C.E.H. Story.
Class 'A' Essay Competition.

Describe the varying relationships of the Crown with the independent member-countries of the British Commonwealth.

Royal Empire Society.
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"How is the Empire?"
—George V

The Commonwealth an experiment-monarchy in England—its power—South Africa's plight and the Crown—Commonwealth Conference of 1952—Canada's future—her relations with the monarchy—
Theory of relationship—India's independence—
where the Queen comes in—doctrine of the
Divisibilty of the Crown—India's Problems—
Pakistan's government—Australia, New Zealand and Canada—Royal Ties—Commonwealth as master of its own destiny.

The British Commonwealth is unique in its conception as a group of Crowned Republics. Although the time for accurate judgment is not yet ripe, it is evident that the experiment upon which the British
have embarked in the last three decades
has about it an element of genius. We
have found it best to permit the spread
of nationalism within our member-
countries, and by doing so have decided
the fate of our own great alliance.
It has been wisely suggested that the
fall of the Roman Empire was caused
by obstinacy on the part of the Rome
republic to allow freedom of aspiration
and feeling. The British have taken the
opposite action. We have come to a crossroads
in our history and have, it appears,
followed with experience and sense
the path which will lead our association
of nations to permanent unity. In this
unity the crown will be the binding
force. And it will be realized in the
course of time that only a 'Republican
monarchy' can survive the storms
which have destroyed less brilliant
constitutions.

An American writer has said that
the distribution of power between the sovereign and parliament, with its smooth mechanism, was Britain's greatest contribution to politics in modern times. It is widely felt, though, that parliament in English countries has the upper hand. The queen is expected to permit all its legislation and agree to the majority of its motives. Sovereign advice may be needed here and there, but royalty is regarded as having little to do with the trend of Commonwealth affairs. This view has been modified since the recent outstanding success of the Queen's World Tour, and men and women, in England especially, are becoming more acutely aware of her immense power. Queen Victoria was the first to exercise the use of this power – influence. The populace was delighted when, after years of seclusion, she recovered from her loss and began to visit farms and
factories throughout the country. Whereas in the previous period Royalty had become almost obvious at home and overseas, the Queen was now instantly a loved, respected Royal lady. The Empress Eugénie, with all her fabric of fame, was dwarfed by the rejuvenated but overpowering Victoria. This example of unselfish attention to the cares of the common people has, in the course of succeeding generations, been closely followed.

The healing of old enmity between England and France by Edward VII and the institution of the Christmas broadcast by George V are merely isolated examples of the fruits of remarkable foresight. During the last war his late Majesty instilled quiet confidence into millions of depressed British citizens and achieved as much as his father in elevating the position of the monarchy abroad. As a result,
the present queen wields enormous power behind the scenes. Her Majesty has already deemed it right to stand firm over important decisions in the Foreign Office. With such effective influence behind her and with helpful, responsible government in her territories, the British monarchy is likely to become the emblem which Lord North once envisaged—'the golden emblem which shall encircle and unite one-fourth of the human family.'

Unfortunately we have to face also the more unbalanced side of our affairs. Certain independent countries within our association are almost dangerously fanned with the breeze of nationalism. It has been agreed that this phase is a necessary and healthy sign of a nation's adolescence, but when it is coupled with the nerve-racking problems that
are shaking the Union of South Africa, diplomacy is at a disadvantage. No other country in the world faces such a gloomy prospect. There are at least five divisions of race, the most difficult to reconcile being a percentage of Asians. Politicians cannot include them in the black group for fear of indignation, and are not disposed to rank them as equals with their own colour. The awkward situation thus created is made more unpleasant by disagreement over fundamentals of policy, which is manifest in the several South African political parties. Many years yearn for freedom from allegiance to the British Crown and segregation from the negro, while the majority of whites there advocate co-existence or a more systematic
approach to apartheid. Further, the recent passing of the deplorable Bantu Act of Education, a step to segregation, will have an extremely detrimental effect. Under this act, black children from innumerable church schools are to be denied a Christian upbringing and transferred to government colleges where it is intended that they receive no moral instruction. They will have merely a limited training—enough to enable them to live among their own community as reasonably civilised people, with little faith and no privileges. If they take trouble to increase their knowledge, their efforts will be barely rewarded. In fact, South Africa is becoming a police state. British missionaries have vowed to continue their efforts to improve the natives in that district,
and with perseverance they may succeed, but unrest could breed anarchy, which, to a native devoid of any hope would be the only outlet for emotion. It is this lurking threat of revolt, guided by communism, the smuggler with a knife under his cloak, which has caused the South African government to adopt a policy of repression so fatal to a dominion under the British Crown.

South Africa brought her troubles to the Conference of Commonwealth Prime Ministers in 1952. It had been collectively decided that the Queen’s revised titles should vary in each independent country, and that each government should determine its own version of her styles. In London, at her accession, the Queen had been proclaimed:

Elizabeth the Second, by the grace of God, Queen of this realm and all
her other realms and territories, head of the Commonwealth. It has been mentioned that the Prime ministers at the conference agreed to disagree, as we are wont to put it, over the question of states. South Africa as once adopted her own shield, as did the seven other independent members. She recommended that her majesty's shield as elsewhere, but without the words 'By the grace of God, and Queen of the United Kingdom.' United Party leaders have alleged that the omission was intended to further nationalist aims and to prepare the way for a severing of practical relations with Great Britain. This way is not far from the truth, for it is clear that a proportion of South Africans are seeking to follow the precedent of India. The relationship of the Crown with the Union of South Africa is thus temporarily uncertain, but unless the situation there is carefully handled the mechanism of alliance between our two countries may be severely strained.

Canada, on the other hand, is the stronghold of the future. There, in the early days of the Commonwealth as such, Canada greatly needed every effort to expand her connections with countries other than Britain, doubts were expressed concerning the duration of her Pacific in the mother country. The diplomat is reported to have declared, 'It is all the fault of that damned statute of Westminster.' The statute was, of course, fostering the expansion of Canada, but at the time of that remark its success was not widely evident.

Diplomats had been trying to see up an equilibrium between Britain and her dominions by balancing the ideals of equality of status and freedom of association with that of common allegiance to the Crown, and they were alarmed at Canada's willing alacrity to associate herself with other countries. However, considerable development has taken place since the publication of that statute. The first two ideals expressed in it have
some of words, while common allegiance is optional. True, nations like Canada and Australia are pioneers with the United Kingdom in her Commonwealth enterprise, but they are free to resign membership if the spirit moves them. There is no clause in Canada's Constitution which compels her to remain a dominion. Moreover, the sovereign is now regarded as being queen of each nation separately, whereas before 1947, George VI was King comprehensively of his British Dominions beyond the seas. In these respects common allegiance is no longer observed. And as if in proof of her separate sovereignty over each nation, the Queen has been offered a residence in several large dominions, notably Canada. Application was even made for the Sovereign to live permanently in Ottawa, and there is a school of thought which would willingly endorse such a move. Certainly, in a country with such a bright future, the Crown would be amply secure.

The most significant change in relationship between the Crown and the Commonwealth in recent years took place not long after the Second World War. In 1947, India was granted Dominion status. Concern over the future of this vast continent created a certain uncertainty in London at the time. Was the moment opportune for India's virtual 'release'? Were Indians as a whole to be trusted under a Crown which placed upon them no obligation to remain associated? Or would the men of that vast continent break away from Britain at the first practicable opportunity? Pressure and exhaustion from the war, however, forced us to take the plunge. India was henceforth free—free to reject allegiance to the Crown and frame her own constitution. She has so done. That her ambitions were high became clear when, in 1947, she replaced the Governor-General by her own elected president, and expressed her immediate intention to associate herself with the United Kingdom completely.

The Indians were now able to snap their fingers at us. Nevertheless a rising generation
of politicians in Delhi concluded that to shut themselves off entirely from the privileges and experience of the Commonwealth would be equivalent to signing their country's death warrant at the very outset. It was therefore advantageous to remain inside the Commonwealth without being under any obligation to London. Indians accordingly owe allegiance to the Queen, but acknowledge her to be Head of the Commonwealth of which India is an associate-member. That country is the only republic in our national association and is a practical illustration of the doctrine of 'divisibility of the crown', which is now such an expressive characteristic of Commonwealth relations.

Problems in India today are complex, but the main impediment lies in complications open to the governing classes. It is well known that the President is not to be assayed; his grip on the country is thereby felt. Many believe this to be inevitable in a nation with 1600 languages and 225 languages—only in any form being hard to achieve. It should be remembered that the most terrible chaos and murder followed our evacuation in 1947. Two or three million Indians were rendered homeless and subsequently died of exposure and famine. Facts which are not usually made clear to the public. Hate must therefore be vigorous in a land where order is such a stranger, and it is not surprising thatotted has ensured such support from the masses. No fact remains that Communist assertions are fixed in that direction, and an oligarchy—India is in practice ruled by 'Ajrakh'—is a harder prey to persuasion than a true republic would be under such pressure.

The new constitution of Pakistan, in contrast to that of India, is still in the making. Under the Indian Independence Act of 1947, the nation was granted common status and its affairs have since been in the hands of a governor-general.
Pakistan is known to favor a republican form of government, evidence of which is to be noted in her affiliation to the new royal titles. At the Commonwealth Conference, her representative recommended that the Queen should be styled in the approved way, but without reference to her as Queen of Pakistan. Instead, it was suggested that the Head of Pakistan should be a President in whose hands would be placed all the powers of an elected president. This plan has been undergoing various vicissitudes in the last equinox months, but its concern to the people of Pakistan was only made clear when a constitutional crisis arose in October of last year.

The Governor-General dismissed the Mohammed Ali's government, proclaimed a state of emergency, and announced that efforts to draft a new constitution had been frustrated by the alarming fact that the Constituent Assembly had lost the people's confidence and was hopelessly out of action. However, law and order has since been restored. A new government has assumed power, and the provinces of East and West Pakistan are to be united under a central executive.

With regard to the remaining three independent countries of Ceylon, Australia, and New Zealand, the scene is pleasantly favorable. Ceylon has adopted the title of 'Queen' of her majesty to suit her own purpose and the words 'Queen of the United Kingdom' have been disregarded. However, this decision does not reflect any change of mood in the island's relations with Great Britain. Mr. Bevan, the Prime Minister, has even qualified his choice of title as being an assurance of his country's continuing membership of the Commonwealth. Moreover, Australia and New Zealand are completely in accord, their relationship with the Crown being equal and absolute. Her majesty is specifically named both 'Queen of the United Kingdom' and 'Queen of Australia', or New Zealand, in conformity with the theory of the Crown's elastic immutability. It was mentioned earlier, but since inhabitants of those regions look upon Britain as their home, the allegiance of the monarch's separateness paramount over each nation is not
fully understood there. This did not prevent the members from agreeing with the rest of the Commonwealth in entirely when the whole question of relationship was discussed in 1852. Australia, New Zealand and Malay remained wholehearted supporters of the Queen and her great alliance of nations, and, with Canada, their ties with the mother-country are unique and firm.

Thus, in essentials, the British Commonwealth is master of its own destiny. These peculiarities fail to understand us, the trait in our national character which puzzles them most of all is our obstinate willingness to brave the root of a matter. Joseph Chamberlain revealed this when he summoned the first imperial conference in 1887. The Prime Ministers met for a frank exchange of opinions and their consultations in London modelled the modern conception of Commonwealth unity. The dominions, they decided in 1887, could not go to war alone. If Great Britain, on the other hand, declared war, they were automatically included and would be expected to rally to the banner of their Sovereign. Even so, at the Peace Conference in 1919, during of this was changed. The dominions were granted entire freedom; they were even given virtual permission to secede from Britain at their own will. The monarch of Great Britain was henceforth the symbol of their unity, and in accordance with the inquest British laws of upbringing, the children they were put on horseback permitted to solve their problems independently. No recent innovation is more directly apparent by the Indian situation, that Britain independent Natives need see no allegiance is the crown at all. In fact, we are still evolving, but we are guided by the highest ideals that man has yet known, and surely fortune has a finger in our pie!

What is so remarkable in the above is the continued state of health as a body of nations, after two great wars. True, certain countries are adolescent and therefore sometimes troublesome, but how do we manage to achieve a condition of friendly negotiation after our disputes? Great 'globe' since the independent countries
together? is it a veneration for all things
British? or is man merely prone to
convince for fear of outside forces? Whatever
the reason, it is abundantly clear that
the British Commonwealth, with 'crowned'
republics within its monarchy, is going
from strength to strength.

Literature consulted:
(b) First two articles in 'International Affairs,
July 1953.
(c) Parliamentary government in the
Commonwealth, by
Sidney Bailey.
(d) World's Almanack, 1955.

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