XV

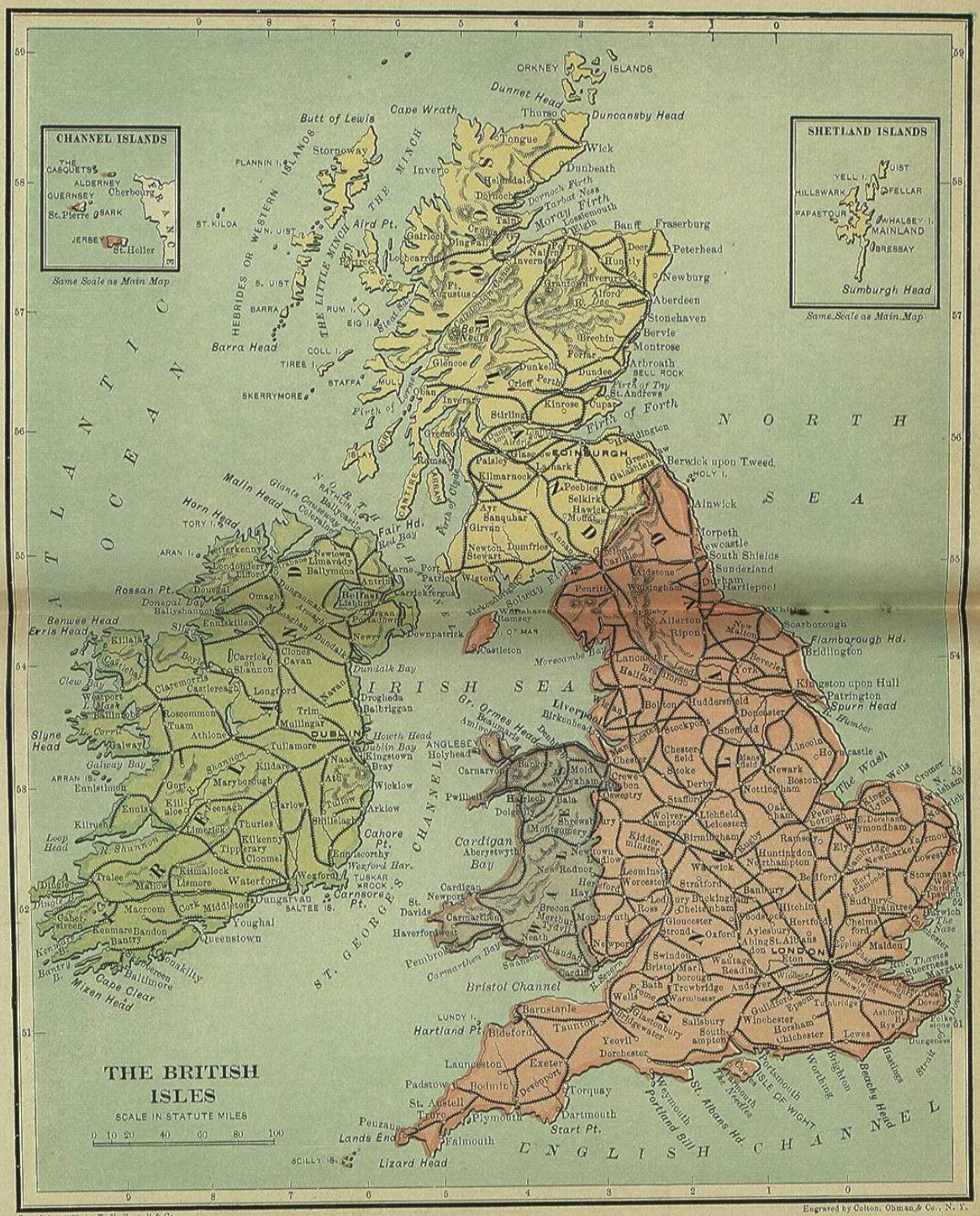
GREAT BRITAIN

The British Empire. — The sovereign of the British Empire bears the title of "Queen of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland, and of its Colonies and Dependencies in Europe, Asia, Africa, America and Oceania." The immensity of this title is bewildering. But it affords only a faint indication of the stupendous fact that the British sovereign reigns not only over the most enormous empire the world ever saw, but over one vaster than the Babylonian, Persian, Macedonian and Roman empires of Nebuchadnezzar, Cyrus, Alexander and Augustus Cæsar united. Its entire territory amounts to over 12,000,000 square miles, almost a quarter of the total land surface of the globe. Its inhabitants, subjects of the queen, number 390,000,000 human beings, more than a fourth of all mankind. Its preeminence upon the sea is even greater than upon the land. Its merchant navy has a tonnage of 13,641,000 tons, exceeding by 3,940,000 tons the tonnage of all the merchant fleets of Austria-Hungary, France, Germany, Italy, Russia and the United States combined. So the British seamen are not far wrong in regarding every ocean as a British lake.

That one little island, less than 90,000 square miles in area, on the western verge of Europe, has been able by its brain and enterprise to exert and secure such unparalleled and world-wide dominion is in itself the most astounding fact of modern history.

British interests, unlike those of any other people, are universal. It may be said that there is no point on the earth's surface that in some way does not touch Great Britain. In this sketch of the years between 1848 and 1898 nothing will be attempted beyond the outline of the most important facts.

Great Britain in 1848. — Queen Victoria had sat upon the throne since June 30, 1837. The two great Whigs were in office, Lord Russell as prime minister, and Lord Palmer-



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ston as secretary of foreign affairs. It was the time of "unfulfilled revolutions." The chartist party, which had carried on agitation since 1832, went to pieces in a miserable fiasco (April 10). But its chief tenets, manhood suffrage, vote by ballot, annual Parliaments, eligibility to the House of Commons, irrespective of property qualification, and payment of members, have already been accepted, or seem about to be accepted, as laws of the land. The Young Ireland party attempted armed revolution. Its leaders were arrested and sentenced, after trial, to transportation. But the Irish question remained to embarrass legislation through the remainder of the century and to force a gradual solution.

Repeal of the Navigation Laws (1849). — These laws were enacted in the days of Cromwell (1651). They were designed to cripple Holland, then the chief carrying power, and to develop English shipping. They prohibited the importation into England, Ireland or any English possession, of merchandise from either Asia, Africa or America, except in English built ships, commanded by Englishmen and manned by crews three-fourths of whom must be English. From Europe no goods could be imported except under the same conditions or in ships of the country where those goods were produced. Under these laws Holland had been crippled and the mastery of the seas secured to England. They had been gradually modified at various times. But they had become no longer necessary. Nevertheless their abolition encountered determined opposition.

The Great Exhibition (1851). — Since then there have been many universal or international exhibitions, notably at Paris (1867), Vienna (1873), Philadelphia (1876), Paris (1878 and 1889), Chicago (1893), but that at the Crystal Palace in Hyde Park was unique, inasmuch as it was the first. Its inception was due to Prince Albert, the husband of Queen Victoria. The mere proposal to exhibit goods of foreign production and to invite foreigners to England encountered a storm of vituperation and abuse. The splendid edifice of iron and glass was itself the most fascinating part of a wonderful display. Over 30,000 visitors were present at the opening (May 1, 1851). The time chosen for the exhibition was most propitious, a sort of interim between the revolutionary storms of 1848 and the outbreak of the Crimean War. The Crystal Palace at Sydenham, erected

(1854) from the materials used in the Palace of the Great Exhibition, now affords some slight conception of how imposing was the structure in which the nations for the first time met in peaceful and beneficent rivalry.

The Part of Great Britain in the Crimean War (1853–1857). — Various causes led Great Britain to participate in this war. The chief was dread of Russian expansion. It is the only war with a European state in which the empire has engaged since 1815 down to the present time. The country could well be proud of the invariable pluck displayed by the common soldiers at Alma, Balaklava and Inkerman. The Crimean campaign gave the world the inspiration derived from the deeds and name of Miss Florence Nightingale and directly contributed to the foundation of the Red Cross at Geneva in 1863. But in every other respect it brought a terrible disillusion to the British people.

The empire, almost omnipotent upon the water, found itself almost impotent against a civilized enemy on the land. The generals were incapable and sick. Confusion, disorder and fraud prevailed everywhere. Abundant stores had been paid for and shipped, but the soldiers were without food and their horses without hay. Whole regiments were without shoes. Immense quantities of boots arrived, but were found to be all for the left foot. Medical and surgical supplies were always at the wrong place, and the wounded and cholera-stricken received no care. Most galling was the superior condition of the French. But their allies were generous and provisions were constantly sent to the British from the French camp.

Even on their own dominion, the water, there had been failure. Amid exuberant demonstrations Sir Charles Napier, with a magnificent fleet, had sailed to attack Cronstadt, but, without accomplishing anything, had been forced to return.

As the state of affairs in the Crimea became gradually known in England, there was an outburst of popular rage. Mr. Roebuck in the House of Commons introduced a motion to investigate the condition of the army and the conduct of the War Department. The government counted on its normal majority in a docile Parliament. It vigorously opposed the motion, which was none the less carried by a majority of 157. Indignation had proved itself stronger than party ties (January 31, 1855).

The energetic Lord Palmerston became prime minister. At once he despatched a sanitary commission to the Crimea and revolutionized the commissary department. The British were more ready for war the day it ended than they had been at any preceding time. But Britain had learned a bitter lesson. She set herself to the reform of her military system. Probably her grave errors in that war she will never repeat.

Wars with Persia (1857) **and China** (1857–1860). — The Persian war was quickly finished. The Shah's army was beaten at Koushaub and most of his southern ports occupied. He obtained peace on condition of evacuating Herat in Afghanistan, which he had seized.

The Chinese war was caused by the overbearing policy of Lord Palmerston. The coöperation of France was easily obtained, as she had an outstanding claim against the Chinese. Canton was captured (December, 1857). By the treaty of Tien Tsin (June, 1858) China agreed to pay the expenses of the war, to no longer apply the term "barbarian" to European residents and to allow British and French subjects a certain degree of access to the interior. Again troubles broke out (1859), whereupon the allies stormed Pekin, spent two days in burning the summer palace and forced China to accept their terms. This time she was to pay a main indemnity of $20,000,000, with other minor indemnities, to accept a British envoy at Pekin and to apologize for fighting at all. The vandalism of the allies in these expeditions was a disgrace to Western civilization.

The Indian Mutiny (1857–1858). — Many causes have been assigned for the Indian mutiny. The all-sufficient cause is to be found in the detestation which the natives entertained for foreign rule, and in their belief that at last the opportunity had come to shake it off. India was not then a possession of the British crown, but of the East India Company. Chartered in 1600 with a capital of £68,000, that company had rapidly swollen until, in 1857, it controlled a territory and a population many-fold larger than the territory and population of the British Islands. Its authority was maintained by a large standing army, mainly composed of sepoys, or Mussulman or Hindu natives, but in part of British troops, and commanded by British officers. In 1857 many of the European soldiers had been withdrawn

and the sepoys were left in dangerously large proportion. The latter were discontented and sullen. Mutinies were frequent, but had been always put down. Then a rumor spread among the troops that their new cartridges had been smeared with swine's fat, a defilement to the Mussulman, and with cow's fat, a profanation to the Hindoo. The cavalry regiment at Meerut mutinied (May 10). Insurrection flooded northern India like a volcanic eruption. It was not a concerted movement. It did not embrace all India. But it put in peril everything that Englishmen had acquired in the peninsula during 250 years. It revealed unsurpassed heroism among the British, both men and women, and made the names of Lieutenant Willoughby, General Havelock and many other British officers immortal. On the tomb of Sir Henry Lawrence, who was slain during the siege of Lucknow, the following words were engraved, "Here lies Henry Lawrence, who tried to do his duty." The glorious epitaph would have applied no less well to hundreds of men and women who died during that awful time.

During their brief day of power, the sepoys had inflicted every conceivable horror upon their victims. When fortune changed, their conquerors were no more merciful. The mutiny was not entirely crushed until June, 1858. Soon afterwards the rule of the East India Company was terminated and the government of the country vested in the crown. Lord Canning was appointed the first viceroy of India (November, 1858).

Lord Palmerston Prime Minister (1859–1865). — Accused of subservience to the French emperor, Lord Palmerston had fallen from power in 1858. The conservative ministry of Lord Derby and Mr. Disraeli did not last twelve months. Lord Palmerston again became prime minister, Lord Russell secretary of foreign affairs and Mr. Gladstone chancellor of the exchequer. This strong Cabinet controlled the destinies of the empire for six years. One of its most important measures was the Cobden treaty with France (1860), whereby an immense step was taken toward free trade. In Jamaica an insurrection was repressed by Governor Eyre with extraordinary severity (1865).

The Civil War in America (1861–1865). — When the war of secession broke out, the attitude of Great Britain caused surprise and disappointment in America. With unfriendly haste the British government recognized the Confederacy as

a belligerent, and issued a proclamation of strict neutrality between the Federal Union and the seceded states (May 13, 1861). Then, regardless of its own proclamation, it permitted privateers like the *Florida* and the *Alabama* to be built in English yards and manned with English sailors in order to prey upon American commerce. Lord Palmerston, Mr. Gladstone and many members of the House of Commons, especially liberals, made remarks and speeches which left a sting. The Duke of Argyle, John Stuart Mill and the Manchester party of Cobden and Bright were staunch friends of the North. Mr. Disraeli was absolutely impartial. An American captain forcibly removed Confederate envoys from the *Trent*, a British mail-boat (November 8). This unjust act was speedily disavowed by President Lincoln, but the negotiations concerning it were conducted by the British secretary in an arrogant and overbearing tone. It was commonly believed that the American Union had broken to pieces, and Lord Palmerston never spared those whom he considered weak. While the controversy was hottest, the calm and judicious Prince Albert died (December 14, 1861), as sincerely lamented in the United States as in Great Britain.

Cotton had been obtained almost wholly from America. The blockade of the Southern ports cut off the supply and the mills shut down. Only charity saved the operatives from starvation. More than 480,000 persons in cotton-spinning Lancashire received assistance. But they believed slavery a crime. So, despite their misery, they never wavered in unselfish and never to be forgotten sympathy for the United States.

Second Reform Bill (1867). — Lord Palmerston died (October 18, 1865) and Lord Russell became prime minister. Mr. Gladstone was chancellor of the exchequer. His Reform Bill failed, and Lord Derby and Mr. Disraeli returned to office. The latter, convinced that the country urgently desired electoral reforms, introduced and carried what is known as the Second Reform Bill. This was a democratic measure, adding to the list almost 1,000,000 voters, specially among the workingmen. In the boroughs all householders who paid rates and lodgers who occupied buildings of an annual value of ten pounds became voters. So, too, in the counties did persons occupying houses or lands of twelve pounds annual value. This bill abolished