

“ There are very few conditions to which commerce cannot adjust itself. It may be disturbed by the operation of tariffs; it may be seriously affected by the insidious working of bounties on production; it feels the effects of great strikes; it is most sensitive to the influence of climate; but to those elements and to others of a similar character commerce adjusts itself by means of fluctuating prices, by the flow of capital from one country to another, and from one industry to another, and by a hundred other inner workings of its system.

“ It is, however, of the utmost importance to realize that there are two conditions to the absence of which commerce cannot adjust itself—two conditions which are absolutely essential to the existence of any great commerce at the present day; one is reasonable protection of life and property, and the other is the presence in every important trade area of competent and impartial courts for the adjustment of commercial disputes and for the enforcement of contracts.

“ Now these two conditions, without which modern commerce cannot exist, are precisely the conditions which native rule in the tropics never afforded; and it is ultimately to this cause that we must trace the substitution of European for native methods of administration throughout the heat belt.”

The great variety of administrative methods which have been adopted by the European powers and by the United States in their various dependencies and the varying degree of success and failure which has attended their application is the material to which the student must turn if he wishes to embark upon a scientific study of colonial administration.

DISCUSSION.

POULTNEY BIGELOW, taking up the theme of Alleyne Ireland rather than the paper for which he had been booked, dwelt upon the importance of preparing the ground for scientific treatment of colonial questions.

On many vital points, said the speaker, public opinion in the United States is opposed to measures advocated by such practical students of colonial life as Mr. Ireland.

It is only necessary to mention our attitude towards missionaries, colored races, contract labor, free trade, to discover for ourselves that many matters most elementary from the point of view of the colonist become very complex when dealt with by a statesman in Washington.

Hence the great importance to this country of an impartial tribunal on colonial affairs before whom might come questions of fact regarding colonial matters.

For instance, our Philippine possessions are reported by our salaried officials as presenting a picture of progress and content.

On the other hand, a student like Mr. Ireland, who has other standards than those of Michigan or Ohio, finds them deplorable. Only an authority such as these allied societies could erect would be in a position to decide such a question to the satisfaction of the public.

Again at Panama we are spending many millions, and are creating a condition of things suggesting the worst phase of French mismanagement rather than a work of which this nation could be proud.

My own experience at the Isthmus covered but two visits—one of six weeks, the other of two days.

It is possible that what I saw and heard was fallacious. It may have done injustice to many gentlemen drawing salaries in connection with a magnificent job. My opportunities for judging were of course limited, and I wish to submit my statements to the sharpest revision at the hands of my fellow-seekers after truth.

The Administration at Washington has pronounced, through many costly reports, that the work there is admirable and that all who differ from this opinion are unpatriotic and malicious.

Personally I walk through a swamp which Mr. Roosevelt sees in time of flood and declares to be a magnificent reservoir. Who am I that I should have an opinion other than my President's?

Therefore the more important that such matters be settled by a committee of our scientific societies who shall represent no other interest than love of truth.

Such a tribunal would immediately command national respect, and rank only second to that of the Hague in determining matters of the first importance.

Personally I am an "Imperialist"—if that means that it is our duty to bring happiness and prosperity to several overheated sections of the earth that have become ours since the war of 1898. I believe that the task is within our power provided that we approach it, not as politicians, but practical students of the truth.