

12. If Sir George Grey is justified in thus thinking, there are additional strong reasons for checking any attempt made by the Secretary of State to interfere with the proceedings of the General Assembly, or to express to that body, without solicitation on its part, any decision or opinion upon its proceedings, rights, or privileges.

13. It has long been universally admitted that in the Colonial Department the real power vests in the Permanent Under Secretary. The Principal Secretary of State of that department, usually suddenly called to office, and rarely holding it for any lengthened period, can know but little of the multitudinous colonies of the British Empire. His time is occupied by his duties in Parliament, his duties in the Cabinet, his private affairs, the claims of society on a great Minister of the Crown; and when all these duties are attended to, but little interval is left for him to study the history and requirements of so vast an assemblage of dependencies. Even to read the letters which from day to day pour into his department, would occupy the greater part of the time of the most industrious statesman, however conversant he might be with the conduct of public business.

14. From these and other causes, the Permanent Under Secretary, in whose hands lie the entangled threads of the various questions of importance which perhaps have been for many months pending in the Colonial Office, becomes the real managing power in that department. He is unseen and unknown to the public generally: upon him no real responsibility rests.

15. It may be said that in the main this line of reasoning applies to all departments of the State in Great Britain; but this, in truth, is no answer to the arguments which have just been used. The action of the Foreign Office, of the Treasury, of the Home Department, of the War Office, indeed of most of the great offices of State at Home, concerns the nearest and dearest interests of every inhabitant of the British Isles: hence the action of these departments is narrowly watched by the observant eye of a jealous public, and is subjected to the careful scrutiny of the leading statesmen of the country. The attention of Parliament is thus ever closely riveted upon the proceedings of those great departments of the State.

16. On the contrary, in the case of the Colonial Department, the vast amount of business before the British Parliament renders it difficult to secure the attention of that body to any colonial question, whilst the members of it are too generally profoundly ignorant upon all colonial subjects. The public at large in Great Britain, also occupied by questions of near and intense interest relating to their own immediate welfare, give but little attention to colonial questions, which involve remote interests, and regarding which their information is necessarily extremely limited.

17. The power of the Permanent Under Secretary in the Colonial Department is, therefore, very great. He may largely change the relations of the colonies to the Empire without the leading statesmen in England, or the nation at large, having the least knowledge of what is taking place: he may greatly modify the institutions of a colony, and shape its whole future, without alarm being taken in any quarter, even by those most interested in its welfare.

18. For instance, if his own views were strongly in favour of breaking the Empire up, in a few years measures could be taken which would render such an event ultimately highly probable. Did he desire to set up an aristocracy in the colonies, in some novel form, landed or titular, or both, he could get many firm steps made towards the achievement of such a project. The man who earnestly believes in either of these principles, armed with the vast, and generally long-continued, power possessed by the Permanent Under Secretary of the Colonial Department, could hardly avoid, perhaps almost unconsciously, adopting measures which would tend to the fulfilment of his cherished convictions.

19. Or, again, the Colonial Office is often liable to be pressed to adopt some line of policy by returned colonists, who, having realized fortunes, are resident in England. Some of these gentlemen are occasionally disappointed colonial statesmen, who, having failed in getting their fellow-colonists to adopt their views, hope still to see them carried out by pressure brought to bear upon the Colonial Department. It may safely be said that nothing could be more injurious to the interests of Great Britain, and to the colonies, than that a party should exist in England, and have sufficient weight there to induce the Secretary of State for the Colonies, or the Permanent Under Secretary, to adopt their views in preference to those of any of the Colonial Parliaments. Differences of a serious kind must ultimately result between Great Britain and some of her colonies, if any opening is left by which a party in London can exercise an influence of this nature.

20. It must be remembered that the Colonial Department only communicates to the colonies such intelligence as it suits its own views to impart. At the present time, the intentions and recommendations of the Secretary of State are conveyed to the Governor in despatches of which even Ministers know nothing, or only so much as the Governor may please to communicate to them.

21. In many cases, laws which involve the most important interests of dependencies of the Crown, or regulations the enforcement of which will mould the destinies of rising nations, have been made and brought into operation without those most deeply concerned having been previously consulted. Too often, the difficulties which invariably attend on early settlement, struggles against native races, or the too ardent pursuit of wealth in a new country, blind the inhabitants of a colony to the probable effect of measures which have been taken and brought into force so rapidly and unexpectedly that they almost escape public notice.

22. Few colonists have been educated in a knowledge of constitutional law: they are, therefore, ill qualified, until trained by experience, to estimate the real value of a Constitution, or to