

I.—CONSTITUTION AND GOVERNMENT OF CANADA.

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THE British Empire consists of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland, India, the Protectorate of Egypt, the Dominion of Canada, the Commonwealth of Australia, the Union of South Africa, the Dominion of New Zealand, the Colony of Newfoundland and numerous colonies and protectorates in all parts of the world.

Territorially, Canada is all that part of the North American Continent north of the United States and east of the Territory of Alaska. In area it is the largest of the dominions of the Empire beyond the seas, and the greatest in white population.

There are several classes of territory and government under the Imperial sway, the first and highest class being composed of those former colonies possessing self-governing powers with legislatures freely elected and administrations responsible to the electorate through the parliaments or legislatures.

Responsible Government.—This system is styled “Responsible Government” in contradistinction to other forms wherein the executive powers are controlled to a greater or less extent by the Imperial Government and are not fully responsible to the local electorate. In the first class are Canada, Australia, South Africa, New Zealand and Newfoundland. The first three above named are federal in their character, with legislative and other jurisdictions strictly defined in their Acts of Union. In all these, the Governor-General, or Governor, as the case may be, is the direct representative of the Sovereign and responsible to the Imperial Government for the proper discharge of his important functions.

Imperial Veto.—In addition to the right of appointment of Governors-General, the Imperial Power, or the “Crown,” as it is called, reserves certain powers of veto upon the Acts of the Dominion, Commonwealth or other parliaments, which might be held to be at variance with, or prejudicially affect, the general or foreign policy of the Empire as a whole, or be deemed to be beyond the powers granted to the Dominion, Union or Colony in question. The veto power is, however, rarely exercised, partly because the colonial parliaments freely recognize Imperial rights, claims and policies, and carefully avoid trenching upon them, and partly because in doubtful cases precedents, judicial decisions and friendly discussions have long since practically settled almost all disputed points. In all essential respects, at any rate as far as domestic affairs are concerned, the government of each Dominion is independently exercised by a parliament and administration responsible to the electorate.

Crown Colonies.—Other colonies are known as Crown Colonies, Dependencies and Protectorates, and these have various degrees of self-government. The executive power is here carried on under the close supervision of the Colonial Secretary and the Imperial Government