

RELIGION COLONISING & TRADE

CHAPTER I

THE SIXTEENTH CENTURY

By 'The Expansion of England,' by the name as well as by the substance of his famous book, Sir John Seeley, nearly half a century ago, gave a notable lead to correct understanding of the British Empire. The lesson by this time has been fully learnt that our singular British Commonwealth is the outcome of growth; that the Empire, with all its endless diversities, is an immensely enlarged version of an island in which all the elements of diversity were, and are still, to be found. Early in the book are the often quoted words that 'we seem, as it were, to have conquered and peopled half the world in a fit of absence of mind.' Perhaps it would be more strictly accurate to say that we did what we did by instinct, the instinct of growth and self-defence; but, at any rate, premeditated design was wholly wanting. Yet, in the making of the Empire, as in the making of everything human, individual men and women have been concerned, and