



Chromolithograph map.

THE HIGH WATERMARK OF THE BRITISH EMPIRE

World. Imperial Federation - Map of the World showing the extent of the British Empire in 1886.

Author

[CRANE, Walter]

Publication date

1886

Publisher

Maclure & Co. Queen Victoria Street,

Publication place

London,

Physical description

Chromolithograph map.

Dimensions

610 by 810mm. (24 by 32 inches).

Notes

A striking pictorial map on Mercator projection centred on the Greenwich Prime Meridian, placing Great Britain just above the map's central focal point. The work was published as a colour supplement to *The Graphic*, a weekly illustrated newspaper, at the same time as Queen Victoria's Jubilee of 1886. To the upper right is an inset map depicting Britain's colonial possessions in 1786,

so the viewer can compare the progress made over the last century.

The British Isles and the colonies are highlighted in red while the rest of the world is left blank, with each continent retaining only its name and some sketched country borders. Each of the major colonies has an accompanying text box listing statistics about its geographical area, population and trade. Three female figures wearing Phrygian caps, symbolising liberty, hold scrolls with the words "Freedom, Fraternity, Federation", with doves of peace bearing olive branches between them. At the bottom, Britannia sits enthroned on the world held up by Atlas, whose sash reads "Human Labour". She is flanked by personifications of the colonies, offering goods and fealty; India brings cotton, Australia offers wool. Despite the peaceful coexistence suggested by the map's motto, to modern eyes the border reinforces the subordination of Britain's territories to the ultimate aims of empire, particularly the Orientalized depiction of the eastern colonies.

The illustrations were drawn by Walter Crane (1845-1915), a prominent illustrator and artist with strong socialist sympathies. Crane's political views are perhaps an explanation for the reminder that the glory of empire is built on human labour. It is, for its period, a creditable attempt at representing all of the various nationalities which constituted the empire, rather than a simple inclusion of some token natives. Crane's contributions to the map remained unnoticed until the research of Pippa Biltcliffe was published in 2005.

Bibliography

Provenance

Price: £7000

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