

ENGLAND AND INDIA

A Review of the Results of English Occupation of India by W. J. Bryan.

NO GAIN IN 300 YEARS

The Whole History is a Sad Story and an Example That we Should Avoid.

The People Impoverished.

In the discussion of a colonial policy for the United States frequent references will be made to England's government of India.

The opponents of imperialism, on the other hand, find in India's experience a warning against a policy which places one nation under the control of another and distant nation.

In 1600 the first East India Company was organized. Its charter was for fifteen years, but a new and perpetual charter was granted in 1609.

In 1767 Lord Clive, by the battle of Plassey, made the company the dominant power in Indian politics, and under Clive and Hastings the income of the East India Company reached enormous proportions.

The history of the century, beginning with the battle of Plassey and ending with the Sepoy mutiny in 1857 was written under head lines like the following: "The First War with Hyder Ali," "The War with Tippoo Sahib," "The War with the Marhattas," "Suppression of the Pindaris," "The Last of the Peshwas," "The First Burmese War," "The First Afghan War," "The Conquest of Scinde," "The Sikh Wars," "The Conquest of Punjab," "The Annexation of Pegu," "The Annexation of Oudh," "The Outbreak of Meerut," "The Seizure of Delhi," "The Siege of Lucknow," etc.

This brief review is not given because it is interesting, but to acquaint the reader with the imperialistic plan of solving the problem of civilization by the elimination of unruly factors.

In 1858 Parliament, by an act entitled "An act for the better government of India," confessed that management of Indian affairs could be improved, and placed the control in the hands of a secretary of state for India and a council.

In 1877 Queen Victoria assumed the title Empress of India. Even if it could be shown that England's sovereignty over India had brought blessings to the Indian people and advantage to the inhabitants of Great Britain, we could not afford to adopt the policy.

Webster presented this idea with great force in his speech on the Greek revolution. After setting forth the agreement between the allied powers he said: "The first of these principles is that all popular or constitutional rights are held not otherwise than as grants from the Crown.

The English people have from time to time forced the Crown to recognize certain rights, but the principle of monarchy still exists. The sovereign has a vote upon all legislation; the fact that this veto has not been used of late does not change the governmental theory, and, in India, the application of the theory had deprived the Indian people of participation in the control of their own affairs.

A nation which denies the principle that governments derive their just powers from the consent of the governed can give self government to one colony and deny it to another; it can give it to colonies strong enough to exact it by force and deny it to weaker ones; but a nation which recognizes the people as the only sovereigns and regards those temporarily in authority merely as public servants is not at liberty to apply the principle to one

section of the country and refuse it to another.

But, so far from supporting the contention of the imperialists, British rule in India really enforces every argument that can be made against a colonial system of government. In the first place, to authorize a commercial company "to make peace in war with any prince or people (not Christian)," according to its pleasure, was to place the pecuniary interests of a few stockholders above the rights of those with whom they had dealings.

The prosecution of Hastings for wrongs inflicted upon the people of India occupies a conspicuous place among the political trials of history. The speeches made against him recall the orations of Cicero against Verres, who, by the way, was also charged with plundering a colony.

Cicero said that Verres relied for his hope of escape upon his ability to corrupt the judges of his day, and it appears that the East India Company was also accused of polluting the stream of justice only a century ago.

In his speech on the Nabob of Arcot's debts Burke said: "Let no man hereafter talk of the decaying energies of nature. All the acts and monuments in the records of pecculation, the consolidated corruption of ages, the pattern of exemplary plunder in the heroic times of Roman iniquity never equalled the gigantic corruption of this single act. Never did Nero, in all the insolent prodigality of despotism, deal out to his praetorian guards a donation fit to be named with the largesse showered down by the bounty of our Chancellor of the Exchequer on the faithful band of his Indian sepoys."

How little human nature changes from age to age! How weak is the boasted strength of the arm of the law when the defendant possesses the influence purchased by great wealth, however obtained, and the accusation comes from a far off victim of oppression!

Those who expect justice to be exercised by officials far removed from the source of power—officials who do not receive their commissions from, and cannot be removed by, the people whom they govern—should read Sheridan's great speech portraying the effect of the Hastings policy upon the people of India.

No clearer case was ever made against a prisoner at the bar, and yet, after a seven years' trial before the House of Lords, Hastings was acquitted, not because he was guiltless, but because England had acquired territory by his policy.

Lord Macaulay, in describing the crimes perpetrated at that time against a helpless people, gives expression to a truth which has lost none of its force with the lapse of years. He says: "And then was seen what we believe to be the most frightful of all spectacles—the strength of civilization without its mercy. To all other despotisms there is a check, imperfect indeed, and liable to gross abuse, but still sufficient to preserve society from the last extreme of misery. A time comes when the evils of submission are obviously greater than those of revolt, when fear itself begets a sort of courage, when a convulsive burst of popular rage and despair warns tyrants not to presume too far on the patience of mankind. But against misgovernment such as then afflicted Bengal it is impossible to struggle. The superior intelligence and energy of the dominant class made their power irresistible. A war of Bengal against Englishmen was like a war of sleep against wolves, of men against demons."

The strength of civilization without its mercy! The American people are capable of governing themselves, but what reason have we to believe that they can wisely administer the affairs of distant races? It is difficult enough to curb corporate power in this country where the people who suffer have in their own hands the means of redress. How much more difficult it would be to protect the interests of the people where the people who do the governing do not feel the suffering, and where the people who do the suffering must rely upon the mercy of alien rulers!

True, Macaulay argues that English morality, tardily but finally, followed English authority into the orient; but as a matter of fact the blotting of India has continued systematically during the present century. Police and refined methods have been substituted for the rude harsh ones formerly employed and the money received is distributed among a larger number, but the total sum annually drawn from India is greater now than it was when England's foremost orators and statesmen were demanding the impeachment of notorious malefactors.

Sir J. Strachey, an Englishman, in a history recently published, is quoted as saying that "the confiscation of the rights of the ryots (in Bengal) has reached vast proportions." He then shows that through the action of the English government the Zemindars, or middle men, have been able to consciously increase their income at the expense of the tillers of the soil, the increase being from 499,000 in the last century to 13,000,000 pounds at the present time.

On the 25th of December, 1897—only a year ago—a meeting of the London Indian society was held at Mountague Mansions and strong resolutions were adopted. Below will be found an extract from the resolutions:

"That this conference of Indians, resident in the United Kingdom, is of opinion:

"That of all the evils and terrible misery that India has been suffering for a century and a half, and of which the latest developments are the most deplorable famine and plague, arising from an ever increasing poverty, the stupid and suicidal frontier war and its savagery, of the wholesale destruction of villages, unworthy of any people, but far worse so of English civilization, the unwise and suicidal prosecution for addition, the absurd and ignorant cry of the disloyal-

ty of the educated Indians, and for the curtailment of the liberty of the Indian press; the despotism—like that of the imprisonment of the Natus—and the general insufficiency and inefficiency of the administration—of all of these and many other minor evils, the main cause is the unrighteous and un-British system of government which produces an unceasing and ever increasing bleeding of the country, and which is maintained by a political hypocrisy and continuous subterfuges, unworthy of the British honor and name, and entirely in opposition to the wishes of the British people and utterly in violation of acts and resolutions of parliament and of the most solemn and repeated pledges of that British nation and sovereign.

"That unless the present unrighteous and un-British system of government is thoroughly reformed into a righteous and truly British system, destruction to India and disaster to the British empire must be the inevitable result."

Mr. Naroji, an Indian residing in England, in supporting the resolution pointed out the continuous drain of money from India, and argued that the people were compelled "to make brick, not only without straw, but even without clay." He insisted that England's trade with India would be greater if she would allow the people of India a larger participation in the affairs of their own government, and protested against the policy of sending Englishmen to India to hold offices and draw their support from taxes levied upon the inhabitants. He complained that British justice is one thing in England and quite another thing in India, and said: "There (in India) it is only the business of the people to pay taxes and to slave, and the business of the government to spend those taxes to their own benefit. Whenever any question arises between Great Britain and India there is a demoralized mind. The principles of politics, of commerce, of equality which are applied to Great Britain are not applied to India. As if it were not inhibited by human beings."

Does any one doubt that, if we annex the Philippines and govern them by agents from here, questions between them and the people of the United States will be settled by the people of the United States and for the benefit of the people of the United States? If we make subjects of them against their will and for our own benefit are we likely to govern them with any more benevolence? The resolutions quoted mention efforts made for the curtailment of the liberty of the press. Is that not a necessary result of governmental injustice? Are we likely to allow the Filipinos freedom of the press if we enter upon a system that is indefensible according to our theory of government?

Mr. Hyndman, an English writer, in a pamphlet issued in 1897, calls attention to English indifference to India's wrongs, and as an illustration of this indifference, cites the fact that during the preceding year the India budget, affecting the welfare of nearly three hundred millions of people, was brought before parliament on the last day of the session, when only a few members were present. He asserts that "matters are far worse now than they were in the days of the old East India company," and that "nothing short of a great famine, a terrible pestilence or a revolt on a large scale will induce the mass of Englishmen to devote any attention whatever to the affairs of India."

To show how, in the government of India, the interests of English office holders outweigh the interests of the natives, I give an extract from the pamphlet already referred to: "First, under the East India company, and then, and far more completely, under the direct rule of the crown and the English people, the natives have been shut out from all the principal positions of trust over five-sixths of Hindostan and have been prevented from gaining any experience in the higher administrations or in military affairs. Wherever it was possible to put in an Englishman and oust a native an Englishman has been put in, and has been paid from four times to twenty times as much for his services as would have sufficed for the salary of an equally capable Hindu or Mohammedan official."

At the present time, out of 39,000 officials who draw a salary of more than 1,000 rupees a year 28,000 are Englishmen and only 11,000 natives. Moreover the 11,000 natives receive as salaries only 3,000,000 pounds a year; the 28,000 Englishmen receive 15,000,000 pounds a year. Out of the 900 important civil offices which really control the civil administration of India 900 are filled by Englishmen and only sixty by natives. Still worse, if possible, the natives of India have no control whatsoever, in any shape or way, over their own taxation, or any voice at all in the expenditure of their own revenues. Their entire government—I speak, of course, of the 250,000,000 under our direct control—is carried on and administered by foreigners, who not only do not settle in the country, but who live lives quite remote from those of the people and return home at about forty-five or fifty years of age with large pensions.

"As I have often said in public, India is, in fact, now engaged by successive relays of English carpet-baggers, who have as little sympathy with the natives as they have any real knowledge of their habits and customs."

The Statesman's Year Book of 1897, published by Macmillan & Co., London, contains some interesting statistics in regard to India. It seems that there are but two and

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"I was troubled with shortness of breath, palpitation of the heart and a general debility. My back also pained me severely."

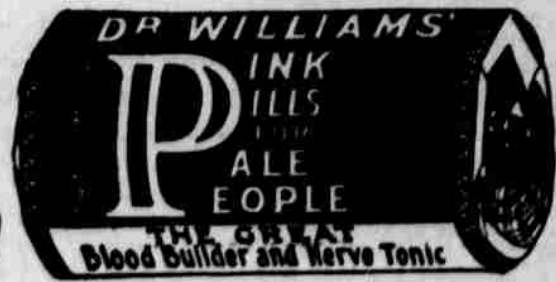
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a quarter million of Christians in India—less than one per cent—after so many years of English control.

It appears also, that in 1891, only a little more than three millions out of three hundred millions were under instruction; a little more than twelve millions were not under instruction, but were able to read and write, while 246,000,000 were neither under instruction nor able to read or write. Twenty-five millions appear under the head, "not returned."

The European army in India amounts to 74,000 and the native army to 145,000. In the army the European officers number 5,000 and the native officers 2,700. One-fourth of the national expenditures in India goes to the support of the army. Nearly one-third of India's national revenue is expended in Great Britain. The salary of the governor general is 250,500 rupees per annum.

The Year Book above mentioned is also responsible for the statement that the act of 1893, closing the Indian mints to the free coinage of silver, was enacted by the governor general and council upon the same day that it was introduced. Mr. Leech, former director of the United States mint, in an article in the Forum, declares that the closing of the mints of India on that occasion was the most momentous event in the monetary history of the present century. It will be remembered that this act was made the excuse for an extra session of our congress and for the unconditional repeal of the Sherman law.

One can obtain some idea of the evils of irresponsible alien government when he reflects that an English council changed the financial system of nearly three hundred millions of people by an act introduced and passed in the course of a single day.

No matter what views one may hold upon the money question, he cannot defend such a system of government without abandoning every principle revered by the founders of the republic. Senator Wolcott of Colorado, upon his return from Europe made a speech in the senate in which he declared that the last Indian famine was a money famine rather than a food famine. In that speech Mr. Wolcott also asserted that the closing of the India mints reduced, by five hundred millions of dollars, the value of the silver accumulated in the hands of the people. If Mr. Wolcott's statements contain the smallest fraction of truth the injury done by the East India company during its entire existence was less than the injury done by that one act of the governor and his council. If the famine was, in fact, a money famine, created by an act of the governor and his council, then indeed is English rule as cruel and merciless in India today as was the rule of the East India company's agents a century ago.

English rule in India is not bad because it is English, but because no force has yet appeared sufficiently strong in character to resist the temptations which come with irresponsible power.

We may well turn from the contemplation of an imperial policy and its necessary vices to the words of Jefferson in his first inaugural message: "Sometimes it is said that man cannot be trusted with the government of himself. Can he, then, be trusted with the government of others?" "Or have we found angels in the form of kings to govern him? Let history answer this question."—W. J. Bryan in the New York Journal.

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The following appeared in the Missouri World last week. It has been shown to all the literary experts at the capitol, and they all give it up. Now we like a joke, if it is "in one on us" so much the better, but where the joke comes in is a puzzle no one has yet been able to solve. This is what the World says:

The NEBRASKA INDEPENDENT (Pop.), wants to know how the peoples party can win alone when the combined people and democratic parties could not win. That reminds us of a story. One minister, in taking his text, unintentionally misquoted the bible—he read: "He led five men with five thousand loaves of bread and three fishes. "Pat a member of his flock who sat in a front pew, remarked as the preacher concluded reading the text, "and I could do that myself." The minister not noticing that he had misquoted the passage of scripture, paid no attention to Pat and continued with his sermon. When the services were over and the minister passed out someone told him of his error in announcing his text. The next Sunday the minister took the same passage for a text, reading it correctly, however and when he concluded reading it looked at Pat and sharply demanded, "And could you do that?" Pat unobtrusively answered, "Yes I could." "Well how could you do it?" inquired the minister. Pat, with a twinkle in his eye, replied, "I would use what was left from last Sunday."

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