

## THE EFFECTS OF BRITISH RULE IN INDIA

### I.

It is generally admitted that the last three or four years have witnessed the birth of a new spirit in India. Whether it should be styled the spirit of unrest and sedition, or the spirit of a legitimate national aspiration, largely depends upon the point of view taken by the observer. It is not proposed in the present article to discuss that question, nor to endeavour to trace the causes which have led to these new developments; still less to dictate to British politicians the steps which should now be taken, in the interests of all concerned, to meet the situation.

But it appears to the present writer to be of the utmost importance that the issue to be determined should be presented in its true aspect. Unfortunately, the essays of those who sympathise with national aspirations are worse than partisan; they traduce without scruple or hesitation the methods of the existing Government in India, and they bristle with misrepresentations of the aims and objects of British policy in that country. For proof of this it is only necessary to point in India to the literature of the Nationalist press *passim*, in England to books such as *Prosperous British India*, published by the late Mr. William Digby, and in America to articles such as that by Mr. Sunderland entitled 'The Nationalist Movement in India,' in the *Atlantic Monthly* for last October. The licence of the Indian native press in this matter has become notorious and need not now be dwelt on, but the repetition of false arguments by Englishmen and Americans is likely to cause infinite harm. To those acquainted with India it may scarcely seem worth while to be at the pains of contradicting the obvious exaggerations and distortions to which currency is given in the English and American publications alluded to; but there is no doubt whatever that exaggerations and distortions of exactly the same nature may lead to practical disaster, and are in fact responsible for the extravagant crudities fermenting in the brain of the assassin Dhingra; while there is plenty of evidence to show that they command a large audience in both countries, and, being unchecked, are likely to gain an unduly wide credence. This is especially the case in America, where a natural tendency to sympathise with autonomous institutions, and a somewhat imperfect grasp of the conditions prevailing in India, predispose the less thoughtful to accept calumnious versions of the

proceedings of the Indian authorities. Mr. Roosevelt, it is true, made a forceful protest against this attitude shortly before he relinquished the post of President of the United States. He appears to have been moved by no impulse except that of a generous sympathy when he went out of his way to extol the work of the British in India, but naturally it was not possible for him to support the honest expression of his belief by a mass of detailed fact and argument. The purpose of the present article can perhaps best be served by adopting his words to represent one side of the case, by making a concise *résumé* of such writers as Mr. Digby to represent the other side, and by then applying to each the touchstone of authoritative facts, so far as such facts can be ascertained. It is curious, but true, that the American speaker must be briefed for the Indian Government against the English writer; because the Englishmen who are best qualified to speak are generally silent.

Here then are Mr. Roosevelt's words,—

The successful administration of the Indian Empire by the English has been one of the most notable and most admirable achievements of the white race during the last two centuries. On the whole, it has been for the immeasurable benefit of the natives of India themselves. The mass of the people have been and are far better off than ever before, and far better off than they would be now if the English control were overthrown or withdrawn. Indeed, if the English control were now withdrawn from India, the whole peninsula would become a chaos of bloodshed and violence; all the weaker peoples and the most industrious and law-abiding would be plundered and forced to submit to indescribable wrong and oppression; and the only beneficiaries among the natives would be the lawless, the violent, and the blood-thirsty.

Now, for the concise *résumé* on the other side, the following statements, taken directly from its literature, may be regarded as fairly representative:—

India was a full land when England first went there, not a comparatively empty one, as America was when it was discovered. It possessed highly-organised governments far older than that of Great Britain, and a civilisation that had risen to a splendid height before England's was born. England does not colonise India. Why did she go there at first, and why does she remain? What has been the result? Only that India is now racked by appalling famines of increasing severity, due entirely to the growing impoverishment of the people. This impoverishment is caused by—

1. Heavy taxation.
2. The deliberate destruction by Britain of India's manufactures.
3. The enormous and wholly unnecessary cost of her Government.
4. The heavy military expenditure.
5. The steady and enormous drain of wealth from India to England.

All these troubles and miseries are due to the fundamental crime committed by England in her dealings with India, viz. that she does not permit the Indian people to have any voice in their own government, but treats them as slaves through the medium of an unsympathetic and unfeeling bureaucracy. Let them have self-rule, and all these evils would at once be righted. India was not incapable of ruling herself before England came. Why should she be regarded as incapable now?

These, then, are the two pictures. It is quite clear that they are essentially incompatible, and that no perversion of words nor ingenuity of argument can make them harmonise.

Let us now apply the touchstone of fact. And first we will deal, as briefly as possible, with the historical aspect of this question. The delineation given in the second picture above is the result of a confusion of thought between the ancient and the modern history of the peninsula. It is true that 2000 or 3000 years ago there existed in India a civilisation higher than that which was to be found in England at the same time. But England came to India 250 years ago; and if it is true that India at that period of history was not incapable of ruling herself, if she possessed at that time, or at any date within one hundred years of that time, a highly organised government of her own, how is it that she came to allow small bodies of Europeans, a few hundreds strong, to impose themselves upon different parts of the country and to divide up its territories among them? The facts are surely too well known and too well authenticated to need repetition in detail. The English first appeared on Indian soil as traders—the expansion of their business among a crowd of petty, weak, ill-governed principalities, combined with competition against traders from other European countries, forced upon them measures for self-protection; the collapse of their opponents obliged them to take steps for the management of the territories which fell into their hands; thus they found themselves the repositories of a political power which was no doubt more than they could safely wield—and eventually the Crown had to intervene to relieve the East India Company of the enormous and extensive responsibilities which the weakness and want of cohesion of the different peoples of India had left to it as a heritage. India was just a congeries of small principalities, all warring with one another, and it is obvious from the briefest perusal of the history of that period that there was no central Government at all, no government of India. It would be premature at present to speculate whether, if English control were now withdrawn, India would at once relapse to the condition of anarchy and misrule in which England found her, though Mr. Roosevelt, whose imaginative faculties were not likely to be blind to its importance, has clearly stated his opinion on this point; but, apart from that question, it is clear that British rule has during the last two hundred years given to the nations of India a peace and a freedom from war and bloodshed which they had not enjoyed for centuries before. This point is generally passed by without notice in the Nationalist literature; but it is surely one which the British administration may claim as counting for much on the credit side of their account.

Leaving now the historical side of the picture, let us follow these writers into regions where they appear to be more cogent, the malevolent methods actually employed by their British rulers towards the

dumb millions of India. It is strange how the transition from a western to an oriental latitude must alter a man's nature! It is generally admitted by these writers, as for instance in the *Atlantic Monthly* article already referred to, that Britain treats her Colonies well, and allows them an extraordinary degree of freedom, and that British institutions generally stand for liberty. How is that the men who go out to help in the administration of India follow such a different line of development? They come of the same stock as the rest of the British race. Is it to be supposed that the young Indian civilian on his first voyage to the East drops, as he crosses the Equator, his proud inherited traditions of freedom, and as soon as he touches Indian soil puts on with his sun helmet the garb of the tyrant and slave-master? The supposition seems too forced. In fact, Englishmen in India are much the same as Englishmen elsewhere. Though they learn, as a rule, that the country cannot be left to itself, they seek, not without marked success, to be just and fair, and they really do not feel the smallest satisfaction in seeing people dying of famine around them.

In speaking of famine, and turning once more to our second picture, it is in the first place necessary to understand the composition of the Indian population. It must never be forgotten, in considering Indian problems, that the Indian Empire is a peasant empire, and that roughly eighty out of every hundred persons in that continent live by the land. A failure of the crops all over India would therefore have a more or less direct effect on 80 per cent. of the population—that is to say, on some two hundred and forty millions of people. But famine has never been known to occur over all the different provinces of India simultaneously, and since the incidence of the population varies from district to district, and famine naturally occurs most readily where the incidence of the agricultural population is heaviest, it follows that the number directly affected in any famine-stricken area must be considerably more than 80 per cent. of the population of that area. This is no new development, due to the effects of British rule. Every Indian will readily admit that agriculture has been the mainstay of the people throughout the ages—and for that reason a fairly widespread failure of the crops has from time immemorial spelt famine. The annals of the country contain numerous references to these recurring calamities. But, it is said, the famines are of increasing frequency and severity. This is a statement which requires the most careful examination. The spoliation of India by the British has been proceeding, according to these writers, at any rate throughout the nineteenth century, if not longer. But, the mortality from famine in the first quarter of the century was twice as heavy as in the twenty-five years which followed. Why was this, if British rapacity maintained its vigour? The whole argument as to the increasing frequency and severity of famines is based on the fact that

several famines of great severity have occurred during the last twenty-five years of the nineteenth century. That this period was one of agricultural distress in India is undisputed ; it was a time during which, and especially during the last ten years of which, the seasons were extraordinarily unfavourable. It is unproved that a similar succession of lean years in an earlier stage of the century would not have been followed by similar conditions of distress. On the contrary, there is every reason to believe that in that case the distress occasioned would have been far greater, the machinery for combating it being then far less efficient. The war which is constantly waged by the Government of India against the ghastly forces of famine is seldom alluded to in the literature now under notice ; and it is therefore worth while to dwell for a moment on this point. The signs of impending distress in any area threatened with a failure of the crops are watched by the Government with the closest scrutiny ; when it is clear that a scarcity is no longer avoidable, preparations to meet it and to save human life throughout the area of distress are promptly and energetically taken in hand ; when distress actually begins, famine or scarcity, as the case may be, is declared to exist, and from that moment a regular campaign opens. All other official work is relegated to a second place ; every officer is expected to gird up his loins for the fight ; relief camps are opened ; hundreds of officials, military as well as civil, are deputed to special duty ; and the Government proceeds to pour forth blood and treasure without stint to meet the crisis ; the word ' blood ' is used advisedly, for no famine occurs which does not take its toll of officers and helpers, whose lives are sacrificed in the struggle through hard work, exposure, or disease. The very watchfulness of the Government for the first approaching symptoms of disaster is in itself an explanation of the alleged increasing frequency of famines. History only records those of which the extent and severity have left a lasting mark—local calamities or those which caused comparatively slight distress are not likely to find mention in the annals—but in modern days the full light of publicity plays upon every part of the continent, and so long as a single relief work is open, although in old days there would have been neither relief measures nor talk of famine, it is now accounted a famine in India. That this statement is well founded can be proved by an examination of the eighteen famines which Mr. Digby tells us have occurred in the last twenty-five years of the nineteenth century. Mr. Digby's list of famines shows that no increase of mortality occurred in ten out of the eighteen occasions, so that in these ten cases either there was only scarcity not amounting to famine, or the measures taken by the Government to meet distress were adequate to prevent any loss of life. Two of the entries on his list may be quoted in full :

1886-87. Central Provinces. Earthworks prepared, but late autumn rains secured ripening of winter crops.

1890. Kumaon and Garhwal. Comparatively small help sufficed.

These are two instances where it is quite clear that there was no famine at all—only the apprehension of it. But some apprehension is felt every year in some part of India, and if it were permissible to everyone to compile statistics in this way it would be easy to show that there were more than eighteen famines in every quarter of each century.

It is not desired, however, to belittle the very serious loss of life which has occurred through famine in India during the term in question. The mortality was no doubt very heavy; but this was due to a series of unfavourable seasons. In British India, especially during the last four famines, every nerve was strained to meet the situation, but at present nothing that human aid can do can avail, in the conditions of the country, to avert dire distress when such seasons come. There is a vernacular word current in Rajputana—a word of very ancient origin, dating back, I believe, to centuries before the British occupation—which means 'a triple famine,' *i.e.* a famine of grain, grass, and water. The later famines, especially those of 1876 and 1899, have been of this nature. The people have known the quality of these calamities for a thousand years, and they attribute them to the correct and obvious cause. Were it not so there must have been a mutiny against British rule on this ground long ago, but it is only our modern pamphleteers who have thought of making the constant liability to famine a grievance against the rulers. If it were true that famines of increasing frequency and severity are the result of British methods of government, and of unduly heavy taxation, how can the occurrence of famine be explained in those parts of the country which are under native rule? In the native States of Haiderabad, Mysore, and Central India the worst famines have occurred, but from these tracts not one penny of the land tax goes into British coffers. If, as our critics say, the remedy for this grievous affliction is to grant independence to the natives, why is the affliction felt so severely in regions where complete power over the agriculturist is already in native hands? The fact is that till lately the distress felt by the agricultural classes in the native States in time of famine has been far greater than in British India, owing to the less effective measures taken by the administrative authorities to cope with it. And this fact is one of the explanations of the high mortality which has occurred during the numerous rainless seasons of the past quarter of the nineteenth century. Mr. Digby, judging largely from the check on the normal growth of the population—a very unsafe foundation for logical argument—puts the figure at 19,000,000 persons. Now in dealing with these large figures it is well to bear in mind that the entire population is some three hundred millions. And it is a matter for congratulation, and indeed for marvel, that in spite of these devastating calamities, affecting hundreds of millions of the agricultural classes, in spite of inadequate protective arrangements in the native States, in spite of the enormously heavy financial drain occasioned by the relief expenditure, the population has not

only escaped decrease, but has actually increased by 7,000,000.<sup>1</sup> Even if, for the purposes of argument only, Mr. Digby's figure for the mortality of 19,000,000 be accepted as an outside estimate, it means that the annual loss from famine causes during the last quarter of the century was less than 1 per cent. of the people. When one considers the difficulties to be surmounted, the very extensive areas affected, the absolute necessity of reducing the daily consumption of food to the lowest reasonable point, the consequent inevitable weakening of the stamina of the sufferers, the liability to illness and disease which, with the best protective arrangements, famine must bring in its train, and, last but not least, the impossibility of ensuring that adequate relief measures shall always be taken in the native States areas, it is to the greatest credit of the Government of India that they have succeeded in bringing the people through these dreadful years of storm and stress with so little actual loss of life. As regards the last point mentioned above, it is far from the wishes of the present writer to convey any unjust impression. He has known many native States where the protective arrangements against famine have been of the most efficient nature; but this is not always the case, and the general standard of efficiency is lower than in British India.

Now as to the impoverishment of the people, it has been stated by Mr. Digby, and by others who have followed in his wake, that the average daily income of the people in India decreased from 2*d.* per head in 1850 to 1½*d.* per head in 1882, and again to ¾*d.* per head in 1900. To reduce the wealth of the country by one-quarter in thirty-two years (1850-1882) would be a considerable feat for British avarice to accomplish, but to reduce it again by 50 per cent. in little more than half of the same period would involve a practical impossibility, which even the most unlimited credulity could scarcely be expected to swallow. I am therefore not surprised to find that the writer in the *Atlantic Monthly* has refrained from adopting the last figure. The fact is that the data on which Mr. Digby bases his estimates are absolutely untrustworthy. He arrives at his conclusions by making separate estimates for the agricultural and the non-agricultural wealth of the nation, adding these together and dividing the sum total by the figure of population. The result so obtained he compares with an official estimate made in 1882, which, however, he describes as pure 'guess-work.' His own estimate for 1900 is equally guess-work, and there does not seem to be much point, apart from the impressionist effect, in comparing two guesses with one another. It is, however, worth while to go a little deeper into these two estimates. Mr. Digby places the annual total wealth of British India in 1900 at 264,000,000*l.*, to be divided among two hundred and twenty-six million people—i.e. between twenty-three

<sup>1</sup> The increase in British India only during the decade ended 1901 was 10,660,000, so that there must have been a decrease of over three and a-half millions in native States in that period.

and twenty-four shillings (a little less than eighteen rupees) per head per annum. The estimate of 1882 was twenty-seven rupees, so even by his own figures Mr. Digby's estimate of a 50 per cent. diminution is belied. But what we have to consider is whether the wealth of the agricultural classes has in fact diminished. Broad facts must be regarded. Here are some that may be of use for the purposes of this discussion. In spite of bad seasons and famine between 1890 and 1900, the area under cultivation in British India increased during that period by nearly four million acres, and the irrigated area by more than one and three-quarter million acres. It is difficult to make a similar comparison for the period between 1882 and 1890, as statistics for the provinces of Bengal are not available until the latter date; but omitting Bengal altogether, comparison is possible with the results established by an official inquiry made in 1885. The cultivated area in British India, exclusive of Bengal, increased between 1884 and 1890 by over sixteen million acres, and the irrigated area by over six million acres. Adding these two sets of figures together, we find that in the sixteen years between 1884 and 1900 the area cropped was extended by twenty million acres, of which nearly eight million acres were irrigated, without making any allowance for the increase which must undoubtedly have occurred in Bengal during the first six years of the period. One more correction is necessary. Upper Burma and Ajmer only came into the reckoning between 1886 and 1888, but deducting even as much as four million acres on this account, and assuming only one quarter of that acreage to be irrigated, we get a total increase of sixteen million acres of cultivation, seven millions of it irrigated, in a period of sixteen years—that period being admittedly one of extraordinary agricultural strain and difficulty. This increase, large as it is, may not perhaps be sufficient to keep pace with the growth of the agricultural population. But that is not the point. Mr. Digby and his followers state clearly that the impoverishment of the agricultural classes is not due to their increasing numbers, and the point at issue is whether that impoverishment is or is not occasioned directly by the brutal methods of the Government. The reply is that a country which can show such an extraordinary development of its agricultural resources as is shown in the figures given above, cannot be the subject of a cruel and grasping rule.

The problem presented by the rapid increase in the numbers of people dependent on the land is one that has long occupied the attention of those responsible for the administration of the country. It is easy for Mr. Digby and others to say that the country is not over-populated. Not, perhaps, if you include in the area all the deserts and mountains. The fact remains that something like 200,000,000 persons in British India at present depend for their sustenance on about the same number of cultivated acres; and there are not many countries where, apart from the artisan and non-agricultural popula-



tion, there are 640 people who have to get their living from each square mile of cultivation. Behind the obvious remedy so sedulously fostered by the Government—viz. an extension of cultivation and irrigation—there is a further means of relief for which the best minds and brains in India have long been striving, viz. the absorption of the surplus agricultural population in non-agricultural pursuits. Scant justice has been done by Mr. Digby and his friends to the enormous expansion of railways, mills, workshops, and industries of all sorts, which has taken place in India during the last thirty years. The picture now under criticism deliberately gives the impression that England has ruined all the old industries of the country, and established a few in their place entirely for her own benefit, while the marvellous growth of trade which the figures do not fail to betray is brushed aside with the remark that it is all part and parcel of the drain on India established, with Machiavellian cunning, by England for her own enrichment and for the impoverishment of the natives. Now over this question of the non-agricultural wealth of India it is easy to refute Mr. Digby's conclusion even more disastrously than over his agricultural statistics. He puts the annual non-agricultural income of British India at 84,751,905*l.* Let us take some of the items at random.

Jute and Hemp (less raw material)	1,937,841 <i>l.</i>
Hides and Skins	4,967,089 <i>l.</i>
Village Potteries	375,000 <i>l.</i>

These are Mr. Digby's estimates. Their statistical value may be gauged by the following statements which, being based on the official trade returns for 1899-1900, represent the closest approximation to truth that can be got for the year in question. The exports from India of jute manufactures, exclusive of the raw material, in the year in question were worth 4,176,233*l.*, or considerably more than twice the value which Mr. Digby assumes for this article, plus hemp, not merely exported but *produced* in the whole of British India. Since 1900 this export trade has increased by leaps and bounds, and in 1906-07 it amounted to nearly ten and a-half million pounds sterling. The value of the hides and skins exported in the same year fell only a little short of 7,000,000*l.*, and this leaves out of sight the enormous internal trade done all over India by the 'chamars' or petty tanners, some of whom exist in every village in the peninsula. Again Mr. Digby's estimate must be very much less than half the truth. His estimate for village potteries allows for each person in India spending about one-third of a penny during the year on the 'chatties' or earthen pots which are seen in daily use in every native household. Nearly all his figures are open to similar criticism, and it is hardly too much to say that his estimate of the non-agricultural wealth of the country is not worth the paper on which it was written.

Mr. Digby and his supporters will doubtless argue that the exports are not to be considered part of the people's wealth in India. They allege that the undeniable prosperity of India, as evidenced by its trade returns, is not that of the Indian people, but of their English masters. Perhaps the most complete answer to this allegation is to be found in the fact that out of the total exports from India of private merchandise, valued at 70,455,797*l.* (these are the figures of 1899-1900), the exports to the United Kingdom were worth only 20,589,258*l.* As to the growth of trade, it is sufficient to say that its volume has grown from 1434 lakhs in 1834-35 to 34,421 lakhs in 1906-07—*i.e.* it has multiplied twenty-five fold in seventy years. It is absurd to say that this enormous expansion of trade has done the people of the country no good. The widening limits of the cultivated area, the increase in the price of agricultural produce, the extension of the markets, the employment of millions of people in a thousand industries, previously unknown, must have added vastly to the wealth of the people of India themselves. Mr. Digby seems to think that British capitalists are to blame for having helped to develop the country. That a large amount of British capital is sunk in the country is undeniable; but if it had not been forthcoming, many valuable schemes, providing labour and wages for the natives of India, would never have been started at all. To refuse an opening to this British capital would be utterly impolitic, and to deny to it, when once admitted, a just return in interest would be utterly immoral. Moreover, large openings have been given to native capitalists, and many of them have in consequence become immensely rich. The talk about the 'drain to England' is idle and baseless. It rests on the fact that the exports from India exceed the imports by about 15,000,000*l.*, and since the bills drawn by the Secretary of State annually (previous to 1900) amounted to about the same sum, it is said that this money constitutes the 'tribute' paid by India to England. The statement is ridiculous. There is *no* tribute paid by India to England. The 'Home Charges,' as they are generally called, *e.g.* the sums disbursed by the Secretary of State for India in England, are roughly made up as follows:

HOME CHARGES FOR 1898-99.

(1) Interest on capital furnished by Englishmen for the development of the country . . . . .	9,000,000 <i>l.</i>
(2) Pensions and allowances to retired officers and pay to officers on furlough . . . . .	4,900,000
(3) Charges on account of Departments in India . . . . .	236,000
(4) Stores for India . . . . .	1,000,000
(5) Military Charges . . . . .	1,000,000
(6) India Office Establishment . . . . .	170,000

No honest man will surely say that the first four of these are other than legitimate charges against the Indian Government. They are merely payments due for value received, such as every civilised

administration regularly incurs and acknowledges and pays without question. The last two items may possibly be more open to question, but at any rate the debit of these charges to India is a matter which has been decided after full consideration of the pros and cons. by some of the fairest and most impartial men in both countries, and in any case the amount involved, as will be seen, is but a small fraction of the whole. As regards the argument that the payment of this alleged tribute is proved by the corresponding balance of trade against India, it is hoped that the following figures, taken from official documents, will finally dissipate this ridiculous fallacy. They are for the year 1899-1900, but the statistics of any year will give a similar result.

PRIVATE MERCHANDISE AND TREASURE.

Total Exports from India to other countries . . . . .	75,760,082 <i>l.</i>
Total Imports into India from other countries . . . . .	61,123,700 <i>l.</i>
Exports to the United Kingdom . . . . .	21,919,372 <i>l.</i>
Imports from the United Kingdom . . . . .	35,212,565 <i>l.</i>

These figures show that India takes from England, in the way of merchandise and treasure, an amount which exceeds by 60 per cent. that which she gives, and that the unfavourable balance of trade is not with the United Kingdom but with other countries. Also that the 'tribute,' if it exists at all and if its existence is to be inferred from the unfavourable balance of the total trade, is paid not to England but to other countries! It will be seen that even if the 9,000,000*l.* paid annually in interest to English capitalists be added to the exports to the United Kingdom the balance of trade as between the two countries would still be largely in India's favour.

The only speck of solid ground for this allegation about the drain from India is that the British administration is undoubtedly and inevitably costly. But who shall say that it was a mistaken policy to send out to India the best material that could be found in England? Good quality cannot be obtained without a price, and to pay that price is in the end the best economy. The quantity is marvellously small, and there has probably never been a country of equal extent in which the central governing body was composed of so small a band of foreigners. Moreover, the increasing cost of living obliges these foreigners to spend more and more of their incomes in the country, while as to the pensions drawn in England more than half of these is generally subscribed by the recipients themselves. Leaving out of account the fractions of their pay and Government pensions spent outside India by Englishmen employed in that country, there is no justification for the alleged 'drain' on India. The wealth of India, thanks chiefly to the enterprise and capital of Englishmen, has multiplied exceedingly during the last century, while during the same period the incidence of taxation—apart from the income tax, which does not touch the poorer classes—has been lowered,

especially the incidence of taxation on land. And all the measures of the Executive tend in the same direction. The latest proofs of this lie in the heavy reductions of the salt duties, and in the lightening of the cesses, collected with the land revenue.

Among all the misrepresentations which are current in the literature under notice there are none more glaring or more daring than those connected with this subject of the land tax. Mr. Digby in *Prosperous British India* quotes case after case where, according to his calculations, the land revenue on a holding amounts to over 80, and even 90, per cent. of the total produce of the fields on which it is assessed; and he certainly leaves it to be inferred that this is the normal incidence of the land tax. Mr. Keir Hardie, M.P.—the latest publicist of this school—after a two months' visit to India during which he really cannot have had time to study the land system of the country, whatever else he may have studied—has published a book entitled *India*, in which, among other amazing statements, he asserts that direct taxes on the land absorb from 50 to 65 per cent. of the total yield, and that with local taxes and other small items probably not less than 75 per cent. of the harvest goes in taxes. To those who have the smallest acquaintance with the conditions of land revenue settlement in India such assertions are positively pitiful in their blind ignorance. In assessing revenue every allowance is made on the most generous scale for all expenses of cultivation, and the balance remaining—that is to say, the *profits*—are occasionally, but not often, assessed at 50 per cent. In other words, it is not 75 per cent. of the total yield, as Mr. Keir Hardie asserts, but 50 per cent. of the net profits that is taken. This, too, is exceptional.

A careful inquiry has been made under the direction of the Government of India into this subject, and it has been ascertained that the incidence of the land tax varies from about 6 per cent. of the total yield in one province to about 10 per cent. in others, except in parts of Madras and in the rich province of Gujarat, where it rises to about 20 per cent. These figures are obtained in each case on a consideration of the entire facts of the whole province, so far as they can be ascertained; whereas Mr. Digby gives his impressions by means of quoting isolated data here and there. To any thinking man the figure of 75 per cent. of the total yield is in fact impossible, and Mr. Keir Hardie goes so far as to admit that to most people it seems incomprehensible. Why then repeat it, without more careful verification? The truth is open to the honest seeker, and he who runs may read.

Turning next to the military forces in India, these are not higher than the circumstances demand. The army is as small and as efficient as it can be, if India is to be defended from external foes. The argument that it is too costly is on a par with those of the small clique who would reduce the strength of the British Navy and who oppose

all measures for the improvement of the British Army. The Government of India have wisely decided not to play into the hands of the Little Englander.

The destruction of India's industries is a purely chimerical idea. That hand weaving and hand moulding have to a great extent vanished is no doubt true, but to ascribe this result to the deliberate machinations of the Government is ridiculous. It would be as reasonable to say that England was to blame for allowing the old Flemish weavers or the coach drivers of ancient days to disappear. Trade must develop in its own way, and according to the requirements of new generations and of new inventions. When steam-driven machinery replaced the ancient hand-loom, the hand weavers lost their special trade; at the present time the cab-drivers in London are disappearing under the invention of the taxi-cab. But these difficulties adjust themselves in every nation. And the enormous expansion of Indian trade, shown by the trade returns already alluded to, is sufficient proof that there has been no real diminution of Indian industries.

If it be argued that the native hand industries should have been protected at all costs, it may not be unreasonable to ask what would the nations think of a Government which prohibited the introduction into its territories of machinery and of capital for the development of the country's resources? Would not its enemies then have some reason in using the word 'slavery' which is employed so lightly and so unjustifiably against the present administration? Were it not that this reproach is seriously brought against the authorities in India, the refutation of it would seem to be idle, so untenable is the position which it involves.

Finally it is said that the great panacea for all the sufferings of the Indian people lies in the grant to them of an autonomous government. One would imagine from the tone of our critics on this subject that the idea of self-government for India was absolutely wanting in the minds of the authorities. The facts are so notoriously at variance with this presentment of them that it scarcely seems worth while to enlarge on the point; but for the benefit of those who are ignorant of the truth, and who may be disposed to accept as gospel the second picture under notice, some leading facts may be stated.

In the Queen's Proclamation of 1858, issued at the close of the great Mutiny, it was laid down that all her subjects, of whatever race or creed, should be freely and impartially admitted to offices for which they were qualified by education, ability, and integrity. This policy has been steadily pursued; and there are at the present time many natives of India holding offices of the highest rank, appointed Justices of High Courts, Commissioners, Members of the Board of Revenue, while in all inferior positions, from that of deputy collector downwards, the natives of India, with a small sprinkling of

Eurasians (*i.e.* descendants of mixed unions), hold a practical monopoly. It has not yet been found possible to appoint to the very powerful and responsible position of Lieutenant-Governor a native of the country, but the latest step in the development of the policy of impartiality has been the appointment of an Indian gentleman to be a member of the Viceroy's Executive Council. Before the article in the *Atlantic Monthly* was penned, the Government of India had made public certain proposals which they were contemplating for a further step in the policy of associating Indians in the Government. It is difficult to ascribe the entire silence of the writer on this point to any motive except a desire to mislead. He speaks only of Lord Morley's promised 'improvement,' and contemptuously adds that so far the promise has had no realisation. Since he wrote, full realisation has come. Lord Morley has amply redeemed his word, going even further than the Government of India proposed, and the immediate aspirations of the Indian people appear to have been satisfied. It is to be hoped that the writer feels some regret for his want of faith in British statesmen, both in India and in England. His only real argument in favour of autonomy is that India is already quite capable of governing herself, and he instances the cases of Baroda and Mysore, two States under administration by enlightened native chiefs. There are doubtless many native States in India which are well managed—the present writer speaks with the experience of a lifetime largely spent among them; there are others which are most indifferently managed. But even the most advanced at present depend for their guidance and support—nay, for their very existence—on the British administration in India. And were that to go, they would be left to fight for their lives, while the peace which they enjoy, and the civilisation which they have so laboriously attained, would quickly tumble to pieces.

The truth is that the policy of devolution of power to the natives of the country is set about with a thousand dangers and difficulties, and every dictate of wisdom and prudence requires that *festina lente* should be the guiding principle in its pursuit. There are many competent judges who think that the Government of India, under the spur of Lord Morley's radicalism, are at present going too fast and are yielding almost too much to popular clamour. There are points where the interests of the Indian subject and of the British subject must inevitably clash, and without the most deliberate and careful navigation round these rocks the ship of State must be endangered. It is the duty of the coming race of Englishmen in India, by the exercise of tact and conciliation, coupled with the most rigid impartiality, to bring it through the shoals, and it will be a task requiring the highest qualities, not only among Englishmen in office, but among all Englishmen, as well as the leading natives in that country. Let us hold stoutly to the belief that the common sense

and love of justice of the majority on both sides will ensure success. But the one certain method of inducing a catastrophe which would ruin the work of two centuries would be to follow the advice of Mr. Digby and his friends, and hand the government over to the natives immediately without more ado.

British statesmanship and forethought are not likely to be hurried into a policy of scuttle and disaster by arguments of this nature. And it is to be hoped that the good sense of the English and of the American people will be stirred no more than that of Mr. Roosevelt by the hysterical cries of irresponsible writers. Let the great problem which lies before us in India be approached by all parties with unprejudiced minds, with a clear perception of the truth, and with a full recognition of England's past efforts in India, so that its solution may end in peace and honour.

ELLIOT G. COLVIN.

## THE EFFECTS OF BRITISH RULE IN INDIA

(II.)

IN the year 1748 the Frenchman Dupleix was master of Southern India. At Pondicherry, in the midst of gorgeous ceremonies, Mozuffer Jung, Nizam of the Deccan and representative of the Great Mogul of Delhi, appointed Dupleix Governor of all the countries to the south of the river Krishna. His subjects numbered thirty million souls. Dupleix built a stately column on which inscriptions in four languages set forth the story of his greatness. Around the pillar arose a town bearing the name of Dupleix Fatiabad, 'the city of the victory of Dupleix.' Three years later the Englishman Clive rased to the ground both the town and the column of victory. *Sic volvere Parcas.* The Fates decreed that England and not France was to enter upon the goodly heritage of the moribund Mogul Empire.

It was the might of England alone that drove the French out of India. But for Clive, a French Viceroy and Governor-General would now hold his court at Calcutta and Simla; the tricolour and not the Union Jack would wave proudly over the forts and palaces of Delhi and Agra. Unless indeed a more robust nation in 1871, not content with Alsace and Lorraine, had replaced the tricolour by the eagles of the Fatherland in Bengal, Madras and Bombay. Asiatic dominion in India was an impossibility. Not the empire of Delhi, not the courage of the Sikhs, not the ferocity of the Mahrattas, could withstand the disciplined forces of the West. The Portuguese, the Dutch, the French, and the English were all striving for the mastery of India, and the prize fell to the nation which came latest into the field. As the ancient Hindoo dynasties had gone down before the inroads of the Mahomedans, so both Hindoos and Mahomedans were forced to yield to the irresistible armies of England.

Madar Lal Dhingra, the Hindoo student who recently murdered Sir William Curzon-Wyllie in London, justified his brutal deed on the grounds that it was wrought on behalf of patriotism.

The English people [he insisted] have no right to occupy India; and it is perfectly justifiable on our part to kill an Englishman who is polluting our sacred land. I am surprised at the terrible hypocrisy, farce and mockery of the English people, when they pose as champions of oppressed humanity, such as the people of the Congo and the people of Russia, when there are such terrible oppression



and horrible atrocities committed in India—for example, killing two millions of people every year.

This is a specimen of views commonly held, or at all events professed, by Indians of to-day. The vernacular press in India teems with such sentiments. Hindoo students in London have celebrated the anniversary of the great Mutiny, terming it the first attempt at independence. Indian students at Cirencester have toasted the memory of the infamous Nana Sahib, the murderer of English women and children at Cawnpore. Nor are these opinions confined to natives of India. Mr. Victor Grayson, M.P., speaking at Huddersfield on the 3rd of July, referred to the assassination of Sir W. Curzon-Wyllie. In the papers that day, he said, he had seen photographs of the victim, and also of the murderer, whom they called ‘the assassin.’ When he saw those photographs, he said to himself, ‘Why not put Lord Morley in, and say, “Another assassin”?’ When a poor Indian, mad and exasperated by horrors endured by his people, rose and committed a mad act, the community howled, and would tear him limb from limb. He did not condone his act. As a Socialist, he was not in favour of assassination. But, while the world howled against a man demented by wrongs to his country, he extended his sympathy to him, and his hatred of tyranny in his country and in England.

Are the aspersions of Madar Lal Dhingra and Mr. Victor Grayson upon British rule in India capable of justification? I propose to consider briefly the circumstances which immediately preceded the introduction of our rule, and the conditions which now exist.

The great Mogul Empire was in the throes of dissolution. The history of that empire was for the most part a record of incessant wars and rebellions, crimes and catastrophes. Royal princes fought with one another for the succession to the throne. Viceroyalties, provinces, deputies and generals, were constantly engaged in setting up independent dominions. The Mahomedan kingdoms of the Deccan, of which the greatest were Ahmednagar and Bijapur, waged bloody wars with the Emperor of Delhi. Invasions by wild tribes from the north were of common occurrence. In 1739, when the French power was approaching its ascendancy in the South of India, Nadir Shah, who had made himself King of Persia, led his army by way of Kandahar to Delhi, and, there meeting with some resistance, gave the order for a general massacre. For six hours, it is recorded, twenty thousand men were employed in the work of slaughter; and the number of the slain was set down as not less than thirty thousand. A great portion of the city was burnt. The imperial jewels and the famous peacock throne were borne away, and even the poorest of the citizens were compelled by cruel tortures to give up their scanty hoards. The Mogul power was broken, and the invaders were suffered

to depart without an effort to oppose them. In the West of India the Mahrattas had made themselves independent of the Mahomedans, Delhi and Bijapur alike. These wild warriors carried their rule from one side of India to the other, robbing and plundering wherever they went. The English merchants of Calcutta were forced in 1751 to dig a ditch round their settlement to protect it from the incursions of these intolerable freebooters. Except during the wonderful reign of the Emperor Akbar, contemporary of our Queen Elizabeth, such a thing as religious toleration was unknown. All Hindoos were forced to pay a capitation tax known as the *jezia*, in return for which Mahomedanism allows conquered populations the sufferance to live. Except in the reign of Akbar, there were heavy taxes on all Hindoos who went on pilgrimage to their sacred shrines. Hindoos who were taken prisoners in war were slain by thousands, and their women and children sold as slaves. The predecessors and successors of Akbar were guilty of deeds of unspeakable cruelty. There was never any security of life and property. Justice was openly bought and sold. The arm of the law, even if willing, was not infrequently powerless to smite down the evil-doers. Emperors and Nawabs might build magnificent palaces and sepulchres, but in the way of public works for the public good, with the one exception of tanks or reservoirs, they did practically nothing. Roads, harbours, canals, and bridges were of scant consideration in comparison with royal parks and mausoleums. Here are two citations of native rulers regarding the mass of their subjects: 'Give the poor a dhoter (loin-cloth), it is enough,' said Shiwaji, the great Mahratta patriot. 'What are the poor to us?' observed Mir Nur Mahomed to Lieutenant Eastwick in Sind, when that country enjoyed independence.

A few specific instances of native misgovernment may be more significant than a series of generalisations. The richest province of India was Bengal. The Nawab or Viceroy of the territory in the year 1735 was Alaverdi Khan. Subject to his rule there were various Hindoo Rajas. One of these was the Raja of Moughyr. By a long-standing agreement this chieftain sent his tribute yearly to a certain spot with an escort of thirty men. Alaverdi Khan on his part was pledged to send thirty men, and no more, to receive the tribute. The Nawab had had certain differences with the Raja, and he resolved to take his revenge. He ostensibly sent his thirty men, but with them there went another force which was to lie in ambush. The Raja came with his men and paid his tribute. All but one, who escaped, were murdered. Two Englishmen, Mr. Holwell and Captain Holcombe, saw a boat going down the river, which contained thirty heads. The man who escaped carried the news of the massacre to the Raja's wife. She set fire to the palace, and with her son died in the flames. The city was sacked and burnt by the troops of Alaverdi Khan. Such was the imaginary golden age which young India would like to restore in

supersession of the Pax Britannica. Alaverdi Khan was succeeded by his grandson Suraj-ud-Daola. The new Viceroy was filled with an insane hatred of the English merchants at Calcutta, and an extravagant idea of their wealth. An excuse was easily found, and in 1756 he marched upon Calcutta. The defenders were overpowered and disarmed. Then occurred the memorable tragedy of the Black Hole. In the fiery heat of the Indian summer solstice a hundred and forty-six English people, whether with or without the Nawab's orders, were thrust into a room about twenty feet square, with one window only, and confined there for a night. In the morning sixteen miserable wretches were found surviving. The rest were dead. Suraj-ud-Daola was indifferent as to what had happened. His only inquiries were for the places where the wealth of the victims might be hidden. Native writers who recorded the capture of Calcutta did not make mention of the catastrophe. In fact, it excited no particular attention, except among Europeans. Events of this sort were too ordinary to call for notice.

The Marquis of Wellesley was Governor-General from 1798 to 1805. He went out full of his predecessor Lord Cornwallis's theory of the balance of power between Native States. But the determination of Tippoo of Mysore, and the great Mahratta chiefs, Sindia and Holkar, to inundate the land with war and anarchy forced him to undertake campaign after campaign, and to realise that peace in India was impossible unless one paramount power prevented aggression and tumult. He saw that of all existing powers the British alone could become paramount in India, and he held it to be his duty to work for this consummation. But this idea was to the Directors of the East India Company incomprehensible; and Lord Cornwallis was sent back to reverse Wellesley's policy. Non-intervention followed. Territories which had been reduced to order were restored to chaos. In 1807 a horrible and desolating war took place between the Rajas of Udaipur and Jodhpur. The former in his distress prayed for British protection, using unconsciously the very argument of Lord Wellesley that without a paramount power in India there could be no peace or safety, and that as the English alone could act as such a power it was their duty to do so. His request was refused, and the war raged on.

The Pindharries of Holkar and Sindia were to the Mahrattas what the carrion crow is to the vulture. Wherever they went these merciless plunderers swept the land like a flight of devouring locusts. The most fiendish and ingenious tortures were used by them to make their victims disclose their wealth. It fell to the lot of the Marquis of Hastings, in connexion with the third Mahratta war, by which the dominions of the Peshwa were transferred to the British, to deal with these incurable ruffians, who were used as convenient instruments or allies by Holkar, Sindia, and even the Peshwa. They were hunted

down, severely handled in many small encounters, and either killed or completely dispersed.

Some years later (1834) a frightful series of iniquities perpetrated by the Raja of Koorg, a mountain State between Mysore and Malabar, forced the British to interfere. The Raja was banished. The Governor-General, Lord William Bentinck, desired that the people should choose a new ruler. They unanimously declared that the new ruler must be the British Government, stipulating only that their Raja should never be allowed to come back. The same Governor-General put down the abominable practice of Suttee, which compelled a Hindoo widow to be burnt alive on the funeral pyre of her husband ; and he broke up the vast secret society of Thugs, who strangled their victims with a handkerchief, and plied their profession of robbing and murdering as a religious calling.

Aggression, violence, murder, everlasting wars within, frequent invasions from without, tyranny and oppression of all kinds, constitute the history of India for many centuries before we gradually established the Pax Britannica. Clive at Arcot in 1751 may be said to have laid the foundations of our supremacy. It was not till 1849, when the Punjab was annexed, that the work of conquest was completed and British power embraced the whole peninsula. Even then Lord Dalhousie's annexations of Nagpur, Oudh, and other States were still to follow.

The contrast between what preceded and what has followed the establishment of our rule can only be described as amazing. Long as the process of conquest took, a great part of the country has been under our sway for more than a hundred and fifty years. During this period once, and once only, has there been war in the territories over which floats the English flag, when, with the completion of a century from Clive's battle of Plassy, the great Mutiny was to tax the strength of British rule to its uttermost. The mind cannot imagine the possibility nowadays of a desolating war between the Nizam of Hyderabad and the Mahratta chiefs of Indore and Gwalior, of the rich plains of Bengal being overrun by hordes of Mahratta horsemen burning and plundering wherever they went, or of a monarch from Persia advancing upon Delhi and causing its streets to run with blood. The stone walls of villages, built to resist Pindharries, are crumbling down, for they are no longer needed. The ploughman has no longer to take a musket with him when he cultivates his field. What a man sows, that he knows that he will be allowed to reap in peace.

We have covered the lands with good roads, while before our time there were no means of communication excepting the great rivers. We have created twenty-five thousand miles of railway over which third-class passengers are carried at a farthing a mile. Steamships ply constantly up and down the coast for the conveyance of passengers at nominal rates. We have instituted a cheap and efficient postal

and telegraphic service throughout the length and breadth of the land. A letter can be sent from Quetta to Mandalay for a halfpenny, a postcard for a farthing, and a telegram for fourpence. We have built schools, colleges, and universities, and diffused education by every means in our power. We have laid out canals for navigation and irrigation, and brought thousands of square miles of desert into culture. We have striven hard to prevent famines, and, if they occur, the utmost efforts are employed for the saving of life. We have provided splendid supplies of pure water for all the great cities and for many of the smaller ones; great bridges for the use of pedestrians and cart traffic, as well as for railway trains, span the Ganges, the Jumna, the Indus, and other rivers. Sanitation, in spite of extraordinary difficulties, has received the utmost attention. Hospitals and dispensaries cover the land. Vaccination has been placed within the reach of all. Experimental farms for the improvement of agriculture have been instituted in every province. The more important cities are lit with electric light, and electric tram-cars run in the streets. The land tax or rent (the thing is one and the same in India) has been assessed at moderate rates, and every landowner knows exactly what he has to pay. Increased assessment on account of improvements is forbidden. Religious intolerance on the part of any in authority is unknown. In no part of the world has a man greater freedom to worship whatsoever gods he will.

We have established one law for rich and poor, for white and black. The only privileges for the European are that he may possess and carry arms without a licence, and may claim in the law courts to be tried by a jury of which the majority are his fellow-countrymen. So long as we are responsible for the integrity and efficiency of the administration the higher appointments must remain for the most part in the hands of Europeans. But those are comparatively very few. Most of the magistrates are natives of India. The whole of the Indian Civil Service recruited in London contains less than a thousand officers, of whom some are Hindoos and Mahomedans. A few facts worth remembering are that India includes a territory equal to all Europe, except Russia and Scandinavia; that nearly a third of this consists of Native States possessing various degrees of independence; that the population of India is three hundred millions; and that Europeans, men, women and children, number less than a quarter of a million. India is defended by an army ludicrously small for the size of the country in comparison with that of any other civilised State, which is as efficient, well-disciplined and well-behaved as any in the world. The police are as capable as European supervision can make them.

What then is the trouble? What was in the minds of Messrs. Dhingra and Victor Grayson? In the case of the latter, nothing at all but the densest ignorance. In the former case one thing only, and

that is that our Government in India is a foreign one. Mr. Dhingra, standing for the present agitators, who, by the way, are practically all Hindoos, considered that we have no right to be in India at all, and that Indians, by which he meant Hindoos, should manage their own affairs—that is, defend the country from foreign invaders, maintain internal peace, secure religious tolerance, and do justice between man and man. These things they have never been able to do. The result of our withdrawal from India would be bloodshed and carnage throughout the land. The country would soon find itself divided, like ancient Gaul, into three parts—one ruled by Germany, one by Russia, and one by Japan. Practical independence such as is enjoyed by Canada and Australia, and which cements our union with those countries, would be used in India, as it would be in Ireland, to break away from us, not because our rule is bad but because it is foreign. The grant of self-government would precipitate our extinction and throw back civilisation and liberty in India by a century. There is no more tyranny in India because the people are ruled by laws which they have not made themselves, than there is in England because the minority (if minority it be) at the present moment has to obey laws against which it has made the most formal and solemn protest, and has to look on almost helplessly at the neglect (to use the least invidious term) of our national defences by Ministers who do not command the public confidence. Before Mr. Victor Grayson again characterises Lord Morley as an assassin he would do well to devote a portion of his time to the study of Indian history.

EDMUND C. COX.

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*The Editor of THE NINETEENTH CENTURY cannot undertake to return unaccepted MSS.*