

The Victorians and the Empire

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by the conscientious but narrow-minded desire to act in accordance with maxims themselves generally sound, but not of universal application, as by violence and consequent tyranny." From this analysis, it is not difficult to deduce the solution. It was the same, in essence, as that which had long been advocated for the colonies of European settlement. The people must be given responsibility, and their institutions must be in accord with their own ideas. Changes must come about in response to local demand, not to the whim of a European Governor or his home government. Upon these lines he founded his system of native administration, and it has survived, in its main outlines, to the present day.

Gordon's contribution to colonial theory was made, of course, when the mid-Victorian tradition in imperial matters was being temporarily overthrown. In 1872 Disraeli had committed the Conservative Party to a policy of imperialism. In 1876 he had, by the Royal Titles Act, made Queen Victoria Empress of India—or, in the words of a contemporary, he had "changed the sign of the Queen's Inn to Empress Hotel Ltd." Before 1890 we were to be involved in the "scramble" for Africa. The causes of the change were complex, but they were mainly economic. For, from the late 'sixties onwards Britain experienced a series of depressions. It began to be realised that our industrial predominance was likely to be a temporary phenomenon. Colonies became increasingly attractive as markets and fields of investment. Fresh annexations were welcomed, and a prolonged attempt was made to tighten relations with the existing self-governing colonies. It was hoped by many that the colonies would abandon the right to make their own tariffs. And much labour was spent in drawing up paper constitutions for the federation of the empire.

Continents and Cobblestones

It is obvious from these projects how wrongly the new Imperialists had gauged the temper of opinion in the colonies. But at home they had great success; and they bespattered their predecessors in the field with a liberal stream of abuse. Goldwin Smith, in particular, became the victim of a conventional anti-radical witch hunt. When he left Oxford one London paper had declared its satisfaction that no longer would young men of "the High Orders" be exposed to the corrupting influence of his teaching. Disraeli had greeted one of his earlier utterances with a description of him as a pedant and a prig, later he called him, amongst much else, "an itinerant spouter of stale sedition." Even in his old age, in Toronto, the Imperialists did not forget him. Perhaps it was only to be expected that a man who possessed both wit and integrity in such a high degree should have almost as many permanent enemies as Disraeli had temporary friends.

Even in our own time we have not been willing to give full recognition to the contribution of the mid-Victorians to Imperial thinking. We have slowly learnt again through experience nearly all the lessons which they taught. But we still feel that, like the writers of history books, we should reserve the

topmost places in our hierarchy of honour for the leaders of the generation which followed. We seldom possess the courage to repeat G. K. Chesterton's observation on Cecil Rhodes. "There is nothing large," said Chesterton, "about painting the map red. It is an innocent game for children. It is just as easy to think in continents as to think in cobblestones. The difficulty comes in when we seek to know the substance of either of them."

But to-day, looking back on a year which has seen the establishment of the Dominions of India and Pakistan, the grant of independence to Burma, and the attainment of dominion status by Ceylon, does it not seem that the opinions of Rhodes and his contemporaries have less to offer us than a passage such as this which Anthony Trollope wrote in 1872: "We are called upon to rule them (the colonies)—as far as we do rule them—not for our glory, but for their happiness. If we keep them, we should keep them not because they add prestige to the name of Great Britain, not because they are gems in our diadem, not in order that we may boast that the sun never sets on our dependencies, but because by keeping them we may assist them in developing their own resources. And when we part with them, as part with them we shall, let us do so with neither smothered jealousy nor open hostility, but with a proud feeling that we are sending a son out into the world able to take his place among men."

SHORTWAVE HIGHLIGHTS

The BBC General Overseas Service

DAYTIME reception from London is excellent at present and the coming week's programme schedule includes broadcasts covering the opening of the Wimbledon Lawn Tennis Championships and the Second Cricket Test at Lord's.

Stations, Frequencies, Wavelengths and Times of Transmission: GSF, 15.14 mc/s., 19.82 metres (9.15 a.m.-12.15 p.m.); GSO, 15.18, 19.76 (8.0 a.m.-12.15 p.m.); GSD, 11.75, 25.53 (8.0 a.m.-3.15 p.m.); GVW, 11.70, 25.64 (9.0 a.m.-5.0 p.m.); GSD, 11.75, 25.53 (5.0 p.m.-9.0 p.m.); GRY, 9.60, 31.25 (4.0 p.m.-6.15 p.m.).

Headlines in the Programmes for the Week June 20-26: Pioneers in Africa, 9.45 a.m., Tuesday; Gert and Daisy's Working Party, 8.45 a.m., Wednesday, and 4.30 p.m., Saturday; World Government, 11.15 a.m., Wednesday; Variety Bandbox, 4.30 p.m., Tuesday; London Letter (a talk by Macdonald Hastings), 11.45 a.m., Tuesday; Landmarks of Britain, 2.45 p.m., Wednesday; The Street We Live In (new radio serial), 11.15 a.m., Saturday; Colonial Questions, 10.45 a.m., Sunday; Science Review, 12.15 a.m., Monday.

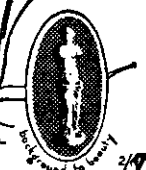
On Tuesday to Saturday inclusive at 6.45 p.m. in the Pacific Service (on 9.64 mc/s., 31.12 metres), a report from Wimbledon will be broadcast, covering the day's matches; and at 7.0 p.m. on Saturday an Olympic Preview will be heard giving the prospects for the XIV Olympiad.

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