

**THE FAILURE OF LORD CURZON,
A STUDY IN "IMPERIALISM": AN
OPEN LETTER TO THE EARL OF
ROSEBERY**

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The Failure of Lord Curzon, a Study In "Imperialism": An Open Letter to the Earl of Rosebery
by Charles James O'Donnell

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CHARLES JAMES O'DONNELL

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O'Donnell, Charles James

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A STUDY IN "IMPERIALISM"

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EARL OF ROSEBERY

BY

"TWENTY-EIGHT YEARS IN INDIA"

"God give us men. A time like this demands
Great hearts, strong minds, true faith and willing hands :
Men, whom the lust of office does not kill ;
Men, whom the spoils of office cannot buy ;
Men, who possess opinions and a will ;
Men, who have honour, men who will not lie."

—OLIVER WINDKILL HOLMES.



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PREFACE



THE author has adopted anonymity, though quite aware that it is the thinnest of screens, if there is any wish to pierce behind it. The fact of a twenty-eight years' acquaintance with India suggests some knowledge of the matters he discusses, whilst, after so long an exile, his name would be recognised by few. Moreover, in political controversy the author favours an impersonality similar to that which enables a journalist to leave his facts and arguments to speak for themselves. He desires to draw attention not to his own opinions, which are expressed with hesitation, but to the long array of weighty quotation, which he adduces, the statements of men like Sir George Wingate, Sir Richard Garth, Sir Ashley Eden, Sir William Wedderburn, Sir Steuart Bayley, Sir Charles Rivaz, Sir John Jardine, Sir W. W. Hunter, and a score of others, Governors and Imperial Councillors, Judges and Chief Commissioners. He would also solicit the fullest consideration for the unbiassed evidence of high-class journals, the *Englishman* of Calcutta, the *Pioneer* of Allahabad, *Capital*, and many others.

Preface

Since this book went to the printers the Indian Budget for 1903-4 has passed the Legislative Council. It introduced two modifications of taxation. The tax on every maund of salt, 82 lbs., has been reduced from 40 to 32 pence—one penny less in every 10 lbs., which is about the annual consumption of each individual Indian. One penny a year will not seriously lighten their burden, but it represents the present ideal of "Imperial" munificence to the poor. The second change raised the lower limit of annual income, liable to income tax, from 500 to 1,000 rupees, an appreciable benefit to an already well-to-do class, the small tradesmen, whose contributions to revenue are always small. The average income of the town labourer is about 50 rupees a year, under £4, whilst that of his agriculturist fellow is roundly half of that pittance.

The most prominent feature, however, of the new budget is the continued increase of military expenditure. The charges under this head have been:—

In 1899-1900.....	£14,165,743
„ 1900-1901.....	14,265,525
„ 1901-1902.....	14,786,342
„ 1902-1903.....	16,234,900
„ 1903-1904.....	16,352,300

The last figures represent the amount to be expended by the Army Department during the current year, but there are other items of strictly military outlay, which raise the total to £17,907,699.

The Indian public, European and native, protest

Preface

against the enormous increase from nine millions sterling in 1875, and Lord Curzon has found it advisable to beat the Jingo war-drum. In his speech in Council he declared that "The geographical position of India will more and more push her into the forefront of international politics; she will more and more become the strategical frontier of the British Empire." To talk of a "position" pushing anything anywhere may be intelligible to an "Imperialist," but to a sober-minded citizen, wishing to safeguard the grandest heritage of empire we possess, it would seem that the geographical position of India, her supreme defensive asset, ought to keep her outside the sphere of foreign intermeddling. Walled in by almost impenetrable mountain ranges, some of the highest and most rugged in the world, her position is one of quite exceptional security. Unfortunately, the "Imperialist" would never get his beloved wars if our armies and our diplomacy did not habitually seek fields of contention outside our natural boundaries. Had one-tenth part of the enormous sums wasted in Afghan wars and Black Mountain expeditions been employed in fortifying the frontier and its passes, it would by now be impregnable, and a Russian general would find Cape Town as easy to reach as Delhi.

But Lord Curzon's ambition is to be an "Empire Builder," as your hot Tory calls the pushful and pugnacious idols of his admiration. He does not want any long spoon in dealing with the Tsar and his armies. His dream is a real, big, hand-to-hand fight somewhere — anywhere. Constantinople or Corea

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might do, but the plains of Persia would suit him nicely. With famine following famine in nearly every province of India, and desolating plague everywhere, who will deny that we have at last found a truly "Imperialist" Viceroy?

The recent debate in the House of Lords (May 5, 1903), proves that Persia is the new objective of "Imperialist" fatuity. Nothing on earth can prevent Russia from making her way to the sea. The desire to do so is about as statesmanlike as was our late attempt to bribe the Shah by so valuable a present as the ribbon of the Garter. The commerce of Central Asia must flow down to the Indian Ocean by means of one or more railways as surely as a river of water down a mountain side. We may delay the inevitable by a great war and by again putting our millions on the wrong horse, but would it not be wiser to depend on our navy and on sea power for supremacy in the Persian Gulf? A land struggle with Russia would not be less expensive than our late avoidable war in South Africa; say, £250,000,000 sterling. If £10,000,000 were expended in making Kurrachi or Bombay and Aden really first-class naval bases, we might laugh at any European Power, Russia or Germany or France, that sought to oust us from our position in Eastern waters. Even if we spend £25,000,000 we would still have permanent value for our money, instead of squandering, probably in one year, ten times the amount in a bloody war with little certainty of ultimate success. The total value of our trade with the Gulf ports in 1901 was only £2,300,000 and our profit, at 10 per cent., less than