

**OUR GREAT  
VASSAL EMPIRE**

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Our Great Vassal Empire by Evans Bell

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# "OUR GREAT VASSAL EMPIRE."



BY

MAJOR EVANS BELL,

AUTHOR OF "THE GULF AND THE INDUS", "RETROSPECTS AND PROSPECTS  
OF INDIAN POLICY", ETC.

"Reddite depositum; pietas una fœdera servet;  
Fraus absit; vacuas œdificæ habete manus."—OVID.

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1870.

232. h 58.

“He who would rightly appreciate the worth of personal independence as an element of happiness, should consider the value he himself puts upon it as an ingredient of his own. There is no subject on which there is a greater habitual difference of judgment between a man judging for himself, and the same man judging for other people. When he hears others complaining that they are not allowed freedom of action,—that their own will has not sufficient influence in the regulation of their affairs—his inclination is to ask, what are their grievances? what positive damage they sustain? and in what respect they consider their affairs to be mismanaged? and if they fail to make out, in answer to these questions, what appears to him a sufficient case, he turns a deaf ear, and regards their complaint as the fanciful querulousness of people whom nothing reasonable will satisfy. But he has quite a different standard of judgment when he is deciding for himself. Then, the most unexceptionable administration of his interests by a tutor set over him, does not satisfy his feelings: his personal exclusion from the deciding authority appears itself the greatest grievance of all, rendering it superfluous even to enter into the question of mismanagement. It is the same with nations. What citizen of a free country would listen to any offers of good and skilful administration, in return for the abdication of freedom? Even if he could believe that good and skilful administration can exist among a people ruled by a will not their own, would not the consciousness of working out their own destiny under their own moral responsibility be a compensation to his feelings for great rudeness and imperfection in the details of public affairs?”—J. S. MILL, *The Subjection of Women*, pp. 179, 180.

## PREFACE.

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IN my last revision of these pages I have been troubled by an unpleasant doubt whether, with regard to the Imperial mission of Great Britain in India, they might not, in some degree, and to some readers, convey a less grateful sense of past achievements, less hopeful views of future work, than would be truly consonant with my own feelings. I am desirous, therefore, of repeating here, in words that were published six years ago, that it is not because we have done so little, but because we have done so much, that I wish to see our work in India consolidated and naturalised. I can see no promise or hope of permanence anywhere but in the reformed Native State. *That*, and not the model British Province, is the mature and wholesome fruit of Imperial cultivation.

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"It is a striking fact, that the satisfactions and mortifications of personal pride, though all in all to most men when the case is their own, have less allowance made for them in the case of other people, and are less listened to as a ground or justification of conduct, than any other natural human feelings; perhaps because men compliment them in their own case with the names of so many other qualities, that they are seldom conscious how mighty an influence these feelings exercise in their own lives."—J. S. MILL, *The Subjection of Women*, p. 181.



## “OUR GREAT VASSAL EMPIRE.”

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DURING the Session of 1869 both Houses of Parliament devoted some hours to India. Our recent policy in Afghanistan and Central Asia was brought before the Lords on the 19th of April. The same topic was entertained in the House of Commons on the 9th of July. On the 23rd of that month the Duke of Argyll, as Secretary of State for India, addressed the Peers on the subject of Indian finance, confining himself entirely to receipts and disbursements, and schemes of railway extension.

In the House of Commons Mr. Grant Duff, the Under-Secretary of State, made the annual statement of the affairs of “our great Vassal Empire” at the afternoon sitting of the 3rd, and the adjourned debate was concluded on the night of the 5th of August.

On the former of these two days, Mr. R. W. Crawford, Member for the City of London and Chairman of the East Indian Railway Company, advocated the guaranty system under which the existing lines of railroad had been constructed in India; deprecated export duties on raw produce; suggested some improvements in the telegraph service, and proposed the consolidation of several small loans into one large stock.

Sir Stafford Northcote, Member for North Devon and Secretary of State for India in the late Conservative Ministry, recommended strict economy in the finances; and doubted whether the Public Works Department was in a proper state to undertake the construction of railways.

Sir Charles Wingfield, Member for Gravesend and

late Chief Commissioner of Oude, advised that all expenditure, except that which was extraordinary or strictly reproductive, should be met by income; believed that the outlay on barracks in the last ten years had been "a frightful drain on the resources of India;" insisted strongly on the separation of executive and judicial functions, for "such a multiplicity of duties were now thrown upon a Collector that it was impossible he could get through them all except by devolving the larger share of the duties upon his assistants," and "with a view of ascertaining the opinions and feelings of the Natives, and bringing these into harmony with the acts of our officials, weighed down as they were by their various duties," recommended the establishment of "consultative Native Councils."

Mr. Fowler of Penryn and Sir Wilfred Lawson of Carlisle, two Members honourably noted for their attention to matters of general philanthropy and national morality, denounced the opium traffic, on which one sixth of the Indian revenue depends.

Colonel Sykes, Member for Aberdeen, felt convinced that the income of India was amply sufficient to meet any calls that might be made on it.

After the adjournment, Sir Stafford Northcote having moved for some correspondence on the subject of the extension of railways in India, Mr. Graves, the Member for Liverpool, suggested that a map should be added to the return, and "regretted to see that some of those works would not be executed till 1890 or even 1900, and, if that were so, the construction of railways would be entirely inadequate to the wants of India or of this country. "Another important point," continued Mr. Graves, "was the construction of the Council of India. If more sympathy were shown for commerce in that body, there would be a more prompt extension of the railway system. He thought there should be a larger mercantile element in the Council. The railway system of India was not a mere Indian question. For many years we should have to look to India for cotton, and every mile of railway opened there tapped new sources of production."

The adjourned debate on the evening of the 5th of August enabled Mr. J. B. Smith, Member for Stockport, Mr. Bazley of Manchester, and Mr. Platt of Oldham, to demand greater facilities for the supply of cotton, and for conveying that staple to the coast.

Mr. C. B. Denison, Member for the Eastern Division of the West Riding, formerly of the Bengal Civil Service, apologised for the opium revenue; desired more detailed explanations as to the expenditure on Public Works, the post, the telegraph, and the manufacture of small arms, and supported Mr. Crawford's views as to the guaranty system of constructing railways.

Sir David Wedderburn, Member for Ayrshire, proposed certain measures for promoting the health and comfort of the British army on Indian service.

All this was very well. If more railroads are wanted they had better be made and worked on the most economical and efficient principles,—on some plan very different from that which has been hitherto pursued. It is highly desirable that there should be a constant and cheap supply of cotton. Of course if sixty-five thousand British troops are to be maintained in India they must be properly housed: the only question is—and here Sir Charles Wingfield again hit a blot—whether fifteen millions sterling have been judiciously expended on solid and permanent barracks during the last ten years; whether our soldiers are not more healthy and comfortable in less costly lodgings;\* whether on military, political, and financial considerations, they might not be more effectively distributed and occupied in a rotation of cantonments and in moveable camps of exercise.†

Barrack accommodation, the supply of small arms, the Post, the Electric Telegraph, the Public Works,—all these were by no means inappropriate subjects of inquiry and remark, though scarcely worthy to have formed the chief topics of discussion. The annual inquisition of the House of Commons might well have been directed less to administrative merits and defects, than to those broader and more general principles of Government, which

\* Appendix A.

† Appendix B.