

EDITORIAL CORRESPONDENCE

IS THE BRITISH GOVERNMENT IN INDIA "A COLOSSAL SUCCESS"?

April 13, 1909.

On January 18th, Mr. Theodore Roosevelt, then President of the United States, in an address delivered in the Metropolitan Methodist Episcopal Church in Washington, D. C., made some astounding statements concerning British rule in India. He said that the British government in India was a colossal success, etc. (p. 224).

The success of a government is measured by the sanitary condition of a country, the economic situation of the governed, the prosperity of the nation, and the intellectual and moral achievements of the people. To measure the height of the success of the British rule in India in this article, I will attempt to bring forward facts and figures concerning the sanitation of India under British rule.

It is known to all that since 1901 India is annually ravaged by the Bubonic and the Pneumonic plague, and these fearful diseases have become as common as malarial fever, smallpox or cholera there. The highest medical authorities of the world have pronounced that the plague in India is caused by want of proper sanitation and want of sufficient food among the people. If want of proper sanitation is one of the undeniable causes of plague, we would like to produce before our intelligent readers the government statistics concerning sanitation in India as revealed by Hon. Mr. Gokhale, C. I. E., in his budget speech in March, 1908:

"These figures show the amount contributed by the several provincial revenues as grants-in-aid to the municipalities towards the capital outlay on drainage and water-works during the last five years, i. e., from 1902-3 to 1906-7. Total amount in rupees in five years:

Madras (exclusive of 3 lakhs given to the city of Madras)	Rs. 647,000
Bombay	105,400
United Provinces	568,335
Punjab	235,000
Burma	nil.
Eastern Bengal and Assam	14,000
Central Provinces	41,000
N. W. Provinces	nil.

Total for all provinces in five years..... Rs. 1,610,735

Equivalent in United States currency.....\$ 536,912

"This gives an annual average of a little over \$100,000 for the whole country (where the population is about three hundred millions). It may be noted that during these same five years, while the government contributed a mere pittance of a little over five hundred thousand dollars towards the sanitation of our own towns which were being decimated by annual visitations of the plague, His Excellency, the Commander in Chief, was able to obtain for military charges a sum of about 27 crores, i. e., \$90,000,000, above the level of the military expenditure.

"In 1901-02, nearly 60 crores, i. e., \$200,000,000, were spent as capital outlay on railways, of which one-third, i. e., \$66,666,666, was found out of current

revenues. My Lord, this treatment of sanitation as though the government has no responsibility in regard to it has hitherto been one of the most melancholy features of the present scheme of financial decentralization, under which sanitation has been made over to the local bodies as their concern, though they have admittedly no resources for undertaking large projects of improvement. The analogy of England is often quoted to justify this arrangement, but on the same analogy, railway construction should have been left to private enterprise, but it is not."

The above report proves that the British government in India spent annually an average of a little more than \$100,000 of the revenue collected from the people for the sanitation of a population of about three hundred millions. Is this the best efficiency of the British ideal of sanitation? Is this the best sign of skill and devotion to improve the sanitary condition of the people of India?

The civilized world generally thinks that the British government is doing a great work of irrigation in India to improve Indian agriculture and the sanitary condition of the country. But it is really a myth when we get into the motive and details of the action. We quote a part of the speech of Rai Bahadur Satanath Roy, one of the merchant princes of Bengal, delivered before the first annual meeting of the National Chamber of Commerce on Feb. 13, 1909, Calcutta:

"There is no country in the world which is blessed with such a magnificent river system as Bengal (including, of course, Eastern Bengal). These rivers served most useful purposes. They were not only useful from a sanitary point of view, but also from an economic point of view; they not only supplied good drinking water to the people but served as arteries through which flowed the commerce of the country. But for some time, these rivers, channels and creeks have been silting up, and most of them have dried up, with the result that many once flourishing towns and villages have been devastated by cholera and malarial fever."

He further observes, and very rightly:

"Everywhere, both in Europe and America, rivers are being kept open and navigable by means of powerful dredgers, but except in the case of the river Hooghly, near Calcutta, no really useful and powerful dredger has ever been utilized in removing the silt deposits and for keeping up the natural flow of water through the numerous rivers in Bengal. While several countries in Europe and America have been spending millions for the improvement of their respective rivers, our government, while so lavish in all other things, including railways, have been very slow in spending money on the improvement of the waterways of the country."

This is not all. I am a Hindu. I wandered for over two years in different parts of India to study the real condition of the people, and what I have observed and experienced is unimaginable by the American people. Excepting in a few big cities, Calcutta, Bombay, Madras, Lahore, Alahabad and a few others, it is very hard for the people to get pure drinking water. There is no water supply system in the Indian towns and villages. In villages, where ninety per cent of the people live, there are tanks, or reservoirs, dug by the people; and in most cases the

water of those tanks, where the washerman washes dirty clothes, the dishwasher cleans his dishes, and people in general take their baths, is used for cooking and drinking purposes. The British government does not help materially to remedy these evils. It is regarded as a case of rare fortune if the villagers get any help from the government to dig a well when the reservoir is dried up. I thoroughly agree with Mr. Russell, the eminent sociologist and author of "The Uprising of the Many," who observed that millions of people in India live in huts and hovels whose sanitary condition is worse than those provided for cattle in this country.

Mr. William Jennings Bryan, after visiting India, remarked wisely:

"So great has been the drain, the injustice to the people, and the tax upon the resources of the country, that famines have increased in frequency and severity. Mr. Gokhale, one of the ablest of India's public men, presided over the meeting of the last Indian National Congress held in December, and declared in his opening speech that the death rate had steadily risen from 24 to the 1,000 in 1882-1884 to 30 in 1892-1894, and to 34 at the present time.

"I have more than once, within the last month, heard the plague referred to as a providential remedy for over-population. Think of it! British rule justified because 'it keeps the people from killing each other,' and the plague praised because it removes those whom the government has saved from slaughter." (From "British Rule in India," by William Jennings Bryan.)

Here we want to emphasize that in England the death rate is decreasing, and the statistics read thus: "England has become successful in bringing down her death rate from 20 to 15.5 per 1,000 during the last twenty years."

It is very interesting to note the statement by Sir Henry Cotton, M. P., contradicting the views of Mr. Roosevelt. His observations, published in the "New York World," January 22d, 1909, are as follows:

"Mr. Roosevelt doubtless delivered his eulogy to please Englishmen who, he well knows, are always willing to swallow such praise. But the English need no glorifying of their work in India, for they will do that themselves. We denounce foreign countries when they pursue immoral policies, but we will not seriously criticize our own government, which too often acts in opposition to the wishes of the people. It is interesting to point out that Mr. Roosevelt's conclusions are directly opposite to those of Mr. Bryan, who traveled in India and the East and then wrote his impressions after mature consideration. While I have no desire to belittle the work of my countrymen in India, my own views, I do not mind saying, coincide with those of Mr. Bryan, who gave, I believe, a very fair appreciation of England's work in India. Comparatively speaking, I think America has made more progress in the Philippines than England has in India. I attribute this success to Mr. Taft and to the helpful attitude of Americans residing in the Islands."

Some people make the indiscreet remark that the people of India have no idea of sanitation, and that they never lived in a sanitary way; but such is not the case. Students of ancient history testify that when the Anglo-Saxons were living in caves, then

India had her days of prosperity; medical science, astronomy, ethics and philosophy flourished there. Megasthenes, an early Greek historian and contemporary of Alexander the Great, has fortunately left a very valuable testimony to this early Indian civilization.

Under the existing economic conditions, the people of India cannot undertake independently any work of sanitation, because they are poor—they are taxed to death. There are districts where the people are forced to pay a land tax of 65 per cent of the products. The average income of the people is now one and one-half cents a day, while it was four cents a day some fifty years ago.

All nations condemn the Spanish exploitation of South America, as they also condemn her treatment of Cuba. Under Spanish rule Cuba was in a state of horror, but under the progressive and benevolent influence of the United States the conditions are changed; there shines forth the success of the American democracy which raised Cuba, a country of enslaved people, a resort unfit for human habitation, to a land of free people, blessed with all the latest sanitary developments.

The United States saved the Cubans from the yawning jaws of yellow fever, and the British Government has become the cause of plague, malaria and famine in India. Then shall we call the British Government in India a colossal success?

BANDE MATERAM.

✦ ✦ ✦

THE RECALL IN ACTION.

Los Angeles, Cal.

Los Angeles has the distinction of being the first city in the Union to make use of the "Recall." It was also the first American city to incorporate in its charter this new instrument for the control of its officials. This it did in 1903 by a vote of 5 to 1, being induced to do so mainly through the efforts of Dr. John R. Haynes, president of the State Direct Legislation League, one of its citizens who brought the idea from Switzerland, where under another name it has been in use many years. Los Angeles has a progressive people who take kindly to anything new that seems likely to be an improvement on the old.

To invoke the recall against an elective officer the Los Angeles charter requires that a petition signed by 25 per cent of the legal voters shall be presented to the City Council demanding that a new election, for reasons briefly set forth in the petition, shall be held. The election must occur not sooner than 30 nor more than 40 days after the petition is filed. The officer against whom the recall is invoked, must be a candidate to succeed himself at the recall election, unless he in writing declines to run. To illustrate this new device for securing popular government, let me describe the recall in action.

A. C. Harper, who was recently driven from his office by the recall movement (p. 318), became mayor of Los Angeles in January, 1907, for a three years' term.

He had a good reputation, was well connected and promised well; but it soon became apparent to many that he was too closely allied with, if not controlled by the quartet that so often combine and rule our