

Charles Dickens Views British Imperialism in “Dombey and Son” (1848)

The earth was made for Dombey and Son to trade in, and the sun and moon were made to give them light. Rivers and seas were formed to float their ships: rainbows gave them promise of fair weather; winds blew for or against their enterprises; stars and planets circled in their orbits, to preserve inviolate a system of which they were the centre. Common abbreviations took new meanings in his eyes, and had sole reference to them. A.D. had no concern with anno Domini, but stood for anno Dombei - and Son (p. 50)

Jules Harmand on the Morality of Empire and the Policy of Association

Jules Harmand (1845-1921) was the French imperial theorist who gave the name association to the new racist concept of imperial policy. His early career was spent as a naval doctor, which put him in touch with the biological aspects of pseudoscientific racism. His own field of imperial activity was East Asia, where he first made a reputation in the 1870's as a traveler and diplomatic agent in Siam, Cambodia, and Laos. In 1884, he acted as Commissaries-General in Tonkin and from 1894 to 1905 he was French Minister to Japan. The selection below is a translation to full of Chapter VI, Section I, entitled “Native Policy,” from his major work, *Domination et colonization* (Paris, 1910), pp. 152-174. Source: *Imperialism*, Edited by Philip D. Curtin, NY: Harper & Row, p. 291-293,

The problem to which all others are subordinate is that of setting up and maintaining a good native policy, and in a true empire of the best policy will be that which makes best use of the conquered people, creating the least suffering on one hand, and giving them the greatest extent of well-being on the other. It will be that which succeeds in creating such a close relationship between the interests of the conqueror and those of the conquered that anything useful to the first will also be useful to the second, and vice versa.

Enough has been said of the might that makes “right” through conquest. But whatever explanations are given, or arguments made in its favor, the fact remains that from a strictly moral point of view, these are mere side issues. It is certain that to deprive a people of its independence is in itself an evil deed, and to do so violently most often with motives that are not beyond reproach, is immoral. It is a demonstration of that universal law of the struggle for survival in which we are all engaged, not only on account of our nature, which condemns us to win or die, but also on account of civilization. It cannot permit such vast and fertile regions of the globe to be lost to us and to humanity by the incapacity of those who hold them and by the ill treatment given these lands so long as they are left to themselves.

The two ideas of true empire and of force, or at least of constraint, are correlative or complementary. According to the time, circumstances, and procedures, force can be more or less, strong or weak, open or hidden, but it can never disappear. On the day when constraint is no longer required, empire will no longer exist; only a single society will remain, a single political community. A new nationality will have born, emerging from that of the conquerors. But that is too much to hope for, or even to conceive of, in the conditions which prevail where the enterprises considered in these reflections go forward. Political power, being exercised over races too different from that of the conquerors ever to join intimately with it, gives true empire an indelible characteristic of foreignness. The two elements present are irreducible, or, one may say, inassimilable.

The conqueror should have no illusions. Whatever his wisdom, experience, good conduct, or excellent government, he will never inspire those he claims to guide with the feelings of instinctive affection and easy solidarity that make a nation-not after having conquered them and forced them to submit. These feelings can occur only among men who differ but little in blood and historic culture, in customs and ideals.

Even after a lengthy occupation, after long periods of peace and security will have brought about the anticipated and desirable transformation and joined together the interests of the two communities insofar as it is possible, it would be folly for the conquerors to think that they might be loved, blinding themselves to the extent of believing that the dominated society will submit to their rule with pleasure and turn itself over to them with complete confidence.

No example can be mentioned, and one can rest assured that none will occur, of a conquest like these, over a people separated by oceans and continents, who consequently had no sort of community with their conquerors, but who never the less accepted them without a second thought. However weak or degraded or barbarous one may imagine the vanquished to be, however evil their natural rulers may be: or, on the contrary, however civilized in their fashion and intelligent; or however deprived one may imagine the people to be of any ethnic or patriotic sense,

feudal or religious loyalty toward their princes, they will have always consider the departure or disappearance of the alien power as a deliverance, and almost always and almost everywhere, they will even see the replacement of one foreign master by another as a kind of liberation.

This is a truth expressed recently by the Times in connection with the example of disturbances which India presents today as a demonstration and lesson of true empire after long experience, carried on under exceptionally favorable circumstances, when it wrote: "After all, it was by the sword that we conquered India, and it is by the sword that we hold it.

That is inexorable fate, which no policy can remove or any rhetoric hide. However high the conqueror's ambitions and aspirations, he must resign himself to it. It is the punishment for his violence, the bloodstain that nothing can remove from his hands.

But expansion by conquest, however necessary, seems especially unjust and disturbing to the conscience of democracies. Empire, hardly compatible with their egalitarian principles, is ipso facto autocratic in practice; it requires an absolute government. The conquerors, by the mere fact that they are foreign and conquerors, become an aristocracy, a privileged body with special powers, and their government in its very essence, and in order to carry out fruitfully the demands of the situation, can only be a patriarchal government, a government removed from the concept of equality and hence from political liberty; for this liberty is only a form and a manifestation of equality. They must be "good tyrants," intelligent, kind, enlightened, foresighted and charitable, comprehending and tolerant, but strong. Whatever else, they will always remain aristocrats and usurpers.

To place the republican emblem on government actions and public monuments may be allowable. But to transpose democratic institutions into such a setting is aberrant nonsense. The subject people are not and cannot become citizens in the democratic sense of the term.

France has tried to resolve the contradiction by assimilation, based on a previous faith in the equality of all men and their rapid perfectibility. Observation, experience, and science have convinced all those who are not content to pay for the inanity, sterility, and dangers of that chimera with mere words- and with the suffering it brings to those whom one would like to help.

The time has come to substitute other conceptions for these utopias, perhaps less generous but assuredly more useful and more fruitful, for they alone are in conformity with the nature of things.

The Right to True Empire Founded on Moral Superiority

It is necessary, then, to accept as a principle and point of departure the fact that there is a hierarchy of races and civilizations, and that we belong to the superior race and civilization, still recognizing that, while superiority confers rights, it imposes strict obligations in return. The basic legitimation of conquest over native peoples is the conviction of our superiority, not merely our mechanical, economic, and military superiority, but our mortal superiority. Our dignity rests on that quality, and it underlies our right to direct the rest of humanity. Material power is nothing but a means to that end.

Peoples who lack this belief and this frankness about themselves should not try to conquer. The policy which suits them is that of Simeon Stylites, Whatever happens, they should stay at home. Otherwise, they will inevitably prepare the ruin of their empire and render it evil, because in such uncertain and irresolute hands it is never aboveboard or certain of consequences. Incapable of sustaining or prolonging empire, such people are shown in advance to be unworthy of the role they claim without right a role that necessitates the uninterrupted used of force, if it is to be advantageous both to the mother country and to the natives, that requires discipline and the kind of justice that goes with command-with imperium.