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The propagation of Christianity will hardly be alleged as the object of British conquest in India or anywhere else, especially as the governing class of the imperial nation is itself rapidly tending in a very different direction. Whatever else Christianity may be, it is not a religion of conquest. Its founders, and that later body of apostles who evangelized and civilized the northern tribes, presented themselves at all events as purely spiritual agencies, wholly unconnected with military power or with blowing rebels away from guns. A member of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel would, perhaps, be shocked by the suggestion that whatever is best and most spiritual in the nature of a Hindoo would be likely to restrain him from abandoning the religion of his fathers to embrace the religion of the conqueror. If the number of converts made by the Church of England in India, backed as she is by power and wealth, were compared with the number made by Xavier, taking the latter at the lowest possible estimate, the result would be by no means flattering to political religion. Nor, if the testimony of the shrewdest observers may be trusted, are the converts of Xavier likely to have been less respectable or less sincere than those made by the Church of England.

The political dominion of India is a legacy from generations, the political aims, the commercial policy, the public morality, and the general conditions of which were different from ours. Whether, if it were offered to us now for the first time, we should do wisely in accepting it—whether it would not be better to secure free commercial access without political dominion—may be reasonably doubted. In fact, even the generations by which the empire was founded were drawn on for the most part, not only without design, but against their wishes, and were always trying to set a limit to the progress of conquest, though they could never succeed in doing so.¹ But, by a course of events which there is little use in discussing, as it cannot now be reversed, India has become ours; and nobody would now propose that we should either give it up or let it be taken from us. Independently of imperial pride, we are bound to maintain our hold on it by strong bonds both of duty and of interest. Our departure, after suppressing the native governments and destroying the organizing forces, would consign the country to a sanguinary anarchy, and place in jeopardy British property and invest-

ments, the aggregate value of which can hardly be less than four hundred millions. Still, of the two objects, India and England, the most spirited advocate of aggrandizement must allow that England is to be preferred, and therefore that there is a limit to the perils to be incurred, and the sacrifices to be made, for the sake of India. Some things have been mentioned which seem to show that this limit is not entirely beyond the horizon, and even that, unless Indian finances assume a more hopeful aspect, it may come very distinctly into view.

There are two ways of keeping our hold on India. One, and no doubt the more certain while it lasts, is to forego internal improvement, and to lavish the earnings of our people in the maintenance of armaments large enough to command the Mediterranean, at the same time occupying Egypt and every place else that may be necessary in order literally to annex India to England by an unbroken line of British territories, fortresses, and waters. The other way is to keep on good terms with the Mediterranean nations. Whatever depends on amity must be to some extent precarious. But there is no apparent reason why this amity should be broken. Our possession of India does not hurt or menace the Mediterranean nations in the slightest degree; it benefits them, so long as we keep the Indian ports open to their trade, and it need not give them any sort of umbrage. To do wanton mischief may be in their power, but there is no ground for presuming that they will be inclined to do it, especially as they would obviously hurt themselves. As to the potentate, whoever he may be, through whose territory the Suez Canal runs, he will surely be no more tempted to destroy or close it than a turnpike man is tempted to nail up his own gate.

That Russia meditates an invasion of British India is a belief which, if it were not shared by some persons of mark, we should be inclined to call a chimera. Mere proximity does not denote hostile designs; if it did, there would be no peace on earth. The natural barrier between the two empires is stronger than that between any other two conterminous countries in the world. If Russia, reckoning by mere miles, without regard to obstacles, is near to us, we are equally near to her; and if she has arrived at this position by continual additions of territory, we have done the same. Both empires have grown in the same manner, and one as naturally as the other, by extension in a sort of political vacuum, where nothing opposed them but the arms of barbarous or half-civilized powers. In each case, probably,

¹ See the preface to Mr. Sidney Owen's "Selection from Marquis Wellesley's Despatches," and the despatches themselves.