

Nor has the service such honourable traditions as has that of India. There is no regularity of promotion; men are constantly brought in from outside; the governor, in whose hands is vested great power, may have had no previous training whatever; not so long ago a governor of Mauritius was appointed because the British House of Commons found him such a quarrelsome bore that they determined to get rid of him.

But the real defects of the system lie deeper. They are best summed up in the *West African Studies* of Miss Mary Kingsley, who, though she exaggerates the defects, and does too little justice to the good side of our administration, undoubtedly calls attention to very great and serious mistakes.

In West Africa the interests of the white race are two; the finding of new markets for commerce, and the improvement of the native. That Great Britain has constantly endeavoured to shield the black from injustice is, I think, undoubted. But her efforts have not always been enlightened; some of her greatest mistakes have been made with the best intentions, for, as the British Prime Minister has said, "Most of the time of wise men is taken up in undoing the harm done by good men." The mind of the negro is not a *tabula rasa* on which the white man may write what he pleases; white law is not to the negro so superior that he is at once pleased with it; on the contrary, the law which seems to us so just and necessary is often to him the grossest injustice. Every native tribe is bound together by a system of laws and customs, resting eventually on a religious basis, that is to say, resting on certain ideas as to man's nature, his relations to his fellows and to the other world. On the basis of these ideas different tribes have built up a very complex system of laws and observances, resting on, and bearing witness to, a certain habit of mind. Lightly to do away with these, and to endeavour, with the best intentions, to fill him with English ideas, is to give him at most a few superficial English observances, resting on no firm basis, and to leave his moral nature without any support to prevent it from lapsing into chaos, to produce that evil creature, the native inhabitant of the coast town. Even to touch a native custom which seems to us objectionable is to run the risk of pulling down a whole edifice, of destroying a whole system of morality, imperfect indeed, but infinitely better than the chaos which supersedes it. In a very interesting study of the Island of Fiji, Mr. Basil Thomson has lately shown the enormous harm done to the morals and to the health of the natives of those islands by the well-meant attempts of English