

lation, I believe there was never a time when they were not on the whole benefited by the connection. Soon, however, the colonies grew to the strength and maturity of nationhood, and the mother country speedily recognized the fact and allowed no unworthy or ungenerous fears to restrain her from granting them the fullest power, both of self-government and of federation. It is true that she still sends out a governor—usually drawn from the ranks of experienced and considerable English public men—to preside over colonial affairs. It is true that she retains a right of veto which is scarcely exercised except to prevent some intercolonial or international dispute, some act of violence, or some anomaly in the legislation of the Empire. It is true that colonial cases may be carried, on appeal, to an English tribunal representing the very highest judicial capacity of the mother country and free from all possibility and suspicion of partiality, but I do not believe that any of these light ties are unpopular with any considerable section of the colonists. On the other hand, though it would be idle to suppose that our great colonies depend largely upon the mother country, I believe that most colonists recognize that there is something in the weight and dignity attaching to fellow membership and fellow citizenship in a great Empire—something in the protection of the greatest navy in the world—something in the improved credit which connection with a very rich centre undoubtedly gives to colonial finance.

It is the custom of our friends and neighbours on the Continent to bestow much scornful remark on the egotism of English policy, which attends mainly to the interests of the British Empire and is not ready to make war for an idea and in support of the interests of others. I think, if it were necessary, that we might fairly

defend ourselves by showing that in the past we have meddled with the affairs of other nations quite as much as is reasonable. For my own part, I confess that I distrust greatly these explosions of military benevolence. They always begin by killing a great many men. They usually end in ways that are not those of a disinterested philanthropy. After all, an egotism that mainly confines itself to the well-being of about a fifth part of the globe cannot be said to be of a very narrow type, and it is essentially by her conduct to her own Empire that the part of England in promoting the happiness of mankind must be ultimately judged. It is, indeed, but too true that many of the political causes which have played a great part on platforms, in parties and in Parliaments, are of such a nature that their full attainment would not bring relief to one suffering human heart, or stanch one tear of pain, or add in any appreciable degree to the real happiness of a single home. But most assuredly Imperial questions are not of this order. Remember what India had been for countless ages before the establishment of British rule. Think of its endless wars of race and creed, its savage oppressions, its fierce anarchies, its barbarous customs, and then consider what it is to have established for so many years over the vast space from the Himalayas to Cape Comorin a reign of perfect peace; to have conferred upon more than 250 millions of the human race perfect religious freedom, perfect security of life, liberty and property; to have planted in the midst of these teeming multitudes a strong central Government enlightened by the best knowledge of Western Europe, and steadily occupied in preventing famine, alleviating disease, extirpating savage customs, multiplying the agencies of civilization and progress. This, gentlemen, is the true meaning of that