

wrote a book, the object of which was to show how desirable it was that this Empire should be gradually but steadily reduced to the sweet simplicity of two islands. Similar views prevailed very generally in the Manchester school. Cobden frequently expressed them. The question of the colonies, he maintained, was mainly a question of pounds, shillings, and pence; he proved, as he imagined, by many figures that they were a very bad bargain, and he expressed his confident hope that one of the results of free trade would be "gradually and imperceptibly to loosen the bands which unite our colonies to us." About our Indian Empire he entertained much stronger opinions. He described it as a calamity and a curse to the people of England. He looked on it in his own words "with an eye of despair," and declared that it was destroying and demoralizing the national character. It was the belief of his school of politicians that all the nations of the world would speedily follow the example of England and adopt a policy of perfect free trade; that when all men were able to sell their industries with equal facility in all countries it would become a matter of little consequence to them under what flag they lived, and that this complete commercial assimilation would soon be followed by a general disarmament which would put an end to all fear of future war. Many politicians who certainly cannot be classified with the Manchester school held views tending in some degree in the same direction. Even Sir C. Lewis in his treatise on the "Government of Dependencies," which was published in 1841, summed up the advantages and disadvantages of a great empire in a manner that gives the impression that in his own judgment the disadvantages on the whole predominated. In the autobiography of that

great writer and excellent public servant Sir Henry Taylor, who for many years exercised much influence in the Colonial Office, we have a curious picture of the opinions which were held on this subject about 30 years ago both by Henry Taylor himself and by Sir Frederic Rogers, who was at this time Permanent Under-Secretary of State for the Colonies. They both agreed that all our North American colonies were a kind of *damnum hereditas*, and that it was in a high degree desirable that they should be amicably separated from Great Britain. Sir Henry Taylor frankly wrote that at a time when your Royal Highness "was employing yourself so successfully in conciliating the colonies" your Royal Highness was "drawing closer ties which might better be slackened if there were any chance of their slipping away altogether."

I do not believe that opinions of this kind, though they were held by a large and powerful section of English politicians, ever penetrated very deeply into the English nation. One of the causes of Mr. Cobden's "despair" was his conviction that the English people would never be persuaded to surrender India except at the close of a disastrous and exhausting war, and in his day the policy of national surrender was certainly not that of the statesmen who led either party in Parliament. No one would attribute it to Mr. Disraeli, in whose long political life the note of Imperialism was perhaps that which sounded with the clearest ring, and it was quite as repugnant to Lord Palmerston and Lord John Russell. In an admirable speech which was delivered in the beginning of 1850 Lord J. Russell disclaimed all sympathy with it, and I can well remember the indignation with which in his latter days he was accustomed to speak of the views on this subject which were then frequent.