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## Documents Online

**Title:** "British Empire in the East," by Isaac Dillon

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British Empire in the East.

He that would understand human nature, must contemplate it in its diseased, as well as its healthy condition. He must behold man not only in greatness and dignity, but in littleness and depravity: not transported with ecstasy at the view of grand and sublime virtues, nor yet sunk in despair at the sight of dark and friendless vices. In a word he must regard man as he is, sometimes virtuous, sometimes vicious: Capable of noble self-denial and magnanimous benevolence, yet often the subject of passion, scattering poverty and distress around him for the gratification of inherent selfishness. Few individuals have not presented in their lives these extremes of their nature: and nations have enacted them, upon a larger scale. - none more conspicuously than England, the blessing - the curse of the world.

Her conquest and government of India present a striking picture of the power of mind and corruption of the heart. There we see intellect towering in majestic pride and her children bow in submission, and there passion rearing its horrid form still higher, bids that mighty intellect, crutch, a slave. From their bloody conflicts there arose over India the foul vapors of crime and wretchedness; but the spirit of modern benevolence has already gone to dissipate them. India no longer attracts attention, simply as the theatre upon which heroes have acted, nor yet as a vast mine from which nations have been enriched. War and commerce are doubly important. But the age of heroic is past intellect. It is the contest between mind and mind that now enlist attention. It is the triumph of

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of virtue and liberty that calls for the shout of applause.

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The ancient government of India, political, social, and religious has crumbled. They no longer govern themselves. Western influence has broken down the system of castes, in which their bodies, mind, and soul were encased. And though the murderous Ganges has not entirely ceased to stifle the infant cries, and the car of Juggernaut to crush under its bloody wheels the victims of Idolatry. Though the death-stench of the funeral pile ascends but too often in mockery towards heaven - the darkness of their religion is vanishing: - That mighty fabric which superstition erected, and prejudice has upheld, the strong arm of civilization is hurling to the dust. Whatever motives impelled the English, whether of personal safety, final good to India and to man, or pure selfishness, the Conquest itself affords a grand exhibition of the power of Genius, and its advantage over mere brute force. Whatever were the means they used, that a handful of Merchants should enter a distant land and wrest from its rulers, the sceptre of power over millions of subjects, shows at once the might of mind - its elevation, its influence and the weakness and slavishness of ignorance: - Human nature improved, strong, healthy; that same nature debased, weak and diseased.

But power to sway millions of helpless minds once obtained by a Christian Land, we cannot overlook the principles by which it is wielded. Happy for India - Happy for Eng. and humanity, had the British empire in the East displayed as much of the harmlessness of the dove, as it did of the wisdom of the serpent. Intellect must rule.

We see it among the civilized, the action of every child speak its difference to superiors, and nature has uttered it through the submissive mind of the savage. But woe to the man, woe to the nation that dares pervert the power that intellect bestows into an instrument of selfishness! The withering indignation of man has already descended upon the actors of the bloody scenes of Peru, of Mexico and of our own country. And Eng, has cursed herself for the brutal scenes of India. Religion, humanity and justice forbid that man should enrich himself by sacrificing the rights and enjoyments of his fellows. All the noble principles of his nature call upon him to deny self for the benefit of his race, and without self-sacrifice, there can be no active benevolence. The truth, this day shakes the despots throne; for it is uttered by the voice of public opinion; it rings in the trembling consciousness of every man, that earth itself though glistening with the fires of myriads of gems valued compound with the glorious jewel every human frame supports. - The human mind, a jewel that shall continue glorious when the stars of heaven shall have fallen.

What then were English motives? How did they use the power heaven entrusted to their their care? Benevolence, she who would have whispered hopes of freedom & happiness to the poor, enslaved and degraded Indian, was banished from her lawful throne - conscience, justice, all laws human and divine were smothered, & avarice, hydrated avarice reared itself and triumphed over every principle of religion and humanity. Sons of Britain

Bearing in their hands the torch of liberty, erected no altars in the distant East, but extinguished their sacred charge in the leath-  
some exhalations of guilt and corruption. Religion and nature remonstrated in vain. The blood of the Rohillas, the disgraceful scenes at Benares, and the inhuman, the fendish treatment of the Begums were enough to have dishonored forever the name of England. Why this great sacrifice of principle? Why this corruption of all that renders human nature lovely? It was the triumph of passion. If huzzas rang in praise of their martial victories, they were now changed into into blasting denunciations of insulted and outraged humanity. National wealth is a blessing: it aids in diffusing knowledge and augmenting the comforts of life - but never - "never did Heaven intend its price to be that noble of virtues honesty -" honesty to God, honesty to man, and honesty to self." Oh! what a crown of glory would have surrounded England's brow had her power over the destinies of the Hindoo, been directed by wisdom and benevolence! But though the brightness of her name has been tarnished, among her own sons there have not been wanting noble defenders of humanity. The thunders of Burke muttered vengeance upon those who had thus disgraced his country and his race. Never were nobler bursts of Eloquence heard on Earth, than his appeals to England and to man in behalf of aggrieved and outraged India. and the efforts of Sheridan & Pitt to expose the treachery and corruption of the Company

and relieve suffering man, reflected honor upon England and human nature

A brighter day is drawing upon India. Her long night of gloom and misery is receding before a brilliant morn. Her conquest has doubtless enriched science, enlarged commerce, and given new impulses to talent and enterprise. But these considerations with the brilliant discoveries & splendid achievements that led to her conquest, are alike lost in the more benevolent view of final good to India herself. No one can shut his eyes to the mysterious train of Providence that exalted England from barbarism to a powerful civilized nation. It was the curiosity of a Genoese that resulted under the guidance of Heaven in the exaltation of the whole world in power, liberty and virtue. And India once the fairest garden of nature - the birthplace of philosophy India once so proud and renowned, but since fallen and degraded - may again take her place among nations in the bloody famed for learning, art and religion. In spite of England's selfish intentions, in the bloody waste of the conquerors, has followed the spirit of <sup>trinity</sup> ~~trinity~~ upon the wings of universal sympathy to spread peace and plenty over that wide and desolate waste. And India is destined to be another monument of the wisdom of that Providence that is ever educing good from evil.

July 11 1843

J. Dillon

British Empire in the East

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