The Decline and Fall of the British Empire

A brief account of those causes which resulted in the destruction of our late Ally, together with a comparison between the British and Roman Empires.

Appointed for use in the National Schools of Japan

—Tokio, 2005—

Orford:
ALDEN & CO. LTD., BOCARDO PRESS
LONDON:
SIMPKIN, MARSHALL, HAMILTON, KENT & CO. LTD.
1905
The Decline and Fall
of the
British Empire

A brief account of those causes which resulted in the destruction of our late Ally, together with a comparison between the British and Roman Empires

Appointed for use in the National Schools of Japan

“Men are we and must grieve when e’en the shade
Of that which once was great has passed away.”

An English Poet.

Tokio, 2005

TENTH THOUSAND.

OXFORD:
ALDEN & CO. LTD., BOCARDO PRESS

LONDON:
Simpkin, Marshall, Hamilton, Kent & Co. Ltd.
PRESS NOTICES.

We commend strongly to the electors of England a little brochure just issued, entitled 'The Decline and Fall of the British Empire.'—Morning Post.

"Written in all seriousness and honesty of purpose and written well...This little book should be read."—The Standard.

"Literature of the 'Battle of Dorking' class has a perennial interest, but is apt to err on the side of exaggeration. No such fault can be found with the startling brochure just published at Oxford, in which a Japanese historian in 2005 recounts the 'Decline and Fall of the British Empire.' The causes that produced the catastrophe are set forth so forcibly and so truthfully that they must impress even the most apathetic amongst us."—Pall Mall Gazette.

"Quite in the dead season a great sensation is caused by a sixpenny pamphlet entitled 'The Decline and Fall of the British Empire.'... No one will be the worse for reading what, recalling Macaulay's Lay, is for no party, but entirely for the State."—Liverpool Daily Post and Mercury.

"We deem it our duty to recommend it warmly to the notice of all our readers, for it deals in an original and striking manner with the causes which are at the present moment undermining the splendid fabric of our Empire."—National Service League Journal.

"A clever application of Gibbon to a later day than that he wrote about, and makes capital holiday reading."—The Scotsman.

For other Press Notices see end of book.
PREFACE.

This little book is intended for use in the upper classes of our National Schools. It will, we hope, supply a long-felt need. Any Empire, which wishes to play a notable part in the history of the World, must realize that other Empires as proudly exultant as herself have passed away. If she wishes to avoid a similar fate, her inhabitants must from childhood be acquainted with the errors of their predecessors if haply they may avoid them.

Had the English people, at the opening of the Twentieth Century, turned to Gibbon's *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, they might have found in it a not inaccurate description of themselves. This
they failed to do, and we know the result. In compiling this book, my thanks are therefore due to that laborious author. In numerous instances I have found those phrases in which he described the decadence of Rome singularly applicable to the England of the Twentieth Century. In all such cases I give references to Gibbon's work in the English Bohn Edition, 7 volumes, 1853-5.

THE AUTHOR.

Tokio, 2005.
THE DECLINE AND FALL OF THE BRITISH EMPIRE*

The sudden Fall of our great Western Ally, ten years ago, unanticipated as it was by the thoughtless mass of mankind, should have come as no surprise to those few persons who study the rise and fall of Empires, and are acquainted with the causes which, in every case, have brought about their dissolution. No writer who possesses a heart can however afford to look at the fall of England merely with the eye of the moralist or the calm historian. I would therefore remind my readers of the great love which our nation has always had for the English, and of our profound regret when we felt

* Copyright in Thibet.
The Decline and Fall

it impossible to send our Navy to the Far West. The long voyage by way of Cape Town was too great an adventure to be thus rashly undertaken. And even had we saved the British from disaster our assistance would only have afforded a brief and ineffectual respite. The sources of their weakness were too deeply rooted to be removed in a day. They had become too effete and nerve-ridden to guide the destinies of the world.

As Babylon and Assyria have left us their monuments, Egypt her pyramids, Carthage her Queen, and Rome her laws, so too England has bequeathed to posterity Shakespeare and her world-wide language. And, while these endure, so long will her history be the schoolroom of mankind, and the story of her fall a reminder to living Empires of those subtle influences which are ever
present, to quicken the germs of national decay, and transfer the sovereignty of the Earth.

While, therefore, India has fallen to Russia, South Africa to Germany, Egypt to the Sultan; while Canada has taken shelter beneath the wings of the American Eagle, and Australia has become a protectorate of the Mikado; all these, like the scattered fragments of Rome's mighty Empire, will yet possess traces of a common language and of a common past.

There is no written history of the Decline and Fall of England. A Chinese historian is reported to be engaged upon one, but he might spare himself the trouble, for, as I hinted in my Preface, it is all to be found in Gibbon.* Studying his seven volumes, as I have recently done, and comparing them with

* Gibbon: *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire.*
The Decline and Fall

records of English life from the beginning of the Twentieth Century to its close, I have been almost startled out of my senses by the symptoms of decay common to the two epochs. The only difference, apart from the setting, is that the decline of England was far more rapid. The reason is obvious. There were far more competitors in the field.

I cannot do better than begin my account by referring to the prophetic act of a typical English statesman in the year 1905. Lord Rosebery* had always been happy in his phrases but he was never so gloomily felicitous as when in this momentous year he gave the name of Cicero† to

* The Author feels that an apology is due for this somewhat unkind allusion to a very charming personality. He earnestly hopes that all allusions to early Edwardian Politics and Letters will be read by the English with that kindly spirit in which they were written.
† A famous Roman.
a horse with which he won 'The Derby,' a great English race. And if some friend of that unfortunate people had foreseen the future, he could scarcely have done better than present every member of the British Parliament, if not with a Roman racehorse, at any rate with a little ivory statue of Cicero.

For Cicero was a great talker. He talked incessantly and on all subjects. He talked of old age and virtue; he talked of books and politics; he talked of Pompey, who was the Kitchener of the Italian 'man in the street'; but above all things he talked about the Roman Empire. Shortly after Cicero talked about it the Roman Empire began to decline. Empires do not ask for orators. They ask for men of action, who are prepared to do their duty.

Now in 1905 the English House of Commons slowly but surely was
The Decline and Fall

following in the footsteps of Cicero and his contemporaries: it was becoming a House of Talkers, and was ceasing to guide the aspirations of the people. In other words, it was becoming like nothing so much as the staff of one of our up-to-date Tokio newspapers, which is blown to and fro by every wind of popular emotion.

When he hears that the leaders of the British people were of this description the Japanese student will not be surprised to find signs of national decay scattered like ugly ulcers through the length and breadth of their land. Let us probe some of them.

I. The prevalence of Town over Country Life, and its disastrous effect upon the health and faith of the English People.

The first sign of decadence in a
of the British Empire

Nation appears when it forsakes the calm delights of the country to live amid the depressing splendour of dreary towns. The decay of the upright Roman farmer was one of the first signs of Rome’s weakness, and so it was with the English people. Their vigour, which they gradually ceased to renew by daily exercise in the open air, departed from them, and with it their confidence. This is seen in nothing so much as in their increasing unwillingness to emigrate. These declining townsfolk, whose ancestors had sunk the galleons of Spain and flooded America with stalwart colonists, were too devoted to their Music Halls and the weekly feats of their professional athletes, to sally forth and encounter the forces of nature.*

* For the possibilities open to English emigrants at the beginning of the twentieth century, see Africa and National Regeneration, by E. F. Chidell. London: Thomas Burleigh, 376 Strand.
Boasted of as they might be, the English Colonies of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries were not a success. Australia ran into hopeless debt and displayed some of the worst vices of the Mother Country.* South Africa came to depend for its existence upon the products of imported Eastern labour. The only successful piece of colonization throughout this period was to be found in the Salvation Army Labour Colonies in Canada. These succeeded because, like the original American Colonies, they were founded on a practical faith in God. To colonize successfully men must go forth, not as State-aided emigrants, not as solitary wanderers, but in God-fearing gangs: and the English of this sad epoch were slowly losing their faith in both God and themselves. We must not be too hard upon them. For town-

* "Our people in Australia are unduly, and to their own detriment, given over to holiday-making, to horse-racing, to boastfulness of speech and
life, whatever economic advantages it may possess, is bound in the end, unless vigorously counteracted, to have a blighting effect upon our sense of the sublime, that avenue through which we approach our God. Let the Japanese beware lest in their growing love for town amusements they forget this mighty truth.

With the enfeebled health and physique of the English I shall deal later. Another grave result of the decay of Agriculture is so well described by Gibbon that I shall avail myself of his words. "Since the age of Tiberius," he writes, "the decay of Agriculture had been felt in Italy; and it was a just subject of complaint that the life of the Roman people depended on the accidents of the winds and waves." Vol. iv, p. 104.

The same with little alteration may be said of the English. As the thought, to political experiment, financial recklessness, improvidence, vaingloriousness."—An Australian writer, author of *Tommy Cornstalk*. (See *Spectator*, Aug. 19, 1905.)
Twentieth Century advanced they became more and more dependent on outside help. They gathered together into ill-planned towns to shout patriotic songs, but they had to go to Germany for their guns. They had to go to Tolstoi and Wagner* and Thoreau† to tell them how to live. They had to come to us to show them how to die. They had to go to the past for their patriotism and to everybody for their bread.

II. Growing tendency of the English throughout the Twentieth Century to forsake the sea except as a health resort.

Among the countless evidences of British decadence this was perhaps the most shameful. As the Twentieth Century advanced, the "Sons of the Waves," as they still continued to call themselves, became more and more unwilling to embark

* Author of a book entitled The Simple Life.
† Author of Walden.
upon a seafaring life. Every year liners manned by Lascars and continental aliens conveyed wealthy English invalids across the ocean in quest of health. Every year the effete townsfolk of Britain invigorated their languid bodies by a visit to the sea-shore. But they ceased to equip their Mercantile Marine with seamen,* and we know how when the call came and they were face to face with a hostile Europe, they had no adequate Naval Reserves to fall back upon. We know too how their alien-manned corn-ships mutinied and played them false; we know how, in the last stages of their decline, both Navy and Merchant Service were hastily reinforced by Metropolitan policemen and Government engineers: and we

* According to Lord Muskerry the numbers of aliens in the British merchant service in 1905 were as follows: alien captains 511, alien petty officers 2,991, alien seamen 40,000; and a large number of merchant ships were manned solely by aliens.
know in all its ghastly details the disillusioning story of their defeat.

What the English wanted at the opening of the Twentieth Century, when these evils were becoming unmistakably prominent, was a number of Cabinet Ministers of the President Roosevelt type: men with a genius for duty, with seasoned bodies and masterful minds, who would not permit the nation to slumber amid the deafening armament of Europe.

III. The Growth of Refinement and Luxury.

Gibbon makes much of this, and the historian of British decadence will be equally severe. The evils in both nations were remarkably alike. We observe the same inclination in both to regard pleasure as the end of existence; the same devotion to costly banquets; the same refusal to take exercise; and the same increas-
ing popularity of steam or Turkish Baths. We note in both Empires the growing numbers of irresponsible wealthy Capitalists who lavished large sums on menials and failed to realize that inherited leisure is only justified when it is devoted to the community.

In both Empires, as they approached the brink, the cost of living increased by leaps and bounds, and the problems of poverty became more acute. Free grants of corn and bread were among the chief corrosive influences at Rome; and the presentation of free meals to British School-children in 1910, was one of the most disastrous acts of that false philanthropy which did so much to ruin England. In both Empires too, the numbers of unhealthy parents increased, and in both the sturdy dutiful yeoman dwindled into nothingness.
Gibbon notes with dismay the increasing popularity of spectacular shows at Rome, during that epoch when it was besieged so frequently by the Goths. "The impatient crowd," he writes (Vol. iii, p. 420), "rushed at the dawn of day to secure their places, and there were many who spent a sleepless and anxious night in the adjacent porticoes." The same phraseology might have been used of the English*, whose inordinate love for the Theatre was only equalled by their ignorance of Shakespeare and the great dramatists.

IV. The Decline of Literary and Dramatic Taste.

Here again the words of Gibbon may most aptly be used to describe Twentieth Century Literature and Drama in England.

* See Newspapers of the period.
“The name of poet was almost forgotten; that of orator was usurped by the sophists. A crowd of critics and of compilers darkened the face of learning, and the decline of genius was soon followed by the decay of taste.” (Vol. i, p. 76.)

Or again, “The tragic and comic muse of the Romans, who seldom aspired beyond the imitation of Attic genius, had been almost totally silent since the fall of the Republic, and their place had been occupied by licentious farce, effeminate music, and splendid pageantry.” (Vol. iii, p. 420.)

I have studied English writers of the Decline with some care. Few were really healthy, and, from what I can gather, the best among them were neglected by the people at large. Critics and annotators flourished as at Rome; but genius, as at Rome, seems to have been
conspicuous by its absence. An unworthy imitation of the worst elements in contemporary French literature seems to have pervaded a large section of English art and life. This was in part due to the fact that the emancipated Englishwoman of the age used her freedom for selfish rather than National ends. For one picture in the National Academy, during this epoch, that represented her as a Sweetheart, inspiring her knight to battle for God and his country, there were half-a-dozen that showed her forth as a Siren luring him to destruction. Men boasted that they were "Decadents." Novels dealing with the morphia or cigarette victim were more widely read than the works of Bunyan or Sir Walter Scott. Men and women of all classes purchased cheap and gaudily bound editions of the Classics to
adorn their shelves, but in only a few instances were these books read with patient devotion. The flimsy Musical Comedy, the illustrated Magazine, and the Newspaper were the chief intellectual food of the Nation. I have only found one eminent writer among them during the period of their decline, and he, properly speaking, belongs to the Nineteenth Century. Robert Louis Stevenson, for such is his name, suffered from ill health all his days. His Gospel was the Gospel of trying to be cheerful, his task "the task of happiness." It is distressing to read of the thousands who asserted, throughout this sad epoch, that the only writer who really understood them was this spirited invalid. Their cry goes up to heaven like that of a people sick unto death, and the wonder is they never knew it.
V. Gradual Decline of the Physique and Health of the English People.

Here again Gibbon is our best guide, and his sad tale is fully paralleled among the facts of English Life in the last century. Speaking of the Roman legions of The Decline he writes, "The relaxation of discipline and the disuse of exercise rendered the soldiers less able and less willing to support the fatigues of the service; they complained of the weight of the armour which they seldom wore: and they successively obtained the permission of laying aside both their cuirasses and their helmets. The heavy weapons of their ancestors, the short sword, and the formidable pilum which had subdued the world, insensibly dropped from their feeble hands." Vol. iii. p. 271.

Similar incidents happened in the British Army. Early in the Twen-
tieth Century, the rifle, with which the English troops had staved off defeat in South Africa, was declared to be too heavy for them and a lighter weapon was substituted for it.* Unlike our own, the English infantry-man was rarely able to carry his knapsack or often his greatcoat. The number of men who 'fell out' on route marches during times of peace, or were relieved of their rifles by kindly officers, was phenominal. An eye-witness relates how he saw a dozen men of the Guards Brigade fall out during a Review at Aldershot when their only duty was to stand at attention for a somewhat trying period. About the same time the height and chest-measurement which had been the requisite standard for service with the Colours was reduced. In spite of this reduction

* It may well have been a better weapon.
thousands upon thousands were turned away as unfitted for the fatigues of a soldier's life, owing to the excessive smoking of cigarettes and unhealthy living in general. In 1904 a Report on Physical Degeneration appeared. Overcrowding, insanitary conditions of life, ill-conducted factories, the sweating, especially of women employees, infant mortality, impure milk, the evils of excessive indulgence in alcohol and tobacco, bad feeding, and the increase of insanity were among the subjects of this disheartening document.

As I have already noticed, the English at the opening of the last century had, in a large degree, ceased to be a nation of active habits: this was especially true in London and the large towns. Like the Romans who assembled to watch rival teams of gladiators, they came
together in roaring, and often gambling crowds, to witness the efforts of paid Athletes. Cricket and football ceased to be the sports of England. Teams representing her against Australia were composed almost entirely of professionals. Bowling, the most arduous part of what had once been an amateur's game, was left, with few exceptions, to such men. And, as they ceased to play themselves, the English insisted more and more that they were a Nation of Athletes.

It was far otherwise. Their theatres (thanks to one Barrie*, who seems to have had an inkling of the truth) were turned into hospitals; their newspapers and and magazines were so many eyesores, for the patent drugs and supports for the

* Author of a witty play which exposed the disgusting habits of many who suffered from excessive devotion to the table.
emasculated with which their columns were filled. But while hundreds of thousands realized individually that they were not physically sane or happy, no one seems to have understood whither this collective misery must tend. Evolution was in the air, but few of the English philosophers seem to have left their studies and gone into the streets to tell their countrymen that God's unalterable law concerning the survival of the fittest is just as applicable to the life of a Nation as it is to the briefer existence of an animal or a human being. And hence it came about that there was no united effort on the part of the English to remedy a state of things which was bound in the end to place the British Empire among those which had ceased altogether to control the future of the world.
VI. The Decline of intellectual and religious life among the English.

No one who has read the foregoing account will be surprised to hear that the English of the Twentieth Century were found wanting in religious and intellectual enthusiasm. A great deal of piety and social activity glistened upon the surface of things, it is true; for weak and effeminate minds have always sought a solace in false philanthropy or the external ceremonies of Religion. But as the Century advanced there was a noticeable absence of that practical and spiritual courage which, in former ages, had welded Cromwell's Ironsides together, or inspired Wilberforce and his compatriots to free the slave. And, while thousands were busily engaged in tinkering with Reform, few had the insight or conviction to go to the root of things, and deal with first principles.
Such a line of conduct is only possible for men with vigorous bodies and unbounded confidence both in God and themselves.

Where was that calm and lofty faith which had led mediaeval Englishmen to spend three or four hundred years in building a Cathedral? Where was that undying love for lost causes which had been so characteristic of days gone by? These had departed, and with them there had gone out for ever that virtue by which men hold dominion over the hearts of their fellows, and lead them onward to unquestioned victory.

It was indeed typical of this sad era that a series of critical volumes, dealing with the religious life of London, were presented to the public in a smooth white binding, calculated to embellish a drawing-room, but utterly unsuited for the use of fisher-
men or tent-makers such as the first Christians had been. Religion and sociology had indeed become, as at Rome, a kind of pastime. Thousands of well-to-do persons, who would never dream of foregoing a portion of their annual dividends to shorten the hours of their employees or give work to the destitute, talked glibly about social problems and read innumerable soothing volumes on the beauty of unselfishness. But few of them went forth to battle thoughtfully with the great problems of their age.

To do this required a grim intellectual effort and a practical imaginative fervour which was rarely discernible in Church or Chapel. The Nation required to be fanned to a white-heat of Cromwellian enthusiasm before its countless problems could be effectually dealt with; but no Cromwell arose to fan it.
Gibbon comments on the number of strange religions to be found in Rome. A careful study of the records of English life in the Twentieth Century has convinced me of the numerous and equally strange creeds which found favour in England. 'Christian Science' and Palmistry were widely popular among the fashionable crowds of London society. Positivism and a fateful Determinism provided an enervating creed for thousands of Socialists and factory 'hands,' while the rich dilettante who posed as a litterateur sought refuge in the sad philosophy of Omar Kháyyám, whose faith has been summed up in the words, "Let us make up in the tavern the time we have wasted in the kirk."

The Clergy of other denominations worked hard enough in their way, but they failed to deal with first principles. Nonconformity was too
often a social and political society, which made little headway among the masses, while the Church of England only succeeded in doling out the threepenny bits of the rich to the pauper instead of vigorously assaulting a social system which was radically unjust. Shareholders and Directors who controlled the capital of the country were satisfied if they fulfilled the meagre requirements of the law in dealing with their employees, but they cared little or nothing for their health or general well-being.* "The highest obtainable interest for our money" was the cry that arose yearly among them. Having obtained this, a few might perhaps acquire a name for philanthropy by pauperising those who, under such conditions, refused to

* Several notable exceptions to this state of things existed. I am speaking of Shareholders and Directors generally.
work. But, despite the noble efforts of a few hundred earnest thinkers and theologians, the Churches grew intellectually and spiritually effete. What Milton had written two centuries earlier had at last come true.

"It is not," he had said, "the unfrocking of a priest, the unmitring of a bishop, and the removing him from off the Presbyterian shoulders that will make us a happy nation: no; if other things as great in the Church and in the rule of life both economical and political, be not looked into and reformed, we have looked so long upon the blaze that Zuinglius and Calvin have beaconed up to us that we are stark blind."

Blind indeed were the Churches and their guides of all denominations,

* Milton's Areopagitica: the italics are mine. Milton, if I understand him aright, meant that religion covers the whole field of human activity from speculative theology down to the Tokio housing problem or Korean army reform.
of the British Empire

and in nothing so much as their refusal to co-operate, as Christians, against those evils which were rapidly dragging their country along the road to eternal shame and degradation. Misunderstandings and unkind suspicions flourished between sect and sect; and all this while there were millions upon millions of sad disillusioned folk, in lofty palace and low hamlet, in mean slums and in drab suburbs, crying unto their God for some one to tell them how to live. The supreme need of the Churches was indeed a great intellectual and religious awakening which would have swept aside the petty distinctions of rival creeds and built for the future upon the basis of a wider and more Christian patriotism. But such an awakening never came.* The churches continued to

* Why did it not come in 1905?
slumber, and while they slumbered the Nation died.

VII. Excessive Taxation and Municipal Extravagance.

Not the least of those causes which resulted in the fall of the Roman Empire, was the existence at Rome of an elaborate Civil Service which crushed private enterprise.* The disorganization of this Civil Service during a period of storm and stress resulted in the most hopeless confusion. As we know, it was precisely the same in the case of England. Her citizens came to look to the State for everything. It educated, fed, whipped, and in some cases even clothed their children. It lit their houses and

* In addition to Gibbon, see Bury's History of the Later Roman Empire, vol. i, chap. iii; also Roman Society in the last Century of the Roman Empire, by Samuel Dill, Book iii, chap. 1.
lent them light literature†; it carried them to and fro on tramcars; it gave them cheap lodgings, and conducted scores of similar costly undertakings on principles which will be recognized by the smallest office-boy in Tokio as ignoring the mere elements of political economy.

For as early as the year 1900 we find the State entrusting local bodies with the right of spending more than a hundred million pounds a year upon municipal objects. Of this vast sum a large portion was spent in municipal trading, and as the century advanced the money thus employed increased enormously. Of the enterprises which were thus undertaken many were avowedly run at a loss. Of the remainder a few were sound business concerns, but

† Large sums were spent by the State on Public Libraries, but the investment in serious books was a financial loss as they were inadequately used.
the mass of those which claimed to be making a profit did so by allowing a quite inadequate sum toward yearly depreciations. It followed that every year increasing loans had to be issued to meet those additional sources of expenditure, and the increasing interest on such loans grew with the general expenditure, until life in a large town became a burden for any but millionaires or paupers. This state of affairs was the more extraordinary in that the English prided themselves above all things on their business qualities. Strange as it may seem, they took no business interest in electing those who were to control municipal trading, with the result that men conspicuous as Talkers or Party Politicians became the leaders of Municipal affairs. Knowing full well that they were trading with other people's money, these talking
or political Councillors paid the barest attention to the common laws which condition success in commerce. Smitten with a false philanthropy, or desirous of winning cheap esteem, they succeeded only in pauperising the masses and plunging local and national finance into a state akin to bankruptcy.

Mr. Gladstone was a man upon whom many aspersions have been cast, but few would deny that he was a master in the art of finance. Now it was a maxim of Mr. Gladstone’s that “it is the business of a government to govern and not to trade.” Well had it been for England if her citizens had realized the profound truth contained in this crisp sentence. For government in England meant talking; it meant placing the interests of one’s party before the interests of one’s country; it meant fishing for votes and baiting one’s
hook with other people's money. Business cannot be run on these lines; it is, like war, a grim affair, and should only be undertaken by men who fully understand the complex laws which govern modern commerce, and who will incur the loss of their private fortunes if they disobey them. For while to conduct a few enterprises at a loss, or a small profit, for the public good, is quite justifiable, to do so on a vast and increasing scale is to court financial ruin.

VIII. False systems of Education prevalent in Britain.

The object of any true system of education is twofold. Firstly, it seeks to produce good and earnest men, that is to say good citizens—secondly, it seeks to give a boy such knowledge as will enable him to earn his own living, or, supposing
this is unnecessary, such knowledge as will make him a capable and unselfish leader in politics, art, or commerce. These two aspects of education are however inseparable, and it is often impossible for a man to be a reliable citizen if his education has not fitted him to follow some definite calling.

Now the English of the Twentieth Century quarrelled mightily about the first of these two aspects of education. Every religious denomination had its peculiar views on the subject of religious training, and every one was vastly exercised in his mind as to what his neighbour's child ought to be taught in the National Public or private school which it might happen to attend. What all failed to realize was that there are certain sacred truths in regard to life which a child can only learn in its own home from the lips
and from the lives of its parents. What young man will go out into the world with an instinctive reverence for women unless he has learned to reverence and respect his own mother? What girl will make a good wife if she has not learned to respect and trust her father or her brothers? The home and not the class room is the best school in which to educate an Imperial Race. The schoolmaster may do much with the raw material entrusted to him; but dealing as he must, with boys or girls en masse, he rarely finds their hearts and minds opening to him with that frank confidence which a child intuitively feels towards those who brought it into the world. This is such a natural and obvious truth that it might seem unnecessary for me to emphasize it here. I do so because there is a growing tendency among us for young parents to follow
the English and send their children to a seminary before they have even learned to walk. Excellent as such institutions may be, they can never supply the place of home, and the parent who acquits himself of the responsibility of educating his children in the fear of God and in a reverent love, not for lists of Jewish Kings or Apostolic chronology, but for the simple narrative of the New Testament, does so at the risk of its lifelong happiness. Denominations may clatter and theologians may hold disputations, but the eternal struggle between inclination and duty is ever with us, and the life of Christ is a surer guide than the changing beacons of the churches.

Let us now turn to the more practical side of Education which, under modern conditions, must often be dealt with by the Schoolmaster. Here the English were equally to
blame. It is indeed ludicrous to read of the vast sums they spent upon education and the hopelessly inadequate returns which they got for their money. Let us first consider the National Schools, which were supposed to educate the masses. The largest proportion of the children in these schools were destined, presumably, to cultivate the land or to follow a handicraft; but neither agriculture, carpentry, engineering, nor anything associated with practical industry, was taught them. The curriculum was, with few exceptions, a literary one. Young men from Oxford and Cambridge who had never ploughed a field nor even learned to mend their own bicycles, were appointed as inspectors and generally controlled the education of Britain's future agricultural labourers and artisans, with the result that the few farm
labourers who existed took but little real interest in their work, and to sell newspapers or to do odd jobs was the sole ambition of millions who should have been skilled mechanics.

Few persons could be more devoted to books than the writer of this humble volume, and he would be the last person in the world to deny a literary education to any one who desires it. But books are not the sole means of conveying instruction to the mind of youth. To love agriculture as a science or to understand the poetry of a steam engine is for thousands a truer source of inspiration than tales of bygone kings and the whisper of fairylands forlorn. It is futile to teach a farmer's boy a thousand and one facts of history against his will, and yet leave him ignorant of the nature of the earth, and the soil which he will have to plough. Teach him to
read and to write by all means, and if he has a taste for good literature encourage him, in every possible way, to indulge it; but if you wish him to be an intelligent son of the soil do not, in heaven's name, leave him ignorant of the laws which condition man's success in his great struggle against the forces of nature.

This is to court disaster; for the children of such a limp education will inevitably despise manual labour and the crafts, and persist in thinking that to sit on an office stool in Tokio and read Scrappy Bits at lunch is nobler than to be an intelligent farmer or artisan.

This is precisely what happened in England. The children of the masses grew to despise labour, and to think that a gentleman was one who was ashamed to use his hands. It followed that far too many young men, forsaking the sea, forsaking
the land, and forsaking the handicrafts, entered upon a business career; till the increasing competition which ensued led to widespread commercial dishonesty* and the general stagnation of trade.

If the education of boys in the National Schools of England was unpractical and contrary to the primitive laws of nature, that of the girls was equally wanting in common sense. The Report on Physical Degeneration, referred to above, makes it clear that the girls trained under the system were in the majority of cases ignorant of cooking, of hygiene, and of domestic economy. How the English fancied that they could establish a lasting Empire on the basis of a literary or commercial training alone, will always remain a mystery. Books are excellent things, and the fact

* See newspapers of the period.
that humanity has discovered the art of printing and can study the wisdom of past ages is a high tribute to modern civilization; but a civilization under which men find it dull to plough the fields and women do not suckle their offspring is a delusion and a sham.

When we turn to the Public School and University system which was supposed to equip young Englishmen for public life we find that, if not quite so unpractical, it was very far from being a success. It presented the nation with thousands of genial athletes, but did very little to promote among her gentlefolk the study of present day problems. All such study was undertaken by young men apart from the general curriculum appointed for them by masters and professors. Numbers of Oxford youths, for instance, served in the South African war, but on
of the British Empire

returning to read so-called Modern History, including strategy, at their University they were not permitted to study for the B.A. degree any campaign which could have the slightest bearing upon modern warfare.* Questions were set them upon the disposition of troops at the battles of Bannockburn or Crecy, and they were expected to be able to draw sketch maps to illustrate the Wars of the Roses, but such books as Stonewall Jackson and such campaigns as the American Civil War or the Indian Frontier afforded were considered to be too near the unpoetical present to be studied by future leaders of their country. Can we be altogether surprised that statesmen trained under these conditions knew more about golf-sticks than rifles, and more about Parliamentary tactics than the military requirements of an Empire? In the same

* See Oxford University Examination Statutes.
way, too, the valuable study of the Classics was in few instances turned to practical use, and thousands of educated Englishmen read how Athenian democracy perished at the hands of demagogues without ever dreaming that political, municipal, and working-class demagogues were destined to be among the most salient causes of the future downfall of England. There was, in fine, among the gentlefolk of England as a whole, a great absence of that spirit which animated Sidney Smith, when he cried, "I care not what political party be in power, but I have a passionate love for common justice and for common sense."

IX. Inability of the British to defend themselves and their Empire.

The last phase in the life of a dissolute fellow who dwells among hostile neighbours and has lost both
his faith in God and his confidence in himself, comes when he is unable, nay even unwilling, to defend his home and the honour of his women-folk against the onslaughts of stronger men. For such an one we have little pity, and yet such, if the truth be told, is the state of those great Empires which fail to realize God's law concerning the survival of the fittest and lose their faith and pristine virility.

This is the fate which befell the Roman Empire at the hands of vigorous barbarians. It was of no avail that it claimed to be a Christian Empire. God, if we read history aright, seems to have no regard for those who call him "Lord, Lord," but fail to obey His laws of health and manly duty.* The Romans, I say,

* See the remarkable passage in which Jeremiah prefaces his account of the destruction of the Jews at the hands of a healthier nation with the words "Shall I not visit for these things? saith the Lord: and shall not my soul be avenged on such a nation as this?" Chap v. 9
fell because they had ceased to obey these primitive laws, and it was so with the English. Let us weep for them, yet, even as we weep, determine resolutely that such a terrible vengeance from the offended Majesty of Heaven fall not upon ourselves.

The English had a far harder task before them than the Romans. In the first place they had to meet the civilized armies of Europe. The opponents of Rome were in many instances unskilled barbarians.* In the second place, the Roman Empire, stretching as it did from Asia Minor to Cornwall, was locally more compact than those scattered Colonies and Dependencies which owned Britain as their Liege Lady. And yet, shout about it as they might,

* I make this statement with considerable reservations. Many of Rome's most formidable opponents were those Germans who had served as mercenaries in her armies. See Oman: *The Art of War in the Middle Ages*. Chap. i.
the English never realized how vast, and how easily assailable, their Empire was, nor what a duty was incumbent upon each citizen if it was to be held together and promote the spread of justice throughout the world. Like some invalid, who cannot defend his home, they put their trust in mercenaries and native troops, and were surprised when these suddenly proved inadequate.

At the opening of the Twentieth Century only fifty years had elapsed since the Indian Mutiny, and the South African war was showing them what a large number of troops were necessary for the defence of a mere fragment of their Empire.† But they

† "In January, 1900, I found it difficult to assemble a force of men and guns large enough for the march on Bloemfontein, and I should have been relieved of many anxieties if I had felt justified in calling on the Government to send me immediate reinforcements of Regular units. At the time, however, the Regular Army in England (excluding the recruits at the depôts) had dwindled down to nine battalions and eighteen field batteries,
The Decline and Fall

seem to have thought that a fleet was their sole need.*

Let us observe for a moment a few aspects of this wide Empire at the close of the South African war. In the first place the blacks in South Africa, to say nothing of the Boers, were as five to one. Most of the natives in Basutoland were armed with Martini-Henri rifles and possessed an adequate supply of cartridges. The mere numbers of these uncivilized barbarians, and their knowledge of the grave Native problems in the United States, should have put the English on their guard, even if they had never learned the

and I was reluctant to put forward demands which would have caused a still further reduction.”—Earl Roberts’ statement before the Royal Commission on War in South Africa. Minutes of Evidence I., page 433.

* I would here ask the reader to remember how, till the very night of their doom, the English never realized that, through the increased speed of the modern steamship and the submarine march of the torpedo, the English Channel had virtually become a moat, and Britain was rapidly ceasing to be an island.
lessons of the Indian Mutiny.* To the South West lay German West Africa, and to judge from a novel which appeared in Germany† about this time, the Germans appear already to have meditated the possibilities of acquiring the gold-fields of Johannesburg and Kimberley to replenish their Treasury. In India and Egypt the Native problem was equally urgent. Who could foretell what effect the sudden lowering of British prestige might have in the Soudan, in Somaliland, or among the frontier tribes of India?‡

* My attention has been drawn to the Ethiopian movement, which was only nipped in the bud by the despatch of the South African Constabulary to the North of the Transvaal, in Oct., 1904, to check the meeting of native chiefs. Vide Lehlo, the native paper published in Pietersburg.

† Alluded to in the English House of Lords, July 11th, 1905.

‡ e.g. South Africa was fought to save India. "Ye cannot in one place rule and in another place bear service."—See Traffics and Discoveries: A Sahib's War, by Rudyard Kipling.
How came it that the English failed to realize their needs? Surely they might have guessed that the Anglo-French *entente* in 1905 would draw closer the bonds of sympathy between Germany and Russia. Surely they might have suspected that, before the century was out, some plot would have been contrived for their destruction. Surely they might have guessed the possible coercion or bribery of the Sultan*.

* The English were warned of this by an anonymous letter from Alexandria, which appeared in the *Spectator* as long ago as July 29th, 1905. The author of this letter, who had private sources of information, pointed out the military possibilities of the railway which was being built by the Sultan from Damascus towards Hedjaz. "The real originator of the scheme," he writes, "was General von der Goltz, whose plans for the defence of the Ottoman Empire included the construction of great strategical lines, which would enable the Turkish armies to be mobilised and concentrated with great rapidity for the purpose of defence against invasion or rebellion. . . . . German hostility to Great Britain," he continues, "is no new thing. With Turkey hostile to the first Moslem Power in the World (viz., England), German ambitions might contemplate the possibility of using the Turkish
They might have known that their commercial and literary ally, France, was too deeply interested in Russia’s finance to join them in a war against her. They might have known that it would be mere child’s play for a revolutionary Russia, having seized Persia, to hurl 600,000 men against India by no less than three distinct routes. They might have realized that such an attack would be accompanied by a raid from German West Africa and an attempted invasion of England. They might have guessed that alien-manned corn-ships would forces to make a formidable diversion during an Anglo-German conflict at Koweit (on the Persian Gulf) and on the Egyptian border . . . . The Suez Canal could be blocked with ease. Ma’an is only fifteen marches from Ismaila, and though the Sinai peninsula and the desert of El Tih are inhospitable enough, large armies have entered Egypt from the north-east since the dawn of history, and the Turkish soldier requires little but bread and water and cartridges.” It seems strange, in the light of after events, that the English should have taken no notice of this sinister forecast of events, which were really destined to happen.
not prove the most reliable of provision agents. They might have guessed that the strain on their navy would demand vast reserves of trained naval officers and bluejackets. They might have guessed that for the adequate defence and garrison of Africa, Egypt, and India during a state of war, to say nothing of London, several millions of disciplined civic riflemen would be necessary to support their mercenarys and native troops. Above all things they might surely have realized the need of a large supply of Reserve Officers*, who, though civilians, had made the study of war their pastime, instead of cards.

All our Japanese experts are agreed that if, in her struggle

* Their terrible loss of officers in South Africa should have taught them this. It was a want which Earl Roberts and Lord Kitchener fully realized; but how could this want be supplied unless wealthy leisured gentlemen came forward to supply it?
against Russia and Germany, England had added such officers and armed citizens to an adequate supply of hardy seamen she could have laughed at defeat. As it was she was crippled for want of men.* Her fleet was unable to adopt an aggressive attitude. It lay encircling an Isle of trembling nerve-ridden townsmen, who had forgotten how to play the man for their hearths and homes.

Happy is the man who calmly and reverently loves his country, her smiling pastures and time-clad hills;

* Compare J. R. Seely's account of reasons for the fall of the Roman Empire: Roman Imperialism: "Whatever the remote and ultimate cause may have been, the immediate cause to which the fall of the Empire can be traced is a physical, not a moral, decay. In valour, discipline, and science the Roman armies remained what they had always been, and the peasant Emperors of Illyricum were worthy successors of Cincinnatus and Caius Marius. But the problem was how to replenish these armies. Men were wanting; the empire perished for want of men." Lectures and Essays, page 52 of Macmillan's Edition (Eversley Series).
the sturdy frames of her men, and the bright glances of her noble women: for him the fields never lose their freshness and village pleasures never pall. But such an one is no idle talker; he is prepared to make sacrifices for what he professes to love. Above all things, he is one who looks ahead, who spends time, money, and quiet forethought, that nothing may happen against which adequate preparations have not been made. And these are greater things than to die.

Why should I tell again the shameful story that is known to each of us: of the possessions that were stripped from England because she had slumbered; of the Isle denuded of troops; of the corn-ships that never came; of the fleet that grew weary with watching; of the dark night, and the crowded transports; of streets that lay sodden
with the blood of those who ran because they had never learned to shoot; of the women who cursed them for cowards when the foreigner was quartered in their homes?

How came it that a hundred years ago, in 1905, when Earl Roberts, who had saved them from defeat in South Africa, told them in unmistakable language* the needs of their Empire, these poor townsfolk failed to play the man and realize the dangers which surround an empire whose inhabitants cannot defend it? How came it that in this sad year they told one another tales of Nelson †, who had left them an ideal that every man was to do his duty, but made not the slightest effort to find out what that duty was? We can only conclude that they were ceasing to love their

* Speeches in the House of Lords, July 11th, and at the Mansion House, Aug. 1, 1905.
† Their noble admiral who died at Trafalgar in 1805, 200 years ago.
country. They were too busy with their commerce and their cargoes, their professional athletes and their race-horses, to study the past and the unalterable decrees of Heaven.

There was no need for them to adopt the lengthy Conscription of Europe, but it was absolutely essential for the defence of their scattered possessions that they should spend three or four months of their youth in learning the duties of a soldier's life.* Their boasted liberty had become only another name for license. 'Hooligans,' as they dubbed the undisciplined sons of English slums, ran riot in their streets. There existed among them no respect

* For the fact that they had been told this see Earl Roberts' statement concerning the inefficiency of the Volunteers and Militia. "It is impossible under the present system to rely upon the Volunteers as they are now, or upon the Militia. Some change must be made; either they must have more training, or we must use some means to create an Army."—Royal Commission on War in South Africa. Minutes of Evidence I., page 437.
for parents, no reverence for old age, nothing but an insane insistence that every sorry child of sloth and ignorance had an unreasoning right to do exactly what he pleased. Four months under canvas, a rigid discipline, and a sound education in the most bracing of all schools, the school of war, would have given a new tone to the community, and compelled every man to realize what it meant to be the citizen of an Empire which strove to direct the aspirations of the world. But further, and beyond all this, such a training would have crushed for ever the spirit of Jingoism and unchristian militarism in which the English crowed over their petty triumphs against native princes, or alternately deified and damned their generals; and would have substituted for it that soldierly and statesmanlike frame of mind
which is based on a knowledge of what grim war really means. Acquainted with rifles and realizing only too well the ghastly possibilities of the bayonet, the English 'man in the street' would have ceased to be a war-poet and have become the most peaceful of beings. It is the strong and disciplined nature which is merciful and just, which is tender towards women, and pitiful to the weak. It is the bragging but ignorant mind which has never been disciplined or trained, that takes delight in torturing dumb beasts and talks cant about the glory of an Empire for which it is unwilling to make the slightest sacrifice.

Girt about with a race of disciplined civic riflemen, linked as one by a fleet which was adequately supplied with reserves, the British Empire might have realized at last the dreams of her Roman predecessor
and British Peace* might have been an everlasting tribute to that ideal of sober Christian discipline which was set forth by St. Paul.

Where is the man so dull of heart that he fails to conceive the daring possibilities of such an Empire,—a duty-loving, disciplined Empire, sober, and self-reliant, sworn together for the protection of the weak, resolute in its mighty determination to preserve the peace of the world and hand on to its children the tradition that an Englishman was not one who shrieked about Imperialism, but a strong man armed who kept the palace of Justice and Peace secure and inviolable?

And now I would remind my countrymen, and particularly those youths and maidens for whom this book has been written, that such a

* This daring dream would of course have been best realized by a joint union of the Anglo-Saxon race, including America.
task has fallen to Japan. Let us realize the profound nature of that ideal which we must now set before us. In many points we resemble the English: we have the same sturdy physique which was theirs in the days of Queen Elizabeth*; the same faith in God and ourselves. Like them we are an Island race on the verge of a great Continent with an increasing trade and a boasted Navy. Let us read the history of past Empires and beware. Let us study the Decline and Fall of England, as the English should have studied the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire.

FOR THE GOOD OF THE RACE.†

Tokio, 2005.

* The Queen under whom they defeated the Spanish Armada, a victory which has been compared to the Battle of the Sea of Japan.
† This is the nearest translation of the original Japanese nom de plume which I can find.— [TRANSLATOR.]
PRESS NOTICES
(Continued from back of title.)

"Every one who has the welfare of England at heart should read 'The Decline and Fall of the British Empire.'"—Sunday Times.

"There are many happy thoughts and sayings in the little book."—Morning Leader.

"An undoubtedly clever bit of Cassandra work."—The Glasgow Evening Times.

"The book contains much sound common sense and not a little matter of a debatable character."—Manchester Guardian.

"Some national failings are clearly stated. The brochure conveys many a useful lesson."—Sheffield Daily Telegraph.

"Not without some cleverness, and points out some flaws in our armour."—The Liverpool Daily Courier.

"Some pretty stern facts that deserve the attention of all thinking men. . . . Compels attention and tries to teach us how to think imperially, in a very real sense."—Newsagent and Booksellers' Review.

"Contains some warnings of a salutary character which statesmen and social reformers might do well to heed."—The Presbyterian.

"At this particular time, this brochure will, no doubt, prove of particular interest to many."—Civil Service Gazette.

"Cleverly conceived and admirably worked out."—Western Daily Press.
Press Notices

"Worthy of consideration by every citizen of this vast Empire. The author may be congratulated on having put his unusually vivid imaginative powers to some practical use."—Oxford Times.

"The attitude of the writer is that of the moralist rather than the humorist. And the chief moral is that Britain is paving her way for a fall by the want of sincerity and strenuousness in her national life."—Oxford Chronicle.


"Another Chesney come to judgment."—Public Opinion.

"It would indeed be a triumph for the little brochure if it could induce a return to a healthier and more vigorous life."—Exeter Flying Post.

"We may hope that his efforts will not be wasted in trying to make his fellow countrymen 'think imperially.'"—British-Canadian Review.

"The author clearly believes that he has a message for his fellow-countrymen, and one that is of urgent import to them."—Montgomery County Times.

"There is undoubtedly much truth in the writer's remarks."—Financial Chronicle.

"It is undeniable that there are some ugly symptoms in the body politic at the present time pointing to deep-seated disease, and for this reason this Oxford treatise is to be welcomed. If it only makes people think a little more of the serious problems of life and a little less of the trifles of daily existence, it will have done some service."—London Argus.
BY THE SAME AUTHOR.

To be published early in October.

'The Land we Love.'

A volume of Constructive Essays in matters Religious, Political, and Military: written in a fresh and original manner.

* * * This volume is of far more importance than the Decline and Fall. It was while writing these cheerful constructive Essays that the idea occurred to the author of predicting the fall of Great Britain if her citizens did not learn to take an enlightened individual interest in the civic, religious, and military problems of their country. The price of The Land we Love is not yet settled, but every effort will be made to put it within the reach of those whose resources are limited.

Oxford:
ALDEN & CO. LTD., BOCARDO PRESS.

London:
SIMPKIN, MARSHALL, HAMILTON, KENT & CO. LTD.
RETURN TO the circulation desk of any University of California Library or to the
NORTHERN REGIONAL LIBRARY FACILITY Bldg. 400, Richmond Field Station
University of California Richmond, CA 94804-4698

ALL BOOKS MAY BE RECALLED AFTER 7 DAYS
• 2-month loans may be renewed by calling (510) 642-6753
• 1-year loans may be recharged by bringing books to NRLF
• Renewals and recharges may be made 4 days prior to due date.

DUE AS STAMPED BELOW

12,000 (11/95)