BONANZA KINGS OF CALIFORNIA

RECOLLECTIONS AND REFLECTIONS OF THOMAS FITCH

HATS off, old pioneers, Johnny Mackay was a man—every inch of him. Long before he girdled the world with his cable, he wired an electric cord around 16,000 hearts that throbbed with love for him while he lived, and with grief for him when he died.

When great wealth or great fame comes suddenly to a man, it sometimes engenders the disease of "magnus cabesa." That complaint never attacked Mackay. He was ever the same brave, chivalric, generous soul, who gave like a Prince, fought like a Crusader, and forgave like a priest. Those who knew him were wild with delight when this multi-millionaire, disregarding his 50 years, resented a sneering remark concerning his wife, not by a libel suit, nor by a retort in kind, but by practicing an art of which he was in youth a past master, and thrashing the scandalizer upon a street corner in San Francisco, and thrashing him well.

The other bonanza kings left scarcely a perceptible mark upon their times. O'Brien died soon after he came into his great fortune, but while he lived went ever into his pocket at the sight of distress. Flood was originally a saloon-keeper, and in his contest for financial supremacy with William C. Ralston—the cashier and controlling spirit of the Bank of California—the latter is reported to have said: "I will send Flood back to his original business of selling cocktails." When this threat was communicated to Flood he replied: "If I do I will sell them over the counter of the Bank of California." When the great bank stopped payment and Ralston committed suicide, Flood negotiated for the purchase of the bank building, proposing to fit it up as a saloon, with carved counter for a bar, behind which he designed, arrayed in a white apron, to officiate as barkeeper for a day. It was with great difficulty that Mackay and Fair dissuaded him from executing this scheme of vengeance upon the dead Ralston.

Fair was the inventor of a plan to discourage widows and orphans who first offered proof of an alleged marriage with a millionaire after his death. He provided in his will that every lady who should prove herself to be his widow, and every child who should establish a title to call him father, should be entitled to receive from his estate a legacy of $100.

Mackay's generosity was unostentatious and took the form of private rather than of public benefactions. A few months before his death he locked himself in his office with his private secretary and destroyed notes, receipts and other evidence of loans and gifts to the amount of several millions of dollars.

It was not only the poor who lacked food and shelter who were relieved by him, but his benefactions extended to those who, impoverished by ill-fortune, yet struggled desperately with fate, and, like the Spartan boy, smiled in the face of the world, while the wolf of disaster was eating at the vitals.

Of a lawyer once prosperous, but who had lost his practice, a gentleman said to Mackay, "The Judge dresses well and he lives in a handsome house, but I happen to know that his wife's diamonds and furs are in pawn, that his furniture and law library are covered with chattel mortgages, that his rent and servant hire and grocery bills are unpaid, that his landlord is very impatient, and that his family may at any time be thrust into the street."

"Poor fellow," said Mackay, "and he has such a nice family. Such distress is greater than the suffering of one who has no position to maintain. Dick, draw a check for a thousand dollars and send it to him."

"He won't take it, Mr. Mackay," replied the secretary. "He is as proud as Lucifer, and I believe that rather than accept charity he would commit suicide."

"Is it as bad as that?" said Mackay. "Well, we'll find a way to make him take it. What has become of that litigation between the Durgon and Homeschich Company?"

"All settled," replied the secretary.

"Well, you hunt up some other lawsuit, any old lawsuit. Sure there's enough of them bothering us when we don't want them. You employ the Judge in it to assist our other lawyers and pay him a thousand dollars, and don't you let on to him that I have anything to do with it. Tell him it is the order of the Board of Directors."

Mackay's gifts sometimes took an eccentric form. He would send a hundred dollars or more to a widow "with the regards of William Sharon" until that capitalist was not only driven wild with protestations of gratitude, but his outer office was crammed with petitioners for similar aid, to whom Mackay's beneficiary had communicated the glad tidings that Sharon was taken with enlargement of the heart.

An old mining partner of Mackay's, who had not seen him for years, came to San Francisco from the Siskiyou Mountains and called upon the multi-millionaire at his office in the Nevada block. Mackay greeted his old friend warmly, invited him to dinner, drove with him to the Cliff House, accompanied him to the theater, and for two days and nights abandoned all other engagements to entertain him. On the morning of the third day the old miner called at the bank to bid "Johnny" good-bye.

"Before you go," said Mackay, "I have a little business with you. You remember that claim that we had and worked together at Crisely's Bar? After you went on that wild-goose chase to Fraser River I sold that claim for $800. I could not get any trace of you, so when I went to Washoe the next spring I put your half of the money in Gould and Curry. It stayed there all these years until yesterday, when I closed it out. It amounts, dividends and all, to $22,004.60. Here is a check for the money."

"I'm glad you didn't forget the four dollars and sixty cents, Johnny," said the old miner, tearing the check up and throwing the pieces into the waste-basket. "You're a fine bookkeeper, Johnny, but you're also the biggest liar in the State of California. I know all about that claim, for I went back there after you left and worked it a month. I couldn't make grub money out of it, and I gave it to some Chinamen for a vegetable garden. You never sold it and you are giving me this gift because you want to give me a lot of money. Sure, I don't want your money, Johnny; it would spoil the taste of the good time my old partner has given me. My place as foreman at Bigg's cattle ranch is kept open for me, and I'm going back to it. So good-bye, Johnny, and God bless you for dropping all the dudes for two days to take a run with the old man."

"Hold on a minute," said Mackay. "If you won't let me do something for you, maybe you will do something for me. I have loaned a lot of money to the Eureka Cattle Company, and they have mismanaged things and cannot pay, and I have got to take the ranch in. Now, I want you to go up there and appraise the property for me, and if I take it you must act as manager, and I'll pay you going wages, and not a cent more, and if you don't run things properly I'll fire you."

"Oh, that's business," said the old man, "that I'll do."

The next Fall the manager of the Eureka Cattle Company ranch wrote to his old friend: "I have kept up all expenses so far, from the sale of steers, and the cattle have increased nearly one-third, but I need a lot of cash to pay taxes and put in more pipe, and beef on the hoof has gone down. I think it not best to sell any more at going prices, and maybe you had better send me the money needed." By return mail the manager received a letter from Mackay, saying: "I am not lending money to old idiots who tear up checks. Pay your own taxes; if you haven't the cash, borrow it from the bank. You had better look at the records and find who owns your ranch."

And the old man found that Mackay had deeded him the ranch months before—consideration, the friendship and regard of John W. Mackay.

Mackay was an early riser, a hard worker, and although exceedingly hospitable, was himself abstemious, and could seldom be induced to play cards for money, and then for only nominal stakes. The only game that seemed to attract him was the "grasshopper races," with which the mining superintendents on the Comstock beguiled a portion of the noon hour, while waiting for luncheon at the Savage Company hoisting-house. Boys caught grasshoppers and sold them to the players at 25 to 50 cents each. Each player paid a fixed stake, ranging from $1 to $20 into the pool, and the man whose hopper made the longest jump captured the pool. Upon the day before Christmas it was agreed to celebrate that holiday with a pool, the stakes in which were to be $100 for each player. The terms were "play or pay," and at the instance of a German professor who was a superintendent of a leading mine, each man was to use any means that he might devise to stimulate his grasshopper. The professor was so full of his scheme to capture the thousand-dollar pool—for there were ten entries—that he communicated it to a young assayer, who was not a grasshopper plunger. The professor had experimented and ascertained that a grasshopper who was touched by a feather dipped in a weak solution of aqua ammonia would jump for his life. The young man also experimented, and as a result he filled a bottle of the same size and appearance with cyanide of potassium and managed to substitute it for the other in the professor's laboratory. The next day when the professor, after much boasting about his scientific attainments, dipped a feather in the substituted bottle and touched his insect with it, the grasshopper rolled over as dead as a salt mackerel amid the roars of the crowd. Mackay's hopper won the big pool, and two widows, whose husbands had been killed in the Yellow Jacket mine, received a gift of $500 each from an unknown source.

Mackay's wit was quick and occasionally scathing. After an absence of several years in Arizona, I visited San Francisco. In the Palace Hotel court Mackay accosted me, saying jestingly, "Now that you have got rich in Arizona (alas, this was not true), I suppose that you won't speak to your old friends any more?"

I replied—humoring his jest, "Well, John, we millionaires can hardly be civil to a poor man without his trying to borrow money from us. I'll speak to you, of course, but don't you take advantage of it to try to negotiate a loan."

Just then Mr. C. P. Huntington, who was visiting San Francisco on one of his annual tours, crossed the hotel office and accosted me. We shook hands, and I, noticing that Mackay and Huntington did not speak to each other, said, "Why, is it possible that you gentlemen are not acquainted? Mr. Huntington, this is Mr. Mackay."

The railroad king nodded coolly to Mackay and said: "How do you do, sir?"

A moment afterwards the expression of his face changed and he exclaimed: "Why, this is not John W. Mackay, is it?"

Mackay, who was evidently a little nettled at Huntington's failure to know him, touched his hat with mock deference and answered, "John W. is my first name, if you please, sir."

The conversation drifted into comments upon the growth and prospects of San Francisco. "The people must get rid of their expensive ways," said Huntington, "before San Francisco will really thrive." "Why, San Francisco is the cheapest city to live in, in America," said Mackay. "That may be so," I suggested, "for people with small incomes who employ no domestic servants." "San Francisco," repeated Huntington, "must get down to business. There is no coin here smaller than a nickel. It should be so that you can buy something for a penny." "What," said Mackay, "do you want to buy for a penny?" "An apple, for instance," rejoined Huntington. "But," said I, "you can buy five apples for 5 cents." "What?" said Mackay, "and give away the other four, and break his heart?"

This, though witty, was not just to Huntington, who was not by any means a small man in small things. In engineering a financial scheme in Wall street, or suggesting a freight and fare schedule, he would mercilessly exact "all that the traffic would bear," but he was loyal to old friendships and generous to old friends, and if the stubs of his private checkbook were given in evidence, they would show many and many a benefaction known only to the recipient and himself, as well as many larger benefactions to promote public purposes and advance the success of principles in which he believed.

Leland Stanford was the philosopher and prophet of the pioneer overland road. Charles Crocker was its right arm, but C. P. Huntington was its brain. Crocker's favorite seat was upon the cowcatcher of the locomotive on the construction train, ever pushing to the front with restless energy. Stanford, with dominant individuality, controlled men, controlled caucuses, reconciled conflicting interests, and placated enmities. But C. P. Huntington was the master spirit. When the financial necessities of the road called him to New York City he was no longer a young man, and he was without special training for his task. But, from the hour he entered Wall street until death called him, he was successful in its operations. Rival capitalists could not entrap him, and he was not to be bullied either by men or events. When one who had come into possession of a bundle of his letters, that were afterwards used in the Colton case, tried to sell them to him for a large amount, his cool and characteristic reply was: "They are worth the money; but I have read them; you want to sell them to somebody who has not read them." He had the courage of his convictions. He believed that the construction of an interoceanic canal would have a tendency to lessen the revenues of the Southern Pacific Company, and he did not hesitate to throw obstacles in the way of its construction. "It will never be built while I live," said he.

He was a strong friend and a bitter enemy. He was a grand old fighter, who fought ever on the open. When he entered the lists he passed by all lesser antagonists and smote the brazen shields of the Brian de Bois Guilberts. When he began the hazardous experiment of constructing an overland road, there were not 60 miles of railroad, all told, between the Rocky Mountains and the Pacific Ocean. He lived to see the locomotives of seven great transcontinental lines, thundering daily from the Missouri to the Pacific, and to be able to ride in his private car from Arctic to tropic seas. His most appropriate epitaph would be his reply to a member of a committee of the United States Senate, who said to him when he was examined as a witness before the Interstate Commerce Commission. "Mr. Huntington, have you no respect for public opinion?" "I have," was the reply, "the highest regard for the good opinion of C. P. Huntington."

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EFFECT OF IMPERIALISM ON NATIONAL CHARACTER

By Dr. Richard Garnett, C. B.

THE influence of imperialism upon national character the better admits of investigation, inasmuch as it is an influence only operative upon particular nations, those, namely, which have attained to great power and widely extended dominion, involving in most cases a great accession of territory, and very frequently the control of, and consequently the responsibility for, numerous peoples of an inferior grade of civilization. The imperialistic sentiment may be defined as that feeling of complacency with which the citizen of such a dominant nation regards the fact that his country counts for much in the affairs of the world. So long as the question is contemplated from this abstract point of view, it seems extraordinary that there should be any difference of opinion upon the subject. The proposition that it is better to be the citizen of a great country than of a small one seems as obvious to common sense as the proposition that it is better to occupy a high than an inferior position in society. When, however, we descend from the region of idea to that of fact, we find that the assertion of an imperial position is associated with many dangers and inconveniences which may well lead a cautious statesman to question its expediency. With this aspect of the matter our inquiry is not concerned, but, on account of the confusion continually arising between imperialism and patriotism, it is necessary to point out that the proposition that imperialism, however majestic in the world of ideas, is injurious in the sphere of material interest, is one which may conceivably be held by a good patriot. Every imperialist is necessarily a patriot, but every patriot is not necessarily an imperialist. On the other hand, it is easy to show that some of the charges brought against imperialism as an influence detrimental to the national character arise from confounding it with the general sentiment of patriotism.

Rowdyism Not Imperialism.

Such charges are best illustrated by concrete examples. We shall, therefore, instance two phenomena of recent occurrence, justly considered by reflecting men of all parties as discouraging signs of the times. One is the foolish and undignified character of the popular rejoicings over important successes, which has enriched or disfigured the language with the term "mafficking." The other is the systematic breaking up of public meetings by those to whom the opinions of the conveners were distasteful, as great an offense against the foundations of British liberty as it is possible to commit. These incidents were charged upon imperialism, because the majority of those concerned would have called themselves imperialists, but they had no more necessary connection with imperialism than with any other phase of public opinion. They were outbreaks of an ill-regulated patriotism, which might just as easily have been manifested on the other side, had this been numerically stronger than it was. An imperialist has not, as such, any more inclination than a member of the Peace Society to disturb a public meeting. Either may misconduct himself in this manner if he is naturally passionate and intolerant, and it is to be feared that the only absolute guarantee for good behavior is that he should feel himself in a small minority or be aware that transgression will expose him to the stern rebuke of public opinion.

We must, therefore, in any inquiry as to the influence of imperialism upon national character, distinguish between patriotism or love of country, a sentiment liable to abuse, but indispensable to the existence of the very smallest state, and imperialism, or that feeling of patriotic pride which comes with expanded dominion, which could, therefore, have had no existence before this dominion was acquired, and which, in the event of its disappearance, must itself pass away, even though the patriotic sentiment from which it was developed should remain unimpaired. The question is: Was the national character exalted by its manifestation while circumstances permitted? And is it impoverished by its withdrawal?

Nation Bettered by Imperialism?

The answer should not be difficult. Nations are but companies of individuals. The effect, therefore, produced upon the individual will be exemplified in the nation. To determine whether the augmentation of power, rank, authority and the enlarged responsibilities they bring with them, are advantageous to the collective nation, we must study their effects in the microcosm of the individual. Here, for a moment, we seem confronted with an obstacle. The effects on the individual are notoriously not uniform—they may be either good or bad. But a simple solution is at hand; the nature of the effect depends invariably upon the worth of the individual. Take a man of desert, elevate his position, enlarge his opportunities, augment his pecuniary revenues, entrust him with new duties and responsibilities, concede him honor and respect which he has not previously enjoyed, and you will ennoble his character, you will call forth faculties hitherto dormant, add vigor to every generous impulse, and supply new motives to right action, while confirming the old. Take an unworthy man, and the result will be the reverse. But though you can bestow fortune on an unworthy man, you cannot bestow empire on an unworthy nation. The fact of any nation possessing an imperial position, except at those periods of decrepitude when she is plainly living upon her past, is proof that at that time the amount of public virtue within her exceeds the amount of iniquity. No merely external advantages will make a state imperial that is not great at heart, and in whose population the better elements, however mingled and thwarted, have not on the whole the upper hand. If, then, an increase of power and fortune is morally beneficial to the worthy man, affording indeed the best criterion of his worth, why not equally so to the worthy state?

If the tempers and the arguments of those who decry the influence of imperialism on national character are examined, it will soon appear where their error lies. They favor particular descriptions of virtues, which are virtues indeed, and worthy of admiration and cultivation, but are not the kinds of virtue most necessary to a state. Pure abstract virtue is differentiated by entering the world, as light is differentiated by entering a prism. The virtues of a General are not the virtues of a sage; nor the virtues of a philanthropist the virtues of a statesman. Each division of human activity has its own special ideal, which cannot be easily reconciled with the ideals of others. The opponents of imperialism look at it from the point of view of these subjective preferences, and do not see that it is a state matter, and that the only admissible criterion is its profitableness or otherwise to the individual in his relation to the state. If we have correctly defined its essence as complacency in whatever makes the state great and prosperous, it clearly must be advantageous to the state, if for no other reason than that it enlists her children in her service. It is equally profitable to the individual by bringing him under the influence of an unselfish emotion. For imperialism contemplates the greatness of the state as its sole end, without reference to private gain. It is perfectly true that the gain of the community involves the gain of the individual, but the imperialist, when acting or speculating in that character, considers the community alone.

The conclusions of reasoners, nevertheless, would be of little value if they were refuted by the testimony of history. But the voice of history is entirely conclusive as to the ennobling influence which the possession and the sentiment of power may exercise upon the national life. The story of Rome portrays a long course of education in public morality, due to the development of Imperialistic sentiment. The age of Roman conquest under the Republic is one of undisguised rapacity. The age of Roman administration under the Empire, until the irruption of the barbarians, is one of order and justice, and general content, the public weal munificently promoted, the pax Romana everywhere. It is not meant that the genius of Rome was other than Imperialistic even under the Republic, but that the Imperial training was imperfect. It was only by governing that the Romans could learn to govern. An equally strong instance of the value of Imperialistic conceptions to a nation is afforded by memorable eras in our own annals. There never was a period in our history when the Imperial spirit was more active than during the reign of Elizabeth, or one in which it was more inert than in the preceding century. Compare the national feeling disclosed in the Paston Letters of the middle of the fifteenth century with that displayed in the writings of a Shakespeare or a Raleigh. The letters are mostly the production of agitated times, when the Crown of England was continually at stake, nevertheless there is not a gleam of public spirit in them, from one end to the other. The nation clearly needed an ideal, and when this came in the shape of conquest and discovery, and wealth and self-respect, and weight in the annals of Europe, and everything that we now call Imperialistic, it raised the national character to a height which a contemporary of the Pastons would have deemed incredible.

Weak Through Non-Imperialism.

Proof of a converse kind may be derived from the examples of those states which at one time took a leading part in the affairs of the world, but have now fallen to the condition of second-rate powers. Such are Spain and Sweden, and, as regards the colonial empire which alone made them great, Portugal and Holland. These countries may be as patriotic as ever, but cannot be imperialistic, for imperialism is patriotism inspired and buoyed up by a sense of the power which they no longer possess. Has the National character improved since these losses, as, if imperialism be indeed the demoralizing influence it has been represented, it assuredly ought to have done? Do the inhabitants of these countries at this time of day exhibit a finer type of character than did their ancestors of the 16th and 17th centures? Apart from the universal leveling up in enlightenment and civility, which they have shared with all European nations, it is certain that they do not, and that they would be the last to exalt themselves over progenitors, to whose days they look back as to an heroic age. Their advantages over their ancestors are nevertheless many, but not one can be connected in the remotest degree with the dying out among them of imperialistic spirit, consequent upon the loss of empire.

Let us now produce an instance of an opposite description. Little more than 100 years ago the United States of America was admitted among the family of nations, but it was long ere it ranked among the great powers. It had not attained this position when, in 1803, Charles Brockden Brown, best known as the first American novelist, but also as a publicist, sought to persuade his countrymen (who did not require much persuasion) to acquire Louisiana from Napoleon. Writing in the character of a French Councillor of State, he enumerates the causes which are thought to render the American Nation weak. Among these are "the want of National spirit, patriotism, sense of National honor, or love of National glory"—the very things in which America has long superabounded. To what can so vast a change be attributed, but growing National strength, and the consciousness of an imperial mission? And is not the last state better than the first?

Whatsoever evil may attach to imperialistic ideas is likely to be minimized in the United States and Great Britain, from the necessity under which, unlike the great military monarchies, these countries lie of depending as far as possible upon moral force. America must be averse for many reasons to sending expeditions by sea, and the expansion to which she is destined in Eastern Asia and South America need not involve the acquisition of territory. She cannot, however, exercise a protectorate over these regions without skillful and cautious diplomacy, and the clearest proof to the inhabitants that it is well for them to be permeated by her influence. It may seem ironical to speak of the moral suasion of a power which has achieved so many conquests as England, but, in fact, the most important of her possessions are inhabited not by conquered aliens, but by her own children, jealous of their freedom, susceptible in their feelings, and keenly alive to their own interests. To keep so widely dispersed a congeries of communities within the imperial fold will be a feat of the highest statesmanship, impossible without continual concession, conciliation and compromise, and impossible even then if the imperial idea had not in the meantime taken deep root in the minds of the dwellers abroad and at home. Thirty years ago the veteran officials of the Colonial Office, who had no such idea, thought it impossible, and it may at all events be said that no nation has hitherto attempted the like. But even in conquered countries and crown colonies the progress of moral force as a political agent is very apparent. The condition of the protected princes of India is a remarkable instance. Half a century ago the tendency was to get rid of them as opportunity offered, and to incorporate them in the British raj. This was seen to be wrong, and now nothing is safer than the throne of an Indian prince, so long as he does not misgovern his subjects, or fail in allegiance to the paramount power. Even should he do so, the consequences will be strictly personal to himself. As India is and must be governed on imperial principles, this seems a clear proof that imperialism is not necessarily incompatible with justice or synonymous with the lust of territory. It means, in fact, nothing more than that it is better to be the citizen of a great state than of a small one, and that character is ennobled by taking in the virtues which gain and retain empire.

RICHARD GARNETT.

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Imitating Americans.

Some German students who wished to indulge in mountaineering but had not the means, wrote to various firms, offering to place their advertisements at different points of the ascent of Mont Blanc on payment of a certain sum. Some firms accepted the offer, but it is thought the authorities will object to the placing of the advertisements.

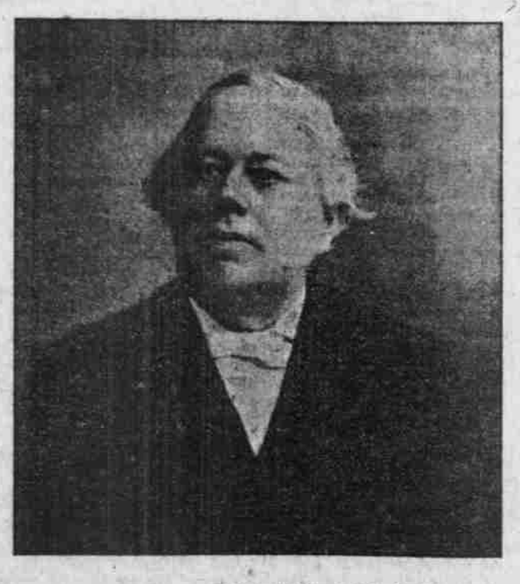
Two little girls were playing in front of a city dwelling when a strange man went by.

"That man is an undertaker," said one of the little girls.

"How do you know?" asked her companion.

"Oh, because he is the man who undertook my grandmother."

BRILLIANT LAWYER, POLITICIAN AND ORATOR WRITES HIS REMINISCENCES



—Photo by Stanford Studio, San Francisco.

HON. THOMAS FITCH.

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