

# THE WORLD'S MISER NATION and ITS HOARD of GOLD



## The Enormous Treasure That India Hides Even in Famine Times

IN INDIA there is being enacted a tragedy such as history has seldom witnessed—a struggle unique in the annals of all the nations of the world.

The opposite effects of wealth and poverty have never assumed such titanic proportions before, for with the enormous increase of wealth there has developed a corresponding degree of abject and pitiful poverty. No nation has ever presented at one time such contrasting pictures of inexhaustible, bewildering wealth side by side with such an extent of human want, disease, distress and misery.

In this country, where the plague has reaped a harvest of 28,000,000 deaths within 150 years, there are now hoarded in the most miserly fashion riches estimated at \$1,500,000,000. Year by year the plague has taken its ghastly toll. The famine of 1900 was worse than that of 1897, that of 1897 worse than those of 1892 or 1889 or 1878. Yet each year the hoarding of gold in India and the importations have increased, until the absorption at present is said to equal \$55,000,000 a year.

There are palaces surpassing any in the world for splendor, containing rooms with carpets woven of gems and furniture of silver and gold, set with diamonds, sapphires and rubies, the owners of which wear diamond mantles and cloaks hemmed with priceless stones. Yet the common wage for



The Gaekwar of Baroda's Palace is a Diamond Mine

men is 4 cents a day, women and children 3 cents.

The poor are becoming poorer, yet, as a French writer says, "the value of gold imported into India during a period of about sixty years, from 1837 to 1898, exceeded by nearly four billions of francs that of the gold exported."

What, then, becomes of the vast wealth of the world poured into the lap of this mysterious and miserable nation?

ONE of the weakest parts of the British administration in India is the failure of the government to enlist the financial confidence of the people of that country," recently declared Sir Ernest Cable, a former member of the viceroy of India's cabinet and an ex-president of the Bengal Chamber of Commerce.

"It is common knowledge," he further says, "that for years past India has been absorbing gold and silver. The late Henry Dunning Macleod said in his book on the Indian currency that persons of the highest authority estimated the hoards at three hundred million pounds (\$1,500,000,000) and one financial organ says that the hoarding averages \$55,000,000 yearly."

To get this wealth into circulation, to put it into railroads, irrigation work, and the development of industrial and commercial resources is the hardest task before the government. He adds: "Surely it is worth while making an at-

tempt to utilize some at least of these dormant resources for the benefit both of the people and the country at large. The task may be a hard one, but success would be fruitful of advantages both to India and the empire.

"For years there has been much talk about the need for inducing the shy Indian capitalist to bring out his rupees. But no practical measures have ever been taken, although in the meantime our railways are being starved for want of capital, and industrial enterprise is being hampered."

From the silver bangles and coins the low-caste women wear in their hair to the caves of gold and gems owned by the rajahs, this wealth has accumulated uselessly and has been hoarded jealously. India is a country with greater riches than were dreamed of by Aladdin in the underground garden. An investigation by a Frenchman, M. Arnould Boscovertz, revealed amazing conditions. Speaking of these investigations, a French writer said:

"When it is considered that the absorption of gold by India has gone on unceasingly for half a dozen centuries, some idea can be formed of the colossal amount of the treasures. The gold does not enter into monetary circulation; it is not utilized in native goldsmith work. It is lost to industry and to the world."

The enormous appetite of India for gold can best be gauged when her annual absorption is compared to the world's output. It is estimated by the director of the United States Mint that the world's production of gold up to the present time is about \$6,000,000,000, of which, it is said, India has absorbed nearly one-sixth.

India each year is said to absorb \$55,000,000 worth of gold. This is more than half as much gold as was produced in Rome, Greece, Phoenicia and other countries of ancient history. India herself, up to the present time, has yielded from her soil gold to the amount of \$130,000,000. At present she absorbs each year more than one-third of this amount.

### THE PRODUCING NATIONS

Of all countries, the United States produced the most gold—the amount being estimated at \$3,040,000,000—an amount little more than twice the amount of India's miser hoard. Australia has produced \$2,720,000,000, and Russia, with Siberia, ranking third, \$1,500,000,000—an amount equaling the unused wealth of the land of the Vedas.

The world's production of the precious metal in 1900 was \$255,000,000, and in 1907 \$410,000,000. In 1873 the United States produced \$36,000,000, and in 1906 increased to \$94,374,000.

In ancient times individual property had no protection in India, for rival clans fought over vast tracts of territory, looting villages

and stealing all they could obtain. Ruling rajahs were also in the habit of swooping down upon the poor and depriving them of all their valuables.

This led to the custom, which now prevails, of converting wealth into bangles, gems and coins and storing it away. The poor do not use the banks, yet many have silver and gold hidden away in their miserable homes, which, sometimes, when driven by the necessity of famine, they reluctantly bring out.

Rajahs have become insatiable hoarders of treasure. From Mexico for a generation they have taken a continuous stream of gold—not only gold, but gems. Into India the steady streams pour; the rajahs; under the heel of Britain, are building up a fabulous wealth which even appals their masters.

One instance is typical. After bowing to the British yoke and receiving an annuity, the rajah of Sindhi demanded the restoration to him of the fortress of Gualior. A dilapidated fortress of no importance, it was finally granted the rajah after a long and persistent appeal. Then the government learned why he wanted it. Before the subjugation he had concealed in a rock forming the foundation gold coin to the amount of many millions of dollars.

### A TRAGIC CONTRAST

To consider the wealth of India on one hand, the splendid palaces of the rulers, and poverty almost inconceivable to the occidental mind on the other, one is struck by the tragic side of the country's predicament. And a tragedy it is, with the most striking stage settings and hideous contrasts ever presented upon the stage of a nation.

In that country, where caste prevents ambition or progress on the part of the people, there is a population of 290,000,000—and of this number 130,000,000 exist in a state of long-endured semi-starvation, fretting and aching away their lives until the merciful plague ends their years of want. Poverty and filth are the chief causes of the plague, which attacks a person where he is weakest—and the half-starved natives easily fall victims.

Periodically, too, the world is called upon to aid India in its struggles with devastating famine. The famines of India are proverbially severe and sweeping.

One of the most famous palaces is that of Sayaji Rao, rajah, or gaekwar, of Baroda, who visited the United States a year or so ago. The luxury of this marvel of architecture is bewildering. The throne room can accommodate 1000 persons. So gorgeous is the palace that it is called Lakshimi Vilas—"abode of the goddess of fortune." In this building is the famous carpet of diamonds, rubies and seed pearls—a splendidly designed fabric valued at \$4,000,000.

In the audience chamber are twelve chandeliers, each one big enough to fill an ordinary ballroom. Rare tapestries decorated with gems move listlessly as scented breezes are wafted along to the mystical sound of "astral bells." Onyxes and marbles adorn the long corridors.

From all parts of the world the rajah imports gems and objects of art; nearly each day sees an addition to his priceless collection. And like his brother rulers, none of his wealth goes into banks or commercial investments. His princely income of \$6,000,000 a year is converted largely into precious stones.

And to see the rajah in the throne room arrayed in his crown jewels, valued at \$20,000,000, with the white light from the twelve cyclopean chandeliers pouring upon him, a glittering, iridescent figure of majestic splendor! Imagine him wearing a cape of diamonds, falling from neck to shoulders, fringed with emeralds the size of pears! And there, too, is the "Star of the South," a pendant gem that glows like electric flame, one of the biggest diamonds in the world.

Or see him in his "howdah" on elephant back, a thing incrustated with gems costing \$1,000,000!

The gems of the rajah and his wife are valued at \$40,000,000. Their thrones, footstools, elephant trappings, umbrellas, fans are all delicately chased gold, set with gems. For years visitors have gazed curiously at a battery of gold cannon in the courtyard.

### MELTED DOWN GOLD GUNS

Recently, however, the rajah ordered these cannon melted down. The splendid but useless pieces of armament were invariably used in all state processions, being drawn by white oxen covered with cloth woven of silver and caparisoned with gold.

Natives, regarding them as sacred, were wont to place offerings of rice, fruits and flowers upon them. The guns, which were made by the order of a former gaekwar, cost \$500,000. They were made to outshine a neighboring rajah who had a battery of silver.

Many other rajahs are enormously wealthy and own vast quantities of rare gems, which they guard zealously as grim famine stalks through the land, sweeping away the miserable natives like flies perishing in a blast of cold.

Many of the Empress Eugenie's jewels have been acquired by the maharajah of Patiala. When she was in great financial distress she sent the famous Sancy diamond to India, where it was quickly purchased by the wealthy ruler. A writer, describing his gems, has written:

"Trays of great emerald rings, stepcut, cabochon, tallowdrop, some of enormous size carved deep with Arabic inscriptions and names of forgotten princesses. Trays of pigeon-blood rubies; necklaces of tiny gems that lie row after row like serpents of living light. A jeweled litter set with seed pearls; a whole carpet of pearls; marvelous Jeypore enamels, the flower of the jeweler's art; unset stones in old boxes and cans; heaps of pearls into which one may thrust one's arm to the shoulder."

### CUP OF EMERALD

A cup cut of a single emerald is owned by the maharajah of Ulwar.

When he appeared at Queen Victoria's first jubilee ball the Maharajah Holkar wore a choga covered with emeralds and sapphires.

India! Wonderful land! "Temples covered with roofs of gold," writes Russell; "gold chariots drawn by bullocks with gold-tipped horns and gold-shod feet; great services of solid gold, in bowls and platters, belong to every king and every temple."

One of the most frightful famines began in the Punjab, Rajputana, the Central Provinces and Bombay in 1900. During one month the government relieved 6,200,000 persons. Then the resources gave out and England came to the relief of the sufferers with a subscription of \$2,500,000. The United States sent 320,000 bushels of grain.

The frightful toll of death, it is estimated, reached into millions. Only estimates for the