

A Muslim view of Our Civilization

FRANCE is carrying civilization into Morocco at the point of the bayonet, Germany is putting to death thousands of black men in Africa with a view to the "pacification" and Christianization of that continent, and now England's method of civilizing India is put in the same class by Mr. Ameer Ali, a brilliant Hindu who writes in *The Nineteenth Century and After* (London). After remarking that "the most important problem of modern times is the future relation of East and West," Mr. Ameer Ali launches out into a fierce arraignment of Western civilization in its most recent development. Thus, in regard to imperialism, he exclaims:

"A few years ago 'Spread-eagleism' was used for mere purposes of ridicule; christened 'Imperialism' it has acquired a holy meaning—it sanctifies crusades against the liberty of weaker States. Not only has the Empire of Great Britain an imperial policy which has enabled it to appropriate vast territories in every part of the globe, but the mighty republics of the United States of America and of France have similar policies of an equally decided character. One would have thought that 'Imperialism' was inconsistent with 'Republicanism,' but here come into play some of those anomalies which make modern civilization, with its mixture of humbug and hypocrisy, such an interesting study."

He soon concentrates all his vituperation on the English in India with their so-called "Western civilization." While the Spaniard conquered the New World in the name of religion, England goes to India with a new catchword. Thus we read:

"To-day other shibboleths have taken the place of older ones; religion has made room for what is called 'Western civilization.'

'The white man's burden' has elbowed out the Gospel, while trade has become more important than 'evangelization.' Altho the missionary, in his efforts to avoid martyrdom, has always at his back ironclads and big guns, the Bible is not forced upon unwilling people with the same fierce proselytizing zeal as a few centuries ago; it is now trade which they are compelled to admit whether they will or not. They are no more converted, they are 'civilized.' Civilization is brought to their doors with beat of drums and clangor of arms, in the shape of trousers and top-hats, drink, disease, infant murder, and prostitution. There was something definite and ennobling in the conception of religion; and tho the adoption of a new faith did not usually bring the converted equality of rights with the converting missionary, soldier, or priest, it promised at least some compensation in the next world.

"The new creed does not hold out any such prospect. They drink and they die, and there is an end of it. But the fat lands remain to reward the labors of the civilized man. In the intensity of conviction in his 'mission,' the follower of the new creed rivals those of the old. The champion of Jehovah restricted salvation to birth in Israel; the champion of 'Western civilization' confines it to a special color. With him it is a primary article of faith that, whatever may be the case in heaven, the kingdom of the earth is for the white skin. And the products of the ghetto and the slum are equally vehement, equally clamorous in the assertion of special claims to civilization, with the privileges which it carries."

England treats her provincials worse than Rome, a pagan country, ever treated even the aliens she had conquered. To quote further:

"We are thus face to face with a peculiar situation which in the struggle for 'grab'—that delightfully simple yet expressive Americanism—we have neither the time nor the wish to study; the incongruity does not strike us as anything out of the common. The pagan Empire of Rome extended to all its subjects the rights of citizenship, and the 'provincial' was as much entitled to the full enjoyment of those privileges as the Roman-born. The Christian Empire of Great Britain can not secure considerate treatment for its 'provincials' in its own colonies. South Africa presents at this moment an extraordinary spectacle of what a mixture of high altruistic pretensions and rank selfishness can produce in the name of civilization. . . . The galley and the scourge have disappeared; the taskmaster still flourishes, and modern ingenuity has armed him with new instruments of punishment. The names are changed, but the substance remains. That this is no exaggeration any fair-minded student of the subject in the Kongo, in parts of South and East Africa, will not hesitate to admit."