

F. D. Lugard, *The Rise of Our East African Empire*, 1893

*F. D. Lugard (1858–1945) was a soldier who fought in the British military campaign in Sudan (1884–1885), an employee of several colonial companies including the British East Africa Company between 1889 and 1892, and a colonial administrator who served as high commissioner (1900–1906) and then governor (1914–1919) of British Nigeria. In this excerpt from his book *The Rise of Our East African Empire*, published in 1893, he discusses the economic logic behind the creation of the British Empire in Africa from the perspective of a soldier and British East India Company employee during a period when the British government was considering the abandonment of Uganda in East Africa.*

Source: F. D. Lugard, *The Rise of Our East African Empire* (Edinburgh, 1893), I.585-587, II.69-75.)

It is sufficient to reiterate here that, as long as our policy is one of free trade, we are compelled to seek new markets; for old ones are being closed to us by hostile tariffs, and our great dependencies, which formerly were the consumers of our goods, are now becoming our commercial rivals. It is inherent in a great colonial and commercial empire like ours that we go forward or go backward. To allow other nations to develop new fields, and to refuse to do so ourselves, is to go backward; and this is the more deplorable, seeing that we have proved ourselves notably capable of dealing with native races and of developing new countries at a less expense than other nations. We owe to the instincts of colonial expansion of our ancestors those vast and noble dependencies which are our pride and the outlets of our trade today; and we are accountable to posterity that opportunities which now present themselves of extending the sphere of our industrial enterprise are not neglected, for the opportunities now offered will never recur again.

Lord Rosebery in his speech at the Royal Colonial Institute expressed this in emphatic language: "We are engaged in 'pegging out claims' for the future. We have to consider, not what we want now, but what we shall want in the future. We have to consider what countries must be developed either by ourselves or some other nation. . . . Remember that the task of the statesman is not merely with the present, but with the future. We have to look forward beyond the chatter of platforms, and the passions of party, to the future of the race of which we are at present the trustees, and we should, in my opinion, grossly fail in the task that has been laid upon us did we shrink from responsibilities, and decline to take our share in a partition of the world which we have not forced on, but which has been forced upon us."

If some initial expense is incurred, is it not justified by the ultimate gain? I have already pointed out what other nations are doing in the way of railway extension. The government is not asked to provide the capital of the railway, but only a guarantee on the subscribed capital. . . . Independently of money spent on railways, the conquest of Algeria alone cost France £150,000,000, and it is estimated that her West Coast colonies cost her half a million yearly. Italy spends on her Abyssinian protectorate a sum variously estimated at £400,000 or £600,000 per annum. Belgium, besides her heavy expenses for the Congo railway, the capital of which she has advanced without interest, guarantees £80,000 per annum to the Congo state, and is altering her constitution in order to allow her to take over that state as a colonial possession. Germany has spent over a million sterling in East Africa, besides her expenditure on the west and southwest colonies. The parallel is here complete, for the German company failed, and government stepped in to carry out the pledges and obligations incurred. Even Portugal is content to support a

yearly deficit on each of her African possessions, gives heavy subsidies to the mail steamers, and £10,000 per annum to the cable. All these nations are content to incur this yearly cost in the present, confident that in the future these possessions will repay the outlay, and willing to be at a national expense to fulfill their treaty obligations under the Brussels Act.

The Zanzibar Gazette, which is in a good position to judge, since the imports and exports from German East Africa can be fairly assessed there, speaking of "the comparatively large sums from the national resources" invested in this country, says, "We think it is only a question of time for such investments, with a careful management of the territory, to show highly profitable returns." Such a view from those on the spot and possessing local knowledge, should be a strong testimony in favor of the far richer British sphere. . . .

A word as to missions in Africa. Beyond doubt I think the most useful missions are the medical and the industrial, in the initial stages of savage development. A combination of the two is, in my opinion, an ideal mission. Such is the work of the Scotch Free Church on Lake Nyasa. The medical missionary begins work with every advantage. Throughout Africa the ideas of the cure of the body and of the soul are closely allied. The "medicine man" is credited, not only with a knowledge of the simples and drugs which may avert or cure disease, but owing to the superstitions of the people, he is also supposed to have a knowledge of the charms and *dawa* which will invoke the aid of the Deity or appease His wrath, and of the witchcraft and magic (*ulu*) by which success in war, immunity from danger, or a supply of rain may be obtained. As the skill of the European in medicine asserts its superiority over the crude methods of the medicine man,

so does he in proportion gain an influence in his teaching of the great truths of Christianity. He teaches the savage where knowledge and art cease, how far natural remedies produce their effects, independent of charms or supernatural agencies, and where divine power overrules all human efforts. Such demonstration from a medicine man, whose skill they cannot fail to recognize as superior to their own, has naturally more weight than any mere preaching. A mere preacher is discounted and his zeal is not understood. The medical missionary, moreover, gains an admission to the houses and homes of the natives by virtue of his art, which would not be so readily accorded to another. He becomes their adviser and referee, and his counsels are substituted for the magic and witchcraft which retard development.

The value of the industrial mission, on the other hand, depends, of course, largely on the nature of the tribes among whom it is located. Its value can hardly be overestimated among such people as the Waganda, both on account of their natural aptitude and their eager desire to learn. But even the less advanced and more primitive tribes may be equally benefited, if not only mechanical and artisan work, such as the carpenter's and blacksmith's craft, but also the simpler expedients of agriculture are taught. The sinking of wells, the system of irrigation, the introduction and planting of useful trees, the use of manure, and of domestic animals for agricultural purposes, the improvement of his implements by the introduction of the primitive Indian plough, etc.—all of these, while improving the status of the native, will render his land more productive, and hence, by increasing his surplus products, will enable him to purchase from the trader the cloth which shall add to his decency, and the implements and

household utensils which shall produce greater results for his labor and greater comforts in his social life.

In my view, moreover, instruction (religious or secular) is largely wasted upon adults, who are wedded to custom and prejudice. It is the rising generation who should be educated to a higher plane, by the establishment of schools for children. They, in turn, will send their children for instruction; and so a progressive advancement is instituted, which may produce really great results. I see, in a recent letter, that Dr. Laws supports this view, and appositely quotes the parallel of the Israelites after their exodus from Egypt, who were detained for forty years in the desert, until the generation who had been slaves in Egypt had passed away. The extensive schools at his mission at Bandawi were evidence of the practical application of his views. These schools were literally thronged with thousands of children, and chiefs of neighboring tribes were eagerly offering to erect schools in their own villages at their own cost.

The Established Church of Scotland Mission at Blantyre was (if I may so call it) an administrative mission. It was started under a wholly different set of conditions. The site of the mission, instead of being in a densely populated country, like the Free Church mission stations, was in a district largely depopulated. Around the mission grew up a population chiefly consisting of fugitive slaves. This initial mistake led to serious difficulties later, and I believe the resentment of the tribes from whom these slaves had run away was eventually disarmed only by the payment of ransom money by the mission. Thus the missions became the administrators and lawgivers of the native community which grew up around them. Just as the mission houses and plantations were themselves an object lesson to the natives of Africa, so the little colony became itself a model. The

spotless clothes of the children, the neatness, and order, and discipline enforced, were like nothing I have ever seen elsewhere in Africa. The children in the schools were boarders; native chiefs from surrounding tribes sent their sons to live in Blantyre, and be taught in the schools; neighboring chiefs came to the white man of Blantyre, as arbitrator in disputes; his intervention on more than one occasion prevented war.

The great coffee plantation and buildings of the missions, the Lakes Company, and Messrs. Buchanan, were the means of instituting on a large scale the experiment of free labor in Africa, and natives came from great distances, even from the warlike Angoni tribe, to engage themselves for regular wages. . . .

An administrative mission can, of course, only be founded in a country not under the aegis of any European power. Under such circumstances, a mission may be justified in undertaking to some extent administrative functions, pending the absorption of the country under European protection, especially where no central native authority exists, and there is no cohesion to repel the attacks of slavetraders, or the tyranny of the dominant tribe. This is, of course, more especially the case when the community has grown up in a previously unpopulated country, as at Blantyre. But when a secular administration is established, it appears to me that the missions should resign entirely into the hands of the authorized executive government all functions pertaining to administration. . . .

One word as regards missionaries themselves. The essential point in dealing with Africans is to establish a respect for the European. Upon this—the prestige of the white man—depends his influence, often his very existence, in Africa. If he shows by his surroundings, by his assumption of superiority, that he is far above the native, he will be

respected, and his influence will be proportionate to the superiority he assumes and bears out by his higher accomplishments and mode of life. In my opinion—at any rate with reference to Africa—it is the greatest possible mistake to suppose that a European can acquire a greater influence by adopting the mode of life of the natives. In effect, it is to lower himself to their plane, instead of elevating them to his. The sacrifice involved is wholly unappreciated, and the motive would be held by the savage to be poverty and lack of social status in his own country. The whole influence of the European in Africa is gained by this assertion of a superiority which commands the respect and excites the emulation of the savage. To forego this vantage ground is to lose influence for good. I may add, that the loss of prestige consequent on what I should term the humiliation of the European affects not merely the missionary himself, but is subversive of all efforts for secular administration, and may even invite insult, which may lead to disaster and bloodshed. To maintain it a missionary must, above all things, be a gentleman; for no one is more quick to recognize a real gentleman than the African savage. He must at all times assert himself, and repel an insolent familiarity, which is a thing entirely apart from friendship born of respect and affection. His dwelling house should be as superior to those of the natives as he is himself superior to them. And this, while adding to his prestige and influence, will simultaneously promote his own health and energy, and so save money spent on invalidings to England, and replacements due to sickness or death. . . .

I am convinced that the indiscriminate application of such precepts as those contained in the words to turn the other cheek also to the smiter, and to be the servant of all men, is to wholly misunderstand and misapply the teaching of Christ. The African

holds the position of a late-born child in the family of nations, and must as yet be schooled in the discipline of the nursery. He is neither the intelligent ideal crying out for instruction, and capable of appreciating the subtle beauties of Christian forbearance and self-sacrifice, which some well-meaning missionary literature would lead us to suppose, nor yet, on the other hand, is he universally a rampant cannibal, predestined by Providence to the yoke of the slave, and fitted for nothing better, as I have elsewhere seen him depicted. I hold rather with Longfellow's beautiful lines—

“In all ages

Every human heart is human;

There are longings, yearnings, strivings

For the good they comprehend not.

That the feeble hands and helpless,

Groping blindly in the darkness,

Touch God's right hand in that darkness.”

That is to say, that there is in him, like the rest of us, both good and bad, and that the innate good is capable of being developed by culture.