

right to it, and then with elaborate care falsifies accounts so as to conceal the giving? Is law after all a miserable farce, and the sword of Justice a wooden slap-stick which makes a loud noise but never hurts?

—Puck.

BOOKS

THE HISTORY OF A CRIME.

A People at School. By H. Fielding Hall. Published by the Macmillan Company, New York. Price, \$3.00.

I always read everything that I can lay my hands on bearing the name of H. Fielding Hall. Half a dozen years ago I read his "Soul of a People," an account of the Burmese among whom he lives, and I was fascinated by it. He has the rare power of insight into an alien race, fine capacity for description and a most original, simple and attractive style. That book could claim a high place among the best ten I have ever read. I liked it so much that when I had read it I sent my copy to Count Tolstoy. Some months later I met a man who had just come from the Tolstoy household and who related his experiences there to me. "Count Tolstoy was reading a book that delighted him while I was there," he said. "He would come from his study again and again into the drawing-room where we were sitting, with it in his hand, saying, 'Listen to this! Here is a passage I must read to you.'" It was my copy of the "Soul of a People," and my informant did not know that I had sent it. The book is a description of the Burmese from an intimate view-point. Their nation is the fine flower of Buddhism. Averse to the taking of life, disapproving of war, they were until recently happy, simple-minded, and contented. They had no aristocracy, were kindly to all men, devoted to their religion, industrious, frugal and artistic. I was moved to write to the author to thank him for the book and to express my regret that Great Britain should have overridden such a unique civilization, when, to my surprise, I received a letter from him, written in a remote corner of Burmah, in which he expressed his entire approval of the conquest.

And now Mr. Hall, having doubtless been misunderstood in like manner by many of his readers, has written a defense of British rule in Burmah and I made haste to get it so that I could find out what reasons there could be for such a strange climax to the panegyric of a people. And now I have read the book, "A People at School," and I confess I am more than ever at a loss to understand how the author fits his conclusions to his premises. His insight is as keen as it was, his descriptions as charming, his style as marked by distinction. He does not take back a word. The Burmese are still for him the happy, ingenuous and winning children of an earthly paradise. "The Burman villager was as free a man as it is possible to conceive." Women were as highly esteemed as men and in some respects had greater

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influence. "They were people one got to like very much, for their insouciance, their freedom from care, for the courage with which they faced the world." The pretext for annexation was a quarrel between the Burmese government and an English timber company which was exploiting their forests of teakwood, and by which Mr. Hall was at the time employed. But he admits that this was not the real cause. He ascribes the conquest to "fate." "We have come because we had to come. We, too, as drops of water, obey great forces that we never understand." This sounds very fine and perhaps it means something, but if Mr. Hall caught a burglar in his bedroom and the intruder informed him that he had come like a drop of water, I doubt if the reasoning would appeal to him so strongly. The reason why England took Burmah was because she coveted it. To ascribe it to destiny is a small and cowardly proceeding. Mr. Hall sees a resemblance between England's role in the East and that of Rome in Europe. He forgets that the Romans did not avoid responsibility for their own acts. It is only the modern Roman who indulges in such cant. It is the sign of an uneasy conscience. Our standards have risen in two thousand years, even if our actions are much the same.

Mr. Hall admits that European civilization has little good effect upon the Burmese. They distrust the British courts. They dislike British ways. The two peoples cannot get en rapport with each other. The natives who enter the civil service become spoiled and corrupted. Many of the good old customs of the villages have been broken up, and there is nothing suitable to take their place. The native arts and handicrafts which were sui generis and exquisite have been totally destroyed. The educated natives have become pessimistic and discouraged. I take all these facts from Mr. Hall. And what advantages has he to set up to counterbalance them? Literally nothing. There is greater commercial prosperity, better roads, and land-values have risen, but he admits that these things are not fundamental, that they have killed the old civilization and brought in their train the usurious money-changer, the mortgage, the craving for money, a horde of coolie immigrants, and increased taxation. The native Burmese handicraftsmen have been driven out of business, and the women are losing their independence. The old esprit de corps of the villages has gone, and the young men are more selfish and have lower ethical standards. A proletariat class is growing up. Mr. Hall very frankly gives us page upon page of such disheartening facts. It is the plain story of the corruption of a people by foreign invaders, told powerfully and in plain, unmitigated English. The worst enemy of English rule could not have told it more effectively. It almost seems as if Mr. Hall's conclusion in favor of his fellow-banditti was intended as a joke, and that the book is really a protest on behalf of Burmese independence. But no. Mr. Hall is the most serious of men, and in all his books (and I have now read four, and hope he will write more) there is not one glimmer of humor.

Mr. Hall has a peculiar theory by which he tries partially to excuse his countrymen. He divides them into two classes, the "Normans" and the "Anglo-Saxons." The Normans are noble-minded, adventurous, gallant, despise money and trade, believe in

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caste, and have a passion for helping along weaker people. The Anglo-Saxons on the other hand are tradesmen, exterminate or enslave inferior races, and preach equal rights and the ballot for themselves. All the sins of England are attributable to the Anglo-Saxons and all the virtues to the Normans. This is a pretty theory, but unfortunately it has no facts to support it. It is true that merchants and gentlemen of leisure have different tastes, but that is true the world over and has nothing to do with race. There are no Normans in England to-day, and there are probably no Englishmen without Norman blood. Thomas Hardy shows us how the peasantry is honey-combed with noble lineage. The tradesmen of the Hudson's Bay Company and the East India Company were originally just as adventurous as the younger sons of the nobility, and these latter gentlemen are attracted by salaries and pensions and sinecures just as much as the merchant is by profits, and they are just as hard upon natives too. The "Norman" saint whose memory is honored by primroses and duchesses, is the Hebrew D'Israeli, and the present "Norman" chief, Mr. Balfour, while on his mother's side he comes of the old nobility (long post-Norman, however), on his father's is the grandson of an Anglo-Indian contractor of none too certain reputation. The great imperialist leader is no other than the distinguished "Norman" of Birmingham, Mr. Chamberlain. The Normans in their original home in Norway are the purest of democrats without an imperialistic idea, and when they want kings they have to import them, as the British Normans do, and in Normandy they have shown no talent for empire.

Two of the most distinguished Norman satraps of recent years are Lord Cromer, who bears a German name, and Lord Milner, who is said to have been born a German subject. It was the tradesmen and not the nobility who abolished slavery. Three-fourths of the officers of the Royal Army are of middle-class families, and in recent wars those with a pretense to Norman extraction have come the nearest to disgracing themselves, while the Irish Kelt has done the best of all. Mr. Hall himself went to Burmah as an "Anglo-Saxon" trader and remained as a "Norman" magistrate. It is odd indeed for the representative of such a conglomerate race to assert that "mixed blood is valueless, and the sons born of it die out!" The fact is that Mr. Hall is an admirable observer, but when he begins to philosophise he is sure to slip up.

The secret of his approval of British rule seems to lie in his view of women. Women were too free in Burmah. It is a mistake for them to inherit equally with men, he says. They should be subject to men. Buddhism is effeminate. A peaceful disposition is effeminate. Vegetarianism is effeminate. "Village after village in the districts is asking to have slaughter-houses built. . . It is a step in the right direction!" Yet he admits that the Burmese are "naturally courageous, active and daring," and that British occupation has made them less courageous! (See p. 263.) England is the schoolmaster, it seems, and she must teach the Burmese manliness. The native "must throw off his swaddling bands of faith and find the natural fighter underneath. He must learn to be a savage if necessary, to destroy, to hurt and push aside without scruple!" This is what our au-

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thor calls bringing them out into the real world. As if they had not been in the real world for centuries! They are as true products of the survival of the fittest as the Briton. They have lived and thriven with a strong empire, China, on one frontier, and wild tribes on the others. Their forests are full of deadly wild beasts, and yet they still persisted and produced a civilization altogether unique and individual which has charmed the heart of such a "Norman" as Mr. Hall himself. How could they better justify their ideals? What a mad ambition this is to make all the world alike! The violet has earned its place in the woods as well as the oak. What can the oak teach to the violet? Is it impossible to admire them both and to leave them each to flourish in its own place? Who knows but that the violet may have the best staying powers after all?

The East bowed low before the blast
In patient deep disdain;
She let the legions thunder past,
And plunged in thought again.

But I do not wish to close my article in a tone of adverse criticism. Mr. Hall's book, whatever his intention may have been, is really a plea for the weaker peoples, and it shows distinctly that the only justification of England's occupation is brute force. He appreciates to the full the native virtues. There is no "Oriental mind," he tells us again and again. Their minds are like ours. The Oriental is as truthful naturally as the Occidental, so he says, and I have long known it. A strong man does not lie, because he does not have to. "If the weak lie, it is for the strong to see if he has not by misuse of power forced him to it. And be sure such lies are not debited in the eternal reckoning to one side only." "Trust is the reward of trust and of that only." These are fine sayings and show Mr. Hall at his best. It is a false boast, that of the English, that they are the most truthful of races. They are forever saying so, but that does not prove it. It is possible that they are more frequently in positions in which there is no temptation to lie. That is Mr. Hall's opinion. It so happens that two of the worst liars I ever met were English. One of them was a university man, highly educated and cultured and of perfect breeding, but he could not tell the truth. I knew him well for twenty years, and to this day I doubt if he gave me his right name. Lord Curzon was recently bragging to an Indian audience of British truthfulness, and the native press proceeded to prove from his own books that he had told falsehoods to the Emperor of Korea and made light of it. An English "Norman" once told me that there was cheating in all horse-races. This was an exaggeration, but it contained an element of truth. Dishonesty has been exposed in the king's own card-parties, and we do not know how many have escaped detection. Let anyone who thinks superlatively of British honesty buy a few horses of the "Normans." I have been there. It is best not to boast of virtues. Virtues that people boast of are usually non-existent. And Mr. Hall has insight enough to see these truths, and he sets a high value on the Burmese character. Why is he pleased then with his task of helping to deprave it? His book gives no reasonable explanation. Let me sum up in his own words: "We are, of course, strangers here—strangers who have come from a far country and conquered this land and made

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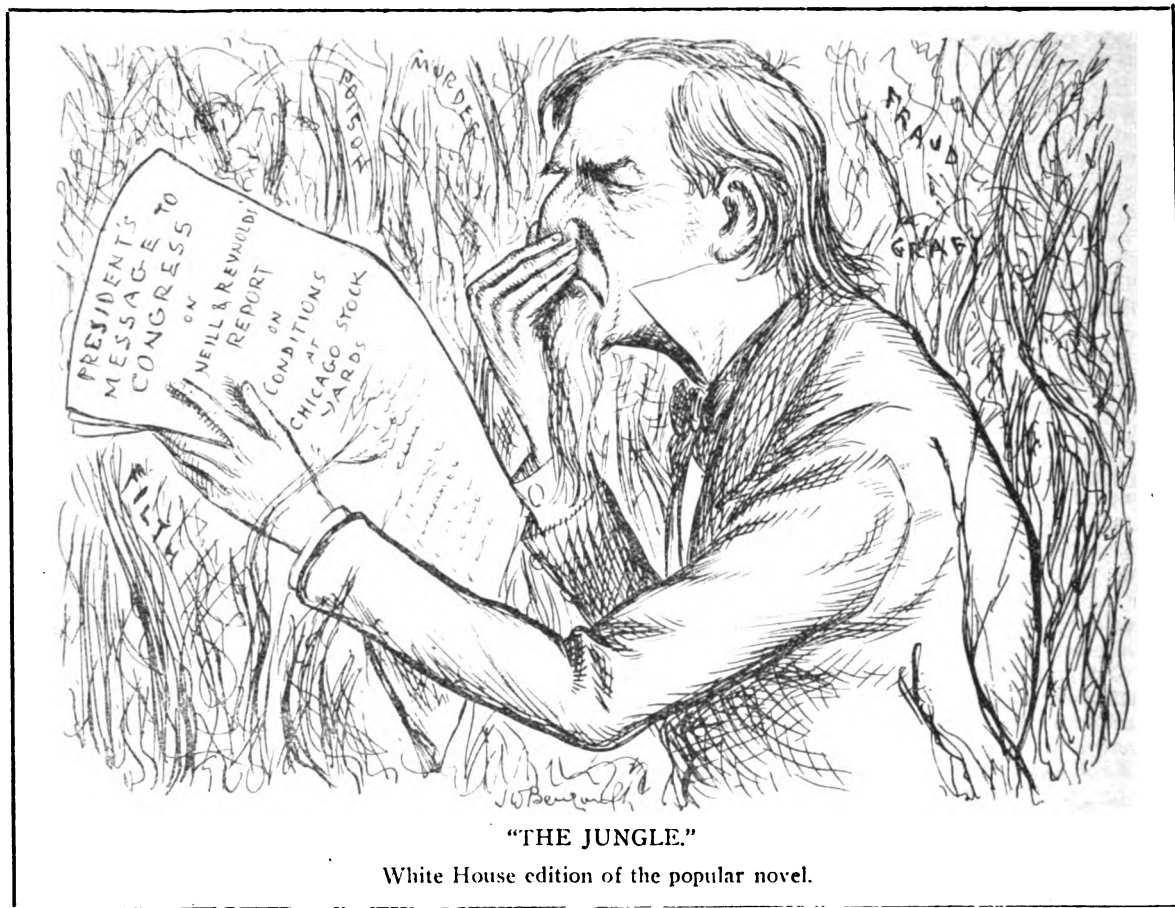
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it ours. The laws are ours, the power, the authority. We govern for our own objects, and we govern in our own way. We are strong enough to enforce our own wishes, even against those of the people. And in fact our whole presence here is against their desires. That we should under such circumstances be popular or be liked is an impossible thing." Why then stay there? There is only one reason, and that is to find an outlet for British trade and billets for younger sons. Mr. Hall would not think of seizing his next-door neighbor's house and farm for any such purpose. Why should a different rule obtain between nations? It is because as nations we are not as civilized as we are as individuals. The main tendency of civilization has been to prevent the strong individual from oppressing the weak. We must sooner or later attain the same standard between nations. The pretense that Burmah needed schooling as an effeminate nation is a sham, unconscious perhaps, but still a sham. England has seized weak nations impartially whether their religions made war a crime or a virtue, and whether the people fed on rice or rhinoceroses. No law can justify her but the law that might is right, and that law, thank heaven, is doomed. Mr. Hall may uphold it in form, but he has dealt it some doughty blows in fact. Every student of imperialism should read his books and draw his own conclusions.

ERNEST CROSBY.

AMERICANIZING THE PHILIPPINES.

The Philippine Experiences of an American Teacher. By William B. Freer. Illustrated. Published by Charles Scribner's Sons.

Mr. Freer has written his experiences as a school teacher in the Philippines with the hope on the one hand that some desirable traits of Filipino character may be better appreciated, and on the other that there may result "a stronger conviction of the unwisdom of granting at this time any greater degree of self-government than the Filipinos already possess."

On the latter point the spirit of the book is of the school-master school-mastery type. It is delightfully exemplified by the author in a little bird story which he borrows from a Filipino friend—a revised version of the story of the caged bird, the moral of which is that wise birds will prefer the safety and comforts of a cage to the difficulties and dangers of liberty.

The same school-mastery ideal assumes another form of expression when Mr. Freer tells of the tyranny and corruption of most of the Filipino justices of the peace, as if there were none such in the United States. In this connection he wonders "what would become of the poor and ignorant masses at this stage of their tutelage under Filipino government," when "so large a number of local officials practice corruption and tyranny under the present