

LORD LUGARD

A GENERAL APPRECIATION

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IT is too soon after the death of Lord Lugard to attempt anything more than to write down some ideas and impressions that come into the mind at the first realization of our loss.

The chief impression upon considering Lord Lugard's public career is the immense range of his life and work. This never ceased to astonish, as some chance remark of his suddenly recalled that nearly seventy years before he had been playing his part in imperial affairs. From the moment when in 1878, at the age of twenty, he left Sandhurst, until a few days before his death, his was an active working life. As the needs of the British Empire changed and his own qualities and ideas developed, he passed through four clear-cut stages of his career, any two of which would have represented the life-work of most public men.¹

His first period, 1878 to 1887, was that of a soldier. The son of a clergyman, he was born in 1858; he passed through Rossall School and Sandhurst, joined the Norfolk Regiment, and was sent to the East. During his service he fought in Afghanistan under Roberts; he took part in the Sudan operations of 1884-5 and in the difficult Burma war of 1886-7. It is doubtful whether even war service would have continued to satisfy Lugard's ardent and original mind: certainly peace-time soldiering quickly wearied him, and in reaction he plunged into the second stage of his career by setting off alone—on sick leave!—for tropical Africa. His ability as a soldier, however, was to prove one of the most valuable of his many aptitudes, not only for this period but for the next.

He could hardly have fully grasped at the outset the prizes and responsibilities which lay before those Powers then engaged in the 'scramble for Africa'. But if it was partly a young man's thirst for the most independent and dangerous adventures which could be found in his world that led him into the unmapped interior of Africa, this was joined with humanitarian and idealistic hopes, especially with regard to the suppression of slavery. And he was of the metal to take a new impression when he got into the continent and realized what it was. For he saw much the same things as Livingstone had seen not so many years before upon his last journey. He saw the poverty, disunity, and helplessness of the people. Above all he saw the ravages of the Arab slavers. Indeed, his first enterprise was to penetrate to Lake Nyasa to take command of a handful of white men in the attempt to save a new British trading station from the attacks of the slavers. In a desperate defence the enemy was beaten off, but later Lugard, in storming a slavers' stockade, was seriously wounded by a bullet which went through both arms and across his chest, and suffered some effects of the wound for the rest of his life.

His many adventures and achievements in other parts of Africa cannot even be

¹ This memoir was written in some haste and does not pretend to describe, even in outline, his career. For a brief summary of this see *The Times* of 12 April and *East Africa and Rhodesia* of 19 April.

listed here: the earlier ones are to be found in his own spirited book *The Rise of our East African Empire*, published in 1893. It will be remembered what a great part he played in securing Uganda for Britain, not only by swift and bold action on the spot, but also by his whirlwind campaign in Britain against the decision of the Gladstone government, at a time when some of the Liberals were denouncing Lugard as a dangerous buccaneer, to abandon that country. From East Africa he went to West Africa where, by a swift expedition—speed of decision and movement characterized all his enterprises at this time—for the Niger Company he secured, in the face of competing Powers, important territory in the west of the present Nigeria. Then in 1896 he went south with his brother, the present Major E. J. Lugard, to explore the Kalahari desert, acting in collaboration with Cecil Rhodes. The next year, his dynamic character having won the respect and friendship of Joseph Chamberlain, who was equally dynamic in his own way, he was sent back again as a brigadier-general to West Africa to raise the West African Frontier Force and secure a very debated frontier at a moment when African rivalries had brought France and Britain to the edge of war. This enterprise demanded equal mastery of ‘bush-whacking’ and of diplomacy: it meant knowing when to move—and move swiftly—and when to stand. Lugard’s success in this difficult task showed to any who did not know it that he was something much more than a good soldier and a brave frontier agent.

The assumption of official responsibility for Northern Nigeria, of which he was made High Commissioner in 1900, ushered in the third period of Lugard’s work, during which he turned from acquiring colonial territories to governing them. There was a little overlap between the periods, since most of Northern Nigeria had been acquired by Britain only at the European conference table, and in 1903 another of Lugard’s dashing little campaigns, undertaken entirely upon his own responsibility, was necessary in order to bring the Muslim emirs of Kano and Sokoto to accept British rule. This accomplished, Lugard settled down to what he would probably have regarded as the most important part of his work. Between 1900 and 1919, except for five years at Hong Kong, he was building up in Nigeria the system of African administration with which his name will always be connected.

It is probable that the first seven years, 1900–6, were the most creative. He suddenly found upon his hands a vast region heavily populated (for Africa) with groups ranging from large, ancient, semi-civilized Muslim principalities down to the naked pagan hill-tribes they raided for their slaves. He confronted these almost unknown peoples and their almost untravelled lands with fantastically exiguous resources of money, officials, and soldiers. It was in this situation that, working as only he could work, with a small number of carefully selected officers, he built up the main structure of the system later known as ‘indirect rule’. He incorporated the effective elements of the native polities into the framework of his government, recognizing the emirs, chiefs, and headmen, authorizing their law-courts, reforming their systems of taxation, respecting the Muslim religion and abolishing slavery by a gradual, automatic process which became a model method.

Two comments have been made by those who consider that the significance of Lord Lugard’s system of indirect rule has been over-estimated. One is that there is little original about it, since in India and elsewhere the British had made use of the authority of native rulers. They might, indeed, have added that this obvious

technique of remote annexation had been used in many other Empires and from the earliest times. The second comment is that no special wisdom was needed to seize upon an expedient that Lugard's poverty of resources made so necessary, and which the relatively advanced organization of the emirates made so clearly practicable. The answer to both these comments is the same. No claim should be made, and certainly never was made by Lugard, the most modest of pro-consuls, that the whole system of administration in Northern Nigeria was novel. What students of that system would maintain, and what the writer of this article has attempted to point out before in these pages,¹ is that Lugard, more than any other British administrator, turned a common expedient of empire, generally resorted to in the interests of the rulers, into a constructive and educational system developed in the interests of the ruled. It was this which distinguished Lugard's methods from those of the Romans or their French administrative heirs, among whom the tendency was to abandon the 'indirect' expedient when, with increasing control, the 'direct' methods that seemed to be in the interests of the ruling power or more consonant with their assimilative traditions became practicable. But the spirit of Lugard's methods is also to be contrasted on the other side with the more static policy of recognizing native authorities, as in the Indian States or, until recently, the South African Protectorates, and leaving them to operate in a parallel and almost unregulated manner because a policy of limited liability saved the ruling power from embarrassment or expense. Lugard, on the contrary, developed the powers of the native chiefs at the same time as he actively reformed them and, as he gained fuller control, he incorporated them increasingly as vital, growing elements in the new civilized and unified government which had been imposed from above. There is no ambiguity about his acts or purposes. In his annual reports and his *Political Memoranda* the whole system is laid bare both in principle and method, and the men trained by him in those first arduous, creative years continued to develop native administration according to his principles after he had left them in 1906, and, later, many of them extended these principles into other colonies to which they were promoted.

There is a third estimate of indirect rule which is no more tenable than the first two and, as regards Lugard himself, misses its mark. It is a natural if regrettable event in the history of administration that where a great mind has imprinted itself upon institutions, his very reputation and success have a crystallizing effect upon them, and lesser men feel themselves excused from that year-to-year adaptation that the changing needs of men require. There is the greater danger of this in colonial rule where aliens have the major power in deciding the forms of government and the subjects cannot easily exert from below those restive and critical movements which, in homogeneous and democratic nations, produce incessant, almost unconscious, adaptation of institutions to men. There is little doubt that in Northern Nigeria, and in some other places, including Southern Nigeria, to which 'indirect rule' was extended, the basic principle of moulding local government upon the most effective institutions and vital forces of each native society was overlaid by the accidental and local circumstances which had led Lugard to make use of the big chiefs of Northern Nigeria. It is probable that in the very provinces of its origin 'indirect rule' was, after his day, allowed to crystallize into a mere preservation of the emir's powers and

¹ *Africa*, vol. vii (1934), No. 3, pp. 321-34, 'A Restatement of Indirect Rule'.

prestige, while elsewhere the obsession that the method demanded 'big chiefs' caused a search for these so persistent that they were sometimes revived where they had become obsolete or even invented where they did not exist. The responsibility for these later errors cannot be laid upon Lugard, and a true appreciation of his work demands very special attention to the time, 1900 to 1906, and to the place, in which the achievement of these years was made. At this time the first necessity was obviously to keep the authority of the emir, as the keystone of the political arch, in place. Moreover, the degree of subsequent error should not be exaggerated. If there was some stagnation here and some distortion there, the spread of Lugard's ideas and the wide acceptance of his system as a model has had a deeply stimulating effect upon native administration throughout much of British tropical and southern Africa and, indeed, beyond that continent. With the rapid development and democratization of native local government, it is certainly better, as Lord Hailey has suggested, that the term 'local government' should replace 'indirect rule', which should now be used in its historical connotation. That is perhaps the largest tribute that could be paid to the success of Lugard's preparatory work.

In 1907 Lugard was transferred to Hong Kong. This interlude will be of less interest to readers of *Africa* and, indeed, the story of his governorship there has still to be written. We may, however, note in passing that Lugard was not among those colonial governors who, having achieved their first constructive work among one race, find it difficult to adapt themselves to the character and needs of another and very different race. Lugard always afterwards spoke of the Chinese with the greatest affection and respect, and he founded the University of Hong Kong not only to serve the higher education of the island but also in the hope that it might be a meeting-place for the culture of the West and the much older culture of China as a whole.

Lugard returned to Nigeria from 1912 to 1919. His second term of office differed in character from the first. If it was not so creative in the fundamentals of colonial administration, this was because his energies were absorbed by two great tasks. One was the amalgamation of Northern and Southern Nigeria, and for this purpose he held the title of Governor-General. Each of these territories was in itself vast both in size and in population, and outside their frontier belt they differed widely in their peoples, religions, and customs and had, moreover, been administered by the two British Colonial governments on very different lines. Amalgamation was thus an immense, exacting, and, in some of its legal and financial details, an uninspiring task. Lugard, however, threw himself into it with his customary zeal and energy, and described the whole process in a masterly report.

Lugard's second great preoccupation was, of course, the war. There were not only all the general problems of supply and security caused by the submarine menace, but also a severe local campaign in the Cameroons, while West African units were later sent to East Africa. These distractions and the great shortage of British staff made a situation that was not very favourable to rapid progress in native administration. Yet the Nigerian peoples, with hardly any exception, remained orderly and loyal. This was the more remarkable in the North, where some of the large Muslim emirates had come under anything like close administration for only a very few years—Kano and Sokoto had been taken over only ten years before—and this is all

the more striking since the then leader in the world of Islam, Turkey, was fighting against Britain and North Africa was made fully aware of that fact by German propaganda.

In 1919 Lugard retired from the Colonial Service. Most colonial governors undertake a gradually decreasing amount of part-time public services through which they offer their administrative experience to the State. Not so Lugard. From the moment of his retirement at the age of 61 he began the fourth period of his career, undertaking a number of tasks which kept him working almost at full stretch until a few days before his death. This period lasted twenty-six years. There is no space here to list all the activities that kept him working ten hours of the day or night at the big desk in his home among the Surrey woods, or took him to London and Geneva, Paris and Brussels. It might appear at first sight as if these new tasks were somewhat disjointed. But they were all concerned with the betterment of colonial, and especially African, conditions.

Lugard chose four main ways of working to this general end. One was by educational development. Hence he became one of the first members of the Committee which was set up in 1923 at the Colonial Office to advise upon Colonial education and was—though this hardly needs saying since he took up nothing to which he did not mean to give the fullest attention—a keen and effective member.

His second main contribution was by the promotion of scientific study of colonial problems. Here he concentrated his energies upon the development of the International Institute of African Languages and Cultures. His work for this institution is, however, described in this number by his close colleague in the enterprise, Dr. J. H. Oldham. This work overlapped with the third method by which he devoted himself to colonial reform, that of international collaboration. This led him to play a full and important part in the machinery of the League of Nations, first as a member of the Permanent Mandates Commission from 1923 to 1936, a very exacting duty which his successor, Lord Hailey, has discussed in this number. He was also a member of both the International Slavery and the Forced Labour Committees at Geneva of 1925 and 1932, and of the International Colonial Institute at Brussels. In many other ways, through public and private contact and through his hospitality to distinguished European colleagues, he fostered the conception that there were common interests among colonial Empires and that by discussions and the pooling of experience and information the standards of their administration could be raised in the interests of the peoples they ruled.

Lugard's fourth contribution at this period was that of his own writing and speaking, though he had no fondness for this latter form of expression and avoided it whenever he could. His *Dual Mandate in British Tropical Africa* (published in 1922) is charged with his great administrative wisdom and wide experience, and was the more sure of its effect because it filled a serious and surprising gap in the literature of a great Empire. It is a practical and informative book, in which the ego of the writer is, in view of the subject, almost too firmly repressed. It offered in considered and developed form the method and ideas which, as we have seen, had already extensively influenced colonial administration.

His leading conception, and one that to the end ran through all his work and writings, was that Europe should respect African institutions and traditions

and should not, in the necessary imposition of western government, education, and economics, crush the cultural vitality of Africans but should rather deliberately keep open a free field for their development and spontaneous adaptation. He was thus doubtful of the wisdom of conceding the parliamentary institutions demanded by the Europeanized minority of Africans. This doubt was widely shared, and the new constitutional proposals for Nigeria, which he must have warmly approved, build up the regional and central councils upon the foundation of those native administrations which, thanks to his work, are considered capable of carrying the new structure.

The second main conception which dictated the title of his book was at that time liberal and advanced, especially as a governor's principle of action. Institutions and ideas, however, move quickly in Africa, and already the emphasis upon the dualism of the European and native interests in Africa has, at least in theory, moved into one that rests more heavily upon the native side of the balance.

However far ideas may have been built up above the solid basis laid down both in act and word by Lugard, this book, as the most authoritative presentation of British colonial methods at this period, will remain a classic. Though Lugard had little faith in his own powers as an author, and though, because he always wrote with scrupulous attention to accuracy and documentation, he found the effort of writing laborious, his earnest desire to advance his main interest and his generous reluctance to refuse persistent requests kept him chained to his desk, pen in hand, for a large proportion of his last twenty-six years. He wrote articles, pamphlets, prefaces to other people's books, and memoranda upon subjects current in colonial circles. He also wrote an immense number of letters to correspondents, known and unknown, all over the world, and these were written with the greatest care and often involved a considerable amount of work. In the House of Lords—his peerage came in 1928—he spoke seldom and nearly always upon the affairs of which he was a master; his contributions were studied and weighty. Letters and articles by him appeared frequently in *The Times*: the last article, 'A World Colonial Charter', appeared only three months before his death.

It is impossible to leave this list of Lugard's main tasks in these years without speaking of his interest in slavery. He had seen much of slavery and all the terrible processes of raiding and trading that led up to it, and he fought this evil in the many different ways that were appropriate at the different periods of his life. Stern in the suppression of the seizure and trading of slaves, he was moderate and realistic in dealing with the status of slavery itself, since in most parts of Africa this had a relatively mild form, with economic ramifications that would have made the sudden imposition of abolition as disturbing to the slaves as to their masters. This is not the place to describe his system, but only to record that by his experience and his studies he became, perhaps, the leading authority in the world upon slavery and its abolition, though fortunately by the end of his life there was little opportunity left for the practical application of his ideas.

One cannot think of Lugard in this last busy period of his life without seeing him against the background of his beautiful house and garden on the wooded hills of Surrey. He turned this into a conference-house to which for meals, for nights, and for week-ends came a ceaseless stream of colonial governors and other ranks of the Service, officials from the Colonial Office, politicians and ministers, anthropologists,

missionaries, Kenya settlers and their opponents. They found themselves greeted with that considerate, ceremonious courtesy which was passing with their host's generation; they walked up and down the paths of a garden walled in by great pines and beeches, carrying on discussions which went on far into the night. In this house they saw the gifts and mementoes of his eventful life—part of the wooden doors of the hall of audience of Kano, the model of Hong Kong University, weapons and big-game trophies, the signed picture of Joseph Chamberlain—while the royal drum of Buganda, later returned to that kingdom, summoned them to dinner. Some of his most welcome and certainly his most impressive visitors were Africans. One day it was the Alake of Abeokuta (a native state he had forcibly annexed to Nigeria) taking tea in the garden in a magnificent cloak of blue velvet under a state umbrella. The Muhammadan Emirs of Sokoto, Kano, and Gando came to pay their respects. The Emir of Katsina came four times; on one occasion, when the writer of this article was present, this Emir recalled how in early days he had prepared an ambush along Lugard's path and had sat up all night discussing with his friends whether to destroy the infidel intruder or not. At sunset the Emir and his suite went out on to the drive in their flowing white robes and prostrated themselves in evening prayers. All these men were the rulers of prosperous and progressive states and had many administrative problems to discuss with their former conqueror.

Lugard was a strong man physically and mentally. Only tireless fibre of body could have carried him through all the strains and exposure of his early pioneering in unhealthy lands and enabled him to work as he did until his death. To the end his movements were alert and strong; he asked none of the indulgences of age; he would spring up to open doors or to carry weighty burdens for women; he struggled in war-time buses and tubes on his weekly or bi-weekly journeys to London. His figure was small, spare, and erect; there was no difficulty in seeing at once the man that he had been in his youth and prime, especially in those rare moments in later life when something caused his eyes to flash with anger or excitement. This immediate impression of strength came through his body from his mind. He had a will of very unusual tenacity. What he believed, he adhered to; what he set out to do, he achieved—that is written right across his life. This tenacity never deserted him. It marked his judgement, for once he had made up his mind upon some fundamental principle, he was not to be moved. On such issues, for instance, as 'administrative separation' which he advocated between the Europeans and Africans in Kenya, or in his condemnation of international administration, his mind was inflexible. He would listen with respect, his face puzzled and slightly clouded, to arguments against his conviction, but, at least in later life, it would be hard to move him, and he would be influenced less by any verbal brilliancy than by the estimate in which he held the exponent's character and experience. He showed the same tenacity in his judgements of men; once he had given his trust, he continued to give it without reserve, but he was stern in his refusal to change his mind about any man in whom he had detected a lack of integrity.

Another striking quality in Lugard, industry, was only another expression of his tenacity. There was no trouble he would spare himself in order to carry out a given task in the best possible way. While governor of Nigeria he embarrassed the Colonial Office by his suggestion that during his leaves he should continue to supervise the

administration of the territory from a room in that Department. He seemed never to need relaxation of mind and very little of body. Holidays, changes of scene, light literature, a walk or game to break the long routine of the day—these things were not so much as named by him except when he pressed their advantages upon his friends. The work of one day always went on with little intermission into the first hours of the next, with a late breakfast as partial compensation. When engaged on any urgent or important task he would withdraw himself even further from the ordinary life around him, to return again when the work was completed. With the help of his brother, Major E. J. Lugard, his partner and friend from the earliest to the last days, and of his devoted secretary, Miss Townshend, he kept cuttings and references and built up files from the vast number of British and colonial papers that passed across his desk. In his own clear, firm hand, which never weakened, he would make elaborate summaries of important documents for the benefit of himself or others. Certainly the massive total of his achievements was not easily won.

Tenacity and industry. In this list of qualities which is the poor literary fashion of trying to call up a character which is a living whole, patriotism must take equal place beside the other two. Lugard's faith in his country was so much the governing idea of his life that he and others were probably hardly aware of it. Certainly he never spoke of it. His faith in the justice and—be it admitted—the superiority of England was absolute: her righteousness was something he willed and lived himself. He could criticize this mistake or that turn of policy, but he would never press criticism so far as to weaken or embarrass 'the Government', of which he had been and still felt himself to be the servant. He retained all his life the special kind of loyalty and discipline that marks the patriotism of the soldier, and this line of un-deviating service runs right through the four diverse periods of his life and makes a unity of them. It is an attitude of mind that may have its dangers and limitations: but it can also give great confidence and continuity to a man's work, especially in imperial administration and in a man full of an initiative which he believes must be consonant with his country's interests and high reputation. Many of his acts, especially in his second period, were based upon his unshakable conviction, which he kept to the end, that no better fate could befall an African tribe than to be incorporated into the British Empire. For this purpose he was perfectly ready to use force, though, unlike Stanley, he hated to resort to it, and he used it with an economy that, by the standards of some other modern empires, made it an insignificant part of his total actions. When in later life he consorted much with educational and sociological experts, men and women at times inclined, if only as an intellectual exercise, to question the accepted fundamentals of their age and nation, the small figure of Lugard, with its strong, leonine head, seemed in that rationalizing company to stand firm on the rock of his absolute allegiance to his nation as he believed her to be, and was determined, as far as he was concerned, that she should be. Diverse men will differ as to whether this was Lugard's chief limitation or his great virtue. In spite of this—or was it because of this?—he could appreciate the achievements of other nations and the men who served them, and he could work to build up the African nations to be.

If Lugard had, as all men must have, some faults in public life, in private life, to his friends, he seemed to have none, and with his strength went a very great sweetness.

To the end he was gay and lively, always ready to laugh, and most happily of all at himself. His modesty was of the kind that at once abases and stimulates the lesser man in deference to whom it is revealed. He was almost as surprised as he was pleased when some tributes came to him, perhaps on the anniversary of some long-ago achievement. One of the things he loved most was to be addressed as 'Chief' by the dwindling band of those old officers who had done their hard service under him in the old Nigerian days. When talking of the past he would always bring out the names of other men who had been with him at the time and give them equal or greater credit in the story. In the exchanges of friendship he gave a hundredfold in sympathy, in appreciation, and in practical service. He had an old-world distaste for the use of shorthand and the typewriter for letters that were at all personal, and was never too tired, even in his last days, to write long personal letters in his own hand, and they were letters of the kind that are written at cost to the writer, entering fully into the troubles and needs of his friend.

Of Lugard's marriage it is difficult for a friend, who knew him only from the year of his wife's death in 1929, to write, yet it was possible to know that it was something very rare in human experience. The sense of loss remained with him always: it never grew any less as an element in his life and yet it was kept hidden and sacred. Flora Shaw was one of the most distinguished and enterprising women of her time, with famous friendships and great powers which show clearly in the historical sense and grand rhythm of her own book on colonial administration, *A Tropical Dependency*. She will have a biography, not so much as the wife of Lord Lugard as in her own right. They had no children, and the peerage, therefore, becomes extinct.

It may seem in this hurried memoir that its subject stands out too far above common human stature. Time and further study will show how far the main lines of this rough sketch, made so soon after his death, are true. It is possible that a detailed record of his life's work may bring out, as no summary can, some inevitable mistakes and limitations of a man who attempted such large tasks and worked at them for nearly three-quarters of a century. We write now under the immediate sense of the loss of a very great man. The historical microscope has not yet come into play, still less the sense of historical perspective. British imperialism between 1880 and 1945 was a vast, many-sided movement, and one that changed greatly within those years, and his biography will show that in so far as one man may Lugard personified that movement. He might, indeed, be called its spearhead. That in itself is a title to greatness, whether or not there is agreement with all his ideas and purposes. It is certain that all students and all critics of British imperialism will have to study that system as expressed in the work and ideas of this man. Before they make their judgement they will have to study the Africa Lugard found and the one he left. Whatever differences of view may develop between men of this or that party and between this generation and the next, as to the kind and degree of his greatness, all the tributes that have appeared in these last few days show the belief in Britain that Lugard was among the greatest and best men of his age. I do not believe this view will change. There are no absolute or fixed standards in the evaluation of human affairs, and it may be well to record our estimate of the administrator while this is still freshly stamped with our personal allegiance to the man, for what we feel and believe now is itself part of history.