

Lang-Tung (Pseudonym) (1881) *The Decline and Fall of the British Empire: Being a History of England Between the Years 1840-1981: Written for the Use of Junior Classes in Schools*

Two satires on imperial inefficiency and the excesses of the Gilded Age take the long view of history, within which both Britain and the USA have disappeared into obscurity. *The Decline and Fall of the British Empire* (1881) ironically reduces Gibbon's grand history to a pamphlet designed for use in junior schools. Its simple question-and-answer sequence infantilizes the projected reader, the whole work being presented as a primer, translated from the Chinese, by Lang-Tung, professor of history at the University of Peking. The latter explains that the book is "intended for use in the upper classes of our National Schools". This pamphlet unusually projects an infantilized reader for its mock-millennial catalogue of imperial inadequacies..... [David Seed, "Framing the Reader in Early Science Fiction," *Style* 47, no. 2 (2013)]

Here is an excerpt of a popular magazine of the period (*Cassell's Family Magazine*, June 1889), giving news of quasi nowhere in Africa, where Stanley is battling against odds, nature and people. Especially people who, when resisting his advance, are said to be 'incorrigibly vindictive'.

In general, a good example of the forcing "of wares on the natives" and the creation of "new wants" leading to "the slavery of hopeless toil" was opium, forced upon the Chinese government by the British, supported by the French, in two wars (1839-1842 and 1860s). This was part of an ongoing debate, as evidenced, inter alia, by a pamphlet published in 1881, purporting to be the work of a Chinese historian written in the year 2881 (*The Decline and Fall of the British Empire. Being the History of England between the years 1840-1981. Written for the use of Junior Classes in Schools*. By Lang-Tung, professor of history at the Imperial University of Peking, and tutor to their Imperial Highnesses the Princes Sing and Hang. Translated into the English Language by Yea, Peking, 2881 A.D., London: F.V. White & Co., 1881, 32)