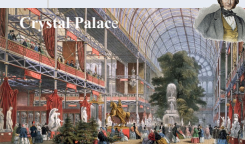


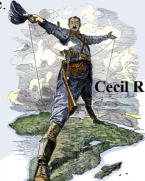
## Overview:

In the 19th century, England controlled 24% of the world's land mass, touching on six of the seven continents. The collection of exotic animals, emblemized by the prized hippo Obaysch, was a manifestation of British desire to demonstrate its global dominance. The London Zoo was an outward symbol of British imperialism. The zoo was opened in 1828 by Sir Thomas Stamford Raffles, who is also considered to be the founder of Singapore as a British colony. Collections of exotic animals in England were not new – dating back to the thirteenth century where wild animals were kept in the Tower of London. The London Zoo was different in that it was established as a scientific endeavor. Originally, the only people allowed inside its gates were members of the zoological society. The London Zoo was opened to the public in 1847. The two most popular attractions were Obaysch the hippo and Jumbo the elephant.



In 1851, the Crystal Palace which housed "The Great Exhibition," opened to the public. It came to represent Britain's global dominance. The Crystal Palace displayed industrial and colonial might.

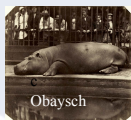
England considered it her 'right' "to amass a far-flung empire, both to exhibit her frightening strength as well as maintain her control of important sources of raw materials." This idea is immortalized in the Rudyard Kipling's poem, "The White Man's Burden" (1899), which revealed English imperialist attitudes that entailed taming and domesticating what was perceived to be "animalistic" or "savage."



Cecil Rhodes

Britain's global imperialistic endeavors owes a lot to the efforts of Cecil Rhodes whose land acquisitions in Africa paved the way for Britain to become an international powerhouse.

**Conclusion:** English society was torn between advancement and morality, causing a Crisis in Faith. The Victorian Age and the Natural World blended together to form an imperialistic idea that negated the "traditional" Victorian ethical standard. The beauty of the world provided poets, writers, and artists a canvas of creativity which clashed with scientific exploration and the capturing, categorizing, and dissecting of the same natural world the poets were romanticizing. Nature was being replaced by the machine, the city, the wealth, the power, the subjugation, and imperialistic attitude of England. Darwin's *Origin of Species* generated the mantra of "survival of the fittest," a phrase originally coined by Herbert Spencer. A complex notion that could serve many objectives, "survival of the fittest" was frequently used to rationalize teleological thinking that justified human dominance. For many, the argument of Natural Selection became the tool of religious dogma to align with ethnocentrism to sustain English Imperialism. Unfortunately, poetic nature could not withstand technological advancement, the need for resources, and the industrialization that fueled the British Empire. The English were themselves evolving into Darwinian "predators" scratching and clawing their way to the top of the Animal Kingdom and subduing, with impunity, the peoples they viewed as savages in England's many Dominions.



Obaysch

In 1838 Charles Darwin visited the London Zoo and became fascinated by an Orangutan that lived there named Jenny. He visited her multiple times. Charles Darwin was still working through information gathered from his trip on the Beagle and these meetings with Jenny helped solidify some of his views on creation and evolution.



In W. H. Hudson's novel *Green Mansions* (1904) the reader is taken on an imperialistic journey through jungles in South America. This book exemplifies imperialism. By describing "natives" as "Savages." The word "savage" is used 69 times, while the word "human" is only used half as much.



W.H. Hudson

## Victorians and the Natural World: Colonialism and the Moral Imperative

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The Victorian Empire

**Natural History Museum** – Constructed 1873 - 1881 by Alfred Waterhouse – housed collections of ancient fossils as well as species of nature gathered throughout the British Empire. The museum was a portrait of British global dominance and scientific discovery. Sir Hans Sloane (physician and naturalist) initiated the museum in main exhibition in 1753. The collection grew with the Empire, adding even more animals, human skeletons, and dried plants from throughout the growing Empire.



### The Victorian Crisis of Faith:

According to historian Richard Helmstadter Victorians experienced "an intellectual and emotional upheaval, stemming from challenges to the historicity of the Bible, discoveries in geology and biology, and concerns about morality, or rather, the apparent lack of it, in nature. Science and religion." English society, particularly the middle class, was thus engaged in a dogmatic debate between organic "evolution" and the age-old notion of "special creation" through god.



The source text for special creation was William Paley's book *Natural Theology: Or, Evidence of the Existence and Attributes of the Deity Collected from the Appearance of Nature* (1802) which employed the "Watchmaker Analogy," stating that any "design implies a Designer"; in other words, the complexity of the universe could only come from the mind of god.

Implicit in Paley's argument is a teleological argument that all living creatures and plants had a function in the design of the world and our biology was created to function perfectly. Charles Darwin's *Origin of Species* (1859) challenged the Paley's idea that a "God or Creator" designed every species individually. Darwin argued that creatures evolve in balance with the natural world and demonstrated this by using the 13 species of Galapagos finch as an example of natural selection. Finches, Darwin observes, "are, a nearly perfect graduation [of form, that] may be traced, from a beak extraordinarily thick, to one so fine, that it may be compared to a warbler." Thus, the beak of each finch has evolved to meet the needs of the bird's habits. Darwin's theory demonstrated that creatures could adapt and mutate without disrupting the design or designer. Nature could thus function on its own, as it were, without the need for either God or, even more troubling for Victorians, moral strictures.



THE ORIGIN OF SPECIES

