

5 nov 2020 - The Victorian Age

Corn Laws

An other social question was the price of **corn**; it was kept artificially high by the government, through protective tariffs there were called the *Corn laws*, which restricted the importation of foreign corn.

An association was formed against the Corn laws, and it obtained the repeal [cancellazione] of these laws in 1846, with the support of a conservative Prime Minister, Peel.

The repeal caused much discontent in the *Conservative Party*, since it wanted to protect the interests of the *landed gentry*, by which it was largely supported.

Free Trade

The upper class and the industrial class both believed in a policy of **Free Trade**, that is an uncontrolled flow of commercial transactions with foreign nations. It was a free exchange of good, without protective tariffs, and it brought great wealth to England.

Reforms

The Victorian Age was marked by a great number of social achievements and reforms;

- **The Factory Act**, which regulated and improved the conditions of workers in factory
- **Ten Hours' Act**, which limited the working hours to ten a day, for both men and women.
- **The Mines Act**, which prohibited the working of women and children in mines
- **The Public Health Act**, which improved health condition
- **The Education Act**, which reorganized elementary education
- **Adoption of the English week**, by which Saturday Afternoon was devoted to pleasure and entertainment

Ireland

The population of Ireland consisted mainly of Catholics, and they were very poor and they became even poorer by recurrent famines; with only potato crops to feed on.

In the 1840's there was a potato famine, and so potato crops failed several times; this caused mass starvation and emigration.

In order to stop a mass emigration and starvation, Charles Parnell, which was an Irish leader, demanded Home Rule (an independent constitution), but these reforms were rejected twice by the conservatives, and Ireland obtained Home Rule only after WWI.

Foreign Policy

The Victorian Age was above all the period in which the great British Colonial Empire took its final form.

There was an enlargement of the Indian territories, as a consequence of the Indian mutiny [ammutinamento indiano] in 1857, and after this mutiny England acquired the control of India. In 1876, Queen Victoria became Empress of India, that was India, Bangladesh and Pakistan.

The English Empire had enormous proportions, involving Canada, Australia, New Zealand, India, Ceylon, Singapore, Hong Kong, Gibraltar, Malta and Cyprus.

This period is characterized by two wars:

- from 1899 to 1902 England was at war against two South-African areas, called Orange and Transvaal; these two areas were interesting because there were diamonds and gold; these two regions were ruled by Dutch colonists, called Boers; it gave England the supremacy over the two Dutch regions
- **The Crimean War:** it was the only international war during Victoria's Reign; it was originated by a dispute between Turkey and Russia, over the boundaries of the Turkish empire.; England and France, declared war on Russia, together with Turkey, because they were afraid of the growing power of Russia in the Balkans; the war broke out in 1854 and 1857; Russia was defeated, but the conflict exposed the disorganization of the English Army particularly in the field of sanitation; public opinion was horrified at the news to the terrible conditions in which sick and wounded soldiers were kept; a young lady of noble origins, **Florence Nightingale** went to Crimea organized hospitals, obtained nurses medicines and bandages from England, laid the foundations of Medical Services for soldiers; she inspired the creation of the Women's Corps in the international *Red Cross*.