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Wallace.

India in 1887

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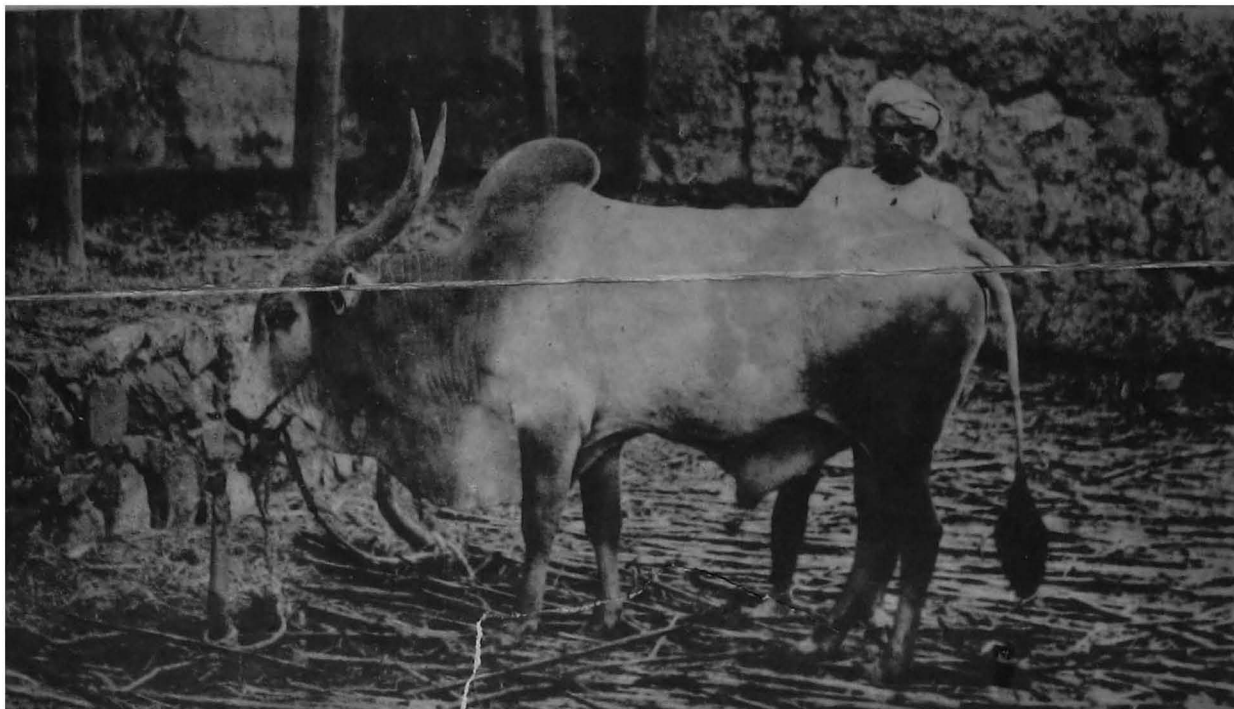
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INDIA IN 1887.

INDIA IN 1887

AS SEEN BY

ROBERT WALLACE,

PROFESSOR OF AGRICULTURE AND RURAL ECONOMY IN THE
UNIVERSITY OF EDINBURGH.

With Plates and other Illustrations.

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TO

LIEUT.-GEN. H.R.H. THE DUKE OF CONNAUGHT,

K.G., K.T., K.P., G.C.S.I., G.C.M.G., G.C.I.E., C.B.,

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF OF THE BOMBAY ARMY.

PERSONAL AND INTRODUCTORY.

SIX years ago I was appointed Professor of Agriculture at the Royal Agricultural College, Cirencester. During my term of office, which extended to fully three years, until my removal to Edinburgh University, I had in my classes four English civilians and eleven native scholars, who had come from India on the strength of Government scholarships to study English Agriculture.

The application and ability of these men placed them at all times high up in the College honours list. My object in going to India was not altogether confined to a desire to extend my knowledge of the Agriculture of the British Empire, but to learn in an unmistakable manner what fruits the Cirencester College training had borne. I felt that my own reputation as a teacher and the English system of agricultural education were both on trial, and it naturally was a matter of the deepest interest to me to discover how my former pupils had been dealt with by Government, and what facilities had been afforded to them of extending their knowledge of the agricultural practices of their own or their adopted country, and of calling into requisition the results of an English theoretical training.

From my detailed statement it will be gathered how

much cause I had to regret the position of all but a few of those in whom I was interested, and how necessary it is for the credit of the teachers who had been involved, that at least a protest should be lodged against the action, or rather want of action, of Government in this matter.

My going was entirely a matter of my own seeking, of my own free will, and for my own ends, although these were largely in the interests of the country. I landed in Bombay on the 10th of May, and left it on my return on the 13th of September. I was thus fully four months in the country. During that time I travelled over 13,000 miles by rail. Those who know what it is to travel in India during the heat of summer will at least give me credit for sincerity of purpose, whatever verdict they may pronounce upon the work which I accomplished. My *route* and most of the numerous centres visited are shown by red lines on Map No. 1. I have intentionally omitted to mark a few places where a halt was made, because in giving what I consider an unbiassed description of my experiences I have had to say in some instances what might, if names were added, wound the feelings of some of my friends, though it is in no way my desire to do so. From Bombay my course was northward—Simla and Lahore being the extremities in a north-west direction. Calcutta and Dárjiling were subsequently reached in the east. The return from the north was by Jabulpur, and Nagpur in the Central Provinces.

Southern India was traversed by way of Madras and the S.I. Railway, which may be said to hug the eastern shore. From Tuticorin, the most southerly point of my journey on the Continent, I passed by steamboat to Colombo. I returned after spending ten days in Ceylon. The course of the northward return journey was more towards the west; but owing to the railway connexion on the western side not being complete, it

was necessary to double back from Utakamand and Bangalore to Madras on the way to Dharwar, Poona, and Bombay.¹

I took occasion, at the first suitable public opportunity after my return, to express the great sense of gratification which I felt at the kindness and courtesy shown to me by European residents in India and by natives whom it was my good fortune to meet. For the above reason I do not now enter into details in this matter, although the lapse of six months has in no way impaired my recollection of the attention shown me.

Those who have not visited India cannot fully comprehend how well and devotedly the duties of our European officers are performed under difficulties of climate, of which in this country we have no conception. The standard of work in matters of administration (the great business of our countrymen in India) is excellent, and the amount performed is quite wonderful. The fabric of the constitution of the Government of India—that institution which dispenses justice and brings peace and prosperity to millions by a mere handful of educated British gentlemen—is one of the most extraordinary that could possibly be imagined. It is quite impossible to detail the reasons for its success, but amongst them all stands out prominently the innate love of justice, which is the birth-right of every true-born Britisher. In India we are trusted and respected. I could feel that time is surely deepening the impression in the minds of all thoughtful natives that the future welfare of India is irrevocably

¹ The date of my arrival at each of the main points named I here subjoin :—

Bombay, 10th May.

Simla, 29th May.

Lahore, 8th June.

Calcutta, 14th June.

Dárjiling, 15th June.

Jessor, 24th June.

Nagpur, 20th July.

Madras, 4th August.

Tuticorin, 12th August.

Colombo, 13th August.

Utakamand, 28th August.

Bangalore, 31st August.

Dharwar, 2nd September.

Poona, 6th September.

bound up in the existence of British rule, which is a synonymous term with British freedom.

I have been careful in acknowledging my sources of information where this was possible or expedient, but should any of my many esteemed friends be inadvertently omitted, I hope they will be generous enough to forget and forgive my shortcoming as an oversight. I hope, too, that the consistent omission of the prefix "Mr" will not be thought in any sense to lack courtesy.

I have to apologise to my readers for the condition of a number of the collotype plates representing cattle. The defects are not attributable to Waterlow & Sons, London, who printed them, but to the poor and, in some instances, very imperfect negatives which I supplied. Nearly all of the original photographs were taken by myself in India. [Those borrowed I have acknowledged elsewhere.] I feel that I may claim indulgence on the ground, that five days before I left Edinburgh for India I knew nothing practically of photography,¹ and of the difficulties in India for a beginner, in the shape of moisture and the inconveniences arising from keeping constantly on the move, with the impossibility of being able to find a dark room or even a dark corner. For weeks I had nightly to change my plates (adjusting them altogether by touch) under the folds of my traveller's blanket. To succeed in developing negatives myself was impossible under the circumstances.

I now gratefully acknowledge the valuable assistance in this matter rendered by Baldwin in Cawnpur, Skeen in Colombo, and Hughes in Madras, all of whom were pleased to devote themselves to my assistance.

In determining what plates should appear in my work, I sank the idea of ornament altogether in favour of anything which might serve to elucidate a point which required

¹ My painstaking instructor was the Secretary of the Edinburgh Amateur Photographic Society; W. Forgan, Bristo Place, to whose tuition I am indebted for the ability to bring home anything worthy of being reproduced.

more than a written explanation. The consequence is that a number of plates which appear are, from an artist's point of view, quite inexcusable; still they are, from my own point of view, instructive.

My sojourn in India was a great source of pleasure and gratification to me; and the work of arranging my facts and views for publication has been no less enjoyable and edifying.

The letterpress was practically completed within twelve months from the time I landed in Bombay. My best thanks are due to my friend Hugh Cameron (who acted for Oliver & Boyd, my printers and publishers) for the expedition with which it has been made ready for the public, and for the care displayed in executing the details of the work.

The maps were designed and prepared under the personal superintendence of my friend J. G. Bartholomew, Edinburgh, and the reproduction by lithography of the grasses and crop plants¹ was also executed under his orders to my complete satisfaction.

The execution of the mango coloured plates by Waterston & Sons was equally satisfactory.

In describing the leading crops, I have omitted the growing of opium and cotton, besides many others for which there was no room. The former is a necessary evil, of which the less said the better. About cotton, again, every one knows as much as I should have been able to tell in the space I had at my disposal.

It may be said, and perhaps objected to, that I have devoted a large share of my attention to cattle. There is, however, no subject of greater importance in India than that of cattle, and it is a fact, and one after all not to be wondered at, that, from the peculiar and special nature of the study of it, there are few subjects which are less under-

¹ The originals were borrowed by permission from Duthie and Fuller's *Field and Garden Crops*, and Duthie's *Indigenous Fodder Grasses of the Plains of North-Western India*.

stood by European residents. I think I may safely say that, with the exception of the excellent little book by Dr Shorte, which only refers to a small number of breeds, and is limited in other respects, there is no work which deals in a comprehensive manner with the cattle of India. I do not claim that what I have done has exhausted the subject; but my object will have been gained if my efforts are great enough and successful enough to rouse Government to the knowledge of the importance of it.

Let those who criticise me remember it is just possible that the difference between their own opinion and that expressed by me may arise from their knowledge of certain facts being local. India is a very great country, and there are few officers indeed who possess much knowledge of matters of detail beyond their own immediate neighbourhood. There was nothing that struck me so much in passing from one part to another as this limitation of knowledge, and the likelihood of mistakes arising from it when local facts are stated as generally applicable to the Empire.

Let those who would severely criticise me on account of my short sojourn in the country, look to the discoveries which I record relating to the colour of the skins of cattle¹ and to the influence of early castration, and ask themselves if it is not just possible that those who, with daily opportunities for observation, have yet failed to notice these matters, might not also have overlooked other points which in a greater degree demand special knowledge rather than time for their study. Naturally, many of my outspoken remarks will be assailed; but I leave it to a discerning public to infer that the necessity of bringing the subjects criticised before their notice bears some proportion to the severity of the attacks which may be made upon my rendering of them.

My object in writing an account of my Indian experi-

¹ Professor Huxley, in writing to me on this subject, says, "The fact you mention is of very great interest as showing a hitherto unsuspected relation between colour and climate."

ences, beyond the personal gratification of doing so, is to induce Government to alter its plans as regards an Agriculture Department, and to see that ground which has been lost by inexperienced officers is yet capable of being regained by efforts made in the right direction. One of the most hopeful signs that my desires in the matter of an Agriculture Department in India may be realized is the promise of our home Government to create a Minister of Agriculture and a special Department of Agriculture for Great Britain. Arguing in the abstract—if this country, with all its wealth and the greatness and variety of its resources, requires such an organization, what must India require within her narrow grooves of commercial life, with the evils of an over-crowded population at no great distance, and periodical famines staring her in the face?

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* Produced from negatives presented by E. C. Ozanne.

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ERRATUM.

Page 69, footnote, line 8, for "sun-wheat," read "sun-wheel."

sciences bearing on the subject. This is, I think, almost the only method which has not had a trial in India, and it is the only one which could be successful.

Matters have at present come to such a deadlock that something extraordinary must happen before any improvement can be brought about. The confidence of Government in the possibility of agricultural improvement is thoroughly shaken. There is an impression widely abroad that the Indian ryot knows much better than we do how to work his land and grow his crops. Assuredly he knows much more than any European whose business is not agriculture, and there is no one whose business is agriculture that I could point to in India; but the ryot certainly does not know more than a Scotchman or an Englishman would who had been selected for his proficiency in the science and practice of British agriculture, and whose duty it had been for a term of years to make himself thoroughly acquainted with everything connected with Indian agriculture. I am speaking advisedly when I say that no such individual has ever held a position in the employment of the Indian Government. Failure on a gigantic scale, more especially when carried out at great expense, and with disastrous consequences to the country, is regrettable, but to the initiated there is nothing disheartening in failure when it is known to be the direct result of disregard of the elementary principles which govern all human undertakings. The drowning of a thousand men who could not swim in the effort to cross a river is in no way a proof that one good swimmer would not cross it with the greatest ease and without the slightest fear of the consequences.¹

The important questions arise—What class of men should be employed to form the Agriculture Department in India? How many are required? And where shall we

¹ The foregoing portion of this chapter is taken, with some few verbal alterations, from the Introductory Lecture by the Author to the Agriculture Class in the University of Edinburgh, delivered in October 1887.

go to find them? There never was at any previous period a better opportunity of supplying this prospective demand from the ranks of the hereditary farmers.

The men suitable for the purpose are well-educated sons of gentlemen farmers, brought up in the country and accustomed to mix freely with the lower classes, so that they are more able to understand and sympathize with them than the sons of men in the higher spheres of life, who have never been really in touch with individuals far beneath them in rank.

Young farmers with a good general education, and who have been trained from their youth in those details of agricultural practice which can only be acquired by early association with a farm and its purtenances, have within recent years been induced to undertake scientific study and research, in many instances with the object of becoming land-agents, and in other cases so that they might be more able to contend with the increasing complications of the times, which have often proved too much for the old-fashioned farmers working according to old lights.

To make certain that the best men available in all parts of the country are secured, some such arrangement as the following might be adopted:—

(1.) There should be a minimum test and competitive examination in the subjects of (a) English,¹ and (b) Agriculture. The latter to be made so thoroughly practical that no one could pass who had gained his knowledge and experience solely from books.

(2.) The educational qualification, which it should be imperative for a man to possess before going forward for the final examination, should be a Degree in Agriculture, or the Diploma of one of the leading Societies or Associations offering such in Agriculture and the collateral sciences.

By this system the best candidates could be secured, and much expense in examining would be saved, as compared with the ordinary subjects of an English education, but excluding Literature.

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