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With the Author's most cordial regards
and esteem.

INDIA'S INTEREST IN THE BRITISH
BALLOT BOX.

THE GENERAL ELECTION,

1885.

INDIA'S INTEREST IN THE BRITISH
BALLOT BOX,

BY

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TO THE READER.

COROMANDEL, WOODVILLE ROAD,
EALING, W.,

September 18th, 1885.

BROTHER ELECTOR,

I venture to ask your attention to the facts and arguments contained in the following pages. They deal with Indian and Colonial affairs—affairs in which British electors ought to evince more interest than they do at present. My endeavour has been to put into the hands of those who bear responsibility for our rule of India and the Crown Colonies such particulars as are likely to be of value in enabling everyone who cares to know them to form some idea of the problems involved in the righteous rule of the countries mentioned. I do this with confidence. The subject upon which I address you being what it is, and the persons I address being British Electors, I have no fear that the matters put forward will be overlooked, or cast aside without consideration. Whatever faults there may be in the manner of my statement the matters themselves will, I am sure, receive consideration. I remember how keenly my countrymen resisted the stamping out of Polish nationality by the despotic empires of Europe and how warmly they sympathised with the aspirations and the efforts of the Italians to free themselves from the hateful yoke of the Austrians at Venice and of the French at Rome. Consequently, I am sure that the affairs of their fellow-subjects in India and in the Crown Colonies will not be pushed aside as of little concern or that indifference will be felt as to the despotism which ^{on} two hundred and five millions of the Queen's subjects ^{is} ^{so} vice preventing all political growth and denying to the

subjected any share in the government of their own country. The system of administration now existing in India is as certainly doomed to early overthrow as was Negro slavery in the United States when John Brown paid with his life for the gallant efforts he made for freedom at Harper's Ferry. The "signs of the times" are as clear now in India and in England as they were in the Slave States and Free States in America at that period.

The pages of this pamphlet will be found to be mainly devoted to Indian affairs. But it is not on behalf of India alone that I ask your attention. The affairs of our Crown Colonies, those Colonies being despotically ruled, as much need close overhauling in the House of Commons as do those of India. Irresponsible rule is an evil alike to rulers and to ruled. Colonial concerns *are* debated in both Houses of Parliament, and so far as this is the case there is occasion only for satisfaction. But these concerns are of a kind calculated to flatter our national pride and to appeal to our instincts as an imperial race. That which will make for Federation and will constitute the Empire one and indivisible attracts attention. Well and good. Colonial Federation, followed by Imperial Union, is most desirable so far as it is attainable by legislative ends and is workable by obvious means; no true patriot will hesitate to further this object. But what, if, when the chain is constructed, it be found that some of the links are weak and the chain breaks because the metal here and there has corroded through neglect? That event is extremely probable. We look, in our Indian and Colonial Empire, too much to what is grandiose and too little to what is useful and to what will make for the real good of the subject peoples for whose good governance the British Electors through the House of Commons are responsible.

An example of what I mean is afforded by Ceylon. In the United Kingdom the tax on bread has been removed, and a barbarous system of taxation remodelled. The House of Commons did these things. It ought to have done the same for Ceylon. The House of Commons is as much responsible for the administration of the affairs of Ceylon as it is for what

happens in the ^{United} Kingdom. Yet it has permitted the bread-tax to remain in Ceylon until this day unrepealed, and has forborne to touch the wretched and unfair system of taxation which exists there: until 1878, it permitted the bread-tax to be farmed precisely after the Herzegovinian fashion. For the continuance of unjust taxation the Colonial Office, in the major degree, is highly culpable. Forty-two or forty-three years ago, William Ewart Gladstone was Under-Secretary of State for the Colonies. He had not been in office long before he observed that the system of revenue and taxation in Ceylon presented a general character very much at variance with the more enlightened and liberal policy, financial and commercial, prevailing elsewhere in the British Dominions. To the youthful Under-Secretary as to the mature Statesman to discern an evil was to grapple with it. Mr. Gladstone wrote a despatch, which was approved by Earl Grey, Secretary of State for the Colonies, in which he stated that the time had arrived "for a revision of the present system of taxation, with a view to its adaptation to the altered circumstances and prospects of the Colony." With what result? Shortly after approval of his suggestions was expressed Mr. Gladstone ceased to be connected with the Colonial Office and has never returned thither; his despatch was pigeon-holed. Consequently we have this instructive comparison:

1843 or 1844.

Promise of Amendment.

1885,

Promise still unfulfilled and nothing done towards its fulfilment.

It remains to be seen whether a Reformed House of Commons will allow a system of taxation to continue whereby a common cooly in Colombo has to contribute annually much more than a tenth of his income—chiefly as a bread-tax and partly as a poll-tax—to the State, while all the land devoted to the growth of grain is taxed, that held by foreigners being exempted from any tax whatsoever, the poll-tax, too, being of the same amount for the poor man as for the rich man. On pp. 92 to 101 the reader will find some particulars relating to Ceylonese Food Taxation and the means whereby, without

adding any burden to the enterprising Tea or Coffee Planter, a readjustment of taxation may be made. It rests with the House of Commons,—that is to say, with every man who votes in November next,—to decide whether bread, or the staple food of a people whether that staple be rice or ragi, shall be untaxed in Britain and most heavily taxed in a British Colony. Such a question may seem small and of slight importance when proposals for Federation are in the air and on men's lips, but it were well we made our Colonies contented before we strove to cement them together. One of the first things Mr. Gladstone touched as a Minister was Ceylon taxation; may he not finish his great work as a Statesman without correcting the errors his youthful eye was quick to detect! His eye in matters financial is not dimmed nor in regard to aught for the good of humanity is his strength abated.

A British Elector may not be indifferent to the concerns of Greater Britain even if he would. The responsibility which rests upon him is too great to allow of unconcern on his part. Every voter, who, in November, will record his vote will do so not only for himself, but also on behalf of

200,000,000 British subjects in India,

3,000,000 „ „ in Ceylon, and

2,000,000 „ „ in the Crown Colonies generally

In none of these places is there the semblance even of Representative Government. The countries, one and all, are ruled by pure despotism tempered with irresponsible criticism; the rulers are liable to no punishment, let the blunders or crimes committed be what they may. Nominally the Houses of Parliament, but really and truly certain "permanent persons" in the India Office and in the Colonial Office, rule these many millions of our fellow-subjects. They do not rule them wisely; they do not rule them well. It is impossible to say of our Crown Colonies that their native inhabitants have prospered and benefited by Downing-street despotism as those British subjects have prospered and benefited to whom self-governing facilities have been granted. The time has come for a careful enquiry into Indian and Colonial Administration. British Electors, you are

begged not to forget the need of your fellow subjects under other skies, and when you record your vote in November to remember that each of you is making his mark on the ballot paper for nearly seventy others who have no vote, exclusive of non-voters in the United Kingdom.

So far as India is concerned the emergency is great. During the interregnum of power enjoyed by the Conservatives—power obtained solely owing to defects in our system of electing Parliaments which it is to be hoped will soon be remedied*—there seems every likelihood that, in India at least, the hands of the clock will be put back, military expenditure will be increased, all the bad and none of the good features of Lord Lytton's viceroyalty will be repeated. Lord Randolph Churchill's speech on August 6, as Secretary of State for India, was not only marked by violent and virulent departures from truth unusually discreditable, because in the Office he administered there were facts he ought to have known entirely disproving what he said, but it was characterized by some of the worst aspects of past Indian administration; if not checked the course indicated betokens serious evil.

Yet, more urgently and of more importance, you are asked, not merely by one who strives, as I strive, to be a friend of India, but by the Indian people themselves, to take up their cause and become their champion. I have reason to believe you will soon be addressed by certain Representative Associations in India, and asked to consider their needs and to come to their help. The plan to be adopted is described in a letter published in the *Bombay Gazette* on August 10. The writer, signing himself "English Elector," demonstrates the need for making an impression on English electors, and adds that, in his opinion, action might be taken in two ways:—

(1) Efforts should be made to inform and influence the general public, and especially the more important constituen-

* I refer to Septennial Parliaments. Were we to return to the good old constitutional practice of Triennial Parliaments it is safe to say (1) Reforms would not be so "killingly slow" as they are, and (2) more than half the misfortunes we suffer from would not occur as the Tories would not (as they now do) get into power through the loss of Liberal virtue arising from want of frequent contact with the Electors. Only twice in fifty years have the Tories been elected to office by the British people, viz., in 1841 and 1874.

cies, such as those in the manufacturing districts of the north. Great public meetings should be addressed: among the masses there is a deep sympathy with India, and an appeal on her behalf is sure to meet with a hearty and generous response. After the example of the Cobden Club, pamphlets and leaflets should also be distributed in large numbers, giving brief but clear answers, from the Indian point of view, to the practical questions of the day: *e. g.*

Why does India prefer English to Russian rule?

What is our interest in Central Asia?

Is the Indian Council a benefit to India or the reverse?

Can India be defended within her own frontier and by her own citizen soldiers?

What are the aspirations of her educated classes?

What are the causes which impede her material progress and the development of her trade with England?

On all such questions India knows best where the shoe pinches, and can tell England what is the policy which is the most just and at the same time the most safe. In the solution of these difficulties England is as much interested as India. For any one who has studied the question must see that India is the pivot upon which the whole foreign policy of England turns. If we have been in trouble in Afghanistan, in Egypt, in the Soudan, in Central Asia, it is because we have been led there for the supposed defence of India. If in these enterprises we have uselessly squandered many lives and much money, it is because we have not yet abandoned an old and mischievous policy of suspicion, treating India as a sort of powder magazine which no stranger can safely be allowed to approach. But if the English people will listen to wiser counsels, if they will understand that the real defence of India consists in gaining the good-will and approval of this vast but reasonable and docile population, then indeed the whole situation becomes changed. India, instead of being a point of weakness, will, with her marvellous resources, become a tower of strength. By a just and sympathetic policy the friendly feeling now existing will become confirmed as a permanent national sentiment, and the two countries will be linked together in a partnership of common interest and mutual good-will.

(2) So much with regard to an appeal to the general English public. But it is equally necessary that those constituencies should be specially addressed where the candidates are men who have shown themselves either friends or "unfriends" of India. Mr. Slagg, Mr. Digby, Sir John Phear, and others have performed most valuable services to India, and both from gratitude and self-interest the people are

bound to do what they can to secure their return. It seems therefore natural and proper that they should assure the electors that the views held by these gentlemen are those approved by the intelligent classes out here, and that if these views are acted on the country will be contented and prosperous. On the other hand, there are candidates, like Sir Richard Temple, who do not enjoy the confidence of the Indian people; but who, on the strength of the high offices they held out there, put themselves forward as authorities on Indian subjects, aspiring probably to higher office still. In such cases it is proposed to tell the electors that the people of India do not wish to say anything with regard to these gentlemen personally, or as to their general politics; but for self-protection they must repudiate them as friends of the Indian people and as exponents of a sound Indian policy. By such a procedure the hands of India's real friends will be strengthened, while the wolves in sheep's clothing will be stripped of their outer garment before the eyes of an admiring public. And great indirect benefit will accrue if the results of even a single election can be affected. For candidates will then understand that they cannot afford to neglect Indian questions, and even those least altruistic by nature will think it worth their while to get up Indian questions and personally to conciliate the good-will of the Indian people.

This counsel has proved acceptable to Native-Indian Reformers, to the large number of Indian Liberals throughout the Continent, and, probably, action in the various directions suggested will speedily be undertaken. Englishmen have never yet turned a deaf ear to such an appeal; if it be made, I, for one, am certain, it will be heeded.

May I, therefore, ask you, to carefully consider what is set forth in the pages of this pamphlet? I venture, further, to hope the result of such consideration may determine you to press upon those who seek your suffrages the desirability of pledging themselves to an enquiry—

1. Into past and present administration of India, Ceylon, and the Crown Colonies as a whole; and
2. Into the possibility of early readjustment of administrative arrangements, whereby Despotism shall be replaced by Constitutionalism, alike in India and in our Crown Colonies generally.

xiii.

In so doing you will largely contribute towards the consolidation of the great Empire of which all British subjects are proud; will do much to remove the dissatisfaction now prevalent in all quarters of the British globe; and will so strengthen every part of the Empire from within that of all and every portion of it Shakespeare's words will become literally true:

“Come the three corners of the world in arms,
And we shall shock them.”

I am, your Obedient Servant,

John Dighy

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TALBOT BROTHERS, 81, CARTER LANE, E.C.

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