

# INDIAN FAMINES

THEIR

HISTORICAL, FINANCIAL, & OTHER ASPECTS

CONTAINING

REMARKS ON THEIR MANAGEMENT, AND SOME  
NOTES ON PREVENTIVE AND MITI-  
GATIVE MEASURES

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## P R E F A C E.

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THE object of the following pages is to afford to the English public an opportunity of forming opinions upon a subject which has hitherto received but little general attention. I am aware that the topic is not an inviting one, and that it possesses few elements calculated to make it popular.

I consider that hitherto the public have depended too much on the daily press for information upon the true state of affairs; and that they have therein perused the articles on, and narratives of, the present famine, as so much ordinary newspaper intelligence, because they have no other grounds upon which to base

their opinion, or enable them to criticise the information given. If the intention of these pages is fulfilled, the public will in future be able to weigh statements and figures, and to judge for themselves on the subject as it is represented to them from time to time, a necessary consequence of which should be that the press generally will be somewhat more tolerant in future in their criticisms of the management of Indian famines.

It has been insinuated that Indian officials are apathetic in the case of famines; that the throwing overboard of the "useless gear" is a matter of indifference to them; and that they fatalistically assume the inevitable death of a large proportion of the population during such disasters. I do not know that these pages will prove absolutely that such insinuations are altogether groundless; they have not been written with the object of proving any one innocent: but I hope that they will show clearly the many difficulties surrounding the matter, and prove the importance of making all allowance for

those connected with the management of similar calamities, except where gross misjudgment, miscalculation, maladministration, or culpable neglect, can be brought as a specific charge.

While in India during the two previous famines, I was struck by the comments of the English press on this subject. I then considered that both the information given and the criticisms passed were misleading; and I have come to a somewhat similar conclusion from the perusal of English newspaper articles on the present famine. The idea of penning these pages therefore suggested itself to me. I thought that all the information which could be brought together on the subject would be of use; and being on duty at the India Office at the time, I had a very favourable opportunity of collecting my materials.

As a whole, these pages have been written for home reading only; the intention of the book is not to give rules for guidance in actual practice.

The first two chapters are of a historical

nature, and have been written with the object of affording a basis for contrasting the action taken during famines in past and present times. I may add, that a full historical account of Indian famines still remains to be written; but, at the same time, I may as well express the opinion, that the benefit to be derived from such a work would never repay the trouble required to search out the materials for it. The few instances which I have cited suffice for my present purpose. Chapter III. gives such details of financial results in past famines as I have, up to the present, been able to trace. The table in this chapter exhibits some singular facts. Chapters IV., V., and VI. deal with criticisms on the management of famines. Chapter VII. concludes the subject, with remarks on preventive and mitigative measures.

In general, I have preferred quoting known writers—as likely to carry more authority—to giving abstracts or narratives, and making statements founded on my own personal experience.

I may conclude by saying, that I desire to offend no one in these pages. In noticing press criticisms, I could not avoid alluding to the correspondent of a daily paper, and my remarks may therefore appear more personal than I wish them to be; but I can only regret it if they are looked at in this light, because such is certainly not my intention in making them.

GLENFOOT, TILlicOUNTRY,  
*August 1874.*

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