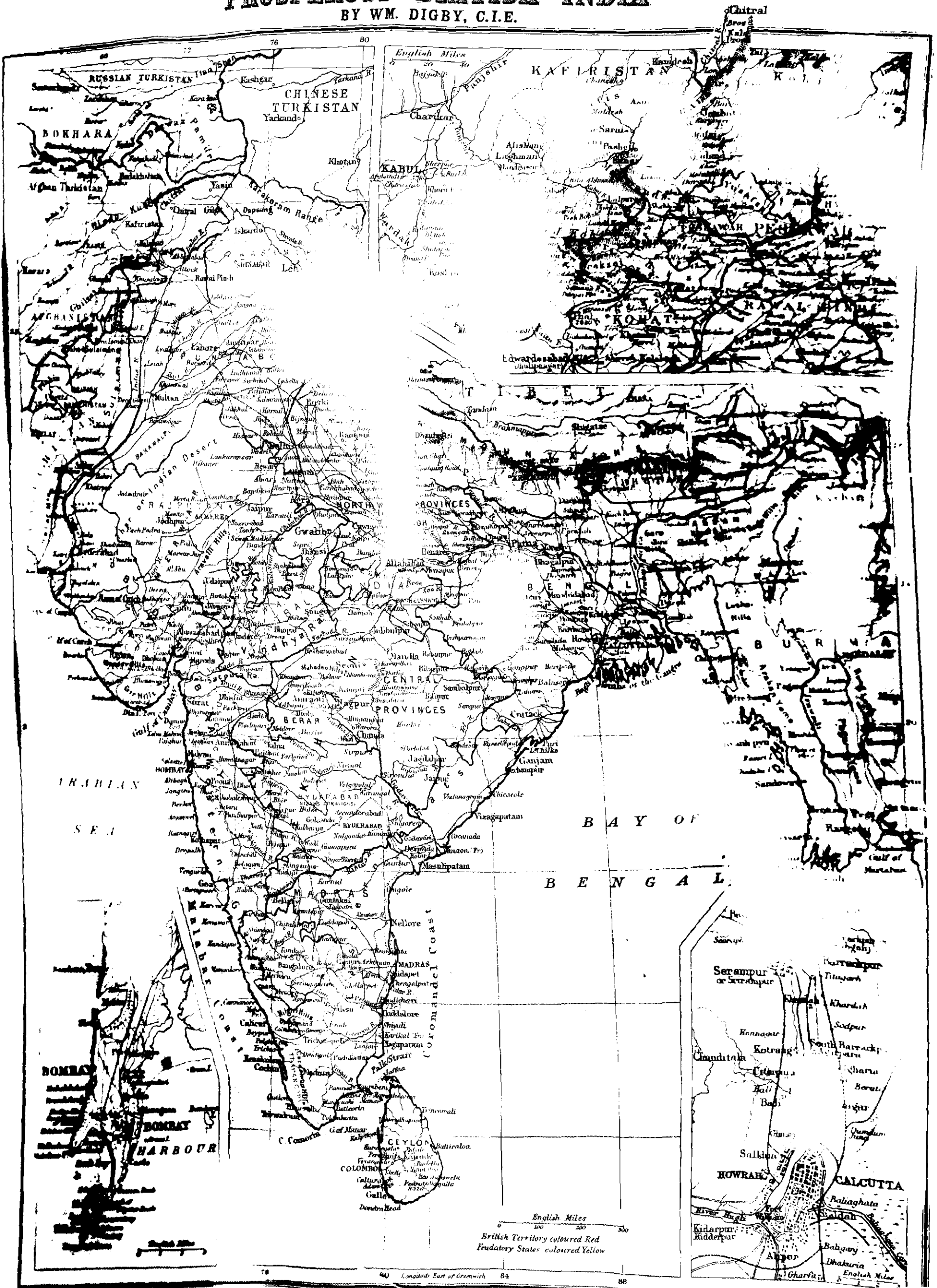


MAP TO ILLUSTRATE
"PROSPEROUS" BRITISH INDIA
 BY WM. DIGBY, C.I.E.



'PROSPEROUS'

BRITISH INDIA

A REVELATION FROM OFFICIAL RECORDS

'The question I wish to consider is, whether that Government, with all its machinery, as now existing in India, has, or has not, promoted the general prosperity of the people of India, and whether India is better or worse off by being a Province of the British Crown: THAT IS THE TEST?'—Sir H. H. FOWLER.

BY

WILLIAM DIGBY C.I.E.

AUTHOR OF

'THE FAMINE CAMPAIGN IN SOUTHERN INDIA, 1877-1879'; 'THE NEWSPAPER PRESS OF INDIA AND THE FAR EAST'; 'FORTY YEARS' OFFICIAL AND NON-OFFICIAL LIFE IN A CROWN COLONY'; 'INDIA FOR THE INDIANS—AND FOR ENGLAND'; 'INDIAN PROBLEMS FOR ENGLISH CONSIDERATION'; 'INDIA AND THE BRITISH BALLOT-BOX'; 'THE DARK SIDE OF BRITISH RULE IN INDIA'; 'OPEN LETTERS TO LORD CURZON';
ETC. ETC.

LONDON: T. FISHER UNWIN
PATERNOSTER SQUARE 1901

‘Only for myself I speak.
Newise have I right to play the spokesman for my brothers.’

Earth is sick and Heaven is weary
Of the hollow words that States and Kingdoms utter
When they talk of truth and justice.’

[All rights reserved.]

THIS BOOK IS DEDICATED

(WITHOUT PERMISSION)

TO

THE RIGHT HONOURABLE LORD GEORGE HAMILTON,
P.C., M.P.,

His Majesty's Secretary of State for India,

Who has said :

' You speak of the increasing impoverishment of India, and the annual drain upon her as steadily and continuously exhausting her resources. I assert you are under a delusion ' ;

TO

HIS EXCELLENCY LORD CURZON OF KEDLESTON,
G.M.S.I., G.M.I.E.,

Viceroy and Governor-General of India,

Who is endeavouring, though in a too-facile way (avoiding searching inquiry), to ascertain why the country he rules is in such sore distress ;

TO

THE RIGHT HONOURABLE SIR HENRY H. FOWLER,
G.C.S.I., P.C., M.P.,

Ex-Secretary of State for India,

Who does ' not think that history has ever known so fair, so just, so equitable, so peaceful, so successful, a government as the government by Great Britain of the Empire of India ' ;

AND TO

EVERY MAN OR WOMAN OF BRITISH BIRTH

Who is desirous that our rule should become
a Blessing to the People of India ;

WITH THE HOPE

That the Facts herein recorded may lead to the amelioration of the condition of Many Millions of British Subjects who, on every New Year's Day, enter upon a period which is certain, for their country as a whole, to be worse than the years already past.

Dorset House,
Dorset Square,
London, N. W. 3.
Nov. 15, 1901.

The Right Hon'ble

Lord George Hamilton, P. C., M. P.
Secretary of State for India,
India Office, London.

My Lord,

It was my privilege, from a gallery seat in the House of Commons, to listen to your speech when you introduced, on the 16th of August last, the annual financial statement concerning India.

In that speech, according to the report in The Times, you said:—

There is a small school in this country as well as in India who are perpetually asserting that our rule is bleeding India to death. Since I have been Secretary of State I have taken great pains to collect and investigate any information or evidence I could obtain, no matter from what quarter it came, which by facts, figures, or other reliable information tended to support this allegation. I admit at once that if it could be shown that India has retrograded in material prosperity under our rule we stand self-condemned, and we ought no longer to be entrusted with the control of that country. But no such facts, figures, or evidence have I ever been able to obtain. That a section of the public both here and in India believe this allegation is clear from their constant and unwearied repetition of the charge. But this belief is founded not on figures, or facts, or economic data, but on a plausible syllogistic formula that they are never tired of repeating.

These remarks call for some reply.

1 The most distinguished, as well as one of the earliest, Masters in the 'small school' to which you refer was the most noble the Marquis of Salisbury, K. G., now Prime Minister in the United Kingdom. In 1875, when he was Secretary of State for India, he urged that 'as India must be bled,' the bleeding should be done judiciously. He also lamented that 'much of the revenue' of India 'is exported without a direct equivalent.' None of us who write concerning India's impoverishment have yet bettered the phrases of our great Master, your political chief. So far as I know he was the first to speak of the 'bleeding' of India.

2. Probably you will agree that the second sentence quoted above, and some of the passages which follow, must have been uttered by you in a moment of forgetfulness, was, in fact, one of those 'oratorical necessities' which become sad indiscretions. A little later in your speech you repeated certain statements made by Lord Curzon in his Budget speech, disproof of which, based wholly on statements in the most recently published official records, had been in your

possession exactly four months before you said over again what the Viceroy had incorrectly said. I know that you received the evidence of disproof, for the receipt of the document in which this disproof appeared was acknowledged on your instructions about the middle of April last. You have done a great wrong to India in repeating and emphasizing statements of which you possessed proof that they had no foundation in fact.

3. You assert that if it could be proved India had retrograded in material prosperity under our rule we stand self-condemned; and 'we ought,' you go on to say, 'no longer to be trusted with the control of that country.' I ask your kind acceptance of the accompanying work in which, without going outside the covers of your own Office productions, I establish, as I think, beyond all peradventure, the great, the dismal, the awful, retrogression, not only in material prosperity but also in other important respects, of the country you govern. That is to say, I establish all this if

Your own facts and figures are to be depended upon. You put them forward year by year for the information and guidance of the public, and must be content to be judged by them. Unhappily, they appear only too closely to approximate to absolute accuracy.

4. You say that you have 'never been able to obtain' 'facts, figures, or evidence' to prove 'material prosperity' has retrograded. You admit that belief in this retrogression exists, but, you assert, it is not founded 'on figures, or facts, or economic data.' You need not remain in the unhappy condition of wanting data any longer. In what I send you there is abundance of figures, of facts, of economic data. I have nothing to do with 'syllogistic formulae,' whether 'plausible' or otherwise. I deal with economic data concerning the people of India; in doing so I simply employ your figures, your evidence, your facts. In this connection, I venture especially to ask your attention to Chapters VI to XII, particularly the twelfth chapter.

I go farther, and express the hope that you will not overlook the Introductory Chapter and Chapters I to V. Everywhere I depend upon the facts which the India Office furnishes — upon them and upon none other. My fount of knowledge flows from Whitehall; its source is the lofty chamber you have occupied for many years.

I ask your lordship's careful perusal of the pages of my book. I do not ask this as a mere 'man in the street,' though such men have been held by one of your colleagues to know enough to put them on a level with Cabinet Ministers. In such a matter as this I have a right to some consideration at your hands. Twenty-three years ago, during your novitiate at the India Office, there passed through your hands at least one dispatch from the Government of India in which that Government was pleased to express its indebtedness to my humble self for the manner in

which, the Viceroy and his Councillors said, I had kept them informed week by week concerning the voluntary Relief efforts throughout India. The Viceroy thought so well of what I was able to do in 1877, and of the way I did it, that he informed me of his intention to nominate me for a seat on the Famine Commission which was appointed in the following year. From that distant period until the hour in 1901 in which I am writing this letter, I have not, for one moment, faltered in the interest then aroused in me respecting the condition of our Indian fellow-subjects, nor have I neglected any opportunity of making myself acquainted with their needs. If, in some of my chapters, I write impassionately from a full heart, as I confess I do, in them as in all the other chapters I write from an equally full mind.

Because of the facts I marshal, and because my many years' study of the question call for a consideration of the evidence I submit and the conclusions drawn therefrom,

I ask, in the public interest, that my assertions and conclusions may be submitted to searching examination by some of the very many able gentlemen who, at Whitehall, assist you to govern India. If I am proved to be wrong in what I state I will as publicly withdraw my statements as I now publicly make them. On the other hand, if it be admitted that I am correct in what I assert, your lordship, I feel certain, will at once accept the fact of India's retrogression in material prosperity and will consider in what way an effectual remedy shall be applied. That way should be one which shall render unnecessary that heroic measure of retirement from India which you declare will be our duty.

The statements in my book, I respectfully submit, may not be ignored. The challenge contained in your speech is specifically met. You can only desire that the truth should be known. In that we are at one. The writer of the book is naught: leave him,

if you will, out of consideration first,
last, and all the time. But, as the
allegations made are declared to be
wholly yours in essentials and often
yours in actual words, I implore you,
for India's sake, to show that what I
state is untrue; or, if that be impos-
sible, to entirely change your policy
so that it may be brought into line with
the facts. I repeat, nowhere is the evi-
dence the author's evidence. Always is
it yours. It must be accepted or it
must be disproved. Of my own poor
volition, possessing no power or influence
save such as is contained in the truth
and justice of the cause I advocate,
moved wholly by feelings of our common
humanity on behalf of a silent, helpless,
too-patient, always long-suffering, peo-
ple,

I challenge your lordship to the
disproof.

I have the honour to remain,

Yours most truly,

Wm Digby.

PREFACE

THIS work, unintentionally, has grown into a big book. That would be regrettable if it were not that India is a big country and space commensurate with its extent and with the variety and complexity of the problems affecting it must necessarily be given. As it is I have not dealt with one tithe of the questions demanding attention, even though I have referred to many topics. To readers of different proclivities certain sections of the book may specially appeal; therefore, to one who does not care for all of it, selection of topic has been made easy.

The object with which the book has been written is, if it be feasible, to bring to a definite issue two contrary views regarding India. Two schools exist. One is always referring to the increasing prosperity of the country and people, and claiming unstinted praise for England as the creator of this prosperity; the other is incessantly dilating upon the rapidly-growing and now alarming impoverishment of both country and people. The latter declare that, by the principles of our rule, deliberately adopted, the impoverishment is made inevitable. Both cannot be right. Nor is there, to my seeming, any middle course which would reconcile the views held by both protagonists, and provide a working arrangement including both views. One is right; the other is wrong.

Which of them is right? I, unhesitatingly, say, 'That

school which declares the country is in a bad way and the people in a worse way.' I endeavour to prove, and think I succeed in proving, the correctness of this statement. I do so from evidence furnished to me—sometimes gratuitously, oftener on payment—by the authorities themselves in India and in England. It is they who tell the story I try to unravel from the complexities in which it is concealed; that story I endeavour to make plain for my countrymen's information. May I ask, kindly interested reader or keen critic, or both of you, that one circumstance be always borne in mind as the various facts herein discussed are produced and considered? It is that I am not responsible for the facts I cite. All that I do is to use the material which the Government of India and the Secretary of State supply. If what I put forward seems, as it well may, far too terrible to be true, let me beg that it be always borne in mind, and let me say it again, that I do no more than put before the reader the evidence, impartially dealt with, scheduled by the authorities themselves. If I be right in my deductions, nothing is to be gained by denouncing me for drawing those deductions. The facts on which they are based are there, whether attention be drawn to them or not. To describe an evil does not make the describer the author of that evil. If a true statement be given concerning an existing disaster, and accurate signs of a coming catastrophe are announced, he who makes the statement and utters the announcement does not cause the disaster or create the catastrophe. It is a satire on present-day controversy that it should be necessary to say this: unhappily it *is* necessary. Always, in this book, the evidence is given, given in too much detail may be, and the reader is put in a position to judge for himself or herself whether any given deduction is fair or unfair.

To write such a book as this which I have written is for a man to take his (literary and public) life in his hands. No treatment, some people think and say, can be too bad for him who dares to declare that everything in

India is not perfect; who desires to procure adequate reforms and solid benefits for Indians. This has long been a characteristic of the British people in regard to India. Lord Ripon, to his cost, found that this was the case. One of the greatest of the Governors-General before Lord Ripon had drunk from the same cup. 'A part of Lord Wellesley's just policy towards India in 1800 was an endeavour to obtain the admission of Indian ships and their cargoes into the ports of England on terms approaching in some degree to reciprocity; but his Lordship's humane efforts on this point caused him great opposition at home, embarrassed considerably his Government, and was the cause of the treatment which he received in England in 1806-7.' So wrote Mr. Montgomery Martin, nearly seventy years ago, and, in this respect, the average Briton of to-day, who is in any way connected with India, or fancies that his craft may be in danger if justice be done to India, is precisely as were his fathers before him.

All my sources of information, I repeat, are to be found in the scores of Indian Blue Books—of most of which I have been a diligent student—issued year by year from the Government Press at Calcutta or Simla, and from the presses of His Majesty's Printers in London. There is one exception. The more important details relating to the condition of the people in all parts of India, but especially in Northern India and Bombay, are abstracted from a series of volumes which were printed in the printing offices of the various Local Governments. They are all marked 'Confidential,' and their publication has more than once been refused in the House of Commons. This is not the place in which to argue whether evidence taken in an official inquiry conducted by public servants, in the public time, at the public cost, respecting the condition of the people may, rightly, be withheld from publication, and a more or less accurate summary suffice for the information of those deeply interested in what has been stated. I assume (as I assert) that it is a great wrong to the

community to keep the evidence of such an inquiry in pigeon-holes over the entrance to which, maybe, spiders spin their webs, since it is anxiously desired that no one shall see the contents of those pigeon-holes. All I am concerned with in this place is to account for my possession of the set of volumes, the substance of which, in the words of the witnesses themselves, I put before my readers. The volumes I have used were received from the Parliamentary representative of the India Office by the late Mr. Bradlaugh, M.P., early in 1891, on a request made by him and at first refused; they were handed to me by the honourable member for Northampton himself. Indeed, I have reason to believe that he told the official from whom he received them that they were coming into my hands and would be used by me, that it was, indeed, at my suggestion and for my use that he required them. With this clear understanding, as I was informed, they were given to that great champion of Indian rights, and were by him passed to me absolutely without any conditions which could in the slightest degree fetter my discretion in using them.

Other points, which would have been appropriately referred to in the preface of such a work as I herein venture to put forward, will be found in a letter to Lord George Hamilton, a copy of which forms a part of this volume.

I have simply to add that, in the invidious and most disagreeable and painful duty which the writing of a book of such conclusions must, necessarily, be to one whose faith in England's good work, in England's destiny, has been passionately cherished,¹ I have striven to hold

¹ 'I that shall stand for England till I die.'

England? Yes,—

' . . . The England that rejoiced to see
Hellas unbound, Italy one and free;
The England that had tears for Poland's doom,
And in her heart for all the world made room ;

Accounting her all living lands above,
In justice, and in mercy, and in love.'

the scales fairly. I have not, consciously, strained any argument to enforce a foregone opinion, nor have I refrained from stating aught, germane to the discussion, that, in the course of the statements I was dealing with, would tell against the conclusions which I drew; those conclusions were drawn because the facts left me no other course but to draw them. I was not a free agent. The reader must judge as to that. I express only that which I was compelled to express. All I ask is that the evidence be carefully considered, especially that portion which is recorded in the first chapter where foundation-principles are dealt with, and the still greater part appearing in chapters six to twelve. In the latter, particularly, are to be found the facts which make the optimism of the Secretary of State for India, as expressed in his latest (and twelfth) Budget speech, a mockery, a frivolity: this optimism and this frivolity, exhibited, as they were, in connection with sorely-suffering men, women, and children, in multitude such as no man has ever before numbered, were worse than a blunder: they were a cruel wrong.

My first request to such readers as I may be honoured with is also my last request. It is that my statements be tested by the evidence I furnish. Only as those statements are adequately supported by the evidence—all, be it never overlooked, obtained from Government sources; in economic matters my sole reliance is on the official evidence—do I ask for their acceptance. Having said this I am, I think, entitled to go farther, and to say that, if the case I put forward be proved, no man or woman who becomes acquainted with it may, henceforth, refrain from doing something to remedy so gross and so grievous a wrong as is embodied in the material impoverishment and the political degradation of two hundred and thirty millions of British subjects. The times of past ignorance may be pardoned: with knowledge comes responsibility. In my own imperfect way I endeavour to supply a portion of the needed knowledge. Others will come and examine deeply and more searchingly where I, a pioneer, have

been able to do little more than indicate the tracts along which trained bands of experts may pass to fully explore the distressful region of which I treat. I am not—

The first who ever burst
Into this troubled sea.

Mr. Dadabhai Naoroji has circumnavigated its shores, and Mr. Romesh Dutt and Mr. Hyndman have indicated many of the perils of the way, while Mr. A. J. Wilson, of the *Investors' Review*, never wearies in well-doing where India is concerned, nor does Sir William Wedderburn ever falter in his endeavours to ascertain what really is wrong, with a view to providing a remedy. But, like Columbus, in discovering America, the Parsee patriot and these others only point the way to research and investigation which statesmen like Lord Rosebery, Mr. John Morley, Mr. Asquith, Sir Robert Reid, Mr. C. P. Scott, Sir Edward Clarke, Mr. W. S. Caine, Mr. C. E. Schwann, and many others are, in honour, bound to undertake. Will they do their duty? Possibly, the continuance of British empire in the East depends upon the answer they and those like-minded with them give to this question.

My acknowledgments are due, and are hereby cordially expressed, to friends who have aided me in my task. Amongst them must be mentioned Miss Annie A. Smith, of Hampstead, whose admirable work in preparing the Index all who need to refer to it will appreciate; Mr. Hedley V. Storey, who prepared the diagrammatic sketches which so vividly illustrate statements in the text that might otherwise be imperfectly apprehended, and whose experience in the villages and towns of India has been of some service to me in connection with the proof-reading of this work; and my son, Everard Tuxford Digby.

Finally, I must be permitted to say that the writing of this book has been the hatefullest and most painful duty I have ever performed. I have put to myself, a score of times, Lord Melbourne's question, 'Can't you let it alone?' and always I have had to answer, 'No, I can't.' And it's as well I can't. For, if I could I should be a contemptible creature. To me, things in India are as I describe them to be, and I have no choice but to so describe them.

DORSET HOUSE, DORSET SQUARE,
LONDON, N.W.

November, 1901.

SOME OF THE AUTHORITIES CONSULTED

OFFICIAL.

The Dufferin Inquiry in 1887-88 as to the Steadily Underfed Population of India:

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- a. An Inquiry into the Economic Condition of the Agricultural and Labouring Classes in the North-Western Provinces and Oudh.
- b. Similar Inquiries for Bombay, Madras, Bengal, Panjab, Central Provinces, Assam, the Berars, and Ajmere-Merwara.

[These volumes constitute the nearest approach to an economic inquiry into Indian conditions yet undertaken.]

Statistical Abstracts of British India, Nos. 1 to 35.

Statement Exhibiting the Moral and Material Progress and Condition of India, Nos. 16 to 36.

Famine Commission Inquiries and Reports:

The Orissa Famine of 1866.

The Famine of 1877-78;—

Especially

- a. Miscellaneous Papers bearing on the Condition of the Country and People;
- b. Appendix—Vol. III., Chapter I.—Condition of the Country and the People; and
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Report and Evidence. Several volumes.

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Parliamentary Inquiries into the East India Company's Administration prior to Renewal of the Charter—

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'England's Work in India,' by Sir W. W. Hunter, and other works by the same author.

'The Dictionary of Statistics,' by Mulhall.

'The Law of Civilisation and Decay,' by Brooks Adams.

'The Science of Civilisation,' by C. B. Phipson.

'The Poverty of India,' by Dadabhai Naoroji.

'Famines in India,' by Romesh C. Dutt, C.I.E.

'The Great Famine,' by Vaughan Nash.

'The Indian Tribute,' by Thos. Inwood Pollard.

'Asia and Europe,' by Meredith Townsend.

'Life of Major-General Sir Thomas Munro, K.C.B.,' by the Rev. G. R. Gleig. Two volumes.

'Eastern India,' vol. i., 'Behar and Shahabad.' Montgomery Martin.

Max Müller's Works.

'The Indian Problem Solved.'

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GOD SAVE INDIA!

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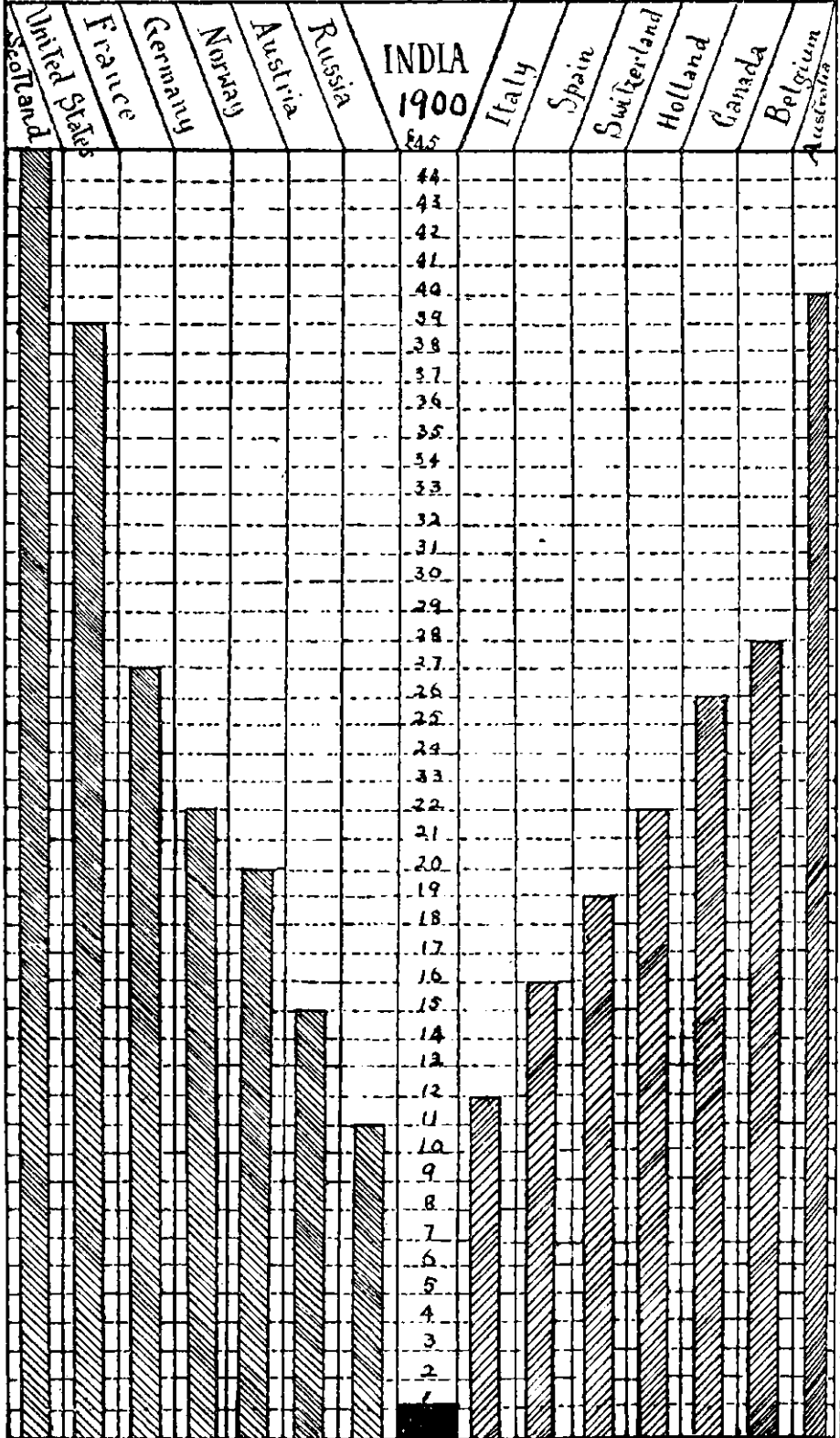
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14. Income of the People for Bengal	548
15. Income of the People for Madras	558
16. Income of the People for Bombay	566
17. Income of the People for North-Western Provinces and Oudh	578
18. Income of the People for Panjab	586
19. Income of the People for Central Provinces	596
20. Income of the People for Burma	604
21. Income of the People for Assam	608

Income per head per Annum in Pounds Sterling.



PROEM



National Incomes—A Comparison.

Alleged Lightness of Taxation in India (Sir J. Strachey's Inaccurate Statement).

English and Indian Taxation Compared.

England's Beneficent Work in India : a Notable Instance.

Obsolete Indian Customs.

Unwillingness in England and in India to discern Ill-Consequences of Present Rule.

A Famine Comparison between the Beginning and End of the Century.

Some personal considerations, chiefly affecting the Author and this Book.

'THERE is no country possessing a civilised administration where taxation is so light' as in India.

'Mr. J. S. Mill declared his belief that the British Government in India was "not only one of the purest in intention, but one of the most beneficent in act, ever known among mankind."

'I do not doubt that this is still truer now.'

Thus writes Sir John Strachey, G.C.S.I., who, towards the close of a long official career in India, was Finance Minister. The passages are to be found on page 395 of 'India,' 'new and revised edition.

¹ Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner, and Company, Limited, London, 1894. When one reads Sir John Strachey's book in the light of the facts recorded in these pages, the wonder arises whether anything more misleading than that book has appeared since William Caxton first made movable type by which to record Anglo-Saxon utterances of voice and pen, and printed his first pages at Westminster. Sir John Strachey possesses a very acute intellect;