

TRUTHS ABOUT INDIA

A COLLECTION OF LEAFLETS
ISSUED BY
THE EAST INDIA ASSOCIATION

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ISSUED BY THE EAST INDIA
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WITH A FOREWORD BY
THE RIGHT HON. LORD AMPHILL, G.C.S.I., G.C.I.E.

AND A PREFACE BY
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FOREWORD

THE East India Association has taken a very sensible, and indeed necessary, step in republishing this collection of leaflets in Pamphlet form. If India is really to be governed by the British Parliament, it is of course essential that the Members of that Parliament should be correctly informed about Indian affairs; and if the House of Commons is really a democratic institution, it is equally essential that those who elect the members of that House should have some knowledge of the questions affecting three hundred millions of their fellow-subjects for whose welfare and contentment under British rule they are responsible. Both electors and their chosen representatives ought to realize more fully than they do at present that no nobler responsibility or more inspiring duty has ever fallen to the lot of any people than the protection and government of India.

But there are few who can afford the money to buy books about India or the time to read them, so that the cheap Pamphlet is the only and obvious means of disseminating the necessary information. This has been generally recognized of late in the matter of domestic politics, where the rapidly increasing number and complexity of questions has become a serious difficulty in the way of true democratic government. The ordinary voter is no longer satisfied with a leaflet which only gives him party catchwords or makes unqualified assertions in regard to points of detail. He demands more solid and serious matter, and wants something

to read and think about. The present Pamphlet, which is reasonably concise, portable in form, and convenient to preserve, meets this need, while leaflets (which are often issued in millions) are frequently used only to light the fire.

I am inclined to think that the articles in this collection err on the side of "sweet reasonableness" if the prevalent taste for strong, and even exaggerated, language in public controversy is taken into account. They are all of the nature of the "soft answer which turneth away wrath." Now, if it were a case of meeting honest but mistaken wrath, this would be the best and most judicious method; but it is, unfortunately, sometimes a case of meeting falsehoods and slanders of a deliberately vile and malicious character, and these deserve the strongest and most severe condemnation.

Britons who deliberately slander their fellow-countrymen in India are no better than cowards, for they select as the objects of their unscrupulous attacks those who have no opportunity of defending themselves. All public men in this country are from time to time exposed to bitter calumny; that is one of the evil fruits of our so-called "progress." They are, however, always surrounded by partisans, as numerous as their opponents, who defend them with vigour, so that in the end both sides can "cry quits." But British public servants in India have no such advantage, and every attack which is made upon them, however gross and unfair it may be, undermines their prestige and increases the difficulty of their difficult task.

Malice and hatred generally proceed from envy, and it is hard to understand why the Englishman in India should be an object of envy to any of his fellow-countrymen at home. Life in India has many hard trials even for those who have good appointments and who are most attached to the country and the people. Exile from home and separation from wife and children are among the things which it is hardest for human nature to bear, and these trials are the ordinary lot

of those who spend the best part of their lives in doing British work in India. How bravely these trials are borne, and how strong is the sense of public duty which makes them tolerable, can only be realized by those who have lived among the British men and women in India. But a little knowledge and a little thought should make the circumstances comprehensible to all people at home, and incline them to regard with gratitude rather than with envy those who are doing work for which the British nation is responsible, and upholding British traditions of justice, humanity and civilization.

It is incomprehensible to anyone who has a spark of national feeling why we alone of all nations should have in our midst a vociferous section whose only object in life seems to be to disparage and vilify the best achievements of our race. The only potent and efficient remedy is to provide our democracy with that knowledge which it ought to possess in order to pass a sound judgment on the affairs for which it is responsible; and if the East India Association can make a commencement of supplying this public need, they will be entitled to national gratitude.

AMPTHILL.

MILTON ERNEST HALL,
BEDFORD,

June 28, 1913.

PREFACE

"THERE is no religion higher than Truth." But the question still stands, "What is Truth?" and perhaps the best reply is that Truth is "the justly-proportioned expression of the fact":—nothing, therefore, seems more desirable in fair controversy than the justly-proportioned setting forth of facts and the careful avoidance of all exaggeration or extenuation. It is from want of attention to these essentials that newspaper controversy, whether political or economic, is often so barren of good results.

"Absolute" truth is, of course, unattainable in this world of ours, and the most we can do is to move "through illusions towards truth," as Dr. Abbott says. So the leaflets here collected are at best merely movements and attempts to get as near to the truth about matters Indian as our partial knowledge will admit. The chief aim and end we have in view may be expressed, in the words of Mr. Hume, as "the consolidation of union between England and India," and this we consider can best be secured by fearless truth-telling on both sides, and by reciprocal goodwill and mutual trust.

If exaggerated language (sometimes, perhaps unfairly, called "Orientalizing") could be eliminated from controversy, there would, we are persuaded, be far less unwholesome unrest in India. But perhaps complete elimination of heated language is hardly possible, and all progress, of course, implies "unrest"; but such "unrest"

need not necessarily be the sign of anything "unwholesome," or, indeed, of anything more serious than the growing-pains of youth. In this connection it may be noted that the British Government in India itself is still in its early youth. So when Great Britain is reproached for doing so little during the "150 years" (during which it is sometimes alleged she has been the Ruler of India), it is only fair to recall the fact that barely 150 years have elapsed since the handful of English in Patna and its neighbourhood fell victims to Mir Kasim, and were almost exterminated (in 1764); and that it was not till some time after that event that even so much as Lower Bengal came under a very imperfect and indifferent sort of British control. It was certainly not until 100 years after the Patna massacre that Patna itself became a British self-governing Municipality, and that the British Government in India may be said to have matured, and to have begun the work of popular administration in real earnest. Before 1756 the British Raj was practically non-existent, and the condition of England at that time is thus described :

"Never did the fortunes of England stand lower than at the end of 1756. In North America, Braddock had been defeated and his army annihilated. Oswego, with which went the control of Lake Ontario, had been taken; from India came news of the Black Hole of Calcutta; on the Continent our only ally, Frederick of Prussia, had been defeated; on sea Admiral Byng had been defeated by an equal force of French, and had slunk home without daring to renew the action."

Indeed, such was the state of affairs in those days that the cynical Lord Chesterfield uttered the despairful cry: "We are no longer a nation." It is, therefore, clearly idle to maintain that 150 years ago the English were the rulers of

India, or that they have had 150 years of Empire in the East. They are really only at the beginning of their work of Imperial consolidation, and it is in the hope that this great work may be helped, even a little, for the abiding benefit of the people of India and the Empire in general, that this reprint has been issued.

J. B. PENNINGTON.
JOHN POLLEN.

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