

INDIA·IN·FERMENT

CLAUDE H. VAN TYNE

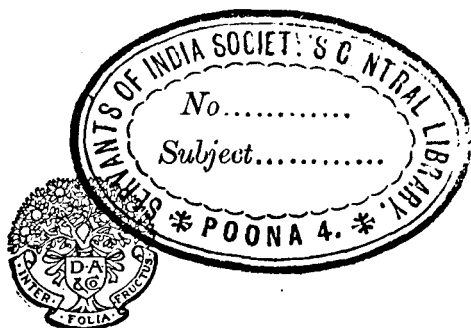
INDIA IN FERMENT

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BY

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TC

HON. CLARENCE M. BURTON

GENEROUS FRIEND AND FELLOW HISTORIAN

PREFACE

DURING the winter of 1921-1922 there was a unique political situation in India, perhaps without a parallel in the history of the world. On the assurance of a friend that every door in India would be open to me, I was tempted to go and see the situation for myself. In India I talked with representatives of all points of view from "Mahatma" Gandhi, the greatest of Indian leaders, to Lord Reading, the Viceroy of India. It was my privilege to sit at the council table with the bitterest enemies of the British régime, to listen to the most seditious talk about it, and then to sit with governors of provinces and with their ministers of state and get their "angle of vision." In Allipore jail in Calcutta I enjoyed nearly two hours' confidential talk with C. R. Das, the great Bengal leader of the extremists, and not long after I sat in the Bengal Legislative Council watching at their work the lawmakers for 40,000,000 people. In Delhi I listened for two weeks to the debates in the Legislative Assembly and held converse with members of every faction in it. I talked with rajahs and maharajahs and nawabs. I went with collectors and subdivisional officers into villages, and there through

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some local officer asked questions of the assembled villagers. Into courts high and low, into offices of collectors and commissioners, wherever government touched the people, I pried in the hope that I might learn for myself the facts in the strangely complex problem of Indian politics.

The British Government had just created the Indian Legislative Assembly, a "Parliament in embryo," and had pledged themselves to give India self-government as fast as she demonstrated her fitness for it. Indians who claimed to be the representatives of 320,000,000 of people, one fifth of the inhabitants of the globe, were declaring to the world that those mute masses were trembling with a desire to be free from the British rule. In our own country a consistent and powerful enemy of Great Britain with unrivaled press facilities was spreading among millions of ignorant American readers stories of British misrule utterly without foundation. Fed by a Washington agency of Indian extremists, the radical American press teemed day after day with the fantastic products of licentious imaginations. Imported agitators appeared on the platform paid by our parlor Bolsheviks who delight in financing any cause which promises to turn the world upside down. "Revolutions are such fun," was their cry. "On with the propaganda, never mind the truth," seemed their watchword. We were told, for example, that the Malabar tragedy in India was caused by an English

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officer putting poison gas in the car with the imprisoned Moplahs, a yarn which even the most lurid agitator in India never thought to invent. To seek out the truth, if that was attainable where the problem was so complex, I went to India.

My obligation is deep to those who made that possible. President M. L. Burton of the University of Michigan took up the matter with enthusiasm, induced generous alumni of the university to finance the expense of the journey, and secured from the liberal-minded Board of Regents a leave of absence for five months. The donors of the travel fund were Hon. C. M. Burton, J. W. Beaumont, Wm. R. Kales, Hal H. Smith, Julian H. Harris, Paul R. Gray, Henry M. Campbell, C. H. Campbell, Clarence A. Lightner, Stanley G. Stevens, Wm. L. Jenks, Oscar Webber, Wm. G. Sharp, Earl D. Babst, Bryant Walker, John R. Russell, Walter L. Russell, R. P. Lamont and P. W. A. Fitzsimmons.

In India my obligations were so great, and to so many Englishmen and Indians of all parties, that it must suffice to mention the greatest debt of all, that to Sir Frederick Whyte, who lavishly expended his own hospitality and drew heavy drafts on the kindness of his friends so that I never was without a hospitable home and a guiding hand from the moment when, a thousand miles out at sea, I received a wireless from the Governor of Bombay offering his hospitality on my arrival, until, after traveling 5,000

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miles in India, I left the generous table of the Governor of Ceylon to go aboard my home-bound ship in the harbor at Colombo.

In closing this preface I desire to say just what I feel that I am competent to do, and what I have tried to do in this little volume. I am not an authority on Indian history or institutions, and have read, perhaps, not over twenty books on India, together with numerous contemporary political pamphlets and a rather wide range of both radical and conservative newspapers appearing while I was traveling in India or sent to me since my return. My life has been spent in studying, writing and teaching American history. Therefore, I took to India no special knowledge of it, but merely a mind trained to a study of the social sciences and to observe political activities past and present. Except where explanatory matter gathered from books was necessary I have tried to tell only what I saw or heard. I have expressed opinions for which those who disagree will criticize me, but the thing of real value in the book is, I believe, the attempted accurate report of things said to me by actors in the great drama going on around me as I traveled. As soon as I had had a conversation I put down in my notebooks every scrap I could recall. Never was there more than a few hours between the interview and the entry in my notes. Wherever I would not violate a confidence or commit an indiscretion by telling who it was that said a thing to me

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I have given the person's name so that the value of this contemporary account might be enhanced.

Indian critics of my articles in the July and September (1922) issues of the *Atlantic Monthly* say that I was prejudiced by English officials, that I "opened the wrong doors," and even "British gold" has been darkly hinted, but to all that I can only assert that I spent more time interviewing "non-coöperators" and nationalists than I did "sun-dried bureaucrats," and if there was any "British gold" ready for my itching palm I was too stupid to realize it. Indeed, the only finesse I suspected in my British friends was too great eagerness to have me meet all the most extreme Indian agitators, even opening the jail doors that I might talk with them. Of course, I did look at the Indian life with Western eyes, and I brought all my American prejudices in favor of cleanliness, sanitation, hygiene, universal education, and the necessity of training for political fitness. I found myself not so sympathetic with superstition, religious fanaticism, and the mystic Indian philosophy as old English residents in India, the "bureaucrats," against whom my radical Indian acquaintances raged. But, at least, I have tried honestly to give the impression which Indian life and Indian politics at a most interesting time in India's history made upon an academic American.

Of India, the great continent, with its many races, religions, and castes, with its varied climates, soils,

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and products, a lifetime does not suffice to gain fullness of knowledge; but if there is value in a survey at a moment when political agitation has touched the masses of Indian peoples, for perhaps the first time in their long history, it may not be overbold to assume that an account of the survey is worthwhile.

I must not close this preface without an expression of my deep obligation to my friend, Professor Campbell Bonner, who has read the proofs with the greatest care and saved me from some humiliating errors which would otherwise have marred these pages. I have also been constantly aided in this task by my devoted wife, faithful as ever through all the drudgery of book-making.

Finally, I am obliged to Mr. Ellery Sedgwick of the *Atlantic Monthly*, for the privilege of using in this book the material which appeared in that magazine.

CLAUDE H. VAN TYNE.

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