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A FEW WORDS
ABOUT
INDIA,
AND THE
INDIAN MUTINIES.

WITH A MAP.

BY THE REV. A. C. AINSLIE, M.A.,
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TAUNTON: FREDERICK MAY, HIGH STREET.
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1857.

ADVERTISEMENT.

The following pages were written with a view of giving to my own Parishioners, in a short and simple form, some information with regard to India and the Indian Mutinies, preparatory to a collection in aid of our suffering fellow countrymen in the East. They are published under the hope that they may meet a want, which is likely to be felt elsewhere, of some little pamphlet of the kind.

Corfe, Sept. 18, 1857.



BRITISH INDIA.

THE map which is bound up with this little book represents the Continent of Hindostan, or India. It is a vast tract of country in Southern Asia, extending far into what is called, the Indian Ocean. To get an idea of its enormous extent, you must look at a map of the world, and you will see how insignificant England, Scotland, and Ireland, put together, appear when compared with India.

I know that high figures are apt to convey but an imperfect notion of great distances, but if we take a map of England, and compare our distance from London, (which distance we probably know) with the whole length of England, measured from North to South, and then compare this latter again with the length and breadth of India, we shall probably get a notion of what is meant when we say, that, whilst the length of England, reckoning from the South Coast of Devonshire, to the River Tweed, is about 380 miles, the length of India from Cape Comorin (see map) to Peshawur is about 2000, and the width from Kurrachee to Calcutta 1500 miles. Add to this, that whilst the population of the British Islands is about twenty-eight millions, that of India is computed at two hundred millions, or nearly eight times as great as that of our densely peopled land. A moment's thought upon these facts will give an

idea of the importance of our position in the East, and of the serious nature of that outbreak which is now occurring in British India.

But I must describe what I mean by British India.

We must not imagine that the whole of this vast Continent of which I have been speaking is actually in the possession of the English. Over a great part indeed, they are absolute masters, receiving the revenues, administering their own laws, and ruling independently of any other State or Prince. There are, however, in various parts of India, large states, governed by Native Princes, according to native laws. Over the internal affairs of these states, the English exercise but little interference, except where the gross misgovernment of the Native Princes endangers, as it too often has done, the peace of India, and the consequent security of trade. The British power being dominant in India, these Native States are under British protection, in return for which they are bound to the payment of certain tributes, and, in some cases, to the support of a military force, which is called their Contingent, and which is under the orders of the British authorities, and officered partly by English officers.

Thus at the present time we hear constant mention of the Kotah Contingent, the Gwalior Contingent, and the like, by which we understand the forces of the Rajahs (as the Princes are called) of Kotah, of Gwalior &c.

But the best way to explain the present State of British India, and the causes of the fearful mutiny of a great portion of the Indian army, will be to glance at the past, and the steps by which British power has been raised to its present proud position in the East.

From very early times a great, indeed an exaggerated notion prevailed in Europe of the vast wealth of India, of the value of its spices, its precious stones, its rare and costly manufactures. Its distance, and the wonderful stories of its almost fabulous wealth which found their way to the West, gave an air of mystery to every thing connected with it, but made it at the same time a mystery which all were exceedingly anxious to know more about. But it was almost inaccessible to the nations of Western Europe, they were ignorant of the passage round the Cape of Good Hope, and the sole communication with the nations of the far East was through the merchants who brought Indian merchandise by a tedious land journey from the North of India to Constantinople, from whence it found its way by sea and land to the great cities of Europe, and was bought by the wealthy at enormous prices. But Constantinople was captured by the fierce Mahomedans, who had a deadly hatred against the European nations, and the Indian trade in this direction was cut off. But where money is to be made, men are generally soon found who will undertake to make it; and the trade with the East was too profitable to be willingly abandoned. The enterprising people of Venice in Italy soon contrived to open a new communication with India by way of Egypt; and as the ruler of Egypt granted to them a monopoly, or in other words, allowed them, and them only, to traffic through his dominions, they succeeded in carrying on a most profitable trade, so profitable indeed, as speedily to excite the envy of the other commercial nations of Europe. Foremost amongst these, at the time of which we are speaking ranked, the Portuguese; and

their jealousy of the increasing prosperity of the Venetians led them to set to work in earnest, to discover, if possible, some other means of communication with India, besides that which the Venetians enjoyed.

Much of the world was yet unknown to the nations of Europe, but the shrewd Portuguese began to suspect that there must be some end even to the enormous continent of Africa, and that by sailing far enough to the South, they might somehow get round by sea to India. In the year 1497, a ship was fitted out, and entrusted to the care of one Vasco de Gama an enterprising Portuguese. His voyage was successful; the problem of a communication with India was solved: the Venetians were ruined, and the Indian trade passed into the hands of the Portuguese.

But what was enterprising, commercial England doing? Internal difficulties and civil war had crippled her energy, and Portugal had got the start of her in the race for Indian commerce. But peace at home in the latter part of the 16th century gave leisure to look abroad, and England saw in the increasing wealth of the Portuguese the results of a successful voyage of discovery. So voyages of discovery were quite the fashion. North, south, east, and west, went expeditions, whose great object was to find some shorter way to India than that by which the Portuguese traded round the Cape of Good Hope. But no better way was found; therefore, wisely content to follow where they could not lead, the English gave up their voyages of discovery and sailed away to India by the Cape of Good Hope; and, to the dismay of the Portuguese, a British ship appeared in the Indian waters.

And now that we have brought the English to the coast of Hindostan, we must devote a few lines to describing what they found there.

By whom was this vast continent inhabited ? By many millions of human beings of different races and religions ; but it will be sufficient for our present purpose to say that the mass of the population might be divided into two great classes—a conquered people, and their conquerors.

Who were the original inhabitants of India, and whether any traces of them yet remain, is a question which has been much debated. It is plain, however, that at a very early period the whole land was overrun by a race of Hindoos, who established themselves in almost every part of the country, called from them Hindostan (the Hindoos' land). This remarkable people seem to have had a civilization which distinguished them among the nations of the East, and they brought with them into India peculiar social institutions which gives a singular stability and unchangeableness to their national character.

In religion the Hindoos are Bhuddists. They are idolaters, and their system is one of the grossest superstition. I cannot now stop to describe it fully, but it is necessary for our purpose to say a few words upon a matter closely connected with their religion, which is to us, at the present crisis, of great interest. The Hindoo people are divided into four distinct orders, or *castes*, as they are called. First, the priestly caste, named Brahmins ; second, the warrior caste ; third, the order of agriculturists ; and fourth, the lowest caste, the mechanics and menial servants.

Allied to this of castes, is the institution by which

the son always follows the trade of his father ; a tailor's son is a tailor, and so will be *his* son, and so on through every generation. This, it may well be imagined, has an important influence on their social condition, and whilst it may have acted beneficially in some respects, yet excluding, as it does, the mass of people from any hope of rising in station or power, or in any substantial way bettering their condition, it has a debasing influence, which we, who are blest with liberal institutions, can hardly appreciate.

It is easy to conceive that the high caste Hindoo will be proud and tenacious of his distinction, and that even where there is little thought of *religion*, the honour of caste will be jealously guarded. He would often endure to see his idol's temple destroyed with comparative indifference, but compel him to do anything which shall make him lose his caste, and he is up in arms in a moment.

But, besides the millions of Hindoos (the conquered races), a part of the population of India consisted of their conquerors, the Mahomedans.

These believers in the prophet Mahomet made inroads into India principally from the north and west ; and overrunning the country at various times, established an empire over the whole of India of which they made the city of Delhi, so celebrated now as the head-quarters of the Indian Mutiny, their capital. The last of the Mahomedan races that took possession of the Indian Empire, were the Moguls ; and to this day the successor of the Mogul Emperors retains the shadow of power, under the title of the King of Delhi, in the ancient palace of which city he is permitted to dwell, surrounded by royal state, but entirely without any real authority, which has passed into the hands of the English.

But we must not anticipate the story; our object has merely been to touch upon the two great classes of the population of Hindostan. Much that would interest might be said of the laws and institutions of the Hindoos and Mahomedans, but our space will not allow us now to enter more fully into the subject.

Such were the inhabitants of India when, in the year 1601, the English flag first appeared upon their coast—a flag that was destined, ere long, to be known and respected through the length and breadth of the land. Its appearance caused, as I have said, no little dismay and jealousy among the Portuguese, who had fondly imagined that they were to secure for themselves, as the Venetians had done before them, the whole of the Indian trade. But they could claim no exclusive rights; or rather, claiming them, they had no power to defend them; therefore, grievously against their will, they had to suffer the English to establish factories (as they were called) at various points in the Indian seas.

The word “factory” in this sense denoted little more than a convenient station where the goods collected from the interior were brought together and warehoused till it should be convenient to ship them for Europe. The merchants and others connected with the trade, resided around the warehouse, and the whole formed a European settlement, which was frequently, in later times, for the sake of protection, surrounded by fortifications, and garrisoned with soldiers.

As this professes to be no more than an outline of the progress of British power in India, I cannot enter into all the particulars of the difficulties which the jealous Portuguese, and afterwards the Dutch, threw in

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the way of English commerce, both by openly attacking and demolishing their factories, and by stirring up, by wily intrigues, the opposition of the native princes against the new comers. But force was met by force, intrigue by intrigue, and the native rulers, ever regardless of the most solemn treaties, and ready to side with the stronger party, no sooner saw that the British fleet (for it was principally a naval war) was everywhere victorious over their Portuguese rivals, than they at once broke faith with the latter, and gave to the English the same privileges and advantages which the Portuguese had formerly enjoyed.

Here then we have Englishmen established on the soil of India; their first settlement being at Surat on the Western coast.

But who or what were these Englishmen who thus established themselves at one or two points of that great continent over which they were hereafter to exercise such sovereign sway? They were the agents of a Company of British merchants. Remember this, for in this early company of 1600 we see the infancy of that great corporation which rules India, which maintains armies and fleets, wages wars, governs millions of human beings, and is known far and wide by the title of the Honourable East India Company. And this is the time to mention that when we speak of British India we do not mean the possessions of the Crown or Government of England, but of a Joint-stock Mercantile Company. As merchants the English established themselves, as merchants they raised bodies of troops for the protection of their trade, as merchants they extended their possessions, until at length they exhibited a spectacle which the world had never seen before, and probably will never see

again; a company of merchants ruling with sovereign power over a vast Empire, entering into political alliance with, or dethroning Kings, with all the prerogatives of a sovereign state.

The history of the growth of the power of this British Company from the small beginnings which I have sketched to its present gigantic proportions, is far too long and complicated to be entered on fully here. A hundred different causes led to its prosperity. A little here, a little there, an opening which British enterprise was not slow to take advantage of, a squabble between two neighbouring native princes, in which the assistance of the English was sought, and paid for by the grant of a patch of territory, and we fear we must add, more questionable means employed, all tended in one direction, to enlarge the possessions of the India Company, and to spread the fame of their power, and therefore their influence, over the Continent of Hindostan. In reading the history of this period one is strongly reminded of the fable of the wolf and the leopard who quarrelled about the division of prey that they had caught, and called in the lion to settle between them; and settle he did, for he took the whole to himself! Now here follows a story from Indian history:—Look at the map, and near the Southern point of India, you will see a territory called Tanjore. In the year 1740 a prince named Sanjohee ruled this petty state; but, in the following year, his brother Pratop-Sing supplanted him in the affections of his people, and Sanjohee was deposed. Little liking this treatment, he besought the assistance of the English, who had settlements near at hand; in return he promised to make over to them the fort of Devi Cotah, at the

mouth of the river Coleroon. This fort they wished to have; therefore, although quite indifferent to the wrongs of Saujohee, they promised to assist him, and knowing well the faithlessness of an Eastern Prince, they determined to secure the payment before they did their work. They seized on Devi Cotah, and, to their disgrace be it said, having gained their object, they made peace with Pratop-Sing, leaving in the lurch their ally Saujohee. As an extenuating circumstance to this otherwise disgraceful affair, it must be mentioned that they found that the restoration of Saujohee would be highly unpopular among the people of Tanjore. Here we have Pratop-Sing and Saujohee, the wolf and the leopard of the fable, and the lion on the occasion was the veritable "British Lion."

We can understand from this story what a fertile source of profit to the English were the constant quarrels of the Native Princes. Their aid was continually demanded by one party or the other, and as the native troops could never stand before the bayonet in British hands, they were enabled as the price of their assistance to dictate their own terms.

The English Company managed thus, by various means, to establish itself at three several points of India—Calcutta, Bombay, and Madras—which were dignified by the name of Presidencies, each being governed by a President and Council appointed in England, by the Directors of the East India Company. At this time their possessions were small; a few towns and forts, with the surrounding lands, being all that they could call their own; but their influence and commerce extended throughout many of the native states, and they were beginning to find

favour even at Delhi, the capital of the Mogul Emperor, the sovereign ruler of all India.

But we are not to suppose that the other nations of Europe viewed with indifference the progress of British power in the East. The Portuguese were no longer dreaded; they were glad to retain their possessions at Goa, on the Western coast, and were too weak to interfere more with their successful rivals.

But a formidable foe was in the field. A Company, like the British East India Company, had been formed in France, to try and get a share in the Indian trade. Pages might be filled with the struggles between the rival Companies; there was war between the two nations, and nowhere was it carried on with more constant animosity than in India. The Native Princes, as usual, sided with the party which seemed for the time to be the winners. The head-quarters of the French were at Pondichery; of the English, at Madras; and after years of war and bloodshed, in which the contest had been waged with various fortune, Pondichery fell to the arms of the English, commanded by Colonel Coote, and the French hopes in India were annihilated.

British supremacy was also disputed by the Dutch; but in the winter of 1781 war having broken out between England and Holland, an attack upon the Dutch possessions in Hindostan was determined on, and, under Sir Hector Monro, carried out with such success that the Dutch were expelled from the Indian seas.

But the growth of English power had, ere this, excited the fears of the Native rulers, who saw their lands slipping from their grasp and passing into the possession of the foreigner. Endless intrigues, quar-

rels, campaigns, battles, defeats, and victories fill up the next page of Indian History. We cannot follow the windings of the story, but must be content with stating the general result. One incident however is too memorable to be passed over in silence, as it offers a terrible parallel in Indian history to the horrors which have marked the present outbreak in Bengal. The British in Calcutta had excited the wrath of a cruel Indian Prince, Suraja Dowla by name. He marched upon their town with an overwhelming force. The river Hooghly runs by Calcutta, and communicates with the sea some miles below, and afforded a means of escape for many of the inhabitants and the garrison: the rest were left to their fate—and terrible was that fate. Suraja Dowla stormed the fort and captured one hundred and forty six prisoners. He thrust them into a room twenty feet square, and left them to perish by suffocation. Horrible were the sufferings of these hapless wretches in that awful night: I will not attempt to describe them; suffice it to say that, when the morning dawned, twenty-three individuals alone remained alive! This is the fearful story of the "Black hole of Calcutta." It was in the year 1756 that these barbarities were enacted; a hundred years have passed and again Europe is made to shudder at the fiendish cruelty of the natives of India.

Before passing on to the present state of British India, one other great event, closely connected with what has just been mentioned, has to be recorded. When the news of the fall of Calcutta reached Madras, it produced, as may be imagined, the deepest indignation, and immediate steps were taken to re-establish the settlement of Calcutta, and punish

Suraja Dowla. The command of the forces despatched for this purpose was conferred on the celebrated Clive, who had already distinguished himself in the South of India. The campaign was eminently successful; Suraja Dowla was defeated at the famous battle of Plassy, and the idea which has ever since remained fixed in the native mind, of the invincibility of the British arms, was established.

It would be impossible in a short space to describe the subsequent squabbles between the Emperors and their tributary Princes, in all of which the English managed to take a part. Intrigues, insurrections, and revolutions followed in quick succession, in all of which the English found opportunity to increase their influence, until at length, in the year 1765, the unfortunate Emperor, Shah Alum, who retained but the shadow of real power, was compelled to grant to the Company the Provinces of Bengal, Bahar, and Orissa as their absolute possession, thus raising them at once to the rank of a sovereign power.

And now we will take a great step in time. The Empire, thus established, continued gradually to extend its borders; state after state was annexed, or added to the British dominions, until the Government of the greater part of the Continent of Hindostan passed into English hands, and of the remaining states, all, with the exception of four or five, acknowledged themselves under British protection. The succession of the Mogul Emperors was still continued, and Delhi was their capital, but their authority was a mere name and a shadow; all real power was in English hands, and a vigorous administration took the place of the corruption and incapacity of the native rulers.

Such was the state of India when this year, 1857, opened. Throughout the land were scattered the servants of the East India Company, to administer the laws, to collect the revenues, and to carry on the general Government of the Country, in the name of the Company. This is the Indian Civil Service.

Surrounded, as the British possessions have always been, by turbulent native states, it has been necessary to maintain a large and effective army, for the protection of English territory. This army has, like the Civil Service, been divided into three separate establishments, for the three Presidencies of Bengal, Bombay, and Madras. It consists principally of native troops, enlisted from among the agricultural classes of the population. In one point, however, there is an important distinction between the army of Bengal and those of the other Presidencies. The men are for the most part of *higher caste* than in Bombay or Madras, and have been chosen for their stature and fine soldier-like appearance, in which the high caste men excel. The consequence has been that the Bengal army has been considered the finest of the three. We shall soon see, however, that this very anxiety to have fine, tall Sepoys (as the Native soldiers are always called) has been the very ruin of that branch of the Indian army. Besides the Native Sepoys, the Company maintained a small force of European troops, and, as an additional protection, have always had the assistance of a considerable body of the Queen's forces.

Such, then, was the condition of India at the beginning of the present year. Peace reigned throughout the land; the people appeared contented; the army, which had fought bravely under their English

officers on many a bloody field, were fully trusted. As they assembled on parade, as fine a body of men, as the world could produce, you might see the medals for former victories adorning the breasts of the heroes of the Punjab campaigns. Their discipline, their drill, and their fidelity seemed all that could be desired—in a word, they were trusted. And so the month of January passed quietly away. All was peace in the stations, where, throughout the country, the magistrates, the collectors, and other civil officers resided with their families in all the enjoyment of the comforts and luxuries of home. The garrison towns were occupied by the orderly Sepoys, under their European and native officers. The construction of railroads was being actively prosecuted—the electric telegraph stretched across the land—the arts of peace were industriously cultivated—India was becoming daily more like our happy peaceful England, when a circumstance occurred; which at the time excited curiosity, but nothing more, and which even now is not well explained. Openly from village to village, and from regiment to regiment throughout the Bengal army, a small cake and a lotus flower were sent! The English wondered what it meant, and the mystery of its meaning is yet hidden. But soon most unmistakeable events occurred, which turned all eyes with anxious interest to India. It was the first low rumble of the coming storm. The military authorities in India had, with culpable imprudence, (so, at least, it was, either truly or falsely, reported at the time), prepared for the use of the native army a supply of rifle cartridges, *greased with the fat of bullocks*; an abomination in the eyes of the Hindoo, and the more so the higher his caste—doubly hateful,

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therefore, to the proud Sepoy of Bengal, who would "*lose his caste*" * if he touched, with his teeth, the fat of the sacred animal, as the Hindoo considers the bullock. But a cartridge has to be bitten before it can be fired. Here then was a difficulty. The first refusal of the cartridge was on the 26th of February, when the men of the 19th Regiment of Native Infantry, at Berhampore, assembled on the parade ground with their arms, and refused to lay them down unless the cartridges were taken from them—in a word, they were in open mutiny. This regiment was immediately disbanded; a punishment which, it was hoped, would crush the mutinous spirit that began to show itself in the regiments of the Bengal army. For a short time all was quiet. But the 10th of May, a day to be remembered in Indian history, witnessed the outbreak of general mutiny. At the town of Meerut, only 26 miles from Delhi, the 3rd Regiment of Bengal Native Cavalry, enraged at the imprisonment of 85 of their comrades, who had refused to receive the rifle cartridges, assembled with their arms; they rushed to the gaol, liberated the im-

* A word to explain what we mean by a Hindoo "*losing his caste*." It is true, indeed, that it is a distinction to which he is born, and which will adhere to him through life, if he remains a faithful Bhuddist; but let him become a convert to Christianity, or even let him eat one mouthful of beef, the flesh of the sacred animal which the Hindoo worships, and at once he "*loses caste*." His distinction, and the privileges which accompanied it, are gone, and he becomes an object of universal scorn and aversion. It is easy, then, to understand the obstacle which "*caste*" presents to the success of Christian Missions in India.

prisoned Mutineers and some hundreds of other convicts; and then ensued a scene of bloodshed and destruction which I shrink from describing. The 11th and 20th Regiments of Native Infantry joined the Cavalry—murdered their officers and every European, man, woman, and child they could lay their hands on, and then made off for Delhi. And here I must pause; for I said it was not my intention to describe horrors, or pander to that morbid taste which loves tales of misery and suffering; and the Delhi Mutiny with its horrible atrocities, inflicted not on men only—that we could have borne—but on English ladies and girls, who suffered every indignity that lust and cruelty could devise—on helpless infants, tossed into the air and received on the bayonet's point—all forms a terrible picture on which we will gladly draw the curtain.

The mutiny became now all but universal in Bengal—the Bombay and Madras armies have to this day remained for the most part, staunch and faithful to their colours. At Ferozepore, Lucknow, Neemuch, Benares, Cawnpore, Jansi and other places the regiments rose in mutiny. Almost everywhere the same scenes of murder and plunder were repeated—the prisons were opened, and a flood of criminals swept over the country. The Europeans that remained shut themselves within the forts where they could do so, or fled from place to place for safety, or made their way to Calcutta by steamers on the river Ganges. The Government has not been idle, either in India or at home. The electric telegraph speedily spread the alarm; the European regiments, in the north-west, moved down upon Delhi, and laid siege to that stronghold, which we

had, ourselves, fortified and filled with guns and ammunition; the mere handful of British troops which could be brought against it, have, in consequence, been unable to recapture Delhi, and reinforcements are awaited. Nor will it be long before upwards of 25,000 English soldiers will be landed on the shores of India.

The world watches the struggle, which is one for our Indian Empire. The anxious hearts of thousands in England, long for decisive news of the punishment, which we believe will be inflicted upon the barbarous murderers, and ruffians, who have defied our power and vengeance. But we must wait. An army disciplined and armed by ourselves, practised too in the tactics of European warfare, and established behind the fortifications of Delhi, is a foe that we dare not despise, and a premature or ill-considered movement might destroy for ever our Indian Empire.

In the meantime, while England is thus held in painful suspense, the question is being everywhere asked, "What is the cause of the mutiny?" There are one or two significant facts which will help us in answering the question. Delhi is the central point of the movement, and one of the first acts of the mutineers was to proclaim the King of Delhi, as reinstated in all the authority of the old Moguls, as Emperor of India. This would lead us to conclude that the mutiny is a revolutionary movement on the part of the Mahomedans of India to re-establish their empire by the overthrow of British power. But then it becomes necessary to explain the part which the Hindoos, who form the great majority of the native regiments, have taken on the occasion. We

can hardly suppose them deeply interested in the restoration of the Mahomedan empire ; for the feeling existing between Hindoos and Mahomedans has hitherto been anything but friendly ; and the difficulty of the greased rifle-cartridges would appear as though the religious prejudices, the *caste* of the Hindoo Sepoys, were at the bottom of the movement.

But the fact, as far as it can be yet understood, appears to be this :—That the authors of the movement (those most discontented with our rule) are the Mahomedans, and that the unfortunate incident of the cartridges gave them an opportunity of persuading the Hindoos that their religion was in danger, and thus of gaining them over to their schemes, and making them the tools to work out their design.

I have alluded to the sufferings and dangers of our countrymen ; it remains only to say a word upon their losses. We hardly exaggerate when we say that multitudes have lost *everything*. Their houses burnt to the ground, their property plundered, their very clothes in some cases torn off their backs, they have made their way to Calcutta, or still remain, surrounded by dangers in the country towns, utterly destitute, supported on the charity of others who may be better off than themselves, or dependent on the bounty of well disposed natives for their daily food. Their cry for help comes to us from the far East ;—Will Englishmen suffer it to come in vain ?

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