

BRITISH RULE IN INDIA

BY

S. M. MITRA, M.R.A.S.

WITH AN INTRODUCTION

BY

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CONTENTS.



	PAGE
I.—INTRODUCTION - - - - -	I
II.—DID ENGLAND TEACH INDIA TO DRINK ? -	7
III.—MR. DUTT AND INDIAN FAMINES - - -	23
IV.—AN ALIEN YOKE : OR—A DIVINE DISPENSATION ?	41

PREFACE.



ALTHOUGH these pages are merely a reprint of certain magazine articles I wrote while in India, and although no alterations whatever have been made in the original contributions, this booklet is by no means a bundle of disconnected thoughts. All my contributions to the Indian Press—English, Urdu or Bengali—have been directed to one end, viz., the advancement of the best interests of my native land, by removing friction between the rulers and the ruled. The political opinions expressed in these pages have resulted from prolonged experience of indigenous Indian rule, and from close comparison of the native system of government with the methods adopted by the British Administration. Such a comparison can alone bring out the general problems and difficulties of tropical administration, and by such comparison alone can one really understand the difficulties involved in reconciling the various differences due to caste and traditions of the East, which being transmitted through centuries, have acquired the rigidity of race characteristics. No country in the world can possibly offer a more fascinating field for investigation to the students of politics and sociology than India.

Let no one misunderstand me. I have no wish to disparage my native land. India possesses a great literature and philosophy of her own. In times gone by, she was not only able to manage her own affairs, but actually founded colonies, and rejoiced in oversea expansions. Java, now under the Dutch, was a Hindu colony for over fifteen centuries. India is a vast Continent—the Hindustanis proper outnumber the whites in the United States, the Bengalis are twice as numerous as are the French, and the “fighting castes” in

India number about 125,000,000, or more than the population of the Roman Empire ! Neither Greece nor Rome could boast of a third of the number of our King-Emperor's subjects in Asia.

The corner-stone of British policy in India is *Justice*. By a constant unity of purpose, with a government that can boast of great flexibility as well as mechanical precision, the English have been successful with the teeming millions of India, in making them, to a certain extent, think for themselves, and in developing the individuality of the people. The oriental hatred for change is well known. The complexity of interests in India presents difficulties varying in character as well as in magnitude, the solution of which is hard and unromantic work. But the success of the British Indian Administration has been little less than marvellous. Most of the officials work with the precision of machines and the enthusiasm of Crusaders. They have had serious obstacles in their way. The Hindu, indifferent alike to life and comfort, whom even the grand-whip hunger fails to teach much, is separated from the rulers by a gulf of thoughts and aspirations. In the East, thought is stronger than armies.

"The East bowed low before the blast,
In patient deep disdain ;
She let the legions thunder past,
Then plunged in thought again."

The so-called critics make the problem of British Administration even more and more difficult. It is a great pity that, with most "critics" on Indian affairs, a sound knowledge of the history of the country is hardly considered essential before the formulation and public utterance of most decided opinions. Nothing in the world is perfect, and I do not for a moment say that the British Administration of India is not capable of great improvements. The rulers show no lack of adjustment to local conditions, though they have yet to teach young India to appreciate the dignity of manual labour. The immense inert mass of peasantry have a firm faith in the "*Sirkar*," and show a willing submissiveness to a strong and consistent government ; and not all the harangues of the agitators have as yet