

**FAMINE TRUTHS,
HALF
TRUTHS, UNTRUTHS**

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Famine Truths, Half Truths, Untruths by Charles W. McMinn

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CHARLES W. MCMINN

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UNTRUTHS.

*Sed veteris populi Romani prospera vel adversa consilium
miki tradere,—sine ira et studio quorum causas
procul habeo.—TACITUS ANNALS.*

BY

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I.C.S., Retired.

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PREFACE.

IN the Report of the Indian Famine Commission of May, 1901, Sir Anthony Macdonnell has said the last word apparently about the treatment of these frightful calamities, while his powerful individuality is strongly impressed on every page.

About the origin, the history, the etiology of famine, nothing hardly is found, nor was the subject within the scope of the Committee's instructions. To one paragraph of the report, however, 270, a foot-note is added, dealing with the land assessments of ancient India, and the "unjust comparisons" with British taxation, to the disparagement of the latter, which have appeared in the Indian press; these comparisons are declared to be of "antiquarian rather than of practical interest." I submit that this is a very partial view of the situation. Not only in the Indian press but at home, have repeated efforts been made by responsible writers, English, French, Indian, to trace the causation of Indian famine to heavy taxation and misgovernment. A comparison is made, with an outward show of candour, learning, and loyalty, between the famines of ancient times and those under British rule, by Romesh Chander Dutt, Professor of Indian History in London University, and he traces the frequency and severity of the latter to the crushing pressure of the land tax now exacted, as compared with the mild and gentle fiscal methods of Mogul and Hindu.

In other words the three hundred millions of India are informed that they have only to revert to the rule and customs of their ancestors, getting rid somehow of the British incubus, then they will find peace, plenty,

and bliss of every kind. If these things are true I for one would be foremost to exclaim with John Bright, "Perish the British empire in India."

If they are false, as I know they are, it must still be perilous to peaceful rule to permit the millions of India to be told weekly from the press, that they have only to get rid of their tyrants in order to be happy in this world as in the next.

Therefore the matter is not only of antiquarian interest but also of political and imperial importance. Professors of history, who taught such inflammatory doctrine to the rising generation, would not be tolerated in France, Germany, Italy, anywhere save possibly in the United States, which is now, after its honoured President has been murdered, deploring the license which it permitted to the preaching of fanatics. In England Mr. Dutt has not only been allowed to defame British administration unchecked, he has not been even refuted in any direct and authoritative fashion.

He is the principal champion of a section of the National Congress which is always oscillating between adulation and sedition, its professions are full of lip-service and loyalty, its doctrines and arguments all lead to the conclusion that there can be no happiness for India, whose millions are being starved to death by the British, till their rule shall cease.

The subject may logically be treated under several heads, first the causes of famine in ancient times, then their number, severity, and destructive effects. The comparative results of British famine policy would claim treatment, leading generally to the poverty of the masses, its cause, and the general trend of their environment under the white men's rule.

Since I commenced this little book there have appeared several other detailed arguments on the same subject.

Mr. Digby's Prosperous India is a bulky volume: the author writes in the same spirit and on the same lines as Mr. Dutt. His Excellency Lord Curzon has reviewed the incidence of the land tax at the present day. Mr. Thurburn has addressed the Fabian Society in vague but vigorous condemnation of the British system such as he knew it in one province. Mr. Skrine has described India with great powers of imaginary narrative.

- I have served in India in four different provinces for nearly forty years, and was on special duty for seven years, engaged in discovering and describing the economic conditions of the province of Oudh, past and present. I ought to know the truth and will try to tell it.

LIST OF ERRATA.

- P. 17. marginal reference.
Elliot VI, should be Elliot VII.
- P. 44. marginal reference 1890, should be 1900
- Pp. 60, 61. monogram, should be monograph.
- P. 57. their widows, should be poor widows.
- P. 84. samru, should be Samru.
- P. 118. gul, should be gulf.
- P. 95. fertile, should be futile.
- P. 96. In N.-W.P. certain crop estimates were taken
from model farm cultivation at Cawnpur.
- P. 104. coinage, should be courage.
- P. 122. nearly sixty, should be above sixty.

