INDIA AND THE ENGLISH

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by Barbara Wingfield-Stratford

with an Introduction by the Right Honourable V. S. Srinavasa Sastri

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TO

THE RIGHT HONOURABLE
V. S. SRINAVASA SASTRI

Author's Foreword

OF the many books that have been written about India, the greater number fall, roughly speaking, into two categories. One is that of the book which sets out frankly to be a guide to certain districts of India, with, sandwiched in, notes on shikar and, in some instances, detailed descriptions of the author's daily life. The other kind of book is a highly technical treatise upon some given aspect of Indian life —historical, social or political—written by a specialist in the one particular subject undertaken.

In writing this book I have aimed at neither of these two ideals, but have instead endeavoured to present to the reader some kind of a unified picture of the many, often contradictory aspects that go to make up the Indian nation and country. For it is only by taking a broad and general view, weighing one thing against another, and looking always to the end, that one can begin to understand the cross currents of present-day India's troubled life. If, therefore, I have dwelt but lightly upon certain branches of Indian

activity—especially political ones—if, for instance, I have said comparatively little upon such a momentous subject as that of the Montagu-Chelmsford reforms, it is not because I underrate the importance of these affairs, but because they have been fully and frequently dealt with in detail elsewhere, and my own object has been to show the reaction of such things upon the Indian temperament, the points at which they do or do not touch the inner life of the essential India.

The great bar, hitherto, to the furtherance of that better understanding between East and West whose consummation would be of such incalculable value to England and India alike, has been the apathy and indifference most people —even intelligent people—feel towards that strange and surpassingly wonderful Eastern country whose destiny has been linked—with such apparent incongruity—to our own. If I should succeed in arousing in only one or two readers the desire to know something more of India, to study one aspect or another of her life, to seek friendship with her people I shall feel that my purpose has not been altogether unaccomplished.

For a sinister feature of the present situation is the perceptible hardening of opinion against India. Almost every day some new instance of this occurs, and the Indian problem, instead of being looked at as one demanding abstract justice and a true English sense of fair play, is

rapidly becoming a party question upon which the worst passions engendered by party politics can be freely let loose.

The danger that ill-informed public opinion, biased by the undoubted excesses of certain factions of the "extreme left" in India, may drift into the current of blind reaction against all progress and reform, is a very real and terrible one. If that should happen, the future of the Empire will be dark indeed. Let us trust that the threatened recrudescence of racial prejudice and colour-feeling—aggravated, unfortunately, by many doubtless well-meaning but mistaken "patriots" who persistently shut their eyes to changing conditions—is foredoomed to failure, and that the innate justice of the British nation at its best, will prevail—and *in time*.

B. W.-S.

Berkhamsted.
1922.