

A
BRIEF SUMMARY
OF THE FACTS
CONNECTED WITH MY REMOVAL
FROM
THE COMMISSIONERSHIP
OF
PATNA!

BY WILLIAM TAYLER,
LATE BENGAL CIVIL SERVICE.

TRUTH IS TRUTH
TO THE END OF THE RECKONING
Measure for Measure.

CALCUTTA:
PRINTED BY P. S. D'ROZARIO AND CO, 8, DALHOUSIE-SQUARE.

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PREFACE.

I HAVE just written and printed for private circulation a pamphlet of 164 pages, containing a detailed and circumstantial narrative of the events, direct and collateral, connected with my removal from the high and responsible office of Commissioner of Patna during the insurrection of 1857.

But I am advised that few of those, whose interest I should be most desirous of enlisting, will have the time or the patience to read such a pamphlet, containing, as it undoubtedly does, much that is dry and uninteresting.

I am also painfully conscious that a man with a grievance—especially an Indian grievance—is usually regarded as a bore, scarcely less intolerable than the historical nabob, or irrepressible “Bengal Tiger;” and that it is a very difficult and up-hill task for such an one to secure the sympathy of the outside world, especially of those who, while they collectively exercise paramount influence in the nation, are, individually, so engrossed with the discharge of their unceasing and onerous duties, as to prevent their sacrificing time and attention to subjects of minor importance.

I therefore wish to present to such as may be un-

able or unwilling to devote time to the study and examination of the subject in detail, a brief, though accurate, abstract of the question which I am now submitting to the authorities of the department with which that question is immediately connected; that so, in the event of its being considered worthy of public discussion, those who are in a position to influence the result, may, without labour, difficulty, or loss of time, acquaint themselves with the essential facts. Such is the history, and such the object of the following pages.

W. TAYLER.

A BRIEF SUMMARY,

ETC. ETC.



"Truth is truth to the end o' the reckoning."

Measure for Measure.

IN the terrible crisis of 1857, when men's hearts were failing them for fear, and the British Empire in India was trembling in the balance, I was, as the representative of Government, invested with the charge of Patna, one of the largest, most important, and most disaffected provinces in India. My position, as described by the Court of Directors themselves, was the "most difficult of all the offices in the Lower Provinces;" and the universal belief was, that on the preservation of Patna depended the safety of the metropolis, and, more or less, of Bengal.

From this high and responsible post, without defence or explanation, in the face of the universal and enthusiastic testimony of all classes of the community (excepting a small knot of officials whom I will take the liberty of calling the "Patna Cabal") I was summarily, rudely, and ignominiously removed by the Lieutenant-Governor of Bengal, who, as was notorious at the time, had other personal reasons for wishing me to leave the district.

The Lieutenant-Governor who thus removed me was at the time labouring, as has since been incontrovertibly proved, under the most distressing ignorance both as regarded the extent of the disaffection, the feelings of the people, and the designs of the Sepoys; having, in the first instance, been summoned

by the peremptory orders of the Governor-General, from Darjeeling, where he was quietly enjoying the cool breezes and bracing air of the sanatorium, he wrote to me from the security of Calcutta, and endeavoured to persuade me that "the Mutiny of the Sepoys" (in my district) "was inconceivable in the presence of the European force" (although mutiny had occurred at other stations in the face of far larger European forces), and that there was "no danger at Patna till they did mutiny." He further warned me, not against neglect, supineness, or fear, but against rigour, informality, and coercive measures; thus endeavouring to discourage and repress those initiatory proceedings which were essential to the safety of all Christians in the Province.

Thus discouraged and repressed, but at the same time deeply convinced of the imminent danger of the crisis, and the accuracy of my own information, (based as it was upon careful inquiry and familiar intercourse with the natives,) and not less alive to the deplorable ignorance and short-sighted views of the Bengal Government, I invited a meeting of all the Christian residents of Patna, and laid before them the critical state of affairs,—and, on my views being enthusiastically, and by acclamation, approved,—and the confidence of the community cordially declared, I then took those steps which I felt convinced were indispensable to the safety of the province and city.

After some weeks of intense anxiety and incessant labour, the crisis of our danger arrived. Of the four districts of my division, the officials of Arrah were immured in a house where they were besieged by 8,000 rebels; the functionaries of Chuprah had all abandoned their station on their own responsi-

bility, and under a pressing sense of overwhelming danger; a large force of European soldiers (some 440 men) sent to relieve the Arrah garrison had been beaten back with terrific slaughter, and the destruction of the officials was considered inevitable; Major Eyre was advancing towards Arrah with a far smaller force of some 150 to 200 men, with two guns, and, as far as human calculation could foresee, was doomed to a defeat, of which the consequences would have been fatal; we were surrounded with disaffected regiments and temporising landholders; the Sikhs, on whom alone we could rely, were discontented; the most savage spirit had been shown throughout the country, and the public officers of the two districts still occupied wrote frequently to represent their imminent danger.

In this crisis, taking a deliberate review of our position and resources, and recording my conclusions at the time, I held it to be not only my duty, for the sake of preserving Christian life and preventing further massacre, but also for the purpose of concentrating our forces on the river bank, and thus keeping open the communication by road and river, to call in the Christian functionaries from the remaining two districts—Tirhoot and Gaya.

For this single supposed "error of judgment" the Lieutenant-Governor—unable to appreciate, or unwilling to consider, the grounds of my action—summarily and ignominiously suspended me, unjustifiably charging me with acting under a panic, a charge indignantly scouted by the large majority of those who were personally cognizant of my measures, and officially rejected by Lord Canning and the Honourable Court of Directors.

Subsequently my whole administration was designated by the Lieutenant-Governor, without any ground whatever, and in the teeth of the unanimous testimony of the residents, as causing public scandal "and discontent," a verdict officially ignored by the Honourable Court of Directors, who thus recorded their opinion regarding my position, my difficulties, and the character and result of my administration :—

"The most difficult position of all the local officers "in the Lower Provinces during the period under "review was that of the Commissioner of the Patna "division. The districts most exposed to danger "when revolt had actually broken out in the North "West Provinces, were those subject to his authority. "Mr. Tayler had, moreover, strong reason for be- "lieving that the large Mahomedan population of "the city of Patna and its neighbourhood sympa- "thized and were ready to co-operate with the muti- "nous soldiers. The magistrate of Patna reported "on the 28th June, 1857, that the greater part of "the Mahomedan gentry of that place were more "or less disaffected, and would probably rise had "they the opportunity, but that they lacked the "means of offensive operations; and the reports of "the magistrates of adjacent districts show that there "was a very general apprehension both of a mutiny "at Dinapore and a rising at Patna."

This then may be admitted as a fair representation of my anxious and embarrassing position.

Again, as to my measures, and their result :—

"They" [*i. e.*, the narratives sent home by Govern- ment,] "show, that from the first Mr. Tayler took "a correct view of the critical circumstances in which "the districts of his division were placed, and that

“his measures for meeting impending danger were
 “taken with great promptitude and vigour; an out-
 “break in Patna, the provincial capital, where dis-
 “affection largely prevailed, was immediately sup-
 “pressed, and the general peace of the division,
 “throughout a season of great difficulty and peril,
 “extending to the time of the mutiny at Dinapore,
 “was successfully maintained by the efforts of the
 “local officers acting under the constant advice, and
 “vigilant supervision of the commissioner.”

This opinion was at the time supported by Lord Derby, who thus referred to me in the House of Lords:—

“Then there is another gentleman whose conduct
 “has not received the sanction of the Government, I
 “mean Commissioner Tayler of Patna. His conduct
 “has been disapproved by the Government, but the
 “papers appear to me to show that he had a more
 “enlarged view of the crisis, a keener sense of the
 “danger, and a better idea of the remedy, than the
 “Government itself. (*Hear, hear.*)”

All these facts, which it would be the height of presumption in me to set forth before the world if they depended upon my own allegation, I have shown in the larger pamphlet to be established by ‘unanswerable evidence beyond dispute or cavil.

I have shown that every prediction I recorded, every view I took, every opinion I laid down, regarding the natives—whether citizens, outsiders, or sepoys—have been since unequivocally confirmed; and I have at the same time shown that where I had the misfortune to differ with the Lieutenant-Governor on each and all of these vital points, he was most unfortunately labouring under such an en-

ture delusion, that had I acted in conformity with his ideas or adopted his opinions (as I of course should in ordinary times have thought it my duty to do) I should beyond all doubt have involved the whole province and all the surrounding districts in ruin and destruction.

It has thus been incontrovertibly proved that, while in the midst of an administration which the highest authority has pronounced to have been successful, and which has elicited the enthusiastic encomiums of all those best competent to judge, I was subjected to the severest penalties on account of *one* supposed "error of judgment," the Lieut-Governor, who, by the same verdict, has been necessarily convicted of a *series* of the most grievous errors on almost every subject of importance connected with Patna, (errors only not fatal because I interfered with their operation), has, in spite of these errors, in virtue only of his official position, been since rewarded with high distinctions and honours by her Gracious Majesty!

I have shown that at the very commencement and outset of the insurrection I arrested the leading Molvees of that most dangerous fanatical sect, the Wahabees, and placed them in confinement for the purpose, as distinctly laid before the Government, of checkmating the entire sect, then numbering tens of thousands in the province.

I have shown that the Lieutenant-Governor disapproved of this act, endorsed the recorded opinion of the officer whom he deputed, with a Mahomedan assistant, to succeed me at Patna, to the effect that these very men were the most innocent and inoffensive of the Mahomedans, and that I had been incited to arrest them by the evil counsels of my subordinates.

officer, Dewan Mowla Buksh, the deputy magistrate of Patna, for his own evil purposes, and for the sake of removing these *loyal men*, who might have interfered with his designs.

I have shown how within the last few years these opinions have been stultified ; how six or seven years after the mutinies a war broke out beyond our frontiers ; a war which, though of short duration, led to grave disasters, the slaughter of many officers and men, and the serious injury of our reputation and prestige ; and how on the conclusion of the campaign, inquires were set on foot, and the startling discovery was made that the hostilities had been incited, and the war fed, by these indetical “innocent and inoffensive gentlemen,” the Wahabees of Patna, against whom I had ineffectually warned the Government ; that Ahmed-oollah, the chief Molvee, whom I had arrested at the outset of the rebellion in 1857, was the “head-centre” of the sect, who, while petted and cherished by a deluded Government, had been supporting with arms, money, and men, the open enemies of the State ; that his own brother, the high priest of the Wahabees, had been openly preaching rebellion in the heart of the Patna city, and his friends and relations travelling throughout the length and breadth of the country, as emissaries of treason !

I have further shown that these “innocent and inoffensive” Mahomedans, after careful and elaborate trial, conducted by Sir Herbert Edwardes, the Commissioner, Mr. Roberts, the Judicial Commissioner of Lahore, and the Judges of the High Court in Calcutta, have been condemned to death as traitors, and are now expiating their crimes, under commutation of sentence, in transportation for life in the Andaman Islands.

I have further shown that my subordinate native officer, Dewan Mowla Buksh, who was thus denounced as a suspected traitor, and who, on my own suspension from office, was disgraced by Government and removed from Patna, where he had exhibited such unswerving loyalty and done such signal service (all of which I had officially represented), has within the last few months, in reversal of the sentiments and judgment of the Government of 1857, been publicly decorated by her Majesty's Viceroy, Sir John Lawrence, among a crowd of illustrious chiefs and princes, with the Star of India.

Thus it has become apparent how painfully blind the Government of Bengal was to all those facts which it was most essential for the authorities to know; and that in very truth the preservation of the city and province was affected, and could only have been affected, by my acting upon my own responsibility, and on the information which I obtained by careful and anxious inquiry on the spot; and that if the views and opinions of the Bengal Government had been carried out, the loyal would have been discouraged, the traitor cherished, free scope have been given to the assassin, and ruin entailed upon the province.

With regard to the *single act* which was officially alleged as the cause of my removal, *viz.*, the withdrawal of the public officers and Christian families from the two stations of Mozufferpore and Gya, I have shown that the disapprobation of the measure was recorded without any reasonable or just consideration of the terrible crisis at which the order was issued; that although, in consequence of an unexpected and providential victory under Major (now Sir Vincent) Eyre, the withdrawal might, had I been gifted with clairvoyance, have perhaps been avoided,

yet that, when, viewed with reference to the state of the province, the improbability of Eyre's success, and the *fatal* consequences which his defeat would have involved, it was the only measure which would, in such a contingency, have saved the Christian residents of the outlying stations from massacre, and enabled us, by the concentration of our strength at Patna or Dinapore, to hold the province, keep open the communication by road and river, and forward succour to Lucknow and Cawnpore.

All these facts and incidents are supported by written evidence *recorded at the time*; and those who have sufficient interest in the subject to devote a small portion of their leisure to the perusal of the documents printed in the larger pamphlet, will see that my administration throughout those awful days has been the subject of general, unanimous, and enthusiastic eulogy on the part of all classes of the community—public officers, civil and military; non-official residents; Protestant chaplains and missionaries; the Roman Catholic bishop and all his congregation; planters; East Indians, and all respectable natives; all, in short, save the members of the “Patna Cabal,” a small and insignificant clique of four or five local officers, who, for reasons not difficult to fathom, had just before the commencement of the rebellion been actively engaged in opposing my schemes for the good of the people, and who were headed by a gentleman of the old school, celebrated for nothing more than his open immorality, and for the extent of his Mahomedan seraglio, the favourite sultana in which was a spiritual disciple of the Wahabee Molvees, whom I had arrested!

I believe I may confidently say that the above facts

have been established by indisputable evidence; and I may, without presumption, appeal to the recent revelations—sufficiently strange to partake rather of sensational romance than sober history—for a final and unanswerable confirmation of my views and measures.

I need not here particularly allude to the sundry collateral matters, which are more or less connected with the assault upon my administration, and the action of the Lieutenant-Governor. All these have been fully dealt with in my pamphlet; and it would have been unnecessary to mention them even there in connection with my removal, had not the Lieutenant-Governor of Bengal, immediately after he had suspended me for the single supposed error of judgment, sensible of the extreme weakness of his position, and the palpable insufficiency of the alleged cause, raked up and rechauffed all these subsidiary incidences to strengthen his case and embarrass me in my defence.

Supported, then by the hearty, cordial, and unanimous approval of all those who were best qualified to form a sound judgment at the time, encouraged by the unswerving friendship of some of the most able and excellent of public men, and confiding in the justice of her Majesty's Government, I now come forward, to ask for that which Justice and righteous dealing can scarcely refuse: a public recognition—in such shape as may appear befitting to her Gracious Majesty—of that service which I was permitted to render to the State, which few, since the recent development of facts, will now feel disposed to question, and which is generally considered by the most competent judges to have been the greatest service which

has been rendered by any officer within the territories of the Bengal Government.

I ought not, perhaps, to omit that when I was thus summarily removed from office, I had been twenty-eight years in the service of the Company; had throughout my service held exceptionally high appointments; and had just declined a seat on the Bench of the highest Court in India, offered to me in consequence of the high character recorded by the court; that when removed from my post I was kept for seven months under suspension; subjected to a loss of some 3,000*l.*; and when the Governor-General ordered me to be re-employed in high office, was banished to the farther extremity of Eastern Bengal, as far as geographical limits would admit from Patna. Since then almost every public officer who had supported or upheld me was, by a strange coincidence, in some way disgraced or removed from Patna; and from that time I myself, though comforted with the friendship and kindly feeling of most of the members of the other Governments, have been, more or less, the object of persistent hostility on the part of a certain section of the Bengal Government, and the relatives and connections of the original "Patna Cabal."

Under all those trials and difficulties I have struggled on in a new career, cheered by the support and cordial friendship of all those whom I revere, and sustained by the firm belief, which I have publicly reiterated, that God would—as He has—eventually vindicate the right.

WILLIAM TAYLER,

Late Bengal Civil Service.