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# My Diary in India, in the Year 1858-9

William Howard Russell was sent to India by *The Times* newspaper to report on the conflict of 1857–9 known as the Indian Mutiny. His previous work was in the Crimean War and his exposés of conditions there led to the sending of Florence Nightingale and her nurses, improvements to supplies and conditions, and to the demand for military and administrative reform. It was largely because of his contributions that war correspondence emerged as a new branch of journalism. In his Indian diary, Russell criticises British snobbery as well as attitudes to and treatment of Indians, and advocates leniency and conciliation. Volume 1 covers his journey to India and first impressions. It also contains some fascinating examples of first-hand coverage of the conflict and the reprisals following Lucknow and Cawnpore. Russell was horrified by such events, and concludes that only law reforms and non-military rule can ensure the prosperity of the Empire.



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# My Diary in India, in the Year 1858-9

VOLUME 1

WILLIAM HOWARD RUSSELL





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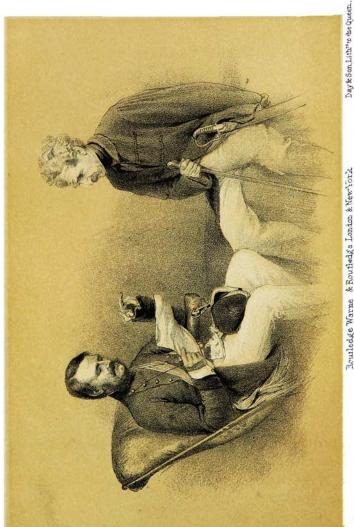
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# MY DIARY IN INDIA.





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# MY DIARY IN INDIA,

IN THE YEAR 1858-9.

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# WILLIAM HOWARD RUSSELL, LL.D.,

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT OF "THE TIMES."

With Illustrations.

IN TWO VOLUMES.—VOL. I.

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## PREFACE.

In the belief that the incidents of Indian action and personal adventures in the field may not be altogether destitute of attraction, I have prepared my journal for publication. It is with much diffidence I ask my readers to remember that a diary is essentially an egotistical work, and that one who is lord of himself, in his memorandum book, is apt to rule it over his heritage in a very despotic and narrow spirit which shuts him up in the prison of his own thoughts, and looks very little beyond it for treaties of friendship and alliance. The frequent use of the first personal pronoun is the necessary consequence of a personal narrative, written from day to day, of the impressions made by passing events on the senses of the spectator. To the text of the Diary I have added a few notes and observations not originally incorporated with it; but with this modification, and with the exception of omissions of conversations and occurrences of a private or confidential character, and of purely domestic and personal references, the MS. is printed almost as it was penned. betray no confidences, I shall violate no trusts; and if in observing that condition I may be compelled sometimes to be silent, I shall tell, at all events,



ii PREFACE.

when I do speak, the truth, and nothing but the truth. Whilst I was in India I had no authors to consult, no books to read, and I had no guides but my own perceptions; but neither had I any prejudices to overcome, nor theories to support. It may so have happened that, like the traveller who stands for the first time in a great city, I have been struck by objects which to the inhabitants had no significance or value. I may have detected a crack in the wall of the capitol which they believe to be secure because they have been looking at it so long that it ceases to cause any apprehension. Things familiar to, or unnoticed by, them, to me may have had a remarkable aspect and importance.

The temples, which to my eyes seemed foul with smoke, may be under the care of cunning workmen, who, as the good citizens know, will soon restore the walls to more than pristine whiteness. bridges, which appeared to me sinking and gaping wide, may have some secret props that give confidence to all the habituated that cross them. stream, that filled me with alarm as it rolled sullenly on, may have rolled on thus for centuries and done no harm, but, passing smoothly along, have borne quiet generations to eternity. Ignorant of those hidden sources of knowledge, I stand and look around, and say, "thus does it appear to me, and thus I seem to see." In saying so I always bear in mind and fully acknowledge the liability to errors into which one may fall, who allows himself to be led by first impressions. I think it is Sir Gardner Wilkinson who tells a story in one of his books respecting a learned German who came to London,



#### PREFACE.

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and at once went forth to generalize his remarks. He walked into Grosvenor Square, and observed an escutcheon on the walls of a house, which he duly considered for some time, and noted as an object to be inquired into. On going into Berkeley Square, he saw another escutcheon on the walls. "Ha!" quoth he, "I see it now," and forthwith he proceeded to write: "Each square in London has its distinct coat of arms, which is placed in a conspicuous place on one of the houses, and is generally identical with the arms of the principal proprietor."

Have you ever passed through the Strand, or Fleet Street, at dawn on a summer's morning? If so, you will have seen a street unknown to you by daysharp gables, quaint angles, odd signs and sculptures, strange shops, new alleys-a curious old carved and irregular continental street, with antique spires peering over a toppling sea of roofs, as unlike the street that the good citizen sees when he takes down his shutters as Venice is to Bermondsey. I saw India in mourning, lighted up by a blood-red conflagration, and in her misery she appeared very different indeed from the pictures which had been drawn of her, but they may have been, nevertheless, accurate representations of her former state. I know not if I have seen aright or can describe the objects which I beheld; but such as India appeared to me, it shall be, to the best of my poor ability, portrayed in pen and ink.

Into the history of the Mutiny I do not pretend to go—nor will I, except incidentally, touch upon the revolt which followed it, and which was, in certain places, more or less popular in its character; but I



iv Preface.

trust the reader will find a recompense for the absence of such disquisitions in what I would fain hope to be truthful details in reference to some scenes of the revolt, and more particularly to portions of the glorious efforts which crushed it. If there is something to be extenuated, surely nought shall be set down in malice. If I mention names, the owners will, I trust, take it not amiss, and if they do I shall gladly make amends hereafter and erase any index to their identity.

I have to express my obligations to Mr. Lundgren, to whose well-skilled pencil I am indebted for the illustrations.

WILLIAM HOWARD RUSSELL.

London, December, 1859.



#### PREFACE TO THE FOURTH EDITION.

It is necessary to say a few words to my readers ere they open the fourth edition of "My Diary in Three large editions were sold with such rapidity, that I could not make the corrections for which the haste wherewith the original sheets were passed through the press in order to satisfy the exigencies of my publishers had given occasion. But since the appearance of the first impression, I have been revising and altering such portions of the work as seemed to me to require it; and, struck by the frequent egotisms and allusions to personal annoyances which, though in some sort excusable on the ground that they were contained in what was originally a private diary, may have taxed the patience of those who travelled along with me, I have excised groans and lamentations which were intended merely for my peculiar solatium, and have added here and there a few notes or explanations which were rendered desirable in consequence of errors or misapprehensions on my part at the time when I was jotting down my daily notes in reference to persons, things, or occurrences, to which I had occasion to allude.

Many of my kindly critics—and I have to acknowledge that, even in the severest notices which have been brought under my eyes, there is a strong leaven



Vi PREFACE.

of friendliness, for which I am very thankful-were under the belief that "My Diary in India," either in part or in its entirety, consisted of letters which had already appeared in the "Times" from my pen when I was engaged as Special Correspondent of that journal in India, and I have been frequently obliged to correct the mistakes which originated in such criticisms. have observed with regret, that statements and passages in the work have been selected to corroborate peculiar views, or to maintain diverse crotchets, by writers who were indifferent to my professed and real intention as declared in the opening pages of the work, of recording without consciousness of prejudice the events which were passing around me, and the impressions and reflections to which they gave rise, without pretending to infallibility of judgment and conclusion, or to correctness and profundity of observation. course, I cannot dispute the right of theorists and crotchet-weavers to make use of my materials; but I beg to assure them, they were never collected for the purposes to which they have been put. When I have recorded an act of cruelty or of humanity on the part of the white or the dark man, I have done so because the act itself struck me at the time with feelings of disgust or admiration. "Sunt quia videntur" is a phrase which the circumstances under which the Diarv was written make applicable to what it contains. own that I was deeply moved by the spectacle which India presented to my eyes; but I should have been false to my heart, to my head, and to the truth as it appeared to me, if for any consideration connected with expediency or popularity with any class at home or abroad. I had not made public the views I enter-



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tained of our position in that vast empire, and of the policy we pursued in reference to its inhabitants, or had suppressed passages which honestly expressed the sentiments I, no matter how erroneously, entertained.

My creed is that we never can hold India by the sword but at a cost of money which England cannot afford to pay, and that any attempt to diminish the expenditure by large employment of native military agency is certainly dangerous, and will probably be unsuccessful. By the tenure of the sword I mean the use of armed force as the sole machinery of government, to maintain a rule, which is-if not odious to -unpopular among-the people governed. We have neither the men, populous as are our islands—nor the money—rich as are our aristocracy, our merchants and our bourgeoisie, and liberal as are our tax-makers-to maintain an army of Europeans in India, which shall uphold our rule on its bayonets, nor do I believe that the scheme of Mr. Wilson, able as it may be, and much applauded as it is, will supply resources for the process out of the pockets of the natives themselves. So long as the evils of our law courts, and the mischiefs of our administrative system, remain uncorrected and unmitigated—so long as we regard India as a mere cottonfield, as an indigo-garden, as a plantation for the growth of five-per-cents and for enriching of younger sons, or as the arida nutrix of the civil and military services, our relations with the myriads we can neither destroy nor succeed must be uncertain and perilous. And if to the impolicy of such a course we superadd the madness which precedes the destruction of dominant rules, and in the mere wantonness of power for ever fret and gall the chain-marks of the slave—if we



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PREFACE.

permit any portion of our fellow-subjects in India to be treated by another portion of them as the Helots were treated by their Spartan masters, we shall have to encounter the sullen spirit of discontent which at any moment may become the animating principle of a terrible servile war, repeated and renewed again and again till the crust on which our power was sustained, destroyed and eaten through by incessant and never dying flames, drops into the boiling lava beneath our feet, carrying with it the prestige of the British name, and the traces of the magnificent audacity, of the indomitable courage, of the subtle genius, of the kinglike statesmen who founded and stabilitated the most extraordinary possession of which History speaks or shall be able to speak in times to come!-That the evil day may be averted I heartily hope!-That the direct reign of the Queen over India may be the date which a remote posterity, prosperous, peaceful, happy, and christianised, shall look back upon through a long vista of ages, as that which inaugurated the reforms and instituted the privileges which shall then make that Empire the pride and glory of Great Britain, and the immortal credit of her people, I fervently pray.

WILLIAM HOWARD RUSSELL

London, April, 1860.



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