PREFACE.

It is to be regretted that old Anglo-Indian Officials, especially those whose lives have been passed in the interior as Magistrates, Superintendents of Police, and the like, do not more often employ the time, that we are told hangs so heavily on their hands after retirement, in jotting down some of their experiences for the benefit of the public in England, whose ideas of Official life in India, of the mode in which the country is governed, and of the idiosyncrasies of its people are still of the crudest.

Especially as to the "seamy side" of the character of the mixed population could police officers contribute much that would not only be very good reading, but that would also prove highly instructive to their younger brethren just commencing life.

General Hervey, who was for many years employed in the Department for the Suppression of Thuggee, has recently set an admirable example of what might be done in that direction.

It is true that incidents rarely occur in India which would furnish material for tales "à la Gaboriau," or that could vie in interest with the
"Hansom Cab Mystery." Highly scientific murder is happily as yet unknown in India; jewels worth fabulous amounts are not often made away with;* the trained intelligence of detective geniuses of the Lecocq type is rarely called for—which is fortunate, inasmuch as the Indian police, as at present organised, is destitute of the detective element, as understood in Europe.

A very rough-and-ready investigation ordinarily suffices to bring home his guilt to the average Indian criminal. As a matter of fact, the commoner offences—murders, manslaughters, and thefts—have usually been traced to the perpetrators before the constable makes his appearance, and he finds that the patel (or head man) and the humble mhr (village watchman) have already got the offender in custody. It only remains for the constable to get the case into order and to supply—which he is very ingenious in doing—any gaps in the chain of evidence. After this it runs the usual monotonous course—to the nearest Magistrate or to the Sessions, as the case may be.

But, as every experienced Official knows, there are thousands of serious crimes that are not only never discovered, but never even reported; there are many reported that never occurred; and careful observation over a number of years shows that there are flushes or epidemics, as it were, of particular classes of crime, and there are others which are peculiar to particular castes and races.

* Though His Royal Highness the Duke of Connaught was robbed of valuable jewels between Rawal-Pindi and Poona.
If a few leading cases from the note-book of an old Anglo-Indian Police Official in the Bombay Presidency can throw any light on any of these matters, I shall rejoice that my scribblings during a long period of sickness and suffering have not been entirely useless.

No one can live for thirty-five years in India without being drawn into deep sympathy with the people, without recognising the many virtues they possess, and the numerous good qualities which have survived ages of anarchy and persecution. It is in no hostile spirit, therefore, that allusion will hereafter be made to certain weaknesses, certain conspicuous failings of character, which force themselves to the front. They are largely compensated for by good traits; such as unbounded hospitality, kindliness of disposition, the rugged fidelity of the servant to his master, which come back to our minds in very practical form when we have left India for good. It is my earnest hope that in bringing out the darker side of Indian character I may also have thrown light on some of the better qualities of the people among whom I have lived so long.

On the other hand, I trust I may have shown the need for incessant watchfulness in the administration of a conglomeration of nationalities, creeds and castes such as exist in India. We habitually shut our eyes in India—as in other Colonies—believe that all is going on for the best, and abhor pessimists. But, trite saying though it be, that in India we walk on a slumbering volcano—the truth of it is now and again brought home to us with startling vividness, and an
incident here or there reveals to us, for the moment, the glow of the molten mass on the crust of which we walk so blithely.

In these pages, I have endeavoured with all humility to utter certain warnings which, even a year ago, would have been denounced as mere ravings. Yet they have been justified very amply since! And on this very day when I despatch my last proof, an ominous cloud hangs over the dominions of Her Majesty the Queen Empress. It may—let us hope that it will—disperse.

T. C. ARTHUR.

11th May, 1894.

P.S.—The following tales are not "stories," or in any sense inventions. I could give chapter and verse, could refer to existing records in verification of them; and although it has been necessary to give fictitious names occasionally, I can assure my readers that in almost every case I was personally concerned, and that the others in some way or other came under my personal cognizance.