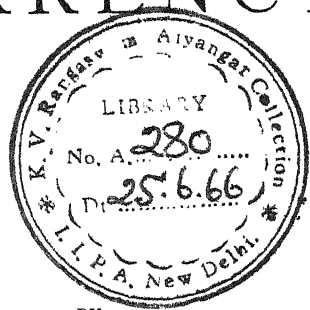


A  
COLLOQUY  
ON  
CURRENCY.



BY  
HENRY HUCKS GIBBS.

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## P R E F A C E .

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THE following colloquy was in great part written as an article in the "Contemporary Review" for July, 1889, and was founded on a correspondence between me and two well-known members of Parliament, who appear as taking part in it under names other than their own. With their permission I used, as far as was possible under the change from epistolary to colloquial style, their own words; only adding such further questions or answers as spring naturally from my own part in the conversation.

Mr. White, the fourth in the *dramatis personæ*, represents, as he says, the Man in the Street; and is made to ask such questions and interpose such arguments as would occur to a man of sufficient intelligence but insufficient knowledge.

Since 1889 much has happened, the condition both of British Agriculture and of British Commerce with foreign nations passing continuously from bad to worse, a downward impulse having been given them by the unfortunate operation of our monetary laws, an impulse which has been continually increased by the action of other nations in following our bad example. To them it has been much less hurtful than to us, for they have no India to govern, and their foreign trade weighs little in the balance compared with ours.

So grave were the perils which menaced Indian finance and Indian trade, and so loud were the outcries of the manufacturing districts of England, that the Government of Lord Salisbury had no hesitation in sending delegates to the Monetary Conference lately assembled at Brussels, choosing, with a view to fair and full discussion of the various monetary questions which might be presented to it, a pronounced representative of each school, Monometallist and Bimetallist, and as a third the Master of the Mint. The succeeding Government, with less liberality and less insight

into the situation, added to the number two men of strong Monometallist opinions.

Under these circumstances I thought it might be useful to give some further extension of the colloquy of 1889, bringing forward as fairly as I could the arguments and assertions of my opponents, and giving as briefly as I could the answers to the arguments, and the correction of many errors both of fact and deduction.

Since it was written the Brussels Conference has met, has sat through four weeks, and adjourned till the 30th of next May. It pleases the London press to say that its deliberations have been abortive, and can lead to nothing. For my part I will only say that its deliberations have been much what I expected and indeed (under the circumstances of last year) desired, resulting in the suggestion and shaping of various proposals alleviative or constructive, to be considered during the recess of the Conference, both by the Delegates and by their Governments, and to come on for decision at a time when our Government (who alone struck a discordant note during the discussions) will be more under the supervision of Parliament than they would be, had the formal voting taken place now. I regretted, indeed, that none of the proposals were accepted by the Committee *ad referendum*. They were for the most part, in truth, only palliatives, but that was what they were intended to be, and a means to gain time (which is of great importance), and above all things they were a recognition of the danger of the present situation, and of the great necessity of finding a remedy.

The whole existence of the Conference is itself a recognition of the danger, and a proof that the Governments of the world appreciate it, and do not despair of safeguarding commerce against it. In 1878, 12 States were represented; in 1881, 16; and in this year 20. That alone is a sufficient proof of the increasing interest that is felt in the question; and a yet more important feature is that all these nations bore testimony to the fact that there was a great and increasing difficulty to surmount.

I finish this preface with some weighty words of the late Mr. Adolph Soetbeer, a leading German Monometallist.

They are nearly the last written by him, and are well worthy of the attention of our Government: Je crains que si le Gouvernement *Anglais*, à l'occasion de la prochaine Conférence Monétaire Internationale, refuse de soumettre ou d'appuyer des propositions praticables destinées à *étendre considérablement l'emploi de l'argent comme moyen de paiements*, il en résultera probablement une nouvelle dépréciation incalculable dans la valeur du métal, et une "appréciation" très-sérieuse de l'or, suivies de conséquences désastreuses.\*

I have added an Index to my Colloquy, for the convenience of easy reference to the various points touched on therein.

HENRY H. GIBBS.

*March, 1893.*

\* I fear that if the English Government on the occasion of the forthcoming International Monetary Conference, should refuse to submit or support practicable propositions destined to extend considerably the use of silver as legal tender, there will probably result a further incalculable depreciation in the value of the metal and a very serious appreciation of gold, followed by disastrous consequences.

## CONTENTS.

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	PAGE
Preface - - - - -	3
<b>A Colloquy on Currency :—</b>	
First Day - - - - -	7
Second Day - - - - -	28
Third Day - - - - -	56
Fourth Day - - - - -	79
Fifth Day - - - - -	93
<b>Appendix :—</b>	
Sir Thomas Gresham's Letter to Queen Elizabeth - - -	v
Extract from the Report of John Locke and other Commis- sioners, 1698 - - - - -	viii
Reports of Isaac Newton to the Right Hon. the Lords Com- missioners of His Majesty's Treasury, 1717 - - -	ix
A Paper on Currency, by Huskisson, 1826 - - - - -	xiv
Tables.	
Chart.	
Index.	