

PREFACE.

THE following was delivered as the Inaugural Address of a "Conference on Colonial Questions," held at the Westminster Palace Hotel, on July 19th, 20th, and 21st. The tone and spirit of the criticism offered upon the proceedings in certain quarters is at once so unfair and infatuated, that I am induced, before the larger and complete Report of the Transactions, which is in course of preparation for the press, is issued, to send forth this Address in a shape that will enable almost every Englishman, at Home or in the Colonies, to form a judgment between the promoters of the Conference and its cynical detractors. It is printed as it was read with a few verbal alterations.

It would seem as though the time were fast coming when it will be a crime to be a reformer; when once more inconvenient propagators of new doctrines may be hanged or pilloried for being in advance of their age—for startling a selfish, self-satisfied, self-satiating community with troublesome warnings of its follies or its perils. British policy is now at the mercy—do I say at the mercy?—is now *tyrannised over* by a limited but powerful class. They are driving us to the devil with a smoothness, precision, and certainty that must be as grateful to him as it seems satisfactory to them. They resent the outcry of some such protesting passengers as we, and certain "guards" of the Press, I am sorry to say, assist in repressing it with singular intolerance.

In the following Address will be found explicitly set forth the objects of those who promoted the Conference. It was essentially what its name imported—a *Conference on Colonial Questions*. As illustrative of the general honesty and accuracy of our critics, I may mention that an article upon it in so careful a paper as the