

BRITISH RULE IN INDIA.

CHAPTER I.

THE TERRAIN.

1593.

“It was a mountain at whose verdant feet
A spacious plain, outstretched in circuit wide,
Lay pleasant: from his side two rivers flowed,
One winding, th’ other straight, and left between
Fair champaign with less rivers intertwined:
High cities and high-towered, that well might seem
The seats of mightiest monarchs; and so large
The prospect was, that here and there was room
For barren desert, fountainless and dry.”—MILTON.

WHAT is the British India which is now, per force, occupying so much of our thoughts and conversation? Hitherto we have, for the most part, been satisfied with very vague notions of what our great Asiatic dependency is like, and of how we came by it, and of the precise nature and extent of our concern with it. We have regarded it as the business of a particular class of our society to understand and transact Indian affairs, while the great majority

might fairly admit the whole subject of that very and odd, and troublesome settlement of ours to be very tiresome, and one which might be left to those who understood it. The time for this kind of insolent negligence is past—suddenly brought to an end by calamity, which may probably have been engendered by that very selfishness. We shall all have to bear our share in the efforts and sacrifices which this calamity will impose on the nation; and we might all be glad, at the present moment, to know as much as every “old Indian” whom we have been accustomed to let alone with his speciality. It will do us no harm, therefore, to look a little into this matter, to brush up such knowledge as we may ever have had, and to gain somewhat more, however cursorily, as to what British India is, how we came there, and what our relations have been with it, up to the present day.

It is not difficult to choose a stand-point of place and time from which to ascertain what our great dependency is like. The time which suits us best is that in which an Englishman first landed on the coast to trade. The place must be that which is best suited for the widest survey.

The central part of Asia is a table-land, believed to be, in its highest platform, ten thousand feet above the sea level. The descent of the land to the sea is variously accomplished in the different maritime countries of Asia, but nowhere more im-

massively than in that which belongs to us. The evidence of the land from 10,000 to 1,000 feet above the sea is made by a steep slope, like a diversified wall with embrasures, covering an area of from 90 to 120 miles in breadth, and running a line of 1,500 miles. The area of this embankment is not less than 150,000 square miles. From a time beyond record the ridge of this slope has been called by the people who live below it the *Abode of Cold*, or of *Snow*—Himálaya. With them this was not a mere figure of speech; for, high up above the clouds, where adventurous trepassers found the air hardly fit for mortal breathing, dwells the god (not the least in a pantheon of many millions) who is the *Father of the Ganges*, and father-in-law of Siva, the Destroyer. For many millions of years the god lived in repose, watching over his great progeny of rivers from his solitude, approached no nearer than by the few herdsmen who came up from either side after their goats which had browsed the slopes of thyme and marjoram too high; or by the daring traders who, with mountain sheep for their beasts of burden, threaded the passes with their woven fabrics, or with camel's hair or silky wool. But now, intrusion has become so common, the secret of the rarity of the atmosphere is so vulgarised, and our countrymen have such a propensity to live above the clouds in the hottest weather, that we need not scruple to mount to the *Abode of Cold*—to the very palace of

the old divinity—and use his stand-point, and borrow his eyes, for our survey of our own dominions lying below.

Turning first to the right, we see (with eyesight, however, many times magnified) nothing but high table-land, stretching westwards beyond Persia itself—a table-land fringed with the Affghanistan peaks which we have no concern with at present—our period, being that in which our first trader set foot on the shore below; that is, in 1593. Looking nearer, we see five rivers gushing from the embrasures of the great wall—from the ravines of the mountain range. Having flowed from sacred lakes in Thibet, these rivers are holy in their way; and the territory they enclose is rich and populous in comparison with that outside. We look down on some busy scenes in the Punjaub, even three centuries ago; while the Sandy Valley through which the Indus rolls his strong body of waters shows no life, except where parties of fighting men are on the way to pillage their enemies, and lay waste the villages which rise up round the wells. East of the five rivers, the Himálaya slope becomes lovely. Averaging four or five thousand feet in height, it presents now forests of the stern woodland character of the north; and now vast expanses of grass and wild flowers; and then dark ravines, leading down to sunny platforms, where the solitary Englishman below would have found

Hard to believe that his countrymen would hereafter set up their homes by hundreds. Clouds are floating below, tier beneath tier, and stray vapours dim the sun at any moment. yet even here, monkeys abound in the woods, and butterflies, measuring nine inches between the tips of their wings, light on the flowers in the pastures. There is no finer sight for the ordinary human eye than standing up there, at sunrise or sunset, and waiting for openings in the clouds below, to survey the great plain of India, too vast for diversity of colour, but stretching into the sky in one boundless expanse of purple, except where the level rays of the sun strike upon some eminence lofty enough to be thus distinguishable. Assuming the vision of the old god of the region, what do we see, as he saw it three centuries ago?

Immediately below is a belt of jungle, fringing the slope where it meets the plain; and, stretching forward from it, a region of tropical growths, caused and preserved by the umbrageous character of the woodland. Prodigious trees are bound together by creepers which shake out their blossoms a hundred feet from the ground. Tree-ferns remind us of an older time than even Hindoo tradition reaches; and the grass is so tall that the elephants are heard and felt by their tread before they are seen. In the beds of shrunken streams the oleanders blossom, and the apricot and pomegranate ripen

in the sunny spaces. This is still high ground in comparison with that which lies near the sea and none in India is more sacred in the eyes of its inhabitants. The land, as it slopes northwards from the Jumna, is strewn with temples, and traversed by groups of pilgrims, coming up to worship. From the sandy western plains to the watery eastern region of Bengal stretches this rich plateau, through which run the prodigious rivers of Upper India, and where the great cities on their banks tell of the old glories of Hindoos and Mohammedans alike. Traditions tell of Canoge which covered an area equal to modern London; and of the greatness of Delhi, Agra, Cawnpore, and many others. From our perch we look down on them, and see what those millions of natives are doing, before they begin to dream of seeing white faces among them as their masters. In the well-drained fields of this upper surface, the husbandmen are sowing their grain seeds all mixed, or pulling them up separately, with infinite waste of time and produce. Others are more wisely leading water from the tanks among the dry ridges. Under the trees there is a loom here and there, the rude arrangement of sticks above a little pit, by which the fine muslins for turbans and female garments, or the gay and tasteful shawl fabrics are to come out, as if by magic. Within the woods, the herdsmen are burning the jungle grass in

to procure a fresh growth for their animals; and the hunters are distributed in a circle to take account of the wild beasts which will be thus dislodged. The sacred Ganges is all alive with boats; and along its margin are companies of the devout at their ablutions, with here and there an aged or sick sufferer awaiting death from the stream. In the towns, the people are like townspeople everywhere—bargaining in the bazaars, salaaming in the temples, prostrating themselves in the palaces; while, in the domestic courtyards, the women are grinding corn in the handmill, and neighbours sit in a circle at evening, to listen to interminable tales—enjoying the literature of fiction in its primitive style. This is the region now most interesting to us, under the fearful transition of an after-time.

What lies below and to the east of this plateau? The basin of the Ganges, a watery realm, where, in seasons of inundation, the villages are seen crowning eminences, like islands amidst the waste of waters, while the tops of the forests are swaying under the gush of the currents and eddies. In the dry season when the waters are lowest, the people resort to the shade of these forests; the wild beasts slink into the covert again from the hills; the rice-fields grow green, and the pestilence drives the rural population to the towns, or a boat life on the great rivers. The highest social cultivation is in this district, where

there is somewhat less superstition, more industry, more art, and more communication with varietal men. The further side of this basin is formed by the highland beyond the Burrampooter, which limits to the east the territory which we are surveying. Thus have we overlooked the domain of Hindostan Proper, or the Bengal Presidency, as we call it now, viz., the area extending from the Himálaya to the Vindhya mountains in one direction, and from the Burrampooter to the Indus in the other.

If ever a realm was dignified by its boundaries, it is this. Nature's mightiest barricades hedge it in; northward, mountains never yet scaled; round the shores, an ocean never yet fathomed, and brooded over by the irresistible monsoon; and these mountain and ocean barriers connected by rivers of a magnitude kindred to both. The Burrampooter and the Indus are indeed gulfs brimming with rushing seas; and where they reach the ocean they threaten to melt down the continent into it. Their deltas are, indeed, fit only for amphibious creatures, with which man can establish no understanding; so that in entering India by them the sensation is like that of travelling back into a pre-adamite age from the scenes of common life.

Looking southwards, the Vindhya mountains might seem to the people of the valleys a barrier cutting off Hindostan Proper from the true peninsula of India; but the god in his "Abode of Snow"

; by overlook them, and survey the Deccan. This river stretches not quite from sea to sea, but from the Gulf of Cambay to the Ganges, on its descent into its basin. Looking over the range—and it is little more than 2,000 feet at the highest—what do we find next? A deep pit dug by torrents in the black soil of the peninsula—a rich narrow valley in which the Nerbudda flows from east to west: and then comes another and a lower range, and another great river, the Taptee, the last of such magnitude which flows westwards. From the deep valleys of these rivers we see the land rise, terrace beyond terrace, till, at 1,000 miles from the Nerbudda, the plateau is 3,000 feet above the sea. It is not horizontal, for it slopes down from west to east; and it is not altogether level, for its plains show some shallow undulations, and round the outer edge little hills are grouped and scattered, their recesses being filled with forest. Otherwise that whole staircase of terraces spreads, open and treeless—a vast expanse of grass and crops after the rains, and of brown burnt surface in spring—with towns scattered here and there, and thousands of villages; and near the sources of rivers, mighty Hindoo temples, to which trains of pilgrims are converging from all quarters. Each great river has its deep cleft, worn in the soft soil by the flow of waters for ages; and the plateau thus drained cannot be irrigated from rivers running so far below. Therefore the inha-

bitants are busy about their tanks, and the channels which lead their waters over the fields in the districts which have been least disturbed by war.

Who makes war? The sovereigns whose palaces show themselves above the other abodes of the great cities make war sometimes—even often; but the everlasting peace-breakers live in those strongholds, those *droogs*, which crown the hills at the edge of the plateau. The marauding chiefs of the Deccan take refuge in those fortresses with their booty, when they have made a raid among the villages. They little suspect that the landing of a solitary Englishman on the coast down below has determined the fate of those robber-castles of the Deccan, and that within three centuries they will be crumbling ruins, telling of the atrocities of the age preceding the British occupation of India.

Lying before us in the glare of a tropical sun, this plateau darkens with vegetation towards its further extremity. The high corner of the south-west is darkest, for there the clouds gather first above the heights which are like the rim of a tray to this table-land; and under those clouds the forests are grandest. Narrowing as it rises towards the south, the platform is rounded off before it reaches the sea. A chasm of lower land, the Gap of Coimbatore, lies beyond; and beyond that more hills, the last of which run into the sea as a promontory at Cape Comorin. Is there anything beyond but the broad

with its white surf, dashing up against the apex of this vast triangle? Looking to the eastward of that apex, we see the loveliest of islands, anchored fast by its central mountain, but otherwise looking as if it would float away before any breeze which might fill the foliage of its woods as if it were sails. Fringed with palms, fragrant with spices, gaudy with tropical flowers, a perfect Eden for luscious fruits, Ceylon rises on the south-eastern horizon of that Indian territory, the northern boundary of which is the *Abode of Snow*. It is nearly 2,000 miles from the one to the other. What would the adventurer on the coast have said, if told that his great-grandson might come on his track, and find all this territory in English occupation, and the greater part in possession?

But we have not seen quite all. What is below the rim of the plateau—between it and the sea? There is, on the western side, a strip of land, hot and moist, from sixty to thirty miles broad, easily reached from the sea, but not so easily from the plateau above. The great embankment which supports the table-land of the Deccan is a miniature of the Himálaya range, which supports the plateau of Thibet. A mere rim on the inside—it is a precipice of two or three thousand feet deep on the seaward side. There are few roads down these Ghats; and, till the British showed the way, it was scarcely possible for the people on the shore to obtain the produce

of the Deccan. It was on that strip of shore that our pioneer Englishman, Stevens, landed in 1598. He saw that steep wall bristling with forests—bamboos waving in the breeze which passed over the summits, and teak-trees being tumbled down by the torrents in their leaping course, after the rains; but he knew nothing of what lay behind that great green wall. The sandy beach of that Malabar coast bristles with cocoa palms, which make a fringe for the margin of the tide. The waterfalls of the Ghauts join the sea by a multitude of small inlets; and here and there a rice-swamp makes a gap in the long hedge of palms. A rocky island of small extent, lying close under a larger island, was an object of attention to our pioneer countryman while on that coast. The Portuguese had obtained it from the potentates of the mainland, valuing it for the goodness of its harbour on that exposed coast, and expressing that value in its name—Good Bay, or Bombay. The Coromandel coast, answering on the east to the Malabar on the west, is less strong in its distinctive features, except the assault of the sea on the shore. The Madras surf is celebrated all over the world. As for the rest, the Ghauts are lower, more broken, and more spread; the line of coast is broader; and all the great rivers, from the Taptee southward, fall into the sea on that coast. South of the basin of the Ganges, five noble streams pour their floods into the Bay of Bengal. The Mahanuddy; the great

Godavery, which cuts a channel for itself right across the Deccan; the Krishna, which does the same lower down; the Panabar; and the Cauvery, which washes the walls of a series of great cities, from Seringapatam to Negapatam. That part of the peninsula is little more than 300 miles wide. In the northern part of this great territory, from the Indus to the Burrampooter, it is not less than 1,500.

What territory it is!—that which is now British India, but which our pioneer of 1593 would no more have dreamed of our making our own than the Garden of Eden, or the dominions of Prester John! He would have been no less astonished if he could have known that such a territory, being once our own, and the largest dependency ever held by any nation, would not be considered worth study by the British at home till calamity, arising from that levity, should make every nook and corner of it as fearfully interesting to the people at large as the interior of Africa to the Parks of Peebles, and the Polar regions to the Franklins and Kanes. When Stevens returned from having set foot on the coast of Malabar, his countrymen could not hear enough of the great peninsula. Now that it has long been our own, we have not cared enough about it to help our rulers to govern it well. It is time for repentance and amendment.

CHAPTER II.

ANTECEDENTS.

B.C. 4000*—A.D. 1593.

“Thus thou hast seen one world begin and end,
 And Man as from a second stock proceed.
 Much thou hast yet to see.”—MILTON.

IF a merchant from Japan were to land in a European port, on a commercial speculation, and be told in a dream that his countrymen would, within three generations, become possessed of the whole continent, except Russia, he would think it the very wildest dream that had ever visited his sleep. Yet a parallel dream, during Stevens's first night at Goa, would have been a true prophecy.

Major Rennell first turned our attention to the relative magnitude of Europe and British India. Rectifying his statement, in accordance with recent changes, we find that our Indian empire slightly exceeds in area, while falling little short in population, the whole of Europe, exclusive of Russia.†

* Hindoo computation.

† Excluding Russia, the excess of the Indian area is 144,150 square miles; and the excess of the European population is under 19,000,000.

It is a great and marvellous conception, even after a century of such feelings as must be excited by an extension of dominion unmatched (all conditions being considered) in history. This vast territory is the abode of nations as numerous and as different from each other in character and language as the nations of Europe. If we lose sight of this, and lump them together as "natives of India" declaring ourselves unable to recognise any difference between one and another, we are simply emulating the ignorance of Asiatics in their occasional travels in the west. They do not know an Italian from a German—a Frenchman from an Englishman; and we may conceive what would be the chances of success of an Asiatic government of Europe which should proceed on such a view. The main point of education for Anglo-Indian service is the understanding of the conditions and qualities of the peoples to be governed; but that kind of preparation has never had the advantage of popular intelligence and sympathy at home. Nobody has felt an interest in what Indian officials have had to study; nobody has cared to hear what Anglo-Indians have had to tell; and now, when our great dependency is in a state of serious, though partial revolt, most of us at home have everything to learn, when we ought to have been able to judge, suggest, and insist, through the carefully gathered experience and vigilant observation

of a hundred years. It is probably a new idea to most of us that our Indian empire is almost as large and populous as Europe, and including as many nations, with their languages. When Stevens, who had joined a party of Portuguese to reach Goa, saw what he could from thence, he probably formed a more just estimate of the great peninsula than we have hitherto done; but now, stern events are awakening the interest which has slumbered too long.

What made Stevens go to Goa? One of the agents of the Russian trading company to India was a man of English birth, who had seven times gone down the Volga, and by the Caspian and Persia to Hindostan; what he saw of the wealth of India, and of the scope for commercial adventure there, became known to Stevens, who found enough that was wonderful and tempting to make a most stimulating narrative as soon as he got home. Everybody read his book, and the nation became extremely eager to obtain a commercial footing under the shadow of the Moguls. News from other wanderers began to come in. Of a party of four travellers who had gone to see what they could see, one, named Storey, remained as a monk among the Portuguese at Goa; another, Newberry, died on his way back; a third, Leedes, accepted service under the Emperor Akbar; and only the fourth, Fitch, came home. The London merchants began

their scheme of a company (from which our East India Company has grown) before the new century came in. They raised money, laid plans, and sought Government aid; but the 16th century closed before they could bring their scheme to bear. While awaiting the founding of our first factory, we must therefore survey the new region of society, thus strangely disclosed, with the eyes of Steuarts, at Goa, or of Leedes, at Delhi; perhaps of both, as the one certainly saw Hindostan Proper, and the other, no doubt, more or less of the Deccan—regions as distinct, to say the least, as eastern and western Europe. It ought to be at least as interesting to us as it could be to these early adventurers to know who the inhabitants of India were, and what they were like; because we understand what they could never have dreamed of—that our institutions and methods, as rulers in India, must take shape and colour, more or less, from those which were bequeathed to us by our predecessors. It is but little that can be told in such space as can be spared for the purpose here; but the most superficial retrospect ought to be full of instruction.

Behind the history of the Hindoos lies a dim region in which even speculation gropes, and can make no way. Somebody was there, in that singularly fenced region, before the Hindoos came down (as the learned tell us they did) through

the passes from Central Asia: and now and then an ancient monument turns up, or a gem of law or tradition 'dropped from its setting,' or a philological hint sends a flash of disclosure through the darkness of antiquity—all indicating that the predecessors of the Hindoos were wise at a time when the whole earth is supposed to have been barbarous, and that there was at least one great country which swarmed with an organized society in days when we are apt to fancy deep calling to deep, and wildernesses resting in perpetual silence, before Man had appeared to awaken all the voices of Nature. Ascending no higher, it seems to be admitted on all hands that the ancient Hindoos were near the top of the scale of nations in civilization. Their institutions must have been strongly rooted to have stood their ground as they did, under the rule of their Mohammedan conquerors, even so late as Leedes's residence at the Delhi Court; and it is said to be something singular in the history of nations that an idolatry should have been sustained against a comparatively pure religion, as theirs was against Mohammedanism under the Mogul emperors. However, that might be, a good observer could easily point out such modifications as the presence of the conquerors had caused in the ideas and manners of the Hindoos, while the wonder was that those modifications were so few and of such minor importance. The bulk of the population was

Hindoo; and the Moha'medan element was almost as distinct as the European is now. This does not imply that Hindoo institutions and manners were not very much changed from their primitive type; but the changes must be imputed much more to the indigenous faults of the antique polity, than to the operation of foreign influences. The long duration of the general polity was owing, no doubt, to the large proportion of municipal institutions to the central despotism; but, under a religion which encouraged a passive condition of mind and life, and an institution of caste which obstructed improvement from within, and excluded it from without, deterioration was inevitable, whether it came sooner or later.'

Whatever may have been the origin of the Hindoos, and however erroneous their own belief concerning it may be considered, that belief, from time immemorial, has been that Hindostan Proper—the country between the Vindhya mountains and the Himalaya—is their native home. It is to them the "Holy Land;" and they deny that the Deccan has any right to share the title. To say the least, they were nearly at the head of human civilization for a thousand years before our era. Modern scholars are disposed to think that the culminating point of the Hindoo empire, taking all conditions together, was just before the appearance of Alexander the Great on their frontier, though their literature and arts reached a higher perfection afterwards. But little

can be alleged with any certainty prior to the invasions which followed the rise of Mohammedanism.

The Prophet's own wars, and those carried on in his name after his death, were on the whole successful in Persia, and onwards to Cabul, and further eastward still, till they met the thoroughly organized resistance of the Hindoo priesthood. Other faiths and their priests had gone down before the Prophet's sword and battle cry. Here was one which had the support of the throne on the one hand, and popular devotedness on the other; so that the new proselytising religion was nearer meeting its match in India than it had ever been before. The conservatism of the Hindoo polity was a fair antagonist for Mussulman fanaticism. The thorough amalgamation of the Hindoo faith with the whole national and individual life rendered speedy conversion impossible, and made it clear that by violence alone could any empire over the people of Hindostan be obtained and preserved. Thus was the spread of Mohammedanism in India slower and more difficult than anywhere else, long after it had made a lodgment within the territory; the lapse of time tending, meanwhile, to relax the forces of fanaticism, and to turn the warriors of the Prophet from apostles into politicians and princes.

Existing evidence seems to show that the first onset was made by a Hindoo potentate, the Rajah of Lahore, in the tenth century, from alarm at the

encroachments of the Mohammedans established at Ghuznee, under the rule of the father of Sultan Mahmoud. The Ghuznee ruler had the advantage, and Sultan Mahmoud so improved it as to be called the Conqueror of India. While our Canute was blessing England by exalting religion above the clergy, Sultan Mahmoud was making his twelve idol-breaking incursions among the Hindoos, overthrowing their temples, and insulting the idolaters whom he could not convert. He did not establish any regular government in Hindostan, so that the people rushed to their temples as soon as his back was turned; and the dynasty of the intruders was changed, and more than a century and a half had passed, before the conquest became real and permanent. It was not till 1193, when our Cœur-de-Lion was fighting against the children of the Prophet in the Holy Land of Christendom, that the Mohammedans took real possession of the Holy Land of the Hindoos, and set up their banner and their throne at Delhi. Mohammed, the first King of Delhi, stands in Arab history as the founder of the Prophet's empire in Hindostan. Genghis Khan swept past the frontiers of Hindostan repeatedly, but did not enter it. Other Mogul chiefs did, however; and then the Affghan princes reigned at Delhi, and, by the hands of one of them, conquered a chief part of the Deccan. At about the time when Bolingbroke was enforcing the abdication of our Richard II.,

Timur was dethroning the now feeble kings of Delhi. He merely marched through Hindostan to effect this purpose, and left it to his successors to establish a Mogul dynasty there. This was done by his descendant Baber, who took possession of the throne at Delhi in 1526, and founded the Mogul empire in India, extending his dominion to the Ganges, but not improving the condition of his dominions. This was done by Akbar, whose long reign was a blessing to the Hindoos, in comparison with every other since the followers of the Prophet entered their country. His toleration was so great as to contrast favourably with the bigotry of some of the contemporary monarchs of Christendom; for instance, our Queen Mary, whose zeal was waxing and her life waning when Akbar took his seat on the Delhi throne; and the successor of Charles V., who was retiring into his convent just when Akbar was making provision for liberty of opinion among his idolatrous subjects. As always happens in such cases, Akbar was accused of infidelity by his own priests; but his life and his memory were dear to all others. While Wolsey was establishing his influence over our Henry VIII., Akbar, the prince of Mohammedan, as Henry once promised to be of Christian, chivalry, was keeping his high clergy at arm's length, and making himself the protector of the ignorant and the poor against all oppression by all priesthoods. A more gallant monarch, or one more exemplary (when his first wild youth

was passed), or more philosophical in his cabinet, while a true knight in the field, is not upon record in the whole course of history. Queen Elizabeth might be proud of her correspondents if she chanced to write to Henri Quatre and to Akbar on the same day. Leedes and his comrades carried a letter from her to the Emperor at Delhi: and it is probable that Akbar was as eager to hear from his English followers all details of our Queen's good government as the English certainly were to learn from Stevens and Fitch whatever they could tell on their return of the empire and rule of Akbar, the great Mogul.

When Leedes took service at Delhi, Akbar had received the submission of all but one of the princes north of the Vindhya mountains, and on both sides of the Indus; so that he was at liberty to turn southwards, and subjugate the Deccan. Dissensions among the rulers there invited his interposition; but an Indian Joan-of-Arc rendered his task difficult. Chand Bibi, the greatest of Indian heroines, fought in the breach at Ahmednugger, in complete armour, though veiled. Leedes must have heard the Delhi bards tell the stories of her feats at arms on behalf of her infant nephew, which have been the delight of all succeeding generations of listeners; how she loaded her guns first with all her copper coins, then with silver money, and then with gold, and lastly with jewels, before she would make peace; and how she countermined wherever the enemy were approaching, and built up

breaches in the night, and so mauled the foe in the ditch that all parties were glad to come to terms. Her murder by treason was the pathetic catastrophe, and it opened Akbar's way into the Deccan, when he had annexed Cárdeish by the way. The domestic treason which broke out behind his back, and the long series of family griefs, from the deaths of two sons, and the crimes and quarrels of the others, were matters of public observation; and the Englishman at court could have told his contemporary, Will Shakspeare, some tragedies as deep as any of those exhibited in his historical plays.

* Beyond the Court, what was there to be noted? the four Hindoo castes had long been hopelessly confused, so that the accounts given by the members of the lower ones and the histories of the Brahmins were quite irreconcilable. The Brahmins had preserved their lineage; but their occupations and manners had greatly changed. They might be seen engaged in almost every occupation—not only soldiers, but husbandmen—not only expounders of the faith and the Hindoo law, but magistrates and merchants' clerks. Under Mogul government, public business must necessarily be in Mussulman hands, chiefly; but the Brahmins were more concerned with it than when they attended to Menu's commands, and admitted only one of their order to power, as counsellor with the judges, according to the code. The two lower castes of Menu's time, comprehending

the working classes, had become so multiplied that nobody outside of them could pretend to understand their distinctions, any further than as they were a sort of guilds corresponding to branches of industry, and arising out of Menu's assignment of an hereditary occupation to each of the mixed classes. But the members of each of a hundred castes were as strict in preserving their respective frontier lines as the proud Brahmin ever was in his own case. It had become doubtful whether the lowest, the Sudra caste, was originally a separate tribe; and the intermixture of race had so confused that caste, as that a Brahmin might here and there be found in the service of a Sudra. It could scarcely be said that there was even any servile class remaining; for, though there were slaves, they were not in slavery by caste, but by other circumstances. While some of the phenomena of caste, therefore, met the Englishman's eye in all directions, he could not have given any clear account of the precise state of the institution in his time. The distinctions between the Mohammedans and Hindoos were much more obvious, though already becoming less definite every day.

The township, an institution still abiding where almost everything else has changed, was then the first object of interest to a stranger. The whole territory was portioned off into little republics, each managing its own affairs, while strictly subject to the central power. The office of Headman was

hereditary; and while that officer was called the king's officer, he was virtually the representative of the people, while changes of dynasty were passing over their heads. Under the headmen were the hereditary accountant, watchman, money-changer, priest, astrologer, and bard, or genealogist, besides all the ordinary trades. In some regions, there was an intermediate body representing the township, or constituting it, holding all the best as tenants, and calling themselves village landholders. As for the abodes of the villagers, Leedes must have easily distinguished the true Hindoo cottage from the abodes which were assuming a Mohammedan appearance. The Hindoo dwelling of bamboo, with its curved thatched roof, and placed, if possible, apart and under trees, contrasted with the Mohammedan cottage or house of clay, or unburnt brick, or stone, with its terraced roof. The Hindoo swathed himself in two scarfs of white cotton or muslin, rubbed his skin with oil, ate rice, thought his long hair and moustaches a sufficient covering for his head, was conscious of the grace and suppleness of his carriage, and delighted in conversation and indolent and frivolous amusement, while yet his cast of character was quiet and thoughtful. The Mohammedan, on the other hand, covered his head with a turban, and wore trousers, tunic, ornaments, and arms; tiled his roof; ate wheaten bread (unleavened); shut up the women of his family, and

was not much of a talker in society. The Hindoo village had always a bazaar, a market day and an annual fair; one temple and one guesthouse, where the wayfarer might find shelter. Each hut and each mansion had its mat, its earthen pot and dishes, its pestle and mortar, and baking plate, and its shed for cooking. The husbandman prayed and went forth at dawn with his cattle to the field; his wife brought him his hot dinner at noon, and his evenings were spent in smoking and amusement. The women meantime had been grinding and cooking, washing, spinning, and fetching water. In the towns, the tradesmen and artisans lived in brick or stone houses, with shops open to the streets. The bazaar loungers—mendicant priests, smoking soldiers, and saucy bulls which lorded it over everybody—distinguished the towns where the Hindoos predominated; and so did the festivals in which the townspeople took at one draught the pleasure which the villagers spread over all their evenings. The observances at death and burial were unlike those of the conquering race. The Hindoos burned their dead, except those belonging to religious orders; and they seldom or never set up tombs, except to warriors fallen in battle, or widows burned with their husbands. When Leedes was at Delhi widows were not allowed to sacrifice themselves. In almost every other case, Hindoo observances were carefully cherished by Akbar, and Mohammedan peculiarities

were subordinated to them; but in this case he was so resolute (the practice not being authorized by Menu) that he once mounted his horse, and rode a great distance at full speed, to save a woman from the pile. He enabled widows to marry again without any penalty which his countenance could avert; and thus Leedes witnessed a conflict with an interpolated superstition exactly like that which has been conducted by Lord William Bentinck, in our day. In the wooded districts, great hunts were going on, especially where military men were stationed; and the highest officers drove their own elephants, in order not to be helpless if their drivers dropped in battle. Spear-matches and races were the amusements in the country, as wrestling and active footgames were in the towns. The thief-caste, the hereditary mill-robbers, kept in exercise the valour and alacrity of the military class. The monastic orders, another innovation, were conspicuous in Akbar's time, and must have stirred Leedes's spirit with some of the ire of Protestant England. The Hindoo women held a low rank theoretically, but practically were like other matrons and maidens in those essential ideas and feelings which are common to all races in all times. The same may be said of the handsome children. The juvenile gentry looked and behaved like little men and women; and the children of the poor (who went to school, however, and learned writing and arithmetic), rolled

in the dust, and played in the streets like any Christians.

There is no occasion to draw the contrasting picture, as Akbar's Mohammedan subjects were very like the Arabs of our own day. Their occupations, dress, manners, and amusements were substantially the same. It is true, they were adopting some Hindoo customs, as the Hindoos were occasionally wearing turbans, and surrounding their houses with gardens, after the fashion of their conquerors. But Leedes could observe these mutual influences better than we can; and where he could have pointed out resemblances, we can only mark the distinctions which must have struck the eye of a stranger arriving at the court of the great Akbar, at the close of the sixteenth century.

CHAPTER III.

BEGINNING OF COMMERCE.

1593—1624.

“Sir, if any other come that hath better iron than you, he will be master of all this gold.”—*Solon to Cræsus*.

WE are accustomed to consider the 16th century a very lively age in regard to foreign adventure, geographical and mercantile; and yet we recognise, in the beginnings of the East India Company, a good deal of that inertness which individual adventurers in commerce, discovery, and politics have always complained of in the English people. Even after Stevens and Fitch had told the story of their respective voyages, and some notion was entertained of the splendours which Leedes witnessed at the court of Akbar, it was difficult to obtain subscriptions of capital, however small, for a trading experiment to the richest country in the world. The founders of the speculation went about diligently among their mercantile friends, representing to them the prodigious profits that the Portuguese, and of late the Dutch, were making

by buying spices and other eastern commodities on the coast of India, instead of from middlemen in nearer ports. There was evidence that we were paying nearly three times as much for our spices, indigo, and raw silk, by purchasing them at Aleppo or Alexandria, as we should if we sent ships to Malabar. There was a certainty of enormous profits, if the London merchants would but subscribe a sufficient sum to send out an expedition properly fitted out and guarded. At one time a favourable sensation was excited by the arrival of the cargo brought in as a prize by Sir John Burroughs, the commander of one of Raleigh's armaments. This cargo of a Portuguese trader to India, seized near the Azores, and brought into Dartmouth, was found to consist of pearls and gold, silks and ivory, porcelain, cottons, drugs and perfumes, and other captivating commodities: and a fillip was given for the moment to enterprise in the direction of India: but in 1599 only 30,000*l.* had been subscribed in 101 shares. In the first year of the new century, the "Adventurers" obtained a charter from the Crown, giving them, during a term of fifteen years, privileges which constituted their trade with India a close monopoly. As this charter was the foundation-stone of the mighty structure of our Indian empire, it is worth while to glance at its leading provisions. "The Governor and Company of Merchants of London

trading into the East Indies" were empowered to engross the entire traffic beyond the Cape of Good Hope and the Straits of Magellan, unless they chose to license private traders to repair to the same markets. The twenty-four directors and the governor (Thomas Smythe, Esq.) were appointed, in the first instance, in the charter; but the Company might at once elect a deputy governor, and in future all their office-bearers, from the highest to the lowest. The charter gave power to make bye-laws; to inflict punishments, corporal and pecuniary, provided they were in accordance with the laws of England; to export goods duty-free for four years; and to export foreign coin or bullion to the amount of 30,000*l.* a year, provided 6,000*l.* of it had been coined at the Mint, and that the amount thus exported was returned within six months of the end of every voyage, except the first. The Charter might be cancelled at any time upon two years' notice being given. Such were the terms of that first permission to trade with India, out of which grew our acquisition of the greatest dependency on record in the history of nations.

The languor of the subscribers shows how entirely public expectation was limited to a small trade, to be carried on under very uncertain conditions. The contributors did not pay up; some had never believed they should see their money again; others

thought it highly unpatriotic to send money out of the country; others again dwelt on the dangers of the voyage; and scarcely any body beyond the Board of Directors seems to have considered the project a hopeful one, in any view. It was in vain that the clever Director, Mr. Thomas Mun, represented that the husbandman is not a madman because he flings away good wheat upon the ground; and, in the same way, an exporter of gold and silver sends it abroad in expectation of a pecuniary harvest. Notwithstanding such illustrations, so many subscribers failed to pay up their share of the expenses of the first expedition, that the willing members were compelled to form an association within the Company, taking all cost and responsibility on themselves, and possessing themselves of all the returns.

It is not to our present purpose to follow the commercial fortunes of the Company in its early days. The object of dwelling even thus long on the details of its formation is to indicate that its aims were purely commercial, and understood to be so, by both the Government and people of England. As to the dimensions of the speculation, it will be enough to say that the ~~first~~ expedition consisted of five small ships; that the total cost of ships and cargoes was under 70,000*l.*; that the cargoes consisted of the precious metals, iron, and tin, broadcloths, cutlery, and glass; and that the result was fortunate on the whole. For a long term of years great losses nearly balanced

great profits; and the prodigious consumption of time, in days when a voyage to the Malabar coast occupied from six to twelve or fifteen months each way, practically reduced to moderation the profits which, computed in the Indian market, were boasted of as amounting to 130 or even 170 per cent. The first expedition sailed in February, 1601, and returned in September, 1603. There appears to be no evidence that it touched the coasts of the Indian peninsula at all, and its chief trade was certainly with some islands of the Eastern Archipelago.

It was five years after its return that the arrival of the English seems to have first attracted attention in India. Akbar was dead when the British ship *Hector* arrived at Surat, under the command of Captain William Hawkins, who brought two letters to the Mogul Emperor, one from James I., and one from the East India Company. The reigning Emperor, the son of Akbar, criminal in all his relations in his youth, was by this time beginning to retrieve his character, chiefly through a strong attachment to the immortal Nurjehan—the Nourmahal of “Lalla Rookh,” and the princess to whose memory the finest mausoleum extant, the Taj-Mahal, at Agra, was erected by her husband. It was during her term of political activity that the English were encouraged to make a lodgment, for commercial purposes, in India; and it might be for want of her discernment that Commander Hawkins and his com-

rales met with little favour in 1608, three years before her marriage with Jehanghir, and while she was the wife of another. It was nearly three years before the *Hector* got away; and then, without replies to King James and the Company, and through the good offices of Sir Henry Middleton.

Sir Henry Middleton arrived at Surat in 1609, in command of a fleet, which failed in its commercial objects through the opposition of the Turks on the Arabian, and the Portuguese on the Malabar coasts; but its appearance opened a way for better success two years later, when two ships, under the command of Captain Best, made such a gallant resistance when attacked by a Portuguese squadron, not far from Surat, as to impress the inhabitants very favourably. Captain Best had before been sounding the Governor of Ahmedabad, in Guzerat, about a treaty of commerce; and the negotiation was presently concluded, when the curiosity and interest of the inhabitants were fairly excited. In the same year that the Mogul Emperor married the glorious Nurjehan—the political heroine of Hindostan Proper, as Chand Bibi was the martial heroine of the Decan—he permitted the English to establish four factories within his dominions. These factories were all on or near the Gulf of Cambay, being at Surat, Cambay, Ahmedabad, and Goga. In return for leave to make this lodgment, the English paid an export duty of 3½ per cent. on all their shipments.

In one sense, this acquisition of a footing in India was highly important to England. The Company were no longer a temporary association, drawing near the end of a fifteen years' term, and trading on capital subscribed by a few eager speculators in the name of a much larger number. King James was easy to deal with, in comparison with the prudent Queen who had granted the first charter; and he made no difficulty about abolishing such limitations as did not suit the Company's convenience. Under the renewal, which dated from 1609, there was no term fixed for the expiration of the charter. The Directors had an eternity before them, provided they escaped such impeachment as would bring a three years' notice of dissolution upon them. They now dispensed with the private subscriptions which had at once caused them trouble and rendered the separate voyages more profitable than the subsequent joint-stock enterprises. The amount of the joint-stock capital on which the new scheme proceeded was 420,000*l.* Five years later, a further capital of above a million and a half was raised, and then separately managed; and in 1632, a third, of nearly half a million—incidents which show what were the commercial results of the first establishment of our factories in 1613. The Emperor's permission was obtained, as I have said, in 1611; but the requisite firman was not signed till the 11th of January, 1613.

If the English speculators thought of nothing but

commerce in settling their Indian plans at home, much more certainly must they have contemplated nothing else when in Hindostan. What they saw there dwarfed everything English in a manner now scarcely to be imagined by us. By degrees the immensity of the territory opened upon them, as they heard of groups of sovereigns, and crowds of chieftains, each with a province or a district, or a kingdom or an empire under his control, and as they found the old Hindoo organization of rulers of ten towns, and a hundred towns, and a thousand towns, commemorated in traditions. The mere deserted capitals were like the metropolitan cities of Europe fallen asleep. By degrees they learned something of the two deltas, of the Ganges and the Indus, where the mere mouths of rivers might constitute fair kingdoms, without including the course of their mighty streams. By degrees their imaginations became able to attain the peaks of the Himalaya, and to comprehend the spaces of the Deccan which were guarded by the Ghauts. The more they learned of Indian magnitudes, the less could they have conceived of having any other than commercial business there. The phenomena of human life and manners were as stupendous in their proportions as the productions of nature. Our first residents at the native courts saw wars made on such a scale that they hardly dared to tell it at home, for fear of the contempt with which their "travellers'

tales" would be treated. In the battles between the powers of Hindostan Proper and the Deccan, 200,000 men were left dead after a single battle. A rebellious heir-apparent, the day after his defeat, was compelled to rise in front of seven hundred of his impaled supporters. As the elephant was to our cavalry horse, so were all the elements of the military system, so that an army was a marching nation, and its commissariat was the produce of an ordinary kingdom. In one expedition to the Deccan, the Mogul Emperor took 200,000 cavalry alone. The imperial wealth being in similar proportion to European ideas, the stimulus to commerce was strengthened, while every other ambition must have been overwhelmed. The Emperor sat on a throne, the jewellery of which would buy up all the crowns and coronets of kings and nobles all over the world. The shrines and mausoleums beggared the Western and Eastern Churches of Christendom, with all the Prophet's mosques to boot, from Egypt to Cabul. When other nations represent us, at this day, as having crept in upon that new region, in a humble aspect, and with low pretensions, we may well ask what else we could do. We were few and humble, and limited in our objects, and not a little amazed and dazzled at the spectacle of society organised on a scale wholly new to the European imagination. Happily, we are in possession of evidence that the case was so. King James sent an ambassador, Sir Thomas Roe, to the

Mogul Court in 1615, and, as he was received into high favour, and accompanied the Emperor on his military expeditions, as well as his journeys of pleasure, we have the means of knowing the proportion which substantial power bore to mere display. The real refinement and cultivation of the society into which he found himself thrown, were proved by the respect and courtesy shown to the bearer of gifts which must have appeared below notice to the princes and nobles of the Delhi court. Sir Thomas Roe reported many childish weaknesses in royal personages, intermixed with proofs of ability and wisdom; and he perceived that the military genius of the people must have declined considerably since Akbar's time; but he excited the admiration of the English King and people by his account of the state of the arts in Hindostan. In regard to architecture, the Taj-Mahal is an immortal evidence of what the Mogul rule could produce; and, as to painting, the ambassador sent word that none but really good pictures would succeed; "Historical paintings, night-pieces, and landscapes," were his order; "but good; for they understand them as well as we." The language of the court was Persian; but Hawkins had found the Emperor ready to converse in Turkish; and everybody spoke Hindostanee. At one time, the Europeans at court saw Delhi so rebuilt that it might almost be said that Shah Jehan found it mud and left it marble; and on the other, they saw whole provinces

annexed to the west, and the Deccan, with its vast plains, its groups of kings, and hundreds of strong castles, subjugated by mere force of numbers. The armies of the Mogul sovereigns poured over the Vindhya mountains, in a dark cloud of invasion, like locust swarms on a north wind; and the one invasion left everything as bare as the other. Rebellions sprang up again, inviting new invasions, so that the final conquest of the Deccan was left for Aurungzebe to effect; but the intermediate manifestations of power and resource by the Mogul empire were profoundly impressive to European observers. It was not a little dazzling to see the sunshine strike the peacock-throne, (the fan-tail imitated in gems,) which was valued at six millions and a half by professional European jewellers; it was a fine spectacle to see the growth of the New Delhi, with its wide streets, their canal and avenues, and its esplanade, crowned with its fortified palace, glittering with burnished gold and snow-white marble; it must have been a sweet and solemn pleasure to see the Taj-Mahal at Agra grow up into its funereal completeness, adorned with all the tranquil and gracious imagery of death and regretful remembrance; but the phenomena which most deeply and effectually impressed the English mind were those of a social rule which could produce such monuments of art and wealth, and conduct wars for the annexation of kingdoms, without increasing the burdens

of the people, or perceptibly diminishing the treasure with which the imperial coffers seemed to be always filled. How was it possible that our first lodgment in such an empire should appear otherwise than small and unpretending? The imputation is, no doubt, that there was craft under the humility; but there is very clear evidence that the charge is simply slanderous. The English wanted to buy and sell; and they wanted nothing else whatever. Some excellent letters of advice of Sir Thomas Roe's to the Company remain to satisfy us on this point. He recommends even the abolition of his own office, and the employ- of one native agent at 100*l.* a year, to watch over their rights at Delhi; and another at the port at 50*l.* a year, to watch the trade, and communicate with his principal. One port was better than more, he thought; and perhaps one factory better than any number. "It is not a number of posts, residences, and factories, that will profit you. They will increase charge, but not recompense it." But most emphatic was the exhortation to have nothing to do with military defences. "War and traffic are incompatible," declares Sir Thomas Roe. "At my first arrival, I understood a fort was very necessary; but experience teaches me, we are refused it to our own advantage. If the Emperor would offer me ten, I would not accept of one."

At sea there must be warfare; and the general success of the British in their sea-fights with Euro-

From rivals advanced their reputation on land; but those conflicts were only heard of; and, for a course of years, the native impression of an Englishman was of an energetic personage, always buying and selling, loading and unloading ships, emptying and filling warehouses, paying his way and demanding his dues, becoming irritable when the Dutch and Portuguese and the Spice Islands were mentioned, and always victorious at sea over the Dutch and Portuguese, and in the question of spice.

Such was the beginning of our connection with India. It was, as we see, purely commercial. A change took place in 1624, which excited no particular notice or marked expectation at the time, but which is now regarded as introducing a new period in our relations with India.

CHAPTER IV.

BEGINNING OF LOCAL ESTABLISHMENT

1624—1698.

“Give me a seat, and I will make myself room to lie down.”

Spanish Proverb.

The first century of British residence in India affords as good an illustration as could easily be found of the wise conclusion,—“Man proposes; God disposes.” Nothing could well be more unlike what men designed and anticipated than the issues of the early schemes of the East India Company. The members themselves, their supporters and their opponents, were alike surprised at finding, from period to period, that they accomplished scarcely anything they designed, and that all manner of unlooked-for things came to pass—as if the whole affair was some mighty sport, in which grave and earnest men were made the agents of some transcendent levity, or were bewildered pupils in some new school which they had entered unawares. The merchants, who began the whole business, meant to trade, and obtain large profits; and, above all else, to avoid everything but trade. With the

magnificent shows of life in India they had no concern whatever, beyond valuing, buying and selling the commodities in use before their eyes. They knew nothing, and cared nothing, about politics—Mogul or Mahratta; and, as for war, it was only too fearful even to witness it. All they desired was to be let alone to make their fortunes, without any thought of law, government, negotiation, or war, except as far as any of these might affect their commerce—a handful of strangers as they were, on a foreign coast. No men could be more sincere than these men were; and yet, in the course of the next century, a mocking destiny seemed to make teetotums of them, their plans, and their fortunes.

Their commerce was never very successful. With every desire to make the best of it, they could never present a statement of their condition which was not highly stimulating and amusing to private speculators, who followed them into the field, and beat them at all points. They could not satisfy their own supporters, or restrain their enemies from competition. By some evil chance, they were always infested with rivals, supplanted by the Dutch, and tricked by the Portuguese. They were the occasion of alarming collisions between the two Houses of Parliament; and if they won what they desired from one sovereign, the next came down upon them for money, while their balance-sheet satisfied their

enemies better than their friends. They exchanged commodities, no doubt, and made profits; but their concerns were puny in comparison with their pretensions, and did not expand at all in proportion to their scope. It will be enough to say that their reports for the three years preceeding 1683 show that they sent out in those years respectively ten ships, eleven, and seventeen; and that the total cargoes were worth 461,700*l.*, 596,000*l.*, and 740,000*l.* While their direct object succeeded no better than this, they found themselves passing laws, ruling settlements, and making war and negotiating treaties, in alliance or opposition, with the princes of the country. They found themselves touching many points of Indian territory and Indian polity, and fastening wherever they touched, till the necessity was ripe which made them a great administrative and military power. It would take a volume to exhibit their history during the seventeenth century. But it may be possible to fill up by a rapid sketch the interval between the opening of the first warehouse at Surat and their establishment as a substantive power in India, when the last great Mogul Emperor had gone down to his grave. On the rivalships of competing companies in England, and the difficulties with individual adventurers in the East, I cannot even touch. In the history of the East India Company, no part is perhaps more interesting; but my object is to follow the progress

of the British occupation of India; and I must—whenever it is possible—confine myself to the Asiatic scene of action, during the century which decided our fortunes there.

Sir Thomas Roe, we have seen, strongly condemned the setting up of forts to protect the warehouses. There must be some fighting at sea with European rivals, but none in India, where the inhabitants gave us no difficulty. But there was a third party to be guarded against—the Company's own servants. Besides the sprinkling of thieves and scamps, always attracted to remote scenes of speculation, there was an ambitious, or headstrong, or tyrannical man turning up now and then to make mischief, offending neighbours, or defying his masters. The masters applied to the King in 1624 for authority to punish their servants in India by civil and martial law; and the authority was given, without hesitation, even to the ultimate point, of inflicting capital punishment. The King did not consult Parliament, nor express any doubt of the necessity of the case; and there is no evidence that the petitioners had any notion of what was comprehended in their request. No preparation had been made for establishing law and justice in the new settlements; and now the commercial adventurers found themselves able to punish at discretion, without any principles or rules of law to go by. Their function as legislators and executive rulers was thus

already indicated for them; and on this account the year 1624 is regarded as constituting an era in their history. The wisest men among them, during the reigns of the Stuarts, seem to have entertained a truly royal contempt for constitutional law, and a great relish for freedom of will and hand in executive matters. In the early history of the Company there are no greater names than those of the brothers Sir Josiah and Sir John Child. These gentlemen were full of sense, information, vigour, and commercial prudence; yet Sir Josiah has left us an account of his notions which reads strangely in our day. A Mr. Vaux, who in 1686 entered upon the office of manager, with professions of a desire to act justly and uprightly, and with a constant regard to the laws of his country, was thus rebuked by his patron. Sir Josiah Child "told Mr. Vaux roundly that he expected *his* orders were to be his rules, and not the laws of England, which were a heap of nonsense, compiled by a few ignorant country gentlemen, who hardly knew how to make laws for the good government of their own private families, much less for the regulating of companies and foreign commerce." Such was the view of an old man who had seen the whole procession of the statesmen of the Commonwealth pass before his eyes.

Meantime, the wars of the princes of India had much of the same effect on society as the wars of

the Roses in England. The commercial classes grew and throve while the nobles fought over their heads, so that when, in the English case, a mere group was left to assemble in the Peers' House, a town was found to have grown up at the mouth of every river, and shipping to have found its way into many a new harbour. Thus it was in India during the final process of the subjugation of the Deccan by the Mogul sovereigns. Not only the indefatigable Dutch, and the Portuguese, who were first in the field, but the English, and presently the French, began to alight and make themselves at home on distant coasts of the peninsula. Piece goods, then in great demand—the delicate muslins and soft cottons of the Deccan—were to be had more easily on the Coromandel coast than on the western, and the Company attempted to set up several factories or depôts there. We read of four, besides the Madras establishment; but European rivals were hardy, and native governments were harsh, and one after another was given up, or transferred to some safer place—to be again removed. Under these difficulties, men began to talk again of forts. It might be true that garrisons would absorb all the profits of trade; but it was clear that trade could not go on without garrisons. No help was to be had from home. During the civil war there, nobody had any attention to spare for India; and the Company's agents must take care of themselves: so, in 1640, they obtained leave from the

native government to build the fort at Madras—Fort St. George; and the new institution was fairly established which annulled the purely pacific character of British settlements in India. The forts were a humble enough affair; and the native soldiers who were hired to hold them were armed with anything which came to hand, from bows and arrows to damaged muskets; but the Company had now a military front to show, and was pretty sure to be soon called on for evidences of its military quality.

It was the King himself, Charles I., who had brought the Company round to the conviction that they must have forts. In 1635 he had granted a license to a rival company, alleging, among other reasons for the act, that the existing company had fallen short of their duty in neglecting to establish fortified factories, or seats of trade, to which the King's subjects could resort with safety. The charter was supposed to be forfeited by the King's death, as it was a royal and not a parliamentary boon: but the Company exerted themselves to found a claim to better support whenever the kingdom should be once more brought under a settled government. They turned, therefore, to the rich basin of the Ganges, to see if they could not effect a lodgment there, where produce of the most varied kind abounded. We hear of them as having some sort of settlement at Hooghly in 1640; but it brought them more

trouble than profit for some years, in consequence of a mistake of their own in seizing a junk on the Ganges, which involved them in a dispute—not only with the Nabob of Bengal, but with the Mogul government. They had not capital wherewith to extend their operations; and their affairs languished in Bengal; but it was a substantial fact that they had fastened their lines at remote points of the territory—in the Gulfs of Cambay and Bengal, and on the Coromandel coast; and the outer threads of the great net were laid. By an accident which presently brought into play the abilities of one of their servants their commercial fortunes were advanced, and “a stake in the country” was fairly appointed to them.

The medical officers of the English ships were eagerly consulted by the rich Mohammedans of Surat, and other places in the neighbourhood of our factories, and the reputation of their skill had reached the Mogul sovereigns. When Shah Jehán, the father of Aurungzebe, was waging war in the Deccan, one of his daughters was severely burnt. An express was despatched to Surat for an English surgeon. Mr. Gabriel Boughton was sent from the factory; and his success in restoring the princess gave him great influence with her father. He used his power in obtaining freedom of commerce for his countrymen. When he was in the service of the Governor of

Bengal soon after, privileges of high importance were obtained and practically enjoyed; but it required nearly thirty years, and a large expenditure in bribes, to get the license perpetuated and consolidated in a firman. This was done in Aurungzebe's time, in 1680. The terms were that the Company should pay 3,000 rupees (350*l.*) in return for perfect freedom of trade throughout the rich territory of Bengal. Cromwell was strongly disposed to extend this freedom to the whole of Indian commerce, by abolishing the monopoly of the Company; and he thereby excited as much alarm in Holland as among the Directors in London; but he was prevailed with to renew the charter in 1657. As Parliament did not ratify that charter then, nor on its renewal by Charles II., in 1661, there were no means of preventing as much private adventure as individual speculators might choose to hazard, and the trade began to show in India what might be done under the natural laws of commerce, however damaging the results of competition were to the Company at home. If their income was suffering from this cause, and from our hostilities with the Dutch, their power and dignity were eminently advanced by the new charter, which permitted them to make peace or war with any power or people "not of the Christian religion;" to establish fortifications, garrisons, and colonies, to export ammunition and

stores to their settlements duty-free; to arrest and send home any traders they found encroaching on their commerce; and to exercise civil and criminal jurisdiction in India, according to the laws of England.

These provisions for defence were necessitated by the wars of Indian potentates, in the midst of which unguarded factories could have had no security whatever: but it is a remarkable fact that the "Adventurers" who were so determined at first, and for as long as possible, to have none but commercial relations with India should find themselves at the end of sixty years in possession of forts and a soldiery, of courts of justice, and a power of life and death; and likely to enter into political alliances, as a substantive power. So early as 1653, Fort St. George was erected into a Presidency, because it was unsafe for the English residents to be dependent on a seat of government so remote as Bantam while the native potentates on the Coromandel coast were perpetually at war, and the European settlers pretty much at their mercy. When secure of their new powers, the Company made Surat and Fort St. George their centres of government, subordinating a few other settlements to them, and breaking up some, in outlying places, which were too insecure or expensive to be worth retaining.

The use which they made of their power to send home interlopers presently caused a collision between

the two Houses of Parliament, which, however serious, should find its place in a constitutional history of England, rather than in a sketch of our relations with India. "The Skinner case" perplexed all England, and caused the King to adjourn Parliament seven times before he could restore any appearance of peace; but the mischief lay rather in the King and the Lords acting without the constitutional participation of the Commons than in any discovery that the powers of the Company in India were too extensive. One natural consequence, however, was that the Company were more fully recognised at home as a power than they had ever been before.

Their first military reputation grew out of an accident, happening (as was henceforth to be the rule) through the hostility of native potentates. Aurungzebe, the last great Mogul ruler, was governing in the place of his deposed father in 1664, when the first great Mahratta Chief, Sivajee, marched against him, choosing Surat for his point of attack. The Governor of Surat shut himself up in the castle, the inhabitants fled; but the English stood their ground. They refused to capitulate, defended their factory, with the aid of some ships' crews, and cleared the neighbourhood of the enemy, affording substantial protection to the residents. The residents thanked and blessed them, and Aurungzebe remitted on their behalf a part of the Customs' duties at Surat, and all transit charges whatever. At that time,

when Aurungzebe was at the height of his renown, and finally subjugating the Deccan, martial qualities were highly valued; and there is no doubt of the effect on the people of India of the gallant conduct of the British at Surat. They could make no such parade as the Mogul Emperor, with his 200,000 horse, his countless host of infantry, his long lines of elephants, and his glitter of arms, from the one horizon to the other; but the simple readiness and dauntless bearing of the little company of English, within their small enclosure, made an ineffaceable impression on a people who may be able to admire contrasts as much as other races of men. It might have been well if, during recent years, a little more attention had been paid to this first military success in India by those who insist that the natives of India can be impressed only by outward show, imitated from barbaric times and rulers. From point to point of our Indian history there are evidences that the inhabitants of our Asiatic territories are just as human in their admiration of great personal qualities, apart from external grandeur, as the men of Europe and America.

The reign of Charles II. was remarkable in the history of British India for several reasons. The extension of powers by the Charter of 1661 was one. The introduction of tea is another. Early in 1668, the Company's agent at Bantam was desired to send home 100lbs. of tea, "the best he could get:" and

thus began the Company's trade in a commodity to which it owes its existence at this day. It would be an interesting speculation—what our relations with India would now be if tea had not been introduced into Europe, and so relished as to afford an adequate support to the East India Company till its commercial phase was past.

Lastly, it was through Charles II. that the Company acquired Bombay. The island of Bombay was a part of the marriage portion of Catherine of Portugal, the Queen of Charles II. It was more expensive than profitable to the Crown, and it suited the convenience of all parties that it should be transferred to the Company. The conditions of the transfer were remarkable. After a provision that Bombay should not pass out of British possession, it was permitted to the Company to legislate for the settlement, and to wage war on behalf of it. Their laws were to be "consonant to reason," and "as near as might be" to English methods: but legislative and military powers were tully and freely conferred. One of the first consequences was that the western Presidency was removed from Surat to Bombay. It was in 1668 that the Company acquired Bombay; and from that time till 1698 there were two Presidencies, with the Bengal settlement in a state of dependency on them. Till 1692 the Bengal establishment was at Hooghly, thirty miles above Calcutta. In that year it was removed to Calcutta,

and in six years more Calcutta itself with two adjoining villages, was granted to the Company by a grandson of Aurungzebe, who permitted the erection of fortifications and full judiciary powers over the inhabitants. The new fortifications were naturally named after the reigning king, William III., and the agency at Fort William was soon converted into a third Presidency:

Thus were the British in India transformed, in the course of one century, from a handful of "adventurers," landing a cargo of goods, in a tentative way, at the mouth of the Taptee, and glad to sell their commodities and buy others, on the residents' own terms, to a body of colonists, much considered for their extensive transactions, and the powers, legislative, executive, and military, which they wielded. Whence these powers were derived, who these English were, and why they came, might be more than Aurungzebe himself could distinctly explain; and to this day, the relation of our Indian empire to the British seems to be a puzzle to the inhabitants, being really anomalous in English eyes as well. But there we were, acting from three centres of authority and power, and exercising whatever influence commerce put into our hands. It was not for want of enterprise that the British had as yet no territorial power. Sir Josiah Child believed the possession of more or less territory to be necessary to the security of our commerce; and in 1686 an attempt was made

to obtain a footing in Bengal by force of arms. It not only failed, but would have resulted in the expulsion of every Englishman from the Mogul's dominions, but for the importance of our commerce to Aurungzebe's treasury. Our reputation suffered by this unsuccessful prank of ambition and cupidity; but not the less did the last of the great Moguls go to his grave, knowing that he left the English established in his dominions beyond the possibility of dislodgment. They were neither subjects nor rulers in India; but such a man as Aurungzebe must have been well aware that if they were really irremovable they must sooner or later become the one or the other.

CHAPTER V.

LIFE IN THE INFANT PRESIDENCIES.

1698—1740.

“In everything we do, we may be possibly laying a train of consequences, the operation of which may terminate only with our existence.”—BAILEY.

UP to the time of Aurungzebe's death, our relations with India were very simple, and might be easily and rapidly described. The Mogul Court was the one object, which we had to observe, and in regard to which we had to act. To be on good terms with the Mogul Emperors was to be prosperous and safe: to incur their displeasure was to be in danger and difficulty. The Company had troubles outside the pale of their Indian relations; opponents at home, foreign rivals on the seas, and interlopers on their own commercial grounds; but, as far as the powers of India were concerned, the Mogul sovereigns were supreme, and our affairs were simple accordingly. We had to maintain and improve our commercial privileges, to secure a permanent footing in the country; and, for the rest, to buy and sell to the best advantage.

But a time of change must come, sooner or later; and the nature of the change which must ensue on the death of such a sovereign as Aurungzebe, after a reign of forty-nine years, might be foretold, without any pretensions to second sight. When a ruler, wise, efficient, strong in will, and imposing in his successes, dies after a long reign, leaving several sons, a weak government, civil strife, and foreign war as a consequence, may be only too confidently anticipated. In the case of Aurungzebe and his sons, the chances of the future were even worse than usual. The last of the great Moguls commanded everything but affection. He irritated his dependants and subjects while compelling them to admire his abilities and his wisdom. He alienated the Hindoos (the great mass of his subjects) by constant checks and discouragements, while protecting them from Musulman persecution. He was regarded by the Faithful as a greater monarch than even Akbar; yet they gave him no such effectual support as enabled him to accomplish his schemes. He conquered the Deccan; yet, in his old age, he had more and more to dread from the Mahrattas; and, as he himself disclosed, he was borne down by anxiety as to what he might have to endure in life, and dread of what he might have to encounter after death. It must have been plain to all eyes that bad times were coming; and the

British would have foreseen, if their wisdom had corresponded to their needs, that complications and embarrassments must arise, largely affecting, if not entirely changing, their relations with the Mogul empire. (In one instance by accident, and in another by a movement of foolish ambition, the British were on bad terms with Aurungzebe, some years before his death. In 1698, a pilgrim ship on its way to Meccâ was taken by pirates, who were, or were said to be, English. The Emperor ordered the arrest of the merchants at our factories, and the seizure of Bombay; but his own agents were favourable to their British neighbours, and admitted their plea of innocence; and if anything was done, it was only in the way of inflicting a fine. We have already referred to the other case—that of the hostile movement in Bengal, in 1686, when the Company, strengthened by a few troops from home, hoped to obtain redress for losses and a territorial footing by seizing, and fortifying Chittagong. The scheme failed, through misadventure and mismanagement; and the incident was one which naturally deepened the Emperor's distrust, and confirmed the jealous antipathy of the Nabob of Bengal to the English. The aged Emperor's life was prolonged beyond the period of rivalship in England and strife in Parliament which seemed likely to extinguish the Company's privileges altogether, and under which

the trade of India was practically free from 1693 to 1698: and Aurungzebe was still living when the associations which had battled for the commerce of his empire at length joined their forces as "The United Company of Merchants of England, trading to the East Indies." While their old patron was failing in strength and spirits as he verged towards his 90th year, the British merchants obtained the grant of Calcutta, as before mentioned, built Fort William, raised Bengal from its subjection to Bombay up to the rank of a Presidency, and obtained from Parliament, in the form of an absolute prohibition of Indian manufactured goods for home consumption, a reversal of the free trade which had existed for several years, to the advantage of the public, and the discontent of the Company.

Then, after five years more, spent in establishing factories wherever they could be imposed, and in finding that many of them were more expensive than they were worth, the catastrophe arrived. Aurungzebe died in 1707; and with him the empire of the Moguls may be said to have passed away. Crimes of violence and treachery had been frequent before; now they occurred at the Court of Delhi and its dependencies in an unintermitting series, and external foes used their opportunities; so that when Aurungzebe had been dead thirty years, the empire was just in the state of helplessness and corruption which had tempted Timur and Baber to invade it. The

same thing happened again. The greatest of Persian warriors, Nadir Shah, crossed the Indus towards the close of 1738, and was giving out his decrees from the palace at Delhi in March 1739.

Our concern with Indian history in this place, is only in as far as it is connected with the conduct and the fortunes of the British on the spot. It is no easy matter to give even that much without tedious and irksome detail; yet the interval between the death of Aurungzebe and the administration of Clive must not be passed over, if the subsequent history is to be understood, and in any degree relished. Perhaps the best way of conveying something like a clear impression of our Indian relations, from a century and a half to a century ago, is to offer a sketch of what life in India was like, after the founding of the three Presidencies. In the course of such a survey we may discover which of the crowd of native States involved British fortunes more or less with their own; and the rest of the multitude of potentates, with all their marches, battles, "treasons, stratagems, and spoils," may be left undistinguished—on the understanding, however, that they must not be altogether forgotten, as if they did not exist, because it was a leading feature of the life of the British in India that they were always surrounded by rulers and peoples who were at feud, and who desisted from mutual slaughter only to enter upon conflicts of deceit and treachery. The alternative was between savage

warfare in the field and diabolical bad faith in diplomacy; and the constant presence of such phases of social life must produce more or less effect on the condition, moral and material, of all spectators.

First, we must glance at the British residents themselves, in their chief settlements. Of these the most important was Fort St. George, standing only a few yards from the sea, on a sounding shore, where the surf is too furious to be crossed except by boats of a peculiar construction. A worse place for foreign commerce could hardly have been fixed on: five miles of coast, with a strong current running along the shore, and a roadstead so exposed that, as often as not, the native rafts are the only means of communication with the shipping outside. It must have been a welcome amusement to the gentlemen, doomed to so monotonous a life, to see the agile natives put forth and return with their catamarans, casting their lives into the surf as into a lottery, to find a blank or a rich recompense for the daring. A large town of mean dwellings had sprung up near the fort; and outside the town some pleasant-looking country houses stood, each in its own garden. There lived the writers and the factors, and the merchants, seniors and juniors. Their work was to deal with the native weavers and indigo growers; to make advances to the poorest, and pay the balances, and see the cargoes packed, and conduct the correspondence home, and preserve the Company's monopoly, and pay some

little attention to the soldiers in the fort, and order in the factory. The Writers were the clerks and bookkeepers; and their pay was so small that the wonder is why they went so far, and to live in such a climate, for so little. The Factors ordered, received, and despatched the commodities. The Merchants conducted the commerce—the seniors having been writers for five years, factors for three, and junior merchants for three, and being now qualified to be Members of Council, with the chance of being President. What their pleasures were we learn from tradition and their correspondence. They rode in the cool hours; they played cards, and they looked out over the sea, like other clerks and merchants in countries remote from home. There was little to be told about any pursuits of a literary or other thoughtful character.

The life at Bombay was much the same, but with more variety, and perhaps more local vexations. The harbour was good: but nothing else in that small island was good. Whatever was not parched rock was swamp or pool. The tides are high; and there was then nothing to save the lower parts of the island from invasion by the sea. At times, the inhabitants of separate houses were isolated for days or weeks together. The place was unhealthy, of course. The island of Salsette, now united with Bombay by causeways, was then in the possession of the Mahrattas, who were anything but quiet and decent neighbours; and yet it was important to be

on terms with them, as the salt soil of Bombay island would grow literally nothing but cocoa-nut trees; and there were emergencies when it was a matter of necessity to get food from Salsette. On the other hand, life was less stagnant at Bombay than in any other part of India. There was more material for mere amusement in the hunts on the Malabar shore, and in the remains of antiquity, like the rock temples on the island of Elephanta: but there were more stirring influences still in the liabilities of the position—in the piratical attacks from without and the mutinies within. It was necessary to keep constant watch and guard against the pirates of the Arabian Sea; and this was the more difficult from the frequency of mutiny within the gates. Six years after the cession of Bombay to the Company a revolt exercised the new powers of the merchants in decreeing and inflicting capital punishment; and a far more formidable one, eight years after, in behalf of the King as proprietor of Bombay, so endangered the Company's tenure that the King had to interfere in their favour, and the western presidency was transferred to Bombay from Surat. Yet we meet with occasional notices of the manners of the time and place which show that the residents were not engrossed by their cares. A Mogul diplomatist and historian, who was sent to Bombay on a mission by Aurungzebe in a time of misunderstanding, reported of the merchants as knowing how to receive envoys properly, and making the

most of the military material they had to display. The elderly gentlemen were richly dressed, and sufficiently acute and wise, though they laughed rather more than such personages should on such an occasion.

When the English in Bengal preferred settling lower down on the Ganges than Hooghly, their reason was that the site of Calcutta was more convenient for shipping, and therefore more secure. The aspect of their plot of land was discouraging enough. It was chiefly jungle and marsh, with three villages of thatched huts. There was scarcely a dwelling outside these poor villages. The Dutch and the French passed up and down between their shipping and their factories, which were higher up the river than Hooghly. Sometimes they were enemies, and sometimes only rivals; and they were the only companionable persons our factors ever saw, except on the arrival of their own vessels. The natives were vexatious people to deal with—indolent, slow, spiritless, but producing goods which were indispensable to commerce. The merchants were incessantly engaged in driving them to fulfil their engagements, and in vigilance against the lies and trickery which abounded among a timid race, always suffering under the oppression of native rulers. Occasional hunts, river trips, and hospitality to visitors, were the only recreation of the Calcutta merchants when once their houses were built along the river banks. The station

was unhealthy; and their dwellings were too like English houses for the climate, and much less favourable to health and comfort than they might have been. It must be hoped that the managers and merchants here laughed as much as those at Bombay; but it must have been difficult at times to find the occasion.

Here is the little we can gather about the English agents, as they lived at the three presidencies. Something more is known of the orders of persons about them, who made up the business, the interest, and the anxiety of their lives, apart from their immediate commercial occupations.

The chief plague of life at all the settlements was that hydra-headed body—the “interlopers,” or private traders. The hatred of interlopers seems to have been to the British factor in India something like the Indian-hating of the pioneer in the wilds of America. To track intruders who were trafficking under foreign passports was as good an excitement as tiger-hunting: and there was no lack of employment while that sort of enemy infested the country. Evidence was collected; complaints were sent home; captures were made, and offenders shipped off as prisoners. A series of Acts of Parliament was obtained to check this encroachment, culminating in one which declared all British subjects found in India outside of the Company’s service guilty of a high misdemeanour, and liable to seizure

accordingly, for trial at home; but neither laws, perils, forfeiture, nor personal penalties availed to preserve the Company's monopoly as long as foreign potentates favoured Indian enterprises, and offered passports to capitalists of all nations to prosecute them. No game laws have ever secured the preserves of the landed gentry; and a whole series of Acts failed to deter the interlopers. The factors had to hunt them the more the longer the conflict for the monopoly went on. The great ladies of Europe wore more and more Indian silks; and yet the commerce of the Company did not increase. The proprietors at home were dissatisfied with the returns: the managers on the spot declared their ill-success to be owing to the amount of illegal traffic; and though this was only partially true, their anxieties caused the interlopers to be the plague of their lives.

The sepoys began to occupy some time and attention. As soon as there were forts, there must be soldiers. A few recruits came out from home—a very bad set, for the most part. Deserters from the other European settlements in India offered themselves: but they were worse still—inasmuch as, in their case, the probability of treachery was added to the vices which had sent them adrift. At Bombay, but not on the eastern side, there were half-castes or converts, Indo-Portuguese by blood or by proselytism. In all the stations there was a better resource,

though thus far a very scanty one, in the sepoy, or native soldiers. When first engaged, the sepoy were partly armed with bows and arrows, and partly with the sword and buckler of the country. They wore the usual turban, vest, and drawers, and were commanded by native officers. They were soon trained to the use of the musket; but no one thought of applying European discipline till they had proved their steadiness, and capacity of rendering good service in the forts. That no account was kept of their numbers at the respective settlements shows how little idea there was of the importance of this native soldiery to our future conquest and maintenance of our Indian empire. It appears that the French were beforehand with us in training the sepoy they found, as well as the negroes they imported. The sufferings of our factors from the French arms in 1746 proved how great the neglect of the British had been; and from 1748 onwards, the British sepoy were expressly reported of, as to their numbers and quality. Meantime, as the head of each presidency was Commander-in-chief of the troops of his settlement, he was more or less occupied with his few sepoy, on whom the safety of the forts mainly depended. They were supremely valuable as acclimatized soldiers; but, till long experience had proved their fidelity, they could not but be a great anxiety, as often as hostile movements of neighbours made them most indispensable.

Those hostile neighbours were of various races and qualities; but the two chief are all that can be noticed here.

The French had established a settlement at Pondicherry in the latter part of the seventeenth century; and the same sort of jealousy which our factors entertained of the Dutch and Portuguese was aggravated in the case of the French by the hereditary national hatred, which the state of Europe particularly strengthened at that time. The two nations gnashed their teeth and shook their fists at each other from Madras and Pondicherry (less than 90 miles apart) as they did from Dover and Calais. We shall see presently how their state of mutual vigilance issued in the middle of the last century. "

The other formidable neighbour was the Maharrattas. Considering the space they occupy in the history of British India, it seems strange that they should have been as yet scarcely alluded to. The reason is that they rose into notice only in the time of Aurungzebe. Five centuries before, their name had occurred in Eastern chronicles as that of a conquered hill-people, supposed to live along the course of the Nerbudda, and up towards Guzerat—Candeish being a part of their territory. Sivajee founded the great modern Mahratta empire, but, dying a quarter of a century before Aurungzebe, his successors were kept down by the great Mogul. Nothing could check them, however, as a nation

of predatory warriors: and they so managed their warfare as to win over a multitude of landowners by fear or favour. The nominal sovereigns of the Mahrattas were prisoners from generation to generation; but their hereditary prime ministers (the Peishwas) answered the purpose of viceroys. The method of rule was to confer large grants of land on chiefs, who were virtual sovereigns, while superstitiously acknowledging in words the supremacy of their rajah. At the beginning of the last century, the Mahrattas seem to have been here, there, and everywhere. Sivajee's father had a tract of land in the Carnatic, and the command of 10,000 cavalry; so that the managers at Fort George might well live in dread of the Mahrattas. Mahratta chiefs were at Poonah and in Salsette, in Berar and in Guzerat; so that Bombay had to keep a yet more vigilant watch. They professed to approach the north-east no nearer than Berar: but not the less were they feared in Bengal. The Nabob of Bengal paid blackmail to them, or the rice crops of whole provinces were swept off: and the British fortified Calcutta, for the protection of their magazines of goods, and of food and ammunition.

Such was life in our Indian Presidencies for forty years after the death of Aurungzebe.

(CHAPTER VI.

BEGINNING OF A MILITARY FUNCTION.

• 1740—1752.

“So then, when the pedlar found he was welcome in the castle, he made himself at home. He set down his box, and put off his cloak: and behold! he was in armour, and wore a sword. Then one said he had seen the glitter of the breastplate while yet the stranger was on the threshold; and another had heard the tap of the sword against the floor: and the family mistrusted the change: but the stranger said that his armour and weapons were as necessary to his calling as his box and its lock and key.”—*Fairy Tale.*

“He lived unknown
 To fame or fortune; haply eyed at distance
 Some edileship, ambitious of the power
 To judge of weights and measures; scarcely dared
 On expectations strongest wing to soar
 High as the consulate, that empty shade
 Of long-forgotten liberty: when I
 Oped his young eye to bear the blaze of greatness;
 Showed him where empire towered, and bade him strike
 The noble quarry.”—GRAY.

THE period last described was that of transition from the first phase of British life in India to another which had not been dreamed of by the earliest adventurers. The commercial character of our Eastern enterprise was now to merge in the military and territorial.

The first recognition of us as holders of territory

was from the date of the patents granted to us by a descendant of Aurungzebe's, in 1717. There were thirty-four of these patents, which, collectively, secured great privileges to our trade in the way of exemption from duties and aggressions, while they gave us certain villages near Madras which had been the subject of dispute, and permitted the Company to rent the island of Diu, near Masulipatam, and to purchase the lordship of thirty-seven towns near Calcutta. We had before held, at Madras, a strip of coast, five miles long and one mile wide; at Bombay, a small island, all rock and salt marsh; and in Bengal, little more than the plot of ground on which Calcutta stood. By this great charter of 1717, as the English considered it, we became possessed of both banks of the river, for an extent of ten miles below Calcutta. The expectations of the merchants at home were unbounded, now that such a footing was obtained in the rich province of Bengal—all risks and burdens being at the same time removed, as far as the authority of the Court of Delhi extended. The patents had been rather expensive, it is true, and so was the embassy which obtained them by bribes from the debased Mogul sovereign, Furucksur; and some of the stipulations were evaded by the local rulers; but it was not doubted that the profits under the new system would soon pay for all. This did not turn out true, however. The

commerce of the Company did not increase, even though the taste for tea became wonderfully developed in Europe. { At any time within the following thirty years the commerce of the Company might be shown to have been nearly equalled by that of single firms in London.

Yet were the English regarded in India, not exactly as "a nation of shopkeepers," for the natives had been told that Europe did not contain more than ten thousand men altogether—but as a sort of pedlar cast. The French had establishments, imitated from ours, as ours were from the Dutch—presidencies, ruled by a governor, with the help of a council, composed of senior merchants, while the lower offices were filled by junior merchants, factors and writers; and yet the French were regarded as a military people, and admired accordingly, long before we were supposed to be anything but shopkeepers. The reason assigned for this contrasted estimate is that the French were the first to discover the two great secrets of European strength in India: that European strength depended essentially on military *prestige*; and that the native soldier was susceptible of training in European discipline. While the few native soldiers, first retained at Bombay, and then at Madras, were still the disorderly ill-armed peons that they were when taken into pay, the French authorities were training and arming

their native bands (as well as the blacks from Africa), and were not long in convincing their Mahratta neighbours that, however it might be with the English, there were other Europeans who were equal to war, and had a liking for it. The time was at hand for a change in Mogul and Mahratta public opinion in regard to the British.

The French had two presidencies in the East—one at the Isle of France and the other at Pondicherry. Their three factories in India were subject to the Pondicherry government—one on the Malabar and another on the Coromandel coast; and a third, Chandernagore, on the Hooghly, 23 miles above Calcutta.

In 1732 commerce seemed to be under an evil star in that Bengal region. The English government reduced their dividends that year, notwithstanding the splendid terms they had obtained from Delhi: and as for the French factory at Chandernagore, it was in a truly beggarly state. Commerce seemed to be extinct; there was not a vessel of any class at its wharf; and poverty and license divided the lives of the wretched inhabitants of the wooden huts which constituted the settlement. An able man arrived as manager; and stone dwellings rose up in the place of wooden huts, to the number of two thousand: and, instead of a dead stillness at the waterside, from twelve to fifteen vessels a day were coming and going. The hour and the man had arrived for the

French; and the hour and the man were approaching for the English. While the great Dupleix was beginning his reforms there in the prime vigour of his years, a child in England was giving almost as much annoyance to his relations as he was hereafter to cause to Dupleix. The Spaniards say that "the thorn comes into the world point foremost." It was so in this case. The uncle of little Robert Clive, then in his seventh year, wrote a sad character of him. "Fighting, to which he is out of measure addicted," said the uncle, "gives his temper such a fierceness and imperiousness, that he flies out on every trifling occasion." At the same date, there was born in a poor parsonage in Worcestershire a forlorn infant, the son of a father married at sixteen, and soon after dead, and of a mother who died in a few days after the orphan's birth, leaving him to the care of a grandfather, sunk in trouble and poverty. No one living could then have divined what connection could exist among the destinies of these three. Nor would it have been easier to guess seven years later. At that later date, Dupleix had purchased no less than seventy vessels, to carry his commodities to all parts of the known world, extinguishing in Bengal the English reputation for commercial ability, and bringing splendid returns to his own coffers. Robert Clive was then full of mischief—sitting on a spout at the top of the lofty steeple of Market Drayton church, and levying a blackmail of apples

and halfpence, with his rabble rout of naughty boys at his heels, on the tradesmen who feared for their windows. As for little Warren, the orphan, then seven years old, he was lying beside the brook which flows through the lands of his ancestry, and, as he himself told afterwards, making up his mind to the personal ambition of his life—to be, like his forefathers of several generations, Hastings of Daylesford. On these three—the ambitious and unscrupulous French manager, already at his work, the turbulent English schoolboy, and the romantic child, dreaming under the great ancestral oaks, while living and learning among ploughboys—the destinies of British India were to hang. Through them we were to hold India as a territory, and by a military tenure; and to have a policy there, perhaps as important to the human race in the long run as that of the mother-country—however much may be comprehended in that abstraction.

In 1739, Nadir Shah took Delhi, after a victorious march from Persia. Alternate massacres defiled the city, and left it half-empty, as plunder left it bare of its pomp and grandeur. The Mogul sovereigns had declined in authority from the death of Aurungzebe; and now they were the mere victims of their viceroys. The empire was broken up into a greater number of states than it is here necessary to particularise; and, in the mutual rivalship which sprang up in all directions, now that there was no central power to repress

such feuds, it was natural that the chiefs should try, while estimating their resources, what they could make of the English and French. The foreigners, on their part, found this a good opportunity for carrying out in the East the hostilities which were beginning once more in Europe between their respective nations. Thus the native Soubahdars or Nabobs courted the Europeans for the sake of their superiority in civilization and military discipline; and the Europeans, in return, took up the quarrels of the native states, in the prosecution of the war between England and France; and as a struggle for supremacy in India. When Nadir Shah sacked Delhi, England and France were contending against each other in a war which was called Spanish; but by 1744 they were in undisguised war with each other. It was in the interval that the governors of the French presidencies in India, foreseeing the coming war, made all ready for humbling the English, while both implicated themselves in alliance with their native neighbours, for purposes of attack and defence. Dupleix had been summoned from Bengal to rule at Pondicherry just at the time when Clive went out to Madras, as a writer, at the age of 17—poor, arrogant, dissatisfied, and in that mood which is common to young persons of strong self-will, who believe that nobody likes them, and suspect that nobody cares for them. He grew more sullen and wretched every day, and twice attempted his life—learning a proud

fatalism from the accidental failure of his purpose on both occasions; and meantime, Dupleix was giving out that he had received investiture and diplomas from Delhi, in virtue of which he was a Soubahdar, and the brother in rank of the Nabobs who commanded the states of the Deccan. in that capacity he promised his neighbours the possession of Madras, and the complete subjection of the English; and he would no doubt have performed his engagements if Clive had not appeared in time to baffle him.

The governor of the other French presidency, Labourdonnais, had been preparing, in the Isle of France, for the outbreak of war between France and England. There was no reason to suppose that the English could withstand at sea the united forces of France and Spain; and Labourdonnais did, in fact, land his troops, in spite of the English ships of war, and appear before Madras with his force of 1,700 or 1,800 men, of whom 400 were trained sepoys, and 400 Africans, disciplined in the same way. The fort of St. George was a mere enclosure within a thin wall, with four bastions and four batteries for defence, and containing about fifty houses, with the warehouses and two churches. The other divisions of the town were almost undefended. There were only 300 Europeans, of whom two-thirds were the garrison, and the remaining 100 as yet by no means warlike. The place was bombarded for five days; and during

that time the besieged made offers of ransom; but Labourdonnais wanted to show all India the spectacle of French colours flying from the richest of the English settlements; and he proposed to be satisfied with a moderate ransom, and to restore the settlement to the English, if they would yield up the place for a time. He was received into the town without the loss of a man. Only four or five were killed on the English side, and two or three houses destroyed. The keys were delivered to him; his commissaries were set over the magazines and warehouses, but the British were left at large on parole. Here Dupleix interfered. As governor in the Indian presidency, he claimed the disposal of Madras and of everything in it. He declared that it should be razed to the ground. Labourdonnais could show that his orders from home expressly justified the terms he had made; but Dupleix succeeded in obtaining delay till his rival should have gone home to his government. He caused the evacuation of Madras, and carried the English to Pondicherry, and through the place, as captives—the governor himself being made to head the ignominious procession. These breaches of the terms of capitulation exasperated the Madras people as much as they afflicted Labourdonnais; and, by common consent, the British were absolved from their parole by the sins of Dupleix. Clive, for one, escaped in the disguise of a Mussulman;