

Nothing is easier than to find fault with the government of India; and it is certain that a multitude of errors have been committed, the results of which will long embarrass us; but if the singularity of the case be duly considered, its vastness, its prodigious embarrassments, and the necessarily empirical character of the methods to be employed, it may be doubted, even in this our hour of calamity, whether better success could have been obtained by our merely human understanding in our age of the world. As to the beneficent operation of our rule on the fortunes of a hundred millions of natives there can be no question. The doubt is, not of the blessing of our rule to the natives, but whether it might not have been greater to ourselves—a question with which we are not concerned in this place. After taking a survey of India, in his calm philosophical way, and from his excellent point of view at Bombay, Sir James Mackintosh spoke of the country, a dozen years after the institution of the Board of Control, as “our ill-gotten but well-governed Asiatic empire.” We have since deteriorated in some respects, and improved in others; and, on the whole, we believe the description remains true.

The same authority, under the same circumstances, declared his belief that the revolutionary period of our rule had closed with Hastings, and that Lord Cornwallis’s just and moderate principles and temper would stand the country in as good stead as the

ability of Hastings. This experiment was instituted in 1786, when Lord Cornwallis became the second Governor-General. He held the office seven years, during which events of eminent importance took place in the Deccan. He went out furnished with elaborate instructions from the combined authority of the Board of Control and the Company; and his rule was signalled by two classes of operations, financial and judicial.

The Nabob of Arcot, or of the Carnatic, son of our first *protégé* there, had not only failed for a course of years in his engagements to the English, made in return for their defence of his country and his rule, but had become hateful to his own subjects by the oppression exercised in raising the revenue. Who got the money nobody could or would tell; but the Nabob was poor; he did not pay his tribute to the English, nor the wages of the soldiers whose good-will was all important to the British; and yet his subjects suffered as cruelly as if always under the screw of a rapacious government. As the Nabob could not, or would not, govern properly, the British repeatedly proposed to take the charge of his financial affairs into their own hands; and Lord Cornwallis effected the transfer of the management. Every impediment was thrown in the way by the reigning family; the decline of industry and its rewards had become almost irremediable before reform was attempted: and by 1792 it had

become so questionable whether new methods were not as bad as old tyranny, that fresh arrangements were made. In the first instance the Nabob had failed to pay his 360,000*l.* a year, and Lord Cornwallis undertook the levy, altering the conditions; and in 1792 the Nabob became again liable for the same amount, under penalty, in case of failure, of forfeiting certain districts; while, in case of war with Mysore, the whole Carnatic was to come under British management, the Nabob becoming a pensionary—a better lot for him than being the helpless victim of Tippoo, as he must have been but for British protection. He was not qualified for a better destiny, and in 1801 yielded up the civil and military government of the Carnatic in exchange for one-fifth of the net revenue of his dominions, and the maintenance of his officers and court.

Out of these arrangements grew Lord Cornwallis's system of management of the land—well meant, but of questionable benefit to the people. In the other branch of his reforms, the judicial, the results were very discouraging. He received reports of the continuous increase of crime; and the characteristic vices of the natives of India, falsehood and trickery of all kinds and degrees, seemed to be aggravated by the introduction of laws and their forms which an Asiatic people were more apt to pervert than to understand. Lord Cornwallis was an honourable soldier and a benevo-

lent and earnest-minded man, but he was not wont to succeed: and as he failed at Yorktown, and thus closed the American war, and changed a ministry at home; and as he finally succumbed to disease and death on the Ganges, at a critical moment, having undertaken a second term of rule in India when he was physically unequal to the charge; so he now, in the interval between those two failures, miscarried in his statesmanship, though he brought to his work personal qualities as venerable as his chivalrous courage when his army had to lay down their arms in Virginia, and his calm dignity when he was dying in the place which should have been occupied by the most vigorous man of the time. The imperious and corrupt rule of Hastings made everybody eager to put the mild and virtuous Cornwallis in his place; but, at the end of ten years, he would have been a bold man who would assert that the people were better and happier under the one than the other. There remains, however, the grand consideration of the influence of personal character, so potent in India. Hastings had the prestige of genius; Cornwallis of probity, and, for a time, of something approaching to wisdom. But, after all, his name is most favourably connected with military achievements, and the reduction of the power of Tippoo.

After the peace in 1784, the dominions of Tippoo consisted of the high table-land in Mysore, extending

500 miles by 350. This was the stronghold of the Mohammedan power in the south; and very strong it was, with its natural defences and its forts, and a Mussulman population almost as numerous as the Hindoos. Tippoo had the command of any number of French officers and engineers, and plenty of money to pay them with, his revenue amounting to 5,000,000*l.*, in addition to the accumulations left by his father. He was desperately hated by the English from the time when the late peace disclosed what his treachery and cruelties had been towards his prisoners of war; and when the "Tiger" (which is his name translated) proved that there could be no permanent peace or prosperity for us in the Deccan while he held his lofty seat, the British rejoiced to go out against him, as if it had been a real tiger hunt. Tippoo began to arm, and prepare for a struggle when he found, in 1790, that his name was not in the list of friendly powers recorded in the British treaty with the Nizam of the Deccan; and he felt his way by attacking the Rajah of Travancore, whom we were bound by treaty to assist in such a case. The Nizam joined forces with the English; but his junction was as embarrassing as it could be useful. There was a brave and skilful body of French officers to be broken up and dispersed from the service of the Nizam, while his own fidelity was always sufficiently questionable. The dispersion of the French corps was admirably managed, without

bloodshed or even ill-will; and the gorgeous array of the Nizai's forces, with their long train of followers, was a spectacle very animating to the young Englishmen who bore a part in the pageant—some of them little dreaming what fortunes were in store for them—one as directing and controlling the policy of the Deccan from a post at Hyderabad, and another breaking the power of the Mahrattas, and a third becoming the virtual sovereign of broad provinces. On they went, and one after another of Tippoo's fortresses fell into their hands, till Tippoo bethought himself of the way in which his father had distressed the English. "He descended into the Carnatic, leaving the British behind him; and once more the Mysore cavalry appeared in the neighbourhood of Madras. This brought Lord Cornwallis himself into the field, and soon after the Mahrattas joined the league against the "Tiger." Each party had successes in different directions; but when the great fortress of Bangalore fell before the British, Tippoo demanded a truce. It was refused; and then his fortunes revived a little. He held off and held out till the spring of 1792, when General Abercromby coming up, and the allied host surrounding Seringapatam, no further resistance was possible. Tippoo yielded, and accepted humiliating terms. Yet he was not crushed. Half his dominions were left him, as if to give him power of future mischief. The other half he ceded to the allies, and above 3,000,000*l.* of

treasure, and all his prisoners, and two of his sons as hostages. Men are now living who remember the interest excited by those boy princes, ten and eight years old, and the admiration called forth by Lord Cornwallis's treatment of them. Tippoo himself was deeply impressed by it. Yet was he as treacherous and vindictive as ever, while moved by the British fidelity and magnanimity. He instantly began to agitate among the princes of India against us, and sent a secret embassy to the French islands. It took years to disclose the extent of his intrigues and the depth of his hypocrisy. He could claim no sympathy, and little compassion; for he was the first aggressor, and was never ungenerously treated. He was not of any ancient race of princes, but the son of a freebooter; and he was altogether responsible for his own adversity. It was not Lord Cornwallis who disposed of him at last; for the Governor-Generalship changed hands in 1793. He returned home, and was succeeded by Sir John Shore, afterwards Lord Teignmouth, who in 1798 yielded his government to Lord Wellesley (then Lord Mornington). One of the first things Lord Wellesley heard in India was that 10,000 French and 30,000 negro troops were expected in Mysore from the Mauritius. No time was to be lost. The French were carrying all before them in Egypt, and Mysore was now to be the portal through which they meant to march into India. In February, 1799, the invasion of Mysore was ordered; the allies opened

their fire against Tippoo early in March; and on the 4th of May they were in possession of Seringapatam. On the former occasion, when the troops were balked of their plunder there, Lord Cornwallis and General Abercromby gave up to them their own share while awarding them six month's batta, in consideration of their excellent conduct. Their time was now come. Tippoo's troops fled from the breach the British were entering. He was wounded, but obstinately refused to make himself known, and was shot by an English soldier whom, in self-defence, he had wounded in the knee. He was honoured with a solemn funeral the next day; and he has been since idolised among his Mussulman subjects as a martyr to their faith. He was increasingly oppressive to his people, however, and no claims to moral respect can be advanced on his behalf. He was as remarkably fond of letters as his father was illiterate; and at the India House a portion of that library may be seen with which he was wont to delight himself for many hours of the day. The British were now rid of their greatest enemies. Hyder's age was not known; but he was above eighty when he died. Tippoo was forty-nine.

General Harris commanded the British at the storming of Seringapatam, and some remarkable youths sat on the commission appointed to divide the conquered territory. "Boy Malcolm," as he was called, was the first secretary, and Thomas Munro the second. The general in command was one of the



commissioners; and another was the British colonel who had commanded the Nizam's troops on the occasion—that young colonel bearing the name of Arthur Wellesley. The English territory now extended to the sea on the Malabar side, and on the south to Coimbatore and Tanjore. The revenue thus acquired was small—not more than half a million a year; but the British territory was rendered more defensible, and communications were established between the different portions. There was no reason for placing the family of the usurper on the throne of Mysore, while any of the hereditary sovereigns' descendants remained. One of the princes of that family was made Rajah under British protection; and the brilliant episode in the history of Mysore created by the great usurper and his son closed with the expiration of the eighteenth century.

## CHAPTER XII.

## BEGINNING OF A REVENUE SYSTEM.

1793.

“Tell me, Sir,  
Have you cast up your state, rated your lands,  
And find it able to endure the change?”

*Two Noble Gentlemen.*

“What are these?”

“The tenants.”—BEAUMONT and FLETCHER.

It is very interesting to follow the fortunes of the British in India, as their dominion extended by war and diplomacy; and especially when they were forced into war by the aggressions of their neighbours—as in the instance of the Mysore usurpers, Hyder and Tippoo; but our real position and contemporary prospects cannot be understood, without some observation of the measures introduced by Lord Cornwallis as reforms in the internal administration of the country. Those measures have affected the destinies of the native inhabitants to an incalculable extent; and they have been the subject of controversy among statesmen and economists from their first promulgation to this day. No picture of the English in India can therefore be faithful in which

features of so much importance are not sketched, however meagrely.

Horace Walpole said of Lord Cornwallis that he was "as cool as Conway, and as brave; he was indifferent to everything but being in the right; he held fame cheap, and smiled at reproach." This noble eulogium indicates the faults as well as the virtues of the statesman; for a man of such qualities could hardly have any other faults than those which were the shady side of his virtues. So it was, as every part of his eventful life proved, and especially the seven years of his rule in India. He went out with fixed ideas as to the principles and characteristics of a paternal government; and he proceeded to institute from Calcutta a system founded on those ideas. There was another great and humane man at Madras, equally devoted to the work of good government; and his aspirations took form in a scheme the exact opposite of that of Lord Cornwallis. The subsequent controversy has related to the rival schemes of Lord Cornwallis and Sir Thomas Munro. We must look at the outlines of both, as both were tried in different districts.

The revenue of the Company at that time was derived from the land to the extent of more than two-thirds, the monopolies of salt and opium supplying two-thirds of the remainder. The land tenures, and the method of drawing revenue from them, were, therefore, the first object of interest and care to a

good government. Lord Cornwallis believed that nothing could well be worse than the condition of the whole agricultural population, as he and his predecessors found it, and that his duty clearly was to remodel the whole system on incontrovertible principles. He held that a steady emanation of capital from land would sustain, and was the only means of sustaining, an upper class, by which the mass would ultimately be raised in their intellectual and material condition; that such capital would create commerce; that such commerce would create knowledge and enlightenment; and that thus the ends of good government would ultimately be answered. It should be added, in justice to him and to Sir Thomas Munro, that both anticipated with entire confidence the speedy colonisation of India as the consequence of the free trade which they supposed to be near at hand. Every assumption of new political and territorial power by the Company was, in their eyes, an outgrowing of the original commercial function, which must soon, as they calculated, be vacated altogether. The failure of that calculation explains a part of such ill-success as attended both schemes. Lord Cornwallis arrived from England full of the constitutional supposition that an industrial people had their lot in their own hands, when once they were furnished with good laws and methods. He was so far from perceiving that clear and abundant knowledge of the people to be legislated for was

requisite, that he and his helpers volunteered an explanation that they knew very little of the residents and their ways and notions, adding that the knowledge would come in time, and give the means of working the new system more and more effectually. The good-natured conceit of this notion is so like that which at once institutes and damages most philanthropic experiments, that there is no need to enlarge upon it: nor need it be added that Lord Cornwallis's view of our duty to India was that we should Europeanize it as thoroughly and rapidly as possible. India was, from the earliest times discernible by us, studded over with villages, the land being divided into minute portions, which were jointly and severally, in each village, liable for the whole rent and taxes. However long such a system might have lasted if it had been left to itself, it was thoroughly dislocated by the Mussulman intrusion. The tyranny which under Mogul rule crushed the peasantry, made the soil change hands; and in one place several holders depended on one portion, while in another several portions were in the hands of one man. Where the Mussulman had not penetrated there were complications quite as difficult to deal with. The original method seems to have everywhere sprung out of the primary necessity every community was under to defend itself against enemies, brute or human; and as it permitted no inequality of fortune, it was sure to give way in some point or another, and to lapse into

special customs quite as important in the people's eyes as any principles or laws whatever. All these facts and considerations were ignored by Lord Cornwallis in instituting his celebrated "permanent settlement."

He found ready-made to his hand a class called zemindars, who were so full of complaints, and so eager in their claims, that they formed a very prominent object in his view of Indian life. Many of these were Hindoo princes of very ancient families; and no small number boasted of having held their property since a long date before the Mogul conquest. It was natural for the British to regard the order as a sort of nobles, and for Lord Cornwallis to suppose that he had only to endow them with certain powers to obtain the upper class on which the future enlightenment and elevation of the country depended. Whereas in the parts of India which then concerned us (a limitation which must be borne in mind) the zemindars were the class responsible for the payment of the land revenue, and virtually, therefore, the masters of the cultivators and the land. The community of the villages was one of liability and not of possessions; and the zemindars were regarded practically as the landowners of society, when they were theoretically only the middlemen, whose function was to levy the revenue, and pay it over to the sovereign. This account of the zemindars should be accompanied by the warning that their precise character and function are still a matter of dispute between the

advocates of opposite systems, some considering them as genuine landowners, and others as mere officers of Government, making their own fortunes out of their office, and at the expense of the ryots or cultivators from whom they levied the revenue. What Lord Cornwallis proposed to do with them was this:

In 1793 he made proclamation of a definitive settlement of the land revenues in Bengal. The Government gave up all claim to an increased revenue in future. The zemindars were to be the proprietors of the soil, but under the restriction that they could not displace any ryot who paid the then existing amount of rent. The difference between what the zemindar received and what he paid to Government was supposed to be one-third; and he had a further means of improving his fortunes, in the waste lands, which were handed over to the class as a gift. These lands amounted to at least a third of the whole area. The method of equal division was imposed as the law of inheritance. All this might look well on paper on the Governor-General's desk; but a multitude of difficulties rose up at the first hour of its enforcement. Zemindars and ryots could not agree about rent and other claims; there were endless contradictions about ownership of lands: and as soon as there were courts ready to try causes arising under the new system, the amount and hopeless intricacy of the business might have dismayed any but the stoutest heart. Opinions vary still as to the

results of the method on the whole. Where it fails, some lay the blame on Lord Wellesley's passive reception of the policy, which he did not try to amend; and it is certain that the official successors of Lord Cornwallis were too full of their wars and their diplomacy to give proper attention to a scheme which involved the vital interests of nearly the whole population. Complaints abounded, certainly; but it may be true that these complaints were a sign of reviving life, as far preferable to the previous apathy of the ryot class as the screams of a resuscitated patient under the pains of a returning circulation are better than the insensibility of a drowning man under water. On the one hand, again, the rise in the value of land, soon apparent at sales, seemed to show that the plan worked well; while, on the other, it is alleged that such rise was not only capricious where the settlement extended, but that it exactly corresponded with the increased value of the nearest lands which were not subject to the "permanent settlement." It could hardly be alleged that the lot of the ryot was improved, while the landowner could find means of involving him in difficulty, and then turning him out, in order to make way for a tenant who would pay more. In six years from the first promulgation, a former power was restored to the zemindars, on their complaint that they could not obtain payment from the ryots, and on their showing that many of them had lost their ancient estates, and been ruined. They



gained their point partly by showing that the ruined zemindars gave place to a new set of landowners more oppressive than themselves. They were allowed, as of old, to eject the ryots; and then the ryots found themselves thrown into a worse purgatory than that from which they had been ostensibly rescued. It was under this *régime* that Rammohun Roy came over, and gave us his opinion, which was that the system worked well for the Company, well for the zemindars, and most wretchedly for the ryots. Bengal paid better than Madras, which was under the other system: but then, the North-West provinces, which were not under the settlement, paid as well as Bengal. The prosperity of the zemindars was owing not only to the legitimate resources of the waste lands, but to that exaction of increased rents which it was the main object of the whole scheme to preclude. As for the depressed millions, the testimony of Rammohun Roy was very striking. He said that one might take one's stand anywhere in the country, and find that within a circle of a hundred miles there was probably not one man, outside the landholding class, who was in independent circumstances, or even in possession of the comforts of life. No doubt matters have greatly improved in the quarter of a century that has elapsed since this testimony was recorded; but the existence of so low an average of welfare in 1830 proves that Lord Cornwallis's plan was not adapted for remedying the evils inherent in

the Asiatic social system—such as we found it. Lord Wellesley, however, had no misgivings about it, but extended it to conquered and ceded provinces, till it had a very wide area for the trial of its powers.

Sir Thomas Munro's scheme, called the Ryotwar system, had its trial and its failures too. It set out from premises the very opposite of those of Lord Cornwallis. Society in India, we were told, was successful, powerful, civilized, orderly, and refined, clothed in bright shawls and fine muslins, while the Britons wore hides and painted themselves for battle; and the inhabitants of such a country, descendants of such ancestors, must know better than any upstart strangers what social methods were most suitable to their constitution and environment. The object should therefore be to make Indian society as intensely Asiatic as possible. It was not suggested that, for such an aim, the legislating and executive authority ought to be Asiatic too; but the absurdity and peril of subjecting fifty millions of people to the ideas of European closet-statesmen, who admitted their own ignorance of native history, was emphatically exhibited by the advocates of the Ryotwar system. On their part, however, they fell into the mistake of imposing a truly Asiatic repression on the industrial classes. Sir Thomas Munro swept away all intervention between the Government and the taxpayer. He demolished the intermediate function of the zemindars altogether. Every ryot was to have

his field surveyed and assessed; a deduction for errors was to be made in each group of assessments, and then he was to pay the annual rent direct to the State; that rent being fixed for ever, at the amount first settled. The waste land, after being surveyed and classed, was to be taken in hand by the ryots at their own pleasure; and they were at liberty to give up any portions of their lands, after the assessment had once determined the value. This looked well at first, like the scheme it was intended to supersede; and the more because Munro proposed the most liberal terms that could be offered to the ryots. But the working was immediately encompassed with difficulties. Alarmed zemindars showed that certain fields had paid rent to their fathers, in money or in kind, for many generations; there were many cases in which the ryots were virtually tenants at will; and in such instances the plan was either oppressive or impracticable. By sweeping away the landholders, the only chance of a thinking and lettered order of society was destroyed. The plan of survey, minute and meddlesome, let loose an army of rapacious native agents upon the poor ryots, who were accustomed to suppose that nothing could be done without bribes. According to Sir Thomas Munro himself, not more than five per cent. of subordinate officials were innocent of peculation. As for the collection of the small instalments of rent (or tax, whichever it is called), it afforded more opportunity

for oppression and corruption than the power of any constitutionally intermediate body. Upon one pretence or another, the lower functionaries of the State might interfere with the ryot almost every day. Nor could the class, or any members of it, rise in fortune and independence. Where there is no middle class, or only one class, such elevation never happens. In this case the impossibility was strengthened by the remarkable arrangement that bad seasons and other accidents should make no difference in the payments. As a bad year or two might thus ruin the most thrifty and industrious cultivator, the temptation was irresistible—to live from hand to mouth, and be satisfied with what chance might send. Thus a whole series of districts sank down to the condition of the few which had before no zemindars, and which were noted for their depression. According to the accounts transmitted of the district Coimbatore, where the Ryotwar system worked best, the ryot paid, in 1828, about 1*l.* 13*s.* per annum out of a gross produce averaging 5*l.* It seems almost incredible that the cultivator should be expected to thrive on 3*l.* 7*s.* a year for himself and his family, allowing him as much cattle as he could keep in consistency with his tillage. It is not surprising that the revenue under the Ryotwar system should fall far below that raised in Bengal under the Permanent Settlement. And it is rather surprising if we do not perceive that the elevation of society in India must

depend on something else than arbitrary assortment of ranks and orders, and ingenious inventions for assigning land and collecting revenue. In as far as the people are higher and happier than under native anarchy, it is from the moral power with which we are invested in their eyes (and especially through the improvement visible in the character and conduct of our officials in India), and from the moral vitality which we are thus able to impart to them. Political systems must always be weak or useless means of social advancement till the advancement has itself proceeded a long way. Hence we may acknowledge the failure, on the whole, of both the schemes proposed for the redemption of native society, without losing hope of final success, or denying such beneficial consequences as arose from each. Under the one there was, no doubt, a considerable extension of tillage, and improved industrial animation. Under the other, the peasantry felt an immediate relief from the heavy hand of the landholder. For the rest, other influences were necessary than belong to any land revenue scheme.

The crowning glory of Lord Cornwallis's plan was supposed to be the wide diffusion of equal justice. For the first time, the peasantry saw the collectors of the revenue subject to laws which could be read to the people in a way which they could understand; and they were told that if anybody attempted to charge them more than the amount settled on the institution of the new plan, they had only to apply

to the courts to get justice." The courts were presently overwhelmed with applications, which it was found impracticable to deal with from the intricacy of claims and of the evidence brought on behalf of them. Matters were worse when the power of ejectment was restored to the zemindars against the ryots; and at the end of a few years it was evident that, whatever the law might say to it, the ryots were made to pay higher rents than the settlement authorized, and that they could not obtain justice when they appealed against the hardship.

Under the Ryotwar system there was even less chance of justice. Sir Thomas Munro believed that the old laws, as well as the old customs of the region must be adopted; and he therefore preserved, as an essential provision of the common law of India in civil matters, the Panchayet, or method of arbitration. No native, he said, would ever believe that justice could be had without resort to it. The people, however, abandoned it as soon as they perceived that courts on the European method involved less delay and expense. In three years' time, even the courts in which only native judges sat to administer European law, were resorted to in preference to the Panchayet, which might have preserved society in India (as Sir James Mackintosh declared that it did) before any European authority was established, but which was soon to be confined to those localities where the people had never seen an

Englishman, nor heard of the new plans which were on trial throughout the land. The benefits of the Ryotwar scheme, such as they were, were soon almost neutralized by the corruption of the judicial part of the plan. The collectors were found so entirely unable to levy the revenue, that it was considered necessary to make magistrates of them, and give them the control of the police. This was a return to the old grievance of the officers of Government sitting in judgment on their own acts, and employing the police to execute their own purposes. More and more power was given to the native collectors under the Madras Government, till, in a quarter of a century, they were authorized not only to impose fines but stripes. In 1826, the Directors sent over a strong protest against unchecked powers being confided to a class of men who were under constant temptation to apply them tyrannically. On the whole it is clear that benevolent and just-minded men had failed in discovering means of carrying justice within reach of the whole people. For many years the headman of the village was still the main hope of the inhabitants, and his traditional authority was worth more to them than any new judicial system; and the Brahmins and heads of castes did more to preserve order and reconcile differences in their communities than the best men who worthily placed themselves under the orders of the pure-hearted Cornwallis.

In reviewing the operation of the Permanent Settlement and the Ryotwar system, it is (as was observed before) necessary to bear in mind that complement of both schemes which was, after all, never introduced—a free trade, inducing an ample colonization of the country from Europe. When Lord Wellesley made a progress through the upper provinces, in 1801, he was delighted by the signs of improvement which were visible in such agricultural districts as were fertile enough to invite experiment. His suite had rare sport among the wild beasts which were disturbed by clearances in the jungle; and the ryots were improving their tillage in the confidence that their rent would not be immediately increased. It is true there were not a few old and opulent zemindar families, now reduced to poverty, weeping along the roadside, having lost the estates which their fathers had held for centuries. It is true these were succeeded, too often, by rapacious strangers, who used the restored powers of ejectment very harshly in regard to the ryots; but the great point seemed to be gained in the bringing new lands into cultivation. Such increased production would stimulate commerce when trade was thrown open; and commerce would bring capitalists; and the capitalists would make roads and canals, opening new markets, and, through the markets, further production still. Each village would no longer be all in all to itself—in good seasons glutted with food while poor in cloth-



ing; and in bad seasons pressed by famine because there was no access to any granaries. Each village was at all times like the hamlets of lower Bengal in a flood, cut off from access to every other, and subsisting as best it might; but the hope of the legislators of the time was that capital, industry, and commerce would unite the settlements into a prosperous community. This did not happen; and allowance must be made accordingly in estimating the Permanent Settlement. It was not till 1834 that the commercial monopoly was broken up; and it is only recently that public works of the most essential character have been even begun. If India had been freely thrown open and colonized *pari passu* with the growth of free trade opinion at home, the whole country would by this time have been so attached to English rule, and so retained on the side of peaceful industry and commerce, that the Mussulmans would not have constituted an eighth part of the population; and the Mohammedan element, whether greater or smaller, would have been powerless at this day amidst the prevalent loyalty to British supremacy. As this did not happen, we must suppose that it could not happen; but when we remember how confidently the benevolent legislators of sixty years ago expected it, and what have been the consequences of the disappointment, allowance must be made for very bitter grief, though it may be more natural than philosophical.

## CHAPTER XIII.

BEGINNING OF THE SUBSIDIARY SYSTEM.  
THE MAHRATTA WAR.

1799—1804.

“Let them be pressed and ready to give aids and succours to their confederates, as it ever was with the Romans: insomuch as if the confederates had leagues defensive with divers other states, and, upon invasion offered, did implore their aids severally, yet the Romans would ever be the foremost.”—BACON.

“From my gossip’s bread a large piece for my godson.”

*Proverb.*

At the opening of our century, the political world were talking almost as much of Lord Wellesley’s Subsidiary system and the Mahratta war as of Bonaparte and the King’s illness. What was the Subsidiary system of Lord Wellesley? And whence was the Mahratta war?

We must glance at the parties concerned in both, and see what they were doing in their respective places.

Lord Wellesley was at Madras for a time, having found it necessary to be present in the Deccan during the war with Tippoo, leaving the Council at Calcutta to take care of the government there.

From day to day he was feeling very painfully the anomalous character of the British rule in India, which compelled him to exercise absolute power while subjecting him to penalties for doing it according to his own judgment. The ostensible rulers, the theoretical governors of India, were non-resident, and so far off that they could rule only by means of Viceroys; and the Viceroys must act upon their own judgment, knowing how improbable it was that their views should coincide with those of Directors sitting in London, remote from the local incidents and atmosphere by which all practical good government must always be largely influenced. Lord Wellesley had opened out his proposed course of policy in despatches from the Cape, when on his voyage out. All that he saw in India, and all that he learned from the conquest of Tippoo and Mysore confirmed his views—which were these.

The British factories had become provinces, and it was no longer a question whether the English should or could recede from their footing in India. Asiatic government was so “infernal” in its character, and the feuds of various tribes, nations, and states were so irreconcilable that the great peninsula (as large as Europe, without Russia) must have been a mere hell upon earth if our civilization and our control had been withdrawn. There we were; and there we must remain. The great question was, on what footing? Could we stand still, occupying our own

settlements, carrying on the Company's commerce, and simply 'maintaining the frontier? It could not be done. The French had all but established their supremacy over the great prince of the Deccan, the Nizam; so that it was by a singularly fortunate union of chance, wisdom and courage that the French force at Hyderabad had been broken up, and the officers got rid of. Every prince in India would have been suborned by the French if we had not intercepted the operation. We have seen that the move against Tippoo was only just in time. Again, the Deccan was more variously peopled than Northern India, from more remnants of an ancient order of population being visible, and the Mogul power less thoroughly pervading and established. The Mysore usurpers showed what would have been the fate of all the Hindoo inhabitants of the Deccan if the British had sat still within their own frontier, and left all other states to fight out their quarrels, and the great Hindoo population to be overrun by the Mohammedan ferocity. If the more warlike Hindoos, as the Rajpoots and the Mahrattas, should set up their front against the Mussulmans, the prospect was simply of an internecine war. Under such circumstances the British could not sit still. Should they enter on a career of conquest by arms, by which the heterogeneous multitudes of inhabitants—tens of millions of each division—should become our subjects, dependent upon us in every act, and for

every resource of their lives? Nobody desired this. The English have no taste for foreign conquest, well as they like an ever-expanding field of action and enterprise. There was not an Englishman, from the King to the "interloper," who did not regard war in India as a great evil, however justifiable or necessary it might be. What was to be done, then, if we could neither quit the country, nor sit still, nor go forward in it? This was the question which Lord Wellesley had pondered on his way to the Cape, and ever since; and out of his meditations grew his Subsidiary system. About him were collected Englishmen of very various quality. Some of the old sort were mere traders and brokers, transacting their own little tyrannies on the sly, and wishing for the good days back again when the Directors were not so particular, or so well informed, or their officials so scrupulous and severe. There were a few traitors, picking up everything that could be reported to the Directors to the disadvantage of the Governor-General. There were honourable and earnest men, who were as difficult to deal with as the bad ones, from the effect of Anglo-Indian life at that period. It has been said that every man long resident there at that time was either Brahminised or *tête-montée*; either apathetic and submissive, or vehement and self-willed; and, though this could have been only partially true, Lord Wellesley found it sufficiently

irksome to have voices always calling out to him to let things alone, or to set his foot on the necks of one hundred millions of Asiatics. Very naturally and wisely he made up his mind, and incurred the reproach of pride of opinion rather than of infirmity of purpose. Right royally determined were his views and his actions.

Looking abroad from Fort St. George, what was there to be seen? First the Carnatic, where affairs were carried on under British control, in return for the preservation of the State. The Nabob could neither take care of himself nor his subjects, and he was a willing pensioner of ours, receiving one-fifth of the state revenue, and turning over to us the charge of his ruined villages, his wasted plains, and the orphans of the peasantry swept away in Tippoo's invasions. Northwards of the Carnatic was Hyderabad, the Nizam's territory, which depended on us for its welfare almost as absolutely as the Carnatic. There sat the restless and jealous Mussulman ruler in his palace, now sending to the British Resident to say how happy he was to be rid of the domination of the military French; now bending his ear to whispers about how easy it would be to drive the English into the sea, if he would only ally himself with the French, or the Mahrattas; and then again resolving to adhere to the British, because they who could conquer Tippoo, must be the strongest force in the field. After the fall of Seringapatam, the

Nizam was pettish and sulky about his gains, which fell far short of his expectations; but the first cloud in his sky brought him penitent to the feet of the English. They refused to be implicated in his quarrels with the Mahrattas; but within his frontier they virtually ruled. The great "rolling prairies" of Hyderabad were surveyed by English officials, to whom the peasantry paid their proportion of produce, thankful to be secured from further demands; the old forts, perched on crags within the line of the Ghauts, were watched, or dismantled in case of their sending out marauders; thieves were driven out of their haunts in the ruined cities which crumbled away amidst the sandy plains; the British Resident dwelt in a palace built for him, with all the splendour of Asia, and all the comfort of Europe. Around him were miles of ruined dwellings and gardens run to waste; and under his eyes were transacted the intrigues of a court which was described at the time "as a sort of experiment to determine with how little morality men can associate together." Every day there was a murder; every week there was an intrigue. The Englishman, traversing Hyderabad on his elephant, was the conservator of society; and the British troops were the only hope of peace and safety. West of the Carnatic lay Mysore, where the British were sincerely cherished for what they had done, as well as for what they might do. They had restored the

Hindoo family of sovereigns; and the Brahmins were promoting pilgrimages to the old temples, for the encouragement of knowledge and of commerce, while the industrial orders worked cheerfully under their relief from the savage rapacity of Hyder and Tippoo. Their old minister, Poorneeah, who had used his influence for the best, was still in office and showing what he could do. In two years he made fifty bridges, seventy-four miles of canal, and 1,100 miles of excellent road. Looking down from that table-land to the west, we see Malabar, with its prodigious forests filling up the space between the Ghauts and the sea. The deeply-wooded chasms and the shelves of the precipices had many a time been sought by fugitives from the cruel Mahratta troopers who were for ever desolating the territory, north and south of Poonah. The Poonah sovereigns were still captives, and their territory was still administered by a hereditary Prime Minister, called the Peishwa, whenever the Peishwa could hold his ground against the northern Mahrattas, Scindiah and Holkar, who sometimes united against Poonah, and sometimes fought with each other on account of it. At the time when Lord Wellesley was about to inaugurate his system, the Peishwa was buried in pleasure, while agitated by apprehensions of all kinds. He dreaded dethronement by Holkar; and he was jealous of the supervision of the British. His person, swathed in white muslin, was elegant as a lady's;



the jewels he wore might almost have bought a European kingdom; his soldiery were bold, sinewy, robust and martial, compared with Indians generally, with nothing approaching to a uniform, and arms of any kind they could obtain. When the English were away, the Peishwa was afraid of his soldiers, and of the news they might bring him of Holkar's approach, and of his carrying all before him; and when the English were at hand he insulted them in the rashness of fear, or broke his promises to them, as the thought of the French or of Scindiah's threats against the British crossed his mind. And again, if any British traveller told him of the goodwill of England his countenance was radiant with joy. As for Scindiah, he had usurped the portions of four princes, of whom the Peishwa was one and Holkar another. The mention of such a fact will show the state of affairs which Lord Wellesley was contemplating as well (for our purpose here) as the detailed history of each of the rival Mahratta chiefs. Then there was in the north, Oude, where no fulfilment of existing terms could be expected without an introduction of more British authority. Again, there were alarms of invasion on the side of Cabul, unless we could oppose a formidable front by means of native alliances. This much of description must suffice. It is sufficiently evident that anarchy must overrun the whole of Hindostan, unless some principle of policy were adopted, and a fitting scheme of

procedure based upon it. We see that a variety of states, some Mohamiedan and some Hindoo, some ruled by ambitious and others by timid princes, some obstinate and others fickle, but all weak and ill-governed, were in fact awaiting from the British their sentence of destruction by internecine wars, or their reprieve by means of a wise British policy.

Thus it was in India. Elsewhere the Shah of Persia was watching his opportunity of pleasing France and Russia by assailing India with a force from Affghanistan. Bonaparte, who had communicated with Tippoo from Egypt, was keenly intent on every means of strengthening a policy adverse to the English, by sending clever agents to native courts; and Russia did not lose sight of her hereditary policy in regard to India, at a moment when Anglo-Indian councils were evidently troubled. In London, the great majority of the Directors disapproved of every step of Lord Wellesley's, while he was eagerly supported throughout by Mr. Pitt and Lord Sidmouth. By every mail the Governor-General received emphatic encouragement from the Cabinet, while it seemed too probable that the next would bring from the Directors an extinction of his policy. Under such circumstances what was the Subsidiary system of the Marquis Wellesley?

The first object was to enable all the states with which we had relations to keep their engage-

ments with us; and this implied at the moment excluding the French from those States, and precluding wars among the respective rulers. Such was the aim. The result was giving us virtual possession of the Carnatic, the Nizam's dominions, the Peishwa's territory, and the kingdom of Oude. Thus much was done before continual opposition from home induced Lord Wellesley first to relax in his policy, and then to leave his great scheme unfinished. If he could have foreseen how amply the India House authorities would acknowledge his merits before he died, his career would probably have been a different one in its later stages.

The method was determined by the degree of success which attended our arrangements in the Carnatic, and yet more in the Nizam's dominions. The conversion of the Nizam from a restless and dangerous neighbour into a firm ally produced a great effect throughout India, and fully justified, in the eyes of British statesmen there, an extension of the experiment. The Subsidiary system was a system of permanent treaties with the States of India, by which England was to supply a military force to each, and to control all state affairs (except such as related to the royal family) through a Resident—the expense of both these institutions being borne by the state thus assisted. Lord Wellesley's policy was to use every occasion on which we were compelled, in either prudence

or humanity, to interfere with an Indian prince, to render that state subservient to English rule, while preserving its native court, religion, and customs. By this method all violence to native feelings and habits was avoided; the sovereign remained a visible object of the ancient homage, and the name of independence remained. The thing was gone, assuredly; but no method could have preserved it amidst the corruption and humiliation in which every state was sunk; whereas destruction by war and famine was thus averted. It is enough to say in the way of comment, that India has since been repeatedly at peace from end to end, for the first time in history; that the non-Mussulman portion of the inhabitants (seven-eighths of the whole at this time) have become more and more attached to our rule; that industry, security, and comfort (backward as they still are) have advanced almost as marvellously as the expansion of our frontier; and that the revenue increased at once, in Lord Wellesley's own term, by his system and his financial reforms together, from seven to fifteen millions. Such was his Subsidiary system. Now, what and wherefore was the Mahratta war?

The Mahrattas, we have seen, were first heard of in the direction of the Nerbudda, Candeish, and (some add) Guzerat. The cause of their power in the southern regions was that their great founder,

Sevajee, received from the Rajah of Bejapore, in the time of Aurungzebe, a gift of lands in the Carnatic, with the command of 10,000 cavalry. His first use of the advantage was to seize Poonah, in the character of a Zemindary, increasing the number of his soldiers, and levying contributions over a wide circuit. His descendants were feeble as princes; but there were always chiefs ready enough to adopt a marauding life; and more and more of them were for ever issuing from mountain retreats, to lay waste the country to vast distances. The worst consequence of the establishment of such a mode of life was that there could be no end to it. The larger the predatory force grew, the more impossible it was that it could be sustained otherwise than by pillage; and so prodigious had the evil become at the end of the last century, that Indian society, when our rulers took it in hand, was of two kinds only—it was either of the Mahratta type, an exaggeration of the predatory stage of civilization, in which the rulers were freebooters, scarcely pretending to govern their subjects, and rarely seen in their own cities; or it was under the rule of princes who cared for nothing but pleasure and the means of obtaining it, being rapacious in regard to revenue, but otherwise leaving their subjects to take care of themselves. Poonah and its Peishwa afforded an example of the one *régime*, and Hydrabad, with its Nizam, of the other. When the

Subsidiary system came into action this dreary alternative was driven beyond the pale of the British influence, and something inestimably better, however imperfect still, began to grow up at once within our frontier.

In Lord Wellesley's time the Mahrattas were widely spread over the north and west of India, fighting among themselves for the state of Malwa, while the head of their governments was at Poonah. They were the floating, third party which occasioned and determined alliances between any other two; and great was the profit they made by being the bugbear of all. In 1770 they were the cause of the British alliance with the Mysore Sultans. The Nizam played fast and loose with us according to the demonstrations of the Mahrattas, who were the allies of both the Nizam and the British when Tippoo was humbled by the loss of half his territories in 1789. At the next shifting of the scene the Nizam had been perilously weakened by the Mahrattas, while they, again, were apprehensive of attack from Persia and Cabul, at a time when they were at war among themselves. It was plain that no peace could be expected, nor any stability of alliance and government hoped for, while these wild chiefs held their power of annoyance, and were driven by their needs to disturb everybody within reach. This was justification enough of an undertaking by the British to check the Mahrattas; but

more was furnished by the occasion used for the purpose.

Without going into the confused history of the Mahratta succession, I may just show the complication of the case at the opening of the century. The sovereign who died in 1797 left four sons, whose territory towards the north was usurped by the great chief Scindiah, who was careful to keep up a close alliance with the Peishwa at Poonah, as the head of the whole nation. Scindiah's great rival was Holkar, whose field of action was north of the Vindhya range, in Malwa, but who came down into the Deccan in the hope of touching Scindiah in the most sensitive part, by humbling the Peishwa, the feeblest of the whole set. He marched to do this in 1801, driving the Peishwa from his capital. The deposed prince petitioned for British aid, in return for which he would become tributary to the Company. Lord Wellesley availed himself of the opportunity, and used it for comprehending in the alliance as many of the Mahratta chiefs as could be induced to join it. On their part, Holkar and Scindiah both sought the British alliance as a resource against each other. The first steps taken by the Government were to afford refuge to the Peishwa; to send an ambassador to Scindiah's court; to station a large force on the Mysore frontier, as a protection against Holkar; and to prepare the Bombay troops for any service that

might be suddenly required. These preparatory events happened in 1801 and 1802. It was on the last day of 1802 that the treaty of Bassein was signed—the instrument by which the Peishwa bound himself to perpetual alliance with the British in return for their restoring him to power. It was no slight engagement for the English to enter into; and the real enterprise was nothing less than carrying on war with France on Indian territory. Not only were the Mahratta troops organized and commanded by French officers, but so large a grant of territory on the Jumna and the Ganges had been made to one of them, M. Perron, as to constitute a French state in the heart of the northern provinces. The aggregate territory of the Mahratta chiefs extended from Delhi to the Kistna, and from the Bay of Bengal to the Gulf of Cambay; an area of 970 miles by 900, comprehending a population of 40,000,000. The Governor-General's "brother Arthur" had been for many months meditating how this war should be carried on, if it should become inevitable; and here he now won his first great fame. He set forth on his enterprise three months sooner than his own judgment would have advised, and without the protection of well-filled rivers—in March, that is, instead of June, 1803. But by his celerity he saved Poonah, which was to have been burned, according to the orders of Holkar in his retreat. The Peishwa re-entered



his capital on the 13th of May. It was presently apparent that Scindiah, Holkar, and the French, with the Bhoonsla and other second-rate Mahratta chiefs, were all in alliance against the British; and the crisis was so important that full powers of every kind were committed to General Wellesley, to save the delays and possible differences which would have arisen from references to the head-quarters of Government. At the peace of Amiens, Lord Sidmouth had negligently allowed Pondicherry to be restored to France; and there French troops were now landed, to be mustered in M. Perron's northern territory. Not a man of them, however, got beyond Pondicherry; and as soon as war with France broke out again, they were all made prisoners. Without this aid the enemy were abundantly strong. Their force consisted of 210,000 infantry and 100,000 cavalry. It was a grand occasion for our young general; and grandly he met it. He and his brother planned the campaign, and fully wrought out their work.

Four British armies were to attack the territories of the confederated princes on all sides. All the four armies were victorious, and the business was finished in five months. The Deccan force, where Wellesley was, followed Scindiah in various marches in the Nizam's dominions (the Nizam being just dead, and Hydrabad in an excitable state); and Wellesley, with only 4,500 men, came upon the enemy, 30,000

or 40,000 strong, and, not waiting for Colonel Stevenson with his larger force, won the battle of Assye, on the 23rd of September, 1803. The victory of Argam followed, and the great fort of Gawulghur, supposed impregnable, was taken in December. The Bhoonsla first sued for peace, and Scindiah followed. Colonel Murray had humbled Scindiah's power in Guzerat, before the battle of Assye was won, the great fort of Baroach being taken on the 29th of August. The third army was under Lake, who had the same powers in Hindostan Proper that Wellesley had in the Deccan. The French fled without fighting; and M. Perron's *prestige* was gone, and the French power with it, from the moment when he placed himself and his interests under British protection, with bitter complaints of his allies. A great victory within sight of the minarets of Delhi enabled Lake to restore the deposed sovereign, Shah Aulum; and the whole Mohammedan power in India declared for allegiance to England from the moment when the Mogul Emperor was reinstated. The battles of Muttra, Agra, and finally Laswarree were won—the latter on the 1st of November. The Mahrattas, led by the French, were the most formidable foe ever encountered by us out of Europe. They had every resource of science, engineering, courage, and discipline; yet they were always beaten. At that time Lake's reputation stood as high as Wellesley's, and deservedly. Both

received the thanks of Parliament, and Lake a peerage, and Wellesley the Knighthood of the Bath. The fourth field of warfare was Cuttack, which it was indispensable to keep open for communications between Calcutta and the two southern presidencies. The French were riding in the Bay of Bengal, and a land route must be preserved. Colonel Harcourt, with a small force, worsted the light troops of the Bhoonsla on every encounter, took the city of Munickpatam, and the fortress of Barabuttee; and thus the whole province of Cuttack was ours, and the entire coast, from the Hooghly to Pondicherry. On a promontory of that coast, among the salt sands of Cuttack, stands the great pagoda of Juggernaut, a landmark to voyagers, and the centre of pilgrimage by land. The priests came to put their temple and themselves under Colonel Harcourt's care; and he accepted the charge.

It was one of the most wonderful campaigns on record. The warlike Mahratta princes were attacked on a scale worthy their martial reputation. Their enemy came upon them from a wide circumference, from the sea shore, the passes of the Ghauts, the high plains of the Deccan, the tracks of the forest, the river-fords, the salt sands of Cuttack, and the rank swamps of Bengal. The Mahrattas found themselves driven in, like wild beasts by a ring of hunters; and there was no point of the circle that they could break through. They could only submit;

and they must have felt as if the world was witnessing their submission from every ridge, from the Himalaya to Mysore, and from every spire and bastion, from Delhi to Seringapatam. Our accessions of territory were considerable; but much greater was the extension of our virtual dominion. The States, released from Mahratta tyranny, were thankful for our alliance; and even the conquered princes were in admiration at the moderation of the terms proposed. Their possessions were secured to them, on conditions which would prevent their being mischievous. They were, in fact, the vassals of the English; but they enjoyed their nominal dignities and their wealth. If their occupation was gone, that was because it was not compatible with the welfare of their neighbours. Instead of being crushed by a merciless conqueror, they were permitted to pass under the Subsidiary system of a statesman. Parliament had long before interdicted conquest in India for the sake of territory: but this case was so clearly one of war with France, on another soil, that the world could not have wondered if the Mahratta war had been considered an exception to the rule. As it was not so considered, it remains as great in its moral quality as in its military accomplishment, and its political and social results.

## CHAPTER XIV.

## BEGINNING OF SEPOY MUTINIES.

1763—1805.

“ Mislike me not for my complexion,  
 The shadowed livery of the burnished sun,  
 To whom I am a neighbour and near bred.  
 Bring me the fairest creature northward born,  
 Where Phœbus' fire scarce thaws the icicles,  
 And let us make incision for your love,  
 To prove whose blood is reddest, his or mine.”

SHAKSPERE.

“ Foster a raven, and it will peck out your eyes.”—*Proverb.*

UNDER all modifications that we have been induced to try, our Indian government has always and necessarily been grounded on a military basis. The condition and temper of our armies has always been the first consideration in discussing the state of our great dependency. The Subsidiary system was in itself an essential extension of this basis; and in consequence, the condition of the army in India became more and more interesting to the authorities at home as one state after another entered into alliance with us: and when, in 1806, and again in 1809, a rude shock was given to our confidence in our Indian

soldiery, the interest spread far down among the ranks of the general public. By the political biographies, and other records of the early years of the century, we see that our Indian Empire was generally supposed to be in imminent peril through the discontents of our forces. Present circumstances throw a strong light of illustration and interest on the incidents of the various Indian mutinies, from the enlistment of the first Sepoy to the reign of Lord Wellesley's successor, supposed at the time to be probably the last Governor-General of India.

The panic once over, statesmen began to be ashamed of it, and to see or say that there were dangers greater even than mutiny. If our soldiers had been all of one race, any extensive mutiny must have been fatal, they allowed; but our troops were of singularly various quality, even then. Not Moscow itself, on a coronation day, could show so strange an array of warriors, gathered from the diverse regions of the Russian empire, as an Indian Governor-General could parade on any occasion which might compel him to concentrate his forces. The advantage of the case was that there were always troops of one race, country, and faith, ready and eager to put down those of another, on the occurrence of rebellion. Mussulman was against Hindoo, and different Mohammedan sects and Hindoo tribes hated one another as cordially as Islam and Heathendom could hate each other. No combination of indigenous

powers, large enough to endanger the British, could ever take place; and thus, while our rule must become more essentially military with the extension of our authority, the perils of a military rule must diminish. So men said when two great mutinies were over: but few or none had a consolatory word to say while they lasted.

For nearly twenty years prior to 1766 our Sepoys were organized in bodies of 100 each, commanded by a subadar, a native officer, under the eye of European superintendents. For thirty years more the companies were formed into battalions of 1,000 men each, still under their subadars, but commanded by European officers. For four-and-twenty years more—that is, up to 1820—two battalions constituted a regiment; and at that date the battalions were reduced to 500 men each. During the earlier periods, the spirit of the Sepoys of the two oldest presidencies was that of the devoted soldiery of Clive during the siege of Arcot. They worshipped the force of character shown by the creators of their function, as appeared by their bringing their children of two or three generations to salaam before the portraits of Coote, Meadows, and their beloved “Wallis.” They threw all their faculties into their profession, gloried in it, and prospered in it, so as to excite wonder in all beholders, and enthusiasm in their commanders till the changes which took place in 1796 in the constitution of regiments, and in the proportion of

Europeans to natives. In the war against Tipoo, the Sepoys "undoubtedly gained much in point of discipline, by a larger intermixture of Europeans; but it seemed, to take some of the heart out of them, and to lessen at once their pride and their confidence. The difficulty was already experienced which has perplexed our management of our native army at intervals ever since. When the proportion of European officers' was smallest the native soldiers were on their best behaviour, and most attached to their British commanders—their pride and self-respect being engaged in their duty; but then, it is not safe to leave native soldiers so much to themselves. On the other hand, when the regiments have been most abundantly officered by the Company, they could be better looked after; but their complacency was depressed, and their attachment to their commanders visibly cooled. Such is the testimony of Sir John Malcolm, a highly qualified observer, and an eye-witness of devoted Sepoy service on the one hand, and Sepoy mutiny on the other. It was he who obtained for Cawder Beg, a native cavalry officer, the command of a body of 2,000 of the Nizam's regular horse, in the campaign of 1799, and who watched his progress, as aide-de-camp of General Campbell, during the reduction of the Ceded Districts, and as one of the most confidential of Sir Arthur Wellesley's officers' in the campaign of 1803. It was Malcolm who recom-



mended a native officer to the Shah of Persia, to organize and instruct a body of Persian soldiery, and who relied on the good military conduct of our Sepoys in Georgia, where they distinguished themselves in several battles, in the service of the Shah. He saw how nobly the Sepoys fought, in the tremendous conflicts of the Mahratta war, and he witnessed the two extremes of Sepoy conduct in the Vellore case in 1806, when one body murdered their officers, and another put them to death for doing it. After many years' study of the native force, Malcolm's opinion was that the changes which improved the discipline of the Sepoys by introducing more Europeans and more English discipline among them, did far more mischief than good by impairing the original spirit of military loyalty which distinguished Clive's soldiery in the first crisis of our eastern progress. Distinguished as he was for his high conservatism, there was nothing in any possible Government of India that Sir John Malcolm deprecated more earnestly than a Commander-in-Chief who should countenance martinet rule in the army, "forgetting that no perfection in appearance and discipline can make amends for the loss of the temper and attachment of the native soldiers under his command."

The Madras Sepoys hold the first rank during the early history of our Indian dominion. Those of Bombay were of a different kind, and applicable to a different service. They were recruited from all

available sources. Not only were Mussulman and Hindoo thrown together, but the Hindoos were of various countries and castes, some being scarcely superior in rank to the Pariahs on the Coromandel coast. There were a few Christians also, and many Jews; these last being found to make the very best soldiers till they grew elderly, when drink usually degraded them. One great advantage of the admixture in the Bombay force was that it was more available for foreign service than that of Madras. It was, in fact, scarcely possible for high-caste soldiers to undergo a voyage without loss of caste. A few did undertake the necessary self-denial when invited by popular officers to volunteer; but a positive order to go to sea was sure to produce mutiny. There was no such difficulty with the Bombay force, while their attachment to their commanders could not be exceeded. It was always a well-weeded force, from the circumstances of its position. Discontented recruits could always abscond into the neighbouring Mahratta territories, and those who remained were thereby proved superior to the temptation. Tippoo could never induce any of the hundreds of them whom he held prisoners to enter his service, though he offered every possible inducement, and punished them bitterly for refusal: and when at length they and the European prisoners of war were on their weary march to Madras, in order to be sent round to Bombay, some of them

nightly eluded their guards, and visited their officers (by swimming tanks or at other risks) to bring them money or food, saying that Sepoys could live upon anything, but that Englishmen needed mutton and beef. This was truly a spirit not to be trifled with. There are several instances on record of the deliberate intervention of these men to save their commanders from the certain death which they drew upon themselves. They thought all was explained, when they pleaded that officers' lives were worth more than Sepoys.

As for the Bengal native army, it originated with the few companies who attended Clive to Calcutta, in 1756. The first battalions raised in Bengal were called after the names of their commanders—each company by that of its captain; each company having its own standard of the same ground as its facings, and a device derived from its subadar,—a crescent, a sabre, &c. In 1760 the British officers in Bengal were 18 captains, 26 lieutenants, and 15 ensigns, all busy in organizing battalions, consisting each of ten companies of 100 men each. In half a century the Bengal Native Infantry were not fewer than 60,000, commanded by 1,500 European officers. The soldiers were of the proudest classes of natives—Mohammedans and high-caste Hindoos—a large proportion of them Rajpoots, the very representatives of Hindooism—an order come up, as it were, from the depths of the past to show

the modern world what sort of men Hindostan was once full of; a stalwart soldiery of tall stature and unmixed blood: men believing nothing, and insisting upon everything they were accustomed to; with no faith, but plenty of superstition; servile to power, and diabolically oppressive to helplessness: prone to self-torture, without any power of self-denial; bigoted to home and usages, without available affections or morality; smooth in language and manners, while brutal in grain: incapable of compassion, while disposed to good-nature; good-tempered in general, with exceptions of incomparable vindictiveness; timid for a twelvemonth, and then madly ferocious for a day, or heroically devoted for an hour; frivolous and fanatical; liars in general, and martyrs on occasion; scoundrels for the most part, and heroes by a rare transfiguration. Such were, and such are, the Rajpoots of whom our Bengal army has always been largely composed, and who have been the perplexity of plain-witted Englishmen for the hundred years just closed with the Delhi atrocities of 1857.

None but the students of Indian history are aware how common mutiny has been in all the presidencies, and especially in Bengal. After the war with the Oude Nabob, in 1763, there was an outbreak, presently retracted. In 1764, eight of the Red Battalion were blown away from guns—twenty more being sentenced to death in another form. It was on this

occasion that three grenadiers stipulated for precedence, as before related. In the very next year Clive showed extraordinary confidence in his sepoy, on occasion of the celebrated mutiny of the Bengal officers. Finding that the cashiered officers hung about the neighbourhood in a body, Clive sent a corps of Sepoys to disperse them, or bring them in prisoners. Yet were these high-caste soldiers untrustworthy when the sea was in question; for in 1782, three corps in Bengal mutinied on the first rumour of foreign service, so that it was necessary to break them up, and draft them into other battalions. One of the three corps was the "Mathews" which had won high honour during a career of twenty-six years. How well the native troops would serve in the most laborious and perilous expeditions by land is shown in the two grand marches from Bengal to the other presidencies in the time of Hastings. The Bombay march has been described before; and it has been related that 5,000 Bengal infantry, with a small force of cavalry and artillery, arrived at Madras at a most critical moment, after a march of 1,100 miles through Guttack and the Circars. It was in that campaign that our Bengal sepoy are said to have first encountered European troops hand to hand. Excellent soldiers as the French were, they met their match in the Rajpoots, who mainly composed the Bengal force; and the traditions of the fight at Cuddalore were one of the main grounds of

confidence in our native army when a French invasion of India by way of Cabul was afterwards expected. The Bengal Cavalry was an inconsiderable body long after the Infantry had won many honours. It was only just ready for use when the Mahratta war broke out. As it consisted mainly of Mussulmans, it rushed eagerly into the conflict with Mahrattas. Mohammedan cavalry and Rajpoot infantry won the highest reputation during the five months of the first Mahratta war; and it was they who, in the most dreary moments of toil and discomfort to which Lake's army was subjected, cheered their European officers with the words, "Keep up your hearts! We will take you safe to Agra." Lake won their attachment, and the deeds they did in his service would fill a volume. If such a volume were before us now, it would be no easy matter to believe that we can never more have a Bengal native army (and to have none at all is better than to have one that cannot be relied on); yet, during this whole period, there were occasional disclosures which made prudent men, and especially officers who knew the Sepoys best, warn their rulers and the English nation that our Indian Empire, resting on a military basis, lay under conditions of radical insecurity. In all the presidencies the fidelity of the Sepoys depended too much on personal predilection, and on hazardous chances, to be considered safe and certain, at any time and under any circum-

stances. The most startling of these disclosures took place on the 10th of July, 1806, in the Madras presidency.

The eighteen children of Tippoo—ten of whom were by this time married—lived in due state in the fortress of Vellore, 88 miles west of Madras. They had sufficient liberty to be able to surround themselves with a mob of the sort of courtiers known in India as the vilest specimens of humanity it is ever our lot to deal with. The royal family had the palace entirely to themselves. The fort was garrisoned by 1,500 native soldiers, and about 370 Europeans, living in their respective barracks. At three in the morning of that 10th of July, the sentries were bayoneted by the sepoys, and shots were fired into all the windows of the European barracks. The mutineers had possessed themselves of all the ammunition, and planted a field-piece in command of the door. Parties were detached to shoot down any officers who should attempt to leave their dwellings, and the colonel and lieutenant-colonel were thus murdered. The English families inhabiting these separate houses were presently butchered. The English privates in the barracks had no means of self-defence against the fire from without; and the few officers who got to the fort had only their bayonets. The princes' servants were seen encouraging the mutineers, and keeping up their communication with the palace; and presently the standard which bore Tippoo's

emblems was hoisted. It was pulled down as soon as British soldiers could get to the flagstaff. The mutineers parted off in search of plunder; and many waverers absconded from the scene when they found that they were under no direction. By some means or other the news reached Arcot, nine miles off, so early that a strong body of cavalry was before the Vellore fort by eight o'clock. When the guns had come up, it took only ten minutes to dispose of the mutiny; and before noon hundreds of the insurgents were slain. The villagers and the police caught most of the fugitives, and many delivered themselves up as innocent men, put to flight by the guilty: but 600 remained over for trial. There was the same difficulty in deciding what to do with them that we shall have to encounter when the time arrives for us to deal with a multitude of native soldiers who were certainly not staunch under trial, and who lie under vehement suspicion of treason; but against whom there is no proof of criminal acts, and who plead compulsion for their defection. To punish them effectively might be unjust: to turn them adrift was perilous; to restore them would be criminal lenity; to transport them would be in every way inconvenient, and in all probability unjust. Civil and military rulers differed, and the wisest men found it hard to advise. Finally, the regiments were broken up, and their numbers erased from the army list. Absent members were retained under vigilant watch;



the rest were discharged as for ever incapable of serving the Company, the officers being supported by small pensions. This decision was suspended long enough to allow the agitation to subside, and to inflict the penalty of suspense in large measure. All who were proved guilty of massacre or robbery were punished in due course.

This celebrated massacre of Vellore, in which 13 European officers and 82 privates were killed, and 91 wounded, ought never to have happened. As usual, it was seen afterwards how criminal was the carelessness, and how shocking the folly which had trifled with the most significant symptoms of what might be expected. A fakeer had promised in the bazaar the downfall of the English; and for many weeks it had been known that secret societies had been formed to bind the Sepoys in a common resistance to that petty tyranny about military dress which Sir John Malcolm was so earnest in condemning. The old turban was ordered to be exchanged for a head-covering more resembling a hat or helmet in shape. Earrings were to be no more seen, nor the distinctive marks of caste painted on the forehead; and a kind and degree of shaving was ordained, which no native soldier could submit to without inordinate pain of mind, and a reluctance dangerous to excite. This was quite enough to induce a suspicion that the native soldiers were to be altogether likened to the Europeans. The Court of Directors declared their

conviction that the mischief was mainly owing to the altered relation between the soldiers and their English commanders, who did not trouble themselves to acquire any language which would enable them to converse freely with their men, and keep up the intercourse in which lay the secret of Sepoy attachment. The conduct of Colonel Forbes met with no defenders. He had been told the actual facts by a faithful Sepoy, whom he delivered over to a committee of Sepoys, men involved in the plot, to be examined and dealt with. Of course, the man's testimony was declared false, and he was lodged in prison. The widest difference of opinion was about the share the missionaries had in the business. One party maintained that the missionaries had nothing to do with it, while another laid all the blame on them: and both argued as if the introduction of Christianity into India hung on the decision of the difference. It is now, we believe, undisputed that the conduct of the particular missionaries concerned was absurd from ignorance, and extremely censurable for its violent bigotry. It is undisputed that the disaffection had a religious ground. On the other hand, it is clearly perceived that the question of the introduction of Christianity into India could not possibly depend on the movements of a handful of voluntary preachers, setting up to teach on their individual responsibility, and offering a doctrine and quality of sentiment and expression in which they

would be countenanced by few religious bodies in England, and certainly not by the authorities of its National Church. The controversy was not yet about whether a Heber should go, but as to whether the fanatical ravings of self-appointed preachers would involve in their condemnation all future schemes of sending out even such as Heber. The ignorance and mischief-making of the particular missionaries were established by the publication of their own reports; the fatal effects of their proselytising efforts were exhibited but too plainly by events; but the most impressive lesson of all was that of the precarious tenure of our Indian empire, if it indeed depended on the fidelity of a soldiery so easily seduced and alienated as that of Vellore. It may be doubted whether the suspicions of fifty years ago have ever entirely died out. Natives who supposed then that wearing anything like a hat in shape would make them "hat men" (*i. e.*, Englishmen), and using a turnscrew which they thought resembled a cross would make them Christians, and that shaving and leaving off ear-rings would sever them from their native sympathies, may well be conceived to be restless and suspicious at the end of fifty years, and to have accumulated plenty of evidence of our proselytising designs in the interval. Nineteen grenadiers had been arrested in May, and sent to Madras for trial, for disorder arising out of a refusal to wear the new head-gear; and when some prudent

officers evaded the enforcement of the order, the men grew the more suspicious about the depth of the plot. Unmerciful floggings were inflicted on account of these silly turbans; and every stripe alienated a native heart. Tradition lets nothing drop among the imaginative and credulous Asiatic peoples; and, while our British public of the present generation needs to be instructed in the narrative of the Vellore massacre, every descendant of the mutineers is full of stories of signs and portents; and of deeds of heroism and self-sacrifice for an ancient faith: full also, no doubt, of impulse to mutiny again under the remembrance of that old time, and the example of the new. If the Bengal mutiny extends to Madras, there will be a grand revival of the traditions of Vellore.

The other great mutiny, that of Madras in 1809, was of a wholly different character, and one which needs no detailed notice here, however important it was in itself. It was a mutiny of European officers against the Company, the immediate cause of which was the abolition of tent contracts. Under those contracts commanding officers had supplied tents and travelling accommodation to their regiments, making considerable profits out of a transaction, the principle of which was essentially bad. A spirit of thoroughly unmilitary insubordination was shown to exist to an appalling extent; and no ruler was perhaps ever placed in more embarrassing circumstances than Sir

George Barlow, the temporary successor of Lord Wellesley. Only three years before it had become clear that our dependence on the native troops was to the last degree precarious; and now it appeared as if the very spirit of military subordination and fidelity was extinct in the Company's own officers — as far as the Madras army was concerned. The readers of the Life of Sir John Malcolm will remember the story in its minute details. It must suffice here to say, that the mischief was rather got over than cured at the time—the number of insubordinates being too great to be dealt with by the higher authorities in the way their mutiny deserved.

Between wholesale resignations and dismissals, and the imposition of a test in the form of a loyal declaration, a truce was established, which allowed agitation to come to a stop, and a means of return to the hasty and penitent—at the expense of much irritation to the feelings of the faithful and steadfast.

It would be hard to say which was the more alarming and discouraging manifestation to the Company and the Government at home, and their functionaries in India—the massacre at Vellore, or the mutiny at Madras.

## CHAPTER XV.

## OPENING OF THE NORTH-WEST.

,1804—1809.

“Better is a handful with quietness than both the hands full, with travail and vexation of spirit.”—*Ecclesiastes*.

“It is easier to build two hearths than always to keep fire on one.”—*Proverb*.

“Our list of nobles next let *Ami grace*.”—DRYDEN.

THE brilliant months of the Mahratta war were followed by anxious years of suspense about a policy. No period in our Indian history was more important than these ten years were felt to be at the time; and late events invest it with a reflex interest which would tempt me to linger over its incidents if my limits would allow. Even the slight sketch which is all that my space affords cannot but show how and why Indian events were in reality as important as anything that was happening in Europe at the same time, though the period comprehended the last war with France, extending from the close of Lord Cornwallis's negotiations at Paris, and the declaration of war with France, to the evacuation of Spain by the French.

The affairs of the period had to be transacted without the Wellesleys. The General returned to England early in 1805, and how he was engaged for ten years after, no Englishman needs to be told. The Governor-General was in a harassed state of mind for the last year of his official life, and impatient to get home, to defend himself against his accusers and explain his policy. The worst of it was that he relaxed in the application of his system during that last year. Whether outward circumstances compelled the change of policy, or whether it arose from fluctuation in his own mind, under severe trials of his firmness, he and his policy were not what they had been; and some of the consequences may perhaps be afflicting us at this day. His situation was, as was truly said at the time, "a cruel one." The financial affairs of the Company were in such a state, that the means of carrying on war did not exist; while at the same time, there was no other prospect of settling India, and procuring a durable peace, than by carrying the force of our arms somewhat further. Lord Wellesley was, therefore, checking his best negotiators and commanders in the very career in which he had started them, and accusing them of warlike propensities, while he was receiving the same reproaches from England, and irritating his devoted servants into saying that he was stultifying his whole policy by deserting it at the most critical moment. So eagerly was his resignation accepted in

England, that his successor arrived at Calcutta before he could get away—that is, in July, 1805.

His successor was evident'y selected on account of his pacific tendencies; and he was bound down, by the fact of his appointment, to reverse the policy of his predecessor, in as far as it involved opposition to the native rulers. It was old Lord Cornwallis who now came out again to try to obviate war in Hindostan, after having failed in the same effort in France. He was infirm and feeble when he arrived; and he died, in the course of a progress through the northern provinces, in little more than two months from his arrival. It would seem scarcely possible to do so much mischief in so short a time as he did in that interval, with the best intentions, and in the finest spirit. The leading agents of the system of Lord Wellesley were told, in despatches full of urbanity, and in the blandest state-paper style, that they were well-qualified, he was convinced, to appreciate his predominant wish, which was to remove every impression that the British desired to exert influence in any of the native states, and to show that the entire restoration of every native power to independence was to be the policy of England henceforth. While the perplexity of Lord Wellesley's agents under such instructions was at its height, the mild and loyal-hearted old man sank into his grave on the banks of the Ganges, leaving the Mahrattas joyful in the belief that the British capacity for military rule



was exhausted, and that the choice of war or peace lay in their own hands. It cost no little blood and treasure to set them right.

The question was of the settlement of Central India. Holkar would neither be quiet himself nor let the other Mahratta chiefs keep to their terms. He had, indeed, nothing to depend on but war. In peace he could not pay his troops; and he subsisted them and himself by incursions into the territory of the Nizam, and our other allies, as much after the peace was made as before. An illegitimate son, and with the vindictive characteristics of that class of royal posterity, Holkar was the only really popular Mahratta chief. "The One-eyed," as his troops called him, was always grave, usually easy, courteous, and dignified in his manners, but occasionally savage in his wrath. At one hour he would be playing with a lapdog, and the next burning a village, with intense eagerness that no inhabitant should escape the slaughter. Sometimes he distributed vast treasures among his troops, when they had succeeded remarkably in a raid in a rich district; and presently he would be seeking the jungle, with only a handful of followers, declaring that he could carry his all on his saddle. Rich or poor, he held great sway over the mind of Scindiah and the other princes; and the most intelligent British agents said openly, at the beginning of 1804, that the peace had been made too hastily and carelessly, and that

Holkar would not only appear in the field again but would instruct Scindiah to break through the terms of the treaty. For months after, he was employing his agents in all directions to stir up revolt against the English, and ravaging the domains of their allies, while pretending to treat; till, in November, 1804, he was thoroughly beaten by General Fraser and Lord Lake, and, as they believed, annihilated as a potentate; but he took refuge with the Rajah of Bhurtpore, one of the most generously treated of our allies, who sustained Holkar till he could retrieve his fortunes, and whom we were therefore obliged to call to account and punish. This was a fair specimen case, in the eyes of the Directors, of the working of Lord Wellesley's system. They said that, however it might look on paper, the actual effect of it was that we never were, and never should be, at peace. We had undertaken to keep down a hydra; and every head we struck off was to be the last; whereas it was plain that the work would be interminable. They insisted that there should be an end to it at any cost. They desired to circumscribe, and not extend, their empire; they desired trade, and not war; in spite of their positive prohibitions, their servants were making them the masters of India; and the end could be nothing but prostration and ruin. They imparted the fact, which it always causes keen anguish to the commercial mind to admit, that the Company "was fast approaching a

state of bankruptcy," the revenues of the country having been forestalled to support its wars. No more money would or could be raised; and peace must be made on any terms. Henceforth it must be understood throughout India that the British would not interfere, more or less, with any of their neighbours, but mind their own commerce, and retrieve their own affairs.

Nothing could appear more reasonable than this view in London; and Lord Cornwallis did not scruple to engage to carry it out, unaware that when he arrived within the Mahratta range, he might find that the only way to a peace lay through war. The view in India was this. In 1803, just before the Mahratta war and peace, there were several strong states outside the British frontier, and a constant liability to war accordingly. In 1805 there was not one. The extension of the organization of alliances was nearly complete; and another effort or two would make it entire and secure, leaving nothing to be done but to keep the way open for the great natural laws of society to work in the production of industry, wealth, and civilization. If the work was stopped short of this final effort, the prospect would be fearful. Where Holkar's sword and brand had passed, the ground was like that which the demon had trodden, where no grass would evermore grow. There was a time when Candéish, for instance, was all alive with men and

their works, as may be seen by the great fortresses which tower above the jungle, and the ruins which everywhere underlie the rank vegetation of the valleys and plains: whereas now the jungle had spread to the horizon, and was swallowing up more fertile territory every year. This was because the natives would never return to places laid waste with such slaughter as Holkar inflicted. The ghosts of the murdered haunted such places, the people believed, and the lands were under a curse. As the Mahratta bands thus made a wilderness wherever they went, and could subsist only by extending the process, the alternative lay between the suppression of this marauding, and allowing it the final absorption of the whole country. The best security for the British frontier, said the Malcolms and Metcalfes, would be an outlying region of peaceful and prosperous small states, such as the Subsidiary system would always provide; whereas, if a non-intervention policy were pursued, these states would all be swallowed up successively; and when they were devoured, and the Mahrattas enriched, and we impoverished, we should have to go to war at last, under every disadvantage. In ten years, said these negotiators, the effects of such a policy would be plain enough. All that was wanted was money, with which to make an example of Holkar; and then a glorious future lay before the British in India. The needful soldiery was on the spot; the will and the right arm were

ready; the cause was good; the way was open; all that was wanted was money.

To the home authorities it seemed like mockery to say that all that was wanted was money. The treasury was empty; every loan was a failure: the Company could not fulfil their engagements to pay 500,000*l.* per annum to the public in return for their privileges, war or no war, and had not paid it for ten years past: and their revenue had been anticipated in every possible way. There was positively no money to be had. If Lord Wellesley had been in a cruel situation, Sir George Barlow's was now worse. By Lord Cornwallis's death, he was Governor-General provisionally; and with him rested the responsibility of a choice between two representations which appeared to him about equally unanswerable. His decision was to make peace on such terms as would ensure a speedy acceptance. Many years after, it was admitted by all parties that each had reason for the part taken. The Directors magnanimously gave the widest circulation in India to Lord Wellesley's despatches, when they were published thirty years afterwards; and the political negotiators of 1806 acknowledged at length that Sir G. Barlow had no choice, under the financial embarrassments of the time. But it was a season of great grief and bitterness to English, and of mischievous triumph to their enemies, and both believed that the British empire in

could not endure long, and might be extinguished at the pleasure of the Mahrattas. At the last moment of the negotiation, Holkar tried what he could gain by delay; but a message from Lake, that if the business was not finished, in three days he would cross the river, and attack the Mahratta camp, induced the freebooter to accept the restoration of his large possessions: and the treaty was ratified on the 17th of January, 1806. Both parties to the controversy had professed the same object—to afford to the natives “the inestimable gift of Great Britain to India”—freedom from broils; but the Company’s political agents believed that the surest way to subject the inhabitants to interminable warfare, was to make such a peace as this with such a man as Holkar. Before the middle of February he had violated the treaty in several particulars; by the middle of March he was plundering the Sikhs; and the British negotiators were kept waiting the while, till he should choose to withdraw within his own frontier, as he had bound himself to do.

Lord Minto, late Sir Gilbert Elliot, was appointed Governor-General, and arrived in the summer of 1807. The fact of his appointment proved that he was pledged to peace and retrenchment; but he presently won the good-will and hearty allegiance of the vexed local statesmen, by showing that he meant to have his specific commands obeyed by the small surrounding states. When the petty rajahs

quarrelled, he interfered to secure the peace, giving fair notice that he should enforce his interposition by arms, if necessary. He was sufficiently hardy in his policy to improve, rather than lose, the remains of popular respect for British authority, which our recent Mahratta treaty had left us. The mere quarrels were soon settled in this way; but the cure for the devastation of banditti was yet to be found. The population to be ruled over by the Company's chief officer was now one which might well be oppressive to his imagination, and which may go far to account for the shortness of the periods of office. Hastings had been Governor-General for seven years. Lord Wellesley had ruled seven years, and was sufficiently worn at the end of six. Lord Minto ruled for six years. It was a prodigious empire already. His subjects were above 75,000,000: viz., 15,000,000 of Mussulmans, 60,000,000 of Hindoos in their varieties, and 30,000 Europeans. These numbers are mentioned here, because this is, as has been hinted, a turning point in our Indian history.

The questions of policy which I have touched upon are very interesting; but there was another incident of the period which is even more so. Glimpses were by this time opening into a new region, far beyond the ken of the earlier British visitants of this vast country. An Englishman, Leedes, had once lived at Delhi: and when Lord Minto arrived, a British Political Resident, Charles

Metcalfe, was stationed there. It was regarded as a very remote point; and the reason why any Englishman was there at all was that the puppet-king who had been restored to his ancestral throne, as the successor of Aurjungebe, was incapable of ruling his dominions. This first of the renewed series of Mogul sovereigns was blind and old, and satisfied to let the English govern in his name. He was made miserly by long previous poverty, and saved treasure, which intercepted the tyranny of his worthless successor for some time. But extremes of profligacy and cruelty were always going forward in that Delhi palace, where the king of our mutineers is now defying our authority, whether by compulsion or voluntarily. It was necessary to have a representative of British authority at Delhi, to collect the little revenue there was, to keep the machine of government going, and to curb the excesses of the court which it was thought fit to sustain. The first British visitors there little dreamed that in half a century the English cantonments would occupy a wide area, and that long rows of deeply thatched bungalows — the detached dwellings of British residents — would spread like a beautiful suburb of the latest Delhi; or that it would be there, as at a central point, that the attempt would be made to extinguish our *raj*, or dominion, under circumstances which would render Delhi a doomed city, ranking with certain other old “cities of the plain.”



To them, Delhi was an out-lying station beyond the verge of British India; and when they mounted the renowned Khuttab Minar, the noblest architectural shaft in the world, and looked abroad over the undulating plain of Hindustan Proper—at one time scorched brown under the summer sun, and at another green with springing wheat, or gay with flax and poppies—they gazed wistfully northwards, hoping, in the clearest weather, to catch a sight of those wondrous peaks of the Himalaya, 200 miles off, which may be seen thence on rare occasions. All beyond their view to the north-west had been hitherto an unknown land—talked of as men talk of countries they have never seen, when there was an alarm of Zemaun Shah coming down upon the Punjaub, or of the King of the Five Rivers aiding the Mahrattas. But so far were the British from conceiving that they had any business in that region, that their best political agents argued for Lord Wellesley's settlement in its application to Central India, on the ground that the small intermediate states would thus constitute a good barrier between us and the formidable tribes of the north-west. At this period, however, the mists beyond our frontier began to rise and dissolve; and some dim disclosures were made of the high-lying territory where the tamarind and the taree-palm would not grow, and where the flowers of England, and the brilliant verdure of Ireland, and the snows and

pinns of Scotland, would one day surround British dwellings, the resort of fugitives from the Delhi traitor and the Mahratta friend of our own day.

Those who lived in the remote north-west were spoken of, even up to the end of the last century, under that spell of the marvellous which peculiarly bewitches adventurers on a foreign continent. The British in India spoke of the Sikhs and Affghans as their fathers' spoke of the followers of Timour and Ghengis Khan. We have old-fashioned books which describe their soldiers as tall and ferocious, with piercing eyes, and as the sands of the sea for multitude. With the Mahratta war came the occasion of our making acquaintance with the people who are now apparently supporting us against our own Bengal army, and with the country which remains firm to our tread, while our great Bengal territory is sliding from under our feet,—to be recovered, no doubt, and chiefly by means of our vantage ground in the north-west. In the time of Hastings, the Sikhs had declined from their former power; and for many subsequent years they were played fast and loose with by the Mahrattas, like the Nizam and the Mysore Sultans, and the Nabob of Oude, and the Mogul Sovereign, and every other power within their reach; and the Sikhs were changeable accordingly in their dispositions towards the English. In 1788, they offered us their alliance; and in 1803, they fought against Lake's army at Delhi. Humbled

by the result of that war, they offered their allegiance, which was accepted; and they soon had opportunities of rendering service when detachments of British troops were hard pressed by flying bands of Mahrattas. It had been prophesied, a quarter of a century before, that the destruction of the Sikhs would be prevented in one sense, and accomplished in another, by the advent of a prince who should rise on the ruins of the whole commonwealth; and the prophecy was about to receive its accomplishment when our unhappy peace with Holkar was ratified. An able man had risen up among the Sikhs, astute, self-willed, ambitious, and wholly unscrupulous, bent on learning from the British, while pretending to hold them cheap. Some of the British saw him without knowing it, in the first instance; and, from the confidence with which the story is told, it seems probable that one or more of them recognised him afterwards in the midst of his splendour. It appears that Runjeet Singh once walked into the English camp in disguise—eager to see for himself what that soldiery was like which had conquered Holkar and Scindiah. This was the time when the Subsidiary system should have united the British and the Sikhs; but the system was in disgrace at the moment: the English frontier was not to be carried beyond the Jumna; and the small Sikh states were left in the lurch.

The Sikh chiefs had till now been a confederacy, forming a sort of rude republic such as alone is practicable in the physical forcé stages of society. They were now to have a King. Runjeet Singh rose to supremacy among them, and obtained Lahore in 1799, making it his capital, and reducing the strongest of the chiefs to be his feudatories, paying him homage, and supplying troops. Among them, they made spoil of Umritsir, taking it from the widow of a brother chief; and Runjeet Singh appropriated the place as a second capital. He made his profit out of the quarrels of the Affghan princes; marching westwards, and receiving homage along the banks of the Hydaspes, which showed him what hopes lay in that direction. Such enterprises were usually prefaced by a holy bath, in some sacred lake near the sources of the rivers, or some holy mere among the western mountains, or some consecrated river, precious to another faith, if not his own. In 1805, he must bathe in the Ganges at Hurdwar, where the blessed stream bursts from the Himalaya; and he thus saw how affairs were going on eastwards of the Punjaub. It was soon after necessary to decide on a policy in regard to the British and the Marhattas; and the occasion served for making Runjeet the avowed sovereign of the Sikhs, for the purpose of founding a military monarchy. Runjeet went on somewhat too fast with this enterprise, crossing the

Sutlej rather too often to please the British, and interfering so perpetually and tyrannically with the small Sikh states as to bring the latter to the Delhi Residency with petitions for aid against him. The English could not, under the restrictions of the time, promise aid; and Runjeet sent messages that he meant no harm; so that the petitioners went home uncertain whether it would not be best to join forces with their oppressor. It was a favourable opening for French intrigue against us; and, in the fear of invasion from Affghanistan, British envoys were sent in 1808 to the courts of Cabul and Lahore. Mr. Elphinstone went to Cabul; and Charles Metcalfe, then only three-and-twenty, won great fame by his statesman-like management of Runjeet Singh, through every provocation which the levity, the insolence, and the perfidy of the rampant sovereign could inflict. A body of British troops was advanced towards the Sutlej, to support the demand that Runjeet should cease to interfere with the states beyond his river frontier; but even then he trifled and tricked, till Sir David Ochterlony issued a proclamation declaring the Cis-Sutlej states under British protection, which was to be supported by force of arms. Apprehending defection under the inducement of such promises, Runjeet hastened to secure what he had got by obtaining British sanction; and a treaty was signed in April, 1809, by which Runjeet Singh was made the ally of the English, while pre-

vented from devouring any more of his neighbours on our side of his dominions. The most remarkable fact in connection with this treaty is, that it was never broken on either side. During the thirty years of Runjeet Singh's subsequent life he was our ally; and it was only during the earlier years of this term that we had cause for any anxiety about the connection. No doubt the treaty was substantially advantageous to him; but it is also understood that much of his steadiness was owing to the deep impression he received of the superiority of the English from the qualities manifested by our young envoy. If such were our boys, what must our greybeards be, in wisdom and patience? Such was obviously the question awakened in Runjeet's mind; and it should rouse our minds to a fair appreciation, not only of individuals so distinguished as Charles Metcalfe, but of the Indian training which produced such a succession of them as the last half century has supplied.

Thus it was that before the next renewal of the Company's charter, we had seen new regions opening before us—from whence came new calls of duty, more than temptations to enterprise. Nobody wished our responsibilities to be extended; if we could have stopped at the *Jumna* everybody would have been glad; but we were threatened with invasion from the allied French, Russians, and Turks; and it was necessary to interpose a bulwark of states between

the Cabul frontier and our own, and to take care that those states were not weakened by wars among themselves. Our treaty with Runjeet Singh marks a period in our Indian history even more distinct and significant than the new charter of 1813.