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INDIA UNDER BRITISH RULE

James Wheeler

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Wheeler J.

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Содержание

James Talboys Wheeler
India Under British Rule / From the Foundation of the East India Company

PREFACE

A hundred years ago, when the lively Miss Frances Burney was weeping over the wrongs of Warren Hastings, and the learned and portly Gibbon was still lamenting that he had not entered on an Indian career, there were people in the British Isles who knew something of Indian history. They had picked up information respecting Indian affairs from the speeches of the grave Edmund Burke, the eloquent Charles James Fox, and the impassioned Richard Brinsley Sheridan. The facts may have come second hand, and been more or less distorted by the jealous and bitter fancies of Sir Philip Francis, the reputed author of the *Letters of Junius*; but facts or fables, they served to enlighten the British public on the Indian questions of the day.

During the present century, the march of intellect has turned away from India, except as regards an outlet for cotton goods, a field for speculation in railways and teas, or a provision for younger sons in the "Indian civil." Within the last few years, however, there has been a change for the better. The British public has been alarmed at the fall in silver. It has been cheered by the proposal to place British-born subjects under the magisterial jurisdiction of Hindus and Mohammedans. It has been aroused by the prospect of a war with Russia in Central Asia; but it has been comforted by the restoration of the fortress of Gwalior to Maharaja Sindia. Moreover, Burma is no longer confounded with Bermuda, and no one groans over the annexation of the country, or the destruction of brigandage by the new rulers. Still there is room for more knowledge. The author, however, has before him a letter from an old friend in high position in India, who tells him plainly that the British government does not want history. Accordingly, the present work is not called a *History of India*, but *India under British Rule*.

More than one British ruler in India has, however, sinned against history, and might well like to shut it up with confidential minutes and secret negotiations. Within the present century, India has been desolated by wars as cruel as those of the Heptarchy, and as unmeaning as those of the White and Red Roses. Within the present generation, it has been distracted and tortured by a military revolt, created by a scare about greased cartridges, but leading to crimes more horrible than those of the French Revolution. Yet Anglo-Indian statesmen have been known to ignore the past, and to propound schemes for India that would be too advanced for any European nation excepting Great Britain. They have blinded themselves against history, like ostriches burying their faces in the sand. They have dealt with India, as the German philosopher dealt with the "camel," not by the facts before them, but out of the sublime depths of their moral consciousness, stirred up by a political caucus, or a philanthropic gathering in Exeter Hall.

Controversy and fault-finding are to be deprecated. But reform is only possible after a due consideration of what has been accomplished up to date by British rule in India, and of the flaws and faults in the existing constitution.

It will be seen from the first chapter, that the British traders of the seventeenth century, who established factories, built fortresses, and created manufacturing towns, also attempted to introduce representative and municipal government into the East India Company's once famous city of Madras. The second chapter reveals the fact that the acquisition of Bengal in the eighteenth century was not the work of ambition, but an act of self-preservation. The third chapter shows that the peace of India could not have been maintained in any possible way except by the establishment of British supremacy as the paramount power. The fourth chapter proves that the first Afghan war, needless as it turned

out to be at the time, was the outcome of Russian ambition which dates back to the times of Peter the Great and Nadir Shah.

The story of the sepoy mutinies of 1857 occupies a considerable space in the present volume. It is not a mere narrative of military revolt, but a revelation of Asiatic nature; a lesson which every Anglo-Indian statesman must study, if he would avoid defeat or failure. The masses in the British Isles may read Biblical accounts of rebellion and massacre, or the story in Josephus of the atrocities of Herod the Great; but very few seem to realise the fact that they are reading Asiatic history, which has no reflex in Europe, nor in any country under European rule except British India. The horrible intrigues and murders in the household of Herod; his frantic passion for the fair Mariamne; the malicious lies of Salome; the assassination of Mariamne by her jealous and infuriated husband; the alternations in the mind of Herod as regards Cleopatra, whether to accept her love or murder her; —find no parallels in European history, excepting perhaps in Turkey, or in the Russian court of the last century.

The last chapter in the present volume is devoted to the constitutional changes in the government of India, and in the local governments, since the mutinies. The author has not indulged in the hope of raising Asiatics to the level of Europeans by the premature introduction of representative government. He considers that such a scheme would for the present be as much out of place in Asia as a republic of boys for the control of schoolmasters. British India is treated as a political school for Asiatics, in which Europeans are the teachers; and so long as that theory of government is upheld, constitutional reforms in India are practical and possible.

In conclusion, the author has to express his obligations to Professor Terrien de Lacouperie of the London University College, and to his own son, Owen E. Wheeler of the Leicestershire Regiment, for revising the proofs of the present work, and for many valuable suggestions.

Fulham,

12th May, 1886.

PART I.—EAST INDIA COMPANY

CHAPTER I.—FIRST PERIOD: FACTORIES, FORTRESSES, TOWNS.—1600-1756

§1. India in 1600. §2. British at Surat and Masulipatam: Commercial and Social Life, 1612-1638. §3. Rise and Growth of Madras, 1639-1680: Portuguese and Dutch Neighbours. §4. British Rule and Representative Government, 1686. §5. Mixed Corporation of Europeans and Natives, 1688. §6. Slavery and the Slave Trade in India. §7. Madras, Surat, Bombay, and Hughly. §8. Collision with the Great Mogul, 1686-1700. §9. Domestic Administration, 1700-1746. §10. Wars against France in Southern India, 1746-1756. §11. The Black Hole at Calcutta, June, 1756.

Rise of British rule.

The rise of British rule in India is a problem in history. A single association of British traders established factories which grew into fortresses, and governed native towns which became the capitals of a British empire. The march of events is without a parallel in the annals of the world. In 1600 the East India Company obtained from Queen Elizabeth a charter of exclusive rights to trade in the Eastern seas. In 1612 it established its first factory at Surat. In 1639 it began to build a fortified factory at Madras, whilst a Hindu population of weavers and other manufacturers grew up by its side. Before the beginning of the eighteenth century, before Queen Anne ascended the throne of Great Britain, the British settlements at Madras, Bombay, and Calcutta had each a fortress and a town. How Hindu and Mohammedan populations were ruled by British traders will be told in the present chapter. How the British traders acquired provinces and established an empire belongs to the after chapters.

Northern India: the Great Mogul.

§1. In 1600 the whole of Northern India was under the dominion of a Mohammedan sovereign, known as the Great Mogul. His revenues and armies were the marvel of Europe. His empire extended from the mountains of Cashmere to the Bay of Bengal, from the slopes of the Himalayas to the tableland of the Deccan. It covered large Hindu populations and many Hindu principalities, for throughout this vast area the Great Mogul was sovereign lord of all, the emperor, the Padishah.

Southern India: Mohammedan Sultans and Hindu Rajas.

South of the Mogul empire was the Deccan or "south." The country was a *terra incognita* to Europeans. The interior had been conquered by Mohammedan invaders from the north, and distributed into kingdoms under Sultans, who formed a barrier against the Moguls. East and west were hills and jungles stretching to the sea, mostly held by Hindu Rajas who were hostile alike to the Sultans and the Great Mogul. Mohammedan rule, however, had never as yet extended further south than the river Kistna. The whole region from the Kistna to Cape Comorin—sometimes known as the "Peninsula"—was under the dominion of Hindu Rajas.

Portuguese fortresses.

The western coast of the Deccan and Peninsula was dotted with Portuguese fortresses, mounted with cannon and garrisoned by Portuguese soldiers. The Portuguese had made their way to India round the Cape of Good Hope about the end of the fifteenth century, and for a hundred years had been building factories in the territories of Hindu Rajas, and converting them into fortresses. Nothing of the kind would have been allowed by the Great Mogul, or by the Sultans of the Deccan, but the Portuguese had persuaded the Hindu Rajas that they would help and protect them, and the Rajas never saw the danger until the fortresses were bristling with cannon and opposition was useless. The

Portuguese capital was seated on the island of Goa, about half-way between Surat and Comorin, and was a centre of the Catholic religion as well as of Portuguese trade.[1]

British traders at Surat.

§2. British merchants in the service of the East India Company would gladly have traded on the same sea-board, which was known as the coast of Malabar, but they were shut out by the Portuguese fortresses. Accordingly they sailed further northward, and tried to get a footing in the Mogul port of Surat. This port was a centre of the Mohammedan religion and an emporium of Mogul trade. It was the starting-point for all pilgrims going to Mecca, and the point to which they returned when their pilgrimage was over. It was the rendezvous of Mogul merchants who despatched ships to the Persian Gulf and Red Sea, and sent goods overland to the great capitals of the Mogul empire—Agra, Delhi, and Lahore.

British defeat the Portuguese.

At Surat, however, the British were thwarted by the Portuguese. The Nawab of Surat was told that the British were pirates. The merchants of Surat were threatened with the capture of their ships if they had any dealings with the British. Fighting was the only way of meeting the difficulty. Accordingly the British attacked a Portuguese fleet outside the bar of Surat. The news of battle and the roar of cannon brought the Nawab, the merchants, and half the population of Surat to the sea-shore. The British sunk or burnt several Portuguese ships until the residue of the fleet steered back to Goa. The Moguls were fascinated by the victory. They saw that the British had not only superior strength on their side, but Allah and kismet. The Nawab of Surat feasted the conquerors in his tents on the sands, and the Surat merchants eagerly bought British cargoes and supplied Indian commodities to the brave men who had beaten the Portuguese.

British factory at Surat, 1612.

In 1612 the British set up a factory at Surat in a large Indian house, with warehouses and offices below and chambers and refection-rooms above. It was a London establishment transferred to a Mohammedan seaport. The British merchants, factors, and writers lodged and boarded together like members of one family. Native brokers or banyans were employed to buy cotton goods, silks, indigo, and other Indian commodities; whilst public auctions were held in the factory for the sale of British broadcloths, glass and cutlery, especially sword-blades, and also for the sale of lead, copper, quicksilver, and other European commodities. The spirit of enterprise was as busy amongst the British as in after years. One factor urged the Company to send ships up the river Indus and open up a trade with Central Asia; whilst another tried to persuade the Great Mogul to lay down leaden pipes from the river Jumna to the city of Ajmere, a distance of more than two hundred miles, in order to convey drinking-water to the imperial palace in the heart of Rajputana.

Factory life.

In those early days no British ladies were allowed to reside in India. If a servant of the Company happened to be married he was obliged to leave his wife in England. The "English House," as it was called, was thus a bachelor establishment, without ladies, but not without Surat punch or Persian wine. An English chaplain read prayers every morning and evening, and preached two sermons on Sundays. An English surgeon attended the sick factors, and the Mogul authorities and other grandees often applied for his services, and thus enabled him to promote the Company's interests on more than one important occasion. The chief of the factory was known as the President, but all business was transacted by the President with the help of four or five senior merchants, who met twice a week in council. This management of affairs by a President in Council has survived the lapse of nearly three

[1] The island of Goa, and the fortress of Diu in Guzerat, were nominally within Mohammedan dominion, but they were really independent and were held by force of arms.

centuries. To this day the government of presidencies and the vice-royalty of India are in each case carried on by a President in Council.

Foreign guests.

Within a few years the "English House" at Surat was well known to all European sea-captains and voyagers. Not only British travellers, but Italians, Germans, and Frenchmen, were heartily welcomed by the honest factors at Surat. All were impressed with the order and regularity of the establishment, in which decorum and discipline were as strictly maintained as in Leadenhall Street or the Cheape. But when working hours were over the grave men of business proved to be convivial Britons of the old-fashioned type, and on Friday evenings especially, all the married men met together to drink the health of their absent wives to the detriment of their own. Foreign guests who could not speak the English tongue were in no want of amusement. In 1638 a young gentleman from Holstein, named Mandelslo, spent some months in the "English House," and passed the time very pleasantly, visiting the ships at anchor outside the bar of the river Tapty, and hearing the latest news of Europe from sea-captains versed in many languages, or wandering down the row of banyans' shops, which often contained as much wealth, hidden under dirt and squalor, as the houses of London merchants and goldsmiths. On Sundays, after sermon, the factors carried off their guest to their gardens outside Surat, where they all shot at butts, and were regaled with fruit and conserves.

British and Moguls.

The European gentlemen at Surat were always polite to Mohammedan grandees, and were generally politely treated in return, excepting perhaps at the custom-house. British sailors and ill-mannered Englishmen would, however, occasionally show a contempt for Asiatics, which the President could not always restrain. British interlopers on the high seas set the Company's charter at defiance, and carried on a lawless trade, plundering the Mohammedan pilgrim ships and ill-treating the passengers. The Mogul authorities insisted that the Company's servants were to blame, and would listen to no explanation, but sent large bodies of Mogul soldiery to environ the "English House," and stop all trade, cutting off all food and water, until a sufficient fine or ransom had been paid.

Trade on the eastern coast.

About 1620 the East India Company established another factory at Masulipatam on the eastern side of India. The Hindus along the coast of Coromandel were famous for painting muslins and calicoes, and there was a growing demand for such goods amongst the eastern islands, whilst valuable cargoes of nutmegs and other spices could be obtained in exchange. But Masulipatam was seated in Mohammedan territory. A Sultan of the Deccan, reigning at Golconda, had extended his dominion eastward to the coast of Coromandel, and established the port of Masulipatam for the importation of horses from the Persian Gulf. The traders at the British factory were therefore cramped and worried by the Mohammedan authorities, and yearned to effect a settlement on the territories of some Hindu Raja further south, where they could fortify a factory and mount it with British cannon without the interference of local authorities.

British territory and fortress at Madras, 1639.

§3. In 1639 a British merchant named Day bought a strip of territory on the Coromandel coast, about 300 miles to the south of Masulipatam. It was within the dominions of a Hindu Raja, and was about six miles long and one mile inland. It included a small island, which faced the sea and was defended on the land side by a river. Mr. Day agreed to pay the Raja a rent of 500*l.* a year in native coin known as pagodas, and the transaction was duly engraved on a plate of gold. A factory of brick was built upon the island, and mounted with cannon, and called Fort St. George. The Raja was perfectly content. He was too glad to get a rent of 500*l.* a year to raise any difficulty as regards fortifications or cannon.

Fort St. George and Black Town.

This factory was the germ of the city of Madras, on the coast of Coromandel. Weavers, washers, painters, and hosts of other Hindu artisans, flocked to the spot and eagerly entered the service of the British, and began to set up their looms and to weave, wash, and paint their cotton goods in the open air beneath the trees. Villages of little huts of mud and bamboo soon grew up on the sandy soil to the north of the island and factory. Each avocation formed a caste, which generally had its own quarters and its own headman. In this manner a Hindu settlement grew up by the side of Fort St. George and was known as Black Town; and the whole locality, including Fort St. George and Black Town, was called Madras, and was the first territory acquired by the East India Company in India.

Despotic rule.

The transition of the British traders from a factory under Mohammedan control to an independent settlement of their own must have been a grateful change. The President and Council at Fort St. George were *de facto* rulers of the whole settlement, native as well as European, with all the powers of despotic princes and with no interference from without. They acted as a supreme court of judicature for Englishmen in all cases civil and criminal; no Englishman, however, could be condemned to death unless convicted of piracy, which was regarded as the most heinous of crimes. On all other capital charges the Englishman was sent to England for trial.[2]

Portuguese and Dutch neighbours.

Four miles to the south of Fort St. George was the Portuguese town of St. Thomé; but the Portuguese were now friends with the English. Their power was being overshadowed by that of the Dutch, who had founded a town and fortress at Pulicat, nearly thirty miles to the northward of Fort St. George.

Dutch trade in India.

The Dutch settlements in India were the outcome of the hostility of Spain. For centuries the Dutch had been the carriers of Europe, from the Mediterranean to the Baltic. In the period which preceded the sixteenth century they had bought Indian commodities at Genoa, Naples and Venice. After the Portuguese established a trade in India, the Dutch went every year to Lisbon to buy Indian commodities for the European markets. In 1580 they threw off the yoke of Spain, and founded the United Provinces. That same year Spain and Portugal were formed into one kingdom under Philip II. In an evil hour for Portuguese interests in India, Philip thought to punish the Dutch by shutting them out of Lisbon. The Dutch revenged themselves by sailing round the Cape and buying what they wanted in the islands of the Eastern Archipelago. In 1600 they built a factory in Java, which grew into the city of Batavia. In 1610 they built a square fort on the Pulicat Lake, which grew into the town of Pulicat and threatened to become the capital of Dutch ascendency in India.

Right and Left Hands.

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[2] The authorities for the present chapter, which deals with the rise and early development of British rule in India, are somewhat numerous. The most important are the Government records at Madras, in which the weekly transactions of the Governor and Council are entered at full length in a series known as "Consultations." Every year a copy of the "Consultations" was sent to the Court of Directors, together with a summary of the affairs of the year as a "General Letter;" and every year a "General Letter" was received from the Court of Directors, reviewing the "Consultations," and conveying instructions and orders thereon. The Madras records have been closely investigated by the author from 1670 to 1748; and printed extracts were published at Madras in 1860-62, in three volumes small quarto, under the title of *Madras in the Olden Time*. To them may be added Bruce's *Annals of the East India Company*; Sir Thomas Roe's *Journal of a Mission to the Great Mogul* in 1616-18; and the travels of Pietro della Valle, Tavernier, Thevenot and Fryer; as well as Orme's *History of Hindustan*, Stewart's *History of Bengal*, Faria y Souza's *History of Portuguese Asia*, and Shaw's *Predecessors of the High Court at Madras*. Further authorities will be found cited in the author's *History of India from the Earliest Ages*, and in his *Early Records of British India*.

The Indian quarter at Madras was almost entirely Hindu. Scarcely a Mohammedan took up his abode within the Company's bounds. Accordingly one of the earliest acts of the President and Council was to divide the streets of Black Town into those of the right and left hand. All over Southern India, the lower castes of Hindus are divided into Right and Left Hands, and yet no one can account for the distinction, or satisfactorily define the respective rights of each Hand.

The so-called Hands are, however, intensely jealous of each other. For generations each Hand in the towns of Southern India has had its own streets and its own pagoda. At Madras, if one Hand passed in religious procession along the streets of the other Hand, or if the members of one Hand chanted Hindu hymns or mantras before the pagoda of the other, a fray would break out in Black Town, which could only be suppressed by British soldiers, and then would be followed by a strike of weavers or painters, or the flight of all the members of one Hand to the Portuguese settlement at St. Thomé. These conflicts, which more than once brought the settlement to the brink of ruin, reached a climax in Governor Pitt's time, as will appear hereafter.

Mohammedan invasion.

Meanwhile, the country round about Madras was in a state of turmoil. The Mohammedan army of the Sultan of Golconda was advancing against the Hindu Rajas of the south, and formed a camp in the neighbourhood. The Raja who had sold the territory to the East India Company fled away to the interior, and was never heard of more. The Mohammedan army captured the Portuguese town of St. Thomé, dismantled the walls of the fortress, and carried off the cannon to Golconda; and they would have treated Fort St. George in like fashion, had not the British stoutly resisted, and quieted the Sultan by engaging to pay him the rent which they had previously paid to the Raja.

Troubles with Dutch and French, 1670.

About 1670, or some thirty years after the foundation of Madras, the state of affairs was complicated by Charles II.'s unholy alliance with France against the Dutch. A French fleet attacked St. Thomé and drove out the Mohammedans. A Dutch fleet from Pulicat recaptured St. Thomé, drove out the French, and restored the place to the Sultan of Golconda. The British settlement was in sore peril; but in 1674 there was peace between Great Britain and Holland, and the danger was over.

Increase of population.

These troubles brought many strangers to Madras, and the population, white and black, was largely increased. Many Portuguese families from St. Thomé took refuge in Madras, and added to the strength of the European settlement, known as White Town, by building houses under the protection of the factory guns. The British factors and soldiers of the garrison married the daughters of the Portuguese, much to the horror of the English chaplain of Fort St. George, as the marriages were accompanied by numerous conversions of bridegrooms to the Catholic faith. At the same time wealthy Hindu traders and bankers began to build substantial houses in Black Town for the sake of British protection. Many invested their money in trading voyages; some acted as brokers or banyans for the supply of Indian commodities to the Company's servants; others bought European goods at the public auctions, and supplied the native dealers up country.

Fort St. George, 1670-86.

§4. Within forty years of the building of the British factory, Madras was the pride and glory of the East India Company. Fort St. George, or White Town, was a European city in miniature. The primitive factory in the centre was replaced by a stately mansion with a dome, which was known as the Governor's House, but included a town-hall, a council-chamber, and sundry offices. It was seated in an open square, having a strong wall along each of its four sides, guards' houses, and bastions at each corner mounted with cannon. Outside the fortification were little streets, paved with pebbles, containing about fifty European houses. There was also a Protestant church for the

English inhabitants, and a Catholic chapel for the Portuguese residents. The whole of White Town was environed by an outer wall, sufficiently fortified to keep off an Indian army. None but Britons, or Europeans under British protection, were permitted to reside in White Town. The garrison consisted of two companies of European soldiers, and a large number of native guards, who were known as peons.

Hindu town under British rule.

At this time the population of the native town was estimated at 300,000 souls, but was probably half that number, and an attempt was made to introduce something like a representative government. Whenever the Governor and Council desired to know the wishes of the people generally, or to act with their consent, they summoned the headmen of castes, and consulted them accordingly. Justice, however, was administered by two English gentlemen, who sat twice a week in Black Town in a building known as the Choultry. The Justices of the Choultry tried all offences and disputes amongst the Hindus, and fined, flogged, or imprisoned at discretion. The old English punishments of the stocks, the pillory, and the gallows were also in full force in Black Town, but no Hindu was executed without the confirmation of the Governor and Council. The Justices of the Choultry were bound by no code of laws; they were simply instructed by the Directors of the Company in England to decide all cases, civil and criminal, according to "equity and good conscience," guided by English law and their own experiences of Hindu customs and usages.[3] A Hindu superintendent of police was appointed under the title of "Pedda Naik," or "elder chief;" and he was bound to maintain a certain number of constables known as peons, and keep the peace of the town. He was expected to prevent theft and burglary, and either to recover stolen property, or to pay the value to the owner. In return, the Pedda Naik was allowed to cultivate a few fields rent free, and to levy a small octroi duty, or toll, on articles of Hindu consumption.

Protection of Hindus.

The main difficulty at Madras was to keep the peace between the European soldiers of the garrison and the Hindu population. Any European soldier who remained outside the Fort at night time was set publicly in the stocks for a whole day. Any European who attempted to get over the Fort walls, was imprisoned in irons for one entire month, and kept on rice and water. Any soldier who threatened to strike a Hindu was whipped. Any European who took an article out of a shop or bazaar, under pretence of buying it at his own price, was sentenced to pay treble the value to the party aggrieved.

Question of taxation.

Another difficulty was to keep the streets of Black Town clean and wholesome. The Governor and Council summoned the heads of castes, and proposed to levy a small tax on every house. The heads assented to the measure, but offered to carry out the work themselves, and to raise the necessary funds in the same way that they levied contributions from their respective castes for defraying the cost of public festivals. All this, however, was a blind on their part to delude the British Governor and Council. Nothing was done by the heads of castes, no money was collected, and the streets were dirtier than ever.

Contumacy of heads of castes.

Meanwhile Madras was threatened by the Sultan of Golconda, and the Directors in England instructed the Governor and Council at Madras to build a wall round Black Town, and meet the cost by levying a small ground-rent from each householder. In this case no difficulty was anticipated. The Hindus might ignore the importance of sanitation, but they could scarcely refuse to contribute towards the defence of their lives and property, to say nothing of their wives and families. The heads

[3] The Mofussil Courts, and the High Court in Appeals from the Mofussil Courts, are still required to decide, according to "equity and good conscience." See the "High Court amended Charters" granted in 1866.

of castes, however, raised strong objections, but found that the Governor was bent on carrying out the orders of the Court of Directors. The heads of castes were told that the rents must be paid, and that those who refused to pay must be prepared to sell their houses and leave the British settlement. At this threat they all promised to pay, but secretly prepared for a general uprising.

Hindu rebellion, 1686.

Suddenly, one Sunday morning, the 3rd of January, 1686, it was known in Fort St. George that the Hindu population of Black Town were rebelling in Asiatic fashion. Under the orders of the heads of castes, the Hindu servants of the Company had thrown up their duties, bazaar dealers had shut up their shops, and provisions and grain were kept out of the town. The Governor in Fort St. George sent a detachment of the British garrison to guard the entrances to Black Town and suppress the tumult. Proclamation was made by beat of drum that unless the heads submitted before sunset, their houses would be pulled down on the following morning, the sites sold by auction, and the rebels and their families banished for ever. Hindus who failed to return to their duties would be discharged from the Company's service; dealers who kept their shops closed would be heavily fined and all their goods confiscated. These peremptory orders had the desired effect. The heads of castes seemed to be completely cowed. Before sunset they appeared at the Fort and begged pardon for their rebellion, and were told to put an end to the tumult in Black Town.

Wholesome despotism.

Next morning the heads of castes returned to the Fort and presented a petition, begging to be relieved from the payment of the ground-rent. Each man was asked in turn whether he would leave the town, and each in turn said that he would submit, and then the whole body declared with one voice that they would not pay the tax. Proclamation was at once made by beat of drum that the orders of Sunday would be immediately put in execution. The Hindus bent to the storm. They saw that they were at the mercy of their British rulers. The shops were opened, provisions were brought into the town, and all the artisans and servants of the Company returned to their duties. The ground-rents were collected without demur, and later on the scavenger-tax was raised without difficulty.

Mayor, aldermen, and burgesses, 1688.

§5. When the news of these disturbances reached England, the Directors in Leadenhall Street, or rather their once celebrated chairman, the great Sir Josiah Child, devised a scheme for rendering municipal taxation acceptable to the native population. A charter was obtained from James II. for founding a corporation in Madras, consisting of a mayor, twelve aldermen, and sixty burgesses; but it was suggested by the Court of Directors that the heads of Hindu castes, as well as Britons, might be appointed aldermen and burgesses, and it was hoped that the corporation would be willing to tax themselves and the inhabitants generally, for keeping the town clean, improving the public health, building a guild-hall and hospitals, and establishing schools for teaching the English tongue to Hindus, Mohammedans, and other Indian children. Before the Governor and Council at Madras could offer a single suggestion, they received instructions cut and dried. The mayor and three senior aldermen were always to be covenanted British servants of the East India Company, and they alone were to be Justices of the Peace. The remaining nine might belong to any nationality, and included Portuguese, Hindu, and Jewish merchants having dealings with the Company at Madras. Thirty burgesses were named in the charter, but they were all Englishmen; and the remainder were to include the heads of all the castes, so as to induce the whole of the Hindu inhabitants to contribute cheerfully to the public works already specified. The mayor and aldermen were to wear red silk gowns, and the burgesses white silk gowns, and maces were to be carried before the mayor. In a word, all the paraphernalia of an English municipality in the seventeenth century were sent to Madras to be adopted by the new corporation.

Corporation festivities.

The new municipality was inaugurated with much pomp and ceremony in 1688, the year of the glorious Revolution. The Governor of Madras was outside the corporation, but the mayor and three senior aldermen were members of council. On Saturday, the 29th of September, 1688, the Governor received the mayor, aldermen, and burgesses in the council-chamber at Fort St. George. The members of the new corporation then took the oaths and sat down to a corporation dinner; and after a while they all marched to the town-hall in their several robes, with the maces before the mayor. Nothing, however, is said about the heads of castes, and nothing more about the burgesses.

Failure of municipal rule.

The mayor and aldermen were to be a Court of Record, with power to try all causes, criminal and civil, in a summary way, according to "equity and good conscience," and such laws and orders as might be made by the Company. The corporation were authorised to levy taxes for building a guild-hall, a public jail, and a school-house for teaching English, arithmetic, and merchants' accounts to Indian children, and for payment of the necessary salaries. Henceforth, two aldermen sat as justices of the Choultry; but the corporation raised no tax and founded no institution, and eventually died out from sheer want of vitality.

Slavery under Hindu rule.

§6. All this while the slave trade was an institution in Madras, and indeed, throughout Southern India. In most of the Hindu kingdoms of the Peninsula, the farm-labourers were slaves or serfs attached to the soil; they were probably aboriginal populations who had been reduced to slavery by their conquerors. Prisoners of war, male and female, were also compelled to serve the conquerors as domestic servants, and treated as slaves of the family.

Mohammedan slavery.

When Turks and Afghans introduced Mohammedan rule, slavery was recognised, but Hindu slaves might raise their condition by embracing Islam, and the converts might become important personages in the household, and marry female members of the family. The favourites of a grandee or Sultan might even marry a daughter, and rise to the rank of steward of the household or minister of state, like Joseph in the court of the Pharaohs.

Mogul restrictions.

When the Moguls established their dominion over Northern India there was a change for the better. It was a fundamental law of the Moguls that no subject should be enslaved, but only captives taken in war. This law was still enforced when the Moguls became Mohammedans, for they always looked upon the slavery of subjects with horror, whatever might be their race or religion. Foreign slaves, male and female, provided they were not Mohammedans, were sold by private dealers, or in the public bazaar.[4]

Portuguese slave trade.

Unfortunately, the Portuguese and other nations of Europe had not as yet awakened to the iniquity of slavery and the slave trade. During the Portuguese wars in Africa, Moors and Negroes were carried off as prisoners of war and sold as slaves in Lisbon. In India the Portuguese established depôts for the purchase of slaves. At Goa female slaves were to be found in every Portuguese household,

[4] This was notoriously the case at Surat, where female slaves might be purchased by Europeans. There was a Dutch factory at Surat of the same stamp as the British factory, and its married inmates were in like manner forbidden to bring their wives from Holland. But when the Dutch got possession of Java, they offered grants of land to married Dutchmen, and, according to Pietro della Valle, there was a sudden change in domestic arrangements. Dutch bachelors were in such a hurry to go to Java, that they married Armenian Christians, or went off to the bazaar and bought female slaves and baptised them and married them without loss of time.

and sometimes were sent into the streets to sell sweetmeats and confectionary, and earn money for their masters in other ways.

Kidnapping from Bengal.

For many years large numbers of Hindu slaves were brought from Bengal. The Portuguese had been permitted to build a factory at Hughly, on the river Hughly, about 120 miles from the sea. During an interval of civil war they fortified this settlement and landed numerous cannon, whilst a native town grew up in the neighbourhood. Meanwhile, the scum of Goa and other Portuguese towns, chiefly military deserters and apostate monks, had established themselves on the islands near the mouths of the Ganges, built a fleet of galleys, and led the lives of pirates, brigands, and kidnappers. These men were the pest of the Sunderbunds. They scoured the waterways of the delta of the Ganges, carried off whole villages into slavery, and especially delighted in capturing marriage processions, with the bride and bridegroom and all their kinsfolk and acquaintance in the bravery of silks and jewels. The Portuguese at Hughly were base enough to deal with these villains, to buy the poor wretches who had been kidnapped, and to ship them to Goa, where they were sold as slaves at the daily auctions on the Exchange, together with other commodities from all parts of the world. The rascally kidnappers at the mouths of the Ganges, and the pious traders at Hughly, alike quieted their consciences by baptising their victims, and boasting of having saved their souls from hell.

Vengeance of the Great Mogul.

Such a state of things aroused the Great Mogul to take action. The very existence of a Portuguese fortress and cannon within his dominions had given mortal offence, and this unholy slave trade sealed the fate of the Portuguese at Hughly. The settlement was environed by a Mogul army. There was a rush of ladies and children to the shipping, but the river was low and the vessels ran aground. There was absolutely no way of escape; all provisions were cut off, and the Portuguese were starved into surrender. Five or six hundred prisoners, many of noble birth, were sent to Agra. Some saved their lives by turning Mohammedans; others, mostly priests, perished as martyrs; the choicest of the lads and maidens were sent to the palace of the Great Mogul, and the remainder were distributed amongst the mansions of the Mohammedan grandees. For generations afterwards the doom of the Portuguese at Hughly was likened to the Babylonian captivity of the Hebrews.

Slave trade at Madras.

Hughly was captured in 1632. Seven years later the British built their factory at Madras, on the coast of Coromandel. At every Portuguese settlement in Southern India the slave trade was still in full swing, for the sway of the Great Mogul had only been extended over the northern part of the Deccan, and was as yet far away from the Peninsula. Accordingly the British traders at Madras connived at the exportation of slaves by sea. Some restraints, however, were placed upon kidnapping by insisting on the registration of every slave bought or sold in Madras, together with the names of the seller and purchaser, in order that the information might be given in the event of any inquiry by kinsfolk or acquaintance, and also that a fee might be levied on the registration of every slave.

Great Mogul conquers the Deccan.

In 1688 the British rulers of Madras abolished the slave trade by public proclamation. The Great Mogul, the once famous Aurangzeb, was engaged in conquering the Sultans of the Deccan. Unlike his predecessors, Aurangzeb was a bigoted Sunni, or a zealous believer in the four Caliphs who succeeded Mohammed. The Sultans of the Deccan were Shiahs who damned the first three Caliphs as usurpers, and swore that Ali, and Ali only, the son-in-law of the Prophet, the husband of Fatima and the father of Hassan and Hosein, was the rightful successor of Mohammed. Under such circumstances Aurangzeb was impelled by pious zeal for the interest of the Sunni religion to conquer and slay the heretic Sultans of the Deccan and annex their dominions to the Mogul empire. He next

prepared to march his army further south into the Peninsula, with the view of conquering the Hindu Rajas and compelling their idolatrous subjects to accept the religion of the Koran.

Stoppage of the slave trade.

The British at Madras were greatly alarmed at the threatened approach of the Great Mogul. They were naturally afraid of sharing the fate of the Portuguese at Hughly. Accordingly they abolished the slave trade by proclamation, and sent numerous petitions to Aurangzeb, tendering their submission to the Great Mogul, praising his imperial majesty to the skies, imploring his protection as though he had been another Cyrus or Darius, and engaging to pay the old rent of 500*l.* per annum in pagodas. Matters were finally arranged, but it is grievous to add that the pious Aurangzeb was not so careful of the welfare of the Hindus as his liberal and tolerant predecessors. He preferred the laws of Mohammed to those of his Mogul ancestor, Chenghiz Khan; and within a few years the slave trade at Madras was as brisk as ever.

British toleration.

§7. The Mogul conquest of the Sultans of the Deccan drove many Mohammedans to settle at Madras. The British traders protected the lives and property of Hindus and Mohammedans, and permitted them to worship as they pleased. In early days, the Directors had repeatedly pressed their servants at Madras to convert the Hindu worshippers of idols to the truths of Christianity, and no one in the British Isles seems to have doubted the possibility or expediency of the work. The British traders at Madras, however, deprecated any interference whatever. They described a terrible riot that broke out at St. Thomé because of some interference with a Hindu procession, and they urged that the frays between the Right and Left Hands were sufficient proof that it was best to leave the Hindus alone. As for Mohammedans, they were the subjects of the Great Mogul, and interference with the dominant religion in India was out of the question.

Flourishing private trade.

During the latter years of the seventeenth century, the British settlement at Madras had grown into a principality, independent, and self-contained. At the same time it presented rare attractions to traders, Asiatic as well as European. The Company's servants were paid very small salaries, but were allowed the privilege of private trade in the eastern seas, so long as they paid customs and did not interfere with the European trade. Every Company's servant in Madras, from the Governor to the youngest writer, engaged more or less in trading ventures. The number of traders was swelled by private individuals who came from England, under the licence of the Court of Directors; as well as by Hindu, Mohammedan, and Armenian merchants, who often took shares with the Company's servants. Moreover, this private trade increased the demand for European commodities which were sold by public auction in Fort St. George, and swelled the revenue of the East India Company which was derived from the sea customs.

Decay of Surat.

Meanwhile the British situation at the Mogul port of Surat had become intolerable. The religious fanaticism of Aurangzeb had stirred up hatred and discontent amongst Christians and Hindus. The factors at the English House were more oppressed than ever. On the north their trade was cut off by the Rajput princes of Western Hindustan, who were revolting against the Great Mogul and stopping the caravans between Surat and Agra. On the south they were exposed to the Mahrattas of the Western Deccan, who attacked and plundered Surat, and would have plundered the English House had not the factors surreptitiously landed some cannon, and called in the British sailors from the shipping, and manfully beaten off their assailants.

Bombay, 1661-85.

Fortunately, the British had taken possession of the island of Bombay, which Charles the Second had obtained from the King of Portugal as part of the dowry of the Infanta Catharine, and made over to the East India Company. Bombay was nearly two hundred miles to the south of Surat, and hedged around by the Mahrattas, but being an island it was well protected, and included both a fortress and a town. Moreover, it had a magnificent harbour, and the valuable trade with the Persian Gulf, the Red Sea, and the Mozambique could be better carried on from this harbour than over the bar of Surat at the mouth of the river Tapty. Accordingly the East India Company secretly resolved on leaving Surat for ever, and removing the British factors and their trade to the island of Bombay.

Bengal trade, 1640-85.

In Bengal the East India Company had established a factory at Hughly, hard by the dismantled Portuguese fortress; but were exposed to so much insolence and extortion from the Mogul authorities that they were prepared to leave Bengal rather than tamely submit to further oppression. The trade was enormously profitable, and had helped to defray the cost of the fortifications at Madras and Bombay. Saltpetre had been in large demand ever since the breaking out of the civil war between Charles the First and his parliament. Raw silk and opium were equally marketable, and all three products could be brought from Patna to Hughly by the river Ganges. At Dacca, the old capital of Bengal to the eastward of the Ganges, muslins were manufactured of so fine a texture that a piece sufficient for a dress might be passed through a wedding ring; and every young lady in the British Isles who aspired to be a bride was equally anxious to be led to the altar in a cloud of Dacca muslin. Aurangzeb, however, stopped the supply of saltpetre, because the Sultan of Turkey complained that it was used by Christians in their wars against true believers; whilst the Nawab of Bengal, who resided at Dacca, was most overbearing, and on one occasion ordered that Mr. Job Charnock, the chief of the Hughly factory, should be imprisoned and scourged, and his orders were literally obeyed by the Hughly officials.

Plans of Sir Josiah Child, 1685.

§8. Sir Josiah Child, the chairman of the Court of Directors, was endowed with real political genius, but he was imperious and headstrong. He resolved to make war upon the Great Mogul, and compel him to make reparation for the misdeeds of the Nawab of Bengal, and to cede sufficient territory for the establishment of a fortress and a town corresponding to the settlements at Madras and Bombay. He proposed to coerce the Great Mogul by sending out the Company's cruisers from Bombay to capture the Mogul ships going to Mecca, until Aurangzeb came to terms. He also persuaded James II. to send a Royal fleet to Bengal to ensure the success of his scheme. Should his plans fail, should Aurangzeb prove obstinate and impracticable, it was intended to form an alliance with the Raja of Arakan, on the eastern side of the Bay of Bengal, and promise to help him in his wars against the Great Mogul, provided he ceded the required territory at Chittagong. In short, Sir Josiah Child proposed to overawe the Mogul and establish British trade with India on a lasting basis for the future by means of three great fortresses—one at Madras, a second at Bombay, and a third in Bengal or at Chittagong.

Elements of mischief.

Unfortunately Sir Josiah Child was unable to cope with the craft and capacity of Aurangzeb. That keen-witted sovereign had spies in all directions, and was gifted with such a power of divining what was going on that he was often suspected of employing supernatural agency. Meanwhile, Sir Josiah Child was maintaining such profound secrecy that no Englishman on the Bengal side knew what was going on at Surat or Bombay, and no Englishman on the Bombay side knew what was going on in the Bay of Bengal, whilst the British at Madras knew nothing whatever of the plans in operation.

Blunders and disasters.

The blundering that followed was most disastrous. Whilst the Company's cruisers were capturing Mogul ships as lawful prize, Aurangzeb drew the Surat factors into his clutches, and threatened to put them to death unless the prizes were restored and vast sums paid by way of ransom. Meanwhile, the Royal fleet arrived in Bengal, and made its way up the river Hughly, under the command of a certain Captain Heath, who would listen to no advice and regarded Asiatics with contempt, whilst he was ready to make war on anybody. He brought away Mr. Job Charnock and the British factors from Hughly, with all their goods and records. He captured all the Mogul ships he encountered in the Hughly river. He bombarded a Mogul town at the mouth of the river. Meanwhile, the Nawab of Bengal was in a panic of fear at Dacca, willing to make any terms provided only that the terrible admiral would leave Bengal and solemnly promise never to return.

A hot-headed admiral.

The Royal fleet sailed to Arakan and frightened the Raja into a state of utter bewilderment. The Raja could make nothing of the offer of the admiral to help him against the Great Mogul, nor of the demand for the cession of Chittagong, and he naturally vacillated, prevaricated, and procrastinated. The admiral was blind with rage and mortification, and would have captured Chittagong by force of arms; but the place was too strong for him. Accordingly, he sailed away to Madras in a towering fury, and landed Mr. Charnock and the British factors at Madras, swearing that he had heard nothing but deceit and lies since he first entered the Bay of Bengal.

Humiliation.

The East India Company submitted to the Great Mogul, but the great Josiah Child must have found it a bitter pill. The prizes were restored, a vast fine was paid, and pardon was humbly implored before the Surat factors were restored to liberty.

Calcutta founded, 1690.

Meanwhile, the Moguls had learned to respect the British. The fugitives from Hughly were invited to return to Bengal, and permitted to purchase a strip of land on the eastern bank of the Hughly river, about twenty miles nearer the sea than their old factory. It was three miles long and one mile inland, and included the three native villages of Chutanutti, Govindpore, and Kali Ghat, which grew into a native town resembling that of Madras. Later on, the Hindus round about revolted against Mogul oppression, and the British took advantage of the general alarm to convert their factory into a fortress and to give it the name of Fort William, in honour of the Prince of Orange. The native settlement was known by the name of Calcutta, after the village of Kali Ghat, or the "landing place of the goddess Kali." Thus the dream of Josiah Child was realised, and British trade in India was protected by three fortresses and three towns—Madras, Bombay, and Calcutta.

Indian calm, 1700-40.

From the end of the seventeenth century to the middle of the eighteenth the Company's settlements were for the most part shut out from the Indian world. The British had learned their lesson and kept quiet, and the Moguls were busy fighting the Mahrattas, and left them very much alone. The Mogul conquests in the Deccan were made over to a Mogul Viceroy known as the Nizam, whilst those in the eastern Peninsula round about Madras were placed in charge of a Nawab who was known as the Nawab of the Carnatic. Meanwhile, the Moguls kept the Mahrattas quiet by the payment of a yearly black-mail known as chout, or "*chauth*," which was reckoned at one-fourth of the land revenue, but was often commuted for a lump sum. Thus India was to all outward appearance in a state of calm, but it was the calm that precedes a storm.

Typical Madras Governors.

§9. Although the administration of Madras was carried on by a Governor and Council yet each Governor had a strong personal influence and individuality. Two of these Governors, an Englishman and a Scotchman, may be brought under notice as types of all.

Governor Pitt, 1698-1709.

Thomas Pitt, grandfather of the Earl of Chatham, was Governor of Madras from 1698 to 1709. In 1702 the Nawab of the Carnatic was staying at St. Thomé, trying to squeeze some 50,000*l.* out of the British at Madras. He boasted loudly of his friendship for the British whilst his troops were plundering their outlying villages. He was entertained at dinner with great pomp at Fort St. George, and gratified with presents; but shortly afterwards he environed the whole settlement with his army. Pitt held out for months, getting his supplies by sea. At last Pitt offered two or three thousand pounds in rupees, and a peace was patched up, and the Nawab went away.

Imperious rule.

Governor Pitt was as lofty and mysterious in his way as his illustrious grandson. He was much irritated by a protracted quarrel between the Right and Left Hands. He set up stones to mark the boundaries between the streets, but they were carried away at night time. The bulk of the Right Hands fled to St. Thomé, and the Hindu populations in all the country round about were in great commotion. Pitt threatened to send a body of European soldiers to St. Thomé, and put the deserters to the sword. At this crisis, the Mogul officer at St. Thomé turned the malcontents out of the town. They went back to Madras submissive and crestfallen, and begged to be forgiven. From this time, however, the distinction between the Right and Left Hands was abolished as far as the streets were concerned, and all streets were opened to both Hands. But the old strife is still burning in the hearts of the Hindus of Southern India. They can be prevented from fighting with swords and clubs, but they carry the battle into the law-courts, where disputes are frequently brought to a decision as regards the right of either Hand to worship at a particular shrine and in a particular way.[5]

Hasty tempter.

Pitt was severe on native offenders. Some thieves went off with boat-loads of cotton goods, and the gunner at Fort St. George was ordered to fire upon them. The thieves escaped, but two peons who connived at the robbery were whipped and put in the pillory, whilst Governor Pitt thrashed the native overseer with his own hands.

Pitt diamond.

During the siege of Madras Pitt managed to buy a wonderful diamond from a Golconda jeweller at a small price. In after years he sold it to the Regent of France for 135,000*l.*, and it was known as the Pitt diamond. The matter created some scandal at the time, but is now only remembered in connection with Pope's lines:—

"Asleep and naked as an Indian lay,
An honest factor stole his gem away."

Governor Macrae, 1725-30.

James Macrae, a Scotch celebrity, was Governor of Madras from 1725 to 1731. He carried out a general survey of Madras and its suburbs for the better collection of the quit-rents and scavenger-tax. The population of Madras numbered 200,000. The expenses of Fort St. George amounted to 20,000*l.* a year, whilst the revenue from the sea customs was under 5,000*l.*

[5] Abbé Dubois, who lived many years in Southern India, could not account for the distinction between the two Hands; Dr. Fryer was told about 1676 that the antagonism was planned by the Brahmans to keep the lower castes in subjection.

Mayor's Court.

The Mayor's Court was re-organised in Governor Macrae's time under the charter of 1726. It was to consist of a mayor and nine aldermen for the trial of all civil causes. Seven of the aldermen were to be Englishmen, and the remaining two of any nation, provided they were Protestant. The new court was inaugurated in a style which seems inexpressibly absurd in the present day. The new mayor and aldermen were sworn in with much ceremony, and then left Fort St. George in a grand procession of soldiers with kettledrums and trumpets, dancing girls with the country music, court attorneys with all the chief gentry on horseback, and passed through Black Town to the Company's garden in the suburbs, where they were received by the Governor and Council and duly *fêted*.

Breaking up of the Mogul empire.

Meanwhile, the Mogul empire was breaking up. Aurangzeb died in 1707. Within thirty years after his death the power of the Great Moguls had died out; the name and prestige remained, but very little more. The successors of Aurangzeb were *Roisfainéants* shut up in palaces with wives and concubines, whilst all real power was exercised by the Ministers of State and the Viceroys of the provinces. In 1738-39 the British at the three Presidencies were startled by the news that Nadir Shah had invaded India with a large Persian army from the north-west, and had plundered the city and palaces of Delhi and carried away the spoil of Northern India. The payment of the Mahratta "chout" was stopped at the Mogul treasury, and armies of Mahratta horsemen were making up the loss by the plunder of the Carnatic and Bengal.

War with France, 1745.

§10. In 1745 news reached India that war had been declared between Great Britain and France. This was alarming news for the British traders at Madras, as the French had established a flourishing town and settlement at Pondicherry, on the coast of Coromandel, about a hundred miles to the south of Madras, and a collision might be expected at any moment between the two settlements. Moreover, the Governor of Pondicherry was a certain M. Dupleix, a Frenchman of large capacity and restless ambition, who hated the British with all the ardour of the typical Frenchman of the eighteenth century. The same year a British fleet appeared off the coast of Coromandel and threatened Pondicherry; but the Nawab of the Carnatic declared that he would have no wars between European nations within his territories, and the British fleet sailed away.

Madras captured, 1746.

In 1746 a French fleet appeared off Madras, but the Nawab was not inclined to interfere; he had, in fact, been bought over by M. Dupleix, the French Governor of Pondicherry. The French bombarded Fort St. George; the native inhabitants fled from Madras; and the British inhabitants were carried in triumph to Pondicherry as prisoners of war.

French defeat the Mogul army.

The Nawab of the Carnatic affected to be very angry at this bombardment of Madras. He demanded that the settlement should be transferred to his authority, and sent an army of 10,000 Moguls to take possession of the town and fortress. To his utter amazement the army of 10,000 Moguls was utterly routed by a battalion of 800 Frenchmen. From that day it was felt throughout Southern India that no Mogul army could stand against the rapid firing of disciplined Europeans. In 1748 the war between Great Britain and France was over for a while, and Madras was restored to the British.

Brilliant success of Dupleix.

Later on, the death of the Nizam of the Deccan threw the whole country into confusion. Rival kinsmen began to fight for the throne of the province without any reference to the Great Mogul.

Dupleix plunged at once into the fray. He saw that a French force might turn the scale of victory, and he moved a French army, under the command of Bussy, to help a victorious candidate as occasion served, without the slightest regard to the rightness or wrongness of his claim. In 1751 he had realised his dream of ambition. He had placed a Nizam on the throne at Hyderabad, and he was rewarded with the cession of a territory stretching 600 miles along the coast, for the maintenance of a French standing army. To crown all, he induced the Nizam to appoint him Nawab of the Carnatic; and, in spite of Dupleix being a Frenchman and a Catholic, the appointment was actually made under the seal of the Great Mogul. Meanwhile, the British had supported the claim of a Mogul prince named Mohammed Ali to the throne of the Carnatic, but had been circumvented at every turn, and were now called upon to acknowledge the superior authority of their bitter enemy Dupleix.

Triumph of Robert Clive.

British rule in Southern India was at its last gasp. If Dupleix could only have got hold of Mohammed Ali, he might have been master of the Carnatic; Madras might have been a French settlement, and a French Governor and Council might have taken the place of the British in Fort St. George. As it was, Mohammed Ali was very nearly surrendering. He had fled away to seek the help of the Hindu Rajas of the south, and was being closely besieged by the French in the city of Trichinopoly, 180 miles to the south of Arcot. At this crisis Robert Clive saved the East India Company. He left Madras with a small force, and after a march of seventy miles into the interior, threw himself into the city of Arcot, the capital of the Carnatic, where the Nawabs of the Carnatic had held their court for more than half a century. The native garrison fled at his approach, and the inhabitants, numbering 100,000, offered no resistance. The French were aghast at hearing that the capital of the Carnatic was in the hands of the British. They despatched a large force from Trichinopoly, but failed to recover Arcot. In the end they raised the siege of Trichinopoly, and Mohammed Ali was delivered out of their hands and placed by the British in possession of the Carnatic, to the exclusion of Dupleix and ruin of his ambitious schemes.

Tragedy at Calcutta, 1756.

British and French were now anxious for peace, and agreed to make Dupleix their scapegoat. They threw the whole blame of the war upon the unfortunate Frenchman, who returned to France and died in poverty. In 1755 a treaty was patched up at Pondicherry, but was never executed. In 1756, on the eve of the Seven Years' War, terrible news arrived from Bengal. The Nawab had captured the settlement at Calcutta; and a hundred and twenty-three English prisoners had been thrust into a barrack cell, and perished most miserably of heat and suffocation.

Threats of the Nawab of Bengal.

§11. The tragedy was appalling, but the causes were intelligible. About the beginning of the eighteenth century, a Nawab of Bengal, Behar, and Orissa, territories considerably larger than the United Kingdom, had removed his capital from Dacca to Murshedabad, about a hundred miles due north of Calcutta. Here he founded a dynasty, which reigned in peace for some forty years. About 1742 a usurper seized the throne of Murshedabad, and reigned as Nawab. He died of extreme old age in April, 1756, and was succeeded by a grandson, a young man timid and suspicious, surrounded by foes eager to take his life and throne. The new Nawab heard that Governor Drake was sheltering one of his enemies at Calcutta, and strengthening the fortifications; and he ordered the British to surrender the refugee and stop further defences. Governor Drake replied that he knew nothing of any enemies of the Nawab; that he was ready to obey the Nawab in all things; and that he was repairing the defences on the river to prevent being surprised by the French, as Madras had been surprised ten years before. The Nawab was in a fury at this message, and set off for Calcutta in the heats of June with an army of fifty thousand men.

Defences at Calcutta.

For half a century the British had paid little or no attention to their defences. Fort William had been deemed a sufficient protection on the side of the river, and on the land side the native inhabitants had begun to dig a ditch as a defence against the Mahratta horsemen; but the Mahrattas were paid chout to go away, and the ditch was never finished. The Europeans dwelt in houses and gardens along the bank of the river Hughly, on either side of Fort William; and an English Church, the Mayor's Court and some other buildings, covered Fort William on the land side. The native quarter, including a large bazaar, adjoined the Mahratta ditch, and avenues of trees led from the native quarter to Fort William and the European buildings.

Neglected precautions.

Had Governor Drake or any member of his Council possessed a spark of military genius, they might have held Fort William against the Nawab in spite of his superior numbers. There was a garrison of two hundred European soldiers in the Fort. The European residents should have abandoned their houses on the river, and repaired to the Fort with their wives and children. The neighbouring buildings should have been demolished to prevent the Nawab's troops from approaching under cover. The enemy should have been harassed with shells all day and sallies all night, until the Nawab raised the siege. Moreover, the beginning of the south-west monsoon was daily expected. With it would come the ships of the season from Europe. Could the besieged have held out for ten days, they might have been rescued by the ships, just as Charnock and the factors were carried away from Hughly some seventy years before.

Weak preparations.

Whilst the Nawab's army was approaching Calcutta, the native population were flying *en masse* to the neighbouring villages. There was also a large population of Portuguese half-castes, which should have been left to do the same, as they would have been in no manner of danger. Unfortunately, two thousand of these black women and children were admitted into the Fort, and the overcrowding and confusion were fatal. Meanwhile, batteries and breastworks were constructed in the avenues leading to the Fort, in the wild hope of protecting the whole European quarter; but they were too far away to be supported by reinforcements from the European garrison.

Siege of Fort William.

At noon on Wednesday, the 16th of June, the Nawab's army poured into the settlement through the unfinished portion of the Mahratta ditch. They set fire to the native bazaar, and, after meeting obstinate resistance, they captured the batteries and breastworks in the avenues. The European gunners spiked their cannon and fell back upon the Fort; but the Nawab's artillerymen drilled the cannon and turned them round towards the Fort; whilst bodies of the Nawab's matchlockmen occupied the buildings outside the Fort which ought to have been demolished, and opened fire upon the ramparts and bastions.

Escape of women and children.

The fighting lasted all Thursday and Friday. On Friday night the English ladies and children were placed on board the single ship which lay before the Fort. On Saturday the firing was hotter than ever. Hopeless efforts were made to place the Portuguese women and children on board the ship, but they would have been safer in the neighbouring villages, for the overcrowding was such that many boats were sunk and numbers were drowned. Governor Drake, however, got on board, and the ship moved slowly down the river, leaving the British soldiers and others to their fate.

Loss of Fort William.

Throughout Saturday night the garrison fired rockets for recalling the ship. At sunrise they waved flags, but without effect. A Mr. Holwell, a member of Council, was elected Governor in the room of Drake. But resistance was useless. The British soldiers broke into the arrack-room and got hopelessly intoxicated. Late in the afternoon a mob of the Nawab's troops advanced to the Fort with ladders. In a few moments they were swarming over the walls, whilst the drunken European soldiers ran to the back of the Fort and broke down the gates leading to the river. But the Fort was closely environed by the Nawab's troops, and whilst some of the fugitives may have escaped to the boats or been drowned in the river, the bulk were brought back into the Fort as prisoners of war.

Black Hole tragedy.

By this time the Nawab had taken possession of Fort William, but was terribly disappointed at finding very little money and only a poor stock of merchandise. The season ships to Europe had carried off all the Indian exports to escape the south-west monsoon, and the ships from England were waiting for the monsoon to carry their European cargoes up the river. There were 146 prisoners, and no place of security except the barrack cell, known as the Black Hole, which rarely held more than two or three prisoners, and was only eighteen feet square. In this horrid hole they were driven with clubs and swords, and next morning only twenty three were taken out alive.

End of the first period.

Such was the close of the first act of the East India Company's rule. Within a very brief space of time the British traders entered upon a new era of conquest and dominion; but the tragedy at Calcutta in June, 1756, has never been forgotten, and to this day there is not an English man or woman in India who does not occasionally call up a painful memory of the Black Hole.[6]

[6] Since the foregoing chapter was in type, Professor Terrien de Lacouperie has kindly pointed out that a division between right and left hands has existed from a remote period in Central and Eastern Asia. Among the Turkish Hiung-nu on the north-west of China, the officers were arranged into two divisions, a left and a right-hand side, both before and after the Christian era. The Burut-Kirghiz are still divided into two wings, viz., *on* of the right and *sol* of the left.In China the task of keeping a daily chronicle of "words" and "facts" was entrusted to two officers, one on the left-hand of the emperor and the other on his right. The officer on the left recorded all speeches and addresses, whilst that on the right recorded all facts and events. This last division, however, is a mere title in Chinese administration; the left-hand being more honourable than the right, and taking the precedence.The distinction between the right and left hands in Southern India, is, as already seen, a caste antagonism, and it is impossible to say whether it has or has not any connection, however remote, with that in Central Asia or China. The Dravidian populations of Southern India certainly immigrated from the region beyond the Himalayas in some unknown period, but all historical links are wanting save the evidence of language. Professor Terrien de Lacouperie, in his lectures on "Indo-Chinese Philology," has pointed out that the Dravidian group forms the fourth division of the Kueonlunic branch of Turanian languages.

CHAPTER II.—SECOND PERIOD: BENGAL PROVINCES.—1756-1798

§1. From Calcutta to Plassy, 1757-58. §2. Nawab Rule under British Protection. §3. British Arrogance: Massacre at Patna. §4. Lord Clive's Double Government, 1765-67. §5. Warren Hastings, 1772-85: Life and Career. §6. British Rule: Treatment of Bengal Zemindars. §7. British Collectors and Magistrates: Circuit Courts and Sudder. §8. Innovations of Parliament. §9. Collisions in Calcutta Council: Trial and Execution of Nundcomar. §10. Clashing of Supreme Court and Sudder. §11. Mahratta War: Goddard and Popham. §12. Triple Alliance against the British: the Mahrattas, the Nizam, and Hyder Ali. §13. Parliamentary Interference: the Two India Bills. §14. Charges against Warren Hastings. §15. Lord Cornwallis, 1786-93: Perpetual Settlement and Judicial Reforms. §16. Sir John Shore, 1793-98: Non-Intervention.

Madras politics.

In June, 1756, Calcutta was lost; the news reached Madras in August. War with France was trembling in the balance. An army of Europeans and sepoys, under Colonel Clive, was waiting to attack the French in the Deccan. A Royal fleet, under Admiral Watson, was waiting to bombard the French at Pondicherry. But the news from Calcutta outweighed all other considerations; and Clive and Watson were dispatched to the river Hughly with 900 Europeans and 1,500 sepoys.

Calcutta recaptured.

§1. The force appears small in modern eyes, but it was irresistible against Asiatics. The ships of war, with their tiers of cannon, were sufficient to create a panic. The expedition reached Calcutta on the 1st of January, 1757. The Mogul commandant at Fort William fled away in terror, and next morning the British flag was hoisted over the factory. The Company's merchandise, which had been reserved for the Nawab, was lying untouched, but every house in the town, Asiatic as well as European, had been plundered by the Mogul soldiers.

Nawab accepts terms.

At this moment, news arrived that war with France had begun. Clive and Watson were anxious to make peace with the Nawab in order to fight the French. The Nawab, on his part, was frightened at the British fleet, and was ready to promise anything if the ships and cannon would only go away. He agreed to reinstate the British in all their factories and privileges, and to pay full compensation for all the plunder that had been carried away from Calcutta, so that nothing further was wanted but the execution of these terms.

Treachery and intrigue.

The Nawab, however, never seems to have intended to fulfil his promises. He vacillated, procrastinated, and lied egregiously. He signed a treaty, but evaded every application for the money. He worried Clive and Watson with fresh promises and excuses until they were wild with the delay. At last they discovered that he was intriguing with the French for their destruction. But the Nawab himself was environed with dangers of all kinds. His own grandees were plotting against him, and opened up a secret correspondence with Clive. Englishmen, Mohammedans, and Hindus became entangled in a web of conspiracy and craft, from which it was difficult to escape with an unsullied reputation. Eventually, the Nawab sent an army to Plassy, on the route to Calcutta, as if to overawe the British settlement. The army was commanded by Mir Jafir, the head of the conspiracy for dethroning the Nawab. Shortly afterwards, the Nawab himself followed Mir Jafir to Plassy, and the whole force was estimated at 50,000 men and forty pieces of cannon.

Battle of Plassy, June, 1757.

Clive advanced from Calcutta to Plassy with 3,000 men and nine pieces of cannon. The battle of Plassy was fought on the 23rd of June, 1757, just a year and three days after the Black Hole tragedy. It was more of a British cannonade than an action between two armies. Clive was expecting to be joined every moment by Mir Jafir. The Asiatic plotter had sworn to be faithful to both parties, and was mortally afraid of both the Nawab and the British. He dared not desert the Nawab, and he dared not fight the British. For hours he did nothing. At last, towards the close of the day, he moved his forces from the field, and made off towards Murshedabad. Clive advanced to charge the Nawab's camp, but the Nawab saw that he was deserted and betrayed, and fled in abject terror. The days of the fugitive were numbered. He hid himself for a while with a favourite wife and his choicest jewels, but was then taken prisoner and brutally murdered by a son of Mir Jafir. Such was the end of the once notorious Suraj-ad-daula, better known to British soldiers and sailors as "Sir Roger Dowler."

Overflowing riches.

Colonel Clive marched on to Murshedabad, and installed Mir Jafir on the throne as Nawab of Bengal, Behar, and Orissa. Clive, and Clive alone, was the lord paramount of the hour, the hero of Plassy, the invincible warrior. The money and jewels in the treasury at Murshedabad were lavished by Mir Jafir on Colonel Clive and his party. The British officers of the army and fleet received large donations. One million sterling was given to the East India Company, another million sterling to the inhabitants of Calcutta—European and Asiatic. A hundred boats loaded with silver went down the river from Murshedabad to Calcutta, followed by the curses of the grandees; whilst the sight of the boats approaching Calcutta was hailed with the joy of men who had escaped shipwreck. "For once," says a contemporary, "and only for once, the people of Calcutta were all friends."

Terrible responsibilities.

§2. The battle of Plassy was a British triumph, but it entailed enormous responsibilities. Colonel Clive had raised up a Nawab to be absolute ruler of territories larger than Great Britain and Ireland, and far more populous. Bengal, including the delta of the Ganges, was one of the most fertile regions in the world, whilst the inhabitants were most submissive and easily governed. For centuries the Bengalis had been oppressed by foreigners—Turk, Afghan, Abyssinian and Mogul. The revenues, however, had been collected by Hindu officials, as being at once more exacting in their demands, and more easily stripped of their ill-gotten gains.

Wretched rule of Mir Jafir.

Nawab Mir Jafir was most subservient to the British and most anxious to please them, but was otherwise as dissolute and worthless as any Turkish pasha. In his younger days, when the Mahrattas were harrying Bengal, Mir Jafir might have been a good soldier, but since then he had degenerated into a worn-out voluptuary, spending all the money he could get on jewels and dancing-girls, whilst his own troops were in mutiny for want of pay, and his British supporters and protectors were demanding further supplies for the payment of their own forces. To make matters worse, the Nawab was removing the old Hindu officials and placing his Mohammedan kinsmen in their room.

Delhi affairs: flight of the Prince Imperial.

Suddenly, a new vista opened out to Clive through the territory of Oudh, on the north-west, to the remote capital of the Great Mogul at Delhi. The Great Mogul was a mere pageant in the hands of the Vizier, who exercised what remained of the imperial authority. The Prince Imperial, the son and heir of the Great Mogul, was afraid of being murdered by the Vizier, and fled away into Oudh, and threw himself on the protection of the Nawab.

Invasion of the Nawab of Oudh.

The Nawab of Oudh had long desired to get possession of the Bengal provinces, and thought to secure them by making the Prince Imperial a cat's paw. He proclaimed that the Prince Imperial had been invested by his father with the government of Bengal, Behar, and Orissa. He then sent the Prince forward with a large force to enforce the proclamation, whilst he himself remained behind in Oudh and awaited events.[7] To make matters worse, the Hindu officials in the Bengal provinces, who had been dispossessed, or were expecting to be dispossessed, were preparing to join the invaders.

Clive's difficulty.

Mir Jafir was in a panic of fear at the appearance of the Prince Imperial, and proposed to pay him a sum of money to go away. Clive would not listen to the suggestion. He ignored the Prince Imperial and the Great Mogul, and soon routed the invading army. The Prince Imperial then became a suppliant to the British, and implored Clive for help; but Clive had been requested by the Vizier at Delhi to arrest the fugitive, and would not commit himself. He, however, sent a bag of 500 mohurs, about 800*l*. sterling, to relieve the immediate necessities of the Prince Imperial, and the money was gladly received by the impoverished fugitive.

Wanted, a British army.

Meanwhile, Clive was at his wits' end for money. The Bengal provinces could be held against any enemy in India by a standing army of Europeans and sepoys. Such an army could be maintained for half a million sterling per annum, and the public revenue amounted to three or four millions; but the Nawab refused to disband his own rabble soldiery, and pretended that he could not pay the Europeans.

Solution.

At this crisis Clive received a secret and startling proposal from the Vizier at Delhi, that he should accept the post of Dewan to the Great Mogul for Bengal, Behar, and Orissa. In the palmy days of the Mogul empire, every province was governed by two officials, the Nawab and the Dewan. The Nawab kept the peace and administered justice; the Dewan kept the public purse, received the revenues, paid all salaries, and sent the surplus as tribute to the Great Mogul. The later Nawabs had become their own Dewans, and spent the revenue as they pleased, without sending any tribute to the Great Mogul. Had Clive closed with the offer, it would have involved a mortal struggle with Mir Jafir, for it would have deprived the Nawab of all power over the public purse. But it would have removed every financial difficulty, as the Vizier would have been satisfied with a yearly tribute of half a million sterling, or even less, whilst Clive would have had the whole remaining surplus at his own disposal.

Clive's offer to Pitt, 1759.

Clive would not accept the post of Dewan, either for himself or for the East India Company. But he wrote privately to the British premier, the first William Pitt, and proposed that the British Crown should act as Dewan to the Great Mogul. Under such an arrangement, the Crown might have taken over the Bengal revenues, sent half, or a quarter of a million a year to Delhi, spent another half million on a standing army, and devoted another half million to the salaries of the Nawab and his officials; and then might have secured a surplus of two millions a year towards the payment of the national debt. William Pitt, however, was already alarmed at the growing power of the Crown, and he declined taking over the proposed income lest it should endanger the liberties of the British nation.

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[7] The three provinces of Bengal, Behar, and Orissa are known to Europeans by the one name of Bengal. Bengal proper includes the delta of the Ganges and Brahmaputra. Behar is the frontier province towards Oudh, having its capital at Patna. Orissa lies to the south of Behar and Bengal proper, but Cuttack and the hilly country to the south and west had been ceded to the Mahrattas. The Orissa of the period comprises little more than Midnapore; but the high-sounding title was still retained of Nawab of Bengal, Behar and Orissa. After the Mahratta wars of 1803, the British took possession of Cuttack and remaining portions of Orissa, in order to hold the sea-board against invasion.

Turmoils in the north-west.

In 1760 Colonel Clive returned to England, and in 1761 the war with France was over. India might now have been at peace, but the north-west was in a turmoil. The Great Mogul was murdered by his Vizier. The Afghans had slaughtered 200,000 Mahrattas on the fatal field of Paniput, and established their ascendency at Delhi. The fugitive Prince Imperial was proclaimed Padishah, or Emperor, by the Nawab of Oudh, who assumed the title of Nawab Vizier; and the Padishah and his Nawab Vizier invaded Behar and threatened Patna.

Change of Nawabs.

§3. The British at Calcutta were now in sore peril, and there was no Clive to guide them. They deposed Mir Jafir on their own authority, and set up his son-in-law, Mir Kasim, as Nawab of Bengal, Behar, and Orissa. The new Nawab was unquestionably a better man than the deposed Mir Jafir; but the transfer of a throne by a Governor and Council of British merchants was somewhat startling. There was, however, no one to resist the Calcutta traders, and Mir Jafir yielded to his kismet, retired from his post as Nawab, and removed to Calcutta, as a safer residence than Murshedabad.

Mastery of the British.

Mir Kasim agreed to all the British demands. He was bound over to pay half a million sterling for the maintenance of the British army; but he averted money disputes with the Company's servants by ceding three districts in the immediate neighbourhood of Calcutta, which yielded the same amount of revenue, and the British could collect the money for themselves. Above all, the new Nawab agreed, as Mir Jafir had done before him, to free the Company's servants from the payment of all inland transit duties within the Bengal provinces.

Dealings with the Padishahs.

Mir Kasim, accompanied by a British force, took the field against the young Padishah and the Nawab Vizier. The invaders were soon defeated; the Nawab Vizier fled back to Oudh, but the young Padishah remained at Patna. Accordingly, the British determined to get his sanction to their proceedings, and thus to justify their appointment of a new Nawab in the eyes of the people of India and the European nations trading with Bengal. He was without territory or revenue. His throne and capital at Delhi were in the hands of the Afghans. Yet he had been proclaimed Padishah in India, and was legally the Great Mogul. Accordingly, the British determined to recognize his sovereignty, and arrange for the appointment of Mir Kasim as Nawab of Bengal, Behar and Orissa, under his imperial seal and commission.

British set up a Great Mogul.

It was somewhat audacious for a handful of British traders to set up a Great Mogul for themselves as lord paramount of India. It was still more audacious to carry out the ceremony of installation in a building sacred to silk and saltpetre. Nevertheless, the work was done. The Company's factory at Patna was converted into a Mogul palace; the centre room into a hall of audience; the dining-tables into an imperial throne. The Padishah was carried in procession to the factory, and enthroned on the dining-tables as the Great Mogul. Mir Kasim paid homage to the sovereign, and was invested with the post of Nawab of the Bengal provinces. In return, the Nawab was bound over to pay a yearly tribute to the Great Mogul of a quarter of a million sterling.

Enthronement at Patna.

The installation of the Great Mogul, and the formal appointment of the Nawab of Bengal, were established facts, but no party was satisfied. The Padishah was disgusted, because the British would not conduct him to Delhi and place him on the throne of Aurangzeb. The Nawab was disgusted at paying a heavy tribute when the Padishah might have been forced by a little pressure to sell the

appointment for a bag of rupees. He was apparently bent on breaking off all relations with the British, and there was no objection to his doing so. He moved his court from Murshedabad, which was only a hundred miles from Calcutta, to Monghyr, which was more than three hundred miles. Here he formed an army of picked men, and employed a European deserter, known as Sombre or Sumru, to drill the troops in British fashion, and began to manufacture muskets and cast guns.

No one satisfied.

The quarrel began about the right of the British servants of the Company, under the treaty with Mir Kasim, to carry their commodities through the Bengal provinces free from the payment of all transit duties. The British at Calcutta twisted the privilege of non-payment into a right to carry such native commodities as salt, tobacco, opium, betel, sugar, and oil, without payment; whilst all Bengali dealers were compelled to pay a duty at every station. The British were thus able to undersell native dealers, and monopolise the whole trade of the country. The Nawab protested against this interpretation, and insisted on collecting the duties, unless the goods were bought for exportation by sea. Then ensued quarrels, misunderstandings, frays and reprisals; the Nawab complaining of the loss of duties, whilst the British set him at defiance, and resisted all attempts to collect the duties by force of arms.

Quarrel with Mir Kasim.

Mir Kasim cut away the British monopoly by abolishing all inland transit duties. The Bengali dealers were thus placed on the same footing as the Company's servants. The Company's servants were blind with wrath at this measure. They insisted that they enjoyed a certain privilege under the treaty with Mir Kasim, and that this privilege was rendered valueless, by the general abolition of duties. Accordingly, they proposed sending two of their number to Monghyr to argue the matter with the Nawab.

Fresh exasperations.

The city of Monghyr is situated on the river Ganges, three hundred miles above Calcutta and a hundred miles below Patna. The two British envoys were received and entertained by the Nawab, but told there was nothing to settle; he had ceased to collect duties from his own subjects and the British had nothing to do with the matter. At this very moment a boat arrived at Monghyr on its way to Patna with a cargo of firelocks from Calcutta for the garrison at the British factory. The Nawab at once suspected that the British were preparing for war. He confiscated the firelocks, and kept one of the envoys as a hostage, but permitted the other to return to Calcutta. The latter man was doomed. On his way down the river he was fired upon by the troops of the Nawab, and brutally murdered.

Mir Jafir restored.

When the news of this catastrophe reached Calcutta, the Company's servants seem to have lost their heads. In vain they were told that the British at Patna, and those at another factory, were at the mercy of the Nawab. They swore that they would be avenged although every Briton up country was slaughtered; and they wrote out a declaration to that effect, and each man signed it. The Governor and Council of Calcutta then went in a body to the house of Mir Jafir, and restored him to his post as Nawab of Bengal, Behar, and Orissa, on the condition that he once again levied the duties from Bengali traders. Mir Jafir readily promised, and indeed would have promised anything to recover his lost throne.

Perils at Patna.

Meanwhile, the British at Patna were in extreme danger. They had a European garrison at the factory, but the factory was untenable. They made a desperate effort to seize the town of Patna, and for a few hours were successful. The Mogul commandant was taken by surprise and fled with most of his troops; but the Mogul fortress still held out. The British ought to have stormed the fortress,

but delayed on account of the heat. The result was fatal. The European soldiers went to the bazaar for drink, whilst the sepoys plundered the shops and houses, and within a very short time the whole force was utterly demoralised.

British prisoners.

Suddenly, the Mogul commandant met with reinforcements, and returned and recovered the town. The British fled back to the factory, but saw that they were being environed by the Nawab's troops. They hurriedly embarked in boats, in the hope of escaping up the stream into Oudh, but the enemy closed around them. Had they resisted to the last, some might have escaped. As it was they surrendered as prisoners, and were taken to Monghyr, where they found that the British inmates of another factory had been arrested and imprisoned in like manner.

British advance: massacre at Patna, 1763.

An avenging army was soon on its way from Calcutta. Murshedabad was captured, but not without a stout resistance, for the drilled troops of the Nawab were vastly superior to the rabble hosts that had fought at Calcutta and Plassy. The British force, however, overcame every obstacle, and pushed on to Monghyr, whilst the Nawab fled to Patna, carrying his prisoners with him to the number of a hundred and fifty souls. At Patna the Nawab heard that Monghyr was taken by the British, and resolved on exacting a terrible revenge. His prisoners were shut up in a large square building with a courtyard in the centre. He ordered Sombre to slaughter the whole, and the miscreant environed the building with sepoys. The British assembled in the courtyard, bent on fighting for their lives. The sepoys climbed to the roof, but were assailed with a storm of brickbats and bottles from the courtyard. Sombre ordered them to fire on the prisoners, but they hung back, declaring that they were sepoys and not executioners, and would not fire on men without arms in their hands. Then Sombre grew furious and violent; struck down the nearest sepoys with his own hands, and threatened and bullied the rest into obedience. The sepoys yielded to their European master. Successive volleys were fired into the courtyard, until it was strewed with dead bodies. Not a single prisoner escaped that horrible slaughter.

Mir Kasim and the Nawab Vizier.

The massacre at Patna sealed the doom of the Nawab. He fled away into Oudh with his family and treasures, but the avenging Furies were at his heels. The Nawab Vizier received him with ostentatious hospitality, but only that he might strip him of his treasures. The Nawab Vizier declared war against the British for the restoration of Mir Kasim, but it was only that he might eventually get the Bengal provinces into his own hands.

Battle of Buxar, 1764.

The war lasted many months, but was brought to a close in 1764 by the battle of Buxar. The victory gained by Sir Hector Monro at Buxar on the Behar frontier was as decisive as that of Plassy. The Nawab Vizier fled away in terror to the Rohilla Afghans beyond his north-west frontier, leaving his dominions at the absolute disposal of the British; and Sir Hector Monro marched on to the capital at Lucknow and took possession of the whole of Oudh.

British triumph.

The triumph of the British was complete. Mir Kasim lost his treasures and died in obscurity. The Nawab Vizier was a helpless fugitive; neither Rohillas, nor Mahrattas, nor any other power could help him against the British. The Great Mogul was once more a suppliant in their hands. The British were *de facto* masters of the bulk of the old Mogul empire, and might have taken possession of the whole of Northern India in the name of the Great Mogul. As it was they proposed making over Oudh to the Afghans, and restoring the Great Mogul to the throne of his fathers at Delhi. Before, however, the Governor and Council at Calcutta could change the map of India, the Court of Directors upset their plans by sending out Clive for the last time with the authority of a dictator.

Lord Clive Dictator, 1765.

§4. The Directors of the East India Company had been alternately infuriated and terrified at the news from Bengal. They were extremely angry at the quarrel about the private trade, especially as they had not shared in the profits; but the massacre at Patna filled them with grief and despair. Accordingly Clive, who had been raised to the peerage, was sent to Bengal as Governor, with full power to act as he thought proper.

Settlement of Oudh.

When Lord Clive landed at Calcutta Mir Jafir was dead, and the existing Governor and Council had sold the throne of the three provinces to an illegitimate son for 200,000*l.* and divided the money amongst themselves. Lord Clive was extremely wroth, but could do nothing. The offenders retired from the service of the Company and returned to England. Meanwhile Lord Clive stopped the expedition to Delhi, restored Oudh to the Nawab Vizier, and secured a handsome sum out of the transaction for the benefit of the East Indian Company.

Company acquire Bengal, Behar, and Orissa, 1765.

But the crowning event in Lord Clive's life was the acceptance of the post of Dewan to the Great Mogul in the name of the East India Company. Henceforth, the Governor and Council at Calcutta took over the revenues of Bengal, Behar, and Orissa from the Nawab's revenue officers, and provided for the military defence of the three provinces. A quarter of a million sterling was paid to the Great Mogul, and half a million to the Nawab at Murshedabad for the salaries of himself and his officials; but all interference on the part of the British with the administration of the Nawab and his ministers and servants was strictly forbidden, as contrary to the policy of non-intervention. Accordingly, the Nawab and his officials were left to govern the country in their own fashion, without a revenue and without an army.

Sorrows of the Great Mogul.

The Great Mogul, however, was not content. He would not live in the Bengal provinces; he wanted to go to Delhi, and he was sulky because the British would not take him there. He set up his little court at Allahabad, half-way between Calcutta and Delhi, and lived like a prince; but he was unhappy. A British brigade was posted hard by, and the officer in command would not allow him to support his imperial dignity by beating the imperial kettledrums, because of the noise.

Agony of Bengal, 1765-72.

The arrangements as regards the Bengal provinces, known in India as the acquisition of the Dewanny, were carried out in 1765. In 1767 Lord Clive returned to England, and the Bengal provinces were reduced to greater misery than ever. There was no one to control the native officials, and they accumulated riches at the expense of the masses. The wealth which the old Nawabs had lavished on their pleasures was at least spent within the three provinces; whereas it was now sent to China to buy tea and silk for the East India Company, or was remitted to England as the private fortunes of the Company's servants. Bengal was drained of its silver, and the masses loudly complained that the British ought to protect them against their oppressors. But non-intervention was the cry both in Bengal and in the British Isles, and nothing was done.

British supervisors.

Meanwhile the revenue had rapidly declined. Before Lord Clive left Bengal he was compelled to do something in spite of his policy of non-intervention. He sent a British civil servant to every district in the Bengal provinces, under the name of Supervisor. The supervisors were to watch and

report what was going on, but not to interfere with the Bengali officials.[8] They were to collect statistics respecting the land, its produce and capacity; the authorised amount of land revenue and the illegal exactions; the administration of justice and the regulation of trade. The British supervisors could only report what they saw, and what the native officials chose to tell them. One thing was certain: the people were terribly oppressed and the administration was in utter confusion; and so long as the British played at non-intervention it was impossible to apply a remedy.

Famine, 1770-71.

At last the dreadful famine of 1770-71 desolated and depopulated the whole country. Terrible reports reached England that the Company's servants had leagued with the native officials to buy up all the grain and sell it at famine prices. Meanwhile the revenue had rapidly declined, and the blame was thrown on the Bengali officials. Accordingly the Court of Directors resolved to dismiss the Asiatic officials, and to appoint covenanted British servants in their room; and they selected Warren Hastings to be Governor of Bengal, with peremptory orders to carry out the necessary reforms.

Restricted authority of Lord Clive.

§5. The change from Lord Clive to Warren Hastings was most momentous. Lord Clive was a soldier born to command. Warren Hastings was emphatically an administrator born to rule. From the first Lord Clive had shirked all political responsibility. He was content to place the East India Company in the position of Dewan, with the additional duty of maintaining a standing army for the defence of the country, but without attempting to invest it with the ruling powers of a Nawab. So long as the Company took over the revenue, the Nawab and his officials were left to govern the people, and administer law and justice, according to their own will and pleasure. For himself, Lord Clive was content to rule the Company's settlement and some small cessions of territory of no account, and to leave the outside masses in utter darkness.

Vast dominion of Hastings.

Warren Hastings went to Calcutta as absolute ruler over the three provinces. He was a prince amongst princes; the equal if not the superior of any Hindu or Mohammedan ruler within the Himalayas and the two seas. As President of the Council his authority was not confined by the Mahratta ditch, but stretched far away over territories as large, if not larger, than Great Britain and Ireland. He united the powers of British Governor, Nawab, and Great Mogul. He was destined to strip the Nawab of every vestige of authority; to cut down his yearly income from half a million sterling to 160,000*l*., and to reduce him to the condition of a private Mohammedan grandee dwelling at Murshedabad. As for the Great Mogul, he had vanished from the scene. In 1771 he had quitted Oudh and returned to Delhi with the Mahrattas, and thereby forfeited his pension and empty suzerainty as far as the British were concerned. Later on, the Mahrattas demanded payment of the yearly tribute, but were flatly refused by Warren Hastings.

Career of Hastings *ante* 1772.

In 1772 Warren Hastings was forty years of age, with very large experiences. He had landed at Calcutta at the age of eighteen, and served as a clerk and warehouseman in the factory at Calcutta. In 1757, after the battle of Plassy, he was Resident at the court of Nawab Mir Jafir at Murshedabad. Later on, during the quarrel with Mir Kasim, he was a member of the Council at Calcutta, and one of the very few who took the part of the Nawab. In 1764 he went to England and became poor. In 1769 he returned to India and was appointed member of the Council at Madras. In 1772 he proceeded to Calcutta to become Governor of Bengal, Behar, and Orissa, in other words—to govern territories covering an area of 150,000 square miles, or one-tenth of the great continent of India. Henceforth

[8] In the present day there are forty-five districts in the Bengal provinces, namely, thirty-seven regulation and eight non-regulation. The distinction between the two classes of districts will be explained hereafter.

his dominion extended from the mouths of the Ganges to the foot of the Himalayas, and from the frontier at Oudh to the frontiers at Assam and Bhutan.

Two portraits.

Warren Hastings must be regarded in two different aspects. In 1766, whilst residing in England, his portrait was painted by Sir Joshua Reynolds, and represents a mild, benevolent, and intelligent English gentleman. Twenty years afterwards another portrait was painted, which represents a stubborn and vindictive official, from whom all traces of the mild gentleman had disappeared.[9]

British rule in Bengal provinces.

§6. The first task of Warren Hastings was to introduce British administration into the Bengal provinces. The work had been easy enough when dealing with the population of towns, who were dependent on the East India Company for employment and protection. But dealing with provinces having a population of twenty or thirty millions of Hindus and Mohammedans, who knew very little of the British, and very little of their laws or ways, was a very different matter, and demanded extreme tact and caution.

Land revenue.

Warren Hastings began the work of government with the reform of the land revenue—the backbone of all administration in India. In those days the task was beyond the strength of any Englishman or body of Englishmen. During the Mahratta invasions and sudden changes of Nawabs the collection of the revenue had fallen into utter confusion, and it was impossible for Europeans to understand local rights or wrongs.

Zemindars and ryots.

The bulk of the land revenue in Bengal was collected by middle men, known as zemindars, from tenant farmers known as ryots. The zemindar was half a landlord and half a revenue collector. He generally possessed some hereditary land which was the family demesne; but outside the demesne were the landholders or ryots, from whom he collected the rents. The zemindar was not a landlord in the eyes of the ryots, because under Mogul law he could not raise the rents. Still he was a great man within his zemindary. He was magistrate, judge, and controller of the village police; and he had armed followers in his pay, who helped the village police in pursuing robbers and collecting rents. He had the right of hunting, fishing, and cutting wood, throughout his zemindary. Moreover, he levied irregular cesses, benevolences or aids, from the ryots, to defray the expenses of a birth or marriage within his own family, or to meet the demands of the Nawab in an emergency like a Mahratta invasion.

British zemindar at Calcutta.

The changes in the status of Bengal zemindars may be gathered from what is known of old Calcutta. Before the battle of Plassy the East India Company itself was nothing more than a Bengal zemindar, and held the settlement at Calcutta on a zemindary tenure. The Company was pledged to pay to the Nawab a fixed yearly royalty for their little territory. A British civil servant was appointed to represent the Company as zemindar, to bear the name and fulfil the duties of the post; and he collected the ground-rents within the Company's bounds and paid the yearly royalty to the Nawab. He could not raise the rents, for that was forbidden by Mogul law, but otherwise he was all powerful. He administered justice, criminal and civil, like the Justices of the Choultry at Madras. He also raised an additional income by farming out certain trades as monopolies, levying octroi duties on provisions, and taking fees for the registration of marriages, and sale of houses, boats, and slaves.

[9] The first portrait of Warren Hastings was exhibited at the Grosvenor Gallery in 1883. The second portrait is still hanging in the Council Chamber at the India Office at Westminster.

Auction sales of Calcutta lands.

After Plassy the British zemindar at Calcutta cared nothing for Mogul law. He raised the rents within the Company's bounds by the simple process of putting the leases up to auction; and the eagerness of the Bengalis to hold lands and sub-let them to under-tenants led to much competition and a large advance of rents. The zemindar who carried out this innovation was no other than Mr. Holwell, the same gentleman who was accepted as Governor of Calcutta on the morning of the day that ended in the Black Hole disaster. During that terrible night Mr. Holwell seems to have imbibed hatred and contempt for Moguls and Nawabs. Whilst Clive was shilly-shallying with Mir Jafir, Holwell was urging the deposition of the Nawab, the annexation of the Bengal provinces, and the radical measure of putting up all the zemindaries to public auction.[10] This scheme was ignored at the time as the dream of a madman; but nevertheless, within fifteen years, or half a generation, it was seriously considered by Warren Hastings.

Mogul revenue records.
Mysterious disappearance.

The revenue records of the Moguls had always been singularly complete down to the minutest detail. The holding of every ryot and the area of every zemindary had been measured and remeasured; the average value of the yearly produce of every field had been calculated; and the yearly rents payable by the ryots and the yearly revenue payable by the zemindar had been fixed in each case on the basis of the average harvests. All these details had been entered at length in the Mogul records. But the revenue records which contained all the details respecting the land in the Bengal provinces had mysteriously disappeared when they were most wanted. A Mohammedan contemporary says that they were all destroyed when Mir Kasim fled into Oudh. Possibly they may have been thrown into the Ganges and carried out to sea.

British collectors.

Warren Hastings did perhaps the best he could under the circumstances. By the stroke of a pen he converted the British supervisors into British collectors of revenues; and thus brought the new collectors into direct contact with the zemindars, who collected yearly rents from the ryots or tenant farmers. The next work would have been to re-measure all the lands and to make fresh estimates of the average yearly value of the produce of each field. This work had been carried out within the Company's zemindary at Calcutta, and many frauds and errors had been discovered and corrected. But what was possible in an estate, was impossible in a territory considerably larger than the British isles. Warren Hastings had no means at his disposal for re-measuring the lands and revaluing the yearly produce, and it was utterly impossible to get at the actual facts as regards rents and revenues. Not only were the records lost, but the revenue administration was in utter confusion; the ministers exacted what they could from the zemindars, and the zemindars in their turn oppressed the ryots. Moreover, no reliable information could be obtained from ryots or zemindars, who were alike suspicious of British intentions and mortally terrified by the British invasion. The new British collectors, with the help of native officials, arrived at some approximate estimate of the rents paid by the ryots in each zemindary, and then every zemindar in possession was called upon to pay a certain lump sum as yearly revenue for the whole during a term of five years. If he accepted a lease for the five years, well and good. If he refused, the lease was sold to the highest bidder, with no other reserve than that of requiring him to give the necessary security for the yearly payment to the British collectors.

Disastrous results.
Auction sales of zemindaries.

[10] See Holwell's *Historical Events in Bengal*.

The experiment proved a failure. The revenue demands had been fixed too high. Such was the passion for local influence, that many zemindars had agreed to pay a larger revenue than could be realised from the rents. Vast amounts were lost as arrears that could not be realised. Many zemindaries were sold by auction, and were bought up by native speculators who were ruined in their turn. When the five years' leases had run out no attempt was made to renew them; but zemindaries were let on yearly leases until some permanent system could be devised, and this arrangement continued in force until the end of Warren Hastings's administration.

Judicial reforms: Mohammedan criminal courts.

§7. The system of judicial administration introduced by Warren Hastings was equally cautious and experimental. Bengal zemindars ceased to act as magistrates or judges. The British collector became magistrate and civil judge.[11] As magistrate he made over all prisoners for trial to a Mohammedan court, which was created in each district, but over which he maintained some degree of control. A cazi sat as judge and tried the prisoners, whilst muftis and mulvis expounded or interpreted Mohammedan law; but the British collector was present to see that trials were properly conducted, and perhaps to intercede when the punishment awarded was barbarous or cruel. This was little more than a reform of the existing system—such a reform as might have been carried out by an Akbar or Aurangzeb. For centuries Mohammedan law had been the common law of Northern India, and Hindu criminal law, with its hideous severities as regards caste, had been ignored by Mogul rulers, although, no doubt, caste laws were often enforced by the Hindus themselves.

Mixed civil courts: collectors, cazis, pundits.

Civil justice was administered more directly by the British collectors. In civil disputes, especially as regards inheritance and marriage, the parties concerned were necessarily guided by their own laws. Accordingly the collector sat as judge, but was assisted by Mohammedan lawyers in deciding cases between Mohammedans, and by learned Brahmans, or pundits, in deciding cases between Hindus. Under most circumstances the cazi or pundit must often have been the real judge, whilst the British collector was only the representative of the supreme authority.

Courts of circuit and appeal.

Courts of circuit and appeal were also appointed to travel through different areas, and sit as British judges of assize in both criminal and civil courts. Here was that same mixture of British and Asiatic judges as in the collectors' courts. But many changes were made from time to time in the judicial system, and the whole question will be better considered hereafter when dealing with the reforms of Lord Cornwallis, who eventually succeeded Warren Hastings as Governor-General.

Chief court or Sudder.

Meanwhile the Governor and Council still formed the chief court at Calcutta, and confirmed all capital sentences, or heard appeals in important civil cases, as in the old times when British authority was bounded by the Mahratta ditch. From time to time they passed regulations for the guidance of collectors, and eventually Warren Hastings drew up a clear and concise criminal code with his own hands. This chief court was known as the Sudder. It had a civil and a criminal side, and lasted as an institution down to the latest days of the East India Company.[12]

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[11] The control over the country police was also transferred from the zemindars to the new magistrates and collectors. This measure was good in itself, but attended with disadvantages, which will be brought under review hereafter.

[12] The old Sudder Courts at Calcutta, Madras, and Bombay finally disappeared in 1862, when they were amalgamated with the Supreme Courts, which will be described hereafter, and which, up to that date, were exclusively composed of barrister judges. In the present day they are forgotten by all but lawyers familiar with a past generation, yet the Sudder Courts played their part in the history of the past. In the beginning of the nineteenth century, when the Marquis of Wellesley was Governor-General, three civilians were appointed judges in the Sudder, one being a member of Council and the Chief Judge in the room of the Governor-General.

Patriarchal justice.

Under such circumstances British ideas of justice gradually superseded Mohammedan usages. Indeed it was impossible to maintain the criminal law of the Mohammedans in courts controlled more or less by British judges. Under Mohammedan law theft was punished by mutilation, adultery was punished by death, or not punished at all unless four eye-witnesses could be produced; whilst the most atrocious murderer might escape from justice by the payment of a blood fine to the kinsmen of his victim. Cazis and muftis might be nominally independent, but practically they yielded to British influences; and British judges administered justice in a patriarchal fashion, which might be condemned by trained lawyers, but was far better suited to the condition of the masses than British courts of law in the last century.

New members of Council and barrister judges.

§8. Whilst carrying out these reforms Warren Hastings was taken somewhat aback by the appointment of three English gentlemen, not in the service of the Company, to seats in the Calcutta Council. At the same time four barrister judges, equally independent of the Company, were sent out from England to form a Supreme Court of Judicature at Calcutta for the administration of English law, civil and criminal. The jurisdiction of the Supreme Court was to extend to all British subjects, and to all Asiatics who were servants of the Company or had dealings with British subjects. The Chief Justice was Sir Elijah Impey, who was known to Hastings, as the two had been schoolfellows together at Westminster. The three other barristers were puisne judges.

Regulating Act of 1773.

The three new members of Council and the four new Supreme Court judges had been appointed, not by the East India Company, but by Parliament and the Crown. The public mind in England had been greatly stirred by reports of maladministration, and in 1773 a "Regulating Act" had been passed to bring the administration of merchant rulers under some control independent of that of the East India Company. No offence was intended to Warren Hastings; on the contrary, he was raised by the same "Regulating Act" to the post of Governor-General, with a controlling power over Madras and Bombay on all questions of war and peace. He filled the chair as President of the Council, but besides him there was only Mr. Barwell, who belonged to the Company's service. The three remaining members were the three strangers and outsiders—General Clavering, Colonel Monson, and Mr. Philip Francis, the reputed author of the *Letters of Junius*.

Warren Hastings and Philip Francis.

§9. From the very first there were jealous suspicions in the Council between the two gentlemen in the service of the Company and the three gentlemen appointed by the Crown. In one direction Warren Hastings had laid himself open to an attack. In an evil hour he had lent the services of a British brigade to the Nawab Vizier of Oudh, and the Nawab Vizier had employed the brigade against the Rohilla Afghans on the north-west in a quarrel with which the British had no concern. The Rohilla Afghans were defeated by the British brigade, and then plundered and brutally ill-treated by the cowardly troops of the Nawab Vizier. Warren Hastings could only defend himself by saying that money was urgently required by the East India Company, and that the Nawab Vizier had paid heavily for the brigade.

Charges against Hastings.

Whilst Philip Francis and his two independent colleagues were denouncing this transaction, the idea spread amongst the Bengalis that the three new members of Council had been sent by the King of Great Britain to redress the wrongs of natives. Petitions against Warren Hastings were poured into the Calcutta Council, and seriously investigated by Philip Francis and his two colleagues, whilst Hastings and Barwell formed a minority and could not override their proceedings. Hastings was charged with

having taken a bribe of 100,000*l.* from the Nawab Vizier of Oudh. Then it was said that the public auctions of zemindaries were shams; that the native servants of Hastings and others had succeeded in getting large estates at low leases, and that Hastings had shared in the gains. Finally, a Brahman, named Nundcomar, a man of notoriously bad character, charged Hastings with having taken bribes for certain lucrative appointments in the household of the Nawab at Murshedabad.

Nundcomar executed.

Warren Hastings might have rebutted the charges by producing his accounts, and allowing his steward and other servants to be examined before the Council. But he preferred standing on his dignity and refusing to answer the charges brought forward by Nundcomar, who was notorious for perjury, for forging other people's seals, and for carrying on secret correspondence with the enemies of the British. Suddenly Nundcomar was arrested on a charge of forgery, and tried in the Supreme Court by a full bench, comprising Chief Justice Impey and the three puisne judges, and, after a fair summing up, was found guilty by a British jury, and hanged accordingly.

Inaction of Hastings: extenuating circumstances.

Nundcomar was a Brahman, and in those early days no Brahman, under Hindu law, could be put to death; whilst killing a Brahman, even by accident or unavoidable circumstances, was regarded by Hindus as the most horrible crime that could be committed by man. Forgery was a capital offence under English law, but not under Hindu or Mohammedan law. Hastings might have reprieved Nundcomar, but would not interfere. Philip Francis and his two allies, Clavering and Monson, were insolent and aggressive in the extreme. They had pushed Hastings into a corner from which he could not escape without damaging his position as Governor in the eyes of the Bengali population. They were equally insolent towards Sir Elijah Impey and the Supreme Court. They demanded, in arrogant language, that every respect should be paid to the caste feelings of Nundcomar during his imprisonment; and whilst the trial was proceeding they addressed the Chief Justice in the language of reprimand, as though they had been his superiors. Sir Elijah Impey went so far as to consult Hindu pundits on the proper treatment of a Brahman under confinement, and to act in accordance with their suggestions. Indeed he seems to have regarded the pretensions of a Brahman to be above English law, to be as deserving of respect as the old "Benefit of Clergy," which was still in existence in England, although taken away by statute from several offences. The execution was delayed for more than a month after conviction, and Nundcomar would probably have been reprieved altogether, but for the arrogance of Philip Francis and his two allies, and the additional perjuries and forgeries which were committed in the course of the trial. Had Sir Elijah Impey submitted further to the dictation of Francis, the Supreme Court would have lost all authority in the eyes of the people of Bengal. The abstract justice in executing Nundcomar for the crime of forgery may be open to question, but Sir Elijah Impey, as Chief Justice of the Supreme Court, was bound to follow English law, without making any exception in favour of a Brahman.

Collision between the Supreme Court and the Sudder.

§10. Meanwhile there was a collision between the Supreme Court and the Sudder. The Supreme Court began to exercise jurisdiction over zemindars and other Asiatics throughout the Bengal provinces, and to override the decisions of the Company's Courts. Its powers had not been clearly defined, and on one occasion it had been called upon to arbitrate in a quarrel between Warren Hastings and General Clavering, thus assuming a superior authority by deciding differences between the Governor-General and a member of his Council. Again, the judges of the Supreme Court were qualified lawyers appointed by the Crown, and they ignored the decisions of the Company's servants, who were not lawyers.

Points in dispute.

The collision, however, was entirely due to the false position which the East India Company had taken up. The servants of the Company had as yet received no authority from Parliament or the Crown to act as judges, or to make laws. They affected to treat the Nawab as a sovereign, and to act in his name; but the Nawab was a fiction set up to hide the territorial power of the East India Company from the British nation. Warren Hastings pleaded that the Bengal zemindars were servants of the Nawab, over whom the Supreme Court had no jurisdiction. The judges replied that the Nawab was a puppet, a phantom, as unsubstantial as a king of the fairies. Unfortunately, the maintenance of this phantom Nawab for the benefit of the East India Company has been for more than a century a dead weight on the revenues of Bengal.

Parliamentary settlement, 1781.

In 1781 another Act of Parliament was passed which put everything to rights. It authorised the Governor-General and Council of Bengal to make regulations which should have the force of laws, and it restricted the jurisdiction of the Supreme Court to the old bounds of the settlement between the Mahratta ditch and the river Hughly. But the state of Englishmen—that is, of British born subjects of the Crown—was exceptional. They could not be tried by any of the Company's Courts, or under any of the Bengal regulations. A British born subject who committed a criminal offence in any part of the Company's territories in Bengal could only be tried by the judges in the Supreme Court, in accordance with English law, and could only be convicted by a jury of his own countrymen.

Alleged corruption of Impey.

Whilst the struggle was going on between the Supreme Court and the Sudder, Warren Hastings appointed Sir Elijah Impey to be chief judge in the Sudder, on a salary of 7,000*l.* per annum, in addition to his post as chief justice in the Supreme Court. Philip Francis denounced this arrangement as a bribe to Impey; possibly it may have been so, but in itself the appointment was admirably suited to the exigencies of the time. As an experienced lawyer, Sir Elijah Impey was far better fitted than Warren Hastings to act as chief judge in the Sudder, to hear appeals from the Company's Courts up-country, and to control the judicial administration of the Company's judges, who could not pretend to any legal training. But the malice of Philip Francis was as obvious in the case of Impey as in the case of Hastings. Francis had been cast in heavy damages by the Supreme Court as a co-respondent; and he was bent on the ruin of Impey. The result was that Impey was recalled to England and impeached.[13]

Origin of the Mahratta power.

§11. Meanwhile the British had been drawn into a war with the Mahrattas. For a hundred years the Mahrattas had been the terror of India. Between 1660 and 1680, Sivaji, the hero of the Mahrattas, founded the Mahratta kingdom in the Western Deccan, between Surat and Goa. The head-quarters of the family of Sivaji had been at Poona, about seventy miles to the south-east of Bombay, and Sivaji's early life and exploits were associated with Poona. Subsequently, in consequence of Mogul aggressions, the Mahratta capital was removed to Satara, about seventy miles to the south of Poona.

Rise of the Peishwas, 1748.

In 1748 there was a revolution. The last descendant of Sivaji was shut up in a fortress at Satara, whilst the Brahman minister, known as the Peishwa, removed to Poona, the ancient seat of Sivaji's family, and cradle of his dynasty. The imprisonment of the sovereign at Satara, and the reign of a Brahman minister at Poona, hardened into an institution; and whenever a Peishwa died, his successor went to Satara to be invested with the office of minister by his imprisoned sovereign.[14]

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[13] The defence of Sir Elijah Impey has been thoroughly investigated from a legal point of view, in the *Story of Nuncomar and the Impeachment of Sir Elijah Impey*, by Sir James Fitzjames Stephen.

[14] Two centuries have passed away since the death of Sivaji, yet in June, 1885, a public meeting was held at Poona to take steps for repairing his tomb. His admirers styled him the Wallace of the Deccan.

Peishwa and his feudatories: Sindia, Holkar, &c.

The Mahratta kingdom covered the greater part of the area of the Mahratta-speaking people. But the Peishwa sent his lieutenants to collect chout, or black-mail, in Northern India; and one of these lieutenants, Mahadaji Sindia, became a greater man than his master. Sindia always professed to be the loyal servant of the Peishwa, and yet he managed to exercise a commanding influence at Poona. It was Mahadaji Sindia who carried off the Great Mogul to Delhi in 1771 and established a dominion in Hindustan, extending from the Gwalior territory northward over the valleys of the Jumna and Ganges. The other lieutenants were only beginning to play their parts in history; they included Holkar of Indore, the Gaekwar of Baroda, and the Bhonsla Raja of Berar in the Deccan, immediately to the northward of the Nizam.

British relations with Berar.

Very soon after the battle of Plassy, the British at Calcutta came into contact with the Bhonsla Raja of Berar. It was the Bhonsla Raja who compelled the later Nawabs of Bengal to pay chout, and to cede Cuttack; and when Lord Clive had concluded his settlement with the Great Mogul and the Nawab Vizier of Oudh, he advised the Court of Directors to pay chout on condition of getting back Cuttack. But the Directors did not want Cuttack and would not pay black-mail; and the Bhonsla Raja pressed his demand at convenient intervals, but wisely abstained from invading the Bengal provinces.

Bombay and the Peishwas.

Meanwhile, the British at Bombay had come into contact with the Mahrattas at Poona. For years the East India Company had been anxious to hold two important positions close to Bombay harbour, namely, the little island of Salsette and the little peninsula of Bassein. But the Mahrattas had wrested Salsette and Bassein from the Portuguese, and would not part with them on any terms. A civil war, however, had broken out in the Mahratta country. A Peishwa had been murdered. An uncle ascended the throne, but was banished on suspicion of being the murderer. He applied for help to the British at Bombay, and offered to cede the coveted positions if the British at Bombay would restore him to the Mahratta capital. The Governor and Council at Bombay closed with the offer, and the war began.

Disastrous retreat.

After some successes, the British at Bombay met with disaster. Mahadaji Sindia appeared at Poona with a large army to act against the banished Peishwa. A British force advanced from Bombay towards Poona, but took alarm at the report of Sindia's army, and suddenly halted, and beat a retreat. During the return march, the British force was environed by the Mahrattas, and finally surrendered to Sindia under what is known as the "Convention of Wurgaum."

Success of Warren Hastings.

Warren Hastings condemned the war from the outset; as, however, the Company was committed to a war, he exerted himself, in the teeth of Francis, to maintain British prestige in India. He sent an expedition, under Colonel Goddard, from Bengal to the Mahratta country, and detached another force under Captain Popham to capture Sindia's fortress at Gwalior. The success of these exploits electrified half India. The war was brought to a triumphant close, but all conquered territories, excepting Salsette and Bassein, were restored to the Mahrattas. Indeed, Warren Hastings was not a conqueror like Clive; he acquired no territory during his régime, excepting that of Benares, which was ceded to the Company by the Nawab Vizier of Oudh.

Three Asiatic powers in India.

§12. During the Mahratta war secret negotiations were carried on between the Indian powers for a confederation against the British. The two great powers of the Deccan—the Mahrattas on the west representing the Hindus, and the Nizam on the east representing the Mohammedans—had hated

one another for the greater part of a century. A third power, that of a Mohammedan adventurer named Hyder Ali, was becoming formidable further south on the western tableland of the peninsula. Hyder Ali is said to have once served as a sepoy in the French army. Later on, he entered the service of the Hindu Raja of Mysore, and eventually ousted the Raja, usurped the sovereign authority, and conquered the countries round about.

Hyder Ali of Mysore.

For many years Hyder Ali was the Ishmael of the Deccan and peninsula. His hand was against every man, and every man's hand was against him. He invaded alike the territories of the Mahrattas and the Nizam in the Deccan, and those of the Nawab of the Carnatic up to the suburbs of Madras and Fort St. George. At the same time, he more than once exasperated the British by his secret dealings with the French at Pondicherry.

Invasion of the Carnatic, 1780: breaking up of the confederation.

About 1779 Warren Hastings was warned that the three powers—the Mahrattas, the Nizam, and Hyder Ali—were preparing for simultaneous attacks on Bengal, Bombay, and Madras, and that a large Mahratta army was already on the move from Berar territory for the invasion of the Bengal provinces. In 1780 Hyder Ali desolated the Carnatic with an army of a hundred thousand men, but he was the only one of the three allies that kept to his engagement, and was eventually driven back by Sir Eyre Coote, one of the half-forgotten warriors of the eighteenth century. The Nizam did nothing; he probably waited to see what the others would do. The Mahrattas of Berar encamped in great force in the hills and jungles of Orissa, but only appear to have wanted a money present; and after wasting several months they were induced by Warren Hastings to return to Berar. No movement of any kind was undertaken against Bombay; and thus the strange confederation of Mohammedans and Mahrattas melted away.

Parliament interferes.

§13. The quarrels, the wars, and the irregularities of Warren Hastings induced the British Parliament to attempt radical changes. The antagonism between Philip Francis and Warren Hastings had led to a duel, in which Francis was wounded; and he returned to England to pour his bitter prejudices against Warren Hastings into the ears of Burke and Fox. The result was that a bitter animosity was excited, not only against Warren Hastings, but against the East India Company; and Parliament was called upon to decide whether the control of the administration of British India ought not to be transferred from the Court of Directors to the British Crown. The main question was one of patronage. The patronage of Indian appointments would render the Crown too powerful, as the elder Pitt had foreseen in the days of Clive; and George III. was already straining his royal prerogative over Parliament and Ministers to an extent which was exciting alarm.

Fox's India Bill, 1783.

In 1783, when the coalition ministry of Charles James Fox and Lord North was in power, Fox brought forward a bill for abolishing the Court of Directors, and transferring their authority and patronage to seven Commissioners nominated by Ministers. The bill was passed by the Commons, but George III. opposed it, and it was rejected by the Lords.

Pitt creates a board of control, 1784.

In 1784 William Pitt the younger brought in another bill, which left the Directors in full possession of their power and patronage, but brought them under the strict supervision of a Board of Control, consisting of six privy councillors nominated by the Crown. Henceforth the President of the Board of Control, who was always a member of the Cabinet, was the centre of all authority, and was strictly responsible to Parliament for the conduct of Indian affairs.

Trial of Warren Hastings.

§14. Warren Hastings returned to England in 1785 to find that the minds of Burke, Fox, and other leading statesmen had been poisoned against him by Philip Francis. Eventually he was impeached by the Commons and tried by the Lords in Westminster Hall. Hastings was certainly responsible for the Rohilla war, and also responsible for the execution of Nundcomar; but the crowning charge against him was that he had connived at the torture of the servants of the Oudh Begums by the Nawab Vizier of Oudh. The charge was painted in terrible colours by Sheridan, and it may be as well to sum up the actual facts.

Case of the Oudh Begums.

A Nawab Vizier of Oudh died in 1775, leaving treasure to the value of some two or three millions sterling in the public treasury at Lucknow. The son and successor of the deceased ruler naturally assumed possession on the ground that the money was state property; but his mother and grandmother, known as the two Begums, claimed it as private property, which the late Nawab Vizier had made over to them as a gift. Warren Hastings declined to interfere. Philip Francis, however, insisted that the British Government ought to interfere; and eventually the money was made over to the Begums on the condition that they paid some quarter of a million towards the State debt due to the East India Company.

Did Hastings connive at torture?

During the Mahratta war money was urgently required. The Nawab Vizier owed large arrears to the Company, but could not pay up unless he recovered possession of the State treasures. Philip Francis had returned to England. Accordingly Warren Hastings abandoned the Begums to the tender mercies of the Nawab Vizier, and connived at the imprisonment of their servants. It subsequently appeared that the Nawab Vizier tortured the servants until the money was surrendered, but there is no evidence to show that Warren Hastings connived at the torture.

Services of Hastings.

Warren Hastings was undoubtedly a man of great abilities and marvellous energy. His services to the East India Company, and to British interests in India, are beyond all calculation. But he was exposed to great temptation in times when public virtue was less exalted than it has been in the present generation, and he was hedged around with enemies who were spiteful and unscrupulous enough to misrepresent any and every transaction. His errors were those of his time, but his genius is stamped for ever on the history of British India. His misdeeds cannot be entirely overlooked, but he paid a bitter penalty. For many months he was threatened by the proceedings which culminated in his trial at Westminster Hall. Eventually he was acquitted of all charges, but his trial was protracted over seven long years and ruined his private fortunes and public career.

Merits as an administrator.

After the lapse of a hundred years, the flaws in the character of Warren Hastings may be condoned in consideration of his merits as an administrator. He found the Bengal provinces in chaos, and introduced light and order. He converted British traders into revenue collectors, magistrates, and judges, but he established Courts of Appeal to supervise their proceedings; and if his magistrates and judges had no legal training, they were at any rate Britons with a national sense of justice, and their decisions were infinitely better than those of Bengal zemindars, without law, or justice, or control. Warren Hastings kept a watchful eye on British interests as well as on the welfare of the people under his charge. He sent a mission to Tibet, which shows his anxiety for the extension of trade. He recorded a touching tribute to the memory of Augustus Cleveland, a young Bengal civilian who had done much to humanise and elevate the rude Sonthals of the Rajmahal hills, which sufficiently proves his

sympathy with the well-being of the masses. Altogether, if Warren Hastings is not so free from blame as he is represented by his friends, he certainly was not so black as he has been painted by his enemies.

Lord Cornwallis, 1786-93.

§15. In 1786 Lord Cornwallis, an independent peer, was appointed Governor-General. This event marks a change in British rule. Lord Cornwallis was the first British peer, and the first Englishman not in the service of the East India Company, who was appointed to the post of Governor-General. He carried out two measures which have left their mark in history, namely, the perpetual settlement with the Bengal zemindars, and the reform of the judicial system.

Perpetual settlement.

The settlement with the Bengal zemindars was still awaiting a decision. Lord Cornwallis was anxious to arrange the land revenue of the Bengal provinces on English lines. He abandoned the yearly leases, and concluded leases for ten years, with the view of eventually declaring the settlement to be perpetual. Mr. John Shore, a Bengal civilian, pressed for a preliminary inquiry into the rights of the ryots, for the purpose of fixing the rents. But Lord Cornwallis was opposed to any further delay. In 1793 he proclaimed that the ten years settlement would be perpetual; that the tenant-rights of ryots would be left to future inquiry; and that henceforth the Bengal zemindars would be invested with the proprietary rights enjoyed by English landlords, so long as they paid the fixed yearly revenue to Government and respected all existing rights of ryots and cultivators.

Judicial reforms.

The judicial system introduced by Warren Hastings was modified by Lord Cornwallis. The British collector, as already seen, was also magistrate and civil judge. Lord Cornwallis decided that a collector ought to have no judicial duties under which he might be called on to adjudicate in revenue questions. Accordingly a regulation was passed under which the duties of revenue collector were separated from those of magistrate and judge, and the magistrate and judge was to be the head of the district, whilst the revenue collector was his subordinate. It is difficult to understand the merits of this measure. Since then the two offices have been sometimes united and sometimes separated. Eventually the two offices of magistrate and collector were united in the same person.

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.