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INDIA
ITS ADMINISTRATION & PROGRESS



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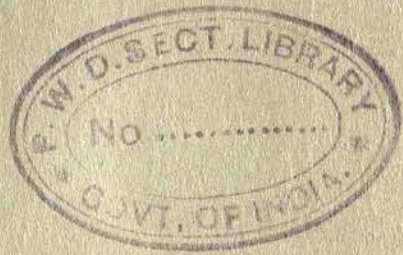
From out the sunset pour'd an alien race
Who fitted stone to stone again, and Truth,
Peace, Love, and Justice came and dwelt therein.



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INDIA

ITS ADMINISTRATION & PROGRESS



BY

SIR JOHN STRACHEY, G.C.S.I.

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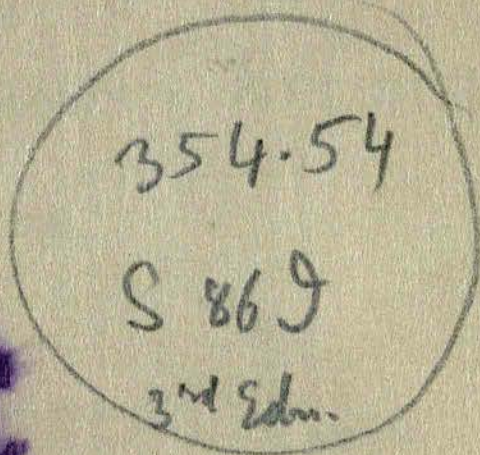
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DEDICATION TO THE FIRST EDITION

TO

SIR JAMES FITZJAMES STEPHEN, K.C.S.I.

&c. &c. &c.

MY DEAR STEPHEN,

Fifteen years ago you dedicated one of your books to me, and in now offering to you this less worthy gift, the fittest words that I can find are almost those which you addressed to me. I dedicate this book to you as an expression of strong personal regard and of gratitude for great kindness, and in recollection of that time in India when we served together and which neither of us can forget.

I am, my dear STEPHEN,

Your sincere friend and late colleague,

JOHN STRACHEY.

October 1888.



PREFACE TO THE THIRD EDITION

IN 1884 I gave a course of lectures on subjects connected with India before the University of Cambridge. They formed the basis of the first edition of this work, published in 1888. Since that time great changes have been made in the constitution of the Indian Legislatures, in the organisation of the Civil Services and Army, and in other branches of the administration, while the progress of the country in wealth and material prosperity has been immense. A second and revised edition of the book was published in 1894, and so many alterations were then made that the work assumed a new shape, and no division into imaginary lectures remained. In the present edition the changes and additions necessary to make it give, as far as possible, an accurate description of existing facts, have been still greater, it has been much enlarged, parts of the work have been entirely re-written, and its title has been slightly altered. The changes thus made in the original form of the book have one drawback. While it was merely a course of lectures, it was obvious that it professed to be nothing more than a series of papers, not necessarily connected with each other, on various Indian topics; that many subjects of importance necessarily



and design^{ly} remained untouched; and that I did not pretend to attempt the impossible task of describing in a single volume the great continent of India. In that respect the purpose of the book remains as it was, but, instead of being a collection of lectures on certain Indian subjects, it has become a collection of chapters.

Mr. Baines, in his *Report on the Indian Census of 1891*, a work which I have often quoted, and to which it would be difficult to give more praise than it deserves, has applied to himself the words of Molière, "Je prends mon bien ou je le trouve," and every one who writes, with any just pretence to knowledge, on such a subject as India must say the same. There is no man living competent to give, from his own knowledge alone, an accurate description of a continent as large as civilised Europe, and one that in all its physical characteristics is far more various. Valuable works and official reports have been published in recent years, dealing with Indian subjects, or with special branches of the administration, and to these I have, in the body of the work, acknowledged my obligations. Among them I must here especially mention the contributions to our knowledge made by Sir Henry Maine, Sir James Stephen, Sir Alfred Lyall, Mr. Baines, Sir Denzil Ibbetson, Mr. Risley, and the Reports of the three Famine Commissions of 1880, 1898, and 1901. I am under many obligations of a more personal kind. Mr. A. N. Wollaston, Sir Steuart Bayley, Sir John Edge, Sir Charles Lyall, and Mr. Lionel Abrahams have given to me, in the preparation of this edition, both from their personal knowledge and from the records of the India Office, help for which I cannot sufficiently thank them. Mr. Bourdillon, now



acting as Lieutenant-Governor of Bengal, and who possesses a knowledge and experience of the subject which few can equal, has been good enough to revise my account of that great province; and Sir Antony Mac-Donnell has not been prevented by his present arduous duties from going through the proofs of the chapters which treat of the United Provinces of Agra and Oudh, the government of which, a short time ago, he was administering with conspicuous ability. My special thanks are also due to Mr. Morison, the accomplished Principal of the Mohammedan College at Aligarh; to Sir Charles Elliott; to Sir Hugh Barnes, the Lieutenant-Governor of Burma; to my son, Major J. Strachey; and to Mr. G. H. M. Batten, who, in addition to much other assistance, has contributed to the book the most complete account which, in my opinion, has been written of all the facts connected with the opium revenue of India. Thus, if I may apply to such a subject as the improvement of this book the famous words of the poet, it has at least had the advantage of the help of "the masters of those who know."

When a man has been for many years writing and speaking on matters to which his life has been mainly devoted, there must be much about which he can say nothing new. As Mr. John Morley has written in somewhat similar circumstances, "These borrowings from my former self the reader will perhaps be willing to excuse on the old Greek principle that a man may say a thing once as he would have it said—*δὺς δὲ οὐκ ἐνδέχεται*—he may not say it twice." But it is not from myself alone that I have borrowed without acknowledgment in the present edition. In 1882 a book, now long out of print, was



published by my brother, General Sir Richard Strachey, and myself on the Finances and Public Works of India. It was our joint production; our opinions were so much in unison, and were so constantly formed in close personal communication, that while I know that I owe far more to him than he has owed to me, it is impossible for me to say to which of us some parts of that book are to be attributed. In the present edition I have borrowed from it freely. And, having named my brother, I must add, because this is the last opportunity that I shall ever have of saying it, that there are, in my belief, few men living who have done so much, often in ways unknown to the outside world, for the improvement of Indian administration. It is to him that India owes the initiation of that great policy of the systematic extension of railways and canals which has been crowned with such extraordinary success, which has increased to an incalculable extent the wealth of the country, and has profoundly altered its condition. To him is due the conception of those measures of financial and administrative decentralisation which have had the most far-reaching consequences, and which were pronounced by Sir Henry Maine to be by far the greatest and most successful reforms carried out in India in his time. To his active support is largely due the initiation of the measures, which have proved of the highest value, for preventing the destruction of the Indian Forests, and for their scientific protection and management. He it was who first organised the great department of Public Works, and laid the foundations of the scientific study of Indian Meteorology. He was the first, many years ago, to advise that reform of the Currency which



has now been carried out, and the delay of which has involved India in incalculable loss. If the Weights and Measures of India are still in a condition of mischievous chaos, it is because, through the powerful influence of ignorant prejudice, the Act which he introduced and carried through the Legislature, and which is still on the Statute Book, has remained a dead letter. He presided over the first of the Commissions which have taught us the true principles upon which Indian famines can be combated.

I suppose that no two men had greater opportunities, through a long course of years, than my brother and myself of obtaining knowledge regarding India. For many years we took part, often in close association, in its government, and it would be an affectation of humility to profess that this part was not an important one. There is hardly a great office of the State, from that of Acting-Viceroy, Lieutenant-Governor, or Member of Council downwards, which one or other of us has not held, and hardly a department of the administration with which one or other of us has not been intimately connected. The book of which my brother and myself were the joint authors was dedicated by us to the public servants of all classes, the results of whose labours for India we had endeavoured, in some measure, to record. Whatever may have been done by viceroys, and governors, and great commanders, the soldiers and civilians whose names have hardly been heard in England have done much more in building up the splendid fabric of our Indian Empire. It is by the everyday work of administration that the real foundations of our power have been maintained and strengthened, and the steady progress



of the country has been secured. It is, indeed, to that part of their lives that Indian officials like my brother and myself, actively concerned although we have been in the work of the Central Government, look back with perhaps the greatest interest. We may be forgiven if we take pride in remembering that during the last century and a half four generations of our family have given to India the best portion of their lives.

A distinguished Frenchman, M. Harmand, did me the honour of translating into French the first edition of this book, and he prefaced his work with an Introduction which, if it had been less flattering to myself, I should have been glad to reproduce in English, showing as it did, the opinions of a most competent and intelligent foreign observer on the government of our Indian Empire. M. Harmand, during a long residence in the Asiatic possessions of France and in British India, in both of which he held important official posts, had rare opportunities of forming an accurate judgment on the problems which have to be solved by the Western rulers of Oriental peoples. He has discussed the principles on which the government of a great Eastern possession can alone be wisely conducted, and, taking India as his object-lesson, has endeavoured to show to his countrymen why the efforts of the English to establish a solid and self-supporting dominion in the East have been crowned with such extraordinary success. Another interesting book, written with aims similar to those of M. Harmand, has been published by M. Chailley-Bert, the worthy possessor of an illustrious name.¹ I

¹ *La Colonisation de l'Indo-Chine, l'Expérience anglaise.*



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commend to Englishmen who feel an honourable pride in the work of the men who have built up and who are maintaining the wonderful structure of their Indian Empire, the calm and impartial testimony of M. Harmand and M. Chailley-Bert.

JOHN STRACHEY.

April 1903.



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CHAPTER I

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SIR HENRY MAINE, referring to the ignorance regarding India which prevails even among educated men in England, declared his conviction that for one who desires to unveil the stores of interest which India contains, the first necessity is that he should not shrink from speaking on matters which appear to him too elementary to deserve discussion, that he should sympathise with an ignorance which few felicitous efforts have yet been made to dispel, and that he should remember that the language of administration and government in India has become so highly specialised and technical that it forms an imperfect medium for the communication of ideas to Englishmen. Believing this, I make no apology for beginning this book with some very elementary matters, and I ask at starting this elementary question, What is India? What does this name India really signify? The answer that I have sometimes given



sounds paradoxical, but it is true. There is no such country, and this is the first and most essential fact about India that can be learned.

India is a name which we give to a great region including a multitude of different countries. There is no general Indian term that corresponds to it. The name Hindustan is never applied in India, as we apply it, to the whole of the Indian continent; it signifies the country north of the Narbada river, and especially the northern portion of the basins of the Ganges and Jumna.

I have been told by intelligent Natives of India who have visited Europe that they could see little difference between the European countries through which they had travelled; the languages being equally unintelligible offered to them no marks of distinction; the cities, the costumes, the habits of life, the manners and customs of the people, so far as a passing oriental traveller could judge, seemed much the same in England, in France, and in Italy. The differences between the countries of India—between, for instance, Bengal and the Punjab, or between Madras and Rajputána—seemed to them, on the other hand, immense, and beyond comparison greater than those existing between the countries of Europe. Englishmen have often similar impressions in visiting India; they cannot see the great diversities that exist. As to persons who know nothing of geology or botany or agriculture, rocks and trees and crops present comparatively few distinctive features, so it is with those who look with uninformed minds on conditions of life and society to which they have not been accustomed.

The differences between the countries of Europe are undoubtedly smaller than those between the countries of India. Scotland is more like Spain than Bengal is



like the Punjab. European civilisation has grown up under conditions which have produced a larger measure of uniformity than has been reached in the countries of the Indian continent, often separated from each other by greater distances, by greater obstacles to communication, and by greater differences of climate. It is probable that not less than fifty languages, which may rightly be called separate, are spoken in India. The diversities of religion and race are as wide in India as in Europe, and political catastrophes have been as frequent and as violent. There are no countries in civilised Europe in which the people differ so much as the man of Madras differs from the Sikh, and the languages of Southern India are as unintelligible in Lahore as they would be in London. A native of Calcutta or Bombay is as much a foreigner in Delhi or Peshawar as an Englishman is a foreigner in Rome or Paris.

People sometimes complain that Indian authorities differ so greatly among themselves that it is hardly possible to learn the truth. These apparent contradictions have frequently no real existence, but arise from false generalisations.

To one, for instance, who has gained his knowledge of India in Lower Bengal, India is a country of almost constant heat and damp, luxuriant vegetation, rivers, tanks, rice-fields and cocoa-nuts, with few cities and no monuments of art, densely inhabited by a mild and timid population. To such an India as this, a vivid imagination could hardly conceive a completer contrast than the India of Agra or Lahore. Instead of one of the dampest and greenest countries of the earth, we find in the early summer one of the brownest and most arid, a country scorched with winds like the blast of a furnace, but in the winter it has the climate of an Italian



spring, cold, frosty, and invigorating. In the latter season, instead of the tropical vegetation of Bengal, we find thousands of square miles covered with wheat and barley and the products of the temperate zone. It is a country with famous cities and splendid monuments, and its population is not inferior to that of many parts of Europe in manliness and vigour.

I have spoken of the different countries of India, but they are not countries in the ordinary European sense. A European country is usually a separate entity, occupied by a nation more or less socially and politically distinct. But in India, as Sir Alfred Lyall has explained in his *Asiatic Studies*, a work that is a mine of knowledge on Indian matters, there are no nations of the modern European type. The same fact has been clearly brought out by Professor Seeley in his lectures on *The Expansion of England*.

"Geographical boundaries," says Sir Alfred Lyall, "have no correspondence at all with distinctive institutions or groupings of the people, and have comparatively little political significance. Little is gained toward knowing who and what a man is by ascertaining the State he obeys, or the territory he dwells in; these being things which of themselves denote no difference of race, institutions, or manners. Even from the point of political allegiance, the Government under which a man may be living is an accidental arrangement, which the British Viceroy or some other inevitable power decided upon yesterday and may alter to-morrow. Nor would such a change be grievous unless it divorced from him a ruler of his own tribe or his own faith. . . . The European observer—accustomed to the massing of people in great territorial groups, and to the ideas (now immemorial in the West) contained in such expressions as fatherland, mother-country, patriotism, domicile, and the like—has here to realise the novelty of finding himself in a strange part of the world, where political citizenship is as yet quite unknown, and territorial sovereignty or even feudalism only just appearing. For a parallel in the history of



Western Europe we must go back as far as the Merovingian period, when chiefs of barbaric tribes or bands were converting themselves into kings or counts; or, perhaps, he should carry his retrospect much further, and conceive himself to be looking at some country of Asia Minor lying within the influence of Rome at its zenith, but just outside its jurisdiction. He gradually discovers the population of Central India to be distributed, not into great governments, or nationalities, or religious denominations, not even into widespread races, such as those which are still contending for political supremacy in Eastern Europe, but into various and manifold denominations of tribes, clans, septs, castes, and sub-castes, religious orders, and devotional brotherhoods."¹

This is the first and most essential thing to learn about India—that there is not, and never was an India, or even any country of India, possessing, according to European ideas, any sort of unity, physical, political, social, or religious; no Indian nation, no “people of India,” of which we hear so much.

Until we rightly appreciate the significance of such facts we shall, among other things, never understand how our Indian Empire has come into existence, and how this vast dominion is maintained by a handful of Englishmen. There was never, as Professor Seeley has said, any conquest of India by the English, according to the ordinary sense of the word “conquest.” The conquest was rather, to borrow his expression, “in the nature of an internal revolution,” directed by Englishmen, but carried out for the most part through the Natives of India themselves. No superiority of the Englishman would have enabled England to conquer by her own military power the continent of India with its 300 millions of people, nor could she hold it in subjection if it had been occupied by distinct nations. In

¹ *Asiatic Studies*, p. 152. Sir Alfred Lyall was specially referring to Central India in this passage, but it is equally true of India generally.



the words of Professor Seeley, "the fundamental fact is that India had no jealousy of the foreigner, because there was no India, and therefore, properly speaking, no foreigner."¹

It is a consequence of all this, that in every great Indian province the political sympathies of large sections of the population towards men who, geographically speaking, are their own countrymen, are often as imperfect as they are towards their English masters. We have never destroyed in India a national government, no national sentiment has been wounded, no national pride has been humiliated; and this not through any design or merit of our own, but because no Indian nationalities have existed. They no more exist in the so-called Native States than in our own territories, and the most important of those States are ruled by princes who are almost as much foreigners to their subjects as we are ourselves.

The diversities between the countries of India and the people inhabiting them extend, more or less, to their administration by the British Government. The ordinary English notion is that the Secretary of State for India and the Viceroy and his Council carry on, somehow or other, the government of India. Few Englishmen understand how comparatively little these high authorities have to do with the actual administration, or appreciate the fact that the seven or eight chief provinces of British India, which may be compared, in area and population, to the chief countries of Europe, have all their separate and, in a great measure, their independent governments. Under circumstances of such extreme diversity as those which exist in India, no single system of administration could be appropriate.

¹ *The Expansion of England*, p. 206.



Instead of introducing unsuitable novelties from other countries, Indian or European, we have taken, in each province, with some unfortunate exceptions, the old local institutions as the basis of our own arrangements. Good or bad administration in India depends to a far greater extent on the Government of the province than on the distant authorities in Calcutta or London. The vast majority of the population is hardly conscious of the existence of the Viceroy and his Government. From time to time a glimpse is caught of the great Lord Sâhib. He passes perhaps along the streets of some famous city with a train of elephants recalling the traditions of Aurangzib, or at some immense gathering, far more picturesque and magnificent than any of the ceremonial shows of Europe, he receives in Darbâr the homage of chiefs and princes. From the splendour of his surroundings people derive some vague notions of an authority above the powers by which they know that they are governed.

Although in the management of the greater portion of the public business immediately affecting the everyday interests of the 294 millions of people inhabiting India the part of the so-called Government of India is comparatively small, this central power, administered by the Governor-General in Council, under the supreme authority of the British Government at home, has, of course, from another point of view the highest importance. It regulates and harmonises the Governments of the British provinces, controls the Native States and our relations with foreign powers, provides for military defence, makes war and peace, and manages those branches of the administration which directly concern the general interests of the empire.

It must not be supposed that such bonds of union



can in any way lead towards the growth of a single Indian nationality. However long may be the duration of our dominion, however powerful may be the centralising attraction of our Government, or the influence of the common interests which grow up, no such issue can follow. It is conceivable that national sympathies may arise in particular Indian countries; but that they should ever extend to India generally, that men of Bombay, the Punjab, Bengal, and Madras should ever feel that they belong to one great Indian nation, is impossible. We might with as much reason and probability look forward to a time when a single nation will have taken the place of the various nations of Europe.

I wish especially to insist on the fact that we can never hope to arrive at any accurate knowledge of India until we properly appreciate the immense diversities of the countries included under that name, and understand that there is no part of the world in which it is more easy to be misled by generalisations.

The changes through which India has passed during the last half-century have been so great, that it is often very difficult to deduce useful inferences from the comparison of its present and past condition. The changes in the condition of the country, in its available resources, and in its requirements for necessary administrative and material progress have been numerous and profound.

The territorial extension of the British Empire in India since the middle of the nineteenth century has been immense. Great provinces have been added to it, with an area about equal to that of France and the German Empire put together, with a population of more than sixty millions. This fact is alone sufficient to show how easily we may be misled by general comparisons; but other changes not less important have



occurred, and they have been hardly less remarkable in the older provinces than in the new.

There was formerly in British India, comparatively speaking, little of what we now think the first necessities of a civilised administration. When, in 1844, I first went from Calcutta to the North-Western Provinces, I was carried about a thousand miles in a palanquin on men's shoulders, and it took some three weeks to toil through a journey which is now accomplished in twenty-four hours; there were no other means of travelling through the richest and most civilised parts of India. Speaking generally, roads and bridges had only begun to appear; railways were not thought of; the value of irrigation as a means of affording protection to the people against famine had hardly been recognised; there were few barracks in which English soldiers could live with tolerable health and comfort; there were few jails in which a sentence of imprisonment did not carry with it a serious probability that it would prove a sentence of death.

British India, however, even at that time was entering on a phase of rapid change. The energies of the Government and its officers, which had at first been unable to do more than secure the bare existence of British power in India, by degrees rendered that power paramount. Then they were applied to its consolidation, and to the evolution of an organised system of administration out of the chaos bequeathed to us by the old rulers of the country. The firm establishment of order was followed by improvements in all directions. A vigorous impulse was given to material progress, and among the most active causes of the great changes which were beginning must be ranked the introduction of new and rapid means of communication. These not only directly



developed the resources of the country, increased the wealth of the people, and profoundly altered the conditions of life, but they stimulated the vitality of every branch of the administration; they brought the various provinces of the Empire closer together, and England closer to India; English influence became stronger and stronger, and all classes, as they were more frequently and immediately brought into contact with European habits and civilisation, had set before them new and higher standards.

Even before the mutinies of 1857 this process of change had made great progress. After that revolution, which for a time nearly swept away our government through a large part of India, the change went on with accelerated speed. Thousands of Englishmen, not only soldiers, but Englishmen of almost every class, poured into India. Ten thousand things were demanded which India had not got, but which it was felt must be provided. The country must be covered with railways and telegraphs, and roads and bridges. Irrigation canals must be made to preserve the people from starvation. Barracks must be built for a great European army, and every sort of sanitary arrangement which could benefit the troops must be carried out. The whole paraphernalia of a great civilised administration, according to the modern notions of what that means, had to be provided.

This was true not only in regard to matters of imperial concern. Demands for improvement, similar to those which fell upon the Central Government, cropped up in every city and in every district of the country.

Compare, for instance, what Calcutta was when Lord Lawrence became Viceroy in 1864, and what it is now. This city, the capital of British India, supplies an excel-



lent type of what has been everywhere going on. The filth of the city used to rot away in the midst of the population in pestilential ditches, or was thrown into the Hugli, there to float backwards and forwards with every change of tide. To nine-tenths of the inhabitants clean water was unknown. They drank either the filthy water of the river, polluted with every conceivable abomination, or the still filthier contents of the shallow tanks. The river, which was the main source of supply to thousands of people, was not only the receptacle for ordinary filth; it was the great graveyard of the city. I forget how many thousand corpses were thrown into it every year. I forget how many hundred corpses were thrown into it from the Government hospitals and jails, for these practices were not confined to the poor and ignorant; they were followed or allowed, as a matter of course, by the officers of the Government and of the municipality. I remember the sights which were seen in Calcutta in those days, in the hospitals, and jails, and markets, and slaughter-houses, and public streets. The place was declared, in official reports, written by myself in language which was not, and could not be, stronger than the truth required, to be hardly fit for civilised men to live in. There are now few cities in Europe with which many parts of Calcutta need fear comparison, and, although in the poorer quarters there is still much room for improvement, there is hardly a city in the world which has made greater progress.

I do not mean to say that Indian cities generally were as bad as Calcutta. This was far from being the case, but Calcutta affords, not the less, a good example of what has been and is still going on in India. Illustrations of the same sort might easily be multiplied. In 1865, for instance, in the city of Rangoon, containing,



at that time, more than 100,000 people, with half a million tons of shipping, there was not a single public lamp, no supply of wholesome water, not a single drain except the surface drains at the sides of the streets, and no means of removing the filth out of the town. About the same time, the Royal Commission for inquiring into the sanitary state of the army in India declared that thousands of the lives of our soldiers had been and were still being sacrificed in consequence of bad and insufficient barrack accommodation, and neglect of every sanitary precaution. So again, the Government was told, and in many parts of India it was certainly true, that, in consequence of the insufficiency of jail accommodation, the prisoners were dying at a rate frightful to think of, and that the necessary proceedings of the courts of justice involved consequences repugnant to humanity.

Thus arose demands for the requirements of civilised life and of modern administration, which had to be provided, and to a great extent for the first time, within the space of a few years. This was true not only of material appliances, of roads, and railways, and canals, and barracks, and city improvements, and so forth; for the demand for improved administration became so strong that it is not too much to say that the whole of the public services were reorganised. Thus, for example, the police, which was in a most unsatisfactory condition throughout India, was, although even now it cannot be said to be good, placed on a completely new footing. The changes in the judicial service, and in the laws which it administers, have been great. Lord Lawrence, when he was Viceroy, declared that the inadequacy of the pay given to the Native judges, and to the chief ministerial officers of the courts, was a public scandal,



many of these officers receiving salaries less than the wages earned in many parts of India by the better class of bricklayers and carpenters. No honest or satisfactory administration of justice was, under such conditions, possible.

The demands for every sort of public improvement, moral and material, which thus sprang up, could not be resisted. Whatever might be the cost, remedies had to be provided in the most complete way, and in the shortest time possible.

A greater or more admirable work was never conceived in any country than that which was undertaken, and which in a great degree has been accomplished by Englishmen in India, and which is still going on. That mistakes should have been made in dealing with a country larger and more populous than the whole of civilised Europe was inevitable. Nevertheless, the work has been excellently done, and with this further merit, that there has been little talk about it. For all this the credit is not due to the initiative of the Government alone. India has been fortunate in her Viceroy, but still more fortunate in the possession of a most admirable and hard-working body of public servants, to whose intelligence, devotion to their duties, and self-sacrifice, the results actually obtained are mainly due.

The vast majority of the population of India remains, in many respects, as it has remained from time immemorial, almost unchanged and unchangeable. It is still, in the words of Sir Henry Maine, "an energetic expression of the Past, hardly affected by its contact with the Western world." But, while this is true, it is not the less true that in material progress and in the improvement of the public administration the magnitude of the work that has been accomplished in India is



extraordinary. In these respects the England of Queen Anne was hardly more different from the England of to-day, than the India of Lord Ellenborough from the India of Lord Curzon. The country has been covered with roads and railways; her almost impassable rivers have been bridged; the most magnificent canals and works of irrigation existing in the world have been constructed for the protection of the people against famine; our soldiers live in barracks that can hardly be equalled in Europe: quarters which once had a reputation little better than that of pest-houses are now among the healthiest in the British Empire, and the rate of mortality among the troops is not one-half what it was; the improvement in the jails and in the health of the prisoners has been equally remarkable; the cities and towns are totally different places from what they were.

Simultaneously with the progress of all these and a thousand other material improvements, with the increase of trade, the creation of new industries, and a vast development of wealth, there has gone on an equally remarkable change in every branch of the public administration. The laws have been codified, and improved, and simplified, and India has obtained, to a degree unthought of before, protection for life and property, and an honest administration of justice. All over India we have been building schools, and hospitals, and dispensaries. The Natives of India have been admitted to a far larger share in the government of their own country; municipal institutions, the first practical step in political education, have been established in every considerable town throughout British India. It is needless to continue this catalogue of the changes that have taken place; but it is not the least



remarkable part of the story that the accomplishment of all this work, and the immense expenditure incurred, which have increased to an incalculable extent the wealth and comfort of the people, have added nothing to the actual burden of their taxation.

This is a subject to which I shall return; but a few other facts may here be given to illustrate the changes that have occurred in India.

In 1840 the total value of the imports and exports of British India was about £19,000,000; in 1901 it exceeded £150,000,000. The trade of India is more than twice as great now as that of the United Kingdom was in the beginning of the nineteenth century. In 1854, the first year for which any figures are forthcoming, the number of letters passing through the Post Office was 19,000,000, while in 1901 it was 545,000,000. It might be stated how many millions of tons of goods are now carried on the railways, and how many telegraphic messages are despatched; but as fifty years ago railways and telegraphs in India had only begun to exist, there would be no comparison to make.

All this implies no disparagement of the work of our predecessors. On the contrary, great as, with the aid of modern science and capital, our later progress has been, it is certain that ever since our countrymen first established themselves as the dominant power in Southern Asia, each successive period, when viewed in relation to the circumstances of the time, has yielded, in one direction or another, not less important results. No language of admiration can be too strong for the noble work accomplished in India by the soldiers and civilians of former days. The greatness of their work, and of the work of which they laid the foundations, may best be seen by a comparison of the neighbouring



Asiatic countries with British India. Not only has it been rescued from the incessant sequence of foreign conquest, plunder, and anarchy which had marked its past history, but in little more than a century it has acquired a position of peace, good government, and wealth, in which it will compare favourably with that of many of the States of Europe.

There have always been, and perhaps always will be, people who, according to the unfortunate English fashion of decrying the great achievements of their countrymen, endeavour persistently to show that, in consequence of the wickedness or folly of our Government, India is in a state bordering upon bankruptcy; that its people are becoming poorer and poorer, more and more miserable, more and more exposed to ruin and death by famine; that crushing taxation goes on constantly increasing; that an enormous and ruinous tribute is exacted in India to be spent in England, and I know not what else. I have no inclination to reply to statements of this sort. "I know," said the wisest of English statesmen, "the obstinacy of unbelief in those perverted minds which have no delight but in contemplating the supposed distress, and predicting the immediate ruin of their country. These birds of evil presage at all times have grated our ears with their melancholy song; and, by some strange fatality or other, it has generally happened that they have poured forth their loudest and deepest lamentations at the periods of our most abundant prosperity."¹

It is not pretended that the social, material, and political conditions of India do not leave ample room for improvement. Defects of many sorts can readily be pointed out. But it is through the progress made that

¹ Burke's *Third Letter on a Regicide Peace*.



these become known. In the arts of administration, as in all other applications of knowledge, our views widen with each successive step we take, and the emphatic recognition that much yet remains to be done for India neither dims the lustre of what has been accomplished nor should cool the ardour of those who there continue the strife with human misfortune, weakness, and ignorance.

That India has gone on, with a speed hardly surpassed in any country, steadily increasing in knowledge, in wealth, and in all the elements of progress; that every branch of the public administration has constantly improved in honesty and efficiency, and that of all the things for which England deserves honour in the world, there has been none greater or better than her government of India—these are to me facts not requiring to be argued about.

There are other critics of our Indian government who deserve to be spoken of with more respect than those "birds of evil presage" to whom I have referred. We often hear expressions of regret that the days of strong personal government have passed away. We are told that the men who, with much smaller personal authority than that of their predecessors, now carry on the everyday work of administration have neither the vigour nor the intimate knowledge of the country for which our officers were formerly so distinguished, and that they have less sympathy with the ideas and feelings of the people. While it may be admitted that there is in this an element of truth, I am satisfied, for my part, that we have gained far more than we have lost. Now that the distance between India and England is measured in days and not in months, the Englishman in India has become less Indian and more English in all his habits



and in all his feelings. He may know less of some aspects of Indian life, but he is no longer cut off, as he once was, from the invigorating and most wholesome influence of his own country. Methods of administration which were once the only ones that were appropriate, have become unsuitable and impracticable, and I entirely disbelieve that the men of the present generation are one whit less capable than those who went before them; they know more and not less of all that it is most necessary for them to know, and the results of their work are more and not less excellent. There can hardly be a more striking proof that there has been no falling off in the qualities necessary for the wise and vigorous government of a great dependency than the manner in which, within recent years, new provinces have been transformed from a condition in which there was no tolerable government, and no safety for life or property, into peaceful and prosperous countries. No more remarkable story than that of the pacification and progress of Burma can be told of any portion of the Empire.



CHAPTER II

THE GEOGRAPHY OF INDIA

The Indian Empire: area and population—The main features of Indian geography—The Indo-Gangetic plain—Presidencies and Provinces—The table-land of Central and Southern India—Physical causes of the great differences between the countries of India—The monsoons.

THE Indian Empire has an area of more than 1,700,000 square miles, and a population of nearly 300 millions. In area and population it is greater than Europe without Russia. A line drawn from its northern boundary beyond the mountains of Kashmir to Cape Comorin, the southern extremity of its vast peninsula, exceeds 2000 miles in length, a distance almost as great as that from Gibraltar to St. Petersburg. It is nearly equally far from the borders of Baluchistán on the west to the point where the eastern frontier of Assam approaches the frontier of China.

Excluding Burma and the mountain countries of the north, India proper may be roughly divided into two regions.

The first of these is a vast alluvial plain, lying immediately below the Himálaya, and stretching with an unbroken surface for some 1700 miles across Northern India. Its eastern and central portions are watered by the Ganges and Bráhmáputra and their tributaries, the northern and western portions by the river-system of the



Indus. At its highest point, on the watershed between the feeders of the Indus and Ganges, it is not more than 1000 feet above the sea. At its eastern end, it extends over the delta of the Ganges and Bráhmáputra, and includes the greater part of the province of Bengal. At its northern and western extremities, it spreads down the Indus to the Arabian Sea, over the Punjab, the western states of Rajputána, and Sind. The central portion of the plain comprises the United Provinces of Agra and Oudh. The alluvial deposits of which this vast tract is composed are, as Sir Richard Strachey says, "so finely comminuted that it is no exaggeration to say that it is possible to go from the Bay of Bengal up the Ganges, through the Punjab, and down the Indus again to the sea, over a distance of 2000 miles and more, without finding a pebble, however small."¹ The Indo-Gangetic plain comprises the richest, the most fertile, the most populous, and historically the most famous countries of India. Its south-western extension includes the desert tracts of Western Rajputána and the almost rainless districts of Sind. It covers more than 500,000 square miles, an area almost as large as that of France, with the German and Austrian Empires, and it contains more than 160 millions of people.

The greater part of the northern plain, excluding the countries on the extreme west, was formerly included, for certain purposes, in the so-called Presidency of Bengal. I shall have to explain how the name Bengal has had, at different periods, different meanings, and how the term "Presidency," although still sometimes used in official papers, has almost ceased to have any special signification. British India is now divided not into the three presidencies of Bengal,

¹ *Encyclopædia Britannica*, Art. "Asia."



Madras, and Bombay, but into provinces, nine of which are extensive countries under separate Governments.

The second region of India lies to the south of the Indo-Gangetic plain, and includes the great triangular peninsula which projects into the Indian Ocean. It has an area of about 700,000 square miles, with a population of more than 120 millions.

The greater part of this tract consists of a hilly table-land,¹ having an average elevation above the sea of about 1500 feet, but rising in the south, in Mysore, to 3000 feet. It may be said, in general terms, to include the whole of that part of India which lies to the south of the Tropic of Cancer, with a relatively small extension to the north, where it gradually merges into the southern borders of the Gangetic plain. On the western and eastern sides of the peninsula, the table-land terminates in the ranges known as the Western and Eastern Gháts. Roughly speaking, they run parallel to the coast on the two sides of Southern India, leaving between them and the sea a more or less broad strip of low-lying land. The Eastern Gháts are an ill-defined range of no great height. The Western Gháts rise steeply from the sea to about 4000 feet, and near their southern extremity reach 8700 feet in the Nilgiri mountains. Farther north, nearly in the same line with the Western Gháts, the Aravali range, in which Mount Abu rises to 5600 feet, forms the western border of the table-land. The northern border cannot be sharply defined; it is broken up into hills which pass

¹ I take the following note from Sir Henry Yule: "A friend objects to this application of 'table-land' to so rugged a region of inequalities. But it is a technical expression in geography, applicable to a considerable area, of which the lowest levels are at a considerable height above the sea."—*Glossary of Anglo-Indian Words*, Art. "Tibet."



more or less gradually into the plains of the United Provinces.

The Vindhia and Satpura ranges, the highest points of which have an elevation of more than 4000 feet, run from west to east across the northern parts of the table-land of Central India. "Now pierced by road and railway (says Sir William Hunter), they stood as a barrier of mountain and jungle between Northern and Southern India, and formed one of the main difficulties in welding the whole into an empire. They consist of vast masses of forests, ridges, and peaks, broken by cultivated tracts of the rich cotton-bearing black soil, exquisite river valleys, and high-lying grassy plains."¹

Through two deep and almost parallel depressions in this tract, the waters of the Narbada and Tapti flow westward to the Arabian Sea. With these exceptions, all the chief rivers of the peninsula, the Són, the Máhánadi, the Godáveri, the Kistna, and Kávári, flow eastward, and excepting the Són, which joins the Ganges, they all fall into the Bay of Bengal. The high ranges of the Gháts, on the western edge of the peninsula, throw off nearly the whole of its drainage to the eastward.

This table-land, with the low-lying tracts on its borders, comprises the British provinces of Madras and Bombay, the Central Provinces, and many of the chief Native States of India. Among the latter are the Marátha States of Gwalior and Indore, and those of Haidarabad and Mysore.

There are other extensive countries that I have not named, lying outside the two great regions into which India Proper may be roughly divided. On the north-eastern border of Bengal the British province of Assam,

¹ *The Indian Empire*, 3rd edit., p. 68.



with an area of nearly 50,000 square miles, and a population of more than 6,000,000, lies immediately below the *Himálaya*, and comprises the great and fertile valley of the *Bráhma*putra after it issues from the mountains. On the opposite side of India, the North-West Frontier Province, formed in 1901 from districts transferred from the Punjab, and British Baluchistán farther south, are the outposts of our empire towards *Afghánistán*.

The French and Portuguese retain some small possessions, now little more than nominal signs of former greatness. The French possessions, of which the most important is Pondicherry, on the eastern coast, contain about 273,000 people; the Portuguese territory of Goa, on the western coast, has a population of nearly 500,000.

Lying on the east side of the Bay of Bengal is the great province of Burma, the latest addition to our Indian Empire. It is completely cut off by the sea or by mountains from India Proper, and differs essentially in every respect from every Indian country. Including the protected *Shán* States, it has an area of more than 236,000 square miles, with a population of 10,500,000. Its frontiers, on the east, march with those of China, French Indo-China, and Siam.

Politically, Aden, at the entrance to the Red Sea, belongs also to the Indian Empire.

The provinces of British India, including Burma, cover more than 1,000,000 square miles, and contain 232,000,000 people. The Native States cover nearly 700,000 square miles, with a population of 62,500,000.

Although the main natural features of India are comparatively simple, the differences between the climates and many of the physical conditions of its various



countries are, as I have already said, often far greater than any that exist between the various countries of Europe. The explanation of this fact is not difficult.

Excepting in temperature, and in a rainfall the amount of which varies within no very wide limits, the general climatic conditions of the countries of Europe, excluding those in the extreme north, are not very different. On the other hand, it is hardly possible to imagine greater contrasts than those which often exist between the climates of various parts of India.

Take, for example, the two extremities of the great Indo-Gangetic plain—Sind on the western, and Lower Bengal on the eastern side of India. These countries are almost in the same latitude; each of them is an unbroken alluvial plain, slightly elevated above the sea. In Sind, so little rain falls that the country may be said to be rainless. It is the Egypt of India, and without artificial irrigation would be an uninhabitable desert. Bengal, on the other hand, is a country of tropically heavy rain and luxuriant vegetation. The rainfall on the mountains along its eastern borders is heavier than any that has been observed in any other part of the world. At Cherra Punji, on the Khasiya hills, on the frontiers of Eastern Bengal, the average yearly rainfall is between 500 and 600 inches, and 40 inches have been measured in a single day. The average annual rainfall of London is about 25 inches, a quantity less than that which not infrequently falls in twenty-four hours in many parts of India.

It is not difficult to imagine from this illustration, taken from two Indian provinces, how great must be the differences in physical conditions between countries presenting such extraordinary contrasts of climate.

The one characteristic, common at certain seasons



to the whole of India, except at great elevations, is excessive heat. The southern half of India, including nearly the whole of the Madras and Bombay Presidencies, lies within the tropic. The northern half, including nearly the whole of the Indo-Gangetic plain, lies north of the tropic. Although in the southern or tropical region the mean temperature of the year is higher, the variations of temperature between summer and winter are comparatively small; and it is in the second region, in the plains north of the tropic, where the days are longer and the power of the sun more continuous, that Indian heat reaches in the summer months its greatest intensity. In parts of the Punjab and of the United Provinces of Agra and Oudh, and in the desert on the borders of Sind, the temperature in May and June is probably exceeded in no part of the world; but this extreme heat brings by its own action the relief without which all life would perish.

“The dominant feature of Indian meteorology (I am quoting from the late Mr. Blanford, formerly the head of the Meteorological Department in India) is the alternation of the monsoons, the annual reversal of the prevailing wind-currents. This alternation is consequent on the fact that, in the early summer, the broad plains and table-lands of India are heated to a far higher temperature than the seas which bathe their shores; whereas, in the winter, the seas retain much of their warmth, while the land radiates away and throws off into stellar space much more heat than it receives from the oblique rays of the sun during the shorter winter days, and, especially as regards Northern India, speedily cools down to a temperature much below that of the surrounding seas.”¹ Observations of these phenomena

¹ *Statistical Atlas of India*, chap. iii.



and their consequences, especially in regard to the winds and the rainfall, show us, as Mr. Blanford says, "how each season in succession affects in diverse modes the different portions of the country; why one province may sometimes be devastated by flood while another is parched with drought, and why, with special adaptation to the peculiarities of its own seasons and resources, each of them has its own agricultural system, its own staples, its own rotation of crops."

After March the heat in Northern India rapidly increases. As the air above the heated earth becomes hotter, the pressure becomes less. At the same time an increase of pressure is going on over the ocean south of the equator, which has then its winter. Thus, a current of air laden with moisture is gradually established towards the continent of India from the sea. This is the so-called south-west monsoon, which brings the periodical rains every year to India, when the heat of the summer has reached its greatest intensity. Towards the end of May the monsoon has usually become established in the south-western extremity of India, and before the end of June it has extended to the greater part of the northern provinces.

The quantity of rain that falls in any part of India depends mainly on the configuration of the surface of the land, and on its situation with reference to the vapour-bearing winds. As the amount of watery vapour which air can hold in suspension varies with the temperature of the air, and increases with the temperature, any cause which cools the current from the sea leads to condensation of the vapour and to the fall of rain.

One of the chief of such causes is the existence of mountains which stand in the path of the winds, and



force the vapour-bearing currents to rise over them. Thus, the range of the Western Gháts, which form an almost continuous barrier along the western coasts of Southern India, meet first the whole force of the monsoon as it comes saturated with moisture from the sea. A great condensation of rain is the immediate result of the fall in the temperature of the hot moist air as it is forced to rise in passing across the mountains. On the face of the Gháts, not far from Bombay, the annual rainfall in some places exceeds 250 inches; but a very large part of the moisture which the current of air contains is drained away by the excessive precipitation near the coast, and, as the current flows on over the land, the quantity of rain is greatly reduced. At Poona, only 60 miles from the sea, the annual rainfall is not more than 26 inches.

Similar phenomena are observed in a still more remarkable form on the Himálaya. The line of maximum elevation is not far from the southern edge of the great mountain mass. When the monsoon winds strike the outer ranges of the Himálaya, a large amount of rain immediately results; the quantity diminishes as the wind passes over the mountains, and when it reaches the regions of perpetual snow, about 100 miles from the plains of India, almost the whole of its remaining moisture is condensed. Thus, the periodical rains are completely stopped by the ranges of the southern face of the Himálaya; they can find no entrance to the mountains beyond, or to the table-land of Tibet, one of the driest and most arid regions of the world.

Similar causes shut off the rain-bearing south-westerly winds from the Madras provinces, on the south-eastern coast of India. These winds cannot carry much moisture over the obstacle to their course



formed by the Western Gháts, and little rain falls in the eastern districts of Madras during the summer months. But, as I shall presently notice, the remedy for this deficiency is not wanting.

Where, on the other hand, the configuration of the land is such that no obstacles are offered to the passage of the monsoon current from the sea, there may be no condensation of its moisture. Thus, when the wind strikes upon the coast of Sind, very slightly elevated above the sea, it finds a hotter and not a cooler surface than that which it has left, and it passes on with all its watery vapour for 1000 miles across the rainless plains to the Punjab, where at last the Himálaya converts the vapour into rain. If, as Sir Richard Strachey has observed, there had been a range of mountains connecting the high land of the Indian peninsula with that of Baluchistán, hardly a drop of rain would have reached the Punjab and the North of India.

It would be easy to multiply illustrations of the manner in which geographical position and configuration determine the fall of rain in the various provinces of India, and even local conditions of a kind which might have seemed of little importance produce remarkable results. Thus, for instance, a deep depression in a range of mountains may afford an opening for the entrance of the vapour-bearing currents of air, and give an ample supply of rain to a tract of country which would have been almost rainless if the mountains had been continuous. In this manner, the valleys of the Tapti and Narbada rivers, which enter the sea north of Bombay, are gates through which the monsoon finds access to the provinces of Central India, and makes them fertile and prosperous.

As the sun travels southward after midsummer,



the south-west monsoon passes gradually away, and towards the end of September it ceases to blow over Northern India. Causes acting in the converse direction, but similar to those which brought it with its rain-bearing currents, lead to its cessation. The temperature falls as the sun goes south, and the vast dry tracts of the Asiatic continent become rapidly colder; the barometric pressure over the land increases, and winds begin to blow from the north towards the south. These winds are the north-east monsoon.

This monsoon, although far less important than its predecessor to the greater part of India, is essentially necessary to Madras and the south-eastern provinces of the peninsula, which, as already explained, are cut off by their geographical position from the benefits of the monsoon from the south-west. When the wind from the north-east is established, these are the only parts of India which it reaches after passing across the sea, and, while everywhere else the current of air is dry, it takes up in its passage across the Bay of Bengal a supply of moisture. Under the operation of the same laws which give their rainy season in the summer to the other provinces, the moisture brought by the north-east wind from the sea is precipitated in rain on the eastern districts of Madras and Southern India from October to December.

This slight sketch of some of the main facts of Indian meteorology may serve to illustrate the causes which render the physical conditions of various parts of India so extremely different. As Mr. Blanford has observed, we may speak of the climates, but not of the climate of India. "The world itself (he says) affords no greater contrast than is to be met with, at one and the same time, within its limits." When these facts are



understood, it will no longer seem surprising that India and its inhabitants, its natural productions, and all the conditions of life, should present such contrasts and diversities.

The following Table, taken from the "Statistical Abstract relating to British India," presented to Parliament 1902, gives the area and population of the British Provinces and Native States of India, according to the Census of 1901.

| PROVINCE OR STATE. | Area in square miles. | Population. |
|--|-----------------------|-------------|
| PROVINCES. | | |
| 1. Ajmer-Merwara | 2,711 | 476,912 |
| 2. Andamans and Nicobars | 3,188 | 24,649 |
| 3. Assam | 56,243 | 6,126,343 |
| 4. Baluchistan (<i>Districts and Administered Territories</i>) | 45,804 | 308,246 |
| 5. Bengal | 151,185 | 74,744,866 |
| 6. Berar | 17,710 | 2,754,016 |
| 7. Bombay (<i>Presidency</i>) | 123,064 | 18,559,561 |
| <i>Bombay</i> | 75,918 | 15,301,677 |
| <i>Sind</i> | 47,066 | 3,210,910 |
| <i>Aden</i> | 80 | 43,974 |
| 8. Burma | 236,738 | 10,489,924 |
| 9. Central Provinces | 86,614 | 9,876,646 |
| 10. Coorg | 1,582 | 180,607 |
| 11. Madras | 141,726 | 38,209,436 |
| 12. North-West Frontier Province | 16,466 | 2,125,480 |
| 13. Punjab | 97,209 | 20,330,339 |
| 14. United Provinces of Agra and Oudh | 107,164 | 47,691,782 |
| <i>Agra</i> | 83,198 | 34,858,705 |
| <i>Oudh</i> | 23,966 | 12,833,077 |
| Total, British Territory | 1,087,404 | 231,898,807 |
| NATIVE STATES. | | |
| 15. Baluchistan | 86,511 | 502,500 |
| 16. Baroda State | 8,099 | 1,952,692 |
| 17. Bengal States | 33,652 | 3,748,544 |
| 18. Bombay States | 65,761 | 6,908,648 |
| 19. Central India States | 78,772 | 8,628,781 |
| 20. Central Provinces States | 29,435 | 1,996,383 |
| 21. Hyderabad State | 82,698 | 11,141,142 |
| 22. Kashmir State | 80,900 | 2,905,578 |
| 23. Madras States | 9,969 | 4,188,086 |
| 24. Mysore State | 29,444 | 5,539,399 |
| 25. Punjab States | 36,532 | 4,424,398 |
| 26. Rajputana States | 127,541 | 9,723,301 |
| 27. United Provinces States | 5,079 | 802,097 |
| Total, Native States | 679,393 | 62,461,549 |
| Grand Total, India | 1,766,797 | 294,360,356 |



CHAPTER III

THE HIMÁLAYA

The Himálaya—Its influence on India—Its geography—The great rivers of India—The story of the sources of the Ganges—British and Native Himálayan provinces—The Kumáon Himálaya—Scenery of the Himálaya.

I HAVE referred in some detail to the regions into which India is divided, but there is a third region which has been barely mentioned, on and outside its borders, the influence of which over a great part of the Indian continent is so important that some knowledge of it is essential to a proper comprehension of Indian geography. I refer to the Himálaya. Without these mountains some of the richest tracts of India would be deserts; they give to India her principal rivers, and, through the effect that they produce on the monsoons and the rainfall, they affect all the conditions of life in the plains above which they rise. This is a subject on which books on India have usually not much to say.

It is unfortunate that we are taught to call these mountains the Himālaya, instead of giving them their more euphonious old Sanskrit name Himālaya, "the abode of snow." There are excellent general accounts of the Himálaya in the ninth edition of the *Encyclopædia Britannica*, and in the fifth supplementary volume of that work, by Sir Richard Strachey and by Sir T. H.



Holdich respectively. As Sir Richard Strachey has shown, the *Himálaya* is not a mountain chain in the ordinary acceptation of the term. There stretches across a large part of Asia, immediately to the north of India, "a great protuberance above the general level of the earth's surface." We usually call the whole of its southern border by the name *Himálaya*, and its northern border, in a much less definite way, *Kuenlun*, and between them lies the mountainous table-land of Tibet, with an average elevation above the sea of 15,000 feet or more. Neither the *Himálaya*, nor *Kuenlun*, nor the Tibetan table-land, have any special or separate existence, the whole constituting one huge agglomeration of mountains.

A range of mountains like those to which we are accustomed in Europe gives no notion of the *Himálaya*. It extends from east to west for some 2000 miles, and the average distance from its southern to its northern edge exceeds 500 miles. The *Himálaya*, thus defined, would stretch from England to the Caspian, and it covers 1,000,000 square miles, an area as large as that of Great Britain, and the German and Austrian Empires, France, Spain, and Italy all together. Mountains like those of Europe have never been obstacles very difficult to pass, but except for a comparatively short distance on the north-western frontiers of India, where the mountains of *Afghánistán* and *Baluchistán* run southwards from the ranges of perpetual snow, the *Himálaya* and its offshoots form a barrier between India and the rest of Asia which for all practical purposes may be called impassable. Except in the quarter that I have named, the *Himálaya* has in all ages given protection to India along a frontier 2000 miles in length. But the exception has been a serious one.



From this vulnerable side, in the course of the last eight hundred years, a swarm of invaders has five times come down upon India, sometimes to conquer, sometimes only to destroy.

As might be supposed from its vast proportions, the Himálaya comprises many countries, differing from each other in almost everything except in this, that they consist entirely of mountains. We find in them every possible variety of climate, of vegetation, and of all natural products, and they are peopled by tribes of various character in most different stages of civilisation. The Himálaya offers a good illustration of the misleading generalisations which are common in regard to almost everything Indian. Some authorities tell us that the mountains between the plains of India and the regions of perpetual snow are bleak and bare and arid, and that their scenery, in spite of its stupendous scale, is uninteresting; others tell us that they are covered with forest and rich vegetation, and present, in the higher regions, scenes more beautiful and sublime than anything to be found in Europe. Both stories are true; but considering, as I have just said, that these mountains would stretch from England to the Caspian, we might as reasonably expect to find the same conditions in the Grampians, the Alps, and the Caucasus, as to find them everywhere in the Himálaya.

It is only with that portion of the Himálaya which rises immediately above the plains of Northern India that I am now concerned. The highest peaks hitherto measured in the Himálaya or in the world are, for the most part, found on the southern side of the watershed between India and Tibet, at a distance of about 100 miles from the Indian plains. Mount Everest, in the Eastern Himálaya, reaches more than 29,000 feet; many



of the peaks exceed 25,000, and still higher points may possibly remain to be discovered. On the north and north-west of Kashmir some of the peaks are hardly inferior to Mount Everest and the highest summits of the eastern portions of the chain. The elevation of the passes from India into Tibet is seldom less than 16,000 feet, and the average elevation of the watershed probably exceeds 18,000 feet. The table-land of Tibet is usually 15,000 or 16,000 feet above the sea.

I have already referred to the manner in which the lofty mountains that rise along the southern margin of the Himálaya form an impassable obstacle to the periodical rains of the south-west monsoon. The moisture-bearing currents cannot pass such a barrier, and all their vapour is condensed on the southern or Indian side of the chain. It is now well known that this furnishes the simple explanation of the fact formerly discussed by Humboldt and others, and long misunderstood, that the line of perpetual snow is lower on the southern than on the northern slopes of the Himálaya. Although on the latter, in Tibet, the winter cold is almost arctic in its intensity, very little snow will be found there in the summer even at 20,000 feet, because the air is so dry that snow can hardly form, while on the southern slopes of the chain the snow-line is found at an elevation of 15,000 or 16,000 feet.

3,000 or 4,000
The greatest rivers of India all come from the Himálaya. It is remarkable that, although their courses through India to the sea are so widely divergent, their chief sources are not far apart from each other, and are all on the northern or Tibetan side of the Indian watershed. They are in the high Tibetan plateau, near the lake of Mánasarowar and the peak of Kailás, names among the most sacred of Hindu mythology. This is



strictly true of the Indus, the Sutlej, and the Bráhma-putra, and, although the Ganges seems to be an exception, it can hardly be said to be one.

The true story of the sources of the Ganges is curious. We all know how, in the eighteenth century, Bruce was supposed to have discovered the sources of the Nile, and how it afterwards appeared that he had been to the head, not of the great river, but of one of its tributaries. Something of the same sort may be said of the Ganges.

Almost every work on the geography of India still tells us that the Ganges has its origin in the glacier, or, as it is often and inaccurately called, the snow-bed of Gangotri, where it issues from the ice-cave, the "cow's mouth" of the sacred books of the Hindus. The truth is that, apart from mythology and religion and common belief, and judging as we judge less holy streams, Gangotri has no claim to be called the source of the Ganges, designating by that name the river that issues from the mountains at Hardwár. The river which comes from Gangotri is the Bhágirathi, one of the numerous Himálayan feeders of the true Ganges. The main stream is that of the Alaknanda, which has a much longer course and, at all seasons of the year, a much larger body of water than the Bhágirathi; its most distant sources are on the southern side of the watershed, near the Niti and Mána passes into Tibet, and it collects the drainage of the peaks and glaciers of the Kumáon and Garhwál Himálaya, from Nanda Devi to the sacred shrines of Badrináth and Kedárnáth. These two streams unite about 40 miles above Hardwár. But the Ganges, applying that name, according to universal custom, to the combined river that flows through Bengal past Patna and Rájmahál, and thence on to the sea, has also, like the Indus, the Sutlej, and the Bráhma-putra, its trans-



Himálayan sources. The Gogra, or more correctly the Ghágra, which joins the Ganges above Patna, about 500 miles from the sea, is hardly known to European fame, but in the upper portion of its course it is a much larger river than the Ganges. It rises on the north of the Indian Himálaya, not far from the sources of the other great rivers, near the lake of Mánsarowar, finds its way through the mountains of Nepál, under the name of Kauriáli, and flows on through Oudh until it joins the Ganges. The Kauriáli, near the borders of Nepál, after it has entered the plains, is said to have a minimum discharge of 11,000 cubic feet per second, whereas that of the Ganges at Hardwár is only 6300 feet. Whether at the junction between the Ganges and the Gogra, the former, after its longer course through the plains of India, has become the larger stream, is a question to which no certain answer has hitherto been given. It may seem curious that it should still be possible to doubt whether the Gogra can properly be called an affluent of the Ganges, or whether it ought not rather to be held that the Ganges, in its passage from the mountains to the sea, falls into a river greater than itself, the very name of which is hardly known in Europe. The question has no material importance, and the truth is that no standard has hitherto been clearly recognised by which to determine the characters that justify us in speaking of any particular affluent of a river as its source. It remains undecided whether that term should be applied to the affluent which has the longest course, which has the greatest catchment area, or which has the superior volume; and, if volume be the test, whether this is to be measured where the stream is at its highest, its lowest, or its average level.

Like the rivers that I have named, the Irawadi and



the Salwin, the great rivers of Burma, have also their main sources on the northern or Tibetan side of the Himálaya.

Between Assam, the British province on the extreme north-east of India, and the western frontiers of Kashmir, a distance of 1500 miles, the countries of the Indian Himálaya and its offshoots cover more than 150,000 square miles, and contain some 6,500,000 people. They are mostly under Native rule, and among them the most important is Nepál, the one State in India, or on its borders, which has remained entirely independent of our power. In 1815 and 1816 the Nepalese measured their strength against ours, and lost in consequence Kumáon and Garhwál, their richest districts. Since that time they have preserved an unvarying policy of absolute but thoroughly friendly isolation. The British representative at Kátmáandu, their capital, is treated almost as a highly honoured prisoner, and Central Africa is more accessible to European travellers than the greater part of Nepál. However unenlightened from our point of view this policy, which the geographical position and configuration of the country alone rendered possible, may have been, it has had the result of shutting out all causes and opportunities of dispute, and of preserving the independence of Nepál. The other Native Hill States are all under British control. The most important of them is Kashmir, with its dependencies in Western Tibet. I have spoken of the great differences between the various countries and peoples of these mountains. A remarkable illustration is seen in the contrast between the States on the Eastern and Western extremities of the Indian Himálaya. There are no braver soldiers than the little Gurkhas of Nepál, and few greater cowards than the stalwart Moham-medans of Kashmir.



In the Western Himálaya, in the Punjab Lieutenant-Governorship, several districts, of which Kángra is the most important, are under British administration, and in one of them, a small patch surrounded by Native States, is Simla, the summer headquarters of the Government of India. But the most considerable tract of British territory in the Himálaya is the province of Kumáon and Garhwál, bordering on the plains of Rohilkhand, in the Agra Province.

It would be foreign to my purpose to speak at length regarding this or any other portion of the chain, and, as I have just said, in treating of so vast a subject as the Himálaya it is easy to be misled by generalisations. I will, however, say something about Kumáon, because in its main features it affords instructive illustrations of many of the chief and most widely prevailing characteristics of these mountains, and because it is a country with which I have had unusual opportunities of making myself acquainted.

The province of Kumáon has an area of more than 12,000 square miles, and its population exceeds a million. Its whole surface is covered by mountains. They rise with strange suddenness from the plains of India. We pass almost in a moment into the mountains, and when we have once entered them, we hardly find level ground again until we have gone 400 or 500 miles across the Himálaya, Tibet, and the Kuenlun. The Gágar range, described with enthusiastic admiration by Bishop Heber, rises immediately above the plains to more than 8000 feet, and in one of its valleys lie the little lake and station of Naini Tál, the summer headquarters of the Lieutenant-Governor of the United Provinces of Agra and Oudh.

After travelling through Kumáon for more than



100 miles, through a constant succession of high ranges and deep gorges, we pass the great peaks of the Indian *Himálaya*, and cross over into Tibet, but, looking northward from the watershed, we see again fresh snowy ranges and mountains that look as endless and as vast as those that we have left behind.

In the earlier part of my Indian life I had the good fortune to be employed for about ten years in various offices in Kumáon and Garhwál, and I spent many summers in the higher regions of the *Himálaya*, sometimes among the almost countless glaciers at the sources of the Ganges and its tributaries, or visiting the passes into Tibet, one of them more than 18,000 feet above the sea, or on the forest-covered ranges immediately under the snowy peaks. I have seen much of European mountains, but in stupendous sublimity, combined with a magnificent and luxuriant beauty, I have seen nothing that can be compared with the *Himálaya*.

Although none of the Kumáon summits reach an elevation equal to that attained by a few of the peaks in other parts of the chain, for only two of them exceed 25,000 feet, it is probable that the average elevation of the snowy range of Kumáon is nowhere surpassed. For a continuous distance of some 200 miles the peaks constantly reach a height of from 22,000 to more than 25,000 feet.

The Alpine vegetation of the Kumáon *Himálaya*, while far more various, closely resembles in its generic forms that of the Alpine regions of Europe; but after we have left the plains for 100 miles and have almost reached the foot of the great peaks, the valleys are still, in many cases, only 2000 or 3000 feet above the sea, conveying, as Sir Richard Strachey says, "the heat and vegetation of the tropics among ranges covered with