



a fierce dispute or the anxiety of a protracted lawsuit; his first object has been to fix a moderate assessment, and to lay restrictions on a right possessed by the Government, which they all acknowledge and consider sacred, and for moderation in the exercise of which they are grateful. Having successfully accomplished this, and thereby conferred on them a new and valuable property, he calls upon them, whilst their minds are calm and their best feelings brought into action, to come to an agreement on all points likely to produce disputes among them; he then reduces the terms of the agreement to record, and gives to the record the stamp of judicial authority."¹

An elaborate system was long ago established for the preparation and maintenance of the record of rights. Every field, as I have explained, is shown in the village maps, and it has a number corresponding with a register or field-book. In this are entered the area of the field, the crop, whether or not it is irrigated, the rent payable for it, the names of the proprietor and tenant, and other particulars. A rent-roll is prepared for every village, showing the fields and area of each cultivator's holding, the length of time for which he has held, the rent which he has to pay, and the person to whom it is payable. A list is also drawn up showing the proprietors of land in the village, the share of each, and the amount of revenue for which each is responsible.

It was formerly a weak point in the land revenue system of Northern India, that no sufficient provision existed for maintaining the accuracy of the records prepared at the time of the settlement with so much labour. It is obviously not enough to make a record of facts connected with the land at any given time; the constant revision of the record is necessary, so that it may always represent the actual condition of things.

¹ Directions to Revenue Officers.



Every village or circle of villages in Northern India has, according to ancient custom, among the servants of the community, a local accountant or notary called the Patwári, and on him the responsibility primarily rests for the maintenance of the village records. In the United Provinces there are about 30,000 patwáris, each of whom has usually charge of three or four villages. It was found extremely difficult in practice to ensure the accuracy of the patwári's papers. Maps and records, prepared at the cost of the State with the utmost care, frequently lost the greater part of their value by failure to maintain them up to date. This had long been recognised as a serious evil. Public and private interests alike suffered from the frequent inaccuracy of the official registers.

The establishment in 1875 of a separate department of Land Records and Agriculture, to which reference will again be made, has gone far to remedy these defects, and to ensure the constant correction of the village records.

I quote from an official report the following account of the manner in which this is done:—

“Changes occur every year under nearly all the heads of the record which the patwári has to prepare. Field boundaries are altered; waste land is brought under cultivation; parts of holdings are relinquished by tenants; tenants are ejected; new tenancies are created; rents are raised or lowered; proprietors die and their lands are divided among the heirs; sales and mortgages take place; irrigation and crops vary perpetually with season and market. All such changes are carefully noted every year by the patwári in the map and in his annual record. Abstracts of each year's record are made for each village and tabulated, and these again are compiled for each sub-division of the district. In this way the agricultural resources of every village, sub-division, and district can at any time be ascertained.

“To render these records accurate, and to enforce their punctual



preparation, a very rigorous system of supervision and testing is necessary. This is effected through Native inspectors called Kánungos. There is in each district a staff of these officers, whose duty it is to supervise and check the field work of the patwáris, to test their annual entries, and verify changes recorded by them. There are nearly 1200 kánungos of various grades in these provinces. In every district there is a special training school, through which the patwáris are required to pass and qualify according to prescribed standards."

These measures for ensuring the accuracy of the village records have also led to very important improvements in the system under which settlements are periodically revised.

The policy of fixing for all time the demand of the State upon the land has been—we may trust, finally—abandoned. We have had sufficient evidence of the folly of such a policy in the consequences to which, after more than a century's trial, it has led us in Bengal. It has nevertheless always been felt that there were serious evils connected with the system under which settlements were made in Northern India for a term of years. Whatever care was taken, operations of survey and inquiry and record could not be carried on continuously for long periods of time without harassment of the agricultural classes, and without causing uneasiness and discontent. When the term of the settlement approached its close, not only was a check placed on improvements, but positive deterioration was to be feared, because the people were apprehensive that signs of prosperity might lead to enhancement of the Government revenue.

The necessity for elaborate local investigations ceases when the village records are accurately maintained, and in a great part of the United Provinces these are now so trustworthy that when a new settlement is necessary



they can be used as a sufficient basis for the revision of the assessment.

An official paper gives the following account of the system under which settlements are now made :—

“These most valuable and successful reforms, carried out under the direction of the Department of Land Records and Agriculture, which have laid the foundations of all the recent improvements in the revision of land assessment, were originally devised and inaugurated by Sir Edward Buck. In the districts about to be brought under settlement, the annual correction of the village maps has made them so nearly accurate as to render a fresh survey unnecessary, and the rent-rolls compiled by the Patwáris, under the supervision of the Kánungos, are sufficiently correct to serve as the basis of assessment. For the costly and troublesome temporary establishments which used to be employed has been substituted this ordinary and permanent agency, and the results have been, that proceedings which would have lasted at least ten years under the old system will now be carried out in three years, and probably at less than a quarter of the expense. The first duty of the settlement officer is to verify the rent-roll drawn up by the village accountant; and unless he has grounds for believing that the rents are fraudulently understated, or that for any other reason they are very much below the rents paid in similar circumstances in the same neighbourhood, he accepts them as the basis of his assessment, and fixes the Government revenue at half the rental. He is forbidden to take prospective assets into account, and in every case the assessment will rest on the ground of actuals. In assessing land cultivated by the proprietors themselves, for which no true rent is paid, he applies a rate which is 25 per cent lower than the rent paid by tenants in the same village.”

No enhancement of the Government demand can be made on account of increased value given to the land by wells or other permanent improvements made at the expense of the owner or occupier.

This is a rule which was altogether unknown under any of the governments that preceded us. In Bombay



its observance is secured by law ; in the other provinces, in one form or another, the same principle is followed, and the Government of India has insisted on the necessity of everywhere making the assessment of the land revenue in a manner which shall stimulate the expenditure of private capital upon the improvement of the land, and secure to the owners the benefits of their enterprise.

The importance of the reforms that have thus been carried out, and which are mainly due to the formation of the provincial Agricultural departments, can hardly be overstated. They have brought about a revolution in the system under which settlements were formerly made. The administration has been strengthened ; the interests of the agricultural population are better protected ; the efficiency of the courts has been increased, because they have access to trustworthy records of the rights of all persons interested in the land ; the expenses of litigation have been reduced ; and the saving of money to the Government will be very large.

The Reports of the settlement officers constitute, in the words of Sir Henry Maine, "a whole literature of very great extent and variety, and of the utmost value and instructiveness." I have now before me one of these Settlement Reports, a folio volume of more than four hundred pages. I doubt whether there is any English county of which, physical science apart, so minute a description could be found. Geography, climate, history, castes, religions, communications, population, commerce, condition of the people, education, agricultural statistics, systems of cultivation, tenures of land, history of past and present settlements, rates of rent and revenue—there is hardly a subject of interest in regard to which the results of long and patient investigation have not



been recorded. This is the class of authorities to which we must go if we desire to learn the truth about the condition of the people.

Excepting in Bengal, where more than a century ago a permanent settlement of the land revenue was made without surveys, and on data to which at the present time we should attach no value, systems of settlement as careful and elaborate as that which I have been describing exist in all the chief provinces of British India. The plans followed in the Punjab and in the Central Provinces are similar, for the most part, to those of the United Provinces. In Southern India, where the prevailing tenures of land are different, the systems of assessment are, as I have already said, different also. Under one system or another, cadastral surveys have been made and registers of rights and possession have been prepared, which, notwithstanding inevitable imperfections, are probably more complete than any that exist in any other country. Much in the existing land revenue system of Northern India is due to the great Akbar; it assumed almost its present form under the East India Company; it owes much of its perfection to James Thomason,¹ one of the most enlightened men that have administered an Indian province, and its efficiency has gone on constantly increasing since the transfer of the Government to the Crown. No greater and more beneficent work has ever been undertaken than these vast operations, extending over several hundred thousands of square miles, designed to protect the interests of more than 150,000,000 of people.

I shall have occasion to refer again to the condition of Oudh in 1856, when it became British territory. The

¹ Mr. Thomason was Lieutenant-Governor of the North-Western Provinces from 1843 to 1853.



Tálukdárs were the great landlords, and about two-thirds of the province were included in their estates. Some of them belonged to families which had been in possession for centuries, and their claims to be recognised as proprietors could not rightly be denied. Some had been officials or revenue contractors, intermediate between the Native Government and the village proprietors; by their ability or rapacity they had often become holders of large estates, and had managed to appropriate to themselves more or less completely the rights of the old occupants.

On the annexation of Oudh in 1856, the Tálukdárs were treated with neither discrimination nor justice. In the first settlement of the land revenue, claims were often ignored which ought to have been admitted, and when the mutinies of 1857 occurred the majority of the Tálukdárs went into open rebellion. I will not give in any detail the history of what followed. A proclamation was issued by Lord Canning, confiscating to the British Government, with a few exceptions, all landed property in Oudh. His object, regarding which there was at first much misunderstanding, was to get rid of all the obligations involved by the settlement of 1856, to obtain *tabula rasa* which would give the opportunity of repairing the injustice with which many of the Tálukdárs had been treated, and of restoring their estates on condition of loyal submission. This purpose was effectually carried out, but unfortunate consequences followed. After the mutinies there came over the British Government and its officers, almost throughout India—happily, for a short time only, but long enough to do much injury—a flood of reactionary opinions, and the experience of the past seemed forgotten. Permanent settlements of the land revenue were to be introduced;



great landlords were to be created or their growth encouraged, in the belief that they would become devoted supporters of our Government; the system of dealing with small village proprietors and communities was pronounced politically unwise; the rights of tenants were declared to have no existence, or at any rate must not be strengthened to the detriment of the landlord.

When Oudh was reoccupied after the mutinies, in 1858, it offered a fine field for the application of such opinions. "The maintenance," the Government of India wrote to the Secretary of State in November 1859, "of a landed aristocracy in India, where it exists, is an object of such importance that we may well afford to sacrifice to it something of a system which, while it has increased the independence and protected the rights of the cultivators of the soil, has led to the exhaustion or decay of the old nobility." India is doubtless a country in which it would be more than ordinarily foolish to ignore the consideration due to families whose position and claims may have been recognised for centuries, and which in the eyes of the people still retain their titles to honour, and in the settlement of 1856 many of the Tálukdárs received scant justice. But the injustice that followed the new arrangements was worse. The ancient rights of multitudes of small proprietors and cultivators, rights often older and more undoubted than those of the Tálukdárs, were swept away or ignored; the Tálukdárs not only recovered their estates, but they received, in many cases, extravagant privileges to which they themselves had made no pretensions, and solemn promises that those privileges should be maintained were given by the Government. It is true that, under the orders of Lord Canning, all subordinate rights in the land which had been actually



enjoyed before the annexation of the province were to be preserved; but the onus of proof lay upon those who claimed them. In consequence of the orders of confiscation, followed by the grant of full rights of property to the Tálukdárs, the legal presumption was *prima facie* that the right of the Tálukdár was complete and that other rights in the land had been extinguished. Anarchy prevailed in Oudh before annexation, and it was difficult for an ignorant peasant-proprietor to prove that he had enjoyed at that time rights independent of those of the Tálukdár. The fate of the tenants was no better. With rare exceptions, rights of occupancy in the land were declared to have no existence in Oudh. Lord Lawrence, when he became Viceroy, was anxious that remedies should, so far as was possible, be applied, to diminish the injustice which had been done. I was myself, as Chief Commissioner of Oudh, one of the agents through whom he acted, but I look back with little satisfaction on such amount of success as was gained. Public opinion in India was still going through the phase of admiration for artificially created aristocratic institutions; and, both in his own Council and in England, Lord Lawrence met with such strong opposition that it was impossible to do much. He did all that seemed at the time practicable, but it may be a question whether it would not have been better to have done nothing; for although protection was given to an important class of small proprietors, and to a small class of tenants, it may be feared that the measures that were taken tended, in some respects, to give greater strength to a vicious system.

About two-thirds of the land in Oudh are now owned by great landlords, the Tálukdárs, and one-third by proprietors of small estates, or by the sharers in village communities. The greater part of the province is



cultivated by tenants possessing no permanent rights. Custom has gradually been giving way to competition in the determination of rents. Much, however, has been done in recent years to improve the position of cultivators. The Tálukdárs have concurred in legislation to render the condition of tenants less precarious. Under an Act passed in 1886, important checks have been placed on enhancement of rent and eviction. Sitting tenants are now, as a general rule, entitled to continue in undisturbed occupation of their holdings, at present rates, for periods of seven years; and on the expiry of each period they are entitled to renewal at a rent not exceeding by more than $6\frac{1}{4}$ per cent that formerly paid. In all cases compensation is due to tenants before they can be evicted. Measures have also been taken for the preservation of the estates of old families which had become involved in pecuniary difficulties. Act II. of 1890 enabled a Tálukdár to entail the whole or a portion of his estate, and to place it beyond the danger of being lost to his family by the extravagance of his heirs.

In spite of all our mistakes and shortcomings in Oudh, the condition of the people generally is beyond all comparison better than it was before the establishment of our Government. There has been a great increase of cultivation, the means of communication have been immensely improved by the construction of roads and railways, new markets have been opened, the prices of agricultural produce have risen, and the cultivators, although usually very poor, are better fed, better clothed, and better housed than they were.

In speaking of the system under which the assessments of land revenue are periodically revised, and under which land records are maintained, I referred to the improvements that have followed the creation of separate



departments for the control of this branch of the administration. I must return for a moment to this subject.

Lord Mayo was the first Governor-General who gave practical recognition to the value of the study of questions connected with Indian agriculture.

"For generations to come," the Government of India wrote in 1870 to the Secretary of State, "the progress of India in wealth and civilisation must be directly dependent on her progress in agriculture. Agricultural products must long continue the most important part of the exports, and the future development of Indian commerce will mainly depend upon the improvement in the quantity and quality of existing agricultural staples, or on the introduction of new products, which shall serve as materials for manufacture and for use in the industrial arts. . . . There is perhaps no country in the world in which the State has so immediate and direct an interest in such questions. The Government of India is not only a Government but the chief landlord. The land revenue is derived from that portion of the rent which belongs to the State and not to individual proprietors. Throughout the greater part of India, every measure for the improvement of the land enhances the value of the property of the State. The duties which in England are performed by a good landlord fall, in India, in a great measure, upon the Government. Speaking generally, the only Indian landlord who can command the requisite knowledge is the State."

In 1870, a separate Department of Agriculture and Commerce was created under the Government of India.

It was foreseen by Lord Mayo that this central department of control would be able to do comparatively little until working departments with similar objects had been established under the local Governments. In 1875, when I was myself Lieutenant-Governor, the first provincial department of Agriculture was created in the North-Western Provinces. The honour for the successful initiation and subsequent progress of this excellent reform is mainly due to the enlightened and



untiring energy of Sir Edward Buck. Similar departments have since been established in the other provinces of British India. They are still in their infancy, but they have already led to valuable results. I do not doubt that much will ultimately be done, by the application of more scientific methods, towards the actual improvement of Indian agriculture, but up to the present time the chief work undertaken has been the improvement of the land revenue administration, the better organisation of the system for maintaining accurate land records, and the reform of the methods under which the land revenue is assessed.

The necessity of everywhere organising Departments of Agriculture was strongly urged by the Famine Commission of 1880, and the recommendations then made were accepted, and to a great extent carried out, by the Government of India. Sir Antony MacDonnell's Famine Commission of 1901 wound up its Report by the following reference to this subject:—"Much progress has been made in the last twenty years, but the progress has been unequal, and the time has, in our opinion, now come for a further advance. These Agricultural Departments have a double function to discharge, and this is expressed in their designation as Departments of Land Records and Agriculture. They have on the Land Records side to register all facts connected with the tenure of land, with questions of rent and revenue, and with agricultural statistics. On the Agricultural side they have to deal with the condition of the cultivating classes, with agriculture, and with agricultural methods and the various questions connected with their efficiency. We are, indeed, far from thinking that the Indian cultivator is ignorant of agriculture; in the mere practice of cultivation, Agricultural Departments have probably much



to learn from the cultivator. But in the utilisation of his hereditary skill, in economy of the means of production, and in the practice of organised self-help, the Indian cultivator is generally ignorant and backward. It is in correcting these deficiencies that Agricultural Departments will find their richest fields of labour. Without pretending to exhaust the number of subjects on which these departments may usefully employ themselves, we may mention the following: improved agricultural teaching to the better classes; the promotion of Mutual Associations; agricultural research and experiments; inquiries regarding tillage and manure; the investigation of crop diseases and their remedies; the provision of improved seed; the experimental introduction of new staples; the improvement of cattle breeding; the investigation of cattle diseases; and the development of the fodder supply. To some of these subjects more or less attention has, we know, been already given, but they all claim greater and more systematic attention. To this end the employment of a stronger expert staff in every province is necessary. The steady application to agricultural problems of expert research is the crying necessity of the time."

In 1900 and 1901, an elaborate inquiry was made by the Government of Lord Curzon, and by the Provincial Governments, into the subject of the land revenue system of British India. It had been contended by some of the critics of the Government that the intensity and frequency of famines in India had been largely due to poverty caused by over-assessment of the land revenue demand, and the Government of India determined to take the opportunity of instituting fresh inquiries into all the more important questions connected with the land revenue administration. The conclusions



of the Government were embodied in a Resolution dated the 16th January 1902. It deserves the attention of every one who desires to learn the truth on this subject, for nothing could be more complete,¹ and I may fitly close this chapter with the following extract in which the Government stated the propositions which it claimed to have established.

“(1) That a permanent settlement, whether in Bengal or elsewhere, is no protection against the incidence and consequences of famine.

“(2) That in areas where the State receives its land revenue from landlords, progressive moderation is the keynote of the policy of Government, and that the standard of 50 per cent of the assets is one which is almost uniformly observed in practice, and is more often departed from on the side of deficiency than of excess.

“(3) That in the same areas the State has not objected, and does not hesitate, to interfere by legislation to protect the interests of the tenants against oppression at the hands of the landlords.

“(4) That in areas where the State takes the land revenue from the cultivators, the proposal to fix the assessment at one-fifth of the gross produce would result in the imposition of a greatly increased burden upon the people.

“(5) That the policy of long term settlements is gradually being extended, the exceptions being justified by conditions of local development.

“(6) That a simplification and cheapening of the proceedings connected with new settlements, and an avoidance of the harassing invasion of an army of subordinate officials, are a part of the deliberate policy of Government.

“(7) That the principle of exempting or allowing for improvements is one of general acceptance, but may be capable of further extension.

“(8) That assessments have ceased to be made upon prospective assets.

“(9) That local taxation as a whole, though susceptible of some redistribution, is neither immoderate nor burdensome.

¹ This Resolution was published in the *Papers regarding the Land Revenue System of British India*, presented to Parliament in 1902.



“(10) That over-assessment is not, as alleged, a general or widespread source of poverty and indebtedness in India, and that it cannot fairly be regarded as a contributory cause of famine. The Government of India have further laid down liberal principles for future guidance, and will be prepared, where the necessity is established, to make further advance in respect of—

“(11) The progressive and graduated imposition of large enhancements ;

“(12) Greater elasticity in the revenue collection, facilitating its adjustment to the variations of the seasons and the circumstances of the people ;

“(13) A more general resort to reduction of assessments in cases of local deterioration, where such reduction cannot be claimed under the terms of settlement.

“In thus defining their policy, the Government of India would not desire to claim for the land revenue system of British India an exactitude or a freedom from blemish to which it cannot pretend. Historically it owes its immediate origin to practices inherited from the most decadent period of native rule, and its form to changes made slowly and not without mistakes by men who were aliens to the country, and could only with difficulty, and by slow degrees, assimilate the requirements or enter into the feelings of the people. Where habit and precedent count for more than wisdom, there has been need for caution in reform ; and logical completeness or simplicity could not be expected of a system, born amid such surroundings, applied to such manifold conditions and to so heterogeneous a population, and subject, in the various stages of its development, to considerations of practical expediency rather than of abstract symmetry or scientific perfection. . . . Assessments cannot be dictated by the theorist in his study ; they elude dogmatic treatment, and can only be safely worked out by the Settlement Officer in the village and on the fields. While they may admit of statistical analysis, they are liable to be hampered by premature statistical definition. The true function of Government is to lay down broad and generous principles for the guidance of its officers, with becoming regard to the traditions of the province and the circumstances of the locality, and to prescribe moderation in enhancement, and sympathy in collection. Above all, it is its duty to exercise discrimination in the choice of the agents whom it employs for this



most critical and responsible of tasks. The Governor-General in Council acknowledges with gratitude the services that have been rendered to Government in this respect by a long line of devoted and capable officers, and he believes that the existing system, if pursued upon the lines that have been indicated, is both well suited to the present conditions of the country and compatible with its future development, and that the revenue which it provides, and which is more lenient in its incidence than at any previous stage of Indian history, is capable of being levied from the people with surprisingly little hardship and without discontent."



CHAPTER XX

AN INDIAN PROVINCE (*continued*)

Administration of an Indian Province—An Indian district—The Magistrate and Collector or District Officer—His functions—Subdivisions of districts—The Tahsildárs—Executive and Judicial Powers—The Joint, Assistant, and Deputy Magistrate and Collector—The Police—Jails—Hospitals—Sanitation—Vaccination—Public works—Education—General illiteracy—Municipalities—Local self-government—Commissioners of divisions—The Revenue Board—Heads of departments—The Lieutenant-Governor—The Legislative Council—The Judicial Courts.

I now propose to give a sketch of the manner in which the administration of an Indian province is carried on, taking, as before, the United Provinces of Agra and Oudh as my example. In regard, however, to many matters little need be added to what has been already said. An account, more or less generally applicable to the whole of British India, has already been given of the constitution of the Provincial Governments, of the Civil Services, of the system under which justice is administered, of the measures taken to encourage education, of the railways and works of irrigation, and of the principal sources of the public income. I shall now refer more particularly to some of the executive branches of the provincial administration, to which little reference has hitherto been made.

Throughout British India the District, technically

so called, is the unit of administration. Every province is divided into Districts, each of which has its separate organisation. A province is a collection of Districts, and without a clear conception of a District no one can understand how the actual government of India is carried on. In the details of District organisation there are great differences in different provinces, but the general principles on which the administrative system is based are much the same everywhere, and the account which I am about to give of a District in the United Provinces is, in many respects, generally applicable to the whole of British India.

These Provinces are divided into forty-eight districts, each of which is a compact tract, having usually an area of 1500 or 2000 square miles, and a population of 750,000 to 1,500,000. This is about the area and population of one of the larger English counties. In several provinces, and especially in Madras, the districts are much more extensive.

In India, where an absolute government is administered by a small body of foreigners far more advanced in civilisation than the people of the country itself, the most essential condition of safety to the rulers, and of good government to the people, is that authority should be strong, and authority cannot be strong unless it is concentrated. In every district of British India the Government has its representative in whom all executive civil authority centres. This officer, in the province of Agra, in Bengal, in Madras, and in Bombay, is called the Magistrate and Collector, or Collector alone; in the Punjab, in Oudh, in the Central Provinces, in Burma, and in the other so-called Non-Regulation provinces, he is called the Deputy Commissioner. The term "District Officer," by which he is often known, is applicable in



both cases. The name Collector conveys to English ears a very false idea. A collector in England is a petty officer who collects rates and taxes; in India, he is, in many respects, the most important officer in the whole administrative hierarchy.

I borrow from Sir William Hunter the following description :—

“The district officer, whether known as collector-magistrate or as deputy commissioner, is the responsible head of his jurisdiction. Upon his energy and personal character depends ultimately the efficiency of our Indian Government. His own special duties are so numerous and so various as to bewilder the outsider; and the work of his subordinates, European and native, largely depends upon the stimulus of his personal example. His position has been compared to that of the French *préfet*, but such a comparison is unjust in many ways to the Indian district officer. He is not a mere subordinate of a central bureau, who takes his colour from his chief and represents the political parties or the permanent officialism of the capital. The Indian collector is a strongly individualised worker in every department of rural well-being, with a large measure of local independence and of individual initiative. As the name of collector-magistrate implies, his main functions are twofold. He is a fiscal officer, charged with the collection of the revenue from the land and other sources; he is also a revenue and criminal judge, both of first instance and in appeal. But his title by no means exhausts his multifarious duties. He does in his smaller local sphere all that the Home Secretary superintends in England, and a great deal more, for he is the representative of a paternal and not of a constitutional Government. Police, jails, education, municipalities, roads, sanitation, dispensaries, the local taxation, and the imperial revenues of his district are to him matters of daily concern. He is expected to make himself acquainted with every phase of the social life of the natives, and with each natural aspect of the country. He should be a lawyer, an accountant, a financier, and a ready writer of state papers. He ought also to possess no mean knowledge of agriculture, political economy, and engineering.”¹

¹ *The Indian Empire*, p. 513.



All this signifies, not that he is expected to be omniscient, but that the Magistrate and Collector is the principal officer of Government in every branch of the executive administration of the district. As the local representative of the Government, through whom all the orders and measures of the ruling power are issued and made known to the people, and on whom the Government depends for information of every serious matter that occurs, he holds a position of great and exceptional importance. If the District officer is weak and incapable, authority and law in the district are weak also; if he is strong and competent, they are respected. Every cause which tends needlessly to diminish his influence lessens the authority of the Government. At the same time, it must not be supposed that he has any irresponsible and arbitrary power: all his more important duties are strictly regulated either by law or by rules laid down by the Government, and all his proceedings are subject to supervision and, when necessary, to correction.

His duties as Collector differ in different provinces, according to the system on which the land revenue is assessed, the prevailing tenures of land, and other local circumstances. Thus, in Bengal, where the Government demand has been fixed in perpetuity, and where comparatively few measures have been taken to maintain accurate records of existing rights in the land, the duties of the Collector are less important and difficult than in the temporarily settled provinces.

In Northern India the District officer, as Mr. Thomason wrote, "in order properly to discharge his duties, must possess the most complete knowledge of the landed tenures in his district, and of everything which tends to affect the interests of the agricultural



population." He has to act in many capacities. He supervises the arrangements for securing the payment at the appointed times of the land revenue, the excise upon spirits, the revenue derived from stamps, and the assessment and collection of the income tax. He is personally responsible for the care of the Government treasury at the headquarters of the district, and for the punctual preparation and submission of the public accounts. The records and registers affecting landed property are deposited in his office; and, in connection with the Agricultural Department, to which reference was made in the last chapter, the duty rests upon him of maintaining in a condition of efficiency the elaborate system laid down for their preservation and correction. He decides judicially, subject in many cases to an appeal to the Civil courts, disputes regarding rent and other questions between landlords and tenants.

"Nothing can pass in the district of which it is not his duty to keep himself informed, and to watch the operation. The vicissitudes of trade, the state of the currency, the administration of civil justice, the progress of public works, must all affect most materially the interests of the classes of whom he is the constituted guardian. Officious interference in matters beyond his immediate control must be avoided, but temperate and intelligent remonstrance against anything which he sees to be wrong is one of his most important duties."¹

It need hardly be said that the District officer cannot administer personally the details of all this business. He has at his disposal a large staff of officers, only a few of whom are English, through whom the work is carried on. An efficient District officer watches every department of the administration; he is always ready to intervene, but he does not occupy himself with

¹ *Directions for Collectors, N.W.P.* p. 184.



the details of business which his subordinates are as competent as himself to transact. His duties of supervision are so onerous and important that he ought, as Mr. Thomason has said, to do nothing that he can make others do for him.

Every district is partitioned, for the convenient administration of business, into a number of subdivisions, often corresponding with those that existed before our time. Each revenue subdivision is in charge of a Native officer of high standing, called in the Northern Provinces a Tahsildár, and in Southern India a Mamlatdár. He superintends the collection of the revenues, and all business connected with the land. The Tahsildárs are the principal agents of the Collector in the interior of the district, and their duties, on a smaller scale, are almost as various as those of the Collector himself. They are chosen with care, and are an intelligent and excellent class of public servants. "The satisfactory administration of the subdivision" (the Famine Commissioners of 1880 wrote), "the proper carrying out of the details of government, the protection of the people from hardships and oppression, the detection of abuses, and the general well-being of the community, very greatly depend upon the integrity, zeal, and ability of the Tahsildár." There are usually five or six Tahsildárs in each district of the United Provinces.

The District officer is also the chief Magistrate of the district; the powers which he possesses in this capacity have already been described. His title of Magistrate is hardly, according to English ideas, more appropriate than that of collector. He exercises, it is true, magisterial and judicial functions, but he is a great deal more than a magistrate. The responsibility



for the protection of life and property throughout the district, for the maintenance of the public peace, and for ensuring obedience to the laws, rest ultimately upon him. He has, in the United Provinces, supreme authority over the police, and all the magisterial courts and the gaols are under his supervision. In one capacity or another, he possesses all the authority necessary to make him, in the eyes of the people, the representative of the Executive Government.

We often hear demands for the more complete separation of the executive and judicial functions of the District officer, but they are demands based on the assumption that a principle necessary for England must be good for India also. There could be no greater error. The first necessity of good administration in such a country as India is that it should be strong, and it cannot be strong without the concentration of authority. In the everyday internal administration there is no office so important as that of the District officer. He is one of the mainstays of our dominion, and few steps could be taken in India which would be more mischievous and dangerous than to weaken those powers which enable him to maintain his position as the local representative of the Government.¹

¹ In the discussion on the Financial Statement for 1902-1903, which took place in the Council of the Governor-General on the 26th March 1902, one of the most enlightened and respected among the Native gentlemen of India, the Hon. Syad Husain Bilgrami, made an interesting speech, in which he referred to the position of the District officer. "The Viceroy," he said, "represents the might and majesty of the Empire, but the Viceroy is not so potent as the District officer who has found his way to the hearts of the people by taking an interest in their affairs, listening to their little grievances, and treating their faults and shortcomings with that good-humoured tolerance which is one of the characteristics of born rulers of men. The Indian people love an autocratic official provided he is sympathetic and just. They even prefer a high-handed man if he is accessible and kind. Above all, they love a gentleman, and will do anything for him. Many an English administrator has left behind

The first place on his staff is held by the Joint Magistrate and Deputy Collector; in the Non-Regulation provinces he is called Assistant Commissioner. He is always an officer of considerable length of service and experience. The territorial or other limits of his jurisdiction are determined by the District officer; the extent of his executive authority mainly depends on the amount of confidence placed in him by his superior; but in respect of cases heard by him as a magistrate, his powers are almost the same as those of the District officer himself. Next below him, in the Regulation provinces, comes the Assistant Magistrate and Collector; if the district be large and the work heavy, there may be more than one officer of this grade. No Assistant is invested with any powers or receives promotion until he has given evidence of his competency by passing examinations in the Native languages and in law. The Magistrate and Collector, the Joint Magistrate and Deputy Collector, and the Assistant, are, as a rule, Englishmen belonging to the Covenanted Civil service, but, as I have already explained, a certain proportion of these offices have been thrown open to the Native members of the Provincial service.¹ The other chief officers of the executive staff are the Deputy Collectors and Deputy Magistrates; they are almost always Natives. There are several in each district, some of them at the headquarters, and others in the interior of the district.

Reference has been made in a previous chapter²

him a name which is a household word in our villages and towns, and is written indelibly on the hearts of the people."

It must be understood that the remarks made above regarding executive and judicial functions are only intended to refer to the District officers in the so-called Regulation provinces. In some of the other provinces the existing system would be much improved by relieving the District officer of some of his judicial powers.

¹ Chapter VI.

² Chapter VII.



to the Code of Criminal Procedure, which defines the various classes of magisterial and other criminal courts, and the powers which each class of officers can exercise.

The system under which the police is administered differs in different provinces, but its general organisation throughout India is based on a law passed in 1861, and the manner in which its duties are to be performed is laid down in great detail in the Code of Criminal Procedure. Every district is divided into a number of police divisions, each of which is in charge of a police officer, almost always a Native, with a force of constables, clerks, and other subordinates. Every village or circle of villages has, according to the ancient custom of the country, its *chaukidár*, or watchman, whose duty it is to report all occurrences falling within the cognisance of the police.

Under the Native Governments that preceded us there was, outside the towns, hardly any police at all, and the responsibility for preserving the peace and for the detection of serious crime rested on the proprietors of land. This responsibility still attaches to them by law, and various old regulations define their obligations for reporting, preventing, and detecting crime. It was inevitable that as the administration became more regular, and more completely organised, the difficulty of enforcing general responsibilities of this kind would become greater, and the assistance practically given by the landholders in matters of police is usually small.

At the headquarters of every district there is an officer called the District Superintendent of police. He is, with rare exceptions, an Englishman. He supervises, with the help of his staff of inspectors and others, and subject to the general control of the Magistrate of the



district, all police arrangements, and is responsible for the efficiency and good behaviour of the force. The law gives to the District officer a general power over the police of the district, but the interference which he practically exercises varies in different provinces. In the United Provinces his supreme authority and responsibility have been carefully maintained; but in some other provinces (unfortunately, as I think) his powers have been so strictly limited that the police has become virtually a separate department, administered by the District Superintendent, under the orders of the Inspector-General of police, at the headquarters of the Provincial Government.

The character of the police in India varies very much. Before the transfer of the Government to the Crown, no branch of the administration was in greater need of reform. The police was often oppressive and corrupt. The traditions of police management in India tended to encourage much that was bad. Under almost all Native Governments, past and present, torture has been avowedly or tacitly permitted, and has been looked upon as a natural and legitimate means of obtaining evidence. The people, for the most part, will not protect themselves, but have been accustomed, from time immemorial, to submit unresistingly to all official action. Under such circumstances it has always been difficult to guard against abuses. The improvement has been great. There is little violent crime, and the protection to life and property is, in the greater part of British India, as complete as in almost any European country. But there can be no doubt that Sir James Stephen was right when he gave, as a result of his personal experience in India, the opinion that "no part of the Institutions by which India is governed requires more careful watching in



order to prevent the police, which is designed for the protection of the people, from becoming a means of petty oppression. The Code of Criminal Procedure is full of provisions intended to guard against this and at the same time to make the police efficient for their purpose."¹ Although, compared with the state of things which formerly prevailed, the progress has been great, it is still true that steadily to maintain an honest and efficient police is one of the standing difficulties of our administration, and that there is still very much room for improvement.

Every district has its gaol, and there are central prisons in convenient situations. Although not in all respects managed on the system adopted in England, there are few countries in Europe where the gaols are so well looked after. A great Indian prison is a model of cleanliness and good management. Every district has also its engineer establishments for the construction and maintenance of roads, bridges, and other public works and buildings; its telegraph and post offices; its schools and hospitals. In 1901 there were 484 hospitals and dispensaries in the United Provinces, and some 3,800,000 patients were treated in them. I have already referred to these institutions, and to the great skill of many of the Native surgeons. They are highly valued by the people, and for the most part are supported from local funds or by voluntary local subscriptions, the Government supplying the Native doctor and European medicines. There were also, in 1901, twenty-seven separate hospitals for the exclusive use of women. These belonged, for the most part, to the admirable institution founded, when she was in India, by the Marchioness of Dufferin and Ava, of which some

¹ *History of the Criminal Law of England*, vol. iii. p. 331.



account has been given in a previous chapter,¹ and which has rendered invaluable service to the women of India. Each district has a European officer, called the Civil Surgeon, who supervises all the medical establishments.

I wish that I could give a satisfactory account of the progress of sanitary improvement, but the prejudices and ignorance of the people make even simple reforms difficult. There are not many parts of India which are not liable to frequent epidemics of cholera, and in late years bubonic plague, which, except in the remote Himálayan districts, had long been almost unknown, has become lamentably destructive. Much, however, has been done to improve the sanitary condition of the larger towns, and in many cases important works for water supply and drainage have been constructed. There is another respect in which much progress has been made. Smallpox has always been extremely fatal in Northern India, but the prejudices and suspicions of the people have gradually been giving way, and vaccination has been extended with increasing success. In the Himálayan districts of the Agra province, in particular, smallpox, which formerly sometimes decimated the population, has been almost extirpated. A staff of vaccinators is maintained by the Government in every district of the United Provinces, and in 1901 more than 1,500,000 persons were vaccinated. It is only in a few of the larger cantonments that vaccination has been made compulsory. The registration of vital statistics becomes every year more trustworthy. The whole sanitary department of the province is under the control of an officer called the Sanitary Commissioner.

¹ Chapter XVI.



I will not again speak of the public works constructed by the British Government in Northern India. Some account has been already given of the great canals of irrigation, and of the immense improvement that has taken place in the provision of means of communication.¹ The principal towns and districts are now connected by railways, and the country is well supplied with roads and bridges.

An account was given in a previous chapter² of the system of education followed in the Indian universities, colleges, and schools. The villages in the districts of the United Provinces are grouped together in small circles, each of which has its Government school, affording elementary instruction to the poorer classes of the agricultural population. These schools teach, in the language of the country, reading, writing, arithmetic, and a little geography and mensuration. They numbered in 1901 nearly 7000, and contained 276,000 scholars.

In regard to female education, these, like other provinces, are, in the words of the Government, "lamentably backward. There is no general wish for female education, and so long as that is the attitude of the popular mind, little can be done. For the progress that has been made, the Government is indebted mainly to missionary efforts." In 1901 there were 152 primary schools for girls maintained by the Government or by municipalities, with 4000 scholars; and 165 aided schools, with 7000 scholars. There was also a considerable number of boys in so-called indigenous schools which have no connection with the Educational Department of the Government.

In each revenue subdivision there is a school,

¹ Chapter XIV.

² Chapter XVI.



teaching, in the vernacular language, grammar, geography, Indian history, arithmetic, algebra, geometry, mensuration, and the elements of natural science. At the headquarters of each district there is a Government school of a superior kind, in which English is taught, and in many of the larger towns there are good schools conducted by private agencies, chiefly by missionaries, receiving grants-in-aid from the Government. These schools often give an education up to the standard of the entrance examination of the University.

Reference has already been made to the colleges. Until 1887 the direction of higher education was in the hands of the University of Calcutta, but in that year a university was established at Allahabad, to which the colleges of the United Provinces have been affiliated. Like the other Indian universities, with the exception of that at Lahore, it is not a teaching body.

I have shown in a previous chapter¹ how vast a proportion of the population of the countries of India remains altogether illiterate, and that the United Provinces are no exception to the rule. In 1901 the male population was 24,617,000, of whom 1,423,000 could read and write. The female population was 23,078,000, and the number that could read and write was 55,900. But the subject of education in India is one to which I must not return.

For the management of local affairs every large town has its municipality, the members of which are chiefly natives of the place not in the service of the Government. There are 104 of these municipalities in the United Provinces, and 3,290,000 people live within their limits. These non-official bodies co-operate usefully with the Government authorities in the management

¹ Chapter XVI.



of the roads, conservancy, schools, hospitals, and in all the local business. Many of the Native members are honorary magistrates, often associated in Benches. A large proportion of the less serious criminal cases brought to trial are decided by the unpaid Native magistracy.

In almost all cases a large majority of the members of the municipal boards are elected by the townspeople. The voting qualification depends on amount of income, house-rating, and contribution to municipal taxation. The rules under which elections are conducted are framed by the Provincial Government, and vary according to local circumstances. The chairman is usually the District officer, but in this matter the boards have generally the power of making their own choice. The income of the municipalities of the United Provinces amounted in 1901 to £331,000, more than half of which was raised by octroi duties on articles brought into the towns for consumption.

There are similar boards in the rural districts. An electoral body is nominated by the Government, and this body chooses from its own members not less than three-fourths of the board. The District officer is the chairman. These boards levy no rates, but local funds and grants from the provincial revenues are assigned for the local duties entrusted to them.

Although much has been done throughout India for the encouragement of local self-government, the systems in force are still to a great extent in a tentative stage. It cannot be said that the people usually take much interest in such matters; they care, for the most part, nothing for sanitation, or for any of the modern improvements to which we attach importance, and if they were left to please themselves they would ordinarily prefer that their towns and villages should remain in



the condition with which their forefathers were content. No taxation is more unpopular in India than direct taxation for local purposes. People can understand that they must contribute towards the expenses of the State, for the maintenance of the army, for the courts of justice, and so forth ; but that they should be made to pay for the drainage of their streets, and for so-called improvements which we tell them will diminish mortality and disease, is a thing of which, for the most part, they fail to see the necessity or justice. Nevertheless men are often found among the Native members of the municipalities who are sufficiently enlightened to understand the value of the work in which they are engaged, and glad to help in performing it.

Including the cities of Calcutta, Bombay, and Madras, there were in 1901 in British India 760 municipalities, with an income of nearly £5,000,000 and a population, within municipal limits, of about 16,000,000.

I must now speak of the manner in which the executive authorities of the districts are brought under the control of the Provincial Government.

The forty-eight districts of the United Provinces are grouped together into nine Divisions, technically so called, each of which is in charge of an officer called the Commissioner. In matters connected with the revenue in all its branches, and with the executive administration generally, he exercises powers of supervision over the proceedings of the District officers, but he does not interfere in the details of the business entrusted to them. In certain cases appeals lie to him, and nothing of importance can happen without his knowledge, because all communications between the District officers and the Government pass through his hands.

A similar system prevails in other parts of British



India, with the exception of Madras, where there are no Commissioners. In that province the District officers communicate directly with the Government, except in revenue matters, on which they make their reports through the Revenue Board.

Besides the Commissioners of divisions, there is a large staff of officers, through whom the executive business of the province is supervised, reported on, and submitted for the orders of the Lieutenant-Governor. The members of the Revenue Board are entrusted with the duty of supervising the proceedings of the Collectors and Commissioners in matters connected with the land, and the collection and management of the public revenues. The term "board" has become, in this and other provinces, somewhat of a misnomer. It has been found in India, as elsewhere, that, as Bentham expressed it, almost every board, entrusted with executive duties, is a screen, efficient for hiding what ought to be known, and for avoiding individual responsibility. Each member of the Revenue Board has now his own separate duties.

The departments of Police, Jails, Education, Medical Services, Public Health and Vaccination, Agriculture and Commerce, Forestry, Meteorology, Registration, Stamps and Excise, and Public Works have all, under one title or another, their respective heads, who act as the advisers of the Lieutenant-Governor. They make their reports and receive their orders through the Secretaries to the Government.

The headquarters of the Government of the United Provinces are at Allahabad, but they are removed during the hottest months of the year to Naini Tál, in the Kumáon Himálaya. Each of the great Indian provinces has had, for many years past, its Hill Station.



I have already referred to the benefit to the public service which attends the annual migration of the Supreme Government to Simla, and there can be no question that the efficiency of the Provincial Governments is also greatly increased by the custom of allowing officers under their own immediate orders, and who have no local duties to perform, to carry on their work in a cool climate, instead of remaining in the enervating heat of the plains.

Authority, in every branch of the public service excepting the judicial, is centralised in the Lieutenant-Governor, subject only to the paramount authority of the Governor-General in Council. Excepting the Viceroy, no officers in India are entrusted with so large a measure of personal power as the Lieutenant-Governors of the great Indian provinces. They have no executive councils. Their nominal dignity is less than that of the Governors of Madras and Bombay, but the territories ruled by the Lieutenant-Governors are in no way inferior in political importance, and, in the case of Bengal and of the United Provinces, they have larger populations and larger revenues. The checks against the wrongful exercise by the Lieutenant-Governor of arbitrary power, are, however, complete. There is no branch of the administration in which he is not bound either by positive law, or by the standing orders of the Supreme Government, or by the system which has gradually grown up under his predecessors. Any great changes which he may desire to introduce must first receive the approval of the Governor-General in Council. He can impose no new taxation; his powers of sanctioning fresh expenditure, although large, are carefully restricted; and he has no control over the military forces.



Until 1887 the Lieutenant-Governor of the North-Western Provinces had no Council for legislative purposes, and all laws required for the North-Western Provinces and Oudh were passed in the Council of the Governor-General. The Lieutenant-Governor of the United Provinces has now a Legislative Council similar to those in Madras, Bombay, and Bengal, the constitution of which was described in a former chapter.¹

Under the Indian Councils Act of 1892, the number of Councillors must not exceed fifteen, and the Rules passed under the Act provide that not more than seven of these shall be officials. The appointments to the Council are made by the Governor-General on the nomination of the Lieutenant-Governor. Six of the non-official members are nominated on the recommendation of various bodies. The Senate of the University of Allahabad recommends one member. Five members are recommended by groups of Municipal Boards, groups of District Boards, Associations of landholders, whether landlords or tenants, and Associations of merchants, manufacturers, or tradesmen. It is provided that the nomination to the remaining two non-official seats shall be made by the Lieutenant-Governor in such a manner as will, in his opinion, secure a fair representation of the different classes of the community.

There are other departments of the administration which, as before explained, are under the control of the Supreme and not of the Provincial Government, because they deal with matters of imperial interest, common to the whole of India; among these are the Post Office and Telegraph, the Survey, the Public Accounts and Currency.

Before leaving this part of my subject I must repeat

¹ Chapter IV.



that no one can understand how the actual government of India is carried on until he has obtained a proper appreciation of the facts which are stated in the earlier part of this chapter. The unit of administration in every province of British India is the district; every district has its own organisation; the province is a collection of districts, with the addition of the strong central authority of the Provincial Government which controls and gives unity to the whole; the machinery by which this central authority is exercised is efficient and complete; nothing of public importance can occur in any district or in any village, information regarding which is not immediately laid before the Government of the province.

I have hitherto referred to the executive administration only. The courts of justice, as in other countries possessing civilised systems of government, are independent of the executive power; the Government, like its subjects, is amenable to the law, and, like them, may be sued in the courts.

A general account has already been given of the system under which the administration of justice in India is carried on.¹ In the United Provinces each district has a Civil Judge, who also presides over the court of session.

The district is divided into a convenient number of sections, in each of which there are courts of civil jurisdiction, subordinate to the court of the Judge. There are two classes of these courts: those of the Munsifs, who try suits up to the value of 1000 rupees, and those of the Subordinate judges, who try them, with certain restrictions, to any higher amount. Appeals lie in the smaller cases to the Judge, and in cases for more

¹ Chapter VII.



than 5000 rupees to the High court. There are also Small-cause courts, which decide petty cases without appeal. Out of more than 200 Subordinate judges and Munsifs in the North-Western Provinces there are only two or three who are not Natives.

The High Court of the North-Western Provinces,¹ which has its seat at Allahabad, consists of a Chief Justice and five Puisne Judges, all appointed by the Crown. One of the Judges and the Chief Justice are chosen from the English Bar, three of the Judges are members of the Covenanted Civil Service, and one of them is a Native gentleman. In Oudh the principal court is that of the Judicial Commissioner; it consists of Judges appointed by the Lieutenant-Governor, with the previous approval of the Governor-General.

The Lieutenant-Governor appoints the district judge, and possesses in criminal cases the power of pardon, but he has no control over the judicial administration.

¹ Although the North-Western Provinces are now called the Province of Agra, the High Court, having been constituted by an Act of Parliament, which has not been altered, retains its old title.



CHAPTER XXI

AN INDIAN PROVINCE (*continued*)

Condition of the people—Increasing wealth and prosperity—Indebtedness of the agricultural classes—Increase of population—Emigration—Character of the people—Their great honesty—Cruel customs—Crime—Infanticide—Criminal Tribes.

REFERENCE will be made hereafter to some of the results of the elaborate system of government which I have been describing. Something must now be said regarding the material condition of the people.

It is easy in almost every country to find examples of extreme poverty, and it is easy in India. The day labourer is often little better than an hereditary bondsman, and in bad seasons his condition may be miserable. It would be hard to discover people living in a worse state of moral and physical degradation than that of the lowest classes of Mohammedans in many of the towns of Northern India. It is easy for the Indian pessimist to take cases of this kind, which are not rare, and then, by a bold generalisation, to assume that extreme poverty and misery are the normal condition of the agricultural population throughout India. We might as reasonably, on evidence of the condition of the poorest classes in the West of Ireland, or in the worst slums of the great cities of England, conclude that the rural and town population of our own country are universally wretched and degraded.



I have laid much stress on the progress of India in material prosperity; but that India is a poor country is a fact which no one could think of denying, and so it will inevitably remain while the country is almost purely agricultural. In the words of an eminent economist, it has been proved by experience, everywhere and at all times, that a purely agricultural country is never rich, even from an agricultural point of view. Where other industries and commerce also flourish, it is through their means that agricultural wealth is developed.¹ But it by no means follows that because an agricultural country is not rich its people are miserable.

Referring to Northern India, I have already said that there is perhaps no country in which more complete and trustworthy information has been placed on record in regard to every subject affecting the agricultural population.

The great majority of Indian agriculturists have the advantage of possessing, either as peasant proprietors or as cultivators with occupancy rights, permanent interests in the land. The condition of the people mainly depends on the degree in which these interests exist. This is always shown in a striking manner when seasons of drought occur. The first to suffer are the field-labourers, who live on the wages of their labour. If the rainy season fails, the land cannot be cultivated, and they are thrown out of employment. The next to suffer are the tenants-at-will, with no fixed rights and little credit. Where, on the other hand, the land is cultivated by the proprietors themselves, or by tenants with hereditary rights, it is only when drought is unusually severe and

¹ "L'esperienza di tutti i luoghi e di tutti i tempi ha dimostrato che i paesi puramente agricoli non sono mai ricchi, neppure sotto l'aspetto agrario, e che invece dove fioriscono i commerci e le industrie il tornaconto privato crea la ricchezza rurale."—Jacini, *Relazione sull' Inchiesta agraria*.



prolonged that these classes require help, for they have stocks of food and money to fall back upon, and they have credit with the money-lenders.

The field-labourers, when they have no permanent and hereditary employment in their villages, and who depend on wages paid usually in kind, are the only class in the condition of which it is probably true that there has been no general improvement. They are often worse off than in the times when there were no roads and railways, and when the value of agricultural produce was lower. To the menial servants of an Indian village a rise in prices does not necessarily bring increased wages, and they are usually too ignorant and helpless to think of bettering their condition by going elsewhere for employment, which would not in these days be difficult to find. But these are exceptions. Unless the seasons be especially unfortunate, the ordinary life of the Indian peasant is far from unhappy. The immediate requirements of life are easily satisfied in the climate of India, and if we compare the physical ease of the average Indian agriculturist with that existing among the same class in a great part of Europe, I do not doubt that "the advantage would probably be greatly in favour of the former, although his life may be shorter and subject to greater risks." This is the conclusion stated by the Famine Commissioners of 1880, and they wrote with a knowledge, an experience, and an authority to which very few can pretend. There can be no question that in times of ordinary prosperity there is, in proportion to the population—and the population of India is more than seven times as large as that of the United Kingdom—more want and extreme misery in our own country than in India; and, if in this matter comparison were possible, we should have to make it not with



India in its normal condition, but with India, I do not say in time of famine, but in time of scarcity.

Elaborate calculations, based really upon no facts, and in themselves valueless, are put forth from time to time to prove that the average income of the Indian agriculturist does not exceed a few farthings a day, and that the masses of the population have no sufficient means of obtaining the bare necessities of life. Such statements often arise from simple ignorance, but at other times from that unfortunate inclination which makes Englishmen not unfrequently seem to rejoice in anything which can bring discredit upon their countrymen. These assertions are not only unfounded, but transparently absurd.

It is a fact that the Indian peasant has very little money, and that measured in money his income is very small, and this fact may easily lead to totally mistaken conclusions. But his income is not and cannot be measured in money. It is a very ordinary supposition of English writers that the Indian, like the English peasant, buys all that he requires for his support, but nothing could be more erroneous. As a rule, he derives from the land which he himself owns or cultivates most of the necessities of life for himself and his family.

"He retains," in the words of Mr. T. H. Thornton, "so much of his produce as he requires for seed and home consumption, and disposes of the surplus only, and this surplus he does not ordinarily sell in open market, but makes over to the village *banya*, or shopkeeper, with whom he has an account current for cash advanced and goods supplied. The attempt to give a money value to these primitive transactions, and formulate the financial condition of the peasantry in terms of cash receipts and payments, must be a very hazardous undertaking."

I may add, in regard to those classes of the popu-



lation which have incomes that can properly be stated in money, that we are apt in this country to forget that an income which would here mean absolute poverty would often denote ease and comfort in India. The term poverty has no absolute and invariable signification; it depends on the relation between a man's wants and the means of supplying them. Every one acquainted with India knows that almost everywhere a man who possesses five or six rupees a month, or say 3d. a day, is looked upon as a comparatively well-to-do person, able to provide, in something more than comfort, not only for himself but for his family.

Little money passes through the hands even of the well-to-do Indian peasant. He need buy little or nothing except the simple implements of husbandry, cooking-vessels, clothing, sweetmeats, and tobacco; and all these together will not cost him many shillings in the year. In the provinces to which I have more particularly referred, his cottage affords clean and, according to his ideas, comfortable shelter. He has not much clothing, but much is not wanted; in the winter he suffers little from the cold. In ordinary circumstances, he has sufficient food of the only kind that he desires, the produce of his own fields or garden, his millets and lentils, his barley or his rice, his much-appreciated *ghee*, made from the milk of cows or buffaloes, the vegetables, spices, and condiments of which in a hot climate there is no lack, and as much tobacco, sugar, and sweetmeats as he can afford to buy. The more valuable products of his land, such in Northern India as the wheat which he does not himself consume, give him the means of meeting the demands for rent or revenue. His wife has often her holiday attire and her silver ornaments, for after providing the necessities of life there is frequently something left



for simple luxuries and for buying jewellery, the latter a common form of hoarding. If, as is usually the case, he drinks no spirits, the only tax that he has to pay is about fivepence a year for salt, for himself and each member of his family. The improvement in the condition of the people in Northern India within my own recollection and observation has been obvious. As one of the settlement officers says, the vessels used by the peasantry fifty years ago were almost always earthen—now they are of brass; their clothing is better and they have more of it—"now every tenant dresses like a Brahman or zemindar of old days." One of the most experienced officers of the Agra Province has declared, as the result of his inquiries and observation, his belief that the landowning classes are, speaking generally, four or five times as rich as they were early in the last century. "Everywhere," he says, "there has been an extraordinary rise in the value of land, and the great advance in wealth and prosperity of the agricultural classes is too plainly evident to be called in question."

It has been estimated by competent observers that in the Punjab the value of land has more than sextupled in value since it became a British province. On this subject, I may quote the interesting remarks made in the Council of the Governor-General on 26th March 1902, in the discussion of the Financial Statement for 1902-03 by Sir Denzil Ibbetson. I suppose that there is no Englishman who possesses more intimate and personal knowledge of the people, or one whose ability and experience entitle him to speak with greater authority regarding their general condition. After referring to statements that during the past fifty years the Indian peasant had been growing poorer, he thus proceeded:—



"The Honourable Syad Husein Bilgrami tells us from his personal observation that the peasant is, as a fact, better off. In such a matter I attach greater weight to personal experience than to *a priori* reasoning. And my honourable friend's testimony will carry special weight as based upon an intimacy of knowledge to which no one who is not a native of the country can pretend. At the same time, I have spent twenty years of my service in India, in work which has brought me into intimate daily contact with the people, and I also have formed a very definite opinion as to their condition. We have heard a great deal of late about the poverty of India, about its impoverishment under British rule, and about the reduction of the average income within the last fifty years. As for the diminution of average income, the best and shortest answer that I have seen to the assertion has been given by the *Hindu Patriot*. It is, briefly, that the assertion is *sheer nonsense and opposed to common knowledge*. As the *Patriot* observes, 'the day labourer who used to get only one anna a day now receives more than two annas.'¹ There is not a Member of this Council who cannot of his own personal knowledge confirm the statement.

"But, as the *Patriot* very truly remarks, increased wages do not necessarily mean increased comfort, and the charge of impoverishment remains to be dealt with. In the great cities there is, no doubt, poverty amounting to destitution, as in all the great cities of the world. In the villages and small towns the labouring classes are poor enough in all conscience, more especially in backward or unprogressive tracts, where no development of industries or of communications has brought assistance to the labour market, and most of all in purely agricultural areas, where the change, to which the Honourable Syad Husein has alluded, that is slowly taking place under the solvent influences of occidental ideas and institutions, has substituted cash payments for work actually done, for the old customary payments in grain. But if their incomes are small, their needs are small also. The margin between the two is narrow, and when prices rise, as they do rise in years of stress, there is no doubt that the pinch of hunger is widely and severely felt. But, so far as my knowledge

¹ The *Hindu Patriot* is the most ably conducted and important Native newspaper in Bengal, written entirely by Natives of the country, and always independent and unsparing in its criticisms of British administration.



and experience carry me, there is in ordinary seasons far less of that carking, grinding poverty, that uncertainty of how the day's food is to be provided, that certainty that on some days it will not be forthcoming at all, which eats into the heart of man—there is far less actual destitution than there is in wealthy England, the only country with which I am able to make a comparison. The fact is partly due, no doubt, to that practice of universal charity which is in its details so small as almost to escape observation, but as a whole so splendid as to constitute, in my eyes at least, the chief glory of the Indian people.

“We are told that India is being slowly bled to death, that its agriculture, its commerce, and its industries are ruthlessly exploited for the benefit of England, that the British rule has been one long continuous process of impoverishment, under which the old prosperity of the peasantry has steadily decayed till they stand tottering on the brink of famine, and that even in the best of years many of them hardly escape starvation. My Lord, I am not so rash as to predicate anything of India as a whole. I dare not frame an estimate for a whole nation. But I should like to send those who believe this thing (for I recognise that some, though not all, of those who say it do sincerely believe it)—I should like to send them to a district in the Punjab, where I spent eight years in the beginning of my service, which I settled, which I know by heart, and which I revisited only ten years ago; a district only fifty miles from Delhi, which while it is traversed by a great canal, and includes some of the finest well cultivation in the province, includes also great jungle areas, where the people live chiefly upon the produce of their herds, and wide plains where the crops of industrious cultivators are dependent upon the uncertain rains of heaven. I should like then to tell the people of that district what they tell us, and to ask them whether they agree. There are men there who have heard from their fathers, or perhaps I should now say from their grandfathers, and who would tell them, as they were never tired of telling me, of the state of affairs which preceded our advent. I will not weary the Council by any attempt to describe that state of affairs in detail. Suffice it to say that in the early years of the last century, when we took over the district, the royal canal had long dried up, that more than four-fifths of the area was over-run by thick forest, which afforded shelter to thieves, vagabonds, and beasts of prey, and its inhabitants



either removed or exterminated, and that out of 221 villages in a single *pargana*, the people of no fewer than 178 had been wholly driven from their homes and fields.

"I believe the history of our early administration of that district to be typical. It would have been impossible to 'im-poverish' what had already been laid desolate. But at first we made many and grievous blunders. We misunderstood the local tenures; our assessments, founded upon the rates which we inherited from our predecessors, were oppressive, and our police and criminal administration was stern and rude, though perhaps not more so than the unsettled state of the district demanded. But the mistakes did not long remain undiscovered or unrectified. The country gradually settled down in the early 'thirties, a rough survey afforded a basis for a more reasonable revenue system, and from that time to the present, or at any rate up to 1892 when I last saw it, the history of the district has been one of continuous advance in prosperity. In 1871, when I first went there, its condition was that of an ordinary fairly prosperous British district, though it included tracts which had suffered from the too prodigal use of canal water. When I revisited it in 1892 the change for the better that had taken place in the interval was marvellous. The canal had been re-aligned at great expense so as to extend and improve irrigation; the supply of water had been rigorously limited to what was needed, rather than to what was asked for; the swamps had been drained, so that I found waving sheets of wheat where I had been accustomed to shoot snipe; the saline efflorescence which had thrown hundreds of acres out of cultivation was slowly but steadily disappearing; villages which I had been obliged to assess with extraordinary leniency on account of their water-logged and depressed condition had become prosperous, and their people were no longer unable to marry their daughters because they were barren with malaria; new branches of the canal had been carried through arid tracts of which the produce had been notoriously insecure; and a railway had been constructed right through the heart of the district. I either marched through or saw people, not merely from the canal tract, but every part of the district, including the driest and the most precarious. They had their grumbles and their grievances, without which no properly constituted husbandman is complete, but their general story was one of increasing contentment and prosperity; nor was outward



evidence lacking. It was impossible to ride across the old familiar fields and through the well-known villages without realising the progress that had been made. To mention three small but significant facts: brick houses, which had formerly been confined to the *sāhukār* of the village, had become much more common; small factories for ginning and baling cotton had sprung up all through the cotton-producing tract; and when I wished to show my daughters one of the picturesque old-fashioned cane-presses to which I had been accustomed, I was told that, except in two villages, they had been superseded throughout the district by the iron mill invented by Mr. Milne of Behea. I know this, that if any one were to tell these people whom I know so well that their history under British rule has been one of continuous deterioration and impoverishment, they would simply laugh in his face. I have chosen to speak of this particular district, because I have known it as I have never known any other, and because I visited it again after an interval of fifteen years. But I have served in many other districts of the Punjab, and from all that I have seen and heard, I believe that what I have said of this district is in the main true of all."

There can be no question that the story which Sir Denzil Ibbetson has told us of the Punjab is equally true of other provinces of British India.

In a previous chapter¹ I showed the progress of the commerce of India—progress which it is not possible should have taken place without a corresponding development of the wealth and industry of the country. This increase of the external and internal trade has occurred simultaneously with an equally remarkable increase in almost every branch of the public income, although the burdens of the people have been reduced. The statistics of the railways, the telegraphs, the post office, and the savings banks all tell the same story. That all this should be compatible with anything but a great and rapid improvement in the material

¹ Chapter XIII.



condition of the people is contrary to reason. It is, unhappily, true that there is one respect in which the growing wealth of the country is sometimes liable to a terrible shock. All that has been said of the ordinary prosperity of the people is indisputably true, but the danger cannot be forgotten to which I have repeatedly referred, and to which, in the greater part of India, they are exposed when there is a failure of the periodical rains, a danger against which no efforts that a Government can make can provide more than partial remedies. This is a question which has been fully noticed in other chapters, and I have described what has been done to protect the country against famine or to mitigate its consequences.

Much has often been said regarding the general indebtedness of the agricultural classes to money-lenders, and the evil results that often follow cannot be denied. It is no peculiarity of India that agriculture can hardly be carried on without credit, but the great vicissitudes of season to which the country is liable often increase the risks that are a consequence of that fact. There is no reason whatever for supposing that Indian agriculturists have ever been an exception to a very general rule, but it can hardly be doubted that their indebtedness is greater now than it was before the establishment of our Government. This has been one of the results which, in the words of the Famine Commissioners of 1880, have followed "in the progressive development of social life from a simple to a more advanced stage. . . . There has been a considerable increase in the incomes of the land-holding and cultivating classes, and their standard of comfort has also risen. With a rise in the transfer value of their tenures, their credit has also expanded." We have given to the agricultural classes, as I have shown



in a previous chapter, rights which formerly had little or no existence. The right of private property in land has been virtually almost created by ourselves. When there was practically no such right, there was, comparatively speaking, no credit; there was no adequate security that a landholder desirous of borrowing could offer, and there was therefore less indebtedness. As the standard of comfort has risen, wants of every kind and demands for expenditure have increased also, and with this increase has come more frequent necessity for recourse to the money-lender. It would be a complete mistake to suppose that the pressure of the land revenue has been the principal cause of the difficulties into which the owners of land have often fallen, but I do not doubt that among the contributory causes we must count the manner in which the Government demand has been not unfrequently levied. Although in actual amount it is far more moderate than that of any former Government, or of any Native Government at the present time, it is collected, under our existing system, with greater rigidity, and has thus, in unfavourable seasons, tended to increase the difficulties of the proprietor of land. The fact that greater elasticity ought, in this respect, to be given in the application of our revenue system is now fully recognised and acted upon by the Government.

Frequent attempts have been made, and laws have been passed, in the hope of protecting the agricultural classes from the exactions of money-lenders and from their own improvidence. Whether these attempts have had any useful effect is more than doubtful. Efforts are in progress in many parts of India to establish Agricultural Banks which, it may be hoped, may be successful. Meanwhile it cannot be too confidently stated that, in spite of all drawbacks, there has been



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A Hindu gentleman of great intelligence once said to me that while he fully admitted the superiority of the English not only in the arts of civilised life, but in many noble qualities, there was one virtue, on which the English especially prided themselves, in which they seemed to him inferior to his own countrymen. "The English," he said, "seem to think that honesty consists in not telling a lie in answer to a direct question. Almost all of us tell lies when it seems convenient to do so; but, in my opinion, in the particular quality of honesty we are better than the English."

There was a good deal of truth in the contention of my Hindu friend. If lying be the test of dishonesty, it would be hard to equal the dishonesty that you meet with in India. I have heard one of the most eminent of our judges doubt whether the perjury that goes on in his court in England could be surpassed in India; but I think he was wrong, and that in this matter the Indian courts would easily carry off the palm. Nevertheless, if I were asked what was the most striking characteristic of the people of Northern India, I should say it was their honesty. Mr. Bennett of the Indian Civil Service has well expressed what I believe to be the truth on this subject:

"Writing two centuries before Christ, of the Hindus in the kingdom of Patna, an educated Greek selected as the leading feature in their character their honesty and integrity in the ordinary relations of life; and, paradoxical as it may sound to most English ears, it is probable that this is almost as true of the Hindu village of to-day as it was of the Buddhist court of two thousand years ago. Even among our own servants no one can fail to have been astonished at the absolute safety with which large sums of money may be entrusted to their keeping, when theft would be almost impossible of detection and would secure them comfort for the remainder of their lives. In the higher ranks, the well-paid and educated office-clerks are faithful and trustworthy



beyond any other class of men who can be procured for the responsible duties. What has been said applies to their relations with foreign masters, for whom they can rarely feel any affection and who not unfrequently regard them with a suspicion which would be itself enough to make most men dishonest. In their relations with their own people the quality is far more conspicuous. Trade transactions involving enormous sums are carried through with a want of precaution which we should consider idiotic, but which is justified by the rarity of breaches of faith. In a country where writing is an art as common as it is with us, large debts are contracted every day on nothing but the verbal security of the borrower; and if there may be occasional repudiation in our courts, the fact that that security is still considered sufficient is ample proof that the debts are honourably acknowledged among the parties themselves. In such cases limitation is never thought of, and families who have emerged from poverty will discharge debts contracted by their ancestors a century back, of which no other record exists but an entry in the money-lender's private ledger. Their whole system postulates an exceptional integrity."¹

No people are more charitable. It is true that the Indian idea of charity is often very different from ours, and it is affected so strongly by caste considerations that it sometimes seems to us to pass into cruelty. But there is hardly any class that is not, according to its means and according to its own ideas, kind-hearted and benevolent. Nothing is more remarkable in times of scarcity than native charity, although it is often too indiscriminate to be wise. The people generally are extremely industrious. Although uneducated and superstitious, the agricultural classes are certainly not inferior in intelligence to the peasants of many of the countries of Europe.

All classes are polite but not servile in their manners; it would be impossible to surpass the finished courtesy of a Mohammedan gentleman.

¹ *Introduction to the Oudh Gazetteer*, by Mr. W. C. Bennett, C.S., p. 28.



I must leave this part of my subject. I spent in Northern India the best and most interesting portion of my life. It is impossible to live among its people without feeling for them a deep regard, and, assuming that our dominion does not perish before the proper time has come, I cannot doubt that their future will be fortunate.

I have been describing a peaceful, contented, and well-disposed society, deserving in a high degree the respect and affection of its rulers, but it must not be forgotten that we shall have a very incomplete idea of India if we look only at what we see upon the surface. The more we learn about India the more we become alive to the fact that we are, to use Sir James Stephen's expression, the representatives of a belligerent civilisation, which has to wage constant warfare against strange barbarisms, horrid customs, and cruel superstitions, ancient survivals, ready at any moment to start into activity.

If we look at the criminal statistics of Northern India, which are as carefully collected as in any country of Europe, it will appear that there is less crime than in England, and that the people are astonishingly peaceable and honest. The conclusion will be true; but if we inquire more deeply we shall find strange facts that these statistics do not show. We shall find, for instance, that in the United Provinces there were, not many years ago, more than 300,000 people belonging, not to barbarous tribes like the Patháns on the Afghán frontier,¹ nor to the outcasts and scum of the community, but to classes of honourable and comparatively civilised men, who were living under the restraint of special penal

¹ The following is extracted from an official report of 1887:—"According to the Pathán code of honour, murder under certain conditions is not a crime but an obligation. Two thousand murderers are believed to be at large in the Pesháwar district." In this case also a special law has been put in force.



laws, because from time immemorial they had killed their female children. Among all the races of India, there is none more noble than the Rájput; and among the Rájputs, the first rank belongs to the Chauháns—the *sangre azul*, as they have been called, of Indian chivalry. No men in India are so proud of their lineage, and they trace their descent, not from mortal ancestors, but from the sacred fire called forth on the summit of Mount Ábu, by one of the sages of the Vedas, to destroy the demons who were persecuting the Brahmans and depriving the gods of their sacrifices. These people are numerous in the United Provinces. In the district of Mainpuri there are more than 30,000 of them, and not fifty years ago it was discovered that among them there was not a single girl. Every daughter that was born was killed. The higher the rank of the family the more constant and systematic was the crime.

"There is at Mainpuri," wrote Mr. Raikes, the magistrate of the district in 1850, "an old fortress which looks far over the valley of the Eesun River. This has been for centuries the stronghold of the Rája of the Mainpuri Chauháns, whose ancient blood represents the *crème de la crème* of Rájput aristocracy. Here, when a son, a nephew, a grandson, was born to the reigning chief, the event was announced to the neighbouring city by the loud discharge of wall-pieces and matchlocks; but centuries had passed away and no infant daughter had been known to smile within those walls."¹

This is not rhetoric but the statement of a fact. In 1856 special inquiries were instituted. It was found that this practice of infanticide, although especially prevalent among the Rájputs, was by no means confined to them, and it was common not only in the North-Western Provinces but in Oudh, the Punjab, and in parts of the Bombay presidency. Numbers of villages

were visited where there was not a single girl, and where there had never been one within the memory of man. Of one large Rájput community on the borders of Oudh it was officially reported that "not only are there no girls to be found now, but there never have been any, nor has such an event as the marriage of a daughter taken place for more than two hundred years." In 1869 another investigation showed that there was little change for the better. This was the sort of report:—In seven villages, 104 boys, and 1 girl; in twenty-three villages 284 boys, and 23 girls; in other villages, the marriage of a girl an entirely unknown ceremony.

There is an interesting account of the marriage customs of the Rájputs in Sir Alfred Lyall's *Asiatic Studies*. A Rájput cannot marry a woman who does not belong to a Rájput family, but at the same time he cannot marry one of his own class.

"The custom makes marriage difficult by narrowing the field of selection; for neither can a man go very far among strange tribes to seek his wife, nor a father to seek a husband for his daughter; so that a poor man often does not marry at all, while a rich man of high birth is besieged with applications for his hand, in order that the stigma of an unmarried daughter may at least be formally removed."¹

Thus, while an unmarried daughter is looked upon as hopelessly disgraced—and this is true of almost all classes throughout India, and not of Rájputs only—a son-in-law cannot always be found unless the father of the girl is prepared to pay highly, and the marriage of a daughter may mean the ruin of a family. Rather than incur this danger, the Rájput prefers that his daughter should perish. But a still more powerful reason is immemorial custom, which Manu declares to be "trans-

¹ Notes on the North-Western Provinces of India, 1852.

¹ Asiatic Studies, p. 220.



cent law and the root of all piety." These people have gone on killing their children generation after generation because their forefathers did so before them, not only without a thought that there is anything criminal in the practice, but with the conviction that it is right.

For many years past measures have been taken for the prevention of this crime. For a long time, in the days when our civilisation was less belligerent than it has since become, it was thought that the best hope of success lay in the removal of the causes which appeared to lead to its commission, and especially in the prevention of extravagant expenditure on marriages; but although these benevolent efforts were undoubtedly useful, their practical results were not great, and it became clear that it was only by a stringent and organised system of coercion that these practices would ever be eradicated. In 1870 an Act of the Legislature was passed which enabled the Government to deal with the subject. A system of registration of births and deaths among the suspected classes was established, with constant inspection and enumeration of children; special police-officers were entertained at the cost of the guilty communities, and no efforts were spared to convince them that the Government had firmly resolved that it would put down these practices, and would treat the people who followed them as murderers. Although the time may be distant when preventive measures will cease to be altogether necessary, great progress has been made, and there are now thousands of girls where formerly there were none. In 1874 the population living under special regulations numbered 359,000; in 1887 it was more than 200,000; in 1891 the population under supervision had fallen



to 62,000; in 1901 the Act was still in force in 264 villages, but in many of these it was hoped that the practice of infanticide had been abandoned. In the Mainpuri district, where, as I have said, there was once hardly a single Chauhán girl, nearly half of the Chauhán children at the present time are girls.

In those districts in which the Rájput clans are scattered and greatly mixed with other classes of the population, and where the support of clan feeling and clan custom is comparatively weak, there is reason to think that infanticide has almost ceased. In other districts where the Rájputs are found in large and homogeneous communities, the suppression of the crime is more difficult. There can be little doubt that if vigilance were relaxed the custom would before long become as prevalent as ever.

Another illustration may be given of the strange conditions that still exist in India, and of the difficulties with which we have to contend. Much of the crime that is committed is carried on by tribes of criminals as their regular and legitimate occupation, not only with no thought of criminality, but in the belief that in following the custom of their forefathers they are acting in the only way that is right. I will not repeat the well-known story of the Thugs, the professional murderers who practised their trade over a great part of India. They have been extirpated by the British Government. Another class of murderers, poisoners by profession, still exists in our own provinces, but in greatly diminished numbers. We have not altogether succeeded in stamping out the professional Dacoits, associated for the purposes of violent gang-robbery, but it is in the Native States that they now chiefly have their headquarters, from which they



carry on their marauding expeditions. Other criminal organisations, with which it is more difficult to deal, abound to this day.

The following quotation from an official report will show what these professional criminals are. They have no resemblance to the habitual criminals of Europe.

"We all know that trades go by castes in India; a family of carpenters will be a family of carpenters a century or five centuries hence, if they last so long; so with grain-dealers, blacksmiths, leather-makers, and every known trade. If we keep this in mind when we speak of 'professional criminals,' we shall realise what the term really means. It means that the members of a tribe whose ancestors were criminals from time immemorial are themselves destined by the usages of caste to commit crime, and their descendants will be offenders against the law until the whole tribe is exterminated or accounted for in the manner of the Thugs. Therefore, when a man tells you he is a Badhak, or a Kanjar, or a Sonoria, he tells you, what few Europeans ever thoroughly realise, that he is an offender against the law, has been so from the beginning, and will be so to the end; that reform is impossible, for it is his trade, his caste—I may almost say his religion—to commit crime."

Here is an account of one of these tribes called Barwárs. Their headquarters are in the district of Gonda, in Oudh, where they inhabit forty-eight villages, and number a thousand families. They have little to do with agriculture; they live quietly and honestly at their homes for some months of every year, and the rest of their time is spent in wandering, in small gangs, over distant parts of the country, plundering everything they can find. But they may not steal cattle; they may despoil the temples of the gods; they may rob even the goddess Debi, one of the special objects of their worship. The only sacred places that they may not touch are the temple of Jaganáth in Orissa, and



the shrine of a certain Mohammedan martyr. They have a regular organisation, under duly chosen chiefs; every child goes through a form of religious initiation on the twelfth day of his life; if a man of the tribe gives up his thieving profession he is excommunicated and disgraced. The time for starting on their predatory expeditions is settled by the astrologers, and the plunder brought home is divided according to fixed rules, after $3\frac{3}{4}$ per cent has been set aside, to be distributed in certain proportions among their gods. Each family has in its house an altar, dedicated to the special tutelary god of the tribe, Panch Puria, a god not recognised by other classes; on a certain day in August a fowl must be sacrificed on the altar, and thin cakes of bread must be baked, and these offerings have then to be given to a Mohammedan fakeer, who goes from house to house beating a kettledrum. It was stated, in 1901, by the Government of the United Provinces that "very little advance had been made in reforming the Sonorias and Barwárs."

Other criminal tribes are devoted to cattle-stealing, others are dangerous robbers. In Gurgáon, one of the frontier districts of the Punjab, official reports tell us of a large isolated British village, surrounded by Native territory, inhabited almost exclusively by some 2000 people of the Mina tribe. Their sole occupation is, and always has been, plunder in the Native States, and in distant parts of British India; they give no trouble at home, and, judging from criminal statistics, it would be supposed that they were an honest community. They live amid abundance, in substantial houses, with numerous cattle, fine clothes and jewels, and fleet camels to carry off their plunder; and, it is added, "there is no end to their charity." When



I was myself a District officer, I knew personally an almost exactly similar case in Rohilkhand.

In the Agra Province alone there are said to be twenty-nine different tribes who, without any notion of criminality, have from time immemorial made crime their sole serious occupation; and they are probably not less numerous in other parts of India where less is known about them.

There is a special law for dealing with these classes. Registers are kept showing all the members of the tribes; they can be compelled to live within certain local limits, and prevented from leaving those limits without permission, and they may be arrested if they are found beyond them. In some cases, the measures taken have been more or less successful, but the difficulties are great, and a long time must elapse before we see the end of the criminal tribes of India. In 1890 the Government of India declared that it was clearly established that improved communications, railways, and telegraphs had greatly facilitated the operations of the classes who are in the habit of leaving their homes to commit crime at a distance and returning with their plunder.



CHAPTER XXII

BENGAL

Exceptional character of Bengal and its people—The Bengal Lieutenant-Governorship—Natural features, area, and population—Products—Scenery—Climate—Cities—Art—Hindus and Mohammedans—Lord Macaulay's description of the Bengalis—The Mohammedan peasantry—The Permanent Settlement—Zemindars and ryots—Loss of public revenue—Confiscation of the rights of the peasantry—Weakness of the Government—Absence of records of agricultural rights—Former constitution of the Bengal Government—A separate Government constituted—Improvements in the administration—Great increase in rentals of the Zemindars and loss by the ryots—Maintenance of conditions of the Permanent Settlement—Claims of the Zemindars for exemption from taxation—Rates on the land—Changes in the Bengal Rent Law—Condition of the people in Behár—The Tenancy Acts—Cadastral Surveys—Lord Curzon's Government on the results of the Permanent Settlement.

I now propose to give a few sketches of another great British Province—Bengal. I am the more desirous of doing this because Englishmen are frequently under the impression that Bengal and Bengális are types of India and its people, the truth being that there is no province which is in all respects more exceptional, and no people more distinct. But these sketches must be very brief, and many important matters must remain unnoticed.

I have explained the various significations which the name Bengal has had at different times. It now usually means the country included within the Bengal



Lieutenant-Governorship, but this again includes four provinces—Bengal Proper, comprising the tracts between the Ganges and Bráhma-putra and the deltas of those rivers, and bounded on the west by the river Kosi; Behár, on the north-west of Bengal Proper, adjoining the United Provinces of Agra and Oudh, to which in its physical character a great part of it is very similar; Chutia Nágpur, a wild and hilly country between Bengal Proper and Central India; and Orissa, south-west from Calcutta, the country of the river Máhánadi, with the sea on its eastern side.

A description of any one of these four provinces would be wholly inapplicable to the rest. Their physical conditions, the character of their population, and their languages are all different. Including the subordinate Native States, the Lieutenant-Governorship of Bengal covers an area of 189,837 square miles; it is almost as large as France, with double its population: Bengal at the census of 1901 contained 78,500,000 people. As Sir William Hunter has observed, "Its elements exhibit every stage of human enlightenment and superstition, from the sceptical educated classes, represented by the Hindu gentleman who distinguishes himself at a London Inn of Court, to the hill chieftain, who a few years ago sacrificed an idiot on the top of a mountain to obtain a favourable decision in a Privy Council appeal."¹ Although I shall have to make some references to Behár, it is almost solely of Bengal Proper that I now propose to speak. It is the largest and most populous and richest of the provinces that make up the Lieutenant-Governorship. It has an area of more than 82,000 square miles, and a population of nearly 46,000,000.

¹ *Imperial Gazetteer of India*, art. "India."