Bengal Proper is everywhere intersected by the channels and tributaries of the Ganges and Bráhmaputra. The Ganges at one time reached the sea through the channel of the Bhágirathi, which in the lower part of its course is known as the Hugli, on which Calcutta is situated. The Bráhmaputra flowed formerly far to the eastward in a separate stream, but in the earlier part of the last century it changed its course, and rolling westward joined the Ganges about two hundred miles from the sea. Their mingled waters now flow together to the Bay of Bengal through countless large and small channels. Sir William Hunter has given a graphic description of this part of the province :—

"The delta of the Ganges" (he says), "and with it the delta of the Bráhmaputra is indistinguishably mixed up, where it borders on the sea, becomes a labyrinth of creeks and rivers, running through the dense forests of the Sundarbans, and exhibiting during the annual inundations the appearance of an immense sea. Higher up, the rice-fields, to the extent of thousands of square miles, are submerged. The scene presents to a European eye a panorama of singular novelty and interest—the crops covered with water; the ears of grain floating on the surface; the stupendous embankments, which restrain, without altogether preventing, the excesses of the inundations; and peasants in all quarters going out to their daily work with their cattle in canoes or on rafts. The navigable streams which fall into or diverge from the Ganges intersect the country in every direction, and afford abundant facilities for internal communication. In many parts boats can approach, by means of lakes, rivulets, and water-courses, to the door of almost every cottage. The lower region of the Ganges is the richest and most productive portion of Bengal, and abounds in valuable produce." [1]

The rivers in Lower Bengal render, to a great extent, the services which are rendered in other countries by the roads. In many parts of the province a

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

well-to-do man keeps his boat as elsewhere he would keep his cart. Railways have penetrated into most of the districts: their development during the last ten years of the nineteenth century has been great, and there are now only five of the thirty districts which compose Bengal Proper through which a railway does not run. The other districts are mostly those in which it is difficult for railways to contend with the cheap water-carriage; they do not diminish the usefulness of the rivers or materially lessen the traffic which they carry. The great marts and entrepots of internal commerce, especially in the eastern parts of Bengal Proper, are situated at convenient places on the chief rivers, and the agricultural produce of the country is carried off in all directions by the navigable channels. The list of the useful products of Bengal would be a long one. Almost everything is provided in abundance that a people in a tropical climate requires. Rice, jute, timber, bamboos, indigo, opium, oil-seeds, and tea are the principal agricultural products which come into the export trade from Calcutta, but tea is only cultivated in the mountainous borders of the province, and not in Bengal Proper, and the indigo and opium come from Behár and the United Provinces of Agra and Oudh. I have already referred in some detail to the great and remarkable growth of industrial and mining interests in Bengal.[1] A great business is done in hides and skins, and in coal, the output of which has increased largely in recent years, and shows every sign of further development. The great agricultural staple, more important than any other, is rice, which constitutes the chief food of the people.

Although the endless stretches of the rice-fields are

[1] Chapter XIII.

monotonous, few flat countries can be more beautiful than parts of Bengal. A constant succession of admirable pictures is afforded by the reaches of the rivers, busy with traffic; the boats with their great sails; the clumps of feathery bamboos, the climbing canes and cocoanuts, "the pillared shade" of the sacred figs, the tamarinds and mangoes, tall rushes and plantains; the villages, with tanks green with weeds and water-lilies; neat cottages covered with creeping gourds and cucumbers and melons; the emerald greenness of the grass—these, and a thousand picturesque details, and the colouring of its hot and steamy atmosphere, make Bengal one of the most beautiful countries of India. Nor is it so disagreeable for Englishmen to live in as might be supposed. Although it has not the advantage of the pleasantly cold winter of Northern India, the heat of the summer is tempered by the greater prevalence of cloud and rain, and by the nearness of the sea. Heat like that of June at Agra or Lahore is unknown, and for three or four months in the winter the climate is very agreeable. The rainfall in Lower Bengal has seldom failed; excellent crops are almost always secured, and the whole of this portion of the province is as nearly as possible free from the danger of famine.

Although there is hardly any part of India where trade is so active, there are few cities and important towns. Calcutta, with its immediate suburbs, and the large transpontine suburb of Howrah, which is to Calcutta what Southwark is to London, contained in 1901 more than 1,105,000 people. It is in population the second city in the British Empire, but with this exception there are few towns in Bengal which, according to a European standard, can be called large. Patna, with 134,785 people, and Dacca, with 90,542, are the

largest. In addition to these three towns, Calcutta, Howrah, and Patna, there are only four besides Dacca which have more than 50,000 inhabitants. Almost the whole population is rural. Near Calcutta and Dacca many factories, chiefly of jute and cotton, have been established, but away from these centres there are scarcely any manufactures, except of common cloth and other articles, made by the ordinary village artisans. Bengal has never, within historical times, been distinguished, as other Indian countries have been, for excellence in art, except in textile fabrics, and its population is, for the most part, devoid of that admirable sense of colour which prevails in many parts of India. The difference in the appearance of the crowds that throng the streets of Bombay and Calcutta is remarkable, the former clad in bright and variously coloured garments, the latter in an almost uniform garb of dirty white. The native portion of Calcutta, although full of wealth, can hardly be surpassed in mean ugliness; people who are comparatively rich are often content to live in hovels; and among the zemindars and rájas of Bengal, with incomes which even in England would be thought great, there is hardly one who lives in a house which in its architecture and decoration is not detestable. In this respect the modern native city of Bombay is a striking contrast to that of Calcutta. The western and eastern capitals of India have grown up under not very dissimilar circumstances, but while the latter in its native quarter is little better than a collection of huts, the former can show streets which are sometimes strikingly picturesque. The admirable Indian styles of architecture which are living arts in other provinces are seldom represented in Bengal.

Throughout nearly the whole of Bengal Proper the

language of the people is Bengáli, but with much variation from place to place. "Bengal," Mr. Baines wrote in 1891, "is the province of all others in which there is the widest gap between the small literary castes and the masses of the people. The vernacular has been split into two sections: first, the tongue of the people at large, which changes every few miles; secondly, the literary dialect, known only through the press, and not intelligible to those who do not also know Sanskrit. The latter form is the product of what may be called the revival of learning in Eastern India, consequent upon the settlement of the British on the Hugli. The vernacular was then found rude and meagre, owing to the absence of scholarship, and the general neglect of the country during the Moghal rule. Instead of strengthening the existing web from the same material, every effort was made in Calcutta, then the only seat of instruction, to embroider upon the feeble old frame a grotesque and elaborate pattern in Sanskrit, and to pilfer from that tongue whatever in the way of vocabulary and construction the learned considered necessary to satisfy the increasing demands of modern intercourse."[1] The result is that books published in Bengáli are, for the most part, quite unintelligible to the people at large.

I have already referred to the great progress of the Mohammedan religion in Bengal.[2] In 1901, in Bengal Proper, the Mohammedans were more numerous than the Hindus, the former numbering 22,287,061, and the latter 21,731,482. In some of the eastern districts the Mohammedans constitute three-fourths of the whole population. Although often fanatical in their religion,

[1] *General Report on the Census of India*, 1891, p. 143.

[2] Chapter XVII.

they are generally totally ignorant of its history and abstruser tenets. The chief effect of their conversion has been to give them a more independent bearing and character than the Hindus of the classes to which they belong, and not unfrequently a disregard of life and the rights of property which leads to the commission of heinous and cruel crimes. The religion of multitudes of them is so interfused with local superstitions that it might almost be classed among the varieties of Hinduism. Changes, however, have been in progress in this respect during the last half-century, and there has been a tendency among the Mohammedans of Bengal, which is still maintained, towards the purification of their faith from Animistic superstitions and from Brahmanical influence. The great mass of the Musalman population is agricultural, but, even where it is most numerous, wealth and property in land are chiefly in the hands of the Hindus. If we look merely to numbers, the Lieutenant-Governor of Bengal is, as Sir William Hunter says, "as great a Musalman power as the Sultan of Turkey himself," but in our political speculations we need not alarm ourselves about the millions of Mohammedans in Bengal. They lack the capacity, the religious fervour, and the personal vigour which have at other times and in other places swept everything away before the onset of Islam. They have of late years been more and more awakened to the necessity of marching with the times, and of obtaining the advantages of English education, so that they may not be hopelessly defeated in all walks of life by the Hindus. This new development is increasing steadily, and much of the bigotry of former generations has already passed away.

The educated Mohammedans deserve to be named

with respect. They are not very numerous or wealthy, and cluster chiefly about Calcutta, Dacca, and Patna.

Many years ago Lord Macaulay gave a description of the Natives of Bengal. There is good reason, as I have already said, for calling in question the accuracy of some of his historical pictures, based on fallacious records, which have taught to thousands of Englishmen almost all that they know about India; but when Lord Macaulay wrote his character of the Bengális he was describing, from personal knowledge and observation, a people among whom he had himself lived. Its accuracy has hardly been denied by the Bengális themselves, and will be disputed by no Englishman.

"The men," he wrote, "by whom this rich tract was peopled, enervated by a soft climate and accustomed to peaceful employments, bore the same relation to other Asiatics which the Asiatics generally bear to the bold and energetic children of Europe. The Castilians have a proverb that in Valencia the earth is water and the men women; and this description is at least equally applicable to the vast plain of the Lower Ganges. Whatever the Bengalee does he does languidly. His favourite pursuits are sedentary. He shrinks from bodily exertion; and, though voluble in dispute, and singularly pertinacious in the war of chicane, he seldom engages in a personal conflict, and scarcely ever enlists as a soldier. There never, perhaps, existed a people so thoroughly fitted by habit for a foreign yoke."[1]

In another passage Lord Macaulay has passed upon the Bengális a similar judgment. I will quote a portion of it:—

"The physical organisation of the Bengalee is feeble even to effeminacy. He lives in a constant vapour-bath. His pursuits are sedentary, his limbs delicate, his movements languid. During many ages he has been trampled upon by men of bolder and more hardy breeds. . . . His mind bears a singular analogy

[1] Macaulay's *Essays*—"Lord Clive."

to his body. It is weak even to helplessness for purposes of manly resistance; but its suppleness and tact move the children of sterner climates to admiration not unmingled with contempt. . . . Nor does he lack a certain kind of courage which is often wanting to his masters. To inevitable evils he is sometimes found to oppose a passive fortitude, such as the Stoics attributed to their ideal sage. An European warrior who rushes on a battery of cannon with a loud hurrah will sometimes shriek under the surgeon's knife, and fall into an agony of despair at the sentence of death. But the Bengalee, who would see his country overrun, his house laid in ashes, his children murdered or dishonoured, without having the spirit to strike one blow, has yet been known to endure torture with the firmness of Mucius, and to mount the scaffold with the steady step and even pulse of Algernon Sidney."[1]

Lord Macaulay would have been the first to declare that we might find Bengális of a different stamp. Courage is no more an invariable virtue among the hardiest races of Europe than cowardice an invariable infirmity among the population of Bengal. There have been many changes since Lord Macaulay wrote, and among signs of increasing vigour, one that is not without significance has been, in late years, the development of a taste for athletic sports among the educated classes and in the Government schools and colleges. Gymnastics are often practised with some enthusiasm, and the Bengáli schoolboy has taken to cricket, hockey, and football, especially to the latter, which is now played all over the province. This, however, is true of a small section only of the population, and the general character of the people throughout the greater part of the province remains as Lord Macaulay represented it. It cannot, however, be applied to the northern and eastern districts, where the majority of the population is Mohammedan. The Mohammedan peasantry of the eastern portion of

[1] Macaulay's *Essays*—"Warren Hastings."

the province are men of far robuster character than the Bengális of the western districts; it was among them that the sepoys who fought under Clive at Plassey were chiefly recruited, and the maritime districts supply thousands of intrepid boatmen and lascars to the mercantile marine.

It has often been said, and it is probably true, that Bengal is the only country in the world where you can find a great population among whom personal cowardice is looked upon as in no way disgraceful. This is no invention of their enemies; the Bengális have themselves no shame or scruple in declaring it to be a fact. Even in the western parts of Bengal Proper and in Calcutta there can, however, be little doubt that English education, which has taken so deep a root, is encouraging the growth of manliness among other virtues, and is producing effects which are not limited to the young men trained in our colleges. The writers in the popular vernacular newspapers have begun to speak of patriotism and courage as qualities which should be presupposed to be present in characters worthy of respect. Even the academic admiration of such things is a mark of progress. The people generally are acute and intelligent, patient and industrious, and when they get more knowledge they may become more self-reliant and less helpless against wrong.

Leaving speculations on possible changes that may come to pass if our dominion should last sufficiently long, and looking to present facts, it is difficult to conceive for such a people as that of Bengal any independent political future. Neither in our own great Native army nor in the army of any Native State is there a Bengáli soldier; it would be impossible to induce Bengális to enlist, and equally impossible that

the recruiting officers should accept them. Even the Darwán or door-keeper, who guards the entrance to a well-to-do Bengáli's house, is invariably a man of the more vigorous races of one of the northern provinces; no Bengáli would credit a countryman of his own with possession of sufficient courage to keep out a bold intruder. But for the presence of our power, Bengal would inevitably and immediately become the prey of the hardier races of other Indian countries.

The condition of the people of Bengal has been profoundly affected by action taken more than a century ago by the British Government. In 1793 the so-called Permanent Settlement of the Land Revenue was introduced.

We found in Bengal, when we succeeded to the Government, a class of middle-men, called Zemindars, who collected the land revenue and the taxes, and we continued to employ them. As a matter of custom and expediency, but not of right, the office of zemindar was generally hereditary. In a few cases, especially in Behár and Chutia Nágpur, the zemindars were the heads of large clans, or the descendants of conquering families, but even then they had never been in any sense recognised as the owners of the land. It was supposed, however, by Lord Cornwallis and the English rulers of the time, that it would be an excellent thing for Bengal to have a class of landlords something like those of England; the zemindars were the only people that seemed available for the purpose, and they were declared to be the proprietors of the land. It was by no means intended that injustice should thus be done to others. Nor, when the Settlement was made, did it appear that any great boon had been conferred upon the zemindars, for the Government demand was assessed on what we

should now consider the extravagant basis that 90 per cent of the rental belonged properly to the State.

Excepting the State, there was only one great class, that of the ryots or actual cultivators, which, according to immemorial custom, could be held to possess permanent rights in the land. The existence of those rights was recognised, and, as it was supposed, guarded by the law. It was provided that "the Governor-General in Council will, whenever he may deem it proper, enact such regulations as he may think necessary for the protection of the dependent talookdars, ryots, and other cultivators of the soil." There has been much dispute as to the exact nature of the rights given to the zemindars, but every one agrees that it was not the intention of the authors of the Permanent Settlement to confiscate anything which, according to the customs of the country, had belonged to the cultivators. The right of property given to the zemindars was a portion of those rights which had always been exercised by the State, and of which the State was at liberty to dispose; it was not intended that they should receive anything else. The land revenue, representing the share of the produce or rental to which the State was entitled, was fixed in perpetuity. The ryots were to continue to hold their lands permanently at the "rates established in the purgunnah"; when the amount of those rates was disputed it was to be settled by the courts; so long as rents at those rates were paid, the ryot could not be evicted. The intention of the Permanent Settlement was not only to fix for ever the land revenue of the zemindars, but, at the same time, to secure to the ryot fixity of tenure and fixity of rent. There was in those days a great area of waste land, and the zemindars were entitled to the profit derived from its reclamation,

but, unfortunately, the rights which it had been intended to secure for the ryots were only secured upon paper, and have been grievously disregarded.

If the intentions with which the Permanent Settlement was made had been carried out, the result would, at any rate, have been beneficial to the ryots of Bengal, whatever might have been the effect on the interests of the State. I described in a former chapter[1] the nature of the right, which the ruling power has always exercised in India, of reserving for its own purposes a portion of the rent of the land. It was a right which had been exercised in Bengal from time immemorial. This resource, which would have gone on growing with the increasing prosperity of the country, has been thrown away in Bengal. The consequences at the present time are these:—Even if it be assumed that the share of the rent which the State can wisely take is smaller than the share which any Government, Native or British, has ever taken or proposed to take in India, the amount now received by the State from the land in Bengal must be held to fall short of what it might have been by a sum that can hardly be less than £3,500,000 a year; this is a moderate computation—probably the loss is much more. This is given away in return for no service to the State or to the public; the zemindars are merely the receivers of rent; with rare exceptions they take little part in the improvement of the land, and, until not many years ago, they bore virtually no share of the public burdens. The result of these proceedings of 1793, to the maintenance of which the faith of the British Government has been pledged, is that the poorer classes in poorer provinces have to make good to the State the millions which have been given away in Bengal.

[1] Chapter IX.

More serious evils have followed in the train of the Permanent Settlement. The crowning misfortune has been the destruction or non-recognition of those rights of the masses of the agricultural population which the authors of the Settlement undoubtedly intended to preserve.

"The original intention of the framers of the Permanent Settlement" [I am quoting from Sir George Campbell] "was to record all rights. The Canoongoes (District Registrars) and Putwarees (Village Accountants) were to register all holdings, all transfers, all rent-rolls, and all receipts and payments; and every five years there was to be filed in the public offices a complete register of all land tenures. But the task was a difficult one; there was delay in carrying it out. English ideas of the rights of a landlord, and of the advantage of non-interference, began more and more to prevail in Bengal. The executive more and more abrogated the functions of recording rights and protecting the inferior holders, and left everything to the judicial tribunals. The putwarees fell into disuse or became the mere servants of the zemindars; the canoongoes were abolished. No record of the rights of the ryots and inferior holders was ever made, and even the quinquennial register of superior rights, which was maintained for a time, fell into disuse. When a regular police was established, the zemindars were in practice freed from any effective responsibility for the suppression of crime, or other administrative functions. They became in every sense mere rent-receivers."[1]

The consequences of the Permanent Settlement did not become immediately prominent. At the beginning of the last century the population was far smaller, there was much waste land to be occupied, and there was little disposition or power on the part of the zemindars to disregard the old customary terms on which the land was held. But, as time went on, and population and

[1] *System of Land Tenures in Various Countries*, published by the Cobden Club, p. 176.

wealth increased, as cultivators were more readily found, and custom began to give way to competition, the position of the ryots became worse and that of the zemindars became stronger. Other circumstances helped the process of confiscation of the rights of the peasantry. For more than half a century after the Permanent Settlement was made, the Executive Government in Bengal was extremely weak. The English principle that in the ordinary affairs of life the less the State interferes with individual action the better, and that for the protection of private rights little more is required than the maintenance of order, with good courts of justice accessible to all, is admirable when applied to the government of Englishmen, but it is unsuitable to India, and there could be no people to which it was less applicable than the people of Bengal. This principle of non-interference was carried out in that province to an extent unknown in any other part of India. Nothing would have so much helped the timid people of Bengal in social and political progress as the just and active and masterful administration of Englishmen, resolute that the rights of the weak should be respected, determined to satisfy themselves by personal knowledge that this was done, and possessing power to interfere effectively on behalf of those who could not protect themselves. A system of administration which left it to the courts of justice to remedy any oppression of which the sufferer might complain, or which he might be able to prove, practically resulted in providing no remedy at all.

I showed in a former chapter[1] that in other provinces of India an elaborate machinery has been spread over the whole country, extending its ramifications into every

[1] Chapter XIX.

village, for the purpose of maintaining an accurate record of the rights and liabilities of all classes of the agricultural population. In the greater part of Bengal nothing of the sort exists. There has been, until lately, no cadastral survey and no record of agricultural rights, but within the last ten years these have been introduced throughout North Behár, and in the greater part of Orissa, as well as in parts of other districts and in estates under Government management. Under the arrangements of the Permanent Settlement, the Government has no anxiety about the collection of its land revenue. The whole responsibility for punctual payment falls upon the zemindar. If he does not pay at the district treasury on the appointed date, no questions are asked; there may or may not have been causes which make immediate payment difficult; these are matters with which the Government does not concern itself; it is enough that the revenue is due; the estate is put up to public auction, and the demand of the State is the first claim on the proceeds of the sale. In consequence of this system, the Executive Government, so far as the collection of the land revenue is concerned, has little to do in the interior of a Bengal district, and financially there is little direct reason for interference with any interests in the land.

There were other causes for the weakness of government in Bengal. This being the province in which British authority was first established on that side of India, and from which our chief conquests were gradually made, the Government of Bengal was for a long time the Supreme Government in British India. Until 1833, the Governor-General was called the Governor-General of Fort William in Bengal, not the Governor-General of India, and it was not until 1853 that he was relieved

from the duty of governing Bengal. While the empire was being constantly extended, he could spend comparatively little time in Calcutta. When he was there, he was by law Governor, but it was impossible for him to attend personally to the details of Bengal administration. When he was absent from Calcutta, the senior member of Council for the time being became Deputy Governor. Thus there was a frequent change of rulers, and no one man was long responsible for the good government of the province. At last, the contrast between the condition of Bengal and that of other parts of India became too obvious to be neglected. This was especially seen when Bengal was compared with the neighbouring province on the north, which in 1835 had been placed under a separate Government. When the North-Western Provinces, under their admirable Lieutenant-Governor, Mr. Thomason, were becoming a model of good and vigorous administration, Bengal was the most backward of the great provinces of India. There were almost no roads or bridges or schools, and there was no proper protection to life and property. The police was worthless, and robberies and violent crimes by gangs of armed men, which were unheard of in other provinces, were common not far from Calcutta.

By the Act of 1853 a separate provincial Government was constituted for Bengal, and a Lieutenant-Governor was appointed. From that time a great change began, and constant improvement has been going on ever since. The courts have been purified, the police has been organised, crimes of violence have almost ceased, public works have been constructed, education has made great progress, and, although still weak when judged by the standard of other provinces, the executive administration has become stronger. Not the least bene-

ficial of these changes were the measures which soon began to be adopted, but of which we have not seen the end, for the protection of the rights of the agricultural population.

The difficulty of the problems to be solved in Bengal has been great. In 1793 the rental left to the zemindars under the Permanent Settlement, after payment of the land revenue, is supposed not to have exceeded £400,000; according to some estimates it was less. If the original intentions of the Government had been carried out, it was to the ryots that the greater portion of any future increase in the annual value of the land would have belonged, in those parts at least of the province which were at that time well cultivated. It is not possible to state with confidence the present gross annual rental of the landlords. According to an official valuation admitted to be imperfect, it was said, in 1891-92, to be about £10,000,000, and in 1901 to be about £11,200,000. It is certainly much more. However this may be, it may be safely assumed that after deducting the land revenue, which is now about £2,700,000, the net rental is thirty or forty times larger at the present time than it was a century ago. In some parts of Bengal the increase has been far greater, and this has mainly resulted from the destruction of the rights of the peasantry. Hardly any of it has been due to the legitimate action of the zemindars. That part of it which has not been due to worse causes has been due to the increase of population, to the industry of the ryots, and to the expenditure of the State, an expenditure defrayed, in great measure, from the taxation of poorer provinces. If ever there was an "unearned increment" it is this.

It must not, however, be supposed that the land

of Bengal now belongs to a small and wealthy class of proprietors. Although some of the estates of the zemindars are great tracts of country, yielding immense incomes to their owners, a constant process of subdivision has been going on. In 1901 the number of estates in the whole province had increased to 186,583, of which 152,824 or nearly 82 per cent were petty estates paying less than 100 rupees as revenue, with an average area of only 51 acres and an average assessment of 24 rupees per annum.

We cannot now restore to the State the large revenue which has been sacrificed; we cannot replace the ryots in the enjoyment of the property of which they have been deprived, and give to them again the rates of rent which have been so enormously increased, but we can at least secure to them protection for the rights they still retain, and prevent the further illegal enhancement of their payments.

I am far from suggesting that pledges given at the time of the Permanent Settlement should be set aside, or that the zemindars should be deprived of privileges which, however they may have been acquired, have been enjoyed through a long course of years. So far, however, as it is now possible, without breach of engagements which we are bound to maintain, to remedy evils such as these which I have been describing, it is our obvious duty to do so.

The zemindars have repeatedly put forward the claim that in consequence of the stipulations of the Permanent Settlement they are entitled to exemption for ever from all taxation upon profits derived from the land. In 1859, when an income tax was first imposed on every kind of property throughout India, they protested that the conditions of the Settlement were

violated, and that the Government had been guilty of a breach of faith. In 1871, and again in 1877, they demanded, on similar grounds, exemption from liability to rates imposed on land and other immovable property for local and provincial roads and public works, for sanitation, education, and other local objects. These claims have always been rejected, and the time has passed in which there was danger that any British Government would listen to the pretension that it was the design of the framers of the Permanent Settlement that no taxation should ever fall upon profits drawn from the land. The intention of that Settlement was simply to fix permanently the share of the produce or rental to which the State, in its capacity of superior landlord, intended to limit its demand. No questions of taxation were touched or involved. In the words of Sir James Stephen, the Permanent Settlement "reduced to a certainty one particular charge on the land, which had previously been of variable amount, and so freed the landholders from uncertainty which had previously hung over them in respect of it. . . . Since the Permanent Settlement the proprietary right of the zemindars has been undoubted, and the line between their property and that of the State has been clearly defined, and is no longer subject to increase 'in consequence' (to use the words of the Permanent Settlement itself) 'of the improvement of their respective estates.'"[1] As Sir James Stephen went on to say, to affirm, that because this has been done, the land has been freed from that liability to taxation which is the common liability of all property in all countries, is a confusion of thought against which it is superfluous to argue. Under Acts passed in 1871 and 1877, and consolidated by Bengal Act IX. of 1880,

[1] Speech in the Legislative Council, 6th April 1871.

rates were imposed upon the land, and they yielded in 1900-01 about £620,000. By these rates, and by the previous imposition of the income tax, the principle that profits derived from the land are liable to taxation both for local and imperial purposes was affirmed. Within the last few years proposals have been made to impose a cess for the payment of patwáris, and also an educational cess, and though these measures have not in fact been enforced, the reason for abstention was not that they would have infringed the conditions of the Permanent Settlement, but that the necessity for them had passed away for the time.

The first serious effort for the improvement of the rent-law of Bengal was made in 1859, when an Act dealing with the subject was passed. Its chief object was to place restrictions on the landlord's powers of enhancement, distraint, and eviction, and to declare the conditions under which occupancy rights accrued to the ryots. It was described by Lord Canning as "a real and earnest attempt to improve the position of the ryots of Bengal, and to open to them a prospect of freedom and independence which they have not hitherto enjoyed, by clearly defining their rights, and by placing restrictions on the power of the zemindars such as ought long ago to have been provided." The intentions of the Legislature were excellent, but the Act proved imperfect and insufficient, and in some respects made matters worse than they were before. As time went on the difficulties increased. In Eastern Bengal the state of affairs became highly unsatisfactory; combinations of ryots to refuse the payment of any rent occurred, and violent collisions took place between them and the zemindars, aggravated by the fact that the former were mostly Mohammedans and the latter Hindus. In 1876

it became necessary to legislate for the prevention of agrarian disputes.

In Behár the case was more serious. This great province of Bengal has an area of 32,000 square miles, and a population of more than nineteen and a half millions. There is hardly any part of British India possessing greater natural advantages of soil and climate, and no part where the condition of the agricultural population is more precarious, or the margin of subsistence smaller. This was a cause of much anxiety to Lord Lawrence when he was Viceroy, and he stated his belief that legislation would become necessary for the protection of the ryot, "and make him what he is now only in name, a free man." In 1878, Sir Ashley Eden, then Lieutenant-Governor of Bengal, described the ryots of Behár as "poor, helpless, discontented men, bound down to a state of extreme depression and misery, tenants of the richest province in Bengal, yet the poorest and most wretched class we find in the country. . . . The loose system of zemindari accounts, the entire absence of leases and counterparts, the universal prevalence of illegal distraint, the practice of amalgamating holdings so as to destroy evidence of continuous occupation, are evils which necessarily prevent any possible development of agricultural prosperity among the tenant class, and place them entirely at the mercy of their landlords." The Indian Famine Commissioners of 1880, not long afterwards, pressed the same subject on the attention of the Government.

"Where," they said, "as in Behár, the relations of landlord and tenant are those of a high-handed proprietary body on the one hand, habitually disregarding the law, and on the other a tenantry, ignorant, very helpless, and sunk in the most abject poverty, the onus of bringing complaints ought not to be laid

on the tenants, and the first and most important duty of the Bengal Government and of the officials would seem to be to guard zealously against infringements of the law by the rich, and to put them down as if they were offences against the public peace." "It was proved," writes Mr. Finucane, the head of the Agricultural Department in Bengal, "by indisputable evidence, that the rents of ryots in Behár have during the past fifty years been illegally and arbitrarily enhanced out of all proportion to what the landlords were under the law entitled to demand, and to what the tenants were legally liable to pay. Though the rent law gave the ryot certain rights, he was so helpless or so ignorant that he was unable to assert these rights out of court, or to go into court to enforce them."

I will make a few more extracts from official reports regarding the condition of the people in parts of Behár.

"The gross rental of permanently settled estates being at the lowest estimate five times the amount payable by landholders as Government revenue, there can, as a matter of course, be no difficulty in realising that revenue under the sunset law. But there are certain tracts in which, though the permanently settled land revenue may be realised, yet the sums realised by the Government have had again to be expended, many fold increased, on charitable relief which became necessary in order to prevent mortality by starvation. Such pre-eminently is the province of Behár, and specially the three northern districts of Darbhanga, Mozaffarpur, and Sáran. Within a period of seventeen years there have been five in which a portion of the people of this part of the province have died of starvation. The whole conditions of agricultural industry are such as to render it precarious. It is impossible for the people to fall back in one year of partial failure of crops on the accumulated reserves of a previous year, whether of grain, property, money, or credit. Thus, in the one district of Darbhanga, which is taken as being the worst of all in these respects—a district which is one of the most fertile, best cultivated, and highly favoured by nature in all India—it was necessary for the Government to expend in one year, on one famine in 1874, by way of charitable relief, no less than £370,000 in cash, and 118,000 tons of grain, valued in Burma at £9 per ton. If to

this be added the cost of transport, and cost of famine establishment, it will not be too much to put down the net cost of famine to Government in this single district at £1,500,000, the Government revenue being less than £50,000 per annum. The famine expenditure in this district, in one year, was more than thirty times the amount of the Government revenue, and far more than its capitalised value. . . . Yet the rental of the district was no less than twelve times the amount of the Government revenue. It is not alone on famine relief that enormous sums have been expended in this part of the country. There has been also a great outlay on State railways, which, though they may facilitate the importation of grain in times of distress, can in ordinary times be of little benefit to the mass of the peasantry; for it is evident that so long as landlords are permitted to take advantage of the local competition for land in order to enhance rents illegally, it is they, and they only, who appropriate the profits resulting from that rise in prices which attends the opening up of means of communication. Besides £200,000 expended on a temporary famine railway to Darbhanga in 1874, there has been an expenditure on the Tirhut State railway of £1,300,000 within the past ten years."[1]

Much, however, has been done, since the facts just quoted were described, to ameliorate the condition of the peasantry in Behár. The Tenancy Act which became law in 1885 defined the position of tenants, and this has been still further consolidated by the institution, still in progress, of a cadastral survey and record of rights. In the famine of 1897 it was found that only a small proportion of the tenantry accepted relief, and the extent of their resources surpassed the general expectation; those who were employed on relief works belonged almost entirely to the class of landless day labourers, the numbers of whom were large.

Some of the zemindars of Behár are among the richest men in India. The estates of the Rája of Darbhanga, in

[1] *Report of the Agricultural Department in Bengal for 1886.*

the district just mentioned, have an area of 2400 square miles, a population of more than 750,000, and a rental exceeding £130,000 a year. The increase in the net rental of the zemindars of North Behár in the last three generations has been immense. At the time of the Permanent Settlement it was about £3000, and in 1893, a hundred years later, it was about £2,400,000, or eighty times greater.[1] If the intentions of the framers of the Settlement had been carried out, the larger part of this vast sum would have been in the possession of the unfortunate peasants whose rights have been swept away.

Happily, the condition of the agricultural population in the greater part of Bengal is much better than in Behár; the necessity for their protection was urgent, but they were not reduced to a condition such as that common in Behár; climatic conditions are such that the productive powers of the land are not precarious, and they live, as a rule, in reasonable comfort.

The discussion of the measures required for placing the law of landlord and tenant throughout Bengal on a better footing continued for many years. In 1885 the "Bengal Tenancy Act" was passed by the Governor-General in Council, mainly with the view of benefiting the tenantry of Behár. I will not attempt to describe all its provisions, but its value cannot be doubted. It aimed at giving protection to the ryots without interfering with the rights of landlords. It defined the position of the various classes of landlords and tenants, the incidents of the various tenures, the conditions under which rights of occupancy in the land could be acquired and maintained, the manner in which rents were to be

[1] "Minute by Sir Antony MacDonnell, Officiating Lieutenant-Governor of Bengal, 21st September 1893."

regulated, enhanced, and reduced, the circumstances under which evictions might take place; it imposed penalties for illegal exactions, laid down rules regarding compensation for improvements, gave power to the Government to order surveys and the preparation of records of rights, and dealt with a multitude of other matters of importance. There has undoubtedly been in recent years immense improvement. In the words of a paper which has been already quoted, "the rise in the price of agricultural produce has benefited all who have such produce to sell. For a long time the landlords contrived to appropriate the greater part of the benefit, but partly owing to the increase in the number of districts and the creation of subdivisions, which have let the light of day into the remotest parts of the country, and partly owing to the Bengal Tenancy Act and the operations under it, a fair share has at last been secured to the ryot." [1]

The passing of the Tenancy Act was an excellent measure, and its results have been most valuable. More is required, but much progress has been and is being made. I have shown that in other parts of British India there has been a survey of every field, and that a permanent record is maintained of all rights and interests in the land. This, in other provinces, is the basis of our system of administration. Without such basis, in a country where nearly the whole population is agricultural, neither the executive authorities nor the courts of justice have the means of obtaining the knowledge essential to the protection of the most important interests of the people. In land disputes the first essential is to know accurately where the land is situated,

[1] "Memorandum on the Material Condition of the People of Bengal," by L. P. Shirres, C.S.

and its area; in all questions of transfer, or sale, or rent, or tenure, this knowledge is required, and there are, in the greater part of Bengal, no means of supplying it. In this province, until a few years ago, there were virtually no detailed surveys, no revenue maps, no records of rights; there was universal ignorance of almost all facts connected with the greatest industry of the country, which it was the most necessary to know.

The first steps, however, have been taken to wipe away this disgrace. A cadastral or field survey was begun in 1892 in the province of Behár, accompanied by a record of all existing rights in land, and this is still being carried out under the provisions of the Bengal Tenancy Act. The Government contributes towards the cost of these operations, but the greater portion of it is apportioned between the zemindars and ryots, who directly benefit by the survey. This measure at first met with much opposition from the zemindars. The traditions of administration in Bengal, to which I have referred, had not accustomed them to such an interference on the part of the Government, although this was no more than has been done in every other province of British India, and they not unnaturally disliked payment of the cost. In other provinces the expenditure on cadastral surveys is defrayed from the Imperial treasury, but they are accompanied by a re-settlement of the land revenue, and the result is usually an enhancement of its amount. In Bengal, the settlement being permanent, the State receives no such advantage, and it would be unreasonable to call on the general Indian taxpayer to provide the means of meeting an expenditure the objects and benefits of which are purely local. But as time has passed, the zemindars equally with the tenantry have recognised the value of these operations, and they have

learned to appreciate the great advantages which an accurate record brings to them. While this important work has been carried on in the permanently settled districts of Bengal, a work of not less importance to the good of the people has been brought to a conclusion in the province of Orissa, of which two-thirds are temporarily settled. This province had not known settlement operations for sixty years, but the present settlement was concluded in the space of ten years (1890-1900), and has resulted in a substantial increase of assessment, with practically no friction or opposition whatever.

Every measure of political importance is discussed by the organs of the educated classes. Not long ago there could be no doubt as to what would be the reception of any measure that seemed to threaten the interests of the zemindars. No taxation affecting them could be imposed without the cry being raised that the solemn pledges of the Permanent Settlement were being violated by an unscrupulous Government. Every measure which has had for its object the more just distribution of the public burdens has, as a rule, met with nothing but opposition. We were told that to reduce the salt tax was folly; let it be increased if the Government wants more money. The abolition of customs duties on cotton goods was solely prompted by the desire to benefit the manufacturers of Manchester, and by the base political purpose of gaining votes in Lancashire. Educated Bengális were not to be deceived by the profession that we desired to give to the people of India cheaper salt and cheaper clothing. It is, I fear, impossible to deny that English education in Bengal has given frequent aid to the perpetration of injustice and to the prevention of reform.

It has sometimes been loudly asserted by persons imperfectly acquainted with the facts, that in Bengal, in consequence of the Permanent Settlement, the country has been preserved from famine, that the cultivators are more prosperous than in other parts of India, that agricultural enterprise has been fostered, and private capital accumulated which has been devoted to useful industries and to public works and industries. I have already referred to the exhaustive inquiry made by the Government of Lord Curzon in 1901 into the whole subject of the Land Revenue administration throughout India. The conclusions arrived at were established by a mass of unimpeachable evidence. It was shown that there was no foundation whatever for any such contentions as those which had been urged. Failure of the periodical rains is far less common than in the greater part of India, but when it has occurred, Bengal has suffered like other provinces. As regards the condition of cultivators there is, the Government of India demonstrated, not only no ground for the contention that their position, owing to the Permanent Settlement, has been converted into one of exceptional comfort and prosperity, but such assertions are directly contrary to the fact. "It is precisely because this was not the case, and because, so far from being generously treated by the zemindars, the Bengal cultivator was rack-rented, impoverished, and oppressed, that the Government of India felt compelled to intervene on his behalf, and by the series of legislative measures that commenced with the Bengal Tenancy Act of 1859 and culminated in the Act of 1885, to place him in the position of greater security which he now enjoys. As for the allegation that the Permanent Settlement has been the means of developing in Bengal an exceptional flow of public-spirited

and charitable investment, while the Government of India are proud of the fact that there are many worthy and liberal-minded landlords in Bengal—as there are also in other parts of India—they know that the evils of absenteeism, of management of estates by unsympathetic agents, of unhappy relations between landlord and tenant, and of the multiplication of tenure-holders or middle-men between the zemindar and cultivator in many and various degrees, are at least as marked and as much on the increase there as elsewhere; and they cannot conscientiously endorse the proposition that, in the interests of the cultivator, that system of agrarian tenure should be held up as a public model which is not supported by the experience of any civilised country, which is not justified by the single great experiment that has been made in India, and which was found in the latter case to place the tenant so unreservedly at the mercy of the landlord that the State has been compelled to employ for his protection a more stringent measure of legislation than has been found necessary in temporarily settled areas. It is not, in fine, in the Permanent Settlement of Bengal that the ryot has found his salvation; it has been in the laws which have been passed by the Supreme Government to check its license and to moderate its abuses."[1]

[1] *Papers regarding the Revenue System of British India*, presented to Parliament, p. 3

CHAPTER XXIII

THE ARMY IN INDIA

The ultimate basis of our dominion—Indian interests beyond the limits of India—The advance of Russia—Defence of North-West Frontier—The Frontier tribes—Formation of the North-West Frontier Province—Results of the advance of Russia—The armies of India before 1857—The Mutinies—The reorganisation of the Native Army—Its present constitution—Its fighting qualities—The Bengal Army—The Officers of the Indian Army—The Police—Increase of the army in 1885—Present strength—The British troops—Improvement in their health—Hill stations—Frontier and Port defences—Volunteers—Changes in 1893 in constitution of Army—Existing commands—Armies of the Native States—Special contingents for Imperial service.

In this book I profess to speak of nothing except of India itself, its internal administration, and its progress under British rule. There are other subjects, of the utmost gravity, with which Indian interests are intimately connected, of which, although I am silent regarding them, it must not be supposed that I fail to recognise the importance, believing, as I do, that the position of England as the greatest Power of the world, with which, indeed, her national existence in a form worthy of her is inseparably bound up, depends upon the maintenance of her Indian Empire. The ultimate basis of our dominion in India is obviously our military or, to speak more accurately, our naval power, and this to be efficient must be capable of being exercised on sea and land not

only within India itself but far beyond her borders. The problems connected with the advance of Russia to the frontiers of Afghánistán, and our relations with the latter country are far from their final solution. In Persia and the Persian Gulf, in Arabia, in Africa, in Tibet, in China, and in Siam there are great Indian and Imperial interests which, let us trust, British statesmen will never forget, and which they will defend with all the power of the empire. By the military positions that we now occupy and by the construction of railways, we have gained for the north-western frontiers of India a great accession of military and political strength, and a not less important step towards that end has been the adoption of wiser methods in dealing with the wild and warlike tribes which have given to us such constant causes of anxiety. These causes still remain, but those most competent to judge now look forward hopefully to the time when they may cease to be, as they have been in the past, a serious source of military weakness. A most important step towards that end was the formation, in 1901, of the North-West Frontier Province, by which the frontier districts were severed from the Punjab, and placed under a separate administration under the immediate control of the Supreme Government. This measure, advocated long ago by Lord Lytton, although in a different form, as a matter of urgent necessity, was at last successfully accomplished by Lord Curzon.

All these are subjects into which I cannot enter, but it must never be forgotten how profoundly the proximity of a great European Power has altered our position in India, and that it is not only our military position that has been affected. The change has been felt throughout India. It has thrown into the minds of men uncertainties

regarding the future; it has disturbed the finances, and thus has retarded the progress of works essential to the prosperity of the country, and checked improvement in the administration. No Englishman who deserves the name will for a moment doubt our resolution to maintain our Empire, or that we can render India invulnerable, but statesmen will do well to remember that nothing can save us, sooner or later, from attack, except the certainty on the part of those who may desire to assail us, that every hostile attempt must end in disastrous failure. The condition among all others obviously essential to our success is one on which I need not dilate: absolute supremacy at sea gave to us our empire, and without it the maintenance of that empire in India or elsewhere will be impossible.

Although I can say nothing more on the serious subjects to which I have been referring, some account must be given of the constitution of the army in India.

In the earlier times of the East India Company, a military force grew up in each of the three presidencies of Bengal, Madras, and Bombay. Three distinct armies came into existence, and until not long ago they still remained.

The principal extensions of territory having occurred, since the beginning of the nineteenth century, in the presidency of Bengal, the army of Bengal became the most important of the three; in 1856, the year before the mutinies, it was more numerous than the other two armies together. In that year the British forces in India consisted of 39,000 Europeans and 215,000 Natives, besides several contingents, as they were called, maintained for the protection of Native States, and at their expense.

The Native army of Bengal, consisting in 1856 of

seventy-four regiments of infantry, with ten regiments of regular and eighteen of irregular cavalry, was mainly recruited, especially for the infantry, from the Brahmans and Rájputs of Oudh, and in a lesser degree from the North-Western Provinces. A part of the Bombay army and of the contingents was supplied from the same classes. The army of Madras was recruited from its own presidency. Besides the regular army, and various local corps, there was a strong force of so-called irregular cavalry and infantry, the most important part of which was raised in the Punjab from Sikhs, Patháns, and other warlike races. This body of troops, known as the Punjab Frontier Force, guarded the northern frontier, and was under the orders of the Provincial Government. The greater part of the artillery in India was manned by Native soldiers.

About one-third of the European infantry, and all the European artillery were local troops, raised by the East India Company for permanent service in India. They numbered about 14,000 men.

In 1857 almost the whole of the Bengal Native army, a part of that of Bombay, and the contingents in Northern India, mutinied. The Madras army remained faithful. The Punjab Frontier Force was not only faithful, but rendered admirable service in the suppression of the revolt.

Before peace was restored the old Bengal army had ceased to exist. The Government was transferred to the Crown, and the whole military organisation was altered. The local European army was abolished. The artillery, which had been chiefly Native, became almost wholly British. The place of the local European infantry was supplied by British regiments of the line. The total strength of European troops was largely

increased, while that of the Native army was largely diminished. Three distinct armies—those of Bengal, Madras, and Bombay—were still maintained. After the new arrangements had been completed, the army in India consisted of about 62,000 British and 135,000 Native troops.

I quote from the Report of the Indian Army Commission of 1879 the following summary of the changes made after the mutinies; but, as I shall show, it became necessary in 1885 to increase the numbers both of British and Native troops:—

"On the reorganisation of the army, after the mutiny was quelled, it was decided that the proportion of Native and European troops in India should never greatly exceed two to one, and that the field and other artillery should be exclusively, or almost exclusively, manned by Europeans. . . . All the fortresses in the country are now served by British artillery. All the heavy batteries and all the batteries of field artillery are manned by Europeans. The lessons taught by the mutiny have thus led to the maintenance of the two great principles of retaining in the country an irresistible force of British troops, and of keeping the artillery in the hands of Europeans.

"Our position in the country has very materially changed, and a force of 62,000 European soldiers represents a power far in excess of that which it represented in 1857. In those days the British troops were scattered in small forces throughout the country, and it was a matter of great difficulty, delay, and expense to concentrate even a small British force on any one spot in India. When the mutiny broke out we had hardly 400 miles of railway complete in the country, while at the present moment we have 8312 miles of railway open.[1]

"All our great cantonments, all our fortresses and arsenals, save one, are now connected with each other, and with the seaboard, by railway. The strength of our European troops for action at any point, within or without the borders of British India, has thus been enormously increased. For example, whereas

[1] In 1902 nearly 28,000 miles of railway were open or under construction.

in 1857 a regiment took three or four months to march from the seaboard to Lahore, it can now move from Calcutta to Lahore in a week. Reinforcements from England, which then occupied three months on a voyage round the Cape, now land in Bombay within thirty days of leaving England. Again, the power of British troops has been indefinitely increased by their armament with breech-loading rifles, and by the substitution of rifled field-pieces of higher power for the smooth-bore six-pounder, nine-pounder, and mountain guns of the mutiny era. In any contest within the borders, or on the frontiers of India, these improved armaments would tell heavily; for the troops of Afghánistan, Burma, Nepál, Gwalior, Hyderabad, and the Cis-Sutlej States, are for the most part still armed with smooth-bore muzzle-loading weapons."

Before the mutinies of 1857, the infantry of the Bengal army was, as I have already said, mainly recruited from the Brahmans and Rájputs of Oudh and the North-Western Provinces. Although men of fine physique, they were not remarkable for fighting efficiency, and the former reputation of the Native army of Bengal was certainly exaggerated. Most of its triumphs were mainly due to the British troops who were associated with it. The ruinous consequences of drawing the larger proportion of our soldiers from a single class, under the influence of the same feelings and interests, and holding more than any other people in India the strictest prejudices of caste, were shown by the events of 1857. The old system was abandoned, and I quote from the Report of the Indian Army Commission a description of that which took its place:—

"The systems of recruiting for the several armies are diverse. Regiments of the Madras and Bombay armies draw their recruits from many tribes and castes over the several recruiting grounds of those presidencies, and the Bombay regiments have an admixture of Sikhs and Hindustanis from Northern India in their ranks. These armies are thus composed of what are called

'mixed recruits'—that is to say, of corps in which men of different races, several religions, and many provinces are thrown together into the same company or troop. In the Bengal and Punjab armies the majority of corps are what are called 'class-company regiments'—that is to say, the regiments draw recruits from three or more different races and recruiting grounds, but the men of each class or race are kept apart in separate companies. Thus, an infantry regiment may have two companies of Sikhs, two companies of Hindustani Brahmans and Rájputs, two companies of Punjabi Mohammedans, one company of Trans-Indus Patháns, and one company of Dogras from the Kángra or Jamu hills: such a regiment would be a class-company regiment; the native officers of each company would ordinarily belong to the race, tribe, or sect from which the company was recruited. In the Northern army are a limited number of 'class regiments,' which are composed of men belonging to one caste or tribe. Such, for instance, are the Gurkha corps, recruited entirely from the hardy short-statured highlanders of the Nepál hills, the Pioneer regiments, which consist exclusively of men of the Muzbi tribe, who in the early days of Sikh rule were despised outcasts, whose noblest calling was thieving, but who are now among the flower of the Northern army."

During the last few years further changes have been made with the object of securing greater military efficiency, and important reforms have been carried out in the Bengal, Madras, and Bombay armies.

The system of "class regiments" has been extended to the infantry of the Bengal army, and each battalion of this force is now composed of men of one race—Brahmans, Jats, or Rájputs, as the case may be.

In the infantry of the Bombay army Sikhs are no longer recruited. They are now grouped in battalions by themselves, or in class-company regiments serving in the Punjab, or in Burma. Nearly all cavalry regiments, however, except in Madras, include a considerable proportion of these admirable soldiers in their ranks.

In Madras the changes have been many. The annexation of Burma, which rendered necessary the maintenance of a garrison in that country, has been one of the chief causes, and several battalions for which men of Madras were formerly recruited in class-company regiments now enlist Punjabis, Gurkhas, and other men of Northern India. The experiment is also being made of forming Moplahs and men of Coorg into class regiments, and it is hoped that these and other tribes will furnish useful contingents to the army.

The Native army is recruited by voluntary enlistment. The infantry are clothed, armed, and equipped by the State, but the men provide their own food, and, with some assistance, they themselves, according to the old custom of the country, build the lines in which they live. On foreign service beyond sea, or in campaigns beyond the frontiers of India, they receive rations from the Commissariat. Except in the Madras command, where the Native cavalry are in these respects on the same footing as the infantry, this branch of the service is organised on what is called the Silladár system. The men provide their own uniform, their arms, excepting breech-loading carbines, their equipment, and their horses; they feed themselves and their horses, build their own lines, and provide their own camp equipage and carriage on the line of march. Their pay is fixed at a rate which enables them to meet all these charges.

Considering the great variety of the sources from which the Native army is recruited, there is much variety in its military qualities, and all recent measures have been designed with the object of enabling the Government of India to place rapidly in the field the largest possible number of troops composed of the

best fighting material. It would be difficult to find in any country finer soldiers than Sikhs, Patháns, and Gurkhas, and in case of necessity there would be no difficulty in making at short notice a large addition to their numbers. There can be no doubt that a large portion of our Native army is now equal to the troops of any European State, and is fit to take its place anywhere in the field by the side of British soldiers.

The most efficient section of the Native army is undoubtedly that of the North, stationed in the Punjab and on the north-western frontier, and consisting entirely of men belonging to the most vigorous and martial races of India. Among its other excellent elements it comprises several battalions of Gurkhas, soldiers whose fighting qualities can hardly be surpassed. The Punjab Frontier Force, a most efficient body, formed until some years ago a virtually distinct army under the Government of the Punjab, and although it has since been brought, like the rest of the army, under the orders of the Commander-in-Chief, it retains its separate organisation.

Although the old name of the "Bengal Army" has been partially retained, it had, as already noticed, long become somewhat of a misnomer, for there was not a single native of Bengal in its ranks, and only a small part of it was ever stationed in Bengal. In Bengal Proper there are a few thousand men at places on the railway connecting Calcutta with Northern India, and near the frontier of Nepal and other Hill States, and there are usually four or five thousand men in Calcutta and its neighbourhood. In the rest of the Lieutenant-Governorship of Bengal, with its population of more than 78,000,000, there are hardly any troops. Sir William Hunter was well within the mark when he said

that, in that province, "probably 40,000,000 of people go through life without once seeing the gleam of a bayonet or the face of a soldier."

The "Officers of the Indian Army," known until the 1st January 1903 under the designation of the "Indian Staff Corps," supply the British officers of the Native army. A Staff Corps for each of the three armies of Bengal, Madras, and Bombay was established in 1861, when the Native army was reorganised. The officers of the Corps were, in the first instance, transferred from the East India Company's Army, and subsequently they were drawn from British regiments of the line or artillery. In 1891 the three Staff Corps were amalgamated into a single body, and the Officers of the Indian Army, as they are now called, are about 2700 in number. They are mainly recruited by the appointment of candidates from the Royal Military College at Sandhurst, but some are accepted from the British army serving in India. After the probation of a year's duty with a British regiment in India, and another year's duty with a Native regiment, and after passing examinations in the Native languages and in professional subjects, an officer is finally approved for service, and he is then eligible for staff employment or command in any part of India. In respect of regimental appointments, an officer ordinarily remains with the territorial branch of the army to which he was first posted, but he may be transferred by exchange to a regiment belonging to another command. The Officers of the Indian Army are employed not only in the Native army and in military appointments on the staff, but also in a large number of civil posts. They hold the majority of appointments in the political, or, as we should call it in England, the diplomatic department,

and many administrative and judicial offices in non-regulation provinces.

Before 1857 duties were often performed by the Native army which were really duties of police, and the great reduction, amounting to more than 90,000 men, made in the numbers of the army after the suppression of the mutinies, was followed by a complete reorganisation of the police throughout India. The number of men available for military duty was, therefore, not diminished to the extent that the figures seem to show. Exclusive of the village police, of whom there are some 700,000, the regular police force in India consists of about 170,000 officers and men, of whom more than half have firearms, and are more or less drilled. There is no part of British India in which the people habitually carry arms, or commonly possess them, and the occasions are rare—not, on an average, more than two or three in each year—on which, usually in consequence of religious disputes between Hindus and Mohammedans, or between other sects, it is necessary to call out troops to assist the civil power in maintaining order. Considering that the population of British India exceeds that of the five Great Powers of Europe together, this furnishes an illustration of the quiet character of the people.

In 1885 the altered position of Russia on the frontiers of Afghánistán, and the apprehension of war, rendered it necessary to reconsider the whole question of our military position. The result was a determination to increase both the European and Native army. The British force received an addition, in cavalry, artillery, and infantry, of about 11,000 officers and men, while the number of the Native troops was increased by 19,000. Five new battalions of Gurkhas were added to the infantry. Altogether the army in

India was increased by about 30,000 men. In 1900 the total strength was nearly 223,000 officers and men of all arms, of whom rather more than 76,000 were British. This is exclusive of the active Reserve, consisting of men who have served with the colours in the Native infantry from five to twelve years. There are now about 20,000 men in the Reserve, but it may ultimately attain much larger proportions.

Apart from the addition to its numbers, the efficiency of the British troops in India has been greatly increased by other causes. Among all the changes that have occurred since the transfer of the Government to the Crown, there is not one over which we have better reason to rejoice than the improvement in the health of our soldiers. The Royal Commission which inquired in 1859 into the sanitary condition of the army reported that the average death-rate among the British troops in India, for the forty years ending with 1856, had been 69 per thousand. This was six times as high as the rate among Englishmen of the same ages at home. The Commission expressed the hope that the rate might be reduced by measures of sanitary improvement to 20 per thousand, or even lower. This hope has been more than fulfilled. In the ten years ending with 1879 the death-rate was 19 per thousand, and during recent years the average has been less than 16 per thousand.[1] No efforts have been spared to improve in every way the position of the British soldiers in India. They now live in barracks which, in comfort and in all sanitary conditions, excepting those conditions of climate over which we have no control, probably surpass any that

[1] It must be admitted that this comparison is not altogether accurate, because the figures given by the Royal Commission included all the deaths that had occurred in the numerous campaigns of the previous forty years. Making, however, allowance for this, the rate of mortality was extremely high.

can be found in any other country. Every regiment, battery, and depot has its regimental institute, a sort of soldiers' club, with refreshment department, library, reading and recreation rooms, a temperance association room, and a theatre. The issue of spirits has been diminished, and is discouraged, while every encouragement is given to useful employment and occupation for the men. Cantonments for 25 per cent of the whole force have been provided at stations in the Himálaya or other mountains. The education of soldiers' children is provided for partly in regimental schools and partly in the Lawrence Asylums in the hills, excellent institutions, originally founded by the liberality of Sir Henry Lawrence, and now largely assisted by the Government.

Other measures have greatly added to our military strength in India. All points on the north-western frontier at which attack seems possible are now guarded by strongly-fortified positions, and connected with the railway system of India; the principal ports have been fortified and armed with modern guns, and the defence of the harbours is secured by a flotilla of turret-ships, torpedo gunboats, and torpedo boats. The Native army and Volunteers have been, or are about to be, armed with the latest pattern rifle, and the establishment of a cordite factory will render the army self-supporting, to a great extent, in regard to its ammunition in case of necessity. Another very important measure has been the formation of Volunteer corps. There are already in India 31,000 Volunteers, nearly all British, of whom 30,000 are effective and well armed. The defensive value of this force can hardly be over-stated. If it had existed in 1857, many of the catastrophes of that time would undoubtedly have been prevented.

Supreme authority over the army in India is

vested by law[1] in the Governor-General in Council. The Military Member of Council has charge of the Military Department, which corresponds to the War Office in England. Subject to the administrative control of the Governor-General in Council, the chief executive officer of the army is the Commander-in-Chief in India. Until 1893 he held special command of the troops in the Bengal Presidency, and he exercised a general control over the armies of Madras and Bombay, each of which had its local Commander-in-Chief. The Governments of those Presidencies possessed, until the same time, certain administrative powers.

Although the ultimate military authority rested with the Governor-General in Council and Commander-in-Chief in India, this system of divided control led to much inconvenience, especially in time of war, and it became clear that it must be altered, and that the armies of Madras and Bombay must no longer remain in the exceptional position of being partially subject to the control of the Provincial Governments and the local Commanders-in-Chief. The necessary change could not be made without the authority of Parliament, and it was not until the close of 1893 that this was obtained. The delay did not prevent the completion of many other reforms in military administration, and before 1893 all the Army Departments, except the Medical, had been brought directly under the orders of the Supreme Government.

The Act of 1893 abolished the offices of the Provincial Commanders-in-Chief; it provided that the powers which had been exercised by them should be transferred to such officer as the Commander-in-Chief in India, with the approval of the Governor-General in Council, might

[1] 3 and 4 Will. IV. c. 85.

appoint; that the powers of the Commander-in-Chief in India should extend to the whole of India; that all the powers of military control which had been vested in the Governments of Madras and Bombay should cease, and be exercised by the Governor-General in Council; and that the officers commanding the troops in those Presidencies should no longer be members of the Provincial Councils.

The result of these changes, which came into effect in April 1895, was as follows:—

Four great commands were constituted, each under a Lieutenant-General, the whole being under the direct command of the Commander-in-Chief in India. The Punjab Command includes the Punjab and North-West Frontier Province, with the Punjab Frontier Force, which retains its organisation as a separate body. The Bengal Command includes the territories under the Civil Governments of Bengal, Assam, and the United Provinces of Agra and Oudh. The Madras Command, until the beginning of 1903, included not only the whole of the Madras Presidency, and other territories formerly garrisoned by the Madras Army, but the Province of Burma. This now forms a separate command. The Bombay Command includes the Bombay Presidency, Baluchistán, and parts of Rájputána and Central India.

I have not yet referred to the armies of the Native States. They look formidable on paper, numbering, according to some estimates, 85,000 men, but a small portion only of these so-called armies has any military organisation. They consist for the most part of men who can hardly be called soldiers. The majority of them are maintained for purposes of display, without the least idea that they can ever be used for fighting. The so-called army includes multitudes of the armed

retainers of the chiefs and nobles, and nearly the whole of the men whom we should class as police.

Among all the armies of the Native States, that of Gwalior is the most completely organised. It consists of about 11,000 men, of whom about 6000 are cavalry, all fairly drilled and disciplined, with several fully-equipped batteries of artillery. A very small part of the Gwalior troops consists of men recruited in that country. The great majority of them come from our territories, and chiefly from the classes which before the mutinies of 1857 supplied the bulk of our Bengal army. The Government of Sindhia is, as I shall show, that of a foreign Marátha dynasty; the people are unwarlike and disinclined for military service. The strength of the forces which may be maintained is regulated by treaty with the British Government.

The largest of the armies of the Native States is that of the Nizam of Haiderabad, also a foreigner in the country belonging to him. It is so heterogeneous a body that it is difficult to state its numbers, but that part of it which may with some show of reason be called an army has been estimated at about 45,000 men. A portion of it has been reorganised and improved. Many of these troops are foreign mercenaries from distant parts of India, and many are Pathán from our northern frontier. While they perform no useful service to the Nizam, it has been necessary to watch and overawe them, and the necessity has been imposed on us of always keeping a large force of British and Native troops at Haiderabad. A Native force, called the Haiderabad Contingent, consisting formerly of more than 7000 men of all arms, under the command of British officers, but recently reorganised and reduced in numbers, has also been maintained by our Government

at Haiderabad. The charges for the Contingent have been met from the revenues of the Berár districts, which were assigned to us for the purpose in 1853 by treaty with the Nizam, and which, as I explain elsewhere, are now virtually British territory.[1]

The troops of the Rájputána States are, on paper, numerous, but the figures have no military significance. The men are not, for the most part, soldiers in the service of the State, but the members of a military class. There is no doubt of the loyalty of the Rájput chiefs or of their followers.

The troops of the Sikh States deserve mention. "They are" (in the words of the Indian Army Commission) "of good material; they are well officered, and have on occasions done excellent service for the British Crown. They are devoted to their chiefs, who are conspicuously loyal, and bound to the British Government by mutual goodwill and good offices, which have extended over many years."

The troops of the Native States possess, as a rule, no arms of precision, no breech-loading rifles, no rifled ordnance, and very little organised artillery. They are, for the most part, as Sir Lepel Griffin says, "an undrilled, wretchedly armed rabble, and two or three of our regiments, with a battery of horse artillery, would disperse 50,000 of them." They are not armies in the ordinary sense of the term.

One important addition has to be made to the foregoing observations. During the Viceroyalty of Lord Dufferin arrangements were made with several of the Native States, possessing specially good fighting material, for maintaining a number of selected troops in such a condition of efficiency in arms, equipment, drill, and

[1] Chapter XXIV.

organisation, as shall make them fit to take the field side by side with British soldiers. Other States have engaged to furnish transport corps, which have already been most useful in time of war. The total number of these special contingents is now about 17,500 men. Both officers and men are, for the most part, Natives of the States to which they belong, but British officers are appointed to inspect them, and to advise in regard to their training and equipment. The Kashmir Imperial Service troops saw active service in the operations for the reduction of the mountain principalities of Hunza and Nagar, and behaved with conspicuous gallantry. Since then in the Tirah and other campaigns on the North-Western Frontier, and more recently in China, contingents from other States have proved themselves a valuable, keen, and loyal addition to our regular troops.

CHAPTER XXIV

THE NATIVE STATES

Area, population, and revenue of Native States—Meaning of the term Native States—Prevalent mistakes—Native States not nationalities—Different classes of Native States—Mohammedan and Marátha States—Their foreign character—Ancient dynasties preserved by the British—The Governments of Native States—The personal despots—The tribal chiefs—The supremacy of the British Government—Our relations with Native States—The doctrine of lapse—Right of adoption—Assumption by Queen Victoria of title of "Empress of India"—The Coronation Durbar of January 1903—The character of Native rulers—Frequent necessity for British intervention—The annexation of Oudh—Condition of Oudh before annexation—Deposition of the Gaikwar—The States of Central India—Desire of the British Government to maintain the Native States—Their misrule their sole danger—The conditions essential to their preservation—The restoration of Mysore to Native rule—Improvements in the administration of Native States—Colleges for the education of Native chiefs—The Imperial Cadet Corps.

THE Native States of India cover an area of 679,000 square miles, and contain a population of 62,500,000. Their total revenues are estimated at about £15,000,000. Counting them all, there are more than 600 of them, but the great majority are so insignificant in extent, and their rulers have so little authority, that they do not deserve the name of States. The largest, that of the Nizam of Haiderabad, has an area of 83,000 square miles, and a population of more than 11,000,000; Gwalior, 25,000 square miles, and a population of 3,000,000;

Mysore, 29,000 square miles, and 5,500,000. Several others have between 1,000,000 and 3,000,000 people.[1]

Excepting the Himálayan State of Nepál, which since 1815 has been enabled by its geographical position to maintain a constant attitude of complete but friendly isolation, no Native State within the limits of India has any real independence; but, subject to this general fact, their rulers have every degree of power and importance, from the petty chief with little or no political authority, to princes with large revenues and considerable armies, with whose internal administration, under ordinary circumstances, we hardly interfere.

I am obliged to use the term "Native State," but this expression only signifies a State not directly administered by Englishmen. The rulers of some of the principal Native States of India are almost as much foreigners to the people that they govern as we are ourselves. The term "Native States" is apt to convey the idea that they are Indian nationalities existing in

[1] The following list shows the area, population, and approximate revenue of the principal Native States:—

	Square miles.	Population.	Approximate revenue.	Religion of ruler.
Haiderabad. (The Nizam)	82,700	11,141,000	£3,300,000	Mohammedan
Bhopál	6,990	666,000	270,000	,,
Bahawalpur	17,300	720,000	137,000	,,
Gwalior. (Sindhia)	25,000	3,000,000	1,092,000	Hindu
Indore. (Holkar)	8,400	851,000	570,000	,,
Baroda. (Gaikwár)	8,100	1,950,000	1,130,000	,,
Mysore	29,400	5,539,000	1,250,000	,,
Travancore	7,100	2,950,000	663,000	,,
Jaipur	15,500	2,700,000	455,000	,,
Jodhpur	35,000	2,000,000	343,000	,,
Udaipur	12,700	1,000,000	247,000	,,
Bikanir	23,300	584,000	143,000	,,
Rewah	12,600	1,320,000	107,000	,,
Kutch	7,600	450,000	131,000	,,
Patiála	5,400	1,597,000	411,000	Sikh
Kashmir	80,900	2,906,000	460,000	Hindu

the midst of our great foreign dominion. This, indeed, is the popular English belief. It is assumed that in our conquest of India we imposed our rule on peoples who had previously been governed by princes of their own race, that we took the place of ancient native dynasties which we destroyed, and that, having kept for ourselves the more valuable provinces, we have, for one reason or another, allowed some portions of India to retain their Native governments. No suppositions could be more contrary to fact. When, after the death of Aurangzíb in 1707, the Moghal empire was breaking up, a scramble ensued for the fragments, and this lasted through the greater part of the eighteenth, and the earlier part of the nineteenth century. The chief competitors during the struggle were the Maráthas, the Mohammedan powers of Southern India, and the English. The larger share of the gain fell to the English, but the other competitors had no better titles than our own. All alike were foreigners in the countries for which they were contending.

Those who desire to learn the truth on this subject should read Sir Alfred Lyall's *Asiatic Studies*, to which I have often referred, and Professor Seeley's *Expansion of England*.

"One of the popular notions in England and Europe (I am quoting from Sir Alfred Lyall) regarding the establishment of the English empire in India, is that our conquests absorbed nationalities, displaced long-seated dynasties, and levelled ancient nobilities. These are some of the self-accusations by which the average home-keeping Englishman justifies to himself the indulgence of sitting down and casting dust on his head whenever he looks back upon the exploits of his countrymen in India —an attitude which is observed by foreigners with suspicion or impatience according to their insight into English character. Yet it would be easy to prove that one important reason why the

English so rapidly conquered India was this, that the countries which fell into our hands had no nationalities, no long-seated ruling dynasties or ancient aristocracies, that they had, in fact, no solid or permanent organisation of the kind, but were, politically, treasure trove, at the disposal of the first who, having found, could keep. The best proof that in these countries the English destroyed no organised political institutions is the historical fact that in the countries which they annexed none such had been left for them to destroy. On the other hand, where indigenous political institutions of long standing still exist, it is the English who have saved them from destruction."[1]

The principal Native States of India may be roughly divided into two classes. The most important of the first class are the Mohammedan State of Haiderabad and the Marátha States of Gwalior, Indore, and Baroda. They survived the struggles of the close of the eighteenth and the beginning of the nineteenth century, and their chiefs are in all cases foreigners to the people under their rule. None of these States are much older than our own dominion; the principal officials are usually as foreign as the chiefs; the armed force mainly consists of foreign mercenaries; and there is little more sympathy between the people and their rulers than that which exists in British territories. I have repeatedly pointed out how misleading are such terms as "Natives of India," "People of India," and other general expressions; and this warning is especially necessary in regard to the "Native States." It can never be assumed that because the chief of a Native State is a so-called "Native of India" he has rights essentially differing in kind from our own. If a question arises whether our own administration or that of a Native ruler is to be preferred, Englishmen usually suppose that the choice must lie between giving to the people the foreign

[1] *Asiatic Studies*, p. 181.

government of the English or the national government of their own countrymen. For instance, there was much discussion some time ago whether we ought to restore to the Nizam the districts of Berár which had been assigned to us, and which have been for many years under British administration. Few had any suspicion of the fact that the Mohammedan Government of Haiderabad would be almost as foreign as our own to the people of Berár, who are Hindus having nothing in common with their former rulers.

The Nizam holds the first place among the Native princes of India. The founder of the ruling family was one of Aurangzíb's viceroys; in 1724 he was virtually independent. Nearly the whole population is Hindu; but although at the present time (1903) a Hindu is the Chief Minister of the State, Hindus have usually had little or no share in the administration: everything has been in the hands of Mohammedan foreigners. The army chiefly consists of foreign mercenaries. The Haiderabad State is the chief surviving relic of Mohammedan supremacy in India. With the not very important exceptions of Bhopál and Baháwalpur, the latter of which States had, however, a more autonomous and legitimate origin, the other States under Mohammedan rulers, about twenty in number, are politically insignificant. The population of the so-called Mohammedan States is altogether about 14,000,000, but of this number at least 12,000,000 are Hindus. Even in Haiderabad, where the Mohammedans have been in power for centuries, they form less than a tenth part of the population. A very small proportion of the 62,500,000 Mohammedans of India live under rulers of their own faith; by far the greater number of them are our own subjects.

The principal remnants of the Marátha power are the three States of Gwalior, Indore, and Baroda, and of these Gwalior, under the rule of Sindhia, is the most important. They all came into existence about the middle of the eighteenth century. Their chiefs are entirely foreign to the people. In the words of Sir Lepel Griffin, they are "the representatives of the predatory hordes which, until crushed by British arms, turned the fertile plains of Central India into a wilderness. These Marátha dynasties have nothing in common with the people they govern. Their race is different and their language is not understood." The population of the three Marátha States is nearly 6,000,000; but, except the rulers and their followers, there are no Maráthas.

Among the more important of the Native States of which I have been speaking, there is not one the Government of which can be said to have a more legitimate or national origin than that of the British Government itself in its Indian dominions.

I come now to the second of the classes into which the Native States of India may be divided. Judged by their area and population and political importance, these States are inferior to those of the former class, but they are more numerous and far more interesting. They are the only parts of India where ancient political institutions and ancient dynasties still survive, and their preservation is entirely due to the British Government. The principal States of this class are those of Rájputána; and there are many others in Central India, in Bundelkhand, Baghelkhand, and in the Bombay Presidency. In his *Asiatic Studies*, Sir Alfred Lyall has described the States of Rájputána, the most interesting of the whole. They were saved by the British Government from destruction by the Maráthas. They are twenty in

number, with an area of some 150,000 square miles and a population of more than 12,000,000. The constitution of these States is very different from that of the Mohammedan and Marátha States. In the latter, the ruler formerly exercised absolute personal power. In consequence of his responsibilities to the British Government, it can no longer be said that this is true. For instance (I am quoting from Sir Alfred Lyall), Sindhia, the head of the Marátha State of Gwalior, "is the representative of the single family of a successful captain of armies who annexed in the last century all the territory he could lay hands on, and whose son finally encamped so long in one place that his camp grew into his capital some sixty years ago. . . . He is a despot of the ordinary Asiatic species, ruling absolutely the lands which his ancestor seized by the power of a mercenary army."[1]

In States like those of Rájputána, on the other hand, where ancient institutions have been preserved, the constitution of the governing authority is very different. The chief is the hereditary head of a military clan the members of which have been for centuries lords of the soil. He and the minor chiefs and nobles are supposed to be descended from a common ancestor; he is *primus inter pares*, and while all the branches of the original stock are ready to join their chief in time of danger, his actual power over them is, under ordinary circumstances, very greatly limited.

Owing to the custom of adoption, through which no Hindu family need become extinct from failure of heirs, some of the ruling families of Rájputána go back to an unknown antiquity. In the States of Udaipur, Jodhpur, and Jaipur, there seems no reason to doubt that the

[1] *Asiatic Studies*, p. 196.

families to which the present chiefs belong have ruled in the same territories for more than a thousand years. In States of this kind there is often a strong feeling of attachment on the part of the people towards their chief.

There are other States of a different character which have nothing in common with those which I have last mentioned, except that they owe their present existence to the British Government. The largest of these is the Frontier State of Kashmir, with an area of 81,000 square miles, and a population of 2,900,000. It was given by Lord Hardinge to Ghulab Singh in 1846, after the first Sikh war. The treaty under which the grant was made declares the supremacy of the British Government, and a nominal tribute is paid every year by the Máhárája.

Mysore, in Southern India, has an area of 29,000 square miles and a population of 5,500,000. Its Hindu rájas contrived to maintain more or less independence until the middle of the eighteenth century, when Hyder Ali took possession of their country. It remained in his hands and in those of his successor, Tippoo Sultan, until the capture of Seringapatam by the English in 1799. Mysore was then restored by Lord Wellesley to the old Hindu dynasty. In consequence of gross oppression and misgovernment, it became necessary in 1830 to place British officers in charge of the administration. The Rája died in 1867, leaving an adopted son, and the British Government announced its intention of restoring the government to the heir when he reached his majority. This promise was carried out in 1881 in a manner which I shall presently notice.

The ancient Hindu State of Travancore, at the southern extremity of India, was rescued from Tippoo by the British, and still remains in the possession of its rájas.

The principal Native States of the Punjab also owe their continued existence to English protection. Without it they would have been utterly swept away by Ranjit Singh. There are altogether thirty-six of these States, with a population of more than 4,000,000.

The supreme authority of the British Government has become a fact which no Native State in India thinks for a moment of disputing. These States are often called "feudatory," but there is no analogy between their relations with the British Government and the incidents of ancient feudal tenure. The expression has come into use, as Sir Charles Aitchison says, "merely from want of a better or more convenient term to denote the subordination of territorial sovereignties to a common superior, combined with the obligation to discharge certain duties and render certain services to that superior."

In the case of the more important States, our supremacy was long ago recognised, more or less completely, by treaty; in the case of the smaller States, whether expressed and formally recorded or not, it has become one of the obvious conditions of their existence. Some of the States, so far as their internal administration is concerned, are substantially independent, unless their government becomes so scandalously bad and oppressive that intervention is forced upon us; in other States the authority of the chiefs is more strictly limited; in many of the smaller States it hardly exists in any independent form. But whether the State be great or small, there are certain rights which the paramount power always asserts. No Native State can have any political communication with any other Native State, or with any Foreign Power, without the consent of the British Government; no Native State can maintain

more troops or military establishments than are required for purposes of internal administration, for the support of the reasonable dignity of the chief, or except in accordance with its recognised obligations towards the British Government; there is no Native State in which civil war would be permitted, or in which, in case of gross and systematic injustice and tyranny, the British Government would not interfere for the protection of the people. This last right is the necessary consequence of our absolute power, and it has been repeatedly exercised. There is no Native chief who might not be tried and punished for a crime of special atrocity by a tribunal constituted by the British Government. It will be understood from all this that rules of international law which govern the relations between independent States cannot apply to the relations between the British Government and the Native States of India.

There is no dynasty in India which would not, without the custom of adoption, long ago have become extinct. It may also be said that it is the rule, as much as the exception, that a Native prince has no direct heirs. I need not dwell on the significance of this fact.

Whether an adopted son had the same right as a natural heir to succeed to the government of a State without the sanction of the paramount power was a question in regard to which there had been no uniform custom or practice before the time of Lord Dalhousie. He laid down the broad principle that while we were "bound in duty as well as in policy to act on every such occasion with the purest integrity and in the most scrupulous observance of good faith," it was right that "on all occasions where heirs natural shall fail, the territory should be made to lapse, and adoption should

not be permitted, excepting in those cases in which some strong political reason may render it expedient to depart from this general rule." He recorded his "strong and deliberate opinion that, in the exercise of a wise and sound policy, the British Government is bound not to put aside or to neglect such rightful opportunities of acquiring territory or revenue as may from time to time present themselves." These views were not based on any lust of dominion, but on the sincere belief that it was our obvious duty to extend to the people of all parts of India, when it became possible to do so, the benefits of our Government. This "doctrine of lapse" was carried into practical effect by Lord Dalhousie in several cases. The most important was that of Nágpur, a State with an area of 80,000 square miles and several millions of people. The Rája had died without an heir, and the State was declared to have lapsed to the British Government. If the policy of Lord Dalhousie had continued to be followed, the extinction of nearly all the Native States of India would have been a question of time only, but it was completely abandoned by his successor.[1]

The mutinies of 1857 showed conclusively that the Native States are a source to us, not of weakness, but of strength. In the words of Lord Canning—"These patches of Native Government served as a breakwater to the storm which would otherwise have swept over us in one great wave." With hardly an exception, they remained faithful in circumstances of the severest trial and difficulty. Before Lord Canning left India a *sanad* was issued to each of the principal Hindu chiefs, assuring

[1] It has been pointed out to me that this "doctrine of lapse" was declared by Lord Dalhousie to be inapplicable to "Hindu sovereignties which are not tributary, and which are not and have never been subject to a Paramount Power." It does not appear to me that these exceptions to Lord Dalhousie's general rule had much practical significance.

him, in the name of the Queen, that, on failure of natural heirs, the British Government would recognise any adoption of a successor made by himself or by any future chief of the State, in accordance with Hindu law or the customs of his race. The Mohammedan chiefs received assurances that every form of succession allowed by Mohammedan law to be legitimate would be recognised by our Government. From the principle thus laid down there has been no departure. In default of regular adoption, the British Government exercises the undisputed right of selecting the successor whom it may think most fit. In case of a minority, it invariably asserts a right of interference, limited only by its own sense of what is proper.

The supremacy of the British Government over all the Native States in India was declared in 1877, in a more emphatic form than it had received before, by the assumption by Queen Victoria of the title of Kaisar-i-Hind, Empress of India.

When, in 1876, Mr. Disraeli proposed that the Queen should assume this new title, there were no limits to the scorn with which the suggestion was received by his opponents, and it may be doubted whether he found much real sympathy from a majority of those who felt bound to support him. But he possessed that gift without which, as he said to me himself, no statesman can be truly great—the gift of imagination. "Touch and satisfy," he said in the House of Commons, "the imagination of nations, for that is an element which no Government can despise. This will be an act which will add splendour to the Throne of the Queen, and will add security to her Empire." His conviction of the power which imagination exercises on the minds of men, and especially of Orientals, was fully shared by Lord

Lytton, who was then Viceroy, and its truth has, in this case, received ample proof.

No such gathering of chiefs and princes had been seen in India, in historical times, as that of January 1877 at Delhi, when, with a pomp such as the East alone can show, all the great chiefs of the Native States of India came to make the formal acknowledgment of their dependence on the British Empress. The 1st of January 1903 saw repeated at Delhi, on a far grander scale and with far greater splendour than that of 1877, the assemblage of ruling chiefs and nobles from all the States and Provinces of India, representatives, some of them, of countries as far apart as Iceland from Constantinople, summoned by Lord Curzon to celebrate the Coronation of Edward the Seventh as King and Emperor. No spectacle so magnificent can have been seen in Europe since the Triumphs of Ancient Rome, and it may be doubted whether, when Aurelian passed through the city with Zenobia and the spoils of Palmyra, and "the arms and ensigns of conquered nations," Rome itself witnessed a more splendid pageant than when the British Viceroy entered Delhi with the brother of the Emperor, or when he afterwards received in solemn Durbar the homage of the princes of India. The time has passed in which it was necessary to defend the policy of the measure which proclaimed the paramount sovereignty of the British Crown. No Indian statesman doubts its wisdom or the profound practical importance of its political results. It has given to the British power a position different from that which it held before; it has swept away old jealousies that were not extinct, and has made more loyal the ruler of every Native State in India. Not many years ago it would have been difficult to believe that