



we should see in London great Rájput princes who, to prove their loyalty, had thrown aside the prejudices of caste and immemorial custom, and that Sindhia, the descendant of Marátha chiefs, who had fought with us for supremacy in India, and was now ruling one of its most important States, would be proud to ride as Aide-de-camp at the Coronation of the King and Emperor. The Emperor of India has become to its chiefs and people a great and real personality, in place of "the impersonal power of an administrative abstraction."¹

There has been, but only in recent years, a marked and satisfactory improvement in the administration of the Native States. To this I shall refer again, but as lately as 1883, Sir Lepel Griffin, than whom no one could at that time speak with greater personal knowledge, declared that, although there were many honourable exceptions, the Native States of India were for the most part "a wilderness of oppression and misrule." This conclusion was that of all those most competent to judge, and it was certainly my own.

I think it useful to refer to the former condition of some of these States, because it cannot be doubted that if the vigilance of the British Government were relaxed, that condition would often become no better than it was not long ago. It is to our intervention before misrule became altogether insufferable that many of these States owe their continued existence. Without going back to more distant times, when all conditions were different, if we examine the history of the principal Native States during the greater part of the latter half of the last century, we can hardly find a single case in which the record was one of uninterrupted tranquillity and fairly good administra-

¹ *History of Lord Lytton's Indian Administration*, by Lady Betty Balfour.



tion. From time to time there was a just and benevolent chief, but sooner or later came almost always the same story; our interference for the protection of the people against their ruler became inevitable. Even within the last few years it has sometimes become necessary for the British Government to assume the administration of the State, and on several occasions the chief has been deposed because he was guilty of atrocious crimes.

I will give some instances in which interference has been inevitable, and as the first of them I will take the annexation of Oudh. Although this is now an old story, for the Native Government ceased to exist in 1856, it is still an instructive example of what has happened in a time not very distant, and I wish to refer to it for another reason. We still sometimes hear the annexation of Oudh quoted as one of the iniquitous proceedings of the British Government, and as an illustration of its lust of dominion.

General Sleeman, the representative of our Government in Oudh, gave from personal observation a description of the country at that time, and its accuracy has never been called in question. I will give some account, often in his own words, of his report.

Oudh is naturally one of the richest countries in India, as large as Holland and Belgium together, with a population at the present time of nearly 13,000,000. Government in Oudh, deserving the name, there was none. The King did not pretend to concern himself with any public business. His ambition was limited to that of being reputed the best drum-beater, dancer, and poet of the day. Sometimes he might be seen going in procession through the streets of Lucknow, beating the drum tied round his neck. Singers, fiddlers, poets,



eunuchs, and women were his only associates. The Prime Minister, "a consummate knave," after keeping an enormous share for himself and his creatures, distributed the revenues and patronage of the country. The fiddlers controlled the administration of civil justice; that of criminal justice was made over to the eunuchs; each of the King's favourites had authority over some court or office through which he might make a fortune for himself. The minister kept the land revenue, and "employed none but knaves of the very worst kind in all branches of the administration." Every office was sold; commands in the army were put up to auction every season, or oftener, and the purchase money was divided among the minister, the singers, the fiddlers, and the eunuchs. The principal singer had two regiments at his disposal. The minister was as inaccessible as the King himself. Petitions and reports were usually made over by him, if he gave any orders at all, to the commander-in-chief, who was an infant, to the King's chamberlain, or footman, or coachman, chief fiddler, eunuch, barber, or any person uppermost in his thoughts at the time. Courts of justice were unknown, except as affording means of extortion to the judges. The charge of the so-called police throughout the country was sold to the highest bidders. There was only one road that deserved the name in Oudh, made for the benefit of English travellers from Lucknow to Cawnpore, a distance of about forty miles.

The atrocities that went on throughout the country would pass belief, if the evidence of the truth were less complete. I will give a few illustrations, taken from General Sleeman's narrative.

The districts of Bahraich and Gonda have an area of more than 5000 square miles, and they now contain



more than 2,000,000 inhabitants. Shortly before General Sleeman's visit, a man called Raghubar Singh was their local Governor, with large bodies of the King's troops and of his own armed retainers at his disposal. In two years his extortions and crimes had reached such a point, that these districts, which had once been in a flourishing condition, and noted for their fertility, had become for the most part uncultivated. The English officer deputed by the Resident to inquire into the facts reported that "villages completely deserted in the midst of lands devoid of all tillage everywhere meet the eye; and from Fyzabad to Bahraich he passed through these districts, a distance of eighty miles, over plains which had been fertile and well cultivated till Raghubar Singh got charge, but now lay entirely waste, a scene for two years of great misery, ending in desolation."

The Rájá of Bondi was one of the principal landholders in this part of Oudh; his estates contained some three hundred villages. He objected to the extortionate demands of Raghubar Singh, and this was the consequence. Parties of soldiers were sent out to plunder and seize all the respectable residents they could find. They sacked the town of Bondi, pulled down the houses of the Rájá, and those of his relations and dependants; and, after looting all the towns and villages in the neighbourhood, they brought in 1000 captives of both sexes and all ages, who were subjected to every sort of outrage until they paid the ransom demanded. The Rájá escaped, but his agents and tenants were horribly tortured. Soon afterwards, detachments of soldiers were again sent out to plunder; 1500 men and 500 women and children were brought in as prisoners, with 80,000 animals. All were driven off pell-mell through the rain for three days. The women were driven on by the



troops with the butt-ends of their muskets; many of the children were trodden to death. The prisoners were tied up and flogged and tortured, red-hot ramrods thrust into their flesh, their tongues pulled out with hot pincers. Many perished from torture and starvation. The women and children were all stripped of their clothing. For two months these atrocities continued. Similar horrors went on in other parts of Bahraich, and not very many years ago the English officer in charge of that district reported that its population would at that time have undoubtedly been much larger but for the former atrocities of Raghubar Singh. General Sleeman tells us that no single person concerned in these crimes was ever punished.

There were then in Oudh 250 forts in the possession of the great landholders, with 100,000 men, maintained to fight among themselves, or against the Government. General Sleeman's two volumes are filled with descriptions of the enormities that were going on, almost under his own eyes, of open war, of villages attacked and plundered, of horrible murders and outrages. "Every day," he writes, "I have scores of petitions delivered to me by persons who have been plundered of all they possessed, had their dearest relations murdered or tortured to death, and their habitations burnt to the ground by gangs of ruffians, under landlords of high birth and pretensions, whom they had never wronged or offended. In these attacks neither age, nor sex, nor condition are spared."

In General Sleeman's narrative I have found hardly anything to relieve the uniformity of his terrible story except this:—

"In the most crowded streets of Lucknow, Europeans are received with deference, courtesy, and kindness. The people of



the country respect the British Government, its officers, and Europeans generally. Though the Resident has not been able to secure any very substantial or permanent reform in the administration, still he has often interposed with effect, in individual cases, to relieve suffering and secure redress for grievous wrongs. The people of the country see that he never interposes except for such purposes, and their only regret is that he interposes so seldom, and that his efforts when he does so should be so often frustrated or disregarded. In the remotest village or jungle in Oudh, as in the most crowded streets of the capital, a European gentleman is sure to be treated with affectionate respect, and the humblest European is as sure to receive protection and kindness, unless he forfeits all claim to it by his misconduct."

For many years one Governor-General after another had gone on protesting against the atrocities of which some illustrations have been given. At last came "the great Proconsul" Dalhousie. He knew that since the British Government, without moving a soldier or spending a rupee, had absolute power to put an immediate end to these abominations, it was on the British Government that the responsibility really rested for suffering them to continue. There was only one complete remedy, and Lord Dalhousie applied it by declaring the whole of Oudh to be British territory. I find one defect only in his most wise and righteous action; he was too merciful to the miserable King and to the demons who had been destroying one of the most populous and fertile countries of India. There could be no greater contrast than that presented by Oudh under Native and under British Government: it is now as peaceful as any part of England; life and property are safe, and justice is honestly administered.

For atrocities committed on a vast scale the case of Oudh stands alone, but I will give a few illustrations of the condition into which some of the Native States have



fallen in much later times, and which have rendered the interference of our Government inevitable.

Baroda is the principal Native State of Western India. It covers 8100 square miles, and has a population of nearly 2,000,000. Its ruler, the Gaikwár, claims precedence over all the Native chiefs of India. In 1863 Malhár Ráo was imprisoned on a charge of having attempted the life of the Gaikwár, his brother; at the end of 1870, on his brother's death, he was released, and he assumed the government of the State. Before long his proceedings had become so scandalous that the British Government was compelled to make a formal inquiry into his administration. It was shown that general discontent prevailed through his dominions; in one district there was open rebellion; public offices were sold to the highest bidder; payment of extortionate demands of revenue was compelled by torture; respectable women were seized in open day in the streets of Baroda by the Gaikwár's servants, and taken to the palace to be converted into household slaves or worse; the condition of the agricultural classes was desperate; and the whole administration was infamous. The Prime Minister was forcibly poisoned in prison, and it was hardly possible to doubt that this was done under the direct orders of the Gaikwár. It was proved that, for an act by which he had been personally offended, the Gaikwár had caused one of his servants, without any trial, to be tortured to death.

In 1874 he was informed by the Government of India, Lord Northbrook being Viceroy at the time, that, if immediate and satisfactory reforms were not carried out in the administration of the State, his deposition would follow. He showed no inclination to alter his conduct. Soon afterwards an attempt was



made to poison the British Resident at his court, and there was every reason to believe that the Gaikwár had personally instigated the crime. A commission, of which the Chief Justice of Bengal was president, and of which the rulers of two of the principal Native States were members, was appointed for his trial. The Native chiefs pronounced that the charges were not proved, but the Chief Justice and the English members found that he was guilty, and there was not the least doubt that they were right. As the judgment was not unanimous, the Gaikwár escaped the extreme penalty that he deserved, and which, if he had been formally convicted, he would probably have suffered. He was deposed, and a member of another branch of the Gaikwár's house was selected by the British Government as his successor. When the rule of Malhár Ráo ended, it was found that out of an expenditure in his last year of £1,700,000, which was greatly in excess of the revenue, he had squandered £700,000 in gifts to favourites and on his personal pleasures, and £200 remained in the public treasury.

The two important Marátha States of Central India, Gwalior and Indore, ruled respectively by Sindhia and Holkar, have together an area of more than 33,000 square miles, and a population of nearly 4,000,000. I make the following quotations from an official report for 1885 by Sir Lepel Griffin, Agent to the Governor-General in Central India :—

“The largest states in this agency, Gwalior and Indore, are those in which the rulers spend the least on administration, and most neglect all those requirements which we specially associate with progress and civilisation. . . . Those districts that are under the direct control of Sindhia's officials give little cause for trouble or complaint to the Government, although the administration is



lax and apathetic. Those, however, which are given in jagír to his great courtiers are constant sources of anxiety. Neglected by the grantees, who reside at the capital, they are made over to rack-renting agents, who support their authority by Afghán and Mekráni mercenaries, who are the scourge of the country-side. Damodar Panth, the agent of one of the principal nobles of the Máharája, has long been notorious for his open encouragement and support of crime in his master's jagír. Having sufficient proof of his complicity in numerous cases of dacoity and robbery, I have, with the full consent of the Máharája, caused his arrest, and he is now being tried on these serious charges, while the bands of dacoits, which had been allowed with impunity to plunder that part of Málwa, are being broken up. . . . During 1883-84 the oppression exercised in Indore city called for the severest condemnation on the part of the Government of India, and the senior Prince Shivaji Ráo Holkar was specially censured and removed from all concern with public business. I have had during the past year to remonstrate with the Durbár on many occasions and in strong terms against action which appeared to me to have been taken against individuals unjustly, and in defiance of the commonest principles of justice and equity. . . . The judicial administration of Indore must be held to be deteriorating and not improving. The reforms instituted by Sir Mádhava Ráo are being gradually abandoned from motives of false economy. . . . If I am unable to say much that is good of the two great Mahratta States included in Central India, this is no matter for surprise. In the Rájput States which abound in Central India, and which are rather oligarchical than autocratic, there is on the part of the chiefs a far more kindly and unselfish attitude towards the brotherhood and the people generally than in a Mahratta State, the despotic egoism of which is fatal to all progress and civilisation. The ruler considers the soil of the State as his own; the people are his slaves; the entire revenue is his private pocket-money, to hoard, lavish, or waste, without any right of remonstrance or complaint on the part of his subjects. The disease of such governments is chronic and intolerable. It is impossible that they can be other than evil, and it is a false and foolish policy to use towards them the language of false compliment, and to pretend that they are other than irretrievably bad, until a higher civilisation and the example of the British Government



shall have demonstrated that the rights of princes have no existence apart from the rights of the people."

In another paper, also referring to the States of Central India, Sir Lepel Griffin wrote as follows :—

"The peasants are little better than serfs. The importation of foreign slaves is prevented by the vigilance of the British authorities alone. Torture is a recognised part of judicial and police procedure. . . . Only a few months ago I was compelled to refuse to return the visit of a ruling chief who was openly accused of squeezing the juice of chillies into the eyes of recusant witnesses. He was an old gentleman of the most soft and courteous manners, and the idea that chillies could be objected to as a means of judicial investigation did not appear to have occurred to him. . . . Administration of justice has virtually no existence; a bribe procures the acquittal, or escape, or release of a criminal. Every offence can usually be compounded for money. Numerous boundary disputes between Native States come before me, and the consideration which governs every case is that both States have, as a matter of course, supported a wilfully exaggerated claim by perjured witnesses and forged documents. One of the first chiefs in India punishes and ruins the headman or cultivator of a village who may give truthful evidence contrary to any boundary claim the State has chosen unjustly to advance. . . . The actual demand of the Government per head of the population is double, treble, or quadruple what it is in British India."

Speaking of Kashmir with personal knowledge, Sir Lepel Griffin said in 1883 that "nothing escapes taxation, and bare life is all that the State leaves to the cultivator, whose position is harder and as hopeless as that of a slave." The shameful maladministration of this State was too long tolerated, but at last, in 1889, the patience of the British Government was exhausted. The Máharája was for a time deprived of all authority, and although he was subsequently allowed to resume his position as head of the State, it was under new conditions, the administration being carried on by a



Council of State, acting under the advice of the British Resident.

In 1884 the condition of Bhopál, a State with nearly 1,000,000 inhabitants, became such that it was necessary for the Government of India to remove the husband of the reigning princess from power, and to appoint an English minister to carry on the administration. The land revenue had been arbitrarily raised from £170,000 to £410,000; the payment of more than £1,000,000 was demanded in a lump sum from the people; justice became a mere engine of corruption and oppression; districts were ruined and depopulated; the police were no better than dacoits who shared their plunder with men in high places. Although, through the efforts of the English minister, all this was reformed, we were told that many years must elapse before the people of Bhopál could recover from the ruin which they suffered.¹

¹ In 1894 a valuable work, *Our Indian Protectorate*, was published by Sir Charles Tupper of the Indian Civil Service. It gives a very clear account of the relations between the British Government and its Indian Feudatories. Sir Charles Tupper, while he fully acknowledges that many Native States are well administered, gives some terrible illustrations "to show that the battle with cruelty, superstition, callous indifference to the security of the weaker and poorer classes, avarice, corruption, disorder in all public affairs, and open brigandage is by no means over even at the present day." I will quote one passage only from Sir Charles Tupper's work. "We are not far yet from the confusions of the last century, and deep in existing societies lie predatory instincts which, in the absence of strong control, might soon fill whole provinces with pillage and alarm. In a State where there was a good deal of corruption, and the torture of prisoners was not unknown, a colony settled not long ago, consisting of the descendants of Thugs. In 1888 there were in three villages 800 of these people all told. They had no occupation except theft, robbery, and the disposal of stolen goods. . . . In a circle of three States not less than 400 miles from the villages of these Thugs, a formidable band of robbers was lately making depredations. In the four years ending February 1889, twenty-two villages had been plundered by daring gangs, forty-seven murders committed, fifty-one persons wounded, and about two hundred hostages carried off, of whom many were ransomed at enormous gains to the brigands. In another State, in 1885 and 1886, seven or eight bands of dacoits, each fifty to one



In 1887 the Chief of a small Native State was removed from power in circumstances too abominable to be described.

In 1895, in consequence of the conduct and intemperance of the Chief of Bhartpur, a State well known in the history of the beginning of the last century by its successful resistance to a British army, the Government of India was compelled to interfere for the protection of the people, and the Chief, although not formally deposed, was deprived of his powers of administration. In 1900 he shot and killed one of his personal servants who had offended him; all his rights were then declared by the Government of India to be forfeited; he was placed permanently in confinement; his infant son was selected as his successor, and during the minority the administration of the State is to remain under British supervision.

In 1901 the uncle of the Chief of the Panna State died in circumstances which showed that he had been deliberately poisoned, and the reasons for supposing that the Chief himself had instigated the crime were so strong that the Government of India ordered his suspension from power, and assumed the administration of the State until all the facts had been ascertained by a Commission specially appointed. The guilt of the Chief was clearly proved; in April 1902 he was deposed, deprived of all his rights and honours, and placed in permanent confinement; and his principal agent in the actual commission of the crime was sentenced to death. The Governor-General in Council reserved to himself the right of selecting a successor as ruler of the State.

hundred strong, mostly carrying firearms, had reduced a tract of country some 120 miles long to a state of terror; in the villages all valuables were hidden, and if the dacoits failed to discover the property they expected, the greatest barbarities were practised."



Enough has been said to show the condition of many of the Native States of India not long ago, and to illustrate the fact that even now the cases are not rare in which the interference of our Government becomes unavoidable. Happily, matters are now far better than they were, and States, the condition of which formerly deserved the strongest condemnation, are now fairly well administered. The improvement has been especially marked under the vigorous rule of Lord Curzon. The British Government now fully recognises the responsibilities which rest upon it as the paramount power in India. Its supervision is exercised in a far more reasonable manner than was formerly the case. It can no longer be said, as Sir Henry Lawrence said many years ago, that if ever there was a device for ensuring maladministration, it was that of a Native ruler backed up by British bayonets, and directed by a British Resident. Owing to the continued efforts of our Government in encouraging and providing means for their better education, many of the Native chiefs have become more enlightened and more alive to their duties towards their people. The example of the increasing prosperity and wealth of the people living under our Government has had powerful effects. The improved means of communication, and especially the extension of railways, have brought about great changes throughout India, and the people themselves in the Native States are no longer as helpless and silent as they once were; they are becoming alive to the fact that in the last resort they can appeal to the British Government for protection against oppression.

There are not many positions in which a man has larger powers for good than that of the enlightened ruler of a Native State. He is protected by the British



Government from all anxiety outside his own territory. He requires no armed force except for the maintenance of order among his own people. He has at his disposal, in many cases, very considerable resources. His State shares, as a rule, without any charges being imposed on it, the benefits derived from the railways and other public works constructed by our Government. He has no difficulties such as those that beset on all sides our own administration. Wise and upright chiefs, followed by worthy successors, might bring their States into a condition of almost utopian prosperity. But, if the opportunities are great, so have been the temptations which lead to failure and dishonour, and unrestricted personal power is inevitably doomed in India to the same ultimate fate which has attended it elsewhere.

The British Government has for many years past ceased to desire further extensions of territory in India, and it is difficult to imagine circumstances under which the annexation of a Native State would now be considered expedient. The complete recognition of the right of adoption and the experience of the last quarter of a century have in this respect removed from the minds of the Native Princes all suspicion of the policy of our Government. There is only one apparent cause by which the political existence of any of these States could now be imperilled. We are far from desiring that their government should necessarily be like ours, but as our own administration improves, and everything in India becomes increasingly open to public criticism and inquiry, the more impossible will it be for us to tolerate gross oppression and misgovernment.

The problems to be solved are often difficult, especially in those States, the most interesting in India, and the most worthy of preservation, where old political



institutions still survive. Where the ruler is a petty despot, with few or no checks on his arbitrary power, the principles on which we ought to act are easier to define. No real progress in such States is possible while their governments remain purely personal, based upon nothing more permanent than the will of the Chief, whose character and capacity are accidents, and while the authority of the paramount power is exercised on no fixed system, but spasmodically, by special acts of intervention as necessity arises.

The first serious attempt to give a clear definition of the principles on which the relations of the Imperial Government towards the Native States of India ought to be conducted was made by Lord Lytton when he was Viceroy. In 1830 the administration of Mysore had fallen into a miserable condition. Offices were sold to the highest bidder; the people were oppressed and impoverished, and at last broke into revolt. Lord William Bentinck, who was then Governor-General, ordered, as the only sufficient remedy, the transfer of the entire administration into the hands of British officers. Mysore was fortunate in finding in Sir Mark Cubbon an admirable Governor. "The history of the province under his rule (I quote from an official report) is the history of a people made happy by release from serfdom, and of a ruined state restored to financial prosperity."

In 1868 the deposed Rájá died, and the British Government resolved that when his adopted son, who was then only six years old, attained his majority, the Government of the State should be entrusted to him.

In 1879 it became necessary to settle the manner in which this resolution should be carried out; it was clear that more than 5,000,000 people, who had been under



British. — for fifty years, could not be made over like sheep, and the conditions under which the transfer of the Government was to take place were embodied in a formal instrument. Among the principal of these were the following :—

1st. A clear distinction must be drawn and permanently maintained between the private fortune of the Chief and the public revenues of the State; a civil list of fixed amount must be assigned to the Chief, and the rest of the revenues must remain available for public purposes only, through appropriation by constituted authorities.

2nd. There must be permanent security for the observance of established laws, rights, and usages, and the laws must only be altered by suitable legislative machinery.

3rd. Provision must be made for the judicial independence of the civil and criminal courts, and justice must be dispensed by regularly constituted tribunals.

4th. The assessment and collection of the revenues must be made under fixed rules; all rights in the land must be defined and maintained, and no fresh taxation imposed except in accordance with law.

Under the principles thus laid down, and which have been acted upon ever since, the administration was made over, in 1881, to the Native Chief. His civil list was fixed at £130,000 a year, and he cannot appropriate more than that sum for his personal expenditure. The revenue of the State is now about £1,250,000. The administration is carried on by the Máharája with the assistance of a Council, the members of which are Natives of the country. When the Government was transferred it was provided that all laws then in force should be maintained until altered by competent



authority; new laws can only be made under a regular system of procedure, and they require the sanction of the Governor-General in Council.

The objects with which this system was initiated were summed up as follows by the Government of Lord Lytton :—

“The experiment of placing the Maharaja of Mysore at the head of a constitutional government—that is, a government conducted upon fixed and fundamental principles—makes a new departure in the policy of the Imperial Government towards the Native States of India. To determine the proper method of dealing with these States, and of discharging the responsibilities which they entail upon the paramount power, has always been, and still is, a problem of great difficulty; for the improvement of their condition, and their gradual assimilation to the general system and standard of the Imperial Government, is almost essential to their preservation. . . . The Supreme Government has been obliged of late years to interpose frequently in the affairs of Native States. The incapacity or grave misconduct of a ruler has produced complications which have demanded immediate and stringent remedies, or the interval of a long minority has made it necessary to superintend more closely a State’s management. . . . The policy now framed proceeds upon the broad principle that in order to guard against chronic misrule in a Native State, and to obviate the necessity for frequent and arbitrary interposition by the Supreme Government to remedy the consequences of such misrule, it is expedient to avail ourselves of every opportunity of placing some reasonable limitations upon the personal power of the ruler, or of the minister to whom the administration may be entrusted. The limitations thus imposed must be brought on public record, in order to place them beyond question or controversy, and in certain cases the general power of supervision to be exercised by the Supreme Government may need to be strengthened and extended. These principles may form the groundwork of a settled policy which will guide the Government of India in the general discharge of its responsibilities towards Feudatory States. A new and valuable precedent will have been established, and this, with the experience which will have been gained in Mysore, may enable us in future to deal systematically with similar



questions of reorganisation or reform. The contrast presented by the steady growth of orderly civilisation in British India, and the increased publicity that is now given to the internal condition of our Feudatory States, are likely to render more and more imperative the duty of interference in restraint of serious mismanagement. We may thus hope gradually to raise the general standard of administration in Native States, and to make some progress toward the important political object of consolidating their institutions upon an improved and stable foundation."¹

The system thus introduced into Mysore has worked efficiently and well. While it has placed reasonable checks on the arbitrary power of the ruler, his proper authority has been maintained, the administration has been in Native hands, and there has been no necessity for that frequent interference by the British authorities which in some other States has often been unavoidable, but which is nevertheless incompatible with good government.

The Máharája died in 1894, leaving as his heir an infant son, and it became necessary for the Viceroy to appoint a regent during the minority of the young Chief. The choice fell upon his mother, and its wisdom was shown by the intelligence and dignity which, throughout the minority, she showed in the management of the affairs of the State. Her son received an excellent English education, and careful training to prepare him for the proper performance of his future duties, and, in 1902, he was formally installed by the Viceroy as Máharája.

The wisdom of the principles laid down for the Government of Mysore has been amply proved by experience, and although they have not been applied in other cases in precisely the same form, they are in

¹ Despatch from Government of India to Secretary of State, 22nd May 1879. Parliamentary Return, Mysore, 1881.



practical accordance with those on which the Government of India now regulates its proceedings towards the Native States when necessity or fitting opportunities occur. Such opportunities have not been unfrequent. There have often been long minorities during which the administration of the State has been reorganised and reformed, and when the time has come for placing the young Chief at the head of his Government, this has been done under suitable conditions which he is bound to observe, and which cannot be altered without the consent of the paramount power. An illustration is seen in the important Marátha State of Gwalior, the gross misgovernment of which not many years ago has been already described. During a long minority the State was brought into a condition of greatly increased prosperity and wealth, and when the minority ended the Chief was able to take his place at the head of a well-organised administration as an educated, intelligent, and enlightened man, alive to the duties which he owed to his people. I have already noticed his presence in London at the Coronation of the King. He gave another example of his loyalty by fitting out at his own expense a hospital ship for the service of the troops in China, and by himself accompanying the expedition.

In January 1903, Holkar, the ruler of Indore, after attending, in token of his loyalty to the British Crown, the great Durbar at Delhi, abdicated his chiefship in favour of his son, a boy twelve years old. During his minority every care will be given to his education and training, and the administration of the State will be reformed and carried on by a Council of Native Ministers, with the help, when it is required, of the British Resident. Thus we may reasonably hope that



in both of the Marátha States of Central India, Gwalior and Indore, the foundations of good government have been laid.

Kashmir offers another example of the results obtained by the wise intervention of the British Government. Speaking of this State with personal knowledge, Sir Lepel Griffin wrote, in 1883, that "nothing escapes taxation, and bare life is all that the State leaves to the cultivator, whose position is harder and as hopeless as that of a slave." The shameful maladministration of this beautiful country was too long tolerated, but at last, in 1889, the patience of the British Government was exhausted. The Máharája was for a time deprived of all authority, and when, after some years had elapsed, and the administration had been completely reformed, he was allowed to resume his position as head of the State, it was under new conditions. The government is successfully carried on with a Council, acting with the advice, when necessary, of a British Resident, in a manner very similar to that established in Mysore. It has become virtually a Constitutional Government, and the gross oppression from which the people long suffered has ceased.¹

Among the more important Native States Haidera-bad, the largest of them all, is probably that in which, although here also there has been improvement, the administration still remains the most unsatisfactory. There is no part of India in which the people have less sympathy with their rulers, men, as I have already

¹ A complete and most interesting account of Kashmir will be found in Sir Walter Lawrence's work, *The Valley of Kashmir*. He was employed there for several years; a settlement of the Land Revenue and Survey was carried out under his orders, and it is to him that no small part of the honour is due for the immense improvements that have been effected in the administration of the State.



shown, of other countries and of another faith. Frequent interference by the British Government has been necessary; the misfortune has been that it was not, in past times, more complete and efficacious. Excepting sometimes for a short period, no Government in India has been worse than that of the Nizam. Latterly, the wise influence of the Viceroy, Lord Curzon, has brought about valuable reforms, and the Nizam has entrusted to a British Officer the supervision of the finances of the State, which had fallen into a state of the utmost confusion. Not the least useful part of Lord Curzon's work in Haiderabad has been the final settlement of the long-standing difficulties connected with our administration of Berár. This province, with an area of nearly 18,000 square miles, and a population, in 1903, of 2,754,000, had long been under the dominion of the Nizam, and in 1853 it was assigned to the British Government, with the object of providing from its revenues the charges for the so-called Haiderabad Contingent, a force of more than 7000 men under the command of British officers, which was maintained permanently at the capital of the State. The terms of the treaty under which Berár was assigned to us became, in process of time, a constant cause of dissatisfaction and complaint on the part of the Nizam's Government. The revenues of Berár under British administration largely increased. The Nizam was entitled under the treaty to whatever surplus revenues remained after all necessary charges had been met, but the amount of those charges was left to the discretion of the British Government, whose views regarding administrative requirements and the necessity for material improvements differed greatly from those of the Government of the Nizam. Frequent attempts were



made to obtain the abrogation of the treaty and the restoration of the province, and, sometimes by means which commend themselves not only to Oriental chiefs but to those who profit by them, and of which I will say nothing, it was not difficult to find in England loud advocates of the claims of the Nizam. Nor were honourable advocates wanting, influenced by sentiment, or ignorance, or by the not uncommon assumption of Englishmen that our treatment of India constantly involves some gross injustice to the people of the country. To restore to a Mohammedan Government, one of the most corrupt and oppressive in India, and one almost as foreign to the people of the country as our own, a great Hindu population, which for a long period had been prospering under British rule, would have been a disgrace and a crime.¹ All controversies on this subject were settled in 1902 by Lord Curzon on terms which, while they protected the people of Berár, gave liberal recognition to the claims of the Nizam. A fixed annual payment is made by the British Government to the Government of the Nizam; his nominal rights of sovereignty are maintained; and Berár has become, for all practical purposes, a British province.

I must not close this chapter without referring to the measures that have been taken for enabling the chiefs of Native States to obtain an education that will make them more competent to discharge the duties that fall upon them.

When the Indian Universities were first established, Lord Canning expressed the hope that the time was near when the nobility and upper classes of India would

¹ Almost the whole population of Berár is Hindu. Out of a total of 2,754,000, in 1901, there were only 212,000 Mohammedans.



think that they had not had the dues of their rank unless they passed through the course of a University. This expectation has not been fulfilled. The upper classes, even where no religious objections have existed, have for the most part kept themselves aloof. India being a country where the influence of birth and position is great, this has been unfortunate, but it is not surprising. The princes and chiefs and great landholders of India have seldom been educated. To be absolutely illiterate involves, even at the present time, no discredit; sometimes, indeed—but it may be hoped that this is ceasing to be true—it is held to be honourable, because to be anything else would be a violation of immemorial custom. Native chiefs and nobles had, with rare exceptions, no disposition to send their sons to our colleges, not only because they cared little for education, but because they were afraid of loss of social dignity, or contamination of caste.

To meet these difficulties an excellent beginning was made when Lord Mayo was Viceroy, by the establishment of special colleges. The Mayo College at Ajmir was founded by Lord Mayo for the education of the sons and relatives of the chiefs, nobles, and principal families of Rájputána. Many of them sent their sons to the college. It was liberally endowed by the chiefs, and received a grant-in-aid from our Government, and boarding-houses for their cadets were erected by all the principal States. Similar colleges were afterwards established at Indore, Lahore, and Rajkot. English and Oriental languages, mathematics, history, and geography are among the studies. "It is not desired," the Education Commission wrote, "to make these young chiefs great scholars, but to encourage in them a healthy tone and manly habits."



The Viceroy, Lord Curzon, has spared no efforts to increase the efficiency of these colleges, and in 1902 he took another step of great interest by the formation of an Imperial Cadet Corps, which is ordinarily to be recruited from the Chiefs' Colleges. The Corps, in the words of the rules framed by the Viceroy, "has been organised with the main object of providing a military training for selected members of the aristocracy of India, and of giving them such a general education that whilst, in course of time, they may be able to take their places in the Imperial Army as British officers, they may never lose their character and bearing as Indian gentlemen. With this object in view, the Cadets will be expected to acquire during their training a good knowledge of the English language, and at the same time to maintain an enthusiasm for their own history and traditions. The Cadets will be treated in every way as soldiers, and will be required to behave as such. Discipline will be strict. The moral side of their character will be closely watched; any tendency to immoral or unmanly practices will be sternly suppressed, and as the education is to be essentially military, every endeavour will be made to keep the Cadets in good physical condition. The Corps will remain under the direct surveillance of His Excellency the Viceroy, who takes a deep personal interest in its welfare, and will himself inspect it periodically. The Cadets will be in attendance on His Excellency on occasions of State. . . . The course of instruction will last for between two and three years. During the first year the Cadets will be taught drill, riding, and military exercises out of doors, whilst in-door instruction will be given in English and such elementary mathematics, etc., as are required for a study of military science. . . . At the



close of the period of training, there will be an examination in order to assist the Government of India in the bestowal of such Commissions on Lieutenants in the Imperial Army as it may be decided from time to time to confer."

"Great interest," the Government of India stated, "was displayed in the scheme by the princely and aristocratic families for whose scions it was intended to provide an opening, and numerous applications for admission were received." The number of young men, selected with rare exceptions from those between the ages of seventeen and twenty, and receiving education at the Chiefs' Colleges, was limited at the outset to about twenty. Four of the ruling chiefs have already been included in it. The Honorary Commandant of the Corps is the well-known Chief, Máharája Dhiraj Sir Pertab Singh; there is a British Commandant, and British and Native Adjutants. The Imperial Cadet Corps was in attendance on the Viceroy at the great Coronation Durbar of January 1903, and gained much admiration for its manly and distinguished bearing.

If future Viceroys continue to give their personal care to the development of the scheme which Lord Curzon has thus initiated, we may reasonably hope that it will lead to results of no small importance in the Native States of India.

Some account has already been given of the Armies of these States, and of the arrangements under which some of them furnish contingents for Imperial Service.¹

¹ Chapter XXIII.



CHAPTER XXV

CONCLUSION

Cruel customs—Neglect of social questions—Reasons for avoiding their discussion—The employment of Natives in the public service—Political hypocrisy—The duty of maintaining our dominion—Offices to be retained by Englishmen—Natives of India often as much foreigners as Englishmen in provinces other than their own—Sir Syad Ahmad Khán on Mohammedans and Hindus—The results of British Government—The popularity of our Government—Lord Lawrence's opinion—Reasons why our Government cannot be popular—The dangers to which our dominion is exposed—The principles on which our Government must be conducted.

THERE is no province in India without customs which we think must be repugnant to all civilised men, but which are almost universally respected because they are believed to have been divinely ordained, or which have come down from a remote antiquity. There is hardly a province in which horrid and cruel practices would not instantly spring into vigorous life if our watchfulness were relaxed. The prohibition of the burning of widows was, and is still, disapproved by all but a small minority of Hindus. I doubt whether the majority even of the more highly educated classes approve it. I gave in a previous chapter an account of the wholesale murder of female children, which, in parts of India, has gone on for centuries, a custom against which

the Hindu, however enlightened, hardly ever raises his voice, and which, with all our efforts, we have not yet succeeded in eradicating. But for us, even in the provinces where education has made its greatest progress, Kāli would still claim her human victims. Not many years ago, in a time of drought, near a railway station twenty-five miles from Calcutta, a human head was found before her idol, decked with flowers; and in another temple in Bengal a boy was savagely murdered and offered to the goddess. While a former edition of this book was passing through the press, a ghastly story came from the Central Provinces of the sacrifice of a young man to the local gods, in obedience to a widely prevalent belief and ancient practice that this is a sure means of obtaining a plentiful harvest. Horrors such as these receive no general condemnation in India, nor does the determination of our Government that they shall be suppressed often gain for us any practical signs of approval or sympathy even from the educated classes. Interference with ancient custom is usually an abomination to a Hindu, whether it be his own custom or not.

There are in India many questions of another order which are still more difficult to solve, because we cannot deal with them by the strong hand of the law. I will mention one only as an illustration, the custom of child marriage. As its not unfrequent consequence multitudes of girls are given over to outrage, or, if they belong to the higher classes of Hindus, doomed to lives of miserable and degraded widowhood. Some of the most holy Brahmans of Bengal made, not long ago, a living by being husbands. A child of five or six was given as perhaps the fortieth or fiftieth wife of some old man; sometimes two sisters were given to the same



man, and sometimes to one who had not long to live.¹ Though it might be certain that the girl must soon be a widow, this was considered preferable to allowing her to remain unmarried. Every one has heard of the wretched fate which widowhood in India often involves, at least among the upper classes, with whom the practice of re-marriage does not prevail.

Nothing could be more valuable than to receive the advice and help of highly-educated Natives of India on such subjects as these, and to know that they were striving, by the example of their own lives, to teach their less instructed countrymen to abandon these abominations. No greater encouragement could be given to those who desire to see educated Natives admitted to a larger share in the administration than the certainty that they were anxious to help us towards ampler knowledge of the wants and feelings of the people, and to make us better able to deal with problems that now seem too hard to solve.

Unhappily, in regard to these great social questions the Government seldom receives such advice or assistance. There are admirable exceptions, and some leaders of Native opinion are generally found to support the Government when it insists on carrying out a reform which it has initiated, but it would not be easy to give instances in which an influential Native of the country has himself taken the lead in proposing a measure of social improvement.

It is easy to understand why these questions are

¹ Mr. O'Donnell, in his Report on the Census of Bengal, 1891, states that this abominable practice, known as Kulinism, now exists only to a very limited extent, and that it is strongly condemned by public opinion. An interesting description of the former and present marriage customs of the Kulins, and of other classes of Brahmans will be found in Mr. Risley's *Tribes and Castes of Bengal*.



avoided. Some of these Native gentlemen are silent because they dare not, by speaking of them, bring themselves into collision with the cherished beliefs and prejudices of their countrymen; others are silent because in regard to these matters they are at heart as intensely conservative as the mass of the population, and have little desire for changes in social and religious usages which have come down from a venerable antiquity. It is, on the other hand, safe to indulge in the political commonplaces which they have learned in our schools and colleges. They obtain in this way the applause of Englishmen who know nothing of India and of the difficulties with which the true friends of Indian progress have to deal, who see nothing good in any political institutions except those of their own particular type, and assume that certain abstract principles are applicable to all sorts and conditions of men.¹

I said in a previous chapter that I should return to the subject of the admission of Natives of India to the more important public offices. I showed that the number of Englishmen employed in the Civil Service

¹ I make the following quotation from the Report of Mr. Baines on the Census of 1891 :—“A serious development of the Brahmanic system is indicated by some of the superintendents in their census reports, and that is the strong tendency, in the present day of peace and plenty, to manifest their prosperity, firstly, by prohibiting the marriage of widows, and then by insisting upon carrying out strictly the Brahmanic injunction, and save themselves from the place to which the law-maker consigns them, by getting all their girls married before they have reached womanhood. Many cases have occurred within recent years to show that any movement among the literate classes in the direction of the abrogation of these two precepts is but mouth deep, whilst their heart is with the observance of them to the utmost. *Longum iter per praecepta; breve et efficax per exempla*, but when opportunities occur for carrying into practice amongst themselves or their families some of the reforms they have been so strenuously endeavouring to impose upon others, it is remarkable to note what an amount of filial piety and of deference to the feelings of those to whom their respect is due comes into play, to prevent them from becoming martyrs to their principles.”



is extraordinarily small, that the greater part of the civil administration is already in Native hands, and that the Native Civil Service performs its duties, as a whole, with high efficiency.¹

Subject to certain conditions, the true principle on which we ought to treat this question of the employment of Natives in posts of importance was laid down in the Act of Parliament passed in 1870 to which I have already referred. That principle is that almost all offices in India shall be open to Natives, but to those only "of proved merit and ability."

In the case of Englishmen, whether in India or at home, it has been found that, considering the dangers and abuses which attend the distribution of valuable patronage, the first appointments to offices in the higher branches of the public service may with advantage ordinarily be filled by those who, in competitive examinations in their early youth, are successful in satisfying certain literary and other tests. Although this system has, on the whole, worked well with Englishmen, it is open even with them to objections and drawbacks, and to think of applying it to the Natives of India is nothing less than absurd. Not the least important part of the competitive examination of the young Englishman was passed for him by his forefathers, who, as we have a right to assume, have transmitted to him not only their physical courage, but the powers of independent judgment, the decision of character, the habits of thought, and generally those qualities that are necessary for the government of men, and which have given us our empire. The stock-in-trade with which Englishmen start in life is not that of Bengális; but I must not say this of Englishmen only, for it is also, in a great measure, true

¹ Chapter VI.



of the more vigorous races of India, although their time has not come for competitive examinations.

Few would go farther than I would go in opening the public service in India to Natives "of proved merit and ability," but it is well to avoid "political hypocrisy." "Is there," Lord Salisbury asked, "any man who will have the hardihood to tell me that it is within the range of possibility that a man in India should be appointed Lieutenant-Governor of a province, or Chief Commissioner, or Commander-in-Chief of the Army, or Viceroy, without any regard whatever to his race?" Some will answer even this question in the affirmative. There will always be people ready to accept with composure any political folly, provided that it involves some triumph of sentiment over sense, and some appearance of national humiliation. When we say that we cannot always ignore differences of race, this is only another way of saying that the English in India are a handful of foreigners responsible for the government of nearly 300 millions of people. I have said that we are foreigners in India in a different sense from that in which we are foreigners in Paris, and that the people of one Indian province are often almost as much foreigners to the people of another province as we are ourselves; still, we are foreigners, and although I suppose that no foreign government was ever accepted with less repugnance than that with which the British Government is accepted in India, the fact remains that there never was a country, and never will be, in which the government of foreigners is really popular. It would be the beginning of the end of our empire if we were to forget this elementary fact, and were to entrust the greater executive powers to the hands of Natives, on the assumption that they will



always be faithful and strong supporters of our government. In this there is nothing offensive or disparaging to the Natives of India. It simply means that we are foreigners, and that, not only in our own interests, but because it is our highest duty towards India itself, we intend to maintain our dominion. We cannot foresee the time in which the cessation of our rule would not be the signal for universal anarchy and ruin, and it is clear that the only hope for India is the long continuance of the benevolent but strong government of Englishmen. Let us give to the Natives the largest possible share in the administration. In some branches of the service there is almost no limit to the share of public employment which they may properly receive. This is especially true of the Bench, for the performance of the judicial duties of which Natives have shown themselves eminently qualified, and in which the higher offices are equal in importance and dignity and emolument to almost any of the great offices of the State. Even on the Bench, however, there are important administrative duties for which some degree of English supervision is necessary, nor would it be politically wise to place this great department of the Government altogether in Native hands. Prejudices of race may be regretted, but they cannot be ignored, and it would be a dangerous experiment to give to Native judges an unlimited power of control over English magistrates. For my own part, subject to some restrictions, there are few judicial offices in India that I would not throw open to Natives of their own provinces. But let there be no hypocrisy about our intention to keep in the hands of our own people those executive posts—and there are not very many of them—on which, and on our political and military power, our actual hold of the



country depends. Our Governors of provinces, the chief officers of our army, our District officers and their principal executive subordinates must be Englishmen under all circumstances that we can now foresee, and in all departments of essential importance there must be selected Englishmen to maintain a standard of high efficiency.

It is not only in regard to the employment in India of our own countrymen that we ought never to forget differences of race. It is quite as essential to remember them in connection with the employment of Natives. I have often insisted on the fact that, strictly speaking, there is really no such country as India.¹ I must repeat that such terms as "People of India" and "Natives of India" are meaningless in the sense in which they are frequently used. The term "Natives of India" applied generally to Brahmans from Bengal, Parsis from Bombay, Sikhs from Lahore, Gurkhas from Nepal, and to Gonds from the Central Provinces, has no more meaning than the term "Natives of Europe" applied generally to Englishmen, Poles, Spaniards, and Turks. As I have said before, no countries and no peoples in Europe differ from each other so profoundly as countries and peoples differ in India. No good administration or permanent political security is possible unless facts of this kind are remembered. It ought never to be forgotten that it can never be assumed that because a man is a "Native of India" he has any natural claim, different in kind from that of an Englishman, to be employed in the public service in every part of India. Often, indeed, you may go much further. I used no terms of exaggeration when I said that a Native of Calcutta is more of a foreigner to the hardy races on the frontiers of Northern India

¹ See Chapter I.



than an Englishman. To suppose that the manlier races of India could ever be governed through the feebler foreigners of another Indian country, however intellectually acute those foreigners may be—that Sikhs and Patháns, for instance, should submit to be ruled by Bengális—is to suppose an absurdity. To ignore this order of facts is made especially dangerous by the position which the Mohammedans hold in India. The Mohammedan of Northern India often remembers with pride that his ancestors belonged to the ruling race, and he accepts with natural regret, but with no humiliation, the government of Englishmen. Although he may not love them, he admits that they must be respected. But the thought of being governed by a Hindu foreigner from Bengal fills him with indignation and contempt.

I have already referred to the proposal that competitive examinations for the Covenanted Civil Service should be held in India as well as in England. It cannot too often be repeated that the adoption of such a plan could in no way tend to make our government more popular or to render it, in public estimation, less than at present a government of foreigners. It would transfer a certain number of important offices now held by Englishmen to men drawn from a very small class of Hindus who have alone received the sort of education which would enable them to pass the necessary examinations, who, although we choose to call them "Natives of India," would be to at least 200 millions of the Indian populations almost as much foreigners as we are ourselves. One of the inevitable consequences would be the anger and discontent of the more intelligent of our Mohammedan subjects.

I remember a conversation which I once had with one of the most eminent members of the noble families



of Oudh, the well-known Maharája Mán Singh, a man of rare sagacity, whose intellect, position, wealth, and influence made him the most important personage in his province. Referring to this subject of holding competitive examinations for the Civil Service in India, "I am afraid," I said, "that for a long time to come there would be no candidates from this part of India; it is only in Bengal that young men could be found who would have any chance of success in such an examination as that required. The result would be that you would some day have a Bengáli as your chief District officer." I shall not forget the scorn with which he drew himself up and replied to me, "And does any one think that we, the men of this country, would stand that? Do you suppose that you could govern us with Bengális? Never!"

This book was almost ready for the press¹ when the reports reached England of some remarkable speeches made by Sir Syad Ahmad Khán at two great meetings of Mohammedans in Northern India. I referred in a previous chapter to Sir Syad Ahmad Khán, and to the work to which his life was devoted.² I mention these speeches because they illustrate the practical importance of the fact on which I have repeatedly insisted, with which I began this book, and with which I wish to end it, that the most essential of all things to be learnt about India is that it is a continent filled with the most diverse elements, that it is the strong hand of England alone which maintains peace among them, and that, if our vigilance were relaxed, anarchy and bloodshed would spread themselves over the land. No Englishman could speak with higher authority than Sir Syad Ahmad Khán, and there was no one, Englishman or Native,

¹ First Edition, 1888.

² Chapter XVI.



more worthy of respect for his wisdom and of admiration for his character. It was his special aim in these speeches to protest on behalf of his Mohammedan fellow-countrymen against the assumption that they could be treated as belonging to the same nation as the Hindus of Bengal, and to express his contempt for the political nostrums which it is often proposed to apply throughout India. If these were adopted, the result, he said, would be that "there would be no part of the country in which we should see at the tables of justice and authority any faces except those of Bengális. I am delighted to see the Bengális making progress, but what would be the result on the public administration? Do you think that the Rájput and the fiery Pathán would remain in peace under Bengális?"

"... Suppose that all the English were to leave India, who would be rulers of India? Is it possible that under those circumstances Mohammedans and Hindus could sit on the same throne and remain equal in power? Most certainly not. It is necessary that one of them should conquer the other and thrust it down. You must remember that although the number of Mohammedans is less than that of the Hindus, and although they contain far fewer people who have received a high English education, yet they must not be thought insignificant or weak. Probably they would be by themselves enough to maintain their own position. But suppose they were not. Then our Musalman brothers, the Patháns, would come out as a swarm of locusts from their mountain valleys—like a swarm of locusts would they come—and make rivers of blood to flow from their frontier on the north to the extreme end of Bengal. This thing—who after the departure of the English would be conquerors—would rest on the will of God. But until one nation had conquered the other and made it obedient, peace could not reign in the land. This conclusion is based on proofs so absolute that no one can deny it. . . . Be not unjust to the British Government, to whom God has given the rule of India. And look honestly, and see what is necessary for it to do to maintain its empire and its hold on the country. You



can appreciate these matters; but they cannot who have never held a country in their hands nor won a victory. O my brother Musalmans! I again remind you that you have ruled nations, and have for centuries held different countries in your grasp. For seven hundred years in India you have had Imperial sway. You know what it is to rule. Be not unjust to that nation which is ruling over you. And think also on this, how upright is her rule. Of such benevolence as the English Government shows to the foreign nations under her there is no example in the history of the world."

These are illustrations of the opinions of a man more universally honoured by those who deserve honour in India, than perhaps any other man that could be named, and who was entitled to speak on behalf of all that is best and enlightened among Indian Mohammedans. Nor must it be supposed that these views were prompted by prejudices of race or religion. No man could have shown more conspicuously than Sir Syad Ahmad Khán his absolute freedom from such influences, or have given by the conduct of his life stronger practical proof of his respect and regard for his Hindu fellow-subjects. He merely stated what he and his Mohammedan brothers know to be the truth.

"It is better," says a famous writer, "to follow the real truth of things than an imaginary view of them." If intelligent men in England would make themselves acquainted with "the real truth of things," they would understand how purely imaginary is that "Indian nation" and that "People of India" of which we hear so much.

I must now bring this work to a close. I have endeavoured to give some general idea of what India is and of the results which she has obtained from the establishment of our power. No reasonable man can doubt the answer that we must give to the question



whether the 300,000,000 of people inhabiting the numerous countries of India have benefited by our government.

The first great and obvious fact, overshadowing all other facts in significance, is this, that in place of a condition of society given up, as it was immediately before our time, to anarchy and to the liability to every conceivable form of violence and oppression, we have now absolute peace. Let not this unspeakable blessing of the Pax Britannica be forgotten. There are not many European countries where protection to life and property is so complete. Excepting England and her colonies, and the United States of America, there is hardly a country in the world where there is so little needless interference on the part of the Government with personal liberty, or such freedom in the public expression of opinion in matters of politics and religion. Except when not unfrequently the fanaticism and intolerance of rival sects of Mohammedans and Hindus burst into violent conflict, and show what would instantly follow if the strong hand of our Government were withdrawn, unbroken tranquillity prevails. Justice is administered under laws of unequalled excellence and simplicity. There is hardly any country possessing a civilised administration where the public burdens are so light. Mr. J. S. Mill declared his belief that the British Government in India was "not only one of the purest in intention, but one of the most beneficent in act, ever known among mankind." I do not doubt that this is still truer now.

Whether all this makes our Government really popular is another question.

When Lord Lawrence was Viceroy, in 1867, many of the most experienced officers in India were invited to



give their opinion whether our Government was more generally popular than that in the Native States. As might have been anticipated, nearly all the answers were affirmative, but I shall only refer to that of Lord Lawrence himself. His conclusion was given in these words: "The masses of the people are incontestably more prosperous, and—*sua si bona nōrint*—far more happy in British territory than they are under Native rulers." No Englishman knew India better than Lord Lawrence. That the people had been made more prosperous by our administration was, in his opinion, beyond controversy, but when it came to the question of their happiness and of our popularity, well—at any rate they *ought* to be more happy. The proviso is significant, *sua si bona nōrint*.

The truth is that, in a country in the condition of India, the more actively enlightened our Government becomes, the less likely it is to be popular. Our Government is highly respected; the confidence of the people in our justice is unlimited. That accomplished traveller, Baron von Hübner, says in his excellent book, *Through the British Empire*, that if proof were needed to show how deeply rooted among the people is this trust in English justice, he would quote the indisputable fact that throughout India the Native prefers, in civil and still more in criminal cases, to go before an English judge. "I think," he says, "it would be impossible to render a more flattering testimony to British rule." The duty was once imposed upon me of transferring a number of villages which had long been included in a British district to one of the best governed of the Native States. I shall not forget the loud and universal protests of the people against the cruel injustice with which they considered they were being treated. Every



one who has had experience of similar cases tells the same story.

The sympathies between the people and their English rulers can hardly be anything but imperfect. The system of caste and the differences in all our habits make social intimacy difficult. Instances of insolence and brutality on the part of Englishmen undoubtedly occur, but the assertion that they are very frequent is false. At the same time it is true that the ordinary Englishman is too rough and vigorous and straightforward to be a very agreeable person to the majority of the Natives of India. These, however, are not reasons which seriously affect the popularity of our Government. Because, according to the only standards that we can accept, it is good it can hardly be popular.

I never heard of a great measure of improvement that was popular in India, even among the classes that have received the largest share of education. No one who has lived, as I have done for the better part of my life, among the people can have towards them feelings other than those of sympathy and affection and respect. They have qualities which deserve all admiration, but they are intensely conservative and intensely ignorant, wedded, to an extent difficult for Europeans to understand, to every ancient custom, and between their customs and religion no line of distinction can be drawn. We often deceive ourselves in regard to the changes that are taking place. We believe that our Western knowledge, our railways, and our telegraphs must be breaking up the whole fabric of Hinduism, but these things, as I have said before, have touched only the merest fringe of the ideas and beliefs of the population of India. The vast masses of the people remain in a different world from ours. They dislike everything new, they dislike



almost everything that we look upon as progress, and they live, for the most part, in blind ignorance of the aims and ideas of their rulers.

Among all the dangers to which our Indian dominion is exposed, the ignorance of the people is the greatest. The task of removing or at least of diminishing this ignorance is the highest of our duties, but its accomplishment can only come in a distant future, for we have to deal not with a single country and a single people, but with a multitude of countries that we choose to include under the general name of India, and with a multitude of different peoples, constituting, perhaps, in numbers, one-fifth part of the population of the world. So long as this ignorance continues, no one can say what belief or suspicion or unreasoning panic may not spread like wildfire through the country, or what may be its consequences. No one now doubts that the mutiny of the Bengal army, whatever it may subsequently have become, had its real origin in a panic of this kind, in the general and honest belief of the soldiers that our Government intended to destroy their caste, which involved everything that was most valuable to them in this world and in the next. It is hardly less true now than it was in 1857 that we are liable at all times to such dangers as this. Nothing is too foolish or too extravagant for general acceptance. This ought never to be forgotten. Ominous signs from time to time appear which ought to remind us how easily in India a terrible conflagration may be lighted up. There is no limit to the liability of such a population to be influenced by the assurances or suggestions of religious fanatics and political agitators, or to be disturbed by interference with its prejudices and beliefs.

It would thus be an error to suppose that the British Government is administered in a manner that altogether



commends itself to the majority of the Indian population. This we cannot help. Considerations of political prudence compel us to tolerate much that we should wish to alter, and to abstain from much that we might desire to see accomplished, but, subject to this most essential condition, our duty is plain. It is to govern India with unflinching determination on the principles which our superior knowledge tells us are right, although they may be unpopular. I will quote Sir James Stephen's summary of the principles which we enforce, and with it I may fitly close this book :—

“The English in India are the representatives of a belligerent civilisation. The phrase is epigrammatic, but it is strictly true. The English in India are the representatives of peace compelled by force. The Mohammedans would like to tyrannise over Hindus in particular, and in general to propose to every one the alternative between the Koran, the tribute, and the sword. The Hindus would like to rule—over Hindus at least—according to the principles of the Brahmanical religion. They would like to be able to condemn to social infamy every one who, being born a Hindu, did not observe their rites. They would like to see suttee practised, to prevent the re-marriage of widows who were not burnt, to do away with the laws which prevent a change of religion from producing civil disabilities, to prevent a low-caste man from trying or even testifying against a Brahman; and Mohammedans, and Hindus, and Sikhs would all alike wish to settle their old accounts and see who is master. The belligerent civilisation of which I spoke consists in the suppression by force of all these pretensions, and in compelling by force all sorts and conditions of men in British India to tolerate each other. Should the British Government abdicate its functions, it would soon turn order into chaos. No country in the world is more orderly, more quiet, or more peaceful than British India as it is; but if the vigour of the Government should ever be relaxed, if it should lose its essential unity of purpose, and fall into hands either weak or unfaithful, chaos would come again like a flood.”



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