

one must give up what it might fairly claim, or the others must submit to what they cannot possibly bear. On this subject we may refer to Colonel Arthur Cotton's work; and we extract a short passage from Mr. Bourdillon, which may, perhaps, make people reflect on the possible consequences attending difference in locality, facility of communication, and such small matters:—

“ ‘ Tanjore contains 4,000 square miles, and yields in land revenue alone thirty-nine lacks; Bellary contains 13,000 square miles, and yields of land revenue twenty-two lacks, being for equal areas only one-sixth of the revenue of Tanjore. But I will omit the consideration of what vast tracts in Bellary are wholly waste and unreclaimed, (and in part, indeed, irreclaimable), and will compare the cultivated areas only. The total extent cultivated in Bellary in the revenue year 1259 (1849-50) was 14,37,749 cawnies; and as the revenue realized was 22,52,334, the average per cawny was only a rupee and a half; in Tanjore, in the same year, the ryotwar cultivation was 6,37,360 cawnies, and the collections 38,74,000 rupees; the average to the cawny of actual cultivation was therefore above six rupees, or more than four times the rate of Bellary.\* And yet land in Bellary is an unsaleable commodity, while in Tanjore it is a valuable commodity; and in every indication of a sound and prosperous condition Tanjore has an immeasurable advantage.

“ ‘ And this difference in its favour is not due to any superiority in natural fertility; of the two provinces, I imagine the soil of Bellary is the better. What, then, is the cause? It is mainly this, and no other, viz., that in Tanjore the state has, for ages, laid out a portion of its income, first, in bringing water to irrigate the soil, and, latterly, in making roads to transport its produce. If that had not been done, Tanjore would, at this moment, be no richer than Bellary or Guntoor. This example may serve to show that the way to make our provinces flourish, and to give land a value, is not to reduce the land-tax, but to devote a portion of the produce of it—and a portion only will be

\* The capacity of the cawny is of no consequence in this comparison, being the same on both sides of it; but I may mention that the cawny contains 6,400 square yards, being, within a fraction, one-third larger than the acre, which contains 4,840 square yards.

amply sufficient—to the creation of those means which, on the one hand, multiply the resources of the producer, and, on the other, bring him near to a market.’

“The ‘Friend of India’ suggests that assessment should be fixed for a period of fifteen years, at the expiration of which it might be open to the Government to raise it. Has the ‘Friend of India’ lost sight of our pledged faith, that so long as the ryot pays his fixed kist, the land is his for ever, without any further advance? And if there is one thing more than another calculated to hinder the investment of capital in the soil, it is the feeling of uncertainty engendered in the minds of the ryots by the fear that Government may raise their kist as their land becomes more productive. This has operated to a great extent upon the ryots under the Godavery Delta, and precisely the same argument is used by European capitalists, who ask how can they be expected to speculate in coffee planting on the Indian hills, where after twenty years they know not what fresh terms the Government may enforce, whilst in Ceylon they may purchase the soil outright for ever? One plan would be this:—let Government at once fix the maximum assessment which it ever intends to take under any future circumstances; and when it is found inexpedient at once to exact the full amount, let it take the minimum, raising it as the resources of the land are developed, and the landholders rise in wealth. With such a system a feeling of comparative security might be at once engendered, whilst all proper and prudent consideration will be shown for the existing condition of the ryots and the soil.

“Further, the Government, says the ‘Friend of India,’ should take *fifty* per cent. of the gross produce. Was there ever so lamentable a self-exposure as this. What has been the result of taking half the produce from that unfortunate district, South Arcot, so highly taxed above any other in the Madras Presidency? It is universally allowed by all revenue authorities in the Madras Presidency that  $33\frac{1}{3}$  per cent., or one-third of the gross produce, is the extreme limit of demand. It was for this purpose that Munro recommended a reduction of 25 per cent. in the ceded districts, in order that the rates might be brought down to the standard of  $\frac{1}{3}$ d. of the gross produce, which recom-

mentation was carried into effect, though upon a totally erroneous and unproductive principle. This is the maximum which the Board of Revenue has repeatedly laid down in its instructions on the subject; this is the maximum which Mr. Maltby attains in his late revision; and it was thus that Munro expressed himself on this topic before the Parliamentary Committee:—‘I have stated in my Report of 15th August, 1807, that when the rate of taxation exceeds one-third of the produce, land, generally speaking, is of little or no value, and is often abandoned. I have also given it as my opinion that when so high a rate of revenue as one-half of the actual produce is exacted, persons who are not actual cultivators cannot occupy Circar lands without loss.’ And in the Government Minute of Consultation on Mr. Maltby’s Report, we find the following:—‘They hold in common, it is believed, with all authorities of any weight, that a general assessment of 50 per cent. of the gross produce upon both irrigated and unirrigated land, must of itself constitute a tax which neither South Arcot nor any other district of Southern India can bear, and the ryot at the same time prosper.’

“Further; let us take the proved results of a tax of 50 per cent. of the gross produce. In South Arcot, we quote from the report of Mr. Maltby, out of 1,76,167 cawnies of irrigated land, there were 95,655 lying waste; out of 10,64,880 of dry land, 8,15,993; and out of 4,731 of garden land, 3,226; or 54 per cent. waste of irrigated, 77 per cent. of dry, and 74 of garden. Of the best, or garden, soil, 500 cawnies have been used for building sites: the district does not grow grain enough for its own consumption; ‘the best lands now lie waste, whilst numbers of its inhabitants seek subsistence in foreign emigration.’ In the words of the Board of Revenue, ‘The extensive emigration which has been yearly going on amongst an industrious and agricultural population, from a district where there is an abundance of available waste land, and many outlets for the surplus produce, must, in the absence of any other adequate cause, be attributed, the Board think, to the excessive character of the land assessment, which does not admit of their earning a living from the cultivation of their own native fields.’ Such is the picture of what the Madras Presidency would be if the proposed reduction were carried out!”

The results of heavy and light assessment are next to be shown by practical examples, and for this purpose Madras has to be contrasted with other territories:—

“The ‘Friend of India’ has chosen to compare Arracan with Madras, and though the comparison is unfair, it is very valuable and should be accepted; but let Canara be compared with Arracan, and we have no reason to fear the result.

“There are two countries in which the tenure is identical, but one of these countries is prosperous and the other declining. The nature of the tenure, then, does not account for the difference, and the cause must be sought elsewhere.

“When any particular branch of industry in England is in a declining state, or when the country generally is suffering, public attention is usually drawn to the pressure of taxation as the cause to which the evil may most probably be attributed; and it is most extraordinary that in India we should go on discussing the manner in which the tax gatherer makes his rounds, until we lose sight of the amount of assessment that he comes to demand.

“The parallel between Madras and Arracan is much more close than the ‘Friend of India’ is aware of; in fact, every alleged discrepancy may be excluded as erroneous. There is no difference of principle as to the right of possession. In Madras, as in Arracan, the peasant is recognised as proprietor—and by no one has this principle been more staunchly contended for than by Sir T. Munro. The peasant of Madras is as much at liberty to contract and expand his cultivation in good and bad seasons as the peasant of Arracan, and, what is more, he does so. The ‘Friend of India’ says that it is only necessary for the Madras Government to say that it will not raise its rent for ten years, to make Madras as prosperous as Arracan. The Madras Government has done much more. It has said that it will not raise its rent for ever; so long as a peasant pays the rent of a field, so long he is the proprietor of it. If it is not to his advantage to continue to cultivate the field, he is at liberty to throw it up, and the demand for rent ceases. Whether, when thus rejected by the owner, the land is available for any other cultivator, or whether the previous cultivator has a lien upon it for one or more years, is a matter of local custom, and varies in different districts. The correct principle most certainly is, that if there is any party



willing to cultivate the land, the owner must either pay the assessment or resign it, and the 'Allod' of ten years in Arracan is a faulty principle. The proper test whether a peasant is justified in leaving his land fallow is, whether there is any one willing and able to turn it to account, so that it shall yield subsistence to the community and revenue to the State. If there is not, the peasant can himself resume it when it is profitable to do so; if there is, he has no right to withhold the land from cultivation unless with the view of making it, by a fallow, doubly profitable the next year, and then he is fairly bound to pay the rent. But as the privilege is, as stated above, prevalent in some districts, it does not account for the difference between Arracan and Madras.

"In Madras, as in Arracan, the rent for a year once paid, 'the excuse for the tahsildar's interference ceases.' 'The constant disputes with the Collector—the measuring of this patch and the examination of that'—are imaginary. The ryot pays the whole rent or none; wherever the ryotwarry principle is fairly in operation, each field bears its assessment, and the peasant either cultivates the field and pays the assessment, or resigns the field and ceases to be responsible for the assessment.

"How then is the difference between Madras and Arracan to be accounted for? The answer is plain; because in one the land assessment is light, and in the other it is heavy.

"In proof of this a comparison should be instituted between the taxation of the land in one country and in the other. The exact amount of the assessment in Arracan we do not know, but believe that the province resembles Canara in possessing a fertile soil and an unfailling monsoon, and that, notwithstanding these advantages, the assessment on wet lands does not exceed 3 rupees an acre on the best lands; at least that is the case in Chittagong.

"But we know what the assessment in Madras is, and as one instance is more forcible than many general assertions, let us take the following:—

"In Salem a piece of land measuring two acres and one-fifth has lately been put up to sale for an arrear of revenue. The assessment upon that field is 19-6-0 rupees, or 9½ rupees the acre. Now the question is, Is the assessment on the land in Arracan equally heavy? But it may be said that this may have been land of unusual fertility, and the mere amount of the

assessment proves nothing at all. Let us then see what the land sold for. It sold at a Government public auction, which confers the best title that can be obtained, for 15 rupees, or less than the assessment of one year. So that the Government tax of 19 rupees and 6 annas was undoubtedly within a fraction of the whole rent of the land. Now the question is, Is the Government in Arracan taking the whole rent of the land? If not, the difference of taxation accounts for the different conditions of the two countries.

"Let it, then, be added that much of the land in Madras is assessed from 9 up to 50 rupees, and that a great portion is lying waste because the assessment is more than the rent, and the argument is complete.

"Let the Madras peasant be taxed as lightly as the peasant of Arracan. It will be time to attempt a 'change of tenure' in Madras when the simple remedy of a reduction of taxation has been tried and has failed.

"The 'Friend of India' is greatly mistaken when he says, 'by the universal consent of all men, officials included, the evils which exist in Madras are traceable to its peculiar tenure.' He would have been right if he had said, by the universal consent of all who have studied the subject with candour, the evils of Madras are ascribed to the enormous pressure of its taxation, and wherever that pressure has been relieved the tenure has proved to be as admirably adapted to the wants of the people in Madras as it has in Arracan.

"In the Deccan, under the new assessment, the rates of lands are as follow :—In Poonah something less than 1s. an acre. In Indapore the average is 8d. an acre, and in Dharwar, the best class land, the famous black cotton soil, fetches on an average but 1s. 9d., the very highest being let at less than 3s. an acre. This may be as convenient a place as any to exhibit the results of this enlightened policy. Since the survey, the increase of average brought into cultivation up to 1854 is as follows :—

Poonah .....	179,232	Acres.
Ahmednuggur .....	260,000	"
Sholapore .....	456,645	"
Dharwar .....	292,756	"

Total.....1,188,633

and reckoning Nassich and Belgaum, an addition of a million and a-half of acres has been made to the cultivation of the province.

The Collectorate of Poonah is divided into eight taluoks, and the following table of four, comprising eight years before and eight years after the survey, shows remarkably, first, the actual collections of the year as compared with the estimated settlement; secondly, how "remissions" have gradually dwindled; and thirdly, how balances have vanished.

YEARS.	Settlement of the Year.			Actual Collection of Land-Tax.			Remissions granted.			Balance irrecoverable, and struck off.		
<b>ABSTRACT.</b>												
<i>Indapoor.</i>												
Prior .....	6,09,433	11	10	3,28,007	5	7	1,31,641	6	1	1,49,785	0	2
Subsequent .....	6,26,040	7	3	5,75,665	2	0	43,543	0	1	3,776	6	6
Increase subsequent to Survey....	16,606	11	5	2,47,657	12	5	0	0	0	0	0	0
Decrease " " .....	0	0	0	0	0	0	88,098	6	0	1,46,008	9	8
<i>Deemthurry.</i>												
Prior to Survey.....	5,91,359	9	5	3,97,531	11	1	1,84,793	11	0	8,992	13	11
Subsequent to Survey .....	6,34,610	3	6	5,49,974	0	0	79,455	3	6	161	5	10
Increase subsequent to Survey....	43,250	10	1	1,52,442	4	11	0	0	0	0	0	0
Decrease " " .....	0	0	0	0	0	0	1,05,338	7	6	8,831	8	1
<i>Pabhoole.</i>												
Prior to Survey.....	6,25,165	1	7	5,10,716	9	2	1,11,299	3	2	1,634	7	9
Subsequent to Survey .....	5,93,317	0	7	5,73,255	14	10	17,583	0	11	20	0	0
Increase subsequent to Survey....	0	0	0	62,539	5	8	0	0	0	0	0	0
Decrease " " .....	31,848	1	0	0	0	0	93,716	2	3	1,614	7	9
<i>Havailly.</i>												
Prior to Survey.....	5,85,586	11	9	4,73,688	4	8	79,130	9	8	25,003	5	9
Subsequent to Survey .....	5,54,425	9	3	5,29,182	4	7	9,372	9	7	28	9	0
Increase subsequent to Survey....	0	0	0	55,493	15	11	0	0	0	0	0	0
Decrease " " .....	31,161	2	6	0	0	0	69,758	0	1	24,974	12	9
Total prior to Survey .....	24,11,545	2	7	17,09,943	14	6	5,06,864	13	11	1,85,415	11	7
Total subsequent to Survey .....	24,08,393	4	7	22,28,077	5	5	1,49,953	14	1	3,986	5	4
Total Increase subsequent to Survey	0	0	0	5,18,133	6	11	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total Decrease " "	3,151	14	0	0	0	0	3,56,910	15	10	1,81,429	6	3

“Precisely analogous results have been found in the other Collectorates, of which, however, no statistical tables are procurable. We have no doubt the increase has been since progressive. Compare Madras next with Bengal; we find the rich alluvial soil of that Presidency paying about 300 lacks on 100,000,000 of acres, of which about 70,000,000 are under cultivation; so that the average is only 8 annas per acre on the whole cultivated area. Or, according to another calculation which has been forwarded to us, we find that the permanent settlement of the Marquis of Cornwallis comprised an area of 149,000 square miles, say about 96,000,000 of acres, of which Colebrooke estimated one-third to be under tillage, (about 30,000,000 of acres,) and to pay Government 270 lacks, and that this also gave the right over the waste lands which were also productive, so that the average rent paid by the zemindars did not exceed 8 annas. At this date the average from the extension of tillage must be much less on the actual cultivation, and if we take two-thirds to be under cultivation, we can safely say that 70,000,000 of acres only pay 270 lacks of rupees, or 6 annas per acre. Munro clearly points out the difference under which the two Presidencies were acquired, a point which never should be lost sight of:—

“ ‘The Presidencies of Bengal and Madras were acquired under circumstances which have ever since continued to influence their revenue system. Bengal acquired at once the dominion of rich and fertile provinces, yielding a revenue much beyond its wants; it had, therefore, no occasion to enter into any minute examination of the assessment; it was satisfied with what it got from the zemindars, and left them in possession of the lands on very easy terms. Madras, on the contrary, rose amidst poverty and many struggles for existence. It never was able to pay its establishments; it acquired its territories by slow degrees, partly from the Nizam, but chiefly from Mysore; and though the assessment had already been raised too high by those Governments, its own pressing necessities did not permit it to lower the demand, but forced it to enter into the most rigid scrutiny of the sources of the revenue, in order to keep it up; and there has, in consequence, always been a pressure upon the ryots, which nothing but necessity could justify.’

“ In Pondicherry the French Government has made a reduction of 50 per cent. on the uncultivated, and of 33 per cent. on the cultivated lands. In Pegu the most fertile land, an alluvial Delta, annually manured by the natural overflow of the river, and requiring no artificial irrigation, is to be had at 2 rupees an acre. In 1854, the ‘Englishman’ informed us that the Calcutta Revenue Board had framed new rules for waste lands in Assam, which it was intended to extend to Arracan and the Tenasserim provinces. Forest and grass lands were to be granted on the same terms, one-fourth was to be exempt in perpetuity for sites of houses, roads, &c, the other three-fourths to be rent free for fifteen years, and afterwards to be assessed for ten years at 3 annas per annum per acre, and from the twenty-sixth year for seventy-three years at 6 annas per acre, the whole term being for ninety-nine years. In Madras, hill forest lands are granted rent free for five years, after which they are assessed at 1 rupee an acre for twenty years, at the expiration of which all is uncertainty, and the Government is free to levy what tax it likes upon the improvements of those who are bold enough to sink their capital in reducing the capabilities of the land.

“ Thus we have completed the contrast between the Madras Presidency and the other portions of our Indian territories, more or less completely according to the various data at our disposal, but sufficiently for our purpose, which is to establish the assertion that Madras is more heavily burthened than any other portion of the empire; and this we take it is now so clearly proved, that it must be henceforth an admitted fact in any future argument on the subject. These are the differences which it is essential to bear in mind, where the question for consideration is how the backward state of Madras, as compared with the other portions of the empire, is to be accounted for; it is the most delusive, self-deceptive fallacy to exclude these causes, and saddle the whole blame upon the system of collecting the land revenue. Let Madras be granted similar privileges with the North-West, the Deccan, Arracan, Pegu, Assam, Pondicherry; let her assessment be reduced to the level of even the highest of theirs; let her be provided with the same physical materials of advancement, in the shape of roads and irrigation works; let her have only a fair per-centage of her revenues laid out upon the soil, and

the means of exporting its produce, and then, if the people do not rise in wealth and social prosperity, let ryotwarry be universally proclaimed the one prohibitive cause of stoppage and degradation—but not till then; especially when, look whichever side we will where ryotwarry is in force, we find that the boons we ask have no sooner been granted, even in part, than there is as elastic and immediate a spring towards improvement as under any other revenue system whatsoever. We assert that the particular form of revenue system is, in reality, the least important of all questions when we are deliberating upon the measures necessary for regenerating a country. Our reasons for preferring ryotwarry to either a zemindarry or village system have been already sufficiently insisted on. We say that it is the simplest and most rational of all forms; that it is not only compatible with protection to the ryot, but that administered in that simplicity which characterized it in the intentions of its founders, minute interference—which is supposed to be its greatest curse—is not even necessary, but, on the contrary, necessarily vanishes. Sir Thomas Munro points this out with his usual felicity. ‘It has been objected,’ says he, ‘to the ryotwarry system, that it is intricate, difficult of management, and expensive; but experience contradicts these opinions; for, wherever ryotwar has been properly established, it has been found to be more easy, simple, and efficient, than any other kind of settlement. The idea of its being more expensive arises from not considering that it *includes all the expenses of collection which would be incurred by zemindars if the country were under them, and which would in that case be necessarily deducted from the amount of revenue, and not appear as a charge.*’

“These three objections are still alleged in the present day. With regard to the last—the greater expense of collection—Munro has hit the white; and this is precisely what has occurred in Bengal. A writer in the ‘Calcutta Review’ expands our views on this subject, and probes the details as follows:—

“‘First, then, as to the cost of collecting the revenue. According to the published official accounts for the years 1845–46 to 1849–50, the charge for collecting the land revenue (with the Abkari and Moturpha in Madras, and the Abkari and Sayer at the other Presidencies) was  $9\frac{3}{4}$  per cent. in Bengal,  $9\frac{1}{2}$  per cent.

in the North-West Provinces, 13½ per cent. in Madras, and 14½ per cent. in Bombay. But we propose to show that those accounts are fallacious on this point, inasmuch as the term "charges of collection" is very far from containing the same classes of particulars in all the four cases. We have already shown that the expenditure on works of irrigation, to the amount of 5,55,000 rupees annually, is improperly included among the costs of collection at Madras; and to this must be added about two lacks for the Civil Engineers and establishments belonging to the Tank Department, making a total of seven and a half lacks, or nearly two per cent. on the land revenue collection. This however, is very far from being all; and we now proceed to show that items to a very much larger amount, which are certainly part of the cost of collection, and which are no less certainly paid by Government, do not appear in the accounts of Bengal and the North-West Provinces, while at Madras similar charges are exhibited among the costs of collection.

"One great difference consists in this, that, under a ryotwar settlement, such as that prevailing in the greater part of the Madras Presidency, where the whole revenue is directly collected from the individual ryots or occupiers of land by the agency of Government servants, large expenditure appears in the accounts for the salaries of such agents; while, under a zemindarry settlement, such as that of Bengal, or a system of village leases like that of the North-West Provinces, still larger sums are permanently remitted—to the zemindars in the former case, to the collective body of villages in the latter—for the expenses of managing and collecting the revenue. It is surprising that the present anomalous and fallacious mode of comparing the costs of collection under the several Presidencies has been allowed to continue so long, and that a fair mode of making the comparison has not yet been devised. It cannot be ascribed altogether to oversight; for the facts, as we have briefly stated them, were brought prominently forward by Mr. J. Mill, in his examination before the Select Committee in 1831. He there clearly explains\* why the charges of collection appear larger under Madras than in the other Presidencies, alleging the same causes which we have assigned. His evidence on this point

extends to too great a length to be extracted here in full, but the following is its purport. The charges of collection in the accounts then before him were from  $15\frac{1}{2}$  to  $17\frac{1}{2}$  per cent. in the ryotwar provinces of Madras; in Bengal  $6\frac{1}{2}$  per cent.; and in the Upper Provinces from  $9\frac{1}{2}$  to  $10\frac{3}{4}$ . Mr. Mill truly explains the difference to be owing to the greater cheapness of collecting a fixed revenue under a permanent settlement, where an allowance, exceeding the actual cost of settling with and collecting from individuals, has been already struck off in making the settlement, and so does not enter into the accounts at all. Thus, in Bengal, the apparent costs of collection were  $6\frac{1}{2}$  per cent.; but, in forming the settlement with the zemindars, 10 per cent. was allowed them for the costs of the detailed process, and was struck off the jumma; and this, being added to the present actual charge to Government, at once raises the proportion to  $16\frac{1}{2}$  per cent. And Mr. Mill adds, the one-tenth allowed to the zemindars has, in the course of improvement, become two, and even three or four-tenths; so we may safely say that the real costs of collection in Bengal, at this time, are at least 25 per cent. on the amount paid by the actual occupants of the land, being very much higher than the highest per-centage under ryotwar settlements at Madras.

“ ‘ We are unable to state precisely the amount allowed from the jumma, for the detailed processes of collecting the revenue, in the recent village settlement effected in the North-West provinces; but as far as we can gather from the published documents respecting it, which we have had the opportunity of seeing, it was generally 10 per cent. there also; and this, added to the 9 per cent. directly borne by Government as above shown, raises the total cost in those territories to 19 per cent.—again exceeding the highest proportion at Madras, even including the outlay on irrigation, there improperly entered among the costs of collecting the revenue. Nor is even this the whole. Mr. Mill adds, that various local expenses are, under the Madras Government, included among the costs of collecting the revenue, though having no connection with it at all. A careful consideration of the published annual accounts leads to the belief that this is still the practice to some extent, though we are unable to specify the probable amount.’ ”

“ The other two objections, intricacy and difficulty of manage-



ment, fall under the same head, because they are attributable to the same causes. It is we ourselves who have introduced the intricacy and difficulty. It is the exorbitant assessment which is the primæval origin of these evils. It is the necessity of squeezing out of the ryots far more than they can pay without utter ruin to themselves, that has ushered in all the minute interference with every agricultural operation, and compelled us to maintain an army of 40,000 peons, to bully, torture, and extort. It is the voluminous and useless accounts which we call for, that makes the working of the system intricate; the keeping of these accounts in Mahratta, which none but the writers understood, and which had to be translated before they could even be read by revenue officer or ryot, that has added to that intricacy. It is to our overlaying the simplest fundamental rules with a host of minute exceptions; to our departing from our pledged faith, and saddling the ryot with the cost of his own improvements, and making them profitable to us rather than to him; it is to the introduction of such cruel absurdities as the compulsory delivery up of "good and bad" in equal portions, the unnecessary issue of superfluous puttahs, and all the long catalogue of similar excrescences engrafted by us on the original plan, (all attributable to our departure from the object of Munro and Reid), to secure the profits of the zemindar or middle man to the ryot himself, and the endeavour to transfer them, together with as much more as could be wrung out of him, to the pocket of the Government, that we owe whatever of intricacy or difficulty our Collectors have laboured under. We admit that they have been enormous; but so far are they from being inherent in the system, or essential to its maintenance, its necessary concomitants and props, that we have the clearest possible proofs to the contrary. Canara is a standing example of the ease and simplicity with which the ryotwar may be administered, when shorn of its abuses, and reduced to something like what its originators intended it to be. When that state of things has been once reached, in which there are neither remissions to be made, nor balances to be collected; when the dispute among the people is not who shall be *made*, but who shall be *allowed* to pay the revenue, our minds may be perfectly easy as to the facility with which the Collector gathers, and the cheerfulness with which the people render their dues.

There is then neither necessity nor even room for minute, vexatious, extortionate interference in every operation, and at every season of the year. All the malpractices of the subordinate revenue officials are weeded, and die out by a purely natural process, which works its own effect silently, but surely."

Next, let us contrast portions of Madras where the assessment has not been lowered, with portions where it has.

As to picturing the former, I will leave it to each man's imagination to fancy it as wretched as he can. There are two districts, however, Canara and South Arcot, where the assessment has very recently been lowered, which furnish us with precisely the illustrations we are in search of. The facts are taken from an article by a Madras Civilian of great reputation, in the "Calcutta Review" for December, 1853.

Let us see then what has been done of late years for Canara, and what have been the results.

The first measure, (in what year does not appear), was to relieve the estates from a demand of 1,74,000 rupees, and "at the same time the languishing commerce of the coast was revived by a reduction of the duty on rice from 10 to 3 per cent., at a sacrifice of 1,40,000 rupees."

"In 1833," continues the same writer, "the demand upon a large number of estates, which failed to come up to the reduced standard, or to which the previous revision had not extended, was reduced to an amount adjusted to their capabilities. The effect of this has been most remarkable, and agriculture has made a great advance. The pressure thus withdrawn, was a sum never really added to the revenues of the State, while it disheartened the landholder, and discouraged improvement. From the date of its withdrawal, the increase of the Government revenue has been unchecked.

"The next great measure of relief was the abolition of the transit duties. With a frontier of 300 miles, these pressed with perhaps greater severity upon this than upon other districts, and under this head was included an excise upon the staple products, betel nut, pepper, and cardamums. This measure relieved the province from taxation to the extent of 300,000 rupees, and has changed the entire state of the garden cultivators from one of indebtedness and poverty, to affluence and content.

"The abolition of sea customs from port to port, and of all duty on cotton in transit to Bombay, has effected for the sea-borne trade what the last great measure had done for that of the interior, and nearly a similar sum of 300,000 rupees has been remitted to the traders of the coast.

"A still greater boon has since been conferred. A tobacco monopoly had been established in this province, and taxation could not possibly assume a worse form; and not only were its own inherent evils of the greatest magnitude, but so long as it existed, the abolition of the transit duties failed of half its advantages. Search on the frontier, domiciliary visits, and oppression of every kind, could still be practised under the pretext of zeal for the interest of Government. This has now been swept away, and the country is released of a taxation which may be reckoned at 200,000 rupees.

"Concurrently with these measures, there has been steady advance in the recognition of the claims of a large province to the aid of Government, in the construction of public roads. Since 1837, above 500,000 rupees have been expended, we will not say on the improvement, but in the creation of public roads, chiefly from the coast, through the line of mountains, to the table land of Mysore, Bellary, and Dharwar; and most amply has the expenditure been reimbursed. Every year, for the last seventeen years, has seen many miles of road opened to commerce, and it has seen them crowded, as soon as made, by thousands of bullocks and hundreds of carts. In a country where this first duty of the ruling power had been neglected from a traditionary age to the present time, what could be done in fifteen years with small means, is but a fraction of what is due to the country; but it marks a most important era in its progress."

This account is the more valuable, as it shows us what is the effect not only of reduction in over assessment, but how wise is the policy of abandoning oppressive duties and taxes, such as those on tobacco, rice, transport, export; combined with a simultaneous outlay in the improvement of means of communication. And how triumphant a refutation, Canara, which is a "picture in little" of what might be a full-length portrait of the whole of the Madras Presidency, affords to those who assert that the East India Company cannot afford to make what are pleasantly called *sacrifices* of its revenue! In all, the remissions

*Population and Revenue of Canara, exclusive of Coorg Maganies.*

or sacrifices have been upwards of 1,100,000 rupees, while 5 lacs of rupees have been expended in the creation of roads.  
The writer of the article in question has thrown the results in the following tabular form:—

Years.	Population.	Land Rev.	Moturpha.	Abkarry.	Salt.	Stamps.	Ferry Farms.
1802 ..	592,635	.....	.....	9,761	(1806) 2,56,847	(1808) 12,074	(1804) 837
1832 ..	718,333	16,18,817	8,989	39,443	2,48,838	29,444	2,789
1852 ..	999,011	18,28,846	16,492	78,901	4,43,175	55,519	9,452
	Imports of Copper.		Dates.		Piece Goods.		Total Imports.
1812 ..	3,196		2,861		1,31,589		3,44,563
1837 ..	43,463		12,938		1,02,659		5,83,243
1852 ..	68,536		27,702		1,71,705		9,89,096
1853 ..	40,967		59,591		2,53,748		14,32,153
	Exports of Cotton.		Coffee.		Rice.		Total Exports.
	Quantity.	Value.	Quantity.	Value.	Quantity.	Value.	
1812 ..	Candies Mds. 2,874- 6	3,05,436	Candies Mds. 3-16	643	Moorahs. 12,35,853	24,17,536	33,77,763
1837 ..	15,294-16	13,70,415	176-16	17,681	10,77,949	18,85,960	41,89,786
1852 ..	28,888- 5	15,74,133	3,153- 8	1,60,527	14,63,029	21,28,377	51,89,785
1853 ..	71,261-14	42,79,238	4,117-18	2,22,039	13,15,564	18,68,668	73,68,072

Since 1837, or, in other words, since the era of "*sacrifices*" commenced, population has increased by a third; exports have nearly doubled, imports nearly trebled themselves; while every item of Government revenue, directly from the land, and indirectly from Moturpha, Abkarry, salt, stamps, and Ferry farms, shows a considerable improvement.

Under such a state of things, the assessment, as might be expected, is easily collected, and readily paid; there can be little or no room for extortion on the one hand, or need of bribery on the other. Native agency is rendered harmless.

"The collections of the land revenue," says the writer of the article, "are made with striking punctuality, and the balances irrecoverable are of the most trifling amount. Those struck off in the last five years on account of losses by floods, or fire, or other causes, contrasted with the settlement of the year, afford convincing proof of this.

Year.	Assessment.	Struck off.
1258 .....	18,85,476 .....	714
1259 .....	18,96,603 .....	986
1260 .....	19,04,731 .....	199
1261 .....	19,14,101 .....	53
1262 .....	.....	174

There are, at present, in Canara, 55,000 holdings, of which 19,000 pay less than 10 rupees a-year, and yet sales for arrears of revenue are almost unknown, and the reference to the European officer is as frequently on the question—who shall be *allowed* to pay, as who shall be *made* to pay, the dues of Government?"

Land, where a distinct title can be placed, is easily saleable at sixteen years' purchase, and often even higher; and this, where, fifty years ago, even mortgagees were willing to abandon such land as they could not themselves cultivate, to any who would pay the land-tax.

Let us now return to South Arcot.

The condition of this district, the most highly assessed of any in the Presidency, previous to the reduction introduced there by Mr. Edward Maltby, its enlightened Collector, may be broadly stated, in his own words, as that of ruin and stagnation. The assessment was fixed at 50 per cent. of the gross produce.

Assessment was fixed on some lands on the supposition that they could give a second crop. These were entered in the accounts as lands "suspected or doubtful of two crops." Dry land was reckoned as garden, because a well was dug in it, and a more valuable description of produce grown; and, in short, South Arcot may be looked upon as an example of the most fatal errors committed in the administration of ryotwar. After fifty years of undisturbed peace, with a largely increased population, with a favourable soil and climate, with outlets for its production at Madras, Pondicherry, and the seaports along its own seaboard, we find "more than half the land was uncultivated,—the labour and capital of the country being driven to the inferior soils;" that "a moiety of the assessment was uncollected and merely nominal;" and that while "the best lands lie waste, numbers of its inhabitants seek subsistence in foreign emigration." In 1853, Mr. Malthby took the matter in hand, and the result is shown in the invaluable Public Record, No. xxii, on the "Revision of Assessment in South Arcot." In August, 1854, the Government sanctioned reductions on the following scale:—a maximum reduction of 25 per cent. on wet land; of 35 per cent. on the eight highest classes of dry land, and 25 on the four lowest; and by sanctioning the reduction of one anna per cawney for district roads. It was anticipated that by this reduction, the Government would give up about 3 lacks a-year on land thus under assessment; but, on the other hand, it was argued that so much fresh land would be taken up under the reduced rates, that the deficiency would be very soon made up. How just was this reasoning is apparent by the following "Notes, on the Results of the Reduction of Assessment," which close the Record, No. xxii.

"In closing this collection of papers, it may be well to mention a few facts to shew the result of the reduction made in the assessment so far as there has yet been time to develop them.

"The modification of the rates of assessment was made known in Fusly 1264, some months after the commencement of the Fusly, and when the principal season for cultivating the dry lands was past. Nevertheless, the cultivation of that year exhibits an increase of 38,395 cawnies over the preceding Fusly. Of this increase, 17,673 cawnies consisted of irrigated land, and

an additional revenue of 3,19,183 rupees was thus gained, to balance in part the 6,22,324 rupees given up to the people in the modification of the rates.

"In Fusly 1265, the reduction of the assessment was generally known, but cultivation was greatly checked by the scantiness of the early rains, and the district officers had not had leisure to settle all the contending applications for permission to take up waste lands. Notwithstanding these impediments, however, the cultivation accounts, closed at the end of Urpasy, or the 11th November, 1855, show a further increase of 84,007 cawnies in the unirrigated lands, and of 9,304 cawnies in the irrigated.

"The cultivation of the last six years is shown in the following statement; and it will be observed that, although the current Fusly 1265 is still incomplete, its cultivation up to the 11th November exceeds the highest year on record by 75,002 cawnies, or above 15 per cent.

Fuslies.	Dry Land.	Wet Land.	Garden Land.	TOTAL:
	Cawnies.	Cawnies.	Cawnies.	Cawnies.
1260.....	3,53,720	1,18,434	1,337	4,73,491
1261.....	3,63,264	1,31,201	1,498	4,95,963
1262.....	3,53,648	1,24,725	1,466	4,80,039
1263.....	3,20,659	1,17,468	1,564	4,39,691
1264.....	3,41,381	1,34,651	2,054	4,78,087
1265.....	4,25,380	1,43,551	2,054	5,70,985

"The assessment on the lands cultivated in the current year is not known, but it is calculated that if the cultivation reaches 600,000 cawnies, the revenue given up by the reduction of the rates, amounting to about 7 lacks of rupees, will be at once made good. This result is by no means improbable, even in the current year, as two cultivating months remain, in which the extensive indigo lands are sown, besides cotton and tobacco being cultivated.

"Of the gross increase of cultivation in the present Fusly, amounting, on the 11th November, to 93,311 cawnies, 89,111 cawnies occurred in the ten Hooloos talooks, where the assess-

ment has been formerly reduced. In the remaining three talooks, temporary remissions are allowed at fixed rates until the assessment is revised.

“Whether or not the full amount of the revenue given up in the reductions is recovered this year, there seems no rational room for doubt that in another year or two there will be an actual and permanent increase of revenue, as a consequence of the reductions; and this, it must be remembered, in addition to the Road Fund of 30,000 or 40,000 rupees a-year, for the improvement of the district roads.

“Fort St. George,

“December 17th, 1855.”

A Table, to be found in Appendix, exhibits, in a comprehensive form, the entire operations of the ryotwar in South Arcot, from 1845 to 1856.\*

It may not be out of place to mention that the low rate of assessment enabled Mr. Hall, to whom it fell to carry out Mr. Maltby's reform, to insist upon payment for land left fallow, so long as it was not thrown up. This is a grand point, because it at once sweeps away the necessity of that constant minute interference of the native revenue authorities, with a view to ascertain how much of a man's holding was cultivated;—a necessity which gave scope for bribery by the ryots, and extortion by the peons, to a vast extent.

Dry as this subject is, these details, if they are once mastered, must relieve me of the necessity of proving that if the conditions pointed out are fairly laid down, the class desired by the “Friend of India,” which “shall have the means and leisure for permanent improvement,” must grow up rapidly and spontaneously. If these conditions, as I have said before, avail not, none will.

I have shown, unmistakeably, I think, that in theory the ryot is the proprietor of the soil. Munro said, give him his lands over

\* In the present year it is estimated that the revenue will fall short, by nearly 8 lacs. But there is no argument against the soundness of the reform. It arises solely from the want of rain, which has compelled the ryots to throw up their land; which will come at once into cultivation again when the season is more favourable. This fact, however, suggests one reflection:—How much water could have been stored by the expenditure of 8 lacs of rupees expended in anicuts and river improvements, so that the breadth of cultivation should never again depend upon the precarious supply of rain?



in perpetuity whenever he applies for them ; and the Indian and Home Governments have both, within the last two years, acknowledged that this is the fundamental principle of the ryotwar. Lord Harris, I am aware, has caused a seeming confusion, by having stated in one minute that the ryot is the proprietor, and in another that the Government is the proprietor. In his minute of 26 October, 1854, he maintains this latter proposition : "The land of a country," he writes, "belongs to a Government *de facto*, and should be held by it and distributed by it among the population, in such a manner as is likely to cause it to be most beneficially cultivated, both as regards the interests of the cultivator, and the whole community." That is nearly the doctrine of the Socialists. Further, he says, the Government is to be "the great landlord," the tax-payer is to be the "tenant of the state on liberal terms." The ryot is not to have the "fee simple of the land, which is considered almost a *sine quâ non* in England."

But in a later state paper by Lord Harris's Government, the Madras report for 1856-7, there occurs the following passage :—

"Under the ryotwarry system, every registered holder of land is recognized as its proprietor, and pays direct to Government. He is at liberty to sublet his property, or to transfer it by gift, sale, or mortgage. He cannot be ejected by Government so long as he pays the fixed assessment, and has the option annually of increasing or diminishing his holding, or of entirely abandoning it. In unfavourable seasons, remissions of assessment are granted for entire or partial loss of produce. The assessment is fixed in money, and does not vary from year to year, except in those cases where water is drawn from a Government source of irrigation, to convert dry land into wet, or one into two-crop land, when an extra rent is paid to Government for the water so appropriated ; nor is any addition made to the assessment for improvements effected at the ryot's own expense. The ryot, under this system, is virtually a proprietor on a simple and perfect title, and has all the benefits of a perpetual lease, without its responsibilities, inasmuch as he can, at any time, throw up his lands, but cannot be ejected so long as he pays his dues ; he receives assistance in difficult seasons, and is irresponsible for the payment of his neighbours."

This is adopted by the Supreme Government, and in the Court of Directors' Memorandum of improvements during the past

thirty years, it is expressly stated that "the actual cultivator, the peasant himself, is regarded as the proprietor of the soil, subject to the payment of the Government demands."

Is it not amazing, then, to find the Government, in the very same breath in which it calls the ryot the proprietor, the perpetual leaseholder, propose to cut his estate down to a term of thirty years, after which his rent may be raised upon him? Surely this is in derogation of his right? and what the Government has no power to carry out. The fact is, that Munro's settlement was as final as that of Cornwallis. Upon this I have written as follows:—

"The ryot is virtually a proprietor on a perfect and simple title, and has all the benefits of a perpetual lease, without its responsibilities, inasmuch as he can, at any time, throw up his lands, but cannot be ejected, so long as he pays his dues.

"If these words have meaning, they mean that the ryot has the fee simple in the land, subject to the payment of a quit-rent reserved by Government.

"And this is precisely our conception of what the ryotwarry system was intended to be by its original framers, Read and Munro. If this leading idea be once fully comprehended, and steadily adhered to, and faithfully worked out in all its consequences, fortunate will it be for the Government, fortunate will it be for the people. But at the very onset, we are met by a contradiction. If the tenure of the ryot be, as it is here denominated, a *perpetual* lease, why is it to be limited for thirty years, according to the 'blockhead' system, or fifty years, according to the proposition of the Madras Government? Is not every term, be it longer or shorter, a curtailment of that which is 'perpetual?' And if we tell the ryot that his tenure is perpetual, by what right, or with what justice, do we in the same breath inform him that without any consultation, explanation, or consent on his part, this perpetual tenure shall be cut down to half a century, or thirty years? Is this really giving him a greater interest in the soil? Is it not, in sober truth, giving him a less? And is it not altogether a mistaken idea to suppose, that by bestowing on the 'proprietor' of the soil, a 'long lease,' we shall stimulate, or inspire him with confidence, if his present perpetual tenure has failed of this effect? Are not the want of confidence, the indif-

ference to good farming, the apathy of the ryot, to be attributed to other causes? and are they not to be sought for and found in the heaviness of his assessment, the harassing amount of petty interference with every operation of his agriculture, the chicanery and corruption of the revenue servants, and the utter inefficiency of our judicial system, which is tantamount virtually to a thorough bar to all redress?

“This confusion of ideas, which thrusts a ‘long lease’ upon the perpetual leaseholder, is, we think, attributable, partly to an oversight of the ryot’s real title; partly to that vacillation which halts between two opinions, and hesitates to draw the legitimate conclusions from premises which are not denied. It is thought that a permanent settlement is a monstrous folly; that there is no reason why a Government hereafter, in want of a larger revenue, may not re-open the question of assessment, with a view to obtain a revenue adequate to its wants, while it would not press heavily upon the improved condition of the farmer. What, it is asked, would be the position of the Government, if there were a sudden emergency, such as a foreign war, requiring vastly increased expenditure, and heavily drawing on the resources of the Government, already not more than adequate to the securing all those objects of administration which in their sum make up good government? In such a case, we say, let the extraordinary emergency be met by extraordinary, but temporary measures. Let a war tax of five or ten per cent., or whatever is necessary, be levied, and cease with the termination of hostilities; just as in England the war ninepence is called into existence by, and dies with the war. But do not let such shadowy imaginings as these come in to cloud the future prospects of the ryots. When once the proportion which a Government may justly claim has been fixed, be it 35, or 40, or 45 per cent. of the net produce, let no element of doubt supervene, which shall make men suspect or fear that proportion is not fixed *for ever*. Let them not be cut down from their perpetual lease, subject to the payment of that fixed proportion, by being told that though this may last for a longer period, it need not necessarily last beyond fifty or thirty years.

“But, it is urged, this is all in clemency to the ryot. The tendency of the price of grain is to fall; experience shows that prices have fallen since Munro’s time 40, 50, 70 per cent., and on such

an event again occurring, it might be fair to take a less proportion of the produce. But the answer is patent. The proportion, if it is fair once, is always fair. The hardship upon the ryot is by erecting an invariable standard of value. Let this be revised once in seven, or once in ten years, and adjusted according to the average of the preceding seven or ten years, the commutation price ever fluctuating with the price of grain, and while the Government will profit by a rise without damnifying the ryot, the ryot will never be ruined, or even straitened, by a fall in prices. Nor is any interference with the operations of the ryot necessary on this account. Minute statistical information of the market rates of grain may be kept in each district, the more publicly the better, and thus the data for striking the averages be complete. But what is there in common between this measure, and that of limiting the ryot's lease to fifty or thirty years? If the average can be struck at the end of the first seven years, so can it at the end of every successive seven years *ad infinitum*; that is to say, throughout the entire duration of the ryot's *perpetual* lease.

"The ryot is now recognised as the proprietor of the soil; his title is declared to be 'simple and perfect;' his tenure is admitted to be a perpetual leasehold, subject to the payment of the Government dues.

"Those dues having been fixed upon a principle of fairness; assessed upon the lowest kind of crop, say rice; and the proportions in which the Government and ryot are to share respectively, settled; the elements of prosperity will have been secured; the seeds of confidence will have been sown: let it be proclaimed that these proportions, and the principles on which they are fixed, shall not be liable to future change, and the harvest will speedily be reaped. Let the Government take, then, all those steps which are necessary to secure a knowledge, and provide a record of its rights on the one hand, and which are necessary to diminish revenue official interference to its possible minimum on the other; and all the conditions for prosperity will have been laid down. Matters may then be left to take their own natural course. These measures are a revenue survey conducted by honest agency and on scientific principles; and an edict that every ryot shall pay for the whole of his holding whether he cultivate it or not; just

as in England the tenant pays his yearly rent for his entire farm, notwithstanding he may leave a fifth of it fallow. If a ryot wishes to diminish his holding, by all means let his puttah be altered; but do not reserve to him a right to reclaim his abandoned land for a long series of years. If he has not sufficient means to cultivate his entire holding, let any one who will, cultivate that portion which is thrown up. Thus will be superseded all that official interference which is now necessary for verifying the extent of each man's annual cultivation, and which we see no other means of extirpating than by insisting on this fair demand, that every tenant shall pay for whatever he chooses to retain a claim over, whether he cultivates the land in a particular year or not.

"We have hopes that people, at any rate in India, are throwing off their misconceptions of the real nature of ryotwarry. That they at last see that the excrescences and vicious engraftings which have disfigured the bark of the old tree, are superficial, and that the tree itself is sound and vigorous to the core, and capable of flourishing and bearing fruit. Especially do we cling to this last manifesto of the Governments of Madras and India. The ryot is a proprietor; his leasehold is perpetual. Let this idea be generally adopted; let it be as widely acted upon as possible, as universally, and invariably. Let it be published in every village. Let no doubt be cast upon it either by issue of leases for fifty years, or by the annual issue of fresh puttahs in any district, or in any case, except when the holding has been altered. This done, let the Government forthwith earnestly bend its every effort to the task of producing those conditions which will render land valuable. With a revenue survey, let there be a thorough revision of the Hookumnamahs; a plain, intelligible, comprehensive, liberal set of rules embodying the various *ordered* improvements and reforms of the last few years, should be forthwith drawn up, published in every collectorate, and in every village; affixed to every office, promulgated to every villager; so that not a man in the land, but shall know that he may improve his property, and put the profits into his own purse; let the reductions in assessment be at once carried out, whenever the present rate is manifestly too high, without waiting for the survey; and then the ryotwarry will be found to be

nothing more or less than the natural system under which every kingdom in the world's history has risen to prosperity."

I have said that Munro's settlement was final; by which, however, I do not mean that the assessment was not open to being lowered. In fact, it was part of his original plan that it should be lowered 15 per cent. upon his own estimates; and he afterwards recommended a reduction of 25 per cent. all round. But, independently of this reduction, which never was carried out, it is apparent that if the circumstances of the country ever so altered, that what was a fair assessment became a burthen too grievous for the people to bear, the Government *must* reduce it for its own sake. But as *against* the Government, I hold that settlement was final; they never could *raise* it. They have no right to share in the increased value of the land, that value being given, not by them, but by the owner's sinking his capital in it. The Government is not in the position of a private landlord. I pointed this out not long since in a former work.\* Government has since expressly endorsed that view. In a minute of consultation on the commutation rates (11th May, 1855,) the Madras Government writes:—"The Government of a country is not in the position of a landlord, justly entitled to take the whole surplus produce of the soil; all that it can claim is a revenue sufficient to secure the objects of Government, viz., to maintain peace and order, and to execute those works of public utility, the promotion of which, in this country, is held to belong to Government."

If the Government requires a larger revenue, it appears to me that it will most effectually obtain it by lowering, not by raising the assessment. The results of both plans are before us; while a high assessment throws a vast breadth of land out of cultivation, and drives the population to emigration, a low assessment, as in South Arcot, rapidly increases the area of agriculture, and consequently the amount of revenue. Let Government require what funds it may, there is ample margin for raising the amount without levying any additional tax. There are 90,000,000 acres of land in the Madras Presidency; deducting 20,000,000 for roads, houses, rivers, and tanks, there remains 70,000,000. At the lowest estimate

\* "Madras," page 201.

35,000,000 of these are cultivable. But Government has only 20,000,000 under cultivation, having 15,000,000 more to be brought under the plough. A modification of assessment would effect this. There remains another mode by which Government may raise its resources. Let it sink capital in the stowing of water in large masses, according to Colonel Cotton's plan—and a Civil Engineer reports that there is no difficulty in carrying out this operation on the Neilgherries,—and then the thing is done. For water quadruples the crop in quantity, often doubles it in value as to kind, and trebles the security of reaping it. Land thus becomes twofold more valuable; and Government may lay a tax or rent fivefold that charged on land not irrigated; thus, not only paying the interest, but returning a fair profit on the sunk capital.

If this tenant right of "perpetual lease" be admitted, and the position of the Government as above laid down be the true one, *cui bono* keeping up the uncertainty which must attach to renewable leases? Why not at once act up to theory; and if it be acknowledged that the ryot is a perpetual leaseholder, give him a document of title to that effect?

The ryotwar system is the simplest conceivable. It is impossible to give a title more effectual. No change of tenure can be necessary. All that is required is to carry out ryotwar itself promptly, honestly, and boldly.

A great outcry has been raised against the ryotwar because it has been supposed to be incompatible with security of title. I have shown how ill-founded this idea is. We must, however, I admit, make our practice square with our theory. Hitherto, like the rower, we have looked one way and pulled the other. There are certain other steps which may be taken with a view to rendering assurances secure. The first is a general registration, which, to be of any effect, must be compulsory. The existing regulation for the registration of deeds\* is a mere dead letter, because it is not compulsory, and the benefits derivable from it are scarcely appreciable by the people in general. In 1856, there were but four documents registered in Chicacote, two in Ganjam, eight in Vizagapatam, nine in Masulipatam, nine in Salem, twelve in Coimbatore. On the other hand, in Canara, where land

has acquired a considerable value, the registrations amount to 2727, and have kept at that average for the last five years—a fact which shows that the people will resort to registry freely enough under particular circumstances. Still, I think that the new act should render registration compulsory. The penalty for non-registry, it has been thought by some persons of great experience in Madras judicial affairs, should be the rejection of non-registered documents when tendered in evidence; whether this is the best penalty that can be devised, or whether it is indeed a wise penalty at all, may admit of much discussion. I desire to express no opinion on the point. All transfers should be executed on stamped paper, and registered. More precaution should be taken against the fraudulent use of stamps than at present; and the Revenue authorities should give a yearly receipt to that party who pays the rent, specifying not only the amount received, but the land for which it is paid. These receipts would be *prima facie* evidence of occupancy, a point of constant litigation at present; and another advantage would be, that while they rendered titles secure, they would also decrease litigation, and diminish the facility of forgery, perjury, and subornation of perjury in the Courts of Law.

It is admitted on all hands that a thorough revenue survey, conducted on scientific principles, and by honest agents, is indispensable. Village maps, and substantial boundary stones marking the limits of present estates, must be provided; the only question on this topic is, whether the operation shall crawl over the country at the rate proposed by Lord Harris, which will bring it to a close in about thirty years, if no interruptions intervene; or, whether steps ought not to be taken for a rapid completion of this essential measure, by starting from many centres instead of from one, so that various districts may be surveyed simultaneously. The objection is that by the former arrangement the expense will be spread over a long period of years; but I apprehend that this consideration should not be allowed to stand in the way of an undertaking which will of itself go far to settle, and secure, and simplify men's titles.

Lastly, as to the proposition which has been made for “redeeming the land-tax.” Among others, Mr. Norton, the late Advocate-General of Madras, has published a pamphlet on this subject,



which I learn, has met with a certain success in England. That was natural. I have glanced at the reason in my remarks on another topic—Who is to pay the cost of the rebellion? But now I would crave to go somewhat deeper into the matter, because it is one of such primary importance to the future of India, that it is highly desirable to obtain clear ideas upon it. Some persons are favourably disposed towards this scheme from a dim notion that they will thereby secure the ryot a title for his land. I have already shown how vain such an idea is; and, in truth, it arises from a confusion of thought. It is clear that the ryot may have just as good a title to the land he holds, whether he holds it subject to a certain fixed tax, or free from future payment of that tax, because he has redeemed it by a ready-money payment. The measures I have suggested in this chapter will assure the ryot the most perfect title; and in this aspect, redemption of the land-tax is simply unnecessary. But, on the other hand, it is fraught with peril. It remains to consider it in two points of view; that is to say, whether we could safely trust the Indian Government with the funds which the measure, if successful, would place at its disposal; secondly, whether it would really confer upon the present owners and holders of the soil those benefits which their philanthropic auxiliaries fondly hope would be the consequences of a general redemption.

On this topic I lay before my readers the arguments which have appeared in the “*Madras Athenæum*,” not indeed proceeding from my pen, but written at my request, and after consultation with myself, by a gentleman every way qualified to discuss the subject:—

#### ARTICLE I.

“It is to be hoped that in this time of financial embarrassment, there will be no empirical tampering with our legitimate sources of taxation. It is to be feared that any fortuitous shift or expedient, however pernicious its ultimate result, will be had recourse to for the sake of tiding over the momentary embarrassments of this country. It is probable that such a measure, by promising to divert every portion of the costs of the revolt from the pockets of English tax-payers, would add to the popularity of the minister. It is fortunate, however, that there are at present in England numbers of experienced persons from India, who would

set all the weight of their very considerable influence against any quackery being tried in the revenues of this country. The question of taxation is altogether independent of political differences as to forms of administration. Irreconcilable as these differences may be, we are certain that they obtain among many persons who have but one great object in common, namely, the good of the country. Any attempt to play tricks with the revenues of this country should unite in opposition to it all Indian politicians, however bitter in other respects may be their antagonism.

"It is one of the misfortunes of human nature that the best friends of a country are frequently the causes of many of the evils that befall it. A man distinguished for virtue, wisdom, and patriotism, is nevertheless fallible; and may get a crochet in his head, which, if put into operation, would ruin the country that he would make any sacrifice to serve. Now, of all the crochets that are springing into existence out of the excitement produced by the present crisis, there is none so fraught with evil as the crochets about the redemption of the land-tax. There is absolutely in existence a class of politicians, who, contrary to every dictate of prudence, foresight, and every sound principle of political economy, would sell for a sum of money, the portion of the rent of land which, in India, has from a period beyond history, been reserved for the purposes of the state. Without being able to devise or even suggest another impost to replace the tax which they would dispose of, they would place in the power of Government the means of present prosperity at the cost of future ruin. It is not sufficient that they have seen millions raised and squandered to no purpose by every Government in existence. It is not sufficient that even in England, they have had constant examples of taxes being collected for one purpose, and expended for another. It is not sufficient that they have seen an income-tax take the successive forms of a peace-tax, a war-tax, and then a peace-tax again, according to the exigencies of the Government in office. It is not sufficient that they have seen the failure of that miserable abortion—the sinking fund, for which monies were ostensibly raised to pay off our public encumbrances, and virtually applied for whatever purposes the minister of the day chose to put them to. It is not sufficient that they have had it clearly impressed on them by all history, that even the incessant jealousy of a free parliament, which has the strings of the public purse in its hands, is barely a sufficient check upon the finance juggling of an embarrassed and unscrupulous ministry. These *doc-trinaires* would confide the revenues of a country, not for a short

period only, but for eternity itself, to a Government, on which there is scarce any responsibility, and scarce any check whatsoever. They would place in the hands of the Government of India—a Government remarkable for its skill in making up plausible accounts—the means of showing a magnificent balance-sheet, when its finances were sinking into utter ruin. They would entrust to a Government, which, from its very nature, is rabidly intent upon *present gains*, the absolute disposal of the revenues of futurity. They would place implicit faith in the discretion of that Government, that the sums raised by selling portions of the income of the State should be so invested that the vacuum in such income should not only be eventually filled up, but flow over with abundance; and they talk of this at a time when every available rupee in India, whatever be the source it is derived from, and whatever be the purpose it is raised for, is to be devoted to the costs of suppressing an insurrection, arising from the thorough failure and break down, in a great part of India, of the civil and military administration of her wise, discreet, most honest, and prescient Government.

“ We regret to see a name so deservedly respected as that of George Norton among the *doctrinaires* who would so recklessly sacrifice the revenues of India. What a resource it would be if India could raise a few millions just now, by putting up to sale a portion of that land-rent reserved from the beginning to the State for expenses of Government. This, however, would be to distort Mr. George Norton’s proposition. Admitting that ‘ the tendency of such a measure, indiscriminately and extensively acted upon, would be to swallow up the principal out of which the great bulk of the fiscal income now arises,’ he would effect the redemption of the land-tax by a *process of gradation*. He believes that the immediate annual supply to Government would be considerable, and that before even a fourth of the whole land-tax were redeemed, the deficit would be replaced from other sources of taxation. Meanwhile, Government should exercise a wise discretion in not allowing too rapid or too slow an encroachment on the revenues. Calculating the upset price of the land at twenty years’ purchase, and the land revenue of India at twenty millions, and assuming that the *tenants* paying one-thousandth part of the kist to Government, redeemed annually their proportion of the tax, he puts down the annual sum to be received by Government at £400,000, and the annual loss in revenue at £20,000. The word ‘ *tenants* ’ is in our own italics. We may hereafter have a word to say as to whether the ‘ *tenants* ’ would be, in the majority of cases, the purchasers. If Mr. George Norton’s graduated plan were

adopted, Government, says he, would, at the end of 100 years, have lost for ever two millions of its revenue. But how so able a man could, for one instant, suppose that such a measure would be suffered to proceed uninterruptedly, we are at a loss to conceive. Indeed, he feels the difficulties of his proposition as soon as he gets below its plausible surface. Imagine a Government without the constant check of a Parliament being entrusted with such delicate operations as the following:—

“ But suppose Government desired, for public and profitable purposes, (in other words, for increasing the wealth of the country and consequent sources of revenue,) a larger amount of annual redemption money. This might be done in either of two ways—by lowering the price and attracting a larger proportion of purchasers, or by raising the price to the same, or even to a larger proportion of purchasers. In the latter case the measure would be doubly profitable to Government. It would increase its revenue without any loss, ‘in case the surplus’ (after paying off, if so deemed expedient, a portion of the national debt) ‘was required for exigencies of unprofitable expenditure,’ and it would, at the same time, benefit the purchasers with all the gainful results already alluded to. If the surplus or increased revenue was directed to public improvements, and was not required for such exigencies, of course the advantage to Government would be greater still. Should, however, the former of these two ways be adopted, still the measure would be very profitable. For supposing Government admitted 1-500th part of the ‘kist’ payers to redeem at the price of twenty years’ purchase, or a less proportion, (say 1-700th,) at a lower price, it would take 100 years to reduce the land-tax revenue by one-fifth, *i. e.*, by £4,000,000 per annum; and Government would, in the meanwhile, have had its revenues much more largely increased, wherewith to make that public and beneficial outlay, which would have been the inducement for admitting a more extended redemption, and might thus provide new sources of taxation more than adequate to replace the loss.’

“ ‘Public and beneficial outlay,’ ‘public and profitable purposes,’ are high-sounding words; but what Government in the world—certainly not the Indian Government—is fitted to be entrusted with funds of posterity, on the hypothesis of its laying them out in public and profitable purposes? We have little enough to show in England for our 800 millions of public debt; and we have literally no experience but what tells us that the funds of posterity, whenever they have been drawn upon by any Government whatsoever, have been recklessly and often uselessly squandered.

## ARTICLE II.

"No one who has read Quentin Durward will forget La Balafre, the redoubtable uncle of the hero of the tale. That worthy wore round his neck a massive gold chain, from which, whenever he was short of money, he used to twist off a piece with his teeth, and sell it for ready cash. We suspect, that, before the old warrior died, when his powers were enfeebled with age, and he could no longer wield his tremendous sword to gain him another chain, that some of his revenues must have disappeared altogether. Now what La Balafre did with his chain is precisely what a certain set of politicians would have us do with our Indian Empire. If our means are crippled by a war, an internal revolution, or any other expensive difficulty that may arise, they would have us raise the wind, by twisting off a good lump of territory, and selling it at an upset price. What we are stating is a positive fact. It has already been talked of in England; and a brilliant Bengal contemporary puts in italics, in a recent issue of his journal, the following rather startling question—*why not sell Bengal?*

"It is rather unfortunate for the advocates of the redemption of the Indian land tax, that they should choose a time of financial distress for bringing forward the proposition. If both ends of our finances were meeting and embracing, and nothing was wanted but money for a liberal and judicious expenditure upon remunerative public works, the measure would undoubtedly have had a plausible look; but to advocate it at a crisis when money has to be thrown away in huge lumps, to be utterly dissipated and wasted for ever, casts a very great doubt on the wisdom and forethought of the propounders. It induces more than a suspicion that recourse will be had to so disastrous an expedient in any further difficulty. Bengal, for example, shall pay for the mutinies, and perhaps wipe out the greater portion of the debt incurred for previous wars. For future difficulties, we may dispose of a slice of Madras. For vast sums, wasted by any kind of improvident expenditure, the land revenue of the country, to any conceivable extent, may be made away with. What difference is it to John Smith, who has sunk £20,000 in law suit, whether he mortgages his estate for that sum, or sells a farm on it which will realize the amount.

"Well, to John Smith it may make little difference; for John Smith, like John Company and the majority of men, loves himself better than any one else; but to John Smith's heirs or successors it makes all the difference in the world. The truth is that this argument overlooks the distinction that there is between the saleable value of land, and its real and permanent worth. Between the one and the

other there is as much distinction as there is between the ephemeral fashions and habits of the day, and the undying principles of human nature. Twenty or twenty-five years' purchase of the land may serve a Government which would dazzle the world in the present at the expense of the future. Twenty or twenty-five years' purchase may be spent in a variety of ways; and Mr. George Norton's suggestion was, that it should be invested in a manner that would more than replace the vacuum caused by it in the annual revenue. But who is so infatuated as to trust any Government in the world to do that? All experience goes to show that the Government would be as reckless in their disposal of them, as many a fraudulent banker of his constituents' securities.

"The comparison between Government and a private individual does not hold good. Land will not be worth more than twenty or twenty-five years purchase to the latter. He can hardly calculate on so long a period of life. He may desire the money for a promising speculation; and in many respects it may benefit his individual self more than the possession of the land. Perhaps, however, the seller might feel differently were he, like the Wandering Jew, destined to live for an indefinite period. If the lives of men were prolonged for two or three hundred years, we do not think they would be content to dispose of their lands for twenty or twenty-five years' purchase. It is the duty of the State not to suffer itself to be actuated by the ephemeral motives that incite a man to squeeze into his short life all the enjoyments which he can, but to think and to act as if it were to endure for all time, and as if the present were but an infinitesimally small portion of its existence. The short-sighted sovereigns, who were our predecessors, granted away an enormous quantity of land in *enam*. The grants, it is alleged, were made, in many instances, for services to the State. So also the grants in *Jagheer*. It is, however, a question with us, how far those grants shall be recognized; and whether any previous sovereign had a right to alienate the revenues of the State in perpetuity. Hence our *enam* commissions. Suppose, however, that we were insane enough to sell off large portions of the land tax, is it impossible that, long after we are all in our graves, there will not start up some future species of *enam* commission to question the right we exercised of making away with the State revenues, and to deliberate upon the propriety of imposing a tax similar to the one we had disposed of? Even now, in England, political writers of authority question the principle of Pitt's Land Tax Redemption Act, and seriously advocate that land be reinstated in its appropriate place in the fiscal system.

Yet in England the expansive power of indirect taxation is astonishing. In India, before we can substitute indirect for direct taxation—at all times a questionable exchange—the people must alter the habits which a thousand generations have ingrained in them. Yet it is upon the hypothesis of such an alteration which must form the ground-work of any new fiscal system, that political speculators would, like unprincipled bankers, sell the stock which they hold in trust for posterity, and in which they are only entitled to a life interest. Compared with such a deed, the conduct of a reckless heir, who raises money upon *post obits*, is moral and judicious.”

### ARTICLE III.

“The first question that occurs in the consideration of any fiscal reform, is, how will it act upon the great body of the nation? How will the masses, from whose incessant toiling is wrung the means of supporting the State, be affected by it? Just and excellent as a measure may be in certain stages of the progress of society, it may be as much behind the social grade of some communities, as it is in advance of the low scale of humanity in others. It is obvious that it is impossible to separate the consideration of any great financial scheme from that of the present, as well as prospective condition of the people. A Government which has the welfare of the governed in view, must bear in mind their social institutions, their habits, their tempers, their tendency to providence or improvidence, their desire for dependence or independence, their susceptibility to the influences of a higher civilization, and numerous other circumstances upon which will depend the advantage or disadvantage of the measures proposed. It is certain that an act of the most perfect theoretical beauty and justice, may be an utter failure, owing to its inadaptability to some or other of these conditions. On the other hand, a careful consideration of the latter may suggest a policy, or the continuance of a policy, which may appear very crude and clumsy in the eyes of a political theorist, but may harmonize with the state of the people far better than a measure of the most admirable symmetry. The redemption of the land tax is a proposition that wears a plausible face, and we shall, therefore, consider how it would affect the present owners and occupiers of the soil.

“The measure is advocated on two different grounds. The first is, the present relief, as well as eventual profit, it would bring to the State. The second is, the great stimulus that it would give to agricultural operations, combined with the advantages of freedom from taxation and independence of action, which it would confer upon the owner of the soil. It is also anticipated that the capability

of obtaining the possession of land in fee simple, exempt from assessment, would draw to this country what is so much wanted, namely, European skill and capital.

“ The registered holder of the land, however, that is to say the person who is at present liable to the Government for the tax, is the only individual to whom its redemption can be offered. A stranger could only get possession of the land by purchasing the holder's property in it. But would the persons who are now the great contributors to the expenses of the State—would the descendants of those who have occupied and tilled the soil from time immemorial—obtain their land in fee simple free from tax? That the land tax would be quickly redeemed we have very little doubt, (that is to say if offered at a fair price,) but the land would not fall into the hands of those in whose possession it would be desirable to see it. It would pass into the clutches of the money-lenders, who would make advances to the ryot for the purpose of redeeming his tax. The simple-minded ryot would rush at the bait held out to him. The money-lender would ply him well with the means of purchase. The ryot would sign mortgages with the greatest facility. And it is not difficult to foresee that he would end by being a mere tenant upon the estate from which he had so eagerly and hopefully redeemed the land tax; and by paying to some money-lender a rent, double, or perhaps treble the rent at present exacted by the Government. The estate would probably be paid for by the mere interest of the money lent the ryot. The money-lender would, in too many instances, obtain possession of the soil without any expenditure of capital whatsoever. And the result of this grand measure of financial reform would be, that the ryot would be more impoverished than ever, and that his condition would render it less possible than before for him to use or consume any of those articles of commerce which alone could form the basis of a new system of taxation.

“ The social state of the people of India is generally such, that we think the possession of land free from tax would be positively injurious to them. A high tax would not be more pernicious to their industry than no tax at all. It is certain that wherever the land is the free possession of a people in a low state of civilization, the condition of that people will never improve. They will simply scratch the soil for sustenance, and live the indolent and vacuous life of savages. To stimulate a people to exertion, especially in the tropics where the natural wants of man are very small, some degree of compulsory labour is necessary. This is effected by a tax. Government says to the dweller upon the soil, ‘you shall not till it



unless you pay a tax to Government.' The stimulus to a man's industry is thereby doubled, and when his energies are once set in motion his aversion to their employment disappears, and he feels that what he can gain by his labour is infinitely more pleasant to him than the mere indulgence of idleness. But the tax must be judiciously laid on, and unfluctuating in amount. The cultivator must not be led to fear that the profits of his increasing and improving industry will be lessened by indefinite exactions. It is evident that any State which depends for support upon the rent paid it by the cultivators of the soil, will attend to the aggregate of their interests in a far greater degree than a private individual will to the interest of his tenants. The individual having wrung dry one tenant, may obtain another, and after having served him in the same manner, another, and, again, another. But Government, which embraces the intelligence of many individuals, and is only held in trust for the nation itself, will scarcely act in this manner. So long as it draws its revenue from land, it will proceed upon a far more regular system than private individuals will care to adopt. Indifferently as the land revenue of this country has hitherto been conducted, we would infinitely prefer to see the cultivator pay his rent to the Government than to the money-lender. To the former, the tax rendered would be (that is under an assessment revised upon true principles, which is to be anticipated) moderate in amount, and fixed once and for ever; and in this case would stimulate rather than depress the ryots' industry. But to the latter, the rent would be whatever his exorbitant desires might choose to extort; and beneath such a condition industry would sink into the same state as it was under the middlemen in Ireland, until Government saw fit to interfere. We are not speaking, mind, of a country with enlightened proprietors and intelligent tenants,—and even in such a country the relations between the two are frequently bad enough,—but of a country in which the occupiers of the soil are little better than semi-savage, and in which those who are likely to become the landholders are the worst usurers in the world. If ever a country required a Government that should carefully watch over the interests of the governed, it is India; but by the redemption of the land tax, the interests of the great body of the people would disappear for ever from the eyes of the Government.

"Let not the Government delude itself that by selling off the present land tax it would thereby get rid of all trouble whatever with regard to the owners or cultivators of the soil. The state of society in India is as yet so rude and undeveloped, that the Government *must* protect the simple and improvident against the cunning and

intriguing. Was ever the fee simple of land more absolutely and entirely given away than it was in Bengal in 1793? The amount payable to Government was fixed (at a money rate!) in perpetuity. The zemindars were recognized as the legitimate owners of the soil; and were enabled to sell it, to lease it out, in large or small holdings, and to extract whatever they could from their under-tenants. Yet Government is now, after sixty-five years experience, compelled to come forward with a bill to protect the interests of those under-tenants, who are fleeced beyond all endurance by the owners of the soil. This measure, though in the highest degree necessary, is unquestionably a violation of the perpetual settlement. It is stigmatized as such by the zemindars. In the North-West provinces, the usurer, as we shall endeavour to show in a succeeding article, is at the bottom of a great deal of the present revolution; and it was a matter of deep consideration with the authorities of those districts, how the cultivator should be preserved in the possession of his estate, and from the snares and wiles of the money-lender.

"In sum, we hold that while it would be no advantage to the cultivator, under any circumstances, to be freed from a moderate and judiciously-imposed tax, the operation of the redemption of the land tax would be simply to transform the rent, now paid by him to the Government, into an *ad libitum* charge made upon him by the money-grubbing new proprietor of the soil. The ryot is already too much in the power of the usurer; but this visionary purchase by him of the freedom of the soil, would rivet on him the last fetter of serfhood. A more disastrous condition than this, for an agricultural population,—especially when the latter is almost the sole contributor to the public purse,—it is impossible to conceive. Add to this, that, by the time the tax was redeemed, the ryots of India would generally be poorer by the whole of the amount paid by them to Government for its redemption. The investment would be gone, yet there would still be rent to pay for the occupation of the land."

#### ARTICLE IV.

"We must guard against its being supposed, that, in arguing for the retention of the Indian land tax, we are supporting the present conditions under which it is collected. Holding that it is in the highest degree essential that the revenues of this country should continue to be derived principally from the soil, as they have been from time immemorial; and believing that a sacrifice of those revenues to the fiscal aspirations of a few political theorists would be the wildest measure ever entertained by a Government, we maintain

that, generally speaking, a thorough reform of the present system, as under various phases it is presented in different parts of the country, is imperatively required. The tendency of things has, of late years, been towards ameliorations such as we should be glad to see immediately adopted. The state of the ryot when delivered over to the zemindar and many kinds of middlemen, has, for a length of time, been exciting the anxious attention of the authorities. It is felt that under any system which withdraws him from the eye of the European functionaries, his condition must be hopelessly miserable.

"A few hours after the appearance of our last article upon this subject, we received our copy of the 'Bengal Hurkaru' of January 12th, in which the situation of the Bengal ryot as a tenant of the zemindar—the independent owner of the soil—is forcibly and truthfully depicted. The 'Hurkaru' gives a practical illustration of the ryot in the claws of the money-lender, to whom he is driven by the oppressive exactions of the zemindar. 'The ryot is detained in custody, or his property laid under distress. The mahajun kindly undertakes to advance the money: the offer is accepted with thanks. But interest runs at a compound heavy rate, and the ryot without any addition to his means has another claimant to satisfy. The zemindar's exactions continuing the same, however, it is seldom that he can meet the mahajun's whole demand at once, and so get clear of him. The little he is able to pay at a time goes to satisfy the interest alone; the *ashul* or principal remaining nearly undiminished and the same. And so the unhappy ryot is doomed to see the fruits of his toil entirely wrested from him by others,—the mahajun claiming what the zemindar spared. Between two such millstones, of course, he is effectually ground to dust.'

"Would the state of things differ from this were the land tax, in Madras, for example, redeemed? The usurer would advance the money. The ryot would purchase the redemption of the tax and mortgage the estates for the purchase-money. The pressure of the interest would eat up all his substance. At last, when he was incapable of paying either principal or interest, the money-lender would become the possessor of the estate, either by waiving his claim to the sum advanced, (which the interest would, in all probability, have already repaid,) or by bringing his insolvent debtor into court. The land would still continue to be tilled by ryots, but they would not hold it free of tax. The rent, instead of being what under just conditions it should be, namely, moderate, as well as fixed in amount, would vary according to the avaricious propensities of an ignorant and unfeeling proprietor.

"The writer of the series of articles containing the one from which we have quoted, is so evidently a master of his subject, that it is with great satisfaction we perceive his views of reform to be coincident with our own. 'The peasant proprietor,' says he, 'is in the most desirable situation in which a cultivator can possibly be.' This view, as regards the Indian cultivator, we have long held. We feel assured that it is the condition which for a length of time will be best suited to the ryots of this country. The distinction, however, must be drawn between a peasant and a *pauper* proprietor. Nor does the definition exclude an employer, even to a large extent, of labourers. By the term a peasant proprietary, is simply to be understood that the soil is owned by persons who are engaged directly in agricultural operations. 'There is no reason,' said Munro, in his letter to Colonel Read, 'to regret that farms are small,—it is better on every account, and for general wealth. It does not produce men of great fortunes and overgrown possessions, but it *lessens the number of poor*, and raises up everywhere a crowd of men of small but independent property, who, when they are certain that they will themselves enjoy the benefit of every extraordinary exertion of labour, work with a spirit of activity which would be in vain expected from the tenants or servants of great landholders.' When we see the legislature in Bengal bringing forward a bill which secures to the under-tenants of the great landowners there a right of occupation on the soil, we cannot but feel that Sir Thomas Munro has been more truly prophetic upon this subject than he was with regard to the Indian Press. In Bengal, the system of large holdings has entirely failed, the tenants have been reduced to the extreme of misery, and the authorities have at last come to understand that, generally, there is no class of natives fit to hold, in this country, the position which is held by great proprietors in Europe.

"'We propose, accordingly,' says the writer in the '*Hurkaru*,' 'that every ryot should be vested with the freehold of his farm, subject only to an invariable tribute rent—on no account to be enhanced.' That is intended, we believe, to be the effect of Mr. Currie's Bill, which, converting as it does the zemindars, who are the present owners of the soil, into mere stipendiaries, is unquestionably a revolutionary measure. Had the Government, at the time when the present tenures in Bengal were created, been sufficiently experienced in the character of the people, such a measure would never have been rendered necessary. In Madras our system was initiated by a man who had extraordinary insight into the nature of the tenure which is required for this country. That some of his views were

erroneous cannot be denied; and that his system has not been generally adopted is certain. But he was the first who distinctly enounced that 'every ryot, as long as he pays the rent of his land, shall be considered as the complete owner of the soil, and shall be at liberty to let to a tenant without any hesitation as to rent, and to sell it as he pleases.' We shall not stop here to examine the immense evils and inconveniences which, owing not to the tenure itself but to numerous inessential conditions that grew up around it, have hitherto pressed down the ryots of Madras into the lowest depths of misery.

"Were the system described by Lord Harris in the Annual Report for the years 1855-56, existing in its integrity, it would be difficult to conceive a more favourable position for an agriculturist than that of a Madras ryot. But it is vitiated by imperfect European superintendence, by native extortion, by inquisitorial interference; in a word, by every imaginable evil that is enabled to creep into a lax and inefficient system of administration. The assessment also is much too high; and although the ryot is declared the proprietor in fee simple, there is not a word about that most essential of conditions, an assessment fixed for ever, and varying only, in its money rate, according to the average prices of produce for a certain number of preceding years. The provision that a ryot may increase or diminish his holding, is the provision of a Landlord, not of a Government collecting a tax. If the land were fairly assessed, the portion of a farm given up would be saleable. So also the additional acres taken up by the ryot.

"The true method of proceeding would be to give a legal as well as a prescriptive title to the recognised proprietor of the soil. This would operate to convert the *virtual* titles of many millions into *real* titles. The extent of the actual holdings should all over the country be accurately defined and registered. All land which was not in occupation might fairly be claimed by the Government; and this, with the tax on it, they might sell for what it would fetch. All conditions incompatible with the existence of a fee simple should be swept clean away. The absurdity of annual puttahs, and the heart-sickening interference they necessitate, should be made to disappear. The tax on the soil should be moderate and fixed for ever. Being nearly the whole amount of the rent, few, except industrious agriculturists, would be desirous to purchase the land. But it would be an evil day for the ryot if Government, holding out to him the bait of possessing the land free from tax, incited him to have recourse to the money-lender, who would be no less anxious than the ryot to become, under the new circumstances, a proprietor of the soil."

## CHAPTER IX.

TOPIC 15TH, 16TH.

*XV. Why have not British capital and enterprise invested themselves in India?—XVI. Can they be induced to do so?*

“ONE stout Englishman is as good for routing out and exposing abuses in a judge’s or collector’s court, as several hundred thousand natives,” says Sir Charles Trevelyan. The healthy influence of the Englishman’s presence is not confined to the courts. It operates like an electric shock upon every man and thing in India, with which it comes in contact. The doughty deed of the planter Venables, who retook Azimghur, has been chronicled by the author of the “Red Pamphlet.” It may stand once for all as a proof of an independent Englishman’s worth in India:—

“On arriving at Ghazeepore, it was discovered that some of the indigo-planters and the poorer class of Christians had been left behind. As it was known that the 17th Native Infantry would return to plunder the place, great anxiety was felt on their behalf by one, at least, of those who had escaped. This was Mr. Venables, an indigo-planter residing in the neighbourhood of Azimghur, a gentleman of large property and of a very high character. Fearing for the unfortunates who had been left behind, Mr. Venables endeavoured to persuade Mr. Astell, Mr. Horne, and others, to return with him. They were most unwilling, and pleaded fear of the Commissioner’s anger if they should return without his sanction. A message was instantly dispatched for that sanction; but the Commissioner, Mr. Tucker, comprehending in an instant the feeling of his subordinates, sent back a reply to the effect that ‘he had no objection to Mr. Venables going, but the Civilians were on no account to risk their lives.’

“Thus privately and officially left to himself, this noble-

hearted man determined to go alone. He started the next day, went direct to his estate at Doorie Ghat,—some two-and-twenty miles on the Goruckpore side of Azimghur,—assembled his ryots, armed them, marched at their head, and recovered Azimghur. He did more—he held it ; and whilst the apathetic Civilians had retired into Benares, and were allowed to continue to draw their immense salaries—Mr. Astell alone £250 per mensem—Mr. Venables, the indigo planter, remained at their proper station, did all their work, even collected the revenue which they ought to have collected, restored order where all was chaos ; and whilst these men were whining over the loss of their own private property, he employed himself in restoring the power and re-asserting the prestige of Government.

“ And yet he was one of those ‘adventurers’ whom the Government of India takes every opportunity of insulting. Mr. Venables held this district, reinforced only by a small detachment of native troops, for about six weeks. At the end of that time, the Civilians were most unwillingly compelled to return.”

The “Times” has asserted, with much truth, that Englishmen will seek to make their fortunes in any place in the world, even in Sierra Leone, rather than in India ; though the reasons which the same article assigns for an explanation of this undoubted and discreditable fact are fallacious in the extreme. As the introduction of Englishmen with capital in their pockets, and energy in their minds, is one of the most hopeful contingencies for the regeneration of India, nothing can be more important than to inquire why so very small a number of our countrymen, independent of the services, have hitherto sought this land as a scene of adventure and investment ; and what is required to induce immigration, and the influx of capital.

\* With regard to the settlement of Europeans in this country, it should be observed that Mr. Ewart's Committee for inquiry as to Colonization, may perhaps do more harm than good, if it should lead people away from a *real* inquiry. Colonization, in its usual acceptation, may not be possible or requisite for this country. India is not fitted for the actual European labourer. The masters of labour, with money in their pockets, are the class of persons we want, and who will make their own fortunes, and regenerate the country. They may not *colonize* in India, inasmuch as they would be but temporary sojourners here, looking to return to England when they had

All sorts of reasons have been assigned for the paucity of European settlers in the interior. After one hundred years of rule, India can scarcely boast of four thousand temporary European settlers, while Australia, in fifty years, has afforded an outlet for nearly a million of our surplus population. Sir George Clerk, before the House of Lords' Committee, thinks that the European race must necessarily deteriorate, even on the hills, in the course of three generations. But this objection is purely hypothetical; the possible condition of their grand-children would certainly not operate as a check of any force upon persons desirous to emigrate; and though colonization is highly desirable, an influx of Europeans who intended to leave the country when they had made their money, is sufficient for our purpose. Sir J. C. Melville, before the same Committee, gives a different account, and one of a very peculiar nature. He admits that there are not more colonists now than there were fifty years ago; but attributes this partly to the dense population of India, as though there were no room for settlers! "It is not like Australia or America, where there is plenty of vacant space for foreigners; there is a dense population in many parts of India." And in many parts for fifty miles at a stretch, there is no population at all, as he who travels by our railroad across the plains of the Carnatic can vouch. Constantly have I heard travellers, looking across the vast and arid tracts, ask, in wonderment, Where does the revenue come from? But Sir James has never been in India; he has not therefore enjoyed the advantage of travelling about the country in a bullock cart, and he forgot the officially recorded fact that only one-fifth of the enormous Presidency of Madras is under cultivation. The fact is that gold is lying on the surface of India, far more readily attainable than in Australia and California. The climate, no doubt, must ever operate to a considerable extent against the colonization of India,\* though the effects and disagreeableness of

amassed a competency; though some of them might remain, and their descendants become naturalized. It is the investment of British capital, under the immediate direction of British owners, that we want: and the causes which will tell against *this* I have endeavoured to explain.

\* To this may be added, the vast distance and expense of the voyage between India and England. When we look back upon the old times, when a ship scarcely



the climate have been highly exaggerated: but the indigo, the oil-seeds, the sugar, the cotton of her plains; the coffee, the timber, the other products of her hills, are quite sufficient to tempt the influx of capital, if there were not other considerations which scare men away. The true prohibitions and restrictions to European colonization, are to be sought for in totally other directions. It is the wretched administration of civil justice, which makes it a rash enterprise to enter into any contract in the Mofussil; the revenue "system," which, in the official language of the Court of Directors, makes farming a "wild speculation;" the wretched state of the police, which, so far from affording protection to life and property, is one of the greatest dangers, and a standing menace to both; it is to the impossibility which every man finds of standing alone upon his own integrity and ability in the Mofussil, the thousand-and-one plagues, lets, hindrances, obstacles, pit-falls, which beset him with ruin on every side, the moment he falls into the evil graces of any member of the civil service, revenue or judicial; it is the impossibility of procuring any valid, enduring, satisfactory title to land, which will make it prudent to sink money in its improvement; it is the want of roads and the absence of a magistracy, and a good law of master and servant; it is the jealousy of Government, which still regards men as "interlopers;" these are the causes which prevent the influx of European capital and

reached her port under six months, and a reply to a letter could not be looked for under a year; and compare the present days with those, the difference seems marvellous. Our rapid communications, four times a month,—the voyage being performed in about 28 days; our weekly post; the future electric telegraph, which will transmit a message to England in an hour, are all so many inducements to the Englishman to visit India. But the charges of that great monopoly, the Peninsular and Oriental Company, are still so preposterously exorbitant, as to make us sigh for a cheap Yankee opposition; while an ocean penny postage should be agitated by the Indian reformer, with the same view of bringing India and England close as the Symplegades. Lord William Bentinck, that noblest-hearted Englishman that ever set foot in India, strongly advocated steam, as the means by which "the natives of India, in person, could be enabled to bring their complaints and grievances before the authorities and the country," and by which "disinterested travellers (Mr. Danby Seymour is the only one I can call to mind,) would have it in their power to report to their country at home, the nature and circumstances of this distant portion of the Empire." The result he trusted would be "to rouse the shameful apathy and indifference of Great Britain to the concerns of India."

enterprise into India. I give two specimens taken from the "Dacca News," of the sort of difficulties with which a settler will have to contend in India. They will frighten the boldest heart.

#### BRIBERY.

(From the "Dacca News," Jan. 16.)

"We have spent very large sums of money in bribery in this country. From first to last, we believe that we have spent as much in bribery as would amount to a small competency, on which we might have gone home; but if we had not done so, we should neither have been able to remain in the country, nor should we have had enough wherewith to pay our passage home,—to land, a pauper, in England. There is scarcely an official in India we have not bribed. The European officials boast that they do not take bribes. We deny it. They surround themselves by a set of most miserably paid public servants, commonly known as *omlah*, to whom many of them willingly surrender themselves completely, but to whom all must necessarily surrender a great deal of power, and this power is by them turned into money. The inadequacy of their pay is a great cause of their taking bribes. If they had higher pay many of them would not do so. It is therefore to the State's profit that must be carried the sums paid in bribery, for if it were not for these sums, they would have to pay higher salaries to their servants. But the revenue of the State amounting only to a certain sum, the consequence of paying the native servants more highly would be, that the salaries of the Europeans must be reduced. If, for instance, there are four European servants and twenty native in a district, giving 5000 rupees, say, of revenue monthly, the Europeans agree to divide 4800 rupees among themselves, leaving 200 rupees for the natives. But the natives cannot live on this, so bribery is winked at. We pay bribes in order that the Europeans may enjoy higher salaries. Our bribes go indirectly into their pocket. Do we not, then, bribe the European officials? Bribery in India is not always to be understood to mean the paying of a sum of money to cause an official to do that which is wrong. We are called upon to pay him if he does merely that which is right. A *darogah* often makes both parties deposit a sum of money before he proceeds to an investigation, and keeps that belonging to the party in whose favour he decides. We have often spoken to the English officials themselves upon this subject, and have been blamed by them for having given bribes. They say, "Why do you not come to us yourself and state the facts, and what you want to be done?" When we were in our green youth we did so, and perhaps gained a single case by doing so, but we rendered the whole of the *omlah* our enemies, and at last, without our knowing why, our Civil Servant friend began to wax cold towards us. Every case was given against us. False complaints, so easy to originate in this country, where a false witness may be hired for two annas (three-pence), because there is seldom a conviction for perjury,—false complaints used to arise in which our Civilian invariably punished us or our servants. That miserable system of *thannah* reports, where the *darogah* daily reports secretly to the head of the police, who is also the Magistrate, and whom Mr. Halliday wishes to make Collector as well, had done its work. Soft water wears the hard stone. The Magistrate was unable to resist the daily insinuations against us which we had no means of refuting, because we did not know they were made. He became suspicious of us, and so we lost our cases, till our own servants, wiser than we were, came to us and said, "Sir, you will never gain cases, and the *Sahib's misaj* (temper—disposition) will never be turned towards you, till you bribe the *omlah*. They are all related to one another, and all bound

The first article caused the "Dacca News" to be warned. Everything which proceeds from the pen of the editor of that journal upon this topic is worthy of the most attentive perusal.

by one common interest. They cannot allow that one, however intimate he may be with the Saheb, should escape paying them their due." We were very loath to believe this. We fought hard against it, but we found that native perseverance, native daily-repeated insinuations, and the prejudice that exists in every Civilian's mind against interlopers, was too strong, and we had invariably to give in.—We did not do so without complaining to the men themselves, whose omrah we bribed.

"We have been asked why we did not resist all this. If we had been acting for ourselves we might, perhaps, have felt moved to become a martyr, but as an agent for others we did not see our way so clearly. We were once sent to take charge of an estate which had been very much mismanaged—the native managers who preceded us having permitted encroachments on every side. The estate was seventy miles distant from the nearest magistrate. There was a rumour that a magistrate had once visited it, but grave doubts were thrown upon this tradition. At any rate, when we went there, the memory of it existed only among the very oldest inhabitants. We had reason to apprehend that a number of armed men would be sent to oppose our ryots cutting their rice crops in a certain village. We applied to the thannah for a burkindaz to protect them. It turned out that our apprehensions were groundless. Our ryots cut the rice, and no one opposed them. The burkindaz, whose daily wages we had paid, on his return to the thannah, passed our cutcherry and asked for a present. It was not much, only five rupees, but we had then determined to keep back our hand from all bribery, and to keep ourselves pure from corruption. We refused the five rupees, contrary to the advice of all the old native servants of the estate. We declared we would not give in to native ways. We asked what this burkindaz could do to us. He could only report that what we had apprehended had not taken place, that there were no armed men to oppose our ryots, who had cut their crops in peace. We were very green. When the burkindaz returned to the thannah, he reported that he had gone out as directed to protect our ryots from oppression, but on arriving at the spot, he discovered that, so far from our being the oppressed, we were the actual oppressor, for we had assembled a large force armed, not in the usual Bengalee way with spears, but with muskets—and that on seeing him, the musket-men had fled, and that he had pursued; but being unable to come up with them, he had not seized any of them, nor could he produce a musket in proof of the truth of his story, but, with his report, he handed in some powder and balls which had been dropped by them in their flight. On hearing of this report we were in great consternation. We knew that if it were forwarded to the magistrate, he would require our personal attendance to answer to such serious charges. It was the season of the year when about 20,000 rupees were collected from the ryots, chiefly by the process of attaching their crops while still on the ground. If a week or a fortnight's absence were enforced upon us, the crops would be cut, and the money would be for the most part lost. What were we to do? A kind angel whispered to us, that if we paid the darogah 50 rupees, he would suppress the burkindaz's report. We did so, and registered a mental vow never to refuse a bribe when demanded from us again. From that day to this we have steadily bribed, never refusing to give anything at all, but trying merely how much we could beat down the amount.

"What has caused us to call the public attention to bribery at present, is the

He is indeed a most invaluable witness ; and in the event of any further inquiry into the condition of India, his personal testimony should be secured at any cost. He probably knows more of the

circumstance that several influential zemindars have called upon us, to state that the bribery and extortion exercised by the revenue survey people, in the Dacca district where they are present, is something infinitely beyond what they have been accustomed to submit to. They actually cry out against it, which shows that it must be very severe, for the amount that a Bengalee will allow to be officially squeezed out of him, without his making an outcry, is very great. One thing is very much complained of, which is this :—A village belongs to A. B has a small talook, that is a defined portion of the land of the village, included in its boundary. A does not deny B's proprietary right in the share of the village he claims. There is no dispute between A and B. But, under late rules, as we understand, the Ameen may not mark out B's share without a reference to the Deputy Collector. The Deputy Collector refers it to one of his Peshkars, and it is of these Peshkars that it is complained that they will do nothing unless most highly bribed by either party or by both. In all the Courts of the East India Company it is admitted, that the person who writes down the evidence of a witness, which is seldom or never taken in the hearing of a judge or magistrate, must be paid a certain sum in order to induce him to write down what is actually said by the witness, or, in many cases, to give a different turn to what has been said by them. The sum demanded for this purpose in the Magistrate's Court in Dacca, is quoted at from eight annas to one rupee. No revenue survey Peshkar will look at anything less than two rupees for each witness. The Peshkars declare openly that they cannot live upon 40 rupees a-month, and they make their bargains with the unfortunates who have to deal with them within earshot of the Deputy Collectors, whom we can neither accuse of taking bribes, nor of sharing in the illegal gains of their subordinates. But the Deputy Collectors will not interfere to prevent their subordinates taking bribes. When they were in the lower ranks, they were themselves guilty of the same crime, and do not feel themselves called upon to deprive those who may rise to the rank they now hold, from participating in the advantages which they themselves had. No Bengalee is interested in the reputation of his office for purity. It is enough that he himself is pure. One of the few darogahs we have known who never took a bribe, was an old Up-country Mahommedan, who spent his days in prayer, and who was, in consequence, useless as a darogah ; for no row, however great,—no murder, however atrocious, would prevent his retiring when the hour of prayer came, which it did five times a day. We were never more fleeced than under this darogah. He surrendered all his power and influence into the hands of a sharp little Hindoo Mohurrer, who, undeterred by the responsibility of himself holding the office of darogah, was the most extortionate little wretch we ever knew. It was useless appealing to the darogah himself. The only answer we got was, " God is great, and Mahomed is his Prophet." It was useless appealing to the Magistrate, for who ever convicted a darogah or his subordinates of bribery ? The Company's servants will scarcely listen to such an accusation. They may acknowledge that it is probably true, but they will say—if we are to convict all our servants who are guilty of bribery, we shall have none left, and rather than move those *quieta*, they permit bribery, as they have done perjury and forgery, to remain among the offences which are unpunished by their courts. But to return to the revenue survey. We are informed that there is not an Ameen that does not

working of the courts, of the land tenure system, of the doings of the police, than any other man in India. He has been agent for extensive estates, and has himself, as he informs us, uniformly practised those acts which alone give the Englishman a chance of holding his own in this country; he has had as many as ninety-two lawsuits at one time; he is the manager of the Dacca Bank, and has established his talented journal, because he found that he could not obtain a hearing for his complaints and exposures in the English newspapers, by which his communications were systematically burked. With this introduction, I shall make no further apology for introducing lengthy extracts from this writer; for the reader will not have to peruse the mere opinions of a journalist, but will be confronting a personal eye-witness and actor in the very scenes which he describes.\*

demand eight annas a-day as his *bassah kureh*, that is, expense of lodging. These functionaries make, we have been informed, from 700 to 800 rupees each, during the six months they are in the Mofussil. A fellow-lodger of one of them informed us, that an Ameen married himself and his brother on the profits of one season. Those who know that the two great expenses of a Bengalee's life are his marriage and his death, and that the saving of a penurious life are expended at those two periods, will be able to form an idea of how great the profit must have been, when a man was able to marry not only himself but his brother in six months. The same man informed us, that the measurement of a Talook, paying a revenue to Government of 9 rupees, cost 27 rupees in bribes. The enormity of these extortions have caused numbers of Bengalees to come to us. They complain not of the illegal fees, as we may term the black mail levied in the Commissioner's, Judge's, Magistrate's, Assistant Magistrate's, Collector's, Deputy Collector's, Principal Sudder Ameen's, Sudder Ameen's, Moonsiff's, Register of Deeds' offices, with a multitude of others. They complain not that in every instance where they come in contact with the East India Company, whether it be that they seek the Company, or the Company requires from them boats, coolies, hackeries, returns of crops, returns of population, information or statistics of any kind, they complain not that they have to bribe. What they complain of is, the inordinate amount extorted from them by the revenue survey.

"This article has already run to too great a length, or we might explain the absolute necessity of bribery, arising from the close connection existing not only between the omrah of a particular district, but of all the omrah in Bengal. They as invariably come from Bickrampore in the Dacca district, as our sepoy army came from Oude. But we must stop here for the present at least."

\* Let us now examine the same witness as to a different kind of difficulty with which the Englishman has to contend:—

#### THE TENURE OF LAND BY EUROPEANS IN INDIA.

(From the "Dacca News.")

"Mr. Ewart has moved in the House of Commons for a return showing on what tenure land is allowed to be held by Europeans in India, whether in fee simple, for

Hitherto the witnesses have mostly been for the Company, retired Civilians, old Army Officers, &c. ; now we are beginning

life or lives, or for years ; and if so, for what terms of years, and whether renewable on payment of fines or otherwise. As we may expect that the Court of Directors, which first denied that it had received a copy of Mr. Halliday's Police minute, and then furnished, as the Police minute, a minute which was not the Police minute,—as we may expect that Court to give a false return to Mr. Ewart's motion, we shall give a return of our own, as to the terms on which Europeans hold land in the perpetually settled districts. But before doing so, we would remind our readers, that the perpetual settlement is a bargain entered into between Lord Cornwallis on the part of the British Government, and for which he staked the good faith of England—not of the Court of Directors, or the 'Company Bahadoor,' for that is *nil*—and the landholders, that as long as they paid a certain rent to the Government, they were to enjoy in perpetuity the possession of the lands contained within certain boundaries, specified in the books compiled at the time of the settlement by the various Collectors, and which had been sanctioned with regard to each particular district by the Government. This is the theory of the perpetual settlement. The practice has been very different, especially with regard to Europeans, who, about twenty years ago, were allowed to hold land on the same terms as natives. The practice is as follows :—

“ A European is allowed to hold lands as long as these lands do not excite the conspicuousness of the Government of the East India Company, administered by a Civil Service, whose salaries depend upon the amount of revenue that can be realised, *per fas aut nefas*, from the country. Example : Mr. George Lamb, a gentleman well known for many years in the Dacca district, purchased an estate, called Chur Doopooriah, paying, under the aforesaid perpetual settlement, a rent to Government of 290 odd rupees. By the encroachment of a large and rapid river, the whole of this estate was carried away. Mr. Lamb, aware, from long observation, of the oscillations of the rivers in Bengal, that the land would re-form, continued to fulfil his part of the bargain entered into with the Government—that is, to pay the revenues during eight or ten years while the estate in question formed a part of the bed of the river, which is from four to five miles broad. He, of course, expected that, when the river retired, he would be allowed to take possession of the lands re-formed. There is a law, however, in connection with the settlement, which states, that if an island is thrown up in the channel of a navigable river, it becomes the property of the Government ; and this law is perfectly just, for it pre-supposes the drying up of the river—a circumstance of frequent occurrence in Bengal—and the formation of land on a spot which *had not been included in the perpetual settlement, as there was no land existing there at that time*. There is, also, another law very useful in preventing disputes, which is to the effect, that lands which are formed by the retiring of rivers from one bank, and their encroachment on the other, are to belong to the proprietor on whose lands they form. In the case before us, when the river was retiring, the Government, in the first place, took possession of the dry land which first appeared, as an island ; and then of all the lands successively emerging from the river, as formations on to the island, the property of Government. Mr. Lamb, up to the present date, hoping against hope, that justice may be done to him, pays the perpetual settlement revenue for Chur Doopooriah, though he is not in possession, nor has had, for the last twelve or fourteen years, a single bigah of land belonging to this estate. The Collector receives the rents without a murmur, though, we believe, the Commissioner of revenue has ordered him