

indeed, next to impossible to preserve it from the vices of the zemindary system; and the single advantage to be placed against this very serious disadvantage is the upholding the general system of village association. Another advantage has, indeed, been claimed for it, the collection of the revenue at a trifling expense; but it is surely better to incur some increase of expense, in order to ensure a due apportionment of the general burden, and to protect the poorer and weaker members of the community from being oppressed by the richer and stronger. If Government puts the individual ryots out of the pale of its protection, and recognizes only communities or the heads of communities, it is almost impossible but that the weak should, in many instances, receive injustice at the hands of the strong. The head of a community must occasionally have the opportunity of advancing his own interests at the expense of those of his fellow members, and it cannot be doubted that he will very frequently have the will. Even where all the cultivators in a village are parties to the contract with Government, justice cannot be regarded as secured, for communities often act with gross injustice towards individual members. In Delhi the representative of the village is chosen by the inhabitants; and though this may be viewed as a safeguard, it requires more knowledge than we possess, as to the

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the mode of election and various other points, to enable us to say with confidence that jobbing is excluded, and that by this system of collection every man pays his share, and no man pays more. These observations, of course, apply only to the introduction of the village system as a general one. There may be instances where the habits of the people are so associated with it, and run so strongly in its favour, that it would be in the highest degree unwise to substitute any other. Where it already exists and works well, there it may and ought to be preserved. But it should be fully ascertained that the report of its good operation does not proceed exclusively from those who have a special interest in upholding it. The most judicious advocates of the plan propose to combine with it an individual assessment, which is, in fact, to graft it upon the ryotwar system. But the only effect of superinducing the village upon the ryotwar plan would seem to be, to ensure a just assessment, but to leave to chance the realization of a just payment. The village records, indeed, if properly kept, would afford evidence of what ought to be paid; but it is difficult to see why an aggrieved ryot should be compelled to have recourse either to a court of law or to a collector for redress, when, by the adoption of a simpler and more efficient mode of revenue administration, he might be spared the necessity of appealing to either.

either. The village institutions are most valuable, forming, as it were, the frame-work of the social system; but, except in particular cases, it will be better to place the revenue under the immediate care of the state and its servants. It is to be lamented, that in matters of taxation the consciences of men are seldom very delicate: every man endeavours to shift as much of the burden as possible from his own shoulders to those of his neighbour. It cannot be doubted that this feeling exists in India quite as strongly as in the rest of the world; and it seems reasonable that men should not be left to decide for one another where the danger of deciding unjustly is so great, but that the state should relieve them from this hazardous responsibility, and preserve to itself a power which, as between one subject and another, it has no temptation to abuse.

The great principle to be observed in any mode of settlement is, to offer as little violence as possible to the habits and feelings of the people. Wherever these do not stand in the way—wherever there is room for the exercise of a free choice, there can be no doubt at all that the ryotwar system is that which is best calculated to secure the cultivator from oppression—best calculated to promote industry, order, and independence—best calculated to advance the general prosperity of the country, and best calculated to protect the pecuniary inter-

rests of the Government. That it is generally most consonant to the feelings of the people, is certain. Mr. Sullivan relates an instance which occurred in the province of Coimbatore. The principal native officer on his establishment was rewarded for his services by a grant of revenue. The revenue had previously been paid with the utmost punctuality; but upon the grant being made to this man, the people stopped payment. The man on whom the grant had been bestowed appealed to Mr. Sullivan for assistance, to realize his claim. His interference produced an explanation of the cause of non-payment, which, it appeared, was not attributable to inability, or to any personal dislike to the individual who had obtained the grant, but solely to the aversion which the people felt to pay the Government demand through any intermediate channel. On being spoken to by Mr. Sullivan, they complained of the hardship and disgrace to which they had been subjected, in being deprived of their right to pay their revenue direct to the Government officer.

It is equally certain that the ryotwar system is the only one by which all individual rights can be protected—indeed the only one by which they can be ascertained. And thus, unless a portion of the rights of the people—probably the most valuable rights of the most valuable class of the people,

people, are to be regarded as unworthy of notice, a ryotwar settlement must be the basis of any other. Mr. Hill's observations upon this subject are much to the purpose; of course, the settlement of which he speaks is such a one as it would become a just and upright government to make. He says: "You can no more form a zemindary settlement without a ryotwar one, than you can write a correct hand without spelling, although in either case you may be unconscious of the subsidiary operation. The ryotwar settlement is an essential part of the zemindary one. If the officers of the Government do not make settlements with the ryots, the zemindar must; and therefore the objections that are taken against a ryotwar settlement will not be obviated by the substitution of the other, except in as far as those objections apply to the ryotwar settlement being executed by the officers of Government."

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ascertained and recognized. By this, all the labour and expense which by some are regarded as constituting formidable objections to the ryotwar system, are incurred in the first instance, while the benefits to be derived from them are placed in danger. The contractor may respect these rights, if he is disposed (though a conscientious contractor in India is not an every-day character), or if the holders of the rights have the means of compelling him and the inclination to use them. But why should acknowledged rights be enjoyed upon so fragile a tenure? Why, after so much time and labour have been spent in inquiring into them, should they not be placed under the immediate protection of the Government? The third course, therefore, is the only one by which the full advantages of the inquiry can be obtained—that which makes the ryotwar system, not a part of the plan adopted by Government but the whole of it; and this is the more simple, as well as the more efficacious method. It is clear, however, that when any other system is forced upon us by custom, prejudice, or any other cause, the ryotwar method must still enter into it, unless we are willing to incur the hazard of inflicting gross injustice.

The ryotwar system is the ancient one of a large part of India. Col. John Munro gives an account of it as he found it existing in Travancore, which shews its correspondence with that prevailing in the

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the Company's territories. In that province it appears that a survey was made many years ago, which is the foundation of the assessment of the land revenue. Every ten or twelve years a fresh survey took place, in which alterations were made, according to the lands brought into cultivation, or those fallen into disuse. The original survey comprehended the whole of the country, whether cultivated or waste; the occasional surveys took cognizance of the cultivated lands only. Every field which yielded revenue was inserted in the survey with the name of its proprietor. It appears that a variety of tenures existed, but that no difficulties arose from this source. At the commencement of every year, an account was opened with every individual ryot; the lands he held, with their assessments, were entered, and the several payments which he made in the course of the year were also noted down, and receipts given for them. The beneficial effects of the system were, in a considerable degree, frustrated by the extreme corruption of the officers engaged in carrying it into effect. Colonel Munro says, "The system of the revenue management was so exceedingly defective, and the revenue servants were so very corrupt, that large balances of land revenue stood almost always in the accounts against the several districts, although, on examination, it was found that the ryots or the inhabitants had generally

generally paid up their rents with punctuality." With that mixture of indolence and rapacity which universally characterizes native governments, the officers appear to have been suffered to enjoy the fruits of their dishonesty for a time—but only for a time: when the Rajah's government found itself at a loss for funds, instead of demanding accounts from its unprincipled servants, it had recourse to a more ready expedient; some pretext was devised for the general confiscation of the property of these persons—an expedient which, like the zemindary system, saved trouble. No sound opinion can, of course, be formed from the practical working of any system under such a government. But from peculiar circumstances, it became necessary for the resident, Colonel Munro, to assume the direction of the internal administration, when he took the opportunity of introducing such changes as were necessary in the various departments of government; after which, the land revenue was materially improved, and the assessment generally punctually paid.

In some parts of the territories under the Bombay presidency, a modified form of the ryotwar system is adopted. The collector settles the demand against each ryot; but the collection of it is vested in the pottail or head of the village. In other parts the ryotwar system exists in its pure form. It was objected by a witness before the  
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Committee of the House of Commons in 1832, that this system was subject to two disadvantages; that "it enables the cultivator to conceal lands under cultivation without the risk of his neighbour informing against him;" and that "it enables him also, in case the Government officers are disposed to fraud, in collusion with them to diminish the revenue." These two objections are substantially one. A cultivator may, in some cases, evade the payment of a part of that which he ought to pay. This is an objection which will apply to almost every mode which human ingenuity can devise for the collection of any tax. Taxes have always been more or less evaded, and always will be. Under the zemindary system—under any system by which revenue is farmed, there may perhaps be less evasion than when it is collected by the immediate agents of Government. *The chance of evading payment may be small, when the private interest of an individual is operating to quicken his vigilance in detecting the evasion.* But the advantage here will be a private and not a public one. Payment will be enforced, but not for the benefit of the Government. That portion of the revenue which, in ordinary circumstances, would be withheld by the person liable to its payment, will, under a system of farming, be extracted from him only to be deposited in the pocket of the contractor; and it

it must be a matter of the most perfect indifference to the state, whether the sums which it ought to realize but does not, are withheld in the first instance, or whether they are intercepted in any intermediate stage. But under a vigilant and well-regulated system of revenue management, the amount lost by evasion need not be large. If care and attention be withdrawn, no system will work effectually; but if these be not wanting, that system which is least harassing to the cultivators who have to pay, will be found quite as productive as any other to the Government which has to receive.

Under the Bengal presidency, a detailed ryotwar system has been tried in Boglepore. It was introduced in consequence of abuses arising out of the zemindary system. It was effected under the superintendence of Mr. Ward, who was deputed to that district to repress the encroachments of zemindars on lands to which they had no just claim. It is represented that Mr. Ward's arrangements have been attended with good results, and have afforded great satisfaction to the people.

But it is perhaps under the Madras presidency that the effects of the ryotwar settlement can be most justly appreciated. Between the years 1792 and 1801, we obtained from various sovereigns a vast accession of territory in this quarter.

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We here found the ryotwar system established, and it does not appear that any other was ever known. The cultivators paid their contributions immediately into the treasury of the state, without the intervention of middle men of any kind. A part of the new territory was placed under the charge of Colonel Read. The system pursued by him proceeded upon the following principles; a settlement with each individual cultivator—the reservation to Government of the right to any increase of revenue derivable from the extension of cultivation to the waste—the fixing and recording a specific sum as *the maximum* payable on each field and each tract of unoccupied land, and where the revenue was payable in kind, the commutation into a money assessment. The surveys necessary to carry this plan into operation were executed with various degrees of care and ability, but nowhere were they so systematically and ably conducted as in the ceded districts under the superintendence of Sir Thomas Munro. The opportunity, however, of forming a judgment of the merits of the plan from actual experience, was in a great measure lost by the determination of the Government to adopt a different one, which for some reasons was supposed to be more in accordance with the judicial system then recently introduced. In consequence the ryotwar mode of settlement was abolished, except in a few districts,

tricts, and the village system substituted. It has been already seen that this entirely failed; the effect was only to introduce a zemindary system under another name, and the fate of the experiment was quickly sealed by the ruin which it occasioned. The Home Government urged the abandonment of a plan which was as much at variance with the interests of the revenue as of the community, and as soon as circumstances would admit, the local government complied. In some instances the village settlements were annulled as based in fraud; in others there had not been time to introduce them, and after a few years they every where came to a natural termination, by the expiration of the term for which they were granted. The ryotwar system was in consequence reverted to, and in the arrangements made for carrying it into effect, care was taken to guard against any errors that might formerly have been committed. The present form of the ryotwar settlement under the Madras presidency may be regarded as a modified one, inasmuch as the potal, or head of the village, is employed in its collection. The following account of the practical working of the plan will be acceptable to those who take an interest in the subject.

“ In the spring of each year, every native collector, of whom there are generally ten or twelve under the European officer in charge of a large province,

province, makes the circuit of his district, to ascertain the fields which are occupied, and the individual holding the highest tenure in each. He then allows the poorer ryots to relinquish any fields they may not desire longer to retain, and grants these or other unoccupied or waste fields, to such other ryots as desire newly to extend their cultivation.

“ The settlement itself is not begun by the European collector until towards the harvest, when the native collector of each district, with his district accountant, is in the first instance summoned to meet him. The records of the district accountant shew the result of the native collector's previous circuit through the villages of his district. The quantity of land in each village, with its assessment, is ascertained ; that portion of it which the ryots have agreed to cultivate is distinguished from the rest, and the reduced field survey assessment on it, after the usual deductions in favour of those who have the revenue alienated to them, or remitted in their favour, forms the native collector's estimate of the probable settlement of the land revenue for the season. He then affords personal explanations as to the general state of the several villages in his district, and the local causes of those changes which are observable in the accounts compared with those of former years.

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“ This preliminary having been completed, the village accountants are next summoned to attend the European collector. Their more detailed accounts shew how far the several ryots have completed the engagements into which they have entered with the native collector, and what fields of the land agreed to be cultivated have been left waste. The causes of these alterations are minutely investigated and explained, and the records of the village accountants are checked by information obtained from their competitors or other sources.

“ The collector’s native establishment then prepare from their data a separate account for every individual ryot, specifying the name of each field, whether irrigated, unirrigated, or garden-land, cultivated by him, or at his risk and charge, its number in the survey accounts, and its assessments, with the alienations, or remissions (if any) in his favour. This account also exhibits the ryot’s stock, the number of his cattle, sheep, &c. ; that also of the persons of his family, male or female, the extent of land exempted from revenue cultivated by him, invariably on very easy terms ; and his actual payments to the Government for many years past. These, which are called the rough ryotwar accounts, form the basis of the European collector’s final settlement ; and when any discussion arises with a particular ryot,

ryot, they enable the collector to decide the point at issue without delay, for they contain, in fact, a summary revenue history of each individual contributor.

“ These accounts having been prepared for each ryot, the whole of the cultivators themselves, in eight or ten villages, are ultimately summoned at the same time to the collector’s presence. Here the account of each man, and the deductions (if any) made in his favour, are compared in detail with his own personal information by the collector’s native establishment: any items in it to which objections are started, are examined, discussed, and if erroneous corrected. It is here that the frauds of the village accountants are detected, by the envy, jealousy, or honesty of one ryot pointing out the favours improperly granted to his neighbour. The objections of the ryots, if ill founded, are overruled by the explanations of the head of the village, the village accountant, or the other cultivators in the same village, or by the exhortations of the inhabitants of the neighbouring villages also present; for these persons never hesitate voluntarily to interfere, and to reprimand such as start unfounded objections; and a ryot who obstinately demurs for hours to the laboured and authoritative reasoning of the collector’s native establishment, will often give way at once to the voluntary arguments of his fellows,  
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whose explanations are perhaps better adapted to his capacity, and whose opinion being more disinterested, no doubt carries with it more weight. But if the ryot's objections are valid, he always persists in appealing to the collector himself. The details of every ryotwar settlement must devolve on the native servants. The presence of the European officer is, no doubt, useful to superintend the whole; but it is chiefly requisite, in order to afford, on the spot, to every discontented ryot, this facility of instant access and immediate appeals, which affords the best check against either fraud or oppression in the course of the settlement. The collector, if a judicious revenue officer, seldom has occasion to decide such questions himself; he soon learns to distinguish amongst the ryots assembled, which are those universally respected throughout the country for their good conduct, impartiality, and sound sense; and his call upon them for an opinion, invariably given publicly without any previous preparation, whilst it silences all complaint, relieves the officer of the Government from the odium of deciding questions in which its interests may often be involved.

“All discussions with the ryots having thus been terminated, the puttah or lease, and its counterpart, are drawn out, and the former having been sealed by the collector, the whole of the ryots in each village are called before him. Every man  
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here separately exchanges engagements with the Government, to the number of 60,000 or 70,000 in some provinces, and receives from the European collector's own hands his lease, accompanied by the betel leaf, &c., the usual seal of all native compacts. If any ryot still objects to the terms of his lease, he declines to receive it, and the grounds of his objection are here formally discussed, and finally decided by the collector in open public audience.

“In each village its head or potal, the chief of the police, is also invariably the village collector on account of Government. He realizes from each individual ryot the amount of the government revenue as the instalments fall due, and remits it to the native collector of the district, also vested with magisterial powers similar to those of a justice of the peace, whence it is forwarded to the European collector, uniting in his person the superintendence of both the revenue and police departments over the entire province.”

Such is the mode of proceeding adopted in those parts of the territories under the Madras presidency subject to the ryotwar system, and it appears to possess many advantages. Among the most important may be reckoned the intercourse which it ensures between the European servant of the Government and the contributors to the revenue, and the publicity which attends this intercourse.

course. It may be doubted, however, whether there may not be danger, that deference to the individual opinion of natives may be carried somewhat too far. The points which arise for determination must, indeed, generally be such as a stranger in the country, however acute, accomplished, and laborious, must be less competent to decide than natives, if integrity be secured; but the state of Indian society is so universally corrupt, that it can be scarcely possible to obtain an honest opinion, even where there is no apparent motive to dishonesty. At the same time, it is not possible to devise a system better calculated to elicit the truth than to hear all that can be said; but the collector, after all, should not attach too much importance to the testimony or the opinion of any individual, but exercise his discrimination, in endeavouring to extract the truth from the discordant statements with which he is assailed.

The ryotwar system is applicable to any part of India where custom, prejudice, or positive law does not exclude it. Where different tenures exist, the settlement should be made with the holder of the highest, but he should be required to produce satisfactory evidence of his right. Where lands are cultivated by several ryots in common, on equal joint co-tenure, the names of all should be inserted in the lease, and the share held

held by each distinctly specified. The claims upon the revenue itself can occasion no difficulty, except in ascertaining them. When ascertained, if the claim be to a partial remission, it will be admitted in the settlement; if to a total exemption, there will be no occasion for any settlement at all.

The objections which have been urged against the ryotwar system are principally two: that it subverts the established order of society by reducing all classes to the lowest level, and that it is more expensive than any other system for the administration of the land revenue. The first is obviously groundless. The system recognizes all existing rights, and protects them all in their proper order. It does not, like the zemindary system, create rights which never existed, and sacrifice all old rights to the new. The highest tenant of the Government, whoever he may be, and by whatever name distinguished, is admitted to settlement; and if there are a number holding equal rights in common, they are all admitted. So far, therefore, from subverting the established order of society, the system preserves every man in his proper place; and instead of levelling, it upholds all distinctions which it finds in existence.

The objection, based on the alleged increase of expense, is more plausible, but equally fallacious. Under the ryotwar system, the expense of realizing the  
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the revenue stands prominently forward, without disguise or concealment. Under the zemindary and village systems, the actual sacrifice on the part of Government is placed out of sight. In the Bengal settlement the Government supposed that it was paying for the collection of the revenue about ten or fifteen per cent. It is now actually paying about one hundred per cent. ; and though a portion of this is undoubtedly derived from extortion, yet some considerable part might, under a better system, have been appropriated by Government without doing wrong to the cultivators. Under the zemindary system the *net* amount, after these monstrous deductions, appears as the *gross* amount of the land revenue, and the trifling sum necessary for the remaining establishments of Government appears as the entire charge of collection. The village system, in proportion as it approaches the zemindary, partakes of its evils and its fallacies. Whereas, by the ryotwar settlement, while the entire sum raised from the land appears as revenue, the amount is subject to the deduction of the entire expense of collection, which appears as undisguised as that on which it is a charge. To compare systems so different, in the sweeping manner in which the comparison is sometimes made, is obviously most unfair. Mr. Lewin, whose experience referred to Malabar and Canara, in answer to the question, “ Is the collection of the  
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the revenue, under the ryotwar system, very expensive in detail?" answered, "No, I think not; very cheap, I should imagine. I believe it is calculated at five per cent., or not even so much; but it would be extremely difficult to make a correct calculation, because the revenue officers and the police officers perform the same duty." This calculation may not, in all cases, be borne out by fact; but if the charges exceed five per cent., there is no reason to believe that they reach the *estimated* zemindary profit of fifteen per cent., and it is beyond the possibility of doubt, that they cannot be placed in comparison with the *actual* zemindary profit of a hundred per cent. If the two systems are to be compared in point of expense, they ought to be compared fairly; and if they are, the overwhelming advantages of the ryotwar settlement will be evident. Yet, after all, the question of expense is a secondary one: it is subordinate to those which refer to the maintenance of ancient rights, the promotion of general prosperity, and the securing justice to all, by constant and vigilant European superintendence. If the expense of the ryotwar system were somewhat greater than that of the zemindary, instead of being almost incredibly less, it would still deserve to be preferred, on account of its beneficial effects.

Of all the modes of realizing a revenue from land, the ryotwar is the best, and land must doubtlessly

continue to be the great source of revenue in India. A good deal of discussion has taken place on the nature of the Government claim upon the land—whether it ought to be regarded in the character of a rent or of a tax. The question is not perhaps of any great importance—certainly of no practical importance. Political economists may split hairs in determining the precise limit between two payments, the effects of which upon the payer are precisely similar; but though their intellectual ingenuity may be highly gratifying to themselves, the probability of its being beneficial to mankind is small indeed. The claim of Government upon the land of India appears certainly strongly to resemble rent; but a land-tax in any country must bear the same resemblance. If in England, or any country under similar circumstances, the Government were to impose a very small additional charge upon the land, it is possible that the occupier would pay it out of his profits. But if the charge were a heavy one this would be impossible, and it would operate to diminish the landlord's rent. The claim of Government would thus operate precisely like the claim of a mortgagee, or any other incumbrancer of landed property. The more he took the less would there be for the landlord; and it is possible to conceive the amount of the demand of Government increased until the right of the landlord would

would be worth nothing. The answer given by a very ingenious and able writer, to a question proposed under the authority of the Board of Control, does not appear perfectly satisfactory. The question asks, "How far the land revenue, whether received by Government or through an intermediate person, resembles or differs from the rent of land, or resembles or differs from a tax imposed by law?" and the answer is, that "the land revenue in India, as generally assessed, differs from rent only in respect to amount, according as it is less or more than what exists after the cost of cultivation is replaced." It is added, that "when a fixed proportion of the produce was taken as revenue, it was a tax of the nature of tythe in England." Now it seems extraordinary that a payment in kind should be a tax, and that the commutation of the charge into money should convert it into rent. Notwithstanding tythe is adverted to as invariably a tax, yet when commuted, upon the principle laid down, it becomes rent. In many parts of the world the landlords receive their revenue in kind; because from local causes they can obtain it in no other way. In this case, upon the principle just quoted, these persons would not draw rent, but impose a tax. It would seem more correct to regard the cultivator and landlord as partners; the former bringing to the partnership his labour and his capital  
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when he has any, though where such a system prevails, the cultivator is often so poor that the landlord is obliged to advance seed to sow the ground. The landlord brings to the partnership his land, and the profits of the enterprize are divided according to a given arrangement. The introduction of a money payment relieves the landlord from trouble, and secures him, in some degree, from the risk of loss arising from bad management; and it gives to the occupier the advantage of all the profit which he can make upon the landlord's share beyond the stipulated payment. Such an arrangement is therefore generally beneficial to all the parties interested. It is beneficial in the case of tythe as in any other; but it is not more so, the main difference between the claim of the tythe-holder and the claim of the landlord, being that the former is limited by law, and the latter is not. The tythe-holder, in fact, to the extent of his right, stands in the place of a landlord, and whatever might be taken from the claimant of the tenth part, would be transferred to the pocket of the claimant of the other nine. The mere renter of land will, in ordinary cases, never obtain more than the price of his labour, and a fair interest for the capital which he invests. The surplus produce, either in money or in kind, will pass into other hands, and to him individually it matters nothing, whether into the  
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hands of a Government collector, of a landlord, or of a tythe-holder, whether it be divided between two of them or distributed among all three. Upon principles of state policy, the question may be worth discussing, but not as respects the individual cultivator, whose only interest is to avoid paying too much. Between rent and a tax upon land, therefore, there is no difference but in name. The two charges are exactly alike, and resemble several others which pass by different names. Where there is but one species of claim upon the land, the surplus produce flows into a single channel—where there are two or more it is divided.

The really important question for the Indian cultivator is as to the amount of his assessment. If that be moderate, he may feel perfectly unconcerned whether it is called by one name or another. That it should be moderate, is desirable, not more for his individual benefit, than for the general prosperity of the community. An extravagant assessment, like an exorbitant rent, will rarely be realized; and it needs no argument to shew that a body of insolvent cultivators is inconsistent with national prosperity. If they are kept one step above this state—just able to defray the demands of the Government, but enjoying little and accumulating nothing—the best that can be looked for will be that the  
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country should be stationary. But it is not desirable that any country should remain stationary; and India, especially, is yet too far removed from a state of general prosperity to allow her to take her station where she is, and decline to advance further. The ryots are said to be generally improvident, but nothing makes men so improvident as extreme misery. By improving their condition, we shall impart to them the desire of improving it still further. By enabling them to acquire property, we shall give them the means of effecting improvements and extending the productive powers of the soil. By giving them the power and the inclination to consume, we shall afford a stimulus to manufacturing and commercial industry, and thus increase the means of employment and multiply the resources of the country. By leaving in the hands of the ryot some portion of the surplus produce of the land, we shall elevate his character, and in time perhaps call into existence such a class of men as the permanent zemindary system was intended to create, but failed of creating—men deriving an income from the land, and in consequence acquiring a certain place in society. The ryot “cultivating his own,” has a claim to this at our hands. He has a heritable interest in the soil—his title is much more ancient than ours, and has survived through every variety of change and convulsion.

convulsion. Justice and policy coincide in requiring that he should be treated with liberality.

The evils of over-assessment are of course greater in India, where few of the cultivators possess any capital, than they would be in a country, differently situated in this respect. In any country it would produce considerable distress. In India its effect must generally be utter ruin and destitution ; and as the evils are greater, so the danger of incurring them is more imminent. In England, not only do landlords sometimes demand too much, but tenants agree to pay it, notwithstanding the latter have always some capital, and to a considerable extent a choice of farms. In India the cultivator holds himself attached to the land which his forefathers have cultivated for many generations, and rather than forego the possession of it, he will be tempted into engagements which it is impossible for him to fulfil. As such engagements must end in disappointment on the one side and ruin on the other, it is clearly for the benefit of both parties that they should not be formed. But the only effectual preventive will be moderation on the part of Government. More must not be demanded than is reasonable, or the consequence will be that less will be obtained. We must not indulge the fallacious belief, that by increasing our assessments we shall insure a proportionate increase

increase of our receipts. Swift has observed, that in political arithmetic two and two do not always make four, and this is not less true now than it was in his day, and certainly not less applicable to India than to all other countries. Some disappointment will, under any assessment, continue to be experienced in realizing the claims of Government upon the small ryots; property from the injurious laws of succession being frequently divided into such minute portions as to render the payment of any revenue scarcely possible. The cause of this evil is of too delicate a nature to be hastily dealt with, and it is probably one of those inconveniences to which we must be content, for a time at least, to submit.

Colonel Colebrook suggested the redemption of the land revenue as a measure calculated to benefit the people; and he stated that in Ceylon the system had been in operation for ten or twelve years past with good effect, the people in some provinces having been allowed to redeem the whole of their rents above a tenth. He added, ~~that~~ the returns from those districts shewed that the revenue had increased rather than diminished, notwithstanding the redemption of the assessment, a tenth being now as productive as a fourth or a third formerly was, an effect which he ascribes to new land being brought into cultivation. Captain Duff recommends a similar measure,

measure, and there can be little room for difference of opinion as to its advantages. But it is quite clear that, however desirable, it cannot be effected without capital, and Indian cultivators have for the most part no capital. When they have amassed any (and by a judicious course of proceeding on the part of Government that time may arrive,) the subject may be revived, and its details will then become interesting matter of enquiry. One point is clear—the redemption must be effected by the ryot, or the association of ryots who claim right in the land. A stranger must not be permitted to redeem the revenue, as such a permission would introduce all the evils of the permanent zemindary system under another form.

The redemption of the land revenue at present calls for no minute consideration. But what are our prospects as to the revenue itself, is a question of immediate and pressing interest. Of late years there has been a slight improvement in the revenue derived from the lower provinces of the Bengal presidency—but for the permanent ~~set~~ tlement there would have been a very great one, as has occurred in the western provinces. In the Madras and Bombay territories the revenue has declined, owing to fall of prices, unfavourable seasons, and other causes. There has, indeed, been a general fall of prices throughout the East; but

but this can scarcely be regarded as remarkable, seeing that the same effect has been taking place throughout the world. As has been observed, it is in the provinces under the Madras and Bombay presidencies that the evil has been most severely felt. The evidence which has been brought forward on the subject throws little light upon the matter, and the speculations of political economists cannot be expected to throw much more. The witnesses whose evidence bears most directly upon the point are Lieut.-Col. Barnewall and Lieut.-Col. Sykes, both highly intelligent men. The former, in answer to the question, "To what circumstances do you attribute the fall in value of agricultural produce?" says, "To the altered condition of the country, and to the large establishments maintained by the Guicowar government and other states being reduced. This has caused a less demand, while a state of internal peace prevents all extra demand. Nearly the whole of the population has become agricultural, and the supply of grain ~~so far~~ exceeds the consumption, that there had been a glut in all the markets for one or two years in the provinces on the western side of India before I left it. The effects of importations of cotton cloths from England had greatly lowered manufactures, and commerce was also languid." The coincidence between this state  
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of things and that which has occurred at home is striking. The reduction of establishments and a state of universal peace have been attended with the same results in India as here. This process political economists have often undertaken to explain, but have never yet succeeded. Its existence is, indeed, a bitter satire on the prevailing systems ; as, according to them, the state described ought to be one of extraordinary prosperity. The destruction of the home manufacture of cotton cloths ought not, on the same principles, to create any inconvenience ; yet it evidently appears to sensible and unprejudiced observers to be one of the elements of the mass of misery. The fact is, in spite of the assertions of the fashionable school of political economy, that a period of transition from high to low prices is always a period of general and intense suffering. Colonel Sykes appears at a loss to account for the great fall of prices ; and he admits it—unlike the spinners of cobweb systems of political economy, who profess to be ignorant of nothing. Colonel Sykes's attention was called to a statement of Sir John Malcolm, in his account of Central India “ that the sudden cessation of war, and the return of the population to peaceful habits and the cultivation of the land, had both diminished the number of consumers and greatly increased the number of producers,” to which Sir John attributed a very remarkable

remarkable fall in prices in certain provinces; and Colonel Sykes was asked, "Can the fall of prices in the Deccan be attributed to a similar cause?" He answers, that if such were the cause, there would necessarily appear a much larger extent of cultivation upon the returns than formerly, but that, on the contrary, the breadth of cultivation had diminished. This is an extraordinary fact, and it ought to be mentioned, that Colonel Sykes's opinion is the result, not of a random guess, but of a deliberate inquiry. It is probable, that one part of the theory of Sir John Malcolm is applicable to the case—the number of producers is not increased, but the number of consumers is diminished. To exist, men must consume agricultural produce, more or less, but a very small consumption will sustain life; and if from any cause a large portion of the people are compelled to reduce their consumption to the lowest degree, it requires not the taper of philosophy to shew that the producers must suffer. The land goes out of cultivation because the produce cannot be sold; ~~yet~~ there are vast numbers who would be glad to purchase, but they want the money. The cultivator finds it difficult to sell enough to procure a sufficiency to supply his own necessities and to meet the claims of Government, and in many cases he finds it impossible; while the consumer, or he who ought to be a consumer, perishes for want,



want, or prolongs a wretched existence upon an insufficient supply of that food which the producer cannot sell, and therefore discontinues to raise. Whatever may be the cause of this unhappy state of things, it cannot, at all events, without the most palpable folly, be ascribed to "the pressure of population against the supply of food."

It is generally difficult, and often impossible, to trace with accuracy the precise causes of national distress. The most fatal mistakes are in consequence committed, and remedies are applied which aggravate instead of abating the evil. The diseases which assail the springs of national prosperity require to be treated with extraordinary caution. Nostrums for removing them always abound; but their alleged virtues should be very strictly scrutinized before they are adopted. In our own country, from the period of the termination of the war, we have been continually trying experiments for the removal of the distress which followed that event, and they have all failed. We are therefore entitled to conclude, that all we have hitherto done is wrong, though what is right is by no means so apparent. In India, the state of things being much less complicated and artificial than here, we might suppose, that the same degree of difficulty would not be found, yet we are, in truth, nearly as much in the dark with regard to the distress existing in that country, as to  
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that which we have to lament in our own. There are one or two leading principles which we may adopt with a pretty strong confidence that we are right; and at present, perhaps, neither practical experience nor theoretical speculation can help us beyond them.

In the first place, the assessment on the land, as has already been recommended, should be moderate. It must be conformed, in some degree, to the altered circumstances of the times, and the motives to such a course, arising from its justice and policy, are corroborated by the obvious impossibility of succeeding in a contrary one. The amount of receipt must clearly be limited by the capacity to pay, and an attempt to extract too much will defeat its own object, and end in disappointment, ruin the cultivator, and throw still more land into waste. Moderation in the claims of Government is therefore indispensable, and care should be taken, not only that the State does not press injuriously upon the subject, but, as far as possible, that those persons who stand between the State and the subject do not promote their personal interests at the expense of both.

It seems tolerably certain also, that in the present state of India, the advice of those authorities in economical science, who recommend giving a stimulus to consumption rather than to production, is the sounder and more beneficial. The  
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desire to consume is, of course, vain without the power to acquire. But in a country where land is sufficient and labour abundant, the power should not be wanting. The great impediment to an increased consumption of European goods in India is the difficulty of procuring a return. The interests of Europe and Asia are thus identical, and an increased demand in the West for the commodities of the East, would be equally beneficial to both parts of the world. To promote this, all duties which press heavily and unequally on the produce of East-Indian industry should be abolished. Our fellow-subjects in one part of the globe should not be sacrificed to our fellow-subjects in another, nor even to those at home; still less ought they to be sacrificed to strangers. Called, as we have been, to administer the government of a populous and mighty empire, with which we have no natural connexion, it is a solemn duty to exercise the extraordinary power we have acquired, so as to advance the best interests of the people over whom we rule. We must regard them not as aliens, but as countrymen, separated from us by distance, but entitled to receive the same degree of consideration, and the same impartial protection from the Supreme Government as ourselves. Whatever commercial advantages are enjoyed by their competitors, either at home or in the colonies, should be conceded to them. If the one  
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class is subject to taxation, the other should be subject to it also in the same, but not in a greater degree. If the industry of one is favoured by protection, so should that of the other. The different circumstances existing in different parts of the same empire, may require variations in the laws; but commercial jealousies, and commercial inequalities arising out of those jealousies, must not be tolerated among fellow-subjects. To remove them is an act not of grace and favour, but of justice.

There are some internal charges upon trade which operate as discouragements to consumption, and which should therefore be abolished as soon as the state of the revenue will appear to justify it. The transit duties are both injurious and vexatious; and since they are eminently fertile in fraud and chicane, their abolition would be as beneficial to morality as to commerce.

As the decline in the revenue has not hitherto been great, and as the deficiency in one part of our territories has been made up in another, there is every reason to hope that, by a moderate assessment, and a judicious financial system, *aided by the concession on the part of the United Kingdom of the just claims of India*, any permanent diminution of revenue may be averted; that prosperity may revive in those provinces where it has declined; the land again be brought into cultivation, and the people

people placed in circumstances of ease and contentment. From the introduction of European capital, skill, and enterprize, much may be expected. Their beneficial effects will not be confined to the parts of India open to European residents; they will be extended to all in a greater or less degree.

It is scarcely necessary to point out how closely the prosperity of India is connected with that of England. In the present advanced state of commercial intercourse, prices have a tendency to equalize themselves all over the world, and a rise or fall in one country, will almost invariably act upon every other. Consequently, whatever acts beneficially upon the great interests of England, will have the same effect upon India, which partaking in the prosperity of the protecting country, will repay the benefit with ample interest.

The subject of currency is a delicate one; but in seeking for the probable causes of the decline of prices, it is impossible to exclude its consideration. In the Deccan, the facts connected with this branch of enquiry (as stated by Colonel Sykes) appear so anomalous and extraordinary, as to defy all attempts at reasoning upon them. In the Western Provinces, Mr. Mackenzie appears disposed to regard the fall of prices as owing to a diminished supply of silver. This might arise from various causes; and it is a question of some

interest, how far the state of other countries has, in this respect, operated upon India.

The quantity of the precious metals possessed by any country must be influenced by various other causes besides the will of the Government. The nature of the circulating medium, and the state of the coinage, are matters of purely legislative arrangement. In India, the rupee, as is well known, is the coin in which accounts are kept, and which is the principal medium of exchange; but rupees of different values circulate in the different provinces, and the propriety of continuing these varieties, or putting an end to them by the establishment of a uniform currency, has been of late much discussed. A few observations on the subject may not be misplaced in the present chapter.

The rupees current within the territories included under the old Bengal presidency, are two, the Calcutta sicca rupee, and the Furruckabad rupee; the standard of both is the same; but the sicca rupee weighs about 192 grains troy (176 silver); the Furruckabad 180 grains (165 silver). In the Madras and Bombay territories, the rupee in circulation corresponds very nearly, if not entirely, with the Furruckabad rupee. There is another description of rupee which, though now an ideal coin, must be noticed, because it is still recognized in military accounts. Previously to the

the regulations by which the present currency of Bengal was established, the rupees were distinguished by the year in which they were struck. After circulating for a few years they became depreciated, whether they had lost weight or not, and, were reckoned sonat rupees, or rupees of years. To put an end to this, it was determined that in future all rupees should bear the same date; but, for reasons the validity of which it is unnecessary to discuss, the pay of the Bengal troops continued to be reckoned in the Sonat, or depreciated rupee.

The circulation of the rupee of each presidency is confined to the territories subject to it. In all other places it is received only as bullion; and, except at the mints, is not a legal tender. To obviate these inconveniences, it has been proposed to establish a uniform coinage throughout the British dominions in India. Nothing would have a greater tendency to facilitate commercial operations; and whatever has this effect, tends to the advancement of a nation in wealth and prosperity. Now that the whole of our Indian possessions have, for legislative purposes, been placed under one government, the proper time for establishing a uniformity of coinage seems to have arrived. It would be thought a strange arrangement, if one species of coin circulated exclusively in the English counties north of the Trent, another  
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in the counties south of that river, and a third in Wales—if the silver coin, which commanded every species of commodity at Bristol, should become useless to the traveller on his arrival at Cardiff, and he should consequently be subjected to the inconvenience of seeking out a money-changer, and to the loss arising from the transaction which would be necessary to enable him to obtain a supply of the necessaries of life. Custom only can reconcile us to a similar state of things in India.

If the currency be rendered uniform, as it ought to be, a question arises as to the value of the circulating rupee. It has been urged that the Madras rupee is the most extensively circulated, and that the new coin should be equivalent to it. The propriety of this decision has been questioned by a very eminent authority, who asks why the sicca rupee should not be adopted. In support of this it is urged, that the public debt is contracted in the sicca rupee; that the sicca rupee is the coin of the settled territory, where the introduction of any other would subject Government to the alternative of either sustaining a serious loss, by receiving its revenue in a coin nominally the same, but actually of inferior value; or of committing an *apparent* breach of faith, by demanding from the zemindars a larger number of rupees than they had been accustomed to pay, and thus also unsettling all existing contracts between them  
and



and the ryots; that the sicca rupee is the established currency of the most opulent and most commercial portion of our Indian possessions; and that, within a period of thirty years, nearly as great an amount has been coined and issued of the sicca rupee as of all the other coins of British India taken collectively. These points demand serious consideration; and they would almost seem to determine the question in favour of the sicca rupee, especially as it does not appear that any inconvenience could arise from its introduction into the Madras and Bombay territories. In these, instead of nominally increasing the assessment, the Government would have the more gracious task of making an apparent reduction. In other respects, the operation in those provinces, as far as any effect at all would be produced, would be beneficial. Under either plan, some small difficulty might arise in the payment of the army—and this is a matter not to be tampered with. It has been stated, that in Bengal the pay of the troops is reckoned in the sonat or depreciated rupee; but it is, of course, issued in the sicca rupee, calculated at the rate of  $104\frac{1}{2}$  sonat to 100 sicca. If the sicca rupee were adopted for general circulation, the old system might be preserved. If the Madras rupee were preferred, as that is about  $6\frac{1}{2}$  per cent. inferior to the sicca, while the sonat is calculated at only  $4\frac{1}{2}$ , this difference  
must

must be noticed and accounted for. Here, however, a real difficulty occurs. It has been suggested, that if we give the Bengal army the advantage of the 2 per cent. difference between the value of the sonat and the Madras rupee, the troops of the other presidencies would expect the same. And this seems an additional reason for preferring the sicca rupee; for though the troops of Madras and Bombay might feel some disappointment at receiving a smaller number of rupees than heretofore, yet the same thing must have occurred to the Bengal troops when the new rupee was substituted for the old depreciated one; and the difficulty might, perhaps, be surmounted in the same way, by keeping the accounts according to the Madras and Bombay rupee, and making payment in the sicca. The sonat rupee being regarded as equivalent to that of Furruckabad, and this latter differing little in value from the rupees of Madras and Bombay, the Bengal troops would have an advantage—but this they have now. Whether or not they ought to retain it—whether the advantage should be withdrawn from them or extended to the other presidencies—or whether they should, in this respect, remain precisely as at present, are questions open to discussion, but which do not affect that relating to a uniform currency. The evils arising from the present complexity of coins and currency have been felt and lamented

lamented by military men, among whom may be mentioned Sir Robert Scott and Sir Henry Worsley.

It has been proposed to extend the uniformity of coinage to gold and copper ; and though of less importance, this seems a necessary consequence of establishing a uniform silver currency. The sicca rupee appears, on the whole, the best adapted for the latter purpose, and it has the additional advantage of a very near approach to that of Great Britain. This has been pointed out by Mr. St. George Tucker, and he has suggested that the assimilation might be made complete, and the sicca rupee, by a very slight alteration, converted into a two-shilling piece, it now exceeding two shillings only by the fraction  $\frac{D}{566}$ .

## CHAPTER XII.

MEANS OF SECURING BRITISH INTERESTS.  
AND AUTHORITY.

THE British entered India as traders. They were compelled to exchange the operations of commerce for the labours of war. Success attended their military career, and renewed provocations urged them to continue it. Victory has followed victory, and conquest been accumulated upon conquest, until the dominion of Britain embraces the larger portion of India, and its influence extends over the whole. To look back upon the achievements of our countrymen, cannot but be gratifying to our national sympathies; to look forward to the probable fate of that empire, which their skill and courage raised from such small beginnings, is a duty which is imposed upon us by a regard to our national honour, as well as to the integrity of the British dominions.

The stability and permanency of our power may be endangered either from within or from without. Our first attention must naturally be directed to our own subjects. From their hostility, if provoked, our greatest danger would arise; on their attachment,

attachment, if secured, our safety may be firmly based. To acquire the confidence of the people over whom we rule, and having acquired, to preserve it, must be the grand objects of our policy. The only way to effect these desirable objects, is to place the people as much as possible at their ease. A nation naturally judges of its government by the degree of good which it enjoys under its sway, and appears to derive from it. The majority of every nation, too, regard principally the time that is passing over their heads, and are little disposed to sacrifice present to prospective advantages. From this cause, all changes of which the inconveniences are immediate, and the benefits remote, are unpopular, and nowhere more so than among a people like that of India, constitutionally averse to change. When the inconvenience, which is to be the price of the alleged improvement, is certain, while the benefit is contingent, the dislike will be greatly increased; and if the mighty fabric of British dominion in the East should either prematurely moulder away or fall with a sudden shock, its decline or destruction will probably originate in rash and injudicious attempts to introduce a state of things presumed to be better than that existing, but for which the natives are unprepared, and which consequently, instead of being a step in advance will in effect be a step backward. In

India

India we must leave European prejudices behind us, if we would retain possession of the country ; and while our most anxious thoughts and our most strenuous exertions are devoted to the promotion of its substantial interests, we must lay aside that mania for improvement, which in the West is not unattended with evil, and in the East must be regarded as the sure precursor of convulsion and ruin. Prudence is not less necessary than good intention. The improvement of the state of the people must be effected in their own way if it be effected at all. Enthusiastic politicians will endeavour to effect this at once, and they will undervalue the silent, but certain operation of time : yet time is one of the most powerful agents in forming the character and fixing the destinies of nations. Its effect is strikingly exemplified in British India. In those parts which have been longest subjected to our rule, our power is most firmly established. The people and the government have become more habituated to each other, and our authority is more cheerfully recognized from a perception of the benefits which it has conferred.

One element of security will be found, in the exchange of habits of war and rapine, for the cultivation of the arts of peace ; and in proportion as we protect and advance the interests of agricultural, commercial, and manufacturing industry,

try, shall we promote the stability of our rule. The military adventurer may expect to benefit by a state of tumult and anarchy; but from such a state the industrious classes have nothing to hope, and every thing to dread. To give industry a fair field for exertion, is then to uphold the existing authority; and this is a consideration well worthy the attention of the Legislature of Great Britain, who, alone, have the power of removing from the industry of India the burdens which at present bear it down.

But while the arts of peace are treated with favour, we must be prepared for the opposite state if it should become necessary'. Looking to this contingency, the Indian army becomes an object of vast importance. It has been said, that our dominion in India has been gained by the sword, and that it must be maintained by the sword. The first of these propositions it will be needless to discuss; the second cannot be admitted without some qualification. If our dominion were merely that of the sword, its tenure could not be regarded as otherwise than very uncertain, inasmuch as the sword, though wielded at our command, is substantially in the hands of those whom we are to coerce. The same view seems to have dictated the opinion, that we are in a situation unparalleled in the history of the world—retaining possession<sup>o</sup> of a conquered country by means of a native army.

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But it is wrong to suppose that our dominion depends solely upon the army. Many governments have been established by force; but few have ever maintained their dominion by such means. Still less do governments rest upon the phantom "public opinion." Governments for the most part exist, because they have been accustomed to exist. When the people are rendered happy, they are, undoubtedly, more secure; but obedience is more the result of habit than of any thing else. An old government, unless very feeble or very oppressive, is generally pretty secure, and every year may thus be regarded as adding something to the strength of ours in India. But no government can afford to be despised, and with such an extent of territory as we possess, a large portion of it being of very recent acquisition, and in the midst of a people among whom we are comparatively strangers, a numerous and effective army cannot be spared. Our dominions are not assailable from without only. Within their circle are portions of territory under the rule of native powers—nominally allies, indeed, but for the most part, to be regarded as hollow friends. The formidable alliance formed some years since to drive us from India, shews the feelings with which we are regarded by the old Mahometan authorities; and though their power is now broken and destroyed, we must not imagine that their  
hostile



hostile feeling towards us is abated. We must, therefore, at all times be prepared to defend ourselves. The knowledge that we are so prepared will be the best security for our safety and the general peace. With regard to those states, there can be little reason to doubt that our influence over them must be that of fear. It is important, therefore, to ascertain how far our native troops are to be depended upon. In this respect, the very absence of the loftier qualities of the military character may be considered to be in our favour. To the love of country—to those high and chivalric feelings of loyalty and patriotism which elevate the soldier into the hero, they are strangers. They are undoubtedly pure mercenaries, and would as readily fight for one master as for another. We have consequently nothing to apprehend from the operation of feelings which do not exist; and we must not conclude, that because they are deficient in the more graceful and noble characteristics, they are therefore wanting in the coarser qualifications of the military character. They have generally behaved well in the field; and, like other soldiers of fortune, their fidelity may be relied on as long as we make their interest coincident with it. The importance of securing this is manifest; and, on the whole, the adherence of the native soldier may be commanded with tolerable ease. He serves for pay, and his pay should be

be good, and discharged with as much regularity as possible. Like all his countrymen, he is under the influence of deep prejudices, and his prejudices must not be treated with insult. Though mercenary and prejudiced, he is docile and obedient, especially under mild treatment; and he should, therefore, meet from the European authorities generally, and from his officers in particular, consideration and kindness. The habits of military life naturally beget an attachment between the soldier and his officer, unless there be great faults on one side, or on both. The manner in which European officers have spoken of the sepoy, and the attachment which, in some instances, the latter have shewn for their officers, prove that the feelings which are so desirable for the benefit of the service, may exist in an army constituted like that of India.

We may conclude, then, that our Indian army would be found efficient against an enemy either from within or from without. Happily, there is but little probability of their being tried against either. Our old antagonist, France, is not in a condition to contest with us the dominion of the East, and it must be long before her circumstances so far alter as to enable her to enter into such a contest with any prospect of success. From other quarters there is nearly as little to apprehend. The frontier of our dominions is  
singularly

singularly unassailable, considering the extent of territory; the country, of which a part is subjected to our direct rule, and the whole to our influence, being in a great degree secured by nature from external attack. The sea rolls around a large portion of it; mountains, affording few passes, and desert countries scarcely passable at all, bound the rest. Russia has been regarded with some apprehension, and she may possibly be well disposed to add India to her vast empire; but Russia would perhaps find it no easy task to transport and maintain the vast armies which would be necessary to give even a chance of success. It would occupy too much space to enter into a discussion of the various routes which might be adopted, and of the facilities afforded by each. The friendship of Persia, if not indispensable to our security, is at least an auxiliary to it, and with that country our relations are altogether amicable. A minister has long resided there accredited by the Indian Government; but either from the importance of the mission, or from some other cause, his place is in future to be supplied by one appointed directly by the British crown. But, at present, we need not Persia to stand between Russia and India. Russia has quite enough to occupy all her energy and all her capacity for intrigue in a quarter more dear to her ambition than India. The incorporation of

Turkey with her dominions, is now the object to which she is willing to sacrifice every other. This achieved, she might turn her eyes further eastward. At present, however, it is gratifying to know that the British empire in India is in such a state of security, as must disarm every fear, and leave its rulers at perfect liberty to devote an undivided attention to the advancement of the happiness of the people.

THE END

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National Library, K. 1544

LONDON.

Printed by J. L. Cox and Son, 75, Great Queen Street,  
Lincoln's-Inn Fields. ●