

INDIA'S OPPORTUNITY

**CONSIDERED APART FROM
ITS POLITICAL ASPECTS**

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By MAJOR ·E. ·A. TANDY, R.E.

SURVEY OF INDIA

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PREFACE.

AN unknown author trespassing on a great subject may perhaps explain that time and opportunity have not been altogether wanting. In that as a little boy he knew and loved the old-time India of the early 'seventies, and since then has spent the best years of his manhood working over the most diverse parts of the changing India of to-day, in touch with many varied activities both civil and military.

It will moreover be found that he has confined himself so far as possible to the problem of organic structure, which is a personal hobby, and that he only touches incidentally on those complex questions of policy which are the proper business of statesmen and administrators.—He would liken himself to a mechanic, who, travelling on a great ship, feels at liberty to suggest why the rudder may be acting stiffly, without presuming to offer opinions as to the direction in which the vessel should be steered.

E. A. TANDY.

DEHRA DUN,
September, 1915.

PUBLISHERS' POSTSCRIPT.—In the author's absence on active service the publication of this work has been delayed for more than two years. Meanwhile the Secretary of State's announcement of August 20th, 1917, seems to afford an additional argument in favour of the organization of the machinery of Government "in successive stages," as recommended in this book.

CHAPTER I.

THE PROBLEM.

"To determine the exact nature of a difficulty is the first step towards surmounting it."

THIS little book is written with the object of drawing attention to the affairs of India from a point of view which is too apt to be overlooked. If we turn to the diagram bound at the end of the book, and consider that each of the little squares there shown comprises one thousand square miles of country, and try to realise the countless human interests which each of these squares may represent; and if we then compare these areas and figures with those of the British Isles shown on the same diagram, we shall get some faint idea of the immensities which must ever be borne in mind by those who desire to solve the vast problems of Indian administration.

We have further to remember that these immensities are everywhere complicated by a bewildering complexity of race, culture, language, and religion, probably exceeding that to be found in any other part of the world, and ranging from the highest summits of human accomplishment to the most primitive forms of naked savagery.

These facts are of course matters of common knowledge, but it is very difficult indeed for the human mind to grasp even dimly their full import and significance; since no human being can ever make any sort of intimate personal touch with all the varied communities of so vast an area. Even if he could abolish distances and arrange the population in accessible groups of 100,000 people each, it would still take over 60 years of incessant travel to spend even a *single week* with each of the groups; while the varieties of language are such that there is no one living who can speak intimately with more than a fraction of the population. It is therefore only by earnestly exercising our minds in such ideas that we can come to realise the vital importance to India of studying those natural laws of communal structure under which human communities can work together to the best advantage.

In dealing with this problem, we shall take the organization of India as it stands, and formulate a solution in terms of the States, Provinces, Governors, and so forth, which happen to make up the existing structure of Indian administration. It would indeed be folly to do otherwise, for no one can foresee with any certainty what the precise nature of future political changes may be, any more than they can

foretell how changed may be the spiritual attitude of mind with which humanity will emerge from the present struggle.

But whatever the hidden secrets of the future, we may at least count on two things :—Firstly, that all further progress in the development of Indian affairs must start off from the situation at present existing; and secondly, that whatever may be the nature of that progress, the magnitude of the area and the variety of its races will still remain as the prime factors of the situation.

While therefore we shall base our proposals on the existing order of things, it must be remembered that even if every Province, State, or other unit, were to become entirely democratic or hierarchic, or managed in any other conceivable way, we should still urge the necessity of their being connected to one another by a well-proportioned system of successive groupings as the most practical means of enabling them to act coherently together as a corporate whole. Indeed the more autonomous the various communities become, the more necessary will it be that they should conform to the natural laws of communal structure, if they wish to avoid the miseries of internecine chaos which have in India so often followed the relaxation of a powerful rule.

Since the improved organic stability which we desire to see established in India will always remain a permanent benefit to the country under any form of government whatever, we may hope that the general idea will prove a common ground on which men of all shades of opinion may be able to agree, however strongly they may differ in regard to the political character of the administrations which are to form the organization.

We have no desire to minimise the importance of the political controversies with which India is confronted at the present time; but they are already receiving ample attention from all concerned, and present problems very different from those we are about to discuss. Since all such questions admit of no finality, and are essentially matters of compromise, to be continually re-adjusted by statesmen and politicians in accordance with the requirements of a situation which is for ever changing; whereas our present object is to look beyond these changing issues to the more permanent features of the administrative structure,—the framework of that vast machinery upon which the progress and prosperity of India so very largely depend.

Next to the immediate necessities of the war, the greatest problem before the Government to-day is to

find means of giving scope for orderly development to the new spirit which is beginning to stir all India to a great renaissance. But a very cursory analysis will show how seriously this problem is embarrassed by the extreme unwieldiness of our administrative organization, consisting as it does of a confused medley of Provinces and States, which have gradually crystallized into their present form during the establishment of British rule. These have so increased in number by the processes of accretion and subdivision, and have so outgrown the limits of their original design, that few people to-day know even the main outlines of the political geography of India, and it may be doubted if any single individual is master of the whole of its manifold complexities.

It is not desirable, nor is it necessary, to meddle directly with these complications, which are the natural outcome of recent or existing conditions. But it is desirable, and becoming daily more necessary, that the Government itself should be so organized as to permit of prompt and intelligent response to the rapidly growing interests of this amazing mosaic of mixed communities. Once the problem is squarely faced we shall find that this end can be attained in a way which would both signalize the growing importance of India and relieve the present conges-

tion of business, without disturbing the internal affairs or status of any existing Province or State.

This problem of overgrown unwieldiness has only recently become insistent, and the means suggested for dealing with it are merely an extension of simple principles, applied by all mankind in every age to relieve similar difficulties in the more every-day affairs of life. Similar solutions of the problem have indeed been suggested of late years by writers both European and Indian. But in ordinary times such fundamental questions of organic structure are very apt to be ignored, as "nobody's business," in the absorption of all concerned by the political perplexities of the moment. They stand above and behind all our daily controversies, but are none the less vital to the well-being of the Empire; since whatever may be the changing forms of Indian Government during this twentieth century, orderly and consistent progress will still continue to be embarrassed so long as the organic structure remains overgrown and unwieldy.

Nothing less than the rousing impact of a great occasion can raise the minds of men out of the ruts of every-day controversy into the atmosphere of these higher questions, which equally affect the

well-being of all, but are the direct concern of no one in particular. Such an occasion has now most surely come, and justifies the hope that all who are desirous of India's welfare will seize the opportunity to form that consensus of opinion which alone can bring into being a reform of such widespread national importance.

In considering the overgrown condition of the Indian Empire, one must to some extent lay stress on the shortcomings of the present form of administration, rather than on its very real virtues. It is therefore well to remember that this troublesome overgrowth is itself the sign and the result of health and prosperity; and that the extreme centralisation now becoming so irksome has served a very useful purpose in the past, by impressing on the chaotic India of a hundred years ago a common tradition and a unity of procedure which were the first steps necessary towards its development into a coherent Empire.

The administration still enjoys a full measure of those high qualities which went to the establishment of this wonderful Empire of the East; and the earnest good-will to carry out such improvements as the times may require is abundantly available. But unfortunately, just as a ready response to changing

conditions is becoming more and more necessary, we find the immense expansion of business overwhelming the Government with extreme congestion, which threatens to paralyse personal initiative and is seriously impeding all attempts at vigorous or concerted action. We cannot check the prosperous development of affairs which is the proximate cause of these difficulties; but we can, if we will, so amplify the machinery of Government as to give it a fair chance of keeping abreast of all these growing requirements.

The Decentralisation Commission was intended to deal with this problem, which had already become pressing in the opening years of the century. Apparently it failed to realize that decentralisation is nearly always a question of machinery rather than of measures, of organic structure rather than of procedure. If the organization is well-proportioned the problems of decentralisation will soon solve themselves in practice, while if the organization is overgrown and unwieldy no mere alterations of procedure will ever prove an effective remedy.

Failing thus to discover the root of the trouble, the voluminous efforts of the Commission have done little more than to show how extremely difficult, if not insoluble, are the problems of decentralisation as

presented by the existing structure. This in itself was a useful service to a generation which has not yet formulated the essential principles of organizing the vast mobile communities of the modern world. But in the meanwhile the problems of over-centralisation and congestion of business still remain unsolved, and are daily becoming more urgent.

These difficulties are being staved off by various expedients, and especially by continual increases in the number of special departments of Government—a remedy which is useful up to a certain point, but after that does little more than add to the confusion of reduplicated work and overlapping responsibilities, unless the whole structure is at the same time modified to support the increasing burden. • Mankind is only just beginning to realize that a process of mere accretion will not meet the requirements of the growing communities of large cities, but that deliberate alterations of design are necessary for the relief of *congested areas*. They have yet to learn that the mere accretion of fresh departments is equally unsatisfactory, and that similar alterations of design are no less necessary, when dealing with the problem of *congested arrears* in the great offices of Government.

India is by no means the only large community

in which these difficulties are becoming insistent; but in India they are aggravated by the variety and complexity of local conditions; while, on the other hand, she is perhaps, of all the modern overgrown communities, the one to which effective remedy, if not delayed too long, can be most easily applied.

We may cheerfully recognize such troubles as merely the drawbacks of successful progress. But none the less they must be faced; and there is one further aspect of the situation to which we may refer before closing this stage of the discussion.—Namely the growing impression amongst Government officials that India is “played out,” and that men of enterprise will do well to seek their careers elsewhere.—Surely this should not, and need not be so, in a country of barely awakened possibilities, just entering on what may well prove one of the most critical periods of her history?

India can of course no longer offer quite the same glamour of high adventure as attracted to her service some of the most daring spirits of the nineteenth century. But this is not the real crux of the difficulty.—She still affords endless opportunities for development in nearly every branch of human endeavour, and certainly not least in all that pertains to the wise and courageous direction of

human affairs.—There is scope enough and to spare, but the men India most needs are just those who will not tolerate a system which threatens to submerge all individuality in mechanical routine.

If therefore we desire to obtain for the service of India the best men, whether European or Indian, whom the Empire can produce, our first step must be to provide an adequate and flexible machinery, more readily responsive to the movements of the spirit, and such that the man of ideas, whether an official or non-official, can obtain easier access to those who have power to “see things through,” instead of having so often to send forth his projects into the dreary wastes of official correspondence.

Such enlarged facilities for personal intercourse between the rulers and the ruled can only be obtained by the wider distribution of the central power, and by providing close personal touch throughout the chain of official control, in conformity with the natural laws of human organization.

No side issues, however, must be allowed to cloak the high Imperial importance of this problem of India's unwieldiness. It is possible that as a result of the war, or at some later time, we may find it necessary to extend the dominion of India, by amalgamating with her, for purposes of defence,

such outlying dependencies as Ceylon, Malaya, &c. Any such proposal would at present be regarded with dismay by the dependencies concerned, owing to the notorious congestion of business under the Government of India and the India Office. It is therefore of the first importance, not only for India herself, but for all parts of our Eastern Empire, that these conditions should be removed, and the Indian Government raised above petty responsibility for local affairs to a position in which it could concentrate more effectively on the larger Imperial issues which are so rapidly growing up around us in Asia.

The object of the present work is to try and show clearly those principles of proportion which are essential to the attainment of this end, and how they might be applied without undue disturbance to the existing situation in India.

The present is a unique opportunity for setting our house in order and clearing these difficulties which have grown up during the rapid expansion of the Empire. In circumstances so favourable all we require is the wisdom to choose well, and the unity of purpose without which no great action is ever accomplished.

CHAPTER II.

THE PROPOSED SOLUTION.

"To organize" means "so to arrange the component parts that the whole can act as one body."

THE present chapter will be devoted to a brief summary of the proposals we have to put forward. It will be found that they are all ultimately based on the simple proposition that the human mind cannot properly co-ordinate the affairs of too large a number of separate units, and that the limits of effective co-ordination are much smaller than is generally realized.

If therefore, from any cause, the units or groups under a single control grow to be too numerous, it at once becomes necessary to form some kind of intermediate grouping, so as to reduce the numbers to manageable proportions. This principle is universally applied to the more every-day affairs of life. As when the servants in a man's household increase in number beyond seven or eight, he at once begins to group them under upper servants for the purposes of orderly co-operation.

But though so universally applied in ordinary practice, the vital necessity of observing similar limitations in regard to the larger problems of

overgrown communities or departments is not yet generally recognized. Thus, when a great railway originally consisting of four traffic districts extends until it comprises fourteen, proper management, *ipso facto*, becomes impossible; and the only effective remedy is to form these 14 districts into, say, three groups, each consisting of four or five districts. But so little is the general principle realized, that even this simple problem is liable to become the happy hunting-ground for every kind of confusion of thought, often resulting in the application of any remedy except the right one.

Circumstances had led the author to the study of this principle in connection with various forms of human activity; so that when the Decentralisation Commission was appointed some years ago, his mind naturally applied the same train of thought to the problem of Indian administration: many factors have since assisted him in ripening the idea to its present form.

At the time of the Decentralisation Commission proposals were put forward by administrators of experience, advocating the creation of much smaller Provinces, in order to meet the expansion of business and to enable local administrations to adapt themselves more closely to the needs of special communities,

such as Orissa. This idea was swept aside by the contention that the days of the small Province were over, since small Provinces can never make their voices sufficiently heard amongst the multiplicity of great interests pressing upon the central Government.

The cogency of both these conflicting views is generally admitted, and it is very curious that the obvious solution to which they point should not have been adopted. This can only be attributed to the very nebulous condition of human knowledge in regard to the first principles of organic growth. We have therefore devoted the whole of Chapter III—THEORY AND PRACTICE—to the establishment of the simple precept announced at the beginning of this chapter; showing how it is based on the elements of human psychology, and endorsed by all kinds of human experience.

Having thus, as we may hope, established the principle that the number of separate units under a single control should never be more than about seven or eight; and that when by gradual accretion and subdivision this number is much exceeded, it at once becomes necessary to form sub-groups of manageable proportions, we shall proceed to examine the administrative structure of the Indian

Empire in the light of this idea. Here we shall find, involved with many other complications, the simple fact that this Empire, which consisted a 100. years ago of three small Presidencies, now comprises *over twenty* separate units (Provinces, separate States, and Agencies), *all working directly under the central Government*. We shall see moreover that this number tends steadily to increase, having grown to the extent of three extra Provinces during the present century. The urgent need in some localities for smaller Provinces, is thus faced by the difficulty that the existing units have already become too numerous for efficient management.

This brings us to the natural solution of the problem, which we shall put forward in the particular form of suggesting that these 20 Provincial and other units shall be grouped into a few great **Presidencies**, each under a **Governor-General**.

Further consideration will show that it can be of little use to make these proposed Governors-General a sort of fifth wheel in the coach. Their *raison d'être* is to bring the powers of the supreme Government into closer relations with the provincial and other units, and they must therefore be accorded every kind of power, for internal purposes, of which the supreme Government can possibly divest itself.

These matters, together with suggestions as to the great Councils, including representatives of Native States, by which the new Governors-General might be supported, will be discussed in due course.

The result on the central Government would be to raise it above the arena of ordinary internal controversies, so as to enable it to concentrate on the larger questions of Imperial and Foreign Policy. The present "Viceroy and Governor-General of India" would thus become simply the "Viceroy," having delegated the more controversial parts of his business to the several Governors-General of the new Presidencies.

It will be noticed that the higher and more undisturbed position thus created for the Viceroy of India, might make the post more suitable for the honour of being held by a member of the Royal Family. This would be above all things welcome to every class of the community in India, if only the position could be so raised as to be worthy of the high prestige of the Imperial Crown—a consummation hardly compatible with the present system of India Office control. Whatever may be the solution of this difficult point, our proposal certainly involves the idea that each of the proposed Governors-General of Presidencies should be selected in the same way,

and should enjoy so far as possible exactly the same prestige, as the present Governor-General of all India. Their superior, the Viceroy of India, would thus, by implication at all events, be raised to a still higher position.

In applying this principle of geographical grouping to India as it exists to-day, it will be found that there is no necessity to disturb the status, boundaries, or internal affairs, of any of the existing Provinces or States. They might continue with exactly the same Local Governments or Agencies as at present; and the only change would be that these would refer to a local Governor-General near them, instead of to a distant Governor-General of all India. This is a most important point, as it means that all the everyday business of the country would not suffer any interruption by the change, while a more prompt and satisfactory disposal of big questions could be expected in the future.

India is in many respects practically an island, being dependent on the sea for every kind of commerce or commune with the modern world; and the great ports of India are thus the natural nuclei for any system of administrative grouping. We shall therefore propose to group with each great port all those units which fall in its natural hinterland, and

to form a separate or central group of those inland units which, lying midway between great ports, have a divided interest in more than one of them.

It will be found that the existing Provinces and States of India lend themselves to a very satisfactory grouping based on the above principle; without any alterations of boundaries, excepting the detachment of Sind, as a separate Province * from the Bombay Presidency.

It will moreover be found that if we prefer to proceed gradually, we may quite easily compromise with a complete solution. By at first only forming three great northern Presidencies; and leaving untouched the units in the South and West, where the full application of the principle is less urgent and may be more difficult. This compromise would at a stroke reduce the present 20 units, working directly under the central Government, to the more manageable number of eight; and thus sufficiently relieve congestion for the present, while postponing the final completion of the scheme until its advantages had been proved by actual practice.

Other possible modifications and variants of the scheme will also be discussed; though the object of

* Sind (with included States) has a population nearly equal to that of Ceylon, and a much greater area.

this little book is to insist rather on the main idea than on the particulars of its application; and this great principle of consolidation has only been given a concrete form, as applied to India, in order to illustrate in detail its many advantages, which may be briefly summarized as follows :—

The present unwieldiness of the Indian Empire would be effectively relieved by reducing to due proportions the numerical excesses which have arisen from overgrowth,—with the natural result that the rulers would be brought into closer personal touch with the ruled, so as to have a proper knowledge of the countries with which they were dealing, and of the personalities responsible for any particular proposal; instead of having to depend so largely on how their “cases” were put up on paper. Business would thus be put through with less correspondence and delay, and the more genial glow of personal intercourse would replace much of the clerical drudgery in which even our highest officials are at present immersed.

The reform would moreover allow of similar relief being extended, later on, to overgrown

local Governments, by making possible the creation of smaller Provinces wherever circumstances required it. Since the present objection, due to Provinces being already too numerous, would disappear as soon as they were formed into local groups. And it may fairly be expected that the difficulties of "partition" would prove far less troublesome if it merely meant a re-arrangement within the group, instead of direct cleavage right up to the Government of India.

One of the most vivid needs of British India is the creation of a larger number of lively and powerful centres for the focussing of local activities and aspirations; and recent experience has shown, in the case of Bihar for instance, how warmly the institution of a fresh provincial centre is welcomed by those concerned. Incidentally some of these new administrative centres might also afford much-needed relief in another direction, if they deliberately opened up fresh hill stations in the Himalayas. This could probably be done on a self-supporting basis, and would be the best means of automatically relieving the expensive and unsani-

tary congestion of the few hill stations at present existing.

An increasing number of departments whose services include all India, British and Native, have already found it necessary to group the country into a few great "circles," and it would be much better if they could in future all adopt the same "Presidency" boundaries, instead of their present independent ones, as this would obviously promote closer mutual co-operation than is at present possible. Even the military organization would no doubt in time find the advantage of conforming, in some way or other, to the boundaries of the proposed new Presidencies.

It is also clear that we can no longer regard the Native States as if they were separate islands, having little or no concern with their neighbours beyond observing the restrictions of their proper boundaries; and that under the proposed arrangement they would be in a much better position to co-operate promptly with their neighbours in regard to big questions of mutual concern. Modern communications, and the develop-

ments of commerce and civilization, are making it daily more desirable that all adjoining units of India, however governed, should be given every facility for combined action in financing and administering their common interests, and in facing the emergencies of war, famine, pestilence, and crime.

Finance is at the root of all sound administration, and the present unwieldiness of the Empire not only militates against proper discrimination amongst the great variety of claims, but also promotes financial timidity, owing to the enormous aggregate of cost presented by any reform. So that India is apt to be starved in respect of the assistance and capital which are so freely available for the development of smaller separate units, such as Ceylon and the Malay Peninsula. Obviously the increased financial independence of the proposed great Presidencies would relieve this very real impediment to progress.

In addition to the more general advantages secured by all India, the proposed arrange-

ment will be found especially favourable to the great ports of Calcutta and Karachi. Since the former would recover all that really matters in her recent loss of prestige, by becoming mistress of all parts of the Empire which can in any sense be regarded as her natural hinterland; instead of being, administratively speaking, cut off in one small Province, as at present. She would enjoy once more, not only the patronage of her own provincial Governor, but also the wider influence arising from her being the seat of the Governor-General of the Eastern Presidency. Her feelings in regard to provincial partition should be completely allayed by this enormous extension of her effective influence.

The huge modern development of Karachi would at the same time receive due recognition now, and increased support for the future, by making her not only the capital of a separate Province, but also the capital, or at all events the great port, of the Northern Presidency, comprising all parts of India lying in her natural hinterland.

Without embarking on political considerations, which lie outside the scope of this work, we may note that these proposals should ultimately result in a larger number of Provincial Councils more exactly suited to the needs of special communities; and that they would entail the immediate creation of great Councils for the new Presidencies, which should be in a position to wield more effective power in regard to internal administration than any now existing in India; while the improved organization should facilitate the more direct participation of the Native States in that administration.

Finally, and perhaps above all, the proposed reform would be especially appropriate to the present occasion, by marking on an Imperial scale a great rise in the status of India. Not only in giving her the additional prestige of an enlarged administration, with several statesmen of the first class as Governors-General, instead of one, and possibly a Royal Viceroy at their head; but also in making the immensity of India more tangible to the outside world, by bringing the present involved medley of complications into a form more readily grasped by the mind. Without enlarging

on this point here, we may illustrate it by suggesting that most readers will probably gain a clearer idea of India's many millions from the cover of this book than they may have ever enjoyed before; simply because they are there grouped in a convenient way.

In the same sort of way the arrangement of India into a few great Presidencies, each averaging in population the whole of the German Empire at the commencement of the war (about 70 millions) would bring home the immensity of the Indian Empire to outsiders who do not at all realize it at present. Very few people for instance are aware that we have single districts, buried away in India under a "Collector," almost equal in size and population to the whole of Ceylon, with its nine Provinces, its first-class Governor, and its highly organized and well-manned staff.

This difficulty of realizing the significance of any unit, once it is merged in the incognizable bulk of the Indian Empire, has, like all confusion of thought, a very practical effect on the conduct of affairs, and is largely due to the purely numerical complications which embarrass the present situation.

CHAPTER III.

THEORY AND PRACTICE—A DIGRESSION.

EVERY human organization will only flourish in so far as it is truly suited to the individual human mind. We spare no pains to select and to train the individual for the purposes of the organism: on the other hand, we should be no less careful to see that the organism is itself constructed so as to respond readily to the powers, and duly to allow for the limitations, of the individual.

There is only one point in this complex science of organization which greatly concerns our present purpose; and for its study we can hardly begin better than by looking at Nature's way of meeting human needs. We shall find that man has his own architecture, suited to the form of his mind, and clearly shown for all the world to see. Physically and mentally the same cardinal principle dominates his system.

Thus physically, his 20 digits do not attempt to deal directly with his brain, but are grouped in

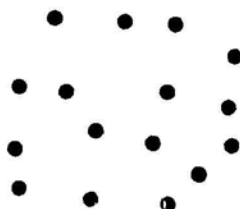
fives at the end of his *four* limbs, and his nervous system has corresponding ganglia, or clearing offices, for the local co-ordination of affairs.

Again mentally, we live in an environment full of powerful activities to which we are insensible. We are gradually discovering a few of them—such as magnetism—of which our senses are quite unconscious; yet we find that in arranging for our relations with the infinite possibilities of this environment Nature has forborne to embarrass us with more than *five* senses. Each of these five senses again, so far as we have been able to analyse them, appears itself to depend on a group consisting of a very few faculties of separate sensation. For instance, though the actual varieties of light are infinite, they are analysed by our eye-sight into three colour senses, combined with sensations of intensity and of direction.

Nature thus teaches us that the organization through which the human mind acts most effectively is based on a principle of continuous subdivision by groups, each of which comprises a very few separate faculties. The following simple test * will

* With acknowledgments to "Physiological Psychology," by W. McDougall, where these mental limitations are carefully analysed.

show how this principle is not merely a convenience, but a prime necessity of the mind's action :—



Let the reader try to memorise the above group of dots, or even to say at a glance how many they are. If he has an exceptional power of visualisation he may, it is said, retain them on his retina long enough to count them. But he will only be able to memorise their relations, and co-ordinate them in his mind, by some method of natural grouping such as the following :—

Imagine the dots separated into four compartments by a vertical line and a horizontal line passing through the centre of the group.—It will then appear as four groups, each consisting of four dots, and it will at once become comparatively easy, first to learn the relative positions of the dots in each group, and then to note the relations of the groups one to another.

This example brings us at once to the point we desire to make. For if our minds are powerless to co-ordinate sixteen simple dots without forming them into convenient groups, how much more necessary must it be to form groups of 20 separate units, especially when those units are themselves complex organisms exhibiting every variety of constitution and of size?

The transcendental symbolism of Hindu mythology has shown a very sure instinct in making a multiplicity of hands and arms a divine attribute; for we are at once impressed by the sense of a complexity of function quite beyond the scope of human management.

Our best organized mental recreation—playing cards—very exactly allows for our mental limitations; in that the best games, utilizing the whole pack, depend on four players, each of whom will on the average hold four suits with three or four cards of each suit. The most ordinary player can thus easily assess the state of his own hand at a glance; the perplexities of the game arise from attempting to infer the hands of other players, and acting accordingly. In the best two-handed card games again, some means is always found to reduce the hand to about 12 cards, averaging three cards in each

suit. Similarly even the subtle complexities of the game of chess require to be grouped into a few main factors before anyone can handle them effectively.

There is a certain confusion of thought under which men are apt to suppose that they can dispose of such difficulties by splitting them into *departments*, in place of grouping them in *compartments*. As if we were to try and meet the confusion of the 16 dots, by getting one man to study their shape, another to study their size, and a third their blackness, and so on. The difficulty would remain, that each man would still be trying directly to co-ordinate 16 dots, with all the consequent embarrassments. The waste of time and reduplication of work involved in this, with the necessity for *each* of them having to run round inspecting *all* the dots, recalls a situation with which we are all too familiar.

Special departments are of course becoming increasingly necessary owing to the progressive specialisation of every form of work; but they should never be formed, as they sometimes are, for the relief of a situation which numerically calls for grouping in compartments. We need not follow this question further than to note how this unavoidable specialisation of departments—as contrasted with that which is avoidable and merely

due to ignorance—is one of the modern complications which are making it daily more necessary that organization should be treated as a science in itself.

Stress of competition has taught this lesson to the vast business concerns of America, where the “ Business Organizer ” or “ Efficiency Engineer ” is a specialist, called in by growing concerns to advise on the most effective methods of organization. In India we have experts in nearly every branch of human activity, constituting an organization far transcending that of any private business; but where are the experts who can advise as to the best means of co-ordinating these myriad activities?

We are in this respect comparable to the men of ancient times who each built his own hut according to common tradition and rule-of-thumb. No large structure could be attempted except by men of great constructive instinct, and the science of architecture was undreamt of. Since then, we have formulated the principles of construction, so that anyone can be taught how to make a large structure which will at least stand; while enormous structural developments, previously quite impossible, are now at the disposal of the expert.

But in the matter of organization every man is still inclined to think his own common sense will

suffice him, and never dreams that there are latent principles which would enable an expert to deal far more effectively with the great structural problems presented by the vast and complex organizations of the present day.

For our present purpose, however, and in the existing chaos of human affairs, we shall do very well if we can make a humble beginning by recognizing, and carrying into effect, the simple principle of grouping to which this chapter is devoted. Should this idea in its explicit form be new to the reader's mind it will certainly be forgotten as soon as he is faced with the perplexities of an actual problem; and only time and use can weave it firmly into the fabric of his effective convictions. We may however assist to this end by passing on to a few examples, designed to show how far the idea is already a part of the hard-earned tradition of mankind, and in what particular respects it is liable to be ignored in actual practice.

As the best possible example of perfect human organization let us take the modern army. In order to provide for the interchangeability of units and equipment in emergencies, and for other special reasons, an army has to maintain a meticulous uniformity which may make many of its arrangements appear at first sight far from admirable to the civilian.

But by the term organization we do not refer to rigidities or absurdities, or indeed to any details of procedure. Neither do we include such modern administrative developments as Army Headquarters in India, which are an organic part of the over-centralised civil Government. What we have in mind is the arrangement of the fighting units, and the fact that, taking men as they are,—with failings of character, memory, and purpose, and the grievous misunderstandings to which even the best of them are liable,—the warfare of centuries has evolved those fundamental principles of organization which, in actual practice and apart from all theories, have proved most suitable for promoting the harmonious co-operation of enormous aggregates of men, in prompt response to every possible change of environment. Armies are also an ideal example, because in them the attainment of this primary essential is not hampered by such extraneous restrictions as so often intrude themselves in civil affairs.—There is nothing to prevent them from establishing the most perfect organization that can be devised.

What is the result?—We find the devolution of control everywhere based on the principle of keeping always a very few groups under a single authority.—All modern armies are built up of a series of groups

each comprising three, four, or five sub-groups, and hardly ever more than six. Thus we have four platoons in a company, four companies in a battalion, four battalions in an infantry brigade, three brigades together with cavalry, artillery and engineers in a division, and about four divisions together with corps troops in an army corps. It will also be remembered that as soon as his army corps became too numerous Sir John French at once grouped them into a few Armies, in order to avoid the confusion which would certainly result from his trying to work an excessive number of corps under his direct control; while the still larger numbers on the great fronts are further organized into "groups of Armies."

It may fairly be said that armies are designed to meet extraordinary requirements, very different from those of civil administration; and that, even if they were necessary, the attainment of ideal conditions in civil government will always be hampered by sentimental or racial considerations, by the restrictions of geographical and historical facts, and by the resistance of vested interests.

All this is true enough, and a civil organization must certainly defer to considerations which do not hamper an army in adopting the most efficient arrangement possible. It is also true that civil affairs

do not usually demand such perfectly concerted action, or such prompt response to a rapidly changing environment as an army. But even so, the limitations of the human mind remain the same, and any organism which ignores them will find all attempts at harmonious development impeded by the friction of misdirected efforts and misunderstandings.

It is of course only to executive action that this strictly applies. You may have councils, parliaments, despots, or what not, to decide on a policy; it is only for the concerted action necessary to its execution that a well-proportioned organism is essential.

You may perhaps, in the absence of vigorous competition, trifle with the principle, if you can afford to luxuriate in a riot of rampant individualism, such as the 48 United States have been able to enjoy, owing to the isolation and the vast spaces of North America; or if you can stagnate in general conformity to a fixed tradition, in practical isolation from your neighbours, as used to be the case in an Indian District or Native State during the last century. But the stress of an increasing population, with the corresponding need for greater coherence and economy of management, must in time force the too numerous United States to coalesce into local groups, or else run the risk of violent disruption. While in India, where we have been

driven to the opposite extreme of over-centralisation, a similar remedy is required to allow of fuller scope for local development. In neither case can the happy mean be found between these two extremes except by removing the true cause of the difficulty.—As all corporate action is dependent on some kind of organization, so is satisfactory co-operation impossible without a good organization.

In the case of the ordinary civil organism we may generally compromise to the extent of allowing the number of units under a single control to vary between three and eight, since some concession to existing conditions will always be necessary. But it should be clearly recognized that as the latter limit is approached, and still more if it is exceeded, congestion of business, reduplication of work, and discordance of effort, will correspondingly increase.

This principle is indeed sufficiently recognized, even in civil affairs, when first organizing any concern. Thus in India we find a few tahsils or taluks grouped into a district, a few districts in a division, and a few divisions into a province; with similar successive groupings in all the departments of government. All this is however done so much as a matter of tradition when *constructing* an organism, that most men are hardly conscious of the principle

involved, and are therefore at a loss when its application is required for the more complex business of *reforming* a concern which has numerically outgrown the limits of its original design—as is now so often happening in the advancing development of Indian affairs.—In just the same way our remote ancestors could build sound huts by rule-of-thumb, but were quite lost when their extension into more complex structures was required. If therefore we have appeared to be insisting too ponderously on what is perfectly obvious and accepted by all, we can only say that this insistence is based on a good deal of experience of the state of many men's minds in regard to such problems, *as soon as they come up against an actual case*. We may perhaps offer the following illustrations, to show how in actual practice the principle may be fulfilled without being at all recognized; and again how in certain cases it may be recognized without being fulfilled; and how the latter contingency is especially liable to occur in regard to the organization of the affairs of the Government of India.

As to the first point, the following is an actual personal experience :—

Some years ago I was travelling on a Burma Railway, and found as my companion an officer of a

great trading company, whose timber operations in Burma and Siam have a world-wide reputation. As is my custom, I questioned him about the methods of organization adopted by so successful a concern.

He told me that the system was based on the chief ports to which timber was floated down,—namely Rangoon, Moulmein, and Bangkok. The head office at each port controlled the operations of the districts belonging to its own hinterland. Rangoon was served by 11 districts, Moulmein by three (as far as I remember), and Bangkok by four.

"*Eleven* districts," I said, "don't you find that is too many for one office to control directly"?

After I had explained my difficulty, he replied that he had never thought about the subject, but that he really didn't see why Rangoon should not run *twenty* districts, if the extent of the country happened to require it.

The conversation then passed on to other subjects, leaving me non-plussed. Until a little later, when he explained that he himself was not in charge of a district, but of a sort of clearing office, which put into shape, by personal discussion when necessary, the accounts of the three or four districts near Mandalay, before forwarding them to Rangoon. It appeared there were three such clearing offices

in Burma, each dealing with a group of three or four contiguous districts.

I mildly remarked that I supposed no such clearing offices were needed for Moulmein or Bangkok. —“ Oh no,” he cheerfully replied. “ You see *they have only three or four districts to handle.*”

The triumph in my eye finally extorted from him a smiling confession that evidently 11 districts *were* too many for the Rangoon office to deal with directly, though the fact had never occurred to him in that light before!

The above is only one of various experiences which have taught the writer how often this principle is fulfilled, in one way or another, without those concerned being consciously aware of it.

Although this particular example is somewhat imperfect, in that it applies to accounts rather than to management, it happens to be especially convenient for our present purpose; first as a useful parallel to the overgrown condition of the administration of Burma, which now consists of 11* separate units working directly under the local government: and also because we can now contrast it with an imaginary case, showing how, under government

* Namely eight large Divisions, together with the three great “ primitive ” charges of the Northern and Southern Shan States and the Chin Hills.

management, the principle might even be recognized without being carried out in practice :—

Let us suppose that this timber business at Rangoon had been run as a government department, and that the annexation of Upper Burma had suddenly increased the timber districts to the unmanageable number of eleven.

Business would soon become congested and unsatisfactory; but the head of the department will be a timber expert probably having the haziest views as to organization, and even if he does realize what is wanted he cannot count on government appreciating the point; so that the dangers and delays of opening up fundamental questions, combined with the short tenure of appointment, will in such cases always cause reform to be postponed for many years after it has become urgently desirable.

Finally things will become so bad that a government committee will be formed to go into the matter. But selections for this committee will be based on the prevalent confusion of thought by which it is assumed that a good administrator must of necessity be a good organizer—whereas we might just as well expect a good chauffeur to be a good designer of machinery, or assume that a good housekeeper must know best how to build a house.—Actually in each

case the two types of mind required are so different as to be almost mutually exclusive.

This statement is obviously open to a good deal of qualification. But how many administrators have concentrated their minds on any such *purely abstract* analysis of communal structure as that on which this chapter is based?—And what would happen to their administrative business while they were so occupied?—Conversely who would trust his car to a chauffeur whose whole mind was passionately absorbed in discovering such profound abstractions as the *Parallelogram of Forces* and the *Laws of Motion*? And yet these are the fundamental principles without which no motor-car could ever have been invented or designed.

However we need not insist on these extremes, beyond drawing attention to a very real differentiation of natural faculty, which is too apt to be overlooked when really constructive re-organization is required. And, to return to our imaginary case, this is why we shall not expect that any single member of a chance committee called together to consider the affairs of a Government Department shall have ever studied organization as a science in itself, besides which they will certainly not have even a two-page pamphlet on the subject to suggest that there is such a science. They will probably neither notice nor care that the number of timber districts happens to be eleven; but will take the usual line of argument, pointing out that owing to modern developments the business

had clearly outgrown the powers of one department, and suggesting that the department should therefore be confined to its own primary business of purchasing and felling timber, while a second department should be formed for the subsidiary purposes of transport and exportation.

This is plausible enough, and undoubtedly would result in some temporary relief. But instead of the simple business solution of three intermediate clearing offices, we should have most extravagantly re-duplicated the whole staff by the formation of two separate departments, each suffering from the inherent defect of dealing directly with eleven districts, and each a cause of interference and friction to the other; with no one to co-ordinate affairs and smooth difficulties except the remote authorities in Rangoon, who would be in a position eminently calculated to develop mutual jealousy and antagonism.

We need not labour this imaginary case too far, and may leave the department making the best of things for an indefinite time, because an overburdened government is "not prepared to reopen this question."—And indeed it would be a fortunate government which had no worse imperfections than the above to consider. Our present object is merely to bring home to the reader's mind, in circumstances

with which he may be familiar, the very nebulous state of current thought even in regard to the simplest principles of organization. For examples may be found everywhere in India, from the supreme Government downwards, of this misdirected attempt to relieve the pressure of growing business by the continual bifurcation of "watertight" departments, until their number is becoming bewildering and the waste of effort is incalculable.

The above comparison of the alternative ways of dealing with the overgrown timber department will be found especially pertinent to the proposals we are putting forward for relieving the unwieldiness of the Indian Government.—For it may at first sight seem as if our scheme must necessarily involve an increase of staff, with corresponding expense. Whereas actually our proposal corresponds with the economical business solution of grouping the work under a few local clearing offices, in place of the far more extravagant method of splitting off fresh departments. That this latter method is in active operation at present may be gathered from the fact that the number of main departments in the supreme Government has been more than doubled during the past 50 years, and that even the last 12 years have seen the addition of fresh departments for Commerce

and Industry, and for Sanitation and Education, together with the bifurcation of the Foreign and Political Departments, and the creation of other specially differentiated activities, such as the Railway Board.

There is no doubt much to be said for these additions and bifurcations on their own merits, and indeed, *under the present system*, they are the only way of meeting the rapid expansion of business. But it appears to be becoming almost a settled habit for each new Viceroy to enshrine his pet reform or most urgent difficulty in a new department, if not in two. The relief afforded is immediate and obvious, while the congestive effect on affairs is insidious and only takes effect very gradually. It appears therefore high time that we should recognize the organic import and disadvantages of this rapidly increasing tendency; and should consider whether it would not really be cheaper to adopt the natural business solution, by creating local clearing offices, which, working in closer touch with men and with facts, could dispose of expanding business far more effectively than even the most bewildering galaxy of distant special departments. We cannot meet growing requirements without increasing expenditure, and the choice clearly lies between piling further

entanglements on to an overloaded concern or remodelling the structure to bear the increasing burden. The former alternative can only lead to ultimate breakdown, while the latter offers a fair prospect of rejuvenescence.

The chief difficulty arises from the fact that the science of organization does not yet form part of a liberal education—a defect which has cost us very dear throughout the war—and that the statesmen and administrators who rightly hold the reins of power are essentially men skilled in making the best of things as they are, and therefore seldom inclined to brood over fundamental problems of structure. So that the very simplicity of the numerical principle we have put forward may incline them to brush it aside as a “mere mechanical theory” compared with the throbbing political perplexities which are their natural field of action. It may therefore be well to conclude our long digression by briefly indicating the very human advantages which this numerical principle brings in its train.

It is obvious enough that a man having only a few units under his control will find it far easier to co-ordinate their affairs than when he has a large number. But apart from such improved co-operation there is a distinct advantage to each separate unit,

arising from the more frequent opportunities for personal intercourse between the superior and his subordinates. Such personal contact is the only way of clearing up misunderstandings and getting properly settled any business which is at all complicated. When the two individuals concerned are mutually congenial it has the happiest results, since each soon comes to leave to the other those items in which he is naturally strongest and therefore enjoys most; but even when temperaments are incompatible, a very little experience of both methods will show that it is far better for the work, and for all concerned, to have a superior who, if he must interfere, at all events does so with a fairly close knowledge of the facts based on personal intercourse, than to have one who intervenes by correspondence, in exasperating ignorance of local conditions obvious to the man on the spot.

Broadly it comes to this, that with a remote superior a man may have greater freedom in respect of trifles, but is liable to be harassed by every kind of delay and misunderstanding in getting anything big put through. While the barrier of correspondence, especially with an overburdened superior, prevents men from opening up all those minor readjustments which every idea requires when put into actual

practice, and which make all the difference between its working smoothly or ill. The management thus oscillates between the two extremes of over-centralisation and of incoherent individualism, as the disadvantages of either extreme become alternately manifest. Good sense and good-will can and do mitigate these troubles, but if the organization does not allow for human limitations even the best men must fail, and the normal results will be a distracted superior, exasperated subordinates, and general congestion of affairs.

It may further be noted that a well-proportioned organism is less at the mercy of the individual, since so long as the groups are small there will always be more than one responsible man in fairly close touch with every branch of the work, and every superior can closely check or support those who most need it, while receiving similar treatment from those above him. Most men will immediately shy at this suggested possibility for increased interference, especially if they are accustomed to remote superiors whose attempts at intervention can seldom be happy. But in practice this theoretical disadvantage is balanced by the fact that interference becomes more enlightened by exact knowledge, and at all events can be withstood or brought to a workable compromise

by personal intercourse, in a way impossible when corresponding with a very high and remote superior.

This advantage of having more than one man in fairly close touch with every part of the work is moreover especially desirable in a staff which has to face so much loneliness and ill-health, and where transfers and changes are so frequent, as in India; and it further permits of regulations being relaxed, since it is possible to allow more discretion to a group than is always safe in the case of the isolated individual.

The prevalent tendency in India towards isolated charges and inadequate management is a relic of the days when the absence of communications made isolation a necessity, and the stagnation of affairs demanded little in the shape of corporate action. Now that modern communications have made constant interference possible, and modern progress is drawing all adjacent units into a whirl of common interests, this old system can no longer suffice us, and is the direct cause of an infinity of futile correspondence; while the attempt to avoid individual errors by the artificial method of multiplying regulations, merely ties the hands of the best officers without really making good the deficiencies of the worst.

The present administrative system was not only designed to meet very primitive conditions, but was based on the assumption that the whole of the superior personnel would be *homogeneous*. We may therefore find an additional advantage of the group system in connection with the increased employment of Indians in the higher places of the administration.

This increase of the Indian element should be a source of strength in many respects, but the personal isolation of charges is a distinct obstacle to its development; since such a state of affairs essentially demands from the whole personnel an intuitive mutual understanding which can only exist in its highest form amongst men who have been brought up from infancy in an identical tradition.

It is hard enough to find anyone who can satisfactorily meet modern requirements under the present difficult conditions; but this handicap inevitably tells hardest against the Indian administrator, who must be blessed with extraordinary tact and intuition if he is to avoid failure.—This is not fair to the country or the individual; and the only remedy is to modify the structure so that more complex requirements may be met by a more heterogeneous personnel.

The group system offers the best hope of strengthening the structure for this purpose. Thus,

instead of having the isolated district, with its meagre staff, as our unit of administration, we might have smaller Divisions, each with its own staff of specialists, and consisting of a few *small* districts working together as a well-manned corporate group.—Just as we desire to see the group system on a larger scale applied to Provinces.

It is however important to note that the best way to carry out such reforms is to proceed gradually, by first strengthening the management at the top, so as to enable each portion of the country to effect the subordinate developments in accordance with local needs.—It is a common mistake to begin at the wrong end, by continually devising executive improvements of detail, without first strengthening the management which has to carry them through.

The settled conditions of Indian official life do not offer to most men the opportunity of testing the advantages of grouping in actual practice; and failing this, only the very few will possess the imagination to realize benefits which are outside their own personal experience. Those who are attempting to put things through in some remote district on a neglected frontier will be best able to feel where the shoe pinches; whereas those exercising their

functions in a well-found and well-manned central office are the least likely to realize how very far from the facts their "files" may sometimes be.

The man in the street, on the other hand, regards "the government" as so mysterious, if not portentous, an agency, that he hesitates to feel sure that the highest activities of State, no less than the smallest private business, depend for their successful conduct on placing the human individual in the most favourable position for co-operation with his fellows. The principle now put forward is however so obviously of universal application, and so extremely simple, that we may fairly hope for its ultimate victory over every kind of confusion of thought which may arise, when it comes to be applied to the complicated problem of Indian administration, which we shall now approach.

CHAPTER VI.

THE EXISTING SITUATION.

ANY attempt to describe the whole complicated system of the territorial subdivisions of India would be tedious, and even a brief numerical summary is not very easy to treat clearly.

Every considerable Native State is essentially a separate administrative unit; and if we were to count all of them our number would run into hundreds. But for convenience of business the large majority of States have already been formed into local groups, in each of which the central Government is represented by one superior officer, who controls the political officers attached to the various States of the group.

Such groups are of two kinds. First those containing Native States only, which are called "Agencies" and have an Agent to the Governor-General in charge; and secondly groups consisting of States which have been affiliated to some British Province in which they happen to lie. In this case the Governor of the Province acts as agent for such States, which are for general business often treated as integral parts of the Province.

For our present purpose we may simplify the matter by regarding as a single unit *any administrative area in which the central Government is represented by one officer* with whom it deals directly. From this point of view all States affiliated to a British Province may be counted as forming a single unit with that Province, and similarly in the few cases where a small British area is included with a group of States, and administered by their chief political officer, the whole may be accepted as a single unit.

We need not detail all these complications which are sufficiently indicated in the list and diagram at the end of the book; where it will be found that, considered in this way, the central Government has directly to administer and co-ordinate the affairs of over twenty separate units under a great variety of conditions.

The Government of India relieves this numerical difficulty by the arrangement under which the Political Department deals with the Native States units, while the Home and other departments are chiefly concerned with British India proper. But considering how intricately the State and British units are in many places entangled together, the relief arising from this division of labour is so counterbalanced

by other difficulties that our summary description of the Empire as a collection of over 20 separate units under one control is a very modest numerical index of the actual complications.

Now we have already seen that any such organization is numerically excessive, and must cause all corporate business to become incoherent and congested. Whereas it may be urged, by those who are sufficiently inured to its shortcomings, that the arrangement does in actual practice work quite tolerably.

Much of course depends on what we choose to consider "tolerable." The subordinate organization is often well designed, and the good order and good faith which now pervade the administration are certainly an immense improvement on the state of internecine chaos which previously existed. Also the standard of expectation from Government Departments, whether in England or in India, is not very exacting, and people have become resigned to government action, or want of action, as though confusion and delay were the natural concomitants of the affairs of State.

There is moreover in the present case a real ground for complacency in the fact that, even in its larger aspects, the administrative machinery evolved

during the past century was wonderfully well suited to the circumstances in which it arose. But we have now to recognize that those times have passed away, and that we are faced with very different conditions from those of the "unchanging East" of the nineteenth century.—Business is everywhere increasing in extent and complexity; the most far-reaching reforms are being demanded and introduced, and have to be applied with a tact and nicety of discrimination generally beyond the powers of a central office; while the development of commerce and communications requires a new machinery for promoting local co-operation in all matters affecting the common weal.

These increasing demands on the machinery of Government have been accompanied by a steady aggravation of the chief defect of that machinery, namely the excessive number of its separate parts; even the present century having added three more separate Provinces (the N.-W. Frontier, Bihar and Orissa, and Delhi) to the list.

There were thus in the past century fewer units to control, and the central Government could allow most of them to jog along with very intermittent attention; whereas we are now faced with a situation which everywhere demands unremitting care applied

to a much greater and steadily increasing number of separate units.

As regards the growing tendency to add to the number of provincial areas by subdivision, we must remember that further extensions of this method of reducing the difficulties of unwieldy Provinces are often urged; and are sometimes reinforced by the lively desire of certain communities, as in Sind and Orissa, for a local administration which shall answer more readily to their own peculiar needs and aspirations than is at present possible. This being the only way of providing that more discriminating and elastic administration which the country is beginning to require, we must expect the tendency to increase with the advancement of material prosperity.

Since the Provinces are already too numerous we can only increase their number with convenience *after* we have formed them into manageable groups; and we thus arrive at the conclusion that this process of grouping must be the first step towards relieving the situation. All that devoted industry and high ability can do to keep the present inadequate machinery abreast of requirements is being done; but good men are everywhere being wasted, if not broken, in the attempt; while there is a growing feeling of unrest which attributes to the vices of "bureaucracy"

faults which are simply due to the system having outgrown itself.

While progress is thus hampered at every turn by the disquisitions and delays of a remote central office, and while that office retains the final veto in regard to local details with which it can have no personal touch, we are placing a direct premium on violent and persistent agitation as the only sure means of obtaining a hearing; and are discouraging the vast majority of loyal and law-abiding people who also desire to be heard and understood but have no taste for political agitation.

The very serious effects of this unfortunate, but let us hope transitory, state of affairs are sufficiently well recognized by the Government of India; as may be judged by the anxious attention devoted of late years to questions of decentralisation. That these efforts have been crowned with so little success is a good example of the general theorem that effective decentralisation is impossible under conditions which are numerically unmanageable.

So long as the present numerical excesses remain the only alternative to over-centralisation would be a disorderly incoherence which is quite out of the question in India; since she cannot afford the enormous waste of wealth and energy which such

incoherence must always entail. This little book is therefore written in the cheerful conviction that whatever may be the latest attempts at improved decentralisation on the part of Government, they will hardly do more than counterbalance the increase of business which will have grown up in the meanwhile; and that therefore things must and will grow steadily worse unless the real cause of the trouble is removed.

No circumlocution can evade the natural law, under which every large household in the world has to group its servants under upper servants, and which through all time has dominated man's every effort at tribal or communal organization.

Even the latest chapters of Indian history will show how the number of separate *Subahs* under the Moghal Empire was steadily increased until the whole structure fell to pieces; and if we desire a more ancient sanction, we may see, in the second chapter of the Book of Numbers, how soon Moses was forced to group the 12 tribes of Israel into four camps. Earlier still, in the eighteenth chapter of Exodus, we may find how Jethro, the priest of Midian, gave Moses the first hint of this idea; and the words in which he criticised over-centralisation in those ancient times are not without their application at the present day—"The thing that thou doest is not

good.—Thou wilt surely wear away, both thou and this people that is with thee : for this thing is too heavy for thee; thou art not able to perform it by thyself alone.”

CHAPTER V.

SUBSIDIARY PRINCIPLES.

BEFORE we can apply the principle of geographical grouping to the administrative units of India, we must deal with certain local considerations which will govern the practical details of any satisfactory solution.

The first question to be decided is whether the separate Native States* and great Agencies should be included in the new Presidencies, or whether the reform should be confined to the British Provinces and those States which happen to be already incorporated with them.

The latter solution, including only the British Provinces, has been advocated by other writers on the subject, and is the one to which the author was rather inclined when first approaching the question some ten or eleven years ago. But further consideration will show that the Native States are so numerous and important, and often so entangled with British areas, that the advantages of geographical

* This point is to some extent susceptible of compromise, as stated in Chapter II, and discussed in further detail at the end of Chapter VI, where it will be found that Kashmir is the only separate State which need be involved in the "simplest solution."

grouping in promoting local co-operation would be enormously reduced if the Native States were excluded.

It will, moreover, be evident that so long as the central Government remains the sole medium of communication with the Native States units, it will be impossible to delegate to the Presidencies free discretion in regard to many details of corporate concern, which might be much better settled locally if the States formed an organic part of the proposed Presidencies.

The old conditions of chaotic struggle under which many of the States became affiliated to the Empire have long since passed away; and the recent glorious rally of the Ruling Princes of India in support of the Crown has only set a seal upon the great change in our mutual relations which has been gradually developing. Our connection with the Native States may often have originated as a treaty between aliens, but has now grown into a federation of the firmest friendship, founded on a common interest in India's welfare, and braced by a thousand personal ties of mutual loyalty and esteem.

There is a very prevalent desire that this great change should be recognized by giving the Native States a more direct voice in the Councils of the

Empire. But the unwieldiness of the present organization, with its confusion of responsibilities, has combined with other causes to make any such arrangement extremely difficult. If things were better ordered, so that the central Government confined itself to broad questions of Imperial policy and left local details to the new Presidencies, it might be found easier to arrange for the representation of the States both on the Presidency Councils and in the Imperial Cabinet of India.

However this may be, the proposed reform would offer a very favourable opportunity for considering the matter, and would in any case afford to the Native States improved facilities for corporate action, from which they would benefit equally with the rest of the Empire.

The present proposal to group them with their neighbours into great Presidencies is indeed nothing more than an extension of the existing system under which many most important States are already incorporated, for the purposes of ordinary business, as parts of the British Provinces in which they happen to lie. Existing personal privileges, such as those enjoyed by the Ruling Princes in their relations with the Viceroy of India, need in no way be curtailed; and the Political Department would carry

on its dealings with the States just as at present, except that the Agents would refer ordinary business to their local Governor-General instead of direct to the Government of India. Finally it will be found that the proposed change need not cause the slightest disturbance of the internal affairs, boundaries, or status, of any unit, British or Native.

The occasion might however be signalized by bestowing more appropriate titles on these Agencies and their chief officers. For instance all Native States coming in on the new basis might be ranked as "*Federal States of India*," the great Agencies being called "*Federations*," while their chief political officer might be a "*High Commissioner*," as in the case of Egypt.

Similar improvements of title might also be applied to the whole administration of British India, since the drab and confused nomenclature of Indian officials is not only a disparagement of the country's importance, but also has the very serious effect of dwarfing in the eyes of the outside world, and not infrequently to the administrators themselves, the vastness of the responsibilities connected with the Empire of India.

We have already referred in Chapter I to the high status and powerful staff accorded to Ceylon,

which in area and population would form a mere fraction of an Indian Province. But this is no solitary instance, and if we bear in mind that the largest Indian districts, administered by "Collectors," have populations up to three and four millions, and then look at the corresponding state of affairs in other parts of the British Empire, we shall find the same thing everywhere. Beginning with Australia, which has, for a population of only five millions, one Governor-General, six Governors, seven Lieutenant-Governors, and one Administrator; and ending with the Sudan, where there is one Governor-General with 13 Governors for a population of under three millions!

India's enormous population of over three hundred millions renders it impossible to equalize these anomalies. But the present occasion would offer a good opportunity to mitigate them, and at the same time to make the administrative nomenclature more simple and consistent. The following suggestions are therefore put forward with this object :—

We may begin by noting the variety of titles given to the rulers of the larger Indian Provinces.—Madras, Bombay, and Bengal, have *Governors*;—the Punjab, United Provinces, Bihar and Orissa,

and Burma, have *Lieutenant-Governors*;—while the Central Provinces, Assam, and the N.-W. Frontier Province, have *Chief Commissioners*. The actual distinction between these various titles does not amount to very much; there is a slight difference in their powers of independent action, but this is a difference of degree and not of kind, since all these Provinces are essentially similar units directly subordinate to the central Government.

If therefore the rulers of all Provinces were called *Governors*, their differences of degree might be denoted by classifying them as Governors of the first, second, or third class; and the title of Chief Commissioner might then be reserved for such special items as Delhi and the Andamans.

Having thus arranged a **Viceroy** for all India, a separate **Governor-General** for each Presidency, and **Governors** for all the considerable Provinces, we could give the title of **Lieutenant-Governor** to the present Commissioners of provincial Divisions, and thus reserve the title of **Commissioner** for the heads of all districts in India.

As things stand at present the possibilities of the "Division," or group of districts, as an organized working unit, are very undeveloped; so that those Provinces which have the advantage of

being organized in Divisions remain in many respects almost as centralised as Madras, which has none. The proposed title of Lieutenant-Governor for the heads of Divisions might therefore, in addition to its natural appropriateness, be useful in suggesting the possibility of further decentralisation in this direction.—We have already referred, at the end of Chapter III, to some of the advantages of developing the possibilities of the Division as a stronger and more corporate group, but this is a side-issue rather beyond the immediate purpose of the present work.

As to the heads of districts, these are at present styled variously in different parts of the country as “Collectors,” or “Deputy Commissioners,” and sometimes as “Superintendents.” And though it may be urged that “a rose by any other name would smell as sweet,” it can hardly be doubted that the single uniform title of “Commissioner” would be more convenient and appropriate.

The confusion of the existing titles is however so embarrassing that we shall, for the sake of brevity, refer to all heads of Provinces simply as “Governors” during the present discussion. Similarly it will be convenient to refer to Madras and Bombay as “Provinces,” in order to avoid con-

fusion with 'the proposed new use of the word "Presidency" as denoting a group of Provinces. It is not suggested that Madras and Bombay should in reality give up the title of Presidency, but merely that they shall be regarded as Provinces for the purposes of the present discussion.*

As already stated in Chapter II, India may be regarded for most practical purposes as an island, being surrounded inland by almost impassable barriers and therefore dependent on the sea and its great ports for all commerce or commune with the modern world.

The great ports of India thus form the natural bases for any system of administration, and we therefore propose to group round each port all those Provinces and other units which fall in its natural hinterland. In doing this we shall find ourselves left with a few inland units which are so placed as to depend on more than one of these ports, and which therefore may be conveniently grouped together as a separate Central Presidency.

When we examine the actual problem from this point of view, we shall find that there is one

* This also applies to the Province of Bengal, which has recently received the technical distinction of being classed as a Presidency.—This distinction would of course disappear on the Province being merged into the proposed Eastern Presidency.

inevitable exception to the principle of accepting all units as they stand, and leaving all boundaries untouched.—Namely, that Sind must be detached, as a separate Province, from Bombay, with which its connection is purely fortuitous and based on no geographical or racial affinities; while its capital, Karachi, is and must remain the great port of Northern India, to which it naturally belongs. This one exception to the principle of avoiding partitions may be little more than an anticipation of events, as it seems probable that Sind will in any case insist sooner or later on being detached from Bombay.

The general principles with which we shall approach the actual problem may thus be summarised as follows :—

- (1) *To group the 20 or more separate administrative units into a few Presidencies under Governors-General.*
- (2) *To include the great Native State units in this grouping. (With possible modifications discussed in the next chapter.)*
- (3) *To make the chief ports the nuclei of the system.*
- (4) *To accept all Provinces and other units as they stand, without any disturbance*

of their internal government or affairs; excepting that Sind would have to be constituted as a separate Province.— This of course does not mean that the proposal is adverse to any such changes as may be desired on other grounds, but that it in itself does not entail them.

- (5) *As a side-issue—to give added significance to the change by raising and improving administrative titles all round.*
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CHAPTER VI.

THE SIMPLEST SOLUTION.

THE list and diagram bound at the end of the book will show how all the separate administrative units of India might be conveniently grouped into a few Presidencies, according to the principles already discussed; with the trifling exception of the small Delhi enclave, which would probably remain as a special Viceregal Province under the direct control of the central Government.

Taking these Presidencies, in turn, the first point which may strike the reader is the inclusion of Burma with the **Eastern Presidency**. Certainly the very distinct individuality and needs of Burma, with its geographical detachment from India and the possession of its own great port, Rangoon, all combine to make a strong case for making it a separate Presidency; and this possibility is adumbrated in the other maps by a broken boundary between it and India proper.

Further consideration however seems to indicate this as an ultimate solution which it may be better to approach gradually. The fact of Burma's small population is in itself hardly conclusive; but added

to this the Province is very undeveloped and sadly deficient in communications; while its interior organization is unwieldy, the number of separate charges having become excessive owing to the addition of Upper Burma to what was previously a manageable system.

It further includes over 2,000 miles of foreign frontier, parts of which are very vaguely defined and still in a state of primitive savagery. The idea of forming a separate N. E. Frontier Province, to include parts of the Burma and Assam frontiers, has been mooted before now; and probably the best ultimate solution would be to divide Burma into two or three separate Provinces, in each of which the picked Governor would be able to exercise a close and effective personal control.*

If seems however possible that if Burma were to be detached in her present state as a separate Presidency, we should not only add to the expense and complexity of our new system, but might leave Burma so weak and distant an entity as still to be in danger of neglect compared with the other great Presidencies. Whereas if we adopt the simpler

* It is officially estimated that the Province could support *at least three or four times* its present population, and the rate of increase since the British occupation has been very rapid.

expedient of affiliating Burma to the proposed Eastern Presidency, she would be a very important item in its responsibilities. The Governor-General and other authorities of such a Presidency would be able by frequent visits to acquire a personal intimacy with the needs of Burma such as is impossible to the present central Government, and would be in a position to bring to their relief all the powers of the largest Presidency of the Empire.

After some years of progress under these more favourable conditions, and after the advantages of the new Presidency system had been more fully realized in actual practice, the Governor-General of the Eastern Presidency would be in the best position to formulate proposals for the creation of a N. E. Frontier Province, and for any such partition of Burma into separate Provinces as might seem advisable; while arranging, if desired, for the constitution of the whole as a separate Presidency based on Rangoon. The balance of advantage seems therefore in favour of adopting, to begin with, the simpler and more economical arrangement shown on the list and diagram at the end of the book; though this must obviously remain a very open question until it has been subjected to careful discussion by those concerned.

The Provinces of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa, and Assam, with the hill States to their North, obviously form parts of the natural hinterland of Calcutta, and should be placed in the best administrative position for co-operation with their chief port; while the Andamans form a trifling item which might as well be administered by authorities who would be able to pay it an occasional visit.

Altogether this Eastern Presidency would practically constitute a re-incarnation of the old Presidency of Bengal, resuscitating the time-honoured title of "Governor-General of Fort William in Bengal," and giving back to Calcutta, in a more workable form, all of influence and of prestige which she has lost under recent administrative changes.

The prosperous development which may be expected from the great spiritual renaissance now fermenting in Bengal, will surely require in time a further reduction in the size of Provinces in order to meet the expansion of business; but we may fairly hope that Calcutta's attitude towards such developments would be very different when they no longer constituted a threat to her natural supremacy.

Instead of being asked to divide her house with an administrative rival, she would merely have to

recognize an increase in the number of her children as the natural result of her growing prosperity. Under the new conditions any such measure would indeed be more like the constitution of an extra "Division" in an existing Province, than that direct cleavage right up to the Government of India which has aroused so much feeling lately.

Turning now to the proposed **Central Presidency**, we find it to consist of two British Provinces, two Native State Agencies, and Nepal. It is doubtful whether Nepal would care to be included in any such arrangement at present, as the State has hitherto preferred complete seclusion amidst its Himalayan fastnesses. But it seems inevitable that the modern world-spirit will sooner or later bring Nepal into closer touch with the outside world; and for the timely promotion of any such development we could hardly do better than to provide a distinguished administrator in more intimate touch with it than the Government of India can ever be.

As regards the other four items, we may note that the United Provinces is the most populous administrative unit of all India, having three times the population of the Central Provinces, and twice that of the Punjab or Bombay without Sind. The congestion of work in the local secretariat is

accordingly 'excessive, and the leading members of the great communities of the United Provinces must have a corresponding difficulty in obtaining personal access to those in authority.

The natural remedy would be to revert to earlier conditions by separating the old Provinces of Agra and Oudh; though a glance at any large map will show that if Oudh were made separate the remainder would fall more conveniently into two Provinces, each of which would still equal the whole of the Central Provinces in population.

But, as we have seen, any such measure would at present carry the grave objection that the provincial government would lose influence in its relations with the Government of India. This objection would however cease to have weight as soon as the Presidency of only four or five units was formed; and thus the creation of the Presidency should be the first step towards relieving the intense strain of present conditions.

It will be seen that these units of the proposed Central Presidency form a compact natural group, whose interior boundaries are in places much entangled with one another. It is also interesting to note that the group would correspond generally with the ancient "*Madhya-desa*" or "Midland"

of Sanskrit geography; and that a title based on this fact might perhaps be acceptable. If however Agra were selected as its capital, perhaps we might revive in it the old idea of a "Presidency of Agra," which was nearly brought into being in 1833. The Presidency would include such wide political relations with the great historic States of Rajputana and Central India, that the proximity of Agra to Delhi might often prove a convenience if that historic city were chosen as the capital.

We may now consider the **Northern Presidency**, which would consist of all units depending naturally on the port of Karachi, namely the Punjab, Kashmir, the N.-W. Frontier Province, the Baluchistan Agency, and Sind, covering roughly the whole basin of the Indus and its tributaries,—a fact which suggests the "Presidency of Sind" as a suitable alternative title. This Presidency has a much smaller population than the other two already discussed. But it includes a well-armed and inflammable frontier which has always claimed a disproportionate share of attention from those responsible for the safety of India; besides this it harbours a large proportion of our military forces, and is the home of some of the most martial races of the Empire.

In this connection it is important to remember that our N.-W. Frontier is not confined to the small Province of that name, but stretches through two thousand miles of wild unsettled country, from the Taghdumbash Pamir, where three Empires meet in the icy highlands of Central Asia, down to the sun-baked coast-line of Kalat on the shores of the Arabian Sea. India is at present rather too much at the mercy of the single and distant authorities who administer separate portions of this frontier; so there should be distinct advantages, and no real loss, in placing the whole of it under a single Governor-General, who could make himself personally acquainted with its problems and personalities, in a way that no Viceroy can hope to do. Thus, with the supreme Government at Delhi, all concerned could meet at short notice in any momentous crisis, for a conference which should be greatly strengthened by the "second opinion" afforded by such a Governor-General.

Be this as it may, the great administrative convenience of developing the whole Indus valley in unison with its natural port is obvious enough, and will become still more marked with the expansions of commerce and of irrigation which will make the allocation of the limited water supply between

different Provinces extremely difficult and controversial.

Sind is indeed already watching with grave anxiety the effect of the great Punjab irrigation schemes upon her water supply, while the Punjab is similarly concerned with the doings of Kashmir; so that the best way to secure a harmonious solution of these difficulties would be to make them the prime concern of an administration directly interested in the whole area.

The problems presented by the vast dessicated areas of North-Western India, of which the Punjab and Sind are only a part, are of the first magnitude, and call for the co-operation of the bacteriologist, the botanist, and the physicist, no less than the engineer. No government distracted with the claims of all India, or pent up in one small Province, will ever be able to handle such problems effectively; whereas the proposed Presidency would represent all the chief interests concerned (especially if modified by the inclusion of all Western Rajputana, *vide Appendix*), and should therefore be in the best position to secure the ultimate victory of man in this unceasing struggle against the barren sands of the desert.

It will be seen that the Punjab would have a

great preponderance of bulk and importance over the other units in this Northern Presidency; but it seems possible that a few years of intimacy with the smaller and more manageable units under the Presidency system, might so clearly show the advantages of compactness that the Punjab would soon develop a desire to enjoy similar advantages by bifurcating into an Eastern and a Western portion. Such developments may however be left in the hands of the future; and all that we need now note are the possibilities for disposing of administrative unwieldiness which would everywhere be opened up by the Presidency system.

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We have now seen how the 15 or more administrative units which stretch across all Northern India from the Khyber Pass to the Kunlon Ferry might be amalgamated into three great Presidencies, without disturbing their internal affairs and with great prospective advantage to all concerned. When however we turn to the remaining five units in the South and South-West of India, we find greater difficulties and less prospective advantage.

To begin with it can hardly be expected that either Madras or Bombay would desire to merge together into a single Presidency. Failing this, we

should have to form two groups, as shown on the maps, by affiliating Hyderabad and Baroda to Bombay, and Mysore to Madras. This would not constitute any great numerical gain, as it would only mean the reduction of the present five separate units to two, while one or more of the great Native States concerned might possibly object to the idea.

It is therefore suggested, as the *simplest solution of all*, though possibly not the most perfect, that we might for the present content ourselves with the consolidation of the three great Presidencies of the North, Centre, and East, as already described, and leave the five units of the West and South just as they are.

This compromise would at one stroke relieve the central Government of its most intimate internal difficulties; since the Southern and Western units already enjoy a good deal of local autonomy, and might be given more; while the total number of separate units working directly under the Government of India would thus be reduced to the more manageable number of eight (excluding the small Delhi enclave).

The bulk of the trouble would thus be removed, and further embellishments might safely be left to develop themselves once the whole machinery had

become comparatively manageable. Thus it appears unlikely that any strong feeling in favour of immediate change would be found at present in the units of the West and South; but once the great co-operative benefits of this improved organization had become manifest in practice, and were recognized by the great States of the Deccan; and when Madras had come to see the desirability of decentralising her administration—which is extremely unwieldy*—into, say, three Provinces under her own Presidency; then the time would be ripe to consider the extension of the principle of grouping to include these remaining five units.

The frontispiece and the diagram illustrate this simplest solution, based on the acceptance of all units as they are; a method which would secure to India the vast advantages of proper management, without anywhere causing so much local disturbance as may arise through the transfer of a single district from one Province to another.

Existing provincial boundaries are however not always ideally suited to the purpose, and there are a few modifications which would round off the proposed Presidencies more perfectly, and which therefore might as well be included in the scheme in

* *Viz.*—26 districts and 5 States, without any intermediate grouping.

cases where local opinion was favourable. The discussion of such minor improvements is relegated to the Appendix, since none of them has any importance comparable with the establishment of the main principle; so that their adoption or otherwise may be decided according to local sentiment in each separate case.

It is most unlikely that all of these minor modifications of boundary would be adopted in the exact form put forward in the Appendix; but the skeleton map on the cover of the book sufficiently indicates their total effect, which will be found rather more symmetrical than that of the simplest solution discussed in this chapter and illustrated in the frontispiece map and the diagram.

CHAPTER VII.

CONCLUSION.

IN the summer of 1913 the author printed a small pamphlet on the present subject for circulation to some of his friends. Apart from the cordial encouragement which has led him to lay the idea before a wider public, he found everyone inclined to urge or to argue about administrative embellishments of various kinds.

For instance the difficulties as well as the advantages of having a Royal Viceroy were sometimes discussed as though the proposals regarding an improved organic structure must stand or fall by that issue alone.—Again it was urged that we might insist more strongly on the improved possibilities which the scheme would afford for obtaining the personal assistance of Indian Princes in the Councils of India.—Suggestions were also offered, and questions asked, as to the constitution of the proposed Presidency Councils, and what powers should be given to them, and what retained by the central Government, with the corresponding rearrangement of High Courts of Judicature, etc., etc.—Above all, opinions seemed unanimous, and

were sometimes heated, as to the urgency of dealing with the India Office question before we could hope to get things moving in India, or greatly lessen the burden of trifling correspondence.

Now all these problems are real and important enough, but they lie outside of our immediate purpose, which is to draw public attention to the prime necessities of the situation. Once this is accomplished we may hope that the solution of accessory difficulties will pass into hands far more competent than our own.

Thus the question of a Royal Viceroy is essentially one for the consideration of His Majesty and experienced statesmen. So that we may content ourselves by pointing out that the proposed arrangement would obviously create a new position much more suitable for Royalty, by raising the Viceroyalty above the arena of petty internal controversies. A permanent President of the Council might conduct the details of such departmental business as remained in the hands of the supreme Government; so that altogether the Viceroy would be far more free than at present to devote himself to the more personal functions of his high office—which are nowhere more important than in the East.

An important possibility in this connection

is that the 'highest posts in India might be made more attractive to statesmen of the first class by removing the present embargo on visits home during their tenure of office. Once we have a Viceroy and several Governors-General, it should always be possible to allow of one or more being at home, while still leaving India stronger in first-class statesmanship, conversant with home affairs, than it is at present. Such visits should moreover automatically diminish the burden of correspondence with the India Office, and promote a more lively personal touch between Indian and home affairs.

It is possible that the institution of some form of high Imperial Cabinet in London, for the joint management of the affairs of the British Empire, may be one of the great results of the war; and clearly any such arrangement might touch the India Office in ways impossible to foresee at present. We need only now note that it should certainly become possible for England to delegate more power to the great Councils of India, once she had a larger number of her representative statesmen on the spot. Though whether this could best be effected by the application of "T. N. T." to the India Office, or by milder measures, is a matter best left for the consideration of experts.

Obviously all objections to conducting the details of public business at a distant central office in Delhi, apply with greater force to a far more distant central office in London, where also the best interests of India cannot always be kept clear of local party politics. It may however be admitted that the India Office fulfils many useful functions, besides others which are the reverse; and in any case it seems pretty certain that, whatever might be designed at first, the mere fact of giving India a strong and properly organized local administration would in the long run result in its acquiring a due measure of local independence.

We have a magnificent example in the way this great principle of geographical grouping has recently been applied to the large number of self-governing British Colonies, by forming them into the great administrative groups of Canada, Australia and South Africa. Many misgivings were expressed by the usual croakers regarding the possible inconveniences of forming such powerful local groups; but who to-day can question the enormous benefits derived by the whole Empire from this improved organization? Incidentally we may notice that the Colonial Office has acquired a very much better reputation for promptitude and efficiency than the India

Office, or than that which it used to have itself when burdened with the impossible task of trying directly to co-ordinate the affairs of all the separate Colonies.

With regard to such minor details as the exact amount of power to be delegated to the proposed Presidencies, it probably does not matter very much what is decided. Obviously unless they are to be mere "post offices" considerable powers must be accorded to them by the central Government; and assuming that this is done on a reasonable basis, so as to give things a fair start, we may safely rely on a properly proportioned organism to perfect the details in actual practice. All we need is a general consensus of public opinion in favour of the main principle, together with the cordial co-operation of the great States, and then the firm and patient leadership which can bring our Argosy of hopes into the safe haven of accomplished facts.

Similarly such questions as the constitution of Presidency Councils and the more direct participation of Native States in the administration, though most important, are clearly details to be decided after prolonged discussion with those concerned. Whatever the exact arrangement adopted, there can be no doubt that the scope for men of ability

who are interested in India's welfare would be immensely improved. Since at present they are either hemmed in by the restricted powers of a provincial Government, or else, if in the central Government, they find themselves crushed by the unwieldy immensity of the diverse interests involved in any measure of reform whatever. A Presidency having considerable autonomous power would provide the happy mean, in combining freedom to act, with a situation not too diverse for the mind of a man to grasp, and not so scattered as to prevent a man of purpose from making his influence personally felt. The great Councils of these new Presidencies might thus offer a more favourable arena for the furtherance of Indian political aspirations than any which exists at present.

Some diversity in the development of different Presidencies would no doubt result from this arrangement. But in dealing with areas so large as the Indian Empire this price must be paid if progress is not to be hampered at every turn. Considering that the proposed great Presidencies will exceed in population the greatest Empires of Europe, and include greater diversities of national character, it is evident that they cannot all want to move in perfect step or in exactly the same direction at the same

time; and that the only happy solution must lie in providing each with a separate local administration to act on behalf of the central Government; which would then only need to check such developments as might be mutually injurious, or such as affected activities in which absolute uniformity was of vital importance.

Many of the gravest problems with which India is now confronted cannot possibly be solved in terms which shall be applicable to the whole Indian Empire; and the best hope of arranging for the satisfactory handling of such difficulties must therefore lie in providing a powerful decentralised machinery for the purpose.

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The British have always proved themselves capable organizers. But when faced with the problems of government organization their natural ability is apt to be clouded by a subtle confusion of thought which is based on a very sound political principle. The race has realized more fully than most peoples that it avails little to change one form of Government for another, and that the utmost possible scope for the free play of individuality is in the long run the only sure guarantee of a healthy constitution. This is a great truth, but is entirely

misapplied when it induces a distrust of organization for the purpose of executive action. Since collective action is impossible without organization, and the prime object of organization is to allot to everyone a position in which his individuality shall have the maximum of useful scope.

The war has given us a very good example of this difference. For our constitution has gloriously justified itself in exhibiting a condition of magnificent health, and in having ready for the occasion born leaders of men already well tried in character and in political emergencies. This was all to the good; but as soon as collective action was required the only bodies capable of a prompt response were the deliberately organized forces of the Army and Navy. Nearly everything else seems to have fallen into chaos. It took nearly a year of war before we learnt from France how to begin organizing the munitions business by dividing the country into a few great groups for the purpose; and even later, and in the domain of Thought itself, we find scientific experts and societies complaining that, in spite of the utmost individual keenness, the great assistance which they might have given has been largely wasted owing to the want of any proper organization.—Even those who would have none of it

in peace time have babbled of the need for organization in our hour of peril,—though often very vague as to what it means.

Here again we are faced by the need for clear definition, since there is a prevalent tendency to confuse organization with discipline in a way which makes men fear the former as the first step towards German “militarism,” etc.

To organize simply means “so to arrange the component parts that the whole can act as one body.”—A certain amount of discipline is no doubt necessary to the successful action of this body, just as temperance is necessary to the maintenance of perfect health; but the two things are quite distinct, and the first essential of organization, as of bodily health, is perfection of organic structure.

The spirit animating a community can never be free while its every impulse is crippled by defective organization, just as a man’s capacity for effective action may be crushed by a miserable physique; so that the more perfect the organization, the less irksome will be the discipline necessary to attain success in the hour of trial.

To perfect its organization is therefore the first step towards attaining the maximum of individual freedom in a community. After this it may be

permeated with such a measure of discipline as the national character and the circumstances of the moment may require.

Everyone feels in the present crisis that the spirit has been willing but the organization weak, and it will be a serious misfortune if the national impulse towards improving this defect should be hampered by any confusion of thought. German organization is far from perfect, but as the first serious attempt at a really national organization on modern lines, its success in nearly every field of corporate action is one of the greatest object lessons of our time. And the fact that it has now been used for the purposes of brutal aggression should not be allowed to cloud the issue.

Discipline and even despotism have no doubt contributed to the vigour of the blow, but the power to deliver it at all depended on sound organization, and however much we may loathe the stupid brutality with which it has been misapplied, it is most important for us to recognise that we also may avail ourselves freely of this great source of power without in any way compromising the national character; as is clearly shown by modern armies, which all possess essentially the same organic structure, and yet how different is the discipline and how various

are the national characters which inform this machinery?—Organization is thus seen to be simply the prime source of corporate power, which can no more injure the character of the individual than it can turn a British soldier into a German.

Under modern world conditions clear thinking on this subject is more than ever a matter of life and death. We have had fair warning that our far-flung Empire must either organize its vast resources, or sooner or later lay them at the mercy of those who will. The great spirit of Imperial unity which has flamed up in every corner of the British Empire only needs to be indued with a well-proportioned body politic in order to fulfil with ease its glorious responsibilities. England has to find a means of combining the happy balances of her constitution, which check the abuse of power, with such a sound organization of the Empire as a whole, and of all Government departments in particular, as may give efficient service in peace and provide nuclei for the co-ordination of all our energies in time of need. This we may very surely accomplish, if only we are resolute to desire it, and cease to fog the issue with objections largely born of mental inertia.

We have seen that a country's energies and resources can only be properly organized on the

basis of a well-proportioned system of geographical grouping; and we need hardly add that this is especially necessary in India where so much depends on Government initiative and guidance.

It has been suggested by some, who are perhaps depending on vague fancies rather than on any real study of organic principles, that the proposed great Presidencies might become too independent, and that the loss of direct touch with the Provinces might prove injurious to the usefulness of the central Government. As to the first point it may perhaps suffice to say that similar fears were once expressed in regard to the grouping of the colonies; and as to the latter objection we have recently seen a similar confusion of thought expressed by a newspaper, in regretting that Sir John French should throw away his personal touch with his Army Corps by grouping them into Armies; whereas the actual facts were that the Commander-in-Chief was bound to lose touch with his units, as soon as they became too numerous, *unless* he grouped them under a few Generals who would provide the required personal link between the units and head-quarters.

We have tried to deal with this kind of objection in Chapter III, and will now conclude by referring to the difficulties which may be raised on

the score of expense. It was shown in Chapter III that the proposed system must prove an economy in the long run, since it allows of more effective work being done by a smaller number of administrators. Still the fact remains that it must entail a good deal of initial expenditure, and money will not be too plentiful for some years to come.

But the present opportunity for action is probably unique; while the interests involved are so vast that the actual cost of thus easing the machinery of Government would be proportionately less than the cost of the lubricating oil which we cheerfully afford for the easement of any expensive machine.

Far-reaching reforms will soon be pressing for attention, 'and nothing can be more dangerous or more extravagant than the attempt to carry them through with clogged and inadequate machinery;—and even apart from such possibilities every business man will know that the first point in economy is to provide adequate and effective management.—In India improved co-ordination of effort between different government departments, with closer and prompter control of their activities, would probably soon save the cost of many Viceroys. While any reduction of the doubts and delays which at present

frighten capital and hamper private enterprise, would constitute a gain to the whole community compared with which a slightly increased expenditure on administration is simply negligible.

The present inadequate state of the superior administration is indeed a very sorry form of economy. The high standard of duty and of mutual loyalty and the incorruptibility of its personnel have done wonders in making up for their deficiency in number. But this inadequacy itself, in delaying progress, choking enterprise, and affording to its over-burdened staff too little time for genial intercourse with the people, or for checking the oppressive malpractices of subordinates, is in every way calculated to dry up the springs of hope and energy throughout the atmosphere, whether official or unofficial; and this is perhaps of all taxes the most costly which a people can be called upon to suffer.

In the offices of the supreme and local governments, and of the districts, work is falling too much into the hands of Secretaries, subordinates, and special departments; while everywhere there is an insistent demand on the part of growing activities of all kinds to obtain the ear of the district officer, or of "His Honour," or of "His Excellency," in order to get things through.

The continual increases of the administrative personnel which have hitherto been made in order to meet the immense expansion of business, have nearly all taken the form of increasing the secretarial staffs of the central and local governments, the subordinates in district offices, and specialists everywhere. A continuance of this policy can only still further choke up with correspondence the existing channels of authority, and increase the congestion of affairs. The true way to provide for the growing importance and prosperity of India is to multiply the channels of authority and so to decrease the area served by each.

Every administrative centre should be, according to its degree, a nucleus for the co-ordination of departmental activities in harmony with private and municipal enterprise. And as all these grow more numerous and complex we must correspondingly multiply the centres of co-ordination. This would mean smaller Districts, which, in order to maintain a due proportion, must logically result in smaller Divisions grouped into smaller Provinces; and, as we have seen, smaller Provinces are hardly possible until we have grouped those already existing into Presidencies.

As already stated, there is a large number of departments of government whose work inevitably

includes Native States as well as British India; and the new Presidency head-quarters would afford them just those centres for their great "circles," which they require for proper co-operation with one another in conformity with changing conditions. Such centres would moreover promote important researches on a scale which no single Province or State could attempt by itself. Similarly the staffs of "Divisions" should include specialists and inspectors who could assist their districts in respect of matters for which we cannot yet afford separate specialists for each District.

The extra management, if applied in this way, would moreover not only repay its cost many times over in material prosperity, but should prove a great moral asset in increasing the prestige and amenities of government, by putting all parts of the country into closer touch with high personages wielding a real power, instead of pouring out upon them regulations and policies from a distant and unseen source. The presence of a vivid and powerful personality supported by the pomp and circumstance of a courtly environment, will do more to enlist the hearty co-operation of the people than the best intentions in the world embodied in the dry verbiage of a Government Gazette.

India will always prefer direct government by picked men to the meticulous observance of abstract principles; and the fact that, apart from the Native States, she maintains fewer administrators of high position than any corresponding population in the world, is very contrary to the national tradition, which cheerfully affords to the ruler of a State no larger than an ordinary district a personal status and income comparable only with that which we accord to the Viceroy. If then we remember that any one of the proposed Presidencies would comprise greater mobilized resources than the Moghal Empire at its zenith, it cannot appear at all extravagant to claim for each of them a separate Governor-General for the local co-ordination of its affairs.

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But this great reform needs something more rare and more difficult to find than mere money, and that is resolution of spirit based on a clear conviction.—“*Facilis descensus Averni*”—and it is easy enough to go patching on additional Departments and Provinces to an already overloaded concern, although by so doing we only add to the difficulties of ultimate reform. Indeed the very fact that reform is urgently required means that everyone is already so entangled with complications as

to make all movement appear very difficult; so that even if we have the clearness of vision to see the real root of our difficulties it will still require great resolution of spirit combined with a favourable opportunity to take the necessary action.—Such circumstances always induce a dead weight of mental inertia which can only be lifted when the right man comes to seize the happy moment.

The present occasion is certainly auspicious in that many have been awakened out of lethargy, and all the best energies of India are alert with the hope of better times. So that if all classes in India will join together sincerely in a cause which transcends their personal differences, and which would equally serve the good of all, we may surely hope that the man we need will not be wanting, and that thus India's great opportunity may prove in very truth to be the dawn of a more glorious to-morrow.

We may further fortify our hopes by noticing that the recent trend of public affairs has been eminently favourable; in that the transfer of the Capital of India to a more central and detached position at Delhi is obviously an excellent first step in the desired direction; while the announcements made by the Secretary of State and others at the time, all indicate that this move was intended to be

part of a great policy of decentralisation. It has certainly made further movement comparatively easy by breaking the fetters which might have impeded such developments as we are now suggesting. But it is only in the accomplishment of this great policy of decentralisation that the true advantages of the Delhi move can become apparent; and until then we must suffer all the disadvantages of those who have weighed anchor but hesitate to set sail.

APPENDIX.

POSSIBLE MODIFICATIONS.

OBVIOUSLY the most important variants of the general idea would consist of some completely different grouping of the proposed Presidencies. The possibilities in this direction are however few in number, and the most attractive is perhaps that which proposes to group all India simply into three enormous Presidencies, one for the North-West, one for the East, and one for peninsular India or the Deccan.

This suggestion has the merit of a large simplicity whose attraction might perhaps outweigh all minor considerations; but in working it out we shall find that the existing provincial boundaries near the Central India Agency are very entangled and complicated. So that satisfactory Presidency boundaries could hardly be found without breaking up some of these central units, and such a necessity would at once add to the practical complications of the proposed reform.

It is also desirable that our scheme should look beyond the minimum requirements of the immediate present to future possibilities; so that if we recognize the likelihood of smaller Provinces becoming more and more necessary in the future, we should now prepare our Presidencies with a view to such developments. Once the new Presidency system has created the possibility, it may not be very long before the number of separate provincial units exceeds 30; and we should obviously have a better working organization if these 30 or more units were in five or six groups of five or six units each, than if they were in three groups of 10 or 12 units each.

This little book however cannot aspire to carry the subject

beyond the first step of presenting the main idea to the public in a concrete form ; and it is only after its discussion from every point of view by the vast and varied interests concerned that anyone can hope to arrive at the happiest practical solution of the problem.

We give below a few minor adjustments of boundaries which might be applied to the "Simplest Solution" described in Chapter VI. That solution was based on the complete acceptance of provincial boundaries as they are ; and the following modifications are merely meant to be suggestive of the kind of minor improvements which may be worth considering in relation to it. They have chiefly been chosen with the object of rounding off the Presidencies more symmetrically, as shown on the cover of this book, and such a consideration can have little weight in deciding details which must essentially depend on political expediency and local sentiment.

1. Western Rajputana.—It may be doubted whether any disturbance of the great Rajputana Agency is at all desirable. But on the other hand we could very conveniently strengthen the Northern Presidency by associating with it the special group known as the Western Rajputana States,—namely, Marwar (or Jodhpur), Bikaner, Jaisalmer, and Sirohi. These States lie for the most part in the Thar or great Indian desert ; they therefore share the crying need for water which is the dominating factor of existence throughout North-Western India ; and Bikaner is already entangled in the irrigation problems of the Punjab.

Besides the advantage of thus amalgamating under one head all units vitally interested in the desert problem, we may see from the cover of the book how much more symmetrically this modification (involving about three million people) would round off the Northern Presidency.

2. Cutch.—This island State (population over half a million) appertains more naturally to Sind than to Bombay, and if it were detached with the former Province we should find in the Gulf of Cutch a better Presidency boundary than that to the North of the island through the Great Rahn of Cutch.

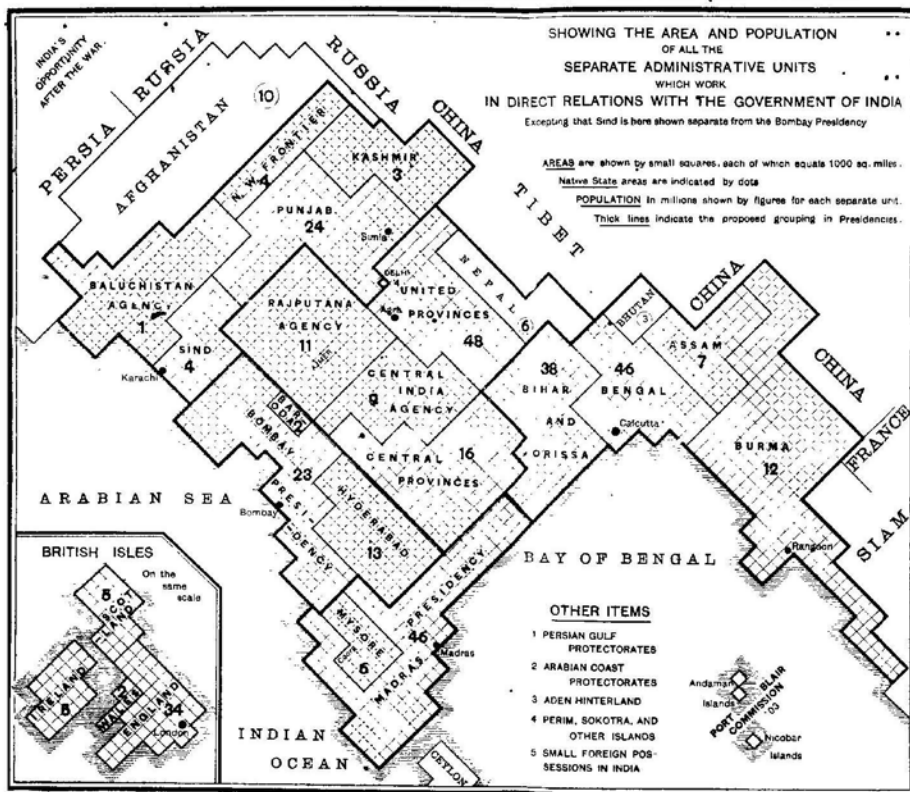
3. Berar, etc.—When Berar was recently handed over by Hyderabad State it was an open question whether to attach it to Bombay or the Central Provinces. The latter alternative was chosen; but its revenue system is that of Bombay, and if there is ever to be a chance of Hyderabad and Bombay falling into one group, it would probably be desirable to include Berar.

Bombay has strong racial affinities with Berar and some of the neighbouring districts besides being their natural port, and their inclusion with the Bombay Presidency has been mooted before now. It might therefore improve the acceptability of the proposed reform if Bombay were given this area as a very fitting set off against the loss of Sind.

The cover of the book shows Berar and part of Nimar district included with the Bombay Presidency, involving a population of over three millions.

4. Ganjam, etc.—It will be noted in the frontispiece how far the "Northern Circars" of Madras stretch up the East Coast to Orissa. This northern portion, including Ganjam district, contains a large Oriya population; and since the new Presidency system would probably result in Orissa ultimately becoming a separate Province, it might perhaps be well to take the opportunity of including with it the Ganjam district and the small corner of Vizagapatam district which falls in the basin of the Vamsadhara River. The total population would be over two millions.

THE ADMINISTRATIVE UNITS OF INDIA



LIST OF SEPARATE ITEMS.

PROPOSED EASTERN PRESIDENCY

1. THE ANDAMANS AND NICOBARS — Islands and peninsular Settlement
2. BURMA — British Province with States.
3. ASSAM — Ditto ditto.
4. BENGAL — Ditto ditto.
5. BIHAR AND ORISSA — Do ditto.
6. BHUTAN, SIKKIM, ETC. — Himalayan States.

PROPOSED CENTRAL PRESIDENCY

7. NEPAL — Himalayan State.
8. UNITED PROVINCES — British Province with States
9. CENTRAL PROVINCES — Ditto ditto
10. CENTRAL INDIA AGENCY — Group of States
11. RAJPUTANA AGENCY — Ditto with British area
12. DELHI — Special Viceregal Province, very small

PROPOSED NORTHERN PRESIDENCY

13. THE PUNJAB — British Province with States
14. KASHMIR — Separate State
15. N.-W. FRONTIER — British Province with States
16. BALUCHISTAN AGENCY — States with British area.
17. SIND — British Province with States

WEST AND SOUTH

18. BOMBAY — British Province with States.
19. BARODA — Separate State
20. HYDERABAD — Ditto
21. MYSORE AND COORO — Ditto with British area
22. MADRAS — British Province with States.

Also AFGHANISTAN

and "OTHER ITEMS" as shown in the diagram

N.B. — To get an idea of the present situation, consider how bewildering the above list would be if it were not divided up into convenient groups.