



a reference to arbitration. Other civil courts are those of the cantonment magistrates, who in 1910 were empowered, as occasion might demand, to dispose of suits within a limit of Rs. 500, while in 1906 *mamlatdars* were given jurisdiction in suits regarding the immediate possession of immovable property.

The judicial arrangements outlined above did not apply to the scheduled districts, which may be defined as "those which have never been brought within, or have from time to time been removed from, the operation of the general acts and regulations and the jurisdiction of the ordinary courts of judicature". Excluding the Panch Mahals district, which was not included in the regulation districts until 1885, the scheduled districts included Sind, where the judicial system is almost identical with that of the rest of the presidency; Aden and its dependencies, in which the resident had rather more extensive powers than a district and sessions judge, and his assistants were usually vested with inferior civil and criminal jurisdiction; and lastly the villages of the Mewasi chiefs, over which the collector of the West Khandesh district, as *ex officio* political agent, exercised both civil and criminal jurisdiction, subject to appeal to and revision by the high court.

The revenue administration of the Bombay Presidency was carried out by the following superior staff in 1914: four revenue commissioners, including the commissioner of customs, opium, salt and *abkari*; eleven senior and ten junior collectors, including the collector of salt revenue and the collector of Bombay; seventeen first and eighteen second assistant collectors, some of whom were serving in the judicial branch and some were on special duty in Sind; sixty-one deputy-collectors, including the personal assistant to the director of agriculture, who were divided into six grades and were in charge of district treasuries or divisions of districts. In Sind, under the commissioner, the revenue administration was carried on by four collectors, two deputy-commissioners, six assistant collectors, and twenty-two deputy-collectors.

The ordinary collectorate (or district), which has not altered appreciably since the beginning of the present century, is composed of twelve *talukas* or subdivisions, each of which contains about a hundred government villages, i.e. villages which have not been alienated and the total revenues of which belong to the state. Each village has its regular complement of officers, who are usually hereditary, namely the *patel*, the *kulkarni* or *talati*, the *mhar* and the watchman. The position and duties of these village officials, as well as of the other hereditary village servants, have already been explained in an earlier chapter. The revenue accounts of a village, which are simple and complete, are based upon the survey register. Every occupant is provided with a separate receipt book in which the total amount of his holding is entered, and the *patel* and *kulkarni* are bound, under heavy penalties, to record in it the sums he has paid. Every year what



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is termed the *jamabandi* of the village is made, which determines the total amount of revenue due from the village. This process brings the assistant or deputy-collector into annual contact with each village in his charge and enables him to acquaint himself with its wants and requirements; it enables the returns of cultivation and other registers, useful for statistical purposes, to be checked; and it affords an opportunity of examining the village accounts, verifying transfers of land, and generally of making such a scrutiny as will protect the individual cultivator from fraud.

Each *taluka* or subdivision of a collectorate is in charge of a *mamlatdar*, whose duties have considerably increased since the first quarter of the nineteenth century. He is responsible for the treasury business of his *taluka*, and for seeing that instalments of revenue are punctually paid by the villages, that the village accounts are accurately kept, that the cultivators' payments are duly receipted, that the boundary-marks of the fields are in repair, and generally that the village officers are performing their duties properly. He functions as a subordinate magistrate and has also to supervise the administration of the local funds. With a view to giving him some assistance, a certain number of villages are placed under the supervision of circle inspectors and other members of the *mamlatdar's* official establishment; but he is expected to assure himself by personal examination that they are doing their work.

Above the *mamlatdar* is the assistant or deputy-collector who is in charge of, on an average, three *talukas*, and is expected to travel about his charge throughout the seven fair-weather months of the year. He has to satisfy himself by direct personal inspection that the revenue work is regularly carried out; he sees that the revenue of each village is brought to account at the time of the annual *jamabandi*; he nominates the village officers; enquires into the needs of his *talukas* in respect of local roads, wells, planting of trees and so forth; he hears appeals from the orders of the *mamlatdars*; corresponds with them on matters concerned with the administration of their respective *talukas*, and generally supervises their proceedings.

Above the assistant and deputy-collectors is the collector and magistrate, who is in charge of the whole district. He has to travel through his charge during four months of the year, and besides superintending the revenues and magisterial work of his district he has to administer the excise and other special taxes and to supervise the stamp revenue. He is also *ex officio* district registrar and visitor of the district jail, and has important duties to perform in connection with municipalities and local funds, with the Land Acquisition Act (I of 1894), and with forests. On all questions of executive administration his opinion is invariably required.

Finally general superintendence and control over the revenue administration are exercised by the three revenue commissioners (for the northern, central and southern divisions of the presidency) and the commissioner in Sind. During the fair season these officers are



constantly moving about their divisions; judging for themselves of the requirements of the various parts of the country, of the manner in which the revenue administration and that of police are being carried on, and of the qualifications of the district officials. They entertain appeals from the collector's decisions and are the channel of communication between them and the government.¹ Speaking broadly, it may be said that, except for a general increase of business resulting from the progress of the presidency, for a few changes such as the introduction of local self-government in the form of partly elective local boards, and for administrative readjustments such as the creation of a third revenue division, the general system of revenue administration in force in 1914, and also at the present date, is practically the same as at the date of the assumption of the government of India by the crown. The main features of the system can be traced back directly to the arrangements initiated by Elphinstone for the settlement of the Deccan and other territories taken from the Peshwa, and indirectly and with certain marked differences, mainly due to the differences in land tenures, to the arrangements in Bengal.

During the period succeeding the year 1858 the administration and expansion of the chief ports of the territories controlled by the Bombay government were provided for by the establishment of the Bombay Port Trust in 1873, of the Karachi Port Trust in 1880, and of the Aden Port Trust in 1889. The plague which broke out in 1896 was directly responsible for the creation of the City Improvement Trust in 1898—a body composed of members partly elected and partly nominated, which was charged with the duty of preparing a comprehensive scheme of improvement for Bombay, with particular reference to the better ventilation of densely crowded areas, the removal of insanitary dwellings, and the prevention of overcrowding. The act legalising the establishment of this trust provided for the nomination by the Bombay Government of three of the trustees, including the chairman, and for the appointment, as trustees *ex officio*, of the collector of Bombay, the municipal commissioner, and the general officer commanding the Bombay district.

The public works department was gradually organised after the transfer of control to the crown, on the foundations laid by Lord Dalhousie for the whole of India in 1854. A considerable addition was made to the department in 1868–9, and by the year 1914 the establishment, including the railway branch, consisted of two chief engineers, the senior of whom was the secretary to government and the junior the joint secretary to government, six superintending engineers, including a sanitary engineer, thirty-eight executive engineers, and fifty-nine assistant engineers. The growth of official buildings and the introduction of electric power had also necessitated the appointments of a consulting architect, an architectural draughtsman, and an electrical engineer, all of whom were employed on five years'

¹ *Report on Administration of Bombay Presidency, 1911–12.*



agreements, as well as an electrical inspector and ten temporary engineers.

Like the public works department, the administration of the forests of the presidency originated in the definite and prudent policy enunciated by Lord Dalhousie in 1855, and was gradually evolved subsequent to the year 1860. The great famine of 1876-8 led to a revision of the provincial arrangements for forest conservancy, and to the introduction of legislative measures which placed the whole system of forest administration in Bombay on a secure and well-defined basis. For administrative purposes the presidency was divided into four forest circles, corresponding to the four revenue divisions, three of which were in charge of conservators and the fourth (Sind) in charge of a deputy-conservator. The controlling staff was divided into an imperial service and a provincial service, of which the former had been reorganised in 1907 and the latter in 1911. The imperial service, in accordance with that revision, was composed of three conservators and twenty-four deputy and assistant conservators, and the provincial service of five extra deputy-conservators and twenty-three extra assistant conservators. Below these was the protective establishment of rangers, foresters and forest guards. As forest control and conservancy are regarded as a branch of the general administration, the central authority in forest matters has always been the commissioner of the revenue division, subject to the general orders of the Bombay Government. In all professional and technical matters the professional forest officer has full control and responsibility; but in regard to such matters as the rights and privileges of the people in forests, the local supply of grass, grazing and fodder, and the general relations of the department with the people, control is vested in the collectors of the districts, to whom for these purposes the forest officers are subordinate. A comprehensive survey of the forests was commenced in 1888, and the work of forest settlement was completed before the close of the period dealt with in this review. The classification of the forests also into forest proper, fuel and fodder reserves, and pastures was completed throughout the presidency before the year 1914, though a working plans division is still maintained in each forest circle for the purpose of ascertaining the productive capacity of the forests and of preparing scientific proposals for the profitable exploitation of the sylvan resources of the presidency.

The salient features of the educational administration subsequent to 1858 were the introduction of the grants-in-aid code in 1865, designed for the benefit of any private primary or secondary school, which was controlled by a board of management and was not maintained solely for private profit; the reorganisation in 1868 of the supply of trained schoolmasters; the foundation in 1890 of the joint schools committee to supervise and control primary education in Bombay city; and the amendment of the constitution of the university, founded in 1857, which synchronised with a declaration of the educa-



General policy of the Indian Government in 1903-4. Broadly speaking, education in the Bombay Presidency is imparted partly through direct official agency, partly through the medium of grants-in-aid. The Bombay Government in 1918 maintained arts colleges in Bombay, Poona and Gujarat, a medical college, a college of science, an agricultural college, a veterinary college, a school of art, a law school and a college of commerce, as well as a model secondary school in Bombay and at the headquarters of each revenue district or collectorate. While the Bombay municipality is now responsible for primary education in the city, the majority of the primary schools throughout the presidency are maintained by the district and *taluka* local boards, who receive grants-in-aid from the government. The official staff responsible for the educational administration consisted in 1918 of a director, an inspector in each of the four divisions of the presidency, and in each district or collectorate a deputy-inspector with assistants.

The importance of agriculture as one of the chief factors in the progress of the presidency was recognised about 1884 by the organisation of a separate department of land records and agriculture, presided over by a director chosen from the ranks of the covenanted civil service. The activities of the department were for several years confined mainly to the simplification of revenue-settlement procedure and the improvement of the land-record system; and in connection with the latter branch of its duties a class of circle inspectors, who were subordinate to the *mamladdars* of the *talukas*, was tentatively introduced about 1887. The agricultural work of the various provinces was eventually co-ordinated by the appointment in 1901 of an inspector-general of agriculture with the Government of India, and the increased attention paid to agriculture after that date led in 1905 to the separation of the appointments of director of agriculture and director of land records, and to the appointments of a deputy-director, an agricultural chemist and an economic botanist for the Bombay Presidency. The director of land records had ample work to perform in supervising the preparation of the "record of rights" in land, which followed on the passing in 1901-2 of a special Record of Rights Act as a complement to existing legislation governing the Bombay land-revenue system. A further attempt to advance the welfare of the agricultural worker and improve rural credit was made in 1904 by the passing of the Co-operative Credit Societies Act by the legislative council of the Government of India. In Bombay the task of organising and supervising such societies under the terms of the act was entrusted to a registrar, aided by a staff of assistant registrars, auditors, and other officers. Shortly after the close of the period with which this chapter deals the Bombay Presidency contained 1648 agricultural credit societies, 211 non-agricultural credit societies, twelve banks, and fifty unions, while the capital of the agricultural and non-agricultural societies amounted respectively to 83½ and 62 lakhs of rupees.

As regards miscellaneous departments of the administration it may



be mentioned that the control of excise was vested at the close of 1918 in the collectors of the districts, subject to the general control of the commissioner of customs, salt, opium and *abkari* (excise). They were assisted in this branch of their duties by a special staff of assistants, inspectors, sub-inspectors, gaugers, clerks, petty officers and menials. The salt department of the presidency proper was separately administered by the commissioner of customs and a special staff, while there were separate establishments for Sind and Aden, which were controlled respectively by the commissioner in Sind and the political resident. The customs administration of the port of Bombay was managed by a collector of customs and six assistants, and of the port of Karachi by a collector and two assistants, subject respectively to the general control of the commissioner of customs, Bombay, and the commissioner in Sind. The collector of land-revenue in Bombay, assisted by four inspectors of factories, was responsible for the administration of the Cotton Duties Act II of 1896.

Excluding the military administration, railways, public works, etc., and special trusts created for developing ports and urban areas, it may be broadly stated that the various administrative appointments and establishments created between 1858 and 1918, in response to the progress and requirements of the people of the presidency, were grafted upon, added to, or linked more or less closely for administrative purposes with the framework of the revenue organisation, which had been constructed, tested and improved during the first half of the nineteenth century. The most important part of that framework was the district officer, who as collector was responsible for the revenue administration, and as magistrate supervised the inferior courts and directed the work of the police. The revenue organisation, while it has always served, and still serves "its peculiar purpose of collecting the revenue and keeping the peace", is, in the words of the Montagu-Chelmsford Report,

so close-knit, so well established, and so thoroughly understood by the people, that it simultaneously discharges easily and efficiently an immense number of other duties. It deals with the registration, alteration, and partition of holdings; the settlement of disputes; the management of indebted estates; loans to agriculturists; and above all, famine relief. Because it controls revenue, which depends on agriculture, the supreme interest of the people, it naturally serves as the general administration staff.

Specialised services, such as the establishments for irrigation, roads and buildings, agriculture, industries, factories, and co-operative credit, may possess separate staffs which are under the control of their own departmental heads. But, "in varying degrees, the district officer influences the policy in all these matters, and he is always there in the background to lend his support, or, if need be, to mediate between a specialised service and the people".¹

¹ *Report on Indian Constitutional Reforms*, 1918, pp. 102, 103.



CHAPTER XV

DISTRICT ADMINISTRATION IN MADRAS

1858-1918

THE storm of the Mutiny raised only a couple of ripples in Madras. A hill-chief of Godavari, marching upon a private quarrel, proclaimed himself a forerunner of Nana Sahib, and strove to raise the country, but paid for the boast with his life. Between a dismissed *tahsildar* of Bellary and malcontents in Dharwar a plot was hatched to bring about a general rising. The rebels got possession of the fort of Kopal, but the place was stormed with heavy loss to the defenders and of the survivors seventy-seven were executed.

The transfer of the government of India to the crown caused no stir whatever. The local annals are silent on the subject because methods and principles remained unchanged.

Only a few events disturbed a period of general serenity. On 1 November, 1864, at Masulipatam, torrential rain preceded early darkness and a devastating wind. Towards midnight, at a cry "The sea is coming", Captain Hasted looked from his half-wrecked house on a "wild waste of luridly phosphorescent water, not in waves, but swirling, boiling, pouring round the house and lifted against it and over it in sheets by the raging wind". In a mass 13 feet above high-water mark, the Bay of Bengal had poured itself on the land. At midnight, with indescribable din and immeasurable fury, the waters rushed back. They had penetrated 17 miles inland, overwhelmed 800 square miles and destroyed 30,000 people and countless cattle.

The next event was much graver. There are seventeenth-century records of awful famines; the Guntur famine of 1833 "covered the country with human bones from Ongole to Masulipatam"; the Orissa famine of 1865-6 afflicted a quarter of the presidency; but it may be doubted whether the tragedy of 1876-8 did not surpass all previous calamities of the sort. Of the 200,000 square miles affected more than a third fell within Madras, where the famine is charged with causing the death of nearly four million people and cost the state over 800 lakhs. The material loss to the community at large was incalculable and was made good only to a trifling extent from the huge Mansion House Fund, though most of that fund was laid out in the Madras Presidency. The calamity left its trace on the agricultural statistics for twenty-five years, and the population which had been advancing up to 1871 at the rate of about half a million a year showed no increase for the decennium ending with 1881. The government has never ignored its duty towards the starving, though the succour given has not always been adequate or timely. Public relief, which dates back



to the eighteenth century, has taken various forms: importation of grain through official agency; bounties, advances and guarantees of price to private traders; opening of public works; gratuitous distribution of food, cooked or uncooked. The great famine led to the preparation of a famine code which centres all famine operations in the collector and requires the maintenance for each district of a programme of the public works ready to be put into immediate operation. As a further preparation for sudden emergencies a scheme was introduced in 1907 for forming provincial famine funds by an annual credit of 2½ lakhs up to a maximum of 25 lakhs, and mention should be made here of the protective irrigation works on the Rushikulya river, which, completed about 1898, serves to afford some security to Ganjam, a region of frequent dearth.

The Moplah sore was still festering in Malabar where outbreaks occurred in 1873 and 1880. A second special enquiry was made into the cause of these troubles and, as they were now ascribed in the main to the eviction of tenants, a law¹ was passed to ensure compensation for improvements to dispossessed tenants. Five outrages in the years 1883 to 1885 emphasised the urgent need for action and four taluks were disarmed as completely as possible. A serious rising in 1894 was the starting-point for remedial measures in the form of roads to open up the fanatical zone, and of special, but not very successful, arrangements for the education of Moplah children. Before these could come into operation the outbreak of 1896 occurred. After the usual pillaging, maltreatment and murdering of Hindus, the rebels took stand in a temple sanctified to them by the slaughter of 1849, and there met the death they courted and merited. The temple was heaped with corpses and streaming with blood, the survivors slitting the throats of the wounded as they fell to prevent their capture alive. In all out of ninety-nine men, ninety-six were killed. The three left alive could not find any material grievance to plead.

Off the coast of Malabar lies the southern group of the Laccadive Islands. Ever since the annexation of Malabar the misgovernment of the islands by the family of the Bibi of Cannanore to which they belonged had been a cause of trouble, and they had been taken over once but restored on promise of amendment. In 1875 it was found necessary to sequester them in perpetuity to protect the islanders from oppression. There was still no settled peace in the Northern Circars. In 1865 the Khonds of the Ganjam hills rose, this time against the Uriya and Pano inhabitants, of whom they murdered many. It was thought necessary after this to arrange for the more or less permanent residence in the hills of European officers to prevent the exploitation and oppression of the Khonds by other classes.

A more serious affair was the Rampa rebellion in the hills of Godavari. The trouble there began in 1835 on the death of the

¹ Act I of 1887; replaced by Act I of 1900.



mansabdar charged with the maintenance of order, the *muttahdars*, or sub-chiefs, objecting to the arrangements for the succession. The quarrel was patched up in 1848, but the *mansabdar* then appointed entered upon a long course of oppressive acts for which he pleaded the authority of government. The police, too, were making themselves offensive to the *muttahdars* and the cup overflowed when the government forbade the free drawing of toddy and leased the toddy-revenue to renters who demanded fees for tapping. After an initiatory sacrifice of several police constables and other obnoxious persons had been made to the gods, insurrection blazed out in 1879 over 5000 square miles. A guerrilla war followed; isolated stations were attacked, villages looted and burnt, detachments of police and even troops forced to retreat, many money-lenders murdered. A large military force was assembled and in the following year the affair was over; the *mansabdar* was deposed and arrangements were come to with the *muttahdars* as to their tenure and duties. This outbreak led to a change in the administration of the hills of Godavari. They were withdrawn from the operation of the ordinary laws and placed entirely under the collector of Godavari, as government agent, in whom was vested both civil and criminal jurisdiction. In short, these hills were put in practically the same position as those of Ganjam and Vizagapatam, though by means of a different enactment.¹ Much later on steps were taken to protect the hillmen of these three tracts from the money-lenders by a law² checking the transfer of land in execution of decrees to persons not belonging to the hill tribes.

In the centre things went quietly except at Salem, where the resentment of Hindus over the building of a mosque resulted in 1882 in two riots, the demolition of the building and a rather long tale of killed and wounded.

In the south also religious prejudices were responsible for trouble. For a long time there had been growing hostility to the Shanars (or toddy-drawer caste) on account of their claims to novel religious privileges. The courts were resorted to, and an injunction obtained forbidding the Shanars of Kalugumalai from going in procession. This led in 1895 to a riot in which nine or ten were killed, followed by the imposition of punitive police on the locality. Four years later a Marava zamindar sued to restrain Shanars from entering the temple at Sivakasi. The Shanars retorted by burning many Marava dwellings. The Maravars thereon mustered in great force and attacked the enemy. Twenty-five persons were killed and there was much destruction of Shanars' property. The Marava gangs were rounded up by sepoys and police and a punitive police was quartered on that locality too.

The disturbances of the nineteenth century were due to religious quarrels or to local or personal causes, not involving, except in 1857, any direct challenge to the state. With the exception of sporadic

¹ The India Scheduled Districts Act, 1874.

² Act I of 1917.



disorder due to efforts to prevent the spreading of plague and of an outbreak against the police at Guntur, the troubles of the twentieth century were the outcome of an organised movement against foreign domination, propagated by the more educated classes and so, in the main, by Brahmans, and finding its principal source in Bengal. The unrest had its first overt expression in 1906 among the students at Rajahmundry; its next, soon afterwards, at Cocanada in a raid on the English club provoked by a trivial incident. Then, in 1908, a commercial failure at Tuticorin was worked up as an instance of the malignity of the rulers; there were strikes, and Europeans were boycotted. Proceedings were taken against the instigators in the criminal courts with the result that there were simultaneous outbreaks at Tinnevely and Tuticorin. A good deal of damage was done and the police had to resort to fire-arms. Three years later a seditious conspiracy found vent in the murder of the collector of Tinnevely. The war did not improve the situation, although the rural areas remained generally unaffected. Of the war itself the country saw nothing except in the form of some shells from the *Emden* which caused three deaths and some injury to property in Madras, and suffered therefrom mainly through the check on sea-borne trade. The attitude of the Indian press towards the war called for little criticism, but political agitation grew in extent and bitterness. By 1918 three distinct political movements had become manifest; the earlier agitation of the Home Rule party, their later action culminating in the formation of the Madras Presidency Association, and a Labour campaign with, on the other side, a growing opposition to Brahman influence on the part of educated members of other castes.

The legislation of 1861 created¹ a high court which absorbed the supreme court and courts of *sadr* and *faujdari* *adalat*, thus becoming a court of appeal, reference and revision for the whole presidency. The passing of the Penal and Criminal Procedure Codes² also led to important changes; the Muhammadan criminal law disappeared, criminal jurisdiction became a subject of general legislation and the ordinary minor civil courts ceased to operate as criminal courts. A host of laws were repealed³ after the enactment of these two codes and the position determined in 1873⁴ was this: the *zillah* civil and sessions judges became district and sessions judges with unlimited ordinary civil jurisdiction and power to pass any authorised sentence; the principal *sadr amins* became subordinate judges with civil jurisdiction similar to that of the district judge; the jurisdiction of the district *munsiffs* was extended to Rs. 2500. The only subsequent change which need be noticed is the enlargement of the powers of the village civil courts and the establishment of village benches.⁵

¹ 24 & 25 Vic. c. 104.

² India Acts XLV of 1860 and XXV of 1861.

³ Act II of 1869 and India Act XVII of 1862.

⁴ India Act III of 1873.

⁵ Act I of 1889.



The new settlement department began to operate in 1857 under a director who, in 1882, took charge of the new department of agriculture also. In 1887 the control of these two departments and of the inchoate land record department was assigned to a member of the Board of Revenue. The nature and development of "late ryotwari" have been sufficiently indicated already; the stage had now been reached in which "subject to the payment of a stated proportion of the produce, . . . the proprietary right of the ryot in the soil of his holding is absolute and complete".¹ It remains only to explain how that "stated proportion" is determined. After a preliminary investigation of the general conditions of a district, the settlement officers classify the soil under "series", "classes" and "sorts", small differences being ignored in order to form practically identical "blocks". The output per acre of the particular soil is then estimated in rice or a standard "dry" crop and this is priced on the average of a series of years; the price is next reduced by about 15 per cent. to cover carriage to market and merchants' profits. The "commutation rate" so found is again reduced to allow for seasonal vicissitudes and uncultivable areas included in the fields. From the gross money value of the crop thus determined, the cost of cultivation is subtracted and not more than half the balance is taken as the assessment due to the state. The rates ascertained for the various kinds of soil are graded to avoid petty differences and, in applying them, consideration is paid to the position of the village and the quality of the irrigation. In the end a village settlement register is prepared. This contains particulars of every separate holding and one of the main duties of the land record department (which was properly constituted only in 1903) is to keep the register corrected up to date in order to facilitate subsequent settlements. Although the state nominally demands a sum not in excess of half the net value of the crop, the proportion actually taken depends, of course, in any year on the ruling price of grain. It was roughly estimated in 1855 that the assessment then amounted to half the gross produce on wet land and one-third on dry, but in 1912 it was reckoned that the government was getting less than one-tenth of the gross produce. It is safe to say that for many years the government has not received the authorised half rate. It may be added that, in 1912, an average district contained 157,000 government ryots and 107,500 survey fields.

We may now pass under review sundry departments which attained importance during our second period only, leading off with agriculture. At the outset the Company was not wholly neglectful of this subject, but its efforts were principally directed to the introduction of exotics. With an eye to cochineal it encouraged the growth of prickly pear (the blacker sin of introducing it is Portugal's). Bourbon cotton was introduced in the eighteenth century and before 1850 there were other

¹ G.O. 1008, Rev. 21 September, 1882.



earnest but unavailing attempts to improve the quality of the cotton grown. In 1865 an experimental farm was started at Saidapett, and there was some training of apprentices. Then a school of agriculture was started at the same place, and about 1886 this was developed into a college but the institution languished, and it was not until 1909 that instruction in agriculture was put on a firm footing by the opening at Coimbatore of a large agricultural college and research institute. On the administrative side development was even more discredibly tardy. The first step was taken in 1882 by the appointment of an agricultural expert to advise the director of settlement, but there was no real attempt to atone for a century's neglect until 1906, when a trained department was instituted and at once developed into an energetic and most important branch of the administration. It was enlarged in 1914, and two years later the control over it was transferred from the Board of Revenue to government.

Forestry is another subject which for long received inadequate attention. Naval demand for teak led to the appointment of a commissioner on the west coast in 1806, and this was followed by the establishment of a sort of government monopoly of the timber trade; but this gave rise to so much discontent that the system and the commissioner were abolished in 1822.¹ Malabar again received a special officer in 1847, and some control was established over the Anaimalai forest. Elsewhere collectors realised some revenue from permits and leases for cutting wood and grazing. In 1856 a conservator was appointed and, three years later, a "Jungle Conservancy Department" was organised. The forests were then divided into "imperial" under the conservator and "jungle conservancy" under the collectors. The jungle conservancy had a separate establishment, derived funds from seignorage and grazing fees, and did some useful work, mainly in the way of making plantations and avenues. At first the conservator's establishment was not sufficient to do more than raise a little revenue; but from 1871 trained officers began to come out from England and were placed under the collectors to whom the conservator acted as adviser. Not until Act V of 1882 had declared certain acts to be offences could conservancy and not exploitation be treated as the end principally in view, and meanwhile much harm had been done to the forests. The forest department then became a branch of the revenue department, the jungle conservancy department was abolished, the trained European staff was organised into advisory conservators and district forest officers, who ranked as assistants to the collectors.

The formal notification of "reserved forests", which began after the passing of Act V of 1882, was practically finished by 1911, when nearly 20,000 square miles had been brought under more or less strict control. The mode of working these forests now adopted where feasible

¹ Munro's Minute, 26 November, 1822.



is to lease them out by *coupees*, in rotation, to contractors who make their own arrangements for removal and sale. Inevitably the department has been very unpopular, and, in an effort to improve relations, it was decided in 1910-11 to disafforest many small areas and to make over certain other minor reserves to village committees for management. Up to the end of our period this experiment was reported to have had a measure of success.

The next subject for consideration is the local administrative bodies, the connection of which with education is dealt with elsewhere. In Madras town Streynsham Master's Civilian Scavenger, the Mayor and Corporation in silken robes, and George the Third's Justices of the Peace pass in succession across the stage, but it was when, in 1856,¹ these last handed over charge to a body of commissioners that the Madras Corporation started on its course. We need not follow its progress along the lines of extension of the elective principle, diminution of governmental control, enhancement of taxation. Outside the city the first municipal institutions were of a voluntary character, the townspeople being left to ask for the application to their towns of an act² which enabled the magistrate and persons appointed by government to raise taxes and see to the management of the streets and the prevention of nuisances. There was no active response to this invitation and, as townsfolk were not contributing fairly to the general expenses, it was resolved to compel them to pay something towards the cost of the police. A Town Improvement Act³ was therefore passed and extended to numerous towns. This vested control of the streets, drains and so on in the district magistrate as president, the local public works officer and five or more persons appointed by government, rendered compulsory the levy of specified taxes to the point requisite to provide for certain purposes (including 75 per cent. of the cost of the town police) and authorised discretionary taxation beyond that point for other purposes. The reluctance of the municipal commissioners to impose taxation beyond the compulsory limit led to a revised Towns Improvement Act.⁴ There were now the collector as president, the revenue divisional officer and three or more commissioners; provision was made for a system of election and a limit was put on the number of officials; education and medical relief entered into the list of purposes; liability for the police *per contra* disappeared;⁵ the government got power to enforce taxation through supervision of the annual budget. The present law⁶ severs the connection of the collector with the district municipalities, while leaving him a measure of control in emergencies; the only *ex officio* councillor is the revenue divisional officer; the minimum strength of the council is twelve; the maximum proportion of officials is one-fourth; the

¹ India Act XLV.

² Act X of 1865.

³ This liability was reimposed by Act VII of 1878, but was enforced for a few years only.

⁴ Act III of 1871.

⁵ Act IV of 1884.

⁶ India Act XXVI of 1850.

⁷ Act III of 1871.



chairman may be appointed by government or by election; a proportion (usually three-fourths) of the council must be appointed by election; taxation has been increased to meet the cost of water and drainage works.

When British rule was established, there was not a single road of any length fit for wheeled traffic; even the main streets of many of the largest towns were unusable by vehicles. Wheeled traffic was limited to rough farm carts on solid wheels. At first there was a good deal of military road-making, but the money spent on it was mostly wasted. Commercial roads were first considered in 1813; and then there was not a road which was not either ill-made or decayed. Bridges were almost unknown. The inland commerce being then small, the Board of Revenue did not ask for more than a grant to enable collectors to keep up their district roads, and the government sanctioned 30,000 rupees a year, with a promise (never fulfilled) of more. In 1825 communications were put under the "maramat department" of the board, the management remaining with the district officers. Such improvement followed as was possible with a total annual allotment of little more than one lakh, and it was reckoned in 1848 that about 90,000 travelling carts with "the European form of wheel" had come into being. In 1845 a trunk road department under a superintendent was formed to take over the main highways from the maramat department. The new official was provided with funds but no proper staff, and the main roads slipped again from his paralysed hands into those of the collectors, who on their part were so starved that their whole road-grants totalled less than 10,000 rupees. In 1852 there was "probably not a single mile throughout the presidency equal to an ordinary English turnpike road", and there were certainly not a thousand miles on which one could comfortably drive at six miles an hour. When a proper public works department was created in 1858, the roads generally were entrusted to it, but imperial funds proved inadequate and it was resolved to find money for the minor roads from other sources. This was at first done by an addition to the assessment on ryotwari land, but the unfairness of such an arrangement led to Act III of 1866, which enabled government to levy a road-cess on all occupied land, whether ryotwari or zemindari. Then the question of providing for education came up and it was decided to have a general measure dealing with rural roads, education and medical and sanitary improvements. The Local Fund Act (IV of 1871) was the result. This divided the country into circles (usually two to a district) which were placed under the collector as president of a board with a non-official element of half or more. The principal tax leviable under this act was a cess of one anna in the rupee on the annual rent value of all occupied land. With the help of contributions from this source the public works department continued to manage the roads until 1879, when the local

¹ Under the amending Act III of 1897.



fund boards started their own engineering establishments and took complete charge. The general system of administration was revised by the Local Boards Act (V of 1884), which has since been amended on several occasions. The district now came under a district board with the collector as president (though in recent years there have been cases of non-official presidents), the revenue divisional officers as *ex officio* members, and other members either appointed by government or (from 1887) in part elected. The revenue division was placed under a *taluk* board with the revenue divisional officer as president or (from 1912) with an elected president. In 1909 the partial election of members of *taluk* boards was introduced. In the case of both boards a majority of non-official members is provided for and full executive authority is vested in the presidents. The law further enables the government to constitute villages and groups of villages into unions under the control of *panchayats* or committees. A house-tax may be raised in such unions, but the principal source of revenue is still the tax on the rent value of land. The main objects of expenditure have been roads, bridges, elementary schools and hospitals, in respect of all of which, since 1871, great development has taken place, attributable largely to the zeal and knowledge of the official presidents.

The current century has produced its own minor departments and one of these promises to do much to relieve the farming class from the burden of debts incurred at extortionate interest from the money-lenders. The purpose of this department is to foster the growth of a system of co-operative credit societies, and so rapid has been the progress that in 1917 there were in existence 2644 societies with a working capital of 235 lakhs.

Such was the position at the end of our period: the mass peaceful and as contented as men ever are; on the surface some commotion crying for appeasement. The development of the administration since 1818 may seem to have been disappointingly slow in some directions; but it must be borne in mind that at the outset the presidency could not pay its way, and that for many years the resources available were very scanty. In 1825 Munro referred to the recurrent need of help from Bengal, and the Madras Public Works Commission in 1852 observed that Madras was invariably unable to provide its prescribed contribution towards "home charges" and was under constant pressure to economise. Only quite recently has the need for rigid economy ceased to hamper the government.



CHAPTER XVI

DISTRICT ADMINISTRATION IN THE UNITED PROVINCES, CENTRAL PROVINCES, AND PANJAB
1858-1918

UP to 1857 the development of administration had been in the main a process of improvisation, which responded to the varying conditions of the territories successively acquired rather than to the *a priori* requirements of any precisely defined system. The pacification after the Mutiny and the assumption of direct government by the crown inaugurated an era of reconstruction and assimilation which gradually substituted a régime of uniform law for one of discretionary regulations and diverse procedure, while preserving some measure of local adjustment to the varied needs of a very heterogeneous population. The change obliterated the distinction between regulation and non-regulation areas, while restricting in the latter the discretion and power of the district officer; and with improvement in communications the activities of government began to manifest themselves through centralised departments rather than, as previously, through the comparatively unfettered initiative of local officers. The reform of the Indian legislature in 1861 and its subsequent activity have been described elsewhere. Here we confine ourselves to their effects on district administration.

The enactment in 1859 of the Civil Procedure Code and in 1860 of the Indian Penal Code, followed in 1861 by that of the Criminal Procedure Code, was among the first-fruits of the new era.¹ The last two acts unified and simplified the criminal law, which in the three provinces had consisted of a confused medley of Islamic precepts, British acts and regulations, and judicial decisions.² The reform was of conspicuous benefit to administration.

In 1861 the first serious attempt was made to deal with the difficult problem of police by an enactment which embodied far-reaching reforms and which applied to all the three provinces.³ Its principal feature was the constitution under each local government of a separate department of civil police, consisting of a formally enrolled homogeneous provincial force, on the model of the Royal Irish Constabulary, distributed over the districts and placed under an inspector-general, who was himself subject to the direct control of the local

¹ Whitley Stokes, *The Anglo-Indian Codes*, 1, xii.

² Whitley Stokes, *op. cit.* 1, 2.

³ *Moral and Material Progress Report*, 1882-3, p. 78; *Imperial Gazetteer*, iv, 387, 388; *Report of Indian Police Commission*, 1903, chap. 1, pp. 9-13.



government, and who was assisted by subordinate deputy-inspector-generals. Police administration in each district was placed in the hands of a superintendent, who was responsible for the working, discipline, and management of the force. But in order to combine the previous direct responsibility of the district magistrate with the introduction of departmental organisation, the superintendent was made subordinate to him in all that directly concerned the preservation of peace and the suppression of crime. The superior officers of the force, including the district superintendents, were Europeans. The districts were, as before, divided into convenient areas, each in charge of an Indian officer, of the rank of deputy-inspector, with a body of constables; a reserve under an inspector being maintained at headquarters. Village watchmen were retained, not as members of the force, though partially placed under the control of the local police officer, but as servants of the village communities, the headmen of which were legally bound to assist in the prevention and detection of crime. The powers of the police and much of their procedure were henceforth regulated by the provisions of the criminal procedure code, a limitation on previous methods, which, though desirable in itself, was probably of advantage to the criminal; while the improved quality of the judiciary, combined with the growth of a legal profession, tended to raise the standard of proof required in criminal trials. The reformed system, though not without defects, was an improvement on its predecessor, and it remained without drastic change for the next forty years. Police, however, continued to be a weak point in the administration, while the strength and qualifications of the force did not keep pace with growing requirements and progressive conditions, nor did it secure public confidence. In spite of some minor improvements effected in 1888-9 an enquiry made at the end of the century revealed a considerable increase in crime of the more serious kinds. A commission was appointed to investigate the whole subject of police administration, and it reported in 1903.¹ While approving the fundamental principles of the existing system, it criticised adversely the manner in which they had been practically applied, as well as the qualifications of all ranks of the force. It recommended many drastic reforms, most of which were introduced,² and in a few years secured highly beneficial results, as shown by the admirable manner in which the modern police force has acquitted itself during recent periods of disturbance.

Shortly after 1858 changes were made in the constitution of the judiciary. In 1866 a high court was established for the North-Western Provinces under the provisions of an English statute of 1861,³ and a

¹ *Report of Indian Police Commission*, 1903, chap. ii.

² Government of India Resolution, 21 March, 1905, on Report of Police Commission (*Parl. Papers*, 1905, lvii, *Accounts*, etc. c. 2478).

³ Field, *Regulations of the Bengal Code*, 1875, p. 149; *Imp. Gaz.* iv, 146; *Moral and Mat. Prog. Rep.* 1882-3, p. 68.



chief court with two judges for the Panjab. The constitution of the subordinate criminal courts was now regulated by the code of criminal procedure, the existing grades of sessions and magistrates' courts being retained. The collector kept his magisterial powers; but in the previously non-regulation areas, where such powers were wider, he was gradually relieved of the disposal of the increasing volume of civil litigation, except as regards suits between landlord and tenant; while the criminal and civil jurisdictions of the commissioners of divisions was transferred—in the Panjab as early as 1884¹—to divisional judges, who corresponded to the district and sessions judges of regulation provinces, and who in more recent years have been completely assimilated to them both in name and functions. The Indian judiciary, both criminal and civil, grew rapidly and for many years it has largely predominated in all grades except the highest, nearly the whole of the original civil litigation being in its hands.

In 1859 the Panjab became a lieutenant-governorship,² and in 1861, that year of notable changes, the Central Provinces was constituted a separate administration under a chief commissioner with a judicial commissioner as principal judicial authority.³ It comprised the Sagar and Narbada territories and the Nagpur state, together with certain other tracts acquired at various times. Its area, 100,000 square miles including Berar, is slightly less than that of the United Provinces and slightly greater than that of the Panjab.

After 1861 all provinces came within the sphere of the Indian legislature, though by no means identical laws applied to all. Some, such as the principal codes, did so; others applied to certain provinces only. One result was the termination of any practical distinction between regulation and non-regulation areas so far as administrative principles and methods were concerned. The non-regulation system was replaced by the constitution of "scheduled districts" under two enactments of 1870 and 1874.⁴ In these areas only those legislative enactments were to be in force which the government might so declare, and it was further empowered to make special regulations for them. Both the United Provinces and the Panjab contain minor areas of this kind, mainly in the more remote hilly tracts.

After 1858 land administration shared in the general development, though without radical changes. The increasing prevalence of money-rents in the North-Western Provinces gradually furnished a more accurate means of estimating the incomes of landlords, as well as the rental value of non-rented lands, with reference to rents actually paid or to those estimated to be fairly realisable; thus affording a sounder basis for revenue assessment than the original rough "aggregate to

¹ *Adm. Rep. Panjab*, 1882-3, p. 646, and 1911-12, p. 31.

² *Adm. Rep. Panjab*, 1882-3, p. 37.

³ Government of India Resolution, Foreign Department, of 2 November, 1861; *Adm. Rep. Cent. Provs.* 1882-3, p. 17.

⁴ Baden Powell, *Land Revenue Systems of British India*, I, 89-92; *Imp. Gaz.* IV, 131.



detail', method.¹ Later, from 1878, as rent records became more plentiful and reliable, actual as opposed to estimated rents were used as data. In the second series of regular settlements, which began in 1858 and was completed in 1882, the standard of assessment was reduced from two-thirds to one-half of net rental, though it is now exceptional for even one-half to be taken. In the Panjab, rents being comparatively rare and paid in kind, as is usually the case even now, the original method of assessment was retained.² But in the course of the next fifty years, as the renting of land became more common, increased stress was laid on a money valuation of the kind-rental received by landlords or, in the case of non-rented lands, of the kind-rental which they could fairly pay if rented; though in practice, especially towards the end of the period, in view of the preponderance of peasant proprietors as well as for other reasons, the actual state demand has usually been substantially below the theoretical standard as measured on a rental basis. Revenue assessment in the Panjab was and still is a matter of local knowledge and individual judgment rather than of arithmetical calculations from assumed data. In the specially insecure tracts in the south-west of that province systems of fluctuating assessment have been introduced, under which land-revenue is assessed at prescribed rates on such crops only as actually mature at each harvest.³ The wide extension of state canal irrigation in recent years has introduced complications into revenue administration with which it is impossible to deal here. For the actual consumption of water in irrigation specific water rates are charged, while the increased rental value of the irrigated land is assessed to land-revenue.

In Oudh after the Mutiny the estates of the rebellious talukdars were formally confiscated, more in order to secure a clear field for the determination of rights and the protection of subordinate tenures than as a punitive measure. Accordingly their estates were returned to all who submitted; and thereafter they held them as grantees of the government. By a reversal of the policy of 1856, settlement of the land-revenue was made in most cases with the talukdars; subject however to the important proviso that where a subordinate village community, or even single members thereof, had succeeded in maintaining a virtual sub-proprietary status as against the talukdar, the annual sum payable to him was fixed in amount, the community or the single members retaining control of the land.⁴ This arrangement is known as a "talukdari" settlement. After a second summary settlement in 1858 the regular settlement of Oudh was begun on the

¹ Baden Powell, *op. cit.* II, 47-61, 66-8; Moreland, *The Revenue Administration of the United Provinces*, 1911, pp. 41-5; *Adm. Rep. N.-W. Provs.* 1882-3, pp. 43-4.

² Baden Powell, *op. cit.* II, 569-82; *Panjab Settlement Manual*, chap. vi.

³ *Panjab Sett. Manual*, chap. xxvi.

⁴ Baden Powell, *op. cit.* II, bk III, chap. iii; *Adm. Rep. N.-W. Provs.* 1882-3, p. 39; *Moral and Mat. Prog. Rep.* 1882-3, p. 132.



above lines in 1860 and completed in 1873. In about one-third of the province, there being no talukdars, settlement was made with the village communities in the usual way. Certain special incidents of the talukdari tenure were regulated by legislation in 1869.

The land-revenue administration of the North-Western Provinces was placed on a statutory basis by Act XIX of 1873 and that of Oudh by Act XVII of 1876. They were replaced by Act III of 1901, which applies to the present United Provinces (of Agra and Oudh). The corresponding enactments for the Panjab were XXXIII of 1871 and XVII of 1887. All these deal with the powers and functions of revenue officers of all grades, with the principles and procedure of land-revenue assessment, and with the maintenance of records of rights; but the subjects of tenancy and rent are regulated by separate enactments.

In the newly constituted Central Provinces most of the villages were of the ryotwari type. Under the oppressive rule of the Marathas very many of them had been farmed, commonly to their own headmen, who were termed *patels*. Over groups of others various classes of persons, local tribal chiefs or their relatives, grantees of state revenue, and others, had acquired a proprietary status on quasi-feudal conditions as jagirdar or talukdar. Prior to 1861 summary settlements of various kinds had been made. It was decided at the regular settlement, which began in 1863 and was completed in 1870, to recognise all the above classes as proprietors, under the common designation of *malguzar*, or revenue-payer, and to make the settlement with them.¹ This arrangement, however, in strong contrast to the Bengal system, was combined with an ample measure of tenant-right, by which a large majority of tenants received substantial protection. This form of settlement is known as *malguzari*. In the first regular settlement the assessment of land-revenue followed generally the "aggregate to detail" method already described.² Tenants whose claims were based on length of time or on the expenditure of capital on improvements were recognised as full proprietors of their holdings, practically independent of the *malguzar*. Others with weaker claims were allowed an occupancy tenure, varying in its incidents, but in all cases affording security in respect of ejection and rent, the latter being fixed at settlement but liable to periodical revision.³ The tenancy law was codified on the above principles by acts passed in 1883 and 1898, which also gave a measure of similar protection to ordinary tenants without occupancy right. The land-revenue law of the Central Provinces was embodied in Acts XVIII of 1881 and XII of 1898.⁴ In consequence of the special position of tenants rents have ceased to be the direct result of economic forces, so that the assessment of land-

¹ Baden Powell, *op. cit.* II, 385-8; *Adm. Rep. Cent. Provs.*, 1911-12, pp. 22, 23; *Moral and Mat. Prog. Rep.* 1882-3, p. 137.

² Baden Powell, *op. cit.* II, 390.

³ Baden Powell, *op. cit.* II, 478-99; *Adm. Rep. Cent. Provs.*, 1911-12, p. 26.

⁴ Baden Powell, *op. cit.* II, 501.



Revenue is primarily the assessment of such rents as the settlement officer may consider reasonable in the circumstances of the tract concerned. The actual method employed, known as the "soil unit" system, is complex. Its main object is the equalisation of rent incidence with reference to the quality of soil, which is minutely classified by means of a proportionately numerical valuation in terms of an assumed common unit, known as the "soil unit". Having regard to certain general considerations a fair rent rate per unit is determined, and by a discreet application of this rate, more or less modified according to local circumstances, a fair rental for each holding and village is framed.¹ The land-revenue due to the government is about one-half of the sum thus obtained. The land-revenue of Berar, which is not legally British territory, though it is attached to the Central Provinces, has been settled on the ryotwari system in force in the Bombay Presidency.²

In all three provinces assets due to agricultural improvements effected by private labour and capital are exempted from assessment for a period of years sufficient to yield a remunerative return; while the rigidity of the fixed land-revenue demand is mitigated by its suspension or, when necessary, by its ultimate remission, on occasions of widespread agricultural calamity.

For many years after the Mutiny tenant right constituted a very intricate problem in the North-Western Provinces, Oudh, and the Panjab. The Bengal Act X of 1859 applied only to the first, but it was replaced by the successive North-Western Provinces Acts XVIII of 1873 and XII of 1881, though neither effected any change of principle.³ These acts protected certain tenants of long standing in the permanently settled Benares districts as well as tenants who had once been proprietors, and they maintained the twelve-years rule which has been already explained in another chapter. A certain measure of protection was also accorded to the interests of all tenants, while collectors and subordinate revenue officers were empowered to dispose judicially of suits between them and landlords. The later Act II of 1901 effected no radical changes. In Oudh the first tenancy law was the Rent Act XIX of 1868. In view of the wide protection afforded to sub-proprietors under the talukdari settlement, occupancy right was allowed only to those tenants who had lost proprietary right within the thirty years preceding annexation, but this being found to be insufficient,⁴ a subsequent act (XII of 1886) went further by ensuring to all non-occupancy tenants a tenure for seven years without increase of rent; and even this measure has been found to be inadequate.

In the Panjab in 1863 a controversy arose as to the propriety of the

¹ Baden Powell, *op. cit.* II, 415-31; *Adm. Rep. Cent. Provs.* 1911-12, pp. 30-2.

² *Adm. Rep. Cent. Provs.* pp. 27, 33.

³ Baden Powell, *op. cit.* II, p. 175; *Adm. Rep. Unit. Provs.* 1911-12, p. 19.

⁴ Baden Powell, *op. cit.* II, 246-9; *Adm. Rep. Unit. Provs.* p. 19.



methods by which tenant right had been treated in the first regular settlement. It led to a lengthy enquiry into the actual status of tenants throughout the province, of which the ultimate outcome was the Panjab Tenancy Act XXVIII of 1868.¹ While saving, subject to a few exceptions, all rights previously conferred, it abolished, for the future, acquisition of occupancy right by mere lapse of time. On the basis of existing custom and with reference to considerations of equity, five classes of cultivators were defined as eligible for such a right, its incidents varying with each class. The act also regulated the rents of occupancy tenants, and afforded some measure of protection to all tenants. It was considerably amended and amplified in details by the existing Act XVI of 1887.

Mainly as a result of the famine of 1860-1 the question of the extension of the permanent settlement to Upper India was revived after the lapse of fifty years.² An influential official school inclined to the view that such a measure would foster economic prosperity, and in 1862 the secretary of state, Sir Charles Wood, went so far as to accept it in principle. But further prolonged discussion of methods and details showed not only its impracticability but also its essential un wisdom, and in 1882 it was finally abandoned after it had been established that in permanently settled tracts prosperity was no greater than elsewhere. In recent years short-period settlements have been avoided as far as possible, and a general term of thirty years adopted, except in tracts where specially rapid development due to the construction of state canals is foreseen.

Special measures for the organised collection of reliable information regarding the economic condition of a vast agricultural population, coupled with the maintenance of correct records of landed rights, were initiated in the last quarter of the century.³ Previous efforts in this direction had been confined to the occasion of a settlement of the land-revenue, so that by the expiration of its term, many years later, the statistics and records had necessarily become hopelessly out of date. In 1875 reform was initiated in the North-Western Provinces, and five years later a Famine Commission strenuously recommended the establishment of special departments in each province. These were constituted in 1880 under the designation of departments of land records and agriculture, each under a provincial director. Originally they had little concern with technical agriculture: their function was to secure the two main objects already indicated. Of the first the primary purpose is to obtain the earliest possible information of the premonitory symptoms of famine, though many other useful ends are also secured. By the continuous maintenance of correct records of

¹ *H. of C. Papers*, 1870, vol. LIII; *Panjab Sett. Manual*, p. 100 sq.; Baden Powell, *op. cit.* II, 705-22.

² *H. of C. Papers*, 1887, vol. I; Baden Powell, *op. cit.* I, 340-9; *Panjab Sett. Manual*, p. 254; *Moral and Mat. Prog. Rep.* 1882-3, pp. 117-19.

³ Baden Powell, *op. cit.* I, 349-60; *Report of Famine Commission*, 1880; *Imp. Gaz.* IV, 24.



rights it was hoped to shorten the settlement operations periodically undertaken in each district, a hope which has been realised. The introduction of more scientific methods of cadastral survey has greatly promoted progress in this direction, while all transfers of right are promptly attested and registered, correct record being thereby facilitated. As the result of the policy adopted, the three provinces now possess up-to-date land records probably unrivalled in the world, and containing detailed information about each one of several millions of fields and holdings and many thousands of villages; while the usual duration of settlement operations in a district has been reduced from six years to little more than three.

✓ The importance of irrigation is indicated by the fact that the total area of crops irrigated by state canals in the Panjab and the United Provinces increased from seven and a half million acres in the first years of the present century to nearly eleven million acres in 1917-18,¹ while the entire capital cost of the works in the latter year was approximately twenty-two millions sterling. The greatest progress has been in the Panjab where the area irrigated quadrupled during the forty years ending 1918. It was in 1866,² when Lord Lawrence, as viceroy, inaugurated the policy of financing productive public works from loan funds, that the modern development of irrigation began. The first-fruits were the Sirhind³ Canal in the cis-Satlej-Panjab, which, originally proposed in 1841, was sanctioned in 1870 and opened in 1882, with a total length, inclusive of branches and distributaries, of 3700 miles; the Lower Ganges Canal in the southern part of the Doab of the North-Western Provinces, sanctioned in 1872 and completed in 1878, and the Agra Canal, opened in 1874, which provides irrigation on the west of the Jumna. Between 1870 and 1876 the Upper Bari Doab Canal, and fifteen years later the Western Jumna Canal were greatly improved and extended.

✓ But the colony canals of the Panjab have been the most striking irrigational development of the period under review.⁴ Their primary object was not to serve areas already cultivated, but to make possible the colonisation and development of the immense areas of waste crown land which existed in the province within recent years and on which large numbers of colonists selected from congested districts have since been settled on specific terms as lessees of the state. The encouraging results of two experiments made on non-perennial canals in the 'eighties led to more ambitious schemes. In 1890 work began on a perennial canal, with a head weir from the river Chenab, designed to irrigate the waste tract—termed Bar—lying between it and the Ravi. Now known as the Lower Chenab Canal, it has proved

¹ *Imp. Gaz.* III, 331; *Statistical Abstract relating to British India*, 1917-18, p. 150.

² *Imp. Gaz.* IV, 329; *H. of C. Papers*, 1866, vol. LII; 1867, vol. L.

³ *Triennial Review of Irrigation*, 1918-21, Calcutta, 1922, pt III, chap. v.

⁴ *Idem*, pt III, chap. vi.



to be one of the most successful irrigation systems in India, if not in the world. Its total length is nearly 2700 miles. Colonisation began in 1892, with the aid of a defective "inundation" canal, but the new canal was not complete until 1899. By 1901 the population of the tract had increased from practically nil to 800,000, while the area now annually irrigated exceeds two million acres. The yearly net revenue from the canal is nearly 40 per cent. of its capital cost of more than two millions sterling. The headquarters of the colony are at Lyallpur, one of the most flourishing towns in Upper India. The second Colony Canal,¹ the Lower Jehlam, in the tract between the rivers Jehlam and Chenab, though sanctioned in 1888 was not begun until 1898 and was opened in 1902. Its results have been satisfactory. At the beginning of the century a project was on foot for the irrigation of the lower portion of the Bari Doab from the river Satlej. Meanwhile a commission² was appointed in 1901 for the formulation, after full enquiry into past results and existing needs, of a definite irrigation policy for India as a whole. It reported in 1903. It found in the Panjab one of the few tracts in which there was scope for the execution of large productive schemes, which would both be financially remunerative and also augment the food supply of the country. It supported the proposal to irrigate the lower part of the Bari Doab while recommending the examination of an alternative scheme, suggested by Sir James Wilson, a distinguished civil servant, and Col. Jacob, an eminent irrigation officer, which substituted for a canal from the Satlej a chain of canals which would successively convey the water of the river Jehlam across the intervening Chenab and Ravi rivers to the lower Bari Doab. This scheme, now known as the Triple Project³ and comprising the Upper Jehlam, Upper Chenab and Lower Bari Doab canals, was ultimately approved. Its construction, which cost seven millions sterling, took ten years, from 1905 to 1915. The first two canals supply water to the third while irrigating extensive areas in the tracts through which they pass. The total length of the canals with distributaries is 3400 miles and the area irrigated nearly two million acres. Colonisation was still in progress in 1918.

In the United Provinces the Betwa Canal, a protective work for insecure districts in Bundelkhand, was opened in 1885 and proved its value in the later famines. The Irrigation Commission recommended other protective but non-remunerative works, of which the Ken Canal, also in Bundelkhand, was opened in 1908. Up to 1907 there were no state irrigation works in the Central Provinces. Until 1896 a complete failure of rain had been unknown, but in the following famine years the tract suffered severely. The commission, holding that protective irrigation was necessary, recommended the construction of

¹ *Triennial Review*, p. 137.

² *Imp. Gaz.* III, 351 sq.; *Triennial Review*, pp. 109-10; *Report of Indian Irrigation Commission*, Calcutta, 1903.

³ *Triennial Review*, pp. 131 sqq.



small canals, and also of reservoirs for the storage of local rainfall and of the comparatively precarious river supply. Up to 1918¹ several of the latter had been completed, the most notable being the Ramtek tank in the Nagpur district with a capacity of 4000 million cubic feet, while three fairly large canals were still under construction. In 1918 several large new schemes for the Panjab and the United Provinces were being considered. Some of these have since matured, the most noteworthy being the Satlej valley project,² with an estimated capital cost of nine and a half millions sterling.

As a result of the extensive development which has been sketched above irrigation had by 1918 become an important branch of district administration. Local work is in the hands of officers of the irrigation branch of the provincial public works department, but the collector is intimately concerned with its success and is generally consulted in all important developments. Moreover, he and his superiors, as land-revenue officers, have a preponderant voice in the determination of the rates charged for the consumption of canal water, while he is also responsible for the collection of the resulting demand, though its actual assessment at harvest time is usually made by irrigation officers. In 1917-18 net revenue from state canals in the Panjab was 1·8 millions sterling, in the United Provinces £580,000, while in the Central Provinces there was none.³

Modern famine policy has been treated in another chapter, but a few facts may be added here.⁴ In 1860-1 severe famine affected an area of 50,000 square miles containing a population of twenty millions. It comprised the south-eastern Panjab and the west of the present United Provinces. The policy of relief on public works, initiated in 1837-8, was retained and expanded, while poorhouses for the gratuitous relief of the incapable were opened for the first time. Remissions of revenue were comparatively small but considerable advances were made. Gratuitous relief appears to have been liberal: in the Hissar district of the Panjab, for example, its recipients were treble the number of persons on relief works.⁵ The same tract was again severely attacked in 1868-9 by a famine which was far more widespread than the last. Distress was extreme, mortality great, and the destruction of cattle immense, while a heavy influx of starving multitudes from the feudatory states, which were without famine organisation, greatly aggravated the situation and in fact broke down the relief system. In the United Provinces the state spent nearly Rs. 30 lakhs in addition to heavy expenditure in the Panjab.⁶ In 1896-7 the same areas again suffered from intense famine, and the Central Provinces were for the first time affected. But on this occasion the

¹ *Triennial Review*, p. 128. ² *Idem*, p. 170. ³ *Statistical Abstract*, 1917-18, p. 150.

⁴ *Imp. Gaz.* III, 485; *Rep. of Fam. Comm.* 1880, p. 12; *Adm. Rep. Unit. Prou.* 1911-12, p. 12; *H. of C. Papers*, 1862, vol. XL.

⁵ *Gazetteer of Hissar District*, 1892, p. 23.

⁶ *Imp. Gaz.* III, 487; *Rep. of Fam. Comm.* 1880, p. 12; *Adm. Rep. Unit. Prou.* 1911-12, p. 22.



organisation, as testified by the subsequent Famine Commission of 1898,¹ was far more efficient than it had been previously, while the agricultural population generally showed a power, hitherto unknown, of meeting the disaster. In the Panjab Hissar was again the most distressed district, and it accounted for more than one-half of the total number relieved in that province, at one time as many as 15 per cent. of its total population being in receipt of relief. Rs. 167 lakhs were spent in the United Provinces and Rs. 23 lakhs in the Panjab in addition to heavy suspensions and remissions of land-revenue.² Once more in 1899-1900 the south-eastern Panjab and the Central Provinces were very severely attacked. Distress was more intense than in 1896-7 and cattle mortality, owing to a complete failure of fodder, enormous.³ In the Panjab the death-rates of the affected districts rose considerably but mortality from actual starvation was prevented. Relief operations in that province cost Rs. 48 lakhs, most of which was incurred in the Hissar district. The great development of irrigation and of communications which has been achieved in recent years, the elaboration of a complete famine organisation, not only in British territory but also in the feudatory states, and, last but not least, the growth of general economic prosperity have gone far to vanquish one of India's direct and most persistent scourges.

The forests of India are of the first importance, not only for their natural products but also through their influence on climate, rainfall, and water supply. As has been truly said they are "the headworks of Nature's irrigation scheme in India". Under native rule unchecked destruction and wasteful misuse did untold damage. Up to 1855 British attempts at management were sporadic and dominated by considerations of revenue, but in that year Lord Dalhousie inaugurated a policy of scientific conservation and regulated exploitation.⁴ An inspector-general of forests was appointed nine years later, but it was not until 1869 that an organised forest department with a staff of trained officers came into existence. Indian forest lands are the property of the state, though generally more or less burdened with public or private customary rights of user, largely grazing, in favour of village communities or individuals; a feature which mainly decides the degree of conservation which can be applied. Those classed as "reserved" are important for purposes of scientific forestry. Forests are "protected" with a view to later reservation or in order to increase their direct utility to the agricultural population; while in "unclassed" forests very few, if any, restrictions are enforced. The first legal basis for forest administration was the Indian Forest Act of 1865, which was replaced by the existing Act VII of 1878. It prescribes, *inter alia*,

¹ *Rep. of Fâm. Comm.* 1898.

² *Adm. Rep. Unit. Provs.* 1911-12, p. 23; *Adm. Rep. Panjab*, 1911-12, p. 24.

³ *Adm. Rep. Panjab*, 1911-12, p. 25.

⁴ *Imp. Gaz.* III, 107 sq.; *Moral and Mat. Prog. Rep.* 1882-3, pp. 202 sqq.; *H. of C. Papers*, 1871, vol. LII.



a procedure for the adjudication and record of public and private rights in forest lands and for their extinction in the reserves, if necessary, by compensation or exchange; the entire operation being known as a forest settlement. Each provincial government has a forest department under a conservator of forests. For executive purposes there are deputy-conservators, or district forest officers, each in charge of a division, corresponding to a civil district, with an assistant and a subordinate staff. The collector is not concerned with technical forest work, but the deputy-conservator is under his control in all matters which directly concern the people, such as grazing in forests, levy of fees, and supply of forest produce. The collector, or a specially deputed officer, carries out forest settlement operations, often a lengthy and intricate business. Up to 1921 the Government of India controlled forest administration through its inspector-general. The main objects of the department are scientific improvement and regeneration of the forests, and, as subsidiary measures, protection from fire and from illicit grazing. Produce of various kinds is commercially extracted in accordance with prescribed working plans, which regulate this as well as other branches of forest technique. The United Provinces and the Panjab are not of great importance as measured by the proportion of forest to total area, which is 7 per cent. in each. In the Central Provinces, however, the figure is 20 per cent., the forest area consisting of 20,000 square miles of "reserves".¹ Former large areas of unclassed forest in the Panjab plains have been entirely colonised in recent years. The reserves in all three provinces are chiefly in the hills.

Smuggled importation from feudatory states together with the wide prevalence of illicit distillation of alcohol, facilitated by the abundance of suitable material supplied by the cultivated sugar-cane and by the wild *mahua* tree (*Bassia latifolia*), long hindered progress in excise administration. But by 1918 much had been accomplished through restriction of supply to supervised distilleries and by improving the quality of the preventive establishment.² An excise law, applying to the North-Western Provinces, was passed in 1856, which provided for central distilleries. But in view of their previous failure, it was not until 1863 that they generally displaced the system of farms and out-stills in the North-Western Provinces, though in Oudh they had been introduced in 1861. A duty was levied on all spirituous liquor produced, and the right of vend at specified shops was leased separately. By 1870 it became clear that the change had been too extensive, and in 1873 illicit traffic was found to be very prevalent. Again there was a reversion to farms and out-stills in many districts. Matters remained thus in the United and the Central Provinces until the early years of this century, farms and out-stills prevailing in one-third and nearly

¹ *Statistical Abstract*, 1917-18, p. 157.

² *Imp. Gaz.* II, 235; *Parl. Papers*, LXX, 609 sqq.; *Moral and Mat. Prog. Rep.* 1882-3, pp. 170-1; Papers relating to Excise administration in India, *Government of India Gazette*, 1 March, 1890.



three-fourths of their respective areas. Throughout the Panjab, where previously there had been no excise restrictions, the farming system was in force for some years after annexation, but in 1863 it was entirely replaced by central distilleries, with separate licences for sale at specified shops. Under this system, which continued for nearly forty years, taxation was substantially increased, so that by 1890 illicit traffic was more rife than in the rest of India. In the early years of this century central distilleries gave place throughout the province to a few private distilleries of modern type located at selected places. Under direct official supervision and in mutual competition, they supplied spirituous liquor, after payment of duty, and at prices liable to government control, to local vendors, who were separately licensed for specified shops. The system was known as the "free supply" system. Only in two small areas, peculiarly situated, were out-stills allowed.

With the passing of an Excise Act in 1896 matters had developed thus far when in 1905 the government referred the whole question of excise administration in India to a committee for review and for advice.¹ In doing so it declared definitely that, while refusing to interfere with the moderate use of alcohol, its settled policy was to minimise temptation for the abstainer and to discourage excess among others; and that no considerations of revenue could be allowed to hamper this policy. It held that the most effective means of pursuing this was as high a taxation of liquor as was possible without stimulating illicit production and resort to harmful substitutes. While recognising that uniformity of method was impossible, it regarded the continuance of extensive farm and out-still areas, of crude distillery systems, and of low rates of taxation as defects to be remedied as soon as possible. After a lengthy enquiry the committee in 1906 submitted with its report detailed recommendations for the future course of excise administration, most of which, with some modifications, are now in force.² In each of the three provinces spirituous liquor is made in private licensed distilleries under official supervision. After payment of duty it is supplied to local licensed vendors under officially controlled arrangements and at regulated prices. Out-still areas have been reduced to a minimum in the United and the Central Provinces, and entirely abolished in the Panjab. Separate licences, containing many desirable prohibitions and restrictions, for the retail vend of liquor at specified shops are issued on fees which are generally determined by auction. The duty is enhanced from time to time with the object of increasing the proportion borne by its yield to that of vend fees; but the risk of stimulating illicit distillation hampers the process. On all foreign liquor, spirituous or fermented, import duty is levied,

¹ Report of the Excise Committee, 1905-6, and Government of India Resolutions thereon, in *Parl. Papers*, 1907, LVIII, 645 sqq.

² Provincial Excise Administration Reports for 1907-8 and subsequent years.



and sale is controlled by licences; while the production of beer, mainly for European consumption, is also subject to excise regulations. The general Excise Act has been replaced by separate provincial enactments.

Opium was extensively grown in the Panjab before its annexation, but its cultivation, manufacture and sale were soon brought under control.¹ The first was gradually restricted and is now prohibited except in a few small hill tracts, very little opium being at present locally produced. For public consumption opium manufactured by government agency is issued at a monopoly price to vendors licensed, on fees usually determined by auction, to sell at specified shops. In the United and the Central Provinces the supply is confined to such government opium.

In 1893 a commission investigated the production, sale and consumption of drugs made from the hemp plant (*Cannabis sativa*).² It did not recommend prohibition, but control and restriction. The control is enforced by a system of licences for sale similar to liquor licences. Cultivation has been greatly restricted, most of the supply being imported from Central Asia.

Local excise administration is one of the more important duties of the collector. The work has grown greatly in volume and complexity in the present century; the total net revenue of the three provinces in 1917-18 being 2·2 millions sterling.

Important developments connected with agriculture, with rural indebtedness, and with the closely allied subject of co-operation have taken place within recent years. As has been already stated the provincial departments of land records and agriculture, instituted in 1880, had little concern with technical agriculture. In 1901, as a first step towards its more scientific organisation, the Indian Government appointed an inspector-general of agriculture with a small staff of experts. During the next few years the subject of agriculture was separated from land records and provincial departments instituted, each under a director with a small staff, subsequently increased by the addition of trained officers. The fundamental object of these departments is the development, by experiment and research, of improved agricultural methods and implements, of better qualities of seed, and of effective means of coping with crop diseases and insect pests. With the growth of the departments many experimental stations and demonstration farms had been established by 1915 and were doing satisfactory work.³ Several cultural and manurial problems had been dealt with, greatly improved varieties of seed for important crops had been produced, and the introduction of better implements had begun. For the provision of sound agricultural training on

¹ *Imp. Gaz.* iv, 245; Report of Opium Commission, 1893, *H. of C. Papers*, 1895, vol. XLII.

² Report of Indian Hemp Drugs Commission, 1893, and Government of India Resolution thereon of 21 March, 1895.

³ Annual Reports of Provincial Agricultural Departments.



scientific lines, an essential feature of the entire scheme, provincial agricultural colleges, with research institutes attached, have been established; while a central college at Pusa in Bihar provides more advanced instruction. The three provinces have taken their full share in the progress, their colleges being located at Cawnpore, Nagpur, and Lyallpur respectively. The last, situated in the Chenab colony, is now a leading centre of research, experiment and instruction. Though the modern movement was started not in response to popular demand, but on the initiative of the government, the agricultural department has succeeded to a surprising degree in securing the confidence of the rural classes. The collector, though having no control of its technical operations in his district, is closely concerned with it on its administrative side and with its general results.

Debt is an inevitable adjunct of peasant agriculture, but under an unhealthy system of credit, where numerous illiterate and often thriftless rural borrowers are in the toils of literate and astute money-lenders, it is apt to become both a fruitful economic evil and a political danger. The grant of freely transferable proprietary rights to the peasantry of the Panjab and of the United Provinces, combined with a novel moderation in the fiscal demands of the state, put at its disposal a volume of credit which grew with the value of land and of its produce. In the period 1875-1900 indebtedness increased rapidly, and with it the sale and mortgage of agricultural land. In the Panjab the evil had attained alarming proportions by the latter year. After very prolonged investigation and discussion a remedy was sought in legislation. The Panjab Alienation of Land Act of 1900,¹ while not affecting transfers of land between members of the agricultural tribes of the province, narrowly restricts such transfers where the transferees are members of other classes, which include most of the professional money-lenders. The undue restriction of credit, the general fall in land values, the widespread evasion which some anticipated as necessary results of the measure, have not occurred. Credit is being placed on a more healthy basis by the co-operative movement noticed below; the rise of land values, though not necessarily beneficial to the rural population, has continued steadily, while the peasant himself now regards the act as an indispensable factor of his economic security. Its proper administration is one of the important duties of the deputy-commissioner. Similar legislation has not been found to be necessary in the United Provinces except in Bundelkhand, where it was introduced in 1903.²

It is, however, rural co-operation combined with improved agricultural practice, which is proving itself to be the most effective means of raising the economic condition of the peasantry. The subject is one which deserves a much closer study than is possible here. After a

¹ *Adm. Rep. Panjab*, 1911-12, p. 49, and other extensive literature.

² *Adm. Rep. Unit. Provs.* 1911-12, p. 20.



preliminary period of investigation, with practical experiments in various parts of India, a Co-operative Credit Societies Act was passed in 1904, which provided legal facilities for the formation and working of such societies. In the light of subsequent experience it was replaced by the Co-operative Societies Act of 1912, an improved measure of wider scope, which, in addition to credit societies, provided for societies co-operative in the purchase of seed and implements, the marketing of produce, and in other activities. A rural credit society is broadly of the German Raiffeisen type, though with certain differences. Its membership is confined to a small specified area, and its function is to lend among its members for approved objects connected with agriculture, including reasonable domestic consumption, funds raised on their joint and several unlimited liability. A small entrance fee is charged, and in the Panjab and the United Provinces, but not in the Central Provinces, each member contributes in addition a small amount of share capital. Deposits are received from both members and non-members, and further capital is borrowed from other societies or from central banks, which form an integral part of the system and are in touch with the external money market. A committee of members constitutes the managing body, and as no paid staff is employed, working expenses are at a minimum; but borrowers are charged a rate of interest, which, though much less than that usually taken by money-lenders from single borrowers, allows of the accumulation of a reserve fund. The whole of the above resources are employed as working capital; and an immense alleviation of rural indebtedness is being gradually effected, while the moral education in self-help, thrift, self-respect, and social solidarity which is being silently imparted can scarcely be overestimated. Many societies for co-operative objects other than credit have been started. In each province the local government appoints a registrar with one or two assistants, who, with a trained staff, superintend and advise the societies in addition to performing statutory functions under the act.¹ The figures for agricultural societies in 1918-19—United Provinces, 3177; Central Provinces, 3871; Panjab, 5087—show the extent to which the movement has spread. It is one of the most effective economic and educative influences which have been introduced into India.

The modern development of local self-government is described in another chapter. Beginning in 1873 with Lord Mayo's measures for the decentralisation of finance,² it was placed by Lord Ripon in 1881-2 on a broader basis, with a largely increased elective element and with a limited degree of freedom from official control. In actual practice, however, most local bodies were dominated by the influence of the district officer, and, in financial matters especially, by the

¹ Annual Provincial Reports.

² *Imp. Gaz.* iv, 287 sqq.; *Parl. Papers*, 1883, LI, 1 sqq.; *Moral and Mat. Prog. Rep.* 1882-3, pp. 59-63.



increasingly centralised control of the provincial government and its departments; both being exercised in the interests of administrative efficiency, which otherwise, there being then no public opinion competent to compel local bodies to discharge their responsibilities. The district officer was not merely the controlling guide of local bodies, but their main active element; their affairs forming a considerable part of his daily work; a position which continued until the Indian Decentralisation Commission issued its report in 1909. It found that progress in local self-government had been hindered because local bodies, and more especially rural boards, had no real power and responsibility owing to want of funds and to excessive control. It made many drastic proposals for removing the trammels, the more important of which, after reference to provincial governments, the Indian Government accepted in 1915¹ with certain reservations and modifications. As a general result central departmental control was much relaxed and in some respects abrogated; local bodies have been placed in a freer and stronger financial position; while in municipalities official chairmen have for the most part disappeared. What the ultimate practical outcome will be in terms of public health and convenience remains to be seen. In the year 1917-18 there were in the United Provinces, the Central Provinces and in the Panjab, 83, 57 and 100 municipalities respectively, which contained in the case of the first two 6½ per cent., and in the case of the third 8 per cent. of the whole provincial population.²

The important subject of education has been treated elsewhere. Its administration being for the most part in the hands of the provincial education departments, its connection with district administration has been mainly through the local bodies, who have helped to finance primary, and to some extent also secondary education, without, however, exercising much actual control over either. The function of the district officer has been to co-operate, advise and encourage on a basis of general interest, supervision and local knowledge.

The main lines which the development of district administration has followed have now been sketched. Throughout the process the district officer—collector or deputy-commissioner—on the whole retained the position of principal local official of the government, in direct control, so far as his district was concerned, of its chief activities, and in direct touch with all others conducted by more purely departmental officials not wholly subordinate to him. The extremely multifarious nature of his work has been indicated. His primary duties are the collection of revenue from the land and from other sources, and the exercise of judicial powers, criminal and revenue, both of first instance and in appeal. But police, jails, municipalities, rural boards,

¹ Government of India Resolutions 55-77, 28 April, 1915.

² *Statistical Abstract for 1917-18*, p. 98.



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education, roads, sanitation, dispensaries, local taxation, agricultural statistics, records of rights and irrigation are matters with which he is more or less daily concerned, directly or indirectly. He is also responsible for the maintenance and submission of correct accounts of extensive local receipts and expenditure, and for the safe custody of large amounts of public money. He must, moreover, be familiar with the social life of the people and with the natural aspects of his district. But the district officer who should seek to undertake personally the daily minutiae of all these subjects would be unwise, not to say incompetent. With a comparatively few of them to do so is inevitable, but the main, the most important work is continuous supervision and control of subordinates, combined with a broad view and a strong but kindly grasp of the changing aspects and the half-expressed needs of the mass of human beings committed to their care. Centralised control has doubtless increased; but the common complaint that it has harmfully restricted the initiative of the district officer is in the main an exaggeration. It has certainly increased his otherwise manifold preoccupations, and where he has not been provided with adequate staff the result has been harmful. But he has been able to succeed just in so far as he has appreciated the need for, and has skilfully arranged, wherever possible, a devolution of actual work to properly qualified subordinates.



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CHAPTER XVII

Sin H. V. Lowett

THE DEVELOPMENT OF FAMINE POLICY

THREE hundred years ago the Dutchman, Francisco Pelsaert, travelling in Upper India, described in vivid language the relations between agriculture and the seasons:

The year is here divided into three seasons. In April, May and June the heat is intolerable, and men can scarcely breathe, more than that, hot winds blow continuously, as stifling as if they came straight from the furnace of hell. The air is filled with the dust raised by violent whirlwinds from the sandy soil, making day like the darkest night that human eyes have seen or that can be grasped by the imagination. Thus in the afternoon of 15 June, 1624, I watched a hurricane of dust coming up gradually, which so hid the sky and the sun that for two hours people could not tell if the world was at an end, for the darkness and fury of the wind could not have been exceeded. Then the storm disappeared gradually, as it had come, and the sun shone again. The months of June, July, August, September and October are reckoned as the rainy season, during which it sometimes rains steadily. The days are still very hot, but the rain brings a pleasant and refreshing coolness. In November, December, January, February and March it is tolerably cool, and the climate is pleasant.

From April to June the fields lie hard and dry, unfit for ploughing or sowing owing to the heat. When the ground has been moistened by a few days' rain, the cultivators begin to sow indigo, rice and various food grains eaten by the poor. When all these are off the land, they plough and sow again, for there are two harvests; that is to say in December and January they sow wheat and barley, various pulses and "alsi" (linseed) from which oil is extracted. Large numbers of wells have to be dug in order to irrigate the soil, for at that time it is beginning to lose its productive power. Provided the rain is seasonable and the cold is not excessive, there is a year of plenty, not merely of food, but in the trade of all sorts of commodities.¹

But if the rain is not seasonable, if the monsoon fails over large tracts which cannot be sufficiently irrigated from ponds, rivers, wells or canals, the crops which are the mainstay of the countryside must be sown in a much restricted area and will often be poor even there; the grass which has been burnt up by the blazing sun and burning winds of March, April and May cannot revive, and both the milch-cows and the plough and transport cattle, which are the cultivator's working capital, are decimated. The water level falls; and the supply is tainted with noxious germs. The peasantry see their means of livelihood vanish. If no remedy be forthcoming they must starve. Destitution will bring cholera and pestilence in its train; and thousands of humble lives will be sacrificed. Such is famine in that grim shape which it has often worn. But nature sometimes relents; and man has done much to combat this king of terrors.)

The drought which follows a feeble monsoon may be mitigated by light winter rains; and in any case there are marked differences of

¹ Pelsaert, *Jehangir's India*, pp. 47-8. For an account of the climate and rainfall see vol. 1, chap. i of this History.



climate and inequalities of rainfall. The populations have accustomed themselves to this circumstance both in their density and in their selection of crops. There are wet provinces and dry provinces, wet areas and dry areas, sometimes within the same district; there are wet crops and dry crops. If communications are adequate there are flourishing tracts to come to the rescue of those less favoured. Rain never fails throughout the whole country, even though the monsoon sometimes disappoints not only regions inured to some degree of drought but those which are usually blessed with abundant rainfall.

When the south-west monsoon is over the young winter crops, and in parts the later rice, need artificial irrigation; and if the rainfall has been deficient, the irrigation must be strenuous and constant. Rivers, wells, "tanks" (artificial ponds) are all requisitioned. But in a dry year, the supply from these sources shrinks, and canals, where they exist, are the greatest stand-by of all. Large-scale systems of canals, drawing supplies from rivers or artificial reservoirs, began with the consolidation of British rule; but the West Jumna Canal, in a dilapidated condition, was inherited from Moghul times; and the Kaveri delta canal system in Madras comes down from remote antiquity.¹ In the year 1919-20 the total area irrigated by canals in British India exceeded 27,000,000 acres. The total length of canals and distributaries was 66,754 miles. The estimated value of the crops watered by government irrigation works amounted to £156,000,000, double the capital expenditure which these works had entailed.)

The storage of water and the regulation of its outflow are matters of supreme importance to Indian agriculture. Wells, tanks and canals play their part. But the wide extension of irrigation which marked the years 1858-1918 could not have been achieved without the skilled and devoted co-operation of the Indian forest service. To quote the words of one of its most distinguished members:

It is by the agency of the forests that the surface-flow from the hills is restrained after heavy rain; that the water level is maintained at such a height that it can be reached by the primitive methods of the East; that the springs are kept supplied; and that perennial springs may be made to flow in the place of those water-courses trickling through dreary beds of sand, that would hardly be suspected of becoming later on in the summer turbulent and muddy torrents, often carrying devastation instead of blessing.²

We need only summarise the history of famines before 1858. In ancient times scarcity owing to floods or drought was not infrequent and sometimes extended to a whole kingdom.³ But scarcities caused by floods have always affected comparatively small areas, and inundations have left a fertilising silt. The great famines have been caused by drought. In his elaborate studies of economic life under the

¹ Moreland, *India at the Death of Akbar*, p. 108; Knowles, *Economic Development of the Overseas Empire*, pp. 366-82; Moreland, *From Akbar to Aurangzeb*, pp. 195-6.

² Eardley-Wilmot, *Forest Life and Sport in India*, p. 5.

³ Cf. vol. 1, chap. viii, *supra*.



Moghul emperors Mr Moreland has shown us that the famines then were marked, not only by widespread mortality and desolation, but by suicide, voluntary enslavement and cannibalism.¹ Before the "pax Britannica" was definitely established the miseries of such times were often aggravated by the ravages of armies. In 1802 the army of the Maratha chief, Jasvant Rao Holkar, marching to Poona from the north, laid waste the countryside. The Pindaris followed in its wake and reduced the Deccan to such depths of misery and want that human beings are said to have been devoured by the peasants. Emigrants passed into the Konkan leaving a trail of dead and dying behind them. The late rains failed; the river at Poona was black with putrescent corpses; and "hunger, hand in hand with cholera, left many villages permanently desolate".² But, in any case, as long as districts were land-locked and populations were isolated, famine relief was largely regarded as hopeless. Almsgiving, storage of food grains in central towns, remissions of revenue, digging of wells, were palliatives occasionally resorted to. But no attempt was made to stem the full tide of starvation and ruin. Even when the government of the East India Company, recently established at Calcutta, was in 1769-70 first brought face to face with responsibility for some measure of relief, its dispatches,

while breathing a tone of sincere compassion for the sufferings of the people, were busied rather with the fiscal results as affecting the responsibility of the Company towards its shareholders, than with schemes which would have seemed wholly visionary for counteracting the inevitable loss of life.³

There is no reason to dispute the finding of the 1880 Famine Commission that up to the end of the eighteenth century "the position of the British in India was not such as either to create any sense of general obligation to give relief, or to supply sufficient means of affording it". While the administration was endeavouring to find its feet, while wars frequently carried devastation into large tracts of country, while the effects of climatic disturbances on food crops were largely a matter of conjecture, while agricultural, economic and vital statistics were unknown, while it was difficult to transmit information speedily, while the absence of communications rendered the timely transmission of grain for long distances or in large quantities a very arduous or an impossible undertaking, while half-starved bullocks or heavy barges were the sole means of transport, famine was regarded as a calamity wholly transcending the powers of man to counteract or even materially to mitigate.⁴ The years 1765-1858 were marked by famines or scarcities in various parts of the country which were dealt with by such measures as seemed best to the local governments

¹ Moreland, *India at the Death of Akbar*, chap. vii; *From Akbar to Aurangzeb*, chap. vii.

² Grant Duff, *History of the Marathas* (ed. Edwardes), II, 368.

³ Report of the Famine Commission, 1880; cf. Hickey, *Memoirs*, III, 343-4.

⁴ Cf. Kaye, *British India*, pp. 275-6, and Maconochie, *Life in Indian Civil Service*, pp. 9-10.



or district officers concerned. No attempt was made to formulate any general system of famine relief or prevention, (although such experiments as storage of grain by the government, penalties on hoarding, bounties on import, poorhouses, advances of money to encourage the sinking of wells, and relief works to afford employment, were undertaken at one time or another.) The only business which can afford employment to Indian cultivators when tillage fails is earth-work, the excavation of reservoirs, the construction of irrigation embankments and the making of roads. But earth-works were never opened on an adequate scale. When in 1837 famine visited the upper reaches of the Ganges and the Jumna, the local government laid down the principle that while the state found work for the able-bodied, the whole community must, as in ordinary times, look after the helpless and infirm.) The measures adopted were quite insufficient. Heavy mortality resulted; and violent riots broke out. Twenty years later came the Mutiny, which was followed by the complete transfer of government to the crown.

The period with which we are now concerned was marked by a wide extension of railways¹ and other communications, by a rapid growth of trade and overseas commerce, by a great expansion of means of irrigation, by the development of an elaborate system of public instruction, by agrarian legislation mainly in the interest of the cultivators, by a gradual change in economic factors which, in spite of a great increase of population, very gradually modified the character of famines.

(The seasons of 1858-9 were irregular; and in 1860 the monsoon practically failed over 48,000 square miles of the North-West Provinces around Agra.) Alwar and other Indian states were affected; and about half a million persons deserted the distressed tracts. The provinces were still suffering from the effects of the Mutiny; but their south-east districts and neighbour provinces had received plenty of rain and were able to supply abundance of food grains. Within the distressed area canals protected about 900,000 more acres than they had protected in 1837; around it communications had improved, and the East Indian Railway had progressed far enough to render useful service. Free-trade principles were followed; and, as in 1837, it was declared that the state would provide employment for the able-bodied while voluntary agency should give charitable relief to the helpless and infirm. In fact, however, voluntary agency did very little; and the government found it necessary to undertake almost the whole burden of relief. Able-bodied persons were organised in gangs, housed in temporary sheds and employed upon earth-works for roads or canals. Some helpless persons were relieved in their homes and others in poorhouses where light tasks were imposed upon the more capable inmates. The famine was on a small scale, but is

¹ For the early history of railways in India see *Quarterly Review*, 1868, cxxv, 48-78.



remarkable for the fact that then for the first time a special enquiry was held into the causes, area and intensity of such a calamity. While it was proceeding Colonel Baird Smith was deputed to examine these matters; but his report did not lead to any formulation of general principles of relief.

We come now to the famine of 1866-7, which is known as the Orissa famine because in Orissa it assumed its most terrible form; but it extended along the whole east coast from Calcutta to Madras and penetrated inland. This calamity proved a turning point in the history of Indian famines for it was followed by the investigations and report of a committee (presided over by Sir George Campbell¹) which laid the foundations of a definite policy.

The causes of the famine were the failure of the autumn rains, and consequently of the rice crops, of 1865, together with the almost complete absence of importation into Orissa of food from outside. The main stress of privation fell on the three British districts which form a comparatively narrow strip between the uplands and the sea and are intersected by rivers which swell enormously in the rainy season. There is a large pilgrim traffic by land to Jagannath in the dry season; but commercial communications were then principally by sea from several small ports open the greater part of the year but inaccessible from the heavy surf and the prevalent winds after the breaking of the south-west monsoon. The country is almost entirely a rice or water country; but the supply of rain is generally ample, and there had been no previous famines since Orissa became British territory. In 1865, however, the monsoon ceased prematurely along the east coast, and two-thirds of the rice crop were lost. Food stocks were low, as export had been brisk of late years, but prices remained moderate for some time. The warnings of certain local officers were disregarded, and famine arrived like a thief in the night.

"In April 1866", says Campbell, "the magistrate of Cuttack still reported that there was no ground for serious apprehension. A few days later in May, he and his followers were almost starved. We compared it to the case of a ship where the stores are suddenly found to have run out."

A panic had set in and stores were withheld from the market. Every Indian cultivator aims at growing and keeping his own food supply. The market supply is what he sells to pay his rent and meet his cash needs, but in times of scarcity even grain which can be spared is held up. Dealers also incline to wait for higher prices. If, however, importation from other districts is easily practicable, even a great failure of crops will not lead to a widespread hold-up of stocks.

In Orissa panic arose suddenly. Importation was rapidly becoming impracticable; and the local government had been slow to appreciate the situation. Before anything effective could be done the monsoon

¹ Cf. his *Memoirs of my Indian Career*, II, 149-55.



broke and Orissa was sealed up for several months. There was terrible suffering before adequate supplies could be obtained, although the cultivators procured or had saved sufficient to sow their autumn crops. In October the government poured in large supplies of grain, and some local hoards were brought out by the dealers. A good new crop was then being reaped, and the famine ended almost as suddenly as it had begun, except in certain tracts, where excessive floods wrought havoc. The Bengal government had provided such relief as it could at a cost of about one and a half millions sterling. But the commissioner of the division estimated that one-fourth of the population had died. Campbell's committee did not think this estimate excessive; but in the entire absence of statistics and of effective machinery for ascertaining the facts was unable to form an accurate judgment. The census of 1871 showed an unexpectedly large population; and Campbell afterwards doubted whether the famine mortality had not been exaggerated. The grain which poured in when the mischief was done was largely wasted and lay unused till it rotted. In Ganjam, a neighbouring district of the Madras Presidency, the situation had been easier, but a prolonged duration of high prices pressed hardly on the people and called for relief measures. The drought of 1865 extended in some degree to Bihar and Bengal where relief was inadequate and badly organised.

Campbell's committee reported that timely measures had not been taken to meet the terrible emergency which arose in May, 1866. The Bengal government had completely failed to forecast developments and had misled the central government. Blindly relying on the law of demand and supply, they had not considered the isolation of Orissa in the rainy season, and its customary dependence on its own food supply. It was essential to improve communications considerably and to initiate in Bengal the maintenance of land records and agricultural statistics which was carried out in other provinces by a subordinate revenue staff. The committee made recommendations which in some measure anticipated those of the royal commission of 1880. Their report produced a change of outlook; but Campbell tells us that "the idea rather prevailed that the Orissa failure was a personal failure which need not occur again". John Lawrence, however, who was then governor-general, blamed himself bitterly for having accepted the facile assurances of the Bengal government, and, when famine again appeared elsewhere in 1868, declared in council that his object was "to save every life", and that district officers would be held responsible that no preventible deaths occurred. The old doctrine that the public would be responsible for the relief of the helpless and infirm was entirely abandoned. Money was borrowed in order to finance additional railways and canals.

(Drought and famine in 1868-9 affected parts of the North-Western Provinces and Panjab, but were more intense in wide stretches of



Rajputana, and produced a great influx of emigrants into British territory, severely straining public charity and tending to swamp relief arrangements. The able-bodied were employed on large and small works. Extra mortality was estimated at 1,200,000 and ascribed mainly to cholera, smallpox and fever.

1873
In 1873 the monsoon ceased prematurely in Northern Bihar, causing a loss of much of the winter rice crop. Relief measures were planned on a scale unknown before. (Sir George Campbell, then lieutenant-governor, wished to prohibit export of rice and other cereals from Bengal overseas, the failure of these crops being largely confined to the north-western districts of his charge. His idea was to save all that was available in the south-east, to dam it up and drive it northward. But the proposal did not commend itself to Lord Northbrook who was then viceroy, and the central government arranged to import 480,000 tons of rice mostly from Burma to the distressed area. Even so up to April, 1874, the imports of rice barely equalled the exports; and during the whole famine year the exports of food from Calcutta were about two-thirds of the imports. Tasks were not strictly enforced on the relief works started in the distressed area, which consisted of 40,000 square miles with a population of 17,000,000. Gratuitous relief was given in villages on a very liberal scale. The whole cost was six and a half millions, although famine had been acute in two districts only: 800,000 tons of surplus grain remained on the hands of the government and were sold at a heavy loss. Relief was undoubtedly extravagant; but, for the first time in Indian history, a serious failure of crops had not produced heavy mortality.

The next drought soon arrived. It produced a famine of great magnitude and eventuated in an enquiry on a large scale which inaugurated a new era.

The famine of 1876-8 resulted from two deficient monsoons and affected not merely rice areas but also tracts which were largely covered by dry crops. It lasted long, covering much Madras territory, part of the Indian states of Mysore and Hyderabad, and the Bombay Deccan, affecting also the North-Western Provinces and Oudh. The policy of the central government was to spare no efforts to save the population of the distressed districts, but not to attempt the task of giving general relief to all the poorer classes of the community. Agreed principles and methods of relief had not yet been formulated; operations were not conducted on any uniform plan; and in many tracts private trade was seriously hampered by imperfect communications, for none of the areas most affected was then traversed by more than one railway line, while various districts were dependent for food on cattle transport from certain depôts served by the railways. In Bombay deaths during 1877-8 were 800,000 in excess of the normal figure, although large relief works had been promptly opened for the able-bodied, and gratuitous relief was well organised. In Madras the



government commenced by importing grain with the object of keeping down prices, but were checked by the central government on the ground that trade should not be interfered with. A few large works were opened; but the majority of the able-bodied were relieved by smaller works on which wages were much too high. Gratuitous relief was extravagant, and the viceroy, visiting the presidency in September, observed that the relief camps were "like picnics". "The people on them, who do no work of any kind, are bursting with fat and naturally enjoy themselves thoroughly."¹ Lord Lytton saw that gratuitous relief urgently required efficient administration, and drafted in extra British civil and military officers from Upper India. Rain came later on in the autumn and relieved the situation; but a number of debilitated persons remained on the hands of the Madras government another year, until the autumn crops of 1878 were ripe. On 11 October, 1877, the viceroy wrote to Queen Victoria:

(Whilst the Madras famine has cost the Government of India over 10 millions, the Bombay famine, under General Kennedy's management, has cost only four millions, although a much larger saving of human life has been effected in Bombay than in Madras.²)

The Madras famine was otherwise remarkable for the fact that charitable contributions amounting to £78,000 flowed in from Great Britain and the colonies.

Lytton's government decided that famine relief called for clear thinking, and appointed a strong commission under General Sir Richard Strachey, which reported in 1880, formulating general principles and suggesting particular measures of a preventive or protective character. It recognised to the full the duty of the state to offer relief to the necessitous in times of famine, but held that this relief should be so administered

as not to check the growth of thrift and self-reliance among the people, or to impair the structure of society, which, resting as it does in India upon the moral obligation of mutual assistance,³ is admirably adapted for common effort against a common misfortune.)

The great object of saving life would be far better secured if proper care were taken to prevent the abuse and demoralisation which, all experience showed, resulted from ill-directed and excessive distribution of charitable relief. In this spirit a provisional famine code must be framed which the local governments would adapt to the circumstances of their provinces and would in future administer subject to financial control from the central government.

Starting with these premises, the commission insisted on the urgent need of proper statistical collection of facts relating to the condition of the agricultural community. The opportunities for such collection

¹ *Letters of the Earl of Lytton*, II, 79.

² *Idem*, p. 82.

³ Cf. Fuller, *Indian Life and Sentiment*, p. 202.



offered by the revenue system in all provinces except parts of Bengal and Sind had been imperfectly utilised. Relief, too, should everywhere be administered on certain basic principles.

(a) Employment on works must be offered before the physical efficiency of applicants had been impaired by privation. All applicants must be received, but self-acting tests of wages and labour must be enforced in order to prevent the earth-works from attracting labourers who were not really in want, but out of work merely because at a particular season there was little to do in the fields. The works should be of permanent utility and capable of employing a considerable number of persons for a considerable period. Wages should be adjusted from time to time so as to provide sufficient food for a labourer's support, allowing him a day's rest in the week. Separate rates should be prescribed for different ages, sexes and classes; and allowances must be made for dependent children of labourers. A margin should be left to prevent accidental error on the side of deficiency. Over the larger works which would be directed by engineers of the public works department, district officers should exercise general supervision, deciding questions relating to tasks and wages, opening or closing of works, and all arrangements except those of a technical nature. Such works as excavation of ponds in villages and raising embankments for water storage might be carried out under the management of the ordinary district staff for the purpose of employing persons unfit to be dispatched to the larger works. Arrangements must be made for providing the latter with huts, temporary markets and hospitals. Great care must be exercised to avoid throwing work-people out of ordinary employ; and if drought merely produced severe scarcity, it would probably be sufficient to enlarge ordinary public works in such a manner as to afford additional employment.

(b) Only of late years had the government recognised that gratuitous relief was the duty not of the general public but of the state. Two systems prevailed; raw grain or money might be distributed in villages, and cooked food might be given at centres subject frequently to the condition of residence in a poorhouse or temporary camp. The latter form of relief was very unpopular. In the North-Western Provinces and Oudh many had died rather than accept it. It could only be a reserve line of defence. Gratuitous relief in villages, however, required very careful organisation and control. For this purpose distressed tracts must be divided into circles, and each circle must be placed under a competent officer who would be drawn from the district staff. Non-officials might be asked to volunteer assistance. Committees of Indian gentlemen would gladly assist in distributing relief to *purdah-nishin* ladies.)

(c) Government should, as a general rule, trust private trade to supply and distribute food, giving it every possible facility. It should prohibit export of grain only if reasonably certain that such action



necessary to conserve the resources of India as a whole (as was done in 1918). As railways multiplied, the country was becoming better and better able to feed itself. There were strong objections to storage of grain by the government, and there was abundant private storage. It was, however, important that supplies of food in distressed areas should be carefully watched.

(d) The commission made suggestions in regard to suspensions and remissions of land-revenue and rents. In times of famine landlords should be encouraged and assisted by loans on easy terms to open works on their estates which would offer employment to labourers and poorer tenants. Loans should also be given for purchases of seed grain and bullocks.

(e) The cost of relief must be so localised as to bring home to its administrators a sense of personal responsibility for expenditure. The sense of responsibility would be most effectually quickened by throwing the burden of famine expenditure on to local taxation, and administering relief through representative members of the tax-paying body themselves responsible for providing all needful funds, but this system would involve the assumption that the various provinces were, on the whole, equally well qualified to bear their own burdens, an assumption contrary to fact. There was always a limit beyond which provincial revenues could not supply famine relief and must be assisted from imperial funds. In ordinary times, too, the central government should assist local governments to undertake water-storage and other protective works, even if such enterprises seemed unlikely to yield immediate profit.

(f) In times of excessive drought facilities should be afforded for the migration of cattle to grassy forest areas where abundant pasturage was procurable.

The commission estimated that the largest population likely to be affected by famine at one time was thirty millions. They held that great uncertainties surrounded all estimates of degrees of failure of crops and that in forecasting consequences attention must be paid to the antecedent and existing circumstances of the areas affected. The classes which suffered most from famine were the cultivators and labourers who were thrown out of employment, the artisans and petty traders deprived of profits mainly derived from dealing with the poorer classes, aged or weakly dependents, and public beggars who found the springs of charity drying up.

The commission's proposals were generally accepted, and steps were taken to create new resources by which in normal times a surplus of revenue could be secured to meet the extraordinary charges thrown on the state by famine. Experience provided a basis of calculation, and, after correspondence with the secretary of state in council, it was eventually decided that 15,000,000 rupees would always be entered in the budget under the head "Famine relief and Insurance" with



sub-heads for relief, protective works and reduction of debt, or prevention of debt which would otherwise be incurred for the construction of railways and canals. When Lord Curzon's second budget was framed arrangements were made to charge against this insurance fund only works designed and executed exclusively as protection against famine.)

In 1883 the provisional Famine Code was promulgated. It formed a guide and a basis for the various provincial famine codes which were subsequently prepared, approved by the central government, and revised again and again as experience widened. The first chapter of these codes prescribed precautions to be taken in ordinary times. The second gave instructions to be followed when a relief campaign seemed imminent. The remaining chapters described the duties of all concerned when it had actually begun. Districts might be declared by local governments either "scarcity" or "famine". "Scarcity districts" would be those less acutely distressed and would require less general relief. They might or might not develop into "famine districts". In any case they would be divided into relief circles organised in the manner suggested by the 1880 commission. The codes enjoined the immediate preparation and careful maintenance of district programmes of relief works. Projects for the larger works, which would be the backbone of relief, would be prepared in detail by the public works department. The codes dealt thoroughly with other matters which had been the subjects of the commission's recommendations.

The district is and must always be the unit of famine relief; and it is worth while to sketch briefly the preliminaries and development of relief measures in a stricken district.

We will say that in a certain September the district officer (the writer has served through two famines, once as district officer and again as commissioner) recognises that the monsoon has failed to a disastrous degree, that the autumn crops have largely perished, and that the sowing of the winter crops on the hard dry ground will be largely impossible. He consults his copy of the provincial famine code and examines the programmes of relief works which, in obedience to its provisions, have been prepared and revised by his predecessors. He looks up the records of any previous famine which may have visited his district, calls for reports from subdivisional officers or *tahsildars*, and journeys to the tracts which cause most anxiety, informing his commissioner of his plans and views. That officer communicates with the local government and will take an early opportunity of inspecting the precarious region himself, but may have other threatened districts to visit. As the shadows lengthen, the district officer will have to revise his programme of relief works, for his charge may measure 3000 or 4000 square miles, and will contain wet and dry areas; the rainfall has been uneven; the subdivisions are affected in varying degrees. All the requirements of particular localities cannot



have been foreseen, and the district engineer must be carefully consulted. Some new projects for roads and water-storage works must be considered and prepared. Estimates too must be dispatched to the commissioner forecasting the degree of crop failure, the consequent suspension of land-revenue, the amount of advances (takavi) required for assistance to occupiers of land, who are anxious, wherever practicable, to sow and irrigate the winter crops, and the sums required for relief of all kinds. A rise in crimes against property will be engaging the attention of the superintendent of police, and outbreaks of epidemic disease will demand special efforts on the part of the civil surgeon. These officers will be touring from time to time and keeping in touch with their subordinates in rural areas. Letters to the district officer are arriving from the commissioner, frequently enclosing orders from the local government who will allot funds and sanction necessary expenditure.

In most provinces the district officer will find his relief circles ready made. His *tahsils* or subdivisions are already split up into circles presided over by inspectors of village records (*kanungos*) who move constantly about and look after the work of the *patwaris* (village accountants). The village headmen, assisted by the latter, prepare lists of infirm and needy persons likely to require gratuitous relief which are checked by the *kanungos*. The totals are collected, scrutinised by *tahsildars* and subdivisional officers, and laid before the head of the district. That officer will call a public meeting for appeal to the charitable and will make arrangements for the immediate distribution of *takavi* advances.

"Scarcity" is declared in our district. Test works are opened which attract increasing numbers, although by far the great majority of the cultivators are sticking persistently to their fields, ploughing, sowing, watering, sinking temporary wells wherever practicable, with a courage and perseverance beyond all praise. Perhaps some fall of early winter rain relieves the whole situation and postpones or mitigates calamity. But this cannot be relied on; and if it does not come, signs of distress speedily increase and "famine" is declared. Then the whole machinery contemplated by the code comes into operation, and everything depends upon efficiency of organisation and supervision. One problem succeeds another rapidly for thousands come on to the relief works, many with babies and children; and it is almost impossible to discriminate between genuine dependents of workers and others. In the 1908 famine the government of the United Provinces decided to discontinue relief of dependents on works, as far as possible, for this reason, preferring to transfer them to their homes. But this cannot always be arranged, and in any case the timely relief of thousands in their homes by doles is most difficult to arrange and control. Cholera too may at any time visit one of the large works, when, unless careful arrangements are speedily made, a panic-



stricken crowd will disperse in all directions, some bearing with them deadly contagion. At all times the condition of the children calls for particular attention. Care must also be taken, as far as possible, to save the cattle; or else even when rain comes, ploughing will be extremely restricted. These are only some of the problems which assail the over-burdened district staff. Extra assistants are drafted in; but the local government may be struggling with the needs of twenty districts or more, and the central government may be perplexed by the conflicting claims of three or four provinces. The commander-in-chief is appealed to and assists with the invaluable loan of some junior military officers. Months of trial and anxiety pass by. If the district adjoins an Indian state, crowds of immigrants may pour in. The commissioner, moving about in his division, acts as adviser, friend and referee. The head of the local government comes to see for himself how things are going. At last the hot weather comes to an end; the rains burst; the labourers on the relief works disperse with valedictory doles; agricultural operations are resumed, and soon relief is no longer required.

But in the meantime privation and disease have taken their toll; the provincial finances have been badly strained; and despite an elaborate system of accounts, the immense opportunities of speculation, which large expenditure on famine relief offers to numbers of subordinates, have not been entirely lost. (In fighting famine vigorous, effective, unceasing supervision by officers of the superior services is, from every point of view, absolutely essential.) The difficulty of securing this can be appreciated by remembering that sometimes twenty districts or more, and many millions of people are affected. In the great famine of 1899-1900 Lord Curzon regretted that more superior and subordinate officers had not been available and remarked that the provinces not afflicted had been "literally scoured for the loan of men". The Indian states had "escaped a disastrous breakdown only through the administrative knowledge, unflagging energy and devotion of British officers lent to them".¹

Between 1880 and 1896 minor droughts in different provinces afforded opportunities of testing and revising the provincial codes. In 1896-7 came a grave failure of the rains affecting 225,000 square miles in British India and a population of sixty-two millions. The tracts severely distressed measured 125,000 square miles with a population of thirty-four millions. The North-Western Provinces and Oudh, Bihar, the Central Provinces, Madras, Bombay, the Panjab, Berar, suffered in varying degrees. In the North-Western and Central Provinces extensive relief operations were undertaken. The famine was followed by searching enquiries from a commission presided over by Sir James Lyall, ex-lieutenant-governor of the Panjab, who found it most difficult to compare degrees of distress with those observed

¹ Raleigh, *Lord Curzon in India*, p. 386.



in previous famines as conditions had largely altered with expansion of railways. But improved supervision and organisation had certainly reduced the cost of relief to a figure below that which might have been anticipated. The commission adhered largely to the views expressed by their predecessors in 1880, suggesting alterations which were designed to impart greater flexibility to the maxims then adopted. They observed:

It may be said of India as a whole that of late years, owing to high prices, there has been a considerable increase in the incomes of the landholding and cultivating classes, and their standard of comfort and expenditure has also risen. With the rise in transfer-value of their holdings, their credit also has expanded. During recent famines they have shown greater powers of resistance. The poorer professional classes suffer severely from rise of prices but do not come on relief. The wages of day labourers and skilled artisans have not risen. The rise in prices of food has not been accompanied by a rise in the wages of labour. On the contrary, as competition falls off, the rate of wages offered falls frequently below the customary rate.¹

Before the proposals of the 1898 commission had been fully considered by the government, India was visited by a drought the greatest in extent and intensity which she had experienced for 200 years. The area affected amounted to over 400,000 square miles with a population of about sixty millions, of whom twenty-five millions belonged to British India and the remainder to Indian states. It embraced the greater part of the Bombay Presidency, the Central Provinces, Berar and much of the Panjab, the states of Kathiawar and Rajputana, the Nizam's dominions, Baroda and the Central Indian principalities. The loss in crops alone amounted to £50,000,000 in British India and £30,000,000 in the Indian states. Water supplies shrank considerably; and a fodder famine on an enormous scale was followed by a positive devastation of all kinds of cattle. Some of the tracts which had suffered in 1896-7 suffered even more now. Speaking to his legislative council on 19 October, 1900, the viceroy estimated that one-fourth of the entire population of India had come to a greater or less degree within the radius of relief operations. Lord Curzon had followed relief measures with devoted attention, touring in the worst districts of Gujarat, one of the areas most afflicted, in the fierce heat of July, 1900. By that time, as he said, famine had brought "its familiar attendant Furies in its train, and cholera, dysentery and fever had fallen upon an already exhausted and enfeebled population".²

The relief campaign was conducted on a very liberal scale. The ratio of relief in June and July, 1900, was 18 per cent. in the famine-stricken area of British India as compared with 10 per cent. in 1897; 637 public officials were specially deputed to famine duty from civil and military employ; provinces not affected were scoured for the loan of men. Revenue was freely suspended and remitted. Large loans

¹ *Famine Commission's Report*, p. 363.

² Raleigh, *op. cit.* pp. 375, 404. Cf. Ronaldshay, *Life of Curzon*, vol. II, chap. v.



were made to the Indian states as well as to land-holders and cultivators in British territory. Following the advice of the 1898 commission, the government adapted its relief system more dexterously to varying circumstances. In British India there was an excess mortality of 750,000 persons, 230,000 of whom at least died of cholera and smallpox. Fever also claimed its victims. All the figures included immigrants from Indian states where, in spite of many bright examples of benevolence and humanity, the standard of relief generally was lower than that in British territory; 140 lakhs of rupees (nearly £1,000,000 sterling) were contributed for charitable relief, of which 88½ lakhs came from the United Kingdom. In 1896-7 the United Kingdom had given 123 out of 137 lakhs. Australia, the Straits Settlement, Ceylon and Hongkong, the United States of America, Berlin, had also subscribed. From the 137 lakhs distributed by the Central Relief Committee 111 went to purchasing cattle, seed and subsistence for peasants in British territory who were not reached by the government loans. Fifty lakhs were given for similar purposes to the Indian states. In 1900 the rains were satisfactory; prospects rapidly mended; revenue was remitted on a liberal scale; another commission was appointed to investigate particular questions in the light of recent experiences. A famine, Lord Curzon said, was a natural visitation in its origin, but should be a very business-like proceeding when once it had started. More should be done by way of precaution. District programmes of relief could be prepared with greater method and should not be considered complete until every possible scheme of irrigation or water-storage had been examined. So terrible an incident as this famine was "an abiding landmark in the history of the Indian people", and imposed very heavy responsibility upon the government.

The commission then appointed met under the presidency of Sir Anthony (afterwards Lord) MacDonnell, who had steered the United Provinces with distinguished success through the recent famine. Their report published in 1901 clearly summarised accepted principles of relief, suggesting variations. They emphasised the benefits of a policy of "moral strategy", early ascertainment and publication of suspensions of revenue and rents, early distribution of advances for purchase of seed and cattle and the sinking of temporary wells. They advocated the appointment of a famine commissioner in a province where relief operations promised to be extensive. They recommended stricter regulation of famine relief in certain respects, efforts to enlist non-official assistance on a larger scale, and preference in particular circumstances of village works to the large public works which had hitherto been the backbone of relief schemes. These suggestions commended themselves to the central government and bore fruit in the provincial famine codes. The commission also advised a considerable increase in rolling stock at the cost if necessary of the famine insurance



grain. The railways, they said, had been unable to carry much of the food and fodder offered to them during the famine. The central government, however, held that possibly the unavoidable limitations in the carrying capacity of the lines was the main cause of blocks in traffic.

The commission dealt fully with allegations that the land-revenue demand was excessive and gave reasons for holding it to be very low in comparison with the share of the produce to which the government was traditionally entitled.¹ But they considered that as the savings of good years were often rapidly spent, more indulgence in collection should be shown in bad years. (Agricultural banks should be established; irrigation works should be pushed on; water-storage must be more sedulously encouraged; measures should be taken to foster improved methods of agriculture.)

The development of village credit associations and the practicability of a wide extension of irrigation had already been engaging the government's attention. No time was lost in considering and acting on the other recommendations of the commission. (Before Lord Curzon left India he had done more to prevent and combat famine, than any two of his predecessors or successors.)

The last considerable famine of our period visited the United Provinces in 1907-8 and disclosed some changes in economic conditions. In consequence of a failure of the south-west monsoon of 1907, which averaged only one-third to one-quarter of the normal fall and came as a climax to more than one bad or indifferent season, the loss of autumn food grains was estimated as approximating in value to £4,000,000. Industrial staples suffered even more. The actual failure of the autumn harvest was greater than and that of the spring harvest was as great as the losses in 1896-7. The range of prices was higher. The situation was not relieved, as in 1896, by an unusually early fall of winter rain. Yet on 25 January, 1908, the lieutenant-governor, Sir John Hewett, was able to describe the situation in the following terms:

Why if the provinces have suffered so much as this, do we not see the outward signs that are associated with famine? Why are we not brought into contact with people in a state of emaciation? Why do we not see bodies of persons in search of work? Why do the crime statistics of the province not show a serious rise? Why again if the calamity of to-day is so like that of eleven years ago, do we find such a change in the statistics of famine relief? Let us compare the figures for the two periods. By this time in 1897 there were 16 districts in which famine relief was in full swing while 24 were under observation and test; there were 480,000 persons actually on relief works, 43,000 on test-works, 123,000 being relieved as dependents of workers, 98,000 in receipt of gratuitous relief in their houses and 51,000 in poor-houses; in all some 796,000 persons were relieved. At the present time there are 311,000 persons receiving different forms of relief. There are only 13 districts that have been declared famine districts, and the workers on relief works number 152,000. We have 11 districts in which test-works are opened, but these are

¹ Cf. resolution by the governor-general in council, 16 January, 1902, published in the *Gazette of India*, 18 January, 1902.



attracting only about 5000 persons. We have 29,000 dependents of workers being relieved on works. On the other hand we have 26 districts as compared with 34 in 1897, in which gratuitous relief is being given to persons at their homes and the number in receipt of such relief in their homes is actually larger than it was in 1897.

The character of relief has undergone a considerable change.... The causes of this change of policy must be sought for in the changed circumstances of the present time.

The changed circumstances were mainly these: not only had railway mileage in the provinces increased 35 per cent. within eleven years; not only had canal irrigation expanded to an equally marked extent, but an established era of higher prices had brought a considerable rise in wages. Employment too had increased. Government expenditure on all forms of public works had been very large; and the industrial and building operations of the general public had greatly extended. The labouring classes had become far less dependent on agriculture than they had been in the past. Emigration had very greatly increased, both overseas to British colonies and inland to mills and factories in Calcutta and other commercial centres. Increasing amounts of money had been received through postal orders from abroad for payment to residents of certain eastern districts now famine-stricken. In some districts the value of the postal orders received from abroad exceeded the total land-revenue demand. Labour was yearly becoming dearer and the cultivating classes were better off. But the high prices of food grains, while benefiting agriculturists, were pressing heavily upon dwellers in towns with fixed incomes. And so it was that while the calamity of 1907-8 was far less a labourer's famine than had been anticipated, gratuitous relief was distributed widely in circumstances not contemplated by the MacDonnell commission who had allowed for it only in tracts where relief works had been started.)

As soon as the failure of the monsoon became apparent, the local government had adopted whole-heartedly the policy of moral strategy recommended by the MacDonnell commission. (The late Sir John Campbell was appointed famine commissioner.) Prompt assistance was given by extremely liberal money advances for the preparation, sowing and irrigation of the winter crops, and by the announcement of large remissions and suspensions of the autumn instalments of land-revenue. All these measures gave heart to the people, mitigated restriction of credit, provided occupation in the villages at remunerative rates of wages and prevented a rise in crime. The winter rains arrived late; and there was a much greater and more continuous demand for labour for irrigating the young winter crops than there had been in 1896-7, a circumstance which contributed to keep down the numbers on relief works. When the latter were opened, village works managed either by district officers or by landlords, assisted by partly repayable grants, took, as far as possible, the place of large relief works under the management of the engineers of the public



was made to continue these arrangements in order to avoid the crowding and risks of epidemic disease which large works involve and to bring relief as near to the homes of the cultivators as possible. The total number of persons on relief of all kinds on 14 March, 1908, at the commencement of the spring harvest was 1,411,576 of whom 1,040,476 were on works, 369,344 were receiving gratuitous assistance and 1756 were weavers who from the nature of their occupation needed special kind of help. After the spring harvest the numbers on relief considerably declined. The monsoon of 1908 broke early and soon enabled operations to be closed. The provincial death-rate from September, 1907, to July, 1908, was 36.47 against a normal figure of 32.59. The principal causes of death were fever, cholera, and small-pox. The total cost of famine relief was £2,135,000. The local government was congratulated by the central government on "the foresight displayed at each stage, on the promptitude and efficiency of action taken, and on the success which attended it".

The next period of stress began ten years later, when India had reached the beginning of the fifth year of the great war. From 1913 she had been favoured by good monsoons; but in 1917 the shortage of shipping and the shrinkage of rolling stock owing to military demands, had produced some disastrous results. The cultivators could not market their grain satisfactorily and had to pay dearly for imported commodities such as spices, oilcloth, kerosine and salt. In large towns foodstuffs and indeed all commodities became much dearer. The position of the labouring classes deteriorated although wages had risen. Early in 1918 came the German offensive in the West, the raising of a large additional body of Indian troops, and a great effort to meet the increased demand for army supplies and munitions of war. Foodstuffs were purchased by the government on a large scale; and before long the rise of prices was intensified by the weakness of the south-west monsoon all over the sub-continent. Prolonged breaks damaged the crops, and the rainfall was 19 per cent. below the average. (An extremely severe, widespread and deadly epidemic of influenza added to general distress.) From the beginning of the war the government had been compelled to interfere with the normal course of trade for the purpose of satisfying the needs of India, the Empire and the Allies, of controlling dealings with neutral countries and of prohibiting traffic with enemy countries.¹ (Early in November, 1918, the Armistice enabled them to apply to the relief of distress in India machinery contrived for the purchase and shipment of rice from Burma. Through the Home Government they arranged for purchases of wheat from Australia to tide over the interval which must elapse before the spring crops of 1919 came into the market; and they prohibited export of food grains from India

¹ See *Moral and Material Progress Report*, 1917-18, p. 91.



except in very small quantities and for exceptionally strong reasons. All these measures, combined with the fact that for ten years the monsoons had been generally kind, carried the country through a critical time. Relief measures were taken under the Famine Codes but never at any time did the number of relieved exceed 600,000. Distress ended with the abundant rains of 1919. The author of *India in 1920* observes that the manner in which the crisis was surmounted showed increased powers of resistance among the masses, although the high range of prices must have caused much silent suffering. Experiences since 1919 point to the conclusion¹ that agricultural labour is in a stronger and more independent position than it was at the beginning of this century; but the high prices of modern times have hit the middle or professional classes hard. "With their small fixed incomes, their large families and their increasing expenditure, they have of late years passed through a very disadvantageous epoch",² a circumstance which has stimulated political unrest.

Our tale is told. Twenty-four years ago Lord Curzon said to his legislative council:³

We may compete and struggle with Nature, we may prepare for her worst assaults, and we may reduce her violence when delivered. Some day perhaps when our railway system has overspread the entire Indian continent, when water storage and irrigation are even further developed, when we have raised the general level of social comfort and prosperity, and when advancing civilisation has diffused the lessons of thrift in domestic expenditure and greater self-denial and control, we shall obtain the mastery. But that will not be yet. In the meantime the duty of the government has been to profit to the full by the lessons of the latest calamity and to take such precautionary steps over the whole field of possible action as to prepare ourselves to combat the next.

Time has gone on since these words were uttered; the Indian railway system has been widely extended; water-storage and irrigation have greatly developed; in 1904 an act was passed authorising the formation of co-operative credit societies, and in 1919 there were 31,800 agricultural credit societies in British India with a total working capital of nearly £6,000,000; provincial departments of agriculture have for years been working with a Central Research Institute at Pusa in Bihar to evolve and distribute better strains of existing crops; education has become more widely diffused; emigration has lessened the pressure on some congested areas;⁴ altogether there is reason to conclude that substantial progress has been made toward the goal to which Lord Curzon directed untiring thought and endeavour. The way, however, is difficult, for between 1881 and 1921 the population of India rose from 253,000,000 to 319,000,000,⁵ and we cannot doubt

¹ See speech by the under-secretary of state for India, 8 July, 1927, Hansard, pp. 1659-60.

² *India in 1924-5*, p. 233.

³ Seventh Budget Speech, 29 March, 1905.

⁴ Of late years, however, it has considerably declined for reasons apparent from the publication *India in 1923-4*, pp. 18, 19.

⁵ Of this total 247,000,000 belonged to British India and 72,000,000 to native states. Between 1921 and 1931 the increase was 10.2 per cent.



It is rising still or that it will always be essentially rural. Famines will come from time to time but will not result from a single failure of crops, and will be rather work famines than food famines. They will be periods of unemployment on a scale to call for state relief; and it will always be necessary for the state to see that the helpless and destitute are not left to starve. But we may surely think that the day of isolated experiments and costly blunders has for ever passed. Out of failures and disappointments has come a broad, deliberate and well-tested policy, a matured and effective plan of campaign. None the less will it always be essential that such campaigns should be conducted by devoted and efficient public services, by men equal not only to the ordinary tasks of administration but to those extra tasks which are imposed by grave emergencies. To the old battles with famine many have devoted themselves with unsparing energy, two notable viceroys, British and Indian officials, missionaries of various Christian denominations. Some have fallen by the way without a murmur.¹) May their successors carry on that high tradition!

¹ "There stands by the roadside at Jubbalpore a cross with this inscription:

'To the memory of the officers of the Central Provinces who sacrificed their lives to their duty in the struggle to save life during the great famine of 1896-1897'.

"On the reverse side are the names of five members of the Indian Civil Service, one executive engineer, one police officer, and two lieutenants of the Indian army."

Holland, *The Indian Outlook*, p. 137.



CSL

CHAPTER XVIII

THE FINANCES OF INDIA

1858-1918

THE transfer of the government of India from the East India Company to the crown brought with it wide-reaching changes in the financial system of India. By the act of 1858¹ it was provided that the expenditure of the revenues of India should be subject to the control of the secretary of state in council, and that no grant or appropriation of any part of such revenues should be made without the concurrence of a majority of votes at the meeting of the council. Though limited discretionary powers of incurring expenditure were delegated to the Government of India, the regulations of this act placed on the secretary of state and his council the final responsibility for the administration of finances. In India, the somewhat antiquated financial machinery had almost broken down under the strain of the Mutiny. In the reconstruction which followed there was a noticeable tendency to bring the organisation and procedure into closer conformity with English practice. The management of the finances had been hitherto in the collective charge of the governor-general and his council, who exercised a control, that at times had not proved very effective, over the expenditure of the presidency governments. In 1859 the first finance minister was appointed and assumed control over all branches of public accounts. The whole administration of finance was vested in the central government, the provincial governments becoming, as regards expenditure, merely administrative agencies and having no power of spending without sanction the revenue they collected. The budget system was introduced, the English model of preparing the accounts being in general followed. The first budget was presented for the year 1860-1 (the Indian financial year ending 31 March), to be followed in due course by annual statements showing closed accounts.

The main preoccupations of the financial advisers of the Government of India between the years 1859 and 1873—which forms the first stage in the history of the period dealt with—were, after restoring order in the public accounts, to balance income and expenditure, and, subsequently, to meet endless demands for improved administration and for the economic development of the country. The Mutiny had involved the government in serious embarrassments. Some of the sources of revenue had been wholly or partially cut off, and the heavy military expenditure had been met by constant borrowings. In all, over £42,000,000 had been added to the debt,

¹ 21 & 22 Vic. c. 108.



and the accounts statement of 1859-60 showed a deficit of £7,250,000. The total debt, which was largely a legacy of the numerous wars in which the East India Company had been engaged, amounted to about £98,000,000. The state of Indian finances had excited some apprehension in England, and it was decided to appoint an experienced English financier to their charge. The choice fell on James Wilson, to whom the credit for the reforms carried out was largely due. Under his guidance, drastic reductions were effected in civil and military expenditure, while the revenues were enhanced by the imposition of an income-tax for a period of five years. With prosperous seasons, the finances rapidly improved and, by 1864, the deficit disappeared from the budget.

The gross revenue of 1860-1 amounted to £43,000,000. This income was derived largely from sources which differed materially from those most common in European countries, a fact which accounted for some of the peculiar features of Indian finance.¹ Under the revenue system which the government had inherited from its predecessors the main productive sources, the land-revenue and opium, were not derived from taxation: of the taxation heads the chief contributory was the salt monopoly; the ordinary excise, customs and stamps being comparatively unimportant. Direct taxation was at first only intermittently imposed. Though an income of this nature imposed a lighter burden on the public, it was less stable and more costly to realise than that of countries relying in a greater measure on taxation for their revenues. The fate of the budget depended on the course of the monsoon. If the rainfall were favourable, the necessarily cautious anticipations of revenue were more than realised: if unfavourable, the returns from heads such as land-revenue, opium and salt fell off, and the estimated surplus was converted to a deficit, often swollen by the extraordinary expenditure called for by measures of famine relief.

The mainstay of the finances was the land-revenue,² which, in 1860, contributed over 40 per cent. to the total of the gross revenues. From time immemorial the ruling power in India had been entitled to a share in the produce of the land. Where there was an intervening landlord, the Government of India exercised its right by taking a portion of the rent paid by the tenant. Where the settlement was made direct with peasant proprietors, it took, as a rule, a portion, either of the estimated net produce of the land, or of the rental accepted as fair for the class of soil. The land-revenue, except in permanently settled tracts, was revised periodically, usually after thirty years, when an assessment was imposed on land brought under cultivation in the interim, or an enhancement made in the rate of assessment, if justified by a rise in rents, or an increase in the value of agricultural produce.

¹ Cf. Bastable, *Public Finance*, bk II, chap. v.

² Baden Powell, *Land Systems of British India*, vol. II, chaps. i and ii, vol. III, chap. ii.



The position of part proprietor thus occupied, however historically or economically justifiable, in practice exposed the state to constant pressure to reduce its claims. The material condition of the small holders, due mainly to the density of population and excessive subdivision of the land, in itself called for caution in enforcing enhancements. There was consequently a tendency towards greater moderation in revising the assessments, so as to leave in the hands of the cultivators a larger portion of the profits of their holdings. Though the income from land-revenue shows a fairly steady increase, it was not in proportion to the rise in the rental value of the land. The ratio of land-revenue to the total gross income of the state gradually diminished and at the beginning of the present century had fallen to 25 per cent.

Next in importance was the opium revenue, derived from profits of the state monopoly of the sale of the drug to China and other countries, the revenue from opium sold in India being treated as excise.¹ The receipts under the former head were of a fluctuating nature, depending on the character of the crop in India and the price of the drug in China. The gross income, too, was subject to material deductions, arising out of the purchase of the raw article and its manufacture for export. Though the maintenance of the traffic in opium with China was subject to frequent attack, it survived in much the same form until 1907, when an agreement was entered into with the Chinese Government under which that government undertook to suppress the cultivation of the opium poppy within a period of ten years, while the Government of India consented to the extinction of the import of opium into China within the same period.

Of the revenues derived from taxation the salt duty was the most remunerative.² Being an article of local production in certain parts of India, the tax varied in its incidence and method of collection. With the improvement of inland communications, the diversity in rates encouraged smuggling from lower to higher taxed areas, the suppression of which called for a great increase in the preventive staff and so reduced the net receipts. The problem was not satisfactorily solved until the Government of India was able to obtain control of the most important sources of supply in the native states. The establishment of state factories at which salt was sold at a price that included the duty rendered it possible to abolish the expensive inland customs line and fix a uniform rate for all India. The equalisation of the salt duties was completed in 1882, when a single rate of Rs. 2 per maund (82 lbs.) was levied, representing an annual tax of about 5d. per head of population. There were frequent fluctuations in the rate of duty imposed, but, generally speaking, the tax was raised only in emergencies and was one of the first to receive the benefit of an improvement in finances.

In 1860 the customs income was derived mainly from a general

¹ Strachey, *Finances and Public Works of India*, chap. xiv.

² *Idem*, chaps. xiii, xv.



rate of 10 per cent. *ad valorem* on most articles imported.¹ A smaller duty of 4 per cent. was levied on many articles of export. As finances improved, the rate on imports was reduced to 7 per cent. in 1864, and again to 5 per cent. in 1875; many exemptions being made from time to time from export duty. With the growth of industries in India, particularly of cotton manufacture, objections were raised in England to the form in which this duty was levied on the ground that its practical effect was to operate as a measure of protection in favour of Indian manufactures and so conflicted with accepted economic principles. The main issue was the retention of the duty on cotton goods which, so long as the Indian home industry was undeveloped, constituted some 60 per cent. of the total imports. The avowed policy of the Government of India was to adopt complete freedom of import, which was carried into effect in 1882 by the abolition of the general import duties. It was found, however, impossible to forgo this source of income permanently, and the customs-duties were subsequently reimposed.

Of the other heads of taxation, the stamp revenue was realised mainly from fees levied in the form of stamps on proceedings in the judicial courts and from stamps on commercial documents. The excise revenue was derived from intoxicating liquors, hemp, drugs, and opium consumed in India. In 1860 the receipts were unimportant, only slightly exceeding a million sterling, but with more careful administration, excise became one of the most valuable sources of income.

In India, as in England, the income-tax was first introduced as a temporary expedient to meet war expenses.² The first general tax was imposed in 1860 to restore the finances after the Mutiny, being levied at the rate of 4 per cent. on all incomes of Rs. 500 or upward, and at half that rate on incomes between Rs. 200 and Rs. 500. It was abolished after five years, but in 1867 bad seasons compelled a resort to direct taxation. An experiment was made with a licence tax on trades and professions, which was of the nature of a tax on incomes. In this modified form the proceeds were insufficient to cover the deficit, and in 1869 the scope of the tax was enlarged and it was converted into a general income-tax. As finances improved, this unpopular form of taxation was dropped. But in 1877-8 financial difficulties again arose, and no means of raising additional revenue, except by direct taxation, being considered practicable, it was re-introduced by the imposition of a licence tax on trades. In 1886 a further step was taken and a tax was imposed on all incomes derived from sources other than agriculture. Experience had been gained to secure the smoother working of the tax and from that time it took its place as one of the permanent heads of revenue.

The above summary indicates the gradual evolution of the revenue

¹ *Imperial Gazetteer of India*, vol. iv, chap. vi.

² Strachey, *op. cit.* chap. xii; Findlay-Shirras, *The Science of Public Finance*, chap. xxi.