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MODERN INDIA:

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A SKETCH

OF

THE SYSTEM OF CIVIL GOVERNMENT.

WITH

SOME ACCOUNT OF THE NATIVES AND NATIVE INSTITUTIONS.

BY GEORGE CAMPBELL, ESQ.,

BENGAL CIVIL SERVICE.

SECOND EDITION, REVISED AND CORRECTED.

LONDON:

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NOTICE TO THE SECOND EDITION.

I TRUST that this volume has so far answered the purpose for which it was intended, that another edition will not be at this time out of place. It was published in a very rough and unpolished form, and abounded in errors of language ; but I flatter myself, that very few inaccuracies have been discovered in my facts, and therefore I do not regret that, having long and assiduously devoted myself to their collection and elucidation, I should have produced them in an inelegant dress at the time when they were most likely to be useful, rather than have delayed them with a view to more polished execution. I confess to many literary shortcomings, but my objects were not literary.

I have since been otherwise employed, and do not profess to have materially altered the book as it originally appeared, but I have revised it, have made some verbal corrections, have rectified any errors which have been discovered, have modified some opinions, and have added some explanatory notes. The date is still that of the original edition. To bring it down one year later, I must have altered much of the detail of my figures, and have recast the whole work. In truth, having been absent from India, I should be hardly a competent witness to subsequent facts, but I believe that there has

been little important change, and I have stated in notes anything which seems materially to affect my former statements.

I have, as I have said, modified some opinions which I stated at the time to be but in course of formation, and I have explained or omitted others which, but incidentally alluded to and imperfectly expressed, have been incorrectly understood. I formerly used some expressions which were no necessary part of my subject, and may have been on that account less guarded and considered than they might have been: and as I have in another volume more fully expressed my sentiments on these points, I have tried in this statement of facts to avoid debatable ground. Some of the expressions applied to the press and to the privileges of Europeans in India should have been confined to the abuse, and are not applicable to the use, of existing rights.

A principal satisfaction to me is, that my volume has drawn forth comments and statements from persons of various experience, and I shall be proud if I have made a beginning towards a more general collation of Indian facts and experiences.

London, May 1, 1853.

P R E F A C E.

I BELIEVE that India is now more considered than it was wont to be, and at this moment, when the periodical Parliamentary review of Indian affairs is approaching, practical information may not be unacceptable.

My object is to give in one view such a general sketch of the mode in which the civil administration of the country is conducted as may satisfy those who take an interest in, without being technically acquainted with, the subject. It appears that this information has nowhere been brought into small compass or accessible form, and some very false ideas on the subject have obtained currency. Whether I may succeed in supplying this want the reader must judge. I have had an intimate experience of the detail of the principal departments of the Indian administration, and I am not without hope that a description of the machinery which I have handled, and the facts which I have witnessed, may be in some degree interesting and useful. The subject has long occupied my thoughts, and I have collected information in many different places and from many different sources. I have then, during the last few months, devoted my spare time to the pages for which I now crave indulgence. I fear that the literary execution is very imperfect, but I trust that the importance of the matters treated may in some degree compensate for the rudeness of the form, and have thought it best to

concentrate my attention on facts, and to publish in this guise rather than let pass what seems to me to be the proper season. The subject is almost too large for such a volume, but I have compressed it as much as possible.

Parliament will shortly legislate for India under peculiarly interesting circumstances. We have lately reached the natural limits of the country, and having become, for the first time, its undisputed masters, we enjoy a much better prospect of quiet and peaceable government than has ever before been known. It is now, then, more than ever important to secure the best system of administration. I do not at present attempt to suggest changes or amendments; to do so would be premature, and there is much to learn and much to compare in this country before finally determining opinions formed on the spot. But as the first and most necessary step towards improvement is correctly to estimate the facts as they exist, I would both myself study the subject, and contribute my mite towards informing the public.

Fortunately little question of English politics is now involved in Indian affairs; yet the effect of former political prejudice is by no means altogether obliterated. A set of notions, originating in the days and in the errors of Burke, are, in some degree, traditionally handed down to the present day. The Indian Government having once acquired a bad name, the most absurd stories obtain a certain degree of credence, or affectation of credence. It is hardly wonderful that individuals (even members of Parliament) should be found to make unfounded assertions on the subject, but the misfortune is that nine-tenths of the educated classes (in or out of the House) seem to be in no condition to say whether these stories be true or false. I should hope that a very little attention to a very few plain facts will show the ante-

cedent impossibility of most of the fictions so often repeated.

I could have wished to have confined myself to present facts, but I feel that, if I were to require as a preliminary the perusal of the nine volumes of Mill, I should be merely throwing myself into a great gulf without the slightest hope of filling it up; and even those who have studied Mill imbibe a great deal of error. In the absence, then, of any correct or generally read civil history of India, I find that, in order to save constant reference and explanation, the easiest course is to prefix a few chapters descriptive of the people, and explanatory of some parts of our Indian history. But this part of my volume is ancillary to what follows, and I only notice those things in the past which directly affect the present.

Elphinstone alone promised to supply what was deficient in our Indian history, but he has most unfortunately stopped short on the threshold. So far as he goes nothing can be wanting, and I have taken his volumes as my text-book, and have frequently referred to them. The well-known Fifth Report of the Committee of the House of Commons, printed in 1812, is a very admirable account of our early administration, and I regret that it is not in a more convenient form. I am not aware that anything of the kind has been published during the last forty years.

I have tried to generalise in regard to the whole of India, because my great principle—in which I am more and more confirmed the more I see, read, and inquire—is the absolute identity, in the main, of the manners, institutions, and mode of government, found by us in different parts of the country. At the same time it will be seen that in many things different, and sometimes opposite systems, have been followed by us, and

that, in consequence, considerable differences now exist. It will be understood, then, that my descriptions more particularly refer to Northern India, and that where I do not expressly mention the Southern Presidencies there may be varieties of detail. I am, of course, liable to error in those things which I have not myself witnessed, but I have used the utmost endeavour to ascertain, test, and correct all such statements, and I have been most obligingly permitted to have access to the best sources of information in this country. I have compiled many statistical facts and tables, which cannot be mistaken, and trust that the comparisons which I have drawn will be found useful.

It is necessary here to state, with regard to the relative value of Indian and English money, that, as the Sicca rupee no longer exists, I have abandoned the exchange of 2*s.* per Sicca rupee, which is still maintained in, and so much complicates, the official accounts, and have adopted the simple decimal exchange of 2*s.* per current or Company's rupees, which is not only so much more convenient, but is, in fact, much nearer the relative intrinsic value of the two coins. The conversion from rupees to pounds sterling, or *vice versa*, by cutting off or adding a decimal, is thus a matter of very easy arithmetic. For convenience of English eyes I have generally stated all monies in pounds sterling.

London, February 15, 1852.

CONTENTS.

CHAPTER I.

INTRODUCTORY.

THE INDIANS TO THE DECLINE OF THE MOGUL EMPIRE.

Aborigines — Hindoos — Their character — Bramins and Khatrees — Institutions — Degree and influence of civilization — Southward progress of Hindoos — Northern republican tribes — Mahommedans — Turkish empire — Portuguese — Mogul empire — Its character — Marattas — Jats — Sikhs — Dutch and English — Decline of Mogul empire . . . Page 1

CHAPTER II.

THE COUNTRY AND THE PEOPLE AS WE FOUND THEM, SHOWING THE PERSONAL AND SOCIAL CHARACTERISTICS OF THE NATIVES.

Definition of India — Geography — Soil — Climate — Capabilities — Effects of predatory wars — Products — Population — National divisions — Interior divisions — Races and classes — Character of the people — Condition of women — Institution of castes — Slavery — Religion. 24

CHAPTER III.

THE INSTITUTIONS AND SITUATION TO WHICH WE SUCCEEDED.

Mahommedan polity — General government — Provincial establishments — Maratta and Sikh systems — Village communities — Tenure of land — Revenue system — Laws — Crime — Punishments — Judicial system 73

CHAPTER IV.

OUR POLITICAL PROGRESS AND PRESENT POSITION, SHOWING ALSO THE ORIGIN
AND OBLIGATIONS OF THE NATIVE STATES.

The native powers with whom we have had to deal — Foreign Mahomedan powers — The French — Origin of various rulers — Acquisitions of the British — Lord Wellesley's policy and acquisitions — War with the Marattas — Change of policy — Pindaree war and consequent acquisitions — Supremacy of British power within the desert — Burmese war — Long peace — Affghan policy and disaster — Annexation of Scinde — First Sikh war — Second Sikh war — Annexation of the Punjab — Statistics and obligations of different native states — Summary of our political obligations, receipts, and disbursements — Present political management — General effect of our political system — Succession to lapses — Debts of native princes. Page 111

CHAPTER V.

ON THE HISTORY AND PROGRESS OF OUR INTERNAL GOVERNMENT.

First government of Company's settlements — Clive — Hastings — Lord Cornwallis — Sir J. Shore — Lord Wellesley — Lord Hastings — Monro — Elphinstone — Lord W. Bentinck — Act of 1834 — Its requirements and their execution — Improvements independent of the Act — Sir C. Metcalfe — Lord Auckland — Lord Ellenborough — Sir C. Napier's government of Scinde — Lord Hardinge — Lord Dalhousie — Freedom from domestic disturbance — Europeans in India — European capital — Products and manufactures — Commerce — Ecclesiastical establishments — Missions 170

CHAPTER VI.

THE GOVERNMENT AS IT NOW EXISTS.

Composition of the Supreme Government — Its legislative and executive powers — Position with reference to home authorities — Governor-General and Counsellors — Working of Government — Law Commission — Local Governments — Territories under each — Want of uniformity — Boards and courts — Division into districts — Executive officers — The magistrate and collector — System in non-regulation provinces: the Punjab — Centralization — Mode of conducting business — No official publicity — Absence of sinecures — Character of Government 209

CHAPTER VII.

THE INSTRUMENTS OF GOVERNMENT.

Civil service — Tests — Course of study at Haileybury — College life in Calcutta — Commencement of service — Duties — Promotion — Periods of service — Leave — Furlough — Qualifications — Character — Salaries — Pensions — Honours — Comparative remuneration — Military officers in civil employ — Uncovenanted officers of different classes: their qualifications, salaries, &c. — Inferior servants — Qualifications — Their supposed influence — Police and revenue establishments — Pay — Unauthorized receipts — Constant change of officers. . . . Page 262

CHAPTER VIII.

THE LAND REVENUE.

Different systems — Zemeendaree system — Perpetual settlement of Bengal — Ryotwar system — System of village leases — Results and present working of Bengal permanent settlement — System in north-west provinces — Its principles — Formation and completion of present settlement — Existing tenures — Mode of working the settlement — Results. — System in the Punjab, &c. — Tenures — Summary settlements — Proposed regular settlements. — Madras system — Sir T. Monro's views — Introduction of Ryotwar management — Description of this system — Its results. — Bombay — Tenures — Mr. Elphinstone's views — New system adopted in Bombay, and its results. — General statement of land revenues of British India 300

CHAPTER IX.

SOURCES OF INCOME OTHER THAN THE LAND REVENUE.

Salt-tax — Its origin — System and receipts — General statement of salt revenue — Customs — Opium revenue — Bengal opium system — Malwa opium — Excise — Tobacco revenue — Moturpha revenue — Stamps and fines — Post-office and miscellaneous — Local taxes 380

CHAPTER X.

FINANCE.

Our peculiar financial position — Our financial history — The debt — General statements of revenues and charges for 1849-50 — Finance of different Presidencies — Result of recent acquisitions — Financial comparison between 1835-6 and 1849-50 — Cause of deterioration explained thereby Page 407

CHAPTER XI.

POLICE AND CRIMINAL ADMINISTRATION.

Police establishment — Duties — Village police — Mode of police proceedings — The magistrate and his duties — Progress of a case till trial — Character of the police — Madras and Bombay police — Special Thuggee and Dacoitee police — The criminal law — Classification of offences — Mode of trial and procedure in felonious cases — And in petty cases — Punishments — Character of the judges — Evidence — Results of criminal system — Statistical tables — Comparison of crimes — And of judicial statistics — Crime and police in the Punjab — Reasons of general want of success — The code proposed by the Law Commission 445

CHAPTER XII.

THE ADMINISTRATION OF CIVIL JUSTICE.

The Regulation system — The courts — The laws — The mode of procedure — Interference with landed rights — Pleaders and attorneys — Perjury and forgery — Character of the judges — Madras and Bombay systems — Appeals to the Privy Council — Statistical statements — Non-regulation system — Civil justice in the Punjab — Experience in regard to examination of parties, &c. 529

INDEX 561

I N D E X.

A.

ABORIGINES, their position, character, &c., 1, 36, 54—their conduct, 130, 139.

Acts of Parliament regulating the Indian Government, 171-3, 184—requirements of the last Act and their execution, 184.

—of the Indian Government, 184.

Adoptions by native princes, 138, 143, 168.

Affrays, 506.

Affghanistan, immigrations and invasions from, 12, 119, 121—a Rajpoot governor of, 17—geographical connection with India, 26—character, personal and political, of races inhabiting, 56, 145—change of dynasty in, 127—the British expedition to, 132—cost of the expedition to, 417.

Agra. *See* North-Western Provinces.

Agriculture, native, 62, 203—the several classes following, 41—soil, crops, and products, 27, 28, 32.

Akber, his possessions, 16—his character and policy, 16—his revenue system, 97, 102.

Alexander, finds republican peoples in India, 8.

Amherst, Lord, his financial extravagance, 416.

Appeals in criminal cases, 482, 502, 517—in civil cases, 533, 549, 551—to Privy Council, 546.

Arabs, conquest of Scinde and retirement from India, 13.

Arson, 513.

Arts and artisans, 53, 62, 205.

Auckland, Lord, his administration, 131, 191.

Aurangzebe completes the Mogul Empire, 16—his character and policy, 17—retreats before Marattas, 21.

B.

Belochee, their position and character, 57.

Benares, acquisition of, 121.

Bengal, Hindoo colonisation of, 7, 10—geographical position of, 26—the people of, 38, 42, 55, 462—under the Mahomedans, 13, 16, 77, 98—condition in which we found it, 118, 130—origin of Nawabs of, 118—establishment of British influence in, 118—granted to the Company, 120—early administration of, 171, 173—Government of, 220, 225—Deputy Governor of, 222—executive of, 243, 272-3—perpetual settlement of, 304—present revenue management, landed tenures, &c., 312 to 321—revenues other than land, 382, 395, 397, 400, 401—revenues and charges, 427, 428, 432, 440, 442—police system, 447, 462—crime in, 496, 503, 508, 512—judicial system (criminal), 476, 499, 515—judicial system (civil), 531, 547.

Bentinck, Lord W., his political management, 133—his civil administration and improvements, 182, 190—puts in train the settlement of the N. W. Provinces, 324—his successful financial management, 416.

Bird, R. M., makes the settlement of N. W. Provinces, 324.

Boards of revenue, 235.

—military, 237.

—of the Punjab, 251.

Bombay, Hindoo colonisation of territories, 10, 39—former Government, tenures, &c., 79, 93, 364, 373—acquisition of territories composing, 124, 129, 143—Governors of, 197, 223—Government of, 224, 227—executive of, 237, 242, 244, 245—land revenue system, 366 to 376—extravagant alienation of revenues, 372—sources of revenue other than land, *see* Salt, Opium, &c.—revenues and charges, 427, 429, 440—financial position and deterioration, 375, 432, 433, 443—police, 464, 511—crime, 497, 510—criminal courts, 500, 515—civil courts, 545.

Bramins, origin and early state of, 4—colonisation of Bengal and the south, 7—modern position, character, &c., 39.

British, first settlement in India, 22—possessions A.D. 1720, 113—possessions A.D. 1785, 122—Government becomes supreme in India within the desert, 130—becomes supreme in all India, 146—political obligations of, 149.
 Burglary, 107, 474, 512.
 Burmah, position in reference to India, 26, 130.
 Business, mode of conducting, 255.

C.

Canals. *See* Irrigation.
 Capital, native and European, in India, 66, 201.
 Canoongoes of the Moguls, 77—in the N. W. Provinces, 306.
 Carnatic, origin of Nawabs of, 117—British power established in, 118, 124.
 Cashmere, inhabitants of, 38.
 Castes, system of, 2, 66.
 Central India, acquisition of supremacy over, 129.
 Centralisation of the Moguls, 75—of the British Government, 253, 282—in the Army, 523.
 Changes, constant, of European officers, 280—of native officers, 298.
 Charges, particulars of Indian, 426, 431.
 Civil departments, cost of, 431, 434, 442.
 — justice system in Hastings' time, 175.
 — justice, Regulation system, 531—want of equitable jurisdiction, 536—evils of the system, 542—system Madras and Bombay, 545—statistical statements regarding, 547—system in Non-Regulation Provinces, 552.
 — service, origin and progress of, 171, 173, 176, 180—appointments to, 263—number and distribution of, 267, 272.
 — servants, education and tests of qualification, 263, 266—dis-education of, 268—official apprenticeship and result, 270, 271—promotion of, 273—employments of, 274—7—average periods of service, 278—rules relating to leave, furlough, &c., 279—qualifications and character of, 281—salaries of, 283—pensions of, 284—honours bestowed on, 285—comparison in regard to remuneration, 285.

Civilisation, early Asiatic, 1—Hindoo, 6.
 Climate of India, 27, 29.
 Clive, his administration, 171—his financial management, 412.
 Collector, duties of, 239, 318, 330.
 College of Haileybury, 180, 263.
 — of Calcutta, 179, 268.
 Commerce, revolution in Indian, 205.
 — great freedom of, 187—remnant of protection, 388.
 Commissariat, duties of, performed by collectors, 240.
 Commissioners of revenue and police, 235.
 Commitments for trial, 455.
 Conspiracy, 492.
 Contingents, explanation of, 130—particulars of, 150—transformation into regular troops, 159.
 Cornwallis, Marquis of, his administration, 176—his revenue system, 303—his financial management, 414—his judicial system, 534.
 Corruption, degree of, in Government servants, 282, 293, 297.
 Cotton, production and supply of, 32, 204—thread, 205.
 Counsel allowed to prisoners, 478.
 Counsellors, particulars regarding, 215, 224.
 Covenanted and uncovenanted servants, distinction of, 232.
 Crime, amount and character of, found by us, 105, 446—facilities for, and native means of suppressing, 105—classification of, 471—statistical statements of, 496.
 Criminal system, result of, 493, 502, 525.
 — courts, statistics of, 499, 515.
 — code. *See* Law Commission.
 — judges, character of, 483.
 Customs revenue, particulars regarding, 387—cause of diminution of, 441.

D.

Dacoitee, 107, 466, 474, 507, 520.
 Dalhousie, Marquis of, his political administration, 142—his civil administration, 196.
 Debts of the government, 420.
 — of native princes, 168.
 Deccan. *See* 'Southern India,' 'Madras,' and 'Nizam.'
 Democratic tribes, absence of, in Menu's time, 4—their origin, character, and settlement in India, 7, 10, 36—their present position, occupations, institu-

tions, &c., 42—their affinity to the Germans, 50—the constitution of their villages, 83, 339, 351.
 Departments, chief superintendence of, 235.
 Desert, great, dividing India, 25—cause of formation of, 27.
 Districts, division of country into, average size of, &c., 238, 250, 447.
 Divisions, geographical, 26—national, 37—interior, of the people, 39—administrative, 235.
 Division of labour, 6, 66, 105.

E.

Ecclesiastical establishments of government, 206.
 Education, degree of, found in India, 58—promotion of, by British government, 183, 187, 196, 237—by the missionaries, 208.
 Ellenborough, Lord, his political administration, 134—his character and civil administration, 192.
 Elphinstone, Hon. M., his History, preface (vii.)—his views regarding the Rajpoots, 49—his government of Bombay, 181—his views on the subject of land revenue, 367.
 Europeans in India, freed from all restrictions, 184—exempt from the control of the courts and the laws, 185, 470—their progress and position in India, 201—employed in uncovenanted service, 291.
 Evidence, Mahommedan laws of, 108, British-Indian rules of, 486, 525, 538, 554—derived from examination of the accused, 486—to character, 488—of parties to civil suits, 556, 559.
 Exchange, rate at which calculated, preface (viii.), 421.
 Excise revenue, particulars regarding, 396.
 Executive, administration of British possessions, 237—of salt, opium, and customs departments, 249.
 Expenditure, checks upon, 253.

F.

Falsehood, degree of, found by us, 60, 489—degree of, under our system, 490.
 Famines, liability to, 27—of recent occurrence, 34, 332.

Fees, abolition and entire absence of, 182, 282, 293, 297.
 Ferry fund, 402.
 Finance of the Moguls, 19, 408—history of British-Indian, 412—present, of the British-Indian government, 408, 419, 424, 444—of each Presidency, 427, 432—comparison of 1835-6 and 1849-50, 435—of the Punjab, 430—of India beyond the desert, 435.
 Fines, revenue derived from, by native governments, 103, 108—by British government, 399, 517.
 Food, staple, 31.
 Forgery, 514, 542.
 Freedom, great personal, of the natives, 258, 446, 525.
 French, their rise and fall in India, 113.

G.

Gardening classes, 42.
 Germans, comparison of ancient, with Indian tribes, 50.
 Gentleman, absence of the distinction of, 62.
 Geography of India, 24.
 Gipsy races, 54, 475.
 Goolab Sing, his origin, 139—his principality, 141, 152.
 Government, ancient Hindoo system, 7—system of the democratic tribes, 8—Mogul system, 73—Maratta and Sikh systems, 79—early British systems, 170, 173.
 ——— of India. *See* Supreme.
 ———, weak yielding of rights of, 307, 317, 373, 410—bad name unjustly attached to, preface (vi.), 413—character of, 258—offices in connection with, 234—classes employed in administration of, 262.
 Governments, local, their constitution, powers, duties, &c., 220—British territories under each, 228—native states in charge of each, 150—comparison of cost of different, 230, 432.
 Governor-General, powers of, 210—selection of, 214—constant absence from head-quarters, 216.
 Governors, Mahommedan provincial, 75.
 ———, Deputy and Lieutenant Governors, past, 198, 222—present functions, &c., 220, 222—salaries of, 283.
 Guickwar, origin of, 116—subsidised, 124—territories of, 156.
 Gwalior. *See* Scindia.

H.

- Haileybury. *See* College.
 Hastings, Marquis of, his political administration, 128—his civil administration, 181—his financial management, 415.
 ———, Warren, his administration 171, 173—his financial management, 412.
 Hardinge, Lord, his political administration, 138—his civil administration, 195.
 Hereditary offices, 373, 463, 465.
 Himalayas, geography of, 26—absence of aborigines in, 36—inhabitants of, 38.
 Hindoos, early state of, 1, 3—influence on character of their conquerors, 6, 200—conquest of Southern India, 7—Northern races appear among, amalgamate with, and rule over, 7, 10, 11—conquered by the Mahomedans, 13—position under the Moguls, 16, 17—rise of new Hindoo nations, 20, 23, 111—religion of, 69—character of those employed by British government, 292.
 Hindostanee people and language, 10, 37.
 Holkar, origin of, 116—war and settlement with, 125, 126.
 Homicides, classification of, 473—statistics of, 503.

I.

- Infanticide, 505.
 Invasion, natural fence against, 26.
 Inspectors of police, 448.
 Irrigation, works for, 28, 189, 337, 363, 435.

J.

- Jats, probable origin, 8, 43, 49—particulars regarding, 21, 47, 49, 84, 339—of Bhurtpore, 116, 126, 131.
 Judges, civil and sessions, mode of promotion to office of, 276—character of, 483, 543—criminal functions of, 248, 459, 477, 482—civil functions of, 249, 532, 556—subordinate, 464, 481—native, 290, 532, 543—of the Sudder, *see* Sudder court.
 Judicial system of the Mahomedans, 109—of the British Indian Govern-

- ment, 236, 248—in criminal matters, 455, 476, 515—in civil suits, 534, 552—statistics of, 499, 547—stamps used in proceedings, 480, 536.
 Jury, in criminal cases, 477—in civil cases, 550, 556.
 Justice. *See* 'Civil,' 'Criminal,' 'Judicial.'

K.

- Kaits, or the writer caste, 52.
 Khatrees, early history, 4—modern, 51.
 Koormees, an agricultural tribe, 49.

L.

- Land revenue, early Hindoo system, 2, 5—Akber's system, 97—systems found by us, 94, 99—choice of systems open to us, 301—Bengal system, 304, 312 to 321—system in N. W. Provinces, 311, 322 to 339—Punjab system, 539 to 350—Madras system, 308, 311, 350 to 364—Bombay system, 364 to 377—General statement, 377—cost of collection, &c., 320, 339, 364, 372, 441.
 Landed tenures existing previous to our rule, 4, 80 to 93, 309, 339, 364—created by us, 304, 314, 325, 355, 369—sale of, for arrears of revenue, 303, 305, 313, 319, 338, 346, 370—sale and alienation of, by the civil courts, 325, 347, 539.
 Languages, want of comparison of Indian, 7—different, now existing, 37, 38—used in the courts, 256—acquaintance of public officers with, 270.
 Lapsas, right of succession to, 167.
 Law Commission, appointment of, 184—results thereof, 185—its constitution, &c., 218—criminal code of, 526.
 Laws found by us, 104, 108, 555—made by us, 258, 469, 535.
 Litigiousness, degree of, found, 59—degree of, created, 543.
 Local taxes and revenues, 401, 404.
 Low classes, 53.

M.

- Mackenzie, Rt. Hon. H., devises an improved revenue system, 181, 323.
 Madras, Hindoo colonisation of terri-

- tories, 10, 39, 351—former government, tenures, &c., 13, 74, 93, 310—acquisition of territories composing, 121, 122, 124—Governors of, 197, 223—Government of, 224, 227—executive of, 237, 242, 244—revenue system, 350, 385, 389, 397—finance of, 429, 433, 443—magnitude of army, 434, 443—police, 463—crime, 497, 509, 511—criminal courts, 515—civil courts, 545.
- Magistrate, duties of, 239, 248, 455—deputy, 460—judicial duties of, 481, 516.
- Magistrate and collector, union of offices, 183—object of union, 238—his assistants, 241—subordinate establishments, 243—his manner of life and business, 245.
- Mahommedans, race and character of conquerors of India, 12—formation of population in India, 18—character of their government, 19—origin of present native states, 111—foreign powers, 112, 127—character, &c., of native, 55—their religion, 71—their laws, &c., 104, 555—class of, employed by us, 292.
- Malik Amber, a great financier of the south, his revenue system, 80, 365.
- Manufactures. *See* Arts.
- Marattas, composition of, 11—first political appearance, 14—rise to power, 20, 112, 116—system of government, 79—repulsed by Ahmed Shah, 119—our struggle with them, 124, 128—outbreak in southern states, 138.
- Meerassadars, origin of, 11, 351—position of, in Madras, 356—in Bombay, 369.
- Menu, character of his writings, 3.
- Mercantile classes, 51.
- Metcalfe, Sir Charles, his administration, 190.
- Military charges, magnitude and increase of, 431, 434, 442—fund for, in India beyond desert, 436.
—officers employed in civil duties, 179, 287.
- Miscellaneous revenues, 401.
- Missionaries, position and progress of, 207.
- Mogul emperors, 14, 16, 23—conciliatory policy of, 16—revenue and riches of, 19—system of government, 74—name of, ceases to be used, 130.
- Moolraj, Dewan, character and conduct of, 144.
- Monro, Sir Thomas, Governor of Madras, 181—his views on land revenue, 351—his judicial system, 545.
- Moral sense of natives, 61.
- Moturpha revenue at Madras, 398.
- Municipal constitutions attempted in towns, 260.
- Murder. *See* Homicides.
- Mysore, acquisition of, 122—establishment of Rajas of, 123—management of, assumed, 131—statistics of, 152.

N.

- Nadir Shah, his invasion of India, 117.
- Nagpore, origin of Rajas of, 116—war with and settlement of, 128—statistics of, 151.
- Napier, Sir C., his character and conquest of Scinde, 135—his government of Scinde, 193.
- Native princes and states, position and character of, 147, 161, 409—tabular statement of, 150—interference in internal affairs of, 164—debts of, 168.
- Natives, their personal characteristics, 57—their social habits and institutions, 64—their political institutions, 73—their employment by the British Government, 175, 180, 182, 291.
- Nepal, origin of Rajas of, 119—progress of the Goorkahs, 126—war with, and acquisitions from, 128—our present relations with, 158.
- Nizams of the Deccan, origin of, 114—subsidized, 123—contingent of, 160—debts of, 169—statistics of territory, 150.
- Nomad races, their early presence in India and colonisation of the South, 7—their present position, 42.
- Non-Regulation Provinces, 181, 231, 249, 552.
- North-Western Provinces, geographical situation of, 26—soil, climate, and products, 27, 31—races inhabiting, 4, 9, 37, 39, 42—former government of, 74—acquisition of territories composing, 124, 126—placed under a separate lieutenant-governor, 185—Mr. Thomason's administration of, 198—Government of, 226—executive of, 238—revenue system of, 322, 383, 389—finance of, 428, 440—police, 447, 451, 461—crime, 496, 508, 510—Criminal Courts, 476, 499, 514—Civil Courts, 532, 547.

O.

- Oaths, judicial, 491, 560.
- Omlah, character and influence of, 295, 297.

Opium, production of, 33.
 ——— revenue, particulars regarding,
 390—financially considered, 418, 431,
 442.
 Oude, origin of Kings of, 115—subsidiary alliance with, 120, 124—title of King assumed, 130—financial position, 410—statistics of, 150.

P.

Paupers, support of, 65.
 Patriotism, want of, 60.
 Perjury, 490, 492, 542.
 Peshwabs, origin and progress of, 116—subsidised, 125—assumption of territory of, 129.
 Pindarees, war with, 128.
 Pleaders and attorneys, 541, 558.
 Police, native system, 75, 445—character of our system, 446—village, 449—district in Bengal and North-West Provinces, 447, 453, 461—progress of a case till trial, 464—Madras, 463—Bombay, 464—Thuggee and Dacoitee, 465—Summary of results, 514—in Punjab, 51—Commissioners and Superintendent of, 236, 237.
 Political pensions, 148—other obligations, 149—relations with native states, 158—receipts and disbursements, 161—present management, 162—officers, 163—system, general effect of, 166—crimes, absence of, 476.
 Population, increase and checks, 34—of native states, 157—of British possessions, 229—of N.-W. Provinces, 230, 335.
 Post-office, receipts and disbursements of, 400.
 Potails, 83, 356, 481, 515, 550.
 Portuguese, their power in India and decline, 15.
 Press freed and the result, 191—position of public officers in regard to, 256.
 Prisons, 237, 483.
 Products, 30, 203—statistical return of, 336, 337.
 Prosecutions, 453, 456, 476.
 Publicity, prohibition of official, 256.
 Public works, progress of, 189, 432.
 PUNCHAYET, system of trial by, 109, 552.
 Punishments, 108, 482, 495, 501—capital, 517.
 Punjab, Hindoo occupation of, 1—in Alexander's time, 8—geographical position of, 26—inhabitants of, 37, 47,

54—former Government, tenures, &c., 74, 80, 84—annexed to Afghanistan, 119—overrun by Sikhs, 126—annexed to British India, 145—statistics of, 228—administration of, 250—revenue, management of, 339, 385—finance of, 427, 430, 434—crime and police in, 518—system of civil justice, 553.

R.

Rajpoots, early history of, 8, 11, 49—favour shown to them by the Moguls, 17—many are converted, 18—their present position and character, 45, 332—territories ruled by, 154.
 Railroad, suggestion for a, 521.
 Rain, distribution of, 27.
 Ranjeet Sing, his rise and character, 127, 131.
 Rebellion, domestic, entire absence of, 199.
 Registration, of landed rights, absence of, in Bengal, 305, 314—of landed rights in North-West Provinces, 327.——— of deeds, 541.
 Regulations published by Warren Hastings, 174—by Lord Cornwallis, 178—by Mr. Elphinstone, for Bombay, 181.
 Religion of the Hindoos, 69—of the Sikhs, 70—of the Portuguese, 71—of the Mahomedans, 71—endowments for, 72—conduct of British in regard to, 206.
 Rents, system of paying in kind, 300—commutation into money, 310—common rates in North-West Provinces, 337.
 Rent free and resumptons. *See* Revenue.
 Revenue, assignments and alienations of, 78, 306, 373, 422—resumptons of, 316, 330, 343, 363.——— system, comparison of, with other times and countries, 404—estimate of gross, for all India, 411—general statement of British Indian, 423, 430. *See* Land, Salt, &c. &c.
 Revenues and charges, for 15 years, 423—for 1849-50, 424.
 Rivers, navigation of, 33, 189.———, ferries and bridges of boats over, 401.
 Roads, state in which we found, 83—construction of, 189—local funds for, 402—tolls on, 404—robberies on, 510, 520—necessity of, between Hindostan and the Punjab, 521.

Rohillas, origin of, 115.
Ryotwar system of management, its origin and nature, 310—particulars of, at Madras, 355—results of system, 361—new system, Bombay, 369.

S.

Salt tax, levied by the Moguls, 103—particulars regarding, 380—general statement of receipts, 386.
Sanskrit, study of, 264.
Sattara, establishment of Rajas of, 129—lapse of, 143.
Sattee, abolition of, 188, 507.
Scindia, origin and history of, 116, 125—vacancy in chiefship and recent arrangements, 137—territories of, 151.
Scinde, geographical position of, 26—modern history of, 127—its annexation, 135—nature of the country, 136—the civil administration, 193—cost of the conquest, 418—revenues and charges of, 427, 433, 443.
Secretariat, particulars of, 232.
Self-government on a large scale, impracticability of, 260.
Servants, inferior, of Government, particulars regarding, 294.
Settlement officers, 241.
Sevajee, origin, character, and successes, 20, 366.
Shir Khan, his reign and character, 14.
Sikhs, origin of, 14—assume military character, 21—locality and political constitution, 48—religion of, 70—system of government, 80—progress of, 126—commencement of our relations with, 127—events leading to war with, 139—first war and consequent arrangements, 141—second war and conquest of, 143—low caste, refused military service, 523.
Sinecures, &c., entire absence of, 258.
Slavery, 68, 185, 186.
Smuggling, 514.
Soodras, origin of this class, 2—colonisation of Bengal, 10—merged in a great variety of castes, 66.
Southern India, early inhabitants of, 7—present population of, 38. *See also* Madras.
Stamps, revenue derived from, 399.
Statistics of India, 147—of British Possessions, 228—of Native States, 150—of N.-W. Provinces, 335—of land revenue, 379—financial, 424, 438—of crime and criminal courts, 496—of civil justice, 547.

Subsidiary system, explanation of, 130—obligations, 149.
Sudder Courts, 236, 544.
Sugar, production of, 32, 204.
Summary Revenue Courts, 318, 333, 348.
Supreme Court, its origin, conduct, and jurisdiction, 172, 183, 197, 260,—salaries of the Judges of, 286.
Supreme Government, constitution of, 209—powers of, 211—relations with home government, 212—working of, 217—territories in immediate charge of, 218—native states in immediate charge of, 150.
Surveys, Revenue, in Bengal, 316—in N.-W. Provinces, 327—in Madras, 310, 355, 357—in Bombay, 369, 370.

T.

Tamul country, colonisation of, 11, 351.
Tanjore, origin of Rajas of, 117—assumption of management of, 124.
Tehseeldars, numbers, salaries, &c., 289, 293—employment of, in N.-W. Provinces, 330, 461—in Madras and Bombay, 356, 481, 515.
Tenants, absence of, in native system, 95—distinction between ancient and new, 314—in N.-W. Provinces, 327—in Madras, 362.
Thanah, a police subdivision, 447, 454.
Theft, facilities for, 105—statistics of, 512.
Thomason, Mr., appointed Lieut.-Governor of N.-W. Provinces, 193, 223—his administration, 198.
Thuggee, nature of, 466—measures for suppression of, 467—present state of, 505—in the Punjab, 518.
Tobacco, revenue raised from, 397.
Towns, 35, 75.
Trial, mode of, in felonies, 476—in petty criminal cases, 480—in civil actions, 538, 556.
Tributes of native states, 150.
Turcs, their conquest of India, 13.

U.

Uncovenanted servants, particulars regarding numbers, classes, salaries, &c., 289.
Uniformity of system introduced by Mahommedans, 19, 35.

Uniformity of social circumstances throughout India, preface (vii.), 35.
 ——— want of, in the British Government of the several Presidencies, 234.

V.

Vagrancy, frequency of, and want of law regarding, 475.
 Vellallars, their colonisation of the South, 43, 351.
 Vikramajeet, era of, 11.
 Village communities, constitution of, 80—aristocratic, 4, 82, 326—democratic, 83, 339, 351—the Saxon, called Marks, 51—joint responsibility of, 345, 367.
 Village responsibility for plundered property, 83, 108, 452.
 Village officers, duties of, under Mo-

guls, 77—under us, 246, 356, 374, 463, 465.

W.

Watchmen, tax in towns for, 403—village, *see* Police, Village.
 Wealth and wages, 65.
 Wellesley, Marquis of, his political administration, 123—his civil administration, 179—his financial management, 414.
 Women, condition of, 63.

Z.

Zemeendars, great or district under the Moguls, 76, 79, 90—under us, 304, 308, 313, 322, 364—village, 89, 326—castes of, in N.-W. Provinces, 336—police duties of, 449.
 Zemeendaree system of settlement, 303.

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