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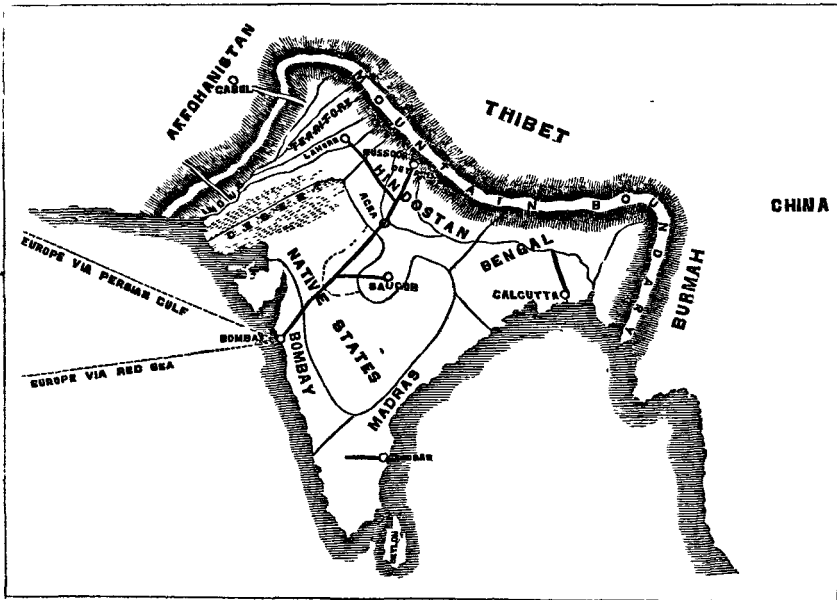
INDIA AS IT MAY BE;

AN OUTLINE OF

A PROPOSED GOVERNMENT AND POLICY.

BY GEORGE CAMPBELL,

AUTHOR OF 'MODERN INDIA.'



LONDON:

JOHN MURRAY, ALBEMARLE STREET.

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PREFACE.

WHILE analysing and comparing things as they are I have been led into determining, completing, and setting in order certain views with regard to the future management and prospects of India. The result is contained in the following pages, which comprise a general outline of a projected administration and policy, and which I now with all deference and humility submit to the public.

It is more necessary that the British Parliament should provide an efficient government for India than that it should prescribe particular measures. The details of the administration may be better and more conveniently regulated by the Indian Government. But as the nature and strength of the machine must be determined with reference to the work to be done, I hope that it will not be out of place at this time shortly to review the requirements of the country.

The scope of my plan doubtless embraces some subjects in respect to which my qualifications as an adviser may justly be called in question, and I should hardly have ventured to travel over so large a field did it not seem to me that as the time for legislation approaches there is still a want of definite and connected general plans. Various suggestions have been put forth on

particular points, but the whole subject has not been so brought together in one view as to enable us to estimate the *relative* bearing of different suggestions.

We want as it were a map of the ground to be operated upon. I do not pretend adequately to supply this want; but if my rough sketch may in any degree render intelligible the relative positions of the most prominent questions, and facilitate the more perfect and detailed plans of more skilful artists, my object will be accomplished. I hope that my plan is so far complete that I shall not be liable to the imputation of proposing some things to the entire disregard of others possibly incompatible, or of suggesting ends in an Utopian spirit without providing the means. For instance, I do not with some people propose, on the one hand, to abandon great part of our revenue in favour of princes or people, and, on the other, to spend large sums on magnificent works without making any provision for the where-withal. So far as in me lies I have tried to look at both sides of each question, and to render one part of my scheme consistent with another. I do not claim originality in all the parts of my plan. I have without scruple availed myself of every suggestion which has seemed to answer my purpose. I have endeavoured to select, convert, and fit together the best materials from whatever quarter derived—to supply such things as were wanting—and to connect and put in array the whole. I fear that I may not fully meet the views of either of the two extremes into which opinion is divided—that I shall not propose so total a subversion of the existing order of things as will satisfy those who see nothing but evil in the present system; and, on the other hand, that the

changes which seem to me to be necessary may appear to those who, admiring things as they are, would let well alone, to contain the elements of innovation, and to be on that account dangerous and inexpedient. I have steered a middle course. It will be seen that some of my proposals are founded on the same main principles as those suggested by that distinguished ex-Governor General whose experience and knowledge of Indian affairs are, above all others, so great and so admirable, while on other questions, in which I believe that his intellect is not unprejudiced, I have taken wholly opposite views. If my arguments are in any degree just, the materials selected from different and even opposition workshops are not inconsistent or irreconcilable.

In my former publication on Modern India I have attempted succinctly to describe the country, the people, and the government as they exist. Suffice it now to say that we have reached the natural limits of a great and undivided empire; that we have peace within those limits,* and are not threatened with any *defensive* war; that the country is fertile and populous, the people personally most capable, and in many respects civilized—politically submissive; and that our Government possesses materials which, judiciously reconstructed, are capable of great and beneficial efficiency. Under an efficient government, occupying a situation of singular advantage, I believe that the social and material wants of the country may be very fully supplied, and that the personal character of the people may be immensely

* I speak of India, not of Burmah.

elevated. In truth, an infinite field of improvement lies before us.

Certain political characteristics are indelibly stamped on particular races, but the ordinary social civilization of this ancient hemisphere seems to have had everywhere much in common. Our western society has in fact sprung by gradual progressive changes from that elder civilization which a few centuries ago was common to the East and the West, but more highly developed in the former. Whether we go historically back or geographically east, we travel very much in the same direction, and most of the manners and customs which now seem peculiar to the East have had their parallels in the earlier days of the West. Then why should not the East be also capable of progress? Why, commencing from a similar level, should it not be raised as the West has been raised? After all, we are but Orientals among whom the old leaven of Greek and Roman civilization has fermented into progress, and I see no reason why we should not introduce in the East a similar progress. I believe that we might and should do so; that India is fully capable of the very highest civilization; and that Heaven has imposed on us a task which we may not neglect.

Hitherto the country has not been fortunate. Repeatedly a prey to conquerors by no means the most civilized or the most forbearing of mankind, its best dynasties have been very shortlived. We seem now to have greater advantages, and we may hope, if we use these advantages well, to attain greater stability. We have rescued the natives from anarchy and confusion, and, doubtless, years of peace have done much to

fill up the gaps caused by years of war ; but it is fairer to compare our government with the more prosperous times of the better native dynasties, and in this view there is a good deal to be said on both sides of the question. Our administration is pure, and we have every desire to do justice ; but our armies are expensive—our government is wanting in concentrated energy—its policy has often been mistaken—and our judicial system is inappropriate and inefficient. The natives in some respects prefer indifferent justice, easily procured, to the most perfect system if complicated and difficult of access. The whole native system of government is but a delegation of absolute power from one official grade to another. To the people one man is their ruler, and he has full and prompt power for good or for evil. He may be neither pure nor disinterested ; but there is a limit to the capacity of one *pool* (as Lord Ellenborough would call it), and, his own interests satisfied, he may be not disinclined to do substantial justice among a people whom he thoroughly understands. He is bound by no inflexible general rules, which, while designed for the good of the majority, may inflict hardship on individuals, and are apt to be slow and difficult of application. He can, if he will, do popular justice in each case. We, on the other hand, go altogether on the principle of setting aside individual will and discretion, trusting nothing to any man, but regulating everything by strict rules. Up to a certain point this system is most beneficial, but it may be carried too far ; and in India especially its over refinement is not appreciated. The evils are patent to all, while the good is seen only by philosophers. Good, simple, and discreet codes of

essential law must be the greatest of blessings to any country, and are particularly required in India, but a too tight tying of the hands of public officers is only necessary when we must guard against political tyranny. Such a system was once necessary in England, but a change is now taking place, and the essence of all our present administrative and judicial reforms seems simply to consist in trusting to the discretion of individuals many things which were formerly determined by the strictest rules of law. It is now found that public opinion and the press are sufficient checks on the conduct of great officers, and that a large latitude may, with much advantage, be allowed.

I do, then, think that the natives of India very much prefer large individual power, easy and popular justice, even at the risk of a little abuse of that power; and that, in comparing our present administration with that of a good native government, we must set against the many acknowledged advantages of our rule not only the obvious evils resulting from the expense of our system and the necessary ignorance of foreigners, but also the injuries and inconveniences caused by the cumbrousness and inflexibility of our machinery, and which I believe to be for the most part remediable.

Of course, the individuals lately dominant have suffered by our rule, and some others who would like to be dominant are excluded from that position; but neither do I think that we are bound to govern the country for the benefit of the highest classes, nor (if the term be used in our sense) do I admit the existence of the ill-used "native gentry" so often expatiated on by philanthropic and imaginative people. The only persons who have any

good claim to that title are the better classes connected with the land, and their position (except in the Ryotwar territories) is unquestionably far more favourable under us than it was under other conquerors. But as regards general social rank there is no well-defined line between gentle and simple. Our European notions in this respect spring from a feudal origin. The organisation of the Rajpoots and other Hindoo conquerors is undoubtedly feudal; but the Mahomedan empires being, in the territories fully conquered by them, the purest of Oriental despotisms, and in no respect feudal in their character, exaltation or degradation but depended on the imperial will or the caprices of fortune. Slaves became Emperors, and Emperors became slaves—men rose like mushrooms, and like mushrooms decayed. True, individuals of all classes were elevated to high posts. There were prizes in the lottery which any of the people might draw, and of the chance of which they are now deprived. But no particular classes of society, except some of the latest Mahomedan rulers, can complain of special degradation.

If the supposed nobles and gentry are not subjects of just sympathy, still less are the recent princes. The old patriarchal chiefs and clans, never completely conquered, and who retained a feudal tenure under the Moguls, are at least as well off under us.

As concerns the general people, I believe that, upon the whole, the best administered of our provinces are now, taking all advantages and disadvantages together, about upon a par with the best administered of the small native states blessed with a good individual ruler. I have had a good deal to do with petty transfers, both one way and the other: I have generally found that

neither were the subjects of the very best of these patriarchal governments averse to be brought under our rule, nor did our subjects in every case think it an insuperable hardship to be made over to the rule of the native chief; petty local circumstances might turn the scale either way.

This, then, is the case as regards the best of those small states which are under our feudatory supervision and control; but as concerns the majority of native states, their subjects are undoubtedly infinitely worse off than in the worst of our territories, and would be delighted to be brought under our government. Almost all the large states, and those whose feudatory tenure has not been sufficiently regulated, are thus ill managed.

Upon the whole, then, the natives owe to us not only the blessings of protection from external war, and, what is still more important, from internal anarchy, but a considerable *average* improvement in the civil administration. But I do also think that that improvement is far from being so great or so general as it might be, and ought to be, if we make the most of our peculiar opportunities. In particular, there seems to be strong evidence to show that the results of our administration of the Madras and Bombay territories is by no means so favourable as could be wished.

Most people are agreed that there are many deficiencies in our system; but there is a very wide discrepancy both in the statements of present facts and the opinions as to future policy.

I believe that the great cause of these very contradictory statements and opinions is the want of uniformity in our system. In truth, our management of different

parts of the country is altogether various. This fact is instanced to show that our government is altogether bad; and it turns out that it is peculiar to Bombay—or to one province of Madras. Proofs are brought that things are better than represented; but the facts on which they are founded do not extend beyond the limits of the North-Western Provinces. So it goes on and the discrepancy becomes wider and wider.

A constant source of error is the too common mistake of supposing Calcutta or Bombay to be India, and reasoning on ideas thence derived. I believe that experience of this kind is the worst possible guide, and that those whose opinions are built on such a foundation have not only everything to learn but a great deal to unlearn before they can understand India. I do not think that any man can really understand the natives who is ignorant of their language, and is thus altogether debarred from communication with them. A man may live for years in India, and may travel all over it, but still, if ignorant of the language, he is in many most essential matters a blind man. His knowledge is but derived from others at secondhand; and he is too apt to contract false ideas, from fancying the few Europeanised natives who speak English to be fair specimens of the inhabitants of the country. The result is generally an unjustly low estimate of the native character, an ignorance of native education, and an idea that the “educated natives” are those who speak bad English. In truth, the native education is by no means so contemptible as is supposed; and I am certain that so far as concerns polish, command of language, use of the pen, and general intelligence, no men can be superior to many

of the educated natives of the middle classes, even though they do not understand a word of English. It is from these classes that a knowledge of the country may be best derived. I fear that the Parliamentary Committees cannot have the benefit of the evidence of such men; but there is another class, whose knowledge is not so perfect, but who have a vast deal more practical information than the editors and merchants of the presidency towns—I mean the European planters of the interior. Some of these men are capable of giving most useful information, and should not be lost sight of by those now engaged in the investigation of Indian affairs.

It does seem most unfortunately to happen that most of those who discuss the subject have very insufficient information; and most of those who have information scrupulously abstain from divulging it. The official silence of the most qualified Indian servants appears to become habitual; and in giving up office they generally close their mouths and throw away their pens for ever. So great is the lack of information, that they cannot even keep up their knowledge of the progress of their own departments a day after leaving India. It is quite wonderful how soon a man in this country loses his connexion with India and his knowledge of passing events.

Hence the difficulty of getting at the real facts, or in any way generalizing, is so great, that most men are repelled from the attempt, and not unnaturally come to the conclusion that, if people are not agreed and cannot agree what and how much is wrong, better let things remain as they are. And in truth, if we wait till the various questions affecting the conduct and cha-

fracter of the administration which are or may be raised shall be finally settled, we may wait a very long time indeed. I believe that the best plan would be to act like a jury assessing damages—to take the average of the various irreconcilable opinions; and we may thus arrive at the conclusion that the Indian government is in fact by no means so black as some people paint it, but that there is very great room for amendment. Amendment then I trust that we shall have and have quickly. It will be hard indeed if it is denied either because as an English political question the matter does not seem very pressing, or because the opinions of various persons cannot be reconciled. I fear that there is too great a disposition to avoid fully grappling with a difficult subject. Yet the question is not one which a powerful ministry need shrink from dealing with. The ends are of vast importance, and will not be attained without considerable improvement in the government, but the present task is not to define ends, but to provide an efficient governmental constitution—a difficult question, no doubt, but not so very large and intricate as it appears when we discuss the details of the administration. We only want some general idea of the character of the present government, good, bad, or indifferent, and a rough *notion* of the work which lies before a new government. There are then to be decided but two or three main points, important, but lying in comparatively narrow compass.

The grand want of our present system is a central government of some kind. Improvements of detail will be of little use if we do not somehow so arrange that it shall be possible to answer the question who governs

India? That is what no one now can tell, and I believe the truth to be that *nobody* governs it, or, at best, that things are left to the varying chances of individual local officers, and that our whole establishment of Indian Governments, Court of Directors, and Board of Control, are but checks on the progress of those local officers. For instance, it is on all hands admitted that the Madras land revenue system is a failure. But whose business is it to institute a new system? No one does so. The fact is, that under the present constitution things will in each department, and each local division, go on as they are till some local officer designs something new. The difficulty will then be to obtain the sanction of each of the various powers to a change, and if a change is in the end sanctioned, it will be not on any large and general principles, but in deference to the pertinacity of the applicant and without reference to its consistency with other plans similarly sanctioned.

I have formed the opinion, in which I am every day more and more confirmed, that most things are in the main identical in all parts of India as we found it; and I think that it is most necessary to introduce some *general* principles and general system. So far as any general government of India is concerned, nothing would have been done in the last fifty years. We have in fact a quadruple government, whose sole duty is to prevent the executive officers from doing too much. It is this then that we must strive to remedy. We must vest somewhere sufficient administrative functions, and we must institute a proper system of gradation, instead of many parallel mutually checking authorities. One authority must direct another, instead

of merely checking the proceedings of another. We are altogether wanting in progress, and the means of progress we must supply through some body actually and ostensibly governing India, and fairly responsible to public opinion.

A great want, and one which may be without disadvantage supplied, is publicity. Some things must, no doubt, be secret, but the great mass of our business is such as will well bear the light and would be every way the better for public airing. We not only keep the public in the dark, but we contrive so completely to mystify the servants of Government, that one knows not in the least what another is doing.

In regard to the constitution of the Government, the points which seem to me to be most important are—the transfer of the whole central executive power to a sufficiently constituted Supreme Government in India; the improvement of the Court of Directors, and especially the introduction of a certain proportion of members selected otherwise than by popular election; arrangements for securing a nearer and better understanding between the Indian Minister and the Court; provision for the formation of good laws and a good judicial system; and the abolition of appointments and jurisdictions emanating from any source other than the general Indian Government.

Of separate matters requiring legislation, the most pressing are the colleges for the education and testing of the young men nominated to the services, and the legal restrictions in regard to the leave and other rules affecting those services which have become inapplicable to the present day.

I have always looked with great admiration on much of the education supplied at Haileybury to those who like to learn, and personally I feel exceedingly indebted to it. Insufficient as it is in quantity, I believe that it is not to be had elsewhere, and would, of all things, deprecate the abolition of a special place of education for the civil service and the reliance on ordinary education. Till the educational system of the country is very much changed indeed, this cannot with safety be done; and if it *could* be done, it would be, I think, in several ways most undesirable. But I think that the special education is not carried far enough, that the duty of plucking is evaded, and that the tone of the college is not what it ought to be. I think that it was a mistake to build it isolated on an out-of-the-way heath—that an academic site and academic atmosphere would have been infinitely preferable. I would transfer our special college from Hertford Heath to Cambridge, and would very much raise the tests of admission to the civil service. I would also institute a great military school, or expand Addiscombe into that character, and would send no cadet to the Indian army who has not received a military education.

There will be, I believe, no hesitation fundamentally to alter the rules for the regulation of the services prescribed in a former age.

In glancing at the general principles of future policy which I recommend, I hope it will be seen that I am by no means inclined to carry to an impolitic extreme principles which I believe to be in the main sound. In describing facts, I have only generally and incidentally alluded to, without fully explaining, views which may have been

therefore, in some degree, misconceived. I very much deprecate the advance of our frontier. Believing that the natural limits of India have been fixed by nature in the clearest and most insuperable way, I rejoice that we should have reached those limits, but I deeply regret that we should overstep them by an offensive war; and I think that, if England will enter on a fresh career in a new continent, she should do so at her own costs and charges, and that India should not be called on to pay if loss should accrue. I am by no means in favour either of an immediate general absorption of all native states, or of any general rule for the assumption of the direct management of *every* territory which we can from time to time, without breach of faith, appropriate; very far from it. Not only would I keep substantial faith, but I have both a very good opinion of the management of *some* small native states, and a conviction of the policy and advantage in several ways of maintaining certain native feudatories and governing a portion of the country *indirectly*. I do sincerely trust that we shall not sacrifice our good name or appropriate countries which do not pay; but for these very reasons I advocate the formation of a good feudatory system, through which those native states which we maintain may become useful members of the empire, and may answer the purposes of faith and policy without inducing anarchy, confusion, and misrule. I draw a wide distinction between different states according to the circumstances of each. There are, after all, comparatively few of which I would covet the direct rule; but I think that the appropriation of Oude, Gwalior, and one or two others, would be most beneficial in every way, both to the empire and to the people of

those states, without entailing any disadvantage whatever; and that we should lose no opportunity which occurs of obtaining possession of these large, rich, and convenient territories. The Rajpoots and other clans I would, without doubt, maintain, and would only by a more discreet and equitable policy make them more directly subservient to our uses, and thus in some degree relieve the finances of the empire.

In our own territories I confess that I should prefer the interests of the people to those of the mushroom official nobles of the former dynasties, and would be just before being generous.

Our administration should be avowedly despotic; but I would be far from introducing severities which are no necessary part of despotisms. In spite of all the faults of the Indian press, I by no means propose to gag and silence it; no man would more deprecate such a course. I would above all things render our laws systematic, simple, and clear, but would not carry them into too great detail; would not regulate minor matters by too precise laws; but, enforcing among the servants of Government an efficient discipline and subordination, I would place much trust in them, and would leave a good deal to individual discretion. As the best means of obtaining a supply of good and trustworthy servants, I would fully maintain a profession devoted to the civil service of the state; and while relaxing its monopoly of office in some respects, would even extend its field of employment in others; but I would use the most stringent means to render that profession in the highest degree efficient, and would make admission to its ranks to depend on fitness more than on favour. I would par-

ticularly study economy in our enormously expensive military system; and I would strain every nerve to put our finances on a healthy footing. As I have already said, I do not propose to sacrifice revenue with one hand and to spend money with the other; but, first providing a surplus, I then spend it on the improvement of the country.

I would not retard, but in every way encourage, colonization, conversion, and the introduction of European morals, manners, and arts; I am even more sanguine than most people as to the aptness of the people to receive these benefits.

With a view both to colonization and to the efficiency of a European government, I strongly advocate a regard to considerations of climate in fixing our administrative stations and our political and social capitals.

If then we have but an efficient government, such as Parliament may now supply, the union of the advantages of freedom in constituting, and despotism in executing, a great imperial administration will be such as no other country possesses. India should be the best governed country in the world; and I fully believe that we might make it one of the most civilized and advanced countries in the world. I picture to myself India as it may be under an enlightened patriarchal empire, peaceable, prosperous, and Christian—its arts developed—its sciences perfected—its surface covered with useful works—its people educated, refined, and rich.

London, Feb. 15, 1853.

50, ALBEMARLE STREET, LONDON.
January, 1853.

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