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The History Of Hindostan; From The Earliest Account Of Time, To The Death Of Akbar; Translated From The Persian Of Mahummud Casim Ferishta Of Delhi

Together With A Dissertation Concerning the Religion and Philosophy of the Brahmins ; With An Appendix, Containing the History of the Mogul Empire, from its Decline in the Reign of Mahummud Shaw, to the present Times ; In Two Volumes

Dow, Alexander

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An Enquiry into the state of Benagl: with a Plan for restoring that Province to its former Prosperity and Splendor.

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AN
E N Q U I R Y
INTO THE
STATE OF BENGAL:

WITH A

Plan for restoring that Province to its former
Prosperity and Splendor.

STATE OF BENGAL UNDER THE MOGULS.

Preliminary Observations.

THE affairs of India, though long of great im-
portance to this kingdom, have only very lately
become objects of public attention. Facts coming
from afar made little impression: their novelty could
not rouse, nor their variety amuse the mind. With a
self-denial uncommon in a spirited nation, we heard,
without emotion, of the great actions of some of our
countrymen; and, if we listened to any detail of oppres-
sions

Reflections.



AN ENQUIRY INTO THE

sions committed by others, it was with a phlegmatic indifference, unworthy of our boasted humanity. A general distaste for the subject prevailed; an age, marked with revolution and change, seemed ready to pass away, without being sensible of events which will render it important in the eyes of posterity.

Design of the author.

The current of public opinion has, at length, taken another direction. Men are roused into attention, with regard to a subject which concerns the welfare of the state. They begin to decide, in their own minds, upon affairs which stand in need of the interposition of the nation; and they shew an inclination to be informed, as well as a willingness to correct mistakes and to redress grievances. This consideration has induced the author of the following observations, to submit them, with all due deference, to the public. He has been, for years, a silent spectator of the transactions of the British nation in the East; and it is, from the means of information which he has possessed, that he hopes to give something new to the world. With hands guiltless of rapine and depredation, he assumes the pen without prejudice, and he will use it with all decent freedom without fear.

A brief account

The empire of the Hindoos over all India, came down from the darkest and most remote antiquity,



to the 170th year before the Christian æra, when it was dissolved by civil discord and war. Bengal, like many other provinces, started up into an independent kingdom, and was governed by successive dynasties of Rajas, who chiefly resided at the now deserted capital of Ghor. Under these princes, it continued a powerful and opulent kingdom, to the beginning of the thirteenth century, when it was first invaded by the Mahomedans, under a prince of the race of Chillagi, who possessed the countries near the source of the Oxus. The name of this Tartar invader was Eas-ul-dien; but he was soon after reduced to subjection by Altumsh, the Patan emperor of Delhi, who formed Bengal into a province, governed by a lieutenant, who derived his authority from the conqueror.

Bengal, during the dominion of the Patans in India, was frequently subject to revolution and change. When a prince of abilities sat on the throne of Delhi, it held of the empire; when the emperor was weak, it became an independent sovereignty under its governor. When the valour and conduct of Baber put an end to the government of the Patans at Delhi, some of that race remained untouched in Bengal. The misfortunes of Humaion, in the beginning of his reign, not only prevented him from extending the conquests of his father, but deprived him even of the throne which Baber

of the various
revolutions



had acquired; and death followed too soon, upon his return, to permit him to reduce the wealthy kingdom of Bengal by his arms. The glory of this conquest was reserved for his son, the illustrious Akbar, who, by the expulsion of Daood, the last king of Bengal of the Patan race, annexed it in the year 1574 to his empire. Viceroy's from Delhi governed the kingdom, from that period, till the debility of Mahommed Shaw gave scope to the usurpation of Aliverdi; and now, by a wonderful revolution of fortune, the sovereigns of that distant province are created by the deputies of the East India company.

of Bengal.

To give an enlarged idea of the subject, it may not be improper to enquire into the mode of government, which the Moguls established in the important province of Bengal. To impose nothing merely speculative upon the public, the Writer of the Dissertation has endeavoured to derive his information from undoubted authority. He has, therefore, translated and annexed to his work, the commissions granted by the court of Delhi to its principal officers in the provinces: From which it will appear, that the despotism of the house of Timur was circumscribed by established forms and regulations, which greatly tempered the rigid severity of that form of government.



THE Mogul Tartars, when they conquered India, carried a system of necessary policy through the countries which their arms had subdued. Instead of seizing the lands of the vanquished, they confirmed them in their possessions. The number of the conquerors bearing no proportion to the conquered, self-preservation obliged the first to adhere together, and to hold the sword in their hands. Had they attempted to settle in different provinces, they would have soon ceased to be a people; and their power would have been broken by separation. They retained, therefore, their military character; and, when they reduced a province, they made the taxes paid to former princes, the invariable rule of their imposts. The people changed their lords, but if their government suffered any change, it was in the substitution of a milder despotism, in the place of the fierce tyranny of the Patans.

Many of the Rajas, or indigenious Indian princes, had, from the first establishment of the Mahommedans in India, been permitted to retain a great part of their ancient possessions; which they continued to govern by their own laws, without any appeal from their jurisdic-

Policy of the Moguls.

equal to

Tributary Rajas.



tion to the courts of justice established by Imperial commissions. The only mark of homage paid by the Rajas, was a certain annual tribute. The house of Timur, no less remarkable for their prudence than for their clemency and justice, never encroached upon the privileges of the tributary princes. They found, that though the Rajas paid not to the crown above half the sum raised upon the subject, their policy, industry, and good government, were so much superior to those of the Moguls, that the countries which they possessed, yielded as much in proportion to their extent, as those which they had farmed out to Zemindars of their own nation and faith. In the two provinces

Their power

The division of the province which was more immediately under the Mahomedan government, was parcelled out into extensive districts, called Chucklas, resembling, in some measure, our counties; and into lesser divisions,

Mahomedan Zemindars.



divisions, like our ancient tithings. These were left to Zemindars, or farmers of the Imperial rents, who sometimes possessed a whole district, or Chuckla; as the Zemindar of Purnea, who assumed the style and state of a Nabob, though only a farmer of the revenue, under the unfortunate Surage-ud-Dowla. The court of Delhi, under the best princes, was venal. A sum of money, secretly and properly applied, often secured the possession of his office to the Zemindar during life; and he even was sometimes enabled to transmit it to his heirs; till, by length of time, they were, in some measure, considered as lords of their respective districts.

The farmers, however, had no lease from the crown of the lands over which they presided. Their authority for collecting the rents from the inferior tenants, was derived from a written agreement, for all certain annual sum to be paid to the treasury, exclusive of the Imperial taxes. To prevent imposition on the poorer sort, in every district there was established a register, in which the rents and imposts upon every village and farm were entered, and open to the inspection of all. The registered rents and imposts were collected by the Corie of the district, who was established in his office by an Imperial commission. He was accountable for the whole, even to the last Dám, as the commission expresses it, to the Fotadâr or treasurer of the district, who paid.

Their power,



paid them into the hands of the Dewan, or receiver-general of the Imperial revenues in the province.

restricted

The rights or dues of the Dewanny, or the revenue paid to the crown, did not amount to above half the sums raised upon the subject by the great farmers. These were, from time to time, permitted to raise the rents upon the inferior tenants, in proportion to the general improvement of the lands. The surplus, which was known to government from the public registers of the districts, was, in part, allowed to the general farmers, for the purpose of building houses for the husbandmen, for furnishing them with implements of agriculture, for embanking to prevent inundations, for making reservoirs of water for the dry season; and in general, for all expences attending the improvement and cultivation of the lands; which otherwise would have rendered the accounts of government intricate and perplexed.

by the crown.

The great farmers, however, were not permitted to oppress the tenants with exorbitant rents; neither was it their interest to extort from the husbandmen sums which would render them incapable of cultivating their lands, and of living comfortably upon the fruits of their toil. In the Imperial officers of the revenue, the poor had



had friends, and the Zemindar spies upon his conduct. They were such checks upon him, that he could conceal nothing from their observation. They transmitted monthly accounts of his transactions to court. If the tenants were able, without oppression, to pay the additional rent, the demands of the crown rose at the expiration of the year upon the farmer, in proportion to the new impost; if they were found incapable of bearing the burden, the Zemindar was turned out of his office for his avarice and imprudence.

A double revenue, it appears from what has been already observed, rose to the crown from the lands; the ancient rent, established at the conquest of India by the Moguls, and the sums which proceeded from the annual contracts with the great farmers. The viceroy of the province was vested with the power of letting the lands; and he was obliged to transmit to the receiver-general a record of the sums payable by each Zemindar. The cause of this mode of raising the revenue is obvious. The detail of accounts, the making of contracts with the inferior tenants, would have rendered the business of government too minute and too expensive; and to have permitted the general farmers to manage their districts without either check or controul, would have given birth to scenes of oppression, which

A double revenue.



which Fate had reserved for an unfortunate people, to our times. The Mogul empire is now no more; and the servants of the freest nation upon earth have left the body of the people to the mercy of the Zemindars,

Various Zemindars.

The general farmers of districts were not the only persons known by the name of Zemindars. Men, who possessed estates for life, and sometimes in perpetuity, free from all taxation, by virtue of Imperial grants, were distinguished by the same title. These grants were generally given to learned and religious men, to favourite servants at court, to soldiers who had deserved well of their prince, and they were respected by succeeding emperors, and seldom revoked. One sixth part of the lands in Bengal had been conferred, in perpetuity, by different princes, on their favourites and adherents. Many of these estates have fallen into the East India Company, from a failure of heirs; and others daily fall, as the property is not transferable by sale. A minute enquiry might greatly increase our revenue. Many grants said to be derived from the emperor, are only from the governors of the province; many are in the possession of men who cannot trace their blood to the original proprietors. A succession of revolutions has rolled one part of Bengal upon the other; and it is not hitherto settled from confusion.

Lands



Lands were held by a tenure less permanent, of the emperors of Hindostan. A firmân or Imperial mandate, called by the name of Jagieer, was issued frequently to particular men. This species of grant was for no term of years. It was given through favour, and revocable at pleasure. When any person was raised to the rank of an Omrah, it was an established rule to confer upon him an estate, for the support of his dignity. This, however, was nothing more than an assignment on the revenues of the crown, arising from a specified tract of land in a district, named in the body of the grant. The grantee had no business with the tenants, as he never resided on the estate allotted for his subsistence. He sent his agent every season to the public officers of the district; and his receipt to them, for his allowance, was received by the Dewan, as a part of the Imperial revenue. No conditions of service, none for the maintenance of troops, was annexed to this grant. These are the fables of men who carried the feudal ideas of Europe into their relation of the state of India. The armies of the empire were paid out of the public treasury. Every province had its particular establishment of troops, which the governors were impowered to augment in times of rebellion and commotion.



tenures

During the domination of the house of Timur, there was no transferable landed property in Hindostan; excepting gardens, orchards, houses, and some small portions of ground, in the environs of great cities, for which merchants and wealthy tradesmen had obtained particular grants, distinguished by the name of Pottas. This species of property was repeatedly secured by general edicts, for the encouragement of building, for the accommodation of citizens, and the improvement of towns. Grants of this kind did not always proceed from the crown. The governors of provinces were empowered to issue Pottas, under certain limitations and restrictions: the principal one of which was, that the usual rent of the ground should be paid regularly by the proprietor, to the collectors of the Imperial revenue.

under the empire.

Tenures of other various kinds were common in Bengal, as well as in the other provinces of the empire. An assignment was frequently granted, upon a specified tract of land, for the discharge of a certain sum; and when the sum was paid, the assignment expired. Particular farms were burthened with pensions, called Altunga, to holy men and their descendants, without their ever having any concern in the management of the lands. The despot reserved the people entire to himself, and

and established his power by preventing oppression. Certain imposts were also appropriated for the maintenance of Mullas or priests, for the support of places of worship, public schools, inns, highways, and bridges. These imposts were laid by the receiver-general of the revenue, upon the different husbandmen, in proportion to the rent which they paid; and the tax was distinguished by the name of the impositions of the Dewan.

Civil Officers and Courts of Justice.

IN states subject to despotism, the legislative, the judicial and executive power are vested in the prince. He is the active principle which exists in the center of the machine, and gives life and motion to all its parts. His authority and consequence, however, depend, in a great measure, on the degree in which he communicates his power to his officers. If he gives them all his authority, the reverence for his person is lost in the splendor of his deputies. If he bestows only a small part of his power on his servants, that terror, which is the foundation of his government, is removed from the minds of his subjects; and a door is opened for commotion, licentiousness, and crimes. The emperors of India, of the house of Timur, had, for two centuries, the good fortune to clothe their officers

Despotism
limited



with that happy medium of authority which was sufficient to govern, without the power of oppressing the body of the people.

among the
Moguls.

The despotism of Hindostan, it ought to be observed, was never a government of mere caprice and whim. The Mahomedans carried into their conquests a code of laws which circumscribed the will of the prince. The principles and precepts of the Coran, with the commentaries upon that book, form an ample body of laws, which the house of Timur always observed; and the practice of ages had rendered some ancient usages and edicts so sacred in the eyes of the people, that no prudent monarch would chuse to violate either by a wanton act of power. It was, besides, the policy of the prince, to protect the people from the oppressiveness of his servants. Rebellion sprung always from the great; and it was necessary for him to secure a party against their ambition, among the low.

Nabob,

The Imperial governor of a province, known by the corrupted name of Nabob, in the East as well as in Europe, was an officer of high dignity and authority; but his power, though great, was far from being unlimited and beyond controul. He conferred titles below the rank of an Omrah; he was permitted to grant



grant estates till they should be confirmed by the crown. He appointed and dismissed at pleasure all officers both civil and military, excepting a few, whom we shall have occasion to mention, who acted by commission, under the seal of the empire; and some of these, upon misbehaviour, he could suspend till the emperor's pleasure was known. He let the lands to the general farmers, in conjunction with the Dewan; but he bore no part in the collection of the revenue, but by aiding the Imperial officers with the military power. The Omrahs, who served under him in the army, having generally, on account of the convenience, their allowance from the emperor on the rents of the province, he had the power, for disobedience or notorious crimes, to suspend them from their Jagieers, until he should receive an answer from court, where the dispute was examined in the cabinet. In matters of justice, there rested an appeal to his tribunal, from the Cazi or chief-justice, though he seldom chose to reverse the decrees of that judge. Disputes where property was not concerned, and where the established laws had made no provision, were settled by his authority; but he was instructed at his peril not to turn the subjects of the empire out of the lands, tenements, or houses, which they themselves either possessed or built, or which descended to them from their ancestors.

The



Dewan,

The Dewan was the officer next in dignity to the viceroy, in the province. He derived his commission from the emperor, as receiver-general of the revenue. His office was altogether confined to the administration and collection of the Imperial rents and taxes. He corresponded with the minister; he audited the accounts of the governor; and as he had entire to himself the charge and disposal of the public money, he might, for good reasons, refuse to discharge any extraordinary and unprecedented expences; or to issue out pay to new troops, raised without apparent necessity. He presided in the office called Daster Ali, or over all the Mutasiddies, or clerks of the cheque; the Canongoes or public registers; Cories, or collectors of the larger districts; Fufildars, or collectors of the lesser districts; Fotadars, or treasurers; Chowdries, or chiefs of districts; Muckuddurnis, or head-men of villages; and in general over all the officers of the Imperial revenue.

Corie,

The Corie of every Pergunna or larger district, derived his commission from the emperor. His office, though in miniature, was the exact counterpart of the Dewan; being the receiver-general of the county, if the name may be used, as the former was of the whole province. He was immediately accountable to the



Dewan, in whose office he passed his accounts. He produced the receipts of the Fotadar or treasurer of the Pergunna or district, for the sums which he had paid into that officer's hands, from the collections made by the Fufildars, who, in the subdivisions of the Pergunna, held offices, each of which was a counterpart of his own.

The Carcûn of the larger districts was an officer commissioned by the emperor, to settle all matters and disputes between the tenants and the officers of the revenue, and to preserve the ancient usages of the Pergunna. He was also a kind of spy upon all their private as well as public transactions; he audited their accounts publicly, transmitting copies of them monthly to court, attested by the Sheickdars, Chowdries, and Canon-goes of the district. These accounts being entered with great regularity in the visier's office at Delhi, the emperor had an immediate view of the collections in the province, before the general accounts of the Dewanny were adjusted; and this was also a great check upon the office of the Dewan.

The view already presented of the mode of collecting the Imperial revenue, renders it unnecessary to descend through all the inferior offices in the department of the receiver-
and other officers.



receiver-general. The revenues, it must be observed, were never transmitted entire to the Imperial treasury in the capital of the province, much less into that of the empire. The expences incurred in every district were deducted from the receipts of the Fotadar or treasurer of the district; and the disbursements of the province in general from those of the Dewan. The surplus alone, which was more or less according to accident, found its way to the Imperial exchequer. The estimates of the Imperial revenues are, therefore, not the sums received in the exchequer at Delhi, but the gross collections in every province.

Chief-justice.

The courts of justice in Bengal, distinguished by the general name of Cutcherries, were of various kinds. They generally received their designation from the officer who presided in each, or within whose jurisdiction they were comprehended. The Author of the Enquiry is not fully informed concerning the powers of the different judges, or the mode of proceeding in their courts. There arose a chain of appeal from the lowest to the highest. An action might be removed from any of the courts below before the Cazi of the province, commonly called Daroga Adalit, or chief-justice; and from him there lay an appeal to the tribunal of the viceroy.

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Inferior



Inferior judges were appointed by an Imperial ^{Judges.} commission, in every large district, and in every considerable city, with whom appeals rested, from the courts in the country, and from the decisions of Cutwals, or mayors of towns. These Cazis, or judges, were vested with power to summon before them all persons, to examine records, public registers, grants, and witnesses. They were, at their peril, to pass judgment impartially, according to the laws of the Coran, and the canons and regulations of the empire. They were impowered to make and dissolve marriages, to execute contracts of every kind between individuals, to inflict punishments, which did not extend to either life or limb. They took cognizance of all riots, disorders, and tumults; and they were denominated the general guardians of the morals of the people. They were provided with an establishment of clerks, registers, and officers of the court. They passed judgment in a summary manner, and their legal fees were one fourth of the matter in dispute, equally levied upon the plaintiff and defendant. This regulation was intended to prevent vexatious law-suits, as well as to bring them to a speedy issue. During the vigour of the Mogul empire, capital punishments were hardly known in India. When a crime which merited death was committed, the Cazi, after a full proof of the fact, by witnesses,



pronounced sentence against the guilty person; but, without the confirmation of the viceroy, it could not be put in execution. Though the empire sometimes abounded with treason, it was never punished but in the field.

Inferior
officers.

In each subdivision of the Pergunna or district, subject to the jurisdiction of the Cazi or judge, there was an inferior officer called a Chowdri, similar to our justice of the peace. Every village had its chief-man, who was the constable of his own department. A Fogedar was, properly speaking, the commander of the troops, in every military station. He sometimes farmed the lands in the neighbourhood; and being the immediate representative of the viceroy, he was considered as the principal officer in his district. But he did not sit in judgment, the civil being always kept distinct from the military department, under the government of the Moguls, as long as it retained its vigour. The Zemindars or general farmers, were sometimes entrusted with the command of the troops in their own districts; but in their courts they decided only upon trivial disputes between the inferior husbandmen.—Such was the government of Bengal, under the empire of the house of Timur.

Revenue



Revenue and Commerce.

A Brief, but it is hoped a comprehensive, idea being given, in the preceding section, of the government

of Bengal under the Imperial house of Timur, the Author of the Enquiry will proceed to explain the Revenues and Commerce of that once flourishing and opulent kingdom. In the reign of the emperor Jehangire, the

revenues of the provinces of Bengal and Behâr, both which, for the sake of brevity, we comprehend under the name of the former, amounted to £ 2,796,719 13 2

Under his grandson Aurungzêbe

they increased to - - - 2,911,866 7 6

Mahommed Shuffia, who wrote an abridgment of the History of the Empire, from the death of the illustrious Akbâr to the fatal invasion of Nadir Shaw, where he mentions the provinces which revolted during the indolent reign of Mahommed Shaw, estimates the revenues of Bengal at sixty crores of Dâms, or one crore and fifty lacks of roupees, which sum is equal to £ 1,875,000

The revenues of Behâr, according to the same writer, amounted to forty-five

crores of Dâms, or - - - 5,406,250

£. 3,281,250

g 2 It

Revenue of
Bengal and
Behâr.

Director
Officers



Increase under the empire.

It appears, from the above calculation, that the revenues of Bengal had been gradually increasing, in the progress of the empire, through time. They continued still to increase, under the revolted Nabobs, some of whom brought into their treasury four millions of our money, but not without distressing the subject, and plundering him of a part of his wealth. It may be necessary to repeat an observation, already made, that not above half the sum raised upon the people came into the coffers of government. The exact sum transmitted annually to Delhi, before the dissolution of the empire, is not easy to ascertain; but we can form some judgment of the amount, from the ruinous policy of the Imperial court, when its ancient vigour began to decline. The provinces of Bengal and Behâr, during some years of indolence and debility, were farmed out to the viceroys, who paid into the treasury, one million two hundred and forty-nine thousand nine hundred and ninety-nine pounds seventeen shillings and sixpence of our money.

Sum annually remitted to Delhi.

This sum, it is supposed, was a medium struck, upon an average of years, of the money remitted to the treasury at Delhi, when the empire retained its force. But this stipulated revenue, as might have been foreseen, was never regularly paid. The viceroys acquired an inde-



pendent power, by a regulation which threw the whole management of the province into their hands, without controul; and the vigour of the Imperial government, in proportion, declined. The country profited, however, by the refractoriness of its governor; if his avarice prompted him to raise more on the subject, the latter was more able than before to pay the additional impost, from the revenue being kept and expended in the province. Bengal began to flourish, under an additional load of oppression. It yielded more to a severe Nabob, than to the milder government of the empire; and being relieved from an annual drain of specie to Delhi, it became opulent under a degree of rapine.

Though despotism is not the most favourable government for commerce, it flourished greatly in Bengal, under the strict justice of the house of Timur. Sensible of the advantages which they themselves would derive from a free commercial intercourse between their subjects, they were invariably the protectors of merchants. The military ideas which they brought from Tartary, prevented the principal servants of the crown from engaging in trade; and, therefore, monopolies of every kind were discouraged, and almost unknown. No government in Europe was ever more severe against forestalling and re-

grating,

Commerce of



grating, than was that of the Moguls in India, with regard to all the branches of commerce. A small duty was raised by the crown; but this was amply repaid, by the never-violated security given to the merchant.

Bengal.

Bengal, from the mildness of its climate, the fertility of its soil, and the natural industry of the Hindoos, was always remarkable for its commerce. The easy communication by water from place to place, facilitated a mercantile intercourse among the inhabitants. Every village has its canal, every Pergunna its river, and the whole kingdom the Ganges, which falling, by various mouths, into the bay of Bengal, lays open the ocean for the export of commodities and manufactures. A people, from an inviolable prejudice of religion, abstemious, were averse to luxury themselves; and the wants of nature were supplied almost spontaneously by the soil and climate. The balance of trade, therefore, was, against all nations, in favour of Bengal; and it was the sink where gold and silver disappeared, without the least prospect of return.

Balance of
trade in its
favour.

All the European nations carried chiefly on their commerce with Bengal in bullion. The Dutch, at a medium



dium of ten years, threw annually into the bosom of that kingdom, in bullion £ 475,000

The English - - - - - 192,500

The French, Danes, and Portuguese - - - - - 250,000

The exports of Bengal to the gulphs of Persia and Arabia, were very great.

She supplied Arabia, Persia, Turkey, Georgia, Armenia, and the lesser Asia with her manufactures, and brought home annually, into her coffers, of gold - - - - - 375,000

Her trade in opium and piece goods to the eastern kingdoms of Asia, to the Malayan and Philippine islands, brought yearly a balance in her favour of - - - - - 150,000

The inland trade of Bengal, with the upper Hindostan and Assam - - - - - 250,000

The coasting-trade with the coasts of Coromandel and Malabâr - - - - - 160,000

£ 1,852,500

The above estimate is made designedly low; for were we to argue from general principles, a greater sum must have been imported annually into Bengal. The twelve hundred and fifty thousand pounds remitted annually to Delhi,

Observations.



Delhi, never returned into the province, and, as there were no mines wrought in the country, the surplus of the revenue must have proceeded from the balance of trade. Coin, it is well known, loses greatly by friction, where little alloy is mixed with the silver, and where the want of paper-currency makes the circulation extremely rapid. It loses also by re-coinage, which happened annually under the empire in Bengal. The practice of concealing and burying treasure, which the terrors of despotism introduced, has occasioned a considerable loss, besides the quantity of silver and gold used in rich manufactures. These various losses could be only repaired by a favourable balance of trade; and the sum which we have stated above, would barely supply the waste.

State of Bengal under the revolted Nabobs.

Gradual decline

THOUGH the causes which broke the empire were obvious, the decline of the power of the house of Timur was gradual and imperceptible. The seeds of decay were long sown before they were brought to an enormous growth, by the indolence of Mahommed Shaw. Had even the Persian invasion never happened, the fabric which Baber raised in India was destined to fall to ruin. The abilities of Aurungzêbe, by establishing half a century of domestic tranquility in his dominions, broke the



the spirit of his subjects, whilst that of the Imperial family declined. The distant provinces obeyed the mandates of the court, through habit, more than through fear of its resentment and power; and governors, though destitute of ambition, found, in their own indolence, an excuse for their inattention to commands which could not be enforced with rigour.

The intrigues of the two Seids at the court of Delhi, ^{of the power} who raised and removed monarchs at pleasure, weakened that respect for the house of Timur which bound the allegiance of the subject, even after their mildness had degenerated into indolence. Every month brought intelligence into the distant provinces of the murder of one prince, whilst another was placed on a throne, still warm with his predecessor's blood. The veil which hid despotism from the eyes of the people, was rent in twain; monarchs became puppets, which the minister moved at pleasure, and even men, who loved slavery on its own account, knew not to what quarter to turn their political devotion. The viceroys, under a pretence of an unsettled succession, retained the revenues of the provinces; and, with specious professions of loyalty for the Imperial family, they became polite rebels against its authority.



of the em-
pire.

Through this debility in the Imperial line, a new species of government rose in various provinces of India. The viceroys, though they assumed the state of princes, were still the HUMBLE SLAVES of some desolate monarch, who sat without either power or dignity in the midst of the ruins of Delhi. They governed the people in his name, but they listened not to his commands. He even became an instrument of oppression in their hands; and they sanctified the most unpopular of their measures by inducing the prince to pass, in their own cabinet, regulations, which originated under the seals of the empire. Instead of a revenue, they remitted to him bribes; and the necessity of his situation reduced him into a tool, to the very rebels who had ruined his power.

Effect

This mock form of an empire continued for many years; and some provinces are still governed through the medium of a monarch that only subsists in his name. But though the Nabobs affirmed that they had still an emperor, the people found, in their oppressions, that there was none. The check which the terror of complaints to Delhi had laid formerly on the conduct of the viceroys, was now removed; and the officers of the crown who had been placed between the subject and the governor, were discontinued or deprived of their power. The inferior tenants, instead of being supported

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ed by the Imperial collectors of the revenue against the avarice of the general farmers, were submitted, without redress, to the management of the latter, and were considered by him as a kind of property.

The usurpation of Aliverdi introduced, more than its dissolution thirty years ago, the above-described form of government into Bengal. The same policy was continued by his successors. They owned the emperor of Delhi for their sovereign, but they governed the country, and collected its revenues for themselves. The interposition of the crown being removed, the independent Nabobs, who succeeded one another either by force or intrigue, adopted a more simple, but a more impolitic mode of collecting the rents and imposts, than that which had been practised by the house of Timur. The lands were let from year to year to Zemindars, who were accountable for the rents to the treasury, and the former officers of the revenue, though not annihilated, possessed neither emolument nor power.

An intimate knowledge of the country, however, enabled the Nabobs to prevent their government from degenerating into absolute oppression. They had sense enough to see, that their own power depended upon the prosperity of their subjects; and their residence in the on the province,



province gave them an opportunity of doing justice with more expedition and precision than it was done in the times of the empire. The complaints of the injured, from a possession of the means of information, were better understood. The Nabobs were less restricted than formerly, in inflicting necessary punishments; and, as they were accountable to no superior for the revenue, they had it in their power to remit unjust debts and taxes, which could not be borne. The miseries of Bengal, in short, were reserved for other times. Commerce, manufactures, and agriculture, were encouraged; for it was not then the maxim to take the honey, by destroying the swarm.

of Bengal.

The folly of the prince had no destructive effect on the prosperity of the people. The Nabobs, carrying down, through their own independent government, the idea of the mild despotism of the house of Timur, seemed to mark out to the people certain lines, which they themselves did not chuse either to overleap or destroy. Many now in Britain were eye-witneses of the truth of this assertion. We appeal to the testimony of those who marched through Bengal after the death of Surage-ul-Dowla, that, at that time, it was one of the richest, most populous, and best cultivated kingdoms in the world. The great men and merchants were wallowing in wealth
and



and luxury; the inferior tenants and the manufacturers were blessed with plenty, content, and ease. But the cloud which has since obscured this sunshine was near.

When the troubles, which ended by putting Bengal into the hands of the Company, first arose, Surage-ul-Dowla, a very young and inconsiderate prince, was Nabob of the three provinces. The good fortune which had at first forsaken us, returned to our arms; and, by the assistance, or rather opportune treachery of Jaffier, one of his generals, he was deposed and murdered. We raised the Traitor, as a reward for his convenient treason, to a throne still warm with the blood of his lord; and the measure seemed to be justified, by our apparent inability of retaining the conquered province in our own hands.

Brief recapitulation

The fortune of Jaffier, however, did not long withhold her frowns. Though he had treachery enough to ruin his master, he was destitute of abilities to reign in his place. His weakness became an excuse for a revolution, which had been meditated on other grounds; and Cassim Ali, Jaffier's son-in-law, an intriguing politician, was invested with the dignity and power of his father. If Jaffier was weak, Cassim had too good parts to be permitted to govern Bengal. He was deposed, and his predecessor



predecessor reinstated in his place. This farce in politics was adopted as a precedent. A governor, without a revolution in the state of Bengal, could not answer to himself for idling away his time.

late revolutions.

The civil wars, to which a violent desire of creating Nabobs gave rise, were attended with tragical events. The country was depopulated by every species of public distress. In the space of six years, half the great cities of an opulent kingdom were rendered desolate; the most fertile fields in the world lay waste; and five millions of harmless and industrious people were either expelled or destroyed. Want of foresight became more fatal than innate barbarism; and men found themselves wading through blood and ruin, when their object was only spoil. But this is not the time to rend the veil which covers our political transactions in Asia.

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