

RULES OF INDIA. DUPLEIX

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Rules of India. Dupleix by George Bruce Malleson

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GEORGE BRUCE MALLESON

**RULES OF
INDIA. DUPLEIX**

Rulers of India

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RULERS OF INDIA

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NOTE

I have to acknowledge the obligations under which I am to the under-mentioned writers: (1) Orme's *History of India*; (2) Cambridge's *Account of the War in India*, containing the Journal of Colonel Stringer Lawrence; (3) The Abbé Guyon's *History of the East Indies*, 1757; (4) The Memoirs of Duplex, and of Labourdonnais, and a contemporary Memoir of Lally; (5) Laude's *Le Siège de Pondichéry en 1748*, containing the Journal of Rangapoulé; and many modern works. I have also with me information which I gathered from Pondichery and Chandarnagar, relating to the events here recorded, during my service in India.

Rec. Cass. M. 142. 1-17-34-

D U P L E I X

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTORY

'THE immense riches,' wrote the Abbé Guyon in 1774, 'which the Portuguese, the English, and the Dutch had drawn from the East Indies, invited the French to follow them in those remote and unknown countries, in order to partake of the advantages of which commerce was there productive.' For many years, indeed, the 'invitation,' as the Abbé calls it, had dangled before the French people. For many years they had failed successfully to respond to it. In vain had Francis I in 1537 and 1543, and Henry III in 1578, exhorted their subjects to make long voyages. As these exhortations were unaccompanied by any promise of a State subsidy, as had been similar offers in the three countries which preceded France in the race for the commerce of the East, they produced no effect whatever. Nor was it till 1615 that a Company, which four years previously had obtained from Louis XIII letters patent for the monopoly of the Eastern trade for twelve years, stimulated by two

merchants of Rouen, MM. Muisson and Canis, made a beginning by despatching two vessels to the Indian Ocean.

The vessels equipped and despatched by this Company touched indeed at Madagascar, but did not touch India. But the account they brought home of the riches of Madagascar stimulated to a certain extent the spirit of enterprise among the public, and to a still greater degree in the ruling circle, then directed by the illustrious Richelieu. On the 24th of June, 1642, that eminent statesman granted to a new Company the exclusive privilege of settling colonies in Madagascar and the adjacent islands, and taking possession of them in the name of the King of France. Richelieu died in December of the same year, and Louis XIII in May of the year following. But the idea had taken root, and on the 20th of September, 1643, the Council of Regency confirmed the privileges of the new Company.

Its success was but moderate. The Company did indeed effect a settlement on Madagascar, and every year of its existence it despatched thither at least one well-freighted trading vessel. For a time the proprietors hoped. The arrival of one ship laden with yellow sandal-wood, hides, aloe-wood, and gums, and of another bringing twenty-five tons of rock-crystal, kept up their spirits. But these were only transient successes, which were far from counter-balancing the losses sustained by wrecks and the insalubrity of the climate. When, therefore, the twenty years for which

exclusive rights had been granted to it expired, the Company did not ask for a renewal of its privileges.

Its place, however, was at once occupied by a famous nobleman, who had won by his services in the field a dukedom and the bâton of a Marshal of France. This was the Duke de la Meilleraye. He threw into the scheme all the ardour of his nature, but without success, and when he died in February, 1664, after ten years of commercial enterprise, he left behind him a record of failure.

At this crisis France was well served by the statesman whom Mazarin, in his dying moments¹, had recommended to Louis XIV as his successor. The fertile mind of Colbert recognised not only the advantage but the necessity of pushing colonial enterprise. He had noticed with the deepest interest the success of England, Holland, and Portugal in that field. Why, he asked himself, should France fail where those powers had shown that it required but good direction to ensure success? In 1664, then, the very year that the death of the Duke de la Meilleraye had left the field open, he constituted a Company with a capital of fifteen million francs and a concession for exclusive trading for fifty years. So far he followed, on a larger scale, the lines on which his predecessors had marched. But his genius recognised that something more was necessary. He saw that the preceding French companies had failed because they had not

¹ 'Sire, je vous dois tout; mais je crois m'aquitter en quelque sort envers votre Majesté en lui donnant Colbert.'