

**NOTES ON THE
NORTH-WESTERN
PROVINCES OF INDIA**

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Notes on the North-Western Provinces of India by Anonymous

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ANONYMOUS

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PROVINCES OF INDIA**

*From the Author
to John Inglis*

NOTES

ON THE

NORTH-WESTERN PROVINCES
CALIFORNIA

OF

INDIA.

BY

A DISTRICT OFFICER.

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UNIVERSITY OF
CALIFORNIA

NOTES

ON THE

NORTH-WESTERN PROVINCES OF INDIA.

I.

ON THE AREA AND POPULATION.

THE territory of the North-Western Provinces is shaped like an irregular crescent, the western horn reaching up through the Himalayas to the watershed line which divides us from Thibet, the eastern stopping abruptly at the base of those mountains. Snug in the hollow of the crescent lie the dominions of Oude; while, from the mid point of the outer edge, a small neck of British soil runs down between the kingdom of Gwalior and the native states of Rewa and Bundelcund. On the north-western boundary lie the territories of the Punjab, and of the independent state of Bhurtpoor. On the south-eastern we have the Lower Provinces of Bengal, and the kingdom of Rewa.

From horn to horn, following the sweep of the crescent, run the Jumna and the Ganges. Flowing in nearly parallel lines until they meet at Allahabad, they enclose between their streams a long and narrow strip of country, known as the Doab. From Allahabad, which is now the capital of the provinces, the united stream flows on to the very end of the eastern horn, where it meets the Ghogra river.

Besides this territory, which I have likened to an irregular crescent, there is an outlying district, that of Ajmere, also under the Government of the North-Western Provinces. The area of Ajmere is 2,672 square miles, while that of the main territory is 80,707 square miles. The total area under the North-Western Government is 83,379 square miles, which support a population of thirty millions one hundred and ten thousand. In extent of territory, then, these Provinces nearly equal England, Wales, and Ireland together, while in numbers they surpass Great Britain and Ireland, and approach within a few thousand of the population of the United States. This vast province, which would be an empire in Europe, is ruled by a Lieutenant-Governor, under the Governor-General of India. He is aided by a

Revenue Board, consisting of two Members and a Secretary, to whom all matters belonging to the revenue and the land are, in the first instance, referred. The administration of civil and criminal justice is watched over by a High Court, similar in constitution to those which sit in the Presidency Towns.

The Provinces are divided into eight Divisions, under as many Commissioners, each of whom, in his own Division, is the agent and representative of the Governor. The Divisions are again divided into five-and-thirty Districts; each District is under an officer known by the name of "Magistrate and Collector."* This officer is responsible to the Government for almost everything connected with the welfare of the district entrusted to him. He has to see that the revenue is collected, and the accounts properly kept. He has the administration of criminal justice, and, to some extent, of civil also. He is responsible for the police, and he is expected to take an interest in all Government institutions, schools, dispensaries, and the like, and to promote their efficiency. Except

* In the "non-regulation" districts this officer is called "Deputy Commissioner," and his duties include the administration of civil justice to a greater extent.

the main lines of communication, which have been handed over to the Public Works Department, the District Officer has the making and mending of all roads and bridges, and the construction of most of the buildings, such as schools, police stations, and the like. In each department of his work he has more or less assistance, both native and European. But the reins which guide the team are all drawn together and put into his hands. To the natives he is the personification of Government; and it is not too much to say, that *to them* the character of the British Government varies with the character of their District Officer.

The Districts are again divided into three or more Sub-districts, according to their size. In charge of each Sub-district is a native officer, who may be best described as a miniature of the District Officer, to whom he is entirely and completely subordinate. These native officers, or Sub-collectors, as they are somewhat inadequately named, are the links between the District Officer and his people. They are more or less the executive of every department of the Government, and their importance cannot well be exaggerated. They are generally allowed to remain for many years in their Sub-districts,

and when they are good and efficient men, they acquire a minute and extended knowledge of the people and the country which the English officer, often shifted as he is, can rarely hope to obtain at first hand.

Each Sub-district contains one or more "Hundreds," to use an English word. These hundreds are ancient divisions of the country, the boundaries of which have seldom been tampered with by us. After the Hundreds, comes the last division of the land into Townlands, or Townships.

As each Sub-district is united to the District Officer by its Sub-collector, so each Township is connected with the Sub-collector by the Village Accountant, who has charge of one or more Townships, according to their size.

The Village Accountant, as his name implies, keeps the rent-roll and accounts of every estate. This is his first duty. But he has many important offices besides; and as a means of communication between the people and the Government, he can be made of much value.

It will be seen, then, that the organization at the disposal of the Government of these Provinces is such as to enable them to reach the very lowest strata of which society is composed.

Whether the machine works so as to attain this end, depends very much upon the *personnel* of the District Officers and their subordinates. That the end is attained to a great measure, and that our hold upon the country is firm and deeply felt, I believe can hardly be denied. It is in this respect that the Government of the North-West differs from that of Lower Bengal. In the latter Province there is nothing below the District Officer. The links which connect the English officer with the native population are wanting.

The following facts, taken from the Census Report of 1865, for the North-Western Provinces, will give the reader some idea of the country:—

The people of the Provinces are chiefly occupied in agriculture, the numbers being nearly eighteen millions of agriculturists to twelve millions of other pursuits. By far the greater number are Hindoos. There are only four millions and a quarter of Musulmans to twenty-six millions of Hindoos. Yet so little do mere numbers weigh against energy and independence of character, that there are few ordinary observers who would not assign a far larger place to the followers of the Prophet. Of the Mahomedans, sixty per cent. are engaged in non-