

CHAPTER XI

GENERAL ADMINISTRATION

ADMINISTRATIVE CHARGES AND STAFF

THE administration of the district is in charge of the Collector under the Commissioner of the Presidency Division, whose head-quarters are in Calcutta. For some years until 1860, Krishnagar was the head-quarters of the Division, but as it was found more convenient that the Commissioner should reside in Calcutta, the head-quarters of the Division were transferred there, and have remained there since.

For general administrative purposes the district is divided into five subdivisions with head-quarters at Krishnagar, Ranaghat, Meherpur, Chuadanga and Kushtia. The head-quarters of the Ranaghat Subdivision were at Santipur until the year 1863, when they were transferred to Ranaghat, where they have remained since. For five years, *viz.*, from 1892 to 1897, the Chuadanga Subdivision was abolished, the area covered by it being amalgamated with the Meherpur Subdivision; but in the latter year it was re-established in deference to the petitions filed by the inhabitants of the eastern portion complaining of the distance which they had to travel to reach the Court at Meherpur.

The head-quarters subdivision is under the direct superintendence of the Collector, who has a staff of four Deputy Collectors, one Probationary Deputy Collector, and one Sub-Deputy Collector. A Deputy Collector is in charge of each of the four outlying subdivisions, and he is, as a rule, assisted by a Sub-Deputy Collector.

150

NADIA

REVENUE

The total revenue of the district in 1880-81 was Rs. 16,68,000, with the Bangaon Subdivision included. In 1890-91, the Bangaon Subdivision having in the meantime being transferred, it was Rs. 14,93,000. In the course of the following ten years it rose to Rs. 16,58,000, and in the year 1908-09 it was Rs. 21,71,586.

LAND REVENUE

As elsewhere, the land revenue forms by far the most important item of receipt in the district. According to the best information now available, the land revenue payable in the year 1790-91 amounted to Rs. 13,59,935; in 1799-1800 to Rs. 13,49,633; in 1850-51 to Rs. 11,74,492; and in 1871-72 to Rs. 10,17,550. These successive declines were not due to any alteration in the rate of levy, but to transfers of outlying portions of the district to other districts. There has not been much variation in the land revenue demand since the Bangaon subdivision was transferred to Jessore in 1883. The current demand for the year 1908-09 was Rs. 9,02,228, of which about 90 per cent. was due from the proprietors of permanently settled estates. There were 2,245 such estates with a current demand of Rs. 8,09,902; 194 temporarily settled estates, with a current demand of Rs. 73,768; and 16 estates, held direct by Government, with a current demand of Rs. 18,558. The Government estates are scattered throughout the district, but the most important ones are in the Meherpur and Kushtia subdivisions. The total cost of management in 1908-09 was Rs. 1,321, equal to 7 per cent. of the demand. The gross rental of the district was returned at Rs. 27,76,530 when the Road Cess Act was introduced in 1880. It is now estimated to have risen to Rs. 33,64,219, showing an increase of Rs. 5,87,689. There has been but little extension of cultivation during these years, and nearly the whole of this substantial increase in the gross rental must be attributed to increase in the rate of rent.

CESSES

Road and Public Works cesses are, as usual, levied at the maximum rate of one anna in the rupee. The average collections during the quinquennium ending with the year 1899-1900 amounted to Rs. 1,54,684; during the following quinquennium (ending with the year 1904-05) they amounted to Rs. 1,69,093; in the year 1908-09 the collections were Rs. 1,83,697. The current demand in the year 1908-09 was Rs. 1,83,111; of this sum Rs. 1,57,878 was due from 3,383 revenue-paying estates; Rs. 2,382 was due from 298 revenue-free estates; and Rs. 22,851 from 9,213 rent-free lands. The number of estates assessed to cesses is 12,894, and the number of recorded shareholders is 18,075. There are 21,081 tenures assessed to cesses, with 34,386 shareholders. The current demand of cesses is equal to about one-fifth of the current demand of land revenue.

STAMPS

Next to land revenue, the sale of stamps forms the most important source of revenue. The receipts upon this account have been steadily increasing since the year 1896-97; they averaged Rs. 3,37,000 for the quinquennium ending with that year; during the following quinquennium they averaged close on Rs. 3,70,000; in 1904-05 judicial stamps alone furnished Rs. 3,73,473, and in the year 1908-09 judicial stamps to the value of Rs. 3,87,022, and non-judicial stamps to the value of Rs. 83,842 were sold. The increase in the revenue from stamps is almost entirely due to the greater sale of judicial stamps. caused by the growth in the number and value of rent and civil suits.

EXCISE

The income from excise has been steadily increasing for many years. In 1894-95 it was Rs. 1,21,293. During the next five years it increased to Rs. 1,30,081. By 1904-05 it had reached Rs. 1,52,828, and in the year 1908-09 it was

Rs. 1,74,188, which works out at the rate of one anna eight pies per head of the population for the year. There are three main sources of the excise revenue, viz., country spirits, ganja and opium. Up till the close of the year 1906-07 the outstill system was in force. The country liquor shops had fallen into the hands of monopolists, and the liquor sold was both bad in quality, and expensive in price. With effect from 1st April 1907 the contract distillery system was introduced. Under this system the local manufacture of country spirits is prohibited, and a contract is made with a firm of distillers for all the liquor which is required for consumption in the district. The contractors are forbidden to hold any retail licenses for the sale of the spirit, but are allowed the use of the distillery and depot buildings for the storage of liquor. The spirit is brought from the distillers to the various depots, and is there blended and reduced to certain fixed strengths, at which alone it may be supplied to retail vendors, and sold by the latter to consumers. A maximum price is fixed for retail sale. The Collector reported as follows at the close of the first year after the introduction of this system :—"The sale of country liquor of fixed strengths at a fixed price has induced people to use country liquor in preference to cheap imported liquor. Under the old system the vendors diluted and adulterated the liquor and fixed their own prices, and so many preferred to buy cheap imported liquor from Calcutta. The Excise Officers have been exercising a salutary check by testing the strengths of liquor in the shops, and in the custody of consumers, and so the public are assured of getting liquor of full strength. While the new system has increased the number of consumers, there has been no tendency to increase of drunkenness. The Excise Deputy Collector and the subordinate inspecting staff made it a point during the year under report to visit all fairs and festivals, but they have seldom come across any drunken and disorderly people."

After country liquor the next most important source of excise revenue is that derived from the sale of ganja,

i.e., the unimpregnated dried flowering tops of the cultivated female hemp plant (*cannabis Indica*), and the resinous exudation on them. The revenue under this head also has been steadily rising of late years. In 1898-99 it was Rs. 32,380, and in 1908-09, Rs. 43,807. The incidence of license fees on consumption is usually high in Nadia.

Opium is the third article important from an excise point of view. The revenue under this head was Rs. 39,178 in 1908-09; it has remained almost constant during the last twenty years, between Rs. 38,000 and Rs. 40,000.

The other items which go to make up the excise revenue are the receipts from *tari*, *pachhwai*, imported wines and liquors, and *charas*, which in the year 1908-09 amounted respectively to Rs. 4,123, Rs. 4,132, Rs. 6,382 and Rs. 1,744. There are also a few petty miscellaneous items, none exceeding Rs. 100.

INCOME-TAX

The receipts under the head of income-tax amounted in 1892-93 to Rs. 44,372 payable by Rs. 2,021 assesseees. By 1901-02 the receipts had risen to Rs. 61,514 payable by 2,587 assesseees; but in the year 1902-03 the steady increase, which had up till then been maintained, received a severe check by the exemption of incomes between Rs. 500 and Rs. 1,000, and in the year 1908-09 the net collections amounted the Rs. 46,563 only, payable by 1,046 assesseees. As regards revenue from income-tax, Nadia takes the third place among the districts in the Presidency Division, producing less than the 24-Parganas and Murshidabad, and more than Jessore and Khulna.

REGISTRATION

There are 11 offices for the registration of assurances under Act III of 1877, including the Registrar's office at Krishnagar. In the five years 1895-99 the average number of documents registered per annum was 23,687, and in the next quinquennium (1900-04) it was 26,123. In 1908

the number of registrations rose to 31,783. The following statement gives a list of the registry offices in the district, and the salient statistics for the year 1908 :—

| NAME | Documents registered | Receipts | Expenditure |
|--------------------------|----------------------|----------|-------------|
| | | Rs. | Rs. |
| Krishnagar | 4,878 | 10,481 | 6,355 |
| Kushtia | 3,181 | 3,365 | 2,820 |
| Meherpur | 1,764 | 2,915 | 1,749 |
| Chuadanga | 2,976 | 3,514 | 2,590 |
| Ranaghat | 2,649 | 3,262 | 2,027 |
| Santipur | 1,049 | 1,328 | 1,809 |
| Kumarkhali | 6,131 | 5,763 | 2,777 |
| Mirpur | 2,970 | 3,563 | 2,810 |
| Birohi (at Chakdaha) ... | 3,510 | 3,681 | 2,178 |
| Ramnagar ... *... .. | 1,775 | 1,965 | 2,032 |
| Shikarpur | 900 | 1,245 | 1,728 |
| Total | 31,783 | 41,082 | 28,875 |

ADMINISTRATION OF JUSTICE

CIVIL JUSTICE

The average number of civil suits disposed of annually during the quinquennium ending with the year 1899 was 19,737, and during the following quinquennium 23,848. During the year 1908 the number of suits disposed of rose to 30,133, of which 389 were on the file of the District Judge, 773 on that of the Subordinate Judge, and 28,971 on the files of the Munsifs. The increase in civil litigation is more marked in the Nadia district than in any other district in the Presidency Division. In 1905 the Collector remarked in his annual report that "the public complaint continues of the cumbrous Civil Court procedure and delay in the disposal of cases and consequent heavy expenses incurred by the parties." The Judicial staff in 1908 consisted of the following officers :—One District Judge, one Subordinate Judge and two Munsifs at Krishnagar; one Munsif at Ranaghat; two Munsifs at Chuadanga; three Munsifs at Kushtia; and two Munsifs at Meherpur.

CRIMINAL JUSTICE

Criminal justice is administered by the District Magistrate and the various Magistrates subordinate to him, under the appellate authority of the District and Sessions Judge. The sanctioned staff at Krishnagar consists, in addition to the District Magistrate, of three Deputy Magistrates of the first class, and one Deputy Magistrate of the second class or third class. Besides these officers there is generally one Sub-Deputy Magistrate with second or third class powers at head-quarters. The four Sub-divisional Officers are invariably Magistrates of the first class, and they are generally assisted by a Sub-Deputy Magistrate vested with second or third class powers. In addition to the Stipendary Magistrates, there is a Bench of Honorary Magistrates at each of the subdivisional head-quarters, and at Nabadwip, Jamsheerpur and Santipur; and there are also Honorary Magistrates with powers to sit singly at Kumarkhali, Meherpur, Chuadanga, Kushtia and Ranaghat.

POLICE

For police purposes the district is divided into five administrative subdivisions each in charge of an Inspector. In the Krishnagar Subdivision there are 7 thanas, *viz.*, Kotwali, Nabadwip, Chapra, Hanskhali, Kaliganj, Nakasipara and Kissengunge. In the Ranaghat subdivision there are 4 thanas, *viz.*, Haringhata, Ranaghat, Santipur and Chakdaha. In the Kushtia Subdivision there are 6 thanas, *viz.*, Kushtia, Mirpur, Daulatpur, Damukdia, Khoksa and Kumarkhali. In the Meherpur Subdivision there are 4 thanas, *viz.*, Meherpur, Karimpur, Gangni and Tehata. In the Chuadanga Subdivision there are 4 thanas, *viz.*, Chuadanga, Damurhuda, Alamdanga and Jibannagar. There are thus 25 thanas in the district, exclusive of the town outposts in the nine municipalities. The present (1909) sanctioned strength of the district police force is 1 Superintendent, 1 Deputy Superintendent, 7 Inspectors, 58 Sub-Inspectors, 63 head-constables, and 598 constables,

exclusive of 29 town chaukidars. The total strength of the force is therefore 757 men, representing one policeman to every 3·7 square miles, and to every 2,203 of the population. The total budget grant for the maintenance of the force is Rs. 1,64,222. The town police, employed in the nine municipalities consist of 16 head-constables, 183 constables and town chaukidars. The rural police, for the watch and ward of villages in the interior, consist of 3,485 chaukidars working under 346 dafadars, representing one rural policeman to every 435 inhabitants.

CRIME

At the beginning of the eighteenth century the district was notorious for the crime of gang-robbery or dacoity. Stern steps were, however, taken during the viceroyalty of Murshid Kuli Khan (1704-1725) to suppress the crime, and he succeeded to a great extent. The following extract is taken from Stewart's History of Bengal, published at the beginning of the nineteenth century :—"Moorshud Cooly was indefatigable in the extirpation of robbers. Whenever a robbery was committed, he compelled the Foujedar, or the zemindar, either to find out the thief, or to recover the property. The goods or their equivalent in money were always restored to the persons who had been robbed, and the thief, whenever caught, was impaled alive. At Cutwah and Moorshudgunge he erected guard-houses for the protection of travellers; and gave the command of the police guards to one of his slaves, named Mohammed Jan, who was of a savage disposition, and who was always attended by a band of executioners; and, whenever he caught a thief, used to have the body split in two, and hung upon trees on the high road; from which circumstance he was nick-named the Kolhareh or axe. By these severe means, during Murshud Cooly Khan's government, travellers were protected on the roads, and every man slept securely in his own house."

Under the less vigorous government of Murshid Kuli Khan's successors dacoity again became prevalent, and

great disorder reigned for some years after the English obtained the *Diwani* in 1765. It was not until the beginning of the nineteenth century that real efforts were again made to put it down. The vigorous administration of Mr. Blaquiere, first as Magistrate of Nadia, and later as Superintendent (or Inspector-General) of Police, had the effect of practically ridding the district of dacoits by the end of the first decade of the nineteenth century. Since then, though the crime has not been extirpated, Nadia no longer bears the unenviable reputation which it bore for the greater part of a century. At present there is no form of crime which is specially prevalent in the district. River dacoity, which is characteristic of the eastern districts of the Division, is practically unknown in Nadia. Professional cattle thefts are fairly common, but not to any very marked extent. In the year 1908 the proportion of cognizable crime to population was one offence to 438 persons. Burglaries and thefts formed about 65 per cent. of the total cognizable crime reported. Among heinous offences there were 11 murders and 10 dacoities.

JAILS

There is a district jail at Krishnagar and a subsidiary jail at each of the outlying subdivisions. The head-quarters jail has accommodation for 180 prisoners in all. There are barracks with separate sleeping accommodation for 125 male and 12 female convicts; the hospital holds 18 beds; there are four separate cells; the undertrial ward has accommodation for 19 persons; and the separate ward for civil prisoners, for 2 persons. This jail is generally over-crowded, and a proposal has been submitted for increasing the accommodation by the erection of new barracks. The Meherpur Subsidiary Jail has accommodation for 11 males and 3 females; at Kushtia there is accommodation for 20 males and 4 females; at Ranaghat for 9 males and 2 females; and at Chuadanga for 9 males and 3 females. The mortality in the head-quarters jail frequently compares unfavourably with the average jail mortality of the Province. In 1907 it amounted to

50 per mille. In this connection the following remarks are extracted from the annual administration report of the Inspector-General of Prisons for the year 1907 :—
“There were nine deaths in this jail with a daily average population of 171·87. I made a special enquiry into the health of the prisoners at Krishnagar Jail. The district has been unhealthy during the year, and an epidemic of pneumonia affected the jail, and caused five deaths out of the nine in this jail. The other fatal cases were (1) accidental, (2) a hill boy received into jail in a dying state, and a third, a sudden death from peritonitis. The arrangements now in vogue for the early detection and prompt treatment of the sick and weakly are satisfactory, and have greatly improved during the past year. I have reason to hope that the jail will show a better record soon, but it always receives a very high percentage of prisoners suffering from enlargement of the spleen and from malaria.”

The industries carried on in the district jail are mustard-oil pressing, *surkhi* making, wheat grinding, weaving and spinning. In 1907 the average earning per head of persons sentenced to labour was Rs. 10. According to Hunter's Statistical Account the average earning amounted to Rs. 17 in 1854-55; to Rs. 8 in 1857-58; to Rs. 8 in 1860-61; and to Rs. 11 in 1870. During the last 30 years it has varied between Rs. 8 and Rs. 15.