PREFACE.

These Selections do not treat of Indian history or politics, except where, in certain cases, new light can be thrown or mistakes corrected, as, for instance, in the intercepted correspondence of Suraja Dowla with the French,* or the French intercepted correspondence,† the Patna massacre,‡ the Sipahi Mutiny, § &c., &c.

Numerous works have been published on the History of Bengal, but unfortunately few of the writers have availed themselves of the Government archives, hence various mistakes have been unavoidably committed; but as Mr. J. T. Wheeler, Secretary to the Record Commission, is publishing the Political Annals of Bengal, the object of the present work is to give all that can be gleaned from the Records tending to illustrate the social state of Bengal during part of last century among Europeans and Natives, and all that is strictly embraced in the domain of Social Science, specially in relation to the people.

Unfortunately, for a complete description, the scanty nature of the early Records is a great barrier; whiteants, damp, the pilfering of ill-paid dufteries and borrowing without returning, have reduced the number considerably.|| But it is remarkable in what a good condition both the paper and ink of those remaining is. The great hurricane and inundation of 1737 must have destroyed many Records; but the capture of Calcutta in 1756 swept nearly all away; even the Account Books and Government Bonds in the hurry

* No. 268. † No. 263. ‡ Nos. 676, 680, 688, 759.* § Nos. 502, 511, 518, 788, 800. || See on this, No. 188.
of flight were left behind, and the Court of Directors were, in consequence, for years in great difficulties how to balance their accounts.

After the battle of Plassey documents become more numerous, and subsequent to 1772 they are abundant on every subject.

The chief sources of these Selections are—
The semi-weekly Consultations of Government;
Despatches from Bengal to the Court of Directors;
Letters from the Court to Bengal;
The Country Correspondence with the Native powers by the President, translated from the Persian;

Miscellaneous papers.

All these documents are supplied by the Home and Foreign Offices. The Records in the Bengal Office do not commence until after 1770.

It is to be hoped that the glimpses occasionally given here into subjects that books do not treat of, may afford some raw material to the future historian of Bengal and to those anxious to penetrate the surface of society, both European and Native.

These Records glance at the Armenians, Portuguese, Danes, Dutch and French, with their bitter correspondence and trade rivalries. The internal state of the Burdwan and Hugly Districts has light thrown on it. The Mahrattas and Mugs figure in the early days. Calcutta, the City of Swamps, in its gradual rise and development;—with its luxury and the sumptuary laws to restrain it occupies a prominent place. We are brought as it were face to face with such men as the Sets, Omichand, Nankumar, Reza Khan, Nabakissen, the Rajas of Birbhum, Burdwan and Nuddea, the
Phousdar of Hugly, the Nawabs of Dacca, Murshidabad and Patna. The curious scale of salaries; the regulations regarding servants, coolies and artificers; the Sunderbunds; early mutinies; curious presents to Natives; items of travelling expenses; the coinage; loafers; Russian Officers;* old and curious punishments; the criminal population; the zemindars and ryots; Clevland's labors among the Rajmehal hillmen; the Slave trade; the revenue and taxes; trade and shipping are all more or less glanced at.

The Court of Directors' policy on various questions is given; it is a subject of much historical interest, and calculated to remove erroneous impressions.

The spelling in the original Records has been retained; though at times there are gross mistakes from the ignorance of copyists, as when Howrah is called Harrow, malik lands, milky lands, &c. The original documents have been printed without alteration, any remarks of the Editor are in the form of foot notes.

An Index follows this, in which the subjects are arranged alphabetically, with figures, referring not to the page but to the article. This is followed by a précis or review of the leading topics treated of in these Records.

Calcutta, 24th August 1869. 

J. LONG.

* No. 731.