Sir Thomas Munro and the British Settlement of the Madras Presidency

Bradshaw John
Rulers of India

EDITED BY

SIR WILLIAM WILSON HUNTER, K.C.S.I., C.I.E.


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AND THE BRITISH SETTLEMENT OF THE MADRAS PRESIDENCY

BY

JOHN BRADSHAW, M.A., LL.D.

Inspector of Schools, Madras

Oxford

AT THE CLARENDON PRESS: 1894
Since this work was printed, news of the death of the Author has reached England. John Bradshaw devoted twenty-five years to education in India, twenty-three of them as a Professor or Inspector of Schools in the Madras Presidency. A scholarly man of letters and a patient searcher into the local sources of Indian history, he leaves a memory which will be cherished by many friends, but his sudden death deprives the world of the harvest of his long labours. With characteristic zeal he had given up the brief holiday at the beginning of the Indian year to verifying certain historical data in South Arcot, although it was known that cholera had broken out in that District. He returned to Madras with the disease upon him, and there died on January 5, 1894. So passes away another original worker in India, before accomplishing what seemed to be his life's-task.

Feb. 11, 1894.

W. W. H.
INTRODUCTION

No name, in any part of India, perhaps, is so familiar or held in such veneration as that of Munro is in the Madras Presidency, though two generations have passed away since his death. In the town of Madras the celebrated equestrian statue by Chantrey serves as a landmark, ever keeping the name of 'Munro' in the mouths of all; but in the Districts where the best years of his life were spent no monument is needed to perpetuate his name or memory.

Great changes have taken place in Southern India during the two-thirds of a century since Munro's death. The country has been opened up by railways and telegraph wires, and the people have been modernized by schools and colleges. Almost every town which Munro visited as Collector, Colonel, and Governor has now a railway station or is within a few hours' drive of one, and each has its English school, its dispensary or hospital, its post and telegraph office, its magistrate's court and its police station.

But great as have been the changes since Munro's time, they are not so great as those which the
Presidency witnessed in the half century between Thomas Munro’s arrival at Madras as a military cadet in 1780, and his death as Governor in 1827. In the former year Haidar was devastating the Karnâtik up to the walls of Fort St. George, and ‘black columns of smoke were everywhere in view from St. Thomas’ Mount.’ During the following forty years the history of Madras was one of wars, of cession of territory to the British, and of the settlement of the new Districts. How large a share Munro took as a soldier and as a civil administrator in the British settlement of Southern India, these pages will show.

They will also exhibit a character worthy of imitation by every Indian official and by every well-wisher of the Indian races. His own letters paint the man—brave, wise, and kindly. No truer estimate of his qualities could be given than that by the Hon. Mountstuart Elphinstone—‘strong practical good sense, simplicity and frankness, perfect good nature and good humour, real benevolence unmixed with the slightest cant of misanthropy, activity and truthfulness of mind, easily pleased with anything, and delighted with those things that in general have no effect but on a youthful imagination.’

‘It is not enough,’ the same writer observes, ‘to give new laws or even good courts. You must take the people along with you, and give them a share in your feelings, which can only be done by sharing

1 Colebrooke’s Life of Mountstuart Elphinstone, ii. 35.