

SKETCHES
OF
SOCIAL LIFE IN INDIA.

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CHAPTER I.

THE VICEROY AND HIS COURT.

THERE are two different classes of people who know very little about India. First there is your old Indian, who fancies that he knows all about the presidency, say Bombay, in which he spent his time, but is as ignorant of the presidencies of Bengal and Madras as he is of China and Japan. Secondly, there is your real rural Englishman, who has had no relations or connections in India, and is, perhaps, still grieving over the untimely fate of some old friend who went out and suddenly died in India. There undoubtedly still exists in many English circles a considerable amount of ignorance and a deep-rooted prejudice against all things Indian. It is possible that this prejudice may be traced back to the ways and manners

in their hearts a warm and kindly remembrance of their old home, and they live in the fond belief that they may be well and kindly thought of by those whom they have left behind.

It is, however, certain that much ignorance, not un-mixed with the old anti-Nabob prejudice, still prevails regarding the ways and habits of our countrymen in India. The most absurd inquiries are addressed to people who have been in India, which doubtless sometimes provoke answers more suited to the intellectual acquirements of the questioner than in actual accordance with the real facts of the case. If your fair and charming companion at a dinner-party persists in her conversation in filling all Indian houses with snakes and scorpions, she will be much more gratified to hear a few anecdotes which accord with her own assertions, than she would be to learn that it is possible to live for years in some parts of India without seeing either a snake or a scorpion. When recent editions of popular Indian hand-books solemnly inform the reader that rhinoceros hunting is an ordinary amusement in the suburbs of Calcutta, it is much easier to acquiesce in that information than to urge respectfully that alligators may sometimes be found in the ornamental waters of Battersea Park.

One of the greatest changes that has come over India in the last thirty years is to be found in the very great addition that has taken place to the numbers of the non-official classes. Fifty years ago Indian society