The 'Courier de l'Orient' of the Abbé Carré

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administration is to maintain the commercial prosperity of the area and yet at the same time to uphold the old tribal restraints and the respect due to the more modern development of chieftainship. Material progress in itself is not only useless but subversive unless correlated to moral and social progress. The maintenance of this equilibrium will be a task of infinite delicacy, but should not prove impossible; it is indeed essential if within a few years economic progress is not to be doomed by a reaction consequent on the slackening of tribal restraints, and it were better now to decelerate evolution rather than to risk such a lamentable contingency.

A second disintegrative element, and one which has frequently been the ruin of a great people, is lack of occupation and interest in life. With the passing of the old order passed too many things which for a Lango alone made life worth living, pre-eminently the ever-present threat of personal danger and the attitude of alertness which it induced, the knowledge that prowess in battle could lead any one to the highest rank, the greater scope available to personal initiative. All these were important factors in promoting tribal healthiness, and with their passing interest must be sustained by other means. This is one of the reasons which contributed to the introduction of cotton cultivation, and this is the most powerful reason for interfering as little as possible with the existing social fabric, and more especially with the marriage code, with the pursuit of hunting, and *pace* prurient ignorance with dancing, which is not only the safety-valve of the emotions but the most popular of all their recreations.

Their past has won them at least this consideration, as is testified by their loyalty during the war, more than eleven hundred recruits having volunteered for enlistment into the King's African Rifles for service in the East African campaign. Immense possibilities of economic development are already discernible, but the development must be their own. It is a district unsuited both by climate and by circumstance to alien settlement, and its prosperity can only be promoted by a natural utilization of its resources. Exploitation would not only be ruinous to any genuine development, but would be a fatal blow to the moral and political well-being of the tribe, which is essentially a people who should be encouraged as peasant producers.

THE 'COURIER DE L'ORIENT' OF THE ABBÉ CARRÉ

R. E. Gordon George, M.A., B.Litt.

THE actual rise of the Royale Compagnie des Indes is told in the unpublished manuscript of the Memoires of François Martin in the Archives Nationales at Paris. They cover the thirty years from 1664 to 1694.* François Martin was born in 1634, a natural son of

* Not 1696, as the title says.

Gilles Martin, a Parisian merchant, and Péronne Gosselin, and after a year or two in Madagascar arrived in India about 1670. He devoted the next twenty-five years of his life to the foundation of a French empire in the East. About this time Colbert sent out the famous scholar Petis de la Croix to the East. It was he to whom Europe owes the famous French translation of the 'Arabian Nights.' In 1692 he became Professor of Arabic in the Collège de France. In 1722, nine years after his death, his excellent translation of the *Zafnama* was published, in which appears his history of Jenghiz Khan. Colbert had another confidential agent in the East, the Abbé Carré.

Carré's '*Voyages des Indes Orientales*' (1699) (2 volumes, 12mo) is an account of a journey to India in 1669-1671, varied, as the title-page announces, with several curious stories. A considerable part is given up to Shivaji's history, of which it mentions some details not elsewhere obtainable. There are stories of the women of Georgia and of a Persian princess, of four French renegades, and of two Portuguese women sold by one of their countrymen to a Moslem prince. These give variety to a gossip account of the Abbé's two voyages to India, of the longer story of which these little volumes profess to be an abridgment. If that longer account exists no record of it has yet been found, but a document of the greatest interest is the manuscript of Abbé Carré's '*Courier de l'Orient*,' which describes his second journey in the years 1672 to 1674. This important work has lain hidden in the India Office Library for just a hundred years. There is no mention of it in the Library Catalogue, and no reference has yet been made to its existence.

It is the most detailed account that any Frenchman has sent home from India, and is full of interesting details. It is the only record of a Frenchman's impressions of the English Company, and supplements that account of the rise of the French Company in the manuscript of F. Martin in the Archives Nationales. It was his use of this manuscript which gave the greatest value to M. Kaepelin's book, the '*Compagnie Royale des Indes*.'

Carré dedicated his work to the Directeurs de la Chambre Generale de la Royale Compagnie d'Orient. He himself described it as a polished mirror in which he shows clearly the most secret and hidden things of all that had passed in the administration of the business of those distant parts of the world: he claimed to give an account of the conduct, the feelings, and the enterprises of those to whom the company had committed its interests; of the accounts and establishment of the company; of the way other European nations managed their business; of Christian Churches, and how others differed from the French in living (*Vous y verrez les églises de nous Chrétiens et leurs manières différentes de vivre, à nostre Esgard*), and he said he would show how the kings and princes of the East studied and protected the French interests.

Carré received his despatches from Colbert at Versailles in March

1672, and coached to Marseilles, where he took ship for Aleppo. From there he travelled overland to Babylon, and then down the river to Basra. He then sailed down the Persian coast, calling at Kong, and skirting the coast of Cambay till he landed at Diu. And then he sailed back in a little Portuguese vessel to Surat, where he compares the French and English settlements. He pays a great compliment to the English, who had had to struggle first with the Portuguese and then with the Dutch, and had been in difficulties a thousand times worse than the French had been, and who excelled both in administration of their settlements and in navigation; he gives ten observations on the discipline maintained by the English and Dutch companies over their servants, and adds twelve salutary rules to be observed by those responsible for the traffic of merchandise in ships.

After a short stay in Surat the Abbé set out overland for San Thomé, calling at Goa, the ruined grandeur of which impressed him as it did Fryer, and then he struck inland to Bijapur and Golconda. An interesting account of the privileges won by the French from the King of Bijapur shows that the French *flair* for getting on well with Indians had already had its success, a success which struck Carré anew on the Coromandel coast, and which later was remarked by Heber. At the same time he saw that difficulties might arise from their missionaries interfering in matters which did not concern them.

Carré gives a good many details of the triangular struggles between the Dutch, the English, and the French; though he receives personal kindnesses from all. When he sets sail from Madras it is in an English vessel. He had a great appreciation always of the way the English Company did its business: he praises the cleverness, the order and the promptitude with which the English repaired their ships after combat with the Dutch; the regularity of the sailing time-table; the skilful navigation; the far-seeing way in which they encouraged the commercial enterprise of other ships than theirs; of their sagacity in their dealings with their employees, and in accommodating their wares to the Indian taste. It is to Bombay that he returns in the English ship in which he sailed from Madras. He again discusses the English establishment there; and a few weeks later he has sailed from Surat for Basra on his homeward journey.

In actual facts 'Le Courier de l'Orient' adds little to the history of the period. Indeed, much of the ground has been covered in the letters which Carré sent during this trip to Colbert, and which are now among the Archives of the Ministère des Colonies in Paris. But as a detailed, and often garrulous, history of an important errand of the trusted agent of the French statesman who first gave solid support to the French enterprise in India, this diligent work of the adventurous Abbé deserves to be rescued from the obscurity in which it has rested for nearly two hundred and fifty years.