

There is, however, nothing remarkable in *that* circumstance, nor in the fact that the duties of my post *had not been defined* until the day on which I reported my arrival at the Presidency of Fort St. George.\*

My induction to those important duties had the effect of creating a considerable fuss amongst the copyists and other subordinate "writers" of the Department, all of whom were noble specimens of sublimity, and men of venerable aspect, who sat with a ludicrous gravity at their respective desks, in full official regalia of spectacles, capacious turbans, and long white linen coats, and each of whom was armed with a steel pen and formidable holder, exhibiting a diversity of colour and design at once awe-inspiring and mysterious. †

The gentleman, who was charged with "coaching me up," in the duties of my office, was a young swell—a veritable beau of the period—of, say, two and twenty, who swaggered about with an unmistakably pretentious air, as being a "card" of no base or minor quality. What *his* particular duties were, I could not discover, for at least a fortnight. Indeed, during the first week of my noviciate, I observed that his time was chiefly occupied in the composition of serio-comic poetry—programmes of projected pic-nics—copying out his parts in a couple of farces in which he was cast, and which were intended to be "produced" at a private theatrical party, of which he was the "head and centre." ‡

My swell guide produced two manuscript volumes which he laid before me, and which he called "*The Index*" to the Military General Orders of the Madras Government. The first volume was devoted to orders of a general nature—the second, to those relating to individuals. Each volume was already arranged in alphabetical sequence, so that the path being thus prepared for me, I had only to "go in and win." (This was *his* observation.)

It would weary the reader to describe in detail all the ramifications of a Department in which the military government of the country is carried on; suffice it to say, that the very limited outline of work which I have just described, is of a purely mechanical and rudimentary character, as serving to test the capacity and intelligence of young gentlemen at the commencement of their official career.

The administrative duties which are entrusted to gentlemen of known ability and long experience, are most onerous and intricate, embracing, as they do, a vast and almost endless variety of subjects, not only professional but scientific. These can only be mastered by means of a thorough knowledge of the requirements of an army whose very existence in India depends on the precision by which

\* This is the official designation of the Presidency of Madras. The public services of all officers in Government employ, commence to reckon from the date on which their arrival is thus reported.

† These officials are styled "*English writers*," in contradistinction to those native clerks, who can write only in the vernacular language of their country. The superiority of the former over the latter is thus an accepted fact in native society; but both classes are recognized as *gentlemen* in their respective circles. Europeans are not employed as *copyists* in any Government office, the functions being considered *infra dig.*

‡ *Fenton* readers (if any), will, I trust, accept this dis-jointed attempt in a generous and becoming spirit.