

## OUR INDIAN EMPIRE.

## II.



WATER-CARRIER, BENARES.

Gibraltar, Malta, Suez, Aden, Bombay, says Mr. Davenport Adams, these are the five main stages on the road to India, and at each the Union Jack is proudly flying. On reaching Bombay, we stand, as it were, on the threshold of the mysterious Indian world, and nowhere else in that world have we made so deep and strong a mark; nowhere else has our civilization struck so deep a root. But then nowhere else in India have we been settled so long; and nowhere else have we had so free and clear a ground on which to rear the fabric of our influence.

For Bombay first came into our hands in 1661, as part of the dowry of Catherine of Braganza, as wife of Charles II. Eight years later, and Charles made it over to the East India Company, which was then just entering upon its historic career. It is the capital of the presidency of Bombay and Scinde—one of the eleven principal ad-

ministrative divisions of the Indian Empire.

To the voyager, as he approaches it from the sea, Bombay, with its mast-thronged harbour, its terraces of square-built, Venetian-windowed houses, its deep masses of tropical foliage, defined against a background of lofty mountains, and its 820,000 inhabitants, presents a charming picture, strikingly diversified in form and colour. Island after island, each with its crown of verdure, sparkles in the widening panorama: while blue inlets of sea seem to reach far away into the deep heart of the mountains. All around you the waters are rippling against the bulwarks of the great ships—ships of every clime and every rig; ships at anchor in the bay, steaming; loading at the wharves—most of them carrying the Union Jack at their mast-heads; while innumerable native boats, with large canvas sails and covered poops, dart to and fro with surprising rapidity. Beyond the masts and quays rise tier upon tier of white houses, embosomed in foliage, and the long, far-spreading area of the native city sweeps round the curving bay, with its motley population of gold-worshippers and fire-worshippers gathered from all parts of the world.

Madras, with its wealth, commerce, and population (exceeding 450,000 souls), ranks among the great cities of the world; but its development is to some extent obstructed by its want of an anchorage available at all times for big sea-going ships. Formerly passengers were carried ashore through the surf in the native Massulah boats.

Calcutta, the "City of Palaces," is the capital of our Indian Empire,