

PREFACE TO THE FIRST EDITION.

THE present work was undertaken, from a conviction, the result of experience, of the necessity of such a publication.

The laws affecting India and the East-India Company are dispersed through more than a hundred volumes of the Statutes: they are to be found, in some cases, in entire Acts of Parliament of great length, especially devoted to the subjects; in others, in scattered provisions, surrounded by enactments applying to objects and interests totally unconnected with India. A very large portion of what once was law has ceased to be so, either from having been directly repealed, or being substantially at variance with subsequent Acts of the Legislature. Of that which still remains in force, much has been limited, extended, and in various respects, modified by later provisions. No one, therefore, referring to any one enactment relating to the point upon which he sought information, could rely upon that which he found until he had collated the provision before him with all others existing on the subject, and from a comparison of the whole deduced the present state of the law.

Many years have elapsed since any collection of the laws relating to the East-India Company appeared, and in the period that has succeeded since the publication of the latest work on the subject, changes greater and more important than any which the Company had previously experienced, have taken place. On this account, little assistance could be derived from preceding works in preparing the present. A careful search throughout the whole of the Statutes was indispensable, as well as a careful comparison of such parts as bore on the subject. The time, labour, and thought, demanded by the task, were great, and the duties imposed by the undertaking were not unfrequently of considerable delicacy. Its execution, however, will, it is

noped, afford what was previously wanting—a guide to the state of the Law relating to India and the East-India Company. The necessity of seeking through the Statutes at large for the various provisions on any subject will be removed, and the inquirer will here find the entire law presented to his view. A reference to the Index will afford a direction to every Act and Section relating to any given point, while the illustrative notes which are attached to the more important enactments will answer the purpose of a Digest of the Law upon the subjects to which they relate. A few of the more recent Acts of the Government of India, to which the opportunity of reference might be desirable, have been placed in an Appendix.

After adverting to the magnitude of the labour necessary to the completion of this volume, it would be unjust to refrain from noticing the means by which that labour has been lightened and its ends facilitated. Access has been afforded to a series of valuable legal opinions given by Mr. Lawford, Solicitor to the East-India Company, and by their present and former standing Counsel; as well as by other distinguished members of the profession, some of whom now occupy the highest judicial stations in her Majesty's Courts at Westminster.

The assistance afforded by Mr. Melvill, the Secretary of the East-India Company, calls for distinct and grateful acknowledgment. The interest which he has taken in the progress of the work, and the valuable suggestions made by him for its improvement, have greatly added to its comprehensiveness and utility.

Under these circumstances the work is submitted, in full confidence that, upon all material points, entire reliance may be placed on its accuracy and completeness.

London, 9th March, 1840