

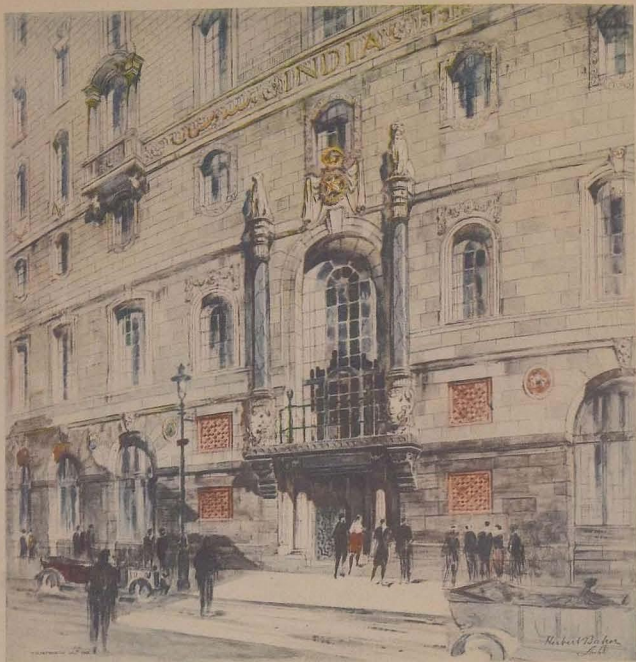
INDIA HOUSE

LONDON



Opened by
His Majesty King George the Fifth
Emperor of India.

July 8th 1930.



THE ENTRANCE.



INDIA House, Aldwych, formally opened by His Majesty the King-Emperor on July 8, 1930, has been built not only as an administrative necessity to house the office of the High Commissioner for India, but also as a visible symbol of India's advancement toward the goal of Dominion status declared by the

Viceroy, Lord Irwin, on November 1, 1929, to be the natural issue of the policy announced in Parliament in 1917. It approximates the visible direct representation of the Government of India in London to that of the other autonomous Dominions.

INDIA HOUSES OF THE PAST

The term "India House" is familiar to students of the history of the



THE RECEPTION STAIRCASE.



THE EXTERIOR OF INDIA HOUSE.



British connection and to lovers of English literature. The Honourable East India Company throughout its career of more than two and a half centuries had its headquarters in the City of London. Its second habitation, occupied from 1621 to 1638, Crosby Hall, is still in existence, though removed in 1910 from the original site in Bishopsgate to Chelsea, and

the curious may compare this small fifteenth century hall with India House and the India Office as a measure of comparison in the growth of British and Indian relations in the past three centuries and of the importance to-day of the great Indian Empire. For more than two centuries the East India Company occupied premises in Leadenhall Street known as "East India House." These quarters as finally rebuilt and enlarged in 1796 may possibly still be within the recollection of some very old Londoners, for they were not demolished until 1861, following on the extinction of the Company and the establishment by the Act of 1858 of the Secretary of State in Council. In April, 1792, Charles Lamb entered the Accountant's Office in the East India House, where during the next 33 years the hundred official folios of what he used to call his "true works" were produced.

INDIAN PROVENANCE

The new India House differs from its predecessors and from the India Office, the headquarters in Whitehall of the Secretary of State for India in Council, in an important respect. While they were essentially British in provenance, the new Aldwych building is definitely Indian in origin. It was planned and constructed under



THE OCTAGONAL ENTRANCE HALL.

the orders of the Government of India with grants voted by the Indian Legislature, and it is the office not of a British Cabinet Minister, but of the direct representative of the Government of India in the capital city of the British Commonwealth of Nations. The reasons for such representation may usefully be indicated.

The Reform Act of 1919 authorised the appointment of a High Commissioner for India in the United Kingdom, and the first holder of the office, the late Sir William Meyer, took charge in October, 1920. The change had been recommended by a Committee on the Home Government of India, presided over by the Marquis of



A CORNER OF THE EXHIBITION HALL SHOWING THE GALLERY.

Crewe, a former Secretary of State, as a means of effecting a separation of the "agency" work in this country for the Government of India from the political and administrative functions discharged by the Secretary of State in Council. It was indeed a part of the general design of the Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms to promote the progress of India toward responsible government. The High Commissioner is the agent in this country of the Central and Provincial Governments of British India and acts directly under instructions from India with an establishment entirely distinct from that of the India Office.

THE DUTIES OF THE HIGH COMMISSIONER

THE functions taken over from the Secretary of State in Council by the High Commissioner or entrusted to him by the Governor-General in Council are many and varied. It is the settled policy of the Government of India to encourage local industries to the utmost possible extent by purchases of railway stores and equipment and other machinery and commodities in India, and to this end the system of rupee tenders now prevails. But in the interests of the tax-payer many purchases still have to be made in Europe, and it is necessary to employ a staff of examiners and inspectors in respect to contracts given both in this country and in India. The High Commissioner controls this important work of the Stores Department, which has its Depot in Belvedere Road, Lambeth. He also supervises the work of the Indian Trade Commissioner in promoting in a great variety of ways the development of India's export trade to this country. He conducts the necessary budget



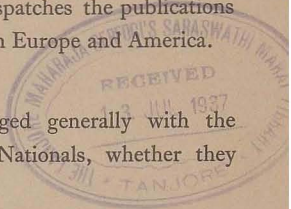
A FIRST GLIMPSE OF THE INTERIOR.

and accounting for the whole work of his organisation, including that relating to the obtainment of stores.

Further, the High Commissioner pays the pensions and leave salaries of all civil officers retired and on furlough from the Indian Services, and administers Income Tax matters on behalf both of the Government of India and of His Majesty's Government. He recruits the majority of the officers engaged in England for Services under the Central and Provincial Governments, and makes arrangements for civil officers deputed to Europe and America for special enquiries and courses of study. All official Indian publications (and they are many) are stored and sold at the offices of the High Commissioner, and he purchases and despatches the publications required by the Indian Governments from Europe and America.

PROTECTION OF INDIAN NATIONALS

The High Commissioner is also charged generally with the protection of the interests of Indian Nationals, whether they



THE PAY ROOM.



THE OCTAGONAL HALL ON THE FIRST FLOOR.



are persons of position and means, young students or lascars stranded in this country. In particular he endeavours with the aid of an Education Department, staffed with officers with experience of education both in Europe and in India, to provide assistance for all students from India who seek his help in the arrangement of their courses of study and their admission to schools, universities, technical and provincial institutions and manufacturing works. Through the agency of this department the High Commissioner undertakes the special supervision of young Indians placed by their parents or guardians under his care for educational purposes, and the arrangements for the training of probationers selected for the All-India Services. An Indian lady has recently been added to the staff of the department in order to advise and assist the women students who are coming from India to Europe in increasing numbers.

INTERNATIONAL AND IMPERIAL WORK

It should be added that many heavy responsibilities fall upon the High Commissioner and his staff in connection with both the Imperial and the international status of India. Sir Atul Chatterjee, who became High Commissioner in 1925, is a member, not ex-officio but by personal election, of the Governing Body of the International Labour Office: he has been the leader in successive years of the Indian delegation to the International Labour Conference: he or the Trade Commissioner in person or by deputy takes part in many other committees and conferences connected with the League of Nations, and he was India's representative at the 1930 Naval Disarmament Conference. Similarly many Imperial standing

or special committees, such as the Imperial Economic Committee and the Empire Marketing Board, look to India House for the representation of British India.

THE NEED FOR INDIA HOUSE

The work outlined has steadily developed from somewhat small beginnings. When the first High Commissioner took possession early in 1921 of two dwelling houses in Grosvenor Gardens, near Victoria Station, this work was in its rudimentary stages. The accommodation (never convenient, since it was not originally intended for offices) became inadequate as the business of the High Commissioner grew. Consequently a third house was taken in 1922, and later part of a fourth to meet pressing needs. At best, however, these quarters were wholly unsuited to be the centre of Indian work on lines comparable with the facilities afforded at Australia House, Canada House, South Africa House and other quarters of the Dominion High Commissioners.



THE SECRETARY'S ROOM.

It was recognised that provision must be made not only for the rapid growth of business, but also that it was most desirable to make available reading, writing and reception rooms, a modern reference library and a centre of information for the use of visitors from India and students of the affairs of that country; also that adequate space should be found for the office of the Trade Commissioner and a display of Indian products in a locality more readily accessible to the City of London and the public. Sir Atul Chatterjee brought these requirements to the notice of Lord Reading's Government, and was encouraged to make recommendations. The project to build, then broadly formulated, was brought to completion in due course and received the sanction of Lord Irwin's Government, and the approbation of the Legislative Assembly.

THE ALDWYCH SITE

Many alternative suggestions were considered; close and careful enquiries were made, and it was ultimately decided (in 1927) to



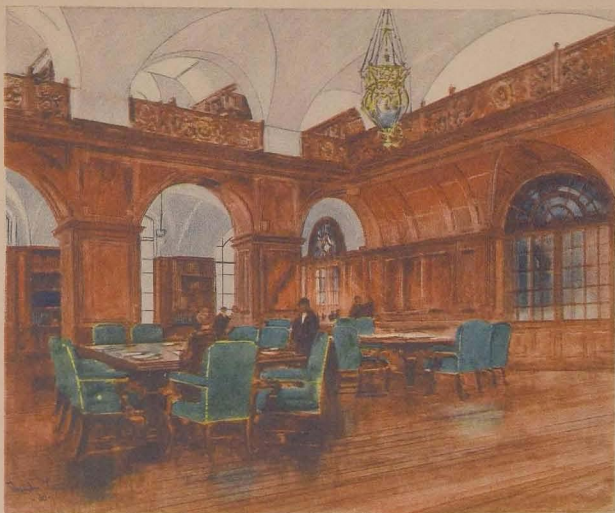
ONE OF THE GENERAL OFFICES.

apply for the lease of a portion of the conspicuous site lying vacant off the Strand at Aldwych between Marconi House and Bush House. An option for a building lease for 999 years was secured from the London County Council. The site comprised an area of approximately 12,400 sq. feet with a frontage of about 130 ft. on Aldwych and a return frontage of about 100 ft. on Montreal Place.

THE DESIGN

India House was designed by Sir Herbert Baker, K.C.I.E., A.R.A., F.R.I.B.A., the co-architect of New Delhi. Sir Herbert's sympathy with India and understanding of Indian art made him readily responsive to the wish of the authorities that India House should reflect something of the great and varied Empire for which it stands. The architectural problem in London was necessarily very different from that in Delhi. There could be no question of adopting a distinctly Oriental style. The site determined the general style: nothing but a steel-framed stone-faced structure planned on the broad classic convention that rules the re-building of this part of London was possible. There is more of India inside the building than out, but there is enough outside—apart from the prominently sculptured name in English, Devanagri and Urdu script—to proclaim even to the casual passer-by the Eastern associations of the place.





THE LIBRARY AND RECEPTION ROOM.

EXTERIOR FEATURES

SINCE India House had to follow the restrained architecture of its immediate neighbours, Sir Herbert Baker felt that reliance must be placed upon simple, well-proportioned fenestration and the continuity of the great cornice line of the adjoining Bush House. Nevertheless, it has been his aim to give to the details of the external elevation by means of carving, heraldry and symbolism, appropriate individuality. In this he has succeeded and India House, outside as well as within, is, to quote *The Times*, "one of the most attractive buildings of modern London."



A PANORAMIC VIEW FROM THE ROOF OF INDIA HOUSE SHOWING THE RIVER THAMES

THE ENTRANCE

THE main entrance in the centre of the Aldwych façade is formed of black Swedish granite. It is a vigorous and original composition. Above the entrance great granite columns standing on elephant head corbels of Portland stone support tigers also of Portland stone. These are reminiscent of the Asoka columns found throughout the whole of India. To the left and right of the doorway are *jalis* formed of black Belgium marble. The *jali*—an unglazed traceried opening or panel—is a familiar feature of Indian architecture. A striking colour effect is given to the whole elevation by a series of emblazoned symbols carved in the stone and painted. The devices include the arms of the King-Emperor and the Queen-Empress, the Star of India, and the arms of the various Indian Provinces on a series of roundels.

THE EXHIBITION HALL

Advantage has been taken of the lower level of the courtyard off the Strand to give India House an entrance at the back on a level with the basement floor, which there becomes the ground floor. Here has been built a special exhibition hall with fine windows facing both fronts, wherein the Trade Commissioner is displaying the arts, crafts and commerce of India in an artistic setting. The hall, typically Indian in design, is carried up two floors, the upper floor being represented by a wide gallery approached from the main entrance hall. The red stone walls, the carved balustrade

of Burma *padauk*, the panelling in the same timber below the gallery, the recesses after the style of an Eastern bazaar—all these serve to enhance the Indian atmosphere. The beauty of the exhibition hall is being matched by the beauty of the articles displayed in it, while for purely commercial exhibits space has been found elsewhere. Gifts and loans have been received from the Governments of the Provinces, from a number of ruling Princes, from commercial firms and from private individuals. Many more have been promised, and any article of artistic merit and suitable size will be received with gratitude. The display is to be varied from time to time so as to make the hall a place worthy of repeated visits.

INDIAN TIMBERS

Whatever displays the Trade Commissioner can arrange from time to time, there can be none more notable and effective than the utilisation throughout the building of the many beautiful hard woods which India produces. Teak is scarcely to be seen, for the reason that it is well known and of long standing commercially. Every part of the building provides evidence of the great possibilities for constructional, decorative and furnishing purposes of varieties of Indian and Burmese timbers for which hitherto there has been relatively little demand in this country.





THE RECEPTION STAIRCASE WITH ITS BEAUTIFUL CARVED BALUSTRADE.

The beautiful entrance doors and the decorative furniture on the ground floor are made of the celebrated Indian rosewood. All the chief rooms are panelled, the library and exhibition hall in Burma *padauk* ; the High Commissioner's suite and the rooms of his personal staff in silver grey; the Trade Commissioner's room in *bombwe* ; the large committee room with its vast table in Indian figured laurel and the small committee room in *koko*. The effect is increased by the use, in the more important rooms, of the same timbers for desks, chairs, shelves and other furnishing. Andaman *padauk* is to be found in the payrooms and elsewhere, and white *chuglam* in the clerical offices. The floors throughout are of *gurjun* or *koko*.

COMMERCIAL ADVISERS

IN this connection it may be noted that the Trade Commissioner, though primarily serving Indian exporters, naturally seeks to be of use to British and Continental importers. He is available for consultation on any aspect of Indian trade, and has on his staff commercial advisers with expert qualifications. Thus, one adviser has had long experience of Indian forests and timber, and another of Indian mineral products. The appointment of an authority on agricultural products as another adviser is expected. There is also an officer with expert knowledge of shellac who is at present conducting an enquiry into the marketing of that commodity, and is ready to give any help and advice thereon. Commercial details which are not immediately available are obtained from India by the Trade Commissioner with the least possible delay.



THE LIBRARY GALLERY.

THE OCTAGONAL⁵ HALLS

THE foregoing information on the way in which India House subserves the purposes of Indian trade has delayed a general indication of the beauty of its interior. From the octagonal entrance hall a great public staircase leads to a gallery round the octagonal hall on the first floor; and all these express in their architecture the Indian character of the building. The walls of the staircase and the halls are of red stone, similar to the stone familiar to those who know the historic monuments of Agra and Delhi. The balustrades of red stone or white Indian marble are carved and pierced in the geometrical patterns of the *jali* in Indian architecture. Such of the carving as could be completely separated from the structure has been made by Indian workmen in India. Thus the marble balustrade round the opening on the first floor was executed in Delhi and shipped to London for erection.



LOOKING INTO THE ROOM OF THE CHAIRMAN OF COMMITTEES.

PROVINCIAL SYMBOLS

BOTH the balustrade and the floor of the entrance hall immediately below are enriched by symbols of the various Provinces of India. Madras, the oldest of the Presidencies, is represented by Fort St. George; Bombay by a ship; Bengal by a tiger; and the United Provinces by fishes (which, to Hindu and Moslem alike, stand for good luck) and bow and arrow, recalling the fact that here was the original home of the Rajputs. The Punjab is symbolised inevitably by five rivers with the sun shining brightly above them; the Central Provinces by two snakes (*nags*), representing both the ancient Nag dynasty and the provincial capital, Nagpur; Bihar and Orissa by the *bodhi* tree, where Buddha reached his salvation; Burma by a peacock; Assam by a rhinoceros; Delhi by an elephant in procession; Baluchistan by a camel, and the North-West Frontier by the crescent moon over a gateway, thus giving to the northern defiles into India an Islamic significance. As previously indicated, the same symbols are shown on the front and the side of the exterior, where there are two vacant plaques which would be available for use in the event of any provincial reconstruction. The interior domes and vaults have been designed for painted decoration, for the preparation of which the services of specially selected younger Indian artists have been secured.





THE LARGE COMMITTEE ROOM.

THE LIBRARY AND ITS USES

THE first floor gallery leads to a high vaulted library and reception room, which, like the exhibition hall below it, is carried to the height of two floors with recesses on both sides and on both floors for bookshelves and tables. The central portion of the library is free of bookshelves and provides adequate space for receptions on special occasions. Bookshelves are more numerous in the panelled gallery, and are so spaced as to leave recesses wherein tables, chairs and writing materials are available for accredited readers and students.

The library, of course, will not compete with that of the India Office or the British Museum as a historical library containing many rarities in relation to India. Its main purpose is to serve for reference regarding present-day conditions and culture, and the economic and commercial possibilities of India. The great stream of current administrative and other reports will here be available; and books illustrative of past history, so far as this is necessary to understand present administrative and economic conditions, are being provided. The aim is to make the library the Mecca of all persons who are interested in the economic and commercial problems of India and in Indian culture generally. Purchases are made from time to time from among non-official works appearing in India, Europe and elsewhere. Already copies of new books of Indian interest have been presented by authors, and it is confidently hoped that such gifts will multiply rapidly now that they can find so worthy a home. Thus the spacious library with its bookshelves, its map room and its facilities for study and reference may well become a centre for the understanding and appreciation of Indian culture in the Western world.





THE AMBULATORY TO THE HIGH COMMISSIONER'S SUITE

THE THIRD FLOOR

ON the third floor are the rooms of the High Commissioner and his personal staff, the Secretary, the Trade Commissioner and his advisers, the heads of departments and other senior officers. A feature of this floor is the white marble lantern or *chhatri* carved by Indian craftsmen which crowns the internal dome over the octagonal entrance hall and serves, when lit from below, as a reminder at least of the bright Indian sunshine.

The upper part of the building consists of three further floors

devoted to general office accommodation, and an attic floor containing residential quarters and space for expansion. From the roof a magnificent panorama can be seen on a clear day. The course of the Thames can be traced from the Tower Bridge to Westminster and beyond, and the Surrey Hills and Northern heights stand out prominently.

ENGINEERING DETAILS

A secondary staircase and lifts run from the bottom to the top of the ten-storied building. The greater part of the lowest or sub-basement floor is adapted for records and purposes of general storage, and a part houses the modern machinery and plant wherewith the building is warmed and ventilated. Here also are two artesian wells which, sunk to 550 ft., yield water for every necessary purpose throughout the building. The water is raised from the sub-basement to a large storage tank on the roof by electric pumps. Fresh air is sucked in from the roof down to the engine room, where it is filtered and purified by washing. Cooled in summer and warmed in winter, it is distributed by hidden ducts throughout the building, and finally expelled by powerful exhaust fans. Heating is by the panel system, the panels being in the ceilings or where necessary in the stone floorings. For the boilers oil fuel alone is used.





THE HIGH COMMISSIONER'S ROOM.

All the clocks (and there is one in every room) are electrically operated and synchronised. By these and other contrivances of modern engineering the cost of upkeep, cleaning and labour is reduced to a minimum. All structural and engineering details were in the hands of Dr. Oscar Faber, O.B.E., whose collaboration with the architect as consulting engineer in supervising the erection of the building was of the greatest value. The beautiful electric light fittings, and notably the great lantern in the entrance hall, harmonise with the architecture, and the question of efficiency has been carefully studied.

THE RAILWAY BUREAU

THE basement floor, in addition to the exhibition hall already noted, accommodates a large office for the sale of Indian Government publications. This is entered and lighted from Montreal Place. The visitor in search of information on the subject of travel in and across India and the business man who has enquiries to make about railway freights, terminal facilities and the like will find on the ground floor, on the right hand side as he enters the building, an Indian Railway Bureau with large show windows facing Aldwych, similar to those of the exhibition hall on the other side of the entrance. The existing West End Railway Publicity Bureau at 57 Haymarket, is, however, being retained. The western wing of the ground floor contains the much visited office of the Pay and Pensions Department.

AN INDIAN CENTRE

It is significant of the value of the new building that in it has been housed the secretariat of the Royal Commission on Indian Labour, which has also used the committee rooms for its London sittings.



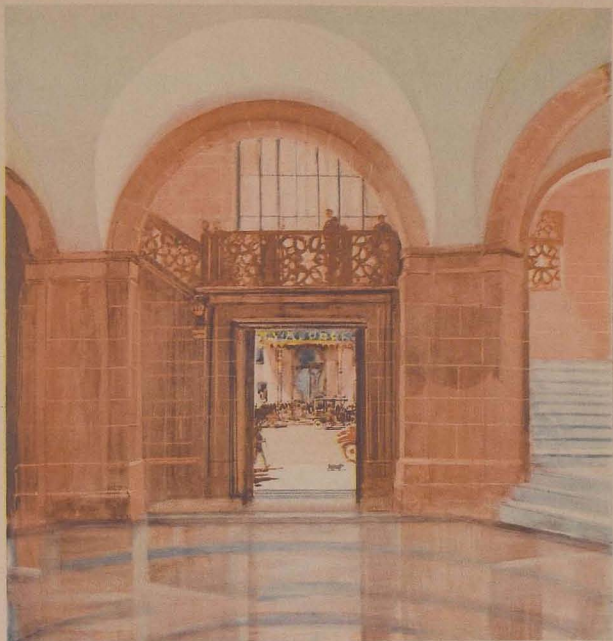


THE TRADE COMMISSIONER'S ROOM.

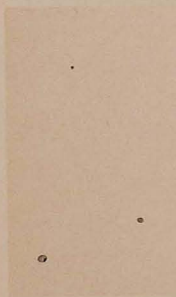
But only one part of the purpose in view in providing India House, at a cost for building and equipment of £324,000, has been to accommodate those engaged in official activities. An almost greater purpose has been to provide a focus of Indian life. To India House come officers on leave, pensioned officers and members of their families, and all others having business to transact at the offices of the High Commissioner. But something more than this was needed. The Indian coming to London or the European returning home after a long absence is apt to feel a sense of strangeness and isolation. Indian visitors have even more need than those from the Dominions

for a venue equipped with libraries and reading rooms and prepared
to furnish the information that may be required. India House
opens its doors to all who have the interests of India
at heart, and there is every reason to anticipate
that it will become in the truest sense
the London home of India.





A GLIMPSE INTO ALDWYCH FROM THE MAIN ENTRANCE HALL.





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RAPHAEL TUCK & SONS LTD
ART PUBLISHERS BY
SPECIAL APPOINTMENT
TO THEIR MAJESTIES
THE KING & QUEEN
& HIS ROYAL HIGHNESS
THE PRINCE OF WALES