

# India

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Notes and News .....	117	An Indian Debate at Oxford .....	126
England and the Indian Debt .....	120	Indian Affairs in Parliament:	
"A History of British India" .....	121	Special Report .....	126
Our London Letter .....	122	Public Meetings on Indian Questions:	
Chronicle of the Week .....	123	The Work of the British Committee .....	127
The Calcutta Municipal Bill: Further Protest (Telegram) .....	124	Advertisements .....	128
The Poona Murders .....	124		
The Muscat "Incident": A Blow to the "Forward" Party .....	125		

## NOTES AND NEWS.

**L**ORD CURZON seems to have made a bad mistake in the Muscat affair. Both French and English Ministers are claiming with equal vehemence to have had the best of the dispute, a condition of things which perhaps indicates the excellence of the compromise arrived at. But Mr. Brodriek's careful phrases do not conceal the fact that the Government of India has made precisely the mistake which was to be feared from Lord Curzon—namely, that it has shown excess of zeal. "The first act of the new Viceroy of India in the domain of foreign policy," wrote the *Times* in a triumphant article on February 22, "deserves high praise for promptitude and decision." Events which have since come to light point to less praiseworthy qualities. The facts are not altogether clear, what with statements in both Houses of Parliament, in the French Chamber, and in semi-official "notes," but the most important of them are plain enough to people who have not reasons for wishing them obscure. In 1862 England and France jointly agreed to preserve the independence of Muscat. But that did not prevent England from securing a coaling depot there, and in March of last year France obtained from the Sultan the concession of a similar depot. The fact that the concession had been made seems for some time to have escaped the notice of the Indian Government. Hearing of it, however, last month Lord Curzon promptly despatched a man-of-war to compel the Sultan to annul the concession under pain of bombardment. The concession was accordingly annulled, amid a flight of Corinthian leading articles from the English Jingo Press.

But in international incidents it is the part of prudent observers to look to the end. The matter took on a new appearance last Monday when M. Delcassé stated in the French Chamber that France had got what she wanted in Muscat—namely, a coaling depot similar to England's—and that "the Queen's Government had expressed their profound regret" for the outrageous form of Lord Curzon's protest. Some attempt has been made on behalf of Lord Salisbury to dispute, or to explain away, both these statements. But it need not perhaps be treated very seriously, especially as it is admitted that France is to have her coaling depot. As for the question of apology, it is instructive to note that what troubles our Jingoës is not whether an apology was needed but whether it was made. It was obviously needed, and the fact that it has been made is the redeeming feature of a humiliating transaction. M. Delcassé speaks of an expression of profound regret. Mr. Brodriek, on behalf of Lord Salisbury, cannot bring himself to use those words. He chooses rather to say that "Lord Salisbury, as he stated to the French Ambassador, would have preferred a less public mode of action." When somebody who has done something that has given needless offence says that he wishes his action had been different, ordinary people call it an expression of regret. But diplomats, no doubt, must in public live up to the cynical maxim, "Never explain, never apologise."

Muscat was "the lease or concession of a piece of land, to be used as a coal depot."—On the land so ceded, Mr. Brodriek thinks, the French Government would have been at liberty to hoist its flag and to build fortifications. This is expressly denied by the French Government, nor is it alleged that France, in the twelve months which passed between the grant of the lease and Lord Curzon's theatrical demonstration, took any steps to build fortifications or to hoist a flag. Note, however, that according to Mr. Brodriek the essential ingredient in the misconduct of France was that the land obtained for an admittedly proper purpose might have been put to a use inconsistent with the treaty of 1862. The weight of this accusation, coming from the English Government, can be easily tested. For what was the temper of our own Jingoës towards this agreement by which we guaranteed the independence of Muscat? The answer is supplied by a passage in Mr. Curzon's "Persia," published in 1892, and quoted with admiration by the *Times* in the article to which we have already referred:—

Oman (Mr. Curzon wrote) may indeed be justifiably regarded as a British dependency. We subsidise its ruler. We dictate its policy; we should tolerate no alien interference. I have little doubt myself that the day will soon come when, as these petty States crumble before the advance of a friendly civilisation, a more definite possession will be required, and the Union Jack will be seen flying from the castles of Muscat.

That is to say, according to Mr. Curzon, the territory whose independence we have guaranteed is to be regarded as a British dependency, as to which we are shortly to require more definite possession. "Lord Curzon," the *Times* wrote in its approving article, "has evidently retained as Viceroy the opinion he formed seven years ago as a private traveller with regard to British rights and interests in Oman." Precisely. And that no doubt explains the procedure by man-of-war. France's opportune assertion of a counter-claim would seem to have checked a flagrant act of political immorality, to say nothing of a burdensome extension of the territories ruled by the Government of India.

Mr. Curzon in the passage quoted above used the common dialect of Jingoism. "We subsidise its ruler. We dictate its policy." When did Mr. Curzon become an Indian? What *we* do is to make the poverty-stricken taxpayers of India give the Sultan of Muscat a subsidy of £40,000 a year in order that *we* may obtain a hold upon Muscat in defiance of the treaty of 1862 and some day, in defiance of the remonstrances of the Indian taxpayers, add to the dominions of British India a useless corner of South-Eastern Arabia. That is what *we* do. The honesty of the thing needs no remark, nor the cheapness of bragging that *we* pay something which we compel our poor wards in India to pay against their will. Lord George Hamilton should be required to present to Parliament (1) an account showing all the payments which have been made to Muscat from the revenues of India, (2) the correspondence which has passed about this affair, and (3) the full text of any agreements or understandings, other than the agreement of 1862, which have hitherto subsisted between the Government of India and the Sultan, or between our own Government and the Sultan. Plainly the matter cannot be allowed to rest where it now is. For the result of the action taken by France is a general return to the treaty of 1862. It follows that any special understandings with the Sultan are as futile as they are dishonest, and that the annual subsidy paid to him is so much wanton waste. There ought to be a spirited protest in the House of Commons on behalf of the gagged and unrepresented taxpayers of India. Of course if the British taxpayers desire to pay the Sultan of Muscat £40,000 a year for his beautiful eyes, that is their own affair. But Sir Michael Hicks Beach ought to make provision for it in his Budget, along with the doles to the parson and the squire.

We print on page 124 a telegram from our Calcutta

The real importance of the incident lies deeper. It is suggested that, while France is now content with a coaling-depot, what she originally obtained from the Sultan of No. 10. VOL. XI.



correspondent, which gives an account of another important meeting held on March 5 to protest against the Calcutta Municipal Bill. Mr. A. M. Bose's speech derives added weight from the fact that he was elected last December by his countrymen to the high office of President of the Indian National Congress. How comes it that the ordinary news agencies abstain from telegraphing from India even the slightest information about the extraordinary series of public protests which the Calcutta Municipal Bill is provoking?

The address presented by the Indian Association to the new Viceroy is an admirable document. It sounds the right note in dwelling upon the necessity of internal development, in contrast with schemes of external aggression:—

Your Excellency will permit us to express the hope that your Excellency's administration may be distinguished by an increasing measure of attention to the great questions of domestic improvement, and by the pursuit of a policy of beneficence and progress, and of confidence in the people. British statesmanship has changed with marvellous rapidity the face of India. The India of to-day is no more like the India of the time of Lord Canning than the England of to-day is like the England of the reign of Queen Anne. Your Excellency with far-sighted statesmanship has recognised the truth that "the work of internal administration applies as searching a test to the capacities of statesmanship as the more dramatic issues involved in external policy," that "there is no standing still in the growth of nations," and that "the adaptation of the conditions and environment of life to the increasing stature of a people" is a task worthy of the highest statesmanship. If your Excellency will permit us we will venture to say that all India looks forward with hope and interest to your Excellency undertaking this duty which in every way is so worthy of your Excellency's genius and which will add to the lustre of the highest efforts of British statesmanship in India.

And the address goes on to make special mention of (1) the claims of local self-government, with reference to the Calcutta Municipal Bill, (2) the separation of judicial from executive duties, (3) the wider employment of natives of India in the higher offices of State, and (4) the development of primary and technical instruction. Lord Curzon's reply was as definite as was in the circumstances to be expected:—

I do not know that sentiments gain in intensity, even though they may earn a wider publicity by frequent repetition; and I will therefore content myself on the present occasion with saying that I hold by what I have previously said both of my anxiety to serve this country and its peoples and of my deeply-rooted conviction that as Great Britain succeeds or fails in India so to a large extent will she be judged by the high court of history.

The occasion of course was one for generalities. But, as the philosopher said, "the particular is the thing to be done."

The *Tribune* in a lively article endorses Sir Antony Macdonnell's defence of English education in India. Our contemporary points out how all classes and religions seem to have agreed to read English education as an accursed thing—the ultra-orthodox because it makes the young question the old customs and beliefs, the lovers of progress because it fits men rather for examinations than for life, the Anglo-Indian who sympathises with the people of the country because it tends to replace the interesting variety of the past by a single type, and the Anglo-Indian who despises the people because it has changed the old submission to the decrees of fate into an active belief that man may control his own destiny. But the *Tribune* will have none of this, and it quotes with admiration Sir Antony's remarks:—

I am not, gentlemen, among those who think that literary education in English has gone too far among the natives of this country, on the contrary I believe that it should and must go much farther than it has already gone.

And he goes on to enter

a protest against the mode which seems to be becoming fashionable of condemning the educational policy of our predecessors for no other fundamental reason, that I can see, than that the policy is producing its foreseen effects in the independent and questioning attitude of mind now assumed by the educated natives of this country.

But it is these effects, foreseen by their predecessors, that are so unpalatable to Anglo-Indians of the present generation.

The new Cantonments Bill is provoking a good deal of opposition. The Bill proposes that all houses in cantonments shall be at the disposal of civil and military officers, so that if an officer wishes a particular house he can force the owner to let it to him and any non-official tenant to

vacate it at once. Moreover, the rent and the repairs needed are to be fixed by the new tenant, subject to an appeal to a committee of arbitration. To this it is objected that in many cantonments the houses are more numerous than the officials require and that no other tenants will come forward to occupy them when subject to eviction at a moment's notice. Moreover it is argued that if the cantonment authorities take it upon themselves to force a particular tenant on a house owner, and practically to fix the rent, they should also undertake the realisation of the rent due; for at present the owner is left to enforce his claims in the civil courts, and before this can be done the tenant may have moved to some distant station or gone to England on furlough. Again the Government gets over the difficulty of the ownership of the land under houses in cantonments by declaring that it belongs *prima facie* to the Government. But, as the *Champion* points out, private land does exist there according to the decisions of high judicial tribunals.

Readers of INDIA cannot have failed to note the great number of charges which have been lately made against the police, charges of violence, corruption, conspiracy, and the manufacture of evidence. That this is no new thing we know from Sir Edwin Arnold's book, "The Queen's Justice"; but it is much to be feared that the evil is not diminishing. On first sight, therefore, the triumphant acquittal of Inspector Jolliffe and one of his Indian subordinates is very satisfactory. It may be remembered that a Hindu named Vitlu, who died in the Bombay police station, was said to have been kicked to death, one of the defendants being accused of the murder and the other, who was an Englishman, of attempting to screen the criminal. In the end the jury, with the full approval of the judge, brought in a verdict of not guilty without calling upon the counsel for the defence. But the satisfaction which this inspires is marred by two considerations. First, as the *Champion* points out, it was admitted that Vitlu went in alive and came out dead, and it has not yet been clearly shown how he met his death. Secondly, the judge accepted the statements of the defendants that they had been made the victims of a police plot, and that certain police sepoys had conspired to bring a false charge against their superiors. It is the custom to vaunt the law and order of British rule; but if the police unite the corruption of the old régime with the greater scope and power of the new, that rule may become the cloak of injustice more terrible than India has ever suffered before.

The work of teaching Indians in our South African colonies what a blessing it is to belong to the British Empire continues. The *Natal Advertiser* reports a case which may be commended to the notice of the people who was eloquent about "England's civilising mission":—

W. Barrett, a European, of Spring Grange, near Pinetown, was charged this morning (February 9) at the instance of Mr. D. Calder, C.P., with assault on his Indian servant. Mr. M. Millar, Magistrate of the Umlazi Court, heard the case. The complainant deposed that about ten months ago his master struck him on the head with a bamboo, which had left a scar. Witness lodged a complaint with the Protector of Immigrants, but he was ordered to return to his master. His master had since struck him a blow on the head with a chopper, and on several occasions with his fists. Witness asked for a pass to enable him to go to the Protector to complain, but his master refused this and threatened to shoot him. About ten days ago defendant kicked witness in such a manner that he could not work, though he was thrashed and forced to turn out. He was in such pain that he again ran away on the Wednesday, but he was arrested and sent back by the police. He was then tied to a bamboo and thrashed until he fell down. Some medicine was given to him then, and he became unconscious.

The man Barrett admitted that he had thrashed the poor fellow with a bearing rein, and a doctor gave evidence that he had found marks of "a very severe beating" on the Indian's body.

Some of the wounds were still festering. The marks represented 20 or 30 different strokes. The man must have suffered intense pain and was by no means fit to work. The marks of the thrashing would probably remain for life.

Yet Barrett, against whom two previous convictions for assault were proved, was let off with a fine of £10! The lightness of the punishment is only less monstrous than the offence. It shows how cheaply Europeans in Natal regard their "Indian fellow-subjects."

The *Tribune* complains that European missionary



"workers in the Indian vineyard often display a marked lack of knowledge" as to Indian needs even in their special field of work. They are inclined to treat all "errors" and "superstitions" as necessary and fundamental to the religions of the country, even though the practices they condemn have also been condemned by the greatest teachers of the religion they attack. They allow nothing for ignorance, nothing for the corruption which the finest thoughts and feelings undergo in base natures. Yet blind mendicants sing the worthlessness of graven images in the lanes of every Hindu city. So in questions of social reform, the *Tribune* points out that all established customs must in order to gain acceptance have satisfied some need; that their adoption could only have been brought about by a severe struggle; and that even if they have now become useless or noxious a certain amount of resistance to their disuse must be expected. Thus in both religious and social controversies we are reminded of the great truths, too often forgotten alike in East and West, that institutions are being continually acted on by their environment, that none are wholly good or wholly bad, and that what is now mischievous may once have played a great part in the due ordering of society.

Although the opinion has often been expressed in these columns that there is no reason to attribute the miserable state of India to over-population, it cannot of course be denied that in India as in many other countries a more equitable distribution is desirable. In fact much attention has lately been given, especially in Bengal, to proposals for the colonisation of unoccupied lands in Assam. It seems, however, that a serious difference of opinion has arisen between the Government of India and the Lieutenant-Governor of Assam as to whether the colonies should be organised on the rayatwari or the zamindari system, as the latter exists under the permanent settlement of Bengal. Mr. Cotton urges that the former system in Assam reduces all to one dead level, obliges the Government to import even its Indian officials from other provinces and is fatal to education and progress. He insists that the ignorance, docility, and want of firmness of the mass of the people render leaders a necessity, and he declares that the zamindari system has worked excellently in Bengal. On the other hand, the Indian Government oppose the introduction of middlemen who, if once admitted, could not afterwards be got rid of. The *Amrita Bazar Patrika* declares that the whole of India is with Mr. Cotton, and that it is owing to the Permanent Settlement that Bengal is the richest and most advanced Province in the country, and that by it famine has been driven away practically for ever.

As all roads lead to Rome so have all Indian difficulties a way of translating themselves into questions of finance. A curious instance of this is seen in the Central Provinces, where it is seriously proposed to abandon some of the roads made during the famine. These roads, constructed as relief works, were handed over to the district councils and boards without any payment being required; but this handsome gift has turned out a veritable white elephant. The cost of keeping up these roads, many of which were not really wanted for purposes of traffic or communication, is found to be far more than they can afford. In the year 1897-98, according to the *Pioneer*, more than twice as much was spent on the repair of roads as on all other public works put together. The Chief Commissioner frankly recognises that even to keep up the roads of permanent value the local boards will need outside assistance, while as for the others, which would never have been made except as famine relief works, "it would be folly to throw good money after bad."

The Contract Act Amendment Bill which has been before the country for some time and is now to be referred to a Select Committee of the Legislative Council, is a very moderate measure. As Mr. Chalmers explained, it does not forbid the alienation of land, it does not extend the custom of *dumdupat* by which the interest on a loan can never exceed the principal, it does not re-enact the Usury Laws, nor does it give the Courts discretion to fix the interest in all cases. It only deals with the case in which one of the parties is able to dominate the will and consent

of the other, and uses this power to impose unfair terms, and in such circumstances it gives the Courts an equitable jurisdiction to amend the contract. But even if the more drastic remedies suggested above had been proposed, the *Tribune* is of opinion that the disease would not have been probed to the bottom. Nearly twenty years ago, during the discussion on the Decan Agriculturists' Relief Bill, Sir Theodore Hope and Sir John Strachey promised on behalf of the Government that the question of modifying the revenue would receive serious and prompt consideration. The *Tribune* is glad that the Government recognises that the peasants cannot go on without the help of the money-lenders, and indeed that without them "the whole machinery of revenue administration will at once be brought to a deadlock." But it repeats "that it is the harsh and rigid revenue system introduced by the British Government" that drives the peasants into the hands of the village money-lenders, a fact which in dealing with agricultural indebtedness the Government have never realised.

The *Civil and Military Gazette* has opened its columns to a new plan for securing the peace of the North-West frontier, which, however, it correctly describes as a "wild cat" scheme. The proposal is to settle a large body of Sikhs, say 100,000, along the border and in the districts now occupied by Pathans, and to support them with strong forts, which should be at once places of refuge for themselves and prisons for their Pathan hostages. What the cost of this fine plan would be, if the preliminary difficulty of getting the Sikhs to emigrate were overcome, its author does not tell us. But our contemporary points out that at the least threat against their independence the Pathans would rise, and to quell such a rising has already required 60,000 troops. "Any attempt to dominate them by military colonies of their bitterest enemies would cause such a storm as would need all our resources to put down, and entail an expenditure which would hamper the revenues of India for years to come." The men with schemes for pacifying the frontier are much more dangerous than the Pathans.

Mysore, the *Madras Standard* thinks, has taught a lesson to the rulers of British India. Plague has been prevalent in the State for the past six months, but it has been free from some of the worst features which have marked its course in the Bombay Presidency.

There has been no panic, no deaths by fear of forcible segregation, no violation of the modesty of women, no dead bodies found in streets. No dead body has been buried without religious disposal. This is not all. Trade remains unparalysed. Famine has not followed this dire pestilence. The privilege of optional segregation has proved that forcible segregation is a downright folly and aggravates the evil which it aims at curing.

The authorities in the Bombay Presidency have no doubt learned by experience. But there is still too much disposition both in India and at home to suppose that the painful results of the earlier plague measures were due to Indian perversity and not to the mistakes of the measures themselves.

In this connexion the following remarks from yesterday's (Thursday's) issue of the *New Age* are worth quoting:—

When the plague riots were disturbing Bombay, Poona, Garshankar, and various other places, the official explanation was always ready. It was the sheer "cussidness" of the ignorant, wrong-headed, and obstinate people. But that explanation was seen to be woefully halting when one considered the capable management of General Gatacre in Bombay and of Colonel Creagh at Poona. These distinguished officers could do just what they liked with the people, simply because they understood their ways and respected their feelings. Another example now comes from the Hyderabad State. There a single English official, Mr. Stevens, has had to perform the most irksome duty of turning some 35,000 people out of seventeen infected towns and villages, and that too at their own cost. Yet the thing has been done without a hitch, and, what is more, without a sepy or a policeman. "The evacuation of Kopal, a town of 18,000 inhabitants, writes Lieut.-Col. Lawrie, "was entirely spontaneous, and was effected, including the erection of the camps, by the people themselves, under the friendly direction of Mr. Stevens." The word "friendly" is the key to the whole situation. "This," says the *Pioneer*, "is a very remarkable manifestation of successful management, and of the docility of the people when they are taken in the right way." Yes, but why should a docile people not be always "taken in the right way," especially when that is the easiest way, and the way of the most ordinary common sense and fellow-feeling?



## ENGLAND AND THE INDIAN DEBT.

THE lovers of Empire are wont to enlarge on the benefits which spring from our world-wide sway, on the openings afforded for our trade, on the honourable careers offered to honest administrators, and generally on the solid pecuniary advantages which have followed the extension of our dominion. Occasionally, when in heroic mood, they have changed their tune. Our gains now become trifling compared with our services, nay our unselfish devotion may even lead to individual loss, to a life of unnoticed toil in the dull round of duty, or an early death at the post of honour. What the Imperialist is not ready to admit in any mood is that Empire implies duties and losses which can be translated into the items of a financial account, and may mean the assumption of new burdens for the taxpayers of this country. Even the very suggestion of such a contingency is to be avoided, and the real facts of the case are to be hidden if they bear such an implication. The public debts of Turkey, of Greece, and of Egypt, places outside the British Empire, may be in part guaranteed by the United Kingdom, and those bankrupt or almost bankrupt countries have thus been enabled to borrow at an easy rate, but India—that fairest jewel of our Empire over which at festivals and banquets we are accustomed to become so enthusiastic—India must borrow on her own merits. The Greek and the Turk are treated with a favour denied to our own Imperial fellow-subjects, and the bread of the children is given to strangers. Such are the advantages of belonging to our glorious Empire. But strange as this anomaly is, there is another equally strange. While England refuses an actual guarantee, it has long given a virtual guarantee, so that India has to pay a heavy price for her loans, while England remains in the end responsible. The present system is injurious to both countries and advantageous to neither. Is it not time that it was changed?

The question has been often raised before without effect, but now a new ally has appeared in the person of the Chairman of the London and County Bank. It would indeed be absurd to suppose that the speech which he delivered at the annual meeting of shareholders was inspired by a disinterested desire to promote the welfare of India. It is on the contrary all the more important because it showed that English business men are becoming alive to the loss inflicted on the commercial world by the poverty of India—a poverty intensified by the drain of wealth from that country. Nor is it any the less significant because another consideration entered into the calculation—the advantage of having a new guaranteed security to take the place in part of Consols, gradually dwindling in amount and more and more held by Government departments. It is not of course proposed that the British Government should guarantee the existing stock, and thus make a free gift to the existing holders, but that the debt should be converted into a new guaranteed stock at a lower rate of interest. It may be useful to consider what would be the gain or loss to England and India of such a proceeding, and what are the arguments by which the plan has been hitherto met and defeated.

The *Friend of India* has made some calculations as to the gain which that country would receive. It finds that India has to pay now, at present rates of exchange on a debt estimated at 300 crores of rupees, seven-eighths per cent. more than it would have had to pay were the whole sum borrowed in England under an Imperial guarantee, and that even if the sum were borrowed partly in India and partly in England, it has to pay three-fourths more per cent. Even if one takes the lower figures the saving would amount to two crores of rupees; a sum which, if devoted to a sinking fund, would extinguish the whole debt in some fifty years. If one allows for the heavy rates at which some of the earlier loans were floated, it appears that the total loss to India which has resulted from the absence of an Imperial guarantee since the assumption of the government by the Crown cannot be less than fifty millions sterling.

And for what has this loss been incurred? Certainly not to spare the English Treasury. It is scarcely credible that England could see India become bankrupt. It would be too great a blow to English credit. On the contrary, far from endangering England, an Imperial guarantee, by strengthening the finances of India, and so making bank-

ruptcy more improbable, would be a safeguard to the English taxpayers. If indeed England is prepared to see India in the last resort repudiate her engagements, then no words can be too strong for condemnation of the cruel indifference which has allowed trust funds to be invested in Indian Government securities. If England disclaims all responsibility for India's debt, it should at least proclaim the fact; but to do so would still further hamper the finances of India. As the *Times of India* says in comparing Consols with India 3½ per cents.:

This marked difference in yield may be taken to be the measure of the public appreciation of a security that is actually guaranteed by the British Government over one that is only "virtually" guaranteed. If this "virtual" guarantee is a sham and a delusion, it behoves the Government to speak out. If it is a reality, nothing is gained by refusing an actual guarantee except that India's liabilities are increased and her power to meet them diminished.

What reasons then are put forward in defence of this anomalous situation, wherein on the one hand trust funds are invested in Indian stock under the authority of the Court of Chancery, and on the other hand India is treated as in name solely responsible for the Indian debt? The first and chief reason is that freedom of the Indian Government from outside control which is so dear to the heart of Anglo-Indian officials and so useless to the mass of the people, that freedom which has already led the Indian Government to decline any assistance as regards the expenses of the war beyond the frontier, and which has during the past few years suffered many curtailments for much less serious cause. The *Times of India* deals with the argument thus:—

Would India have to pay too dearly, by a sacrifice of control of her own affairs, for the advantage that an Imperial guarantee would give her? No conclusive answer could be given to that question until a clear view had been obtained of the extent and nature of the control that the Indian Government already exercise over their financial policy. If this were complete and unquestioned, we should be justified in jealously guarding it, even if in doing this we sacrificed a tangible financial advantage. But it is impossible to survey the history of Lord Elgin's administration without recognising that the freedom of action which the argument imputes to the Government of India has no real existence. The last vestige of it disappeared when Government meekly accepted the Secretary of State's injunction to exempt cotton goods from the customs tariff, notwithstanding that Lord Kimberley's own Council were to a man against exemption, and that the non-official vote was cast solidly on the same side—rightly so cast on the admission of a distinguished administrator.

So that according to a leading Anglo-Indian newspaper, and one in some respects the strongest supporter of the Government, India is to lose the solid advantages of a guarantee in order to safeguard an independence that has already for practical purposes ceased to exist. But even if it did exist, of what use would it be to India that these alien officials should have a free hand? How can it be set against the solid gain which would flow from an English guarantee? As the *Friend of India* observes:—

Selfishness has tinged with a dark stain the whole course of our transactions with India, and dictated the cry of "self-dependence" with which we mock its people, while at the same time they are deprived of all control whatever of their monetary affairs. By the refusal of England to guarantee the Indian debt, a sum of two millions sterling a year is as absolutely wasted as if it were cast into the sea.

In other words the financial interests of poverty-stricken India are to be sacrificed in order that a body of Anglo-Indian officials who represent nobody but themselves and constantly disregard the opinions of those who are subject to them, may still persuade themselves that they are preserving that independence which they have at once to sacrifice to any strong pressure from the Home Government.

But although this is the chief argument against a guarantee, or at least the one most often heard, there is another which grows in force with the growth of Imperialism. Many years ago Lord Stanley clearly showed in the House of Commons how much India would gain if her debt were converted into one having a British guarantee. But though he proved that India would gain immensely, and would to that extent be the more solvent, and so the less likely to call upon England for aid to avert bankruptcy, though in any case short of bankruptcy the guarantee would mean nothing to England, and though he clearly thought that in the event of bankruptcy, England, for the sake of her own credit, could not stand by as a disinterested spectator, guarantee or no guarantee—though he put all this before the House he lacked the courage to propose that England's liabilities should be



formally increased by so vast a sum as the whole Indian debt. And none of those who have succeeded him have in this matter shown more courage than he. Nay, there is now stronger reason than ever why our Imperialist statesmen should shrink. It would indeed be a stumbling-block in the way of the expansionists to find that our Indian Empire had saddled us with a liability for some £200,000,000 sterling. The liability under the present system may in reality be even greater than it would be under a guarantee; but it is not the liability that is feared. What is feared is that the public may come to recognise the real burden of Empire, and so may be disinclined to add to their responsibilities by further annexation. Thus are the material interests of India sacrificed to preserve a belief in the imaginary independence of the Anglo-Indian Government and to hide the real dangers of Imperial expansion; and millions are wasted for want of courage and common-sense.

### "A HISTORY OF BRITISH INDIA."

SIR WILLIAM HUNTER is to be cordially congratulated on the issue of the first of the five volumes in which he proposes to tell afresh the stirring history of British India. The publication of this volume marks the beginning of the end of a prolonged and arduous undertaking. Yet the work is but a fragment of the author's original design, which was ambitious enough to embrace "a complete history of India from the early Aryan period onwards." The ancient history, however, can better wait; it is vastly more important to get at the primary sources of the modern history and to place the story before the world in a truer light than has yet been shed over it. In the present volume, which is simply preliminary, there is little, if any, opening for adverse criticism; and the method of treatment, taken with the conspicuous fairness of the author's mind, strengthens the anticipation that when he comes to the later problems he will remain true to his allegiance to History. On this assumption the completed work will rank with the great historical efforts of modern times, and must prove a powerful factor in shaping the future of Indian policy. The early official life of Sir W. W. Hunter happily provided for him unique personal opportunities of acquaintance with every district of India. His statistical survey "involved annual tours which," he tells us, "enabled me to see every province with my own eyes and to study at first hand the local conditions and races from beyond the Khaibar Pass to Comorin." Such an experience is not readily to be over-rated. Yet there is *aliquid amari*—one bitter drop in the cup—which evokes deep sympathy and regret. "The main part of my materials and manuscripts," he says, "collected during twenty-three years, went down in the ill-fated 'Nepal' on their way home;" and ten years' labour did not adequately repair the loss. The accomplishment of the task in the face of such a blow is nothing less than an example of literary heroism.

Apart from the masterly disposition of the main outline of events, the striking characteristic of the present volume appears to us to be this: it places the reader at once in the right attitude and firmly keeps him there throughout. Now this achievement is very far from being the simple and elementary thing it may look. For it implies that the author has taken a strong grip, not merely of the facts of his particular subject, but of contemporary history as a whole; and without this step it is impossible for the cleverest writer that ever held a pen to present his own section of history in its due position and relations. More than that, the author has treated the enterprise of other nations in a truly cosmopolitan spirit. For example, he narrates the splendid labours of Portuguese kings and admirals with the frank admiration that historians are but too apt to reserve for the deeds of their own countrymen. True, this is but bare justice. Yet how difficult it seems for a writer of one nationality to transcend a traditional though quite natural insularity, and weigh the men of other, often competitive, nations in even scales. This Sir W. W. Hunter has done. And this we take to be a distinctive element in his work—a sure preservative through the coming generations, and a noble example of

fidelity to truth, without which history is mere romance or a congeries of misrepresentations. All the more therefore do we rely upon him for a thorough and fearless examination of the history of British India proper in the succeeding volumes. Nothing will be "set down in malice;" we trust nothing will be "extenuate." Never was it more urgent that Englishmen should know the essential truth.

The volume opens with the closing of the old trade paths by the establishment of the Ottoman Empire in the middle of the fifteenth century. The Turks lay across the tracks of Eastern and Western trade intercourse—the middle route through Syria, the northern route by the Black Sea, and the southern maritime route through Egypt; and although "the rude spoilers grew themselves into luxurious potentates," the initial necessity for the Christian nations of the West to find new routes to India pressed upon the attention of traders, travellers, and statesmen. The Ottoman obstruction had "sent a shock through the whole system of European commerce." Foremost in the race was Portugal—"a nation still aflame with the patriotism that had won its independence, and cherishing an undying hatred against the Moors whom it had driven forth." Foremost among the Portuguese was the famous Prince Henry the Navigator, whose three motives—"enmity to the Moslems, mercantile enterprise, and missionary zeal—profundly influenced the whole history of the Portuguese in the East," not so much by his own actual discoveries as by the mighty impulse he gave to discovery. Then followed Dias, Covilham, and da Gama, the last of whom anchored off Calicut in May, 1498. Sir William Hunter does excellent service in rescuing from Protestant distortion the true meaning and effect of the Pope's partition of the unknown world between Portugal and Spain. He thereby makes clear how it was that the Portuguese habitually spoke of all India as their own, that Protestant England hesitated so long before she ventured to trespass in the Indian seas, and that "the stigma of piracy affixed by Spain and Portugal to our intrusion within their demarcated line" was "legally justified." "The real 'India Portuguesa' was the dominion of the Eastern seas: a mighty achievement for so small a nation"—"the third and last act in the long conflict between mediæval Christendom and Islam." Sir William Hunter, though outlining the brilliant operations of such distinguished officers as Almeida and Albuquerque, necessarily leaves the details to another historian, and puts his strength into a luminous sketch of the Portuguese policy. He does not hide the cruelties which the Portuguese barbarously practised, but he is careful to explain them. It is worth while, in these days of "Imperialism," to reproduce one incidental remark. "The same sentiment of no common faith, no common rights," says Sir William, "still influences the European attitude to the African races; but for the words Christianity and Paganism, we now use the terms civilisation and barbarism." Nay, the remark might well be extended beyond "the African races."

The Bull of 1493, dividing the unknown world between Spain and Portugal, was limited to lands west and south of an imaginary line a hundred leagues west and south of the Azores and the Cape Verde Islands. Hence the force of English exploration was turned to the north-west and the north-east for a passage "to Cathay and the East Indies;" and it is curious to read how John Cabot, on discovering North America in 1497, was supposed to have gained for England "a great part of Asia." But the outburst of free thought early in the sixteenth century, and the breach signalled by the destruction of the Armada, broke down finally the diplomatic settlement grounded on the papal partition. The restrictive doctrine *du secret commercial* also gave way to a doctrine of exclusive right based on priority of discovery. England and Holland rushed forward to capture the Indian trade. "In April, 1591, the first English squadron sailed round the Cape of Good Hope into the Indian seas." Linschoten's *Itinerario* opened the eyes of all Northern Europe, and in 1599 the London merchants, stung by the rivalry of the Dutch, planked down £30,133 for an East Indian voyage, and solicited the royal consent. "The commercial rivalry between Holland and England—that rivalry which was to outlast generations, to profoundly affect our European policy and national antipathies, to burn British ships in the Medway, and to stamp the tragedy of Amboyna in letters of blood upon our Asiatic history—now stood

<sup>1</sup> "A History of British India." By Sir William Wilson Hunter, K.C.S.I., M.A., LL.D. Vol. I. (London, New York, and Bombay: Longmans, Green and Co.)



revealed." In 1600 the London merchants more than doubled their subscription of the previous year, and on December 31 Queen Elizabeth granted them a charter constituting the first English East India Company. This charter ignored the Spanish claims based on the Bull of 1493, and recognised only the rights of effective occupation. The precise character of the company is carefully investigated by the author, and the Portuguese and Dutch systems are fully contrasted. Not only does he correct Adam Smith's classical account of the "Regulated Company," but he shows, from the contemporary records of the East India Company, "the actual working of the Regulated system in its mature Elizabethan growth"—a most interesting and fresh exposition.

To recapitulate: it was at once a Company for regulating the English trade to the East, and also for conducting that trade by subscription raised from successive groups of adventurers, who were generally members of its own body, or were, as subscribers, admitted to it. In one respect it resembled the mediæval guild now represented by the London city companies and "Lloyd's," in another respect it resembled the modern limited liability company. From the first there was a tendency to divided interests between the successive groups of subscribers who found the capital and the permanent Company who administered it. The conflict of these divergent forces determined the internal history of the Company from its first charter of Elizabeth in 1600 to its reconstruction by Charles II in 1661.

Sir William devotes a special chapter to the period of "Separate Voyages," 1601-12. The second period, 1612-61, was conducted on the joint stock principle; the later system came a stage nearer the modern joint stock company.

The splendid victory of Captain Best at Swally in December, 1612, "broke the reputation which the Portuguese had won in India by the sea achievements of a hundred years." The agreement between Best and the Mughal Governor of Surat for the establishment of an English factory at Surat and at three other places around the Gulf of Cambay marks the date of our legal settlement on the Indian continent. "It marks a new departure which was to end in our withdrawal from the Archipelago and our establishment in India." The remaining chapters narrate the final struggle of the English, first with the Portuguese (1612-22), and then with the Dutch (1601-23). Especially notable in the former section is the surpassing skill, valour, and endurance of Captain Nicholas Downton, though the author always keeps the military and naval operations very subordinate to the exposition of methods. In the Dutch section, Sir William exhibits clearly the lines of policy whereby the Dutch built up their supremacy in the Eastern seas; develops the causes and the occasions of increasing conflict between the Dutch and the English; and finally relates the distressful tragedy of Amboyna. Very noteworthy is his dispassionate examination of the Amboyna trial. "It stands on the forefront of our history in the East as an example of the danger of combining the executive and the judicial authority in the same hands." At the same time he does full justice to Coen as a statesman and administrator, just as in an earlier page he does to Albuquerque. It is hardly necessary to add that the volume is written with masterly literary skill, as well as with historical insight.

## OUR LONDON LETTER.

(FROM A PARLIAMENTARY CORRESPONDENT.)

ANYONE who knows the House of Commons, and who has breathed its atmosphere—its atmosphere political and physical alike—will agree that the result is a tendency to pessimism. There are a few earnest, enthusiastic men who resist this feeling, and keep on trying the policy which the Duke of Wellington found so useful in military undertakings, the policy of pegging away. But the majority, I fancy, feel that it is no good trying to effect any reform, and that as the pessimists of old said, "all things are as they were from the beginning." I am by no means an optimist, and yet I am glad to say that I notice signs for hopefulness even in this House. You may have a big Tory majority or not, but whatever the name of the dominant party in the House may be, the influence of public opinion is increasing every day. And this has been shown more than once of late. Nearly a week ago there was a Bill conveniently called the Half-Timers' Bill, introduced on a Wednesday by private members. Its object was to raise the age-limit of children leaving school from eleven to twelve. It is well, seeing how ready we are at all times to exalt ourselves above all foreigners, to know that in this matter of education such

nations as Portugal and Russia are far ahead of us. The trouble is that in Lancashire there is a large body of operatives who want to turn their little children into money-making machines as soon as they are eleven years old. The small creatures are marched off to begin their life's experience with the incessant rattle and roar of machinery, and the atmosphere of the factory before they are a dozen years old. The parents reap a harvest of a few beggarly shillings a week.

I was pleased to notice that the general sense of the House was dead against any such exploiting of the children. Lancashire has a very good opinion of itself, and has repeatedly claimed to lead the opinion of England. But in this respect it lags many a year behind, and the House of Commons passed the second reading of the Bill to give the youngsters another year's mental, moral, and physical breathing-space by 317 to 59. That looks emphatic enough, but it should be remembered that this was a private member's Bill, and there is no certainty therefore of its becoming law. This is especially so in face of the fact that the Government "funked" the situation in the most cowardly manner. They are afraid of Lancashire, and seeing how they have misled that county in connexion with all sorts of wild promises about cotton duties and bimetalism, their fear is not without reason. But there is something contemptible when one remembers how strong this Government is in its apparent numerical majority and how flabby and weak it is in reality.

Nor is this the only way in which the democratic spirit has been made evident during the past week. There has been a discussion on the army, founded on Mr. George Wyndham's explanation of the military estimates. Here again members calling themselves Conservatives, and therefore presumably friends to the existing order of things, denounced the antiquated and really idiotic methods of the War Office with refreshing candour. It has always appeared to me that the War Office has not shaken itself free from the depressing effects of the Duke of Cambridge's *régime*. Its cost is outrageously out of proportion to the value received. Indeed, Sir Charles Dilke pointed out that next year our army—that is to say in Great Britain, in India, and the various colonial forces—will cost £70,000,000. Now France is generally regarded as extravagant on militarism; but while France no doubt sins, she spends only £40,000,000 a year on her army. The word "only" may appear rather absurd in such a context; but vast as such a sum is, it is obviously much less than ours.

Two rather notable remarks were made during the debate, and made by very different men. In the first place Major Rasch stated openly that the success of the Sirdar was chiefly due to the fact that when he fought the battle of Omdurman he was 3,000 miles away from Pall Mall and from Lord Lansdowne. One may gather some notion of the feeling with regard to the War Office when a decided and downright Tory member says that the further a British army is from the Secretary for War (a Tory Minister, be it remembered) the better. But what was more instructive and of greater weight than this was Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman's remark that while it was all very well to criticise the extravagance of the War Office, the cost of the army really and in the last place rests upon the foreign policy of the country. Unless something is done to check the "Imperialist" policy of swagger, we shall not only have a vastly increased expenditure for the army, but conscription also. We cannot go everywhere, take everything, and fight everybody for nothing. Moreover, the Government's Egyptian policy keeps a part of our one-too-large army locked up in the Sudan, weakening our home defences, and exciting jealousy elsewhere.

I leave that, however, in order to say something about an important debate on our telephone system. Let it not be thought that I suppose that the wrongs and woes of the telephone customer in London are of much interest to the people of India. But here again the debate had a very good effect. The company-mongering spirit is being gradually snuffed out in the House. I am not sure that this is because of a higher moral tone in public life, though I should like to think so. It may be because of the revelations in connexion with Mr. Terah Hooley. However that may be, this National Telephone Company was so bad that almost the entire House except those interested in the matter denounces it. And whom does the reader suppose is the chief champion of this company in the Commons? None other than Sir James Fergusson, once Postmaster-General and now a director of the company. I used to wonder, at one time, how this man had managed to learn the art of defence for an admittedly incompetent company. Of course he speaks from the point of view of self-interest. So long as the company pays, the latter-day financier does not trouble about how the money is made, supposing there to be nothing illegal in the transactions. But Sir James is likely to feel at home not only because of his salary, but also because he has had experience as Governor of Bombay. That, when the reader thinks of his record, will explain much. I don't know what Sir James makes out of telephones, but it should be a large sum, for it has cost him a good deal in public standing and reputation.

By the way, Lord Claud Hamilton, the brother of the Indian Secretary, has written a verbose letter worthy of even



Lord George's verbose style, explaining that he can no longer support the present Government. It need not be thought from this that Lord Claud is coming over to the Radicals, for he is not. Indeed the trouble with him is that the Government is not sufficiently Tory. He says "the Conservative party in the House of Commons has become a flabby party." He protests against the attacks on capital, and in doing so Lord Claud exposes the cloven hoof, for he is the Chairman of the Great Eastern Railway Company, and possibly objects to paying injured workmen compensation for injuries. I don't know that I should have referred to Lord Claud had it not been for one fact. He says in this letter, in which he mourns and weeps over the domestic legislation of the country:—

It is not that I take exception to the policy of the Government as represented by its foreign, colonial, and Indian policy. On the contrary these departments have been conducted on lines in accordance with the best traditions of the Conservative party and in a manner conducive to the interests of the Empire.

As to this I have only two things to say: This seceder is careful to give his brother an unsolicited testimonial. India, according to Lord Claud, has been well governed, and does not shrink from saying that although it is his brother who—I will not say governs India, but presides at the India Office. Somehow the incident reminds me of the old sayings, "Let brotherly love continue," and also that "there is nothing like leather." It may be that Lord George Hamilton is no more in sympathy with the home policy of the Government than is his brother Claud. But then Lord George gets £5,000 a year in office and £2,000 (as a pension because he is the son of a duke) out of office. That is the finest sort of muzzling order you can imagine. Lord Claud, on the other hand, has a post outside, and says what he likes.

There was a debate of considerable interest on Tuesday in the House of Commons as to the system of primary education in this country. It must all seem very strange to the educated and cultured native of India how we squabble in this country over what shall be crammed into the mind of the youngster, and at the same time think ourselves fit to upset the civilisation and religions of India as so much ignorance and superstition. There are some few members in the House, thank heaven, who see the absurdity of this. But the majority look on with approval while we drag the wretched youngsters into insanitary buildings in order to ram the Church Catechism down their throats, to teach them that almost the whole duty of man consists in bobbing to the squire and the parson and their wives—and then we call it education. I remember that in one of his earlier essays Mr. John Morley referred to this sort of thing and said that one had no more right to call it education than a miserable naked savage scratching the surface of the earth with a stick or the shoulder-blade of a beast has a right to describe that as scientific agriculture.

### CHRONICLE OF THE WEEK.

**THURSDAY, March 2.**—In the House of Lords, Lord Salisbury, Lord Kimberley, the Lord Chancellor, and Lord James of Hereford paid tributes to the memory of the late Lord Herschell.

In the House of Commons Mr. George Wyndham made the annual statement on the Army Estimates. The motion for going into Committee of Supply was agreed to.

To-day's bulletins regarding Mr. Kipling's condition were the most definitely favourable that had yet appeared. He was reported to have made distinct progress, and the crisis of his disease was said to have passed.

**FRIDAY, March 3.**—In the House of Lords, Lord Kinnaird introduced a discussion upon confessional boxes in the English churches. A return showing the number of such boxes was granted.

In the House of Commons the General Power Distributing Company Bill (which would have enabled a private company to compete with municipal authorities in supplying electrical power and light) was rejected on the motion for second reading by 164 votes to 132. The consideration of the Army Estimates was resumed in Committee of Supply.

It was reported that Captain Roos-Keppel, the political officer at Kuram, on Wednesday night effected a successful surprise of some sections of the Chaunkanni tribe, who had lately been raiding the Kuram Valley. He destroyed a number of village defences, took 100 prisoners and 3,000 cattle, and brought back his force to Kuram without a single serious casualty.

**SATURDAY, March 4.**—The Peking correspondent of the *Times* said that the Tsung-li-Yamen had replied to the Russian protest against the conditions of the British loan for the Northern Railway denying that these conditions conflicted with the undertaking given to M. Pavloff last August. The Russians were now applying pressure, and the Chinese were asking whether, if their Government gave way, Great Britain would reckon with Russia or hold China alone responsible. As to the Italian demand for a lease of Samnun Bay, the Tsung-li-Yamen stated that on Saturday a note was received from the

British Minister supporting the demand, which, however, the Tsung-li-Yamen had already rejected. It was now probable that Italy would repeat the Kiao-Chow incident and effect a landing at Samnun Bay, encountering practically no resistance from the Chinese.

The military authorities at Cairo believed that the strength of the Khalifa's following had been much exaggerated, and unless he ventured on serious offensive operations there was no present intention of sending any expedition against him. Such, at any rate, was the official announcement.

A funeral service for the late Lord Herschell took place in Washington, and was attended by President McKinley, the members of the Cabinet, many of the Diplomatic Body, the members of the Anglo-American Joint Commission, numerous Senators and Representatives, and many other prominent citizens.—Her Majesty's ship "Talbot" had been ordered from Bermuda to New York to bring back Lord Herschell's body to England.

**MONDAY, March 6.**—In the House of Commons, on the motion of Mr. Hanbury, a resolution on which to found a Bill for the improvement of the telephone service was agreed to.—The debate on the second reading of the Sale of Food and Drugs Bill was adjourned.

The lock-out of members of the Plasterers' Union was begun. The returns as to the number of men affected were as yet very incomplete, but, so far as they went, they indicated that the loss of employment had not been so great as was expected.

The Lord Mayor presided at the Mansion House over a meeting to further proposals for the national commemoration of King Alfred the Great. A statement was submitted as to the nature of the permanent memorials it was proposed to raise, for which a sum of £30,000 was required; and Sir Arthur Arnold, the Bishop of Portsmouth, Dr. Conan Doyle, Sir Spencer Walpole, the Chief Rabbi, and others spoke in support of the object of the meeting.

Replying to questions in the French Chamber, M. Delcassé said that with regard to the concession of a coal-dépot at Muscat, the British Government, having been informed of the facts and of the French Government's intentions, had not been slow in recognising that the rights of England and France were identical and that France could have a coal-dépot on exactly the same conditions as England. The Queen's Government had also expressed its profound regret for the intervention of an agent of whom France had complained.

**TUESDAY, March 7.**—In the House of Commons, in reply to Sir C. Dilke, Mr. Brodriek made a statement (reported on another page) regarding Muscat.—Mr. Lloyd George called attention to the question of primary education in England and Wales, and moved a resolution affirming that the present system inflicted upon a large portion of the people grievances which called for the immediate attention of Parliament. The resolution was negatived by 204 votes to 81.

The leading Paris journals, accepting M. Delcassé's statement regarding the settlement of the Muscat affair, dwelt with satisfaction on the nature of that settlement. After Mr. Brodriek's statement in the House of Commons became known in Paris a semi-official note was issued, which we print on another page.

A semi-official note issued in Paris said that a settlement of the questions arising out of the Fashoda incident might be expected at a very early date—probably within a fortnight. The line of demarcation between the possessions of the two countries in the region in question had been virtually determined, and Great Britain had admitted in principle that France was entitled to a commercial outlet towards the Nile for her possessions on the Congo and the Upper Ubangi. It was the application of this principle which was now being negotiated, and confidence might be felt that a satisfactory result would be attained.

M. Paul Cambon, the French Ambassador, was the principal guest of the London Chamber of Commerce at a dinner, and in acknowledging the toast of his health referred to the influence of chambers of commerce as the best guarantee for the realisation of the common interests of the two countries. Nations like France and England were too enlightened to be hurried into war without having counted the cost; but in averting such calamities the task of the diplomatist was not easy. He had been strengthened that evening in the conviction that the commercial interests of the two countries were identical, and that baseless suspicions tended to the detriment of both. He urged the wisdom of a spirit of mutual forbearance and generous compromise on both sides.

**WEDNESDAY, March 8.**—In the House of Commons, on the motion of Sir J. B. Maple, the Service Franchise Bill was read a second time.

Sir H. Campbell-Bannerman, addressing a great meeting in Hull in connexion with the National Liberal Federation, said that such differences as there were in the Liberal party were mainly as to methods and opportunities, and very rarely touched principles. As to Ireland, he justified the demand of the Irish people for self-government, which he asserted would be beneficial to Ireland and not dangerous to the Empire, and on that basis the Liberal party would be true to the Irish



people so long as the Irish people were true to themselves, but declared it to be impossible that they should promise to put Home Rule under all circumstances in the front of their programme. In regard to foreign policy he disclaimed the bastard Imperialism of grabbing everything that came in our way, whether we could use it or not. The recent growth of expenditure under Tory administration was a serious question; during the last 30 years the expenditure had increased by over 44 millions, and retrenchment was sorely needed. Social questions that ought to be dealt with were those of temperance, the housing of the poor, and provision for the poor in old age.

Polling took place in the Elland Division of the West Riding of Yorkshire for the election of a representative in the House of Commons in the room of Mr. T. Wayman (L.) resigned. The candidates were Mr. C. P. Trevelyan (L.) and Mr. P. S. Foster (C.). Mr. Trevelyan (son of Sir George Trevelyan) was elected by a majority of 985, the Liberal majority at the general election being 306.

A Peking correspondent said that Russia insisted on the revision of the Northern Railway contract. The British Government had renewed its emphatic declaration that the contract could not be altered, and had undertaken to assist China if aggression should be attempted in consequence of China's refusing to accede to the Russian protest; adding that Great Britain would retaliate upon China if after this declaration the latter yielded to Russian pressure.

It was stated that the Navy Estimates for 1899-1900 would show an increase of nearly three millions upon those of 1898-99, the total which Parliament will be asked to vote being not far short of twenty-eight millions. It was proposed to add between 4,000 and 5,000 men to the existing strength. But the largest share of the new expenditure was for shipbuilding, repairs, etc.

## THE CALCUTTA MUNICIPAL BILL.

### ANOTHER CROWDED MEETING.

#### IMPORTANT SPEECH BY MR. A. M. BOSE.

#### THE BILL "MISCHIEVOUS, REACTIONARY, AND FATAL."

[BY CABLE, FROM OUR OWN CORRESPONDENT.]

CALCUTTA, March 6.

Another crowded and influential meeting of ratepayers was held here yesterday at the house of a rich ratepayer to protest against the Calcutta Municipal Bill.

Mr. A. M. Bose, Barrister-at-Law, presided. He characterised the Bill as mischievous, reactionary, and fatal to efficient municipal administration. He said it would leave permanent bitterness behind, stifle all healthy public spirit, and become a source of sanitary and political danger. Mr. Bose expressed gratitude to Sir Henry Fowler and other members of the House of Commons for supporting local self-government in the recent debate on the Address. Government sanction, he said, had been obtained for the Bill by misrepresentation of facts which should be enquired into.

Dr. A. P. Sarvadhikary, M.D., supporting the resolution showed that the suggestions of the Beverley Commission had been carried out.

Other speakers followed.

A resolution and a memorial condemning the principle of the Bill were adopted.

Great enthusiasm prevailed.—By Indo-European Telegraph.

## THE POONA MURDERS.

### THE WORK OF "LARRIKINS."

BOMBAY, March 5.

Vasudev Chapekar and Ranade have been condemned to death for the murder of the brothers Dravid at Poona on February 8, while Sathe has been sentenced to ten years' imprisonment for abetting the crime.—*Reuter*.

BOMBAY, March 8.

Balkrishna Chapekar, Vasudev Chapekar, and Ranade, the

two latter of whom are already under sentence of death for the murder of the brothers Dravid, were to-day all three found guilty of the murder of Mr. Rand and Lieutenant Ayerst at Poona, and were sentenced to death.—*Reuter*.

A correspondent writes from Bombay on February 18:—

The news of the recent Poona murders must have reached England, and probably a distorted version of the occurrence has been placed before the British public. A correct account may be useful. It is not necessary to recapitulate here the story of the notorious Jubilee assassinations. It will suffice to state that the brother of the man who was hanged for those assassinations (Damodhar Chapekar) is now awaiting his trial for complicity in them. This man's name is Balkrishna Chapekar, and the chief evidence against him is the confession of his late brother. The Indian police, it appears, were put on the track of these men by one Ganesh Dravid, an individual of a somewhat chequered and romantic career, who gave the information while he was in prison. On February 1 a letter from Ganesh Dravid appeared in the Bombay papers, in which he accused the Government of withholding from him half the reward which they had offered to the person who would give such evidence as would lead to the conviction of those who had murdered Mr. Rand and Lieutenant Ayerst. In the course of this letter, Ganesh Dravid said:—

It has been alleged that half the reward offered was reserved as Balkrishna Chapekar was not in the hands of the police. I admire the ingenuity of the argument, but cannot say the same thing about its logic. Why should I suffer for Balkrishna being as wary as the police were inept? After they had the clue and knew that Damodhar and his brother had something to do with the tragedy, it was their duty to see that the birds should not take to their wings. Anybody with even a grain of common sense will admit that the police blundered, blundered most miserably, in arresting Damodhar and letting off Balkrishna. Was it my fault that common sense was at discount with the officers conducting the investigation? Certainly not; I had supplied the clue and then my work was done. And yet for the culpable incapacity of the officers I am made to suffer; a sort of Jedwood justice indeed. Well, Balkrishna is now in the hands of the Police, and I think I am justified in claiming the other part of the reward. It required exceptional strength of character to come forward to denounce a countryman, and thus lay myself open to the charge of being called a traitor (the majority of people were sure to view the thing in this light), and yet I braved all this, and did what little I could to help the authorities.

On the evening of February 8, seven days after the publication of this epistle, Ganesh Dravid and his brother, Ramchandra Dravid, were enticed from their house, and, as they were walking with those who had enticed them, they were shot. Ganesh Dravid died the next morning, and his brother died on the evening of the same day. When the news of these murders spread, it was felt that the mystery of the Jubilee crimes had been deepened, and some Anglo-Indian papers, notably the *Pioneer* and the *Times of India*, plainly stated that these fresh crimes indicated beyond a doubt the existence of a widespread and dangerous political conspiracy in Poona. And unquestionably it had that appearance. The police, however, were active, and on February 4 they called to the police station a number of youths, who had been members of the athletic club the existence of which came to the public notice during the trial of Damodhar Chapekar, among them being Vasudev Chapekar, a brother of Damodhar Chapekar and also the brother of the man now awaiting trial for alleged participation in the Jubilee murders. While the police enquiry was proceeding in the police station, Vasudev drew from the folds of his clothing a revolver, and shot at a policeman named Ramji Pandoo, fortunately missing him. Vasudev was at once seized. He without any further hesitation confessed that he had murdered the Dravids, in order to prevent them from giving evidence against his brother, and as one English paper puts it, from motives of private vengeance. He further implicated others. In consequence of Vasudev's confession two young men, Sathe and Ranade, were arrested. These have also confessed to the murders of the Dravids and they are now waiting their trial. All the accused are lads, not yet out of their teens, and are of a dangerous "larrikin" type. The police have since searched their houses, and scores of pistols and daggers have been discovered. This is a plain narrative of the circumstances, and is it necessary to state that no one now in India attaches the slightest political importance to the acts of these young ruffians?

The remarks of the (Imperialist) *Globe* on February 10 may perhaps be instructively recalled:—

The fear is expressed in many quarters that the Poona outrages may be the result of some organised conspiracy. It would, as a matter of fact, be a subject for congratulation if they were, as indeed we hope they are. A conspiracy is in its very nature limited to comparatively few people, whom the Indian Government may be trusted to discover and punish.

This thirst for conspiracy is distinctly interesting. But it has not been gratified.



## THE MUSCAT "INCIDENT."

## "A SEVERE BLOW TO THE 'FORWARD' PARTY IN INDIA."

In our Parliamentary report will be found the most recent Ministerial statement regarding Muscat.

Here it may be convenient to give the text of M. Delcassé's statement in the French Chamber on Monday last, March 6:—

"Three weeks ago the English Resident, who is in the service of the Indian Government, repaired to Muscat on a man-of-war and summoned the Sultan to withdraw a concession made to us for a coal depot in one of the Muscat creeks. Under the threat of the English cannon the Sultan asked us to return the act of concession, which we naturally refused to do. The Sultan then declared that the concession was annulled. The Government of the Republic was confronted by two questions—one of substance and one of form. In substance, what grievance could be preferred against us? By the Treaty of 1862 France and England mutually undertook to respect the independence of the Imam of Muscat. France has now no more desire than in the past to impair that independence. She has always said so, and has no hesitation in repeating it. She does not aim, any more than, doubtless, England does, at creating for herself, indirectly and by separate compacts, a privileged situation, or at weakening to her own profit the force of the Convention of 1862. Ought the concession of a coal depot to have excited such alarms? England has long possessed a coal depot at Muscat. Could it be said that what England has been able to do without detriment to the Convention of 1862 would, if done by France, be a breach of that convention? The English Government, having been informed of the facts and of our intentions, has not been slow in recognising that the rights of England and France were identical, and that France could have a coal depot on exactly the same conditions as England.

"We are justified, then, in substance. There remained the question of form. A satisfactory solution could not be doubted. It is not at the moment when the two Governments are negotiating an African frontier in the same spirit of conciliation, and are seeking a durable solution, because the essential interests of the two nations will have been safeguarded, that the intervention, equally unbecoming and spontaneous, of an agent of which we had complained could be admitted. The Queen's Government have expressed to us their profound regret.

"I thank the Chamber for having left to the Government the duty of settling this affair and for allowing it time to do so. Whereas some journals—only a few, I admit—seized on the Muscat incident as an opportunity to announce a fresh *reculade*, as if they wished to enjoy beforehand a humiliation for their country, I thank the Chamber for having, by its silence testified its confidence in the Government. It sees that the satisfaction obtained has not been the less prompt or less complete for having been asked for quietly." (Loud cheers.)

In regard to the first portion of Mr. Brodriek's statement regarding Muscat in the House of Commons on Tuesday afternoon, down to the words, "We expressed no disapproval of the action of our Agent, which, indeed, was taken under our instructions," the following semi-official comment was issued in Paris:—

"It should be pointed out that, contrary to what has just been stated in the House of Commons by the Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, the act of the Sultan of Muscat in conceding to France a piece of land to be used as a coal depot does not carry the right to hoist the French flag, nor the liberty to build fortifications, and in declaring that the Government had not expressed disapproval of the action of its agent the Under-Secretary of State has not denied that it admitted the incorrectness of the proceeding and that it expressed profound regret for it."

The *Elclair*, commenting on the Muscat incident, said:—

How could Lord Curzon have ignored the treaty of 1862, on which France based her claim regarding Muscat? How could he so brutally oppose the exercise of a right which his own Government had guaranteed to us? He should have made enquiries of his chief, Lord Salisbury. Such an attitude, even though the satisfaction afterwards accorded should make us forget its galling character, is still very strange.

In an article on M. Delcassé's speech on the Muscat incident, the *Temps* said:—

After the explanations which have been given, and after the readjustment of the matters in question, there remains nothing of the Muscat incident except, on the one hand, the evidence (which is not useless) of the zeal, occasionally mistaken, of certain subordinate officials of her Britannic Majesty, and on the other hand the demonstration in every way salutary of the efficacy of the method at once precise, dignified, moderate, and firm, adopted by M. Delcassé in this instance as in many others.

The *Journal des Debats* said:—

The cloud which gathered over Muscat has dispersed. The

relations of France and Great Britain are not disturbed by it, and if they have been put to the test the result is, on the contrary, reassuring. As to the practical consequences, they will be what they ought to be. We shall have a coal depot at Muscat, exactly under the same conditions as Great Britain. This is all we wanted.

We take the following editorial remarks from the *Manchester Guardian* of Wednesday:—

Mr. Brodriek made a long statement in the House of Commons yesterday on the Muscat affair which was evidently intended to convey the impression that he was quite as pleased with the turn things have taken as M. Delcassé himself. It might hardly be worth while to disturb the nice equilibrium of satisfaction by further enquiries if nothing more than a coaling-station were involved. The partition of the world into coaling stations with their "back country" is a process that is now generally taken for granted, and exceptional circumstances are required to bring about a single incident in the process into notoriety. But in this Muscat affair a very important question of Indian policy was at stake, and it is worth while to examine a little more closely into the turn it has taken. Mr. Brodriek said yesterday that we expressed no disapproval of the conduct of our agent at Muscat, and that we hold his action in "substance" to be right. That sounds a great deal more impudent than it really is; and indeed it seems to have been generally taken as an official contradiction of M. Delcassé's statements on Monday. We cannot find any justification for this interpretation. What M. Delcassé said in the French Chamber was that France had obtained satisfaction on the question of "substance," and that the British Government had apologised on the question of "form." Mr. Brodriek now says that our agent was right in "substance," that is only another way of saying that he was wrong in "form," and that is what M. Delcassé said on Monday. And Mr. Brodriek goes on to explain why the Indian Government was wrong in "form," and why Lord Salisbury thought it civil to apologise. As long ago as last March the French Government obtained from the Sultan of Muscat a coaling depot. So long as no territorial rights were ceded, France and the Sultan, it is agreed, were at perfect liberty to make what arrangements they thought fit. But the British agent discovered, or fancied he discovered, that territorial rights were ceded. That would clearly be a violation of the Agreement of 1862 by which France and England bind themselves to respect the independence of the Sultan. The French Government, however, denied knowledge of any cession of territory; and if the British agent was right in saying that such cession had in fact been made, it was natural to suppose that the French agent had exceeded his instructions. Under such circumstances the usual course, as Mr. Brodriek says, would be to make representations to the French Government. What the Indian Government, however, did was to threaten to bombard Muscat if the concession were not revoked. This was a breach of international etiquette for which Lord Salisbury quite rightly apologised. The French agent exceeded his instructions, and the Indian Government committed a breach of international etiquette. That in effect is the gist of Mr. Brodriek's statement yesterday. We find nothing in it inconsistent with what M. Delcassé said in the French Chamber the day before. The present situation, then, is this—that both France and England find themselves steadfastly upholding the Treaty of 1862. France is to have her coaling station, but the Sultan is to concede no territorial rights, and France will, therefore, not be at liberty to use it for other than commercial purposes. The whole affair, it seems to us, has been brought to a satisfactory termination. The question, however, remains, What becomes of the "special" rights and obligations between the Sultan and ourselves of which Lord Onslow and Lord G. Hamilton spoke some time ago, and a consideration of which the Indian Government pays the Sultan a subsidy of £40,000? It was this point, if we mistake not, that Sir C. Dilke wished to have elucidated. Mr. Brodriek, however, told us nothing. The Treaty of 1891 between India and the Sultan binds the latter not to alienate any of his territory, and the former to render assistance when the Sultan gets into difficulties with his subjects. This arrangement, we should fancy, is a fairly satisfactory one so far as the Sultan is concerned; but it is not so obvious what the Indian Government receives in return. The present Viceroy of India, however, has written sentences which place this benevolent attitude of the Indian Government to the Sultan in a different light. In his book on "Persia and the Persian Question," Lord Curzon writes of the Sultan of Oman that he is regarded as a British dependency. "We subsidise its ruler," he declares, "we dictate its policy; we should tolerate no alien interference." I have little doubt myself that the time will some day come when, as these petty native States crumble before the advance of a friendly civilisation, a more definite possession will be required, and the Union Jack will be seen flying from the castles of Muscat." Hence that subsidy of £40,000 and the threat of bombardment. Hence, too, Lord Salisbury's apology for the excessive zeal of the Government in India. We are under an engagement with France "to respect the independence of the sovereigns of Muscat," and yet the present Viceroy of India in 1892 could call Oman "a British dependency" and look forward to the day when the Union Jack would fly from its castles. The same statesman seven years later threatens Muscat with bombardment because of a rumour that the Sultan had ceded a harbour to France—a cession of which the French Government has always repudiated any knowledge—and commits a breach of international politeness for which Lord Salisbury apologises. The result is that the Treaty of 1862 has been recognised as the basis of English and French relations to the Sultan; and that, it seems to us, although Mr. Brodriek studiously avoided the point, is quite inconsistent with the continued existence of "special" relations between the Sultan and ourselves, still more so with the British protectorate over Oman, and the virtual independence at present, but presently as Lord Curzon hopes, to become real, of the Sultan of Muscat. The result of the negotiations with France over Muscat is, in fact, to administer a severe blow to the "forward" party in India.



## AN INDIAN DEBATE AT OXFORD.

An interesting debate (writes a correspondent) took place at Manchester New College, Oxford, the other evening, under the presidency of Dr. Drummond, the Principal of the College.

Mr. WOODS, one of the senior students of the college, moved "that in the opinion of this house it is desirable that England should speedily retire from India." The mover sought to argue his case upon two grounds: (1) That England had no moral right to be in India, inasmuch as she was there only for her own gain, and her dominion was leading to the gradual but sure impoverishment of the Indian people; and (2) that Indians, as was proved by the success of the National Congress, being fairly educated, could be trusted to manage their own affairs more efficiently than the English were managing them. The mover made some apt quotations from Mr. Bright's speeches.

The motion was opposed by Mr. BIPIN CHANDRA PAL, who, on the motion of Professor J. Estlin Carpenter, Vice-Principal of the College, was given double the usual time allotted to opposers. Mr. Pal urged that, if for no other reason, at least because England had so emasculated the Indian populations that they were incapacitated to undertake the defences of their own country, England was bound in duty and honour to continue in India. He did not deny that at times they did feel the burden of foreign domination rather heavy to bear when Englishmen maltreated them, when they were called niggers and classed with the negroes, when they were abused by the Anglo-Indian Press; when, as frequently happened, their best men were insulted by members of the ruling race without cause or provocation, they did feel the galling yoke hard to bear. But nevertheless, no educated Indian wanted England to leave India. England had, he believed, a sacred mission to fulfil in India—to raise India to her legitimate place in the counsels of the nations. That was the principle of the best of the English administrators of India. England was in India by the decree of God. To discharge this sacred trust, however, England must change her present policy in India. Mr. Pal then referred to the recent retrograde measures of the Government of Lord George Hamilton, and concluded with an appeal to the House so to influence the Government of India that by wise, liberal, and sympathetic administration, Indians might be made real participants in the wealth, glory, and honour of the great British Empire.

Professor CARPENTER expressed sincere sympathy with the feelings and aspirations of his Indian fellow subjects. He said, however, that the growing poverty of the Indian people was not perhaps wholly or even very largely due to maladministration, but was also largely attributable to the enormous increase of population. He made a powerful appeal to the audience to rise to a proper sense of their responsibilities to the people of India; and declared that it was the ideal of England so to administer the affairs of India that the Indians might be trained thereby ultimately to administer their own affairs.

Rev. CHARLES TRAVERS (of Carlisle) generally supported Mr. Pal. He said that the Unitarian body had done a good thing in founding the Indian scholarships, which made it possible for educated Indians to come over to England and rouse, as Mr. Pal had been rousing, the English public to a sense of their sacred responsibilities to India.

Mr. HEM CHANDRA SIKKAR spoke in support of the opposer, and replied to Professor Carpenter's remarks on Indian poverty. Though population was increasing, India, he said, had still enough room and to spare for her growing populations.

Professor CARPENTER then moved an amendment to the effect that "this House, while recognising the good already done to India by England, thinks that larger scope should be given for the development of the people of that country by faithfully carrying out the repeated pledges of British statesmen, with regard to the employment of the educated Indians in the higher grades of the civil and military services, and a further expansion and development of the schemes of self-government already in operation.

The amendment was seconded by the Rev. CHAS. TRAVERS, and accepted by the mover of the original motion.

The PRESIDENT, in summing up the debate, said that it was a pity that Englishmen knew so little of the actual state of things in India. He was glad to think that the college over which he presided made it possible for Indian gentlemen like Mr. Pal, who knew the condition of their country and the feelings of their educated countrymen, to come over to England and not only help the students there but also enlighten the public outside the college on Indian questions, as Mr. Pal was doing by his lectures in the country. He expressed sincere regret at the "vulgar and insolent" way in which some Englishmen now and then treated their Indian fellow-subjects; but he asked his Indian friends when they went back to their homes to tell their people that Englishmen at home were not so; that large bodies of Englishmen always deeply sympathised with all the legitimate aspirations of the Indian people. At present there was a tide of reaction among a class of men, and retrograde measures might have therefore been adopted in India, like the recent Press laws; but that sort of difficulty

they had now and then to fight against even in England. Whatever reactionary statesmen, moved by an Imperialism that was vulgar and unreasonable, might do occasionally, he assured the House and his Indian friends especially that the heart of the great English people was always with them.

The amendment was put to the vote and carried unanimously.

## Imperial Parliament.

Thursday, March 2.

## HOUSE OF COMMONS.

## PAPERS PRESENTED.

East India (Staff Corps Officers).—Return presented—relative thereto (Address February 23; Sir Seymour King); to lie upon the Table.

East India (Income and Expenditure).—Return presented—relative thereto (Address February 23; Sir Henry Fowler); to lie upon the Table, and to be printed. (No. 80.)

## THE EMPLOYMENT OF LASCARS.

Mr. JOHN BURNS asked the President of the Local Government Board whether he could state the amount of cubical space insisted upon by the Local Government Board for each adult person living in registered common lodging houses;

Whether he was aware that the Lascar seamen employed on the P. and O. steamship "Caledonia," now lying in the Victoria and Albert Dock, had less than seventy cubic feet of space per person allotted to them;

Whether this dock was under the supervision of the sanitary authority for the Port of London;

And whether the Local Government Board had control over the Port sanitary authority; and if so whether the President of the Local Government Board would give instructions for the Port sanitary inspector to inspect the forecables of all P. and O. steamships, and insist upon the Lascar crews having proper accommodation provided for them.

Mr. CHAPLIN: The amount of cubic space which is allotted for each person in a registered common lodging-house is a matter to be determined by the local authority, and is not subject to the approval of the Local Government Board. I am informed that the amount of cubic space allotted to Lascars in the "Caledonia" is upwards of seventy cubic feet. The dock appears to be within the district of the sanitary authority for the port of London, and it is very doubtful whether the Local Government Board have any control in a matter of this kind, which is more within the province of the Board of Trade, to whom I understand other questions are to be addressed.

Mr. HAYLOCK WILSON: May I ask the right hon. gentleman whether the Port sanitary authorities have any control whatever over the space provided for seamen on board ship?

Mr. CHAPLIN: I cannot answer without notice, but I do not think so.

Mr. HAYLOCK WILSON asked the President of the Board of Trade if he could state the number of Lascars employed as sailors, firemen, coal-trimmers, boys, and assistant cooks on board the Peninsular and Oriental Steamship "Arcadia," which was due to leave London on March 9;

Whether he could state how many cubic feet of space was provided for each Lascar in the forecables set apart for their use;

Whether the said vessel was a British registered vessel registered in a port in the United Kingdom;

And whether the Lascar crew of the vessel had allotted to them the cubic accommodation as provided by the Merchant Shipping Act, 1894.

Mr. MACALEER and Mr. M'GHEE had similar questions referring respectively to the "Caledonia" and the "Sumatra."

Mr. RITCHIE: The P. and O. steamers "Sumatra," "Arcadia," and "Caledonia" are British registered vessels. The "Sumatra" is to carry 65, the "Arcadia" 132, and the "Caledonia" 157 Lascars in the capacities mentioned in the questions. The space allotted to each Lascar on the "Sumatra" is rather over 71 cubic feet, on the "Arcadia" 70.6 cubic feet, and on the "Caledonia" 79 cubic feet. There is thus in the first two cases rather less, and in the third somewhat more, space than is required under the Imperial Act. It will, perhaps, be for the convenience of the House that I should take this opportunity of explaining the position of the law as regards crew space. Under section 210 of the Merchant Shipping Act, 1894, each seaman or apprentice is to have appropriated for his use a space of not less than 72 cubic feet, and of not less than 12 superficial feet. For each contravention of this requirement the owner of the ship is liable to a fine not exceeding £20. If this were the only section operating the law would be clear; but it is not. Under the Indian Merchant Shipping Acts only six superficial and 36 cubic feet are required. Under section 125 of the English Act of 1894 the master or owner of any ship may enter into an agreement with Lascars, and the unreprieved provisions of an old Act of the fourth year of King George IV, specially empowering the Indian Government to make regulations with respect to the accommodation of Lascars, are safeguarded. The effect of these various enactments is that it is by no means clear whether the direct obligation in respect to crew space of the English Act or the Indian Acts obtains in regard to Lascars.

The effect of these provisions has been referred for the advice of the law officers of the Crown, and the Board of Trade are in communication with the Indian Government, through the India Office, with regard to the provisions of their law.

Mr. HAYLOCK WILSON: I should like to ask the right hon. gentleman whether, in the case of a vessel not providing the crew with the necessary accommodation in accordance with the law, the Board of Trade will disallow any deductions from tonnage.

Mr. RITCHIE: I have endeavoured to show that the law is by no



means clear, and that there is a certain section of an old Act of George IV which has not been repealed, and which enables captains of British ships, even sailing from British ports, to make arrangements with Lascars, in accordance with the regulations of the Indian Government. It is this obscurity which prevents the Board of Trade from taking up any position definitely at the present moment; but whatever may be the ship or the company concerned. In order to obtain the best advice they can with regard to the law the matter has been referred to the law officers of the Crown.

#### LIUTENANT-GENERALS IN INDIA.

Colonel WYNDHAM MURRAY asked the Under-Secretary of State for War whether it was the case that when the number of lieutenant-generals (cavalry and infantry) was fixed at thirteen there were only two lieutenant-generals' commands in India (exclusive of the Commander-in-Chief), but that now, since the new organisation of the Indian army, there were four such commands (exclusive of the Commander-in-Chief);

Whether some vacant lieutenant-generals' commands had lately been given to major-generals;

And whether, under these circumstances, it was proposed to increase the establishment of lieutenant-generals by two.

Mr. FOWLER-WILKINS. The answer to the first paragraph of my hon. and gallant friend's question is in the affirmative. Three commands as lieutenant-general have lately been given to major-generals, not because of insufficiency in the establishment of lieutenant-generals, but because the officers in question were considered to be, under all the circumstances, most suitable for those commands. It is not proposed to increase the establishment of lieutenant-generals.

Friday, March 3.

#### HOUSE OF COMMONS.

##### THE MERCHANT SHIPPING ACT.

Mr. HAYLOCK WILSON asked the President of the Board of Trade if he was aware that upon August 5, 1898, the President of the Board of Agriculture, replying for the President of the Board of Trade, stated that in every case of a violation of section 210 of the Merchant Shipping Act, the Board of Trade disallowed the deduction from tonnage.

And, whether, although the P. and O. steamship "Australia" did not comply with this section of the Act, she was allowed to sail without the deduction from tonnage being disallowed.

Mr. RITCHIE: Yes, sir, my right hon. friend quite correctly stated the position in replying to the hon. member's question on August 5 last, and the general instruction to the Board of Trade surveyors are to disallow deductions from tonnage when section 210 of the Merchant Shipping Act is not complied with. But, as I explained fully to the House last night, a conflict has arisen between the Imperial and the Indian law on this subject, and pending its settlement a deduction was not insisted upon in the case of the "Australia."

Mr. HAYLOCK WILSON asked the President of the Board of Trade if he was aware that the President of the Board of Agriculture, replying for the President of the Board of Trade on August 8, 1898, stated that the Board of Trade were considering the question raised with regard to accommodation for Lascars in order to ascertain precisely the state of the law; and whether nothing had been done in this matter until a few days ago.

And, whether he could explain why no steps were taken to fulfil the promise given to the House by the President of the Board of Agriculture.

Mr. RITCHIE: I am quite aware of the statement of the Government on August 8, 1898, that the Board of Trade were considering the question with regard to accommodation for Lascars, and the Department has been and is taking every possible step to fulfil the promise then made.

#### THE RUSSIAN TRANS-CASPIAN RAILWAY.

Sir ELLIS ASHMEAD-BARTLETT asked the Secretary of State for India, whether the Russian Trans-Caspian Railway had been recently extended from Merv and Sarakhs to Khush, within sixty miles of Herat;

And, whether her Majesty's Government would propose to the Amir of Afghanistan that the Indian Railway should be extended to Kandahar.

Lord G. HAMILTON: It is true that the Russian Trans-Caspian Railway has been recently extended to Khush, in Russian territory. As to the construction of railways in Afghanistan I can give the hon. member no assurance of the kind which he appears to desire.

The Amir has never shown any desire for the extension of railways within his dominions.

#### THE WAR BEYOND THE NORTH-WEST FRONTIER.

MAJOR RASCH asked the Financial Secretary to the War Office, whether it was proposed to add to the regimental colours of the corps engaged in the campaign on the North-West frontier of India, and in the campaign in the Sudan.

Mr. WYNDHAM: No recommendation has as yet been received from India in respect of the campaign on the North-West frontier. In respect of the Sudan campaign it is proposed to recommend to her Majesty that certain actions should be commemorated on the colours of the troops concerned.

Monday, March 6.

#### HOUSE OF COMMONS.

##### ACCOMMODATION FOR LASCAR SEAMEN.

Mr. HAYLOCK WILSON asked the Secretary of State for India if he could state whether a Bill was submitted to the Indian Government in 1893, having for its object the increase of accommodation on board ship of seamen employed on the coast of India to 72 cubic feet of space per seaman, and whether this proposal was abandoned in conse-

quence of the opposition of the Peninsular and Oriental Steam Shipping Company;

And whether a Copy of this Bill, with the petition submitted against it by the Peninsular and Oriental Company, would be laid upon the Table of the House?

Lord G. HAMILTON: No Bill on this subject was submitted in 1893; Bills were put forward in 1892 and 1896, but neither of them contained any proposal for an increase of the cubic space allowed to each Lascar seaman under the Indian law. The question had previously been carefully considered by the Government of India, who had placed the subject before a Select Committee for consideration; but the Select Committee decided against making the change in the Bill which was then contemplated.

Tuesday, March 7.

#### HOUSE OF COMMONS.

##### BILL TO REGULATE MINING IN INDIA.

Mr. HERBERT ROBERTS asked the Secretary of State for India whether he would state whether it was true that a Bill to regulate Mining and the Exploration of Minerals in India had been drafted by the Indian Government and would shortly be presented in Council; and if so, whether in view of the great importance of the question to British capitalists, he would lay a Copy of the Bill upon the Table of the House?

Mr. BODRICK, on behalf of Lord G. Hamilton: It is true that a Bill on the subject of mining has been drafted, and will shortly, I believe, be brought before the Legislative Council of the Viceroy. But to lay on the Table of this House a copy of a measure which is under discussion in that Council is contrary to the established practice, and would have the effect of transferring to the House of Commons a responsibility which by law rests, firstly with the Legislative Council, and secondly with the Secretary of State, who has the power of disallowing any measure which the Council may pass. I have already stated in this House that I do not think this would be right; and I cannot therefore undertake to do what the hon. member suggests.

##### MUSCAT.

Sir C. DILKE asked the Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs a question of which he had given him private notice, namely, whether the Government desired to make any modification in the recent statement to the House with regard to the affairs of Muscat, and whether it was the case that her Majesty's Government had expressed to France their profound regret at recent occurrences.

Mr. BODRICK: Perhaps the House will allow me to answer this question at some little length. The circumstances of the Muscat case are as follows. In the middle of March of last year the French Agent obtained from the Sultan of Muscat the lease or concession of a piece of land to be used as a coal depot. On the land so ceded, which was in a small harbour, some way from Muscat, the French Government would have been at liberty to hoist its flag and to build fortifications. No hint of these proceedings reached the British Agent until this year. As soon as they were known, they were at once declared by the British Government to be contrary to the treaty of 1862 and to the Sultan's special obligations to the British Government in respect of the assignment or alienation of any part of his territories; and the Sultan was required to cancel the lease. This he did, and the lease has been annulled. We expressed no disapproval of the action of our Agent, which, indeed, was taken under our instructions—(cheers)—and Lord Salisbury informed the French Ambassador more than once that in his judgment the British Government was absolutely right in the contention it maintained, and that it was impossible for us to recede from it. (Hear, hear.) With respect to the form of the matter, the statement of M. Delcassé is somewhat imperfect. He omits to mention that in November he was asked by Sir Edmund Monson whether there was any truth in the rumour of an acquisition of land on the littoral of Muscat, and he said that he had heard nothing whatever about it. He repeated the same statement a few days ago. It was, therefore, a case of action of the French local Agent in excess of the instructions he had received, and in such a case it is usual to bring the question to the knowledge of the Government concerned and secure its decision by diplomatic means, in order to avoid the publicity involved in a threat of bombardment. (A laugh.) While on this account Lord Salisbury, as he stated to the French Ambassador, would have preferred a less public mode of action, it is clear that no blame attaches to our Agent on the spot, who was not in a position to distinguish between the responsibility of the French Agent and the Sultan of Muscat on the one hand, and that of the French Government on the other, and we hold his action in substance to have been absolutely right. (Cheers.) By the convention between France and England of 1862 there is nothing to prohibit France from having a coal store at Muscat itself, as Great Britain has done within the terms of the convention, provided there is no concession of territory; and it is understood that the French Government will avail itself of this power subject to the above-named limitations.

#### PUBLIC MEETINGS ON INDIAN QUESTIONS.

##### THE WORK OF THE BRITISH COMMITTEE.

As has already been announced, Sir W. Wedderburn, M.P., will on Tuesday next address a meeting of the "Liberal Forwards" on "India in Parliament."

On March 20 Mr. Bipin Chandra Pal will address a meeting of the Carlisle Women's Liberal Association on India.

A lecturer on behalf of the British Committee of the Indian National Congress attended the annual meetings of the National Liberal Federation at Hull this week. Arrangements were made for the distribution of "literature" on Indian questions.

Mr. W. S. Caine informs us that he lectured on March 1 at Lambeth, and on February 22 at Clapham, on "England's Duty to India," illustrated with lime-light views.



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