India

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NOTES AND NEWS.

PARLIAMENT in the earliest hours of the new Session has not had much to say to India. But, as will be seen from the notices of motion printed on another page, Sir William Wedderburn intends in the debate on the Address to renew his proposal for a village enquiry, and Mr. Herbert Roberts will call attention to the financial questions connected with the British army in India.

We have already indicated that the *Friend of India* regards the new departure in famine policy foreshadowed by the Government's letter to the Local Governments "with extreme mistrust." So, we fancy, the *Pioneer* regards it, if we may judge from the way it writes round and round about the subject. The famine relief officer, "steering his way between Scylla and Charybdis," is a picturesque figure, no doubt; and a comparison or contrast of Indian and European pauperism might possibly prove instructive. But why does the *Pioneer* not hit the nail on the head? After all, it does hit one important nail on the head when it declares that "the only satisfactory treatment of such a disease [of the body politic as pauperism] is to lay hold of the sources of the disease and to stop them up." We hope it will enlarge on this theme in detail. The *Times of India* seems to go a little way farther, but evidently it is against the grain. Lord Curzon's letter is due to "the exceptional gravity of the outlook." And "when a country is being strained to the utmost extent of its financial resources philanthropic impulses must not blind us to the limitations placed upon the responsibilities of an administration for the welfare of the people in its control." But why are the financial resources strained? And dare Lord Curzon relax the effort to save the people?

The *Madras Standard* seems to speak under the shadow of the Sedition Acts. "Lord Curzon has been rather hasty, we are afraid," it says, "and we hope he will not press his views too much on the Local Governments." However, the meaning of our contemporary is sufficiently plain. The *Indian Spectator*, which is ordinarily so reserved, speaks out with refreshing emphasis. "There is only too much reason to dread, from the experience of Indian officialdom, that the circular letter will be interpreted as a bare mandate to reduce the expenditure on famine relief at all hazards." No doubt it will, unless counteracted by an unequivocal declaration of public opinion. At the same time our contemporary, always bent on finding good even in things evil, says the letter "calls prominent attention to the present economical position of the country." From the argument we quote one of two impressive sentences:—

> We feel satisfied that the magnitude which relief operations have assumed during the present famine is almost entirely due to causes deeper and more far-reaching than the soft-hearted extravagance of the system of relief or of the employees on relief works. There may be extravagance in a few places, but the general tendency is, if anything, towards excessive economy.
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> Every famine leaves the people less able to meet the next; and, therefore, every famine must involve a larger number in the dire necessity that alone sends them to seek Government aid than did the one preceding it. The same may be said of natural and social obligations. The point would seem to have been reached, even in this patient and long-suffering land, when these obligations, which are nowhere more faithfully performed, are strained to the verge of breaking.

The true point of view as regards famine relief is, not whether it is within the means of Government, but whether it is adequate to the calls made on it by the distressed.

Meanwhile, the question of how to prevent famines must receive our serious consideration, since our best efforts to relieve its victims have proved inadequate and beyond what we can afford. We earnestly trust that Lord Curzon will be equal to solving this grievous problem. Retrenchment, more reasonable apportionment of military expenditure, and more economical administration all round, may enable him to leave something in the pockets of the tax-payer on which he could fall back at a time of need.

In a long letter to the editor of the *Bromley Chronicle* (January 25), Mr. William Digby, C.I.E., presents a most weighty indictment of British policy in India in reference to the recurrent famines. "When the Viceroy of India speaks of the famine as 'terrible'," he says, "the suffering, present and prospective, must indeed be severe; official statements of this kind are, almost always, understatements." The famine, in his opinion, "is largely preventible, and largely caused by us, the rulers of India." It is one "of means, not of food." He asks two questions: (1) Why is it that, alone in the British Empire, India is continually in a famine-stricken condition? (2) Why, to widen the enquiry, is it that, among countries ruled according to civilised ideas, in India alone famine should have become chronic? He answers—as we have answered over and over again in these columns—(1) "a deep and deepening poverty, such as has never been before seen on so vast a scale"; (2) the lack of any one in authority, either in India or in England, who really goes to the root of the question why famines are increasingly frequent and increasingly terrible; (3) the increasing enfeeblement of the people through increasing poverty; (4) the destruction of the industrial system; (5) the monopoly of the external and internal trade of India by foreigners who have no abiding interest in the country in the sense of making it their home; (6) the "bleeding" of India to meet its obligations in England; and (7) the crushing expense of maintaining and pensioning "so vast an army of interested individuals." And he asserts firmly "that, with all the facts as to the growing distressfulness of the Empire before them, the Governments of India have, practically, done naught to remedy what is so glaringly wrong."

But look at the railways. Well, "the worst famines have been in the railway area, and the mortality has been equally high in the railway-traversed districts with those in which there were no railways." Irrigation, then? Well, "irrigation works, in some instances, have done exceeding great harm to the soil, and much mischief to the wealth of the cultivators." "Only one large good" has resulted from the Famine Commission of 1878, and that is the Famine Code. Referring to the "chopped hay" of Sir William Lee-Warner's recent lecture, Mr. Digby invites him, when he speaks next, to "adopt as his text the volumes printed (never published for general information, indeed refused more than once in the House of Commons) at the various Indian Government Presses in October, 1888, containing the results of the enquiry set on foot by Lord Dufferin, when Sir William Hunter's statement concerning the forty million of starving people in India, and other like remarks, were attracting much attention in England." We hope that insistent attempts will be made to force the Government to give these volumes to the public, on whom such a serious responsibility is now thrown. The specimens extracted by Mr. Digby are simply harrowing. Let the British public consider this:—

> *Even in a good year*, as was demonstrated by Lord Cromer in an enquiry made eighteen years ago, *there is not income enough in India to give every inhabitant sufficient food to maintain health and strength, and sufficient clothing for comfort and decency*, even if divided equally among the people. The facts which justify my saying this are facts which Indian authorities and the India Office will not publish or permit to be published.

Mr. Digby concludes that India cannot help herself. Help

"must come from England, if it come at all." The root of the matter is this: "the reserves of old time are no longer possible." And it lies with England to supply the deficiency now, and to set about a fundamental reform to provide for the future.

The Simla correspondent of the *Standard*, writing on January 4, gives a painful survey of the famine districts at that time, and forecasts yet more terrible suffering. The Meteorological Reporter of the Government of India "has stated that the present is the worst and most prolonged drought of the century," and all authorities are agreed that "there is no longer any doubt whatever that the country is entering on a period of famine of exceptional intensity, certainly much worse than that of two years ago, worse indeed than that which laid waste a large part of India during the later seventies." The Punjab province, though by no means the worst off, is "rapidly getting into a terrible state." In the unirrigated (and unirrigable) regions, "it has been impossible to sow the spring crops, while in many places the standing crops have not been worth cutting." Water, too, is beginning to fail. "The cattle almost everywhere are emaciated; in many districts they are simply dying of starvation." The correspondent expected the numbers on relief to increase tenfold in a month or two. As regards Rajputana:—

> The official report states that in many parts cattle are dying, while the surviving beasts are emaciated, and are being killed for food. Fodder is everywhere scarce, while there is great difficulty in getting even drinking water in many places. Bands of starving people from this part of India have invaded Bhopal, Gwalior, and the British districts of Delhi, Bulundshahr, and Hissar. . . . . The death of cattle in countless thousands from want of food cannot be helped.

All this in spite of the utmost efforts of Native States, assisted by the experience of British officials and helped by the Government of India with money loans.

In Sindh, Gujerat, and Kathiawar, no rain, and the greatest possible anxiety. Thus:—

> The cattle are dying in thousands for want of food, while the suffering amongst the people is very great. In Kathiawar, a country composed mainly of some hundreds of petty Native States, the general condition is deplorable. A private letter received a few days since from an officer engaged in relief in the central districts paints a melancholy picture of man and beast alike in the Peninsula. "About 300,000 cattle have died from the beginning of the famine till now, this being but a portion of the total loss of cattle in the Kathiawar States. In Porebandar alone over 150,000 cattle have died from starvation."

Nor is the outlook much, if at all, better in other parts of the Bombay Presidency:—

> Not only is grain at famine prices, causing great destitution, but the continued absence of rain is creating a water famine also. Not a single district has had a drop of rain for weeks, nor is there any sign of its advent, and it is, in consequence, impossible for cultivators to work on their holdings. In almost every district the condition of the cattle is reported as bad, in many they are dying wholesale. In Sholapore the distress is acute, while an increase of crime is reported from some parts of the Presidency.

But it is in the Central Provinces that the famine is most severe:—

> Here, indeed, the situation is already more acute than it has been within the memory of any of the inhabitants. What it will be two or three months hence it is terrible to contemplate. There has been no rain whatever. The water supply is rapidly diminishing throughout the province, and there is everywhere great scarcity of fodder. It is only in a few districts that even a moderate yield of wheat is expected. Elsewhere things are hopeless. It may well be doubted whether, during the course of the next month or so, the distress will have not so enormously increased as to make it almost a matter of impossibility for the local government adequately to deal with it.

"The fact is," the *Standard* correspondent concludes, "the extent of the famine is much larger than the Government anticipated." And he expressly attributes "the extreme anxiety of the Government," and the recent letter to the local governments, to the evident loss of the cherished surplus. We suspected as much.

A petition addressed to the Viceroy in Council by inhabitants of Mehmedabad taluk, Zilla Kaira, Gujerat, throws a lurid light upon the sufferings of the people. The petitioners say that there has not been such a calamitous famine in their district for nearly a century and a-half. Their fodder is done, and they have even stripped the trees of their leaves to supply its place; and the Government has not imported a straw for the dying cattle, being apparently under the impression that there was no need. "Almost all of us come under the category of poor classes." The rest have sold their ornaments for what they would fetch, and the poor classes, who have neither gold nor silver ornaments to sell, are obliged to part with their brass and copper vessels and utensils for daily use. As for food:—

> Some of the men of the poorest classes have, because of the fact that they have to bring leaves or grass roots to feed their cattle, not been able to go on relief works graciously opened by the Government. They do not get corn to eat, and something they must have to fill their belly, and so they buy powdered husks of rice (*Kushaki*), mix it with a little of corn, and eat it. In ordinary times, this formed part of food for cattle, and was sold *three pounds* for one pice (one sixty-fourth part of a rupee). Now one can get only three-fourths of a pound of kushaki for one pice.

The mango, mahura, and rayan trees have been cut down and sold to get food, and it will take five years to replace them. The people petition the Government to remit the land revenue this year, or at least to defer payment till the money can be raised. The Kaira district, they say, "has been more heavily assessed as regards land revenue than any of the sister districts on account of her supposed fertility of land and the richness of her cultivators." There must be something wrong here, on one side or the other, or both.

The *Amrita Bazar Patrika*, while warmly praising Mr. Dutt's address at the Lucknow Congress, nevertheless points out another cause of famine which can never be too strongly insisted on—the drain of wealth to Europe. It asks how a country can prosper which has to pay a tribute of, say, twenty millions sterling per annum; and it draws attention to the different way in which the other possessions of England are treated. All the Home Charges of the Colonies are paid by the Mother Country, while India has to pay even the wages of the porters employed at the India Office. And yet the Colonies are much richer and better able to find the money than India is. This, as our readers know, is the fundamental fact of India's economic position under British rule, upon which Mr. Dadabhai Naoroji has so tenaciously and so ably insisted. It is to be hoped that the Royal Commission on Indian Expenditure will give it due prominence in its Report.

The Committee of the National Congress appointed to consider the Punjab Land Alienation Bill unanimously condemned it and asked the Government to institute an enquiry through a special independent Commission. With this the *Tribune* heartily agrees. It appears that local committees have been formed with the same object in some districts, and that it is proposed to establish a Central Committee at Lahore. The *Tribune* further declares that while some of the peasantry, thinking the Sirkar is going to suppress the money-lenders, are assisting by looting their houses, others, and those the more intelligent, are as much against the proposed legislation as the money-lenders themselves. The Bill is notable as a confession of the evil which the Government admit has been wrought in the past by disregarding Indian customs. It also shows by the great volume of opposition it has encountered how difficult it is to undo the evil that has once been done.

It must not be supposed that the opposition is confined to Indians. Sir William Rattigan thinks that from the agriculturist's point of view the Bill will be "a hardship rather than a blessing." Sir William believes that the true remedy will "be found in a policy of more liberal advances to agricultural owners by the Government of India," by which he believes the usurer would gradually be made to disappear. Again Mr. T. C. Morton, a barrister, writing in the *Tribune*, sums up the probable results of the Bill under six heads: (1) It will reduce the value of land by destroying free competition. (2) Mortgagees will lose the security on which they have lent money. (3) Peasants will no longer be able to borrow money in times of distress, for the land which is their only capital will no longer have a marketable value. (4) Where a small holding is sub-divided among many heirs, so that the share falling to each is insufficient to maintain him and his family, he will find it more difficult to sell, and so will be hampered in finding another means of livelihood. (5) There will be a temptation to agriculturists to become money-lenders. (6) The Government will find it very difficult to realise revenue in money.

The *Pioneer* attempts to refute Mr. Dutt's contention that one cause of Indian famine is the loss of village industries, so that the mass of the people depend on agriculture alone. It asks if England is in a bad condition because it depends on manufactures alone to the neglect of agriculture. But England is prosperous owing to the variety of her industries. If cotton had been her only manufacture what would have been her state during the American Civil War? If the *Pioneer* would turn its attention to Ireland, it would see some striking evidence in support of Mr. Dutt's thesis. It may be quite true that a "division of labour" is "as good for nations as for individuals," and yet also true that where a nation depends on one industry, and one liable to great fluctuations, the economic position of that country is very unstable. Mr. Dutt's charge of over-assessment the *Pioneer* meets by denying the fact. Adverting to his remark that the Government should not take more than a sixth, or at most a fifth, of the produce, it quotes the Famine Commissioners to the effect that the land-tax throughout British India was *estimated* by them to be from 3 to 7 per cent. of the gross out-turn. But this estimate, which includes Bengal—excluded by Mr. Dutt—cannot by itself be taken as a refutation of the specific instances which he gave of places where the land-tax was much higher. It is satisfactory, however, that the *Pioneer* says:—

> If it were true, we should say let it be proclaimed at any cost, so that the evil may be attended to and redressed as soon as possible.

The *Friend of India* gives an account of one of the many evil after-effects of famine, the serious spread of *Kans* grass in many of the villages of Bundel Khund. So serious is this that in the Lalitpur settlement the Government of the North-West Provinces has, wonderful to relate, slightly reduced the assessment, which as a rule always rises. *Kans* is a tall, thin grass, green in the rainy season and yellow in summer, the roots of which become so large and tough as in the end to prevent the passage of the plough. After six or seven years another grass named *sonta* ousts it, to be in its turn supplanted by fodder grasses, when the land is again fit for cultivation. *Kans* makes its appearances when tillage deteriorates, as in time of famine, and as few fields escape it soon reduces the village where it appears to penury.

The grievance of the Indians in being debarred from the higher appointments in the Indian Army is, as the *Amrita Bazar Patrika* says, of a different nature from the other grievances which the Indians endure. In every other department, whatever exclusions they still suffer, they have made great advances in the forty-two years that have passed since the Mutiny. An Indian can be a Divisional Commissioner, nay even a Judge of the High Court; but in the Army, "whatever his experience and ability, he must bow down to the authority of the rawest English stripling, just snatched from his mother's apron strings to lead experienced soldiers on to victory." And to make this all the harder to bear, it was not always so; for in the early days of British rule Indians could rise to much higher positions in the Army than are now open to them.

Our readers will remember the indignation of the *Pioneer* at the cruel treatment of some Lancers by villagers because they had shot a boy when out buck-shooting. The *Pioneer* prophesied that it would soon be unsafe for soldiers to go near the villages. This seemed a new view of the timid Indian peasant; and now the *Pioneer* admits that it is not a true one. Here is what it says:—

> In speaking some days back of the brutal injuries inflicted by some villagers on a man of the 16th Lancers, we mentioned that other disturbances between Natives and soldiers had occurred in the neighbourhood of the Pur Camp. Now that some details of these cases are before us it would appear that the people were not to blame in either instance. Each row was one of a familiar type, with outraged female modesty in the background, and a good deal of uncertain evidence and unsustained charges in the fore. But though under these circumstances there were no convictions, it is unfortunately no matter of doubt that the soldiers were the responsible parties.

If an Indian paper had erroneously imputed blame to British soldiers, how great would have been the indignation of the *Pioneer*. It is to be hoped that in the future our contemporary will remember its own error—its ridiculous error, in view of the character of Indian villagers—and learn to be modest in its reprimands to others.

The Coroner complains in the columns of the *Times of India* that the Bombay Common Prison is overcrowded. It was constructed to hold 150, and it contains 371 prisoners, some of whom are awaiting trial and therefore unconvicted; 81 are suffering from relapsing fever. The Superintendent's reply contains two curious arguments. It is not an answer but a serious aggravation to the charge to admit that the overcrowding has been going on for many years; and it is a new use of the theory of over-population to say that it is not only the prison but the whole Presidency of Bombay that is overcrowded. Mr. Mackenzie is on firmer ground when he points out that in the year ending last July the health of the prisoners was extremely good, in spite of the heavy mortality outside. The immediate overcrowding he attributes in part to the number of beggars committed of late. Moreover, it is said that the space is greater than the regulations require for 150 prisoners. Still, when every allowance is made, it would seem impossible to justify the crowding of 371 persons into a building constructed for 150.

General praise has been bestowed on Mr. Justice Ranade's address at the Social Conference. His plea for union in public work between Moslem and Hindu was especially appropriate at a time when the Mahometan element had been represented so much more fully than usual in the National Congress. Even the *Pioneer*, while ready enough to use the Conference as an occasion for comparisons unfavourable to the Congress, repudiates any wish for discussion between the two creeds. After criticising Mr. Ranade's review of Indian history, it says:—

> But while different opinions will prevail about the past, all who have an interest in the future will have one hope, even against hope, and that is the hope of Mr. Justice Ranade. Of all the difficulties which in Upper India lie in the path of the social reformer the difficulty of rival creeds is the most stubborn and the most baffling.

We have referred on a previous occasion to the opinion expressed by a section of Sir William Wedderburn's constituents in Banffshire upon his opposition to the present unjust and unnecessary war. It is gratifying to learn that at a meeting of the General Council of the Banffshire Liberal Association held at Keith on Monday last the following resolution was enthusiastically carried:

> That this meeting of the General Council of the Banffshire Liberal Association desires to record their deep appreciation of the high character of Sir William Wedderburn and of the honest and straightforward manner in which he has so faithfully discharged his duties as the representative of the county of Banff in Parliament. Sir William's never-failing courtesy to all sections of the constituency has been conspicuous; and, while regretting the difference of opinion, which is one of form more than one of substance, with regard to his vote against supplies to carry on the present deplorable war in South Africa, this meeting expresses its unabated confidence in Sir William Wedderburn as their representative in Parliament.

"This resolution," says the local Tory journal, "was put to the meeting and carried amidst enthusiasm. Out of forty present there was only one dissentient."

A Cambridge correspondent writes:—It would interest your readers to know that Mr. R. Narayanan, of King's College, Cambridge, has obtained the Member's Prize for an English essay on "The Influence of Montesquieu on Political Thought." The prize was not awarded last year. Mr. Narayanan passed his Indian Civil Service Examination this year and got the highest number of marks in English composition. He also took a first-class in the Historical Tripos last June, and has carried off several college prizes for English essays, etc.

We learn that a Committee appointed by the Council of Legal Education have under consideration the question of the desirability of appointing a lecturer on Hindu and Mahometan Law. It should be remembered (says the official notice) that on two or three former occasions lectures were given on these subjects, but they had to be discontinued because the number of students who attended was so small. In order to assist the Committee in making their report, students who would undertake to attend the lectures are requested to write their names upon lists provided for the purpose, and to state for how many terms they would attend. We trust that there will be an encouraging response to this invitation.

THE PREVENTION OF FAMINE.

ABSORBED as public attention is in the war, there is little disposition to take account of other calamities, but the rapid increase of famine in India is at last breaking down this barrier of indifference. Even amid the clash of arms, the cry of the starving is heard, and day by day that cry is growing louder. How serious the position is the people of this country do not yet realise. The horrors of the last famine stood out in bold relief amidst the rejoicings that celebrated the sixty years' reign. Now we have our own troubles. Yet the present situation is much worse than that of 1897. Already there are three and a-half millions on the relief works, and the trouble is still in its beginning. Want of water is added in many districts to want of food. The cattle are dying, and the long trains carrying their hides to the seaports tell the tale of present misery and future impoverishment. This mortality of beasts has spread to the Punjab, where horses worth 100 rupees are being sold for 15, and many which could find no purchaser have been shot to save their keep. In some districts it has been found impossible, owing to the want of water, to open relief works on a large scale. In others the opening of works has been abandoned for fear of cholera; for in that famine-stricken land plague and cholera continue to rage. And all these sufferings have to be borne by a people who only three years ago passed through another famine which was declared to be the worst of the century. The ravages of that time have not yet been repaired, and the peasant, struggling on with fewer beasts and diminished resources in every way, finds himself face to face with a new famine of even greater intensity. But if the people of this country do not realise the gravity of the situation, the same cannot be said for the Indian Government, though the advantage to the sufferers is doubtful. So serious does it appear to the authorities at Calcutta that they seem to fear that their whole resources may be unable to cope with it, and that recurring expenditure on famine relief may drag India down to bankruptcy. At least they have in a Resolution insisted that relief-workers should receive only the allowance necessary for the barest subsistence and that it is no part of the Government's duty to succour distress. The prevention of actual death from starvation is the most that they can attempt. It is but a short time ago since the last Famine Commission almost censured the Bombay officials for their too niggardly dispensing of relief, and recommended payment on a more liberal scale; and now the Government of India suggests that the people are flocking to the works so early because they have been demoralised by the lavish expenditure of the past. This comes perilously near an abandonment of the war against the effects of famine—that war on which the Government has so prided itself and which it has thought so strong an answer to its critics. It shows that with the quick recurrence of famine the task of relief may become a burden too great to be borne. Yet beyond relief the Government do not go. It would almost seem as if they thought it impious to enquire into any cause behind the failure of the rains. That is enough for them and being obviously beyond their control leaves them nothing to do but to struggle on feeding the hungry till such time as the visitation passes away, or the distress becomes too great for their resources. But in view of the fears which now beset the Government, is it not time to consider the question of prevention?

It has been repeated over and over again in the pages of INDIA that a failure of the rains is only the occasion not the cause of famine. Such a failure brings a bad harvest, but if there is a store of grain or the money to buy food there will be no famine. That is a result of poverty. There is food enough in the world, but the Indian peasant cannot buy it; nor does he any longer store up the produce of good harvests as a security against evil days. The result is that a failure of the rains plunges him into distress—all the sooner if he has barely recovered from a previous period of want. Therefore the problem that is before all those who are responsible for India's welfare, whether as officials of the Indian Government or as members of the Imperial Parliament, is to undertake no less a task than the prevention of famines in India—a task already practically accomplished in Bengal, and therefore perhaps not so impossible as some officials would have us believe. We shall no doubt be told of the fertility and other natural advantages of the lands on the lower Ganges, but in the last century these did not save Bengal from the ravages of one of the worst famines recorded. What has been done for Bengal may be done, in the same or in other ways, for the rest of India. Let all those who are responsible be up and doing. But the member of Parliament or official person in this country who is anxious to do his duty to India will naturally plead that he is ignorant of Indian life and that the interference of ignorance may well lead to disaster. It is quite true that he is in most cases ignorant of the causes of Indian poverty, but this ignorance he shares with the great mass of Anglo-Indians. Ignorance is only an excuse for inaction till knowledge can be obtained. Those who urge resolute action to abolish this scourge of India are far from advocating a leap in the dark. They may put forward their own theories as to the poverty of India, but they proclaim their anxiety that those theories should be brought to the test of facts. Now how is this to be done? Well, Sir William Wedderburn has put forward a plan which is at once practical, economical and easy to work, which is especially adapted to India and is on the lines of the most successful investigations elsewhere. He proposes that certain villages should be selected in different parts of India, and that each should be subjected to an exhaustive examination by a Commission composed partly of officials and partly of non-officials, of Europeans and of Indians. These Commissions could be named by the Provincial Governments, and as they could work simultaneously no long time need elapse before they were able to report. Those who are acquainted with Mr. Charles Booth's great work on "London Life and Labour," and the success with which he used a minute investigation into certain selected streets in order to vivify and reduce to order the social phenomena of an immense city, will not need to be told how potent an instrument such special enquiries are. Indeed it is being more and more recognised that such investigations are necessary in order to give statistics any real meaning. In India the method is particularly easy of application, for there it is particularly easy to find typical villages—in fact, so great is the similarity in any one district that one chosen by lot would in most cases afford a good example. As Sir William Wedderburn has said: "The village community is the microcosm of all India."

Some believe that the result of such an enquiry would be to show that over-population is the cause of Indian poverty. It is almost as satisfactory as attributing famine to a failure of the rains, since it lays all the blame on Providence and practically shuts the door on human intervention. But the known facts certainly do not support the theory. Bengal, the most thickly peopled part of India, has long been free from famine. The population of the whole country increases at a slow rate—·94 per cent. per annum if Burma be excluded—much slower than that of many other countries. If it be true that India cannot assimilate this very moderate increase of population, then no better argument could be advanced in favour of the most drastic reform. In that case there must, indeed, be something rotten in the state of Denmark. But there are other reasons for the poverty of India. The people, owing to the fall of the village industries, depend more and more on agriculture. Now a community supported by one industry alone is evidently in a very unstable condition. Again, India sends a vast sum to England every year for Home Charges, interest on debt, pensions, etc., or even as private remittances without economic return; and the effect of this is, as J. S. Mill has pointed out, the same as if it were in name as well as in reality a tribute; that is, it raises against India the price of all commodities she imports and lowers that of her exports, so that, to take one example among many, every sack of corn imported into India in time of famine costs more than it would if there were no tribute. Further, India, which is perhaps the the poorest of civilised countries, is blessed with the most expensive of Governments. As a result it has to submit to a crushing load of taxation. And as some four-fifths of the inhabitants gain their bread by agriculture, it follows that the land-tax or rent paid to the Government forms a most important item in the Indian Budget. That land-tax—save where there is a permanent settlement—rises at each re-assessment which takes place sometimes every thirty, but sometimes every fifteen years. And it has already grown so heavy in many places that it is crushing out the life of the people. Until it be reduced there is

little hope for the prosperity of the rayat. It has been denied in some quarters that the evidence we already possess is sufficient to support these views. But this does not touch us. We demand further enquiry. We ask for a Commission to examine into selected villages. Those who refuse or obstruct enquiry must bear the blame if the evidence is insufficient to show the true causes of famine; they must also bear the blame if famines continue to recur. On all those who fail to do their utmost to promote enquiry there will rest a terrible responsibility.

"A SUBORDINATE PROVIDENCE."

ON Wednesday morning there appeared in the newspapers a copy of correspondence between the Lord Mayor of London and the Secretary of State for India on the subject of British action for the contribution of British relief to our fellow-subjects now afflicted by famine in India. Prompted by the Viceroy's melancholy and despairing speech in Council, the Lord Mayor wrote (January 23) to Lord George Hamilton offering to open a famine relief fund, "if your lordship thought a Mansion House collection for the Indian famine sufferers might be of assistance." The collection, said the Lord Mayor, re-echoing with courtly discretion Lord George's own sentiments, "can hardly be expected to reach the splendid results of 1897 or 1877"; but still "there are many charitable people throughout the country who would contribute, and who are much concerned at the present condition of things in India." Six days later (January 29) Lord George Hamilton penned his acknowledgment of the Lord Mayor's proposal. Why did he wait all that time, knowing as he did the awful state of more than 60,000,000 of the people in his charge? "I have been in communication with the Viceroy of India upon the subject," he said. Can any rational person imagine that he had not been in communication with the Viceroy on the subject before, or that he was unacquainted with the straits of the Viceroy at least as well as the Lord Mayor was on January 23? However, the point of communication appears to have been an exceedingly subordinate one. "In the circumstances," he said, "Lord Curzon tells me he proposes that India instead of Great Britain should be the centre of collection for the appeal, and on the 16th of next month he proposes to hold a public meeting in Calcutta for that purpose." Would the Lord Mayor, then, kindly co-operate with the Viceroy, and on the 16th publicly announce his intention of opening a fund on these lines? Better late than never, of course; and a fortnight will give our South Africa generals another chance of raising the spirits of the British public and loosening their purse-strings. Any more humiliating disgrace is not likely to be branded on the British name by any British statesman of the Imperial brood—excepting always the genius of Mr. Chamberlain.

Let us see how the matter has been handled. A Reuter's telegram, dated Calcutta, December 29—a full month before Lord George Hamilton yielded his consent to the Lord Mayor, and then only with a postponement of a fortnight further—six weeks, therefore, before the date fixed by Lord George Hamilton for the opening of a British fund—reported that the persons in receipt of relief were "almost three millions at the present time." On January 5, a telegram from the Viceroy stated the numbers, with some show of precision, at 2,748,000; and a further telegram from Calcutta on the same day gave 3,000,000 in round numbers. The *Times of India* (December 23) had already pointed out that the numbers receiving relief were "considerably higher than those for the same period in the famine of 1896-97." Everything pointed to a famine of even greater severity than the famine of only three years back; and by January 5, the proportion had risen still more ominously. Yet Lord George Hamilton gave no sign. On January 9, however, the *Times* published a letter from Mr. Samuel Smith, M.P. (which we reprinted in our issue of January 12), pointing out the significance of the famine reports, and taking account of our complications in South Africa, but asking "Would it not be wise and timely to start a Mansion House Fund for the sufferers by the Indian famine?" The very next day an opportunity of declaring himself was positively thrust upon the Secretary of State. And what did he say? At the banquet given by the Association of Chambers of Commerce of the United Kingdom to Sir Stafford Northcote on January 10, he announced that he had decided that it would be inexpedient to make an appeal to the British public for relief of the famine (INDIA, January 12, page 13). The decision would, in face of the facts, require a strong reason to support it. What was Lord George Hamilton's reason? "At the present moment," he said, "the whole public mind is entirely absorbed in the war in South Africa, and I think it would be very unfortunate if a public appeal were made and if, owing to the exceptional circumstances, it were to meet with an inadequate response." Such is Lord George Hamilton's estimate of the Imperial responsibilities of this country, and of the Imperial spirit of this people. It is humiliating, degrading, dishonouring—a libel on us all. But, taking him on his own grounds, we asked (January 12): "Even if it were inadequate, would that be more unfortunate than making no appeal at all?" Other newspapers, both in London and in the country, took up the point, and earnestly urged an appeal; and we are especially glad to acknowledge the keenness of Lancashire. But the well-drilled Ministerial Press in London took the cue, some of them even refraining from chronicling the bare weekly figures of the famine ravages. Such is their conception of Imperial duty! The letters in the newspapers, however, continued to increase and to become more insistent in tone. Then on the day before the opening of Parliament, the *Times*, well primed with the purposes of Lord George Hamilton, had the cool assurance to "hope the Lord Mayor may see his way to set on foot, without unnecessary delay, a famine fund for India." As if the Lord Mayor had not professed his readiness six days before! Further, it was now "convinced that such a fund would be generously supported." Why it even had the insolence to say that "it is one of the privileges of the Press, in such a conjuncture as the present, to endeavour to widen the popular horizon." As if the people (and a section of the Press) had not been endeavouring to widen the horizon of the *Times* and of officialdom. Then on the morning of the opening of Parliament, Reuter foreshadows official action. And, finally, next morning, lo! the publication of the correspondence between the Lord Mayor and the Secretary of State, and the opening of the Fund fixed for February 16. "Behold, my son," as Chancellor Oxenstierna exclaimed, "with how little wisdom the affairs of this world are managed!" He might have added: "with how much theatrical chicane, and how much hollow insincerity!"

On the present occasion we have no space to recall the similar dilatoriness of Lord George Hamilton in 1897, and the similar attempts to compel him to action. But any one that does not know, or forgets, the circumstances will find the pitiable history set forth in our columns of the proper date (INDIA, vol. viii (1897), pp. 24, 33-35, 37, 47, 51, 88, 90, 149, 163, 338). On that occasion, Tory journals joined with Liberal in goading him to his plain duty, and the unanimous Resolution of the Indian National Congress (including an authorisation to the President to cable to the India Office and to the Lord Mayor "urging the immediate opening of public subscriptions") broke down his stubborn reluctance. "In the whole history of India," wrote a valued contributor ("An Independent Politician," INDIA, vol. viii, p. 48), "there has been nothing, in my judgment, more cynical than this assumption that it was the Indian Government that discovered the exact time when public benevolence should be invoked, and that the first steps in the change of policy were due to its own initiative. As a matter of fact, it had been resisting the public appeal for voluntary action; it had been concealing from itself the gravity of the famine; it had been allowing famine to affect the craftsmen and the weavers, its indirect victims; and it had been struggling vainly with distress in many regions before it had the manliness and honesty to assent to humane co-operation and to allow the generous hearts of the people to have some share in a noble work." Let Lord George Hamilton and the *Times* take that home to themselves now, under circumstances still more scandalous. We ought indeed to say "three times as scandalous," and for this reason: that whereas at the opening of the Mansion House Fund in 1897, there were only 1,200,000 persons in receipt of relief (Viceroy's telegram of Jan. 15, INDIA, vol. viii., p. 88), there are now about three times as many, and there will inevitably be far more than three times as

many by February 16. The situation may be studied with advantage by those who tell us that history teaches by examples.

In 1896-97 Lord George Hamilton not merely overbore Lord Elgin, but actually got him to disclaim the necessity of assistance. "The Government of India," wrote Lord George to the Lord Mayor (December 21, 1896), "recommend that for the present no action should be taken in this country to raise subscriptions." Lord Curzon is a Viceroy of sterner stuff. Though he has preserved silence unduly, he yet uttered a lamentable wail in his Legislative Council, which stirred up the Lord Mayor to address Lord George Hamilton. Contrasting 1897 with 1900, and gloomily referring to South Africa, "now," he deplored, "we have to suffer and struggle alone. . . . If war absorbs all interest, so does it exhaust the national generosity. I am afraid it is too much to expect that England can again come to our rescue this time as she did so splendidly in 1897, or that, so far as can at present be judged, we can anywhere outside this country expect more than passive sympathy for our misfortunes." Shame upon such craven estimate of British spirit and capacity! The British public were not adequately informed of the real state of Indian distress; but the moment they obtained an inkling of the calamity, they clamoured for a vent to their generous sympathy. Otherwise they would have been shamed into action by the public meeting in Calcutta to raise money for a South Africa fund, and by the fact that India has already contributed war aid to the extent of at least £40,000. This, too, in spite of her present distress, and her perennial poverty. But now that the *Times* has discovered that "the war furnishes, not only no reason, but even no adequate excuse, for neglect of the needs of India by this country," what are the grounds of its new views? The demands of the war, it now thinks, "have not touched, and are not likely to touch, more than the veriest fringe of the wealth of England." What does Lord George think of this deliverance?" "Call you that backing of your friends?" And what does the public think of it? Again, the *Times* "believes it would even afford a wholesome diversion of the public thoughts" if "any large number of people" could be brought to recognise that the sufferings inflicted by famine on "vast multitudes of people to whom we almost bear the relation of a subordinate Providence" are "greater than any which civilised warfare can entail." The leading journal of Imperial Britain ventures to recommend a solemn and imperious duty on the ground that it might afford "a wholesome diversion of the public thoughts." Could a more incredible libel be couched in more heartlessly cynical language? Nay, the inept and shocking futility is repeated: "it will do us good to be compelled to think of other troubles and other anxieties than those which are now falling so heavily upon numbers of English homes; and our emotions as well as our charities may find wholesome outlets among the millions of our starving fellow-subjects." "The war," indeed, "great and manifold as are its claims, should not be suffered to exclude from view the other duties and responsibilities of a world-wide Empire." Heaven help "a world-wide Empire" that rests upon such a pitiful spirit as this! Suppose we contributed about a million sterling, as we did in 1897. Would even that amount "touch the veriest fringe of the wealth of England?" But it is no question of a million. It is a question of Imperial duty and of national self-respect. No fault lies with the British public—except that they do not sweep from their path the blind and recreant guides that spoil even their generosity by robbing it of its grace, and threaten to lead them to the loss of a "world-wide Empire."

OUR LONDON LETTER.

WESTMINSTER, Thursday.

ACCORDING to the fickle barometer of Parliamentary applause the two most popular men in the House of Commons to-day are Mr. Balfour and Sir H. Campbell-Bannerman. At the opening of the Session last Tuesday members were in no mood to applaud anybody. Or perhaps, for once, they were in a mood to discriminate. Who, that witnessed the incident, can have forgotten the theatrical entry of Mr. Chamberlain when, in October last, the House met to provide the sinews of war? The apparition with the crimson despatch-box and the blood-red orchid lingers in the memory like a reminiscence of the Walpurgis. A roar of acclamation drowned the astonished laughter of a scoffing minority and the hero of the coming conquest donned his premature laurels with a smirk of self-approval. But that was four months ago. Much water and some blood have flowed down the Tugela since then. On Tuesday Mr. Chamberlain slipped into the House of Commons with a humility that was almost acrobatic. He came so silently that the first the House knew of it was his appearance on the Treasury Bench by the side of Mr. Chaplin. There was no ready fugleman to raise a welcoming cheer, so that he who but the other day held Parliament in awe was grateful for the countenance of the President of the Local Government Board. Those who understand the subtleties of the language of flowers may be interested to know that on this occasion Mr. Chamberlain's orchid was snowy white.

Sir Michael Hicks Beach had a reception almost as chilling, but as the Chancellor of the Exchequer has never courted applause, the absence of it in his case was the less striking. Like Mr. John Morley he came in straight from the lobby and marched up the floor of the House, glancing, as it seemed, on the packed Ministerial benches with a somewhat defiant expression. Presently Sir H. Campbell-Bannerman arrived and the silence was broken by the first cheer of the day—a wholehearted, ringing cheer bespeaking the confidence of an appreciative party. The outburst put the Tories on their mettle; for on the arrival a few minutes later of Mr. Balfour they raised a shout of welcome which was perhaps intended to assure that much-abused philosopher that the party organs had done him grievous wrong. Later in the evening, it is true, this ebullition of loyalty was succeeded by a spasm of distrust. Mr. Balfour always shows to disadvantage in the earlier stages of a debate. His attempted vindication of the Government was one of the feeblest of his first night performances, marred as it was by a straining after dialectical effect and a singular inability to grasp the real significance of recent criticism. After all, the warmth of his reception had merely been the tribute of a social coterie to an engaging personality.

If the Unionist leaders in the House of Commons were coldly received they were at least spared the bitter experience of the Prime Minister in the House of Lords. The encounter between Lord Salisbury and his predecessor in office has been the sensation of the week. It was both unexpected and dramatic. Quite in the Cecilian vein of early days Lord Salisbury had satirised the simplicity of mind which ascribed to Ministers some degree of knowledge of affairs in South Africa antecedent to the war. Lord Kimberley had just been telling him that the Cabinet must have known of the accumulation of armaments by the Boers. "How on earth were we to know?" was the quaint retort. "They smuggled their guns through as agricultural machinery and as locomotives, and concealed their ammunition in piano-cases and tubs." With the same whimsical humour the light-hearted Marquis doffed aside the suggestion that the Prime Minister was to be held responsible for the speeches of individual members of his Cabinet. "Had I known that we were to be confronted with these quotations," he informed the leader of the Opposition, "I could have had the speeches bound and placed on the Table." Strange to say, the peers failed to see the joke. They neither applauded nor laughed at their chief's witticisms, but on the contrary reserved their applause for Lord Rosebery's passionate rebuke of the amazing and untimely levity of the First Minister.

Neither of the combatants in this sharp little duel was looking at all well. Lord Rosebery, indeed, spoke with fire and animation, but till the moment when Lord Salisbury rose his appearance was that of a man wearied of strife and perhaps of himself. During the earlier part of the debate, which was certainly not inspiring, the ex-Premier sat below the gangway with downcast head, giving no attention, so far as could be seen, to the business of the day. Lord Salisbury's flippancies acted on the lethargic figure like a shower-bath. If the Prime Minister had had eyes to see he might have been warned by the alert and indignant attention which his observations commanded from Lord Rosebery to assume a loftier tone. As it was he remained unaware of the impending avalanche till it overwhelmed him. The suddenness and vigour of the attack may have accounted for Lord Salisbury's almost collapsed appearance. He is unquestionably ageing very rapidly, and the failure of discretion betrayed by his first speech this Session has by no means tended to diminish the uneasiness with which

politicians have been watching recent developments of Ministerial policy.

While India has a place in the Queen's Speech, in which sympathetic reference is made to the famine and a tribute paid to the loyalty of the Native chiefs, the subject up to the time of writing has scarcely been mentioned in debate. Sir H. Campbell-Bannerman prefaced his comprehensive and vigorous indictment of the Government's mismanagement in South Africa with one or two sentences on this pressing theme, but owing to the precedence necessarily given to Lord E. Fitzmaurice's resolution of censure it is only too probable that the question of the famine may escape extended discussion. Mr. Herbert Roberts, however, has given notice of an amendment to the Address demanding relief to the Indian Exchequer from some portion of the large military expenditure incurred by the maintenance of 75,000 British troops as an Indian garrison, and continuing thus: "And whereas nearly ten thousand troops have been withdrawn for service in South Africa, which has been justified by the spontaneous and universal manifestations of loyalty evoked throughout India by the war, we pray that 20,000 of the British troops stationed in India shall in future be treated as a reserve force of your Majesty's Empire in the East generally and shall be charged upon the Imperial revenue." Sir W. Wedderburn's amendment praying for a village enquiry will be found elsewhere.

When the division on the vote of censure is reached the Irish Nationalists intend to abstain from voting. Their view, as expressed in an amendment of which Mr. John Redmond has given notice, is that the war is both unnecessary and unjust and that the time has come when it should be brought to a close on the basis of a recognition of the independence of the Transvaal and the Orange Free State. The terms of Lord E. Fitzmaurice's motion are declared to be inconsistent with the principle of the Irish proposal, and accordingly the reunited party do not intend as a body to take any part in the division. They are, however, quite at one with the bulk of the Liberal party in demanding a fresh investigation into the alleged complicity of the Colonial Office in the Jameson Raid. It is understood that Sir William Harcourt intends to make an important statement on this subject next Monday, when he is expected to take part in the debate on the vote of censure. An impression prevails, for which there is probably good ground, that he will not only explain the course of action pursued by himself and Sir H. Campbell-Bannerman as members of the South Africa Select Committee but will declare that the time has now come when an end should be put to the mystery of the suppressed correspondence.

We have probably heard the last of the unscrupulous attempt on the part of a section o the war press to brand the Chancellor of the Exchequer as a scapegoat. Sir M. Hicks Beach has shown that he intends to stand no nonsense. His vigorous repudiation on Wednesday of personal or departmental responsibility for the Cabinet's shiftless policy in South Africa was received with general cheering, and so was Mr. Sydney Buxton's declaration that he for one had never believed for a moment the "scandalous aspersions" brought against the Chancellor by his more than candid friends in the press. Whether Lord Lansdowne will be equally fortunate in the coming trial of strength between the War Office and its critics remains to be seen. The perfunctory speech with which he favoured the House of Lords on Tuesday gave no great promise of personal strength of will, but on the other hand the Prime Minister made it clear that he has no intention of offering up a single colleague as an oblation to the Yellow Press.

NOTES FROM BOMBAY.

THE NEW FAMINE POLICY.

[From an Indian Correspondent.]

Bombay, January 13.

The first severe pinch of the prevailing famine is beginning to be felt in all the afflicted tracts. It is a certain index of what may occur as the weeks pass by and the summer approaches. The Government of India seems to be already scared at the prospective cost of relieving the distress of the hungry and the starving. In my last letter I briefly referred to the Resolution, or rather Circular Letter, addressed by that authority to the various Provincial Governments, expressing its opinion that famine was being relieved with a most liberal hand and that it was essential they should economise in the State expenditure. In its nature this is a preliminary expression of opinion and an earnest of what the Government of India is likely to do a little later. We need not be surprised if before another month passes, say, by February 10, when the Budget for the coming official year will be practically ready for treatment in his own bureau by the Finance Minister, we are informed that the State has taken a new departure in the matter of famine relief, and that on the score of State economy. Meanwhile it may be said that the Circular Letter, published far and wide, has not met with any approval from the public at large. On the contrary there is universal dissatisfaction with it which is in no way diminished by any extenuating pleas on behalf of the Government of India. There has been no conclusive evidence to establish the theory to which that authority has strangely committed itself. Between 1862 and 1897 there have been four famines. But one never heard of anything like liberality, let alone prodigality, in connexion with famine relief on any occasion. The famine of 1862, which has been ably described in the report of Colonel Baird Smith, was the first in which anything like a serious attempt was made to relieve the starving. That report is a gruesome one in its details, and one must leave the reader to look into them to learn for himself how miserably the State endeavoured to realise the magnitude of the calamity. As to the Orissa famine, which overtook the country in 1866, the less that is said the better. A more ghastly tale of distress and death was perhaps never recorded within the annals of British India. During the first two famines of the last half of the nineteenth century it is admitted alike by friends and critics of Government that it fell miserably short of its duty, and that there was nothing like a judicious expenditure on the relief of the poor and the starving. The far from benevolent policy pursued by the authorities of the time was the subject of most unfavourable criticism in and out of Parliament.

The next famine was that of Behar in 1876, during the Viceroyalty of Lord Northbrook. It was he who, warned by the ineptitude of his predecessors during the two previous visitations, showed great earnestness and liberality in the effort to mitigate distress. Rice was imported at any cost, and later had to be re-sold at a nominal price. The order was to save life at any price. As a consequence there was necessarily great waste both of money and of food grain. Fallacious estimates of supply had been made. But whatever the history of the Behar famine, it may be said to be the only one in which public funds could reasonably be said to have been squandered. Even in 1874 the Indian Government had hardly learned to organise famine relief on a systematic and sound basis. It was the years 1876 and 1877 which first brought Government face to face with the force of public opinion. Then relief was organised to a satisfactory extent, though not without previous parsimony of a most lamentable, nay inexcusable character. Not before hundreds of thousands of people had died in the United Provinces and their bones had grimly told their dismal tale of mortality was anything like regular relief works taken in hand. It was the public spirit and courage of the late Robert Knight, who made a special visit through the North-West Provinces and Oudh, that first aroused public attention to the fact. Similarly, it was the tour made by Mr. Digby in Southern India, and his own courageous campaign against the authorities, and the stern opposition of Dr. Cornish to the miserable policy of the one pound famine ration, of which that "Famine" baronet, Sir Richard Temple, was the chief apostle and sponsor, that brought about a better state of relief organisation in Madras in 1876. The history of that severe famine is writ large in the pages of the Famine Commission of which Sir Charles Elliott was the Secretary and Sir James Caird the most independent non-official member.

So far then, whether we take the famines of 1862 and 1866, or of 1876-77, we are driven to the conclusion that there was no such thing as liberality in the administration of relief. The niggardliness of the Government was rather the theme of angry criticism and even denunciation. India owes to the Famine Commission of 1878-79, and notably to Sir James Caird, the institution of the Famine Code which embraces the broad principles of relief. These recommendations were for the first time practically carried out during the famine of 1896-7. A full and fair trial was given to the Code over vast tracts of the country then visited by the calamity. But not a word was said as to that famine campaign having been carried

on upon an extravagant or even liberal scale. Not even the second Famine Commission, which was specially appointed to enquire into the defects of the original famine Code, as tinkered by the one of 1893, had anything to say on the score of extravagance. Thus the present Circular Letter of the Government of India comes as a great surprise to the public. It is a bolt from the blue. People have not yet recovered from the effects of this strange Circular which, for the first time, and without any evidence, tells us that expenditure on famine relief has been far from economical. In my last letter I referred to the able articles on this subject in the columns of the Calcutta *Statesman*. Since then almost the whole of the Indian Press has reviewed the Circular and has challenged the Government to state the facts upon which it relies. But though all have spoken unfavourably of the Resolution, none has been more outspoken in its candid and vigorous criticism than the *Statesman*. The mischief done by the Circular is likely to assume serious proportions during the coming months. It is an open invitation to those on famine duty to be as niggardly as possible. And knowing as we do how the entire official hierarchy in India is nowadays inoculated with the "mandate" virus, we can forecast the immediate future of famine relief. The Government plea is a startling one. The *Statesman* is not only surprised at it but points out the inconsistency of the Government. Only a few years ago it authoritatively declared that owing to improved facilities of communication and to the other protective measures that had been adopted, the days of great famines in India might be regarded as past, and the sums provided annually for famine insurance purposes might be correspondingly reduced. Says the *Statesman*: "We always regarded that declaration as absurdly optimistic; but it would be still more absurdly pessimistic for the Government to-day to commit itself to a conclusion that it could be well founded on the supposition that the real state of the case was the very opposite of that which the declaration we refer to assumed it to be." Practically, there is not a shadow of excuse for the new policy announced. If there be no excuse, then what may be the ulterior reasons? Can it be that part of the monies which the Indian Government now proposes to save, by its niggardly (not to use a stronger word) policy on famine relief, are to be utilised for another purpose? Can it be that it means to spend the funds on some new adventures and enterprises of a secret nature? Or is it that it wants all the money to build up its gold reserve on which it has set its heart, thanks to its own ill-considered currency nostrum? Evidently there is something serious behind which needs to be brought to light. The next Budget may lift the curtain. If not, it will be the duty of Parliament to question the new policy and try to sift the causes which have led to it. But who in Parliament cares for India so long as that wretched Transvaal war, the fruit of the unrighteous agitation of the gold gamblers who have had the ear of the Cabinet, absorbs the attention of the English nation? Poor India! Who will redress your woes, and who will wipe away your tears of distress?

THE FAMINE IN INDIA.

OVER 3,563,000 PERSONS ON RELIEF.

A MANSION HOUSE FUND AT LAST.

The Secretary of State for India has received (Jan. 29) the following telegram from the Viceroy on the subject of the Famine:—

Good rain has fallen again throughout North-Western Provinces and Oudh, and Punjab. Sowings recommenced in Punjab, but more rain is needed there. Situation not improved anywhere else, and distress is increasing in Bombay, Central Provinces, and Rajputana. Number of persons in receipt of relief:—Bombay, 805,000; Punjab, 147,000; Central Provinces, 1,491,000; Berar, 260,000; Ajmere-Merwara, 109,000; Rajputana States, 232,000; Central India States, 120,000; Bombay Native States, 331,000; Baroda, 63,000; North-Western Provinces, 1,000; Punjab Native States, 1,000. Total, 3,563,000.

The following quasi-official announcement appeared in the newspapers of Tuesday last (January 30):—Reuter's Agency states that in consequence of the serious destitution now prevailing in India definite steps are being taken for the purpose of opening up a charitable fund for the alleviation of the distress, and it is understood that the proposals of the Lord Mayor to the Secretary of State for India on this subject will shortly lead to a definite announcement being made in Parliament with regard to the inauguration of an Indian famine fund at the Mansion House.

Reuter's Calcutta correspondent telegraphed on Tuesday: "The proposal to open a famine fund in England has produced an excellent impression."

ACTION BY THE LORD MAYOR OF LONDON.

The following correspondence (published in Wednesday's newspapers) has passed between the Secretary of State for India and the Lord Mayor on the subject of the famine in India:—

The Mansion House, London, January 23, 1900.

Dear Lord George Hamilton,—I read with great concern last week the speech of the Viceroy of India on the subject of the Famine, from which I gathered that both the area of the distress and the number of people affected are larger than on any previous visitation. The Viceroy pathetically referred to the absence of that benevolent help from the Mother Country which has so materially aided the efforts of the Government in past famines, and rightly attributed that abstention to the great movement in progress throughout the Empire to alleviate sufferings attendant upon the war.

If your lordship thought a Mansion House collection for the Indian famine sufferers might be of assistance—though it can hardly be expected to reach the splendid results either of 1897 or 1877—I should have no hesitation in opening a fund, but you would have to send me a letter giving details and particulars to enable me to make an appeal to the public.

There are many charitable people throughout the country who would contribute, and who are much concerned at the present condition of things in India.—Believe me, dear Lord George Hamilton, yours very truly, ALFRED J. NEWTON, Lord Mayor.

The Right Hon. Lord George Hamilton, M.P.,
Secretary of State for India.

India Office, January 29, 1900.

My Lord,—Since I received your lordship's letter of the 23rd inst., in which you so kindly offered to initiate a fund in this country to assist in alleviating the distress caused by famine in India, I have been in communication with the Viceroy of India upon the subject.

The universal sympathy and generosity shown in 1896-7, when a national appeal was made for a similar object, resulted in so large a sum being collected and transmitted to India that it became possible throughout the whole of the famine-stricken districts to associate with the relief system established by Government supplementary methods of assistance supported by private funds. The machinery at work by which this immense mass of subscriptions was obtained was spread all over this country, and included every form of benevolent, religious, and charitable agency.

Unfortunately, the conditions under which an appeal can now be made are widely different. Public attention is concentrated and absorbed in the war going on in South Africa, and in providing not only for the wants and suffering of those fighting for their country but also for their wives and families at home. It is impossible in these circumstances to expect a response to an appeal in this country for an Indian Famine Fund in any degree commensurate with that made three years back, even though the dimensions of the famine are as large and the sympathy for the suffering of our Indian fellow-subjects is as keen and deep-rooted as before.

I know, however, that there are very many individuals and associations in this country who would gladly subscribe to such a fund if the channel through which subscriptions should pass to India were clearly indicated to them.

Both the Viceroy and I attach the very greatest importance to the co-operation of your lordship in the appeal which it is necessary to make, but, in the circumstances, Lord Curzon tells me he proposes that India, instead of Great Britain, should be the centre of collection for the appeal, and on the 16th of next month he proposes to hold a public meeting in Calcutta for that purpose.

If your Lordship would kindly co-operate with the Viceroy, and on the 16th publicly announce your intention of opening a fund on these lines, you would be conferring a benefit upon the inhabitants of the famine-affected districts of India, for which the Government of India and all those interested in the welfare of the Indian Empire would be deeply grateful.—Believe me, yours truly,

GEORGE HAMILTON.

The Right Hon. the Lord Mayor of London.

The Mansion House, London, January 30, 1900.

Dear Lord George Hamilton,—In reply to your letter of yesterday, I concur heartily in the course suggested, and shall very willingly co-operate with the Viceroy and yourself in raising funds in this

country for the relief of sufferers by the famine. I feel sure that the Lord Mayors and Mayors of England, Ireland, and Wales, and the Lord Provosts and Provosts of Scotland, will most gladly associate themselves with me in making a successful appeal, and that the clergy and ministers of religion will give their congregations an opportunity of contributing to so good a cause.

Much as the sufferers by the war demand our sympathy, the grave distress now prevailing among so many millions of our Indian fellow-subjects makes an equally urgent call upon the benevolence of the Empire, and to that call I am persuaded a bountiful response will be forthcoming.—Believe me, dear Lord George Hamilton, yours very truly,

ALFRED J. NEWTON, Lord Mayor.

The Right Hon. Lord George Hamilton, M.P.

SOME OPINIONS OF THE BRITISH PRESS.

MR. FREDERICK GREENWOOD.

In the course of an article upon "African Wars and Indian Famines," printed in the *Westminster Gazette* of January 26, Mr. Frederick Greenwood, after referring to the recent speeches of Mr. Ibbetson and Lord Curzon, said:—

For delivery *in camerâ* Lord Curzon's speech was the most natural and proper thing in the world. For publication in the newspapers, which must be taken to include the vernacular Press of India, it could hardly have been intended. It is true that there would have been no harm in acknowledging that an exceptional call upon every Englishman's purse, by gift or taxation, must greatly diminish the hope of help for India. There was even a good reason for publishing such an acknowledgment: to do so was preparing the people of India for strict economic regulation in dispensing relief. But even so, a simple statement of the hapless coincidence of two great misfortunes would have been enough. It is not as if the members of the Viceroy's Council themselves needed more. They hardly needed so much, indeed; wherefore we must suppose that this picture of England with her back turned upon a famine-stricken India, an India left "to suffer and struggle alone" while Britain broods upon her own unexpected anxieties, was drawn for the contemplation of the public in general. It is picturesquely but not wisely done. But being done it cannot be undone; and now England has to do what would not have been neglected upon a less despairing and a less surprising appeal.

Famine in India, said one of the greatest of her servants, will one day break down the Indian Government. For the Indian Government has been compelled to make the combating of famine a part of its business. But famine is and ever has been constantly recurrent in India; and the thousands or millions of people saved from death during one visitation breed so many additional victims to be provided for at the next. That has become a well-proved difficulty, and it grows according to arithmetical promise. But it is unavoidable. It must be endured; and is no more to be put by on this occasion than another. Whether so much can be done as heretofore when the need was less appalling I do not know; but neither do I know why not. The duty is what it was, to call upon it is sharper than ever before, and—if we must think of South Africa—with a far better right to be answered than the cry of a mongrel multitude of Outlanders starving for the franchise. And considering how many Indian traders and others are watching affairs in South Africa on the spot, considering the natural effect of the Viceroy's speech on the famine, and considering a typical piece of news to be quoted presently, there are particular reasons for showing, I think, that we still have bread to break for the Queen's famishing subjects in India. The little piece of news referred to just now is only this—but there is something in it to the purpose. It comes from the Calcutta correspondent of the *Times*: "The movement under which Indian regiments are contributing a day's pay to the Transvaal War Fund is spreading. The Sepoys are acting quite on their own initiative in subscribing."

But the ways and means of help for India? Lord Curzon was right when he said, "If the war absorbs all interest, so does it exhaust all generosity." All or nearly all generosity is exhausted by the war, no doubt. Open a public subscription list for the Indian calamity, and partly, perhaps, because it is so enormous a misfortune, so entirely beyond all hope of adequate relief, little success should be expected. Then, irregular as the proceeding may be, and signally inconvenient with the prospect of a shilling income-tax, the Treasury must "part." Why, when we are spending millions by the score, thousands and thousands for the mere mistaken detention and over-hauling of foreign ships—why may we not add to the bill of the year a million or so for so good, so dutiful, so wise a purpose as this? Sixty millions added to the debt or sixty-one, does it matter so much? Does it matter so much when we think of the purpose to be served or the duty to be shirked? Few of us out of the offices of her Majesty's Treasury can think so.

THE "SPEAKER."

In the obsession of the public mind it is little wonder that the cry of distress from India has not yet excited any general notice. The Viceroy in addressing the Council on Friday week, took it for granted that England would be unable to repeat in this crisis the liberality of 1897. We believe that Lord Curzon did an injustice to our national sense of responsibility. The *Manchester Guardian* advocates the opening of a Mansion House Fund, and points out that if help is to be given, no time is to be lost in taking action. It will be a curious satire on the pretensions which inspire almost every Imperialist's peroration, if the dependency which alone justifies the misleading title of Empire as applied to British possessions is to be left to bear the burden of famine without British help. No doubt it is far more agreeable to display your patriotism by spending your charity on horses for the Yeomanry or socks for the soldiers, and thereby making the Government's bill and difficulties lighter, than by spending it on the relief of the victims of famine, and living in an unwelcome obscurity amongst your neighbours. Fashion determines the ends, as it regulates the scale, of private munificence. The names of a couple of Dukes and a cheque from Lord Rothschild ensured an endowment to the Gordon College at Khartum. Make the Prince of Wales Colonel of the Imperial Yeomanry, and there is no danger that that auxiliary arm will lack money or equipment. How absorbing is this spirit may be judged from the *Times'* correspondent at Calcutta. "The grave situation arising from the famine is of entirely secondary interest as compared with the war. Donations in men and money are being daily received towards the war fund and the equipment of Lumsden's Horse." This mental detachment is scarcely creditable to Calcutta. India has already suffered for the Jingo follies of the Government. The frontier wars were a heavy charge on her resources. She was obliged by this Imperialist Ministry to pay for the maintenance of the Indian regiments in the Sudanese campaign on the conclusive plea that the Khalifa might make himself master of the Suez Canal. There is a fine field at home for the benevolence of Calcutta, and if the Empire cannot find men, horses, and money for a war with the two Republics without diverting that benevolence from the needs of sixty millions of starving Indians, it is high time to put up "the shutters in Downing Street." No Imperialism can claim to call itself "sane" if it ignores the obvious moral of the events of the last few years. If empire has so far outstripped the governing capacity of its rulers that the Jameson Raid was neither prevented nor punished, and that its resources are strained to bursting point in a war with the two Republics, it is surely high time to apply in practice, and not merely to recall in a peroration, Lord Rosebery's solemn warning of three years ago against further expansion. And no Imperialism can call itself "Liberal" which forgets that the devotion of her administrators does not extinguish the debt which the nation owes to the helpless Indian. (January 27).

THE "STATIST."

The Government is exerting itself to give all the relief possible. Its officers are working zealously to carry out its policy, and the wealthy Natives of all ranks are helping the poor. But it is clear that the disaster is of such unparalleled magnitude that all the efforts of the Government and of the charitable will be taxed to the utmost to prevent an appalling loss of life. Under these circumstances, it behoves everyone who has any influence upon the course of affairs in India to exercise the greatest caution, lest matters should be made worse by unwise action in any department; especially, the greatest care should be taken in regard to the currency. Money is scarce and dear, as it naturally must be at this time of the year. The Government is not getting in the revenue as it usually comes in: and therefore the Presidency banks cannot expect to hold as large Government balances as they in ordinary times do hold during the next three or four months. On the other hand, the outlay of the Government is very heavy. As stated above, the relief works to the end of March will absorb at least three crores. And if matters grow worse the expenditure may be even heavier; while, unfortunately, we cannot look for an end of the famine with the month of March. Under these circumstances, it is of the utmost importance that the Government should do nothing to make the money market more disturbed than it is, or in any way to affect the course of trade. (January 27.)

THE "INVESTORS' REVIEW."

With such an appalling calamity confronting them one cannot help expressing astonishment at the efforts being made in India to raise troops of Volunteers—whites, of course—for service in South Africa and to obtain subscriptions towards the cost from Native Princes and wealthy men. Wednesday's *Times* contained the news that the number of people in receipt of famine relief was 3,483,000 and on the same page we find the statement that the Mahárája of Bikanir and the Mahárája of Darbhanga "have subscribed liberally" to the expenses of getting up Lumsden's Horse, the troop of Volunteers which is to be sent off to South Africa on the 6th of next month. Also the total sum collected, including subscription for the equipment of Volunteers, had now reached £30,000. The Nawab of Murshedsbad had given 2,000 rupees with his best wishes. On the following day further news of the same description is published, evidently with the idea of impressing the British public with a false conception of the motives dictating these subscriptions from Natives. There is a meanness about the whole thing that words fail us to describe. Some secret pressure must have been put upon the Natives, whether from Court influences here or from the Colonial Office we cannot say, in order to obtain these subscriptions. The same sort of thing is going on in regard to this South African war as prevailed during the season of contemptible touting for that wretched abortion the Imperial Institute. Wealthy Natives are being worried into giving "charity" doles to help the British Empire, poor, distressed entity that it is, to crush the independent farmers of South Africa. And they are being pressed to do this through the Viceroy at a time when every rupee they can spare ought to be devoted to keeping their own fellow-countrymen alive. Can we look upon exhibitions of toadyism and charity-mongering of this description as an indication that the British Empire is strong and likely to endure in the hearts of those composing its citizens? Assuredly not. These subscriptions and volunteers and presents of horses amid professions of the profoundest loyalty can only be accepted as indications of our decadence. They are the product of sinister influences at present hidden but soon to be revealed to our everlasting disgrace. (January 27.)

THE "TIMES."

In the presence of this great misfortune the Government of India is addressing itself with vigour and success to the task of grappling with the problem before it: and its organization for the relief of famine has been so far perfected in the course of the last quarter of a century that no Native need perish if he will only apply for help in time. English officers have faced disease and death in the work of carrying aid to the famine-stricken districts with as much heroism as their brethren in South Africa, and with far less prospect of either honour or reward. The Native princes and the wealthier and more intelligent members of the Native community are zealously co-opera-

ting in the good work, and the loyal interest with which they are watching and, within the narrow limits set to their assistance contributing to the progress of the British arms has only added to their desire to take their full share in alleviating the distress of their suffering countrymen, and to avoid those appeals for British help which, in other times, would certainly have been made and as certainly responded to. As the Viceroy said on the 19th inst., in 1897 the attention of England, almost of Europe, was turned upon suffering India, hundreds of thousands of pounds were contributed by generous hearts and eager hands, and the whole external world assisted in the alleviation of Indian distress. Now, he continued, India has to suffer and to struggle alone, not because England or the empire, or humanity at large has become less sympathetic or more niggardly, but because the thoughts of all England and of almost every Englishman throughout the world are fixed upon the war in South Africa, and upon that alone. On these grounds Lord Curzon encouraged those whom he addressed to trust to their own resources, and to look steadily in the face the responsibilities which the visitation must entail upon them, and which it is their duty to encounter. He finds it necessary to give a caution with regard to the discrimination which must be exercised in the distribution of relief, and to the care which must be taken, in the exceptional circumstances of the case, that it shall neither be excessive in amount nor be bestowed upon undeserving claimants. It is impossible not to feel admiration for the courage and public spirit by which such advice as this has been dictated; but, at the same time, we cannot but feel that it has been carried to a point somewhat in excess of the actual necessities of the case. We are very much in agreement with Messrs. Burrows and Stevenson, that the war furnishes not only no reason, but even no adequate excuse, for neglect of the needs of India by this country. The demands of the war, great as they have been, have not touched, and are not likely to touch, more than the veriest fringe of the wealth of England; and, for the purposes of effectual help, only a portion of that wealth is needed. India possesses the organisation; and all we need do is to come to her assistance with an adequate contribution to the cost. We believe it would even afford a wholesome diversion of the public thoughts if it could be brought home to any large number of people that sufferings greater than any which civilised warfare can entail are being silently and patiently borne over vast tracts of country under our sway, and by vast multitudes of people to whom we almost bear the relation of a subordinate Providence. It will do us good to be compelled to think of other troubles and other anxieties than those which are now falling so heavily upon numbers of English homes; and our emotions as well as our charities may find wholesome outlets among the millions of our starving fellow-subjects. The war, great and manifold as are its claims, should not be suffered to exclude from view the other duties and responsibilities of a world-wide Empire, nor should we allow it to be supposed that its magnitude, in relation either to our interests or to our resources, is such as to place any real impediment in the way of giving necessary attention to all demands that can properly be made upon us. It is one of the privileges of the Press, in such a conjuncture as the present, to endeavour to widen the horizon of the popular view, and to point out that, while the war is slowly dragging on towards its inevitable end, there is still work to be done in the way of bearing the white man's burden in other directions. Whenever money is needed for any national requirement the Mansion-house is the centre towards which the public mind most naturally turns; and we hope the Lord Mayor may see his way to set on foot, without unnecessary delay, a famine fund for India. We are convinced that such a fund would be generously supported, and it is incontestable that it would be well directed and well bestowed. There could be no more fitting response to the malicious carpings of some of our Continental critics than to show, by deeds rather than words, that the conduct of the struggle from which they profess to anticipate the downfall of the Empire will not even be suffered to interfere with the accustomed workings of the Imperial organisation, or with the accustomed outflow of the Imperial charity.

The following are the letters referred to by the *Times*:—

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "TIMES".

Sir,—The time has surely come when the British public and the British Press must cease to shut their eyes to the terrible realities of an Indian famine.

The Government of India in a remarkable circular have applied the adjective "unprecedented" to our present circumstances in India, and have even gone so far as to declare that "if the present rate of progression is long maintained the crowds on relief will far exceed the record of any previous famine, and will strain not only the finances, but also the administrative resources of the Government."

Although the worst months are still before us the numbers depending on public aid or private charity for the means of support exceed anything that has ever been experienced in similar circumstances. On New Year's Day, 1897, only a million persons were receiving Government relief in all India; last New Year's Day the official estimate placed the number at two and three-quarter millions.

Nevertheless, with apparently the worst famine that has ever been recorded staring us in the face we in India can scarcely succeed in making our cry for help heard by anyone. We learn of no Mansion House Fund or other similar efforts being even suggested.

The war has doubtless monopolised the public attention, and must continue to do so to a great degree; but it would be unfortunate if an erroneous impression should get abroad that the resources of this great Empire are so strained by a conflict with a second-class Power that it is unable or unwilling to come to the rescue of literally millions of starving British subjects in this great dependency.—Yours faithfully,

J. SINCLAIR STEVENSON.

Irish Mission, Parantij, Western India, Jan. 4.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "TIMES".

Sir,—Is it possible that the war in South Africa is to be held a valid excuse for our neglecting our duty to India? Not a few of us have been waiting with impatience for the opening of an Indian famine fund. It may be that arrangements are already being made. If so, there may be at least some advantage in urging on the nation a liberal response to any such appeal. But it is conceivable that the authorities who start such subscriptions at the Mansion House or elsewhere mean calmly to acquiesce in the self-effacing attitude taken up by the Indian Government. In the present crisis, said Lord Curzon, India cannot expect Great Britain to subscribe. True! India is generous enough not to expect. But does that generosity lessen our obligation to offer? Does it not rather a thousandfold increase it?

Let us face the situation. There is at the present moment a ghastly famine in India, a famine beside which that of 1897 is likely to be insignificant. Thirty millions of our fellow-subjects are affected. In the middle of December two millions were already on relief, and the number has increased, and will still increase, by hundreds of thousands. Is our Imperialism so little-minded, our conception of our duty so inadequate, that the danger of South Africa means the forgetting of India? Have we so little surplus energy, so little power of rising to the responsibilities of a complicated crisis? It cannot be seriously maintained that we are not actually able to give. We are not at the end of our resources; we are touched in our armaments, touched a little more, perhaps, in our prestige, but the one thing in which we are not touched, and which it would take a dozen Transvaal wars to touch us in, is our wealth. Money is what India needs. And money we ought to give, and can give. Could anything be better calculated to impress the world with the physical power, and, what is more, the moral power, of Britain than such a gift at such a time?

I am, Sir, yours, etc.,

RONALD M. BURROWS.

University College of South Wales and Monmouthshire, Cardiff, Jan. 25.

THE "WESTMINSTER GAZETTE."

We cordially agree with the *Times* in thinking that we ought not to be so preoccupied with the war as to overlook the famine in India, and that the Lord Mayor would render a real public service if he opened a Mansion House Fund. In 1897 we sent India large sums, and then the famine affected only a million and a quarter persons; now the famine area covers three and a-half millions. We have subscribed large amounts to the various war funds, we shall have to pay (in income tax and what not) for the war. But we have plenty of money, and we should feel all the better as a nation if we took care, even at such a time as this, to come to the succour of our Indian fellow-subjects. A good deal of money is being subscribed for the war, in India; let us for our part take care that the cry for help from the famine districts of India does not fall on preoccupied ears. (January 29).

THE "MORNING LEADER."

Already three and a-half millions of Indians are in receipt of relief in the famine-stricken districts of India, and as many millions of pounds sterling will be required if these fellow-subjects of ours are to be kept alive till March. As yet not one penny has been publicly raised in their behalf in this country. Nor is this the worst. The Secretary for India has actually refused to inaugurate a fund to relieve this appalling distress—a distress which covers an area more than twice as large as that affected in 1897. To appeal to the charity of the Empire Lord George Hamilton has told us would be "inexpedient." "The whole public mind," he thinks, "is entirely absorbed in the war in South Africa." But in that very speech Lord George went on to call attention to the generosity of the Indian natives towards our troops, and eulogised their "spontaneous and magnificent loyalty." India, amid present famine, can still think of our war. We, absorbed in reading of a war six thousand miles away, cannot spare a thought for her famine. Are we to accept her charity and spare our own? It is an ugly contrast. Where is the boast of a year ago, that it is we who

Fill full the mouth of famine
And bid the suffering cease?

The task of extending our Empire in Africa does not absolve us from our duty in a land where no further territory is to be won. But this is not the first time that Lord George Hamilton has used his official position to discourage charity at home. Charity in the proper sense it is not. We repay to India during these periodic visitations of famine and pestilence the merest fraction of the contributions we require of her for our frontier wars—not to mention her loans of troops in Africa and elsewhere. We are glad to see that the *Times* has a juster sense of what is due to ourselves and to our subjects than has the India Office. The failure to raise a fund to meet this famine would strike a blow at our prestige, not only in Europe, but in India itself, not less fatal—though its effects might be less immediate and sensational—than a dozen reverses in Natal. (January 30.)

THE "MANCHESTER GUARDIAN."

We trust that Parliament during the coming Session will devote some attention to the very grave question of famine in India. If it is true, as some competent authorities declare, that our system of administration is impoverishing India and weakening the economic position of the Indian peasant so that he is less able to face the bad seasons that are to be expected every few years, then the system stands condemned and must be reorganised as soon as possible. Mr. William Digby, C.I.E., whose services to India and to England as the originator and secretary of the Famine Relief Fund of 1877 are not forgotten by those who are interested in Indian affairs, takes this view in a letter which we print elsewhere. He contends that the Indian peasantry are desperately poor, and illustrates his argument from the reports of the official enquiry made twelve years ago. He asserts that one great reason for their poverty is the heavy burden imposed upon them by the Government, not merely in the shape of taxes properly so called, but in the form of rent. The Government,

it must always be remembered, is the landlord in many of the provinces of India outside Bengal, and it has, in Mr. Digby's opinion, often fixed the rents at far too high a figure, swelling the land revenue but ruining the cultivators. It is significant that a well-informed writer in the *Times* of yesterday, who takes a somewhat optimistic view of the situation in general, agrees with Mr. Digby on this point. "The truth is," he declares, "that the increase of the population is placing the peasantry more and more at the mercy of the landed proprietor and of the Government, who in many provinces of India stands in his place. The Indian Legislature has recognised this fact by imposing severe restrictions on the landed proprietors as regards the raising of rents; and an authoritative statement would be very welcome showing that the Government has observed similar restrictions in regard to the enhancement of revenue." Here, then, is a definite charge which calls for a definite answer from the Indian Government. Is it or is it not taxing the peasant cultivator in some provinces beyond endurance, so that to pay his rent he must either go without proper food and clothing or resort for help to the money-lender, to his ultimate ruin? We hope to see this question made the subject of a public enquiry, for upon it the whole future of our Indian Empire depends. We are glad to see that the Lord Mayor of London is about to open a Mansion House Fund for the relief of the sufferers from the Indian famine. It is high time that something was done, and our only regret is that it should have fallen to London, not Manchester, to lead the way. However, we cannot doubt that Manchester will readily follow this admirable example, and that a Manchester fund will be opened without further delay. Three years ago this city responded nobly to the appeal for assistance on behalf of the starving Indian peasantry, as did the whole country. To-day India needs our help more than she did then, so terrible is the famine. The latest official return states that the persons in receipt of relief number well over three and a-half millions. We cannot realise the full meaning of these figures any more than we can imagine the population of South-East Lancashire being all thrown at once upon the rates. But they will bring home to everyone the fact that this is the worst famine of the century and that India wants all the help that a generous British public can give her as speedily as possible. (January 30.)

Imperial Parliament.

Tuesday, January 30.

HOUSE OF LORDS.

THE QUEEN'S SPEECH AND INDIA.

The LORD CHANCELLOR read her Majesty's gracious Speech on the occasion of the opening of the Parliamentary Session. The Speech made the following references to India:—

I have received from the ruling Chiefs of Native States in India numerous offers to place their troops and the resources of their States at my disposal for service in South Africa. These proofs of their loyalty to myself and of their devotion to the cause of my Empire have afforded me much gratification.

I regret that owing to insufficient rainfall in the autumn over a great part of Western and Central India the harvests and pasturage have failed to such an extent as to create a famine. Timely measures have been taken by my Government, and by the Rulers of the Native States affected, to relieve suffering and to prevent starvation.

I regret to add that the epidemic of plague continues, and that although its severity has not increased since last year, there is at present no prospect of its diminution.

THE DEBATE ON THE ADDRESS.

Lord KIMBERLEY, in the course of his speech, said: There is one other subject to which I must allude in this connexion, and that is the condition of affairs in India. (Hear, hear.) It is a most melancholy thing that India should again this year be afflicted by a terrible famine and also by a continuance of the plague. (Hear, hear.) We deeply sympathise with the people of India, and we must not forget that, even in the stress which is upon them, they have not forgotten their relations to this country, and have sent us both sympathy and help in our present anxiety. I mention this because it marks the excellent relations which prevail between ourselves and our Indian dependency. (Hear, hear.)

HOUSE OF COMMONS.

PAPERS PRESENTED.

East India (Trade)—Copy of Review and Tables relating to the Trade of British India with British Possessions and Foreign Countries for the five years 1894-5 to 1898-9. (In the recess.)

East India (Wars on or beyond the Borders of British India)—Return presented—relative thereto [Address, March 17, 1898; Mr. John Morley]; to lie upon the Table.

East India (Loans raised in India)—Copy presented—of Return of all Loans raised in India, chargeable on the Revenues of India, outstanding at the commencement of the half year ending on September 30, 1899, etc. [by Act]; to lie upon the Table, and to be printed. [No. 12.]

THE DEBATE ON THE ADDRESS.

Mr. H. PIKE PEASE, in seconding the Address in reply to the Queen's Speech, said he deplored the existence of plague and famine in India, and congratulated her Majesty's Government on having at the head of the administration in India a man like Lord Curzon. (Cheers.)

Sir H. CAMPBELL-BANNERMAN, in the course of his speech, said: The language of the paragraph relating to India does not at all exaggerate either the gravity of the situation or the regret and sympathy for the people of India which are universally felt in this country. That the calamity of famine should be superadded to the already existing scourge of plague is indeed a terrible misfortune; but we must hope that the measures taken by the capable officers of the Indian Government will enable them to cope with this great evil.

Wednesday, January 31.

HOUSE OF COMMONS.

THE FAMINE IN INDIA.

LORD G. HAMILTON AND THE MANSION HOUSE FUND.

Sir WILLIAM WEDDERBURN had on the Order Paper the following question:—To ask the Secretary of State for India, whether he can state the number of persons now on famine relief in the affected districts of India, the extent of the area and the population affected, and the estimated cost of relief up to March 31 and afterwards:

And whether he will suggest to the Lord Mayor of London the expediency of opening a Mansion House Fund for subscriptions in this country.

Sir W. WEDDERBURN, on being called upon by the Speaker to put his question, said he did not see the Secretary for India in his place, but as this was a question of great urgency in which many persons were interested, perhaps the First Lord of the Treasury would be kind enough to give some information to the public on the subject.

Mr. A. J. BALFOUR: No, sir. I can give no information to the hon. baronet. The question is not down to me.

NOTICES OF MOTION.

The following Notices of Motion appear on the Order Paper of the House of Commons.

Mr. HERBERT ROBERTS: As an Amendment to the Address, at end, add—And we humbly represent to your Majesty that the constantly recurring and costly famines in India demand the relief of the Indian Exchequer from some portion of the large military expenditure incurred by the maintenance of 75,000 British troops as an Indian garrison; and whereas nearly 10,000 of these troops have been withdrawn for service in South Africa, which has been justified by the spontaneous and universal manifestations of loyalty evoked throughout India by the war, we pray that 20,000 of the British troops stationed in India shall in future be treated as a reserve force for your Majesty's Empire in the East generally, and shall be charged upon the Imperial revenues.

Sir WILLIAM WEDDERBURN—As an amendment to the Address, at end, add—And we humbly pray that your Majesty will be graciously pleased to direct that, in view of the grievous sufferings which are again afflicting the people of India, a detailed and searching village enquiry be instituted, in order to ascertain the causes which impair the cultivators' powers to resist the attacks of famine and plague.

NOTICES OF QUESTIONS.

Notice has been given of the following questions:—

Sir CHARLES DILKE,—To ask the Secretary of State for India, what forces, in reduction of the Indian establishment, are now serving out of India. [*Thursday, February* 1.]

Sir CHARLES DILKE,—To ask the Under-Secretary of State for War, what is the composition of the black battalion, additional to the Indian battalion, which is at Mauritius in garrison:

And, what statement was ever made to Parliament with regard to its recruitment or service. [*Thursday, February* 1.]

Mr. BAINBRIDGE, To ask the First Lord of the Treasury, whether, in view of the fact that the campaign in South Africa has now assumed a grave relation to the important question of the maintenance of the British Empire, the Government will reconsider their expressed intention of not making use of the Native Indian troops, especially in view of the special adaptability of Goorkha and Sikh regiments to the African climate, and of the probability of such regiments being brought into use in case of an invasion of Northern India, whether by white or coloured troops. [*Thursday, February* 1.]

Mr. BAINBRIDGE,—To ask the Secretary of State for India, whether any account is given by the Afghan Government of the manner in which the sum of £130,000 or thereabouts (which is annually paid to that Government) is expended, and whether an account of such expenditure can be presented to the House. [*Friday, February* 2.]

Mr. BAINBRIDGE,—To ask the Secretary of State for India, whether, in view of the recent experience in Natal and Cape Colony proving the practical invulnerability of a well fortified range of mountains to an invading force whose base is at a great distance, the large payment to Afghanistan will be suspended and the whole or part of the money spent on strengthening the forts and increasing the armaments on the frontier. [*Friday, February* 2.]

Lord Northcote, the new Governor of Bombay, on Tuesday last, took the oath and his seat in the House of Lords on his elevation to the peerage. His lordship, with Lady Northcote and suite, left London for Marseilles on Wednesday, and proceeded to Bombay by the P. and O. steamer "India."

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