India

FOR THE

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NOTES AND NEWS.

THE Indian Famine Fund at the Mansion House amounted on Wednesday night to £106,700 and the Lord Mayor during the day cabled to the Viceroy a further remittance of £30,000, making a total sent to Lord Curzon of 14 lakhs of rupees. Funds were opened on Wednesday at Birmingham and at Warrington.

We are glad to see that a public meeting of citizens of Liverpool, summoned by the Lord Mayor, was held on Tuesday at the Town Hall, to take into consideration the desirability of opening a fund for the relief of the sufferers by the famine in India. Sir Edward Lawrence, who submitted a resolution in favour of a local fund being immediately opened, said that some people seemed to imagine that they were not likely to meet with the same response as on some previous occasions of a similar kind, because of the large sums of money which had recently been contributed by the people of this country in connexion with the war. His belief was that, whatever we had done to assist our soldiers and their dependents, we were bound by the responsibilities of our Empire to alleviate the sufferings of our fellow-creatures in the East. The resolution was supported by Sir Edward Russell, Mr. R. Gladstone, and others, and a committee was appointed to carry it into effect. Subscriptions amounting to £4,500 were announced at the meeting.

The *Pioneer*, writing early in February, declared that "the returns from the areas stricken with famine become more significant every week, for the number of people employed on works or in receipt of gratuitous relief has already passed the three and a-half million limit which it was hoped would not be exceeded." The position was steadily becoming worse. And it foretold that enormous numbers would be on relief in May, when famines reach their worst. These considerations, according to the *Pioneer*, vindicated the sound judgment of Lord Curzon in insisting on the curtailment of relief. But throughout this defence of the Circular, as in so many others, the occurrence of this famine so soon after the last is taken into account only as having accustomed the people to seek relief, not as having actually increased the need of relief by leaving the people with small resources. That and the greater intensity of the present famine are surely sufficient reason for the greater numbers flocking to the works.

Nevertheless, the special correspondent of the *Times of India*, writing from Sholapur, may not be far out when he says that "the people with their experience of frequent famines are becoming demoralised;" though it might be put even more accurately thus: "Famines have become so frequent that the people lose heart and give up the struggle more quickly than formerly." It is not the relief given, but the frequency with which famine comes that is the true source of demoralisation. The correspondent, who found that the people of Palampur had parted with all their ornaments and even their brass cooking-pots, is indignant because at Sholapur many women still wore their jewellery. Yet, as regards road-making, here is what he says:—

> As to the road work, I this morning tried a little of it on the Hyderabad-Poona Road. The impression left was that excepting among the class used to such labour no one who was not in real need would undertake it. The people were all in good condition, but the monotony of sitting all day in the sun beating blocks of flinty material into regulation sized chips seems too awful for words. Many of them are not skilful, and as they hold the larger pieces they frequently maul their fingers grievously with the hammer.

Here at least there can be little pretence. No doubt tank-making is much more comfortable. But that so many are ready to work on the roads is a proof of the acuteness of the distress.

The *Pioneer* refers to the Famine Fund raised in the Native State of Bikanir as "a notable instance of Indian generosity and self-help." Our contemporary goes on to say:—

> To the Mahárájá himself belongs the credit of having introduced a system into charity, and he has thus been able to get together a sum which will be of substantial service in the relief of distress. It is a pleasure to note the energy and capacity with which the situation has been confronted by this young chief.

The Mahárájá has been his own famine relief officer and the special famine officer for Rajputana, Captain Dunlop Smith, has borne testimony to the business-like character of the programme and the excellence of the choice of works.

Mr. Thomas Evans, writing in the *Pioneer*, gives an account of the arrangements for the relief of the famine-stricken in the Native State of Dhar, Central India. The efforts there he speaks of as "truly noble and worthy of imitation." Until lately each man on relief received for his work two annas per day, and each child from six to four pice. Now, chiefly owing to Lord Curzon's circular, the authorities, dutifully following the advice of the rulers of India, have reduced the wages to six pice for men and two or three for children. This has had the effect of reducing the number on the works by nearly a quarter. But Mr. Evans doubts its policy. He points out that it costs two annas a day to feed sick patients in the hospital, many of whom can eat but little, and he thinks that at least as much is required by those who have to do a hard day's work.

The *Hindu* foretells that the policy of the Government in systematically reducing the duration of Land Revenue Settlements while increasing the amounts must lead to national bankruptcy. The settlement of the Anantipur District seems a peculiarly flagrant case. Under the old Settlement it was noted as an anomaly that the lands of Anantipur, very precariously irrigated, were assessed at as high a rate as those of Tungabudra, which are well irrigated. This anomaly has now been redressed—no increased—by enhancing the Anantipur assessment by 5·05 per cent. It is, indeed, explained that this increase is due to an increase of the land under cultivation, but even so, that leaves the original anomaly unredressed. The District is described as the poorest and most backward in the Madras Presidency, almost all one vast plain, black and barren; the soil is inferior, and 40 per cent. of the arable land out of occupation.

The *Manchester Guardian* gave prominence on Tuesday to the following "extract from a letter written by an English gentleman in Kathiawar":—

> "The misery on this side is beyond description.
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> "The milch cattle, the cattle of the Burwad and the Burriah, are *all* dead. Of the milch cattle belonging to the better class of agriculturists—Burriahs and Talukdars—a few cows and buffaloes remain.
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> "I passed a village the other day, and there was not a sign of life in it. Not a dog barked or peacock called. The cattle were all dead, as every attempt to raise green fodder had failed.
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> "At another village 1 per cent. of the bullocks remained; at a third there were a few goats and sheep; at a fourth a lot of bullocks were huddled together in a field, dying, as the village had no more fodder wherewith to feed them, no money or credit wherewith to buy grain, and the apathy of despair was upon them all.
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> "If this be the case now, what will happen three months hence, or what in the interval may have happened? Our surroundings are as sad as sad can be—tribulation and desolation on every side."

On Wednesday a correspondent of the same journal gave a passage from "the letter of a lady who has for a considerable time been acting as plague inspectress and nurse at Dohad" (Bombay):—

"The famine is just awful; children are found dead on the roads, and you would hardly know that some of the women were not animals, so awful they look. The Salvation Army people do heaps of good, and are to be respected. Hundreds of these poor Natives gather at the station, and while the waggons are loading with grain some falls from the sacks, and they gather up a handful each. Never mind how the police drive them off—they crowd round again. And now, to make it harder, smallpox has broken out among the children. The Natives are eating the roots of water-lilies. This is in Dohad itself, so what must it be in the small villages around; and with it all they are so helpless and quiet."

A Cambridge correspondent writes:—In your issue of Feb. 23 you write: "The masses, both Hindu and Mahometan, are inclined to believe that a bad famine is the great opportunity for conversions to Christianity." That the belief is not unfounded will be clear from the following extract from the third volume of the "History of the Church Missionary Society" (pp. 172, 3), referring to the converts known as "rice Christians":—

The year 1877 was the year of the great famine which desolated the Central and Southern Provinces. The Society [Church Missionary] had in hand £10,000 . . . . which was at once placed at the disposal of the Corresponding Committees in India. Of the amount spent the greater part was for relief in Tinnevelly (in South India). . . . . A much larger sum was dispensed by the S. P. G. (Society for the Propagation of the Gospel) missionaries. The effect upon the people was immediate. In the course of a few months, some 20,000 heathen in the S. P. G. districts, and 10,000 in the C. M. S. districts, threw away their idols and placed themselves under Christian instruction.

Comment is needless.

The readers of INDIA will be glad to learn that Mr. Dadabhai Naoroji is much better, and his condition is described as very satisfactory. Dr. Sarat Mullick informs us that Mr. Naoroji "is quite convalescent, and will be able to get about in a few days if he progresses as he has done."

On the orders of the Bengal Government in the Chupra case, two of the officers implicated were censured, and two others had their promotion stopped for a year. As to Mr. Pennell, the Chief Secretary stated that his removal to Noakhali had nothing to do with the Chupra case, the order for his transfer having been passed before the Government saw his judgment. Now, "A Colonial," in a letter to the *Englishman* (January 29), points out some significant facts in the case. Mr. Pennell was acting as Judge of Saran in the absence of Mr. Anderson; as Mr. Anderson's leave was running out, Mr. Pennell asked the Chief Secretary by telegraph where he was to go next; the Chief Secretary replied that he was to stay at Saran as Additional Judge; and on October 11 Mr. Pennell was gazetted accordingly. Meantime, Mr. Pennell delivered his judgment in the Chupra case on October 6. Then, on October 18, he was gazetted to Noakhali, his place at Saran being occupied by an officer without any judicial experience. How, in the face of these facts, it can be said that the orders for the transfer of Mr. Pennell were passed before the Government had seen his judgment, "A Colonial," like other people, fails to see, except by the "miserable subterfuge" of substituting "see" for "know." "Did the Local Government," asks "A Colonial" pertinently, "*know* nothing of the judgment before passing orders?" Statesmanship in Indian affairs seems to have been at last reduced to the art of quibbling. On the point of substance "A Colonial" makes this suggestive remark:—

As one brought up under British rule, and having always shared with Englishmen in their proud but justifiable boast that English judges were, by the united voice of the people, placed beyond the reach of any kind of interference whatsoever in the discharge of their sacred duties, I look with considerable trepidation upon the action of the Government of Bengal in this instance, since it appears to me to be the inauguration of a new *régime*—a *régime* such as would, in time, make a Dreyfus case possible in a British court of justice.

This letter was followed up by another, from "An Englishman," dated January 31. "An Englishman" pronounced "A Colonial's" remarks "altogether too mild." "Mr. Pennell's transfer," he said plainly, "was a blow aimed, and intentionally aimed, at the independence of our judges." Then he shortly recapitulated the main facts, and proceeded thus:—

Now, sir, though the cowardly assault of two on one made every white man who calls himself a man bow his head in shame and indignation, it pales into insignificance beside the deliberate pollution of justice that followed. This was no hollow agitation. The severest punishments should have followed. Instead of that, the Local Government have punished Mr. Pennell! The guilty collector and his friends have been let off with censure and stoppage of promotion. This only shows that the Local Government have failed in their regard for their own interests, if not in their duty. How do we know that the two officers, whoever they were, whose promotion is stated to have been stopped for one year, had any promotion due to them? The public had a right to a clear and full explanation on the subject. The one given, as "A Colonial" rightly says, is more shifty, and has all the appearance of condoning a plot. We can only hope that the Viceroy will take the matter up and do justice all round.

Perhaps it would not retard the process of doing justice if attention were called to the matter in the House of Commons.

The *Madras Standard* quotes from the *Hitabadi* another example of a painfully common class of "accidents" in India: "Three Europeans were out pigsticking in a jungle near Baya, a village in the district of Pabna, within the jurisdiction of Dulai Thana. They mistook a Bengalee who was there for a pig, and fired at him. The man was hit and died of his wounds in a couple of days. The police duly reported the case to the magistrate of the district. But no proceedings have been instituted. On the face of it the case was one of pure accident. But the pity of it all is that these accidents are so frequent. Is there no way of putting an end to them? Would they occur if those who handled guns were more careful? The Government ought to be in a position to cope with these cases. The *Hitabadi* reports that the widow of the deceased is left destitute. If so, surely those who brought about the death of the man, though no doubt accidentally, ought to provide for her maintenance?"

A remarkable article appears in the *Advocate of India* (Bombay, February 6) on the Telegraphic Press Messages Bill, which is now creating special interest in India, in spite of the distractions of famine and plague and the South African war. Admitting that vernacular papers "pirate" telegrams from Anglo-Indian papers, the writer urges that it is for Government to choose the smaller of two evils "and not interfere with a situation which has been tolerated for twenty-seven years without any particular injury to anyone." The professed object of the Bill is to obtain for India a first-rate service of telegraphic news. That object, protection or no protection, the writer affirms to be an impossibility under present conditions. The papers cannot afford to pay the telegraphic rates. The writer suggests that the Government, before passing the Bill, should enquire into the history of Anglo-Indian journals as commercial undertakings during the past twenty years. He says:—

We undertake to state that the answer in every case would be that the circulation has vastly increased, in many cases beyond what was ever believed to be possible; that the amounts spent on obtaining news bear no resemblance to those of twenty years ago; that there is increased efficiency all round: that a healthy and desirable rivalry exists amongst journals; that at no time in their history were prospects so bright; and last, though certainly not least, every journal looks to the day when, with the aid of ever-spreading education, it can more nearly approach and appeal to the millions of this country, and when it can, whilst increasing its usefulness, reduce the price which it is now compelled to place upon its sheet.

Any momentary and individual benefit is not worthy of an instant's consideration.

The compromise arrived at by the Select Committee "does not entirely do away with the contention that the Bill gives a copyright in a fact, and the worst results of the operation of such an enactment remain." The present "pirate" system, "however dubious some of its operations," is still "engaged in the important work of informing and instructing a public that the Anglo-Indian Press cannot approach under its present conditions." It is doing a most useful service, which the Government, in its zeal for the public, is intent on rendering impossible, except under penalties—a service that involves no wrong, except nominally, to individuals. But far and away the most essential matter is the political effect. The writer

points his argument by the present experience of the war news:—

What, we ask, would have been the state of affairs had the contemplated Act been in operation on the day that General Buller met his reverse at Colenso? If sixty hours, or six, had intervened between a bazaar rumour getting a start and the actual facts becoming known, the consequence would not have been straightened by any small good half-a-dozen newspaper proprietors would have received. There is a political significance about this aspect of the proposed legislation which Government cannot ignore; for, if this Bill becomes law, it will become an absolute necessity for the Government itself to take steps to supply the people who cannot afford to subscribe to expensive publications with reliable information.

The mixed effect of ignorance and rumour has already been painfully exhibited in the case of the Government's plague policy. This Bill will be undoubtedly "a grave political blunder."

The *Manchester Guardian* has been always a good friend to India, while the Anglo-Indian journals, though of late they have shown signs of repentance, have often been opposed to the wishes of the Indians. Only a short time ago there was reason to complain of the conspiracy of silence by which they tried to stifle the Chupra scandal. It is, therefore, a refreshing novelty to find the *Pioneer* attacking the *Manchester Guardian* for not sufficiently recognising the enormity of the Rangoon outrage. The offence, indeed, of the *Guardian*, or rather of its London correspondent had only been to repeat the criticisms of "high officials" on the activity of the Viceroy, who was accused of running *amok* in the Rangoon case. Here is the spirited answer of the *Pioneer*:—

To say that the military authorities did their best even in a clumsy way is merely a clumsy attempt to whitewash a scandal. What was perhaps the most disgraceful occurrence in the annals of the British army did not prevent the Commanding Officer and the Adjutant of the regiment concerned from taking leave before the most obvious and ordinary means had been taken to bring the culprits to book.

As to the hardship of punishing the whole regiment for the sins of "a few," it says:—

It is well known that some thirty or forty actually took part in the outrage: many others looked on: and yet the men as a corps refused to assist in bringing these brutes to justice.

The *Pioneer* goes on with equal warmth to impugn the conduct of the police and the law of the Recorder and the Cantonment Magistrate. Veritably a Daniel come to judgment.

The *Pioneer* thinks that "the revelation of the enormous advantage that has come to rest with the defence where the ground is favourable" in the present war, will have some effect on Indian military policy. The feasibility of an invasion of India will be discredited more than ever. If this be so, further advance on the North-West is obviously unnecessary. Defence will become the sole object of India's military organisation, and a great relief to her finances may be expected.

There are already many signs that "the splendid courage of the Indian dhooli-bearers on the field of battle" is producing a revulsion of feeling in Natal. The *Friend of India* quotes the *Natal Mercury* as saying:—

During the heaviest fighting, when bullets were scouring the air and men were falling dead and wounded in terrible numbers, the stoical and stolid Asiatics went about their business with heroic indifference to the leaden rain. It is due to them very largely that so many wounded were not afterwards numbered among the killed.

The *Natal Advertiser* is kind enough to admit that the Indians "are sons of the Empire after all." But what it is important to know is whether this improved feeling is to be translated into deeds, whether the unjust laws of which Indians complain are to be removed from the Statute Book, or whether when the danger is past the old meanness and injustice is to be revived. If that be so, then will Natal have sunk to an even lower depth than she has reached before.

It seems well worth while to put on permanent record certain points in the admirable speech of the Hon. P. M. Mehta at the Calcutta meeting in aid of the Transvaal War Fund. "Irrespective of such subscriptions as may be raised," he said, "what, I believe, we have assembled for to-day here is to give emphatic and sympathetic expression to our deep and steadfast loyalty at this juncture in the affairs of the Empire." Mark his appreciation of the real source of British strength:—

Well, gentlemen, it has always seemed to me that English strength and greatness has consisted in nothing so much as in the lofty conception of moral and political duty which has illustrated the lives and actions of her best and noblest sons, and has permeated and leavened the national life, thought, and culture. Gentlemen, it is not a little that we have to be thankful for that, in spite of many drawbacks, many fallings off, many backslidings, in the midst of temptations and allurements, it is this lofty conception of duty which has largely succeeded in moulding and directing the policy of the Crown for the government of this country. It was in pursuance of that righteous policy, or, so to say, policy that maketh for righteousness, that that inestimable and priceless boon, the boon of education, was conferred upon us. (Cheers.) It has been said, and often said, by people whose historical bias has been apt to run away with their historical accuracy, that India was won by the sword, and must be maintained by the sword. Well, gentlemen, this is true so far, that the soldier is abroad, maintaining peace and tranquillity throughout the land. But it is equally true that the humble schoolmaster is also abroad, transforming the feeling of gratitude for the preservation of this peace and tranquillity into a sentiment of earnest, devoted, and enlightened loyalty. (Loud cheers.)

Mr. Mehta proceeded as follows—and his words are golden to those that have ears to hear:—

Gentlemen, look at the spectacle, the whole country, and the press, that reflects its opinion, presents to-day. We have no reasons to be captivated by the glittering Imperial vision of a great South African Empire. We would rather that England kept to her old love, the Indian Empire, and that she did not divide her affections with another. (Cheers.) But however that may be, what do we see but that her sons over all this vast land, unaffected by the differences that distinguish but do not divide us—men of different creeds—inheritors of varied traditions—descendants of distinct races, yet sprung from the same soil, subjects of the same sovereign, and, I will venture to add, soldiers in the same patriotic cause of their common country—are all acclaiming with united voice and heart their unswerving attachment to the throne and person of that noble and gracious lady who presides over the destinies of the great British Empire—(loud cheers)—and our deep and abiding loyalty to the British rule, in which we are firmly persuaded, in which we are convinced by the education we have received, lie implanted the germs and roots of the welfare, the prosperity, the regeneration, and development of this country, (Loud cheers.) Criticism there may be, and I hope always will be, sometimes wrong, ill-informed, and even prejudiced; endeavours there may be and will be to expose supposed wrongs and grievances sometimes misconceived, misdirected or unfounded, even resentment, bitter resentment, against supposed misdeeds and miscarriages of justice. But sedition and disloyalty there is none throughout the length and breadth of the land. Therefore, it is that we have met here to-day in public meeting assembled to give expression to our entire and unflinching loyalty. (Loud cheers.)

At the recent Durbar at Jullundur, the Lieutenant-Governor of the Punjab was able to congratulate his hearers on the comparative immunity of the Province from plague. He added:—

How far this has been due to the measures that have been adopted may be questioned; but of this I am certain, and I feel sure you will agree with me, that whatever we do to combat our common enemy it will be futile unless the people join cordially and with all their might in the operations that are devised for their benefit.

But it is not so very long ago that this truism, now constantly repeated by Lieutenant-Governors and high officials, was accounted the most glaring of paradoxes—nay, a sure sign of disloyalty and sedition.

It is gratifying to learn that definite steps have been taken towards forming a new organisation, to be known as "The League of Liberals against Aggression and Militarism." A meeting of the Provisional Committee was held on Monday in one of the Committee-rooms of the House of Commons, and it was resolved to form a central organisation to carry out the policy contained in the resolutions passed at the conference on foreign and colonial policy held at the Westminster Palace Hotel on the 14th inst. Briefly, the objects are:—

(1) To combat by vigorous propaganda the growth of aggressive Imperialism and militarism;
(2) As a consequence, to recommend to the electorate a policy which shall promote peace and conciliation in dealing with foreign nations on the lines laid down by the Hague Conference, and shall respect and strengthen the rights of self-government enjoyed by our colonies;
(3) To enforce a sane policy with respect to the alarming growth of armaments, and to urge retrenchment as a necessary prelude to social progress and political reform; and
(4) To co-operate with the associations which have for their object the spread of truthful information about the condition of South Africa and the causes and necessary consequences of the war, and to insist that no settlement will be permanently satisfactory which does not take into account the feelings of the Dutch, who form the majority of the white population of South Africa.

The people of India will naturally watch with deep interest the fortunes of an organisation having such aims as these.

WARS BEYOND THE BORDER.

IT is now nearly two years since Mr. John Morley moved for a return of the Wars and Military Operations on or beyond the Borders of British India in which the Government of India has been engaged at any time since 1849. The motion was made on March 17, 1898. The Return was presented in the usual form on January 30 of the present year, and a few days ago was at last issued to the public. It contains an account of the causes and results of the wars, an approximate statement of the number of troops engaged, the cost of the operations, and the contribution, if any, of the British Treasury. The cost, indeed, is only given where it is shown separately in the accounts of the Government of India, and this never occurs before the year 1871 and not always afterwards, so that it is impossible to discover from this document how much India has had to pay for these wars and expeditions. The number is more easily calculated, and reaches the enormous total of 110 for the fifty years, or more than two a year, and only one or two cases did not involve fighting. The chief example of the peaceful expeditions was in 1878, when Indian troops were sent to Malta. On almost every other occasion there was actual fighting or at least the occupation of hostile territory. When the distribution of these wars over the fifty years is considered it will be seen that 69 of the 110 have been in the latter half of the period; that is, the number has increased with the ascendancy of the "forward policy." This, indeed, is a "cause" which has no place in the column devoted to explaining why each war arose. Those that took place from 1875 onward have their causes put down as decidedly as those in the preceding twenty-five years. But the inference that the policy of the Government had its effect on the number of wars can hardly be contested in face of the figures. If we consider the number of troops engaged the result is even more decisive. In the first period, 1849-1873, in only six expeditions were more than 10,000 men employed, and the highest number in any one, the Persian War, was 14,000. In the second period, 1874-1898, though more than 10,000 were only employed in nine cases, these included 44,000 and 71,000 in two Afghan wars, 24,000 in the conquest of Upper Burma, and 43,000 in the Tirah campaign. It is noticeable that no fewer than nine separate expeditions took place in the one year 1897.

As has been already remarked, the cost in money is given only in certain cases. The cost in men, the loss of life and limb, is not given at all. But the cost in money itself is no small matter. The Chitral campaign and the six expeditions two years later against the border tribes, together came to over six millions in tens of rupees. The conquest of Upper Burma cost Rx. 4,704,787; and the Chin and Lushai expeditions cost together Rx. 671,616. The contributions of the British Treasury seem to have been given on no fixed plan or scale; and to have become more restricted in recent years. In the China wars the Home Government bore all the expense, ordinary and extraordinary, as it did when troops were sent to Malta in 1878, and to the Sudan in 1896. In the Persian War of 1856, the British Treasury bore half the extraordinary charges, while in the Abyssinian War of 1867, the Perak expedition of 1875, and the Sudan expedition of 1885, India was relieved of all the extraordinary expenditure. But while the Home Government paid the whole expenses of sending Indian troops to Malta in 1878, in the Egyptian War of 1881 only £500,000 was paid out of Rx. 1,249,578. For the Afghan wars 1878-1881, £5,000,000 was granted by Great Britain out of an expenditure of Rx. 17,516,254, while the whole cost of the campaign of 1897 against the Afridis and other tribes has been borne by India. With the exception of the two expeditions to the Sudan, no assistance appears to have been afforded by the British Treasury since the year 1882. The case of Burma is one of peculiar hardship to India, which has had to bear the whole expenses of the two Burmese wars though it had previously little more concern with that country than with Persia or even China. It has, indeed, been rewarded by the annexation of Burma to India, a white elephant that it could well have done without. The causes of the second Burmese War in 1852 (the first that appears in this list) are stated to have been the "ill-treatment of some European merchants at Rangoon and insults offered to the Captain of a British frigate who was sent to remonstrate." The war resulted in the annexation of Pegu, and the cost, which is not stated, was all borne by India. The third Burmese War, which is spoken of as lasting from 1885—1891 has, as its alleged causes:—

Arbitrary fine of ruinous amount upon the Bombay-Burma Trading Corporation, Limited. Misconduct of King Thebaw.

And as its result, the annexation of Upper Burma. It may at first sight appear that even the ruinous fine on a trading company and the alleged misconduct of the King were hardly sufficient occasion for a six years' war and the annexation of the whole country. The misconduct of King Thebaw seems to have even less to do with India than the injuries to British merchants and insults to a British naval officer which were put forward as the causes of the previous war. Doubt has even been expressed as to whether the turpitude of the King was of such a character as to justify the employment of nearly 25,000 soldiers. But however that may be, it is certain that India was left to pay the Bill of Rx. 4,704,787. King Thebaw was not the only expensive individual we come across in these pages. Certain sections of the Teazai tribe, "contrary to their agreement with Government, allowed Hashim Ali, an outlaw, to settle in their country, and, when asked, refused to surrender him." As a result, nearly 6,000 troops "entered their country and destroyed their defences." But what became of the wicked Hashim Ali is hidden from us. All we know is that the expedition cost Rx. 33,612. As to the ordinary "punitive" expeditions, time after time we have as their result that "the troops traversed the country" and the tribesmen were punished. It is satisfactory to find, so far as is stated in the Return, that this punishment tends less and less to take the form of burning villages. Sometimes the expedition seems to have had only a qualified success. Thus in 1877, the Jowaki Afridis cut the telegraph wire and raided British territory. For this 1,750 "British troops traversed their country and destroyed property of considerable value" by way of punishment. But apparently all to no purpose, for, later in the same year, we read of an army numbering 7,400 despatched to punish "a series of outrages against British territory," committed by the same tribe. Whether the troops destroyed more property, or what other gentle persuasion they employed, is not stated. We are only told that "the tribe made their submission and accepted Government terms."

As regards these small frontier raids, the public is necessarily obliged to accept the causes put forward in the Return. Whether the Mohmands were in 1864 guilty of "unprovoked aggressions," or whether they could give any excuse for their conduct, we have no means of knowing. But when we come to operations on a greater scale, of which history has taken some account, matters are in a different position. We can form our own opinion about the China wars and "the political situation in the Mediterranean" in 1878. Thus, under the heading Second Afghan War (first phase), there is given as the cause, "Reception by Amír Sher Ali of a Russian Mission in Kabul, and his refusal to allow a British Mission to enter Afghanistan." The result is well known—the forcing of a Mission on the new Amír, its massacre, and another Afghan war. But this is not the result put down. On the contrary, we find under the head of *Results obtained*, "British troops forced their way into Afghanistan, and after the flight and subsequent death from natural causes of Amír Sher Ali, a treaty was made with his son, Yakub Khan, who was recognised as Amír." Here end the "results" of the "Second Afghan War (first phase)." But in the next line, we find "Second Afghan War (second phase)," with the massacre of the embassy at Kabul as its cause. "Anarchy in Chitral" is given as the first cause of the Chitral War. "Fanatical outbreak in the Swat Valley. Attack on the British positions at Malakand and Chakdarra," figures as the cause of the Malakand expedition. As to the Mohmand, Kohat-Kurrum and Tirah campaigns in the same year, 1897, they are all three attributed to "unprovoked aggression." Those who remember the famous speech of Mr. Thorburn at Simla will possibly be sceptical as to the entirely "unprovoked" character of these tribal risings. They may think it no more a complete exposition of the causes of these wars beyond the frontier, than is the account of the Egyptian War of 1882, attributed to the "rebellion" (?) of Arabi Pasha, and having as its result, not the British occupation and administration of Egypt and the practical supersession of the Khedive's authority—Oh no, nothing of the sort—

but only the "Suppression of the rebellion in Lower Egypt." They will rather be inclined to attribute the rising of the Afridis and the other tribes to a fear that their independence was threatened by the encroachments of the Indian Government, the delimitation of the Indo-Afghan frontier, and the military occupation of Chitral. And if the causes of these wars are thus insufficiently set forth, is not the same true of the results? It may well be that the tribes were "severely punished" as we are so often told, but nothing is said of the severe punishment inflicted by these wars on the people of India, of the derangement of the Indian finances, of the heavy taxation rendered necessary, of the load of debt incurred. Think of what the financial position of India would have been if these 110 wars had been reduced by half. Of course, they were all, according to the Return, just and necessary wars. But at least it is certain that they became more frequent and more expensive with the increased power of the military element in the Viceroy's Council and the ascendancy of the "forward policy." And if we remember the close connexion between heavy taxation and famine, is not famine one of their most certain and most terrible results?

THE NESCIENCE OF LORD G. HAMILTON.

NOW that the Mansion House and other Famine Funds are in full swing and the country has been awakened to the sore straits of a wide population in India, it may be interesting to look back across last month at the treatment the subject has received in the House of Commons. The Queen's Speech (January 30) acknowledged the existence of famine, which was attributed to the failure of the harvests and pasturage, and that again to "insufficient rainfall in the autumn." But the House was assured that "timely measures" had been taken by the Indian Government and the Native rulers "to relieve suffering and prevent starvation." Lord Kimberley was the only Front Bench statesman in either House that betrayed any sense of the gravity of the situation. "It is a most melancholy thing," he said, "that India should again this year be afflicted by a terrible famine, and also by a continuance of the plague;" and, while he expressed "deep sympathy with the people of India," he recognised the excellent spirit of the Indians in "sending us both sympathy and help in our present anxiety." Next day (January 31), Sir William Wedderburn had an important question on the Order Paper as to the extent of the ravages of famine, and as to "whether the Secretary of State will suggest to the Lord Mayor of London the expediency of opening a Mansion House Fund for subscriptions in this country." But the Secretary of State was not in his place to answer the question; and when Sir William, remarking that "this was a question of great urgency in which many persons were interested," turned to the First Lord of the Treasury, Mr. Balfour could "give no information;" "the question," he said, "is not down to me." Lord Kimberley, as well as others, will perhaps note how the excellent and sympathetic spirit of the Indians is reciprocated on the Government side of the House. Meantime Sir William had put down notice of an amendment to the Address praying that her Majesty would be graciously pleased to direct that, in view of the grievous sufferings which were again afflicting the people of India, a detailed and searching village enquiry should be instituted in order to ascertain the causes which impair the cultivators' powers to resist the attacks of famine and plague—the only Parliamentary suggestion that had yet been made towards a radical treatment of the appalling scourge.

The opening of the Mansion House Fund was postponed to February 16 on the trumpery ground that the Viceroy was to open his Indian fund at Calcutta on that day. The public, however, showed their appreciation of the case by commencing at once to pour in subscriptions to the Mansion House. For weeks it had been apparent to all observers that the famine was to be the worst of the century. On December 27 the Viceroy in Council displayed alarm at the prospect by despatching to the Subordinate Governments the unlucky Holderness Circular, practically reviving the policy of checking "indiscriminate Government reliefs" associated with the Strachey-Lytton executive of 1878 and carried out by Sir Richard Temple in the Deccan. In the Viceroy's Council, on January 19, Mr. Ibbetson set forth an appalling picture of the famine, and Lord Curzon, while attempting to justify his Circular, exhibited still more vivid alarm at the prospect. From Lord Curzon's attitude it is quite plain that he was under severe restraint from Whitehall. The delay in opening the Mansion House Fund, now as in 1896-97, must be laid at the door of Lord George Hamilton. And the reasons of the delay glare through all his little contrivances to minimise the distress. The *Pioneer* hit the nail on the head in a frank moment towards the end of 1897, when the Home Government was pressed to charge part of the cost of the Tirah and Mohmand campaigns on the British Exchequer:

> The mischief of Parliamentary interference with Indian affairs has been conspicuous and serious in the past; but it would be exaggerated a hundredfold if the British workman came to think that, as he was paying for the Indian concern, he had an indefeasible right to control its working.

The working of the "Indian concern" is very much indeed the British workman's affair, and the sooner he looks into it the better will it be both for his peace of mind and for his pocket. But Lord George Hamilton's cue is to postpone the day of reckoning.

In consonance with this principle of action, Lord George Hamilton consistently professes ignorance of what everybody else that follows Indian affairs knows perfectly well. He relies on the difficulty of getting information to percolate through the British constituencies. In spite of the distressing anxiety in the Viceroy's Council, in spite of the reports in the Indian newspapers, in spite of such striking home correspondence as we have exemplified from letters of the *Standard's* representative at Simla (December 14 and January 4), he was leisurely enough to postpone the opening of the Mansion House Fund till February 16. In spite of the array of Indian opinion which we cited in our issue of February 16, which ought to have been before him, he coolly replied to Sir William Wedderburn (February 8) that he was "not aware" that the Holderness Circular had "caused dissatisfaction in India." The unsuspicious "British workman," who is so deeply concerned in these things, would never suspect that Lord George meant "not *officially* aware," or rather "not officially informed by the Indian Government." Here is statesmanship; and it is time for the British elector to begin to understand its methods. On February 15 also Lord George gave an answer which, as we have already seen, was slim enough to escape the sharp eye of the *Morning Post*. Sir William Wedderburn asked him whether, in view of the unhappy condition of India and the unprecedented demands on the Indian revenues for famine relief, the Government would consider the propriety of making a substantial grant to India from the British Treasury; and Mr. William Redmond asked whether it was intended to make any grant from Imperial funds towards the relief of those suffering from the famine in India. Lord George said No, and added his reason, for the benefit of the gallery: "we have no reason to believe that the financial means and credit of the Government of India are insufficient to meet all demands that are likely to arise in connexion with the relief of distress caused by the present famine in India." The British elector may well be amazed at this when he remembers Lord Curzon's wail of distress. But Lord George must be read closely, and the little word "credit" gives the key to the comfortableness of the situation. The Treasury—"the financial means"—may be running empty; but then consider the credit of the Government of India!

Is there yet to be another loan, then? Sir William Wedderburn naturally assumed that there will be; for, if the Treasury is empty, where else is there any hope? On February 22, accordingly, he asked Lord George whether the Government would "consider the propriety of guaranteeing the Indian loan which would have to be raised for famine purposes in connexion with the coming Indian Budget." But Lord George repeated his cheerful answer of February 15, and asserted that, until the Indian Financial Statement was made, towards the end of March, he could not say whether the assumption of the necessity of a loan for famine purposes is correct or not. In view of the plentiful lack of foresight at the India Office, the assertion may readily be accepted. But we shall be much surprised if the end of March does not bring forth another loan, whether for famine purposes or for other purposes—a loan that will be labelled as temporary, and after a short interval re-labelled—very quietly—as permanent. The British elector had better keep his eye on this development, for guarantor he will be, whether formally or no.

Meantime Lord George carefully produces the impression that India is prosperous enough to surmount the famine, as well as all her other expensive troubles.

Again, on February 22, Sir William Wedderburn enquired whether the Secretary of State for India would give the total number of deaths from famine in India reported up to date, and follow up this record with public weekly reports. The question was an exceedingly important and opportune one. But Lord George dislikes the ill-omened name of death from famine under the best Government that ever was invented. Hitherto, he said, "very few deaths have been reported as caused by starvation." We can well believe it; we remember the famine of 1896-97. Monthly statements of "deaths due to starvation," he admits, are received. Then why not publish them? Oh, they "must necessarily be incomplete." And then weekly returns would be "misleading," especially as (for some unexplained reason) "no such returns could be obtained from the Native States." And, once more, he is reluctant "to add to the labours of officers in the famine districts." We will give yet another reason: he does not want the British people to know the facts. The British people would be not a little surprised if they knew the meaning of "starvation" in the official statistics. We recommend them to turn to our article on "That Blessed Word—Privation" (INDIA, vol. viii, p. 243, August, 1897). There we quoted from the Blue-book on Famine and the Relief Operations in India (No. III) such passages as these:—

"*Deaths from starvation.*—Hoshangabad.—None reported; 84 deaths from privation. . . . ."

"*Narsinghpur.*—396 [*i.e.*, deaths from starvation] outside the poor-houses. Number said to be exaggerated."

"Said" by whom? Again, let us introduce a sentence or two of Mr. J. P. Goodridge's (late Divisional Judge, Jabalpur) from the *Central Provinces Gazette* (INDIA, vol. viii, p. 59, February, 1897):—

The death-rates per mille were: Jabalpur city, 110·02; Marwara town, 182·66; Sihora town, 225·29. We have not later figures, but the distress has grown more acute.

And yet, with these figures published "by authority," his Excellency the Viceroy, on the occasion of his recent visit to Jabalpur, solemnly congratulated its residents "on the prosperous appearance of the country," and his only reference to the famine was that the Chief Commissioner had called his attention "to the probability of distress in a part of his province."

So, after all, official reports are not so informatory as they might be. We want the reports of independent correspondents.

On February 22, Sir William Wedderburn further enquired about the remissions and suspensions of land revenue during the last two famines. Lord George refused a detailed statement, but gave general large totals: about Rx. 1,520,000 in 1876-77, and Rx. 2,130,000 in 1896-97. "In addition to these remissions during actual years of famine," he added, "large remissions were on each occasion made during the following year, and as long as the effects of the famine required it." Yes, and what then? Lord George is silent about the cruelly rigid collection of suspended revenue in the succeeding years. What we want is the net amount of remissions and suspensions, and there is no reason why the India Office should not furnish a sufficiently particular account in a very few days. No reason, of course, except the perennial reason of concealment. The motto of the India Office appears to be a double one: "India needs no assistance; Britain needs no information." We shall see.

OUR LONDON LETTER.

WESTMINSTER, Thursday.

EVENTS in the field of war have monopolised public attention this week. All London broke forth into rejoicing when the news came on Tuesday that General Cronje's desperate resistance had terminated in a complete capitulation of the Boer force. The victory was the more popular, occurring as it did, by a dramatic and singular coincidence, on the anniversary of the Majuba reverse. Some of the evening papers emphasised this aspect of the incident in a way peculiar to themselves. Their placards and headlines proclaimed "Majuba avenged!" It was an exhibition of savagery in which popular feeling was not at all faithfully reflected. The general sentiment, far from being one of barbaric exultation over the discomfiture of a brave foe, appeared on the whole to be inspired by a sane sense of gratitude for the first substantial step that has yet been accomplished towards bringing the war to its inevitable conclusion. If Paardeberg has the effect of wiping Majuba Day from the Boer calendar its moral influence may survive a war not conspicuous for that quality. Meanwhile it has to be noted that while the rest of the Empire has been rejoicing in Lord Roberts's success Ireland has received the news with manifestations of regret, and that while the House of Commons as a whole loudly applauded the reading of the victorious soldier's despatches the Nationalist members taunted the Government in bitter terms on the fact that it had taken forty thousand British troops to capture three thousand Boers. While we are fighting for empire in Africa the neighbouring island continues to preach—though the sermons fall on unheeding ears—that "force is no remedy."

As Mr. Goschen's naval budget falls slightly short of twenty-eight millions sterling Parliament has scarcely thought it worth while to discuss so small a matter. The speech of the First Lord of the Admiralty was intended to encourage the impression that there was nothing to talk about. Prince of panic-mongers, he astonished the House of Commons by assuming the *rôle* of a prophet of peace, trouncing the sensationalists who had been demanding a mobilisation of the fleet with all the ardour of a convert. Usually, Mr. Goschen beats the patriotic drum and twangs the imperial lyre with a vehemence only equalled by Sir E. Ashmead Bartlett. On this occasion he ccoed like a sucking dove and quite deluded hon. members into a comfortable belief that his scheme was a miracle of moderation. As a matter of fact it makes a bigger demand on the British taxpayer than has ever before been known in the history of naval finance. Mr. Goschen, however, had nothing to fear from criticisms of extravagance. His defence was solely occupied in meeting and rebutting charges of undue parsimony.

Looking back on the first month of the Parliamentary Session one is fain to admit that there has been a great deal of talk and very little action. Some hundreds of pages have been added to Hansard and some half-dozen to the Statute-book. Night after night the House of Commons has been engaged in voting men and money to feed what Lord Rosebery rightly calls "the ravenous maw of South Africa." Members take little interest in legislative business, and Ministers show a nice appreciation of the prevailing apathy by introducing the most important Bills of the Session under the ten minutes' rule. For all that Parliament cares, the Government might extend this form of closure to other subjects of domestic concern. Even as things are, it seems to be impossible to get a hearing for serious business. The other night, with the Civil Estimates under consideration, the Treasury bench was absolutely untenanted. One member, as an ingenious means of directing attention to the spectacle, rose as if to address a question to Ministers, and then, feigning astonishment at the truancy of the Government, stood stockstill, speechless, and statuesque. Thus he remained for some seconds till the tittering of other hon. members prompted the Chairman to demand an explanation. "Oh, Mr. Lowther," replied Mr. Caldwell amid laughter, "I am reluctant to begin an attack on Ministers behind their backs." But although the House laughed, the protest represented a very general feeling. A Government so absorbed by the war that it cannot spare even a junior lord or an under-secretary to look after Ministerial business will soon lose its hold on Parliament.

A striking illustration of the tastes and temperament of the present House of Commons was offered in the debate on the Cromwell monument. Mr. Tennant had proposed that evening to raise a discussion on the conditions of labour in certain dangerous industries. Anticipating a series of useful speeches on this subject members precipitately retired to the tea and smoking rooms. Much to their astonishment they presently heard that Mr. Swift MacNeill had obtained precedence for an onslaught on Oliver Cromwell. At once they returned to their deliberative duties, and within a few minutes the hitherto empty benches were packed, and the House was ringing with the battle-cries of Cavalier and Roundhead. It was, as Mr. Birrell said, just like a schoolboy debate. The question of the site allotted to the Cromwell statue—which was supposed to be the real point under discussion—almost escaped notice, most of the speakers preferring to bend their critical faculties to the task of examining the Protector's statesmanship, his religion, his qualities as a soldier, and his moral character. As the dinner-hour approached the debate was allowed to flag, and

when finally a division was taken in which the erection of the statue was approved by a majority of three to one, the great body of members again withdrew, leaving the serious business of the night to be carried on by a devoted remnant. You must either thrill or amuse the present Parliament if you wish to command its ear. This is one of the penalties of a swollen majority.

Collectors of Irish bulls are making some rich hauls this Session. Otherwise, they would scarcely be so fastidious about admitting Mr. Swift MacNeill's description of the Cromwell memorial to the category. The member for Donegal spoke of the monument as "this equestrian statue of our national bugbear." Imagination boggles at the suggestion of a bugbear on horseback. Mr. MacNeill's auditors, however, were more concerned with the amazing want of accuracy in his description of the Protector's effigy as an equestrian statue. Had the orator not taken the trouble to look at his bugbear? Or had he mistaken the Lion-hearted Richard, who bestrides a monumental steed in Old Palace Yard, for the mighty Oliver? The first suggestion is the more plausible and is supported by the circumstance that the hon. member, ignorant apparently of the material of the statue, complained that the expense of its periodical whitewashings would have to be borne by an already overburdened State.

Is the Liberal party about to suffer a further sub-division? Mr. Asquith, speaking at Oxford on Saturday, offered a timely protest against the action of certain members of the party in seeking to stimulate internecine strife. The ex-Home Secretary's remarks were probably provoked by the publication in last Friday's *Times* of a circular inviting Liberal Imperialists to form themselves into a separate camp and devote their energies to the reclamation alike of Gladstonian Liberals and Liberal Unionists. This sublime idea, it is understood, owes its being to a group of active young men who were disappointed by the results of the recent presidential and committee elections of the Eighty Club. Lord Rosebery's name is invoked as the prophet of the movement but there is reason to believe that the compliment has given the ex-Premier more annoyance than pleasure. Moreover, his friends in the House of Commons show no great enthusiasm for the proposed disruption. At the time of writing indeed, it appears to be extremely unlikely that a single member of Parliament will attend the private conference at which this new political machine is to be put in motion. The whole subject will doubtless engage the attention of Liberals at the forthcoming conference of the National Federation, both sections of the party having threatened to make the annual meeting of that body the occasion of a display in force. Civil strife, however, may yet be averted by discreet action on the part of the Executive Committee.

NOTES FROM BOMBAY.

THE TELEGRAPHIC PRESS MESSAGES BILL.

[From an Indian Correspondent.]

Bombay, February 10.

The principal topic which has engaged the attention of the Press during the week is the report of the Select Committee on the Telegraphic Press Messages Bill. The two non-official representatives of the people did their best to modify the objectionable sections of the original draft in consonance with the views expressed by the overwhelming majority in the Press; but they were not quite successful in their uphill efforts. The duration of the copyright in certain cases has been limited to eighteen hours, while the objectionable provision regarding comments on telegrams has been removed. But beyond these modifications, Mr. Pherozeshah M. Mehta and the Maháráját of Darbhanga were overruled. For instance, they pressed for civil action, in case of breach of the copyright provisions; but the majority stuck to the penalty being awarded before a police magistrate. Both averred that there was nothing in the Civil Procedure Code to prevent the penalty being administered. But the suggestion was not to the liking of the mandate-bound members of the Select Committee. Both members again dissented from the majority by declaring that the Bill is most unlikely to serve the object in view, plainly hinting that it would be wiser to drop the Bill.

But so bitter a pill is not easy for a self-sufficing Government to swallow. If it is wrong it must persist in its error. And if there be overwhelming opposition from the public, then it may make a show of having considered adverse criticism and nominally modify its original draft. There being a steady official majority in the Legislature, the public has no hope that its objections will be reasonably met by that body or that Bills will be shaped more in consonance with public opinion than with the personal caprices of officials or other persons who from behind may be pulling the strings. The Legislature is still a solemn mockery. And nothing demonstrates that fact more conclusively than the odious Press Bill. The astonishing feature of it is that, except two or three interested proprietors of newspapers, nobody has demanded this new-fangled legislation. In reality it is in the nature of a private Bill. And it is a serious question whether the Imperial Government, at the behest of two or three monopolists whom it likes to favour, is justified in moving all the machinery of the legislative department to force upon the rest of the Press an enactment of this character. The history of the Bill during the last fifteen years is eloquent testimony against its introduction. Why it was revived it is impossible to say. At any rate the public at large did not demand it. Nor did the Press, Anglo-Indian or Indian. Lord Curzon has not displayed statesmanship in allowing the Bill to stand on the legislative file, after the adverse criticism pronounced on it. He ought rather to have ordered its withdrawal. Was he frightened by the surrounding bureaucracy which, on such occasions, is never slow to pronounce its stock shibboleth—"Prestige"? How many are the wrongful deeds which the Indian Government has perpetrated under the influence of this hollow word. It would be lowering the prestige of the Government to withdraw any legislative measure which the public wish to be withdrawn. The more the public oppose, the greater the obstinacy to carry the Bill.

The draft of the Press Messages Bill as amended by the Select Committee has been allowed to stand over for a month. But we all know what will happen to it after four weeks. The non-officials who have recorded their minute of dissent will make their speeches. Then the member in charge will say something by way of apology. Then the Viceroy will try to justify the Bill in rolling rhetoric. And as a Viceroy in the Legislative Council has in India "the last word," the thing will straightway be put to the vote. The official conscience will be for the time forgotten. Mandate will be the order of the day. And the mandate-bound majority will say "Aye" and bless the bantling which will then be the law of the land. What a mockery indeed of legislation. Will Sir W. Lee-Warner, however, explain away this mockery when he next lectures at the Society of Arts or the Imperial Institute? Despite Lord Curzon's dictum of "Courage and Sympathy," he has failed to rise to the occasion when statesmanship has demanded. In the important matters which differentiate the real statesman from the ordinary routine administrator, he has proved a failure. Take, for example, that unstatesmanlike legislation on the Countervailing Duties on sugar; the Punjab Land Alienation Bill; and this Press Messages Bill. Take again the ill-considered Famine Circular bearing Mr. Holderness's signature. These are test measures of the Imperial Government.

Among minor events I may refer to the sham perpetrated by a few of our "courtier" citizens in the Town Hall on Thursday last to raise a permanent memorial in honour of our departing Governor. Neither the recipient of the address nor those who have voted it can be congratulated on their efforts. The meeting had no public character. It was a meeting of friends and admirers. It might have been better termed a meeting of flatterers. There were about 100 of them. The remaining 300 (for the Hall, it is said by those present, did not contain more than 400) were "olla podrida" who hardly understood what was going on, and most of them left the Hall before the proceedings closed. I need not refer to the quality of the speeches. They may be best read in the light. I have never read more absurd panegyric. The impartial historian, if he comes to analyse them, will be constrained to challenge the accuracy of many of the statements contained therein; especially as regards the famine and plague measures of Lord Sandhurst's Government. The rosy side, and that the lightest, has been held up to our gaze. The picture is painted with the largest brush. There are no shades. All is bright as the rainbow. It is astonishing that so much chaff should be spread before an intelligent and critical public which knows how to distinguish between it and grain. Well may Lord Sandhurst say, "Save me from these too gushing friends and admirers." I am obliged to say so much lest the English people should be carried away by the fulsome notice.

THE FAMINE IN INDIA.

FOUR AND A QUARTER MILLIONS ON RELIEF.

The Secretary of State for India has received the following telegram from the Viceroy on the subject of the famine :—

"Number of persons employed on relief works is increasing everywhere, though Local Governments report that every precaution has been taken to enforce strict test of the necessity for relief, and for limiting the wages to be given on relief works to bare subsistence. Death-rate satisfactorily low in Central Provinces, while there has been no serious increase in the death-rate elsewhere. Burma and Bengal rice crops and prospects of good Spring crops in North-Western Provinces keep prices considerably lower than in last famine, especially in Central Provinces and in the Punjab. It appears that supplies are adequate. Number of persons in receipt of relief :—Bombay, 1,097,000; Punjab, 207,000; Central Provinces, 1,418,000; Berar, 308,000; Ajmere-Merwara, 113,000; Rajputana States, 373,000; Central India States, 136,000; Bombay Native States, 397,000; Baroda, 63,000; North-Western Provinces, 4,000; Punjab Native States, 3,000; Central Provinces Native States, 19,000; Hyderabad, 114,000. Total, 4,252,000. 300,000 should be substituted for 160,000 against Berar, in return for last week; figures were incomplete."

A Reuter's telegram from Melbourne, dated Feb. 26, said that Lord Curzon had made an appeal to the people of Australia for funds to aid the sufferers.

THE "INVESTORS' REVIEW" FUND.

We take the following from the current issue (Friday 24) of the *Investors' Review* :—

We spoke too soon last week. On the very morning when our last issue appeared all newspapers contained several columns of advertisements, some of them almost a page, setting forth the names of the donors to the Indian Famine Fund with the amount subscribed. The list of these advertisements must have made a sensible hole in the surplus of the modest amount subscribed; but it is the way of Mansion House funds, and we must not complain, but rather be thankful, that some little help is being afforded to the millions dying out there in India. The last report from the famine districts shows that destitution is spreading into new regions, and that the total number now in receipt of relief of some sort is almost 4,000,000. Are we going to allow these people to perish, and, if so, what is to become of our investments in Indian securities? One would imagine that a feeling of self-preservation would prompt Indian annuitants all over the world to contribute something towards keeping the people alive. This one good deed will not put an end to the danger created to our dominion by our boundless extravagance and appalling maladministration; but if in giving the people wake to a sense of their own danger, and study Indian problems, not from the Viceregal standpoint, but from that of common sense and common prudence, it might be possible for a public opinion to be developed in this country strong enough to produce radical and Empire-saving reforms. Without some such opinion we fear India must go from bad to worse. As regards our own little effort, it has not yet met with much response, although we have cordially to thank some friends for coming to the aid of a fund which, as we said at first, will not have one farthing deducted from it nor one farthing mis-spent. The men who are associated with the Indian Congress in this country and in India have a better grasp of Indian problems than the great mass of the Imperial rulers we send out to govern that country without experience, without knowledge of the people, often without capacity to learn what governing a subject race implies. Lord Curzon has issued an eloquent appeal in India for help, and we hope he will not limit his energies to mere speech, but take care that the money sent out through official channels, from the Mansion House Fund or from other public sources, is carefully and wisely administered. It is a sad thing to think that the efforts of givers here are so often foiled by maladministration, but the worst of it is that with our charity, generous and kindly in spirit as it always is, care is seldom taken to see that the funds subscribed really reach the destination intended. We write a cheque and there is an end of it. No expert public committee supervises the distribution of the Mansion House Fund so far as we know, either here or in India; nevertheless, good in a degree will be done, and the necessities are so tremendous that the many who are rich cannot give too much or too often. Come, then, and help us.

LIST OF SUBSCRIPTIONS.

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Dadabhai Naoroji, Esq.	25 0
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Lady Hope	10 0
Indian Charity Fund	20 0
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THE MANCHESTER FUND.

The following circular has been issued :—

Indian Famine Fund.—President, the Lord Mayor of Manchester; vice president, the Mayor of Salford; hon. treasurer, John Thomson; chairmen of sectional committees, Sir F. Forbes Adam, C.I.E., and C. W. Macara; joint hon. secretaries, A. A. Gillies and W. Tattersall.

22, St. Mary's Gate, Manchester, February 24, 1900.

The Mercantile and Industrial Central Committee.—C. W. Macara, chairman, Tom Garnett, vice chairman.

Dear Sir,—You are doubtless aware that a representative committee has been formed in Manchester to raise funds to alleviate the terrible distress now prevailing in our Indian Empire. To more effectively carry out the work in Manchester and Salford this Committee has been divided into two sections —one meeting at the Town Hall and the other (the Mercantile and Industrial Committee) at the offices of the Federation of Master Cotton Spinners' Associations, at this address. At an adjourned meeting of representatives of the trades and industries of Lancashire held at this office on the 21st inst. it was resolved—"That this meeting of employers and workpeople representative of the trades and industries of Lancashire, drawn from all parts of the county, has heard with great pleasure that the Lord Mayor of Manchester and other chief magistrates in the county have opened Town Hall funds in aid of the sufferers from the calamitous famine in India. It heartily endorses such action, and pledges itself to co-operate by every means in its power with these efforts, and will use its best endeavours to get similar funds opened in other towns in the County Palatine in order that its response may be as worthy as on the last occasion." A representative Central Committee was appointed, to which was deputed the duty of arranging the most effective means of securing contributions from the widest possible area. The formation of the Central Committee will be found on the back of the enclosed specimen appeal. We have to suggest to the employers' and workpeople's associations that in any town where a fund has not been already started a joint deputation should on the earliest possible day wait upon the mayor or local authority requesting him to call a town's meeting for the formation of a local committee on similar lines to the Mercantile and Industrial Central Committee which has been appointed in Manchester, and which is thoroughly representative of the trades and industries of Lancashire. It is strongly recommended that all funds raised in any town should be paid into a local bank, in order that each town, as in 1897, should retain its individuality. Afterwards it is hoped that the numerous towns throughout Lancashire will again co-operate and make one Lancashire County Fund. We are further requested to state that it is intended to form a county committee to deal with the Lancashire Fund as a whole. This committee would embrace representatives from all the contributing towns, the representation being regulated according to the population. We may also add that it is proposed to request the Right Honourable the Earl of Derby, K.G., the Lord Lieutenant of Lancashire, to be the president of the Lancashire Indian Famine Fund. We sincerely hope that as the matter is of urgent importance there will be as little delay as possible in instituting a fund in your town. Printed suggestions are enclosed, not with a view to laying down any fixed rules, but merely as a guide to secure the best results. These, together with the specimen appeal, would doubtless, as before, be adapted to local requirements. Might we beg that you will favour us with a reply reporting progress at your earliest convenience.—We are, yours faithfully, Richard J. Allen, G. D. Kelley, J. Mawdsley, W. Tattersall, joint hon. secretaries.

The *Manchester Guardian* publishes the following announcement :—

"We have been invited by the Committee of the Manchester Indian Famine Fund to open a subscription in aid of the relief operations which are now in progress. We readily undertake this duty. All contributions forwarded to us shall be promptly acknowledged and shall be at once placed in the hands of the proper authorities."

MR. ROMESH DUTT ON THE CAUSES OF FAMINE.

The *Manchester Guardian* has printed two important letters on the causes of famine from Mr. Romesh Dutt, C.I.E., late of the Indian Civil Service, and President of the 15th Indian National Congress. The first letter, dated Calcutta, January 31, is as follows :—

Forty millions of the population of India are affected by the famine of the present year, and twenty millions more are suffering from a scarcity of a less severe type. It is necessary, in the midst of this widespread disaster, to try to find out those causes, slow but sure in their operation, which lead to the impoverishment of the people, make them indebted, resourceless and helpless, and render them an easy prey to famines after every year of bad harvests. No province in India has suffered so severely in 1897, and again in 1900, as the Central Provinces of India, and I propose, with your permission, to sketch briefly the history of its impoverishment within this half-century.

Lord Dalhousie was the Governor-General of India when the last Rájá of Nagpur died, without a natural heir, in 1853. Under the old Hindu law, a son may be adopted in the absence of a natural heir ; but Lord Dalhousie set aside this old law and disallowed adoption, in order to annex the Kingdom of the Rájá to the British territory. The wrong was perpetrated under the specious plea that the happiness of the greatest number should be secured at any cost, and that the population of the kingdom would be benefited by its transfer to British India. That plea has failed, after the experience of half a century ; the population of the Central Provinces are to-day more resourceless and indebted, more subject to famines after every bad harvest, than they were under the Mahratta rule. Lord Dalhousie was succeeded by Lord Canning in 1856, and after the suppression of the Mutiny Lord Canning, with his characteristic clemency, desired to effect a land revenue settlement which would benefit the agricultural population. His good intention was as genuine as it was praiseworthy, but the intention was never carried into effect. Two serious mistakes (not to use a stronger word) vitiated the land revenue settlement then made. In the first place, the rents payable by the cultivators to the landlords were fixed at an unduly high rate ; in the second place, the revenue payable by the landlords to the Government was fixed unduly high. The impoverishment of the province thus commenced in 1862.

By the old Hindu law one-sixth of the gross produce is considered as the proper rent of cultivated land. In Bengal, where landlords make their own arrangements with cultivators, the rental does not exceed this rate in any district, and falls far short of it in many districts. The result is that cultivators in Bengal are resourceful and prosperous, and can save in good years against years of bad harvests. In Northern India also the rental is about one-fifth of the gross produce, as Sir Antony MacDonnell stated in his evidence before the Currency Committee two years ago. But in the Central Provinces the rental was fixed by the Government at one-half of the net produce—*i.e.*, one-half of the produce of the soil after deducting the cost of cultivation. Such calculations can never be accurately made, and the mistakes made were not in favour of the cultivators : so that the rents fixed were really about one-third, or more, of the gross produce of the soil. This is a ruinous rate of rent ; it is double the rate prevailing in Bengal ; and without the operation of any other causes such a rate of rent was certain to reduce the cultivators to poverty and indebtedness. While the rents payable to landlords were thus fixed unduly high, the revenue demanded by the Government was also fixed unduly high. In this respect also the Government of Lord Canning was animated by the best intentions, recorded in excellent resolutions, but never reduced to practice. The rule laid down was "to limit the demand of the State to 50 per cent., or one-half, of the average net assets" of the landlords. In actual practice the revenue demanded was 60 to 75 per cent. of the landlords' assets. I have never been able to find out how the rule so clearly laid down by Lord Canning's Government was violated in practice by the settlement officers in the Central Provinces, and why a ruinous rate of revenue was demanded from the landlords. In Northern India the revenue demanded is about 40 per cent. of the landlords' assets, as was stated by Sir Antony MacDonnell before the Currency Committee. I have failed to discover why the Central Provinces of India were treated more harshly, but the result has been disastrous, and cultivators and landlords have been rendered alike resourceless and impoverished.

Such were the terms of the first settlement made by the British Government in the Central Provinces of India, and the only redeeming feature of this settlement was that it was made for a long period of thirty years, during which the people were not subjected to any fresh enhancements. That period at last drew to a close, and the first districts to fall in were Raipur and Bilaspur. A lenient and considerate settlement now might have saved the province, but the settlement actually made has been more harsh and severe than any previous settlement made in any part of India. I give you the net results in the two districts named above. In Raipur the enhancement is 74 per cent. and in Bilaspur it is about 90 per cent. over the revenue assessed thirty years before ! I will not trouble you with the elaborate calculations by which the new rents were fixed—calculations which could never accurately ascertain the "net produce of the soil" or the "cost of cultivation," and which certainly did not err in favour of the cultivator. And these calculations were made in the dark. "Beyond publishing the final order fixing the assessment," says an eye-witness of these operations, "the people were not allowed to know anything. As much care was taken to keep everything secret as if the fate of the Empire depended on a policy of concealment." When at last the new assessments were announced complaints and appeals poured in. But the Revenue Secretary to whom the appeals were presented had himself been the head settlement officer, and as Revenue Secretary he generally confirmed the orders which he had passed as settlement officer. One more hope was still left to the over-assessed cultivators. A new Chief Commissioner was appointed to the Central Provinces in 1891, and it was hoped that he would look into the settlements and if necessary revise the work of his predecessor. On the occasion of his visit to the Bilaspur district 15,000 people collected from all parts of the district, in the height of the rainy season, to make their piteous appeal to the ruler of the province and to ask for consideration and mercy. All the way from the station to the city, a distance of over three miles, was one continuous gathering of the people, rending the skies with the cry "Bandobastse Mar Gaya"—"The settlement has killed us." The cry was uttered in vain ; the acts of Indian officials are more unalterable than the laws of the Medes and the Persians. While the rents payable by cultivators to landlords were thus fixed unduly high, the revenue payable by landlords to the Government was once more fixed unduly high. Half the landlords' assets is generally considered the proper State demand, and we know from Sir Antony MacDonnell's evidence before the Currency Committee that only 40 per cent. of the landlords' assets is actually taken by the Government in Northern India. The rate fixed for the Central Provinces was 50 to 65 per cent. The Government of Lord Dufferin in their letter No. 397, dated May 31, 1888, had "some hesitation in allowing in any case so high a percentage as 65," but nevertheless did allow it in certain cases, and 60 per cent. in others ; and the landlords of the Central Provinces have been crushed for ever. They have been called upon to screw rents from the cultivators, which they can never realise, year after year ; they have been called upon to pay 60 or 65 per cent. out of this, plus 12½ per cent. as rates, to the Government ; and it is easy to understand that in many cases the Government demand is really more than their actual collections from the cultivators. Cases have occurred in which landlords have offered to surrender their estates to a paternal Government and the paternal Government has not accepted the surrender.

I have troubled you with this history of settlements in the Central Provinces because there, as everywhere else in India, four-fifths of the population depend on agriculture, and the prosperity or the misery of the nation depends on the assessment of agricultural land. The last settlement has been so severe that the rents fixed can be paid with difficulty even in good years, that they leave no savings for bad years, and that large tracts of land have gone out of cultivation on account of over-assessment. Land revenue itself, as well as the proceeds of all direct taxes, must decline under these circumstances, while a year of failure of crops must be a year of famine. The famines of 1897 and 1900 have spoken with a more powerful voice than was ever heard before of the wretched and resourceless condition of the population of this province, and I sincerely hope and trust that after the present famine is over past errors will be rectified and past settlements revised. One-fifth the gross produce should be the maximum limit of rent ; one-half the landlord's assets should be the limit of the Government revenue demand ; settlements should be made for not less than 30 years.

Mr. Dutt's second letter is dated Calcutta, February 5 :—

Since I wrote to you by the last mail on the subject of agricultural poverty and famines in the Central Provinces of India, I have seen the welcome telegram announcing that the Lord Mayor of London is about to open an Indian Famine Fund, as was done in 1897. The announcement will be received with feelings of gratitude in India, far and wide, as it will bring home to us that the British nation has not, even in the midst of a great and terrible war, forgotten their suffering fellow-subjects in India. Were it possible, however, to arouse on this occasion the attention of the British public to the real causes of these repeated famines in India and to enlist their determined effort in removing those permanent causes of suffering and distress among voiceless millions of Indian agriculturists a great and permanent benefit would be conferred on us, worth more than millions in donations. Famines in India are comparatively mild, and cultivators are able to help themselves to a great extent, where the rent is moderate, as in Bengal and portions of Northern India. Famines are fatal and disastrous, and carry off millions in spite of relief operations, where the cultivators are already impoverished and resourceless through a system of rack-renting, as in the Central Provinces of India and in the Province of Madras. I spoke of the former in my last letter ; permit me to say a few words about the Province of Madras in this letter.

Early in this century Sir Thomas Munro introduced the "Rayatwari" system in the greater portion of Madras, under which the rayat, or cultivator, pays his rent or revenue direct to the State and there are no intervening landlords. The permanent nature of the assessment on the cultivator's lands was recognised then, and for half a century later. As late as 1856 the Government Administration Report of Madras recognised the cultivator as the "proprietor" of his holding, entited to hold his land "so long as he pays the fixed assessment." And the Madras Board of Revenue wrote in 1857 that "a Madras rayat is able to retain his land in perpetuity without any increase of assessment." The great initial wrong done to the Madras cultivator is that this right to a permanent assessment has been confiscated under the less liberal policy of modern times. Assessments are revised and enhanced now at each recurring settlement, and the rayat's strongest motive to improve his position is gone in the present state of intolerable uncertainty. Viceroys like Lord Lawrence, Lord Mayo, and Lord Northbrook endeavoured to save the Madras rayat. And the Marquis of Ripon virtually solved the difficulty and proposed an arrangement satisfactory alike to the cultivators and to the State. He suggested, and the Madras Government accepted the principle, that in districts where the assessment had been once fixed by the Settlement Department there should be no further enhancement of revenue except on the equitable ground of a rise in prices. This gave the State the coveted right to enhance revenue when there was a reasonable ground for doing so, and it saved the peasantry from the harassment of surveys and from enhancements except upon some reasonable ground. This principle was embodied in Lord Ripon's despatch dated October 17, 1882. The India Office in London is responsible for rejecting this excellent and equitable solution. The Secretary of State for India has not often interfered recently with the measures of the Indian Government. The Secretary of State did not veto the Sedition Law of 1893 or the Calcutta Municipal Act of 1899. But in 1885 the Secretary of State

did veto the proposal made for the protection and the welfare of the impoverished peasantry of Madras. The famine of 1877 had swept away five millions of the population of the province, and had left the rest indebted and resourceless. A just and sympathetic Viceroy of India, agreeing with the Madras Government, proposed a beneficent rule to permanently improve the condition of the peasantry. The Secretary of State for India in his despatch of January 8, 1885, vetoed the rule and declined to place on the State a restriction somewhat similar to the restrictions which have been provided for private landlords in Bengal and other provinces of India. The result is that the Madras cultivator is subject to enhancements on various grounds at each recurring settlement, and, what is far worse, to that uncertainty of assessment which is fatal to successful agriculture.

Permit me to describe in a few words the method in which assessments are fixed at these recurring settlements. The theory is that one-half the net produce of the soil is claimed by the Government as revenue. The gross produce of the soil is ascertained, the supposed cost of cultivation is deducted, and of the remainder one-half is claimed by the State. The calculations are made by settlement officers in a manner not always favourable to the cultivator; in some cases the calculations are beyond doubt unjust and unfair to him. For good lands in Tanjore district the annual cost of cultivation is estimated at fourteen rupees, or twenty-one shillings, per acre. For ordinary arenaceous soil the annual cost of cultivation is fixed at six rupees, or nine shillings, the acre. One can easily understand that the cost of cultivating bad lands is not always less than the cost of cultivating good lands; but the settlement officer keeps down the estimate of cost in the case of poor lands in order to obtain a good margin of "net produce" and a good revenue. Every cultivator in India understands that six rupees a year will not cover the annual cost of cultivation per acre of any kind of cultivable land; but the settlement officer has made this grossly unjust and inadequate estimate of the cost in order to have the high margin of revenue. The result is that poorer lands are out of cultivation in Madras, and over three millions of cultivable lands remain untouched at the present moment. The cultivator is impoverished, and the Government land revenue is not what it ought to be. This has been repeatedly but vainly pointed out by Mr. Rogers, one of the ablest revenue officers that the Indian Civil Service has produced.

Under these methods of calculation the Government obtains as its revenue, theoretically, one-third of the gross produce of the soil, virtually sometimes one-half. This is a rate of rental which would impoverish any peasantry in the world, and has made the Madras peasantry indebted and resourceless. In Bengal the cultivators do not pay more than one-sixth the gross produce to their landlords in any district. In Northern India the cultivators pay about one-fifth the gross produce as rent to their landlords (*vide* Sir. A. MacDonnell's evidence before the Currency Committee). Will the Madras peasantry appeal to the British Government and the British nation in vain to be placed in the same position as their happier brethren in Northern India? It is now proposed to add to the evils of over-assessment a compulsory irrigation rate by a Bill lately introduced in the Madras Council. In Bengal cultivators who use canal water pay for it, and this has been the rule hitherto in Madras; but it is now proposed to levy a compulsory water rate whether the cultivators use the water or not. The question has been discussed for forty years, and liberal-minded statesmen have always disapproved of such a compulsory tax. As far back as 1863 the Secretary of State for India declared in favour of giving the cultivator the option of using the canal water if he stood in need of it. And in 1870 the Duke of Argyll, then Secretary of State for India, rejected a Draft Bill for Northern India on the ground that "to force irrigation on the people would be not unlikely to make that unpopular which could otherwise scarcely fail to be regarded as a blessing." If the policy was wrong for Northern India it is doubly wrong for Madras, for in Madras the irrigation rate, voluntarily paid, more than pays the Government for the cost of construction. In a memorandum presented to both Houses of Parliament in 1889 it was pointed out in paragraph 39 that in Madras the waterworks yielded a direct return exceeding 15 per cent. on the capital cost, while the canals in the North-Western Provinces and the Punjab paid only 4 per cent. on the cost. Wherefore, then, this compulsory rate in Madras similar to a compulsory rate proposed for Northern India in 1870 and rejected by the Duke of Argyll? A narrow, grasping, and illiberal policy seems to inspire Indian administration since the time of Mr. Gladstone in 1870-4 and 1880-4, and all the profuse expressions of sympathy with the people of India at the present time scarcely leave their mark on the actual dealings of the Government with the people. Were it possible to reduce these expressions of sympathy into acts, were it possible to induce the present Government of India to moderate land assessments, revive industries, cut down military expenditure and home charges, and admit the people of India into some humble share in the control of the administration you would hear less of famines in India, you would have to contribute less to Mansion House funds, and you would vastly increase your trade with India. In the absence of such permanent remedial measures your contributions are grateful offerings to us in times of famine but will not remove the cause of famines.

Imperial Parliament.

Thursday, February 22.

HOUSE OF COMMONS.

THE FAMINE IN INDIA.

SUGGESTED GUARANTEE FOR LOAN.

Sir WILLIAM WEDDERBURN asked the Secretary of State for India, whether the Government, in view of the present severe strain upon the financial means and credit of the Government of India, would consider the propriety of guaranteeing the Indian Loan which would have to be raised for famine purposes in connexion with the coming Indian Budget.

Lord G. HAMILTON: On the 15th instant I stated, in reply to a question from the hon. baronet, that we have no reason to believe that either the financial means or the credit of the Government of India are insufficient to meet all demands that are likely to arise in connexion with the relief of distress caused by the present famine in India. The Indian Financial Statement will be made towards the end of March, and till then I cannot say whether the hon. member's assumption, viz., that a loan will be necessary for famine purposes is correct or not.

DEATHS DUE TO FAMINE.

INFORMATION TO BE WITHHELD.

Sir WILLIAM WEDDERBURN asked the Secretary of State for India, whether he would state the total number of deaths from famine in India reported up to the present date;

And, whether he would obtain and make public weekly reports showing the number of such deaths.

Lord G. HAMILTON: I am glad to say that hitherto very few deaths have been reported as caused by starvation. In the Central Provinces, though the numbers receiving relief are larger than in any other part of India, the death-rate for last December was much less than the rate for December, 1897, and was not greatly above the normal rate. Monthly statements of "deaths due to starvation" are received; but from the nature of the case they must necessarily be incomplete, and any attempt to publish weekly returns would be misleading, especially as no such returns could be obtained from the Native States. I am not prepared to add to the labours of officers in the famine districts by calling for more frequent reports on this subject.

NET REMISSIONS OF LAND REVENUE.

RETURN REFUSED.

Sir WILLIAM WEDDERBURN asked the Secretary of State for India, whether he would grant a Return, in the form standing on Friday's paper, of remissions and suspensions of land revenue in India during the last two famines.

Lord G. HAMILTON: I do not think it would be advisable to ask the Government of India at the present time for the detailed statement which the hon. member asks for. But I can inform him that the total remissions and suspensions on account of famine amounted approximately to 1,520,000 tens of rupees in 1876-7, and to 2,130,000 tens of rupees in 1896-7. In addition to these remissions during the actual years of famine, large remissions were on each occasion made during the following year, and as long as the effects of the famine required it.

The following is the form of return referred to in the question printed above:—

Sir WILLIAM WEDDERBURN,—Remissions of Land Revenue on Account of Famines in India,—Address for Return showing (1) Remission of Land Revenue in each province of India in 1876-7 and in 1896-7; and (2) Total amount of Land Revenue due from each province in 1876-7 and 1896-7, the amount originally suspended; and the amount subsequently recovered on account of each of those official years.

Friday, February 23.

HOUSE OF COMMONS.

ARTILLERY IN INDIA.

Major RASCH asked the Secretary of State for India, what was the number of batteries with quick-firing attachment serving in India; also the number of howitzer guns.

Lord G. HAMILTON: The question of what pattern of quick-firing attachment for artillery in India should be adopted is receiving and has received careful consideration; but as improvements are being made it is desirable to test the carriages so improved before they are introduced wholesale as a service battery.

There are according to the latest return ten howitzers with heavy batteries of artillery in India. In addition to these there are a large number with garrison artillery, in siege trains, in forts and arsenals: but I do not think it would be desirable that I should state the numbers.

THE FAMINE AND THE PLAGUE.

Mr. HERBERT ROBERTS asked the Secretary of State for India, whether he would give the latest information as to the number of deaths from plague at Bombay:

And, whether he would state whether any material change had taken place in reference to famine statistics since he last gave the House information as to the serious condition of affairs in the famine-stricken districts in India.

Lord G. HAMILTON: The number of deaths in Bombay city from plague during the week ending February 16 was 583. The number for the corresponding week in the preceding year was 712.

As regards the famine, the latest estimate of the area affected is now 445,000 square miles, and that of the population affected, sixty-one and a-half millions, as against 550,000 square miles, and forty-nine millions, which were the figures given by me in answer to a question on the first of this month. The number of persons in receipt of relief is now about four millions as against three millions in the corresponding week of 1897. On the other hand the relief arrangements are more advanced than they were in 1897, the people are more ready to accept relief, prices are on the whole less high, and the death-rates in the famine districts, so far as yet known, are lower.

THE INDIAN AND RUSSIAN RAILWAY SYSTEMS.

Mr. MACLEAN asked the First Lord of the Treasury, whether, having regard to the activity with which Russia and Germany were pushing forward the construction of railways towards the Indian frontier, and seeing that this question had not been discussed by the House of Commons since the appointment of the Euphrates Valley

Railway Committee in 1871, he would consent to the appointment of a Committee to examine and report upon the best method of connecting the Indian and Russian railway systems, and so establishing through railway communication from Calais to Calcutta.

Lord G. HAMILTON: The question of connecting the Indian and Russian railway systems is one in which many important considerations, besides that of the convenience of through communication, are involved; any such connexion must run through the territory of the Amir of Afghanistan, and as his assent is a necessary preliminary to the consideration of any such undertaking I do not think that any useful purpose would be served by the appointment at the present time of such a Committee as the honourable member suggests.

Mr. MACLEAN: Is it intended that Afghanistan shall always block the high road?

The SPEAKER: Order.

Monday, February 26.

HOUSE OF COMMONS.

BRITISH INDIAN REFUGEES FROM THE TRANSVAAL.

Sir MANCHERJEE BHOWNAGGREE asked the Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, whether the Report, which he promised in reply to a question last Tuesday to call for by telegraph from her Majesty's Consul at Lorenço Marquez, regarding the ill-treatment of a number of British Indian refugees from the Transvaal by the Portuguese military authorities, and their compulsory deportation to India instead of to their homes in Natal, had been received; and, if so, would he state the contents of the report.

Mr. BRODRICK: The telegram has been received. Her Majesty's Consul reports the Indian refugees lived in a camp while waiting for the steamers to take them away. The camp was necessarily guarded by Portuguese soldiers. A person employed by the Relief Committee lived for some time in the camp, but reported no case of abuse. The Indians were sent to their declared homes, and none who were Natalians were sent to India. Her Majesty's Consul adds that no case of proved robbery or abuse was reported to him.

Tuesday, February 27.

HOUSE OF COMMONS.

RUSSIA AND PERSIA.

Mr. HEDDERWICK asked the Under Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, whether the recently announced Russian loan to Persia was concluded between Russia and Persia with the knowledge of her Majesty's Government:

And, whether her Majesty's Government had taken any and, if so, what action in the matter.

Mr. BRODRICK: The answer to the first paragraph is in the negative. No statement can be made as regards action by her Majesty's Government in regard to such a matter.

SUBSIDIES TO THE EASTERN TELEGRAPH COMPANY.

Sir EDWARD SASSOON asked the Secretary to the Treasury if he would state the amount of subsidies paid during 1898-9 to the Eastern Telegraph Company by the Imperial and Colonial Governments.

Mr. HANBURY: I presume that the hon. member refers not to the Eastern Telegraph Company alone but to the group of which it forms the centre. From Imperial funds £19,000 was paid in 1898-9 to the African Direct Telegraph Company and £63,000 to the Eastern and South African Telegraph Company, but £18,000 was repaid to the Exchequer in respect of the latter subsidy (£10,000 from India, £7,000 from Mauritius and £1,000 from Seychelles), and £5,000 in respect of the former from various West African colonies. From colonial funds £15,000 was paid to the Eastern and South African Telegraph Company by the Cape Government, and £5,000 was paid to the same company by the Natal Government; £32,400 was paid by Australasian Governments to the Eastern Extension Telegraph Company in respect of the duplicate cable subsidy (which finally ceased in October, 1899), and £4,200 in respect of the Tasmanian cable subsidy, besides a payment of £2,632 on a traffic guarantee for New Zealand cables, which can hardly be reckoned as a subsidy. I understand also that the Government of the Straits Settlements paid £400 to the Eastern Extension Company in respect of a telegraph to Malacca.

NOTICES OF MOTION.

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

Sir WILLIAM WEDDERBURN:—Distress in India—To call attention to the condition of the people of India; and to move, That, in view of the grievous sufferings which are again afflicting the people of India, a detailed and searching village enquiry should be instituted in order to ascertain the causes which impair the cultivators' powers to resist the attacks of famine and plague. (Tuesday, March 20.)

Mr. SAMUEL SMITH,—Excise Administration (India),—To call attention to the administration of Excise in India, by which many liquor shops are being opened in various parts of India, in direct violation of the expressed protests of the neighbourhood, and in contradiction of the declared policy of the Government of India, as formulated in their Despatch to the Secretary of State, No. 29, February 4, 1890; and to move a resolution. [An early day.]

Mr. HERBERT ROBERTS,—On Army Estimates, to call attention to the organisation of her Majesty's Military Forces in the East; and to move a resolution. [On going into Committee of Supply.]

NOTICES OF QUESTIONS.

Notice has been given of the following questions:—

Sir SEYMOUR KING,—To ask the Secretary of State for India, whether his attention has been called to the fact that the widows and orphans of subscribers to the Bengal, Bombay, and Madras Military Fund who wish to reside and draw their pensions in India are obliged by the Government to draw them at the old fixed rate of 2s. 3d. to the rupee, thus being mulcted of nearly 50 per cent. of the value of their pensions, whereas if pensions are drawn in England, Ceylon, or elsewhere they are paid at the official rate of exchange:

Whether he is aware that the effect of this anomaly is to prevent recipients of these pensions from joining their relatives in India who may be engaged in the Military or Civil Service:

And, whether it can be arranged that such pensions shall be settled for in India at the official rate or may be drawn in London. [*Thursday, March* 1.]

Mr. HERBERT ROBERTS,—To ask the Secretary of State for India, whether, as reported, special Military operations are contemplated by the Government of India on the North-West Frontier. [*Thursday, March* 1.]

Sir WILLIAM WEDDERBURN,—To ask the Secretary of State for India, with reference to the sums of Rx. 1,520,000 and Rx. 2,130,000, total remissions and suspensions of land revenue on account of famine in India in 1876-7 and 1896-7 respectively, whether he will state what portions of these sums were subsequently recovered from the landholders. [*Thursday, March* 1.]

Sir WILLIAM WEDDERBURN,—To ask the Secretary of State for India, with reference to the Viceroy's telegram of February 20, whether he will state what are the stricter regulations referred to as having diminished the number of persons on famine relief in Berar:

And, whether he will state what is the average daily wage paid to men, women, and children employed on relief works, with its equivalent in sterling. [*Thursday, March* 1.]

Sir WILLIAM WEDDERBURN,—To ask the Secretary of State for India, whether his attention has been drawn to the minutes of dissent recorded by the Mahárájá of Darbhanga, and the Hon. Mr. Mehta on the Telegraphic Messages Bill, to the effect that, on account of the high telegraphic rates, the Bill will not, as desired, produce a first rate telegraphic service for India, but will create a monopoly in favour of a few daily newspapers:

And, whether he will use his influence to obtain a reduction in the telegraphic rates to India. [*Thursday, March* 1.]

Mr. HEDDERWICK,—To ask the Under Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, whether the new Russian loan to Persia supplants the British loan:

Whether her Majesty's Government had the option from the Bank of Persia of guaranteeing the new loan before it was taken up by Russia:

And, whether her Majesty's Government declined to guarantee it. [*Thursday, March* 1.]

Sir JAMES FERGUSSON,—To ask the Secretary of State for India, whether he has come to any decision in regard to the claim of the Church of Scotland that Presbyterian soldiers in India shall share in the use of churches built for Protestants, and that such use shall be regulated by some other authority than the bishops of the Church of England. [*Monday, March* 5.]

CABLE RATES TO INDIA.

It is quite time that popular opinion should be invoked against the too long enduring monopoly of the cable telegraph companies, which have been permitted for many years to fetter seriously our communication with distant parts of the world, particularly with India, the far East, and Africa. The prospect that ordinary telegrams may be exchanged before long between the United Kingdom and France at little more than the sum of the separate charges for telegrams within each country is encouraging. But in other directions the rates required are far in excess of the cost of the service. Sir Edward Sassoon recently showed at Liverpool that a message may be sent to the head of the Persian Gulf for 6½d. per word, but that from that point to India, only one-third of the whole distance, "the rate goes up at a bound to 4s. per word," this part of the route being under the control of the Indian Government. The same authority states that the Indian Government has a joint purse agreement with the cable companies which control the telegraphic communications with India and the Far East. Repeated appeals have been made within the last six years to the Postmaster General and to the Secretary of State for India by the Manchester Chamber of Commerce for a reduction of the charges, on the ground both of the public interest and of the interest of the companies themselves, but with no substantial result. In answer to one of these Lord George Hamilton stated as far back as August, 1896, that at the Buda-Pesth International Telegraphic Conference, held in the preceding month, the delegates for British India had endeavoured to secure a reduction, but that they were overruled by the Eastern Telegraph Company. It is not difficult to understand that short-sighted partners in a monopoly may be easily persuaded to join in exacting the highest prices that they can command. But it has been abundantly proved that a reduction of telegraph rates—both cable and land—leads not to a lessening but an increase of revenue. In their own interests, therefore, the Eastern cable companies ought to lower their rates. If they do not, they may count with certainty upon evoking very serious competition before long, for it has been demonstrated by Sir Edward Sassoon and others that it is possible at very little additional cost to use the Russian lines in order to communicate with India at the rate of 1s. per word and with China at about 1s. 6d. per word, instead of the 4s. and 5s. 6d. now charged respectively for messages exchanged with these countries. The next meeting of the International Telegraphic Conference is to be held during the present year, and it is to be hoped that the delegates thereto may be made to understand that they are not this time to regard themselves as the blind guardians of a monopoly, but, like all other business men, to recognise that their interests lie in giving the best possible service to their customers at the lowest possible price.—The *Manchester Guardian*.

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