

India

FOR THE

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No. 118. NEW SERIES.
No. 212. OLD SERIES.

Notes and News	157	Wedderburn's Motion for a	
"To May Safely be Left"	160	Village Enquiry. Special Report 104	
Mr. Goldwin Smith on British Rule	161	The Causes of Famine in India :	
in India	161	Discussion at the National Liberal	
Our London Letter	162	Club	170
Notes from Bombay	163	Mr. Goldwin Smith on the Position	
Indian Affairs in Parliament	171	in India	172
The Famine in India: Sir W.		Advertisements	172

NOTES AND NEWS.

WE print this week special reports of the debate which took place in the House of Commons on Tuesday on Sir William Wedderburn's motion for an enquiry into the causes of famine, and of the discussion on the same subject at the National Liberal Club on Wednesday. Sir William Wedderburn's proposal for a searching enquiry (1) to ascertain the causes which impair the cultivator's power to resist the attacks of famine and plague, and (2) to suggest the best preventive measures against future famines, was negatived by 155 votes to 72. But it led to a debate of first-rate interest and importance, the results of which, direct and indirect, are likely to be extremely valuable. We discuss the debate at length on another page. Here it may be interesting to set out the names of the seventy-two members who would not accept Sir Lewis M'IVER's complacent formula that "it may safely be left" to the Government of India to do all that is necessary:—

Abraham, William.	Goddard, Daniel F.	O'Connor, James.
Ashby, Thomas G.	Gurford, Sir W. B.	O'Connor, T. P.
Austin, M.	Harwood, George.	Pickersill, E. H.
Baker, Sir John.	Hayden, John P.	Poever, Patrick J.
Bayley, Thomas.	Hayne, Rt. Hon. C. S.	Price, Robert Lobo
Billon, Alfred.	Hedderwick, T. C. H.	Reekitt, Harold J.
Broadhurst, Henry.	Hemphill, Rt. Hon. C. H.	Roberts, John Bryn.
Burt, Thomas.	Jacoby, James A.	Roberts, John H.
Caldwell, James.	Jones, William.	Schwann, Charles E.
Colville, John.	Kilbride, Denis.	Scott, Chas. P.
Crilly, Daniel.	Lawson, Sir Wilfrid.	Soames, Arthur W.
Crombie, John W.	Lewis, John Herbert.	Souttar, Robinson.
Curran, Thomas B.	MacAleese, Daniel.	Stedman, W. C.
Dalziel, James H.	Maclean, James M.	Sullivan, Donal.
Davies, M. Vaughan.	M'Crae, George.	Tanner, Chas. Kearns.
Dilke, Rt. Hon. Sir C.	M'Ghee, Richard.	Thomas, Alfred.
Donelan, Capt. A.	M'Kenna, Reginald.	Wallace, Robert.
Doogan, P. C.	Maddison, Fred.	Warner, T. C. T.
Duckworth, James.	Molloy, Bernard C.	Wason, Eugene.
Edwards, O. M.	Morton, Edw. J. C.	Weir, J. Galloway.
Emmett, Alfred.	Norton, Capt. C. W.	Whittaker, T. P.
Fenwick, Charles.	Nussey, T. Williams.	Wilson, Jos. H.
Flavin, Michael J.	O'Brise, James F. X.	Woods, Samuel.
Flynn, James C.	O'Brise, Patrick.	Yoxall, James H.

Tellers for the Ayes, Sir William Wedderburn and Mr. Samuel Smith.

Only one Unionist—Mr. J. M. Maclean—voted with Sir William Wedderburn. His vote was as courageous as his speech, than which one cannot say more. Three members of the late Liberal Government (Mr. Thomas Burt, the Right Hon. Charles Seale-Hayne, and the Right Hon. C. H. Hemphill) voted for the enquiry, but Sir Henry Fowler and the other Liberal ex-Ministers who were present did not take part in the division. What was there in the motion to excuse this feebleness? Are we to see in their abstention another example of the effects of that "etiquette of the Front Benches" which has so often paralysed official Liberalism in its dealings with India? The majority against the motion consisted of 151 Unionists and four Liberals—Sir John Austin, Mr. J. Fletcher Moulton, Mr. J. Compton Rickett, and Mr. Joseph Walton. Needless to say, Sir M. M. Bhowagroo went into the lobby with Lord George Hamilton. It is to be noted that the Government Whips—Sir William Walrond and Mr. Anstruther—were tellers for the Noes. That is to say, it was so arranged that a majority in favour of the motion would have involved a defeat of the Government. Yet we shall no doubt continue to be assured by Sir Henry Fowler and others that Indian questions are not party questions. The real meaning of that precious

formula, as we have so often shown, is that the Opposition ought not to oppose a Government which is employing the machinery of party to ensure a majority. The minority of 72, it may be added, included 41 members of the Indian Parliamentary Committee.

We have not space this week to give our usual extracts from the opinions of the British Press upon the debate. But it may be said generally that, like the official speeches in the debate itself, they showed a marked improvement upon the usual tone. The *Times*, for example, was good enough to say "we cannot quarrel with the motion on the ground that the subject was unworthy of Parliamentary discussion," and it added that "little exception can be taken to" the "tone and spirit" of Sir William Wedderburn's and Mr. Samuel Smith's speeches. Mr. Maclean's vigorous criticism of the optimism of the India Office and the costliness of Anglo-Indian administration—criticism which recalled Mr. Dadabhai Naoroji's inconvenient facts and figures—was, of course, chastised. "It was left for Mr. Maclean," said the *Times*, "to show that a so-called Unionist could speak with a malign perversity that Mr. Healy himself might envy." It is "malign perversity," then, to call attention to the oppressive burden of taxation in India and the terrible "economic drain" involved in the Home Charges and the private remittances of Anglo-Indians to this country. After this it is not surprising to read that "to assume that any human power, by any conceivable course of policy, could make famines in India impossible is to call for the working of a miracle." The *Times* also assumes that scarcity in India will normally lead to famine. If the assumption were necessary, the prospect for India would be dark indeed. Does not the *Times* perceive that though human power cannot control the rains it can and ought to abstain from methods and aims of policy which leave the Indian peasantry too impoverished to resist the effects of scarcity when the rains fail? There is food in India, but the people starve for want of the means to buy it.

The *Standard*, too, was not combative in tone, and, like Sir M. M. Bhowagroo, it let the cat out of the bag. It said:—

The Resolution passed by the House was an amendment to the original Motion. Sir William Wedderburn had made the "grievous sufferings" and the "extreme impoverishment of large masses of the population" a pretext for demanding—what? A searching enquiry to ascertain the causes that impair the cultivator's power to resist the attacks of famine and plague, and to suggest the best preventives against future famine. Under cover of this sweeping inquiry the whole system of administration might be brought under scrutiny. Is that, then, the reason why enquiry is refused? A little later in the article the *Standard* reflected that "it would be well if the agricultural population of to-day showed a greater power of getting through a period of agricultural distress in reliance on their own resources." But how can one rely upon one's own resources if they do not exist?

The *Daily News*, which has sometimes written about India with knowledge and sympathy, laboured under the mistake that Sir Henry Fowler "made the important suggestion that the House of Commons should vote a sum of money to the Indian Famine Relief Fund." The suggestion came of course from the mover of the motion. Sir Henry Fowler, like most of the speakers in the debate, warmly supported it. The remainder of the paragraph might well have been dictated from the India Office. For Liberal criticism one prefers to turn to the *Manchester Guardian*. The following passage from its article should be placed by the side of the extract from the *Standard* given above:—

It was hardly to be expected that Lord George Hamilton would accept Sir W. Wedderburn's motion last night for an enquiry into the economic causes of the Indian famine. The result of such an

enquiry might be to call in question the wisdom of the Indian Government's system of taxation, for which Lord George Hamilton, as Secretary of State for India, is officially responsible. Thus we have still to wait for an impartial examination of the theory that the peasantry would not succumb so readily to famine were they not rack-rented by the Government and thus rendered unable to save money in good years against the chance of a bad year.

And the *Morning Leader* wrote:—

If the debate had merely supplied the occasion for Mr. Maclean's speech it would have justified itself. But it did more. Enquiry was not granted. But nobody who studies the debate with care can fail to perceive the reason why the India Office shrinks from enquiry. And, again, though Sir William Wedderburn's proposal for a Parliamentary grant to India was refused by the Government, nearly every speaker supported it—Mr. Samuel Smith, Sir Lewis Melver, Mr. Maclean, Sir M. Bhowagree (with suitable apologies), and even Sir Henry Fowler. The last-named, in accordance with his practice, treated the House to some extracts from Sir John Strachey's official compilation about India, amid loud cheers from the Tories. But after Mr. Maclean's speech he could not persuade the Opposition that "the main—the only—cause of the famine is the failure of the rains." The debate had set too many members thinking, as it ought to set the country thinking. How comes it that the Indian peasant is so wretchedly poor that a failure of the rains threatens him with starvation?

The *Manchester Guardian's* sketch of the debate was signed "H. W. M."—initials which hardly conceal the name of Mr. H. W. Massingham, the late editor of the *Daily Chronicle*. We take this passage from Mr. Massingham's article:—

"Ireland," said Mr. Gladstone in one of his great Home Rule speeches, "stands at the door." To-day it is India which is the suppliant. She has not much reason to boast of her reception. I counted the House once or twice while Sir William Wedderburn and Mr. Smith were speaking. There were about two dozen Unionists present, and about the same number on the Liberal side. Among Cabinet Ministers Mr. Balfour alone followed the debate by Lord George Hamilton's side, and facing him were four or five members of the Cabinet of 1892. This is about India's average of attention. The past finance year has not raised it. In earlier days Mr. Bradlaugh's sledge-hammer speeches used now and then to awaken a little interest, as long, indeed, as his oratorical method was new to the House; but it soon died away. Sir William Wedderburn's style is not at all akin to the sledge-hammer. It is quiet and plain. Its interest belongs to the weight of knowledge, the vein of sympathy behind it. Unfortunately neither the House nor the Minister for India is in the least sympathetic. Lord George Hamilton seemed much more taken with Sir Lewis Melver's flippancies about famine than with Sir William Wedderburn's facts. He smiled when Sir Lewis Melver discovered, as the result of his experiences in India, that the rayat was a person rather prosperous than otherwise, who studied the market prices in the vernacular press as regularly as the hon. gentleman opposite perused the tape betting at the Reform Club. I do not gather whether this jest was meant for Mr. Samuel Smith or for Sir William Wedderburn. It was not especially appropriate to either.

There were some neat personal touches too. For example, Sir Lewis Melver "is a comfortable man—admirably attired, cheerful in demeanour, polished in speech. True, there was a famine, but, like Mr. Podsnap, Sir Lewis waved it off." And again, "Sir M. Bhowagree was in a slightly less optimistic vein, but he, too, would have nothing to say to a motion which implied first a general enquiry into economic conditions and secondly an impeachment of the Government of India. That Government was no doubt excellent, answered Mr. Maclean, in a sombre speech, but it was not impeccable, and unfortunately no echo of Native criticism of its work reached this country. But criticism, bad or good, practical or impractical, found no encouragement in the drab officialism of which Sir Henry Fowler is the exponent."

We are glad to see that many voices are being raised in favour of financial justice to India. The *Economist* in its article upon the Indian Budget wrote (March 24):—

If a heavy additional expenditure is to be imposed upon India as a portion of a scheme of Imperial military reorganisation, it is imperative that the question as to the proper allocation of the charges should no longer be hung up. For splendidly as the Indian finances have borne up against the combined disasters of plague and famine the strain upon them has been very severe, and any claim that can be put forward for a mitigation of the burdens they have to bear ought to meet with a ready and generous response.

How best this mitigation can be made was clearly stated by the *Daily Graphic* on March 21:—

Unless we are content that tens of thousands of our fellow-subjects should die of sheer starvation steps must be taken to increase very largely the assistance given to India. The only method really adequate to the necessities of the case is a Parliamentary grant. At a time when we are spending rapidly, even cheerfully, over 60 millions to maintain British power in South Africa we can well afford one million to maintain the tens of thousands of the Queen's subjects, for whose welfare the Parliament of the United Kingdom is in a peculiar degree responsible.

Side by side with these passages may be placed an extract from the *Morning Leader's* article (March 22), from which we quoted last week:—

The troops which we have borrowed from India for South Africa were obviously not needed for the defence of India or we should not have borrowed them at such a time. If then India saves £700,000 by lending us these troops for a few months, how much is she unjustly required to pay in ordinary times for the maintenance of this reserve force for our use? Let us think over the question, and then ask ourselves whether in the circumstances we can fairly refuse to make now to our indigent fellow-subjects the grant-in-aid from the British Treasury which we were willing to make at the time of the Transvaal campaign.

The leisurely ways of the Government of India is the face of the appalling and recurrent visitations of famine are peculiarly remarkable. In 1897 Mr. Nicholson conducted an enquiry into the possibility of finding in agricultural banks some means of relief to the rural population of India from the oppression of the moneylenders. On Thursday last week (March 29) Sir William Wedderburn asked the Secretary of State in the House what had been the practical results of this enquiry—what were Mr. Nicholson's recommendations as regards making early experiments in establishing agricultural banks, what steps had been taken to carry out his recommendations, and what success had attended the action of the Government. Lord George Hamilton, strangely enough, had nothing definite and positive to state to the public. He had not yet received from the Government of India an expression of their views upon Mr. Nicholson's proposals. Orders had indeed recently been passed by the Government of Madras upon them, but these orders had only just gone before the Government of India, and he was not even yet in a position to state in detail the nature of them. Yet, incidentally, he speaks of the subject as an "important matter." Important it undoubtedly is. What one cannot readily understand is that so very important a matter should be treated in so trifling a manner, especially in such serious circumstances.

Mr. Price fared no better when he asked (March 29) Lord George Hamilton "whether some portion of the labour now employed on relief work in India was being used or could be used for the further provision of tanks and other minor irrigation works." "The periodical reports received from the famine districts," said Lord George—and, by the way, why are these reports not placed before the public?—"show that famine workers are largely employed on digging canals, excavating or improving tanks, and sinking wells." Now why could not Lord George Hamilton communicate in a definite form the information he apparently possesses? How many persons are so employed, and in what districts, and with what results? He cannot be unaware that there is much adverse criticism of the employment of these wretched people—criticism expressly directed against the uselessness of the work they are set to perform. "But," he added, "it is not possible everywhere to construct suitable works of this kind." Well, where, and to what extent, is it possible? At the recent missionary meeting at Cannon Street Hotel, the whole burden of the practical contention of the speakers was in favour of irrigation, and more and more irrigation. It is very important, then, to know how far irrigation is suitable to the tracts now suffering from famine. Evidently the missionary gentlemen and their friends at that meeting knew nothing about it, but simply assumed that, as Sir Arthur Cotton had done great things on the Cauvery, the Kistna, and the Godavary, therefore some other engineer could do great things in irrigation say in Kathiawar, or Rajputana, or the Central Provinces. Why, in the name of common sense, cannot the Secretary of State give definite information on the subject if definite information is available, as it must be? Such reticence is unintelligible, and it is wholly mischievous.

In reply to Mr. Herbert Roberts (March 30) Lord George Hamilton gave a somewhat less perfunctory account of the contribution of India to the war in South Africa. But he was content to negative by ignoring it Mr. Roberts's question "whether in view of the value of India in the military defence of the Empire demonstrated in this war the Government would give an opportunity for the discussion of the claim of the Government of India for relief from some portion of its home military charges, before the Indian Budget discussion at the end of the

Session." He sheltered himself behind the dilatoriness of the Royal Commission. Even Sir Henry Fowler wanted to know "when the noble lord expected the long-delayed report would be received." But Lord George had no control over the Royal Commission, and "knew nothing about it." That is the worst of him: he knows nothing about things that he ought to know about, and even when he implies that he does know, he thinks it statesmanlike to keep his thumb on the information. No doubt, however, the Commission will report very soon now, and we shall at last have this ugly question of the partition of costs submitted to Parliament and the public. The delay of settlement has been very discreditably; we can only hope that the discredit will be, in some measure at least, redeemed by the liberality of the final determination.

Week after week the Indian papers tell the same tale of ever-increasing distress. Thus the *Times of India* for March 17 says:—

The weekly famine review is again a most dismal record. In every affected district, with the insignificant exceptions, the number in receipt of relief shows a large increase. The net result of this is that the total of those dependent upon Government aid in British India has jumped up a hundred and fifty-nine thousand, and in the Native States fifty-one thousand.

The one ray of hope in this last outlook comes from the North-West Provinces, where rain has again fallen and the spring crops are being reaped, so that very few remain on the relief works. The *Mahratta* takes as gloomy a view as its Anglo-Indian contemporary:—

Water famine is growing more and more intense with the advance of the hot season. The prices have gone as high as they could possibly do. All the combined strength of Government and the people can counteract the adversity only feebly; but it is gratifying to find that what man can do man is doing.

The special correspondent of the *Times of India* continues his journey through the famine-stricken districts. Before leaving Ahmedabad he was told that more than a hundred persons had died from privation in the vicinity during the previous week. Nor must it be forgotten that to the actual deaths, weakness and disease caused by want of food must be added the moral deterioration—dacoities prevailing on all sides; the permanent impoverishment due to loss of cattle; and the hardships and sufferings of those driven to wander in search of help. The days are hot and the land is parched, but the nights are still cold. The correspondent, starting off in the early morning, thus recounts what he witnessed:—

Considering the heat of the day it seemed scarcely possible it could be so cold. Facing again through the town one pitied the wretched creatures who, without shelter and hardly covered, were lying, coughing frightfully, by the side of the road.

We have been told on high authority that the real reason for the great numbers who had flocked to the relief works was the demoralisation caused by the help given with so prodigal a hand in the last famine. Mr. Frazer, the Chief Commissioner of the Central Provinces, is of a different opinion. Presiding at a meeting in the Nagpur Town Hall to inaugurate a Relief Fund, he is reported by the *Amrita Bazar Patrika* as saying:—

At the end of May, 1897, the people on relief works and in receipt of gratuitous relief numbered seven lakhs, while at present the numbers came to over fourteen lakhs. One reason given for this increase was that the people understood the methods of relief better, and there was a great deal of truth in that. Another reason that might be alleged was that the people had lost their self-respect. He had, however, visited the works and felt sure that this was true in a very small degree. He thought the real reason was that the people had been stricken much more sorely than in the last famine. The calamity was unprecedented, and the people were less able to bear the trouble than in 1897, not having had time to fully recover from the effects of that famine.

This is what INDIA has always urged; and it is now confirmed by the official who perhaps of all others has the best means of forming a true judgment.

The "agriculturists of Nandurbar, Shahade, and Talode talukas in the District of Khandesh" have addressed a petition to Lord Northcote praying for a remission or suspension of revenue. No doubt the Governor of Bombay will prove more courteous than his subordinates; for, when the petitioners applied to the Mamlatsdar of the talukas, they were bidden forward their petitions to the higher authorities, and, when they applied to the Collector of the District and the Revenue Commissioner, they got neither concession nor even reply. The petitioners point out that

the annual rainfall of the last five years has been below the average, and that in 1899 "the miseries and sufferings entailed by the attendant scarcity of food, fodder, and water had no parallel in the history of the talukas during the last thirty or forty years."

Prices have risen sharply; in February, jowari and bajri, the staple food, had become nearly three times as dear as in 1899. Fodder gradually got scarce, and water scanty; and "the weekly mortality among cattle is appalling." The kharif and rabi crops have totally failed. The people cannot borrow, "as no sowkar is prepared to advance loans except on ruinous terms, or on terms which cannot but involve the agricultural population in grave difficulties for years to come." The pass to which things have come in these talukas is further illustrated as follows:—

One direct result of the prevailing scarcity is a lamentable increase in the number of daring thefts, robberies, and dacoities, which have led in some instances to serious and even fatal injuries to the inmates of the houses plundered by armed robbers. The latter set fire to houses with a view to keep villagers engaged in one quarter of the village and then looted their unprotected houses. This has become so desperate as to take away cattle with force from the hands of owners in broad daylight with a view to kill and eat them. Cases have occurred in which they have gone the length of killing even country ponies where the ordinary domestic cattle could not be procured, and eating their flesh. Instances have not been wanting in which poor starving mothers have either cast away their children or sold them for a few seers of grain.

These poor people do seem to have some claim on the "prosperity" surplus.

Considering the way in which Anglo-Indians boast of the benefits conferred on India by her railways and the skill with which they have been planned, it is rather surprising to see the candid way in which the *Pioneer* endorses the Viceroy's remarks on the Assam-Bengal Railway, and even refers to it as a "project which has hung like a millstone round the neck of the Government of India for the last few years." The Viceroy declared that the route chosen was a mistake, that the cost per mile would be equal to that of the most expensive broad-gauge lines in India, though it has only the metre-gauge, and that for many years to come it would be a drain on the Government.

The *Amrita Bazar Patrika*, referring to the case in which Mrs. Caroline Spencer Thomas was fined Rs. 15 by the Fourth Presidency Magistrate, Bombay, for branding her Native servant-girl with a pair of heated tongs, contrasts this sentence with those passed on Indians for a similar offence. In a case where a husband branded his wife under circumstances of great provocation, the Anglo-Indian press were indignant because he only received six months' rigorous imprisonment; while a mother and son convicted of branding the latter's wife who had so slandered her mother-in-law that she was treated as an outcast, were given two years' rigorous imprisonment each.

We are very glad that the *Globe* has taken our hint to carry out itself its own suggestion of raising an "Indian Stretcher-Bearers' Fund." The list published on April 3 showed a total of £55 10s. We trust it will continue to grow rapidly.

The camaraderie of the Gurkhas and the Gordons has just received significant expression. The facts are best gathered from a letter addressed by Lieut.-Col. L. Hall, commanding the 2nd Gurkhas at Debra Dan (March 8), to Colonel H. H. Mathias of Dargai fame, commanding the Aberdeen District, the head-quarters of the Gordons.

All ranks of both battalions of the 2nd (P.W.O.) Gurkhas have watched events in South Africa with the keenest interest, especially so the doings of their old comrades, the 60th Rifles and the Gordon Highlanders.

Their admiration of the deeds of their friends has been expressed, first, in a desire to be sent out to aid them, and, secondly, in a voluntary and spontaneous donation of a day's pay to be paid for the aid of families of killed, etc., in the two regiments.

The amount subscribed has therefore been divided into two equal shares, and it is with the hearty greetings and congratulations on the added fame of their comrades that I send the enclosed cheque for £35 2s. 7d. from all ranks of the 2nd (P.W.O.) Gurkhas.

We entirely agree with Colonel Mathias that "this instance of the affection and brotherhood of an Indian regiment for their British comrades should be made widely known."

"IT MAY SAFELY BE LEFT."

ON Tuesday evening Sir William Wedderburn rose from a sick bed to call attention to the Indian famine from his place in the House of Commons, and to move

That, in view of the grievous sufferings which are again afflicting the people of India, and the extreme impoverishment of large masses of the population, a searching enquiry should be instituted in order to ascertain the causes which impair the cultivators' power to resist the attacks of famine and plague, and to suggest the best preventive measures against future famines.

Three times has Sir William brought this fundamental question before the House, and this time was defeated by 155 to 72 votes—a result that promises well for the future. The debate opened out into one of the most important field days of the Session, and on the whole it was of an exceedingly encouraging character. The moderation of Sir William and of his second Mr. S. Smith extorted frank acknowledgment from the leading opponents of the motion. Mr. Maclean delivered a most incisive and scathing speech that struck to the very marrow of the problem, and that cannot but carry great weight in the country as well as on the Conservative benches in the House. Lord George Hamilton, though strenuously official and optimistic, was more conciliatory than is his wont, and in fact did as much as any other speaker to justify the motion that he was labouring to persuade the House to reject. Sir Henry Fowler, while full of the glory of the Indian Empire, has not yet got beyond the painful position of crying ditto to Lord George Hamilton. But the debate will help to open the eyes of the country, and will give a much-needed filip to the various Famine Relief Funds.

Sir William Wedderburn heartily recognised the unselfish efforts of our Indian officials to grapple with the "stupendous calamity," and the sympathetic willingness of the people of this country to do what they could to relieve the situation. But, he contended, there is a national as well as a personal duty "to give without stint." He said:—

The Town Council of Hartlepool has earned the gratitude of India for proposing an Imperial Grant; and I doubt not that such a grant is widely approved throughout the country. In reply to your question on this subject, the noble Secretary of State for India has stated that the Indian Exchequer is not in immediate need of help. This may be, but my present suggestion is that an Imperial Grant should be given, not in aid of the Indian Exchequer, but for the same purposes as the Mansion House Fund—to help the classes who cannot come upon relief works, to find comforts for the sick, the aged, and the children, and to aid the cultivators in recovering themselves after the famine and replacing the plough cattle which in many parts are almost extinct.

The proposal of Hartlepool, we understand, ran into seven figures, and there can be no doubt that it would be supported throughout the length and breadth of the country. We have ourselves urged this point, and our suggestions have received gratifying support in several important journals. Indeed the idea took such hold of the House that the debate gradually receded from the main point of an enquiry, and tended to concentrate on the propriety of an Imperial grant. There was hardly a single speaker that did not express approval of it. Sir Henry Fowler indeed was emphatic. "I want," he said, "to put it to the House that, as a nation we owe a duty to India as a great branch of our Empire. A vote of the House of Commons is a contribution of every taxpayer in the country, and, as India has so promptly and generously responded to appeals made to her at this crisis on behalf of the Empire, I think the Empire should do something, not in return, but in acknowledgment and in reciprocation of the feeling of sympathy which India has so marvellously displayed." He dwelt on the moral advantage of such an act, and scouted the idea that the strain of war in South Africa was any obstacle in view of "the high tide of national prosperity." We do not wish at the moment to put in another plea—the simple plea of justice; but it is just as well to keep in mind that the adjustment of accounts lies in the background and that the balance certainly lies in favour of India. The present point is that there was a general consensus in favour of such a grant as Sir William Wedderburn pleaded for. Lord George Hamilton, however, though compelled to be conciliatory in form, would not go farther than to suggest that the Government might, if there were stringency in the Indian money market, consent to lend "by way of advances" such an amount as might be considered necessary to set the cultivators on their feet again when the famine was over.

Lord George has his own official reasons, and the *Pioneer* has told him very plainly what they are: if the British workman came to contribute as a taxpayer to Indian relief, he would probably be stirred to enquire why such a contribution was necessary—an enquiry that would prove somewhat inconvenient to placid officialism. Anyhow, the debate proved a useful stirring of the waters of sympathy.

Sir William Wedderburn's main point, however, was the necessity of an enquiry—"a searching enquiry"—in order to discover how the rayat, without leaving his village, could be kept from danger of starvation. On this point he put forward three propositions:—

The first point was that the mortality in an Indian famine was due to the fact that the rayats did not possess a store of food, money, or credit sufficient to tide over one failure of harvest.

The second proposition was that mortality from famine would practically be prevented if they had such a store of food, money or credit.

And his third proposition was that it was our duty to enquire why the rayats had not got this store, and, if possible, to provide for so dangerous an economic condition.

That the rayats are in grievous lack of food, money, and credit is one of the few points on which we possess the clearest and most painful evidence that has reached this country in reference to the present calamity. That mortality from famine could be prevented if the rayats had one or other of these three things is also quite obvious. The third proposition would seem to follow as a matter of course. But Sir Lewis McIver, who moved the amendment, in the tone of a prosperous and comfortable spectator of the distress at a safe distance, was imprudent enough to tell the House that "enquiry into settlement would be a superfluity, seeing that there was a permanent enquiry going on every year and all the year." It was Mr. S. Smith's argument for a permanent settlement that provoked this remark and later some triumphant periods from Lord George Hamilton. We have advocated permanent settlement in a qualified form, but not on the lines of the permanent settlement of Lord Cornwallis; and Lord George Hamilton should have dealt with Mr. Romesh Dutt's argument on this point in the light of Mr. Dutt's qualifications. But Sir Lewis McIver can hardly suppose that people are foolish enough to imagine that the last word is said when a settlement officer has made his decision. Has he not read the scandalous report of the proceedings in the recent settlement at Lucknow, which stirred the indignation even of the Anglo-Indian Press? Does he not know how perfunctorily and oppressively it was hurried through, and that the official explanation, or apology, was that the settlement staff was shorthanded? Surely, if Parliament is good for anything, it ought to revise such a scandalous enquiry as this, and the like of this, and not take it as final because it was done officially. "He would be the last to minimise the poverty and suffering of the people of India." Then is it not his duty to enquire why they are poor and why they suffer? But, he says, an enquiry of this sort would open up a large vista. Indeed it would, and the vista ought to be opened up promptly. Again, he says, we have already enquired; and he points Sir William Wedderburn to "shelves of Blue-books, which would explain to him, as far as it could be explained, the cause of the famine." Now, that is just what the Blue-books fail to do; and Sir William knows it, while Sir Lewis apparently does not. There is not a word about the prevention of famine in Sir Lewis McIver's amendment; the prevention of famine was the very essence of Sir William's motion. The Commission of 1878, we know, dealt with the question of prevention, but in such a superficial and official fashion that it is the merest blindness of party spirit to point to the Report as the final deliverance on the subject.

Sir Lewis McIver and his friends would find instruction in some little enquiry on the lines indicated by Mr. Maclean. The officials, as Mr. Maclean points out, still continue to talk helplessly of famine as an act of God, which has to be borne as best may be, but is beyond the reach of anything more effective than "mitigation." The Secretary of State is optimistic and serene, instead of facing the actual facts and grappling with them. The public servants, who used to be proud of their independence, are muzzled. How then are we to get at the facts without enquiry? The impoverishment of the people needs to be seen, says Mr. Maclean, in order to be realised; it is largely due to heavy taxation and to the mortgaging of the resources of the country to England. "How is it there

are no famines in any other parts of the Queen's dominions?" Mr. Maclean's speech might have been spoken by Mr. Dadabhai Naoroji. There does seem scope for not a little enquiry in its suggestions—enquiry too that shall go to the very root of the mischief. Yet the House of Commons resolved in the terms of Sir Lewis Melver's amendment:—

That this House, while deeply sympathising with its Indian fellow-subjects in the sufferings which plague and famine have inflicted upon them, is of opinion that it may safely be left to the Government of India, to carry out any modification of the land tenure and industrial system which experience may have shown to be likely to mitigate the effects of famine and epidemic disease.

A very confiding body the House of Commons has proved. This is not the first time that it has concluded that the Government of India might be safely left to do this and that. The unhappy thing is that it takes for granted the official action of the Government of India and its subordinates as incapable of impeachment or improvement. It in fact relies upon the Secretary of State, and puts its conscience to sleep, and the conscience of the nation as well. Yet there is serious import in Mr. Maclean's warning that it is time the nation awoke to what it owes to India. The Government's position is plain enough. It dreads enquiry, above all things. The nation's position of responsibility is very different, and we trust that the debate will at least have the effect of bringing livelier pressure to bear on the Government. Indeed, there is reason to believe the Government of India is quietly taking steps for an official enquiry into some at least of the points raised by Sir William Wedderburn.

MR. GOLDWIN SMITH ON BRITISH RULE IN INDIA.

THOUGH Mr. Goldwin Smith has long been absent from this country he is not forgotten. Whatever a man of his eminence may say on India is certain to be of interest and cannot fail to be instructive in itself, and to give rise to fresh trains of thought in his readers. The three short paragraphs quoted on another page of this issue afford an excellent example of this, and if the feeling on reading the earlier sentences be one of disappointment the conclusion will appear all the more striking. Disappointment indeed is but a weak word to express the feelings aroused at the sight of Goldwin Smith repeating the oft-refuted platitudes of the average Anglo-Indian official. Especially is this the case when we hear again the old story of over-population. He indeed, like those he follows when he ought to lead, scrupulously avoids figures. He tells us, it is true, that the population of India has doubled under "the British Peace" without seemingly taking into consideration the length of time that has elapsed since British rule was established. As a matter of fact the population of British India does not increase very fast. The average annual increment during the ten years preceding the last census was only '94 per cent. (if Burma be excluded), the same as that of Japan and far less than that of England, Germany, and many other countries of Europe. Nay, it is much less than that of Travancore, Mysore, Baroda, and several other Native States, which ought thus to be plunged in a poverty far deeper than that of our own dominions. But this is not all. Not only is the total increase for the whole of India very slow, but it varies in different parts, being only '68 per cent. per annum in Bengal and '62 in the North-West Provinces. Thus in the valley of the Ganges, where the population is already very dense, the increase is very slow. Mr. Goldwin Smith does not indeed repeat the Anglo-Indian fallacy of quoting the increase without deigning to enquire what proportion it is of the whole, but he does say:—

Among myriads of bondsmen, in a state of social degradation, the restraint of social self-respect, which in other cases acts as a spontaneous limit of population, has no force; the people multiply like rats or rabbits, exercising no foresight. . . .

But we see that population increases much more slowly in Bengal than in more thinly peopled districts, although in Bengal there is less famine and distress than elsewhere. How can the people of India, who increase only by '94 per cent. per annum, be said to increase like rats or rabbits? Still less the people of the Ganges Valley, whose rate is between '60 and '70 per cent. And how can there be said to be no restraint when the population thus varies with the density, even though the "Positive" check—to use the

language of Malthus—be less active in Bengal than elsewhere? And, again, can a nation be said to have reached the limits of subsistence when it can export food to help pay for the luxury of the most expensive government in the civilised world? Are not these questions which call for an answer from Mr. Goldwin Smith?

Having thus without evidence or argument declared that over-population is at the root of India's troubles, he goes on to enumerate the benefits of British rule, following with beautiful docility the same Anglo-Indian guides. Of the heavy taxation needed to support the monstrous expense of our government of India nothing is said; nor of the payments made in England, the result of alien rule, which as John Stuart Mill has shown have all the economic effects of a tribute, and oblige India not only to pay many millions per annum as Home Charges, pensions, interest on debt, etc., but to force her products on the market in order to provide the sum required. But we have the usual list showing how many good things—some of which they did not want and some of which they could not afford—have been forced on the Indians. And underneath all is the usual tendency to exaggerate the evils of the days before the British conquest and to take the turbulent period which followed the break-up of the Mogul power as typical of Indian history. The pacific character of life in Southern India in the days when first the Portuguese came there is apparently forgotten; nor is it remembered that had there been no foreign interference it is scarcely doubtful that some great Native power would have arisen on the ruins of the Mogul Empire.

One point, however, in Mr. Goldwin Smith's panegyric demands more particular notice. He speaks of the subject race having been "associated with the conqueror in the administration, probably as far as was consistent with the conqueror's retention of supreme power." But it is not very obvious what he means by the two last words. Does he mean by "supreme power" the maintenance of British rule? Surely, no class in India is so closely bound up with that rule and so dependent on it for prosperity and importance as the Indian holders of high office under the Crown. Does he mean that with the admission of Indians in any numbers to posts of great Indian dignity, the administration would be "inspired" by Indian methods and inspired? It would gradually become less an and with the feelings and wishes of the Indians, indeed, an appalling result. The "social" by birth the offspring of the civilisation of India, by training the pupils of the civilisation of Europe, should take up the work of the conquerors and bring it into harmony with the conquered—this which would seem the true apotheosis of English rule is it appears not its destined evolution, but its destruction. There is no need, however, to labour the point; no need to contrast the exclusiveness of the English with the generosity of Akbar. It is sufficient to read Mr. Goldwin Smith's third paragraph, which goes to the root of the matter, and essentially refutes what has gone before: for in his third paragraph he asks what is to be the end of British empire in India, and can find no answer.

Here, indeed, he states his case fairly and squarely. The English race remains "alien and intrusive." It "can never be acclimatised in India; it can never be assimilated." And with the increased facilities of communication between Europe and the East, it has become more alien still. On the other hand "England has destroyed all the organs of Native rule" and it is impossible or at least unlikely that self-government should be developed where all the highest posts are held by aliens, and the whole administration is inspired by alien ideas. Here then is a difficulty. Such an unnatural state of things cannot last for ever; and yet we have destroyed everything that could take its place. Moreover, while the solution tarries and can nowhere be found, events move on. The British Empire in India may come to an end in Mr. Goldwin Smith's opinion, not by the slow process of internal decay, nor by the increasing difficulty of keeping so artificial and complicated a machine in full working order, nor even by the quicker action of bankruptcy—the burden being too great for the economic resources of the country to bear—but by the effect of some great external shock to our world-wide Empire. "If such policy as that which has made the South African war continues to rule British councils, the solution may some day come in a storm."

But is it true that no solution is forthcoming and that the question has never been fairly faced? We can very well believe that Mr. Goldwin Smith might read many works by very eminent Anglo-Indians and find that this was so. They are not prepared to face the only possible solution, because it would be fatal to the theories on which they have moulded their conduct, and to the prejudices which permeate Anglo-Indian life. But Mr. Goldwin Smith must be very ignorant of contemporary Indian thought if he believes that no serious attempt has been made to answer the question. The answer of the Indian National Congress and its leaders may be erroneous; their forecasts may be destined to be falsified by the course of events; their hopes may be shattered by new forces of which they have been unable to take account. But at least their answer is serious and it holds the field. And this answer is that the true euthanasia of the present alien Empire in India is an India ruled largely by her own sons, in whom shall be united the traditions of East and West, the inheritors alike of the ancient civilisation of their fathers and of the noble lessons in government which they had learnt from their conquerors. United by the precious bonds of liberty and order, the Indians of the future will not be wanting in gratitude to those from whom they learnt so much. And England will feel more proud of India prosperous than of India conquered.

OUR LONDON LETTER.

WESTMINSTER, Thursday.

WHEN Sir William Wedderburn rose in the House of Commons on Tuesday night to call attention to the famine in India his audience must have numbered nearly a hundred. One could scarcely believe that members realised the nature of the subject. Usually when India is mentioned the House promptly assumes the appearance of a half-deserted dormitory. On this occasion the audience increased instead of diminishing, and the debate as it went on developed in animation and interest, leaving the impression, despite an adverse report that the Imperial Parliament takes at least a spasmodic

interest in the eastern dependency. At the same time the Government side, while the Opposition might have been better filled. The Government side, however, had their followers a good example. Mr. Balfour and Sir M. Hicks Beach and, later, Mr. Chamberlain kept Lord George Hamilton company on the Treasury bench. Sir H. Campbell-Bannerman, although just recovered from a severe indisposition, sat through the whole of the discussion, retaining by his side during the greater part of the time Sir Henry Fowler, Sir Edward Grey, and Mr. Asquith. Sir H. Fowler was so elated by these unwonted indications of public interest that he could not refrain from a pean of congratulation on the subject. English members generally perhaps felt grateful that the bright-eyed Indians seated in the Strangers' Gallery were privileged to witness something better than the mere simulacrum of a debate which has for years done duty for a discussion of the Indian Budget.

Brief and eminently practical speeches were made by both the mover and the seconder of the resolution, the terms of which were as follow:—

That, in view of the grievous sufferings which are again afflicting the people of India and the extreme impoverishment of large masses of the population, a searching enquiry should be instituted in order to ascertain the causes which impair the cultivators' power to resist the attacks of famine and plague, and to suggest the best preventive measures against future famines.

The establishment of grain storehouses was one of the preventive measures suggested by Sir William Wedderburn, whose reminder that this was "what Joseph did in Egypt" might have been expected to appeal to Conservative predilections in favour of antique precedent. "In the fat years Joseph filled his storehouses, so that in the lean years there was bread for the people." Sir William's chief point, however, was that there should be an enquiry into the economic conditions of village life. The rural village, as he pointed out, is the unit and microcosm of all India, so that an investigation into the economics of a few such typical communities would have a practical and instructive application to the whole Empire.

Irrigation was the panacea—to quote Lord George Hamilton's somewhat contemptuous expression—recommended by Mr.

Samuel Smith, while a solemn statement of British sympathy was formulated by Sir Lewis McIver as an adequate poultice for India's sores. "This House," Sir Lewis proposed as an amendment to the resolution, "while deeply sympathising with its Indian fellow-subjects in the sufferings which plague and famine have inflicted upon them, is of opinion that it may safely be left to the Government of India to carry out any modification of the land tenure and industrial system which experience may have shown to be likely to mitigate the effects of famine and epidemic disease." There is a homely old proverb which says that sympathy without relief is like mustard without beef. Sir Lewis McIver's amendment had evidently been designed as an exposition of some such text. He and Sir Mancherjee Bhownagjee enjoyed the distinction of contributing the only speeches absolutely hostile in spirit that were made against the motion, which by the way was picturesquely described by the mover of the amendment as aimed at a state of things that was non-existent with a view to obtaining an enquiry that had already been granted. Even Mr. Balfour could not resist a laugh when the orator gravely alluded to the pressure of public business as a reason for defeating the resolution.

Then came a slashing speech from Mr. J. M. Maclean, whose impatience of what Burke calls the solemn plausibilities of life is never more extreme than when he is brought into conflict with those of Downing Street. The rosy optimism of both the present Indian Secretary and his predecessor, Sir H. Fowler, was ridiculed with merciless rillery. "You survey the whole area of your administration," he told those right hon. and complacent statesmen, "and pronounce it to be very good. Take care lest you lose for this country the mastery of Asia." The member for Cardiff did not omit to raise his voice against the stifling of Native and of independent official opinion in India (with special reference to the case of Mr. Thorburn), nor to point the moral of the contrast between the recent vote of sixty millions sterling for the South African war and the attitude of Sir Lewis McIver and his sympathisers in relation to the sufferings of our fellow-subjects. "Five famines in India in thirty years!" exclaimed Mr. Maclean, and in the exclamation, as he proceeded to show, was compressed a whole history of slovenly administration, over-paid officialdom, and unimaginative, unsympathetic statesmanship. This audacious and rebellious speech caused something like consternation on the Treasury bench. Lord George Hamilton bestrewed the floor with scraps of paper, the debris perhaps of his efforts to polish a *tu quoque* in time for his reply.

Optimism was certainly the predominant quality of the speeches with which the debate was brought to a conclusion. Despite the shrewd satire of the member for Cardiff, Sir Henry Fowler boldly expended his eloquence on building up yet another of those towering panegyrics of Indian administration for which he has made himself known. His vindication of the policy of railway extension did not however preclude him from admitting that much might be said for alternative measures. Indeed, Sir Henry went on to support Sir W. Wedderburn's suggestion that to deal with the immediate necessities of the famine-stricken districts the Government should grant a subsidy rather than trust to the efforts of charity. "Despite the war," he remarked, with the authority of a potential Chancellor of the Exchequer, "this country never had so much money at its command as it has to-day." A smile flickered on the faces of members when Lord George Hamilton, reverting to this appeal, assured the House that if he could not see his way to accede to it, it was not because the Chancellor of the Exchequer would dream of putting any obstacle in his way. His real reason was that it would be establishing "a startling precedent" to hand over Government money to be distributed by charitable societies. Better to extend the system of local loans, to develop the railway system, to push irrigation, to encourage a greater diversity of occupations in rural India—in short, to continue on the old immemorial lines and piously hope for the best.

While the substance of the Indian Secretary's speech was felt to be disappointing, acknowledgment should be made of its conciliatory temper. Mr. Maclean, of course, had to be sacrificed. He was therefore taunted on having suggested as a remedy for the famine that the Government should encourage its minor officials to insubordination. The only fault of this paraphrase was that it bore no relation to the original statement. For his other critics, including Mr. Ramesh Dutt, Lord

George had nothing but smooth words. His reasoning however was not precisely a model of logic or lucidity. "This is not a famine of food but a famine of wages due to a cessation of employment." "The rayats do not store their grain because they know that the Government will import food into their districts." "Formerly, the want of railway communication compelled them to depend on the produce of their own districts and to store food from year to year; but now in a good year they prefer to sell the grain and save the money to supply themselves with food in a bad year." As one listened to the cheerful inconsistencies, of which these are a selection, it was with a growing desire to ask whether the famine, then, was but a delusion after all? But Lord George Hamilton should never be taken too literally. Having ascribed to the want of railway communication in earlier years the provident spirit by which the village communities were formerly characterised, he next declared that but for the railway extensions of the last two decades the people of India would have died in "tens of millions."

Fortunately, even a famine has its bright side—when looked at through the coloured glasses of the India Office. Thus, the present calamity by bringing home to the people of India the benevolent intentions of British policy has at least "one gratifying feature." Lord George Hamilton indeed appeared almost ready to argue that British compassion for the distress of the famine-stricken districts was the opportune cause of India's sympathy with Great Britain in her South African struggle. The orator had apparently prepared a peroration on this inviting theme, but owing either to the manifest artificiality of his phrases or to a penetrating sense of the unintentional irony of his argument, members cruelly drowned the concluding sentences in a rising tide of conversation. In the division the motion was negatived by 155 votes to 72.

London was thrown into consternation last night by the news from Brussels that an attempt had been made to assassinate the Prince of Wales as he was entering the train at the Gare du Nord on his way to Denmark. Happily, the report was accompanied by an assurance that his Royal Highness had escaped the revolver-shot by which his life was threatened. The public indignation has since been almost unreasonably fierce. People at once jumped to the conclusion that the outrage must have some connexion with the pro-Boer propaganda of which the Belgian capital has long been the Continental headquarters, and bitter reproaches were showered on the head of the police authorities in Brussels for the laxity of their protective arrangements. Whatever the motive of the attempt—whether it turns out to have been the act of a political desperado or of a mere madman—it will have one gratifying result, and that, as Sir William Wedderburn said at the National Liberal Club last night, will be to evoke a demonstration of sympathy for its intended victim throughout the whole of the British Empire. The arrival of the news during the progress of the Indian Famine meeting in the National Liberal Club was a somewhat startling incident of that extremely successful gathering. Mr. A. G. Symonds, as chairman, proved equal to the emergency. In a few well-chosen words, which were warmly seconded by Sir William Wedderburn, he gave expression to the regret with which all present had heard of the disquieting occurrence and to the relief with which the intelligence of the Prince's safety had been welcomed. By none were those sentiments more heartily endorsed than by the Indian gentlemen who formed part of the audience.

NOTES FROM BOMBAY.

EXIT: THE PRESS MESSAGES BILL.

[FROM AN INDIAN CORRESPONDENT.]

BOMBAY, March 15.

The most important event of the week is the abandonment of the Press Messages Bill by the Government of India. Seldom has a Bill officially brought forward been allowed to share the fate which Lord Curzon has decreed for this piece of ill-advised and unpopular legislation. Introduced at Simla in the autumn of last year, where the non-official representatives of the people are not present, and where it is invariably understood that purely official or departmental laws are passed, the measure provoked a strong agitation throughout the entire Press, save for one or two papers well known for their official

advocacy. No case was made out for the Bill. Foremost among the public bodies, apart from the Press, was the Bombay Presidency Association in entering an emphatic protest, which was supported by a volume of opinion from the leading Indian and Anglo-Indian newspapers. The Presidency Association requested the postponement of the Bill till the Government assembled in Calcutta; it requested the omission of the objectionable section prohibiting comments on copyright messages for sixty hours; and it suggested that, as no case had been made out for the Bill, it should be abandoned. Other leading bodies joined the protest forthwith, and the Government was constrained to postpone the consideration of the measure till January. Meanwhile it was busy collecting through the Provincial Governments the opinions of the Press. These are not yet made public. But it is generally reported that, were they made public, the Indian Government would be seen not to have a leg to stand upon. In due course the Government reassembled at Calcutta. A Select Committee was appointed to modify the Bill in response to popular opinion. The result was a compromise which satisfied nobody. The Bill was subjected to more and more adverse criticism. Meanwhile the Hon. Mr. Ananda Charlu, the popular representative of Madras, put another and most effective spoke in the wheel. He interpellated the Government as to the subsidy paid to Renter from the public treasury and the further privilege accorded to that vendor of telegraphic news of wiring his urgent messages to Provincial Governments at rates fixed for deferred telegrams. There was no way of denying the fact. The Government had to make the best of it and confirm Mr. Charlu's information. The answers led to no very favourable criticisms on the action of the State. They also threw a side-light upon the whole matter. The third reading of the Bill came on to-day. But already notices of many amendments to the modified provisions of the Bill had been presented on the agenda. One of them, by the Hon. Mr. P. M. Mehta, was to the effect that the Bill be delayed till the Copyright Act, which is on the legislative anvil, was mature for introduction in the Legislative Council. So far it is a satisfaction to note that the popular voice has been heard, and that Lord Curzon has acted with judgment and courage in withdrawing the Bill. It is to be presumed that this act of the Viceroy will raise him higher in the estimation of the public. It will also raise fair hopes in the hearts of Indians as to the prospects of their grievances being redressed.

In another direction, too, the Viceroy's discrimination is to be praised. On his recent visit to Assam, the interested tea-planters requested him by memorial to disallow the new Emigration Bill, which seeks to secure higher wages for the coolies and at the same time afford greater facilities to the planters for the importation of statutory labour. It has long been notorious that the planters desired to have imported labour at their pleasure, and on the lowest wages. Bitter complaints have been made against their selfishness and tyranny. They have been accused of wishing to reduce the coolies to the level of the West Indian slaves of a former generation. The new Bill has foiled them, and the Viceroy displayed courage in adhering to the views of his Government as to the increase of the coolies' wages. His sympathy for the poor wretches was genuine. All this, it may be taken for granted, will prove gall and wormwood to the permanent bureaucracy. The only thing Lord Curzon has done to allay the planters' agitation for the present is to hang up the Bill for another year. The Indian Press fails to see the necessity for this course.

But Lord Curzon's visit to Assam has brought out one glaring fact. There are still 672 millions of acres of waste land in the Province. The deadly climate is a drawback to cultivation and development. But Mr. Cotton, the able and practical Chief Commissioner, is strongly of opinion that, given permanent settlement or a tenure near it, these millions of acres could be drained and made fit for habitation and cultivation. To introduce the rayatwari system—peasant proprietorship of minute holdings—would be to postpone development. Capitalists alone can develop the Province, and capitalists will not accept any terms save those which have made Bengal, as Mr. Lomesh C. Dutt has lately dined in the ears of the official classes, so prosperous during the last hundred years. Thus there is a wide difference of opinion between the Viceroy—new to the country and ignorant of the evils of the rayatwari system—and the Commissioner, able and experienced, with a full knowledge of the people and of the advantages and disadvantages of rayatwari settlements. If each Presidency and Province had an able Governor or Commissioner like Sir Antony MacDonnell or Mr. Cotton, we might soon see a healthy revolution in our land policy, tending to increased prosperity for the rayat, and ability to withstand the hardships and privation of famine.

The second point is that Assam is not yet a paying Province. How can it be when the Government blocks the way to development on right methods? Until and unless doctrinaire notions about land-revenue assessments, the legacy of Sir John Strachey, are brushed aside at headquarters, Assam never will be a paying Province. But if Assam even after half-a-century of British occupation does not pay, what is to be expected of Upper Burma? Even the fabled ruby mines have failed to yield any substantial revenue. The Province loses 1½ crores of the revenue of other Provinces every year. The loss incurred since its occupation fifteen years ago has been 22½ crores. Add the 4½ crores it cost to occupy, and we come to the figure of 27 crores. There are even grave doubts whether the Punjab is self-supporting.

The Stock Exchange at Calcutta is already hinting that next year's Budget will show a fair surplus. India has previously seen surpluses shown in Famine Budgets. But they have uniformly proved to be delusive. The so-called surpluses have turned into huge deficits. If the financial authorities produce a surplus, one would be suspicious as to the ways in which it had been arrived at. Now that exchange is artificially kept up at or about sixteen pence, the annual Budget may show a fat surplus for one good reason, and provided other factors of expenditure remain undisturbed and military expenditure is not increased once more at a bound. Taxation which was promised years ago to be remitted is allowed to stand. That taxation consists (1) of the enhanced salt duty which yielded over 1½ crores; (2) of the import duties on cotton goods and other articles which yield 3 crores. So that there are 4½ crores of taxation which was levied between 1886 and 1893-4, on the declared pretext of "low exchange," and on the express promise, made in the Council Chamber, that it would be withdrawn when the finances permitted. But the Government, in spite of popular outcry, has never redeemed its promise. No duty works so great a hardship on the poorest classes (those now on famine relief works) as the enhanced duty of Rs. 2½ on salt. It is ten years since the enhancement was made and yet nothing has been done. But for this exceptional taxation there would be no surplus to show.

Bombay had on Wednesday last a hearty farewell to Mr. Romesh C. Dutt, who returns to London to resume his patriotic work and further educate the British public on Indian affairs. He has since the delivery of the presidential speech at the Congress set the ball of land revenue assessments rolling. He has interviewed the Viceroy on the subject. He has corrected the *Pioneer*, and he has spoken with freedom and moderation on various platforms, the last of which was in Bombay, at the invitation of the Bombay Presidency Association. We all hope Mr. Dutt, at the next election, may find a constituency which will send him as well as our G.O.M. to Parliament.

Our local fancy fair in aid of the Famine Relief Fund was most successful. Fully 60,000 rupees have been collected, which speaks well for the sympathy and efforts of all who worked in the cause, Europeans and Indians alike. Lord and Lady Northcote seem to be extremely sympathetic. They have just paid a second contribution of Rs. 3,000; while the good Lady Iddeleigh has sent us £25. The Northcotes have always been kind and sympathetic to India. To Bombay it is a peculiar gratification to find that the pair now reigning at Government House are so sincerely anxious for the relief of distressed humanity in this Presidency. His Excellency has already started on his visit to famine-stricken Gujerat; while Lady Northcote usually occupies herself in visiting the sick and infirm women in our different hospitals, comforting them, and sending presents of fruits and flowers. Her reception of Native ladies of all communities at Government House has been the theme of universal praise. She is so friendly, so simple, and so courteous, in short such a genuine English woman, that she has already won the hearts and affections of our woman-kind, and bids fair to recall the good days of Lady Reay, who is never out of their minds. So far Lord and Lady Northcote have begun well indeed. May Providence guide their steps and lead them to a prosperous and brilliant career as the representatives of her Majesty.

Imperial Parliament.

Thursday, March 29.

HOUSE OF COMMONS.

AGRICULTURAL BANKS.

Sir WILLIAM WEDDERBURN asked the Secretary of State for India, what had been the practical results of Mr. Nicholson's enquiry of 1897 regarding agricultural banks as a means of relieving the rural population of India from oppression by the money-lenders?

What were Mr. Nicholson's recommendations as regards making early experiments in establishing agricultural banks?

And, what steps had been taken to carry out his recommendations, and what success had attended the action of Government.

Lord G. HAMILTON: I have not yet received from the Government of India an expression of their views upon the proposals made in Mr. Nicholson's report upon the formation of agricultural banks; but I

understand that orders have recently been passed by the Government of Madras on this important matter. I am not yet in a position to state in detail the nature of those orders, but I expect to hear during the present season from the Government of India, who have only recently received the report of the Madras Government on the subject.

THE FAMINE IN INDIA. PROPOSED VILLAGE ENQUIRY.

Sir WILLIAM WEDDERBURN asked the Secretary of State for India, whether, looking to the early recurrence of famine in India, and the unparalleled magnitude of the present visitation, as described by the Viceroy of India, he would suggest to the Government of India, to institute, at a convenient time, a detailed enquiry into the condition and food supply of a few typical villages in the provinces liable to famine, with a view to ascertain whether, by local storage of grain in times of plenty and other precautionary measures, the economic condition of such villages might be so far strengthened that the failure of a year's harvest would not bring the cultivators into danger of starvation.

Lord G. HAMILTON: During the past twenty years investigations have been made by two Famine Commissions, and there has also been an exhaustive enquiry into the condition of the people. In these circumstances I am unwilling to call on the Government of India to institute at this moment another general enquiry of the kind suggested in the question. But the hon. member may be sure that the knowledge and experience which is now being gained will be most carefully turned to account, and that any specific question will be investigated, concerning which there may be insufficiency of information, with a view to the adoption of such further precautionary or economic measures as may appear to be advisable.

LABOUR ON RELIEF WORKS.

Mr. PRICE asked the Secretary of State for India, whether some portion of the labour now employed on relief work in India was being used or could be used for the further provision of tanks and other minor irrigation works.

Lord G. HAMILTON: The periodical reports received from the famine districts show that famine workers are largely employed on digging canals, excavating or improving tanks, and sinking wells. But it is not possible everywhere to construct suitable works of this kind.

Friday, March 30.

HOUSE OF COMMONS.

THE CONTRIBUTIONS OF INDIA TO THE WAR.

Mr. HERBERT ROBERTS asked the Secretary of State for India, whether he was in a position to give in detail the contributions of India to the War in South Africa as regards men, horses, and military equipment:

And, whether, in view of the value of India in the military defence of the Empire demonstrated in this war, the Government would give an opportunity for the discussion of the claim of the Government of India for relief from some portion of its home military charges, before the Indian Budget discussion at the end of the Session.

Lord G. HAMILTON: As far as I am able to furnish details the contributions of India to the war in South Africa up to date are approximately as follows:—

Officers and men (British)	8,215
Natives (non-combatants)	5,717
Horses	6,700
Mules and ponies	1,510
Field guns	50
Maxim, naval and machine guns ..	15

besides artillery waggons, ambulance carts, and a large supply of boots, saddles, haversacks, warm coats, tents, and other equipment. All supplies of material and animals were paid for on terms not unfavourable to the factories or agencies furnishing them.

The subject of the Home military charges was specially referred to the Royal Commission on the administration of the Expenditure of India whose report has not yet been received.

Sir H. FOWLER asked when the noble lord expected that the long-delayed report would be received.

Lord G. HAMILTON: I have no control over the Commission. I understand that we are very shortly to receive the report with the subsidiary reports of the individual members of the Commission.

Mr. HERBERT ROBERTS: Is there any chance of the report being received before Easter?

Lord G. HAMILTON: I know nothing about it. I have no control in the matter.

Monday, April 2.

HOUSE OF COMMONS.

EAST INDIA LOANS.

East India (Loans raised in England)—Copy presented—of Return of all Loans raised in England, chargeable on the Revenues of India, outstanding at the commencement of the half-year ending on March 31, 1900, etc., [by Act]; to lie upon the Table, and to be printed. [No. 117.]

THE REVOLUTION IN THE INDIAN CURRENCY.

Mr. SAMUEL SMITH asked the Secretary of State for India, if he could state what amount of gold the Indian and England respectively had the Indian Government acquired in connexion with the proposed changes in its currency system; by what methods this gold had been drawn into the Indian Government's treasuries here and in India; and to what extent, if any, had the issue and circulation of currency notes been increased as resulting from, or in dependence on, the gold in these treasuries:

If he could inform the House at what date the Indian mints recommenced coining to replenish the active circulation of rupees, to what extent this increase in silver currency had proceeded up to date, and whether the mints or the currency department paid out gold to any appreciable extent in exchange for fifteen rupees or currency notes:

And, what the amount or rate of profit derived from the issue of new token rupees was, and whether such profit would be credited to the currency department or to the general revenues.

Lord G. HAMILTON: 1. The Government of India holds at present about 47,900,000 of gold in India, and £1,500,000 in England.

2. The metals by which it was attracted are as follows:

In India, Government offered to receive gold in exchange for currency notes or rupees at the rate of one sovereign for fifteen rupees; in England, the Secretary of State in Council sold telegraphic orders for rupees on the treasuries in India at the rate of one rupee for 16½d.

3. The receipts of gold in the treasuries began to assume large dimensions about February, 1899, at the end of which month the outstanding currency notes amounted to 264 lakhs: while at the end of March, 1899, they were 2,820 lakhs; by the last return they amounted at the end of February, 1900, to 2,727 lakhs.

4. The coinage of rupees was resumed on January 25, last.

5. The addition to the coinage so far is believed to have been about 140 lakhs of rupees.

6. Gold has been paid out to the amount of about £244,000.

7. The rate of profit in coining rupees from fresh silver when silver is at its present price, is about 52 per cent.

8. The Government of India have not reported their views as to the mode of showing such profit in the Accounts.

Tuesday, April 3.

HOUSE OF COMMONS.

THE FAMINE IN INDIA.

SIR WILLIAM WEDDERBURN'S MOTION.

PROPOSED SEARCHING ENQUIRY.

"TO ASCERTAIN THE CAUSES" AND TO PREVENT FUTURE FAMINES.

SUGGESTED PARLIAMENTARY GRANT.

VIGOROUS SPEECH BY MR. MACLEAN.

MORE OFFICIAL OPTIMISM.

THE MOTION NEGATIVED.

Sir W. WEDDERBURN rose to call attention to the Indian famine, and to move "that, in view of the grievous sufferings which are again afflicting the people of India, and the extreme impoverishment of large masses of the population, a searching enquiry should be instituted in order to ascertain the causes which impair the cultivators' power to resist the attacks of famine and plague; and to suggest the best preventive measures against future famines." He said: In the first place, I may be permitted to express my respectful appreciation of the efforts which are being put forth by high and low in India to meet this stupendous calamity. A mass of people larger than the whole population of Ireland are now looking to the Government for their daily bread, and the number is steadily increasing, and will continue to increase for the next three months, while no substantial harvest can be reaped before September. To succour effectively such a helpless mass of men, women, and children, scattered over a vast area, is a task almost beyond human powers; and we at home look with cordial admiration upon those who in India are labouring to save life with such untiring energy and devotion. (Hear, hear.) But, Mr. Speaker, I will go further, and I will submit that the people of this country, and the Members of this House, have a duty to perform beyond that of passive spectators, however sympathetic. We must not fail to realise our responsibility towards the people of India. We hold these poor people in the hollow of our hand. The 250,000,000 all put together have not as much control over Indian affairs as a single elector of the United Kingdom. All the power rests with us; and we should remember that, as we retain all the power so we incur all the responsibility and are answerable for the lives and welfare. What, then, is our duty to these starving millions? Surely in the first place this great and wealthy country should give without stint from its abundance for charitable relief. Let us for a moment compare the present situation with that in the famine of 1897. The result is not satisfactory. At the beginning of April, 1897, there were 2,800,000 persons on the relief works in India, and the Mansion House Fund then amounted to about £470,000. To-day the number on relief works is nearly five millions, but the Mansion House Fund has not yet reached £160,000. In other words, the need seems to be twice as great, but the charitable contributions are only one-third of what they were in 1897. The contrast is a painful one. Why has so little been done on the present occasion when the need is so much greater? I do not believe

that the British people are less willing to relieve suffering than they were in 1897. (Hear, hear.) But what seems to be wanted is a vigorous organised effort to arouse popular sympathy throughout the country. There are many in England, in India, in Government officers, missionaries, and others who have personal experience of the horrors of an Indian famine; others realise the present situation by means of letters from friends in India, and I am convinced that if the Lord Mayor, who is so ready for all good works, were asked to call a great public meeting and bring before the British public the awful sufferings of our fellow-subjects in India, a money would pour in to supplement the relief efforts of Government, which can undertake little more than the duty of keeping body and soul together. And, Mr. Speaker, what we are all willing to do singly, why should we not do collectively as a nation? The Town Council of Hartlepool has earned the gratitude of India by proposing an Imperial grant; and I doubt not that such a grant would be widely approved throughout the country. (Cheers.) In reply to questions on this subject, the noble lord the Secretary of State for India has stated that the Indian Exchequer is not in immediate need of help. This may be, but my present suggestion is that an Imperial grant should be given not in aid of the Indian Exchequer, but for the same purposes as the Mansion House Fund—to help the classes who cannot come upon relief works, to find comforts for the sick, the aged and the children, and to aid the cultivators in recovering themselves after the famine and replacing the plough cattle which in many parts are almost extinct. I feel sure that in appealing to public and private charity I have the sympathy of this House. Much may thus be done to mitigate the calamity. But do what we will in the way of relief, distress and suffering will be widespread; and the same sad experience will be repeated each time that a famine recurs. So I come to the immediate purpose of my present motion, and ask, Can nothing be done by way of prevention to ward off such disasters in the future? This is the point to which I would earnestly ask the attention of this House. (Hear, hear.) Speaking broadly the Government are doing all that can be done to mitigate the calamity by famine relief. But my point is that mitigation alone is not enough. There is a good saying that prevention is better than cure, and if prevention is better than cure, it is much better than mere mitigation. Cannot something be done beforehand to strengthen the feeble knees of the rayat, and make him more able to resist when the bad time comes? I most firmly believe that much may be done. I have closely studied the case of the rayat for the last forty years, and I am no pessimist regarding him. On the contrary I maintain that with a rich soil, a fine climate, and a peasantry skilful, industrious and frugal, India ought to be the garden of the world, and to enjoy, under the *pax Britannica*, a degree of happiness never known elsewhere. Our rayats are in some respects a feeble folk, but they are strong in their skill and industry, and in their power to combine for mutual help in their ancient village communities. Holding these views I have from time to time pressed for a special enquiry into the rayat's economic condition and needs. And I have asked that this enquiry should be made in selected villages, because the self-contained rural village is the unit and microcosm of all India; and if means could be discovered to make one village prosperous, a clue would be obtained to make prosperous the millions of villages in which 80 per cent of the Indian population is collected. This view of the case suggests hope for the future. But I do not wish at present to speak of possible prosperity. The problem now before us is a much humbler one. It seeks only to discover how the rayat, without leaving his village, can be kept from danger of starvation. With regard to this point I will put forward three propositions, which will, I hope, commend themselves to all. The first is, that the mortality in an Indian famine is due to the fact that the rayats do not possess a store of food, money, or credit sufficient to tide over one failure of harvest; and this proposition stands to reason, for it is evident that the people would not die of hunger if they had food in their houses, or if they could buy or borrow it. The second proposition is that mortality from famine would practically be prevented if they had such a store of food, money, or credit. And my third proposition is that it is our duty to enquire why the rayats have not got this store, and if possible provide a remedy for so dangerous an economic condition. (Hear, hear.) As regards the storage of food we have the authority of the last Famine Commission (paragraph 592 of that Report) that the custom of storing grain as a protection against failure of harvest, used to be general among the agricultural classes. This fact came under my own observation. In the earlier days of my service in the Bombay Dekkan every rayat had an underground store of millet put away, enough to keep his family for a year or two. This was easy, because in a bumper year far more of this coarse grain is produced than the people can consume. Roads and railways in those days were few, so that there was no temptation to send a million of the surplus produce; and the grain, if not stored, would be enclosed in a hard shell could be buried in the dry soil for considerable periods without deterioration. The rayat, therefore, acted as Joseph did in Egypt. In the fat years he filled his storehouses, so that in the lean years there was bread for the people. For various reasons this excellent practice no longer prevails. But it seems well worth enquiring whether so simple and inexpensive a safeguard against famine might not be re-established. I therefore last Thursday put to the noble lord the Secretary of State for India a question on the subject. I asked him whether he would suggest to the Government of India to institute, at a convenient time, a detailed enquiry into the condition and food supply of a few typical villages in the provinces liable to famine, with a view to ascertain whether, by local storage of grain in times of plenty, and other precautionary measures, the economic condition of such villages might be so far strengthened that the failure of a year's harvest would not bring the cultivators into danger of starvation. The answer of the noble lord was not unambiguous, and was good, and he promised to promise investigation into any specific question, concerning which there is insufficient information, with a view to the adoption of precautionary or economic measures. With reference to this promise I would submit that the ancient custom of grain storage, and the reasons why it has been abandoned without any effective substitute, is a specific question

of the kind contemplated, and I would earnestly press that the enquiry asked for should be granted. The objection to such an enquiry, as stated by the noble lord, is that during the past 20 years two Famine Commissions have already enquired and reported. But I desire to point out that the specific object of those Commissions was a different one. It was to perfect the system of famine relief, as now embodied in the Indian Famine Code. That this was the case will be seen from the instructions which were issued to the last Famine Commission in the Secretary of State's despatch of December 23, 1897. The Commissions were there requested to investigate the famine relief measures taken in 1897 in the several provinces, to review the lessons learnt from these operations, and to record recommendations that might prove useful in future famines. There is nothing here about measures of prevention as contemplated in my present motion. As already stated, I am making no complaint with regard to the Famine Code, which is an achievement of care and skill, but I press for the modest village enquiry asked for on Thursday last, as I believe it would result in a clearer understanding of the rays's difficulties, and lead to practical measures for strengthening his economic position. (Cheers.)

MR. SAMUEL SMITH.

MR. SAMUEL SMITH, who seconded the motion, said this was the most awful famine of the century, and he was told by persons who knew the facts well that in spite of the best efforts made by the Government, some millions of people would perish. He read two extracts from letters despatched to the writers save with their own eyes. The first letter was dated "Agra Medical Missionary Institution, February 27, 1900," and was written by Colin S. Valentine. "On Sabbath morning we had upwards of 3,500 poor creatures, to whom as usual we preached and distributed alms. There were many cases that pained me to the heart, and which, when once seen, can never be forgotten. Hundreds of poor homeless, homeless creatures are flocking in from the Native States, where even the drinking water has left the wells. The accounts of the sufferings from those parts of the country are truly heartrending; parents actually eating their own children. While all parts of the community are suffering the young widows and children are the greatest sufferers. It is most pitiable to see the dying little creatures lying in their mothers' arms, far more skeletons than living creatures. Of course those are dying by thousands. In some respects the condition of the young Hindu widows is even more sad. The second letter was by Mr. L. E. March, written from Ajmere, in Rajputana, on February 26, 1900. "The suffering is fearful. In many places dead bodies may be seen lying here and there. Mr. Inglis has just returned from the very worst district, and tells me that it was a common sight to see bodies being devoured by dogs, and that he and Dr. Huntly took a walk one evening, and counted forty bodies, and on other evenings twenty, thirty-three, and so on. He could not go through a field without seeing skeletons on the wayside, the bodies bleaching in the sun. The Famine Commissioners saw thirty bodies in a ravine in different stages of decomposition. We hear many other such stories, and we have seen sufficient to believe it all." This state of things prevailed over a great district inhabited by 40,000,000 of people, and a lesser degree of famine prevailed among 20,000,000 more. He thought the country hardly realised it, or a larger response would be made to the Mungo House Fund. There was much that the Government could not do. It gave a heavy subsistence to those who went to the relief works, but could not search out the high class women and children who would rather die than defile themselves by labouring with the lower castes. The cattle also had perished to a fearful extent. In one district of Rajputana 90 per cent had died, and he was told that half of all the splendid breed of cattle in Gujrat, the garden of Western India, had perished. He believed there was one remedy, and only one, which could to a large extent mitigate famines—water storage and irrigation. This famine was mainly in districts like Gujrat, the Central Provinces, and Rajputana, where rivers were scarce, and canal irrigation, fed by rivers, was often impossible, but in these districts the configuration of the country often lent itself to forming reservoirs during the rainy season. There were low hills with valleys or nullahs down which torrents of water rushed during the monsoon, and where by damming up the water courses there could often be obtained at small expense an artificial lake which would irrigate by small canals all the surrounding country. It was morally certain that we had spent as much on railways as on canals in the past fifty years, a great part of India could be irrigated. He had seen beyond the reach of famine. We had spent some 300,000,000 on railways, and only 30,000,000 millions on irrigation. We were spending about 1,000,000 a year on irrigation and 8,000,000 or 10,000,000 on railways. Had not the time come to make irrigation our principal task? We had made Egypt what it was by irrigation works; let us now try India. The crux of those tropical countries was to get water; our true policy was to place an engine of great initiative, at the best of this department, with as much power as Scott Moncrieff had in Egypt, and to give him a competent staff and a free hand for twenty years. Unhappily, there was no section of the British public sufficiently interested to press the Government on this subject, while there was a powerful interest always pressing them on the subject of railways. Above all things continuity of policy was needed, and where a Viceroy like Lord Curzon showed exceptional capacity, and mastered a huge problem like that of irrigation, he should get a second term of office. Irrigation, however, was not applicable to all or nearly all the surface of India, and even if it were it would not give an assured position to the Indian cultivators without moderate and fixed assessments of the land. The countless millions of small cultivators, excessively poor most of them, were hopelessly in debt to the money-lenders, and when a famine year occurred they had no resources to fall back upon. When in India he met with the greatest complaints about the land assessments. The Natives insisted that they were heavily over-assessed, and when the settlement arrived were in a state of terror, and had to bribe the corrupt under-officials to get a fair return made to the revenue officer. He noticed that large additions had recently been made to these assessments. He was convinced

that the two great means of raising the material condition of the Indian people were an extended system of irrigation, and a moderate land settlement, as far as possible fixed and permanent. The most prosperous part of India was Bengal, where Lord Cornwallis gave a permanent settlement at the close of last century. It was a mistake to confine it to the zemindars or large landlords, and it had been necessary to pass various Acts to secure fixity of tenure and fair rents for the cultivators as well. But the broad fact remained that Bengal was more prosperous and less troubled with famines than any part of India. Lord Canning recommended a permanent settlement of the land all over India. This was not adopted, but of late years the settlements had in many parts been made for shorter periods than thirty years, in order to squeeze more revenue. The expense of governing India was too great for so poor a population, and it prevented the Government dealing with the land and the interests of the people required. He urged the importance of consulting more fully native opinion on this subject. The rulers of India, with the best intentions, were too much up in a balloon. There was a vacancy on the India Council at present. Why not fill it with such a man as Mr. Dutt, so that the Secretary for India might have the power of consulting a native of India on points which natives alone could perfectly understand. The government of India was a gigantic problem, and it was not a question of doing and little, and the time had come when Parliament must face those difficulties or plunge into a sea of troubles. (Hear, hear.)

SIR LEWIS MCCLIVER.

SIR LEWIS MCCLIVER in rising to move, as an amendment, to leave out all after "That," in order to add "this House, while deeply sympathising with its Indian fellow-subjects in the sufferings which plague and famine have inflicted upon them, is of opinion that it may safely be left to the Government of India to carry out any modification of the land tenure and industrial system which experience may have shown to be likely to mitigate the effects of famine and epidemic disease," said that while he identified himself with the generous sentiments towards the people of India which the hon. baronet the member for Banff expressed, he could not admit that those sentiments went in the direction of enforcing the motion the hon. gentleman had moved. What was suggested was a far-reaching enquiry into the causes of the impaired capacity of the cultivators of the land in India to resist famine. There was however hardly an economic question in India that had not been more thoroughly thrashed out and examined by competent investigators and reported on during the last twenty years, and to do this all over again would not assist the inhabitants of India to resist famine. There were shelves of Blue-Books at the disposal of the hon. baronet which would explain to him, as far as it could be explained, the cause of the famine. To judge from the way in which the hon. baronet supported his own motion it was not so much an enquiry as a subscription that he wanted, and if that were so he himself would be delighted, according to his means, to assist him. But when the hon. member opposite proposed a permanent settlement for all the ryatry and corresponding tenures throughout India he must forgive him for saying that that was a somewhat crude proposal. The truth was that enquiry into settlement would be a superfluity, seeing that there was a permanent enquiry going on every year and all the year. The primary fact in regard to the settlement of India was that India was that over the major part of the land the landlord did not exist, except in so far as the whole people were the landlords of the soil. With a settlement department, consisting of skilled experts and just officers, and supervised by boards of revenue and local governments, there could certainly be no motive to enhance assessment. In the Central Provinces the average assessment of land was 6½ annas per acre and the estimated average value of the produce per acre was eight rupees; so that the actual produce taken was on the average about 25 per cent of the Central Provinces. It was not a matter of view, how could it be claimed that the Government took from the cultivator in the Central Provinces more than one-sixth when, as a matter of fact, the export returns from the Central Provinces showed that in an ordinary year more than six times the value of the total Government assessment was actually exported in agricultural produce, without taking into account the produce which supplied millions of people with food? Sir A. MacDonnell had said that on a very moderate estimate the assessment in the Central Provinces was not over 10 per cent. As to the enhancement of assessment in Tanjore, it should be remembered that Tanjore was perhaps the most smiling garden in British India; in times of famine it remained as green as Colombo, and it had abundant irrigation. Its area was about 2,700 square miles and it had a population of 2½ millions, which it bore lightly. It was found by the settlement department that it was under-assessed, and in order that the inhabitants might not be let off too cheaply at the expense of their neighbours, the assessment had been raised. He was assured himself that even in the case of the impaired capacity of the cultivator to resist the attacks of famine were proved up to the hilt it could be through no fault of the settlement department, which was perpetually endeavouring to repair the settlement, so as to bring it as near perfection as possible. He would be the last to minimise the poverty and suffering of the people of India, but, pending the further discovery of minerals and the establishment of manufacturing industries, it was only too probable that there must come a time when uncertain rainfall, treacherous climate, the draconic effect of custom combined with other causes to prevent the lives of the people being other than lives of poverty, and their sufferings from plague and famine demanded the utmost sympathy and generosity from this country. (Hear, hear.) History had shown that the British people had not shirked that claim. (Hear, hear.) At the same time a great mistake would be made by distorting and exaggerating the evils from which the people of India suffered. There was an excellent reliable testimony that, judged by any standard, the condition and capacity of the people to resist famine was much greater than was the case thirty and even ten years ago. This might be tested by the progress of population, the price of land, the increase of cultivation, the rate of wages, and the growth of revenue. The habits, con-

ditions, and even the luxuries of the people showed them to be year by year in a better position to resist the effect of famine. Statistics of population showed remarkable recovery of the rate of increase after the decline in recent famine years, as did also the figures in regard to revenue. There was established an elaborate system to resist the attacks of famine, and the greatest factor in that system was the development of railway communication. The railways of India had been the salvation of the country. (Hear, hear.) The old habit of storing up grain for the future had rendered it unnecessary. The rhyast of to-day was a shrewd believer in railways and studied market prices, knowing the advantage of ready sale of his crops and the risk of loss and damage from storage. Taking the motion with the speeches made in support of it, he could not see what useful purpose would be served by adopting it. The Government of India were doing their very best to contend against the evils of famine, and this the people of India knew and appreciated. He was satisfied that no desire for any such enquiry as was suggested existed in India, and if proof were wanted that the people were satisfied with the present Government he might refer to the recent extraordinary and practically unanimous demonstration of loyalty from every class and caste in every part of India. (Hear, hear.) The hon. member concluded by moving his amendment.

SIR M. M. BHOWNAGREE.

Sir M. M. BHOWNAGREE, in seconding the amendment, said he hoped the debate would convince the people of India that the British nation was neither blind nor indifferent to the hardships from which the Indian people were suffering. An Indian newspaper, which generally represented the views of the hon. baronet the member for Banffshire, said: "The famine is universally deplored, and the possibility of a remedy depends on our knowledge of Indian poverty and its cause." The subject had been exhaustively enquired into in all its aspects by many Commissions, and it would take half a lifetime to read and digest their reports and the evidence they had taken. He contended that no case for further enquiry had been made out. Besides the reports of European officials, there were the reports of distinguished administrators of Native States. What further information was required? Enquiry by Commission, as Parliamentary experience showed, merely tended to postpone action. It would make those whose duty it was to begin action remain for a long time in a state of inaction, and postpone the day of responsibility which belonged to them. It was said that the English official was not in touch with the Native population and did not know the condition of life and the habit of rhyasts. He knew of no case where a Native administrator had found out or even suggested a cause of famine which the British administrator was not aware of. In some of the Native States famine was more severe than in the British jurisdiction. Such an enquiry as that asked for would be nothing short of a reflection or censure on the Indian Administration. He believed that the enquiry suggested would have an injurious effect on the Natives themselves. It was said that there had been no Mansion House meeting, and he contended that the Lord Mayor would find it in his power before very long to hold such a meeting, so that the voice of the nation at large might go forth. If there was a proposal in that House to make a grant he should not object, for he should regard it as evidence of the great sympathy felt by the British people for their fellow-subjects in India. He was happy to think that such questions as assessments, irrigation, and industrial education were engrossing the attention of the Viceroy. (Hear, hear.)

MR. J. M. MACLEAN.

Mr. J. M. MACLEAN said the mover and seconder of the amendment had treated the motion of the hon. member for Banffshire as if it were equivalent to a vote of censure on the Indian Administration. He listened carefully to the studiously moderate and conciliatory speech of the hon. member for Banffshire, and the hon. member certainly did not attempt to find fault in any way with the Indian Administration. (Hear, hear.) They all acknowledged that the Indian Government was doing exceedingly good work in coping with the famine. But what they complained of was that it had become the habit of the Indian Government and the India Office too much to treat any famine that occurred in India as an act of God for which nobody was responsible, to say that there were no deep-seated causes which brought about famines of this kind, and that those causes ought not to be enquired into with the view of providing a permanent remedy for this deplorable state of things. The hon. member who had just spoken said that there was no need for further enquiry.

Sir M. BHOWNAGREE: I said it had been made over and over again.

Mr. MACLEAN: But was there no need for further enquiry when a Royal Commission was sitting at the present moment to enquire into the relations of England with India and on the effect of the government of India by England in impoverishing the people of that country which was the charge brought against England; and when they knew that that Commission had been sitting for many years, and now heard that it was going to make some futile report? (Hear, hear.) They were asked to trust the India Office. The India Office was a very admirable institution, but it seemed to him to take far too optimistic a view of the result of its own government of India. During the last few years there had been all sorts of calamities in India. Plague, pestilence, and war had all claimed their victims by tens of thousands. But all that did not disturb the serenity of the noble lord the Secretary for India, who had no hesitation in coming down to the House of Commons and making a perfectly rosy view of the state of affairs prevailing in India. He surveyed the whole area of his administration, and pronounced it to be very good. (Hear, hear, and laughter.) The right hon. gentleman opposite (Sir H. Fowler) was also touched a little with the spirit of optimism when he was at the India Office. The right hon. gentleman had often given the House a proof of the very sincere and earnest sympathy that he felt for the people of India, but he was not inclined to go all the way with the right hon. gentleman when he pronounced the Government of India to be the most discreet, most virtuous, and

best Government that ever existed. Did they ever guess or had they ever any means of guessing what was the state of public opinion in India? The hon. member for Edinburgh (Sir L. McIver) was very eloquent about the loyal display of feeling that had occurred in India in connexion with the war in South Africa. But everybody knew that the offers of help were made by Native princes who owed to us the security of their immense dominions, and by the wealthy citizens of great towns who had grown prosperous under our rule. The great bulk of the population of India were not inclined to any movement of public opinion. The long and long existed in India. There was no freedom of speech there. The public servants of India used to be proud of their freedom and independence and the views they expressed on the action of the Government. Now that was all stopped, and there was an absolute prohibition of anything like freedom of speech. Instead of that they got copious telegrams of the tours and proceedings of the Viceroy in India. They came to them nearly every day in the newspapers, and they had speeches which were distinguished by too frequent and too complacent references to the perfect wisdom and virtue of the Government of India. He thought all these statements did not represent public opinion in India in the very least. They had to grope about and feel what was the condition of the people and what were the true causes of what the member for Banffshire rightly called the extreme impoverishment of the people of that country, the great agricultural population who formed the bulk of the people of India. What was the true cause of the economic condition of India? Ever since 1813, he thought, and did not attempt to go into it. First of all, he thought it lay in the heavy taxation of the people. The salt tax was a most oppressive burden to the people of India. But the land revenue was an even greater burden. We took thirty millions a year from them in the name of land revenue, and this was done regularly from year to year.

Lord G. HAMILTON: No.

Mr. MACLEAN said he looked at the Statistical Abstract yesterday, and he found that within the last twenty years the land revenue had increased by three millions a year, and, except in times of extreme famine, it was never lower, and then only temporarily. That was a very bad thing for any Government to do. The State was the worst absentee landlord they could find anywhere. The State, which collected the land revenue, took the revenue right away from the land and spent it in warlike operations or something of that kind. The consequence was that the farmers were impoverished by the abstraction of this enormous amount of money every year. It was also the case that all the resources of India might be said to be mortgaged to this country. It was urged, and he had often used the argument himself, that India must be prosperous because there was a very active trade being carried on with that country. All that was outside the actual condition of the cultivator in the interior of the country. (Hear, hear.) How was it there were no famines in other parts of the Queen's dominions? He did not forget that there was a great famine in one other part of the Queen's dominions during her Majesty's reign. There was a terrible famine in Ireland fifty or sixty years ago, which caused a great political and social revolution in this country. It broke up the old political parties, it converted Sir Robert Peel to Free Trade, and opened the eyes of Englishmen to the actual condition of Ireland, and there had been legislation during the past fifty years which had transferred an immense amount of property from the landlord class to the farmers and tenants, and also transferred a great deal of the political and social influence which they formerly wielded in Ireland. The result had been that the condition of Ireland had greatly improved. (Hear, hear.) He did not say that the condition of India was absolutely analogous to that of Ireland, but in some respects it was even worse. The people of Ireland had an outlet to other countries, but the poor people of India did not like to travel abroad. They had nothing to hope for unless this country did something to benefit them. It might be said that they were talking vainly on this subject, that the whole mind of the country was entirely absorbed in the South African war, for which they voted sixty millions without a moment's hesitation. Well, that was a few millions to the people of India compared with sixty millions? Was it not time that they raised themselves to a consciousness of what they owed to other parts of her Majesty's dominions than South Africa, and would it not be terrible if, when we were struggling for the mastery in South Africa, we were to run the risk of losing what was a far more precious possession to us, namely the mastery of Asia? (Hear, hear.) He hoped the House would fulfil its obligations to the oldest and noblest of our possessions—one which had poured into the lap of England countless millions of treasure, and which was far more valuable than all the self-governing colonies together. (Cheers.)

SIR H. H. FOWLER.

Sir H. H. FOWLER said that he would not be tempted into discussion of the merits and demerits of the Government of India. That was not the question before the House; but he should be prepared at any other time to argue that question, and he should be interested to hear the hon. member prove from history that there ever was in India at any time a Government so hard upon its subjects as the present Government which did so much to promote the moral and physical condition of the people as the Government of Great Britain in India. (Cheers.) The motion introduced in the two temperate and fair speeches to which the House had listened had reference to the awful and appalling famine. He was sure that those who had in times past conveyed to the people of India the impression that there was in the House of Commons a feeling of indifference to the interests of India, and that the Government were so hard upon its subjects as to have raised, would now be able to reply that in the presence of the great calamity and sorrow an interest was shown on all sides and by all sections of the House in discovering the wisest and best and most generous course to be adopted in the emergency. (Cheers.) As far as sympathy was concerned, all were at one with the mover and the seconder of the motion, but it was necessary to ask what was to be the nature of the enquiry proposed and how it was to be conducted. A great deal had been said about the responsibility of the Govern-

ment of India with reference to the causes of this famine. He could see that there was some arguable point in the first portion of the motion, but he could not see where the Government of India was to stand as being responsible for the famine. "Hear, hear." He understood the causes of the famine to be the failure of rain, the failure of the monsoon. If the same copious rains had fallen during the last three years as India had enjoyed during the preceding five years there would have been no famine, and if the Government of India was not to be praised when there was a good monsoon it could not be blamed when there was a bad monsoon. The hon. member for Flintshire had dwelt on three causes for which he held that the Government were responsible. His principal point was with reference to irrigation. He thought that the House would be agreed as to two points. First, that certainly up to Lord Lytton's Government there was neglect in India with reference to irrigation works; and, secondly, there had been a very great extension of irrigation works during the last twenty or twenty-five years; and it was not fair in dealing with what was going on to-day to apply either the facts, the reasoning, or the arguments which might have been powerfully applied a few years ago. He should like to correct an error into which his hon. friend had fallen. It was said that pressure had been put upon Secretaries of State by the railway interest in this country. Personally he had never been conscious of any pressure. He could tell his hon. friend that the chief guilty person with reference to the pressure on the Indian Government for the construction of railways when he was in office was himself. He had been a great believer, and he was still a great believer, in railway works and railway extension throughout India; and there was no part of the noble material reduced, and he hoped, and he wanted to put it to the House that as a nation we owed a duty to India as a great branch of our Empire. (Cheers.) A subscription was not a national act. A vote of the House of Commons was. (Cheers.) A vote of the House of Commons was a contribution of every taxpayer in the country, and, as India had so promptly and generously responded to the appeals made to her at this crisis on behalf of the Empire, he thought the Empire should do something, not in return, but in acknowledgment and in reciprocation of the feeling of sympathy which India had so marvellously displayed. (Cheers.) The official answer of the Treasury would be—We are in the midst of a war. We want all our taxation. Yes; but nevertheless we were at the high tide of national prosperity. A nation which could pour into the national Exchequer, unexpected by its guardian, and without any increase of taxation, the difference between 116 millions and 120 millions sterling, was a nation that could afford to be generous. He was sure he was speaking the feeling of a large majority of the taxpayers in desiring an opportunity of expressing their sympathy with India in the Indian famine. The more advanced stage of such a vote would far outweigh the amount voted. There were fortifications much stronger than either arms or artillery, and he believed we would strengthen our hold on India and strengthen our Empire in India, which he believed to be an unspeakable boon to India as well as a great advantage to this country, if we held out our hand in sympathy with her in this hour of her suffering and made an outward visible manifestation of that sympathy. (Cheers.)

LORD GEORGE HAMILTON.

—eight per cent. was the maximum, and he believed that the amount had been reduced to 5 per cent. of the gross value of the land, and for many years the tendency has been to diminish the share of the State and to leave a large proportion to the private rayat."

Mr. S. SMITH said he had quoted from a letter which had appeared in the *Times* as to the proportion of the rent taken from the landlords, the amount being 12½ per cent.

Sir H. H. FOWLER said that the landlord was the person who sub-let the property; he was the tenant of the State; but this amount was all that the State received. The hon. gentleman held up for their admiration the settlement in Bengal. Cornwallis was the first Viceroy, and he held the opinion that the greatest benefit which he could introduce in the land system of India was the land system of England, and his object was to show the great territorial landlords, the zemindars, that they would have to pay a fixed sum to the State, and become the intermediate owners of the land, levying their own rents. Nearly ninety years ago Lord Cornwallis carried out the settlement of Bengal. This settlement, said Sir John Strachey, had been described as one of the most unfortunate but best intentioned plans that ever troubled the country. (Cheers.) "At least, 100 millions of revenue are lost every year with no compensating advantage, and the time will come when the intelligent portion of the community in India will appreciate the fact that in consequence of an arrangement ignorantly made a century ago the richest class in the richest province of the Empire bears far less than its just share of public burdens." As far as his memory carried him, and after considering the subject, he came to the conclusion that the sum put into the pockets of the zemindars of Bengal, money paid by the people and not going to the Government of India, was at least ten millions sterling. He loved the idea of rental in Bengal when he was in office was about fourteen millions, whereas the land revenue paid to the State was a little over three millions. He was not prepared to recognise as one of the causes of famine in India the absence of the Bengal settlement throughout the rest of India; it had been the occasion of perpetual conflict between the rayats and the wealthy zemindars who were the owners. It was said that this settlement was being screwed up. It was very easy to say so; but the increased payment had come from land everywhere, every near Calcutta, Madras, Bombay, and other large towns were much like the towns in this country. Land was constantly coming into use for building purposes, and naturally the State claimed its rental one in thirty years. All these circumstances must be taken into account before any contract could fairly be drawn. He was of opinion that the measures to prevent famine had been the subject of exhaustive enquiry. If anyone had taken the trouble to read the reports of that great Indian civilian Sir Antony MacDonnell he would see that the greatest experience, ability, and administrative power had been

brought to bear on the solution of the question. The Government would be ill-advised if they commenced another enquiry, which must necessarily be entrusted to men of equal standing and experience as those who had already described what they thought best to be done. This famine was, indeed, an awful famine, but what would it have been if the recommendations of the great Famine Commissions had not been carried out? (Ministerial cheers.) He admitted that the burden on India was enormous, but, admitting that to the full, was India suffering the heavy taxation of which his hon. friend complained? He, his hon. friend, complained of the salt duty; so did he, but he was, indeed, one of the saddest features of the famine. In this year that he had for the famine, with a surplus of seven crores, it would have been in the power of the Government of India to make a considerable reduction in the salt duty. But he must demur to the complaint regarding the charge of interest upon capital advanced to India. Why, it was English capital mainly that had made India, and at the time the great railways were made 5 per cent. was not an extravagant rate of interest. But it was many a long day since anything like that rate had been guaranteed by the Secretary of State on Indian loans. Whether the rate was low or high, it was English capital that enabled India to construct those works, and they were bound to pay for that as for any other article that came into the market. He hoped the Famine Fund initiated by the Lord Mayor would meet with a more generous response than it had hitherto received, but that did not seem to him to meet the whole state of the case. A subscription was a charity. (Cheers.) The burden of this heavy famine was a charity. (Cheers.) The burden of this heavy famine was in the absence of the famine have been materially reduced, and he hoped, and he wanted to put it to the House that as a nation we owed a duty to India as a great branch of our Empire. (Cheers.) A subscription was not a national act. A vote of the House of Commons was. (Cheers.) A vote of the House of Commons was a contribution of every taxpayer in the country, and, as India had so promptly and generously responded to the appeals made to her at this crisis on behalf of the Empire, he thought the Empire should do something, not in return, but in acknowledgment and in reciprocation of the feeling of sympathy which India had so marvellously displayed. (Cheers.) The official answer of the Treasury would be—We are in the midst of a war. We want all our taxation. Yes; but nevertheless we were at the high tide of national prosperity. A nation which could pour into the national Exchequer, unexpected by its guardian, and without any increase of taxation, the difference between 116 millions and 120 millions sterling, was a nation that could afford to be generous. He was sure he was speaking the feeling of a large majority of the taxpayers in desiring an opportunity of expressing their sympathy with India in the Indian famine. The more advanced stage of such a vote would far outweigh the amount voted. There were fortifications much stronger than either arms or artillery, and he believed we would strengthen our hold on India and strengthen our Empire in India, which he believed to be an unspeakable boon to India as well as a great advantage to this country, if we held out our hand in sympathy with her in this hour of her suffering and made an outward visible manifestation of that sympathy. (Cheers.)

LORD GEORGE HAMILTON.

LORD GEORGE HAMILTON in his reply on the debate said: I think everybody on both sides of the House will agree that this time could not be better occupied than in the discussion of a Motion which gives general expression to that sympathy which we all feel for India in her hour of distress—(hear, hear)—and I think both the hon. gentlemen who introduced this Motion, and for the kindly appreciation with which they spoke of the Indian Government and of the officials who, in the distressed districts, are so nobly battling against plague and famine. I regret that the only jarring note in this discussion comes from my hon. friend the member for Cardiff. He might as a wholehearted distributor against the Indian Government, and its methods of administration, but the House will note he did not contribute one single idea or suggestion for the remedy of famine except the encouragement of official insubordination. Sir, this visitation is the most serious which I believe has occurred during the present century. It affects something like 450,000 square miles of country and the population contained in that territory numbers about 81,000,000 of people. There are at the present moment 5,000,000 of people on relief works and these numbers must increase until we receive the middle of June. In such a situation there are certain redeeming features associated with it. In the first place owing to the admirable provisions made by the Government I am glad to say the mortality is much less than has occurred in any preceding famine—(hear, hear)—and will probably prove little above the normal rate in an average year. I am also glad to say that owing to the increase of that railway communication the expediency of which one hon. member seemed to somewhat question the food in most of the districts is cheaper than it was three years ago when we were visited by a more or less serious famine—(hear, hear)—and I am happy to say the attitude of the people leaves nothing to be desired. They are fighting against the difficulties with a degree of determination which I believe, they have never shown before, and that is because they have the knowledge that behind them is the help, the agency, and the financial resources of the Government. (Hear, hear.) Now, Sir, there is a difference between the two Motions which are under the consideration of the House. It seems to me to consist in that the first implies that there has been some deterioration in the material condition of the natives at large in India; that they have lost some of the old power of resisting these visitations. Now, Sir, I, year after year, sitting on this Bench and hearing the discussions on the financial statement of India, listen to a number of statements coming from a number of gentlemen all of which are intended to prove that the material condition of India has deteriorated. Now is that right? I always contend that our main claim for the Government of India is that having repressed disturbance with a strong hand we are able to improve the material condition of the country. (Hear, hear.) If I had any serious doubts on that point and believe in our methods and system of govern-

ment were acting in the opposite direction, our claim to the government of India becomes seriously invalidated. For there are certain things which are suggested by a sound reformer, by every economist and by every financier to show the progress of a community and a nation in prosperity; and if those tests be generally applicable to the world at large you cannot exclude India from their operation. (Hear, hear.) I think you will find the population increasing, and simultaneously with the increase of population an increase of consumption and of production per head. If you find there is a general improvement in the dress and in the household equipment of the great mass of the people, if you find they are enjoying the comforts and more and more use of the implements which a civilized Government gives them, the use of the post office, the telegraphs, the railways, and the Post Office Savings Bank—if you find such an increase that shows that the country is in the main advancing in prosperity. (Hear, hear.) That that is so I do not think anybody can doubt, although from time to time also may be thrown back and pass through these grievous afflictions. (Cheers.) Now, Sir, we are discussing the terrible evils which famine imposes on a certain part of India. If you substitute the word "drought" for famine you will find once seen that nine-tenths of the criticism against the Government disappears. (Hear, hear.) The beginning and the end of this and all other famines in India is drought. If any hon. gentleman with an interest in this question will take the trouble to look at the map showing the density of population in India and then look at the map showing the varying rainfall in that continent they will find those two maps are almost identical. (Hear, hear.) It is rain alone which enables the cultivator to live; and if rain were to cease for a number of years over the continent of India, India would be as depopulated as Arabia. From time immemorial India has been subject to these famines which we ought to fight; but the great difference between the present Government and the preceding Governments is that they were either unconscious of the distress which occurred or unable to relieve it; at all events, they took little notice of it. Now, Sir, a few years after the Government of India was transferred to the Crown a number of famines occurred. There was a famine in 1856 in the North-West Provinces: there was a famine in Orissa two or three years afterwards, when a million people died from actual starvation, not from disease; there was a famine in 1874 in Bengal; and a famine in 1876, which lasted eighteen months, over a considerable portion of the country. As a result of the actual experience of those famines it was brought home to the Government that it was beyond the power of the individual or the locality to conquer these famines; and that if the terrible mortality and misery which these visitations periodically inflicted could be mitigated, that duty must be undertaken by the Government, because they alone could afford it. (Hear, hear.) In consequence of that a Famine Commission was appointed, and it laid down certain principles which experience proved to be sound. The first duty was to improve communication. (Hear, hear.) The suggestion of the hon. baronet the member for Baniff was that we should encourage the cultivator to store the storage of grain, as in the days of old. There are two reasons why they have departed from that practice. The first is that in the old days they knew if a famine occurred in the locality they would have to provide for themselves. Now they know that the Government will, with the machinery behind it, take care that food is imported into the district affected. The second reason, which is a negative reason, is that they stored food, owing to the lack of transport and locomotion in India, through which they were then unable to get food in from outside the locality. All that is now gone, and I quite agree with the hon. gentleman that it would be advisable to encourage the cultivator to store food for himself and his family; but I think they have an effective reply in saying: "If we can get a good price for things in the coming year it is better to have at once the advantage of that money, and when a famine occurs out of the proceeds we shall be able to supply ourselves." Agriculture in India is the one thing. It occupies 80 per cent. of the whole population. Let the House just think what that means. Supposing that in this country 80 per cent. of the people were suddenly deprived of all means of occupation! Conceive the distress that would be caused: not a famine of food but a famine of wages. All employment ceases. There has been a cessation over a large part of India of 80 per cent. of employment. If gentlemen who take an interest in this question were to analyse the class who come on the relief works they would find the great mass are labourers or coolies; but I am sorry to say in this famine many of the class we are seeking to relieve are of a higher class than have previously come on the relief works; notably in those parts of India which are used for grazing. One of our chief difficulties is the tenacious adherence of the Hindus to their part of the world to the religion of the cow, that creed forbids them to kill the cattle. They will not kill even the worst of these cattle in the earlier stages of the drought; and the result in several cases is that men possessed of very considerable herds of cattle have lost them altogether by refusing to sacrifice any portion of them in order to save the remainder. Not only is that the case but the men who come and try to purchase these cattle have been compelled, on account of the animosity such proceedings arouse, to give up that idea. The problem, Sir, is therefore one which it is the duty of the Government and the minds of gentlemen of the House of Commons, who are accustomed to move among communities having many and diversified occupations. (Cheers.) The relief works which have been started, their classification, and the employment which they have given have been enormously appreciated by those who have flocked upon them; and in a notable instance in those parts of India which were visited by famine both in 1897 and in the present year. In these places by the population had come upon them far more readily than in districts which, for the first time, had been visited. It is the duty of the Government, I think, that was made to me was that we should largely increase our expenditure upon irrigation. That was put forward by the hon. member for Baniff, and he quoted a speech of Mr. John Bright on the subject. He is not perhaps aware what was the sequel to that speech. Mr. Bright, influenced by Sir Arthur Cotton, made a violent attack on the Indian Government at the time I was Under

Secretary for India, on the ground that they deliberately preferred the construction of railways to irrigation, and that they were urged to do that by military considerations. He adopted Sir Arthur Cotton's views, and maintained that by the expenditure of a much less sum you could render India absolutely free from famine by the extension of irrigation works. At that time we were in some trouble in the office as to what principle should regulate further expenditure on public works, therefore I took the opportunity of moving a Select Committee of the House of Commons to enquire into this question. It sat for two years. Sir Arthur Cotton came as a single member of that committee who was converted to his conclusion. It is evident to anyone that if irrigation is to succeed, the supply of water for it must be independent of the local rainfall. (Hear, hear.) Wherever you have an enormous river to depend on you may safely rely upon having always a supply of water, and irrigation works made there have paid enormously—(hear, hear)—but in other parts of India large scale can with any prospect of real success be promoted. Lord Curzon has increased the annual sum to be devoted to irrigation. We wish in every way to encourage the villagers and the local authorities to construct small irrigation works and tanks. In ordinary droughts such reservoirs are useful, but in the presence of a great drought I believe there is scarcely a reservoir which is not dry, and in one case a very large tank which has hitherto been filled with water dried up and the place was sown with grain. Irrigation is not, therefore, a panacea against drought of the kind with which we have to contend. (Hear, hear.) On the other hand, railways are always useful. They are heard in time of plenty as well as in time of scarcity. Sir, if it had not been for the railway extension during the past twenty years people would have died by tens of millions. (Hear, hear.) And when the member for Cardiff complains of the great dividends which shareholders in these railway companies receive I think he never looks at the price of the stock, or else he would see that the shareholders get better dividends on railways constructed here than on those made in India. (Hear, hear.) Then, Sir, a good deal of the speeches made have been devoted to the question of land assessment, and the hon. member for Flint produced several of the arguments, and the figures which a well-known Bengal gentleman recently used, Mr. Romesh Dutt. That gentleman served with distinction in the Indian Civil Service; I have the pleasure of his acquaintance, and I have communicated with him on various matters. When, therefore, I saw he made a definite statement of fact in order to show that the land assessments in various parts of India were too high, and when he suggested a rate at which land should be assessed, I at once gave the most careful attention and investigation to his figures and statements. I have to state that his figures are entirely erroneous. His contention was twofold. He was in favour of the permanent settlement which, he said, in Bengal had preserved the cultivators and occupiers from famine. That is not the case. There have been two most serious famines in Bengal in my recollection, and in both cases the condition of those who were under the permanent settlement was in no degree better than that of those who were in neighbouring and adjoining districts which were only temporarily settled. (Hear, hear.) Then this gentleman proceeds to assert that the rates were low in Bengal, and never exceed one-sixth of the gross yield, which is sixteen per cent. I cannot understand how he induced him to make that statement, I have myself laid Blue-books on the Table of this House, as every Secretary of State has done, as to the condition of the ryats in Bengal, and they pay the highest rates of any land occupiers. I have enquired from gentlemen who have legislated on the question of rates in Bengal, I have asked judges who have sat and heard hundreds of these cases and I have enquired from executive officials in Bengal—and they tell me they never heard, in a judicial or executive capacity, this principle put forward that the rate was to be limited to 16 per cent. on the average of British India, that in most cases they are over 50 per cent. and in a good many cases go up to 75 per cent. (Hear, hear.) He also seems to criticise the land settlement in the Central Provinces, where he seemed to think the Government are exacting an exorbitantly high land revenue. I am very reluctant to dogmatise as to what is or is not a reasonable land revenue, and I should be sorry to say there is not, here and there, an assessment which is too high. But the rules and principles laid down which regulate the revenue officers are framed in a spirit of justice and equity—(cheers)—and as far as I can ascertain by enquiry, and comparing the land revenue of British India with that of adjoining Native States, in every instance the land revenue of adjoining Native States is assessed higher than that in British India. (Cheers.) What occurred in the Central Provinces was not that the assessment was put too high, but it was run up rather too suddenly. The railways which run through the Central Provinces brought immense prosperity for the time being to the country. Prices rose enormously—almost 100 per cent. in some districts—cultivation increased correspondingly, and when a fresh settlement was made a little time back (nins years ago) there was a very considerable increase on the basis of the assessment. I do not think it is too high; but I think its introduction should be gradual—(hear, hear)—because my belief is that where the occupier or owner gradually gets accustomed to receiving an increased profit for the land they occupy they gradually spend it; and if then, at the close of the settlement, there is a sudden and considerable rise in the amount they had to pay to the Government, they are unable in the two or three years to adapt themselves to the higher assessment. The hon. member for Baniff drew great attention to the indebtedness of the ryats in India. It is a most puzzling question. The assertion of the hon. member is that the indebtedness of the ryats largely arises from the heavy assessments which they cannot pay without borrowing, so that they get into the hands of the money-lenders. That is not my view. If the land assessment was so heavy as to afford to the occupier little chance of a livelihood, the money-lender would not advance the money. (Hear, hear.) And it is remarkable in India that in those parts (except in the Punjab) where the land revenue is exceptionally low in propor-

tion to the gross profits the occupiers and owners are more heavily indebted than in other places. (Hear, hear.) There is Mr. Nicholson, who has given great attention to land banks, and his proposals for land banks have been under consideration of the Madras Government to afford ground for criticism. When these papers are complete I will gladly lay them upon the Table of the House because if we can at all contrive to establish a good system of land banks it would be a good thing. I believe it will be found that in the parts of India where the land assessment is very low and therefore where the security is good the occupier and owner are more in the hands of the money-lender than anywhere else. In the parts where the increase in the value of the land is absolutely phenomenal. Forty years ago the number of years' purchase of the land revenue was nine; but it has gradually risen and risen until in the last year of which I have a return it has gone up fourteen times. The area of cultivated land has increased fifty per cent; and notwithstanding that fact the indebtedness of the owner and occupier has so increased that we are now considering legislation by which we shall be able, I think, to put a stop to further trouble. Therefore, when the hon. gentleman speaks of the indebtedness of the rayats and associates it with high assessments he has not taken into consideration all the inducements put before the cultivator when he goes forth to borrow. (Hear, hear.) Sir, the right hon. gentleman the member for Wolverhampton, made an appeal to the Government that a large grant should be made from the Treasury. (Cheers.) The position of affairs at the Treasury since I have been responsible for the India Office is as follows: The Chancellor of the Exchequer has always been ready, if our credit was impaired or we had any difficulty in raising funds to deal with famine, to come to our assistance. (Hear, hear.) But at the present moment what is the financial position of India? If we had had a normal year last year we should have had a realised surplus of nearly six millions sterling. (Cheers.) If a grant is made from the Treasury, what is how is it to be provided? It is not until what the Lord Mayor only assessment the funds which are given by the Government. They do not relieve us of a farthing. The object of these private subscriptions is that they should be put in the hands of committees dissociated from the Government and applied to purposes outside those of the Government. That is to say it is purely a charitable contribution. Are we to advance a very large sum of money to be applied to charitable purposes? Is not that a startling suggestion? If we were short and our hands could be made to feel what we had set ourselves to do, then I think we ought to apply to the Treasury for a grant. On one point I propose to go some way towards meeting the appeal of the right hon. gentleman. One of the great difficulties after this drought is over will be, so far as the West of India is concerned, that so many people have lost, if not all, yet a very considerable number of their cattle. I am in communication with the Viceroy and I think it would be advisable to consider if we could not somewhat extend the principle of advances which are made to cultivators; and if any considerable sum is then required by the way of advances, I think owing to the stringency of the Indian market, I have no doubt we might consider whether or not we might not obtain, in that shape, some help here.

MR. MACLEAN: Lend the money; not give it, you mean?

LORD G. HAMILTON: Yes. Beyond that at the present moment I do not think you can reasonably expect me to go. Sir, the main object is, therefore, the Government of India will concentrate their attention for the future will be in the first place to continue to develop the railway system—(cheers)—and I will try and see if it is possible to dissociate the railway finance from Government finance. (Hear, hear.) Then I hope in developing the railway system to give a great impulse to the small light railways. (Hear, hear.) They have been an enormous benefit to our Continental friends, and they can be constructed, comparatively speaking, at a small cost, and raise the figures and receipts of other lines. In the next place we will endeavour to push irrigation and give particular attention to the smaller works which alone can be constructed over the greater part of the present famine stricken district; and we will in addition do everything we can to try and vary and diversify the occupations of the Indian people. (Cheers.) They all depend on agriculture, and whenever these visitations come there must be great distress. Again, I will bear in mind what my hon. friend has urged about technical education in place of the literary education which is now largely the standard of education. These are objects upon which we can all combine, however we differ otherwise, and I think we ought to be able to push them gradually through the various phases of progress and realisation. (Hear, hear.) There is one most gratifying feature in connexion with the exertions of our officials in India. From everywhere I hear that the conduct of the officials who are fighting against plague and famine and of the people on behalf of whom they are fighting is of the most satisfactory result. (Cheers.) It is bringing us home to the great mass of the people, in a way which is unmistakable, the benevolent intentions and policy of the rule which is over them—(hear, hear)—and when this famine is over the experience so gained shall be utilised for the purpose not only of improving our machinery for dealing with these exceptional emergencies, but of so improving the industrial and agricultural system in India as to make each period of quiet and prosperity a fresh opportunity for the mitigation of distress. My hon. friend who moved the amendment spoke justly, I think, of the extraordinary enthusiasm which the Indian people, in spite of their trouble, have shown in our success in South Africa. (Hear, hear.) India, in the dark hour of our trial, has put her distress for the time being on one side, in order to show her sympathy and her interest in Great Britain in the struggle which has been imposed upon us in South Africa. Therefore, Sir, I think we have not only a duty but we have a debt to discharge in pushing as far as we can the restoration of the prosperity and credit of India. (Loud cheers.)

MR. J. WALTON.

Mr. J. WALTON said he had lately journeyed from Calcutta to Bombay and he was bound to testify to the extraordinary zeal and devotion with which the officials in India, from the Viceroy

downwards, were trying to cope with this terrible famine. Having seen himself the distress that existed, he appealed to the Government to adopt the suggestion of the right hon. gentleman the member for Wolverhampton and to make a grant in aid out of the Imperial Exchequer to assist the people of India in their time of distress. The Secretary for India asked how the money was to be applied. It might be applied towards relieving the suffering cultivators of the soil from the payment of one year's rent or relieving them for a term from the payment of the oppressive salt tax. (Hear, hear.)

The House then divided—

For Sir W. Wedderburn's motion	179
Against	75
Majority against the motion	83
The amendment was afterwards put and agreed to.	

THE CAUSES OF FAMINE IN INDIA.

DISCUSSION AT THE NATIONAL LIBERAL CLUB.

[FROM OUR OWN REPORTER.]

Under the auspices of the Political Committee of the National Liberal Club a discussion took place on Wednesday evening on the subject of "The Cause of the Famine in India." Mr. ARTHUR G. SYMONS presided, and in opening the proceedings said he was deeply interested in anything which concerned India—the country in which he was born. He had unhappy memories of the "native little brown skeletons" which ran about India in his childhood's days, and that made him respond to the call to provide over such a gathering as this. He did not place much value on Parliamentary action; he preferred appeals to the people. He had always believed in appealing to the public, and he believed that if they understood the real position of the Government of India the public would readily respond in order to put an end to existing evils. He would fight to the death till "a salubrious bagman" who was supposed to represent India in the House of Commons. He would fight both Lord George Hamilton and Sir Henry Fowler, neither of whom he believed really understood India. He hoped they would find a good man, such as Mr. Ramesh Chunder Dutt, to oppose Lord George Hamilton at the next General Election. They must appeal to the people of England, or the government of India would lie in the background for years to come. The question of India was one of right and wrong of the highest moral character, and therefore they ought to see to it that the public were made thoroughly acquainted with the facts of the case. (Cheers.) In conclusion he referred to the attack made upon the Prince of Wales in Brussels, and expressed pleasure that His Royal Highness had escaped injury.

Sir WILLIAM WEDDERBURN cordially associated himself with the sentiments of the Chairman, and said he was sure the warm-hearted people of India would rejoice with them that his Royal Highness had escaped injury. The object of the meeting was to discuss the causes of the Indian famine. He did not therefore propose to speak regarding the methods of relief. He had no fault to find with the manner in which the famine was being dealt with. What they wanted to do was to go to the root of the matter, to learn the causes and see whether something could not be done in the way of prevention. They wanted to know why on account of the failure of one harvest the cultivator died of hunger unless fed by the State. A stitch in time saves nine, and prevention was better than cure. Sir Henry Fowler said on Tuesday night that the cause of famine was the failure of the rainy season, and that he did not see where the responsibility of the Government came in as it could not be held responsible for a bad monsoon. It was true that Government was not responsible for drought. But that was not the whole truth. Famine was made up of two factors—drought and destitution. Nature might be responsible for the drought but the Government was responsible if the cultivator was so completely without a domestic store that he could not tide over one failure of harvest. His (Sir W. Wedderburn's) proposition had always been that famine mortality arose because the rayat had no store of food, money, or credit sufficient to tide over one failure of harvest. The question they had to consider, in looking for the cause of famine mortality, was why the rayat had not this store of food, money or credit. As regards food, they knew on the authority of the Famine Commissioners, that it used to be the general custom of the agricultural classes to store grain, and they must hold the Government responsible if it had allowed this simple and inexpensive safeguard against famine to become extinct, without substituting something more suited to existing conditions. Why had the excellent custom of storage disappeared? It was not from any bad action of the Government but from the great changes introduced into the country. Hence the case of the rayat should be carefully studied. He no longer had a store of grain for two reasons. Formerly, when there was a good harvest the yield of millet was large, and there being no railways and few roads, the people, instead of sending grain against famine to become extinct, stored it in their granaries and the making of roads and railways gave a market value to the grain, and it was sent away. The Courts of Justice were established, and the result of our rule having put the rayat in hopeless debt to the money-lender he was used in the court and all his stores of food were seized. These were among the causes which had crippled the rayat. What had brought them into this destitute condition? The rayat was industrious, and had been fairly well off, he would be very moderately prosperous for with a rich soil, the climate, and a skillful peasantry, India ought to be a happy and prosperous country especially under the *pax Britannica*. Sir James Caird had spoken lightly of the work of the rayat. They produced the best rice, opium, coffee, tea, and tobacco; everything in fact which required special care in preparation. Then, as regarded frugality, it was suggested that the rayat wasted too much money in

religious ceremonies, but that was opposed to the report of the Descon Riots' Commission, which declared that the rayat did not spend more on religious or social ceremonial than was proper to his condition. The rayat certainly entertained his guests simply and not with venison and champagne. (Laughter.) Again, it was said the cause of famine in India was over-population. But if a population were able to produce wealth, the larger the population the greater the wealth of the country. Under the old system, when a village became too populous, the excess population went forth and established themselves elsewhere, reclaiming land and making it fertile. That was the way in which the Government should set its hand. The strength of the rayat depended on two things: one was ancient custom in cultivation, the other was the rayat's power of combination in the ancient village community. As long as those villages were protected from aggression they would create wealth; but the effect of our centralised system had been to crush and upset the daily life of the rayat and to paralyse and render him helpless. He could not face great revolutionary changes. We had suddenly given to India reforms which it took generations to carry out in this country, and the change, although good, should be carefully applied. We gave Free Trade to India and introduced better goods, but that killed the village weaver in India, thus showing how a stroke of the pen might devastate a whole country. As regarded the storage of grain, it would not matter so much if the rayat had money or credit in lieu of grain. The difficulty of the famine had been one rather of means than of food, and he hoped to see something done to reinstate the system of grain storage. But if they had no storage the Government should provide some substitute for it. The rayat did not get a good price for his grain and could not keep the money. One cause was the excessive taxation to which he was subject. Salt, a necessary of life to the people, was taxed in a most objectionable manner. It was taxed to the extent of 2,000 per cent.—("Shame!")—so that in order to buy 1d. worth of salt for his family the rayat had to pay 20d. Was that not a reflection on British rule? What really had reduced the position of the people was the weight of the land tax. We had put on a very heavy tax, amounting to a rack rent and trenching in some cases on the wages of labour. But there were cases with regard to the way in which the tax was levied which had done more to ruin the rayat. Formerly a sort of sliding scale involved payment of a share of the produce, but now the Government insisted on payment in cash, and that drove the rayat to the money-lender. The rayat had to pay his rent before his crop was ripe, and that again drove the rayat to the money-lender who could exact his own terms. The rayat could not help himself: he had to pay any interest demanded or the Government would sell up the land which might have been in possession of his family for hundreds of years. Most of the evils had been produced by well intentioned changes. It was the duty of the Government to watch the effects of the changes. He had therefore asked the Government for an enquiry into the economic condition under which the rayat existed. The rayat's industry was paralysed: let them find out the real cause of the difficulty, by an enquiry conducted by trustworthy men. They could then get a clue to the difficulty. He believed the cost of the enquiry would be infinitesimal compared with the loss caused by the famine and the benefit derived from the investigation. He believed the remedy could easily be found. (Applause.)

Mr. W. Denny suggested that the meeting should endorse the resolution defeated in the House of Commons last night, a resolution which did not receive the attention it deserved. (Hear, hear.) It was one calling on the Government to hold an enquiry into the condition of typical villages with a view to ascertaining the cause of the famine. The report of the debate struck him as if the officials and ex-officials spoke round the subject, instead of going to the root of the evil. Why were not results of enquiries which had been held disclosed? No one told them how much more terrible famines now were than in times past. Ministers and ex-ministers in the debate last night adopted a diametrically opposite view. Why should the Government avoid enquiry? They had never dared to look into the facts and ask what they meant as regarded the people of India. The Government were loth to grant an enquiry because the results of their own investigations had proved so exceedingly unsatisfactory, for it had been found that the people of India were insufficiently fed. Evidence had been taken which showed that the small farmers could not possibly make both ends meet; indeed in the case of one it was shown that the landlord took 99 per cent. of the gross produce for rent. No wonder then that the Government, with these facts in their possession, should shirk the defeat of Sir W. Wedderburn's motion. One evil was the cost of collecting the increased revenue from the land and another was the refusal to employ Indians in responsible positions in Indian government in which they could show their capacity for ruling. He appealed for a strong humanitarian and even sentimental desire to help those who were struggling for life in India, and he feared that unless a strong effort were made there would be terrible suffering both for India and ourselves.

Mr. Hyman said every man whose words he had read had spoken of the continued impoverishment of India under British rule. The deterioration of the soil of India was an undoubted fact, as shown by Sir James Caird. These were extraordinary facts, and presented a striking contrast with the condition of Japan. Why should India, which had been under British control for a century, hold a lower position than Japan? The great reason was we took yearly out of India something like £30,000,000 sterling without giving a return. That was sufficient to account for India's trouble. Nothing could be more contemptible and disgraceful than our pretence of sending charity from England when we were drawing £16,000,000 sterling out of India annually on Government account alone. In return we were sending £160,000 for famine relief. If we left in India the wealth of India to be used by the inhabitants for their benefit there would be no famine in India to-day. He said deliberately that these famines were manufactured in India and Lord Salisbury knew it well, for did he not speak of "bleeding India." Our policy was killing India, but there was a conspiracy of silence to prevent the real facts being known to the masses of the people of this country.

Dr. DRYSDALE said that at present there were 287,000,000 of people in India, 15,000,000 of whom were starving. They were almost all testotallers—(hear, hear)—so it was not drink that ruined them. The reason of their poverty was low wages; how could they save on twopence a day? Low wages were due to early marriages and overworking. What was required to relieve them was better customs and the recognition of a better standard of comfort. He regarded the remedies proposed by Sir William Wedderburn and his friends as much too small.

Mr. MARTIN WOOD said the primary cause of the famines was the want of storage of water. If half the hundreds of millions which had been worse than flung away on the borders of India had been spent in providing water storage, such storage could have been provided for every province in India.

Mr. PILLAI, editor of the *Madras Standard*, referred to the advantages of the permanent settlement in Bengal, and insisted that such a settlement should be introduced into other provinces.

Mr. PARKER condemned the method of collecting the land tax, and said the mischief was that the position of the collector depended on the amount he collected.

After further debate the proceedings closed with hearty votes of thanks to Sir W. Wedderburn and to the Chairman, the first named briefly acknowledging the compliment. He regarded the Indian people as an ancient people with an ancient civilisation who only wanted fair play and justice to enable them to go forward.

MR. GOLDWIN SMITH ON THE POSITION IN INDIA.

We take the following from "Comments on Current Events, by A Bystander" (Mr. Goldwin Smith) in the *Toronto Weekly Star* of February 28 last:—

To disastrous war in South Africa is now added famine in India, extending over forty millions of people, while scarcity extends over twenty millions more. The relief which Great Britain has before generously sent to famishing India is now absorbed by the war. Fancy a population eight times as large as that of all Canada left without bread, and another population four times as large as that of Canada on short rations! This gives us some idea of the responsibilities of Indian government. Before the coming of the British active was kept down the Hindu population. Under the "British peace" it has doubled. Among myriads of bondsmen, in a state of social degradation, the restraint of social self-repression, which in other cases acts as the spontaneous limit of population, has no force; the people multiply like rats or rabbits, exercising no foresight, and when scarcity comes throwing themselves upon the hands of an autocratic and paternal government. Pestilence generally stalks in the train of famine, and it is not surprising to hear that lawlessness also abounds.

Not even the bitter enemy of Great Britain can question either the administrative excellence or the good intention of British government in India. Never before had conqueror worn anything like so beneficent a form. The kindness of the conqueror to himself in retaining so difficult and dangerous a position is perhaps more questionable than his kindness to the Hindu. Peace has been maintained, though with a hideous exception in the case of the great Mutiny. Law has been made supreme where lawlessness and rapine reigned before. Evil customs, such as suttee, have been abolished. Thuggee has been put down; railroads have been built; colleges and schools have been founded; and European science has been introduced. Christianity has been freely preached, though from various causes but with limited effect. The subject race has been associated with the conqueror in the administration, probably as far as was consistent with the conqueror's retention of supreme power, and an astonishing amount of freedom, not to say of licence, has been conceded to the Native Press. It may safely be said that no other conqueror ever allowed his Government to be half so freely criticised by the conquered.

But after all what is to be the end of British empire in India? This is a question which the Bystander, though he has read many works on India, some of them by very eminent Anglo-Indians, has never seen fairly faced. England has destroyed all the organs of Native rule, and her departure would probably give up Hindustan, with its conflicting races and religions, Hindu and Mahomedan, to anarchy and intestine war. On the other hand, the English race can never be acclimatised in India; it can never be assimilated. It must for ever remain alien and intrusive. It has become more alien than ever since from the shortening of the passage and the telegraph it has been kept in closer communication with its own country. A state of things so unnatural can hardly last for ever. At the same time it seems impossible that the power of self-government should be developed among the Hindus under an alien rule. What is to be the end? That is a question for a serious attempt to solve which, I repeat, I have looked in vain. If such policy as that which has made the South African war continues to rule British councils the solution may some day come in a storm.

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