

The Examiner.

A WEEKLY JOURNAL OF POLITICS, LITERATURE AND NEWS.

EDWARD WHELAN

This is true Liberty, when free-born Men, having to advise the Public, may speak free.—EURIPIDES.

[EDITOR AND PUBLISHER.]

VOL. VI.

CHARLOTTETOWN, PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND, MONDAY, MARCH 9, 1857.

No. 35.

Literature.

(From Blackwood's Magazine for December, 1856.)

OUR INDIAN EMPIRE.

(Concluded.)

So much for the works of irrigation,—of all others the most important for developing the resources of torrid India, and augmenting the well being of its inhabitants. Next in order come the measures for improving the general communications of the country. It is long since the Ganges was covered with a flotilla of river-steamer, provided by the Government and by the enterprise of private companies, for conveying the great trade which seeks passage on its waters. But it was not till recently that any navigation deserving the name sprang up on the other great river of India. The conquest of Scinde put us in possession of the lower course of the Indus, but it was not till the conquest of the Punjab gave the upper stream also into our possession, that the navigation of the river presented itself as an object of first-rate importance. Ever since the beginning of the century, the gradual extension of our territory in Hindostan has been carrying the frontier of the Bengal Presidency further and further inland, from that grand basis of our power, the sea. But the conquest of the Punjab, the last step in our advance to the northwest, and which removed us further than ever from the Bengal sea, and far even from the broad stream of the Ganges, at once gave us in the Indus a new highway to the ocean, and a much more direct route to Europe. The Indian Government, accordingly, took measures to establish steam-navigation between the sea and the rivers of the Punjab; and for several years steamers have periodically made the passage from Kurrachee to Mooltan. At no great expense the Indus might be made navigable to Attock, and steamers in the rainy season can ascend as far as the military depot at Jhelum. Although this river communication is still in its infancy, the channel of the Indus is already becoming the great highway between Europe and the north-western provinces of our possessions. Troops from England arrive and depart by that route; recruits are sent out, and invalids sent home, each year, by its stream,—thus avoiding the long and weary march which would otherwise be made by Calcutta. Heavy stores in great quantities, and passengers in large numbers, take the same route, in order to reach a direct point of departure at Bombay; and if, as is proposed, a steam-communication be established from Kurrachee direct to Suez, the importance of the line of the Indus will be a still further shortening of the route to Europe. In other quarters also a system of river-navigation is developing itself. Our new province of Pegu is peculiarly adapted for the services of river-steamer. Immediately after the occupation of the province, a portion of the steam-flotilla of the Ganges was transferred to the Irrawaddy, where it now forms the great vehicle for the conveyance of supplies between the frontier and the sea; and measures are in operation for removing the obstacles which impede the navigation of both the Irrawaddy and Bassin rivers, so as to form a continuous line of internal communication throughout the lower parts of Pegu. Regular means of water-communication are likewise being established on the great Burramooter river, which will much enhance the value of the province of Assam, where the experiment of tea-cultivation is now being made. In Southern India the rivers Nerbudda and Godavery have been surveyed; and although the former offers little hope of its ever being made navigable for purposes of trade, the latter, with its tributary the Wyngunga, presents no such difficulties, and promises to become a chief means of conveying to the sea the valuable cotton crops of Nagpore and Berar.

Lord Dalhousie's administration was distinguished, among other things, by the introduction into our Indian empire of three great engines of social improvement, which the sagacity and science of recent times have given to the nations of the West—namely, Railways, Uniform Postage, and the Electric Telegraph. Four great trunk-lines of railway have been approved, or are in course of construction; 1st, A line from Calcutta, running north-westwards through the Bengal Presidency to Lahore, in the heart of the Punjab; 2d, A line shooting off south-westwards from some point in the above line to Bombay, and connecting Bombay with Calcutta; 3d, A line uniting Bombay and Madras; 4th, A line from Madras to the Malabar coast. These lines, when completed, will knit together in close union the various centre-points or foci of our vast Indian empire. In our view they are to be regarded as imperial, rather than as industrial undertakings; that is to say, although certain to benefit greatly the industrial resources of the country, they are calculated to enhance in a still greater degree the power and stability of the British rule,—an object which must ever rank second to none. They are not to be judged, therefore, as mere commercial undertakings, although unquestionably they will greatly economise our military power, by enabling troops to pass from point to point with amazing rapidity, as well as afford outlets for the surplus produce of the various provinces. As imperial trunk-lines of communication, we cordially and unhesitatingly approve of the railways now in progress in India; nevertheless we think the Indian Government will commit an error if it seek to develop the railway system much further for many years to come; for be it remembered, although railways are most advantageous in the midst of a dense population, accustomed to habits of incessant locomotion, and in a country where the goods' traffic consists of articles of high value compared to their bulk, they are of much less use where the mass of the people (as in India) are rural cultivators of very stationary habits, and the bulky low-priced produce of whose fields cannot bear the high rates of railway carriage. Water communication is eight times cheaper than the minimum charge by railway, and the speed of railways is of no consequence in the transport of perishable goods, such as cotton, rice, and grain. Useful as railways are, it is a maxim of common sense, that their construction be delayed until more pressing wants and profitable works are supplied. And such wants India has in abundance; for instance, work of irrigation, of which there can hardly be too many,—the making of ordinary roads, in regions where not a wheel-track is at present to be seen, and where the cost of transport is enormous,—and lastly, the clearing of rivers for that cheapest of all means of transit, water-carriage. The cost of a single railway in India would suffice to execute a score of such other more needed and more profitable works. Therefore, while we approve of the resolution of the Court of Directors to proceed with the trunk-lines connecting the various Presidencies, we venture to think that, with the exception of these, the influence and resources of the Indian Government ought, for some time to come, to be devoted to the promotion of other works of greater industrial value.

There are always to be found individuals whose demands and expectations outrun the possibility of performance; and who, though desiring nothing but what in substance is wise and right, do not take sufficient account of the obstacles to the realisation of their views. It is persons of this kind—men, for the most part, of an enlightened and philanthropic but over-sanguine spirit—who give utterance to the complaint, heard ever and anon, of the inefficient spirit with which public works of improvement are carried on by the Indian Government. Practical men, accustomed to weigh difficulties, will take an opposite view of the matter. Indeed, if we are to believe Mr. Vernon Smith, the fault of late years has not been apathy but over-eagerness. In his budget speech in July, he said, "he regretted that such works had not been pressed forward so eagerly, and that they had not been undertaken more gradually. In consequence of the excitement, there arose throughout India an outcry for public works. Letters were sent round to almost all engineers and other officials employed on such works—a stimulus was applied to the promotion of undertakings of that kind—and ill-digested plans, as well as those which had been carefully considered, were carried out." We think this statement is not free from exaggeration, but at least it serves to show that there is no lack of desire on the part of the Indian Government to engage in public works for the improvement of their territories. To Lord Dalhousie belongs the distinction of having first given systematic development to this noble idea. In the four years between July, 1853, and July, 1857, not less than nine millions sterling will have been spent upon public works in India; and last summer the Court of Directors gave permission for the construction of Government loans for such works to the extent of a million sterling, for each of the next two years. The public works in progress in India tend to produce an increase of revenue to the State, by increasing the fertility of the country, or opening roads for its produce; and the irrigation-works are so remunerative that they pay at the rate of from twenty up to seventy per cent. on the outlay—thus in a few years becoming a direct source of gain to the State, as well as, from the moment of the first opening of their sluices, the greatest of blessings to the native population. To stop such works would be the height of folly. It would be sacrificing twenty per cent. to save five per cent. (the rate at which money can be obtained on loan)—and that to the detriment of our native subjects, as well as to the loss of our Indian Government.

Thanks to the Commission appointed by Lord Dalhousie, the postal system in India has been freed from the great defects which formerly adhered to it, and has been assimilated to the most approved systems existing in Europe. Over all India there now prevails a uniform single rate of postage of half an anna (¼d.) for letters, and of an anna (1d.) for newspapers, irrespective of distance; and at the same time the convenient system of postage-stamps has been substituted for that of cash payments. Recently, too, the Home Government have consented to the adoption of a uniform rate of postage, payable in one sum, on letters between England and India,—the rate being sixpence per half-ounce. Regulations of this kind add so much to the happiness and convenience of the people that they are not to be tested solely by the principles of profit and loss; nevertheless we may state that, since their adoption, the correspondence has increased upwards of twenty-five per cent., and the loss of revenue has been less than was expected. It is not easy to realise the extent of these postal reforms: Rowland Hill has been quite eclipsed in India. In England a single letter is conveyed to any part of the British Isles (at the utmost a distance of 700 miles) for a penny. But in India, a single letter is conveyed over distances immeasurably greater—from Peshawar on the borders of Afghanistan to the southernmost village of Cape Comorin, or from Debrooghur in Upper Assam to Kurrachee at the mouth of the Indus—distances of two thousand miles—for three farthings! Three years ago the postage chargeable on the same letter in India would have been a shilling, or sixteen times the present charge. Again, since the uniform rate of postage has been established between England and India, the Scotch recruit, whose regiment happens to be stationed on our farthest frontier at Peshawar, may write to his mother at John o'Groat's House, and may send his letter free to her for sixpence. Three years ago the same sum would not have carried his letter beyond Lahore!

The name of Dr. W. O'Shaughnessy will descend to posterity as the originator of the Electric Telegraph in our Indian Empire. It was in November, 1853, that the work of construction commenced; and so rapidly did it proceed, that by the beginning of February last 4000 miles of electric telegraph had been placed in working order. The difficulties encountered in laying down telegraphic lines in India are such as have no parallel in the civilised and cultivated countries of Europe. Throughout Central India, for instance, as Dr. O'Shaughnessy states, "the country crossed opposes enormous difficulties to the maintenance of any line. There is no metal road; there are few bridges; the jungles also in many places are deadly for at least half the year; there is no police for the protection of the lines. From the loose black cotton soil of Malwa to the rocky wastes of Gwallar, and the precipices of the Sindwa Ghats, every variety of obstacles has to be encountered." About seventy principal rivers have been crossed in the course of these telegraphic lines, some by cables, others by wires extended between masts. And some of these crossings have been of great extent,—the cable across the Soane measuring 5300 yards, and the crossing of the Toombudda river being not less than two miles in length. Although the construction of the lines has been rapid, their solidity has not been overlooked. For three-fourths of the distance from Madras to Calcutta the line is superior in solidity to any ever erected elsewhere, and on some portions of its length its structure is really superb. For instance, in the Madras Presidency, the line for 174 miles is borne on stone-masonry pillars capped with granite, while for 332 miles it is sustained on single slabs of superb granite, sixteen feet high above ground. The tariff of charges on the Indian lines is cheaper than that adopted in any other country having lines of such length as permit a fair comparison. As regards rapidity in the transmission of intelligence, the Indian lines have already accomplished performances equal to those achieved on the American lines. For example, the first bulletin of Overland news has repeatedly been sent from Bombay to Calcutta, 1600 miles, in forty minutes; despatches from Calcutta have been delivered to the Governor-General at Ootacamund, during the rainy season, in three hours,—the distance being 200 miles greater than from London to Sebastopol; and there is never a failure in delivering the Mail news from England *via* Bombay within twelve hours. The political and military advantages which our Indian Government derives from the possession of such an engine of power are

too obvious to call for remark. So beneficial, indeed, has the telegraphic system been found in India, that the Court of Directors have just sent out orders for the construction of other 3000 miles of lines.

The astonishing rate at which the consumption of raw cotton is increasing in the British Isles, and still more the threatening clouds which are overcasting the horizon of the United States, make all reflecting men turn an anxious eye to the growth of cotton in our Indian empire. The quantity of cotton used in the British manufactures is not less than two-thirds of the whole amount produced in the United States; so that, not to speak of probable commotions in America, even the fluctuations of the seasons seriously affect the prosperity of our cotton-lords and their myriads of mill-workers. It would be a great matter if, by the introduction of a new supply of the raw material, the market could be steadied,—especially if that new supply could be drawn from our own dominions, so as to render us less dependent on the slaveocracy of America. We believe that such a result is within our reach. At present the free-grown cotton imported from Egypt and India amounts to but an eighteenth part of the 2½ million bales imported into this country during the past year. But it must be borne in mind that this free cotton is an increasing quantity, and that there is reason now to expect that its increase will be very rapid. The recent acquisition of the rich cotton-districts of Nagpore and Berar has added greatly to the extent of cotton-growing soil within our dominions,—indeed, all the good cotton-districts of India are now under our control. A railway is in process of construction from Bombay to the heart of the cotton country; while the river Godavery, now being rendered navigable, will afford a still cheaper but more round-about outlet to the markets of Europe. The cultivators are miserably poor, and considerably apathetic; but if agents of the merchants were to settle in the districts, to aid the ryots with their advice and occasional advances on their crops, and to see that the cleaning and pressing of the cotton were properly performed preparatory to the long voyage, great and happy results would assuredly flow both to the Indian peasantry and to our manufacturing interests at home. Already there is observable a very remarkable improvement in the preparation of Indian-grown cotton, and consequently in its market-value. The Dharwar or Compta cotton, for instance, which fourteen years ago was the least valued of any, is now rapidly rising in value, and rivals in estimation and price the best cottons in Western India. We may add that the Indian Government has recently given its attention to the cotton which is produced in the Upper districts of Pegu; and a gentleman, having practical knowledge of the subject, and who has examined the districts beyond Prome and Thayet-Myo, has given in a report of a somewhat encouraging character.

The culture of tea is likewise obtaining much attention and support from the Indian Government. The cultivation of tea in Assam has prospered in a remarkable degree; and the plant has also been largely introduced into the upper districts of the North-west Provinces. More recently Mr. Fortune has been employed to bring plants and seeds in large quantities from China, and to engage Chinese workmen for the manufacture of tea. Very large quantities of tea are now manufactured every year, which sell readily at a high price; and there is reason to believe that the cultivation of the tea-plant will spread widely in future years, and that the trade in tea produced in India will become considerable in extent. The vast extent of India, and the diversities of soil and climate existing within its limits, are eminently favourable for the production of valuable crops not indigenous to the country, and the Government is more and more directing its attention to the promotion of such undertakings. An experiment has been made for the growth of silk, and workmen skilled in the business, mulberry plants, and every other requisite, have been provided by the Government. The growth of flax has likewise been largely encouraged, and the cultivation of it has already extended to very considerable dimensions. Agricultural societies are beginning to appear,—various kinds of seeds are being introduced from Europe for the improvement of the cultivation in certain provinces,—and Merino rams have been procured by the Government from Australia for improving the breed of sheep. A breed of sheep has also been introduced into our new province of Pegu, and the experiment promises to be very successful. The natives show a strong desire to possess them; they thrive perfectly, and are singularly fruitful. The absence of sheep in that province has hitherto been severely felt by the troops employed there, but this privation in respect of food appears now likely to be soon removed.

The mineral riches of India are still almost entirely in an undeveloped state. The search for sparking gems has in all ages been eagerly engaged in, but the thousand-fold more valuable seams of coal and iron have remained unnoticed and untouched up to present times. A beginning, however, has at last been made, and the last and best, though poetically maligned, Age of Iron, is about to spread its blessings over India. There is no doubt of the existence of coal in abundance, and rich mines of iron have likewise been discovered. Indeed Central India, from Nerbudda to Assam, abounds alike in ironstone and coal-bed. "Coal occurs extensively in ten provinces," says Dr. J. McClelland, "namely, Tenasserim, Arracan, Orissa (Cuttack), Bengal Proper, Burdwan, Sylhet, Assam, Raghincher, Behar, and Nerbudda. In every instance iron ores—either the common clay ironstone, or red or yellow ironstone, containing from 30 to 50 per cent. of iron—occur with the coal or extensively in the same district." And Mr. Williams, geological surveyor to the Indian Government, reports that "the actual cost of mining coal in India, including agency and rent, is one rupee (2s.) per ton, and the cost of mining iron would not exceed three shillings per ton. It could be mined in large quantities [for instance, in the Soane district] for much less." Taking coal and iron together at the average Indian rates, the cost of the two at the pit's mouth is not more than half what it is in Scotland or Wales. Labour, too, is plentiful and cheap, for population is somewhat in excess of the means of employment; a large portion of it is ever ready to go anywhere or do anything for a mere fraction of the wages that could be offered in this country; and we have the testimony of engineers to the merits of the patient and clever Hindoo at mining, smelting, and the other processes of the iron manufacturers. In the great railway works now in progress in India, an ample market is opened for the produce both of the iron and coal mines. But the great obstacle is the want of roads. The distance and difficulty of access to the minerals are formidable impediments to their availability; and nothing but the gradual extension of railways will bring these rich stores into extensive use.

One word more, on a matter which may appear unimportant, but which is not so. We mean the Woods of India. For generations to come the Indian forests must supply a

hundred and fifty millions of people with fuel, besides all the other requirements of wood-work, ship-building, &c. Hence it behoves the Government to watch over the vast living stores of timber and firewood. In all countries, at one time or other, the face of the earth has been mantled with forests; but the first result of the establishment of civilisation in a country is to produce a want of that very article which was formerly over-plentiful. Even in many parts of North America a want of wood is much felt; and if we turn away from "modern instances" to the old empire of China, we find that wood is there so scarce that fires are in little use, and the deficit of household calorics has to be compensated by a multiplicity of clothing. It was manifestly the design of Providence, in thus mantling the face of the earth with primeval woods, to keep man in comfort until his wits became sufficiently sharpened and his energies developed to enable him to discover and avail himself of the better mineral fuel beneath his feet. And precisely as the forests are cleared, and the surface of the earth becomes more and more devoted to raising food for man, does the revelation take place of those fuel-stores below, which Nature prepared as a means of permitting a larger population on the face of the globe than was otherwise possible. In the New World each member of the immigrant Anglo-Saxon Race was left to do what was right in his own eyes, but we are glad to observe that the Indian Government has recently taken measures for the preservation and renewal of forests in various parts of the country, so as at once to prevent unthrifty management of them, and to make adequate provisions for the wants of the future. Rules have been laid down, and officers appointed for this purpose. The forests of Oude have hitherto furnished our chief supplies of timber for public purposes in Hindostan, and as these have now been brought under our control, they will henceforth be carefully regulated and preserved. On the treeless plains of the Punjab, efforts are being made to rear extensive woods; and we trust the undertaking will succeed,—for it will not only diminish the sad want of fuel experienced in the districts, but also, perhaps, suffice to alter the climate, and bring down again over the parched land refreshing rains.

Here we conclude this sketch of our great Indian Empire. Having occupied so much space with the exposition of the leading features of our subject, it is impossible to advert in any way to the probable future of the people or their British rulers. Now that railways are beginning to span the land, awaking, tossing together, and amalgamating the different tribes and peoples of India,—now that commerce and wealth are slowly beginning to accumulate in native hands, and that natives in ever-increasing number are taking part in the administration of the country,—the future, the goal towards which all this is tending, must more and more press itself upon the consideration of thoughtful beholders. Suffice it to say, however, that India promises to continue for many generations subject to the ascendancy of the British race, and that it behoves us to fulfil the concomitant duty of benefiting the people over whom we rule. A cheerful and noble though arduous task; and we doubt not that many of the brightest names on the beauro of England will continue to be contributed by the lordly bands of her sons go forth to uphold her strange and mighty Empire in the East.

Colonial Legislature.

HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY.

MONDAY, March 2.

AFTERNOON SITTING.

ADDRESS IN ANSWER TO THE GOVERNOR'S SPEECH.

The House having met, on motion of Mr. McDonald, the first order of the day was read, viz: that the House go into committee on the address in answer to the Governor's Speech. Mr. Clark took the chair of the committee.

It was agreed that the Address be read in the usual way—paragraph by paragraph.

On the Second paragraph of the address being read, which is as follows:—

"It is with pleasure we receive the information that Her Majesty's Government have come to the determination to aid our endeavours to convert the leasehold into freehold tenures, by such means as cannot fail to afford general satisfaction. The sooner that desirable object can be effected, the more it will encourage the tenants to reclaim their lands, and improve their homesteads, which is a sure sign of a prosperous country and contented people."

Hon. T. H. HAVILLAND.—Before the question be put upon that paragraph of the Address which has just been read, I wish, Mr. Chairman, to offer one or two brief observations upon it, as I do not conceive that circumstances warrant the Committee who drafted that Address, in assuming that the guarantee by Her Majesty's Government for a loan to purchase Township Lands in this Island, for the purpose of converting leasehold into freehold tenures, will give "general satisfaction;" and I do not require to go outside the walls of this House in confirmation of the views I entertain upon the question. I was unfortunately absent in England during the last Session of the Legislature, when the Address of the Council and Assembly to the Queen, upon the subject referred to in His Excellency's Speech, was agreed to. Had I been in my place, I do not hesitate to say, for reasons which it is unnecessary at present to explain, that the measure would have received my most decided opposition.

I observe from the Journal of this House, which is now before me, that in the division which took place, when the address passed this House, the numbers were nine to six. I also observe that beside myself, three other hon. members were views upon the Land Purchase question, so that had we with mine, were also absent at that division, so that had we all been in our places, the address would not have left this House,—a sufficient proof, I take it, Mr. Chairman, that the object of the Address, was not generally satisfactory to the people of the Island—that is, if hon. members of this House truly represent the views and opinions of their constituents.

I further observe, Mr. Chairman, among the minority, the names of three hon. members, whose efforts to advance the interests of the tenantry, and to ameliorate their condition have been most unremitting ever since they occupied seats in this House; and when I find that these gentlemen are opposed to the contemplated measure, I am further strengthened in the belief which I have before expressed, that it will not give "general satisfaction." I therefore move that the paragraph be struck out, and the following substituted:—

"We thank your Excellency for communicating to us the information that Her Majesty's Government have come to a favourable determination with reference to the joint address of the Council and Assembly, to the Queen, on the subject of a guarantee by Her Majesty's Government, for a loan for the purchase of Township lands in this Island, with a view to the more speedy and general conversion of leasehold into freehold tenures."

Hon. COL. SECRETARY.—I thought when the hon. member rose, he was going to give some reasons for objecting to the paragraph under consideration, but he wanders off to the last