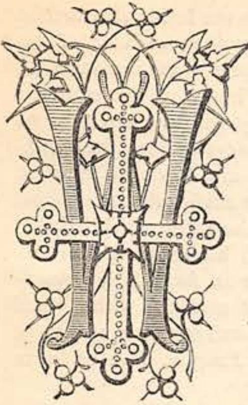
HER MAJESTY'S INDIA OFFICE.



WHEN Lord Palmerston was Prime Minister there was a great battle fought in Parliament, which was spoken of at the time as "the battle of the Styles." The business of State had long outgrown the capacities of the wretched-looking premises in Downing Street which used to be pointed out to visitors as the "Government Offices," and besides this, the buildings themselves were in danger of tumbling down. A committee specially appointed to consider the matter had presented a report to the House of Commons, recommending that one or more blocks should, without delay, be erected on a uniform plan to meet the requirements of the chief Ministerial Departments. The presentation of this report led to the offer of numberless suggestions and plans by architects and amateurs, but for a long time the project lingered in the regions of uncertainty and delay.

At last, however, the necessities of the public service forced the Executive to determine that "something" should be done, and Parliament was asked to decide what that "something" should be. First and foremost was the question—What style of architecture should be adopted? Then began the famous struggle between the friends of the Gothic style on the one side, and the admirers of the Palladian style on the other—a struggle that for the time being absorbed public attention, and obliterated the usual party lines. In the end neither style could claim the victory; for the Premier, with whom the decision practically rested, finally adopted the designs of a "Gothic" architect, modified however, according to his lordship's own ideas of what "public offices" should be. The result was the erection of a splendid pile of buildings in a style which is neither Gothic nor Italian, but a curious mixture of both, with the addition of a considerable amount of "Palmerstonian." Whatever may be the judgment of the *cognoscenti*, there is little doubt that the popular taste has fully approved Lord Palmerston's architectural judgment, while experience has proved that the new public offices are, on the whole, admirably adapted to the purposes for which they were designed.

On our way down Whitehall, walking in the direction of Westminster, we reach the new building as soon as we have passed Downing Street; in fact that famous official home of British Premiers marks the northern boundary of the vast ministerial palace. On the Whitehall side of the structure the Home and the Colonial Departments are housed. Passing through the archway in Downing Street we find ourselves at the Foreign Office, and on the opposite side of the vast quadrangle is the India Office, the principal entrance to which is, however, from Charles Street.

The India Office occupies the whole of that portion of the new building which abuts on St. James's Park, and which presents such an imposing appearance to a spectator standing upon the Horse Guards parade-ground. The fine semi-circular sweep which breaks the angle of the building facing towards the Duke of York's Column, is a striking feature in the frontage which overlooks the park. It is in this semi-circular part of the block that the Secretary of State has his suite of rooms. Entering the quadrangle from Charles Street, our attention is drawn to the series of sculptured figures which look down upon us from near the topmost storey—figures representing the various Indian tribes: Afghans, Ghoorkas, Mahrattas, and so on. As we mount one of the great staircases we find arched niches occupied with life-sized statues of great Indian statesmen; and looking round the noble court-yard which occupies the central portion of the building, we gaze upon a series of twenty-eight busts of men whose services in India their countrymen

"Should not willingly let die."

Havelock, and Clyde, and Lawrence have places there, besides other heroes of less renown. The angles of the court, on the ground floor as well as on the first floor, are filled with statues, standing in niches; Lords Wellesley and Hastings, besides the famous Warren Hastings, being among the great Anglo-Indians thus represented. The splendid State Ball given in honour of the Sultan of Turkey some years ago took place in this court-yard. Much of the internal decoration of the building is designed in keeping with the geographical associations of the Department; the ceilings of some of the rooms, for example, being worked in plaster models of Indian fruits and flowers. In the magnificent chamber in which the meetings of the Council are held, there are two remarkable things which formerly occupied places in the old East India House in Leadenhall Street: the famous fire-place of carved white marble, and a life-size portrait of Warren Hastings—"such a likeness," to use Macaulay's words, "as he would have wished posterity to have of him."

Prior to the year 1858 no India Office existed. The East India Company was virtually the Government of India, but there was a Department of State called the Board of Control, whose special business was to "control" the doings of "John Company," whether at his headquarters in Leadenhall Street or out in the far East. The terrible Mutiny of 1857, however, put an end to the Company's reign; and in the following year Parliament decreed that the double Government which had hitherto existed should be abolished, and the entire administration of the British Empire in India should henceforth be assumed by the Queen's Ministers.

A Bill to effect this great change was first brought in by Lord Palmerston, but his resignation stopped its further progress. Another Bill was introduced by

Lord Beaconsfield—then, of course, Mr. Disraeli; it was known as "India Bill, No. 2," but it was fairly laughed out of the House by one of Lord Palmerston's jocular speeches. His lordship said that whenever he met a friend in the street he found him in an uncontrollable fit of laughter, and as soon as he was able to speak and explain himself, it was always found that he was laughing at India Bill, No. 2! That Bill was withdrawn, and on the suggestion of Lord John Russell, the House proceeded to consider the matter by way of resolutions. Upon these resolutions a Bill was formed and introduced into the House of Commons by Lord Stanley (now Earl of Derby). It received the Royal Assent on August 2, 1858; on the 1st of September the political power of the East India Company ceased, and the Queen of England became Sovereign of India, though she was not proclaimed Empress of India until twenty years later.

By this Act the constitution of the Indian Government was settled. It decreed the appointment of a Minister, to be called the Secretary of State for India, with a salary of £5,000; and of a Council of State consisting of fifteen members, each receiving a salary of £1,200 per annum. The Secretary of State is a member of the Cabinet, and subject to that august body he is, virtually, the chief ruler of India. As a matter of routine almost all the business of the Department goes before the Council, and upon the more important questions a vote is taken, but the Secretary is not bound by these decisions, except in two cases, viz., the appropriation of Indian revenues, and the appointment of members of the Supreme Council in India. Upon all other matters the Secretary of State may, if he pleases, act upon his own judgment, and set aside that of the Council of State.

The Council of State is divided into six Committees of five members each; every member of the Council serving in two Committees. These Committees correspond to the several Departments among which the work of the India Office is distributed, viz., Financial; Military; Political and Secret; Judicial and Public; Public Works, Railways, and Telegraphs; and Revenue, Statistics, and Commerce. Each Department has a Secretary with a salary of £1,200 per annum, and one or more Assistant-Secretaries with salaries of from £700 to £900. In addition to these high officials there are two Parliamentary Under-Secretaries of State, besides a numerous staff of subordinate officers and clerks, with salaries varying according to rank and length of service.

The whole of the revenues of India are at the disposal of the Secretary of State and his Council, and they can draw upon these revenues for all expenses required for the service of India, whether in this country or abroad. The cost of the building erected for the accommodation of the India Office was charged to the Indian Exchequer, and the whole of the salaries and all expenses incurred at the India Office are defrayed out of Indian revenues. An annual statement, commonly called the "Indian Budget," is made by the Secretary of State as to the revenue and expenditure of the country, in the course of which some account is also given of its moral and material progress and general condition.

It would be impossible, within the limits of an article like this, to give our readers any adequate idea of the variety and the amount of business which is transacted daily at the India Office. When it is remembered that this Department is charged with the government of a country containing six or seven times the population of the United Kingdom, and having a revenue of 65 millions sterling, it will be easily understood how vast and how multifarious are the duties which devolve upon the Indian Secretary and his staff. The India Office is, in fact, an *imperium in imperio*, a government within a government; it contains within itself all the different branches of administration which, as regards other portions of the Empire, have separate Departments allotted to them.

Almost all the correspondence which reaches the India Office goes, in the first instance, to the central registry, from which it is distributed among the different Departments according to the nature of the business to which it refers. Much of it comes from persons at home who are more or less interested in Indian affairs; but, of course, most of it relates to the Government of India itself, and takes the form of despatches received from the Viceroy, or of communications with other Departments of State at home. The more important of these go direct to the office of the Secretary of State, or to the Secretaries of the Departments for which they are specially intended. The Departmental Secretaries deal with these despatches first, making such notes upon them as they require, then pass them on to the Under-Secretaries, by whom they are further considered and prepared for presentation to the Secretary of State, or the Committee of Council having charge of the particular matters to which the despatches refer. Finally, in certain important cases, which are far more numerous than many persons would suppose, these documents are submitted to the judgment of the whole Council at its weekly meeting.

Drafts of despatches intended to be sent to India are prepared by the Secretary of the Department to which they relate, and are then revised by one of the Under-Secretaries, either "Permanent" or "Parliamentary." In the revised form the draft is next presented to the Secretary of State, who approves or alters it, according to his discretion, and then refers it to a Committee of the Council. In due course it is considered in Committee, amended if necessary, and forthwith returned to the Secretary of State, to be laid by him before the full Council for final approval.

Every important despatch must be approved by the Secretary of State, and signed by him, before it is sent to its destination; those of minor moment may be signed by the Chairman of the Committee of Council, or even by the Secretary of the Committee, without any reference whatever to the principal Secretary of State. All secret despatches are delivered immediately to the Chief Secretary himself, and he dictates the replies to be forwarded, after consultation with his colleagues in the Cabinet.

J. T. G.