



SEAL OF THE EAST INDIA COMPANY.

# THE INDIA OFFICE.

By ROBERT MACHRAY.

*Photographs by C. Pilkington.*

THE story of the English in India is one of the most marvellous and fascinating in the world, no matter from what point of view it be regarded. It began almost exactly three hundred years ago; for though the first English East India Company was organised in 1599, it did not become what may be called a going concern till the following year. The first expedition sailed from Woolwich in the spring of 1601, Captain James Lancaster being in chief command.

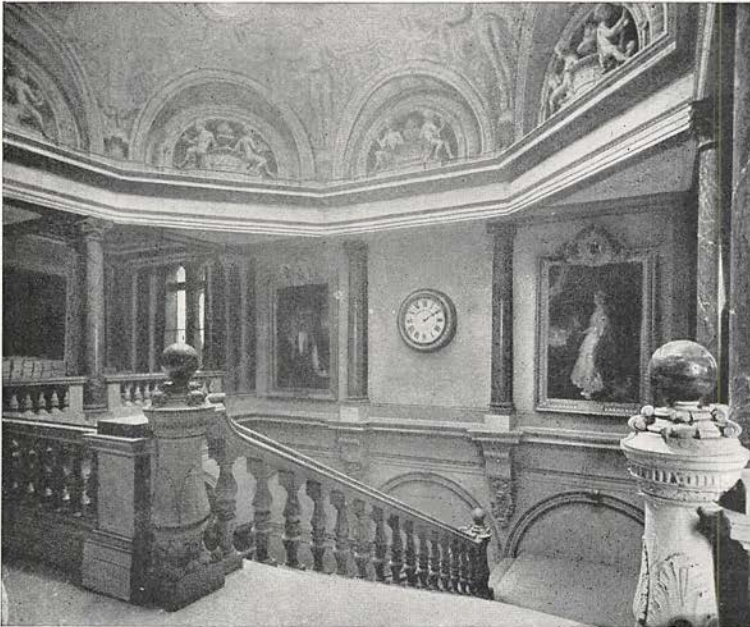
If I had my way, I should have models, designed with such accuracy as may be possible, of the ships composing that expedition set up in every school in these Islands as object-lessons to our children, to help them to remember and appreciate the beginning of the wonderful story, and to teach them that thus and thus was an Empire far greater than that of Rome at its mightiest founded by our forefathers.

There were in all five ships in Captain Lancaster's fleet, and their total burthen was only something like 1,400 tons. The largest was the *Mare Scourge*—sometimes spoken of as the *Malice Scourge*, and, later, re-christened the *Red Dragon*—a vessel of 600 tons, purchased at a cost of £3,700, and having on board a company of 200 men. The smallest ship was not much bigger than a fair-sized lugger, and it was called the *Guift*. The remaining three, the *Hector*, the *Great Susan*, and the *Assention*, were about half the size of the *Mare Scourge*, the first carrying 100, and the other two each 80 men. The whole cost of the five ships was well under £10,000. Out of them has grown our Empire in India. It is an amazing thing—is it not?

India, conquered for us by generations of merchant adventurers and seamen like James Lancaster, remains to-day the most unique and the most interesting as well as the most important possession of the British race. India has always been a name to conjure with. The thought of its wealth and its wonders haunted the dreams of the ancients, and lay like a spell upon the mind of the Middle Ages. The search for, the endeavour to find a way to it by sea led to the re-discovery of South Africa and of America. It has been the scene of some of the most remarkable achievements, not only in war, but also in peace, of our soldiers and statesmen. For many a long year it has poured a golden flood into this country. Last century it created, enriched, and in some cases led to the ennoblement of our middle classes.



ARMS OF THE EAST INDIA COMPANY.



THE HEAD OF THE STAIRCASE.

India—the rich, the wonderful, the glowing, the magnificent, the mysterious!

On the occasion of the second visit I paid to the India Office, in the interests of the WINDSOR MAGAZINE, I was introduced to a noble visitor just arrived from India who is revered and regarded as a god. A quiet, well-spoken, self-possessed man, in the dress of an English gentleman, with the manner and even the appearance of a European, and yet one whom multitudes of his followers all over the East implicitly believe is a divinity—believe it so absolutely that they contribute for his support a portion of all their possessions, amounting to £100,000 a year! In connection with what country on the globe could this have happened save with India? Just think of it. I was sitting talking to one of the high officials, there was a knock at the door, and this personage entered. I was introduced to his Highness, who talked about this thing or that, as might happen. A pleasant, courteous gentleman—and yet to thousands he is very god! It would be preposterous, impossible, incredible, ridiculous, but for India, where almost anything may be true and possible and important beyond all words.

Amongst the great offices of State the India Office is as unique as the Indian Empire itself is among the possessions of the British. It sums up in itself, in its various

departments, all the functions of the Government of India—finance, war, marine, foreign affairs, and so on. It does not cost our ratepayers a farthing, the entire expense, which amounts to £150,000 annually, being defrayed out of the revenues of India. The very building, or rather that portion of it in which the India Office is, has been paid for from the same revenues.

The real seat of the Government of India is not Calcutta, but the India Office in London.

Just as, in the days of the East India Company, India was ruled from Leadenhall Street, so now from St. James's Park are its affairs directed and controlled. Indeed, the India Office is an evolution, not an innovation. First there were the committees of merchant adventurers, who were traders with exclusive privileges derived from charters given and renewed from time to time by the Crown. In 1784 an Act was passed placing the Company in direct subordination to a body representing the British Government. The body consisted of a Board of six commissioners, usually known as the Board of Control. In 1813 the trade of India was thrown open to all British subjects, and this necessarily modified the commercial character of the Company. Twenty years later the Company ceased its connection with trade altogether. When the charter was renewed for the last time, the right of nominating their civil servants was taken from the Board of Control, and a system of open competition was introduced. In 1858 the Crown assumed the direct administration of India, and the great Company became a thing of the past. The President of the Board of Control was transformed into a Secretary of State, and the Board itself was replaced by a Council of fifteen members, eleven of whom had been Directors of the Company. The staff of the East India House in Leadenhall Street, and

of the Board of Control, naturally formed the staff of the first India Office, which, after a period of delay, was housed in that huge, imposing, but somewhat sombre quadrangular pile of buildings where are also the Foreign Office, the Colonial Office, and the Home Office, the general design of which was the work of Sir Gilbert Scott.

The India Office shares with the Foreign Office the site made beautiful by the trees and the ornamental water at the south-western corner of St. James's Park. The outward appearance of the edifice is not marked by any elaborate design or system of decoration; it is, truth to tell, rather too dully solid looking. Its interior, however, might well be described as vast, and is specially noteworthy for its long and lofty corridors, fine staircases, and handsome rooms. The ornamentation of the ceilings, consisting in modellings of Indian fruits and flowers, the work of Sir Digby Wyatt, is unfortunately in nothing more enduring than plaster. One of the chief features of the India Office, speaking architecturally, is a courtyard, shut in on all sides, and covered over with a roof of glass and iron, forming an inner quadrangle, where the Sultan of Turkey, when he visited this country some years ago, was entertained by the then Secretary of State. But so far as I can hear, it has never been used for any great function since, and now presents a decidedly uninteresting and even desolate aspect.



STATUE OF WARREN HASTINGS.

The India Office, unlike its neighbour, the Foreign Office, has many pictures and statues, some of which are very valuable. It formerly possessed a huge number of articles which were genuine treasures of art, but they were removed to the India Museum at South Kensington.

The principal staircase is adorned with statues of some of the remarkable men whose names are for ever associated with the conquest or the government of India, such as Clive, Lawrence, Wellington, the Marquess of Wellesley, Cornwallis, and Eyre Coote. At the foot of the north-west staircase is a statue of Warren Hastings, by Flaxman, and nearly opposite the entrance from the quadrangle is a marble bust of Wellington, by Turnerelli. And here, perhaps, I should say that all these memorials of the past be-



HEAD OF THE GRAND STAIRCASE.

longed to the old Company, as did most of the oil paintings in the Office. An exception to this rule is to be found in a plaster bust of the Queen, which stands in the Council reading-room, and which has quite an interesting history. It formed the model for the head and shoulders of the well-known statue by Matthew Noble, presented to the city of Bombay by the Gaekwar Khanderao of Baroda, which was subsequently spoiled by some fanatical natives. The bust, after the sculptor's death, was purchased from the widow and presented to the Office by Sir George Birdwood, through whom the commission for the original statue had been given.

There are paintings or prints in nearly all



LORD GNSLOW, UNDER-SECRETARY OF STATE FOR INDIA.

the larger rooms and in the corridors. In the Secretary of State's room, a chamber of irregular shape, there is displayed a set of miniatures by Indian artists, painted about the beginning of the present century, of the twelve Emperors of Delhi, and of Nadir Shah, who overthrew the Moguls. The Council-room is the most interesting apartment in the building. Its splendid doors of dark mahogany, and its great mantelpiece of marble, were brought from the old East India House in Leadenhall Street, as were also the tables. Behind an elaborately carved chair of state or throne, on which the Chief Secretary, as President of the Council, sits, is a life-sized portrait of Warren Hastings

as he appeared while Governor of Bengal. Paintings of other Empire-builders, in the person of the Marquess of Wellesley, brother of the Iron Duke, of Lawrence, "the Father of the Indian Army" (the work of Sir Joshua Reynolds), of Cornwallis, the compeer of Hastings, and of Sir Eyre Coote, the conqueror of the French in India, look down from the canvas on the deliberations of what may be termed the Cabinet of our Eastern Empire.

It is, of course, impossible to enumerate in detail the other pictures to be seen at the India Office, but I must find space to mention a few of the more striking. In the Finance Committee-room there hangs the full-length portrait of Napoleon, which Marshal Soult, when he saw it at the India House in 1838, thought so marvellous a likeness that on contemplating it for some time he was moved to tears. On the main staircase, high up in the building, there are life-size portraits of Napoleon III. and of the Empress Eugénie, in massive frames surmounted by the Imperial Arms of France, which were presented by the Emperor to the East India Company in acknowledgment of their contributions to the Paris Exhibition of 1855. Among the portraits of Orientals, the most interesting are those of Fath Ali Shah in the Revenue Committee-room, and of Tipu Sultan in the Finance Committee-room, where is also exhibited an historical painting of considerable importance—that of Shah Alam,

the Great Mogul, conveying the grant of the Diwani, or fiscal administration, of Bengal, Behar, and Orissa, to Clive, at Allahabad, in 1765.

In the room of the Permanent Under-Secretary of State, Sir Arthur Godley, there hangs on either side of the fireplace a series of engravings of the noblemen and gentlemen who have held the high position of Secretary of State for India since 1858, amongst them being the Marquess of Salisbury, Lord Randolph Churchill, the Duke of Devonshire, the Duke of Argyll, the Earl of Kimberley, and the Marquess of Ripon. The present Secretary is Lord George Hamilton.

An anonymous writer in *British Indian Commerce* for January, 1899, who is evidently wellacquainted with Lord George, says of him—

“As one sees a slight figure, clad in faultless fashion, with head erect and face bearded, the hair turning slightly grey, flitting along the corridors, received with respectful salutes by every passing official, you cannot fancy that it is that most important personage, the Secretary of State. ‘Lord George,’ whispers the official, as you look inquisitively at him. Everybody in the India Office has the kindest of words for ‘Lord George.’ The most unostentatious of men, he is the most hard-working and devoted of State Secretaries. Although he exercises it firmly, he gives you



SIR HORACE WALPOLE, K.C.B., ASSISTANT UNDER-SECRETARY OF STATE FOR INDIA.

no outward sign of his great office, for he is the most amiable and modest of men. There have been Secretaries of State who knew nothing of India nor of Indian affairs, for, as they were only politicians, they were compelled to rely upon the officials of the India

Office for both knowledge and guidance. Lord George is not a Secretary of that type. He aims at being an efficient and a conscientious ruler of our great Eastern Empire. He accomplishes his aim quietly and without much parade of policy; but then he has rare qualifications for his high position. He knows the India Office and its ways, and almost every official employed there. Before he became Secretary of State, Lord George spent many years as Under-Secretary. In that post it was



LORD GEORGE HAMILTON, SECRETARY OF STATE FOR INDIA.



MEDALLION OF WARREN HASTINGS.

his duty to supervise the details of administration, and thus he served a splendid apprenticeship in Indian government.

"He was a very industrious apprentice. He is a very industrious master. You will find him generally at the India Office at 11 a.m., and while Parliament is sitting often very much earlier. He probably leaves the House of Commons in the small hours of the morning—sometimes calls at the India Office on his way home, if important telegrams are expected—and will be found comfortably seated in the Secretary of State's room by 10 a.m."

This is the man, then, who at the present moment is the real ruler of India under the Crown. To aid him in this great work he has the advice of the body known as the Council of India.

This Council, which when it was first constituted consisted of fifteen members, now numbers twelve. Originally the members were appointed for life, but now for a period of ten years, and they each have a salary of £1,200 a year. According to the Act of Parliament, the Council, five making a quorum, must meet once every week in the year; nor has it failed to do so since its inception. When it wants a little holiday, it arranges to meet on the Monday of one week and on the Saturday of the week following. The position of member of the

Council is in the gift of the Secretary of State, and those selected are for the most part old Anglo-Indians of ripe experience. Their functions are consultative rather than executive. The Secretary of State in Council has the entire control of the expenditure of the revenues of India, and no grant or appropriation of those revenues can be made without the concurrence of a majority of votes at a meeting of the Council. It will be readily understood that the provision of the Government of India Act places great power in the hands of the Council.

It must be noticed in passing that the composition of the Council includes members of both the great political parties, Conservative and Liberal. The Secretary of State for the time being is of course a politician belonging to the party in power, and the mixed political character of his Council cannot fail to be of great service in the debates and discussions which must necessarily arise on points he submits to it. Nor must it be overlooked that the members of the India Council are men whose careers in administrative departments in India make them rather representatives of Indian opinion and experience than exponents of either of the two political parties.

Although the Council meets but once a week, the duties of its members impose upon them an almost daily attendance at the India Office. The Council is subdivided into committees, each of which is in close connection with one of the Departments—Finance, Military, Revenue, Public Works,



THE ORIGINAL CHARTERS AND TALLY STICKS OF THE EAST INDIA COMPANY.

etc., as the case may be. If Lord George's Council be likened to a Cabinet, then each member discharges functions analogous to those of a Minister. When any question of importance is brought before the Council, the papers are as a rule placed in a box for a week for the perusal of the various members. At the meeting of the Council the following week the papers are again brought up and discussed, and if there is a difference of opinion, a division is taken and the matter is finally decided.

Each member of the Council has a room at the India Office, and they have in addition a common reading-room—it is a good deal like a room in a club—furnished with easy-chairs, books of reference, and the leading English and Indian daily and other papers and periodicals.

The India Office, like the rest of the great Government offices, has its regular staff of civil servants, who have obtained their positions in the first instance by success in the usual way in competitive examinations open to everybody in the country. The staff, including all grades, numbers about three hundred, and the appointments are for life or until the age-limit has been reached. At the head of all is the Permanent Under-Secretary of State, who is seconded by the Parliamentary Under-Secretary and an Assistant Under-Secretary of State.

Sir Arthur Godley, K.C.B., a Rugby and Oxford man, has been Permanent Under-Secretary since 1883. A barrister by profession, he began public life as private secretary to the First Lord of the Treasury in 1872. During his occupancy of his high position he has effected several changes, which have resulted in the Office being worked more economically than was the case previously. The present Parliamentary Under-Secretary is the Earl of Onslow, who is very well known in connection with the London County Council. He was Under-Secretary for the Colonies in 1887, and Governor of New Zealand from 1889 to

1892. When questions are asked in the House of Lords with respect to India, they are answered by Lord Onslow—in the House of Commons by the Minister himself, who, as everybody knows, is the Member for Ealing. The Assistant Under-Secretary, Sir Horace Walpole, K.C.B., has been at the India Office for some thirty-seven years—a long record of public service. He commenced as a temporary clerk in 1862, and has served in various departments of the Office, and besides being Assistant Under-Secretary is also Clerk of the India Council.

The business of the India Office is divided up amongst several Departments, of which



SIR ARTHUR GODLEY, K.C.B., PERMANENT UNDER-SECRETARY OF STATE FOR INDIA.

incidental mention has already been made. Every communication—I understand that about a hundred thousand letters are received in the course of each year—goes first of all to a central registry, from which, after it has been entered into an enormous index, it is sent on to the proper Department. Every letter despatched from the Office has to be registered at this bureau before being posted or delivered. To make this system less onerous, however, there is a branch of the registry in each Department. On the whole the business of the India Office does not increase, but may be said to be stationary—this comes from public business in India itself having been got into well-established order. As a corollary, the



THE READING ROOM, WITH STATUE OF THE QUEEN.

numbers of the staff in St. James's Park remain pretty much the same.

Of the Departments, the Financial is, perhaps, one of the most important, as it represents the Treasury and the Chancellor of the Exchequer of the Indian Empire. The Government of India has to report its expenditure, beyond certain limits, to the Secretary of State, who deals with the matter through this Department, which is also charged with the raising and the paying off of loans in the London money-market, and with financing India generally. At the head of the Finance Department is Sir Henry Waterfield, K.C.S.I.

The Military Department, presided over by Major-General Sir E. Stedman, K.C.I.E., is the War Office of India. Here questions affecting our own soldiers in India (who, by the way, are entirely supported by the Indian Government so long as they serve in that country) or the Native Indian Army, are dealt with as they arise, but of course the Imperial War Office must also have something to say in such matters. But to this Department, or, rather, perhaps I should say, to the Military Committee, all the military reports, whether they relate to the administration of the Army, its maintenance, or its operations, are relegated for opinion, censure, or classification. And while speaking of this committee I should like to say that I found two of the most interesting memorials of the

vanished East India Company in the chamber where it holds its sittings, in the shape of a couple of torn, ragged, and tattered flags (they usually hang above the door) which belonged to the Company's Volunteers, the men who helped to win our Empire in the East.

The Political and Secret Department, of which Sir W. Lee-Warner, K.C.S.I., is chief, corresponds to the Foreign Office of the Imperial Government. It takes cognisance of everything that affects, or is likely to affect, India from

outside. It keeps a watchful eye on what is going on in the Native States in the Peninsula, in Afghanistan, in Persia, in Asiatic Russia, in Siarn, and other neighbouring countries. The Judicial and Public Department and the Public Works Department, on the other hand, look after the internal affairs of India. The former has to do with the legislative action of the several Governments of India, and with ecclesiastical, educational, and general matters of administration, including appointments coming under those heads, as well as to the Covenanted Civil Service; the latter is responsible for the development of the resources of India by railways and telegraphs, by irrigation works, and the like. The chief of the Judicial Department is Sir Charles Lyall, K.C.S.I.; the head of Public Works is Mr. E. Leel, C.I.E.

Other Departments are those of Revenue and Statistics, under Sir Charles Bernard, K.C.S.I.; the Accountant-General, Edward R. Cave-Browne, C.S.I.; the Funds; the Registry and Records; and the Store Department. The last-named, I am told, spends annually in this country something like two million pounds on guns, accoutrements, and stores of all kinds.

One of the most interesting of these Departments, from a popular point of view, is certainly the Registry and Record, under the superintendence of Mr. A. Wollaston, C.I.E. A great part of the basement of the



building is a maze, a perfect labyrinth of passages between walls formed by iron racks, filled with cases containing the records of the old Company and of the India Office itself. There must be many miles of these books and documents, from which, it must be confessed, there proceeds a very ancient and musty smell. But what an accumulation of materials for the history of the British in India there is here!

During the earlier years of the East India Company but little care seems to have been taken of the originals of the charters which conferred its privileges upon it, and only copies of the very oldest are to be seen in the muniment-room of the India Office. Amongst the original documents which have been preserved are an interesting letter—a kind of “letter of credence”—from James I., a charter signed by Oliver Cromwell, and more than one charter granted by Charles II. One of the last-named, covering six large sheets of vellum, has been mutilated, the ornamental borders, the portrait of the King, and the Arms of the Company having been cut out by some unknown Goth. Two other charters of this sovereign’s have admirable etchings of the Merry Monarch. Perhaps what struck me most in the muniment-room were the “tally-sticks,” of which a considerable number have been collected.

The tally-stick deserves a paragraph to itself. As an institution it is, of course, quite obsolete, but it only disappeared at the beginning of the present century. What it exactly was will be most easily understood

ONE OF THE ORIGINAL CHAIRS OF THE EAST INDIA COMPANY.



from the illustration. In appearance it is nothing more or less than a long, narrow piece of wood with notches cut on it, and it would scarcely be surmised that it is a receipt for money paid, each notch standing for pounds, tens of pounds, hundreds of pounds, and thousands of pounds, according to the size of the particular notch on the stick. Originally the piece of wood was just twice the size, but on the account being settled the stick was split into halves, each party to the transaction retaining a half as a voucher, the notches standing for so many figures. If any dispute arose afterwards as to the amount, the two pieces were fitted together and the evidence they furnished was conclusive if they *tallied*—



THE COUNCIL CHAMBER.

hence the modern word. The stick with ten notches on it was the receipt to the Company for the £10 it paid yearly to the king as rent for the island of Bombay.

In the India Office there are no less than three hundred rooms, but considerations of space forbid any further description of them. The library, however, which is placed at the top of the building, is said to be better furnished with books and papers relating to India than any library in that country itself. I understand that permission to make use of

it can be readily obtained on application to the authorities.

In conclusion I desire on behalf of the WINDSOR to thank Lord George Hamilton for his courteous permission to go over the India Office and to have photographs taken. I am indebted also to Sir Arthur Godley and Sir Horace Walpole for their kind assistance, and in a special manner to Sir George Birdwood, K.C.I.E., who was good enough to act as my guide and cicerone.



THE OLD GARDEN.

*From the picture by Fred Hines.*