

Laurel Papers

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Colombo, Ceylon, January 31, 1909.

My dear Sir Wilfrid:

I have refrained from writing until the present, as apart from what has a bearing on the Indian and Chinese missions, there was little to report in regard to my brief stay in England, and it seemed to me that whatever related to the special missions might, with greater satisfaction to yourself, be dealt with in communications dealing special with these subjects. The Indian mission being now completed, I shall outline its results very briefly, reserving full particulars for a detailed report.

I left Ottawa on December 14, and reached London on the 22nd. The Colonial, India and Foreign Offices had been informed by His Excellency of the brief time at my disposal in England, and I was enabled thereby to secure an appointment with Lord Morley for December 23.

At the interview with Lord Morley, His Lordship expressed his appreciation of your kindness in allowing me to travel via India en route to China, and said that in his opinion it would be worth "silver and gold" for me to see India, and that he was anxious you should be fully informed about Indian conditions. He said there were a number of persons in India with whom he would like me to talk. He would communicate with the Viceroy, that I might be brought into touch with them on reaching Calcutta.

Lord Morley thought that the arrangement between India and Canada, as effected in the spring, was working satisfactorily. It had relieved him of embarrassment, and he thought that the understanding reached at that time was all that would be necessary to effectively restrict further emigration from India to Canada.

Lord Morley further stated that he was particularly glad, on account of my connection with the Opium Commission, that I was proceeding via India, as it would afford an opportunity of appreciating the problem which confronted that country and England in connection with proposed reforms. Briefly, he desired me, while in India, to discuss with persons who would be designated, (1) immigration matters, (2) the opium question, and (3) the political situation.

My stay in England was, unfortunately, too brief to permit of my meeting the Premier, Mr. Asquith, who had left London before I reached there, or Lord Crewe, who left the day of my arrival. I was most fortunate, however, in having the exceptional pleasure of spending a night and a day with Sir Edward Grey at his home in Northumberland. Sir Edward had also left London when I reached there, but having had a private note from His Excellency, very kindly wrote to London, inviting me to visit him in the north. The 28th and 29th of December were taken up with this visit, and on the 31st I left London for Marseilles, connecting there on January 1st, with the P. & O. steamer "Britannia," for Bombay, where I arrived on the 16th inst. The journey from Bombay to Calcutta took two days, and the journey from Calcutta here, four, so that out of the two weeks in India I have had in reality only one to get through everything, just as in England, necessary travelling, Christmas and Sunday intervening, reduced the time available for interviews from eight days to about four. However, I feel that it is impossible to convey just how valuable it has been to have had this experience. Though I should hesitate to express judgments too readily, there are certain impressions which one gathers that cannot fail to be of value for a lifetime, while on the other hand, though the time has been short, I have been able to gather an amount of information, supplemented by observation and reading, that has given an understanding of immigration and other inter-imperial and international problems which could never have been had but for a trip of this kind.

I had an interview with Lord Minto on the afternoon of the day of my arrival in Calcutta. On the following days I met one or two members of the Viceroy's Council, the heads of several of the Departments, and other gentlemen whom it was thought advisable I should see. The view taken by the Indian Government on the subject of immigration is that there is practical certainty of the present arrangement between India and Canada continuing to be effectual, and that under the circumstances it would be unwise to re-open the question at the present time. The Indian Government has only the highest opinion to express of the conciliatory attitude adopted by Canada, which has been of a nature to save embarrassment such as has been experienced as a consequence of the action of other self-governing colonies, in particular, South Africa at the moment, and also Australia. I am assured on all sides that Canada's attitude on the subject of Indian immigration has created none other than a favourable impression in India. There has been a great deal of agitation in India arising out of the emigration restriction, but this, I am told, has been occasioned almost entirely by the manner in which Indians who have emigrated to South Africa and taken up residence there are being treated at the present time. Canada has not been brought into the discussion at all. Even in quarters where efforts have been most

active to foment unrest in India, there appears to have been little or no mention of the restrictive measures adopted by the Dominion. Even in the matter of deportations, I am assured, in answer to a direct question on this point, that no feeling is likely to be excited in India if deportation of destitute Indians is resorted to. A clear statement to the effect that destitution and suffering is the sole cause for the step would be received without creating stir, but the authorities are of the opinion that it would be advisable in such a case to avoid the appearance of anything like wholesale deportation, as tending to raise doubt as to the object with which it was made. The action of Canada toward having certain of the Indians transferred to British Honduras is understood and approved here, and Mr. Harkin's action as reported is commended by the authorities.

The Government freely admits that such emigration as has already taken place was due to the recruiting done by the steamship companies. Mr. Harvey, of the Viceroy's Council, assures me that the companies concerned have been given to understand that any further action of the kind will be strongly disapproved of by the Government, and he believes that this of itself will prove an effective deterrent against a repetition of such practices.

It has become perfectly plain to me that the Government of India is being much embarrassed by the action of South Africa; that for the Government of India to move at the moment in the direction of formally defining some policy of restriction so far as Canada is concerned, would be to invite a discussion on a subject which is dormant, and which might only serve to jeopardize the effective working of the arrangement already reached. Canada's attitude has been contrasted with the attitude of the other colonies in a manner highly favourable to the Dominion. Instead of offending India in any particular, we appear to have succeeded in convincing her of our good will. Emigration to Canada is really not desired, so far as I can discover, by anyone or any class. What I have seen of this country and of the people convinces me more strongly than ever that they are entirely unsuited for the Dominion; that it is not a kindness to allow them to come, and that it is in every way desirable that Canada should be kept for the white races and India for the black, as Nature appears to have decreed.

I shall not write more on the subject of immigration, as an official communication emanating from the Government of India, expressive of the Indian Government's position and its appreciation of the attitude of Canada, will be sent to you through the Secretary of State for India, and another communication from the Viceroy direct.

So far then as Canada is concerned, what has been accomplished

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(1) That the Government of India has formally expressed entire satisfaction with the action taken by Canada in her dealings with subjects of India.

(2) That the Government of India has formally placed itself on record as of the opinion that an existing arrangement effected by negotiation and diplomacy, is serving at the moment, has served for nearly a year past, and is likely to continue to serve, as an effectual means of restricting emigration from India to Canada.

(3) A direct assurance from the Government of India ^{has been given} that any action on the part of Canada restricting Asiatic immigration will meet with no objection in India, provided it is not aimed ~~specifically~~ at Indian subjects in particular.

I attach an editorial clipped from one of the Indian papers, referring to cable despatches containing a reference to your remarks on the subject of Oriental immigration during the debate on the Speech from the Throne. The press of India generally appears to have reprinted this editorial, or to have published comments of a like character. The editorial expresses, I think, fairly accurately, the Indian feeling on the subject.

You will hardly be interested in the opinions I have gathered on the opium question and its bearing on conditions in India, so I shall pass this over.

As to the unrest in India, ~~however~~, from what I have learned in conversation from those in authority, as well as from the impressions I gathered by careful observation, I should say that the extent and amount of unrest appear to be much exaggerated. There is no doubt that throughout India and more particularly in the large centres, there is a strong desire on the part of those who are educated to obtain a greater share in the government of the country, but anything in the nature of a movement which is likely to result in force there does not appear to be. The one real danger is that of assassination of individuals, though the authorities believe that there is less danger of this than formerly. There is no doubt that there is a secret society of anarchists at work in India. Their movements are being directed from outside the country altogether, but the parties primarily concerned are believed to be known.

Lord Morley's reforms are, for the present at least, being well received by the Indian population, and are producing a good effect.

I should like to give you some impressions of India and of its problems, but this, I feel, it would be better, perhaps, to verbally convey, than to set out in a letter, chiefly because I am only too conscious of the many considerations that have to be taken into account



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in expressing a judgment on any questions here. Nowhere in the world, I believe, is the problem of government more interesting than it is in India at the moment. The questions arising present a singular parallel to those which Canada was obliged to consider in the first quarter of the last century, only in India there are millions where we were thousands. There are a hundred or more languages while we have scarcely more than two. There are several religions and innumerable castes and sects, where we at most ~~are~~ ^{were} concerned with different phases of the Christian faith, and there is a multitude in the bonds of heathen superstition and ignorance, where saving the Indians alone, most of our people had some enlightenment. In this vastly different setting the same questions as perplexed Canadian politics are arising between the governing and the governed in India, ~~and~~ the authorities in India and the authorities in Great Britain, and all this while India stands one nation in a group of self-governing nations, and while she herself is undergoing an industrial as well as a social and political revolution. Nothing should give us greater concern than the introduction of western methods of production by this country as well as by China and Japan. Already there are a few factories scattered about India, but for the most part industry is carried on entirely in the home and by hand. This was the position of England a century ago. What is to become of England and the rest of us when the same development takes place in the Orient seems to me a problem of like, if not greater magnitude than that ^{arising out} of the possible migration of the Oriental peoples to our shores.

I am sailing tomorrow by the Princess Alice of the North German Lloyd, which reaches Shanghai on the 15th proximo. I shall write or cable you from China as soon as there is anything of importance to report. I would only mention here that Sir Edward Grey was much pleased to learn of Canada's intention to negotiate an agreement with China, and has taken the steps necessary to bring me into touch, through the British Minister at Peking, with the Chinese authorities.

I shall be a fortnight late for the proceedings of the Opium Commission, but the cause of the delay has been explained by the British Foreign Office to the other members of the Commission. I shall do my utmost to conclude matters as speedily as possible, both at Shanghai and Peking, and I shall particularly endeavour to do this to your

Satisfactorily

To Lower

signed

Richard Grey