

**THE VICEREGAL LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL.**

At a meeting of the Supreme Legislative Council on March 4 the presentation of the Select Committee's final report on the Madras Small Causes Court Bill was postponed for a week. The Hon. Mr. Bliss presented the report of the Select Committee on the Bill to amend the Rangoon Port Commissioners Act. The Hon. Sir John Edgar introduced the Bill to amend the Court of Wards Act, 1879, and moved that it be referred to a Select Committee, with instructions to report in a week. He explained the principal sections of the present Bill, as well as the steps that had been taken in the past to prevent the ancient families from ruin and to prevent the estates of political and historical importance from being broken up. The Hon. Sir John Edgar also introduced the Bill for the regulation of the Bengal Military Police. The recent changes in the frontier police force had made the Bill necessary, and it followed very closely upon the Burma Military Police Act.

The Legislative Department have in hand a consolidation of the Merchant Shipping Acts of India. The Bill which is being prepared will embody a large number of Acts of the Legislature, and as these Acts affect the shipowner and shipmaster in every part of their daily work, it will be a great convenience, remarks the *Pioneer*, to know exactly what the law is and where to find it.

A Bill to amend the Land Acquisition Act very radically is likely to be introduced into Council before the close of session, but it will not be taken into consideration till later on. The last meeting of the Council will probably be held on March 25.

**THE VICEROY IN COOCH BEHAR.**

A TELEGRAM dated Cooch Behar, Feb. 23, says:—The Viceroyal party started from camp again this morning at nine o'clock. The guns consisted of the Viceroy, the Maharaja, Prince Christian Victor, Lord de Vesci, Doctor Fenn, Captain Harbord, Chevalier Schiebler, Sir Benjamin Simpson, Lord Valletort, Colonel Boileau, Messrs. W. Grenfell, Bignell, and Lewis; Mrs. and Miss Lewis and Mrs. Grenfell went out to see the sport. There were seventy elephants. The Rhiduk River was crossed and the beat began in the Shapkhater jungle. After some time, two rhino showed, one of which was wounded by Captain Harbord, but managed to get away. It will probably be brought in hereafter. Shortly before lunch a fine tigress charged out in front of the Viceroy, who disposed of her with one shot. The tiger, which was known to be in the neighbourhood, was beaten for, but owing to the nature of the jungle, which was most dense and difficult, he got away. On the way back to camp there was some general shooting, the big consisting of four deer, a boar, a boa constrictor and some small game. The party returned at six.

FEB. 24.—This was another successful day's shooting. With the exception of Colonel Boileau, who remained in camp, the same number of guns went out. The party started at 9 o'clock. The object was to look for rhinoceros and buffalo. The course taken was for about three hours northerly. After travelling over some rough country on pad elephants, the howdah elephants, which had been sent ahead, were come up with, and the beat was at once begun by the Maharaja in a patch of high reed grass and canes lying on the other side of the Rhiduk River. Around this patch the guns were posted at intervals. After some time two large rhinos, a bull and a cow, showed simultaneously from the east and west of the beat, the bull falling to Dr. Fenn, who brought him down with a well-placed shot. The other rhino fell to Chevalier Schiebler's rifle, and lay, as if dead, in some long grass, after the first shot or two. On approaching her she looked like charging, whereupon the chivalrous elephant turned and bolted. The rhino suddenly put on speed and was getting away under cover when the Maharaja rapidly appeared on the scene and despatched her. Lady Lansdowne, with Lord William Beresford, arrived in camp this evening. Her Excellency seems much improved in health.

FEB. 25.—This morning the party went out at the usual hour, Lord William Beresford adding another gun. The jungle was beaten about four miles to the north of the camp for a bear, but owing to its density he could not be got out. The next beat was more fortunate, a fine tiger breaking out in front of Lord Valletort, who knocked him over with a shot. After lunch the party beat homewards, shooting some deer and florican on the way. Camp was reached at 3 o'clock.

FEB. 26.—*Kubbur* arrived early this morning of two tigers which had killed about two miles east of camp. A good day's sport was consequently anticipated. At 9 o'clock the whole party, including Lady Lansdowne, started for the ground. The Maharaja made his dispositions very carefully around a piece of dense high reed grass and canes on the edge of a nullah. The jungle was beaten up against the wind twice, with the result that what ultimately turned out to be a leopard, but which could not be sighted at first, lay close till the last moment, and broke back each time to cover. The beating was then reversed, when the leopard showed under his Excellency's gun and was brought down.

FEB. 27.—A considerable tract of jungle was beaten to-day, resulting in a leopard, a bear, and a buffalo, which fell to Prince Christian Victor, Captain Harbord, and Sir Benjamin Simpson respectively. This day closes the shooting. The number of heads taken in the six days is forty-nine, including two tigers, three rhinoceros, two leopards, one bear, one buffalo, nine barasinghas, two hog-deer, two pig, three florican, and other small game.

FEB. 28.—The Viceroyal party, with the exception of Prince Christian Victor and Captain Harbord, who remain for a few days' more shooting, and will be joined by Lord Frankfort and others, left the shooting camp after luncheon, arriving here this evening. The Maharaja drove the Viceroy as before, covering the distance of thirty miles in something like three hours. Their Excellencies start from the Palace about noon to-morrow for Mogulha, arriving at Calcutta

at noon on Tuesday. The whole party seem in excellent health, and leave Cooch Behar with very pleasant recollections of the hospitality and sport shown them by the Maharaja.

**THE INDIAN FINANCIAL STATEMENT.**

WE have received the following from the India Office:—

"Telegram from the Viceroy of India to the Secretary of State, March 18.

"The financial statement of 1892-93 will be published here in a *Gazette* extraordinary to-day.

"The accounts of 1890-91 have closed with a surplus of 3,638,000 rx. It is explained that this large surplus is mainly due to the speculative rise in exchange which took place in that year, and other causes of temporary operation.

"In the revised Estimates for 1891-92 the revenue is estimated at 88,586,000 rx., and the expenditure at 88,666,000 rx., showing a deficit of 80,000 rx. It is anticipated that the improvement on the revised Estimates for 1891-92, which usually occurs, will more than cover this deficit, and that the accounts for the year will show a surplus. During this year, 1891-92, there has been a very great increase in net revenue from railways, a considerable improvement in the opium account, and a satisfactory increase of revenue under all important heads except land revenue. The improvement has been, however, swallowed up by increased military expenditure, by the fall in exchange, and by falling-off of land revenue owing to scarcity in parts of the country.

"In the Budget Estimate of 1892-93 the revenue is estimated at 88,368,000 rx. and the expenditure at 88,221,000 rx., yielding a surplus of 147,000 rx. The most striking feature of the Budget Estimate of next year is the fall in the rate of exchange from 1s. 5½d. in the Budget for 1891-92 to 1s. 4d. in the Budget for 1892-93, a fall which adds 1,708,000 rx. to the Imperial expenditure of the Government of India. This increase of expenditure has been met by the resumption of 466,000 rx. from Local Governments at the periodical revision of the provincial contracts, by increase of revenue from railways, and by increased receipts under principal heads of revenue, as well as by an improvement in the interest account in India, chiefly owing to capital expenditure on railway and irrigation works having been met from the large surpluses of recent years. The net opium revenue is taken in the Budget at 5,400,000 rx.

"The Estimates of 1892-93 provide 4,035,000 rx. for capital expenditure not chargeable to revenue, as well as 1,012,000 rx. under the famine insurance grant for the construction of railway and irrigation works, and 118,000 rx. under construction of railways (head 37).

"It is not expected that it will be necessary to raise a loan in India this year, though no pledge has been given.

"It is announced, with the usual reserve, that the Secretary of State for India will probably draw bills for 17,000,000l. during the next financial year, and will raise a loan for 1,800,000l. for discharge of railway debentures and for advances to railway companies.

"The present scarcity is stated to be a cause of anxiety, but actual famine is not anticipated unless there should be a failure of the periodical rains in the affected tracts. The meteorological conditions at present afford no indications of the likelihood of such failure. Apart from the possibility of occurrence of serious famine, Sir David Barbour considers that there is no ground for special anxiety regarding the coming year. He adds, however, that the currency question appears to be approaching the critical stage, and that it is impossible to tell what a few years may bring forth."

The Calcutta correspondent of the *Times*, in his telegram dated yesterday, has the following remarks on the financial statement:—

The financial statement published on Friday is one of the most colourless and uninteresting ever laid before the Indian public. The official *communiqué* issued a week earlier, to the effect that the Government had no present intention of raising a loan, put a stop to the excitement with which commercial men usually look for the annual statement. It has been generally believed for some time past that it would show a practical equilibrium, and that no new taxes would be imposed nor existing ones reduced. The situation can hardly be described as hopeful, for although Sir David Barbour considers that there is no special ground for anxiety apart from the possibility of famine, it cannot be doubted that that very possibility is sufficient to cause the very gravest anxiety, and is not unlikely to convert the nominal surplus into a heavy deficit. Nor is it at all certain that the Finance Minister was not over-sanguine in estimating that about half last year's improvement in railway receipts would be maintained.

A general tone of uncertainty appears to pervade the whole of the document. Frequent allusions are made to heavy military expenditure, and especially the charges incurred in connection with frontier defence. These are evidently the bugbear of the Financial Department, and it is natural that it should be so. At the same time it cannot be denied that it is the duty of the Government to make the country safe against aggression, and the expense which this involves must continue for some time to come.

No suggestion whatever is made regarding the all-important exchange question, although Sir D. Barbour says that it seems to be approaching an acute stage, and the absence of any indication of his views is perhaps the most disappointing feature of the Budget. It may be noted that he takes the official rate of exchange at a figure considerably above the market rate of the day, but it is hardly likely that this indicates any particular confidence in the early recovery of silver. The Government, he seems to think, can do nothing but sit with folded hands awaiting the action of the United States—a view of the duties of the Home and Indian Governments which does not commend itself to a large section of the public.

Another point likely to meet with severe criticism is the heavy demand which the Imperial Government makes on the Provincial Governments to help it to meet its difficulties—a demand by which the resources of these latter will be greatly crippled. The keynote of