

THE HISTORY OF THE YEAR.

*A NARRATIVE OF THE CHIEF EVENTS
AND TOPICS OF INTEREST*

FROM OCTOBER 1, 1881, TO SEPTEMBER 30, 1882.



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Act, a measure passed during Lord Lytton's tenure of office, and levelled at the suppression of a spirit of seditious or quasi-seditious writing which had undoubtedly characterized some of the more violent of the native vernacular journals. The policy of Lord Lytton's Act has been freely discussed both in the Indian and home journals, so that a repetition of the principal arguments will scarcely be needed by our readers. The general view appears to be that the measure was one with which it would be better to dispense, if possible; and we have now the authoritative opinion of Mr. Gibbs, the Member of Council who introduced the Act for its repeal, that the existing Indian Penal Code will be quite sufficient to enable Government to deal with seditious publications without resort to an Act which all supporters of a free press are undoubtedly glad to see abolished.

The close of the year 1881 was marked by a highly agreeable event—the investiture of the young Gaekwar, or ruler of Baroda with the Government of that State. Comprising about 4,400 square miles, and numbering a population of about two million souls, Baroda occupies an important position in the larger province of Guzerat, in Western India. Its familiar sound to British ears is chiefly due to the events of 1875, which culminated in the deposition of its former ruler, Mulhar Rao, for gross misgovernment and notorious misconduct. The Government determined to leave the choice of a successor to the Maharani Janna Bai, widow of Khandi Rao, a prince whose unswerving loyalty during the mutiny was well remembered. Her selection fell upon her son, who appears to have occupied up to that time a comparatively obscure position in Khandaish. Thanks, however, to the perfect judgment shown in the measures for good government taken during the minority of the youth, the new *régime* promises wonderfully well. Sir Madhava Rao, the Prime Minister, and Mr. Melvill, the agent to the Governor-General, acting in complete accord, have succeeded in evoking order out of the miserable chaos left by the former ruler; and have not only discharged the burden of debt, but also provided funds for education, public works, municipal improvements, and numerous other administrative wants. The new Gaekwar, Syaji Rao, has been educated under an English tutor, Mr. F. A. H. Elliot, of the Bombay Civil Service, who, in the place of the pernicious *zenana* influence, which is the ruin of so many eastern princes, has implanted in his pupil a thorough and liberal English education, coupled with a healthy liking for field sports and manly exercises, which bid fair to make this young Mahratta Prince a sensible and popular ruler. The investiture—a ceremony followed by scenes of festivity and barbarous gaiety,

of which nautch-dances, rhinoceros, elephant, and buffalo fights formed part—was performed by Sir James Fergusson, Governor of Bombay, and the testimony openly borne on that occasion to the physical, intellectual, and moral qualities of the new Maharajah forms the happiest augury, for the future welfare of his State.

Contemporaneous with the foregoing events, the visit of the Viceroy and Lady Ripon to British Burmah afforded opportunity for a better knowledge of a province which stands as one of the happiest results of British government in the East. To trace the wonderful development of British Burmah within the last ten years would occupy much space, but we may mention, shortly, that its population has increased nearly forty per cent., its seaborne trade from seven and three-quarters to eighteen millions sterling, while education shows a marvellous spread in similar proportion. The chief exports which make Burmah what it is are the rice, timber (*i.e.*, teak, which is so carefully preserved as to promise a magnificent revenue in course of years), and cutch, a resinous gum used for dyeing and other purposes in Europe and America.

Various local grievances were brought under the notice of the Viceroy during his brief stay in British Burmah, the most important being—firstly, the injury done to our up-country trade by the system of selling monopolies adopted by King Theebaw, the Sovereign of Upper or Independent Burmah; and, secondly, the establishment of a separate High Court of Judicature for the province. The creation of the monopolies was contrary to the provisions of our treaty of 1867 with Burmah, and Lord Ripon determined, therefore, that a strong remonstrance should be forwarded to the Court of Ava. This step has, to a certain extent, had a good result in leading the Mandalay authorities to despatch a duly-accredited embassy to the Governor-General of India. The chief of the party is described as intelligent and courteous, and as having lived several years in France and England. In their curious costume—red velvet petticoat and jacket, thickly embroidered with gold, with a marvellous head-dress, compared to two inverted, broad-rimmed, copper basins surrounded by pendant ornaments—these Ambassadors formed one of the most conspicuous objects at the *lèvée* held by Lord Ripon on the occasion of Her Majesty's birthday. Unfortunately, the negotiations, which appear to have contemplated the drawing up of a fresh treaty between the two countries, have brought to light points of serious divergence. Our Government are not unwilling to enter again on closer terms with Burmah, but there are certain concessions, such as a fortified residency and a military guard for