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THE TOPES AT SANCHI.

*Note by the Director-General of
Archæology.*

I append below a letter addressed to me on November 16th, 1904, by Captain C. E. Luard, Superintendent of Gazetteers in Central India, in which he severely criticised the recent repairs to the rail of the Great Tope at Sanchi. On receipt of this letter I telegraphed to the Agent to the Governor General asking him to arrange that the work might be suspended until an inspection could be made by the Archæological Surveyor. This was done, and Mr. Cousens visited the Tope on December 7th and again in company with myself on February 20th.

The report which Mr. Cousens has sent me and which also will be found printed below, was written after our joint inspection of the Tope and sums up generally the conclusions at which we both arrived. From this Report it will be seen that Captain Luard had somewhat overstated the case; but it cannot be denied that he was fully justified in asking for the work to be stopped and I feel that he has well deserved our thanks for calling attention to the matter. I am entirely with Mr. Cousens, however, in exonerating Mr. Cook, the State Engineer from any blame. He is a man, I believe, full of keenness and energy for the work which he has been doing at Sanchi, and it was only his distressing accident last year which prevented him from watching over it as attentively as he would otherwise have done.

The mistake, it seems to me, that has been made, has lain in undertaking the restoration of the rail without proper advice in the matter. Personally, I was absolutely unaware that repairs of any kind were going on at Sanchi. I can find no mention of them in any of the Annual Reports of the Archæological Surveyor, nor had I received intimation of them from any other source, until I received Captain Luard's letter. Since visiting the place I find that instructions for buttressing up the Tope itself were issued by His Excellency the Viceroy on the spot some three or four years ago, and these instructions have been very well carried out. The State Engineer also received a note from Mr. Cousens dated

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January 18th, 1902, on certain measures necessary for the protection of the northern and eastern gateways and on the conservation of Tope No. 2.

But neither in His Excellency's instructions nor in Mr. Cousens' note does there appear to have been any suggestion of replacing the broken rails by new ones. I did not myself see the Tope before the old rails with their inscriptions were removed, but I cannot help thinking that some way might have been found for preserving them *in situ*. However, the restoration has been done now and cannot be altered; so we must make the best of it and patch up the monument as well as we can. Mr. Cousens' note deals very fully with the course to be pursued both as regards the Tope and the inscriptions removed from it and I have nothing further to add to his remarks. I should like, however, to lay some emphasis on the urgent necessity of erecting a museum to receive the hundreds of valuable sculptures lying about the site. The outlay upon the building need not be great and the proposal is one, I understand, which already receives the support of the Darbar. A suggestive design of the sort of building required is appended to Mr. Cousens' note, and to this I have added another, taken from a museum which has recently been established at Sarnath near Benares and which serves its purpose very well. Let me call particular attention, too, to Mr. Cousens' remarks regarding the chaukidar in charge. It is worth considering whether it would not be advisable to invite the Buddhist community in Calcutta or Burma to send a couple of guardians for these splendid monuments of their religion. If we could induce them to do so (and they have already done it in the case of Sarnath), we should be certain of the topes being jealously watched and tended by devoted hands.

SIMLA; } J.H. MARSHALL.
The 17th April 1905.

From CAPTAIN C. E. LUARD, Superintendent of Gazetteers, Central India, dated 16th November 1904.

I was out visiting the Sanchi Tope this morning. An act or series of acts of the most appalling vandalism are being perpetrated on the rail of the Great Tope.

If this continues, and $\frac{1}{3}$ has already been destroyed, there will be a rail round