

PROCEEDINGS OF THE
HOME DEPARTMENT, DECEMBER 1911.

Transfer of seat of Govt. of India from Calcutta to Delhi. [Pro. No. 8

TRANSFER OF THE SEAT OF THE GOVERNMENT OF INDIA FROM CALCUTTA
TO DELHI AND THE CONSTITUTIONAL CHANGES IN THE BENGALS.

No. of 1911.

No. 8

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA.

HOME DEPARTMENT.

DELHI.

To

THE RIGHT HONOURABLE THE MARQUIS OF CREWE, K.G.,

His Majesty's Secretary of State for India.

Simla, the 25th August 1911.

MY LORD MARQUIS,

WE venture in this despatch to address Your Lordship on a most important and urgent subject, embracing two questions of great political moment which are in our opinion indissolubly linked together. This subject has engaged our attention for some time past and the proposals which we are about to submit for Your Lordship's consideration are the result of our mature deliberation. We shall, in the first place, attempt to set forth the circumstances which have induced us to frame these proposals at this particular juncture and then proceed to lay before Your Lordship the broad general features of our scheme.

2. That the Government of India should have its seat in the same city as one of the chief Provincial Governments, and moreover in a city geographically so ill-adapted as Calcutta to be the capital of the Indian Empire, has long been recognised to be a serious anomaly. We need not stop to recall the circumstances in which Calcutta rose to its present position. The considerations which explain its original selection as the principal seat of Government have long since passed away with the consolidation of British rule throughout the Peninsula and the development of a great inland system of railway communication. But it is only in the light of recent developments, constitutional and political, that the drawbacks of the existing arrangement and the urgency of a change have been fully realised. On the one hand, the almost incalculable importance of the part which can already safely be predicted for the Imperial Legislative Council in the shape it has assumed under the Indian Councils Act of 1909, renders the removal of the capital to a more central and easily accessible position practically imperative. On the other hand, the peculiar political situation which has arisen in Bengal since the Partition makes it eminently desirable to withdraw the Government of India from its present provincial environment, while its removal from Bengal is an essential feature of the scheme we have in view for allaying the ill-feeling aroused by the Partition amongst the Bengali population. Once the necessity of removing the seat of the Supreme Government from Bengal is established, as we trust it may be by the considerations we propose to lay before Your Lordship, there can be, in our opinion, no manner of doubt as to the choice of the new capital or as to the occasion on which that choice should be announced.

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On geographical, historical and political grounds the capital of the Indian Empire should be at Delhi, and the announcement that the transfer of the seat of Government to Delhi had been sanctioned should be made by His Majesty the King-Emperor at the forthcoming Imperial Durbar in Delhi itself.

3. The maintenance of British rule in India depends on the ultimate supremacy of the Governor-General in Council, and the Indian Councils Act of 1909 itself bears testimony to the impossibility of allowing matters of vital concern to be decided by a majority of non-official votes in the Imperial Legislative Council. Nevertheless it is certain that, in the course of time, the just demands of Indians for a larger share in the government of the country will have to be satisfied, and the question will be how this devolution of power can be conceded without impairing the supreme authority of the Governor-General in Council. The only possible solution of the difficulty would appear to be gradually to give the provinces a larger measure of self-government, until at last India would consist of a number of administrations, autonomous in all provincial affairs, with the Government of India above them all, and possessing power to interfere in case of misgovernment, but ordinarily restricting their functions to matters of Imperial concern. In order that this consummation may be attained, it is essential that the Supreme Government should not be associated with any particular Provincial Government. The removal of the Government of India from Calcutta is, therefore, a measure which will, in our opinion, materially facilitate the growth of local self-government on sound and safe lines. It is generally recognised that the capital of a great central Government should be separate and independent, and effect has been given to this principle in the United States, Canada, and Australia.

4. The administrative advantages of the transfer would be scarcely less valuable than the political. In the first place, the development of the Legislative Councils has made the withdrawal of the Supreme Council and the Government of India from the influence of local opinion a matter of ever-increasing urgency. Secondly, events in Bengal are apt to react on the Viceroy and the Government of India, to whom the responsibility for them is often wrongly attributed. The connection is bad for the Government of India, bad for the Bengal Government, and unfair to the other provinces, whose representatives view with great and increasing jealousy the predominance of Bengal. Further, public opinion in Calcutta is by no means always the same as that which obtains elsewhere in India, and it is undesirable that the Government of India should be subject exclusively to its influence.

5. The question of providing a separate capital for the Government of India has often been debated, but generally with the object of finding a site where that Government could spend all seasons of the year. Such a solution would of course be ideal, but it is impracticable. The various sites suggested are either difficult of access or are devoid of historical associations. Delhi is the only possible place. It has splendid communications, its climate is good for 7 months in the year, and its salubrity could be ensured at a reasonable cost. The Government of India would therefore be able to stay in Delhi from the 1st of October to the 1st of May, whilst owing to the much greater proximity the annual migration to and from Simla could be reduced in volume, would take up much less time and be far less costly. Some branches of the administration, such as Railways and Posts and Telegraphs, would obviously derive special benefit from the change to such a central position, and the only department which, as far as we can see, might be thought to suffer some inconvenience would be that of Commerce and Industry, which would be less closely in touch at Delhi with the commercial and industrial interests centred in Calcutta. On the other hand, that department would be closer to the other commercial centres of Bombay and Karachi, whose interests are sometimes

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opposed to those of Calcutta, and would thus be in a better position to deal impartially with the railway and commercial interests of the whole of India.

6. The political advantages of the transfer it is impossible to overestimate. Delhi is still a name to conjure with. It is intimately associated in the minds of the Hindus with sacred legends which go back even beyond the dawn of history. It is in the plains of Delhi that the Pandava Princes fought out with the Kurawas the epic struggle recorded in the Mahabharata, and celebrated on the banks of the Jumna the famous sacrifice which consecrated their title to Empire. The Purana Kila still marks the site of the city which they founded and called Indraprastha, barely three miles from the south gate of the modern city of Delhi. To the Mahomedans it would be a source of unbounded gratification to see the ancient capital of the Moguls restored to its proud position as the seat of Empire. Throughout India, as far south as the Mahomedan conquest extended, every walled town has its "Delhi Gate," and among the masses of the people it is still revered as the seat of the former Empire. The change would strike the imagination of the people of India as nothing else could do, would send a wave of enthusiasm throughout the country, and would be accepted by all as the assertion of an unfaltering determination to maintain British rule in India. It would be hailed with joy by the Ruling Chiefs and the races of Northern India, and would be warmly welcomed by the vast majority of Indians throughout the continent.

7. The only serious opposition to the transfer which may be anticipated may, we think, come from the European commercial community of Calcutta, who might, we fear, not regard the creation of a Governorship of Bengal as altogether adequate compensation for the withdrawal of the Government of India. The opposition will be quite intelligible, but we can no doubt count upon their patriotism to reconcile them to a measure which would greatly contribute to the welfare of the Indian Empire. The Bengalis might not, of course, be favourably disposed to the proposal if it stood alone, for it will entail the loss of some of the influence which they now exercise owing to the fact that Calcutta is the headquarters of the Government of India. But as we hope presently to show they should be reconciled to the change by other features of our scheme which are specially designed to give satisfaction to Bengali sentiment. In these circumstances we do not think that they would be so manifestly unreasonable as to oppose it, and if they did, might confidently expect that their opposition would raise no echo in the rest of India.

8. Absolutely conclusive as these general considerations in favour of the transfer of the capital from Calcutta to Delhi in themselves appear to us to be, there are further special considerations arising out of the present political situation in Bengal and Eastern Bengal which, in our opinion, renders such a measure peculiarly opportune at such a moment, and to these we would now draw Your Lordship's earnest attention.

9. Various circumstances have forced upon us the conviction that the bitterness of feeling engendered by the Partition of Bengal is very widespread and unyielding, and that we are by no means at an end of the troubles which have followed upon that measure. Eastern Bengal and Assam has, no doubt, benefited greatly by the Partition, and the Mahomedans of that Province, who form a large majority of the population, are loyal and contented, but the resentment amongst the Bengalis in both Provinces of Bengal, who hold most of the land, fill the professions, and exercise a preponderating influence in public affairs, is as strong as ever, though somewhat less vocal.

10. The opposition to the partition of Bengal was at first based mainly on sentimental grounds, but, as we shall show later in discussing the proposed modification of the partition, since the enlargement of the Legislative Councils and especially of the representative element in them, the grievance of the Bengalis has become much more real and tangible, and is likely to increase,

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instead of to diminish. Every one with any true desire for the peace and prosperity of this country must wish to find some manner of appeasement if it is in any way possible to do so. The simple rescission of the partition and a reversion to the *status quo ante* are manifestly impossible, both on political and on administrative grounds. The old province of Bengal was unmanageable under any form of Government, and we could not defraud the legitimate expectations of the Mahomedans of Eastern Bengal, who form the bulk of the population of that province and who have been loyal to the British Government throughout the troubles, without exposing ourselves to the charge of bad faith. A settlement to be satisfactory and conclusive must —

- (1) provide convenient administrative units ;
- (2) satisfy the legitimate aspirations of the Bengalis ;
- (3) duly safeguard the interests of the Mahomedans of Eastern Bengal, and generally conciliate Mahomedan sentiment ; and
- (4) be so clearly based upon broad grounds of political and administrative expediency as to negative any presumption that it has been exacted by clamour or agitation.

11. If the headquarters of the Government of India be transferred from Calcutta to Delhi, and if Delhi be thereby made the Imperial capital, placing the city of Delhi and part of the surrounding country under the direct administration of the Government of India, the following scheme, which embraces three inter-dependent proposals, would appear to satisfy all these conditions :—

- I. To reunite the five Bengali-speaking divisions, *viz.*, the Presidency, Burdwan, Dacca, Rajshahi and Chittagong divisions, forming them into a Presidency to be administered by a Governor-in-Council. The area of the province will be approximately 70,000 square miles and the population about 42,000,000.
- II. To create a Lieutenant-Governorship-in-Council to consist of Behar, Chota Nagpur, and Orissa, with a Legislative Council and a capital at Patna. The area of the province would be approximately 113,000 square miles and the population about 35,000,000.
- III. To restore the Chief Commissionership of Assam. The area of that province would be about 56,000 square miles and the population about 5,000,000.

12. We elaborated at the outset our proposal to make Delhi the future capital of India, because we consider this the key-stone of the whole project, and hold that, according as it is accepted or not, our scheme must stand or fall. But we have still to discuss in greater detail the leading features of the other part of our scheme.

13. Chief amongst them is the proposal to constitute a Governorship-in-Council for Bengal. The history of the Partition dates from 1902. Various schemes of territorial redistribution were at that time under consideration, and that which was ultimately adopted had at any rate the merit of fulfilling two of the chief purposes which its authors had in view. It relieved the overburdened administration of Bengal, and it gave the Mahomedan population of Eastern Bengal advantages and opportunities of which they had perhaps hitherto not had their fair share. On the other hand, as we have already pointed out, it was deeply resented by the Bengalis. No doubt sentiment has played a considerable part in the opposition offered by the Bengalis, and, in saying this, we by no means wish to underrate the importance which should be attached to sentiment even if it be exaggerated. It is, however, no longer a matter of mere sentiment but, rather, since the enlargement of the Legislative Councils, one of undeniable reality. In pre-reform scheme days the non-official element in these Councils was small. The representation

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of the people has now been carried a long step forward, and in the Legislative Councils of both the provinces of Bengal and Eastern Bengal the Bengalis find themselves in a minority, being outnumbered in the one by Beharis and Ooriyas, and in the other by the Mahomedans of Eastern Bengal and the inhabitants of Assam. As matters now stand, the Bengalis can never exercise in either province that influence to which they consider themselves entitled by reason of their numbers, wealth and culture. This is a substantial grievance which will be all the more keenly felt in the course of time, as the representative character of the Legislative Councils increases and with it the influence which these Assemblies exercise upon the conduct of public affairs. There is therefore only too much reason to fear that, instead of dying down, the bitterness of feeling will become more and more acute.

14. It has frequently been alleged in the Press that the Partition is the root cause of all recent troubles in India. The growth of political unrest in other parts of the country and notably in the Deccan before the Partition of Bengal took place disproves that assertion, and we need not ascribe to the Partition evils which have not obviously flowed from it. It is certain, however, that it is, in part at any rate, responsible for the growing estrangement which has now unfortunately assumed a very serious character in many parts of the country between Mahomedans and Hindus. We are not without hope that a modification of the Partition which we now propose will, in some degree at any rate, alleviate this most regrettable antagonism.

15. To sum up, the results anticipated from the Partition have not been altogether realised, and the scheme, as designed and executed, could only be justified by success. Although much good work has been done in Eastern Bengal and Assam, and the Mahomedans of that Province have reaped the benefit of a sympathetic administration closely in touch with them, those advantages have been in a great measure counterbalanced by the violent hostility which the Partition has aroused amongst the Bengalis. For the reasons we have already indicated we feel bound to admit that the Bengalis are labouring under a sense of real injustice which we believe it would be sound policy to remove without further delay. The Durbar of December next affords a unique occasion for rectifying what is regarded by Bengalis as a grievous wrong.

16. Anxious as we are to take Bengali feeling into account we cannot overrate the importance of consulting at the same time the interests and sentiments of the Mahomedans of Eastern Bengal. It must be remembered that the Mahomedans of Eastern Bengal have at present an overwhelming majority in point of population, and that if the Bengali-speaking Divisions were amalgamated on the lines suggested in our scheme, the Mahomedans would still be in a position of approximate numerical equality with, or possibly of small superiority over, the Hindus. The future province of Bengal, moreover, will be a compact territory of quite moderate extent. The Governor-in-Council will have ample time and opportunity to study the needs of the various communities committed to his charge. Unlike his predecessors, he will have a great advantage in that he will find ready to hand at Dacca a second capital, with all the conveniences of ordinary provincial headquarters. He will reside there from time to time, just as the Lieutenant-Governor of the United Provinces frequently resides in Lucknow, and he will in this way be enabled to keep in close touch with Mahomedan sentiments and interests. It must also be borne in mind that the interests of the Mahomedans will be safeguarded by the special representation which they enjoy in the Legislative Councils; while, as regards representation on local bodies, they will be in the same position as at present. We need not therefore trouble Your Lordship with the reasons why we have discarded the suggestion that a Chief Commissionership, or a semi-independent Commissionership within the new province, might be created at Dacca.

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17. We regard the creation of a Governorship-in-Council of Bengal as a very important feature of our scheme. It is by no means a new one. The question of the creation of a Governorship was fully discussed in 1867 to 1868 by the Secretary of State and the Government of India, and a Committee was formed, on the initiative of Sir Stafford Northcote, to consider it and that of the transfer of the capital elsewhere. In the somewhat voluminous correspondence of the past the most salient points that emerge are—

- (1) that a Governorship of Bengal would not be compatible with the presence in Calcutta of the Viceroy and the Government of India;
- (2) that, had it been decided to create a Governorship of Bengal, the question of the transfer of the capital from Calcutta would have been taken into consideration;
- (3) that although a majority of the Governor-General's Council and the Lieutenant-Governor of Bengal (Sir William Grey) were in favour of the creation of a Governorship, Sir John Lawrence, the Governor General, was opposed to the proposal, but for purposes of better administration contemplated the constitution of a Lieutenant-Governorship of Behar and the separation of Assam from Bengal under a Chief Commissioner.

Since the discussions of 1867-1868 considerable and very important changes have taken place in the constitutional development of Bengal. That Province has already an Executive Council, and the only change that would therefore be necessary for the realisation of this part of our scheme is that the Lieutenant-Governorship should be converted into a Governorship. Particular arguments have from time to time been urged against the appointment of a Governor from England. These were that Bengal, more than any other province, requires the head of the Government to possess an intimate knowledge of India and of the Indian people, and that a Statesman or Politician appointed from England without previous knowledge of India would in no part of the country find his ignorance a greater drawback or be less able to cope with the intricacies of an exceedingly complex position.

18. We have no wish to underrate the great advantage to an Indian administrator of an intimate knowledge of the country and of the people he is to govern. At the same time actual experience has shown that a Governor, carefully selected and appointed from England and aided by a Council, can successfully administer a large Indian province, and that a province so administered requires less supervision on the part of the Government of India. In this connection we may again refer to the correspondence of 1867-1868 and cite two of the arguments employed by the late Sir Henry Maine, when discussing the question of a Council form of Government for Bengal. They are—

- (1) That the system in Madras and Bombay has enabled a series of men of no conspicuous ability to carry on a difficult Government for a century with great success.
- (2) That the concession of a full Governorship to Bengal would have a good effect on English public opinion, which would accordingly cease to impose on the Government of India a responsibility which it is absolutely impossible to discharge.

In view of the great difficulties connected with the administration of Bengal, we attach the highest importance to these arguments. We are also convinced that nothing short of a full Governorship would satisfy the aspirations of the Bengalis and of the Mahomedans of Eastern Bengal. We may

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add that, as in the case of the Governorships of Madras and Bombay, the appointment would be open to members of the Indian Civil Service, although, no doubt in practice, the Governor will usually be recruited from England.

19. On the other hand, one very grave and obvious objection has been raised in the past to the creation of a Governorship for Bengal, which we should fully share, were it not disposed of by the proposal which constitutes the key stone of our scheme. Unquestionably a most undesirable situation might and would quite possibly arise if a Governor-General of India and a Governor of Bengal, both selected from the ranks of English public men, were to reside in the same capital and be liable to be brought in various ways into regrettable antagonism or rivalry. This indeed constitutes yet another, and in our opinion a very cogent, reason why the headquarters of the Government of India should be transferred from Calcutta to Delhi.

20. We now turn to the proposal to create a Lieutenant-Governorship-in-Council for Behar, Chota Nagpur, and Orissa. We are convinced that if the Governor of Bengal is to do justice to the territories which we propose to assign to him, and to safeguard the interests of the Mahomedans of his province, Behar and Chota Nagpur must be dissociated from Bengal. Quite apart, however, from that consideration, we are satisfied that it is in the highest degree desirable to give the Hindi-speaking people, now included within the Province of Bengal, a separate administration. These people have hitherto been unequally yoked with the Bengalis, and have never therefore had a fair opportunity for development. The cry of Behar for the Beharis has frequently been raised in connection with the conferment of appointments, an excessive number of offices in Behar having been held by Bengalis. The Beharis are a sturdy loyal people, and it is a matter of common knowledge that, although they have long desired separation from Bengal, they refrained at the time of the Partition from asking for it, because they did not wish to join the Bengalis in opposition to Government. There has, moreover, been a very marked awakening in Behar in recent years, and a strong belief has grown up among Beharis that Behar will never develop until it is dissociated from Bengal. That belief will, unless a remedy be found, give rise to agitation in the near future, and the present is an admirable opportunity to carry out on our own initiative a thoroughly sound and much desired change. The Oriyas, like the Beharis, have little in common with the Bengalis, and we propose to leave Orissa (and the Sambalpur district) with Behar and Chota Nagpur. We believe that this arrangement will well accord with popular sentiment in Orissa and will be welcome to Behar as presenting a sea-board to that province. We need hardly add that we have considered various alternatives, such as the making over of Chota Nagpur or of Orissa to the Central Provinces, and the creation of a Chief Commissionership instead of a Lieutenant Governorship for Behar, Chota Nagpur, and Orissa, but none of them seem to deserve more than passing consideration, and we have therefore refrained from troubling Your Lordship with the overwhelming arguments against them. We have also purposely refrained from discussing in this despatch questions of subsidiary importance which must demand detailed consideration when the main features of the scheme are sanctioned, and we are in a position to consult the local Governments concerned.

21. We now pass on to the last proposal, *viz.*, to restore the Chief Commissionership of Assam. This would be merely a reversion to the policy advocated by Sir John Lawrence in 1867. This part of India is still in a backward condition and more fit for administration by a Chief Commissioner than a more highly developed form of government, and we may notice that this was the view which prevailed in 1896-1897, when the question of transferring the Chittagong Division and the Dacca and Mymensingh districts to Assam were first discussed. Events of the past 12 months on the frontiers of Assam and Burma have clearly

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shown the necessity of having the north-east frontier, like the north-west frontier, more directly under the control of the Government of India and removed from that of the local Government. We may add that we do not anticipate that any opposition will be raised to this proposal, which, moreover, forms an essential part of our scheme.

22. We will now give a rough indication of the cost of the scheme. No attempt at accuracy is possible, because we have purposely avoided making enquiries, as they would be likely to result in the premature disclosure of our proposals. The cost of the transfer to Delhi would be considerable. We cannot conceive, however, that a larger sum than 4 million sterling would be necessary, and within that figure probably could be found the three years' interest on capital which would have to be paid till the necessary works and buildings were completed. We might find it necessary to issue a "City of Delhi" Gold loan at $3\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. guaranteed by the Government of India, the interest, or the larger part of the interest, on this loan being eventually obtainable from rents and taxes. In connection with a general enhancement of land values, which would ensue at Delhi as a result of the transfer, we should endeavour to secure some part of the increment value which at Calcutta has gone into the pockets of the landlords. Other assets which would form a set-off to the expenditure would be the great rise of Government land at Delhi and its neighbourhood, and a considerable amount which would be realised on the sale of Government land and buildings no longer required at Calcutta. The proximity of Delhi to Simla would also have the effect of reducing the current expenditure involved in the annual move to and from Simla. The actual railway journey from Calcutta to Simla takes 42 hours, while Delhi can be reached from Simla in 14 hours. Further, inasmuch as the Government of India would be able to stay longer in Delhi than in Calcutta, the cost on account of hill allowances would be reduced. We should also add that many of the works now in progress at Delhi in connection with the construction of roads and railways and the provision of electricity and water for the Durbar, and upon which considerable expenditure has been incurred, will be of appreciable value to the Government of India as permanent works when the transfer is made.

23. As regards the remaining proposals, the recurring expenditure will be that involved in the creation of a Governorship for Bengal and a Chief Commissionership for Assam. The pay and allowances, taken together, of the Lieutenant-Governor of Bengal already exceed the pay of a Governor of Madras or Bombay, and the increase in expenditure when a Governor is appointed would not, we think, be much beyond that required for the support of a bodyguard and a band. Considerable initial expenditure would be required in connection with the acquisition of land and the construction of buildings for the new capital of Bebar, and, judging from the experience gained in connection with Dacca, we may assume that this will amount to about 50 or 60 lakhs. Some further initial expenditure would be necessary in connection with the summer headquarters, wherever these may be fixed.

24. Before concluding this despatch we venture to say a few words as regards the need for a very early decision on the proposals we have put forward for Your Lordship's consideration. It is manifest that, if the transfer of the capital is to be given effect to, the question becomes more difficult the longer that it remains unsolved. The experience of the last two sessions has shown that the present Council Chamber in Government House, Calcutta, fails totally to meet the needs of the enlarged Imperial Legislative Council, and the proposal to acquire a site and to construct a Council Chamber is already under discussion. Once a new Council Chamber is built, the position of Calcutta as the capital of India will be further strengthened and consolidated, and, though we are convinced that a transfer will in any case

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eventually have to be made, it will then be attended by much greater difficulty and still further expense. Similarly, if some modification of the partition is, as we believe, desirable, the sooner it is effected the better, but we do not see how it can be safely effected with due regard for the dignity of Government as well as for the public opinion of the rest of India and more especially for Mahomedan sentiment, except as part of the larger scheme we have outlined. In the event of these far-reaching proposals being sanctioned by His Majesty's Government, as we trust may be the case, we are of opinion that the presence of His Majesty the King-Emperor at Delhi would offer an unique opportunity for a pronouncement of one of the most weighty decisions ever taken since the establishment of British rule in India. The other two proposals embodied in our scheme are not of such great urgency but are consequentially essential and in themselves of great importance. Half measures will be of no avail, and whatever is to be done should be done so as to make a final settlement and to satisfy the claims of all concerned. The scheme which we have ventured to commend to Your Lordship's favourable consideration is not put forward with any spirit of opportunism, but in the belief that action on the lines proposed will be a bold stroke of statesmanship which would give unprecedented satisfaction and will for ever associate so unique an event as the visit of the reigning sovereign to his Indian dominions with a new era in the History of India.

25. Should the above scheme meet with the approval of Your Lordship and His Majesty's Government, we would propose that the King-Emperor should announce at the Durbar the transfer of the capital from Calcutta to Delhi and simultaneously, and as a consequence of that transfer, the creation at an early date of a Governorship-in-Council for Bengal and of a new Lieutenant-Governorship-in-Council for Behar, Chota Nagpur, and Orissa, with such administrative changes and redistribution of boundaries as the Governor-General in Council would in due course determine with a view to removing any legitimate causes for dissatisfaction arising out of the Partition of 1905. The formula of such a pronouncement could be defined after general sanction had been given to the scheme. This sanction we now have the honour to solicit from Your Lordship.

26. We should thus be able after the Durbar to discuss in detail with local and other authorities the best method of carrying out a modification of Bengal on such broad and comprehensive lines as to form a settlement that shall be final and satisfactory to all.

We have the honour to be,

MY LORD MARQUIS,

Your Lordship's most obedient, humble servants,

HARDINGE OF PENSHURST.

O'MOORE CREAGH.

G. FLEETWOOD WILSON.

J. L. JENKINS.

R. W. CARLYLE.

S. H. BUTLER.

S. A. IMAM.

W. H. CLARK.

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No. 9

India Office,
London, 1st November 1911.

**To His Excellency the Right Honourable the Governor-General of
India in Council.**

MY LORD,

I have received Your Excellency's despatch dated the 25th of August last and issued in the Home Department, and I have considered it in Council with the attention due to the importance of its subject.

2. In the first place, you propose to transfer from Calcutta to Delhi the seat of the Government of India, a momentous change which in your opinion can be advocated on its intrinsic merits, and apart from the considerations which are discussed in the later passages of your despatch. You point out with truth that many of the circumstances which explain the selection of Fort William in the second half of the eighteenth century as the headquarters of the East India Company cannot now be adduced as arguments for the permanent retention of Calcutta as the capital of British India, while certain new conditions and developments seem to point positively towards the removal of the central Government to another position. Such a suggestion is in itself not entirely novel, since it has often been asked whether the inconvenience and cost of an annual migration to the Hills could not be avoided by founding a new official capital at some place in which Europeans could reside healthfully and work efficiently throughout the whole year. You regard any such solution as impracticable, in my judgment rightly, and you proceed to describe in favourable terms the purely material claims of Delhi for approval as the new centre of Government. There would be undoubted advantage both in a longer sojourn at the capital than is at present advisable, and in a shorter journey to and from Simla when the yearly transfer has to be made, while weight may properly be attached to the central situation of Delhi and to its fortunate position as a great railway junction. As you point out, these facts of themselves ensure not a few administrative advantages, and I am not disposed to attach serious importance to the removal of the Department of Commerce and Industry from a busy centre like Calcutta, for any official disadvantage due to this cause should be counterbalanced by the gain of a wider outlook upon the commercial activities of India as a whole.

3. From the historical standpoint, to which you justly draw attention, impressive reasons in support of the transfer cannot less easily be advanced. Not only do the ancient walls of Delhi enshrine an Imperial tradition comparable with that of Constantinople, or with that of Rome itself, but the near neighbourhood of the existing city formed the theatre for some most notable scenes in the old-time drama of Hindu history, celebrated in the vast treasure-house of national epic verse. To the races of India, for whom the legends and records of the past are charged with so intense a meaning, this resumption by the Paramount Power of the seat of venerable Empire should at once enforce the continuity and promise the permanency of British sovereign rule over the length and breadth of the country. Historical reasons will thus prove to be political reasons of deep importance and of real value in favour of the proposed change. I share, too, your belief that the Ruling Chiefs as a body will favour the policy and give to it their hearty adhesion.

4. But, however solid may be the material advantages which you enumerate and however warm the anticipated response from Indian sentiment, it may be questioned whether we should venture to contemplate so abrupt a departure from the traditions of British Government, and so complete a