

year. There is, perhaps, no district in which so much public spirit has been manifested as that of Tirhoot, where the European residents present the model of an Anglo-Saxon settlement in an Indian district, and where, if we are rightly informed, there are no boundary feuds, no war with the Zemindars, and no army of clubmen. They have fully earned the generous consideration of the Executive authorities in the distribution of the road and bridge funds.—*Friend of India.*

THE TORTURE COMMISSION.

The torture commission has closed its labours at Madras, and has been officially dissolved. The governor has at the same time offered the commissioners his "warm acknowledgments of the highly valuable report which they had submitted, and of the care, ability, and candour with which their inquiry has been conducted." As to the publication of the report in this country, although we are as anxious to see it as the editors at Madras can be, we fear we shall have some time to wait for it. The inquiry was established under orders from the Court of Directors, and it might be considered a violation of official etiquette if the report was published by the Government in India, simply to meet the public impatience, before it had been received in England. As soon as it reaches England, Mr. Danby Seymour, if he should then be in office, will doubtless lose no time in laying it upon the table of the House of Commons, and moving that it be printed, and there is every probability that we shall be gratified by the perusal of it before the close of the present year. Meanwhile, the result of the commission has oozed out, and it is the general impression at Madras that it has established the existence of revenue torture at that presidency, more especially in particular districts, and one of our Madras contemporaries describes the report as a "thunderbolt" which is about to fall in Leadenhall-street.

It has been suggested that the measures which Government propose to adopt to extinguish the nefarious system of torture should accompany the report, and be submitted at the same time to the people of England. The ground on which alone such a procedure appears to be advisable is, that it would serve to clear the character of the Madras Government from the odium of being in any measure implicated in the system, even by tacit connivance, through its fiscal sympathies. But such a measure—which must be premature—does not appear at all necessary for its vindication. The practice of torture has been repugnant to the national character of England, and abhorrent to the feelings of Englishmen ever since the abolition of the thumb-screw. No one supposes that any Englishman would knowingly lend himself to such a procedure, even for the collection of revenue. The indignant denial of the existence of any such practice, by some of the Directors, though it has been brought as an article of accusation against them, affords us the clearest evidence that nothing can be more opposed to the wishes of the Court than any toleration of this system. The course which has been pursued in the present case will be deemed a sufficient vindication of the public authorities. As soon as a sufficient case was made out for a public inquiry into the alleged abuse of power in this form, the Government adopted the most energetic measures for sifting the charge. An Act was passed to constitute a commission of inquiry, and the Government of Madras appointed men of experience and integrity to conduct the investigation, and, wisely as we think, placed one of the most determined enemies of its administration in the committee. The inquiry has been conducted with such impartiality and sincerity as to elicit the commendations even of the Madras journals. There can be no doubt that the Government, both of India and of Madras, will lose no time in taking the most effectual means for preventing the recurrence of any such scenes. If there be no existing law which can reach the case, a new law will be immediately introduced, and, so far as the exertions of the Government can be of avail, this atrocious practice will cease, though from long and uninterrupted prescription in the country, and from the feelings of indifference and even toleration with which it is regarded by the natives who have not been brought under the civilizing influences we have introduced, incessant vigilance will be necessary to prevent its revival.

The successful issue of this commission practically corroborates our assertion that in no case is a Parliamentary Commission necessary for the investigation of grievances in India. We have here abundant evidence of the fact that there is sufficient power lodged in the supreme and controlling government of the country for a full and searching inquiry into every case of local abuse, and sufficient virtue and sincerity in that body to apply that power with vigour and discretion. It is impossible that any Parliamentary commission could have performed the duty executed by the Madras commissioners more honourably and more effectually than they have done. It is questionable whether commissioners

sent from England could have done it so well. They must necessarily have been ignorant of the language and habits, the customs and propensities of the people, all which are important qualifications for the successful management of judicial investigations in the East. In all cases where such inquiries are found to be necessary, it is our firm conviction that the most effectual mode of conducting them is to direct the Governor-General in Council to appoint a commission, and to strengthen its powers, when necessary, by legislative provisions. The object of the philanthropist is at once and satisfactorily attained by indenting on the local experience, and the enlarged information, and the high integrity which are so abundantly found in India, both in and out of the service, and this may be effected without any loss of dignity or prestige, without that supersession of the functions of the local Government, which a commission issued from the seat of authority in England is sure to produce in the minds of the weak and credulous natives of India.

One of our Madras contemporaries intimates that "the pressure from without having thus been withdrawn" by the indirect influence of this Commission, the ryots of Trichinopoly have turned refractory and refused to pay rents. He says that this effect was not unexpected, but has occurred sooner than was anticipated. The case stands thus: The Government at Madras had granted remissions on the "dry talooks," or lands not blessed with artificial irrigation in the Trichinopoly district. After the establishment of the Torture Commission, the ryots of the irrigated lands demanded the same indulgence, and they openly stated that they were not going to take any more leases, or pay any more rents. The difference between the dry and irrigated land is very material. The latter, besides benefiting by the numerous works constructed to improve the river irrigation, "had had the rates of assessment reduced in 1821, 20, 25, and in some cases 40 per cent. The assessment for double crop land was only Rs. 12, and for single Rs. 6; the canopy, a little more than an acre, and the river lands were saleable at Rs. 70 the canopy." This was owing to the improved condition of the people, caused by the construction of roads and works of irrigation. The last harvest had been abundant, and prices were extremely high everywhere for grain of all kinds, and plenty reigned around. Hitherto the revenue had been paid with greater ease and punctuality than at a more ancient period. But the ryots now refused their pottahs in a body, and demanded that the same reduction should be made in their case which had been made in that of the dry and less productive lands. The Tehsildars, or native collectors, have lost much of their control generally, and the slightest angry word or look was sufficient to induce the ryot to threaten them with the "Torture Commission." The Revenue Board, to whom the matter has been referred, has directed the collector to proceed according to the regulations, and in the event of forcible resistance, to call out the military. It appears to be the opinion of our Madras contemporary—we trust we are not misrepresenting him—that the refractory conduct of the ryots is to be attributed to the indirect effects of the Torture Commission; that as soon as the cultivators were certain that they would be subject to no more torture, they determined to make no farther payments. This would seem to imply that they have hitherto been tortured for revenue; but we doubt not, Mr. Bird, the collector, will be able effectually to dispose of that matter. We venture with great diffidence to offer another solution of the enigma why men who paid their land rent without difficulty before the Torture Commission was established, should refuse to pay it afterwards. When they were told that the authority they had hitherto obeyed with respect was degraded, and in a measure put on his trial, they could not resist the temptation of withholding the taxes. If this conjecture be correct, would not the advent of a Parliamentary Commission paralyse the whole revenue system of Madras, and oblige that presidency to draw on Bengal?—*Friend of India.*

THE NEW BOOK POSTAGE RULES.

We are delighted to find that the Director-General of Posts has lost no time in procuring the sanction of the Supreme Government to the assimilation of our Book Post Rules to those contained in the Treasury Warrant dated the 23rd of January, 1855. The most important of these rules are the two following; the others are merely a repetition of those which were formerly promulgated:

"II. Under the new rules, packets consisting of 'Books, Publications, or Works of Literature or Art,' without restriction as to the number of enclosures, may be sent from place to place in India by Banghy Post, at the book post rate of one anna for twenty tolas.

"VIII. The terms 'Books, Publications, or Work of Literature or Art,' include all books, whether printed, written, or plain; publications or compilations, whether in print or in manuscript; almanack, prints, maps, whether on paper, canvas, or cloth, and