

29TH SEPTEMBER, 1904.

PRESENT:—

HIS EXCELLENCY THE GOVERNOR, SIR MATTHEW NATHAN,
K.C.M.G.

HON. COLONIAL L. F. BROWN (Commanding the Troops).

Hon. F. H. MAY, C.M.G. (Colonial Secretary).

Hon. E. H. SHARP, K.C. (Attorney-General).

Hon. L. A. M. JOHNSTON (Colonial Treasurer).

Hon. A. W. BREWIN (Registrar-General).

Hon. Captain L. A. W. BARNES-LAWRENCE, R.N.
(Harbour Master).

Hon. P. N. H. JONES (Director of Public Works).

Hon. Dr. HO KAI, C.M.G.

Hon. WEI A YUK.

Hon. R. SHEWAN.

Hon. GERSHOM STEWART.

Hon. W. J. GRESSON.

Mr. S. B. C. ROSS (Clerk of Councils).

FINANCIAL

The COLONIAL SECRETARY laid on the table Financial Minutes (Nos. 49 and 50) and moved that they be referred to the Finance Committee

The COLONIAL TREASURER seconded, and the motion was agreed to.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY laid on the table the Report of the Finance Committee (No. 10) and moved its adoption.

The COLONIAL TREASURER seconded, and the motion was agreed to.

APPROPRIATION BILL

The COLONIAL SECRETARY moved the second reading of the Bill entitled an Ordinance to apply a sum not exceeding five million eight hundred and thirty-five thousand four hundred and seventy dollars to the Public Service of the year 1905.

The COLONIAL TREASURER seconded.

Hon. R. SHEWAN said—Sir,—Before venturing to offer a few remarks upon the estimates now before us, let me congratulate the Council and the Colony in general on the change that has recently taken place in some of our most important offices. Frederick the Great when he began to perceive what manner of man the great Pitt was is said to have exclaimed, "England has been a long time in labour, but at last she has brought forth a man." We may say the same of the Colonial Office, for it has sent us a man who I am sure we shall delight to honour—one who we think and feel will prove a good Governor for us, who will

take a real interest in the Colony and in us and in our affairs, and who will deal justly between man and man, whether he be official or unofficial, Chinaman or foreigner. He may even in time succeed in overcoming the hidebound prejudices of those officials whose only God seems to be "olo custom." He "aiblins nicht we canna tell" even induce them to "tak' a thocht" and mend their ways by keeping the minute book properly, for why we should have to go to the minutes for our questions and to local newspapers for our answers—

HIS EXCELLENCY—That is scarcely what the Bill before us deals with.

Hon. Mr. SHEWAN—I am talking of the Clerk of Councils' business, and his salary is in the Estimates.

HIS EXCELLENCY—That would be rather a question to be brought up when we come to the consideration of the items. The hon. member should speak on the matter before the Council.

Hon. Mr. SHEWAN — The official members have marvelled why their questions should be printed and their replies not be given. That is a thing none of us can understand. I also think we are fortunate, in fact I am sure, in our new Director of Public Works, for he has already shown himself to be a man who is able and willing to rise above red tape when necessary to do so to accelerate the business of the public. I really believe that under Mr. Jones' regime my friend and neighbour Mr. Goetz when he next gives a dance will not have to wait six weeks for a permit to put up a little matshed, and only receive the said permit duly signed, sealed, and delivered long after the matshed itself had been put up and taken down and the dance was a thing of the past.

HIS EXCELLENCY—That is hardly a matter of finance.

Hon. Mr. SHEWAN—Sir, I am finished. We laugh at the Circumlocution Office and "how not to do it," and we say that Dickens exaggerated, but here is something quite worthy of that picture, and shows that the race of Tite Barnacles is not yet extinct. I also congratulate the Colonial Treasurer on the full and clear statement and explanations he has given of the items of revenue and expenditure; but I am sorry to see my old friends "miscellaneous receipts" and "miscellaneous services" still bulk too largely therein. Miscellaneous receipts, for instance, is composed almost wholly of two amounts—\$120,000, profit from subsidiary coinage, and \$52,200, from conservancy contract; and here I would enquire why there was no profit from subsidiary coin the first half of this year, and more especially why the Government allow this profitable business to be spoiled and interfered with by the wretched Chinese coins that are flooding this place. Turning

to the estimates themselves, the first thing that strikes one is that there is not much margin between revenue \$7,195,000, and expenditure of \$7,170,000, and if the Opium Farm, which is put down there for \$2,200,000, or land sales, which figure for \$500,000, should fail us, we shall be in Queer Street. Land sales, however, will probably do all that is expected, for the Colony is prosperous, the population is increasing, and land will probably continue in good demand; but you must remember that in these land sales you are living on your capital, they are not revenue, and 75 years' leases will not improve that demand. It is the old official story. In 75 years we shall all be dead and gone, and after us—the Deluge. But you must consider that in a few years these leases will have run off considerably, and capitalists who are looking for land for their enterprise, or Chinese and others who want to buy property for their families, will look very askance at property which has only a life of perhaps 50 or 60 years left. It is true that there is some condition as to option of renewal for another 75 years, but the terms have to be re-arranged, and who is going to fix the new price or premium and the new Crown rent, etc., etc.? It is altogether too vague and indefinite for business men—they can do better elsewhere—and the consequence will be that Government land on such terms will grow more and more out of favour. Talking of land reminds me I have seen Hongkong in its darkest days, when houses were to be had for the asking, and with no rent but payment of taxes, but I never thought that I should see it reduced to scraping the hillside for revenue, or the Government doing the very thing that it has often fined and imprisoned old women for doing. The great Colbert took credit for a notable saving for his master Louis the Fourteenth by substituting imitation lace for real lace on his officers' uniforms, and this cheese-paring spirit of income seems to have descended upon our present Prime Minister. For the last few weeks the Colony has been singing in chorus the old song "Woodman, spare that Tree," to the Colonial Secretary; but in spite of what Shakespeare says about the man that is not moved with concord of sweet sounds, he has turned a deaf ear or hummed a song in reply that sounded very like "the Budget is coming, hurrah, hurrah!" Well, it has come now, and we find that the country is to be saved by the magnificent sum of \$30,000, and I am not sure that even that is net. If you must get revenue from your trees why not plant rubber trees? They grow very well on this island, and the Colonial Secretary can enjoy himself tapping or milking them for revenue without destroying and devastating the landscape. If the beauty of our hills, of which we have long been proud since we planted them, is to be sacrificed to the exigencies of finance, the next thing I suppose we shall see will be that the Public Gardens have been turned into market gardens, and Othello's occupation being gone, the head of the Botanical Department will find usefull em -

ployment in hawking vegetables round the town. Nearly half a million dollars spent upon the Sanitary Department must give us pause and make the ordinary man wonder if we get our money's worth, and if it is worth all that expenditure. It does seem a subject of reflection that, in spite of our expenditure and precautions and our boasted Western medical science, the plague should run its course here, just exactly as it does neither sooner nor later in Canton, where nothing is done to contend with it. I am glad to see so much put down for expenditure on public works, but I hope Mr. Jones will not at the end of the year tell us, as some of his predecessors have done, that they never expected to spend all that money or do all that work, for they never had the men, etc., etc. If he feels that way he should speak out now, or for ever hold his peace. When are the promised experiments in wood paving and other materials for road making to be commenced? When is he going to remove the Clock Tower which obstructs Queen's Road, and, I hope, cast it into the sea? Will he now push on vigorously with the Law Courts and the Post Office? In regard to the former I still think that it should have been designed by local architects, who are now putting up buildings worthy of any European city, even Birmingham. There is an old Scottish saying which Sir Walter Scott was very fond of repeating, that "we should keep our ain fishguts leamaws for our ain seamaws." It is not a sentiment that I am over much in love with, but it is the doctrine that Mr. Chamberlain preaches. A little practice is worth a deal of precept, and Hongkong work should not be given to men who may have won prizes at school in Birmingham, but who know nothing of climatic conditions out here nor anything of the tropics, or what kind of buildings are best adapted for life in this part of the world. From what I heard when the plans first came out I formed the idea that the courtroom, as designed, would be about as light and airy as the Black Hole of Calcutta. I know that the Government architect denies this, but I do not think that that gentleman had come to the Colony when those plans first arrived. As for the Post Office, we paid an enormous sum of half a million dollars, or \$20 a foot, if I remember rightly, for the site; and I can see no reason why we should not utilise the ground for all it is worth and get all we can out of it by putting up another storey and putting the Harbour Master and all his works into it. He would have a fine view of the harbour; he would be in a much pleasanter situation than he is at present. It would be much more convenient for shipping people and the shipping firms; and last, but not least, the Colonial Treasurer could eke out the Budget with the proceeds of the sale of the old site, which must be very valuable. I think we in Hongkong suffer from two things, partly from want of taste and still more from lack of imagination. If there were a name that was endeared to all old residents by old memories and

associations it was Pedder's Wharf, and it was mere snobbery and toadyism to alter it to Blake Pier. In the old days Pedder's Wharf was, and still is, the centre of the life of the harbour. It was the starting point of all our little expeditions and adventures to the mainland, and of all our picnics and bathing parties; it commemorated the name of a naval officer who had rendered good services in his time to his Queen and this Colony, and if it were necessary to advertise the name of any particular official there were surely plenty of new buildings and streets that could be used for the purpose. If the old name could be restored to us without offence I am sure the community would hail it with delight, but the wretched sycophants who were responsible for this miserable piece of time-serving surely deserve and will surely receive the contempt of every right-minded man. As for lack of imagination, one has only to go through the streets of the town and see with what an absence of any care, taste, forethought or imagination the place has been laid out. Somehow or other it seems impossible for us to look ahead and try to imagine what Hongkong will be twenty years hence. I don't say that the Government are the only sinners in this respect; we the people are just as bad. We had so little foresight that we built the Hongkong Club on half the piece of ground we could have obtained at the ridiculous price of \$3 a foot. A year or two after wards we had to buy half the remainder at double the price, and had to build a bridge across the road to get at it. A little imagination there would have saved us a lot of money and given us a much better club. It may be too late to do much for Hongkong, but in Kowloon and the New Territory the Government have a splendid chance of laying deep their plans for the future. We want over there main roads, 125ft., not 50ft. wide, with broad boulevards and avenues with, I was going to say, rows of fine shade-giving trees down them. But the thought of so much firewood running to waste would be too harrowing to the feelings of the Colonial Secretary and his friend the Woodcutter when they took their walks abroad over there. Don't tell me that it can't be done, we are tired of hearing of that word "can't"; if you won't do it then give us good reasons; if it is want of money that prevents you doing these things properly, then let us have a Loan. How humiliating, how mortifying it was for me to be told the other day by a German friend who had recently been to Tsingtau, that there was not a road in Hongkong that could compare with those they have in Tsingtau. Think of it, gentlemen. Hongkong, the fifth port in the world. I do beseech the Government to look ahead, for there will be
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some day in Kowloon, and we should not always leave work till the last minute and then do it in the scimpiest and cheapest manner possible. Before I sit down I must make one honourable exception to my charge of lack of imagination. There is one man who through good report and evil report has remained steadfast to his belief in the future of Hongkong. He was derided for his Praya Reclamation Scheme, but the Whirligig of Time brings its revenges; he was right, and time has nobly vindicated him. Need I say that I refer to the senior unofficial member, the member for the justices? In the far off years to come, when this Council and all connected with it shall have vanished from this earthly plane into the limbo of things forgotten, they will take the globe-trotter down to our new Praya, and they will show him the buildings which have lately sprung up there, and they will say of Sir Paul Chater, as was said once before of another noble knight, like him, a mighty workman in bricks and mortar, *Si monumentum queris, circumspice*.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY—Sir, The remarks of the hon. member have certainly furnished two surprises which I myself never expected to experience in this Council Chamber. One is that actual praise should have been meted out to subordinate officials in Hongkong, which I thought was a thing that never could happen here, and the other is that a gentleman, sir, an Englishman, a member of this Council, a man who holds a considerable position in this Colony, should stand up and in the presence of two of our Chinese subjects—(Hon Mr. SHEWAN: Fellow subjects)—and of the Press, who will duly report his remarks, employ terms regarding a former representative of His Majesty the King in this Colony which I should have thought any man would have been ashamed to utter. Now, sir, there are—

Hon. Mr. SHEWAN—I did not apply it to that gentleman. I applied it to the gentleman who advised the last representative of His Majesty to do that.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY—The distinction, sir, is so fine that it can hardly be termed a distinction at all. The hon. member mentioned Canton coins and wondered why we did not restrict them coming into this Colony. I would like to ask him how he—who seems greatly interested in the finance of the Colony—would like to hear of the Viceroy of Canton retaliating by prohibiting the flow of Hongkong coins into China. I think our profit on subsidiary coins would very rapidly disappear if such action were taken. He next criticised the system of granting 75 years' leases, and told us that this would depreciate property in the future in this colony. That is a cry that was raised at the time that the change was made, and all I can say is that the land sales ever since the change was made have fully justified the wisdom of making it. The land appears to be as much sought after as it was under longer leases. He next

animadverted on the policy of the Afforestation Department, and all I can say with respect to that, sir, is that it is one more example of the innate aversion Englishmen have to anything connected with science. They do things in a bull-dog sort of way; but to do these in a scientific way they seem to have no appreciation whatever. He next deplored our expenditure upon plague and said they got on just as well in Canton where they took no precautions. I think he begged the question. He adduced no evidence at all that this year, when we have been practically immune, plague has not raged very severely in Canton and vicinity. My information and the information of the Sanitary Board is to the effect that during the current year Hongkong has been conspicuous by its freedom from plague, with plague all round it. As for his remarks on the Law Courts, all I can say is, wait and see their completion and then criticise the building. He advised the Government to put another storey on the Post Office. Perhaps he has forgotten that it is actually going to be done. There is one storey more to be added to it to be kept in reserve for the expansion of official business that is certain to take place with the expansion of the Colony. The last remark I made a note of, Sir, was concerning our roads. I have not been at Tsingtau, but if they have got better roads in Tsingtau than we have in Hongkong, all I can say is that they are very fortunate.

His EXCELLENCY—There were certain points that the hon. Colonial Secretary did not touch on in his reply to the speech of the hon. Mr. Shewan, with which I will now deal. I could not understand the form of the point raised in connection with the Estimates. The hon. member stated that "miscellaneous receipts" ought not, in his opinion, to include Conservancy Contracts and Profits on Subsidiary Coins—that these are sufficiently important items to be dealt with under a separate heading "details of revenue." It seems to me that they are so separately dealt with on p. 5. It is perfectly clear there that \$54,150 is anticipated to be derived from conservancy contracts, and \$120,000 from the profits on subsidiary coins.

Hon. Mr. SHEWAN—What I wanted to point out was that a small item of \$5,000 of interest has a separate heading, while this item of \$120,000 is under "miscellaneous receipts."

His EXCELLENCY—It is a small thing; it is a matter of type.

Hon. Mr. SHEWAN—It is a matter of bookkeeping.

His EXCELLENCY—The hon. member went on to refer to the disadvantage of crediting to revenue proceeds from land sales. I believe that is a question that has been very often considered and also discussed in this

Council. It seems legitimate to credit revenue with these sales in view of the fact that we are spending largely out of revenue for public works that we anticipate will be remunerative. With regard to the remarks made by the hon. member on the subject of cutting trees, I think that he forgot at the moment that in so far as any one person is responsible for the work of the Departments in the Colony that person is myself and not the Colonial Secretary. It seems to me to have been unnecessary to have gone out of the way to bring in the Colonial Secretary in that particular connection.

Hon. Mr. SHEWAN—I thought this was inaugurated before your Excellency's arrival by the Officer Administering the Government.

HIS EXCELLENCY—The Colonial Secretary has stated, what I have also learned was the case, that while we were successful this year in keeping down the number of cases of plague to considerably less than what it has been in most years since 1894, the epidemic raged in Canton as badly as ever. I do not myself attribute very much importance to that, but I do think it is our bounden duty to carry out such measures as scientific men who have studied the question tell us are necessary to improve the health of the community. The hon. member threw some doubt on the Public Works Department spending all the money provided for them in the Estimates. As a matter of fact the works we are now carrying out are on contracts that have been entered into for some time, and are going on smoothly and rapidly; we want to have enough money so that there should not be a check on the work—for instance, on the Law Courts and on the Post Office, which the hon. member wished should be pushed on vigorously. The small question of the Clock Tower in Queen's Road is one on which I am not able at present to give any opinion, but which I will look into. On the large question of employing local architects in preference to getting designs from the best architects in England, I am not entirely in accord with the hon. member. He talked of want of taste in this Colony though I do not know that it was quite in connection with this subject. At any rate I think we are better here for having some good examples imported from outside, and I do not think we can go to a better place for such examples than to the office of Messrs. Aston Webb and Ingress Bell, the gentlemen who are now designing the most important buildings in England and in other parts of the British Empire. Certainly the best building we have in the Colony which I recently had the honour of governing was designed by the same architects who have sent us the designs of the Law Courts. The question of roads at Kowloon has received the very careful attention of the Public Works, and probably the hon. member, if he has recently been there, will have noticed some steps in the direction for which he argued. I should think it is quite likely that at Tsingtau they have splendid roads. It is part of the German policy. When I visited the German colony adjacent to the Gold Coast last year I was struck by the great expenditure they had incurred on roads. I was also struck by the fact that the German residents of the Colony itself seemed to consider

some how that the expenditure had been in excess of any advantage that was likely to be derived from it. The only matter which remains for me to refer to is the question raised—I cannot think very fortunately—by the hon. member of want of taste in connection with the renaming of a pier. I think that question was sufficiently answered by the silence with which it was received.

The second reading of the Bill was agreed to.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY moved that the Bill be referred to the Finance Committee.

The COLONIAL TREASURER seconded, and the motion was agreed to.

The Council adjourned *sine die*.

FINANCE COMMITTEE.

A meeting of the Finance Committee was held after the Council, the Colonial Secretary (Hon. F. H. May, C.M.G.) presiding.

LAND COURT.

The Governor recommended the Council to vote a sum of \$250 in aid of the vote Land Court, New Territory, other charges, for repairing the house-boat used by the Land Court Department as a branch office in the New Territory, which was damaged by the recent typhoon.

The vote was passed.

TAIPINGSHAN GARDEN.

The Governor recommended the Council to vote a sum of Five hundred Dollars (\$500) in aid of the vote Botanical and Afforestation Department, Other Charges, for Taipingshan Garden—levelling and laying out.

The vote was agreed to.

THE APPROPRIATION BILL.

The Committee proceeded to consider the Appropriation Bill item by item.

HARBOUR REFUGE.

The CHAIRMAN said he was authorised to inform the Committee that it was regretted that it had not been possible to include any sum for the construction of a harbour refuge. When an hon. member asked a question about this matter recently he was informed that it was being considered. It had received consideration, but owing to the large requirements for other works, principally waterworks, it had not been found possible to include it.

THE NEW PRISON.

Referring to a vote of \$10,000 for a prison, the CHAIRMAN said that last year, on the recommendation of the Public Works Department, a site on Stonecutters' Island was selected for a prison, and the sum was actually inserted in the Estimates and voted by the Council for the construction of such a prison; but now it was proposed not to adopt the site on Stonecutters' the reason being that the m i l i t a r y a u t h o r i t i e s ,

for reasons which, he thought, would be obvious to hon. members, wanted control of the whole island. It was hoped that a site which would commend itself equally to the Public Works Committee would be found for the construction of this prison. They would be consulted about the matter in due course.

The different items in the Bill having been approved, the Bill was left in Committee.

This was all the business.
