

*Speech of His Excellency the Governor at the Prorogation of the
Session of the Legislative Council of Hongkong,
June 1st, 1885.*

HONOURABLE GENTLEMEN OF THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL,

1. The satisfactory conclusion to which you have carried no small amount of public business enables me now to close this Session.

2. Several measures of importance will be prepared by my Government during the recess for your consideration at your next Meeting. As I have stated on a previous occasion, I understand it to be generally agreed that the public convenience will be best consulted by opening the Annual Session of the Council in the month of November of each year. But it will be necessary to have a Special Meeting in next September to consider the Estimates for 1886. It has been found to be practically impossible to calculate accurately at an earlier period the probable revenue and expenditure of the ensuing year.

3. I will now proceed, according to the practice established in all Colonies, to lay before the Legislature a brief summary of the present condition of Hongkong, with regard to Finance, Legislation, Public Works, Education, the Public Institutions, and the Police.

4. With regard to Finance;—I thank you, in the name of the QUEEN, for the supplies which you have voted for Her Majesty's service in this Colony, and as a contribution to the cost of the Defence Works. The Report of the Colonial Secretary and Auditor General shows that the probable assets of the Colony on the 31st of next December will amount to nearly two hundred thousand dollars (\$200,000). It will not, therefore, be necessary to raise during the present year any portion of the Loan proposed for the completion of the Extraordinary Works connected with Sanitation, Water Supply, and Defence.

5. With regard to Legislation;—fifteen Bills have become law during the Session; the more important being the Ordinances regulating Weights and Measures, Bills of Exchange, the Disposition of Property by Married Women, and Amending the Post Office Ordinance.

6. With regard to Public Works;—the depression of the Public Revenue, consequent on the unsettled state of political affairs in this quarter of the globe, has rendered necessary some temporary reduction and postponement in several of the principal undertakings contemplated last year. Steady progress has, however, been made with the Tytam Water Works; with the Victoria College; and with the general plan of Sanitation approved, in 1883, by Her Majesty's Government, on the recommendation of Mr. CHADWICK. In connection with the last-mentioned subject, the details of the proposed new Building Ordinance will be carefully considered during the recess by the Public Works Committee.

7. With regard to Education;—the Annual Report of the Government Inspector shows very satisfactory progress, for 'both the number of Schools under Government supervision in the Colony, and also the number of Scholars attending those Schools have been doubled within the last ten years.' Moreover, from paragraph 13 of the same Report, it will be seen that the changes recently introduced into the Education Code have proved completely successful, and have already resulted in decreased expense coupled with increased efficiency.

Again, it is remarked by the Head Master in his Report that the past was an eventful year for the Central School, for the erection of the Victoria College was then commenced. It is believed that this new College will become the principal place of education not only for this Island, but also for many of the future leading men of the vast neighbouring Empire of China; and that this will prove a powerful, legitimate, and honourable method of extending British influence throughout this quarter of the globe. Already indeed, several men holding high positions in the service of the Chinese Government owe their education to the schools established in Hongkong under British auspices.

8. With regard to the Public Institutions and the Police;—I have satisfied myself by several personal inspections that they are in a generally satisfactory condition. Further, from papers recently laid before the Council, it will have been seen that Major-General CAMERON, Commanding the Troops on this Station, has borne his testimony to the efficiency of the English and Sikh portion of the Police Corps in their rifle practice. A force of 300 men, equal to one fourth of the whole, has thus practically been added, in the event of war, or of serious internal disturbance, to the garrison. At the same time, the Police fully understand that their military drill must not be allowed to interfere with their civil duties in time of peace.

9. Having thus glanced at the internal affairs of this Colony, I will remind you, Honourable Gentlemen, of what I stated in my Prorogation Speech last year, viz.: that the foremost statesmen of England attach greater importance to this Colony than to other Colonies of far larger territorial extent; for Hongkong is the centre of British power and commerce in this part of the world. As you are already aware, one of my first acts after my assumption of this Government, was to call the attention of the Imperial Authorities to the comparatively unprotected state of this first-class Naval and Military Station, and great Mart of Trade, and thus to procure the commencement of the Defence Works which are now in progress. I know that you all entirely agree with me in the opinion that the present favourable prospect of peace should not be allowed to cause any relaxation in the efforts in this direction. It is a wise maxim that preparation for War is the surest guarantee for Peace. And, as you know already, the highest Naval and Military Authorities in the Empire believe that the completion of the Defences which are now being vigorously pushed forward by General CAMERON, will place this Colony in safety against foreign attack.

10. In conclusion, I desire to thank you, Honourable Gentlemen, once more, for your valuable advice and assistance during the past Session, and for the constant and loyal support which you afford on all occasions to the Representative of the Queen. I trust that the return of peace will soon remove the temporary depression in our trade and revenue; and that, through the blessing of Almighty God, on the energy and industry of all classes in this community, the general progress and prosperity of Hongkong will be increased and consolidated.

11. I now prorogue this Council to the 15th day of next September.