

The differences which had arisen between China and Japan, and which at one time threatened to lead to war between those States, have been happily adjusted. I have learnt with pleasure that the good offices of my Minister at Peking have been largely instrumental in bringing about this result.

The past year has been one of general prosperity and progress throughout my Colonial Empire.

On the Gold Coast a steady advance has been made in the establishment of civil government; peace has been maintained, and I have procured the assent of the protected tribes to the abolition of slavery. Henceforward, I trust, freedom will exist there as in every part of my dominions.

In Natal I have found myself under the necessity of reviewing the sentence which had been passed upon a native chief, and of considering the condition of the tribes and their relations to the European settlers and my Government. I doubt not that I shall have your concurrence in any measures which it may become my duty to adopt for ensuring a wise and humane system of native administration in that part of South Africa.

Papers will be laid before you on these several matters.

The King and chiefs of Fiji having made a new offer of their islands unfettered by conditions, I have thought it right to accept the cession of a territory which, independently of its large natural resources, offers important maritime advantages to my fleets in the Pacific.

An ample harvest has restored prosperity to the provinces of my Eastern Empire, which last year were visited with famine. By the blessing of Providence my Indian Government has been able entirely to avert the loss of life which I had reason to apprehend from that great calamity.

*Gentlemen of the House of Commons,*

I have directed the Estimates of the year to be prepared and presented to you without delay.

*My Lords and Gentlemen,*

The condition of the finances is satisfactory. The trade of the country in the past year has somewhat fallen short of that of the year before, but the general prosperity of the people, supported as it has been by an excellent harvest, as well as by the great reductions lately made in taxation, has led to a steady increase in the consumption of all the necessaries of life, and of those articles which contribute to the revenue.

The various statutes of an exceptional or temporary nature now in force for the preservation of peace in Ireland will be brought to your notice with a view to determine whether some of them may not be dispensed with.

Several measures which were unavoidably postponed at the end of last session will be again introduced. Among the most important are those for simplifying the Transfer of Land and completing the reconstruction of the Judicature.

Bills will be also laid before you for facilitating the Improvement of the Dwellings of the Working Classes in large towns; for the consolidation and amendment of the Sanitary Laws; and for the prevention of the pollution of Rivers.

A measure has been prepared for consolidating and amending the laws relating to Friendly Societies. Its object will be to assist, without unnecessarily interfering with, the laudable efforts of my people to make provision for themselves against some of the calamities of life.

A Bill for the amendment of the Merchant Shipping Acts will be laid before you.

Your attention will be moreover directed to legislation for the better security of my subjects from personal violence, and for more effectually providing for the trial of offences by establishing the office of a Public Prosecutor.

Although the Report of the Commission issued by me to inquire into the state and working of the law as to offences connected with trade has not yet been made to me, I trust that any legislation on this subject which may be found to be expedient may take place in the present session.

You will also be invited to consider a measure for improving the law as to Agricultural Tenancies.

I commend to your careful consideration these and other measures which may be submitted to you, and I pray that your deliberations may, under the Divine blessing, result in the happiness and contentment of my people.

AT the Court at Osborne House, Isle of Wight, the 4th day of February, 1875.

PRESENT,

The QUEEN's Most Excellent Majesty in Council.

WHEREAS there was this day read at the Board a memorial from the Right Honourable the Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty, dated the second of February, one thousand eight hundred and seventy-five, in the words following, viz. :—

"Whereas by the twentieth section of an Act passed in the twenty-ninth year of your Majesty's reign, chapter eighty-nine, entitled 'An Act to provide for the better government of Greenwich Hospital,' it is among other things enacted, that the regulations for the admission of children into Greenwich Hospital School shall be vested exclusively in the Admiralty, but any such regulations shall not have effect unless and until they are approved by your Majesty in Council.

"And whereas your Majesty has been pleased, by Orders in Council of ninth August, one thousand eight hundred and seventy, and sixteenth January, one thousand eight hundred and seventy-three, to approve of certain regulations for the admission of children into the school.

"And whereas we are of opinion that it is desirable to extend the benefits of the school to as great an extent as is compatible with the due administration of the funds of Greenwich Hospital. We beg leave to recommend that your Majesty will be graciously pleased to authorise the increase of the number of boys to be educated and maintained in the school from eight hundred to one thousand, and to sanction the establishment of the following regulations in lieu of those previously authorised :

*"Regulations for the Admission of Boys to Greenwich Hospital School.*

"I. The school will consist of one thousand boys, the sons of petty officers and seamen, and of non-commissioned officers and privates of marines, who have served or are now serving in the Royal Navy or Coastguard, and of other seafaring persons.

"II. All claims for admission to the school will be judged of by a committee of selection appointed by the Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty, in