

Report by the Hon'ble Mr. A. McROBERT, Delegate to the Fifth Congress of Chambers of
Commerce of the Empire held at Montreal, 17th to 21st August 1903.

To

THE PRESIDENT AND COMMITTEE

OF THE UPPER INDIA CHAMBER OF COMMERCE.

GENTLEMEN,

You were good enough to nominate me as one of the representatives delegated to attend in your behalf the Congress of Chambers of Commerce of the Empire, held at Montreal from 17th to 21st August last, and I have pleasure in forwarding this brief record of the proceedings in which I took part. My colleagues were Sir William E. Cooper and Sir Edward Buck, but the former was unfortunately not able to leave England to be present at the Congress meetings.

My wife and I left Cawnpore on 21st May and sailed from Bombay in the P. & O. s. s. *India* on 23rd. A few hours after sailing, the *India* ran into cyclonic weather and had to heave to for several hours. A wind velocity of up to 100 miles per hour was registered, and the barometer fell three-quarters of an inch in four hours, but the *India* was very skilfully handled and suffered no damage of any kind. We reached Aden on 28th, and transferred to the *Himalaya* which landed us at Marseilles on Saturday, 6th June; and we reached London the following day at 6 p. m.

We remained at home until 28th July; when we sailed from Liverpool for Boston in the Cunarder *Ivernia* (14,000 tons). There were among our fellow-passengers a number of Congress delegates, including Mr. Kenrie Murray, the Secretary, and several prominent men from the London Chamber. During the voyage the smoking-room was frequently the scene of impromptu debates on the fiscal problem usually initiated by certain aggressive Chamberlainites, delegates from Yorkshire Chambers. I succeeded in maintaining the rôle of an amused listener. After an otherwise uneventful and comfortable trip, the *Ivernia* reached Boston on 6th August. On landing, we had to pay tribute to the Protectionist proclivities of our American cousins, by enduring for some two hours the ordeal of perhaps the most obnoxious customs examination in the world. It was difficult to maintain a philosophic calm during the trial, but we were fortified by the knowledge that our declaration was honest and that we possessed nothing contraband, and we were treated no worse than others. To enter the States by land or sea is an agony long drawn out which lives in the memory as a cruel nightmare.

Until the 15th August we were chiefly occupied in visiting factories (boot and shoe, cotton, paper, woollen, rubber, etc.) in the New England States. We reached Montreal late on Saturday, 15th August, and could not therefore take part in the historic tramway ride. Next day there was a Special Congress Service in Christ Church Cathedral, which we attended.

On Monday, 17th, the Congress was opened at 10 A. M. and was continued (two sessions daily) until Friday, 21st. Some of the Resolutions carried the first day were not discussed very thoroughly, as many of the delegates appeared to hesitate to speak even on questions in which they were personally interested. But afterwards, when they had settled down to work, no Resolution was allowed to pass "by surprise" or without ample consideration. Several times what practically amounted to "closure" had to be applied, so that a decision might be arrived at within reasonable time.