

### The Royal Colonial Institute.

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The Royal Colonial Institute provides an admirable platform for colonists and their friends who, being at home, are laudably willing to enlighten British darkness on colonial questions. Selecting a goodly number of the long evenings of winter and spring, the Institute throws open the doors of the assembly rooms at the Pall Mall Restaurant, erects a stage, invites an audience, having previously selected a lecturer, a chairman, and two or three debaters to start a discussion. The whole machinery is excellent, and the Colonies owe a debt to the Institute which some day, it is to be hoped, they will pay. On Tuesday last, a large number of ladies and gentlemen met to hear Lieutenant General Bisset read a paper on the South African Colonies. The Duke of Manchester was in the chair; some official and public men, associated in one way or another with the Colonies, were present; the paper bristled with facts and figures, and was warm and interesting with personal experience; the debate was continued to a late hour with animation, and was adjourned. The evening was a success, and South Africa is under an obligation to the Institute for the opportunity which General Bisset, Dr. Atherstone, Mr. Campbell Johnstone, and Mr. Thomas Watson, so ably used. But every British Colony has in its turn the advantage which on Tuesday last the Institute gave to the Cape, Canadians, Australians, West Indians, West Africans, New Zealanders, and men at home from Fiji, Singapore, Hong Kong, or Mauritius, can always be sure that the Royal Colonial Institute will find a speaking place for them and ears to hear what they may have to say. Nor does the society's help end when the paper reading session ends. It keeps its rooms in the Strand open all the year round for the accommodation of colonists; presents thus a centre for union and a chance for intercourse between those whom it is important on many grounds to bring together; and by providing a table for topographical photographs, a wall for maps, and cases for specimens, suggests the formation of a British Colonial Museum. Beyond this the Institute offers an organisation for dealing effectively with such colonial questions as may be practically mooted in England. It arranges for committees and deputations, the publication of pamphlets, and interviews with members of Parliament. It is indeed an institution with great capacity for usefulness, and as such has a claim on those communities to whose interests it is devoted.

And yet the Colonies have done nothing for the Institute, which subsists upon the subscriptions of those who have been, rather than upon those who still are, colonists. Probably the question of maintaining in London an institution which would in all respects worthily represent them has not been seriously put to the great Dependencies. They have, very likely, never been asked to materially assist in placing the Royal Colonial Institute in a position of some importance not to say splendour. If what we venture to suppose is really the case, then Mr. Young, the honorary Secretary of the Institute, has an opportunity which his zeal will scarcely allow him to lose. It is hardly to be supposed that the Colonies of England would not be glad to respond to a large proposal for the erection in the metropolis of the Empire of a really adequate building for the use and dignity of the only society which represents them and works for them in England. At present the In-

stitute hires for its office an obscure room above a shop, and when it gives a lecture it has to resort to hire again. The colonies need only to know this to be anxious to alter arrangements which cast upon them a certain measure of disgrace. The idea of having a Royal Colonial Institute suitably housed on a fair site in London would find favour all the world over, wherever two or three Englishmen abroad are gathered together.

Undoubtedly a suitable mode of representing the scheme would have to be made. The Institute itself would be the best centre of operations, and the assistance of all colonists at Home could be claimed. A well considered plan having been adopted and promoted in London, suitable agencies would be required for the colonies. Probably, in order to rapid success, the work would have to be taken up by one or two men capable of enthusiasm. Almost all important undertakings need a man at the head of them. As a rule they succeed only under that condition.

We hesitate to say what such a building, with its adequate furniture, appliances and offices, should cost. Not a small sum surely. The present unsuitable hired apartments on a first floor would be better than a mean structure entitled to call itself by a great name and at the same time shaming it. The cost would be regulated by the plan and the value of the site. But, while avoiding estimates, we may show what figures belong to the scheme. In the Canadian Dominion, the Australians, New Zealand, the Cape, Natal, West Indies, and the Mauritius there is at least a population of twelve millions. Now that number of sixpences would make £300,000. This is only a sum, but the factors are not altogether out of the case, nor is the total result ridiculous if looked at by the light of averages. Something less than £300,000 might possibly be sufficient; but more than that would not be out of proportion to the purpose of a suitable habitation for an Institute, once Royal and Colonial. It is, probably, unlikely that the Colonial Parliaments would vote public moneys for the object we have thought it well to suggest, unless, indeed, the plan could be made to include offices for the different colonial emigration and other agents. It would be a most desirable thing of itself were the official representatives of the colonies brought together in one place. Were this to come into the plan, the Governments would readily vote an annual allowance for rent. But, for the funds for the main building, the colonists' personal munificence must be looked to, and there is such a thing as personal munificence in the colonies. We are aware that the plan involves considerations as to trusteeship and other legal questions; and, of course, provision would have to be made for maintenance. But these are difficulties which are common to all undertakings in which societies and property are included. That any difficulties can be allowed to prevent the colonies from having an adequate monumental and institutional representation in London is not to be believed by those who know the spirit of those great communities.

### The Chinese Army.

Some interesting particulars with regard to the organisation and present condition of the Chinese Army are given by a correspondent:—

"The present army of China consists of two great divisions. Under the first are included the Manchu, Mongol, and Chinese Bannermen, distributed in permanent gar-

risons over the great cities of the empire, while the second is made up of Chinese troops. The Manchu Tartars (the present dynasty) when they conquered China in 1644, divided their army into four corps, distinguished as being under *hite*, *blue*, *red*, and *yellow* banners. Four bordered banners of the same colours were subsequently added, and in course of time there were added to these eight similar corps of Mongols and eight of Chinese, who had cast in their lot with the invaders. The chief command of these corps (which exist to the present day, and are of a mixed civil and military organisation, all being liable to bear arms, but by no means all being paid as soldiers) is vested in high officers of the three nationalities, the Manchu, on the whole, predominating. The governor-general and governors have each a small force at their disposal, but they do not command the military or naval forces of the province. Permanent Manchu garrisons under Manchu officers are established, as I have said, in the great cities on the coast and along the frontier. The Chinese Army is altogether distinct from this force, and is under a separate general officer, below whom is a series of subordinates of a number and denomination corresponding to those of our own army, if we count from ensign to major general. These all draw pay, nevertheless the troops assigned to them exist, to some extent, only on paper. Were the naval and military services of China as real and effective as the civil service of the country, foreign Governments would have to deal with one of the greatest Powers in the world.

"The civil competitive examinations held under Government secure to the poorest students of the land the certainty of promotion by merit to the most lucrative posts in the Empire. Under the present dynasty military examinations are periodically held among the troops, but the competitors are men of property, who supply their own weapons and accoutrements, and not the rank and file of the army. Military rank is conferred not for personal bravery and talent, but for prowess in raising heavy weights, wielding enormous swords and bending bows, as well as for skill in horsemanship and archery. Although the list for military preferments are open to all who are eligible for the Civil Service, few engage in the contests, as the posts obtainable are in every respect inferior to those of the administrative departments of Government. Few men of genuine talent, therefore, are to be found among the officers of the Chinese Army, and probably none who have deemed it worth their while to acquire a knowledge of military engineering, fortifications, and all that constitutes the science of modern warfare. It must, however, be said, in justice to the Chinese Government, that they are not altogether ignorant of the defects in their system. Within the last ten years great efforts have been made to introduce a certain measure of reform. Formerly officers of the navy were chosen from the land forces, not that they knew the bow from the sternpost of a vessel, but because they were big and blustering men, whose appearance would strike terror into the hearts of an enemy. Schools have been established for the training of naval cadets under the European system, some of whom now hold commissions in the gunboats and corvettes of the modern Chinese Navy. Li Hing-Chang has introduced foreign drill and arms and is doing his best to promote discipline and to strengthen the army. He would introduce other and more sweeping innovations had he not to contend against the jealousy and suspicion of the Central Govern-