COPY of LETTER from the Court of Directors of the East India Company to the Governor-General of India in Council.

5 May 1858.

1. You will have received, by the mail of the 25th of March, a letter from the Secret Committee, which has since been laid before us, respecting the policy which it becomes you to pursue towards those natives of India who have recently been in arms against the authority of the British Government.

2. That letter emphatically confirms the principles which you have already adopted, as set forth in your circular of the 31st of July 1857, by impressing upon you the propriety of pursuing, after the conquest of the revolted provinces, a course of policy distinguished by a wise and discriminating generosity. You are exhorted to temper justice with mercy, and, except in cases of extreme criminality, to grant an amnesty to the vanquished. In the sentiments expressed by the Secret Committee we entirely concur. Whilst there are some crimes which humanity calls upon you to punish with the utmost severity, there are others of a less aggravated character, which it would be equally unjust and impolitic not to pardon and to forget.

3. The offences with which you will be called upon to deal are of three different kinds. Firstly, high crimes, instigated by malice prepense, and aggravated by treachery and cruelty. Secondly, offences the results rather of weakness than of malice, into which it is believed that many have been drawn by the contamination of example; by the fear of opposing themselves to their more powerful countrymen, or by the belief that they have been compromised by the acts of their associates, rather than by any active desire to embarrass the existing Government. And, thirdly, offences of a less positive character, amounting to little more than passive connivance at evil, or at most to the act of giving such assistance to the rebels, as, if not given, would have been forcibly extorted, and which in many cases it would have been death to refuse to bodies of licentious and exasperated mutineers.

4. It is the first only of these offences, the perpetrators of which, and their accomplices, it will be your duty to visit with the severest penalty which you can inflict; and it is, happily, in such cases of exceptional atrocity, that you will have the least difficulty in proving both the commission of the offence, and the identity of the offender. In the other cases you might often be left in doubt, not only of the extent of the offence committed, but of its actual commission by the accused persons; and, although we are aware that the retribution which may be Righteously inflicted upon the guilty may be in some measure restricted by too much nicety of specification, and that, in dealing with so large a mass of crime, it is difficult to avoid the commission of some acts of individual injustice, we may still express our desire that the utmost exertion may be made to confine, within the smallest possible compass, these cases of uncertain proof and dubious identity, even though your retributory measures should thus fail short of what in strict justice might be inflicted.

5. As soon as you have suppressed the active hostility of the enemy, your first care will be the restoration of public confidence. It will be your privilege when the disorganised provinces shall no longer be convulsed by intestine disorder, to set an example of toleration and forbearance towards the subject people, and to endeavour by every means consistent with the security of the British Empire in the East to allay the irritation and suspicion which if suffered to retain possession of the minds of the Native and European inhabitants of the country, will eventually lead to nothing less calamitous than a war of races.

6. In dealing with the people of Oude you will doubtless be moved by special considerations of justice and of policy. Throughout the recent contest we have ever regarded such of the inhabitants of that country as, not being sepoys or pensioners...
pensioners of our own army, have been in arms against us, as an exceptionable class. They cannot be considered as traitors or even rebels, for they had not pledged their fidelity to us, and they had scarcely become our subjects. Many, by the introduction of a new system of government, had necessarily been deprived of the maintenance they had latterly enjoyed; and others feared that the speedy loss of their means of subsistence must follow from the same course. It was natural that such persons should avail themselves of the opportunity presented by the distracted state of the country to strike a blow for the restoration of the native rule, under which, the permitted disorganization of the country, had so long been to them a source of unlawful profit. Neither the disbanded soldiers of the late native Government, nor the great talookdars and their retainers, were under any obligation of fidelity to our Government for benefits conferred upon them. You would be justified, therefore, in dealing with them as you would with a foreign enemy, and in ceasing to consider them objects of punishment after they have once laid down their arms.

7. Of these arms they must for ever be deprived. You will doubtless in prosecution of this object address yourself, in the first instance, to the case of the great talookdars, who so successfully defied the late Government, and many of whom, with large bodies of armed men, appear to have aided the efforts of the mutinous soldiery of the Bengal army. The destruction of the fortified strongholds of these powerful landholders, the forfeiture of their remaining guns, the disarming and disbanding of their followers, will be among your first works. But whilst you are depriving this influential and once dangerous class of people of their power of openly resisting your authority, you will, we have no doubt, exert yourselves by every possible means to reconcile them to British rule, and encourage them, by liberal arrangements made in accordance with ancient usages, to become industrious agriculturists; and to employ in the cultivation of the soil the men who, as armed retainers, have so long wasted the substance of their masters, and desolated the land. We believe that these landholders may be taught that their holdings will be more profitable to them, under a strong government, capable of maintaining the peace of the country, and severely punishing agrarian outrages, than under one which perpetually invites, by its weakness, the ruinous arbitration of the sword.

8. Having thus endeavoured, on the re-establishment of the authority of the British Government in Oude, to re-assure the great landholders, you will proceed to consider, in the same spirit of toleration and forbearance, the condition of the great body of the people. You will bear in mind that it is necessary, in a transition state from one government to another, to deal tenderly with existing usages, and sometimes even with existing abuses. All precipitate reforms are dangerous. It is often wiser even to tolerate evil for a time than to alarm and to irritate the minds of the people by the sudden introduction of changes which time can alone teach them to appreciate, or even, perhaps, to understand. You will be especially careful, in the re-adjustment of the fiscal system of the province, to avoid the imposition of unaccustomed taxes, whether of a general or of a local character, pressing heavily upon the industrial resources, and affecting the daily comforts of the people. We do not estimate the successful administration of a newly acquired province according to the financial results of the first few years. At such a time we should endeavour to conciliate the people by wise concessions, and to do nothing to encourage the belief that the British Government is more covetous of revenue than the native ruler whom it has supplanted.
RETURN to an Order of the Honourable The House of Commons, dated 14 May 1858;—for,

A COPY "of any PROCEEDINGS or COMMUNICATIONS from the Court of Directors of the East India Company to the Governor-General of India, relating to the proposed PROCLAMATION of Lord Canning, and to the late DESPATCH from the Secret Committee with reference thereto."

East India House, 17 May 1858. J. D. DICKINSON, Secretary.

At a Court of Directors, held on Monday, 10th May 1858:

The Chairman acquainted the Court that it had been specially summoned for the purpose of laying before them, with the consent of the Board of Commissioners for the Affairs of India, the undermentioned Secret Papers, viz.:—

Letter from the Governor-general of India to the Secret Committee, dated Allahabad, 5th March 1858, with the undermentioned enclosures, viz.;—

Letter from the Secretary to the Government of India, with the Governor-general, to the Secretary to the Chief Commissioner of Oude, dated 3rd March 1858; and

Copy of a Proclamation, addressed to the Chiefs and Inhabitants of Oude, to be issued by the Chief Commissioner at Lucknow, so soon as the British troops, under the Commander-in-Chief, shall have possession or command of the city; also,

Letter from the Secret Committee to the Governor-general of India, in Council, dated the 19th April 1858.

And the same having been read;

The Chairman intimated his intention of submitting to the Court a despatch upon the subject of those papers, at their meeting on Wednesday next.

A member of the Court submitted the following motion, viz.:—

"That in reference to the despatch from the Secret Committee to the Governor-general of India, dated the 19th ultimo, with the documents therein alluded to, "and this day laid before the Court of Directors, this Court desires to express "its continued confidence in the Governor-general, Lord Canning, and its conviction that his measures for the pacification of Oude, and the other disturbed "districts in India, will be characterised by a generous policy, and by the utmost "clemency that is found to be consistent with the satisfactory accomplishment of "that important object."

And the previous Question, viz., "That this Question be now put," being moved and put

The same passed in the affirmative; whereupon

The main Question being put, it was

Resolved,—That in reference to the despatch from the Secret Committee to the Governor-general of India, dated the 19th ultimo, with the documents therein alluded to, and this day laid before the Court of Directors, this Court desires to express
EAST INDIA (GOVERNOR-GENERAL).

express its continued confidence in the Governor-general, Lord Canning, and its conviction that his measures for the pacification of Oude, and the other disturbed districts in India, will be characterised by a generous policy, and by the utmost clemency that is found to be consistent with the satisfactory accomplishment of that important object.

At a Court of Directors, held on Wednesday, 12th May 1858.

A Letter, dated the 11th instant, signed by Russell Ellice, Esq., and John Harvey Astell, Esq., Members of this Court, was read; representing, that having been unavoidably absent from want of notice from the Special Court, held on the 10th instant, they were prevented taking part in the discussion of the Secret Papers, laid before the Court that day, relative to the Proclamation to be issued by the Chief Commissioner at Lucknow; and the Letter from the Secret Committee to the Governor-general of India, in Council, dated the 19th ultimo; and from giving their most cordial support to the Resolution, which was carried by a large majority of the members present, expressing the continued confidence of the Court in the Governor-general, Lord Canning; and accordingly recording their entire concurrence in that resolution.

A Letter from Colonel W. H. Sykes, M.P., a member of the Court, dated the 11th instant, was likewise read; stating, that having received a summons to attend the Special Court held on the 10th instant, only after the hour appointed for the meeting, he was disabled from personally expressing his thorough conviction that Lord Canning's measures hitherto have been characterised by prudence, moderation, and firmness, and that he has full confidence that his Lordship's future policy for the pacification of Oude, while punishing guilty leaders in the late disorders, will respect the landed rights of the people.
18 May 1842

[Handwritten text]

[Signature]

Under 1 c. 26.

COPY of Proceedings of the Court of Directors.

[Signature] (Governer General)
EAST INDIA.

RETURN to an Order of the Honourable The House of Commons,
dated 28 May 1858;—for,

COPY "of a LETTER from the Court of Directors of the East India
Company to the Governor-General in Council, dated the 18th day of May.
1858."

East India House,
31 May 1858.

J. D. DICKINSON,
Secretary.

Political Department, 18th May (No. 20) 1858.

Our Governor-General of India in Council.

Paragraph 1. The Secret Committee has communicated to us the Governor-
General's secret letter, dated 5th March (No. 9) 1858, with its enclosures, con-
sisting of a letter addressed to the Chief Commissioner of Oude, dated 3d March, 
and of the Proclamation referred to therein, which was to be issued by Sir 
James Outram to the chiefs and inhabitants of Oude as soon as the British 
troops should have possession or command of the City of Lucknow.

2. We have also received communication of the letter addressed to your 
Government by the Secret Committee, under date the 19th of April last, on the 
subject of the draft of Proclamation.

3. Our Political Letter of the 5th of May has apprised you of our strong 
sense of the distinction which ought to be maintained between the revolted 
Seyoys and the chiefs and people of Oude, and the comparative indulgence with 
which, equally from justice and policy, the insurgents of that country (other 
than Seyoys) ought to be regarded. In accordance with these views, we 
entirely approve the guarantee of life and honour given by the proposed Pro-
clamation to all talookdars, chiefs and landholders, with their followers, who 
should make immediate submission, surrender their arms, and obey the orders 
of the British Government, provided they have not participated in the murder 
"of Englishmen or English women."

4. We are prepared to learn that in publicly declaring that, with the 
exception of the lands of six persons who had been steadfast in their allegiance, 
the proprietary right in the soil of the province was confiscated to the British 
Government, the Governor-General intended no more than to reserve to 
himself entire liberty of action, and to give the character of mercy to the con-
firmation of all rights not prejudicial to the public welfare, the owners of which 
might not, by their conduct, have excluded themselves from indulgent con-
sideration.

5. His Lordship must have been well aware that the words of the Procla-
mation, without the comment on it which we trust was speedily afforded by your 
actions, must have produced the expectation of much more general and indis-
criminate dispossession than could have been consistent with justice or with 
policy. We shall doubtless be informed, in due course, of the reasons which 
induced the Governor-General to employ those terms, and of the means which 
we presume have been taken of making known in Oude the merciful character 
which we assume must still belong to your views. In the meantime, it is due 
to the Governor-General that we should express our entire reliance, that on 
this as on former occasions it has been his firm resolution to show to all 
whose crimes are not too great for any indulgence, the utmost degree of leniency 
consistent with the early restoration and firm maintenance of lawful authority.

307. We
We accordingly have to inform you that, on receiving communication of the papers now acknowledged, the Court of Directors passed the following resolution:

"Resolved, That, in reference to the Despatch from the Secret Committee to the Governor-General of India, dated the 19th ultimo, with the documents therein alluded to, and this day laid before the Court of Directors, this Court desires to express its continued confidence in the Governor-General, Lord Canning, and its conviction that his measures for the pacification of Oude and the other disturbed districts in India, will be characterised by a generous policy, and by the utmost clemency that is found to be consistent with the satisfactory accomplishment of that important object."

We are, &c.

(signed) F. Currie,

W. J. Eastwick.

&c. &c.

London, 18 May 1858.

(True copy.)

J. S. Mill,
Examiner of India Correspondence.

(East India House,)
31 May 1858.