

The R. I. M. S. *Hardinge* carrying the Viceroy from Karachi left shortly before 5 P. M. on Monday the 16th instant under salutes of 31 guns from the land battery at Manora and ships of the East India Squadron lying off the entrance of the harbour. The Squadron was formed in two divisions, line ahead starboard division consisting of the flagship *Hyalcinth* (2nd class cruiser) with the *Fox* (3rd class cruiser) two cables astern port division of the "Argonaut" 1st class cruiser abeam of the flagship followed the "Pomone" (3rd class cruiser). On approach of the *Hardinge* ships were manned and each saluted as the *Hardinge* passed her, steaming between the divisions. The *Hardinge* proceeded the squadron till nightfall and then took up a station astern where she remained till approaching Muscat. The relative positions of ships were admirably maintained throughout the voyage. Owing to this and the smoothness of the sea the lights of the Squadron as seen from the deck of the *Hardinge* by night appeared to be stationary. The ships were dressed with masthead flags throughout the cruise. Muscat was reached at about 10-30 a. m. on Wednesday, the 18th. The port is a miniature Aden and the rocky hills, though less lofty, fall more abruptly into the sea. The forts which occupy commanding sites on the opposite shores of the harbour are ancient Portuguese constructions. A salute of 21 guns was fired by the Flagship as the Squadron entered the harbour, which was returned by one of the Sultan's batteries. The Sultan's Palace and the British and other Consulates and the chief buildings of the town were profusely decorated with bunting, and the whole *coup d'oeil* was most picturesque and striking. The white hulls of the R. I. M. S. *Hardinge* and *Lawrence* in the foreground and the buildings of the town in the hollow of the bay were framed in the sombre setting of brown volcanic cliffs surmounted by the old Portuguese forts, while the dark line of the war-ships lay across the entrance to the harbour. The Sultan's yacht, which he has recently purchased with the friendly aid of the British Government, was dressed also in the inner harbour and looked a most servicable vessel, presumably as a sign of flattering imitation the Sultan has had the yacht painted like a British war ship, and most of the dhows in the harbour were also flying the British Red Ensign. A deputation from the Sultan shortly arrived on board the *Hardinge*. It included the Sultan's half brother and his son, Saiyid Taimur (who represented Muscat at the Delhi Durbar), the Sultan's principal Vazir, the Commander of his Land Forces and his Governor of Mattra. A metrical welcome in Arabic to Lord Curzon was recited by a member of the Deputation and enquiries were made after His Excellency's health. The Deputation then took their leave and the Sultan of Muscat, Faisal bin Turki, shortly after embarked in person with Major Cox, Political Agent at Muscat, to visit the Viceroy. His boat after making a circuit of the entire Squadron came alongside the *Hardinge*, where His Highness was met by the Foreign Secretary and the Military Secretary to the Viceroy and other members of His Excellency's Staff, and by them conducted to His Excellency's presence in the Durbar-room fitted up on deck by means of rich gold worked carpets and embroideries. A short interview took place, at which after conversation the members of the Sultan's suite were presented individually to His Excellency. Coffee and sharbat were then served, and the Sultan was reconducted to his boat and took his departure under a salute of 21 guns. The Consuls of France and the United States next arrived and were accorded interviews with His Excellency. At 2 o'clock the Viceroy accompanied by the Naval Commander-in-Chief, Rear Admiral Atkinson Willes and Staff, landed at the Customs Jetty. When His Excellency left the *Hardinge* the ships were manned and dressed, and a salute of 31 guns was fired by the Squadron: From the jetty the Viceroy's party proceeded along

the progress and enhancement of British prestige and influence. It will serve, too, as an abiding demonstration to the inhabitants of the littoral that the preponderating influence of Great Britain in these waters is no shadowy or remote force, but a lively and dignified reality, and that the Viceroy of the King-Emperor, who holds benevolent sway over the millions of the vast continent of British India, watches with no less zeal and interest the welfare of His Most Gracious Majesty's subjects scattered all over the Gulf.

Except to give Your Excellencies a respectful and hearty welcome, and to give expression to our loyalty and devotion to the great Government whose subjects we are, we have little cause to trespass on Your Excellency's time, and, so far as our own local and particular needs and circumstances are concerned, have an encouraging tale to tell.

We enjoy in Muscat the rights and privileges of the most favoured nation, our interests are carefully guarded by our Consular authorities, and we experience complete toleration in matters of religion. There is an absence of unnecessary litigation amongst us British subjects, and justice is readily and promptly obtainable in the Agency Court.

In matters connected with our dealings with the natives of Oman, while we are accustomed to receive a courteous hearing from His Highness, nevertheless we often experienced difficulty in obtaining relief, and this is partly owing no doubt to the unsettled state of the interior. In this latter connection, we make bold to explain to Your Excellency that, whereas, considering the degree of enlightenment among the Bedouin Arabs, inter-tribal strife and turbulence are within the nature of things, and when they are limited to the interior of the country do not immediately affect our welfare any more than that of other peaceable members of the community, nevertheless when, as is sometimes the case, the scope of the strife is transferred to the coast ports, or their immediate neighbourhood, our commercial interests do immediately suffer, and we are put to anxiety for the safety of the lives and properties of our fellow-subjects. For, as Your Excellency is aware, at many of the coast-towns of Oman (often far removed from the capital) small communities of British Indian subjects reside, in whose hands all the local trade is centred, and who, in however humble a capacity, are the pioneers of British Indian commerce in these waters.

Thanks to the vigilant activity of successive Political Agents and of British men-of-war, at seasons of unrest there is little actual danger to the lives and properties of these our fellow-subjects, but the detriment to their trading operations and ours is great, and we venture to hope that Your Excellency's Government will see its way, either by strengthening the hands of the Ruler, or by active interference on the coast where necessary for the preservation of British interests, to take measures which will deter the unruly tribesmen of Oman from disturbing the commerce of the country by their dissensions.

In matters of commerce generally, we continue to prosper, and though during the last few years signs have not been wanting of foreign competition, Indian imports rule the market.

There is one depressing factor, however, of comparatively recent growth to which we make bold to draw Your Excellency's benevolent attention, and that is the demoralising fluctuations in the silver exchange. Since the closing of the Indian mints in 1893, and the consequent fall in the price of silver, the local Dollar exchange has not ceased to exhibit remarkable fluctuations, which greatly prejudice and impede the local import trade, from the fact that the currency value of the Rupee is fixed and that of the Muscat Dollar is not. We therefore humbly commend the matter to Your Excellency's wise consideration in the hope that, in co-operation with the Local Government, some means may be devised of bringing about a better

no surprise at the co- (Great Britain in the State. Gentlemen, t country in another is commercial interests itself readily to precis on the other hand, t easily reduced to figu effect of which is not of for instance, the time neeted with the Gove the last five years, wh period the British pro port of Muscat has ave of the total number of s and cleared from this po ago British percentage i am satisfied that the pre in the mercantile intere and incontestable, and you I am receiving a p present a not unimporta mercial enterprise in t have contributed and t degree to the material glad to hear from you t peneaful avocations you by the successive Politic am sure more diligently have been sent here to r India. That you obtain j litigation, and that you tolerance these conditi success of your operati little ground for com; of your address you h areas that sometimes s which occasionally tr ports and affect the secu you reside. The Britis embroiled themselves in appears to be a heredit undoubtedly if it were seriously menaced th the lives and propo lawfully trading upon t called upon to interve and by no one I intervention be more condially assisted than b referred in your address local exchange. This is into consideration. Gent kind words in which you I understand that amou address are representative such as the Portuguese protection in this State, continuance of the condi trade exists and flourish that there has been prese ty, while I am the Head India, of testifying the i this "outlying Colony" trade. It only remains presenting your address work so characteristic of of the locality. It will n me of this agreeable me my present visit to Musc From the Consulate I water to the Jetty, wher ing by the Sultan, a gu Marines with a band w Sultan and his suite cond Staff from the pier to th Sultan's palace. The str and sheltered with awn the personal bodyguard on arrival at the nu was a long room facing cipal personages took th dias" while the walls by the two Staffs and