

CHAPTER XVII

A Humiliating Retreat

In bringing the tough and ruthless Kitchener as his Commander-in-Chief to India, in the autumn of 1902, Curzon seemed to have gone and deliberately courted danger as it were and the results were not long in forthcoming. Well-meaning friends had warned Curzon, Rennell Rodd among them:

Kitchener has many faults - he is not straight in the sense that having had everyone's hand against him for so long, he tries to achieve his objects in round about ways, mistrusting the direct and open method; he is secretive and not frank; ... he is even¹, if one must say it, unscrupulous in his methods.

Kitchener's reputation as a bloodthirsty operator was no secret. The press had made much of his barbaric treatment of the Mahdi's body. Not content at killing the Mahdi, Kitchener had ransacked his tomb and carried

¹ Rodd to Curzon, Dec.12, 1899, CP. Vol.405.

away the skull as a personal trophy!¹ But as usual Curzon had chosen to ignore the warnings, confident that the statesman can handle a soldier anyday. He was also conscious that in bringing Kitchener to India, he was elevating his own position: for was not the great imperial hero subordinate to the Viceroy on Indian soil?

Unlike Curzon, Kitchener had not been born into the nobility. But success in South Africa had opened the doors of Britain's great country houses for him. One such door was that of Salisbury's daughter-in-law, Lady Cranborne.² Finding in her an ardent admirer, Kitchener had set himself to cultivate her. In his years in India, Lady Cranborne proved to be his valuable link with the Home Government.

Strangely enough the two protagonists had much in common. Both could be absorbed by fussy, domestic detail. But unlike Curzon, Kitchener had tact and cunning and was adept at building up a chain of contacts who would help him to further his cause. Unlike Curzon, Kitchener never married. He was however capable of exercising great charm with the ladies and Mary certainly relished his company.³

As early as 1900 Curzon had written to Hamilton,

¹ Philip Magnus, Kitchener, Portrait of an Imperialist (London, 1958), p.133.

² Lady Cranborne, wife of Viscount Cranborne, became 4th Marchioness of Salisbury in 1903.

³ Mary to her mother, March 9, 1905, MCP.

the Secretary of State, saying that in India, "We want a Kitchener to pull things together."¹ Curzon had always envisaged grave threats to India's frontier: from Russia, China, Afghanistan, France and had despaired at the Home Government's apathetic attitude in tackling it. "I do not suppose that Lord Salisbury will be persuaded to lift a little finger to save Persia from her doom..." he had grumbled.²

Soon after Kitchener's arrival Curzon reported to the Secretary of State that his new Commander-in-Chief, "greatly impressed me by his honesty, directness, frank common sense, and combination of energy with power. I feel that at last I shall have a Commander-in-Chief worthy of the name and position."³ The very next day however Curzon was saying that Kitchener told him "he had made a mistake in coming out as Commander-in-Chief, and thought he ought rather to have been Military Member. In his view the Commander-in-Chief ought to be the Chief Military adviser to the Viceroy, instead of which it seemed that the position belonged to an officer of inferior experience and rank."⁴ The Viceroy said he asked his Commander-in-Chief to wait a little and see the system in practice.

In India, as in Britain, the system had been one of dual control in the army with the Commander-in-Chief being in charge of manoeuvres, distribution of troops, promotions, intelligence,

¹ Curzon to Hamilton, Feb.15, 1900, CP. Vol.159.

² Ibid. Feb.1, 1900.

³ Ibid., Dec.2, 1902, CP. Vol.161.

⁴ Ibid. Dec.3,1902.

discipline; matters concerning finance, stores and supply were vested with the Military Member. Though inferior in rank to the Commander-in-Chief, the Military Member had a seat on the Viceroy's Council and powers to veto the Commander-in-Chief's recommendations. The Viceroy was unaware that Kitchener had made a quick survey of the situation and was moving towards removing the position of the Military Member. On January 25, 1903, Kitchener was complaining to Lady Cranborne about this "extraordinary" system : "I asked Curzon why he liked to keep up this farce, and his answer was, 'If the Commander-in-Chief had anything to do with the machinery, he would become too powerful.'"¹ By February 1903 Kitchener showed his claws. He refused to sign a document drafted by the Military Member Sir Edmund Elles and backed his refusal with a threat to resign.²

Curzon began to have second thoughts about the harmless nature of his Commander-in-Chief but it was too late. Kitchener sent secret letters through his staff to Lord Roberts, the War Secretary and to George Hamilton. Curzon was in Simla when he received a letter from the Secretary of State in which he said he had heard from Lord Roberts at a meeting of the Imperial Defence Committee in London that a 'scheme of wide reform' was put through by Kitchener.³

¹ Magnus, *op.cit.*, p.202.

² Curzon to Hamilton, Feb.19, 1903, CP. Vol.162.
Sir Edmund Elles, Military Member of the Viceroy's Council, 1901-5.

³ Hamilton to Curzon, April 24, 1903, CP. Vol.162.

Curzon accosted Kitchener:

In his letter which came by yesterday's mail, the S. of S.[Secretary of State] mentioned that he had heard from Members of the Imperial Defence Committee of 'Schemes of Wide Reform and of great alteration' being put forward by you - as he assumed in private letters to the W.O. [War Office] or C-in-C; and he asked me to warn you that - although communications between the two C-in-Cs are always recognised, any changes of an important character must be referred through the Indian Government and the India Office here. Otherwise we shall have a double set of communication which will be a source of great embarrassment and personal friction.¹

Kitchener accepted the rebuke but began intensifying his campaign with the Prime Minister through Lady Cranborne, begging her to be very careful and consider everything he wrote as private.² Curzon still refused to seriously register the danger signals.

Outwardly a truce was declared. But both protagonists knew that if Kitchener threatened resignation, he would win not because of any weakness in Curzon's case or strength in Kitchener's, but because of the latter's great public prestige. Curzon confessed so in a letter to the Secretary of State saying that if Kitchener were to resign, "Public opinion in England though certainly not in India would side with him."³ Nevertheless, Curzon still deluded himself

¹ Magnus, op.cit., p.206.

² Ibid. p.208.

³ Curzon to Hamilton, May 7, 1903, CP. Vol.162.

into believing that he could control the soldier and was blandly referring to him as "a caged lion, dashing its bruised and lacerated head against the bars."¹ On July 9, Curzon was in Simla and serenely reporting to the Secretary of State, "the atmosphere as regards Kitchener has completely changed. He is out here with us in camp at this moment and not a cloud flecks the sky ... He now realises his mistake and is aware that I am his best friend."²

Curzon later wrote, "During the remainder of the year 1903, and indeed until I left India for England in May 1904, the question of Military Administration in India was not revived."³ The outward honeymoon however had come to an end with the announcement of the extension of Curzon's Viceroyalty. Kitchener complained to his lady friend:

The fact is no C-in-C worth his salt could go on with the military department organised as it is now... C-in-Cs can be provided, I have no doubt, for the pay, who will shut their eyes and let things go on; but I cannot; and as the Viceroy likes the present₄ system, there is no doubt I ought to clear out.

Sir Schomberg MacDonnell, who had seen danger signals, had said, "I am however alarmed at your staying on in India; I feel it will wreck your health and render

¹ Curzon to Hamilton, May 7, 1903, CP. Vol.162.

² Curzon to Hamilton, July 9, 1903, CP. Vol.162.

³ Private Correspondence relating to Military Administration in India: 1902-1905, CP. Vol.412.

⁴ Magnus, op.cit., p.209.

unfulfilled my dream of you as Prime Minister."¹ He advised prompt return to England saying, "Don't be ridiculous and pooh-pooh vicereally my counsel. I have so long been 'Head-lad' of the Prime Minister's string that, I know the stayers among the field. And my dear George you are the only stayer among the lot... You have made your reputation as a great Viceroy and the time has come for you to direct other Viceroys."² It was good advice and Curzon should have heeded it.

During his home leave, in the summer of 1904, Curzon had found that the British Cabinet were not prepared to adhere to his advice on Frontier problems. Over Afghanistan they had followed a vacillating attitude. Over the Tibet issue the British Cabinet having given support, had withdrawn it, arguing that the terms imposed upon the Tibetans were tantamount to annexation and far exceeded their instructions.³ What was more, while Curzon was in England, Kitchener had sent a memorandum to the Imperial Defence Committee, criticising the dual system and threatening to resign if it was not abolished. By accident Curzon had come upon it. He recorded, "The S. of S. subsequently informed me (Jan.20, 1905) that the Memo had been handed over to the P.M. by Colonel Mulley, the Indian Officer,

¹ MacDonnell to Curzon, Oct.4, 1903, CP. Vol.14.

² Ibid. Dec.29, 1903.

³ For greater detail see P.Mehra's Younghusband Expedition (Bombay, 1968).

who had been deputed to England to represent Lord K's views."¹ What Curzon did not know was that Balfour, the Prime Minister, invited Kitchener to present his views. Lady Salisbury had forwarded to Kitchener a 'Very Private' note written by her husband. It went "AJ.B.[Balfour] is very much concerned about the situation in India. He is much hampered because the information K. sends is secret, and he therefore cannot use it."² St. John Brodrick, who had in the meanwhile replaced the pliable Hamilton at the India Office, also seemed thick in the conspiracy. He had written to Kitchener in Curzon's absence, "We have got to the point where it is absolutely essential that you and the home government should understand each other," adding "while the cat's away, the mice will play."³

Curzon's friends had pleaded with him to stay back in England, arguing that the British Cabinet was made up of short-sighted men and that Curzon stood a chance of emerging as leader. Mary had on earlier visit in 1901, written to Curzon about it. She had then said:

If you keep your health, as I pray God you will, you have the whole future of the Party in your hands. Arthur will not take the trouble to lead. St. John isn't inspiring enough, George Wyndham is a sentimentalist, and hasn't the hard sense to do strong things. So who is there but my Pappy? No one has anything like your vigour, and there is apathy in London about

¹ Private Correspondence relating to Military Administration, op.cit.

² Magnus, op.cit., p.207.

³ Magnus, Ibid., p.212.

everything and everybody...They will need you to come back and wake them up. Great as your work is in India, it will be even greater in England, where the party is slipping down the hill of indifference and incapacity.¹

Curzon could have stayed back. Mary's health and his own were sufficiently valid excuses. But there was this strange perversity in Curzon's nature which made him almost crave, as it were, for self-punishment. He was downcast at having to leave Mary behind. Probably he would not see her again until he finished his second term and the thought was unbearable. But he would not change his decision. A demon of self-destruction within him seemed to be propelling him to his doom.

In India Mary had come to mean so much more than merely an adorable wife. They had been married five years when Curzon was given the Indian Viceroyalty. The office was, with all its eminence and because of it, an essentially lonely one. Curzon had come to depend more and more upon Mary not merely as a beloved wife but also as his friend and philosopher.

Other men had shown that they admired Mary. But Curzon was too complacent to feel jealous. Arthur Balfour is supposed to have been infatuated by Mary in the brief summer of 1901 when she was on a visit to London. Mary teasingly passed the information to Curzon. His unworried reply was "Oh dear, it seems to me that you have fairly

¹ Mary to Curzon, July 5, 1901, MCP.

bowled our Master Arthur. However, he is tepid though delightful lover. So Pappy does not feel seriously afraid."¹

Early in 1904 Mary had gone back to England for her third confinement. They had two daughters and had hoped for a son and even selected the name Irian-Dorian for him. However, it was once again a girl. But for once Curzon, instead of wallowing in self-pity, thought of Mary. He wrote to her with great tenderness:

Darling, I felt how miserable you would be, and though of course I too was somewhat disappointed, I really felt it much more for you than for myself. However, I think we must entirely attribute it to me. You will remember that months ago we discussed and contemplated this, and that the name Naldera was arranged in consequence. So we will be content with our little Naldera and postpone Irian-Dorian till some future date. After all, what does sex matter after we are both of us gone?²

In fact Mary nearly died that summer. For five days and nights, as Mary had hovered between life and death, Curzon had sat at her bedside, desolate and grief-stricken, writing down every word that she whispered. Curzon has recorded:

I asked her whether in another world, if there was one, she would wait for me till I could come. 'Yes', she said, 'I will wait...' She asked that we might be buried side by side with a marble effigy of each of us looking towards each other, so that we might one day be reunited.³

¹ Curzon to Mary, Aug.21, 1901, MCP.
Nigel Nicolson has referred to this infatuation in greater detail in Mary Curzon (London, 1977) p. 146-9.

² Nicolson, Ibid., p.172.

³ Nicolson, Ibid., p.180.

By a miraculous chance, Mary did not die. By the end of October she was out of danger. But it was clear that she would never be perfectly well again, nor would it be safe for her to return to India. Nevertheless he would not let this consideration stand in the way of his career.

Balfour's Cabinet was in a fix. Brodrick explained to Kitchener:

The difficulty lies in the fact that officials of almost every degree, including Lord Roberts, who are conversant with past working, adhere to what I call the dual control. They are fortified by what most people regard as the failure of successive attempts to improvise a better system.¹

Though Lord Roberts had strongly supported the dual system Balfour's Cabinet felt they could not ignore the claims of Kitchener. If Kitchener resigned the British electorate could well withdraw its support to their shaky Cabinet. The situation was ominous. War clouds had gathered over the horizon with skirmishes having broken out between Russia and Japan. The Commander-in-Chief had struck and drawn blood. The taste was not unpleasant at all.

Before returning to India to resume his second term Curzon confessed:

I was aware that a severe struggle lay before me. I felt it a duty, however, to the Government of which I had been the head for so long not to desert it in the hour of trial but to sacrifice all personal consideration to the necessity of

¹ Magnus, op.cit., p.212.

fighting its battles.¹

Curzon had returned to India in December, 1904 promising Balfour and Brodrick that he would examine the Military Member issue. The Viceroy's Council had met and Kitchener was found to be totally overruled by all the members.

Curzon had argued:

Administrative systems are not constructed to test exceptional men, but to be worked by average men... I believe that the combined duties which Lord Kitchener desires to vest in the head of the Army are beyond the capacity of any one man, of whatever energy, or powers.²

Curzon in his despatch drew attention of the British Cabinet to the implications of vesting all authority in the Commander-in-Chief:

...it would be similar to a situation in England if a Commander-in-Chief of the British Army possessed a seat in the Cabinet, if he were the sole representative of the army there, if he enjoyed the power of the rank of the Secretary of State for War in addition, and if His Majesty's Ministers were called upon to accept or reject his proposals³ with no dependent or qualified opinion to assist them.

Kitchener had merely added, "I entirely dissent from the accompanying Despatch."⁴

¹ Private Correspondence relating to Military Administration in India: 1902-1905, CP. Vol. 412.

² Ibid.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Despatch 36 dated March 23, 1905, with Minute of Dissent by the Commander-in-Chief, Military Department Proceedings 1905.

Kitchener in the meantime had intensified manipulation of opinion in England. With the help of Major R.J. Marker, Private Secretary to the Secretary of State for War, he published in The Times confidential documents supporting his own case. When questioned, Kitchener flatly denied having done so. Major Marker, at an earlier date had been an A.D.C. to Curzon and also had, for a short while, been engaged to Mary's sister Daisy. As Daisy had broken off the engagement, Marker had a vested interest in humiliating the Curzons.¹ "It was a Godsend you setting your billet just in time to be of use to me," Kitchener wrote to Major Marker.² "I have told Gwynne of The Standard that if he appears to you, you will show him confidentially the papers I sent you last mail on the Military Administration."³ Kitchener had grumbled:

Curzon told me the other day, after reading my papers, he still intended to support the Military Dept. for all he was worth. I told him that I feel it my duty to the army to resign on this question. He accepted this as the ⁴natural consequences. So I am preparing to pack up.

In fact, Kitchener had stepped up his campaign at home, aware that the Viceroy knew "next to nothing of what is going on at home" and was confident that "Curzon and his Pocket Council will be [sic] difficulty to get over

¹ Nicolson, op.cit., p.200.

² Kitchener to Marker, Feb.15, 1905, KMP.

³ Ibid. Jan.12, 1905.

⁴ Ibid., Jan.19, 1905.

the Govt. at home."¹

Two days before the meeting of the Council in Calcutta in March Kitchener had despatched his version to General E.Stedman, an officer in the India Office. Curzon later wrote:

So determined was he [Kitchener] that his version should be placed in the hands of the home authorities before the meeting of the Council at Calcutta. He sent from India to General Stedman a detailed and exhaustive reply to the minutes...in which the C-in-C freely attacked me behind my back. The letter covering 40 pages of typed foolscap was marked 'Private and Confidential'.²

The letter was later given to Colonel A'Court, Military correspondent of The Times, who published an article 'The Crises in India' on May 30, 1905.³

In June 1905 the Government had attempted a compromise, drafted by St. John Brodrick, but the tone of the Despatch had been immoderate and censorious. The Military Department was to be retained. But the present Military Member, General Sir Edmund Elles - who had clashed with Kitchener - was to go.⁴ He would be replaced by a junior officer in civilian clothes, renamed Military Supply Member, and would control only stores and transport. He would no longer give opinion on military questions nor veto the Commander-in-Chief's

¹ Kitchener to Marker, Jan.17, 1905. KMP.

² Private Correspondence relating to Military Administration, op.cit.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Military(Secret) Despatch No.67 from the Secretary of State, May 31, 1905, Military Department Proceedings 1905.

proposals.¹ The tone of Brodrick's despatch had been censorious, immoderate, spiteful. Curzon in a state of emotional upset had rushed to Kitchener on June 25th and pleaded that the name Military Member be allowed to stay as of old and that the post be served by a soldier and not a civilian. Kitchener consented and a joint telegram to this effect was sent to the British Cabinet.²

Kitchener immediately regretted his mistake and confessed:

I was rather upset at a slip of the tongue I made after a very heated discussion... after over an hour of a very straight talking from me he suddenly gave in and collapsed and in the excitement of the moment I said I would³ associate myself with him about the other demand.

Having got Kitchener to agree, Curzon deluded himself into thinking the victory was his and publicly criticised the Home Government for having gone over the advice of the Viceroy's Council and made changes in the military administration of India. Sir Henry Fowler was provoked to put the following question in the House of Commons:

I beg to ask the S. of S. [Secretary of State] India whether his attention has been called to the report of the speech contained in The Times today, delivered yesterday in the Viceregal Council by the Viceroy of India, in which, the decision of H.M.G., with reference to the administration of the Indian Army and the Despatch of

¹ Military(Secret) Despatch No.66, op.cit.

² Curzon to Balfour, June 26, 1905, CP. Vol.175.

³ Kitchener to Marker, July 6, 1905, KMP.

the S. of S. conveying that decision to the Viceroy¹ are criticised, I might say severely, if not offensively.

Kitchener gleefully wrote to Lady Salisbury, "Curzon has, I think, given himself away by this very improper speech. I wonder what action the Government will take - he is evidently at their mercy."²

Curzon was by now fully aware that Kitchener had been sending secret telegrams to the British Cabinet. "In the course of the Summer of 1905 at Simla a native gentleman of good position offered to place in my hands the cipher telegrams which Lord K was repeatedly sending in the war office code to Major M[Marker] in London," he said.³ He had realised that he must resign.⁴ The army trying to gain control over civilian rule was a popular issue with the British. But he did not resign on that issue. Instead, he chose to resign over a small issue, which shows how out of touch with reality he had become. Curzon suggested to Brodrick the name of General Barrow, saying that Kitchener had approved of the choice. Curzon wrote:

I had a long and confidential conversation with Lord K. He said he thought it the greatest pity

¹ Private Correspondence related to Military Administration, op.cit.

² Magnus, op.cit., p.221.

³ Private Correspondence relating to Military Administration, op.cit.

⁴ Curzon to Amptill, May 12, 1905, AP. Vol.18.

that I would not get rid of Sir Elles and set General Barrow to work at once and that he himself thought General Barrow almost too good a man for the new billet.¹

Curzon wrote "I heard at a later date that Lord Kitchener after accepting General Barrow without a demur in his conversations with me telegraphed to England behind my back to say that he would not have him. This was told to me by a Minister who had seen the telegram."² Curzon should have concentrated on exposing this deceit and having Kitchener discredited rather than bull-headedly insisting upon Barrow. But alas! Having taken a stand, foolish pride would not permit him to withdraw. Brodrick was getting impatient and testy and, Curzon should have realised, was not going to allow him to have his say. In fact in a letter of June 29, Brodrick had warned that having, in Curzon's words given way to Curzon twice before, he was now going to have his say in nominating an officer for the Military Supply Member from England.³

The telegram to the Viceroy on August 1st was particularly censorious,

We deeply regret the differences which have arisen between H.M.G.[His Majesty's Government] and yourself which have found public expression

¹ Private Correspondence relating to Military Administration, op.cit.

² Ibid.

³ Brodrick to Curzon, June 29, 1905, CP. Vol.164.

on your part, in your recent speech and in your Budget speech on March 29...both these speeches appear to us to be calculated to arouse...public feeling in India. We cannot but feel that public opinion has also been inflamed by your intention to resign."¹

Brodrick had dug in his heels. He declined to consider appointment of General Barrow saying "This is also the view of the Cabinet who are not willing to appoint Barrow. I hope to telegraph you very shortly the name of the officer we propose for M.S.[Military Supply] Dept."² Three days later the Secretary of State telegraphed "I do not gather from your reference to Lord K. that he recommended General Barrow, but he knew your intention to recommend him...we cannot favour the selection of an officer who from the positions he has previously held can hardly be expected to inaugurate the new system with an open mind."³

A headlong collision was in the offing and Curzon charged straight in. He wired:

His Majesty's Government desire me to introduce a new system of military organisation into India. The only conditions upon which I can carry out their policy...are that I should receive their support, and be allowed the cooperation of the officer whom I consider best qualified for the purpose. If this is refused to me, I cannot accept any further responsibility for the discharge of the ⁴duty, and a new Viceroy should be asked to attempt it.

¹ Brodrick to Curzon, Aug.1, 1905, CP. Vol.175.

² Ibid.

³ Brodrick to Curzon, Aug.4, 1905, CP. Vol.175.

⁴ Curzon to Brodrick, Aug.5, 1905, CP. Vol.175.

Surely it was the mistaken confidence that his resignation would not be accepted and that threat would again get him his way which prompted Curzon to send off another telegram a week later:

I am reluctantly driven to the conclusion that the policy of His Majesty's Government differs fundamentally from what I had thought had been agreed upon with the Government of India, and is based upon principles which I could not conscientiously carry into execution. In these circumstances my ability to act with advantage as head of the India Government has ceased to exist, and I beg you again to place my resignation in the Prime Minister's hands.¹

Ten days later he received a royal telegram. The King had said, "With deep regret I have no other alternative but to accept your resignation at your urgent request."²

Mary wrote to her mother in one of her rare complaints against her husband;

The great mistake which George made was in ever coming back to India. But as you know, nothing would prevent him. The strain of all this has been terrible... I feel sometimes that I shall go out of my mind if I have to bear much more stress and worry. The whole of life seems sacrificed to this thankless public life.³

¹ Curzon to Brodrick, Aug.12, 1905, CP. Vol.175.

² King-Emperor to Curzon, Aug.22, 1905, CP. Vol.136.

³ Mary to her mother, Aug.24,(1905), MCP.

* * *

Curzon bitterly wrote to his father, "I felt that I could not go on with honour or self-respect."¹ But he had steered himself into the situation. As though not satisfied with humiliations already inflicted on him, Curzon seemed to invite more by choosing to stay on in India for three more months to receive the Prince of Wales. Any other self-respecting man would have promptly made his exit. But Curzon wrote to the Prince of Wales, "I own, I shall feel rather bitterly when I think of someone else doing the honours of Government House at Calcutta about which we have taken an enormous amount of trouble."² Having planned the show, Curzon could not bear to give up the temptation of presiding over the ceremonial even when he ought to have known that to linger on after the farewells have been said can only be painful and humiliating. Curzon was both sick in body and mind, an understandable fact. All the more reason for Curzon to go back. But he did not.

Not satisfied at having vanquished Curzon, Brodrick had other humiliations ready for his old friend. With the next Viceroy Lord Minto's date of arrival being uncertain, he wanted Lord Ampthill to take over as acting Viceroy and

¹ Curzon to Lord Scarsdale, Aug.17, 1905, CA.266/3.

² Curzon to Prince of Wales, Aug.23, 1905, CP. Vol.216.

and strip Curzon of his command. "Brodrick has proposed our going at once," Mary said bitterly, "George's seven years of work are as though they had never been."¹

But the King had graciously intervened and his Secretary wrote to Curzon, "you are to receive the Prince and Princess of Wales Officially on their arrival at Bombay."² Curzon acknowledged gratefully to the Prince, "owing to the ever memorable and considerate intervention of His Majesty the King, now the Viceroy is to have the great honour of receiving your Royal Highnesses in person."³

In the end, Curzon had stayed back as Viceroy for three long months to receive the Prince and Princess of Wales. Protracted goodbyes can be painful and disappointing and Curzon's was no different. The Curzons had stayed on in Simla till October answering thousands of letters of sympathy and sorrow at their premature departure. The Civil and Military service gave them a magnificent farewell ball⁴ But during much of the three months Curzon was ill and in bed first from "anxiety and prolonged diarrhoea"⁵ and later from "a bad attack of fever."⁶ His great farewell to the Native Chiefs

¹ Mary to her mother, Aug.24,[1905], MCP.

² Lord Knollys to Curzon, Sept.21, 1905, CP. Vol.136.

³ Curzon to Prince of Wales, Oct.5, 1905, CP. Vol.216.

⁴ Mary to her mother, Oct.25[1905], MCP.

⁵ Mary to her parents, [Mid-Aug.1905] MCP.

⁶ Ibid. Nov.2[1905]

at Indore had to be called off even though all the preparations had been made and 30 Chiefs had assembled.¹ He was barely able to raise himself from his sick bed to greet the Prince and Princess but, characteristically, he did it and in full State.²

The Prince of Wales had landed in Bombay on November 9 and after welcoming them the Curzons left India. The Viceroy had unfortunately not been forthcoming in his welcome of his successor. Curzon had not been in the reception room of Government House, as protocol demanded, to receive Lord Minto when he reached there. He had later received the Mintos very casually, clad in a morning coat and a pair of slippers. Like a sulking schoolboy Curzon perhaps felt he could derive some satisfaction from humiliating the King's new representative.

Sir Walter Lawrence reported:

I am afraid that the reception of the Mintos' rankles & the story, exaggerated no doubt, has done harm in England. The story, as I heard it, was that you were not in the room at Govt. House to receive Lord Minto, that you came in some time after in smoking coat and slippers & after a few words said you wanted to talk to Dunlop-Smith. This, coupled with a very hugger-mugger swearing in the next day seems to have upset the new Viceroy & his wife & there has been a great deal of very bitter talk about it in India and at home...I don't suppose it matters much, but it may have helped to

¹ Mary to her parents, Nov.2[1905] MCP.

² Ibid., Nov.10, 1905.

push Lord Minto into the camp of Lord Kitchener...¹

Curzon returned to England on December 3, 1905. No member of the old Government came to meet him. Mary wrote sadly, "old friends of a lifetime were mute."² Upon their return home they found, as Mary said, "George has the unbroken ranks of the hostility of the old Government against him & Balfour & Brodrick are bitter enemies."³ When the King asked Balfour to submit Curzon's name for an earldom, Balfour slyly wrote to Brodrick, "I respectfully suggest the 'waiting, waiting game' is the one to play. The pace is hot just now."⁴

The King had a moral stake in honouring Curzon for it was at his behest that Curzon had on his return home maintained a silence over the controversy in India. Long before he had left the Indian shores, the King had written to Curzon

I cannot but hope that on your return you may consider it advisable in the interests of the British Empire at large and especially as regards India, not to enter into any further controversy regarding the different issues with my Government which compelled you to resign... as the effect would be very serious. It is always undesirable, to wash one's dirty linen in public.⁵

¹ Lawrence to Curzon, Feb.22, 1906, CA.183.

² Mary to her parents, Dec.31[1905] MCP.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Kenneth Rose, Superior Person (London, 1969), p.367.

⁵ King-Emperor to Curzon, Sept.15, 1905, CP. Vol.136.

Lawrence had reported that the King "is also greatly concerned and anxious that when you come home you will meet your opponents with dignified silence."¹

It would have been a justifiable desire on Curzon's part to publish his version of the controversy upon his return home. Even Kitchener had been alarmed at the prospect and had written to Major Marker begging him to see that ~~the~~ the Viceroy was stopped:

Curzon means to be as nasty as possible when he gets home. He means to attack me and is preparing by getting copies of a lot of secret notes that have passed between the Milty[Military] Dept. and the Headquarters...I think the press should be warned of this... I hope you will be able to arrange for ² a douche of cold water coming on him from all around.

Curzon had respected his sovereign's wishes and Godley was gratefully acknowledging that "Curzon has promised to do nothing hastily."³ An earldom would have not merely mitigated some of the anguish at the humiliating termination of his Viceroyalty but also given Curzon a place in the House of Lords. But the new Government under Liberal leader Campbell-Bannerman was not forthcoming, though as Viceroy of India Curzon was supposed to be above party politics.

Curzon never forgave his old friend Brodrick, saying he had been, "jockeyed out of office by a weak-kneed Cabinet

¹ Lawrence to Curzon, Sept.30, 1905, CA.183.

² Kitchener to Marker, Sep.21, 1905, KMP.

³ Godley to Lawrence, Oct.8, 1905, WLP, Vol.42.

and a vindictive Secretary of State" for the sake of an "unscrupulous man without truth or honour."¹ Upon Curzon's resignation being accepted, Mary said bitterly, "Our life here under St. John Brodrick has been a perfect hell - and you would not treat a dog as he has treated George".²

Many years later St. John Brodrick published a 16-page printed note entitled Relations of Lord Curzon as Viceroy of India with the British Government 1902-5. He had added "seen and approved by the Earl of Balfour, June 1926." In the pamphlet, Brodrick tried to imply that Curzon's Viceroyalty had been terminated because the Viceroy was on the verge of a nervous collapse. Brodrick said:

As early as 1902 his letters to his friends at home showed he was almost at the end of his tether...

As Viceroy he had no colleagues of similar experience to himself to consult. Lady Curzon, though possessing brilliant qualities, had not been brought up in England and had none of the traditional knowledge that many Englishwomen possessed of the 'give and take' of public life. To a man thus seated on a pedestal, who felt himself standing up for the rights of the greatest dependency under the Crown against a body of men, who, however, otherwise qualified, had most of them never set foot in India,...it seemed imperative either to ride down³ all opposition or sacrifice his career in the attempt.

Brodrick said Curzon's nervous exhaustion began two

¹ Curzon to Ampthill, Aug.12, 1905, AP. Vol.19.

² Mary to her parents, [Mid-Aug.1905], MCP.

³ St. John Brodrick, Relations of Lord Curzon as Viceroy of India with the British Government, 1902-5 (London, 1926).

years after his Viceroyalty in India. It made him drive "his officials remorselessly; he became intolerant of opposition, and it began to be whispered in India that to differ with the Viceroy was to imperil one's career." Brodrick added that the Viceroy "regarded the Council of India as mere registry office and the Secretary of State as the diplomatic representative of the Viceroy at the Court of St. James rather than as an individual responsible to Parliament for the Government of India."¹

The erstwhile Secretary of State waited till June 1926 to publish his version of the Viceroy's downfall in India. By then Curzon had been dead for over a year.

¹ St. John Brodrick, Relations of Lord Curzon, *op. cit.*