

INDIA BILL

ROYAL ASSENT GIVEN

TRADITIONAL CEREMONY IN LORDS

(REUTER'S AGENCY.)

LONDON, Aug. 2.

The Royal Assent to India Bill

was given at 11-40 a.m. to-day.

The attendance in the Lords when the India Bill became law consisted of the Lord Chancellor, Lords Stanhope and Rhayader forming the Royal Commission appointed by the King to give the Royal Assent in His Majesty's absence, besides the Bishop of Portsmouth, the Marquis of Zetland, Lords Londonderry, Lucan and Strickland. The Opposition benches were completely bare.

The India Bill came 15th among the 95 Bills receiving the Royal Assent, which were given in the traditional Norman-French phrase, "Le Roy le veult." (The King wishes it).

COMMENT OF THE "SPECTATOR"

LONDON, Aug. 2.

As the India Bill is of unprecedented volume, so it is the fruit of unprecedented deliberation, remarks the "Spectator," and says that since the Simon Commission was appointed, every proposal embodied in the present Act has been the subject of ardent and extended discussion in Britain and India, and that no view has been left unexpressed and no school of political thought unheard.

What has prevailed in the end has been reason and weight of argument, and Indians, in particular, will do well to recognise the growth of sympathy with their aspirations denoted by the fact of an overwhelming majority of Conservative members of both Houses of Parliament having unhesitatingly approved a settlement which most of them would almost certainly have refused to vote ten years ago. All Labourites and most Liberals would have been ready to go further than the Act, but it is far better for India to get what is now conceded her with the goodwill of all parties than to secure rather more in the face of formidable and bitter opposition.

HISTORY OF THE BILL

(BRITISH OFFICIAL WIRELESS.)

LONDON, Aug. 2 (Via Rugby).

The Government of India Bill became an Act to-day when it received Royal Assent in the House of Lords. Many members of the House of Commons attended at the bar to witness the historic scene. Preparations for passing of the measure have occupied nearly eight years. Publication of the Report of the Simon Commission in May 1930, was followed by various sessions of Round Table Conferences and the issue of the Government's White Paper in March 1933 indicating the greatest common measure of agreement was reached as the result of these investigations and consultations.

The Parliamentary Joint Select Committee sat for eighteen months. Its recommendations in October last were largely incorporated in the Bill, proceedings in connection with which have occupied 61 Parliamentary days of this session. The Act consists of 478 clauses and 16 schedules occupying 455 printed pages and it is the longest Act in the history of Parliament. The scheme of the Act is to set up in the place of the present form of government in British India which has been described as "in essence unitary and centralised" an All-India Federation linking together eleven British Indian provinces and such Indian States as are prepared to join. Both at the Federal centre and in the provinces, the Government would be formed by Ministers responsible to legislatures in much the same sense as the British Cabinet responsible to Parliament at Westminster. Three federal subjects only are reserved for administration by the Governor-General in his discretion, namely, defence, external affairs and ecclesiastical affairs. In all other matters, both the Governor-General and the Provincial Governors will act on the advice of the Minister so long as to do so, does not conflict with certain special responsibilities laid upon them relating to such matters as the prevention of any grave menace to civil peace, the safeguarding of minority interests and financial stability.

Burma is separated from India and given a constitution on the same general lines. More notable amendments accepted in the course of the Bill's passage through Parliament are the reservation of six seats in the Council of State for women, and the substitution of direct for indirect election to the Council of State. Federation does not come into being without the essential prerequisite of the accession of the Indian States containing not less than half the total of the States' population. The welfare of the people of India and Burma numbering already three hundred and fifty million is involved in the Act that has been added to the Statute Book to-day.