

THE VICEROY'S TOUR.

LORD CURZON ON RAILWAYS.

CALCUTTA, MARCH 7.

The Viceregal party, which left Goalundo at 9-30 on the 3rd, arrived, after a most comfortable journey, at Dibrugarh Ghat on the 6th at 3 p.m. The last stage of the journey was done at half speed. On this occasion the Indian General Steam Navigation Company have beaten the record. The Chief Commissioner of Assam, Mr. Cotton, joined the Viceregal party on the 4th at Gauhati. On the morning of the 7th the Viceroy and party made an early start from the Ghat to Dibrugarh, travelling in the carriages of the Assam Railway Trading Company. On arriving at Rehabari station the Viceroy was received by the chief officials and a number of the leading planters. The guard of honour consisted of troops of the Assam Valley Light Horse, 100 Jats, and 100 Military Police. The station was prettily decorated. The planters' address was read by Mr. J. Alston, who was supported by Messrs. Gerald FitzGerald, F. M. Shaw, and Griffiths.

H. E. the Viceroy replied to the address on the question of Railways, and said:—The Government of India are no more able to certify in advance the complete execution, and still less the generous expansion of their railway programme than you are able to guarantee a first-class crop from your tea gardens. Both of us are dependent upon conditions outside human control. The external world seems sometimes to imagine that the Government of India enjoys unlimited resources for building railways, and that only some malevolent bureaucratic streak in our composition stands in the way of the prompt realisation of the works which we have already commenced, and the even prompter acceptance of whatever fresh proposals may be placed before us. These, of course, are not facts. Our railway programme must be strictly co-ordinated to our financial resources and the triennial outlay that is sanctioned by the Secretary of State. A year of bad weather, high mortality, and low prices will disorganise the whole of the calculations of the tea planter, and will compel him to curtail any of the pet schemes of extension that he may have planned for the ensuing season. In the same way, the terrible famine from which all parts of India are now suffering, reacts upon the whole of our administrative and financial programme. We cannot at the same time produce four or five crores for famine relief, and yet spend them on railways. Governments, in fact, have their lean years as well as companies and syndicates and individuals. We have to do what every private person would do in the same circumstances, *viz.*, cut down our expenses and economise all round.

The party afterwards left for Digboi and Margherita.