

## IMPERIAL PARLIAMENT.

HOUSE OF LORDS.—MONDAY, JUNE 19.

### THE GOVERNMENT OF SINGAPORE.

The Earl of ALBEMARLE rose to ask the President of the Council what progress had been made in the transfer of Singapore and the other settlements in the Straits of Malacca from the Indian to the Colonial Department. He thought these settlements were entitled to the very best consideration of the government and the country. When they were first established they were only populated by a few piratical Malay fishermen, but now they had a thriving, industrious, and peaceable Chinese and Malay population of a quarter of a million. Their trade amounted to no less than fifteen millions, and the greater portion of it was direct with this country, while the next greatest branch was with British India. The capital belonged to merchants of London, Liverpool, Manchester, and Glasgow. Singapore, the principal settlement, was 1,500 miles from Calcutta. It was true it had a governor of its own, but he had no power to legislate for the settlement, and the Governor-General of India had the making of their laws, although he might be in the profoundest ignorance of their requirements. These settlements very naturally desired to come under the direct authority of the crown, and to be placed under the same constitution that had been granted to Hong Kong and Singapore. For five years they had been petitioning parliament for this boon, but without success. In the beginning of the present session there was a slight gleam of hope that before it came to a termination they would be transferred, and form crown colonies. The Secretary of State for India gave way, and sent them to the Colonial-office, and the Colonial-office were ready to receive them, but sent them to the Treasury. The only question the Treasury had to settle was whether they could pay their way, and the most satisfactory account was given, showing that there was a revenue of 250,000*l.*, which was sufficient to meet the public, municipal, and military expenditure. Then they were sent to the War Department, and then a little circumlocution took place. It was stated that the present garrison consisted of two batteries of artillery and two companies of Madras Native Infantry. The Strait settlements, or those who were acting for them, proposed that there should be three batteries of artillery and one native corps for public purposes, with the due proportion of European commissioned and non-commissioned officers. The Secretary for War gave the agents reason to believe that this proposal was accepted, but the Horse Guards considered it indispensable that artillery should have the protection of infantry, and the proposal from the War-office, therefore, was now, as he understood, that there should be two batteries of artillery and a wing of an European regiment. The batteries would cost 12,000*l.* each, and the wing of the regiment would cost another 24,000*l.*, making 48,000*l.*, which the Strait settlements proposed to make up to the round sum of 50,000*l.*, stipulating, however, while they were willing to agree to any arrangements to that extent, that they should not be called upon to incur a greater expenditure than that. Notwithstanding this the question remained undetermined, and the Strait settlements, to whom it was of great importance, were ignorant of the cause of the delay.

Earl GRANVILLE could have given a more satisfactory answer to the question a week ago than he could now, because at that time, as he was informed, gentlemen representing three of the offices through which it was necessary for the question to pass had met together, and there was every prospect of a speedy settlement of the matters in dispute. Some practical matters of detail, however, had not been settled yet, and, though the government were most anxious to bring in a bill to effect the object referred to by the noble lord, he could not give any pledge that it would be possible to do so in the present session.