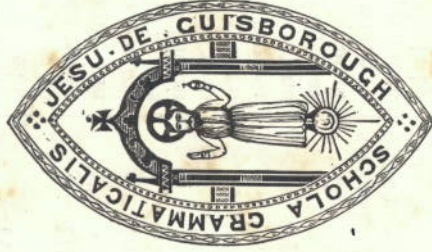


THE GUISBORIAN.



No. 11.

DECEMBER, 1908.

3d.

The Growth of our Indian Empire.

At a very early time in the history of Europe the treasures of India found their way into the markets of Western Europe. Those articles had been conveyed over-land from India through Afghanistan and Persia, and the Arab traders who brought them told wonderful stories of the vast wealth and power of the Hindoo princes. Those stories aroused the cupidity of the great European nations, and each decided to do its best to secure a share of the profits to be gained by Indian trade. A Portuguese, Vasco-de-Gama, was the first man who, towards the end of the fifteenth century, discovered the sea-route to India, but the Dutch were the first to take advantage of this discovery by establishing trading centres in the Indian peninsula. Meanwhile the English had been apathetic in their dealings with India, and it was not until the year 1600 that they began to take a very active interest in oriental trade. In that year a band of adventurous traders obtained a charter from Queen Elizabeth, and established a trading centre on the spot on which the port of Surat stands at the present day. From so small a beginning sprang the once mighty 'East Indian Company.' At first

the trading centres, of which there was soon a considerable number in the peninsula, occupied themselves solely with questions of trade, and took an interest in the petty wars which were continually breaking out among the Rajahs. After a while, however, as the rivalry between the different nationalities, British, French, Dutch, and Portuguese, became keener, it was the custom for each fort to possess a garrison of armed men. The British and the French soon showed themselves to be the two most powerful alien powers in the land, and those people had already met in the field of battle when Robert Clive, who was to be the leading figure in Indian history for more than a quarter of a century, appeared upon the scene. Sent out as a clerk in the offices of the East Indian Company at Madras, he soon became tired of the monotonous routine, and exchanged the pen for the sword. He first distinguished himself by his heroic defence of Arcot against a much superior force of French and natives. When in 1756 the Seven Years War broke out between England and France, the struggle between those nations in India came to a head. Dupleix, the French general opposed to Clive, was a man distinguished for his subtlety and cunning. He had found out