

**FREDERICK BERNAL, ESQ., C.M.G.,  
H.B.M.'s Consul-General.**

The consular service of the Queen will lose one of its ablest and most devoted members by the retirement of Mr. Consul-General Bernal, on the 30th of this month. During his forty year and more of experience, Mr. Bernal has witnessed many changes in the consular and methods of the service. In

the old time a consulate was looked upon as a place of refuge for respectable sort of men, without such brains, and with the faculty of spending more than they earned. The duties were chiefly of a formal character, consisting of notarial work, and odd jobs in the form of tracing imaginary fortunes for foreign claimants, making an occasional purchase of *bric-a-brac* or specialties of the place of their residence, besides shipping and discharging crews by proxy for the wooden ships which at that period constituted the British Merchant Navy, and—oh, yes, we had almost forgotten—plaiting hairs with their contrives of other countries as to precedence and seniority and all the various vexatious questions of official etiquette. But with the marvellous growth of the world's commerce, and the keen competition of the trading nations, and especially since the transition of our shipping from wood to iron and steel, the whole character and functions of the consular service became changed, until now it is certainly of first importance to a trading nation, and incomparably more useful and necessary than the more costly and ornamental diplomatic service.

It is the fashion—a somewhat vulgar fashion—to abuse our own consular service, and make comparisons with those of other countries, to the disadvantage and discredit of our own. There is no ground and no justification for this stupid fault-finding. It is, however, quite true that when Mr. Exars was Secretary of State in the United States he inaugurated a new departure in the consular service of his country. The old order of things, with the annual report compiled of stuff which was of itself a year old, gave way to the practice of preparing special reports upon the requirements and the products of the districts covered by American consuls, all directed, of course, from the Consular Bureau at Washington. But

the advantage of this practice was at once appreciated by our own Foreign Office and consular representatives abroad, and acted upon. The readers of this journal will know that we believe much may yet be done in this direction. But the fault, we repeat, is with the merchants and manufacturers, who should formulate a series of questions intended to evoke all the information they require from the different consular districts in the charge of our representatives. And we venture to repeat that the Foreign Office would favour such a movement in the interests of British trade; and that our consular officers would meet our manufacturers in the spirit of a corps, not only willing, but anxious, to do everything in their power to promote British trade and British interests in every part of the world.

Mr. Bernal, who retires from the service at the comparatively early age of sixty-eight, is an example of an officer who has kept abreast of all the changes, has cheerfully responded to the fresh demands, and has guarded unsullied the flag in every quarter of the globe. No better proof of the high regard entertained for him abroad can be cited, than that President Félix Faure, of republican France, tendered to him the Legion of Honour—the highest distinction in his power to offer. And we shall be glad to learn that Lord Salisbury has not only given his permission for Mr. Bernal to accept this high honour, but that he will supplement it by a recognition of long and faithful service in the form of a patent granted by Her Majesty.

Mr. Bernal is the youngest son of the late Right Honourable Ralph Bernal, M.P., who was Chairman of Committees during those stormy times in which the Reform Bill of 1832 was carried, and who discharged the onerous duties of the chair for fifteen years thereafter. Frederick Bernal was born in 1828, and through an accident lost his left arm at an early age. He was educated at Eton, and when in his twentieth year became a Committee Clerk of the House of Commons. At the age of twenty-six he was commissioned by Her Majesty as Consul at Madrid, and four years later, in 1858, he was transferred to Cartagena, in New Granada. It was at this time that he was able to render substantial service, involving difficulties and exacting tact, in connection with French interests at the port; and for this he received the special



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