who must be the architects of the distinguished position of eminence to which we wish to restore this ancient land of ours. By moving for a better organisation of public and private charity, by curtailing extravagance on marriages and other occasions, we shall be placing ourselves in a position not only to give a greater amount of relief to real distress and helplessness, but also to supply the indispensable capital without which our workers in the industrial line are so seriously handicapped. By rescuing caste from its present absurdities and exaggerations, and confining it within its ancient reasonable limits, we shall be practically preaching to our division-loving countrymen the holy gospel of love, peace and concord, without which a united India is an impossibility, and a common nationality a myth and a fiction. By successfully solving the question of foreign travel, we shall not only divest ourselves of the narrow-minded conceit, self-satisfaction and exclusiveness of the proverbial frog in the well which we at present undoubtedly cherish, but also place at the service of our youth a wonderful educational agency which has almost a magical power for good —a power that has been so well illustrated in the recent history of our plucky neighbours of Japan, the brightest spot at present in old Orient. And by re-admitting into society converts from other faiths, we shall not only be vindicating the liberal catholicity of the pristine Hindu faith, but also showing a practical appreciation of that faith, and turning into friends a large number of our countrymen who are now forced into a hostile camp by our wayward obstinacy.

Ladies and gentlemen, these are questions which are intimately bound up with our national progress and welfare in all directions; and this being the work which it is the noble mission of this Conference to further, we have met here to-day to discuss and consider several of these questions. Until we build up a better mind in a better body, and until our souls are made fit temples for the great soul of the universe to live in, the materials necessary for great and rapid progress in all the directions in which we are now moving, and wish hereafter to move, will be wanting. Until we can produce in our race the able, the brave, the honest, the earnest, the steady, the persistent,

the self-sacrificing and the enthusiastic workers, who made ancient India what it was, and who have made modern Europe and America what they are, we cannot hope to make any solid and substantial progress, and this melancholy truth is brought home more and more every day to the minds of those persons who are engaged in the work of reform in different fields. Let us then gird up our loins, and give up the lethargy engendered by causes already touched upon, and rise equal to the importance of our work by putting forth in future more earnest efforts than we have hitherto done. Although speech is necessary for the ventilation of our programme, and we must again and again have recourse to it in future, as we have had recourse to it in the past, still mere lip-devotion to our cause cannot take us to the goal in view, as we must have now found by sad experience. The time has now surely come for translating speech and ideals into action, and showing by our sincerity and our enthusiasm to those of our countrymen whom we wish to win over to our views, that we really believe in all that we say. If we adopt and adhere to this course resolutely, manfully and in the proper spirit of self-sacrifice, the time will soon come when our Social Reform programme, which is transparently simple, and cannot be long misunderstood, will, under Providence, be viewed with favour by those who are now looking askance at it, and sure enough, those who now come to scoff and flout us, will then remain to pray and bless us.

Before I conclude and sit down, I beg to tender my heartfelt thanks to our good sisters of Amraoti, who, headed by our friend Mrs. Gangubai Joshi, and ably assisted by such ladies as my clever friend Mrs. Manoramabai of Nagpur, were able to organise almost in a trice a very successful exhibition, which we have had so much pleasure to witness in the course of this week. Let us all hope that such exhibitions as these become the normal feature of our annual gatherings, and that this exhibition proves to be the nucleus of regular and full-fledged Fine Arts Exhibitions of the kind annually held at Simla by our advanced sisters from Europe. I also note with pleasure the very gratifying fact which must have struck you all as a

very prominent feature of this year's gathering—the fact, *viz.*, that our Conference this year has been graced with the presence of such a large number of lady friends as might well excite the envy and emulation of even the more advanced provinces. Our best thanks are surely due to these good angels, who have lent so much grace and dignity to this gathering and this pleasant debt of gratitude I beg to discharge with all my heart.

The Twelfth Social Conference—Rao Bahadur K. Viresalingam Pantulu's Address.

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,—I consciously feel that I, an humble and incompetent individual, am not worthy of the position which has been thrust on me and which has been filled with credit at the previous Conferences by eminent and worthy gentlemen with whom I hardly bear any comparison. I wish your selection had fallen on an abler person. As it is however your pleasure that I should occupy the chair, I heartily thank you for the honour you have conferred on me.

We are met here to consider questions of the gravest importance to our society and hence to the commonwealth ; for, I believe the political development of a country must largely depend upon the social condition of the community which supplies the physical, intellectual and moral resources of the people The real work of improving our social environment undoubtedly lies outside Conferences of this kind, but meetings, discussions and resolutions are also necessary to prepare the ground and to fill the moral atmosphere of the community with ideas, which when they enrich the blood of the people, will stimulate them to action.

I have myself always endeavoured in my own humble way to work on the plan which makes action follow as closely as possible upon the heels of conviction. I may therefore be pardoned for the observation that discussions and resolutions do not by any means exhaust the real work of social or any kind of reform, although they have their own part to play in the grand drama of the evolution of humanity. I understand that the

methods of physical science have influenced all departments of modern thought in the West. My acquaintance with the physical sciences is not as wide as I should have liked it to be, but as far as I am able to judge, men of science work on the principle that true knowledge must be based on experiment and observation. I fancy that that wonderful engine which has brought many of you across hundreds of miles from the various parts of this vast continent was not devised by a single effort of imagination, but its evolution was a slow process in which hundreds of trials had to be made with patience and perseverance by as many brains and hands. The electricians who have harnessed lightning to drag the tram car, though by no means at lightning speed in our city, did not, I conceive, rely on mere *a priori* speculations as to how the development of the electrical science ought to proceed, but they had to make innumerable trials patiently and perseveringly. And if patient and plodding work is necessary in the domain of physical science where the laws which the elements obey are more easily ascertainable, patient and plodding and often painful work is still more necessary for social reform, inasmuch as the laws of the human mind and of human society are more difficult to understand and more difficult to be made the basis of any dogmatic theory. I have sometimes been bewildered by the discussions in newspapers about what are called methods of social reform. That bewilderment is no doubt largely explained by the fact that I am not competent to grasp the latest sociological discoveries of Western *savants*, but I must confess that I have generally missed in these discussions any reference to the efforts made by the disputants to check their theories by this experience. Patient, honest and intelligent work is not only the one indispensable condition of the success of the social reform movement, but it is also the only safe-guard against errors of judgment and the results of preconceived theories. The work cannot of course be done in annual meetings like the Conference, but as I said before, meetings of this kind have also an important function to perform in the economy of the social reform movement.

It should not be necessary in the twelfth Conference, and

it would be presumptuous in an unsophisticated individual like me to attempt to set forth the objects which may be served by a Conference like this. But as I laid some stress on the work that has to be done outside the Conference, I wish to be permitted to point out that these annual meetings contribute in an eminent degree to keep the ideas of reforms, as it were, in the air. That in itself is insufficient, and forms no part of the work of social reform, but it forms a material part of the means of reform. You often hear it stated that the Conference is all talk, and that nothing will come of it but mere waste of breath. I hope nobody will accuse me of fondness for hearing my own voice, for I seldom speak in public, but it seems to me that those that regard these Conferences as mere *tamasha* take altogether a narrow view of the imperceptible influence of such gatherings. The annual Conference should certainly be supplemented by the activity of smaller local bodies working throughout the year. Without such activity the Conference will sooner or later begin to suffer from the effects of inanition. But while I think that the Conference must have a large number of feeders, the annual gathering itself will rest on those feeders and serve to combine them into one harmonious system of organisation.

The Conference may thus be reckoned among the educative agencies which make for reform. You often hear it stated that education is the best remedy for the evils from which our society is suffering. If by education you mean that which is imparted in your schools and colleges, this statement does not express the whole truth, and our educated men themselves will bear out the truth of my remark, for, we know the majority of our educated men are as backward in espousing the cause of social reform in *practice* as their uneducated countrymen. Then again observation will reveal to you communities in which education has made such great progress that there is hardly a man in them who is unable to read and write, and yet which would not give admission into society to an England-returned man, and much less to a re-married widow. A friend was telling me the other day that a well-known local Hindu gentleman of great age and experience was once bitterly remarking to him

that education, while it makes good men better, makes bad men worse. This epigram, like others of its kind, must no doubt be accepted with a good deal of reservation; but observation will show you that literary education is often a double-edged weapon. For your purpose, this education, which makes men think and undoubtedly prepares the ground, must be supplemented first, by a familiarity with the ideas of reform, and secondly, by the influence of personal example. But personal example cannot of course be set in annual meetings. These can only contribute to render the right kind of ideas more familiar to the people. These Conferences, therefore, have an important function to perform.

The subjects which you have to consider, though generally called social, relate to the individual and to the family, as well as to society at large. The questions of temperance, purity and perhaps of female education may be said to primarily relate to the individual. The questions of infant-marriage, widow-marriage and others of that kind may be said to relate to the family. The elevation of the depressed classes, inter-marriage between sub-sects, foreign travel, religious endowments, and such other subjects may be said to effect the society at large. But all these questions are intimately connected with one another. For, what affects the individual affects the family and what affects the family must affect society. It is not for me now to speak on any of the particular subjects which you may discuss. I have no doubt that the various speakers will do ample justice to the several subjects which are entrusted to them and discuss them with maturity of judgment, fairness of reasoning, but coupled with courage and enthusiasm for the cause they uphold. There is one matter to which I should like to refer before I conclude. The President of last year's Conference expressed an opinion that your Madras friends "promise ere long to my mind to be the exemplars and the models of earnest workers for the rest of India," and similar compliments have from time to time been given to us by our kind friends of other parts of India. I am afraid, however, that the notions which seem to be entertained in other parts of India about our activity and earnestness, are very much exaggerated. My friends may not thank me if I

dispel that illusion about Madras, and it may even be quoted as another instance of the iconoclastic tendencies of social reforms. But if truth must be told, we in Madras, are as earnest, or as apathetic as our brethren elsewhere. There is as much of vacillation and temporising here as in other places. We are fond of inventing false theories and lame excuses to justify our conduct as people are elsewhere. We undertake difficult schemes as hastily, and fail in them as woefully, as perhaps in other parts of our country. In these circumstances, to accept all the kind encomiums which are now and then showered upon us for our earnestness, will go to prove that we are neither earnest nor honest. We may have more to learn from you than you say you have to learn from us. At any rate, let us all learn from one another, and help and encourage one another.

The Thirteenth Social Conference—Rai Bahadur Lala Baij Nath's Address.

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,—Permit me to offer you my sincerest thanks for the great honour you have done me in electing me as the Chairman of this august assembly. As I call to mind the many distinguished gentlemen who have so worthily presided over the deliberations of this Conference which aims at devising methods of reform for the whole of the Indian community, I feel that your choice might have been bestowed more advantageously upon a worthier head. As, however, you have been pleased to bestow the honour upon me, I gratefully accept it, craving your indulgence if I fail to justify your expectations.

We are met here to discharge one of the most solemn duties which each of us owes to his mother-land. Who is there, be he the most pronounced radical or the most pronounced conservative, who does not wish his country to prosper, all her sons and daughters morally elevated, possessing strong and well-developed bodies, properly cultivated minds, well-trained intellects, and in every way the best men and women of their age. The goal of all Indian reformers in the past has been to bring

Indian society to such a condition, and the goal of modern Indian reformers can also be no other. The reformer in the past had, however, to work under conditions, somewhat different from those under which the reformer in the present has to work. Society had not then so widely gone astray from its ancient ideals as it has done now, nor had later corruption taken such deep root in it as it has done in these times, nor were the forces the reformer had to contend with so strong and so numerous as they are now. The Rishis of ancient India declared all individual and national progress to lie in adherence to truth and duty, and the ten indications of Dharma, according to Manu were fortitude, compassion, control of the mind and the organs of sense, purity, intelligence, study of the Sastras, rectitude of behaviour and absence of anger. But the Rishis appealed to a society not so corrupt or lifeless as ours. Being the best, and the most morally elevated men of their age, they knew that the elevation of the race consisted in a harmonious development and satisfaction of all its wants. The task of the modern reformer in India is therefore one of peculiar difficulty and taxes his resources to the utmost. He should not only know thoroughly and clearly the wants and tendencies of his society and be capable of taking a broad survey of all its institutions, but also the evils under which it labours. Courage of conviction, firmness of purpose and a determined resolution to do the right looking neither to the right nor to the left, are demanded of him in a greater degree than they were from his predecessors.

He cannot, moreover, afford to lose sight of the fact that the evolutionary science of modern Europe makes the development of the intellectual capacity subordinate to the development of the religious character, and declares the future of nations to lie in assigning to reason a lower plane than religion. Said Mr. Lecky, speaking of the causes of the prosperity of nations as indicated by history : " Its foundation is laid in pure domestic life, in commercial integrity, in a high standard of moral worth, and of public spirit, in simple habits, in courage, uprightness, and a certain soundness and moderation of judgment which springs quite as much from character as from intellect. If you would form a wise judgment of the future of a nation,

observe carefully whether these qualities are increasing or decaying. Observe carefully what qualities count for most in public life. Is character becoming of greater or less importance? Are the men who obtain the highest posts in the nation men of whom, in private life, irrespective of party competent judges speak with genuine respect? Are they of sincere convictions, consistent lives and indisputable integrity? It is by observing this current that you can best cast the horoscope of a nation." (Lecky's Political Value of History) The conclusion of the Rishis of ancient India was no other, and the Indian reformer has therefore to keep this ideal as steadily in view as the reformer in Europe.

A revival of Hinduism is noticeable almost everywhere in India, and many think such a revival to be somewhat hostile to the work of social reform. But no Hindu revival, if it is to be at all genuine, can have any other object in view than the removal of all such barriers as impede the progress of the Hindus in the march of civilisation—an object which the social reformer has also in view. What applies to individuals also applies to societies and no society, which aims at a revival of Hinduism without making the necessary reforms in the social conditions of the Hindus, can hope to succeed or earn the sympathy of any right-minded Indian. All that a society, whether it be for social or religious reform, can do, and ought to do, is to find out how far the nation has gone astray from its best and truest ideals, and what portion of its present institutions favours, and what retards its attainment of those ideals; to have the latter retained and the former reformed and modified. This and no other is, I believe, the programme of this Conference, as well as of all other bodies that derive their initiative from it. They are not revolutionary but reforming bodies, working on the lines of the least resistance, and never losing sight of the fact that their goal is the harmonious development of the Indian society in order to make it as perfect as possible.

Opposition there has always been, and shall always be, to the work of reform. Buddha, Sankara, Nanaka, Chaitanya, and others who set themselves about reforming Indian society of their times, had to do so in the teeth of the bitterest opposi-

tion from the advocates of its then existing systems. In some cases it was active hostility, in others passive indifference. But if the cause was right, success came in the end. Perseverance was all that was required So it ought to be with us also. Our difficulties in the work of social reform are our best helpmates, and if we but persevere in our efforts, we shall find our difficulties growing less, and ourselves making greater impression upon the community "Perseverance," says the Mahabharata, is the root of prosperity, gain, and all that is beneficial. The person who pursues an object steadily without giving it up in vexation, is truly great, and enjoys everlasting happiness"

I am not one of those who believe our cause is losing; on the contrary the large and sympathetic audience around me is the best proof of the increasing interest taken in our proceedings throughout the country. It is the Social Conference which has given the initiative to the many caste reform associations, like the Kayastha, the Bhargava, the Vaisya, the Rajput and others, which are now working in these parts of the country in the direction of social reform. In fact, the contagion has spread to the class which was hitherto considered to be altogether hostile to all reform—to Brahmanas, and it is a sign of the times that they too are having sectional Conferences of their own for the same purpose as the other castes. I need only refer to the Gaur, the Sanadha, the Chaturvedi, and the Kashmiri Conferences of that community. All these reform bodies are working on the lines of this Conference, discussing the subjects discussed by it and passing almost the same resolutions. Their success is proportionate to the degree of their effort in the work of reform, and the time during which each of them has been in existence. I shall, with your leave, speak of the work done by the Vaisya during the eight years it has been in existence. Its first sitting in Meerut was attended by only 36 members of the Vaisya community. Its seventh sitting in Delhi was attended by more than 350 delegates from out-stations, and about 2,000 visitors from Delhi. Its last sitting in Bareilly was attended by delegates and visitors not only from the North-Western Provinces, but also from the Punjab, Rajputana, and other parts of India. It has now

more than a hundred branch associations subordinate to it, all working on the lines laid down by it. It counts among its members not only men of the new, but of the old school also. Many of them are leaders of the community in their respective centres, and so great is the interest taken in its proceedings that last year, when in Delhi the question of the lowest marriageable age for girls came up for discussion, the excitement among the Vaisya community of that place was very great. The question became the topic of the day all over the town, and the resolution was passed after the most vehement discussion and amidst the greatest excitement. Similarly in 1896, in Ajmere, when the question of the settlement of caste disputes by private arbitration was being discussed, some sympathetic outsiders appealed to the Conference to procure the amicable settlement of a local dispute about a religious procession, which had been going on among the Vaisyas of Ajmere for some years past, and had cost them enormous sums of money. The matter was enquired into, and some of the members of the Conference undertook to act as arbitrators. The lecturers of the Conference and its papers are doing good work in disseminating its aims and objects in the community, and it is some satisfaction to find the more progressive among us often inviting our lecturers to lecture on social reform on occasions of marriages, and providing these as entertainment for their guests instead of the nautch girls of old. The ages of marriage both for boys and girls prescribed by it have the sanction of the best Sastris of these parts and are being adopted by the community. The scale of expenditure prepared under its direction is also finding favour among the community, and it is not uncommon to find people settling beforehand that marriages shall be conducted according to its rules. The old system of indiscriminately throwing away large sums of money on occasions of marriage is now gradually giving place to its employment in a more useful manner, and one of our prominent members last year set a good example of giving a part of the money he was going to spend on the occasion of his son's marriage, as a donation to the Hindu College of Benares, and another as a fund for the establishment of a female school in Delhi. Even in the latter place, which is re-

markable for its love of show and pomp, a branch of the Conference has been successful in materially reducing the expenditure on some of the marriage ceremonies, and in altogether cutting down the others. The offenders against the rules of the Association are looked down upon and in some cases a nominal penalty is also imposed upon them. The system of advertising for husbands and wives may seem new to the East, but we find our caste paper, the *Vaisya Hitkari*, generally full of advertisements from parents and guardians of both boys and girls eligible for marriage. These advertisements are always matter of fact productions, and describe the position in life of the advertiser, the age, health, education of his child, and the kind of husband or the wife he requires. Last year the Conference discussed the effect of the present system of education upon the youth of the community and it was probably due to its initiative that some very desirable changes in it were introduced by the authorities in these provinces. In order to widen the field of employment of the younger portion of the community, the Conference has set itself about having them trained in arts and manufactures in foreign countries as well as in India by those of its members who own mercantile and manufacturing or banking firms. Its orphanage and Ayurvedic dispensaries are also gaining in popularity and altogether it has a good future before it. Above all it has succeeded in rousing the *Vaisyas* to a sense of their condition both in the past and the present, as well as provided the means of inducing a feeling of affection and regard among its members, and even if it had done nothing else, that alone would have entitled it to its gratitude. I have spoken of the work of the Vaisya Conference as I happen to know it best. The work of the other caste Conferences, like the Kayastha and the Bhargava, is no less praiseworthy. If the reformers have not been able to achieve the success they deserve, it is because they have to work in a society where education has not yet made much progress among the masses, and where old but unreasonable customs are still holding their sway.

As remarked by a great writer, "custom is a violent and treacherous schoolmistress who, by little and little, slyly, unperceived, slips in the foot of her authority, but having thus by

gentle means and humble beginnings with the aid of time established it, unmasks a furious and tyrannical countenance against which none has the courage nor the power so much as to lift up his eyes." The reformer in a country like India, especially in provinces like these, has therefore to meet with great difficulty in making good his standing-place. This is a work of years, requiring the utmost patience. He has not only to be a whole man all round and have a clear conception of his aims and objects, but has also often to work unassisted, deserving little sympathy from those around him, and having generally to rely upon his own resources in his efforts to undo the work of centuries. He requires to look neither to the right nor to the left, neither backwards nor forwards, but always towards the object he has in view, and if he adheres to the well-known Persian saying of "*Himmat mardan madad Khudá*"—Heaven helps those who help themselves,—success will come to him in the end, tardily though it be. This, I believe, is the steady aim which all reformers have or ought to have in view, and I hope the day may soon come when we shall be able to show you more tangible results than we have done hitherto.

We are told that, in having so many caste Conferences and Associations, we are wasting power and are scattering force which ought to be conserved, that it will be much better, if instead of having so many separate bodies working independently, we had one Social Reform Association like this Conference. I regret I cannot subscribe to this opinion We are not, by working in the way we are doing, perpetuating distinctions and differences which ought not to be perpetuated. On the contrary we take society as we find it, and are beginning the work of reform in the only way in which it could possibly begin, *i.e.*, from the bottom upwards. A general social reform organisation like this Conference, though most useful and necessary as an advising body cannot, from the present circumstances of the country, be a working body. All that it can do is to lay down a general programme of social reform, leaving it to each caste and community to carry it out in the manner most suited to its conditions. The number of earnest reformers in the various provinces is yet few and far between, though as time goes on we hope

to see a larger accession to our numbers, and each community shall reckon not a few but many workers in the field till the cry of social reform is re-echoed from one part of the country to the other. I need not cite for our workers the well-known saying of a Sanskrit poet, that where these six, *viz*, exertion, courage, fortitude, intelligence, strength of character, and enterprise, are found, there even the gods are ready to offer their help. Well did the wisest Indian of his time say. "Thy sphere is action, not regard for the fruit of action."

I shall not say much on the subjects we are going to discuss. None of them is new, and they have all been very fully and ably discussed both in the press as well as on the platform, so much so that a vast amount of useful literature has grown round most of them. All that seems to be necessary is to devise practical methods for carrying out the suggested reforms. We do not, for instance, now require to be told the advantages of female education which are now being recognised by almost the whole of the Indian community, a few men and women of the orthodox school excepted. On the contrary the questions which demand serious consideration are: (1) Whether we should educate our girls on the same lines as we are doing our boys in the matter of primary, secondary and college education; if we are to do so with certain modifications, what ought to be such modifications? (2) Are we, as is the general opinion of many of our greatest sympathisers, to give our wives, and daughters, only such education in their vernaculars as is necessary for the successful management of an ordinary Indian household, or are we also to give high education to those who seek for it? (3) What are the kinds of subjects we are to teach our females, and what books are we to place in their hands?

All these questions are periodically discussed in the various reform Conferences in the country, and any suggestions from a distinguished body like this Conference will materially help the movement. In some communities fathers of boys, and boys themselves, insist upon having educated wives, and this is made a condition precedent in some marriage negotiations. Might I suggest a more universal adoption of this suggestion in order to afford greater impetus to the work of

reform? In connection with this subject, I beg to appeal to those of our countrymen who have received the benefits of a Western education to bring their knowledge to bear upon the compilation of suitable text-books for our females and thus make them sharers in their culture. For some years past we have been advertising for suitable text-books for females, and are prepared to give handsome prizes for a series of such books, but our advertisement has not yet been responded to on the part of those who are best able to give us good text-books.

The subject of promotion of the physique of our boys and girls is so closely connected with the question of raising the marriageable age that the two may usefully be considered together. The lowest marriageable ages prescribed by the various Conferences in the country have not yet been universally adopted in the community, yet the progress we have already made in this direction is very hopeful, and parents and guardians of boys, and the latter themselves, are gradually coming to recognise the advantages of marrying at a proper age. This is producing a good effect upon parents and guardians of girls also, and I submit for the consideration of all who are assembled in this Conference, that if they but determine to have their boys marry at a proper age, they will soon find some progress in the direction of raising the marriageable age of girls also. I need scarcely tell you, ladies and gentlemen, that in Western countries the lower the station in life, the earlier the age of marriage, and that among classes which aspire to rise high in the social scale marriage is delayed even up to middle age in order to have fewer children, but such as shall be more capable of succeeding in the present struggle of life in those countries. For instance among the working classes, the average age of marriage among women is between 22 and 24, and among men between 24 and 26. Among farmers the averages are 26 and 29, and among the professional classes 31 and 36. The number of confirmed bachelors among the last mentioned classes is greater than among the first two. Here in India the case is exactly the reverse. The higher the station in life, the lower the age at which children are married, with the result that we are adding every year to a population already incapable of achieving

any success in the modern struggle for existence, or swelling the number of child and girl widows dragging a life of misery, and instead of decreasing are only adding to the general poverty of the country. All indulgence in show and pomp at marriages is also due to this system of child-marriage. Reform it and you lessen the inducements to extravagance on occasions of marriage.

The question of reform in the caste system is closely connected with the questions of unequal marriages, sales of boys and girls for enormous sums of money in the name of marriage, as well as with the restrictions on foreign travels. Broaden the basis of caste by having those sub-sections of a caste which inter-dine also to inter-marry, and *vice versâ*, and you widen the circle of choice of husbands and wives and affect some reform in the system of unequal marriages, and sales of boys and girls; you would also thereby promote brotherly feeling among the members of the caste, and make them less exclusive and more devoted to public good. Many of the restrictions upon foreign travel will also be relaxed, if not removed, by reforming the caste system. Such restrictions are due more to prejudice than to any religious prohibition. The most learned Sastris in the country have given their dictum in favour of sea-voyages, but caste prejudices defy the Sastris and their Sastras. In some communities in the Punjab and parts of the North-Western Provinces such restrictions have been removed in the case of those who, on return from Europe, live and mix with their fellows, in the same manner as they did before going to Europe. In some of these communities a visit to Europe does not excite much notice. The members of those communities have come to recognise the danger of alienating the sympathies of, and throwing overboard, those who are best capable of helping them on in the race of progress by their widened knowledge and experience of foreign countries. On the other hand the latter have also come to recognise the importance of their living with their brethren and keeping themselves in touch with their own community, in preference to unsympathetic relations with foreigners.

These are some of the most important subjects we are going to discuss, and I beg most earnestly the attention of all speakers

to the importance of dealing with each of them in a practical manner. We require not only ourselves to recognise but also to bring home to our less favoured countrymen, the fact that no society can hope to prosper where artificial restrictions or class privileges prevent individuals from putting forth their best powers both to their own and their country's advantage, where the high are prevented from sympathising actively with the low and the mean, where the standard of virtue is neither the same as it was in its own past nor what it is in the most progressive nations of modern times. We have long defied the moral law. In unmistakable tones it tells us that if we aspire to rise in the scale of nations we must purify private life and effect social justice, that our safety lies only in defying it no longer. Says Tennyson :

> Love thou thy land, with love far-brought
> From out the storied Past, and used
> Within the present, but transfused
> Thro' future time by power of thought.
> Watch what main-currents draw the years ;
> Cut Prejudice against the grain ;
> But gentle words are always gain ;
> Regard the weakness of thy peers.
> Nor toil for title, place, or touch,
> Of pension, neither count on praise,
> It grows to guerdon after-days ;
> Nor deal in watch-words overmuch ;
> Not clinging to some ancient saw,
> Not master'd by some modern term,
> Not swift nor slow to change, but firm
> And in its season bring the law
> That from discussion's lip may fall
> With Life, that, working strongly, binds—
> Set in all lights by many minds,
> To close the interests of all.
> For Nature also, cold and warm,
> And moist and dry, devising long,
> Thro' many agents making strong,
> Matures the individual form.
> Meet is it changes should control
> Our being, lest we rust in ease,

We all are changed by still degrees,
All but the basis of the Soul.
So let the change which comes be free
To improve itself with that which flies,
And work a joint of state that plies
Its office moved with sympathy.

I should now conclude. Our ancestors call to us not to let the glorious inheritance they have left us rot and perish. They tell us: "You are proud of us, let your children be also proud of you. According as the generations that come bear honourable witness to your deeds, so shall your fame be." What great deeds, what great institutions, what noble manners and customs of many a nation of antiquity have passed away because succeeding generations could not maintain them in their original purity, nor improve upon them as the times required. It is now for us to prove whether those are right who believe that humanity ever advances in a course of ceaseless improvement and that the great ideals of old are no mere empty dreams, or those who slumber in the sluggish indolence of a mere animal existence and mock every aspiration towards a higher life. Such an answer can only be given by us by deserving the blessings of those who blessed their followers in these words: "May your minds be always devoted to *Dharma* during every day of your lives. That alone is man's friend in this world as well as in the next. Those who follow *Dharma* do their duty without expectation of honour or reward, though both came in the end. Let us therefore never renounce truth and duty, remembering that truth protects those who protect it and kills those who kill it."

धर्मएवहतोहन्ति धर्म्मो रक्षति रक्षितः ।
तस्माद्धर्म्मो नहन्तव्यो मानो धर्म्मो हतोऽवधीत॥

Ladies and gentlemen, permit me now to thank you very sincerely for the kind attention and patience with which you have listened to these words of mine.

FOURTH PART.

Miscellaneous Papers on Social Reform.

Dr. R. G. Bhandarkar, PH.D., C.I.E., on "Social Reform and the Programme of the Madras Hindu Social Reform Association."

Dr. R. G. Bhandarkar delivered the following address as President of the Second Anniversary meeting of the Madras Hindu Social Reform Association, held on the 27th December 1894 :—I have been all my life a schoolmaster and as such it has been my duty to castigate boys and young men. In the observations I am going to make, therefore, you may find a good deal not flattering to you nor to your taste ; but I assure you it will be said with a pure and unmixed desire to promote the real good of my country. The Hindu Social Reform Association has done me very great honour by inviting me to preside at its annual meeting. But great as the honour is, it had not a sufficient attractive power to drag me about seven hundred miles away from my closet in Poona. What I come for is to encourage the members of the Association and congratulate them on having begun real practical work in matters of social reform by taking pledges, and on their determination to withstand all the inconveniences or persecution that may result therefrom for the sake of the truth and their country's good. They have thus shown rare moral courage, and given evidence of the possession of what I call moral force. By moral

force I mean in the present case strong indignation against the evils, injustice, and even the cruelties that at present disgrace our society, and an earnest desire to eradicate them. Moral forces of this sort our race has not shown within the last twenty centuries, and we have allowed ourselves without any thought and feeling to be drifted into our present deplorable condition.

The social ideal was much higher and more rational in ancient times than it is now. I will, therefore, go into the history of the several institutions and practices which your pledges refer to. For this purpose, I propose to glance at what might be called the several layers of Sanskrit literature. The oldest layer is that of the *mantras* of the Vedas. Next in antiquity come the Brahmanas and Aranyakas or forest-chapters including the Upanishads. Then we have the so-called Sutras which deal with sacrificial matters and the religious concerns of daily life of the first three castes. Next we have the epic poems, the Mahabharata and Ramayana, and last of all the metrical Smritis or law-books and the Puranas. The point of view from which I shall consider this extent of literature is that of the critical scholar, whose object is to trace out history, and not of the Pandit, according to whom sequence of time either does not exist or is unimportant.

Now with reference to the first point about the education of women, there is no question that in the very olden times, they were not debarred from the highest education. In the list of teachers which a Rigvedi Brahman has to repeat in connection with a daily ceremony called the Brahma Yajna there are the names of three women—Gargi Vachaknevi, Sulabha Maitreyi, and Vadava Pratitheyi. The works of some of the male teachers therein named have come down to us, wherefore they were historical persons. Hence the three women mentioned along with them were also historical persons, and were teachers though there are now no works which go by their names. The first of these is also mentioned in an Upanishad, as forming a member of an assemblage of learned Rishis in which the highest problems about the world and the Supreme and individual soul were discussed, and as taking part in the debate. In the epic poems girls are represented as going through a regular course of

education of which dancing, drawing and music formed parts; they are represented as mixing freely with men and taking part in conversation on the highest subjects. Buddhistic literature also represents women as actively assisting the reform which Buddha had inaugurated, and as discussing with him points about virtue, duty and absolution. Gradually, however, their importance lessened and about the time when the dramatic literature arose, we find that as a class they were not taught Sanskrit though they could read and write in the popular languages and even compose poetry in them. Even so late as the eleventh century women were not condemned to exclusion, and were taught scientific music, as follows from a copper plate inscription recently edited and translated by me in which a queen, one of the wives of a king of the Deccan, is represented to have sung a beautiful song in an assembly composed of the highest officers of that and the surrounding kingdoms, and to have obtained as a reward the consent of her husband to give land in charity to Brahmans. The seclusion of women and their ignorance is, therefore, a custom that was introduced in later times, and the Mussulman domination contributed to render it very rigid.

Now as to early marriages, it admits of no question whatever that girls were married after they came of age. The religious formulas that are repeated on the occasion of marriage ceremonies even at the present day can be understood only by mature girls. The bridegroom has to say to his bride that she has become his friend and companion and that together they would bring up a family. It is impossible that a girl below the age of twelve can understand such expressions addressed to her. When the formulas were composed, therefore, girls had already arrived at maturity. Then again, in some of the Sutras, the bride and the bridegroom are directed to live apart from each other for a certain number of days and in some cases for a year. It is not possible that such a direction should be given, if the girl was of an age when she could not cohabit with her husband. In some of the Sutras there is an actual direction for their being brought together on the fourth day after the marriage ceremony. All this necessarily implies that the girl had

arrived at maturity before the marriage ceremony was performed. In profane literature also, we have the clearest indications that girls were married after they attained maturity. But early marriages began soon to come into practice. Asvalayana, Apastamba and others say nothing specific about the age of the girl at the time of marriage, leaving it to be understood, from the nature of the ceremonies that they were to be of a mature age. Hiranyakesen and Jaimini expressly prohibit a man's marrying a girl before she has arrived at puberty. After the completion of his study, the student, they direct, shall marry a girl who is *anagnika*, *i.e.*, not immature. Evidently when these Rishis wrote, the practice of early marriages was coming in; but they set their face against it as irrational. The authors of later Sutras, such as Gobhila and Manu, after giving general directions as regards marriage, lay down that it is best to marry a girl who is *nagnika*, *i.e*, one who has not arrived at puberty. They only thus recommend early marriages. This shows that when they lived and wrote the feeling against late marriages had grown strong. Of the writers of Metrical Smritis, Manu is not quite decidedly opposed to late marriages, but other writers prescribe early marriages only under religious penalties. In this manner late marriages gradually went out of use and early marriages became general. When the custom of such marriages became established, the evils arising from them were not perceived by anybody, and gradually in this part of the country in particular, the age at which boys and girls were married became lower and lower, until now a female infant nine months old is tied in holy wedlock to a male infant about a year old. Here there is an instance of the fact that our people through the influence of custom lost all sense of the utter absurdity of the practice.

The practice of re-marriage of women also prevailed in the olden times. The Aitareya Brahmana contains a statement which may be thus translated: 'Therefore one man may have several wives, but one woman cannot have several husbands simultaneously.' This shows that polygamy was in practice, but not polyandry. And to exclude that only and not a woman's having several husbands at different times, the writer uses the

word 'simultaneously.' Thus a woman can have several husbands at different times. In the performance of the funeral ceremonies of the keeper of the sacred fire, the practice prevailed of making his wife lie down with his dead body, but before setting fire to the latter, the wife was made to rise and a verse was repeated the sense of which is: 'Rise up, O woman, to join the world of the living, thou liest down with this man who is dead; come away, and mayest thou become the wife of this second husband, who is to take hold of thy hand.' This verse occurs in the Rig Veda Samhita and in the Taitireya Aranyaka. In the latter it is explained by Sayana in accordance with my translation, but in the former he explains the word *Didhishu*, which occurs in it, not as a second husband as he does here, but 'as one who impregnates,' and makes it applicable to the first husband. European scholars of what might be called the 'etymological school' also explain the word in the latter sense, but the word *Didhishu* acquired by usage the sense of 'a second husband,' and it is not proper to set aside that sense and explain it etymologically as 'one who impregnates.' And another school of Vedic scholars, who attend more to usage, is growing up in Germany, and I feel confident that they would explain the word and verse in the manner in which Sayana explains it in the Taitireya Aranyaka. This verse is in the Atharva Veda preceded by another, the sense of which is 'this woman wishing to be in the same world with her husband lies down by thy side, O mortal who art dead, following the ancient practice; grant her in this world children as well as wealth.' If he is asked to give her children after his death, they must be children from another husband. In another place in the Atharva Veda, it is stated that 'she, who after having had one husband before gets another afterwards, will not be separated from him and if she and he perform the rite called Ajahanchandana.' Here you have a clear statement about the re-marriage of a widow. In later times, the practice began to go out of use, and in the time of Manu it was restricted to a child-widow. But the condition of re-married women was considered lower than that of the wife of a first husband. Still however in two other metrical Smritis occurs a text, in

which women under certain circumstances are allowed to marry a second husband and the death of the first husband is one of these circumstances. This shows that even in later times, the practice of widow-marriages prevailed in some parts of the country, while the existence of texts prohibitory of it in the Puranas and some Smritis shows that it had gone out of use in others. Widow-marriage was a thing by no means unknown even at such a late period as the beginning of the twelfth century of the Christian era, for, in a work written by a Jain in 1170 of the Vikram era corresponding to 1114 of the Christian era, a story is told of a certain ascetic sitting down to dinner along with other ascetics. The other ascetics rose up when he sat down and left their seats. He asked them why they had done so, upon which they told him that he had committed an irreligious deed in having taken the vow of an ascetic, before going through the previous condition of a married life. They then directed him to go away and marry a wife. He went away and demanded the daughters of men belonging to his caste in marriage. But as he had become an old man, nobody would give his daughter to him, whereupon he went back to the ascetics and told them of what had occurred. They then advised him to marry a widow, and he went away and did accordingly. In connection with this, the same text about the re-marriage of women, which I have quoted above, is given as occurring in their Sastras. But in still later times the practice became entirely obsolete.

There prevailed among us, you know, the practice of burning widows on the funeral piles of their dead husbands, till it was put a stop to in 1830 by the British Government. Now in the Rig Veda Samhita there is no trace whatever of the existence of this practice, and it is supposed by a German scholar that it was adopted by Indian Aryas from another Aryan race, with whom they afterwards came in contact; for it did generally prevail amongst some of the cognate European races such as the Thracians. But the Vedic Aryas had given it up; and that it once prevailed among them and was afterwards given up is indicated by the second of the two texts which I have quoted from the Atharva Veda in which it is said: 'This

which in the beginning, at least when unchecked by other influences, gives rise to separate castes. The word Brahman signifies in the older portion of the Veda a hymn composed in praise of a deity. There were some men, who were skilled in the composition of such songs. In return for these songs the gods, to whom they were addressed, were believed to confer favours on the singers, and on those Kings and Princes for whose sake they were composed. Singers such as these were therefore always in requisition, whenever a god had to be propitiated, and it became a lucrative trade. And fathers bringing up their sons in that trade, there came to be in course of time a certain number of families devoted to the avocation of composing these songs and singing them in the worship of gods. The members of these families became 'Brahmanas' and thus they came to be recognised as a separate caste. Similarly the descendants of princes, chiefs and soldiers followed the avocations of their ancestors, and came to form a caste of warriors. The cultivators of soil constituted the Vaisya caste. When the Aryan race left the Punjab and spread over Northern India, some of the aboriginal races were incorporated with their society, and formed the caste of Sudras. Thus there were four castes, but the rules about these were by no means so rigid as they afterwards became. Even in the time of the epics, the Brahmans dined with the Kshatryas and Vaisyas, as we see from the Brahmanic sage—Durvasa—having shared the hospitality of Draupadi, the wife of Pandavas. A member of a higher caste could marry a woman belonging to any of the lower castes, there were also many instances in which a man belonging to a lower caste married a woman from the higher castes. Amongst the composers of the Vedic hymns there were some such as Kavasha Ailusha, who did not belong to the Brahman caste, but was still admitted into it on account of the faculty they possessed. What caste has become in the course of time you need not be told. The smallest difference as regards locality, trade, or profession and practice was enough to constitute a separate caste, and thus four original castes have grown to four thousand, and there are no inter-marriages or inter-dining between any two of these. These four thousand castes form so many different com-

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munities and the phrase 'Hindu community' is but a geographical expression. The evil results of such a system on the social, religious and political condition of a country cannot be overstated.

Thus then you will see that our social institutions and practices were healthy and rational in the olden times, and they have latterly become corrupt and irrational through some cause or other. But the most wonderful thing about the matter is that the excesses which in the downward course our race was led to, did not attract attention and rouse the moral sentiments or excite moral indignation ; and women were committed to the flames, crying child-widows were forcibly disfigured and condemned to a solitary and unhappy life, little girls were sacrificed at the hymenal altar in numbers, female infants were murdered and there was nobody to protest against these cruelties as Hiranyakshin and Jaimini once did against early marriages. On the other hand, these later practices acquired the forces of custom. Custom is a god whom our race devoutly worships, and religious sanction was accorded to these practices by the insertion of texts in the later books. The moral sentiments were not strong enough to burst through the thick veil of custom and assert the claim of truth, justice and humanity. The question now is whether with our minds liberalised by English education and contact with European civilisation, we shall still continue to worship custom and be its slaves, and allow our moral sentiments to remain dead and unjust, and cruel social practices to flourish. If our education does not lead us to protest against them, that education must be considered to be merely superficial. Gentlemen, we have in the course of our history not emancipated ourselves from the tyranny of our political potentates and from the tyranny of custom, our social potentate. Fortunately now the British Government has freed us from the former and granted us rights and allowed us a large measure of freedom ; but not satisfied with that we are seeking for greater freedom. Shall we then with the spirit of freedom thus awakened stoop slavishly to the tyrant custom, and bear all the cruelty that it inflicts upon us? If we do, the spirit of freedom that we think

is awakened in us is illusive and delusive. No! if we have to march on along with the progressive races of the West, with whom we are now indissolubly united, our social institutions must improve and become more rational and just. There can be no advancement politically, I firmly assert, without social and moral advancement. And by seeking the several reforms that we have in view, we certainly shall not be taking a leap in the dark, for the condition of our society once was what we are now endeavouring to make it. This is the spirit in which we should approach the question—of sweeping away from our institutions the corruptions of later ages.

It has often been suggested that on the strength of the texts in the old books we should convince the orthodox leaders of our society of the reforms we seek being sanctioned by the Sastras, and endeavour to introduce them with their aid and consent. But such a thing to my mind is an impossibility. Our old books do not constitute the real authority in religious matters that we obey. Custom has been and is our authority,—custom is our religion. Texts creep into our religious books, as I have already observed, sanctioning current customs and even when they do not do so, our Pandits, who in later days have developed a great deal of logical acumen, prove by means of their subtle arguments customary practice to be the only one sanctioned by our religious books. The later development of the Hindu religious law has proceeded just on these lines. We must therefore begin the work of reform in spite of the orthodox leaders, trusting simply to our awakened moral consciousness and to the fact that it is not an entirely new thing that we are going to introduce.

I am therefore glad that you have begun the work in earnest and taken certain pledges. These pledges are good as a first instalment, though that about caste does not signify much in accordance with the standard prevailing in my part of the country. No one can excommunicate us in Western India for eating food prepared by Brahmins in the presence of members of *most* of the lower castes. I do not wish you, however, to obliterate all distinctions at once. Caste has become so inveterate in Hindu society that the endeavour to do so will only result

in the formation of new castes. But the end must steadily be kept in view. We must remember that caste is the greatest monster we have to kill. Even education and intercourse as regards food does not destroy it. The feeling that we belong to a certain caste and are different from those constituting another caste returns again and again in a variety of shapes, even when we have broken through the restraints imposed by caste as regards eating and drinking, and if not studiously driven away will ever keep us apart from each other and prevent the formation of a homogeneous nationality. I will ask you to consider whether a pledge not to be guided by caste considerations in the disposal of your patronage if you happen to be placed in a position of influence and in the whole of your ordinary practical life, and to act in all matters except inter-marriage and inter-dining as if you belonged to one community, will not be a *more* effective pledge. You might also gradually pledge yourself to dine with members of sub-castes.

Your pledges about concubines and nautch women are also highly commendable in my eyes. They show a correct appreciation of one of the problems before us. One who takes liberties in these matters cannot claim that he has respect for his wife's personality or for womankind generally. Our aims about the elevation of women and the assignment to her of her proper position in society, from which she may exercise a humanising influence over us all, cannot be realised, unless respect for her becomes a part of our nature. Again looseness in these matters deteriorates the character of a man and this deterioration must produce evil effects in other respects also. Your determined attitude in this matter therefore and the earnest efforts you have been making during the last two years to propagate your views have been to me the source of the deepest gratification, and deserve all the commendation that is possible for me to bestow. Moral rectitude here as elsewhere is the essential condition of progress all along the line.

As to your pledge to bring about widow-marriages and to admit the re-married widow and her husband to your table—that indeed is a bold step that you have taken. You will for a time be subjected to persecution, but I hope you have prepared

yourself for it, and if your educated countrymen who have not had the courage to join you will but sympathise with you and not aid the orthodox, I have little doubt that this reform itself will gradually become a custom and cease to be looked down upon. The great thing we have to remember is that we should go on practising what we consider to be good without making much ado about it. It will then come into general practice, and growing into a custom will become sanctified. For our previous history has, I again affirm, shown to my mind that custom is the spiritual potentate that sanctifies, and sanctifies even horrid deeds.

The Association you have started renders me hopeful. There is nothing like it on our side; and everywhere among educated natives there is lukewarmness about social reform. The minds of some are not liberalised at all, others think that the reforms we have in view are good but flatly refuse to do anything to aid them; while there are a great many who are supremely indifferent. I agree with my friend the Hon'ble Mr. Justice Ranade in thinking that there has been an awakening. But he has allowed us the option of being satisfied or dissatisfied with it. I exercise the option and declare that I am dissatisfied. The lamp has been lighted; but the light is flickering and in view of the attitude of even our educated brethren, it is just as likely to my mind that it will be blown out as that it will blaze. In these circumstances the endeavours that you are making are a great source of comfort and encouragement, and I earnestly hope you will continue your work as boldly as you have begun it, and that you will find imitators both in your Presidency and in other parts of India, and our country's cause will make a real advance.

The late Mr. Mano Mohan Ghose on "Social Progress in Bengal during the last Thirty Years."

The late Mr. Mano Mohan Ghose delivered the following address at a meeting of the National Indian Association in 1895, the Right Hon'ble Lord Hobhouse presiding:—LADIES AND

GENTLEMEN,—I confess I feel very diffident after Lord Hobhouse's kind introduction, as I am afraid you will be greatly disappointed if you expect me either to read a paper or deliver a speech on the present occasion. I think I ought to explain that, being on a short visit to this country and having been connected with this Association almost from the beginning, I felt I could not possibly decline the honour which Lady Hobhouse was pleased to confer upon me by inviting me to address the members of this Association upon some topic likely to be interesting to them. I must state at the outset that I have had no time whatever to write a paper upon the important subject on which, according to the notice, I desire to make a few remarks. The subject I have chosen is a wide one consisting of various topics, on each of which a good deal could be said. My remarks, however, will be of a somewhat desultory character and confined to three or four of the most important heads connected with social progress in Bengal during the last thirty years. There are two limitations which I have felt it necessary to prescribe to myself. The first is that my remarks will be confined to social progress among the Hindus in the Lower Provinces of Bengal. It is right that I should confine my observations to that part of India only with which I am familiar, and particularly to the Hindus of Bengal, as my experience of other races is exceedingly limited. The second limitation has reference to the period of time during which I have myself tried to be a careful observer of what has been going on around me. It is now nearly thirty years since I returned to India after my first visit to England as a student, and I therefore desire to limit my remarks to that period of time of which I can speak personally.

In order to be able rightly to estimate the character of the progress which has taken place during thirty years, it is necessary to bear in mind the state of things which existed formerly, and the difficulties which the people of Bengal had to encounter. It is equally necessary to have regard to the character and ideas of the people as they existed when the English were first brought into contact with them. Unless this is borne in mind it would be impossible rightly to gauge the character of the social revolution which is taking place amongst us. Having re-

gard to the state of things which existed in Japan, for instance, or to the advance recently made by the people of that country, the progress made by the people of Bengal may not be regarded as very considerable. But it would be scarcely right to institute any comparison between the people of Bengal and those of Japan for obvious reasons. The Hindus, as you are aware, have always been a conservative people, wedded to their own social institutions, and have always been opposed to the introduction into their country of foreign institutions. As I have said, I propose to touch only on some of the salient points connected with my subject, and I must confine myself to three or four heads, as it is impossible to do full justice even to any one of them in the course of a single hour.

The first point I wish to dwell upon is the Hindu Caste system ; I propose next to point out to you the progress made by the women of Bengal—and in this connection I wish to make a few observations on the marriage system, and certain other social customs which have undergone considerable changes. Before I conclude I shall have to point out some of the difficulties which are still in the way of further progress ; and in this connection I shall have incidentally to refer to the most important question, in which, I know, the members of this Association are deeply interested—namely, the social relations existing between the European and Indian races.

It should be borne in mind that the peculiar caste system of India constitutes the most formidable difficulty in the way of the introduction of European civilisation among the people of India. In religion, manners, habits, ideas, and I may say, almost in every particular which binds man to his fellow-creatures, the two races are widely apart. According to the old Hindu ideas, the very touch of a foreigner was pollution. This was the state of Hindu feeling when English schools and colleges were first established, and no wonder therefore that the Hindus should have suspected that the English Government was animated by some ulterior purpose in inviting them to send their sons to English schools for education. As you are aware, the peculiarity of the Indian caste system has reference chiefly to restrictions imposed upon the people as

regards their food and drink. No food or drink touched by a foreigner could be taken by a Hindu. These restrictions were of so rigorous a character that in course of time people strongly objected to eat any vegetable not indigenous to the country, but introduced by foreigners. A remarkable illustration of this is to be found in the fact that not very long ago Hindus could not be persuaded to eat potatoes. I am assured that, incredible as it may seem at the present day, my own grandfather, who died in 1817, could not be persuaded to sanction the eating of potatoes by members of his own family. It is curious that nearly 600 years' association with Mahomedans only tended to strengthen this feeling of antipathy towards the foreigner though the Hindu and the Mahomedan lived side by side. As I had occasion to point out some years ago, it is a curious and suggestive fact that, apart from its flavour or smell, Hindus strongly objected to the use of onion, because it was supposed that the Mahomedans had introduced it into India as an article of vegetable food. Even now there are Hindu widows who, on the same ground, object to cauli-flowers and cabbages. Such, then, was the state of things when the English first attempted to try this great experiment which is now going on. You have all heard that crossing the seas entailed upon the Hindu loss of caste; this was because he could not be expected to do so without departing from the strict rules of food prescribed for him. But at the present day, these caste rules have become so elastic, that, so far as Bengal is concerned, a man may now live in England for years, and on his return to India be looked upon a good Hindu provided he does not, by his own conduct, in any other way forfeit the confidence and the respect of his own people. During the last thirty years there have been many men who have returned from England, and the majority are now regarded as members of the Hindu community, though they have not thought fit to perform any of those expiatory ceremonies which were at one time considered requisite for the purpose of getting back into caste. Of late years young men belonging to some of the most orthodox families in Calcutta have been received back into their families on their return from England, and many are now living in English style, without visiting England, who are

for all practical purposes reckoned as good Hindus. This is a state of things which 30 years ago could not have been predicted. There have been even a few instances of inter-marriage among persons of different castes, but inter-marriage strikes at the very root of the entire social system of the Hindus. It is not, therefore, to be wondered at that there have not been many cases of inter marriage. As regards the restrictions with reference to food, which formed the greatest difficulty in the way of the progress of the Hindus, it is satisfactory to note that they have been completely relaxed.

I now come to the position occupied by Hindu women. I believe and I have always believed, that it is impossible for any race in the world to rise in civilisation if one-half of their population is kept in subjection and ignorance As you are aware, in Bengal Hindu women had for centuries been kept in a state of seclusion; this may have been partly due to Mahomedan influence, but whatever was the cause, thirty years ago the position of the Hindu women in Bengal was most deplorable. The state of things is altogether different now. As regards the seclusion of Hindu women, the change has been of a marvellous character. The introduction of railways and the necessities of travelling have done much towards bringing about this change. I well remember being much struck about thirty years ago, on my return to Bengal, at the number of palanquins and screens at every railway station on the arrival of a train to enable Hindu ladies to get into or out of a train without being seen by men. But at the present time almost at every railway station in Bengal you will see Hindu women of the middle classes walking to and from a train without any palanquin or screen to hide them. As regards the education of our women, we have also made rapid progress. There was a time when it was thought that the education of women would necessarily lead to the breaking up of Hindu homes and of Hindu society At the present moment there are female schools in almost every village in the country, and in the city of Calcutta we have a College for Hindu women, supported by Government, where Hindu ladies are qualifying themselves for the highest University Honours. In that respect I may say we have gone further even than Eng-

lish Universities, for we have now a considerable number of Hindu ladies who have received degrees from the University of Calcutta. In Bethune College there are at the present moment Hindu ladies of different castes boarding together, and receiving the highest education which our University can impart. In this connection I shall go back a little and refer to the history of this institution as you will find it exceedingly interesting. The boarding department of the Bethune College owes its existence to the philanthropic exertions of an English lady, who, a little more than twenty-three years ago, went to Bengal and laid the foundation of the first Boarding School for Hindu girls. This lady was Miss Akroyd (now Mrs. Beveridge), who, with the help of Lady Phear, was able to start a boarding school for Hindu women. In those days most of the pupils were married women or widows and some of them had to be induced by means of scholarships to attend the school. This institution was subsequently taken up by the Government of Bengal, and amalgamated with the Bethune School, which was before the amalgamation an infant day school. At the time of its amalgamation, in 1878, there were about half-a-dozen boarders, and it was then very much doubted whether it would be wise to keep up an institution which received so little support from the Hindu community. The Government of Bengal was, however, persuaded to erect a building, at a considerable cost, for the residence of these boarders, and when this building was completed not long ago, it was considered doubtful whether even one-half of the accommodation provided would be required by the pupils. The accommodation provided was for forty-six pupils, and it may be interesting to note that just before I left for England in September last, it was reported to me, as Secretary of the institution, that not only the entire accommodation had been filled up, but there were half-a-dozen further applications for admission, which for want of room I was obliged to refuse. The number forty-six no doubt sounds a small one amongst so vast a population, but considering the difficulties which had to be overcome I cannot but look upon it as exceedingly encouraging. It is curious to find that many of the Bengali ladies who are now seeking admission

to this boarding school do not hesitate to describe themselves as Hindus by religion. I mention this, lest you might be led away by the idea that this school consists entirely of girls belonging to the Brahmo Samaj persuasion, though undoubtedly this latter class have chiefly availed themselves of the benefits of it. I well remember the time when our hostess, Lady Hobhouse, used to encourage the pupils of this institution by offering scholarships to deserving young widows, with a view to induce them to continue in the school; and it must be exceedingly gratifying to her to hear that at the present time not only is it not necessary for us to attract boarders to the school by means of such scholarships, but the fees prescribed are in every case being readily paid. While pointing out the marvellous progress which the women of the middle classes are thus making in point of education, I must guard against my remarks being understood to imply that female education has permeated to any considerable extent among the masses of the people.

The advance made by the women of Bengal is intimately connected with the marriage customs prevailing in the country, and I should like to make a few observations on that subject. I am aware that the ordinary idea in England on the subject of our marriage laws is that Hindus are given to polygamy. This, I may be allowed to say, is a very serious error. It is true that there are no penal laws prohibiting bigamy or polygamy by men, but any one who has an intimate acquaintance with the people of Bengal must know that the Hindus are essentially a monogamous people. Bigamy is no doubt sanctioned by law in certain cases, but except among the Kulin Brahmins it is never practised. The feeling is getting stronger everyday in the Hindu community against bigamy, and I venture to assert that there is, numerically speaking, perhaps less bigamy committed in Bengal than is surreptitiously committed in countries where the law makes it a criminal offence. The question of early marriage or rather child-marriage is also intimately connected with the education and advancement of our women. As regards child-marriages, though I regret I cannot say that they have been discontinued, there has undoubtedly been a remarkable progress of late years. The history of the

Bethune School, to which I have already alluded, shows also the progress which has been made in this respect. I remember the time when there was scarcely one pupil in that school above the age of ten years unmarried. But at the present moment all the boarders I have referred to are single women, and there are among the day pupils many girls who, although they have attained the ordinary marriageable age among Hindus, have been left unmarried. This fact also indicates to my mind great progress in the ideas of the people on this subject.

As regards the domestic habits of the people, I may say that, having regard to the tenacity with which Hindus cling to their ancient customs, they have also undergone a marked change, and I think it may be said generally that the progress made by the people of Bengal of late years has been of a very encouraging and hopeful character. My remarks have necessarily been confined to the Hindu community. As regards the progress made by our Mahomedan fellow-subjects, I feel that I am not competent to speak with any degree of confidence. I hesitate to speak on a subject regarding which I know so little, and especially as I should be sorry to say anything likely to be misunderstood by my Mahomedan friends. There is one point, however, on which I feel strongly, as it is intimately connected with the question of female improvement. I mention it in the hope that if I am mistaken in my inferences and opinions I may be set right by some one or other of the Mahomedan gentlemen whom I am glad to see present to-night. It is generally believed that it was the influence of the Mahomedans which led to the seclusion of Hindu women. As regards Hindu women, I have already said that they are throwing off gradually the restrictions which were imposed upon them, but I wish I could say the same with regard to the Mahomedan women of Bengal. I am well aware of the fact that female schools for Mahomedan girls have been established by the Government, but what the result of that experiment has been I am not in a position to state. There is one fact, however, which has struck me very forcibly—namely, that residence in this country among Englishmen has had generally the effect of

changing the view of young Hindus on the subject of the position that women ought to occupy in society. Whether a similar change has been effected in the ideas of Mahomedan gentlemen who have visited this country is a question which I should like to be answered by some of my Mahomedan friends. There has not been, I regret to say, one single instance of a Mahomedan gentleman educated in this country who, on his return, has thought fit to break through the restrictions of the Zenana. In one or two notable instances Mahomedan gentlemen whose ideas have undergone a great change on this subject have solved the problem by marrying English wives, but that is a solution which is scarcely calculated to improve the status and position of their own countrywomen.

Coming back to the progress which Hindu society is now making in Bengal, I have to advert to a matter which threatens, in my judgment, to be a formidable difficulty in the way of further progress. Of late years there has been a decided reactionary tendency among a large and influential section of my educated countrymen in Bengal, whose well-meaning efforts have been directed towards opposing any further influx of European civilisation into the country. The growth of the class of revivalists, or reactionaries, is in my humble opinion partly due, no doubt, to the existence of a feeling of extreme veneration for the ancient institutions of the country, bordering almost upon conceit. If I felt sure that this desire to revive the ancient civilisation of India did not owe its origin to that feeling of contempt which Hindus entertain for European institutions, and, above all, to a dislike of the English people, I should be disposed to respect the patriotic views of this class of reactionaries, however impracticable I might consider their scheme to be. Our ancient civilisation is undoubtedly a legitimate matter for pride, and nothing would be more deplorable than if English education were to extinguish in our minds that just and national pride which every Hindu ought to feel in the thought that he belongs to a race which not only has the credit of being the most ancient in civilisation, but can boast of a language and literature indicating intellectual culture of a marvellous character. But this feeling of pride must not be

permitted to go beyond its legitimate limits. It must not be permitted to generate conceipt, the result of which must be to obstruct all real progress. I am constrained to make these remarks because I have been given to understand that this unfortunate wave of reaction has even reached some of our young men resident in this country. There is now springing up in India, under the guise of reviving the ancient civilisation of the Hindus a feeling of deliberate opposition to the English people and all their social institutions. This is much to be deplored, because I foresee that the result of such a feeling must be to throw back the hand of progress very considerably. These revivalists have been reinforced, I regret to find, even from this country : they have welcomed amongst them Theosophists and English leaders, whose well-meaning utterances can have only the effect of further embittering the unhappy feelings now existing between the two races. If English friends who go to India dilate upon the dark side of modern civilisation, they naturally attract a great deal of applause from certain sections of my countrymen, who applaud not because they have any knowledge themselves of the character of European civilisation, but because all tirades against the English people find a natural response among those who are brought up to dislike them. If I only thought that it was possible for us now to do without the help of England, I should be the first to sympathise with these well-meaning people; but believing as I do that it will take many generations yet before we are likely to be in a position to dispense with the assistance which England and her civilisation can give us, and knowing also full well that for our own sakes it is absolutely necessary at the present moment that we should know a great deal more of England and her institutions than we at present do, I cannot help pointing out to my countrymen, so many of whom I see before me to-night, that the course which these re-actionaries are following is fraught with grave danger to the future of our country. It is not permitted to me to encroach upon the domain of politics, but it is only fair to my countrymen that I should not hesitate to point out that the fault is not entirely on their side. I can fully understand and make due allowance for the feeling of revulsion in the minds of

some of my countrymen at what they rightly or wrongly imagine to be the attitude of the English people towards them, I will go further and say that I believe the English in India have not helped us in this great work of social reform in the way they might have done; and I will further not hesitate to declare my conviction that one of the chief causes of this unfortunate re-actionary movement on the part of my countrymen is the attitude of the English people themselves. As one of the most important objects of this Association is to bring about a better feeling between the two races, I venture at some length to dwell on this topic. To my mind it is one of the most difficult and at the same time most important questions connected with the future of India The gulf which unhappily exists between the two races is no doubt greatly due to the misunderstanding which exists on both sides England has done great things for India, but I am disposed to agree with a writer in the *Contemporary Review* for October—the Rev. Mr. Bonnar—who, after twenty-five years' residence in India, points out that, in spite of the great things which the English have achieved in that country, their rule has been a signal failure in one important respect, and that is, they have failed to convince the people of India that they possess any sympathy for them. If the people of India could be made to feel that the English out there, sympathised with them in this great struggle for social reform, the work, I believe, would be carried out much more speedily than it is now being done. It is necessary that while on the one hand my countrymen should be a little less sensitive than they at present seem to be, on the other hand our English friends who go to India should not only be a little more tolerant of foreign ways and customs, but should even go out of their way to show their sympathy to the people among whom they live. I am one of those who firmly believe in the ultimate success of the grand and unique experiment which England is now engaged in trying in India. That experiment consists in engrafting a Western civilisation upon an Eastern stock. There are undoubtedly great difficulties in the way, but I have no misgivings whatever regarding its success if we could only feel assured of the sympathy of the English people.

Dr. Mahendra Lal Sircar, LL D., C.I.E., on Female Medical Aid to the Women of India.

In seconding the First Resolution moved by the Hon'ble Mr. (afterwards Sir Andrew) Scoble at the Third Annual Meeting of the National Association for supplying Female Medical Aid to the Women of India, held on Wednesday, the 8th February, 1888, the Hon'ble Dr. Mahendra Lal Sircar spoke as follows :—

YOUR EXCELLENCIES, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,—It is nothing but a pure sense of duty, tardily awakened, which has forced me against myself to appear before you this evening, and presume to open my lips before this august assembly, presided over by His Excellency the Viceroy, and graced by the presence of Her Excellency the Lady-President of this Association, and of other distinguished personages. My consolation, in this predicament, is that the Hon'ble gentleman, who has moved the Resolution for the adoption of the Report of the Central Committee of the Association, has fortunately so exhausted his subject that he has left nothing for his seconder to add to what he has already said. All that I have now to do, indeed, all that I can do, is to add my feeble testimony to the flood of testimony already received, and is being daily received, of the good and noble work which this National Association for the supply of Female Medical Aid to the Women of India is doing, and is calculated to do for a long time to come. As you are aware, Ladies and Gentlemen, the necessity for such an Association has arisen from the existence in this country of a social custom prevalent both amongst Mahomedans and Hindus, which has led to the seclusion of women, forbidding them to show their faces to men other than their nearest and dearest kith and kin, a custom which has curbed and cribbed our society, arresting its due development by withholding from it the healthful and benignant influence of its own fairest portion. It would be idle, at this moment, to speculate on the origin of this custom. It is enough for philanthropy to recognise the evils which have come on in its train as its most inevitable consequences. Of these evils, besides the one I have just alluded to, the most stunted

ous, the most heart-rending, the most universal, is that which directly affects the fairest portion of both Hindu and Mahomedan communities. The seclusion of women in this country for centuries has been synonymous, as was happily expressed by an Hon'ble speaker on this very subject last year, in this hall,—the seclusion of women in this country has been synonymous with their exclusion from the comfort and relief of medical aid in sickness and from knowledge of the conditions of a healthy life Now, Ladies and Gentlemen, realise for one moment, what this state of things means. It means that, for centuries nearly half the population of this vast continent had scarcely had any medical aid, certainly, no proper medical aid, in even sickness which, unrelieved, either costs life or entails lifelong suffering. Even at this very moment, when I am speaking to you, countless are the Indian homes which are the scenes of the acutest agonies of disease, which might be relieved, of premature death which might be averted, by timely and skilful medical treatment. And yet, strange to say, the necessity of counteracting this evil was not even thought of in this country till recently. And this thought did not originate with those who are directly concerned. It came from abroad. And the reason is not far to seek. The same custom, which has consigned the fair sex within the prison walls of the Zenana, has prevented them from undertaking the severer duties of life, duties which require rough training in the beginning for their due performance, duties which, up to this moment, are looked upon as peculiar and proper to the sterner sex. I must confess, and it is in expectation of absolution at your hands, gentle Ladies, that I make this confession of a grave sin against you,—I confess that, in the pride of my sex, I had believed that man was more fitted for intellectual work, woman for the exercise of the gentler affections. I had erred with the sublime poet of the world in believing as absolute that—

> "For contemplation he and valor formed,
> For softness she and sweet attractive grace."

But stubborn facts, which recent times have unfolded, have convinced me that while woman's heart is really and vastly superior to man's, her intellect, if allowed fair play, can com-

pete on equal terms with his. Nay, in some instances, her natural acuteness and the exquisite fineness of her temperament are likely to give her the advantage even in matters intellectual. And now my humble belief is that in the matter of ministering to the sick, her heart and her head alike contribute to render her eminently qualified. Whether she will ever approach the stronger sex in high surgery, whether she will ever display the coolness and the nerve that have been displayed by the gentleman surgeon on the operating table, whether, indeed, it is desirable that she should, I will not stop here to discuss. She can well leave this really manly part of the medical art to the gentleman surgeon. She has enough and ample field in the exercise of the purely physician's part, and even this I would limit to the treatment of her own sex. For the treatment of her own sex, she must be infinitely more competent than man. The disorders of the organisation peculiar to women can only be understood by women. And here I am bound to point out how evident and triumphant is the confirmation of the scientific character of the glorious and beneficent system of medicine I have the honor and the privilege to practise, a system which administers for diseases peculiar to women medicines that have been proved by female powers. Differently constituted as man is, he can only indirectly understand diseases peculiar to the other sex, and, therefore, as a matter of course, cannot fully sympathise with them. This is no reproach. The Son of God himself had to take on our form, had to become one of us, to know the magnitude of our sins, and fathom the depth of our misery. I, therefore, venture to think that the necessity of lady-doctors, not only for the women of India, but for womankind all over the world, having thus been demonstrated, we are now in a better position to understand the supreme necessity and realise the full importance of the scheme, which has been inaugurated, and is in fair working order, for the supply of female medical aid to the women of our country, under the auspices of the highest lady in the land and of the Sovereign Lady of the Empire. Efforts in the same direction were in existence before the advent in this country of H. E. the Lady-Founder of this Association. But those efforts were

of a solitary character, few and far between, "local in aim and limited in extent." It was reserved for her noble genius "by a bold attempt," indeed by one of the boldest attempts that have ever emanated from an undaunted will, guided by a philanthropic heart, "to rouse the conscience and the imagination of the public at large, and so to bind together in one common effort all parts of the Empire and all classes of the community." Well might we, men and women, take our lesson of untiring energy and unflinching devotion in the carrying out of a righteous cause from the bright example of the Countess of Dufferin. The third annual report of the Central Committee with its accounts, which is now laid before you, bears ample testimony to the literal truth of what I say. I have, therefore, great pleasure in seconding the Resolution which has been moved for the adoption of the Report, and the confirmation of the accounts therein contained.

In proposing the First Resolution for the adoption of the Report at the Sixth Annual Meeting of the National Association for supplying Female Medical Aid to the Women of India, held on the 9th February, 1891, Dr. Mahendra Lal Sircar spoke as follows:—

YOUR EXCELLENCIES, YOUR HONOUR, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,—Her Excellency the Lady-President and the Central Committee of this the National Association for supplying Femal Medical Aid to the Women of India, have done me the honor to ask me to move the adoption of the Sixth Annual Report which has been just so ably presented to you, and it is due to myself to tell you that while I feel proud of the unusual honor done to me, that feeling is associated with its antithesis, a sincere sense of my own utter unworthiness of the honor, by virtue of my incompetency to discharge the duties which the honor demands of its recipient. Had it not been for the august source whence the honor has come, I should certainly have hesitated to accept it with its heavy responsibility. I have however no other alternative now than with all humility to submit, in full reliance upon your indulgence for my shortcomings.

This the Sixth Annual Report of the Association is the biggest of all that have been published, and I am happy to be able to say that its increased size is indicative of the increase in the magnitude of the sphere of its operations. A comparison of this with the previous Report shows that in place of *fifty* local and district associations and committees affiliated or attached to provinces and in touch with the central committee, there are now over *a hundred*; in place of *ten* lacs spent in the erection of hospitals there have been over *twelve*; in place of *two hundred thousand* of women who had received medical relief there were over *four hundred and eleven thousand*; in place of *thirty* there were *forty* Lady Doctors and Assistant Surgeons and Female Medical Practitioners working in connection with the Fund; and in place of *two lacs* which the local associations and committees had in actual and in promise, there are now actually invested *three lacs and thirty-nine thousand*, in hand *thirty-five thousand rupees*, and in donations promised of over *a lac and seventy thousand*. Now this is progress beyond all expectation, and testifies to the deep and genuine sympathy with which Her Excellency the Marchioness of Lansdowne has taken up the duties of Lady-President, and also to the loyalty and earnestness and energy with which those under her are working for the Fund.

So far therefore as the Central Committee and its Lady-President are concerned the Report is eminently satisfactory. The Association, far from suffering on the departure of its benevolent Founder and first most energetic President, has made immense strides under her successor who has shown herself in every way worthy of the mantle of benevolence and practical good work which has fallen on her and which she has taken up with all the earnestness of genuine conviction. The Report is also satisfactory inasmuch as it shows that the Lady-Founder on her retirement from India has not only not forgotten the noble work which she inaugurated with such unexampled enthusiasm and devotion, but has infused new life into it by working for it with the same undiminished enthusiasm and devotion in her native land, and drawing towards it the active and substantial sympathy of the womankind of England, the noblest of their type in all the world.

So far then as the originators and workers of the Association are concerned the Report is more than satisfactory, and it gives me very great pleasure to move its adoption, fully confident of your unanimous acceptance of my proposition.

But before I sit down, Ladies and Gentlemen, I have one question to ask, and that is a very serious one. Is the Report satisfactory so far as those are concerned who are really interested in this movement of benevolence and charity in the highest sense of the word? Now who are they who are really interested? Who, but we the natives of India? Does the Report show that we have done our duty to ourselves, and to those who have pointed out to us what that duty is? It would be ingratitude, with the fact before us of the magnificent and princely donations that have been made to the Fund, to say that some of us have not. But would it not be a violation of truth to say that we as a nation have awakened to a lively sense of that duty?

Boast as much as we may of our ancient civilization, there is the unerring index, the condition of our women, which points to the melancholy fact that we have not only not advanced from the point attained by our ancestors in ancient time, but that we have receded much from it, that we have not only not profited by a literature, a philosophy and a religion which were marvels and models for the rest of the world in their days and which are the admiration of even the most cultured moderns, but that in every respect we are showing ourselves unworthy of that noble heritage. Look at the condition of woman in Vedic and even in Puranic times, and look at her condition now, and then say if we have not fallen from our high state.

Whatever the cause, about which it is now idle and unprofitable to speculate,—whatever the cause, it is a positive but most lamentable fact that for centuries the fairest of our community have been immured within the prison walls of the zenana, shut out not only from the light of day, but from what is equally essential, the light of knowledge, and subjected to the tyranny of a most degrading and ruinous custom, the custom of child-marriage. The result has been most disastrous to the very life of the nation. And, what is worst and most painful of all, under the mistaken idea of obedience to the dictates of

religion the fair sex has been patiently enduring the acutest agonies of disease, preferring relief in the hands of the great Deliverer himself to relief in the hands of the physician if of the opposite sex. It is only the professional man who can understand what this state of things means, what the amount of suffering is which is so heroically endured, what the consequences in most cases life-long in the shape of chronic uncured and incurable ailments are, and how almost countless are the fatal terminations from all these causes combined, most of which might be averted by timely medical aid. This state of things has been going on in our midst from time almost immemorial, and we have been complacently looking on as if all was right, as if no intervention on our part was necessary. And this state of things would have gone on unremedied till probably the end of time, had it not been for the divine attribute of sympathy in woman. A knowledge of this melancholy state of things in her Indian Empire reached the Queen-Empress, and with that wide and prompt sympathy which has been the charm of all her life, Her Majesty lost no time in commending the matter to the Countess of Dufferin before her departure for India. That recommendation has borne fruit in the foundation of the most magnificent and the most needed charitable institution in the world, the National Association for the supply of Female Medical Aid to the Women of India.

In this fact of this National Association owing its very existence to the direct initiative of our Sovereign, and its maintenance and development chiefly to the philanthropy of our noble sisters of England, we ought to read the two-fold character of the duty that is now imposed upon us, duty to our mothers and sisters and daughters and wives, and duty to our Sovereign and the womanhood of England not only for having pointed out to us that duty but in heping us with head and heart and money to enable us to perform that duty. Now, I think it would be quite superfluous on my part to tell you that the best way to discharge the second duty is by fulfilling the first one to the best of our ability.

Is any incentive necessary to prompt us to do this first

duty, our duty to our own mothers, and to our own sisters and our own daughters and our own wives who are or are to become mothers in their turn, all of whom we have been hitherto most culpably neglecting with a selfishness which has its origin in the pride of our sex? If any incentive is necessary, I should ask you, my countrymen, to find it in the glorious words pregnant with the highest wisdom and the deepest religion attributed to the Founder of Islam—Aljannatu táhtá aqdáme ummahátekum · "Paradise is beneath the feet of your mothers." Woman is essentially mother, and verily, a mother is the incarnation of God's love on earth. In neglecting women we do in reality neglect our mothers, and thus neglect our very salvation. We have been guilty of this sin all along our later national life, and the world has to see whether we are to continue in it, or whether we should attempt to purge ourselves of it. Let us raise woman from the subordinate position she now occupies to the co-ordinate position she ought to occupy, let woman with man be in reality one flesh, one heart and one soul, as God has designed, and then all will be right, and there will be no room for foreign intervention.

Dr. Mahendra Lal Sircar's letter to the Chief Secretary to the Government of Bengal on the Age of Consent Bill.

The following is the full text of the letter addressed by Dr. Mahendra Lal Sircar to Sir John Edgar, K.C.I.E., C.S.I., Chief Secretary to the Government of Bengal, in reply to his letter inviting his opinion on the Age of consent Bill:—

To SIR JOHN EDGAR, K.C.I.E., C.S.I.,

Chief Secretary to the Government of Bengal.

SIR,

I have the honor to acknowledge the receipt of your letter, No. 306 J, dated the 26th January, asking my opinion on the provisions of the Bill now before the Legislative Council of India to amend the Indian Penal Code and the Code of Criminal Procedure, 1882, and have to apologize for the delay due to continued illness in forwarding my reply.

2. My opinion on the custom of early marriage prevalent in this country is before the public since 1871, when, in reply to a circular letter of the late Babu Keshub Chunder Sen requesting opinion on the age of puberty of native girls and their minimum marriageable age, I gave my views on the subject in a rather lengthy letter to the Babu, and in an article, both of which were published in my Journal of Medicine (*Calcutta Journal of Medicine* for July 1871).

3. In the *letter* I said :

"Early marriage, in my humble opinion, is the greatest evil of our country. It has stood, so to say, at the very springs of the life of the nation, and prevented the normal expanse of which it is capable. And I am inclined to date the fall and degeneracy of my country from the day Angira uttered the fatal words, and those words became law, or custom which is stronger and more mischievous than law itself :—

अष्टवर्षा भवेद्गौरी नववर्षा तु रोहिणी ।
दशमे कन्यका प्रोक्ता अत ऊर्ध्वं रजस्वला ॥
तस्मात् संवत्सरे प्राप्ते दशमे कन्यका बुधैः।
प्रदातव्या प्रयत्नेन न दोषः कालदोषतः ॥

"The girl of eight years is Gauri (*i.e.*, of the same elevated character and purity as Gauri or Parvati, the goddess Durga); of nine, Rohini (one of the wives of the moon); of ten (a simple) virgin; of above that age, a woman who has menstruated. Hence the learned should give their daughters in marriage whenever they attain the age of ten, and they will not be liable to the fault of not marrying their daughters in due time."

"I have no doubt in my own mind that high and luxurious living and early seeing and knowing of child-husbands and child-wives, favored by the anxiety of fond parents to see their little ones become fathers and mothers, are the chief causes of the forced puberty which we so much regret in our female no less than in our male children.

"The advocates of early marriage urge that the custom is nothing else than the expression of a stubborn necessity which has arisen from the fact of early pubescence in this country. I think, however, we are warranted, by what has been already

adduced, in concluding that early marriages have been the cause of early pubescence. The primary object of marriage is no doubt the production of healthy offspring, and physiologically speaking it ought not to be consummated before the ages when the offspring is not calculated to be long-lived or healthy. The commencement of the menstrual function is no doubt an index to the *commencement* of puberty. But it is a grave mistake to suppose that the female, who has just begun to menstruate, is capable of giving birth to healthy children. The teeth are no doubt intended for the mastication of solid food, but it would be a grievous error to think that the child, the moment he begins to cut his teeth, will be able to live upon solid food. Our anxiety, on the contrary, should be that the delicate masticatory organs are not injured or broken by giving the child too hard food. So when we see a girl is beginning to have the monthly flow, we should not only anxiously watch its course and regularity, but should also watch the other collateral developments of womanhood to be able to determine the better the time when she can become a mother, safely to herself and to her offspring. For it should be borne in mind that while early maternity results in giving birth to short-lived or unhealthy children, it at the same time seriously compromises the health of the mother also. I can speak positively on the subject from personal experience. A host of complaints from which our females suffer life-long or to which they fall early victims, arise from early pubescence and early maternity.

"This view of the state of things imperatively demands that, for the sake of our daughters and sisters, who are to become mothers, and for the sake of generations, yet unborn, but upon whose proper development and healthy growth, the future well-being of the country depends, the earliest marriageable age of our females should be fixed at a higher point than what obtains in our country. If the old grandmother's discipline could be made to prevail, there would be no harm in fixing that age at 14 or even 12, but as that is well-nigh impossible, or perhaps would not be perfectly right and consistent with the progress of the times, I should fix it at 16."

4. In the *Article* I said :

"We know the disastrous effect the custom has produced in the shape of deterioration of race, and it will be culpable perversity on our part, if informed of the remedy we fail to apply it, through prejudice or pride. The generations, that are being born under the present system of things, in the eye of modern science and of our own ancient Ayurveda, are no better than abortions and premature births."

"The development of the sexual instinct, in the human subject, is not immediately consequent on the development of the physical signs of puberty. That development is, to a great extent, dependent upon moral training or education, and may be delayed or hastened for a considerable time after or before the menstrual function declares itself. We have seen children, who have been born and bred in scenes of sexual immorality, manifest the instinct at an age long anterior to the first menstruation, and we have seen grown up females, who have been born of parents jealous of their children's morals, remain unconscious of it long after the attainment of physical puberty. And this very fact would point to the imperative necessity of the radical reform for which we are contending. Early marriages have led to precocious offsprings, and this state of things must be done away with at once and without hesitation. And in fact, parents ought to be ashamed of themselves if they prove unequal to the task of watching over the morals of their children."

"It is true that at each menstrual period there is chance of conception, but it is equally true, as was pointed so early as in the days of Susruta, that the product of conception at an age, when the mother herself has not attained her full development, is not likely to be a normal human being. The object of Nature, in the union of the sexes, is no doubt the production of offspring for the perpetuation of the species. But in order that the species may be truly perpetuated, it is necessary that the offspring should be healthy. And whatever therefore interferes with the production of healthy offspring must be looked upon as frustrating the intention of Nature, and therefore cannot be regarded as the dictate of sound religion. On the contrary, in our humble opinion, it should be condemned

not only as unscientific, but because of that, as irreligious also."

5. I repeated these views at the Social Conference recently held and over which I presided; and I gave expression to them in my lecture on the "Influence of the Physical Sciences on Moral Conduct" delivered at the Town Hall under the presidency of His Honor the Lieutenant-Governor, when I said:

"The burning topic of the day in my country, which is convulsing Hindu Society and has roused, I am glad to say, earnest patriotism, is the perniciousness of the custom of child-marriage, a custom which has been the most efficient cause of the ruin and degeneracy of the Hindu race. I believe it would be impossible for this custom to endure, if the leaders of our society or better still, if every man and woman of our community, were made to see in the light of physiology what child-marriage in reality means, if they could be made to fully realize that it not only inevitably and to a living certainty prematurely exhausts the couples who are forced to reproduce before the proper season, before they themselves arrive at maturity, but by virtue of that give rise to offspring who must necessarily share all the immaturity and attendant weakness and incapacity of the parents, and that a succession of such generation means progressive degeneracy and imbecility of race."

6. While I was thus strong and uncompromising in my condemnation of the custom of child-marriage, I must confess I was opposed to legislative interference in the matter. In the article in the *Calcutta Journal of Medicine* from which I have given extracts, I said:—"It is beyond our province to say whether legislative interference in such social matters is likely to be beneficial or not. We for ourselves hate coercive legislation. And we would leave such questions to be decided by the good sense of the community." Again: "The only other objection that can be entertained is that the contemplated abolition of early marriage being against a time-honoured custom, ingrained in the mind of the Hindu Community as having all the authority of religion, however false the connection between them may now be shown to be, will be attended with serious

social inconveniences, which it will not be possible even for enlightened and educated men to endure. It is not possible to effect a sudden change in the fabric and organisation of any society, far less of Hindu Society. We admit the force of the objection, and we are therefore afraid of the consequences of legislative interference, should the legislature consent to interfere. But we do not see any ground of its not interfering when the interference is for a particular section of the community and prayed for by that section."

7. At the time I penned the above I was not aware that the Indian Penal Code had made some provision however slight for the protection of child-wives against outrages by brutal husbands, by constituting intercourse by a husband with a wife under ten years of age rape in the eye of the Law and *therefore punishable accordingly. The protection is very slight* indeed, as intercourse by a husband with a wife under ten is a a very rare occurrence. The legislature, evidently as a first attempt, dealt very leniently with the customs and usages of Hindu Society, and therein in my humble opinion made a mistake. For the very large class of little ones who really needed protection was left to the tender mercies of the brutal custom. This large class is constituted by girls between ten and twelve, at which age from precocious development, itself the product of the custom of child-marriage, the function of menstruation very frequently appears, and then the opportunity is seized of declaring the little ones as being fit for becoming mothers, and are then by the twisting and torturing of doubtful texts, and by the ignoring of the more positive and authoritative texts of our Shastras, forced to become mothers, to the great detriment of the health of mother and offspring, which means to the great deterioration of the race itself.

8. Under these circumstances I hail the proposed amendment in the Penal Code as legislation in the right direction, in the direction not only of justice but of humanity to a large class of the community who by the singularity of their position cannot protect themselves, indeed, can never think of protecting themselves; a class who, while they are the victims of a most pernicious custom, are not only not allowed to see through their

miserable condition, but strangely enough are made to believe that their lot is the happiest that could be imagined, ordained by religion as the goal to heaven.

9. It is true that to constitute intercourse between husband and wife rape under any circumstances looks like an absurdity and an anomaly, subversive of the very sacred character of marriage itself, at least jars upon common sense and æsthetics. And it would certainly be better if the object aimed at by the proposed amendment, could be attained by direct legislation raising the minimum age of marriage. But as that seems to be impossible just at present, there is no other alternative than the amendment proposed. We have courted the anomaly by bringing ourselves to our present condition by a perversion of the highest dictates of our truly holy religion.

10. It is a matter of extreme regret that the question has at last to be settled by legislative interference, and not by "the good sense of our community," to which I had appealed twenty years ago. The "good sense" displayed by those of my countrymen who are against the Bill has been such as to drive every well-wisher of his country to the uttermost depths of despair as to the possibility of any good coming out of that "good sense." As genuine Hindus mindful of true religion, I had expected that my countrymen should have taken this opportunity to pray for the raising of the minimum marriageable age, and thus win the honor and credit of removing an anomaly from the Penal Code. Instead of this, is it not heart-rending to see how they are wasting and perverting their ingenuity to bolster up rotten texts to show to the world that the Hindus for centuries, in the exercise of marital rights and under the sanction of so-called religion, have been committing the gravest and the most brutal outrages on immature female children! and that they must have this accursed custom continued and perpetuated, or their religion is in danger, and their way to heaven obstructed! I have been compelled to speak thus of the opposition, because in my opinion it is impossible to imagine a more silly, shameless and suicidal argument than that of *Garbhadan*, that is being advanced by them. It is a silly argument, because the function of menstruation being of a periodical

character, it is impossible to say from the first shows of blood that it is indicative of menstruation at all, or at least of normal menstruation. It is a shameless argument, because even assuming that the first show of blood is indicative of the commencement of normal menstruation, it is impossible (for reasons better imagined) in the majority of cases to enforce the Shastraic injunction (admitting, which I do not, that the injunction *is* Shastraic) without actual force, that *is*, without rape in the literal sense of the term. The argument is suicidal, because in attempting to vindicate our religion, by its perverse interpretations and forced inferences it paints that religion in the most hideous colors. And what am I to say to those of my professional brethren who have not hesitated to lend the weight and the influence of their name and their authority in this unrighteous cause? It is much to be deplored that they have not paid more regard to their Science. It is a sad spectacle they have presented to the scientific world, that with all their attainments in physiology and the allied sciences they do not see any evil consequences from the union of child-wives with child or adult husbands, that they expect mature offspring from immature parents!

11. This is my opinion on the principle of the Bill. I am not a lawyer competent to make any suggestions as to its penal provisions. This much, however, I am bound to say that as, except for the peculiar circumstances of the country, the enactment which constitutes intercourse between husband and wife rape, is an anomaly, the punishment, unless the intercourse is attended with personal injuries, should be much lighter than in the case of ordinary rape; it should, in my humble opinion, in no case be imprisonment. In other words, it should be so provided that the punishment should never be such as to be calculated to embitter the future relationship of the married couples.

I have the honor to be,
Sir,
Your most obedient servant,
MAHENDRA LAL SIRCAR.

BAIDYANATH,
4th March, 1891.

Dr. Mahendra Lal Sircar on the Earliest Marriageable Age.

(*Reprinted from the "Calcutta Journal of Medicine," July*, 1871).

In private conversation and public discourse young Bengal has been assiduous in showing off his enlightenment by lamenting over the evils which teem in his unfortunate country. Of these evils that which has furnished material for the loudest talk is early marriage. As usual with young Bengal, we have had hitherto talk and nothing more. The monster custom, which has enervated our race so that, from having been one of the strongest, we are now the weakest in the world, has defied mere talk. Young Bengal, no doubt because of his half-heartedness, has failed in making any impression upon it, and would seem to have dropped the subject in despair.

Under these circumstances we cannot but be thankful to Babu Keshub Chunder Sen for reviving the subject and attempting to deal with it with his characteristic energy. The way in which he has proceeded with it strikes us as the very best, because it is the most prudent, we had almost said, truly scientific way. The question, strictly speaking, is not primarily religious but physiological. Its religious bearings must be determined by the verdict of physiology. This Babu Keshub Chunder Sen has well understood, and accordingly the first thing he has done has been to address a circular letter to several medical gentlemen of Calcutta, requesting them to give their opinion on the conditions and development of puberty as observed in native females, and on the earliest marriageable age consistent with the well-being of mother and child and society. We publish under our *Gleanings* the circular letter along with the replies thereto of the medical gentlemen addressed, and we would express our opinion, that whatever might be the out-come of the agitation, there cannot be the slightest doubt that it will hereafter be looked upon as the first practical turn which was given to this most important subject. The opinions themselves form a most valuable contribution to the literature of the subject and deserve a permanent record.

We are sorry to find that the agitation has met with opposition from quarters from which at least we did not expect it.

The only ground of the opposition that we can discover is that the agitation has emanated from Babu Keshub Chunder Sen. Some of those very young men, who were hitherto loud, nay, boisterous in decrying the evil of early marriage, are now found in the ranks of the opposition laughing at and ridiculing the very inquiry itself. We do not here allude to the opposition by the so-called Adi Brâhmos to the Brâhmo Marriage Bill as prayed for by the so-called progressive Brâhmos. We allude to the silent and therefore more effective scoffing of neutral parties, who pretend to be more educated and enlightened than any of their countrymen. We medical men have nothing to do with sects and sectarianism. We gave our opinion on this momentous subject on true physiological grounds, irrespective of the manner in which they were likely to be received by particular sects or individuals. And it is really irritating to see that such a broad question, affecting the weal and the welfare of the whole-Hindu race, should have been viewed by any from any other than the most philanthropic standpoint.

It is beyond our province to say whether legislative interference in such social matters is likely to be beneficial or not. We for ourselves hate coercive legislation. And we would leave such questions to be decided by the good sense of the community. All that we want is that the pernicious restraint, which is being exercised by a monstrous custom and a falsely-interpreted religion, be removed.

The advantages of early marriage as urged by its advocates are :—

1. That the marriage being accomplished before puberty is established, all possibility of sexual immorality is prevented, and

2. Facility being offered by it to sexual intercourse just when it ought to begin, that is, with the commencement of puberty, the intention of nature in the union of the sexes, namely, reproduction, is fulfilled, so that there would be no possibility of loss to the world from failure of a single birth.

These views seem to have derived no inconsiderable strength from the dicta of some crack-brained Rishis. Thus Vashist'ha says—

पितुर्गेहे च या कन्या रजः पश्यत्यसंस्कृता ।
भ्रूणहत्यापितुस्तस्याः सा कन्या वृषली स्मृता ॥

The father commits the sin of fœticide, if his daughter, while yet unmarried, menstruates in his house. Such a virgin is called a vrishali (a term of reproach).

And Pait'hinashi goes so far as to declare that,

यावन्नोद्भिद्येतेस्तनौ तावदेवदेया। अथ ऋतुमती भवति दाता प्रतिग्रहीता च नरकमाप्नोति पितृपितामहप्रपितामहाश्च विष्ठायां जायन्ते । तस्मान्नाग्निकादातव्या ॥ ३३ ॥

Before her breasts appear, a girl should be given in marriage. Both he who gives in marriage. and he who receives, a damsel after the appearance of her menses, sink to hell; and the father, grandfather, and great-grandfather of each are again born in ordure. Therefore should a girl be married at an age when she can go about naked.

The objections urged, therefore, by the advocates of early marriage against the abolition of the custom, are (1) that it will tend to increase sexual immorality, and (2) cause a negative loss to the world in the shape of failure of birth. Hence parents that neglect to marry their children before puberty, are considered to be liable to the sin of murder of unborn human beings that might otherwise have been born!

The first objection must be acknowledged to have some force. The intercourse of the sexes is a physiological necessity, and it may be said that if delayed too long after the attainment of puberty, it may become a fertile source of sexual immorality. Our own statistics, it may be urged, point to twelve as the average age at which the menstruation and therefore puberty commences in this country, and therefore it may be argued, the age of marriage should not be fixed higher than this. To this we reply, that it is not early marriage by itself that we regret so much as early pubescence. Our object is, as indeed it should be that of all true philanthropists, to endeavour to prevent the development of early pubescence, which leads to such lamentable deterioration of race. And as we have shewn, we believe, conclusively, that early pubescence is the result of

early marriage. We contend that by striking at the root of the latter we can succeed in preventing the development of the former. So that the dread of the increase of sexual immorality consequent upon the abolition of early marriage, is altogether groundless.

This dread is groundless for other reasons. The development of the sexual instinct, in the human subject, is not immediately consequent upon the development of the physical signs of puberty. That development is, to a great extent, dependent upon moral training or education, and may be delayed or hastened for a considerable time after or before the menstrual function declares itself. We have seen children, who have been born and bred in scenes of sexual immorality, manifest the instinct at an age long anterior to the first menstruation, and we have seen grown up females, who have been born of parents jealous of their children's morals, remain unconscious of it long after the attainment of physical puberty. So that the objection to the abolition of child-marriages, if earnestly made, would look very little creditable to our social and domestic economy—would in fact show the rotten state of the moral foundation of our society. And this very fact would point to the imperative necessity of the radical reform for which we are contending. Early marriages have led to precocious offsprings, and this state of things must be done away with at once and without hesitation. And in fact, parents ought to be ashamed of themselves if they prove unequal to the task of watching over the morals of their children. Unless they can do that, they are unworthy the name of parents, and should not have made themselves so—an argument in itself powerful in favor of the measure now being discussed.

The second objection is merely sentimental, if not altogether puerile, and would seem to have been based, if at all, upon a mere superficial knowledge of physiology. A deeper acquaintance with it will succeed in removing it altogether. It is true that at each menstrual period there is chance of conception, but it is equally true, as was pointed out so early as in the days of Susruta, that the product of conception at an age, when the mother herself has not attained her full development,

is not likely to be a normal human being. The object of Nature, in the union of the sexes, is no doubt the production of offspring for the perpetuation of the species. But in order that the species may be truly perpetuated, it is necessary that the offspring should be healthy. And whatever therefore interferes with the production of healthy offspring must be looked upon as frustrating the intention of Nature, and therefore cannot be regarded as the dictate of sound religion. On the contrary, in our humble opinion, it should be condemned not only as unscientific, but because of that, as irreligious likewise.

The only other objection that can be entertained is that the contemplated abolition of early marriage being against a time-honored custom, ingrained in the mind of the Hindu community as having all the authority of religion, however false the connection between them may now be shown to be, will be attended with serious social inconveniences, which it will not be possible even for enlightened and educated men to endure. It is not possible to effect a sudden change in the fabric and organisation of any society, far less of Hindu society. We admit the force of the objection, and we are therefore afraid of the consequences of legislative interference, should the legislature consent to interfere. But we do not see any ground of its not interfering when the interference is for a particular section of the community and prayed for by that section.

We would deem it a misfortune to the country, if the agitation, inaugurated by Babu Keshub Chunder Sen, be allowed to subside without its producing the desired effect upon the mind of the community, if the note of warning unanimously given by some of the leading medical gentlemen of Calcutta be unheeded. We know the disastrous effect the custom has produced in the shape of deterioration of race, and it will be culpable perversity on our part, if informed of the remedy we fail to apply it, through prejudice or pride. The generations, that are being born under the present system of things in the eye of modern science and even of our own ancient Ayurveda, are no better than abortions and premature births. What can be expected of such human beings, ushered into the world under such unfavorable circumstances? How can they be expected

to compete in the hard struggle for existence, not to say, for intellectual and moral superiority? Why talk any longer of education? What can education do with such subjects? Education is merely a directing power. But the energies and the forces must already exist in order that the directing power may succeed in leading them to healthy results.

Our orthodox community, if they are consistent, ought to yield and adopt the contemplated reform. They ought no longer to rest on doubtful and suspicious texts, when the verdict of common sense and physiology is backed by such high authorities as Manu and Dhanwantari. In religious matters the authority of Manu is unanimously acknowledged to be above all. Why then should Vashist'ha and Pait'hinasi have the preference? If our orthodox community really have at heart the extinction of the Hindu race, they could not have invented a surer way of accomplishing their object than what they have done in following the custom of child-marriages. But if they wish that the once glorious Hindu race should re-assert its place in the family of nations, should contribute to the progress and well-being of the whole human race, then they ought to see by the light of science that the custom of early marriage is suicidal in the extreme. We therefore appeal to the patriotism and the philanthropy of our orthodox community. We appeal to their veneration for their sastras. And we hope that they have not become dead to all the high and holy instincts of human nature. We hope they may yet shake off the shackles of prejudice and superstition which have been lying heavy upon them and preventing them from lifting up their heads in the atmosphere of intellect and morals.

MARRIAGEABLE AGE OF NATIVE GIRLS.

Circular letter of Babu Keshub Chunder Sen to certain Medical Men.

To

Dr. Norman Chevers, M.D.
Dr. J. Fayrer, M.D., C.S.I.
Dr. J. Ewart, M.D.
Dr. S. G. Chuckerbutty, M.D.

Dr. D. B. Smith, M.D.
Dr. T. E. Charles, M.D.
Dr. Chunder Coomar Dey, M.D
Dr. Mahendra Lal Sircar, M.D.
Tumeez Khan, Khan Bahadur.

INDIAN REFORM ASSOCIATION,
1*st April*, 1871.

GENTLEMEN,

I have the honor to solicit the favor of your opinions on a subject of great importance to the Native community in India. There is no doubt that the custom of premature marriage, as it prevails in this country, is injurious to the moral, social and physical interests of the people, and is one of the main obstacles in the way of their advancement. Owing to the spread of education and enlightened ideas the evils arising from this institution are beginning to be perceived, and there is a growing desire to remedy them. Those, however, who are alive to the importance of this reform, feel great difficulty in determining the marriageable age of Native girls. It seems necessary, therefore, that competent medical authorities should be consulted in the matter, and their judgment made known for the guidance of the Native community. I beg therefore respectfully to request, you will be pleased, after a careful consideration of the facts that have come to your knowledge, and of the climate and other influences which govern the physical development of women in tropical countries, to state what you consider to be the age of puberty of Native girls and their minimum marriageable age.

Trusting you will kindly forgive the liberty I have taken in thus addressing you,

I have the honor to be,
Gentlemen,
Your most obedient servant,
KESHUB CHUNDER SEN.

Replies to the above Letter.

[FROM DR. S. G. CHUCKERBUTTY.]

14, *Chowringhee Road*, 1*st April*, 1871.

In reply to your letter of this date, I beg to say that the usual sign of puberty in a girl is the commencement of menstruation which occurs as a general rule in all countries between the ages of thirteen and fourteen, though in some cases it may come on earlier or later. The best standard for comparison will be the Native Christian girls on the one hand and European girls on the other, for in respect of marriage they adopt the same rule. I am not aware that there is any practical difference between these two classes of girls as to the age of puberty. The Hindu and Mahomedan girls, from the custom of early marriage, attain to *forced* puberty at an earlier age. This should therefore never influence our opinion as to what is *the proper age for puberty under normal circumstances.*

But although menstruation may occur at 14 and fruitful marriages may take place at that age, the minimum age according to English law for marriage is 16 with the consent of parents, and a girl is not ordinarily supposed to be capable of being independent till she is 21 years old.

There are various reasons for this practice, the principal object of which is to give a girl sufficient time for education, moral training, and ripe judgment.

In the case of Native Christian girls the same practice is observed with benefit, and I fail to see why any other practice should be adopted in the case of other classes of Native girls. It is a vicious motive that as soon as a girl menstruates she must be married. It is not done in any civilised country, nor should it be done here. The practice of abstinence which the deferment of marriage imposes on a girl is more beneficial to mankind than its reverse, *i.e.*, early marriage.

S. G. CHUCKERBUTTY, M.D.

[FROM DR. FAYRER.]

3*rd April*, 1871.

I have the honour to acknowledge the receipt of your letter, dated 1st April, 1871, and in reply to say, that I have much

pleasure in giving you my opinion on the important subject concerning which you seek information.

I consider that the minimum age at which Native girls should be married is 16 years, and I believe it would be well, as a general rule, that marriage should be deferred to a later period, say to 18 or 20 years of age

The fact of a girl having attained the period of puberty does not by any means imply that, though *capable*, she is *fit* for marriage. Physiological science, common sense and observation all teach that an immature mother is likely to produce weak and imperfect offspring. Before the parent gives birth to a child she should herself have attained her full growth and a much more complete development and vigour than can be looked for in female children of 10 to 14 years of age. I am told that in Bengal marriages do frequently take place at these very early periods of life.

I am speaking of the subject now only in its physical aspect; of the other disadvantages, moral, social and domestic, I need say nothing.

They are so obvious that they must forcibly present themselves to the notice of all the highly educated, thoughtful and intellectual natives of Bengal, among whom, it is to me a marvel that such a pernicious practice should have so long been permitted to obtain.

You have my most cordial sympathy in a movement which, if carried out, will do more physically to regenerate and morally to advance your countrymen and women than almost any other that your zeal for their improvement could promote.

J. FAYRER, M.D.

[FROM DR. J. EWART.]

5th April, 1871.

I am of opinion that the minimum age at which Hindu women should be encouraged to marry, would be after and not before the sixteenth year. But the race would be improved still more by postponing the marriage of women till the eighteenth or nineteenth year of age.

JOSEPH EWART.

[FROM DR. CHUNDER COOMAR DEY.]

152, *Amherst Street, 6th April*, 1871.

In the absence of all statistics, it is hard to say precisely when our girls arrive at puberty, but my impression is that they generally do so between 11½ and 13 years.

Their minimum marriageable age is, I believe, 14 years.

CHUNDER COOMAR DEY.

[FROM DR. CHEVERS.]

Medical College, 8th April, 1871.

The question conveyed in your circular of the 1st instant regarding the age of puberty of native girls, and their minimum marriageable age, is certainly one of great practical importance, and you will see that I have thus regarded it in my work on Medical Jurisprudence in India. The general opinion among Physiologists is that, all collateral circumstances except those of climate being equal, all women would reach puberty at about the same age. If, however, there does prevail in India an idea that a crime equal to that of child-murder is incurred whenever menstruation occurs previous to marriage, it becomes difficult to obtain statistics showing the range of ages at which *naturally* Indian women would attain puberty. It would perhaps, be well to obtain some statistics of the ages at which puberty was reached by some hundreds of carefully brought up widows of *child*-husbands.

This has never been attempted, I believe, and such a table would be valuable to science and of valid aid to the excellent purpose which you have in view. The Mahomedan law has frequent allusions to the principle that puberty sanctions marriage, and, doubtless, Bengal would make a great step in advance, if parents would admit and act upon the rule that marriage allowed before the establishment of puberty, even should that change be delayed until the 17th or 18th year, is contrary to the law of nature. Still this is not enough. It stands to reason that a wife ought to be a person whom the least observant would declare to be a "woman" and not an

immature "child." Therefore, if safe child-bearing and healthy offspring are to be regarded as being among the first objects of marriage, this rite ought seldom to be allowed before the 18th year, the 16th year being the minimum age in exceptional cases. I shall be happy to communicate with you further on this subject, especially should you be able to obtain the statistics which I have suggested.

NORMAN CHEVERS.

[FROM DR. D. B. SMITH.

I was much obliged to you for your note of the 15th and for the 4 copies of the printed Circular which you were good enough to send me.

With regard to the subject of "Too early marriage," I *believe it to be one of great importance socially and politically*. Unfortunately it is almost as difficult as it is important, inasmuch as its consideration brings us face to face with deep problems in physiology and political economy.

It is no easy matter to get at the *facts* upon which arguments should alone hinge in such a matter.

Thousands will no doubt confidently assert that the practice is pernicious to the last degree, whose judgment is based on mere hearsay, and who have never taken the trouble to go into the enquiry carefully. I am afraid that trustworthy scientific observations and statistics as to the exact age of puberty are very scanty in India. Again the minimum marriageable age is not easy of determination.

How is it to be decided? I am myself inclined to think that it should (as far as physiology is concerned) somewhat closely correspond with the complete development and solidification of the bony skeleton. The exact period at which this occurs in India requires careful enquiry. Few men (so far as I know) have paid special scientific attention to it, and yet such opinions only are of any real value.

The early betrothal system and the bringing together of persons of immature age must be bad, as involving a disturbance of imperceptibly gradual sexual development and as

lighting up, what in medical physiology might be called, an unnatural 'Erythism.' I should be glad indeed to be familiar with and to understand all the exact social and religious grounds upon which the practice has been adopted and followed in India, and to read the arguments by which they can best be met.

It appears to me that any attack made against an institution might possibly do more harm than good, unless it is very well thought out, determined and overpowering, and unless it rests upon masses of incontrovertible facts and investigations of a precise scientific character.

With these, I dare say, some good might be done, particularly if a number of leading and thinking men would bring forward some arguments.

The great difficulty appears to me to collect facts of real value. I confess that at present I am personally not in possession of many such facts.

But the subject is one which interests me greatly, and I shall be only too glad if in any way it lies in my power to further the objects of the Circular, or to assist you in the rectification of what is, I believe, one of the physical and social evils which tend to sap the vigor of Indian communities.

I shall be very glad if you will keep me acquainted with any thing that is being done in this matter.

D. B. SMITH.

[FROM DR. T. E. CHARLES.]

Calcutta, 4th May, 1871.

The question asked about the precise age at which girls arrive at puberty in Bengal is one which it is not possible to answer by fixing any given date as that at which puberty commences. Neither in this nor in any other country can puberty be said to arrive at a given date, as whatever date is taken, though it may truly represent an age at which many girls menstruate, must necessarily fail to include the cases of those who menstruate a year earlier or later, and constitute

a class so numerous as perhaps to include as large a number as the one to whom the date chosen is applicable.

Sushruta fixes the date of menstruation in India at "after the 12th year." The inquiries of Baboo Modusudun Goopto led him to believe that menstruation usually began after the 12th year, or at the beginning of the 13th year. I regret that I have not collected any statistics on the subject, and can only record my impression from all I have seen that both of the above authorities have fixed the date a few months earlier than I would feel inclined to do. If I were forced to name any single date, I would state that the *end of the 13th year* would more correctly represent the state of the case as now met with in Calcutta. I would have it clearly understood however that such is only an impression, and does not deserve that implicit confidence should be placed on it. I have heard of very numerous instances of menstruation occurring during the twelfth year, and many during the eleventh. Before this date menstruation is not rare, but still deserves to be regarded as exceptional, much in the same light, in fact, as similar cases are looked on in colder climates. I have heard of many girls not menstruating till long after the completion of the thirteenth year. Instances delayed till the completion of the fifteenth year are of such frequent occurrence that I never regard them as exceptional. Instances of menstruation delayed till the 16th, 17th, and 18th year are met with. Goodeve tabulated six such cases out of ninety instances, and a seven which had not begun to menstruate at 20.

I would beg to be allowed strongly to insist on the fact, that the beginning of menstruation should not be taken to represent the marriageable age. It is true that taking generally, this may be said to be the sign that a girl has arrived at the age at which she may conceive. It is an undoubted fact, however, that out of many girls living in the married state at the time that menstruation begins, very few do conceive for many months or even years after that function has become established. I believe that though this event may be taken to represent *commencing* puberty, a girl ought not to be taken as having arrived at puberty till various changes in her organisation, which take

place gradually and occupy a considerable period, have been fully completed. I have no data on which to determine how long these changes occupy, and therefore cannot assign any date after the first menstruation, as the one at which puberty should be considered as completed.

It is also of great importance that the fact should be kept prominently in view, that there is a broad distinction between the age at which it is possible for a child to conceive and that at which it is prudent in a medical point of view that she should be allowed to become a mother. I have seen many mothers in India of fourteen, instances of early maternity are not rare; but when I meet with a mother under fourteen, I look upon her as an exception, though Baboo Modusudun Goopto has tabulated five such cases out of thirty-seven women among whom he made enquiry. Though I have seen so many mothers at fourteen as to look on the occurrence of maternity at that age as the rule rather than the exception, I uniformly regard such instances of early child-bearing as a misfortune. I am fully convinced that the evils attendant on child-bearing at such an early period are much greater than when the bodily frame of the mother has arrived at more perfect maturity, and consider that every endeavour should be made to prevent children becoming mothers at fourteen. Constitutions shattered by early child-bearing cannot be made to appeal so strongly to the intellect of others who have not been witnesses of the extensive mischief caused, as figures calculated on a death rate. I should think it possible that by examining the death rate of young mothers, some very valuable statistical data could be secured. Till some such exact information becomes available, I may quote the fact that in France "twice as many wives under twenty die in the year, as die out of the same number of the unmarried," and state my belief that probably the injurious effect of early child-bearing would be more apparent from Indian statistics. To fix a minimum marriageable age is so purely an arbitrary proceeding, that I prefer to adopt the age of 14 years, as proposed in the Bill, and making a few remarks on it, to attempting to assume another as a more fit limit. In a medical point of view alone the limit of 14 years, though pro-

bably sufficiently low if only a few were expected to take advantage of it, I consider to be much too low when it is believed that the great majority of those about to marry will avail themselves of the earliest lawful opportunity of doing so. It would be improper to style a girl of fourteen as a child, but we would be equally far wrong in regarding her as a woman. She is in a transition stage, and while she is only developing into a womanhood, she is in a position as regards child-bearing which is very far from perfect. The practical effect of this limit will be to ensure that the young mothers will just be removed from the period of childhood, which I consider to be a very great desideratum, but it will not place them within the safe period of adult age. At present I believe the majority of the women become mothers while they may be said to be children, and the proposed change will just bring them into that age in which they may with propriety be regarded as adolescent. Child-bearing in the early stages of adolescence, I regard only as little less injurious than during childhood; and any regulation which would ensure that most young mothers would have completed their fifteenth year is one calculated to do a great amount of good though stopping very far short of what might be done. I am distinctly of opinion that a resolute stand should be made for the full age at present proposed, and would regard the relaxation of even a month or two as positive loss. Taking into consideration the present state of Native feeling on the subject, I have refrained from dwelling at length on the injurious effects of women bearing children even during adolescence. When the present step has been attended with success, and the mind of the community has been accustomed to the change, it will then be time to try and effect further improvement. I do not know whether it would be just to expect the law to give assistance in the matter to a much further extent, but the leaders of thought and those whose influence extends to guiding social customs should from the beginning strive to give the fullest prevalence to the idea that though the law sanctions the age of fourteen as the minimum age for marriage, medical considerations unite with all others in deprecating such early unions. If the object be steadily kept in view and frequently dwelt on, a most important change will

undoubtedly be effected on public opinion, and when implication in such an early marriage comes to be regarded as a breach of good breeding, as it undoubtedly is among Western nations, the gain to the nation will be immense. Even among orthodox Hindu families, I am told that various causes have led to a postponement of the very early age at which marriages used to take place. I am told that half a century ago, a strong feeling existed that marriage should take place at the age of eight, while about fifteen years ago, the age of eleven was deemed sufficiently young. Of late years a gradual improvement seems noticeable, as large numbers of girls do not marry till they are 12, and marriages delayed till 13 are by no means very rare. Even should the religious belief of the Hindu render it obligatory on him to give his daughter in marriage before menstruation begins, as far as I know there is no obligation which necessitates his allowing his daughter to remain with her husband till she has arrived at such an age that child-bearing will not prove exceptionally injurious to her system. I cannot shut my eyes to many difficulties which are in the way of even slow progress, but most of them can, I conceive, be got over, and as they do not depend on any medical question, I do not enter into this view of the subject. Two points, however, constituting grave and formidable impediment have come prominently before me while making enquiries to enable me to offer an opinion on the question. One lies in a wide-spread belief that the climate leads to early menstruation, which points to early marriage, and the other a similarly extended opinion that the climate causes an early development of sexual passion. There is just sufficient truth in both these statements to render it impossible to give them a full and unreserved denial, and yet so little truth in them as to render the arguments based on them entirely valueless. Menstruation in Calcutta is undoubtedly earlier than it is in London, though the difference in this respect between the two places is not so great as is usually believed. The climate and other surroundings of young girls may have some influence in leading to this result, but the great cause which induces early menstruation is undoubtedly early marriage. The girl is forced into menstruating prematurely

by the abnormal conditions under which marriage places her.

Horse breeders are well aware of this physiological law, and owners of racing studs habitually take advantage of this natural law when it suits their purpose by confining an entire pony under the same roof, though separated from the mare by partition, when they desire that her ovaries should be forced prematurely into that condition which is analogous to the state they are in during menstruation in the human species.

I believe, in the young widow and in the girl kept separate from her husband, menstruation occurs uniformly later than in those living in a state of marriage. I am also of opinion that the universality of early marriage has had a decided effect in determining the earlier appearance of menstruation, as it is well known that instances of early and late menstruation show themselves regularly in special families and the age at which menstruation occurs may be regarded as in a great measure hereditary. A very large number of the instances of menstruation met with before the thirteenth year, is capable of very easy explanation on the supposition of early marriage having caused their premature appearance. If marriage became generally delayed till menstruation had been fully established, I am quite sure that after a series of generations, menstruation would come on habitually at a later and later period and much more closely approach to a Western standard.

On the subject of the early development of sexual passion I write with great reluctance, and only write at all because I consider by not referring to the question, it will do more harm than by allowing it to enter into this discussion.

I have long believed that the young Hindu female is usually totally devoid of all sexual feeling, and special enquiries on the point made during the present investigation have completely confirmed me in this opinion. Believing the allegation to be without foundation, I consider the fear of seduction grounded on it to be needless, and am convinced that such a misfortune befalling on any Bengalee girl of fourteen or fifteen years of age would depend on a train of events in which sexual passion would hold as unimportant a place as it would do under similar

circumstances in Spitzbergen or the Northern shore of Baffin's Bay.

T. EDMONSTON CHARLES.

[FROM DR. M. L. SIRCAR.]

I have the honor to acknowledge receipt of your circular letter dated the 1st April, 1871, and I have to apologize for the delay in replying to it.

The subject mooted in your letter has been to me, for a long time past and especially since I have taken to the profession to which I have the honour to belong—and as I believe it cannot but be to those of my countrymen who look upon life beyond the mere surface of its pleasures and woes, who have acquainted themselves with the laws of its genesis, development, maturity and decline,—one of the deepest concern and anxiety. And I must express to you my heart-felt thanks, as all true well wishers of our country ought, for the initiative you have taken in the matter.

Early marriage, in my humble opinion, is the greatest evil of our country. It has stood, so to say, at the very springs of the life of the nation, and prevented the normal expanse of which it is capable. And I am inclined to date the fall and degeneracy of my country from the day Angirâ uttered the fatal words, and those words became law, or custom which is stronger and more mischievous than law itself :—

अष्टवर्षा भवेद् गौरी नववर्षा तु रोहिणी ।
दशमे कन्यका प्रोक्ता अत ऊर्ध्वं रजस्वला ॥
तस्मात् संवत्सरे प्राप्ते दशमे कन्यका बुधैः ।
प्रदातव्या प्रयत्नेन न दोषः कालदोषतः ॥

The girl of eight years is Gauri (i.e., of the same elevated character and purity as Gauri or Parvati, the goddess Durga); of nine, Rohini (one of the wives of the moon); of ten (a simple) virgin; of above that age, a woman who has menstruated. Hence the learned should give their daughters in marriage whenever they attain the age of ten, and they will not be liable to the fault of not marrying their daughters in due time.

I do not know how such an absurd opinion came to be tolerated and received as the rule of marriage. I believe it was the natural off-shoot of the morbid jealousy which was slowly taking possession of the Hindu mind and of which the final expression we have now in our own time. I hope the day has dawned for better things.

Manu would seem to fix the earliest marriageable age of girls at twelve or eight :—

त्रिंशद्वर्षो वहेत् कन्यां हृद्यां द्वादशवार्षिकीम् ।
अष्टवर्षाऽष्टवर्षां वा धर्मे सीदति सत्वरः ॥

A man aged thirty years may marry a girl of twelve, (if he find one) dear to his heart ; a man of twenty-four years, a damsel of eight. If he marries earlier (than twenty-four) he loses virtue

We ought to remember that by this text Manu simply limits the minimum marriageable age of the male and the female. He does by no means prohibit later marriages. On the contrary, he strictly prohibits the marriage of a man of thirty with a girl of less than twelve, and so on. He does not say a man of thirty may not marry a girl of a higher age than twelve. All that he says is that the youngest girl that a man of thirty can marry is one of twelve years. This is evident from his laying down, in the same text, that a man of twenty-four may marry a girl of eight. The spirit of this text would be better understood if we take it along with another in which he says :—

काममामरणात्तिष्ठेद् गृहे कन्यर्तुमत्यपि ।
नचैवैनां प्रयच्छेत्तु गुणहीनाय कर्हिचित् ॥

The girl, though menstruant, should rather stay at (her father's) home till her death, than be given away in marriage to one devoid of all excellent qualities.

Now certainly this is a very positive injunction, and why should our community overlook or disregard it ? Manu's authority is acknowledged by all to be higher than that of Angirá. Why then should the latter have the preference in a matter of such vital importance, and in which we have, as we shall see, corroboratory evidence of our *Ayurveda* ?

We have not, it seems, any means of ascertaining what was the earliest marriageable age in the Vedic times, at least I have not had opportunities of satisfying myself on the subject. I therefore naturally turned to our ancient medical writings to see if the Hindu medical philosophers of old also sanctioned the unphysiological custom of early marriage. This search has cost me some time, and this is the reason, Sir, of the delay in replying to your letter. As far as I have been able to ascertain, we have no mention of the age of first menstruation nor of the earliest marriageable age in Charaka Sanhitá, perhaps the oldest work extant of Hindu medicine. But in Susruta, a work of equal celebrity and almost equal antiquity, we have distinct mention of the age when menstruation usually commences and of the age when it ceases.

रसादेव स्त्रियारक्तं रजःसञ्ज्ञं प्रवर्त्तते ।
तद्वर्षाद्द्वादशाद्ऊर्ध्वंयाति पञ्चाशतः क्षयम् ॥

The menstrual blood of females is also elaborated from the chyle. It begins to flow after the age of twelve years, and ceases to do so after that of fifty

And more, we are told the age before which the female ought not to conceive :—

ऊनषोडशवर्षायामप्राप्तः पञ्चविंशतिम्।
यद्याधत्ते पुमान् गर्भं कुक्षिस्थः स विपद्यते ।
जातो वा न चिरं जीवेज्जीवेद्वादुर्ब्बलेन्द्रियः ।
तस्मादत्यन्तबालायां गर्भाधानं न कारयेत् ॥

If the male before the age of twenty-five impregnates the female of less than sixteen years old, the product of conception will either die in the womb; or if it is born it will not be long-lived, and even if it lives long, it will be weak in all its organs. Hence the female should not be made to conceive at too early an age.

Here there is no ambiguity. The opinion expressed, as to what should be the minimum age of child-bearing, is decided. And this age is certainly higher than what Angirá's dictum, if followed, is calculated to make it, and what is now actually seen. In fact, the passage looks very like a protest against the

evil of early marriage which had probably already begun to be felt at the time the treatise was composed.

As in the discussion of this subject, the question of the age of first menstruation naturally comes to mind, and as it is commonly believed that this is the age which nature has indicated as the time when the opposite sexes should be united in holy marriage, I have been at some pains in collecting statistics on the subject. The inquiry is attended with great difficulty, which you, Sir, as a Hindu, can easily understand. However, as my informants are all educated men and felt interested in the inquiry, on their testimony I can vouch for the accuracy of the facts which I have collected and which I now submit to you.

No.	*y*	*m*	*No.*	*y*	*m*	*No.*	*y*	*m*	*No.*	*y*	*m*
1.	8	9	25.	10	11	49.	11	6	73.	12	2
2.	8	10	26.	11	0	50.	11	6	74.	12	2
3.	9	0	27.	11	0	51.	11	8	75.	12	2
4.	9	0	28	11	0	52.	11	9	76.	12	3
5.	9	2	29.	11	0	53.	11	9	77.	12	3
6.	9	5	30.	11	0	54.	11	9	78.	12	3
7.	9	5	31.	11	0	55.	11	10	79.	12	3
8.	9	5	32.	11	1	56.	11	10	80.	12	3
9.	9	5	33.	11	2	57.	11	10	81.	12	3
10.	9	5	34.	11	3	58.	11	10	82.	12	3
11.	9	10	35.	11	3	59.	12	0	83.	12	3
12.	9	10	36.	11	3	60.	12	0	84.	12	4
13.	10	0	37.	11	3	61.	12	0	85.	12	5
14.	10	0	38.	11	3	62.	12	0	86.	12	5
15.	10	2	39.	11	3	63.	12	0	87.	12	5
16.	10	2	40.	11	3	64.	12	0	88.	12	5
17.	10	3	41.	11	3	65.	12	0	89.	12	6
18.	10	6	42.	11	4	66.	12	0	90.	12	6
19.	10	6	43.	11	5	67.	12	0	91.	12	6
20.	10	6	44.	11	5	68.	12	1	92.	12	6
21.	10	6	45.	11	6	69.	12	1	93.	12	6
22.	10	7	46.	11	6	70.	12	1	94.	12	7
23.	10	10	47.	11	6	71.	12	1	95.	12	7
24.	10	10	48.	11	6	72.	12	11	96.	12	7

No.	y	m	No.	y	m	No.	y	m	No.	y	m
97.	12	8	108.	13	0	119.	13	9	130.	14	2
98.	12	8	109.	13	0	120.	13	9	131.	14	3
99.	12	8	110.	13	1	121.	14	0	132.	14	10
100.	12	10	111.	13	2	122.	14	0	133.	15	0
101.	12	10	112.	13	2	123.	14	0	134.	15	0
102.	12	10	113.	13	2	124.	14	0	135.	15	4
103.	12	11	114.	13	3	125.	14	0	136.	17	5
104.	13	0	115.	13	5	126.	14	0	137.	18	0
105.	13	0	116.	13	6	127.	14	0	138.	19	0
106.	13	0	117.	13	7	128.	14	1			
107.	13	0	118.	13	8	129.	14	2			

Besides the above 138 cases in which the ages of first menstruation are given precisely to the year and month, I have been furnished with additional 46 cases in which the ages have been given precisely as to the year only. Thus in four, the menstruation had commenced after the age of 9 years, in nine after 10, in thirteen after 11, in twenty-four after 12, in five after 13, in six after 14, and in three after 15. So that, altogether, we have 2 cases of first menstruation after the age of 8 years, 14 after 9, 22 after 10, 46 after 12, 22 after 13, 18 after 14, 6 after 15, 2 after 17; in 1 after 18. The following negative facts, which were furnished to me, are worth mentioning, namely, in one girl above 13, in four above 14, in one above 19, and in one above 40, the function has not yet appeared. The last two cases are no doubt quite exceptional, depending upon some undetected abnormality. On an average of all the cases the function begins after the age of 11 years and 9 months; on an average of the cases in which the age is precisely given, the age in which it commences is twelve years and one month, which may be looked upon as corroboratory of that laid down in Susruta, if we take Susruta's age as the average. But if we take the age laid down in Susruta as the minimum, which is more likely from the language employed, then we must come to the conclusion that the minimum age of menstruation has, since the days of Susruta, become much lower, a fact which demands serious consideration.

As to whether climate, the degree of latitude, the position

on the surface of the earth, the nature of the soil, and other surroundings have or have not any influence upon the menstrual function, its first appearance, its subsequent regularity, and its final decline, is a question which may be still regarded as open to discussion. I do not think facts have been collected with sufficiently scrupulous accuracy, and other circumstances, social and domestic, have been allowed due weight in the balance of causation, to warrant any positive conclusion on the point. A superficial view of available facts would seem to incline the mind to the belief that climate does influence the menstrual function, delaying its first appearance in the cold and hastening the period in tropical countries. After carefully weighing all the circumstances which might have a possible influence on the function, I am led to believe that if climate has any influence, it is trifling, not to say infinitesimal. There is no doubt, as our table will show that the age of first menstruation here in Calcutta (I do not say Bengal advisedly) is earlier than in London, but I am more inclined to attribute this difference to the difference of social and domestic economy that obtains in the respective places. I have not said Bengal, because I have positive testimony that there is a striking difference between the ages of first menstruation in town and country. The earliest ages that I have quoted of early menstruation were in some of the rich families in Calcutta. And I have no doubt in my mind that high and luxurious living and early seeing and knowing of child-husbands and child-wives, favored by the anxiety of fond parents to see their little ones become fathers and mothers, are the chief causes of the forced puberty which we so much regret in our female no less than in our male children.

It is but fair to say that this evil of early marriage has reached its climax only in the present day; especially in lower Bengal, and more especially in Calcutta. The evil was till recently in Bengal, as it is still in the North-West, counteracted to some extent by a quasi-custom, by which the fulfilling of the actual rites of marriage, the actual seeing and knowing of child-husbands and child-wives, is prevented till after some maturity had been attained by both. With the

progress of enlightenment this rigid grandmother's discipline has begun to be disregarded, and we have now true physiological marriage almost immediately after the ceremonial one is over. It is therefore high time that we should endeavour, by the light of common sense and science, to set matters right by fixing the minimum marriageable age of our girls, consistent with the normal development of the offspring and the preservation of the health of the mother.

The advocates of early marriage urge that the custom is nothing else than the expression of a stubborn necessity which has arisen from the fact of early pubescence in this country. I think, however, we are warranted, by what has been already adduced, in concluding that early marriages have been the cause of early pubescence. The primary object of marriage is no doubt the production of healthy offspring, and physiologically speaking it ought not to be consummated before the ages when the offspring is not calculated to be long-lived or healthy. The commencement of the menstrual function is no doubt an index to the *commencement* of puberty. But it is a grave mistake to suppose that the female, who has just begun to menstruate, is capable of giving birth to healthy children. The teeth are no doubt intended for the mastication of solid food, but it would be a grievous error to think that the child, the moment he begins to cut his teeth, will be able to live upon solid food. Our anxiety, on the contrary, should be that the delicate masticatory organs are not injured or broken by giving the child too hard food. So when we see a girl is beginning to have the monthly flow, we should not only anxiously watch its course and regularity, but should also watch the other collateral developments of womanhood to be able to determine the better the time when she can become a mother, safely to herself and to her offspring. For it should be borne in mind that while early maternity results in giving birth to short-lived or unhealthy children, it at the same time seriously compromises the health of the mother also. I can speak positively on the subject from personal experience. A host of complaints from which our females suffer life-long, or to which they fall early victims, arise from early pubescene and early maternity.

This view of the state of things imperatively demands that, for the sake of our daughters and sisters, who are to become mothers, and for the sake of generations, yet unborn, but upon whose proper development and healthy growth, the future well-being of the country depends, the earliest marriageable age of our females should be fixed at a higher point than what obtains in our country. If the old grandmother's discipline, alluded to above, could be made to prevail, there would be no harm in fixing that age at 14 or even 12, but as that is well-nigh impossible, or perhaps would not be perfectly right and consistent with the progress of the times, I should fix it at 16.

MAHENDRA LAL SIRCAR.

[FROM MAULAVI TUMEEZ KHAN, KHAN BAHADUR.]

I really regret much that, owing to a variety of causes, I was not able before this to reply to your letter, regarding my opinion on the subject of the marriageable age of Native girls of Hindoostan and Bengal.

I might premise, that my personal experience strengthens the belief that a tropical region exerts an immense influence in inducing a rapid development of parts in both the animal and vegetable organisation. A natural consequence of this is the earlier appearance of indubitable proofs of puberty amongst the girls of India in general, than is the case with persons of similar ages, but natives of different temperature of climate.

Habits of life and usages of society are not without their influence on age. A girl, who is born and bred up in different, and perhaps, luxurious circumstances, will reach the age of puberty earlier than what is likely to be the case in others, situated in opposite and adverse circumstances.

A Mahomedan girl, according to her law-givers, is considered to be "Moo-ra-bek-kaeo," *i.e.*, aptæ vivibas, when she is "qureeb-ool-lia-loogh," *i.e.*, approaching the age of pubescence.

Experience and the laws both tend to establish the fact that in the tropical climates, this age is attained between the tenth and the thirteenth year. Although a girl may become marriageable at the age, but dictates of observation, commonsense, and

progress of enlightenment this rigid grandmother's discipline has begun to be disregarded, and we have now true physiological marriage almost immediately after the ceremonial one is over. It is therefore high time that we should endeavour, by the light of common sense and science, to set matters right by fixing the minimum marriageable age of our girls, consistent with the normal development of the offspring and the preservation of the health of the mother.

The advocates of early marriage urge that the custom is nothing else than the expression of a stubborn necessity which has arisen from the fact of early pubescence in this country. I think, however, we are warranted, by what has been already adduced, in concluding that early marriages have been the cause of early pubescence. The primary object of marriage is no doubt the production of healthy offspring, and physiologically speaking it ought not to be consummated before the ages when the offspring is not calculated to be long-lived or healthy. The commencement of the menstrual function is no doubt an index to the *commencement* of puberty. But it is a grave mistake to suppose that the female, who has just begun to menstruate, is capable of giving birth to healthy children. The teeth are no doubt intended for the mastication of solid food, but it would be a grievous error to think that the child, the moment he begins to cut his teeth, will be able to live upon solid food. Our anxiety, on the contrary, should be that the delicate masticatory organs are not injured or broken by giving the child too hard food. So when we see a girl is beginning to have the monthly flow, we should not only anxiously watch its course and regularity, but should also watch the other collateral developments of womanhood to be able to determine the better the time when she can become a mother, safely to herself and to her offspring. For it should be borne in mind that while early maternity results in giving birth to short-lived or unhealthy children, it at the same time seriously compromises the health of the mother also. I can speak positively on the subject from personal experience. A host of complaints from which our females suffer life-long, or to which they fall early victims, arise from early pubescene and early maternity.

This view of the state of things imperatively demands that, for the sake of our daughters and sisters, who are to become mothers, and for the sake of generations, yet unborn, but upon whose proper development and healthy growth, the future well-being of the country depends, the earliest marriageable age of our females should be fixed at a higher point than what obtains in our country. If the old grandmother's discipline, alluded to above, could be made to prevail, there would be no harm in fixing that age at 14 or even 12, but as that is well-nigh impossible, or perhaps would not be perfectly right and consistent with the progress of the times, I should fix it at 16.

MAHENDRA LAL SIRCAR.

[FROM MAULAVI TUMFEZ KHAN, KHAN BAHADUR.]

I really regret much that, owing to a variety of causes, I was not able before this to reply to your letter, regarding my opinion on the subject of the marriageable age of Native girls of Hindoostan and Bengal.

I might premise, that my personal experience strengthens the belief that a tropical region exerts an immense influence in inducing a rapid development of parts in both the animal and vegetable organisation. A natural consequence of this is the earlier appearance of indubitable proofs of puberty amongst the girls of India in general, than is the case with persons of similar ages, but natives of different temperature of climate.

Habits of life and usages of society are not without their influence on age. A girl, who is born and bred up in different, and perhaps, luxurious circumstances, will reach the age of puberty earlier than what is likely to be the case in others, situated in opposite and adverse circumstances.

A Mahomedan girl, according to her law-givers, is considered to be "Moo-ra-bek-kaeo," *i.e.*, aptæ vivibas, when she is "qureeb-ool-lia-loogh," *i.e.*, approaching the age of pubescence.

Experience and the laws both tend to establish the fact that in the tropical climates, this age is attained between the tenth and the thirteenth year. Although a girl may become marriageable at the age, but dictates of observation, commonsense, and

lastly biological laws, cannot but lead us to the conclusion, that a female cannot be sufficiently mature for the fulfilment of the serious duties of a wife, much less for those of a mother, at the extremely tender and early age; and that where forced to do so, her delicate and hitherto immature organisation becomes rapidly impaired both in health and vigour, and thus before she is actually young, she gets old and decrepit. This exerts its baneful influences on her progeny. Speaking in a scientific and humane point of view, I might safely pronounce that in considering the proper age of marriage for a Native girl of India, *we should not look* to the time when the signs of puberty show themselves generally, but make it a point *that under no circumstances is a girl to be allowed to get married before she has attained the full age of sixteen years at the least*; nor can there be entertained any doubt that were the consummation of marital rites deferred somewhat longer, it will tend to the improvement of the individual and the progeny too.

TUMEEZ KHAN.

[FROM DR. D. B. SMITH.]

(*Second Letter.*)

With reference to my former letter, dated 17th April, regarding the marriageable age of Native girls, I again address you, with the object of stating that I entirely agree with those high medical authorities who have recently laid before the Indian Reform Association the opinion that, as a rule, girls in this country marry much too early; that before completion of her sixteenth year a girl is physiologically immature; and that it would, in general, be very advantageous if marriages were deferred even for two or three years later than this.

Before the age specified (sixteen), a female cannot be said to be fully developed—either physically or mentally. Some parts of her osseous structure, which are essential to the reproductive function, are not yet consolidated. The first appearance of those means to be regarded as coincident with the most fitting time for marriage; they merely indicate the development of procreative power and a possible capacity for conception;

although, it is to be observed, that a female may conceive before she has ever menstruated, and also that *infants* have even been known to menstruate.

The stomach digests, the brain elaborates thought, the voice gives utterance to such thought long anterior to the time at which these functions are performed with full force and in physiological perfection, and a similar law of Nature applies to the sexual system of the female. She may present the initiative signs of womanhood without its being at all desirable that she should at once become a mother. When a girl reaches the "pubescent" or "nubile" age, she may be said to have acquired the "*Vis Generandi*," but it is a few years after this that she arrives at what the Romans called her *Pubertas Plena* which is physiologically, the most appropriate period for marriage.

I am aware that certain physicians and learned writers have expressed a different opinion on this point. Montesquieu enunciated the *dictum* that "women in hot climates are marriageable at eight, nine or ten years of age,"—adding (what, under the assumed circumstances, is certainly much more near the truth) that "they are old at twenty." "The age of marriage," says Mr. Sale, "or of maturity, is reckoned to be fifteen —a decision supported by a tradition of the Prophet, although Abu Hanifah thinks eighteen the proper age." (Prichard's Natural History of Man, Vol. II., p. 655). Some physiologists believe that the catamenial function does not occur earlier in hot than in cold climates. Mr. Roberton, whose writings on this subject are well known, is a learned exponent of this view of the case. Allusion to his investigations may be found in Todd's "*Cyclopædia of Anatomy and Physiology*"—*Art*—"*Generation*," Vol. II., p. 442.

The experience of Haller, Boerhave, Denman, Barns, Dewees and others were in support of a contrary opinion. There can, I think, be but little doubt that temperature, mode of life, moral and physical education, *do* produce decided variations in relation to puberty. The late Professor Traill, Editor of the *Eighth Edition* of the *Encyclopædia Britannica*, states that Fodere observed a difference in this respect between the inhabitants of the warm, maritime part of Provence and the elevated

valleys of Entraunes and St. Etienne, and that he himself (Traill) had remarked a similar difference in Spain between the children in the plains of Andalusia and among the mountains of Cataluna. (*Outlines of Medical Jurisprudence*, p. 18).

Dr. Tilt compiled from the works of various authors a Table of the Periods of first menstruation of 12,037 women, in hot, temperate and cold climates The following are, briefly, the results arrived at :—

	No of Observations.	Mean age.
Hot Climates	666 . .	. 13 19
Temperate	7,237	. 14 94
Cold .	4,134 .	. 16 11

Grand mean of all countries = 14 85

The table referred to is to be found in Dr. Tilt's Work on *Diseases of Women, 2nd edition*, p. 35

Menstruation has been found to be accelerated, amongst the Manchester Cotton-spinners, by continual exposure to a high artificial temperature. The effects of high temperature in hastening development, and organic functions generally, were well demonstrated by Reaumur's experiments on *Pupæ*, and by Mr Higginbottom's researches on the metamorphosis of the tadpole into the frog (Phil. Trans. 1850, p. 431, and Proceedings of the Royal Society, Vol. XI., p. 532).

Those who desire to study fully the subject of Puberty, in all its bearings, should consult the writings of Bischoff, Raciborski, Coste, Pouchet, Bierre de Boismont, Whitehead, Arthur Farre, Allen Thomson, Roberton, Mayer ("*Des Rapports Conjugaux*"), Meigs, &c., and different standard Treatises on Medical Jurisprudence, as those of Beck, Orfila, Casper, Chevers, Taylor, &c.

Allowing that it would be unphilosophical to endeavour absolutely to fix any purely arbitrary date for marriage in any country, I myself believe that a Bengal female, after the age of sixteen, may marry and bear healthy offspring ; whilst the same individual, at an earlier age, would be very liable to beget children feeble in every sense of the term.

I think we may even go so far as to say that too early marriage is inevitably bad, and radically destructive of national

vigor. Not so, it must be confessed, thought Voltaire's friend, of whom he writes as follows, in his *Dictionaire Philosophique* (Tome *Sixieme*, p. 131) :—" Un grand politique Italien, qui d'ailleurs etait fort savant dans les langues Orientales, chose tres rare chez nos politiques, medisait dans ma jeuness : *Caro figlio*, souvenez que les Juifs n'ont jamais eu qu'une bonne institution,—celle d'avoir la virginite en horreur."

The reason why the ancient Jews thus attached a certain stigma to virginity, is ably explained, both on political and religious grounds, by Mr. Leckie, in his "*History of European Morals*," Vol. I, p. 112. The same learned author (at p. 118) indicates why it is that the views of priests and political economists are somewhat at variance on this subject ; the former believing that " the postponement of marriages, through prudential motives, by any large body of men, is the fertile mother of sin, whilst the latter opposes early marriage on the ground that " it is an essential condition of material well-being that the standard of comfort should not be depressed."

I am inclined to believe that very early marriages in this country are mentally degrading as they are physiologically objectionable. It would be altogether unbecoming and out of place for me to enter into the subject of the moral objections to early marriage ; the more so as it is almost self-evident that the artificial forcing of physical instincts, and the consequent unnatural stimulation of sexual passion, cannot be regarded as a mere error of judgment. It certainly involves a degree of depravity the consideration of which may, however, safely be left to the " intuitive moralist."

The medico-legal bearings of this subject are most important, and they fall much more within the province of the physician. Only a few days ago, a girl aged *eleven* years was brought to me, suffering from advanced Secondary Syphilis, which had been directly contracted by the pitiable child, —her parents being both healthy. The girl was in tears, and endeavoured to conceal the truth ; whilst the mother declared her daughter to be *virgo intacta*,—but it was not so.

I earnestly hope that the thinking and good men by whom Native society is more or less led, may, in time, succeed in

bringing about some change towards abolishing the prevailing custom of child-marriage in this country. The subject deserves most earnest consideration; and it is one, the importance of which should continually be impressed on the minds of the people by all those leaders of thought who speak with authority amongst their countrymen and who may have it, more or less, in their power to regulate prevailing opinions or to modify the social usages of the country. It may, I think, without any exaggeration or cynicism, be said that the present system of early marriage in Bengal panders to passion and sensuality, violates the requirements of nature, lowers the general standard of public health, lessens the average value of life takes greatly from the general interests of existing society, and allows a present race to deteriorate both to its own disadvantage and to the detriment of future generations. The results of reform in this direction would undoubtedly be of great importance. As I said in my former letter, however, the medical arguments against early marriage ought to be much more precise and cogent than any that have yet been adduced. Physiological observations on the subject have neither been extended nor have they been recorded with enough of care. The importance of a broad social question of this kind ought, in great measure, to be determined, and the scientific arguments relating to it grounded, on a fixed and sound philosophical basis, for I believe the saying to be a true one that no mere theory will ever throw down ancestral traditions.

Mr. F. G. P. Neison, in the Preface to his valuable "*Contributions to Vital Statistics*," indicates, as "an immense field which still remains uncultivated," even in England, the investigation of the following questions:

"The influence of age at marriage on the fruitfulness of the marriage. The influence of age at marriage on the mortality of children born therefrom. The influence of age at marriage on the sex at issue, and also on the relative mortality of the first, second and third born, as well as on each subsequent birth in consecutive order."

I observe that the Editor of the *Indian Medical Gazette* has, in his last issue, commented somewhat derisively (one might

almost say—"with plentiful lack of politeness") on the present movement of the Indian Reform Association, regarding the marriageable age of Native girls. This is to be regretted, even although the home-thrusts are playful.

"It seems to us that if the educated and enlightened Native gentlemen referred to by our reformers were anxious for the solution of a problem of this kind, they would hardly seek for advice on the subject from medical practitioners; evidently questions of this description must and always will be settled by the dictates of society, guided by common sense, rather than by physicians and philosophers. We all know the answer of the 'wise man' quoted by Bacon when asked when a man should marry—'a young man not yet, and elder men not at all,' and we doubt not the members of the Indian Reform Association have received some such prudent answer from the professional men they have consulted regarding the marriageable age of their daughters."

Such is the sententious ruling of the *Medical Gazette*. I can only hope that "our reformers" may survive such admonition and censure, and that they may live to prove that they are truly in earnest in this matter.

With all due respect for the opinions of the *Medical Gazette*, I presume to think that the members of the Indian Reform Association may very well be pardoned for asking—(in connection with such a subject as that of early or late marriage)—"What are the teachings of Physiology?"—seeing that true facts and sound principles last for ever, whilst individual opinions and conventional customs are liable at any hour to change. It even appears to me natural and reasonable that they should have put this question to professional men whose special business it is to investigate such subjects,—men who have sometimes very flatteringly no doubt been called "*Ministri et interpretes Naturæ*,"—whose duty and privilege it is to raise, by every possible means, the general standard of health and happiness, and who may, therefore, without any offence be appealed to in questions affecting the science of population, and the popular bearings of medical knowledge.

Although this letter is already too long, I cannot refrain

from adding to it a quotation from the lectures of a learned American Professor (Dr. Meigs of Philadelphia) whose writings on the subject of Puberty are most interesting and philosophical. *Apropos* of the wisdom or otherwise of consulting medical practitioners on social subjects, he writes :—

"Physicians are the health officers of society. I would that they as a body were awake to the importance of so guiding the public mind on all topics connected with the conservation of health, as to exert the whole influence of the profession, a great influence, in impressing upon the public mind, clear and sound notions in regard to those hygienic uses and appliances which the public either know not or overlook, perhaps in the hurry and cares and embarrassments of the business and occupations of the world.

"A physician ought to exert the intellectual power which by his position in society he is presumed to possess in protecting society against the evils of ignorance on hygienic subjects. Forty thousand medical men in the United States should not always allow their day and generation to pass away without leaving some signs of progress, and effecting some amelioration of the condition of society, beyond the mere restorative results of their therapeutical prescription."

There is assuredly some work of the same kind for medical men to do in India; and it would, in my opinion, be hard to instance any subject upon which they could more usefully bring their experiences and wisdom to bear, than upon that which relates to the discouragement of child-marriages amongst the Natives of Bengal.

DAVID B. SMITH, M. D.

—*Indian Mirror*, 23rd and 26th June, and 17th, 19th and 21st July, 1871.

[FROM DR. NOBIN KRISHNA BOSE.]

I am in receipt of your printed letter of the 1st instant relative to the prevalence of early and premature marriage in the country, and I feel myself highly flattered that you should think my opinion on the subject of value enough to be at the trouble to ask for it.

I have always regarded the custom to be among the principal causes of our physical deterioration as a race, and also as a powerful impediment in the way of intellectual advancement and social reform. You will find these views fully set forth in a paper on the importance of physiological knowledge with reference to marriage, education, &c., which I had the honor to read before the Bethune Society in 1855, and which was afterwards published in the *Calcutta Literary Gazette* of that year.

I do not think that climate exerts that degree of influence in modifying the age of puberty in different parts of the world which has been generally ascribed to it Some difference it will produce, no doubt, but this, on examination, will be found to range within very narrow limits. On studying the age of marriage in different countries at different periods of time, it has appeared to me, on the other hand, that early wedlock has always been the result of ignorance and of general degraded condition of the female sex, and hence at one time it was not unknown even in the latitudes of England and Russia. And the mischief lies in this, *viz.*, that when the practice becomes a marked one, it tends to perpetuate itself by producing precocious maturity among the children in accordance with the organic laws which govern the hereditary transmission of physical and mental qualities.

In this country the custom under notice has prevailed for centuries and generations, and it is not at all to be wondered at, therefore, that our boys and girls should attain to puberty at an earlier period of life than under a healthier system of matrimonial connections they would have done. This is a fact, however, which, in fixing the minimum marriageable age of our girls, should not be entirely overlooked, calculated though it be to give rise to some diversity of opinion on the subject. In determining the age in question, more regard is to be had only to the period of life when, by its anatomical development, the female system is fitted to enter upon the functions and duties of maternity without injury to itself or the physical deterioration of the offspring begotten by it. I should say that our girls should not be married before they have attained, at least, the eighteenth year of their age. Before this period it would not

bear with impunity the drain which maternity must establish in it. But considering the modifying influence of the long prevalence of early marriage to which advertance has been made above, it may be doubted, perhaps, whether it would, all things considered, be advisable to fix so high a standard at once. An evil, by long duration, becomes as it were a part and parcel of the system to which it belongs, and cannot be rooted out all at once, without risk and danger to the system itself. In practically dealing with the subject in hand, therefore, it may be necessary perhaps to lower somewhat the above standard of eighteen ; and this done, I should, for the present, fix the minimum marriageable age of our females at fifteen, and this the more particularly, as from a social point of view, this standard has a greater chance of being abided by in practice than the higher one of eighteen.

I have only to add that it has given me the greatest pleasure to find that you have taken up this subject in such an earnest and practical manner, and I sincerely hope that your effort may be crowned with success. My only regret is that in my present insular position—at a distance from all centres of social and mental activity—it is not in my power to co-operate with you in the way I would have wished, but still if you think I can be of any help in forwarding the object you have in view, my services are at your command.

NOBIN KRISHNA BOSE.

Khundwa, 18th July 1871.

[FROM DR. ATMARAM PANDURUNG.]

I received during the first week a copy of the printed circular letter you have addressed to several eminent medical gentlemen at Calcutta, and I am glad, you have thus given me an opportunity of expressing my views on the matter it refers to. I believe the girls of this country arrive at puberty at the average age of from 13 to 15 years, and in this as in every thing else, they differ but slightly from girls in other countries. In some cases puberty is known to come on as early as 10 years, and in others, so late as 17 or 18 years. In some rare instances the

catamenia occur regularly every month from infancy. This difference amongst girls is partly caused by some peculiarity in their individual constitution, but in a large majority of cases chiefly or entirely by social influence—the influence of habits of thought and action which society has on its each individual member. You will then find in all countries in the world, girls *living in cities, and especially in very crowded parts of it*, and in the lowest strata of society, arrive at puberty at a much earlier age than those living in the agricultural or rural districts and in the upper strata in whom high moral feelings prevail. The custom of premature marriage thereby acting injuriously upon the morals of the people among whom it prevails, has an undoubted tendency to bring on early puberty, and this is strangely mistaken for climate influence. *Climate has no influence in the matter.* The history of our own people in former years, when this pernicious custom had no existence, will bear me out fully, so that I need not have to point other classes or tribes in this country or other countries, savage and civilized, where the custom of early marriage does not exist, to support the assertion that climate has no influence on the coming on of puberty.

As to your second question, what is to be considered as the minimum marriageable age of girls in this country, it is rather difficult to give a satisfactory reply. If the question had been simply what is considered to be the proper age at which girls *ought to marry, the proper answer would be, without any* hesitation, 20 years, and there are sound anatomical and statistical reasons. When girls marry at that age, all the ends and aims of marriage are gained with the best of results. There is then less amount of sterility, and also less number of deaths of mothers at their delivery, &c. But it is impossible for any medical gentleman to answer your question in the form you have put it. What one can say is, that puberty is not the best criterion of proper *marriageable age, for it is not the period* at which development of parts concerned in gestation and delivery is completed ; nor is then the mind well adapted for the requirements of the mother in taking proper care of her delicate and tender offspring.

It behoves well-informed and educated people in this country that they should both individually and collectively exert themselves most strenuously to do away with this most pernicious custom of premature marriage by deferring the marriage of their sisters and daughters to as near the age of 20 years as they can, for they would thereby undoubtedly raise the moral, social and physical condition of the people at large. It is their bounden duty to do it, and they must do it.

ATMARAM PANDURUNG.

Bombay, 24th July 1871.

[FROM DR. A. V. WHITE.]

I have the honor to acknowledge the receipt, on the 17th instant, of your letter, dated April 1st, asking me to state what I consider to be the age of puberty of Native girls and their minimum marriageable age, and in reply to offer the following observations.

From inquiries I have made on this subject, I have long since come to the conclusion, that there is a considerable difference, with regard to the period at which menstruation first makes its appearance, between English and Indian girls. Among English girls menstruation occurs more frequently at 15 years than at any other age, while among Indian girls, in the large majority of cases, I believe, it occurs at 13 or even less. The cause of this difference of two years is not so much, in my opinion, the effect of climate, as a difference in the constitution of the two races.

Early marriages, as they obtain in this country, have the effect of prematurely rousing the ovaries into a state of activity, and early menstruation is the result; but this early menstruation is unaccompanied with the other signs of development or advancing puberty, such as the special growth of the reproductive organs, in conjunction with the general development of the frame and of the mental faculties. This pernicious custom has so long prevailed that it has now become the constitutional habit of Indian girls to menstruate early; and this habit, I believe, is transmitted from mother to daughter. If Indian girls

were not to marry until 16 or 18, I believe that in a few generations this habit would be broken, and a marked improvement in this respect would be observed.

Cases of early menstruation at 10 and 11 years are by no means of very rare occurrence in temperate climates, but they are found among girls who have been brought up in indolence, luxury, or among those employed in our large manufactories, where the influences in operation tend to foster precociousness, and indeed place them in very similar conditions, physically and morally, to those of Indian girls.

Menstruation is no doubt the most important sign of puberty, but when it shows itself early, it is only the sign of commencing puberty, and, in the absence of the other indications, by no means implies that a girl is fitted for marriage and child-bearing. It is not until puberty has been fully established that the minimum marriageable age has been reached, and this rarely occurs, in my opinion, among Native girls before the 15th or 16th year, but if marriages were delayed until the 18th year, the frame would be more thoroughly developed; the danger of child-bearing would be lessened and healthier offspring would be secured.

A. V. WHITE,
Professor of Midwifery,
Grant Medical College.

Bombay, July 29th, 1871.

The Hon. Mr. Justice K. T. Telang on "Must Social Reform precede Political Reform in India?"

The Hon'ble Mr. Kasinath Trimbak Telang, M.A., LL.B., C.I.E., delivered the following speech before the Students' Literary and Scientific Society, on the 22nd February 1886:—

MR. CHAIRMAN AND GENTLEMEN,—In opening the address which I have undertaken to deliver this evening, I am afraid I must begin with a word of apology for the imperfections which I am certain must be found in it. And as I am not in a position to plead the excuse of having been asked to deliver the address

by any one other than myself, I must say a few words in explanation of my appearance before you this evening. Well, as one of the Secretaries of the Students' Literary and Scientific Society, it is part of my duty to see that the Society's session does not remain quite barren of essays and lectures. But in consequence of circumstances which need not now be dwelt on, although this session of the Society began as far back as October last, no essays have in fact been read or lectures delivered as yet before the Society. And when I endeavoured to make arrangements to avert any reflection upon us in consequence of this circumstance, and began to ask friends to prepare lectures and addresses, it occurred to me that the fairest course would be for me to begin by putting my own shoulders to the wheel. And accordingly it was only at the beginning of last week, that I determined to prepare myself for the address which I am now about to deliver. The subject of that address, however, is not altogether new to me. It attracted my attention many months ago, when I was writing a letter to my friend Mr. B. M. Malabari in reference to his notes on "Infant Marriage and Enforced Widowhood." When I was writing that letter, Sir Auckland Colvin's communication to Mr. Malabari had just been published in the newspapers. And the view had been expressed in it, that we ought to turn our attention to social reform, in preference to the endeavours we were making to teach our English rulers what their duties were in the government of the country In my letter to Mr. Malabari, I ventured briefly but emphatically to express my dissent from this view of Sir A. Colvin. And in support of my opinion, I quoted a passage from Mr. Herbert Spencer's essay on Manners and Fashions. My letter has been published in the newspapers, and I need not now go into details regarding its contents. Since then attention has been again drawn to the point, by the letter recently written on the subject of Hindu Social reform by one whose authority is deservedly esteemed and highly respected by us all in Bombay. But as the subject is one of undoubtedly great and vital importance, it is desirable to consider it on grounds of reason, and independently of the authority even of Mr. Herbert Spencer or Mr. Wordsworth

And first, when we are asked to give precedence to social over political reform, it is necessary to consider whether there is such a sharp line of demarcation between social and political matters as must be drawn in order to give effect to this demand. I confess I think such a line cannot be logically drawn. The division is one which in many respects is one of convenience only. And even those matters which are mainly and to a great extent social have most important political aspects, and *vice versâ*. Take education. It is an agency of vital importance alike for political and social purposes. Or again, take the removal of the prohibition against a voyage to England. The social importance of this is obvious But the political value of it also is equally manifest, especially now when we have just welcomed the Indian Delegates back to their own country. Take again the question in reference to which this controversy has been raised. The question of infant marriage is a social one. But the modes suggested for remedying the evil raise great political issues, touching the province of legislation, and the true functions and limits of State activity. Therefore it is clear, that these political and social questions are so intertwined one with the other, that a hard and fast line cannot in practice be drawn between them. And consequently, even if the preference suggested could be justified in theory, it would not be feasible to enforce it in practice.

But now, assuming that it is practicable to work on the basis of such a preference being given to social over political reform, let us inquire on what ground of reason such a preference can be laid down. I have endeavoured to follow the whole controversy as it has been going on for some time past. And I have come across only two reasons in favour of the preference thus suggested. First it is said, that slavery at home is incompatible with political liberty. Now, when understood in its true sense, I have no quarrel with this principle. I am prepared to concede, and indeed I hold the doctrine myself very strongly, that the true spirit of political liberty must be only skin-deep, if so much, in the man who can actively maintain or even passively tolerate slavery within his own household. But I apprehend, that for the application of this principle, you must

have a conscious tyranny on the one side and a slavery that is felt to be slavery on the other. Without this consciousness on both sides, I hold that the principle would be incorrect. Now, how does the matter stand in the case before us? Have we in truth got to deal with a case of conscious tyranny and felt slavery? I say, certainly not. I say, that so far as we have tyranny and slavery in the case, we have only a case of the tyranny of the past, the present being bound in slavery to it. It is not, as it is often represented, a case of male tyrants and female slaves to any notable extent. We are all—men and women, widows and widowers, children and adults—slaves, if that is the proper expression, to ancient custom. Remember this further. As regards all those burning questions, which just now trouble us in connexion with social reform; as regards enforced widowhood, infant marriage, voyages to England, and so forth; the persons who are supposed to be our slaves are really in many respects our masters. You talk of the duty which lies upon us of breaking the shackles off their feet, but they will have none of this breaking off of the shackles. To a great extent they do not feel the shackles, and they decline to let us break them. They protest against that interference with and desecration of their ancient and venerable traditions, which, from their point of view, is involved in this course of enfranchisement. Therefore I hold, that the phrase "household slavery," as used in this controversy, is an entire misnomer. It is these so-called slaves within our households, who form our great difficulty. And under these circumstances, I venture to say, that the sort of "household slavery" that in truth prevails among us, is by no means incompatible with political liberty. The position in fact is this. Here we have what may, for convenience, be treated as two spheres for our reforming activities. There is slavery in the one sphere, and there is slavery in the other, and we are endeavouring to shake off the slavery in the one sphere as well as in the other. I can see no reasonable objection to this course. That course is a perfectly legitimate one, and as Mr. Herbert Spencer has pointed out, it is also shown to be the natural one by scientific observation.

Let us now go on to the next reason alleged in favour of the precedence claimed for social over political reform. It is said that a nation socially low cannot be politically great, that history shows no instance of such a condition. Now if this means that political and social progress go on together, that the spirit of progress working in the political sphere always manifests itself in greater or less vigour in the social sphere, I at once admit it. The passage from Mr. Spencer's essay, which I quoted in my letter to Mr. Malabari, and which merely sums up the result of a full discussion marked by all Mr. Spencer's acumen and comprehensive grasp, shows that very clearly. But this is a very different thing indeed from the proposition involved in the present argument. It is not enough, as thus understood, to justify the preference demanded. For that purpose, it is necessary to prove, that in a social condition that is at any given period unsatisfactory, political greatness is unattainable, and political progress not to be achieved. To *this* proposition, I confess, I cannot see that history affords any support. And I hold, indeed, that the lessons to be deduced from history run exactly counter to this. Look at that brilliant episode in the history of India which is connected with the names of Sivaji, and the subsequent Maratha rulers—an episode on which our memories still love to dwell. I have been recently reading several of the *Bakhars* or chronicles of those times which have been published. And judging from them, I cannot find that the social condition of that period was very much superior to the social condition that is now prevailing. We had then infant marriage and enforced widowhood; we had imperfect female education; we had also the practice of Sati, though that never was a very wide-spread practice. Confining our attention to the subjects involved in the practical controversy now going on, and to subjects kindred to it, it is plain, I think, that the palm of superiority cannot be awarded to the period covered by the achievements of the great Maratha power. Yet there can be no doubt, that politically those achievements were very brilliant, and that they implied great political progress, at least within the limits of their principal home. If we go back to

a still earlier period, we have evidence in the writings of that famous Chinese traveller, Hiouen-Tsang who came to this country in the seventh century A D., of a prosperous political condition, while the facts of the social condition do not indicate any very great superiority over what prevails now. The caste system was then in force. And we have it expressly and distinctly stated by Hiouen-Tsang, that in those days widow-marriage was not practised. There you have one mark of "household slavery" certainly, yet the political condition of the provinces in Northern India ruled by Harshavardhana, or of our own part of the country, then governed by the great Pulakesi, was by no means a bad one But it may be said that our materials for a correct picture of those times are not satisfactory, and that it will not be quite safe to draw such inferences from our imperfect materials. I do not wish to impugn this view. I must admit certainly that the materials are not quite satisfactory. And therefore I will ask you for a little while to join with me in considering the lessons to be derived from the history of a country, whose history we can ascertain from much more satisfactory materials—a history, too, which we are sometimes charged with knowing better than we know the history of our own country. Let us look at the history of the country which we believe, and are happy in believing, to be at the very top of the political ladder to-day; let us look at the history of England in the seventeenth century A.D., the materials for which are easily accessible, and have been digested for us by such classic historians as Hallam, for instance, and Lord Macaulay. The political history of England in the seventeenth century is pretty familiar to us The beginning of the century synchronises with the close of the reign of Queen Elizabeth, in whose time, after a pretty long period of enjoyment by the Crown of almost uncontrolled power, the rights and privileges of the people had begun to be asserted. I pass over the reign of James I. and come to that of Charles I. Here you have the achievements of that brilliant galaxy of political workers, containing Hampden, the Five Members, the great men of the Long Parliament. You have then the battles of the first English Revolution, as it has

sometimes been called, winding up with the proceedings of the tribunal over which Bradshaw presided, and the final catastrophe of the execution of King Charles I. A republican might object to the phrase catastrophe, but as there was a destruction of the life of one of God's creatures, it is, I hope, allowable to speak of the event as a catastrophe. Well, we pass on then to the protectorate of Cromwell, a tangible embodiment of the assertion of popular power against the Crown. Then we come after the Restoration to the well known Habeas Corpus Act. And after the short and inglorious reign of James II, we come to the great Revolution of 1688. Then we have the Declaration of Rights and Bill of Rights, till finally we reach the Act of Settlement at the very close of the seventeenth century. It would not be easy, I should say, to find out in history many parallels to the course of political progress indicated by the events I have now alluded to—a course which not merely improved the condition of England at the time, but has been followed up by greater or less progress of a similarly salutary character since, and is being still so followed up in our own day. Listen to the words of the judicial Hallam in regard to the political position achieved by England at the close of the seventeenth century. "The Act of Settlement," he says, "is the seal of our constitutional laws, the complement of the Revolution itself, and the Bill of Rights the last great statute which restrains the power of the Crown, and manifests in any conspicuous degree, a jealousy of Parliament in behalf of its own and the subjects' privileges. The battle had been fought and gained. The voice of petition, complaint, or remonstrance, is seldom to be traced in the Journals. The Crown in return desists altogether not merely from the threatening or objugatory tone of the Stuarts, but from that dissatisfaction sometimes apparent in the language of William; and the vessel seems riding in smooth water, moved by other impulses and liable perhaps to other dangers than those of the ocean wave and tempest." So much for the political condition. And now let us see what was the social condition of England, at the time when her people were achieving these glorious political successes. The materials are collected ready to our hands in an

elaborate chapter, the third or fourth, of Lord Macaulay's History of England—on the condition of England in 1685. Those who wish to examine the question for themselves must read that chapter in the original. I cannot go now into all the topics there expatiated on. The condition of the working classes, and the agriculturists, the state of the means of communication, the extraordinary extent to which children were overworked for the benefit, in the result, of the adult population, the looseness and obscenity of general conversation, these are all dwelt on in the interesting pages of Macaulay. I will not say more about them. I will only draw attention particularly to two points. The first relates to the state of female education. Macaulay gives as an instance of the miserable state of female education, and merely as an instance of what was only too common at the time, the ignorance of such a person as Queen Mary, the wife of William III.—her ignorance of her own vernacular, the classical languages being, of course, out of the question. The ignorance is shown in a sentence endorsed by Queen Mary herself on a copy of a book, a Bible, I think, presented to her. The English is such as a boy in our sixth standard classes could easily improve. I have copied out the words here, and I will read them to you. "This book," so runs the endorsement, "was given the King and I at our crownation." That is one point. Another, also noted by Macaulay, is that husbands "of decent station," as Macaulay is careful to note, were not ashamed, in those days, of cruelly beating their wives. Well, as I said before, I need not go into further details. These are enough to demonstrate, that at the politically glorious epoch we are now surveying, the social condition of England in regard to the relations of the sexes, was by no means of a highly creditable character. Look again at the England of to-day. Politically, she continues to be as great, and as prosperous, and as energetic in advancement, as ever. How is she socially? I have noted down here a point or two in regard to this, which is worthy of consideration. But I wish to say a word of warning before I refer to these points themselves. On this as well as on the last point, I refer only to existing social evils. This is necessary for the argument. But I must

not be understood as supposing for one instant, that these evils afford a satisfactory picture of the social condition of England, taken as a whole, whether in the seventeenth century or at the present day. I have not the privilege of a personal knowledge of the social condition of England even at the present day. But from all I have read and seen here; from all I have heard from those of our friends who have had the inestimable privilege of seeing with their own eyes England and English social life; especially from what I have heard from our distinguished friends who have only just returned; and among them, too, especially my excellent friend Mr. Ramasawmi Mudaliar of Madras who has publicly spoken on this subject; from all this, I have formed a conclusion, which I have no hesitation in plainly avowing, that in my judgment the social condition of England is, in many important respects, immensely superior to that of any of the sections of our Indian community. I hope this open avowal will prevent any misunderstanding of my meaning in what I have said on this subject, and also in what I am going to say. Of the detailed points, then, that I have noted, I pass over one which I had intended to refer to, but which, on second thoughts, I consider to be so liable to misapprehension that it had better be omitted. And I will refer first to the question of women's rights. That was a question on which, as we all know, the late John Stuart Mill felt, thought, and wrote, very strongly. But what has been the result of it? His very eloquent treatise on the Subjection of Women has not yet had any appreciable result, as regards the practical enforcement of its doctrines, while Mr. Mill himself was, in his lifetime, ridiculed for his out-of-the-way views. Great is truth and it prevails, says the Latin proverb, and our own Sanskrit maxim is to the same effect—Truth alone is victorious, not untruth. But for the present the truth enunciated by Mill is not in the ascendant. Again, it was only the other day, in this very Hall, that we were informed how the relations of the working classes and the aristocratic party in England were constituted, and how the former felt a genuine and fervent sympathy with the wants and wishes of the Indian population, because they felt that in their own country and by their own people, they were

treated in much the same way as we are here. Does that indicate a satisfactory social condition? Or again, let me refer to the telegram received only this afternoon, about a grand Socialist meeting of 20,000 people in Hyde Park. One of the Socialist orators there declared, that there would be bloodshed, unless social reform—by which I understand him to mean a reform in the relations of the different classes of society,—was granted. Can we say, that that is altogether as it should be? There is one more point that I would wish to refer to here, especially because it affords an even closer parallel to our condition than those to which I have now alluded. Marriage with a deceased wife's sister is at present prohibited in England. The movement for the removal of this prohibition is not one of yesterday. It is an old one, and has gone on for many years. On the last occasion that it was solemnly discussed, the reform was obstructed, and successfully obstructed, by those who correspond in English society to our priesthood. There you have the case of a social reform, which comes as near as possible to the social reforms required among us—reforms, that is to say, of social regulations intertwined closely with religious, or what are regarded as religious, ordinances. How, then, does the whole matter stand? In this England of ours, this England, where political reform is advancing by leaps and bounds, where political affairs attract such attention as is shown by the commotion of the General Election just closed—in this England, there are still social evils, huge and serious social evils, awaiting remedy. To them attention is not directed with anything like the force and energy bestowed on political affairs—even until bloodshed is threatened. Where, then, is the lesson of history which we are asked to deduce and act upon? Once more I say, that my remarks must not be understood as implying for a moment, that I am comparing our social condition with that of England. I am doing nothing of the sort. I am only pointing the lesson taught by the contemporary history of England—that political progress can be achieved, and is being achieved before our eyes, where social evils still remain unremedied, and where they receive but a comparatively small fraction of the attention and reforming energy of the people.

And now having dealt with the only two arguments that I have come across in support of the theory that social reform must precede political reform, I must pass on to the next branch of my observations. But before I do so, I wish to say one word. A good deal more might be said on this question of the true lesson taught by history But having said what I have said, I think it is unnecessary to further labour the point, as the view I have taken is that which is implied in the practical advice given by Mr. Wordsworth, whose authority—especially on questions like this one, concerning the philosophy of history—may safely be pronounced to be unequalled in Bombay.

Well, then, having dealt with and shown what I conceive to be the fallacy of the arguments urged in support of the affirmative of the question which forms the subject of this evening's discourse, I will now proceed to state the arguments which appear to me to support the negative answer to that question. And first, it seems to me to be plainly a maxim of prudence and common sense, that reform ought to go, as I may say, along the line of least resistance. Secure first the reforms which you can secure with the least difficulty, and then turn your energies in the direction of those reforms where more difficulty has to be encountered. You will thus obtain all that vigour which the spirit of reform must derive from success, and thus carry out the whole work of progress with greater promptitude than if you go to work the other way. This is the principle we actually act upon within the sphere of political activity itself. How, then, can we be justly twitted for applying the same principle as between the two spheres of political and social activity? Now if this principle is correct, it leads manifestly to the conclusion that more energy ought just now to be devoted to political than to social reform. Remember, I am not asking that our reforming energies should be confined to the political sphere. Far from it. I entirely repudiate that principle. And I don't think you could carry it out if you would. As pointed out in the quotation from Mr. Spencer's essay given in my letter to Mr. Malabari—I must ask to be excused for referring to that letter so frequently—as there pointed out, the spirit which impels to political reform must

needs burst forth in other directions also, more or less frequently, with greater or less force. I have not the remotest idea of laying an embargo on its outgoings in those directions. But this I do say, that political reform is entitled to a greater share of our energies than social, under the circumstances we have got to deal with Every one of us cannot devote himself to every one of the numerous reforms which are wanted. Extraordinary natural gifts may enable one person, like, for instance, my friend Mr. Ranade, to devote himself successfully to many modes of activity at one and the same time. But this is not possible to us all Therefore in dividing our energies, if we have to divide them, between political and social reform, I hold that the greater portion of our energy legitimately can, and therefore ought to be devoted to the former. And now mark how the result I allege follows from the application of the line-of-least-resistance principle. What are the forces opposed to us, if I may use that compendious expression? On the one side, we have a government by a progressive nation, which is the benign mother of free nations—a nation which, by its constituted authorities, has solemnly and repeatedly declared, and in some measure practically shown the sincerity of its declarations, that it is ready to admit us to full political rights, when we show that we deserve them and shall use them well. On the other side, we have an ancient nation, subject to strong prejudices; not in anything like full sympathy with the new conditions now existing in the country; attached, perhaps "not wisely but too well," to its own religious notions with which the proposed social reforms are closely, intimately, and at numberless points, intertwined; loving all its own genuine hoary traditions—and some of its very modern ones also which it supposes to be hoary—yet often failing to understand the true meaning and significance of both classes of traditions. As between these two groups of what I have called, only for convenience of phrase, opposing forces, can there be any reasonable doubt how the line of least resistance runs? If we compare the Government and the Hindu population to two forts facing the army of reform, can there be any doubt that the wisest course

for that army is to turn its energies first towards the fort represented by the Government, where we have numerous and powerful friends among the garrison, and which is held against us only in order to test first whether we shall be able to properly use any larger powers that may be conceded to us there? As to the other fort, the case is as far as possible from being one of *veni, vidi, vici*. The soldiers of the old garrison are not in the least ready to "give up," and in some respects we have yet got even to forge, and to learn to wield, the weapons by which we have to fight them.

Again, in politics, argument goes a great way; in social reform, it goes for very little, seeing that feeling and tradition are involved in it to a very large extent indeed. In politics, even such a thinker as Sir Fitzjames Stephen is content to resort to reason He says, that if the people of India want free institutions, without wire-pulling from English Radicals, let them by all means have such institutions. Sir Fitzjames Stephen's objection is only to the concession of such institutions, when they are not asked for in India, only to prove a pet theory of English politicians. In presence of such champions of the existing order of things, logic is an instrument of power. But where feeling and tradition are the authorities appealed to, logic is almost impotent. You must then make up your minds—still to use logic, of course, but only as a subordinate agency—and you must rely more on a long, patient, toilsome, process of diverting the feelings, or to express it differently, making the soil unfit for the growth of these misplaced sentiments and misunderstood traditions, in the same way as, according to a great scientific teacher, science does not attack the weed of superstition directly, but renders the mental soil unfit for its cultivation. You cannot say, you ought not to say here, "cut this down, why cumbereth it the ground." You must improve here, you must infuse new vitality and new vigour into the old growth. In one word, to go back once again to our old political phraseology, we have here got, like Disraeli, to educate our party, which always must be, and in this case must particularly be, a lengthy and laborious operation.

Once more. In political matters we can all unite at once.

Hindus, Mussulmans, Parsis, the people of Eastern India, Southern India, Western India, Northern India,—all can unite, and not only can do so in theory, they have actually done so in fact, as demonstrated at the National Congress held last Christmas. What is the secret of this? The answer is obvious. The evils, or supposed evils, are common; the remedies, not being in any way mixed up with any very powerful traditions, are also the same; and all intelligent Indian opinion is necessarily unanimous. In regard to social matters, the conditions are all altered. The evils, for one thing, are not identical. The surrounding conditions are excessively various. The force of traditions and old memories is not equal all round. And the remedies, therefore, that suggest themselves to different minds are almost of necessity different. It is plain, then, that the advantages to secure which we can all unite ought to be tried for first, so that we may obtain the benefit of the fraternal feeling which must be generated by such co-operation. If political reform is thus secured by the concerted action of all the educated classes in India, that must, and inevitably will, tell favourably on the advancement of social reform. Reading Mr. Cotton's book on *New India* the other day, I came across a passage germane to this topic, which I have copied out here and shall read to you. "Bereft of political independence," says he, "their ideas of collective action cannot have that impress of sound logic and morality which collective action alone can impart to them. A considerable degree of unity in thought and action has lately been established in political matters, and it may be hoped, therefore, that there will shortly be a similar manifestation in regard to moral and social questions." What Mr Cotton says here is not only perfectly true, but I venture to think it is somewhat understated. In regard to moral and social questions, in the same way as with regard to political ones, there is a great deal more unity already established than he supposes. The difference there, too—as regards the goal to be reached—is but slight. The real difference is—and that I admit is at present very wide—as to the roads for reaching the goal. Some believe in legislation, some in State aid, and some are inclined to trust to the development

from within of the energy of the community. Such and other important differences exist in the modes suggested for effecting reforms. But about the substantive reforms themselves, there is but little—I don't deny that there is a little—difference of views. But the general unity is not thereby marred. And the want of unity in details here referred to is due to various circumstances like those already indicated, and must gradually cease to exist.

One of our Anglo-Vernacular newspapers recently asked how the progress of political reform was expected to tell on the advance of social reform. I say, we have just indicated one mode in which this operation will take place. In political matters, we are learning—and learning more easily than we should do in any other department of activity—the lesson, that we must act in concert, that to this end we must give and take, and sink smaller differences for the one common purpose. This, and lessons like this, when we are thoroughly imbued with them, will form the best possible equipment for the work of social reform that lies before us. We must act together, we must disarm opposition, we must conciliate those opposed to us. Such are the modes of action which we are learning in the course of our political activity. These we shall have to apply in the performance of our duty in the social sphere. Let us remember further, that with political independence, to a certain extent, goes a great capacity for social advancement. This is not a mere empty speculation. It is a theory in support of which historical testimony can be adduced. Sir H. Maine has pointed out in regard to the Hindu Law as administered by our Indian courts, that it has now assumed a stiffness, rigidity, and inflexibility, which formed no feature of the system before British rule. In the days of the Peshva *regime* again—a *regime* which many among us are apt to look upon as very anti-liberal and narrow—there was a liberalising process going on, which, if I may be permitted to use that figure, must make one's mouth water in these days. The story of Parashuram Bhau Patvardhan is a familiar one. That brave soldier-statesman had almost made up his mind to get a favourite daughter, who had become a widow in youth, remarried. He had to abandon

that intention, it is true, but still the very fact that such an idea should have entered his mind, and should have been placed by him before those by whom he was surrounded, and that these latter should have deprecated it in the very mild manner that they seem to have done—these are facts worthy of being pondered over. Coupling them with such facts as I see in the *Bakhars*, regarding the behaviour of the Peshvas with Jivba Dada, the entertainment of Mussulmans and Hindus at dinner together on occasion of the marriage of Savai Madhavrav Peshva, the marriage of the Peshva Balaji Bajirao with a daughter of a Desastha family, I confess I am inclined strongly to draw the inference, which I have held for a long time, that if Peshva rule had continued a little longer, several of the social reforms which are now giving us and the British Government so much trouble would have been secured with immensely greater ease.

And now I come to the last of the points I wish to address myself to this evening. I do so the more readily now, because I am afraid I have trespassed already too long on your attention. The remark of Sir A. Colvin which I alluded to at the beginning of this address, assumed that as a matter of fact we were devoting an extravagant proportion of our time and energy to the subject of political reform, and neglecting almost entirely —so it appears to me to have assumed—the subject of social reform. I cannot admit this to be the fact at all, I can well understand, how such an incorrect impression should arise among those whose acquaintance with what is going on in Indian Society is from the outside, and derived from newspapers and other similar sources. In the case of political reform, it is of the very essence of the thing that a great deal should be done through the agency of newspapers. Nobody, I am sure, will suspect me of undervaluing the utility of the press in all works of reform. But I must own, that I do not think social questions are very much the worse for not being talked about so much through the newspapers as political questions. For see how different the two cases are in regard to this point. In regard to politics, the efforts made so far have, as a general but not by any means as a universal rule, addressed themselves to

those who come within the circle of the influence of the press. For one thing, the officers of Government have to be kept informed in regard to what is thought, felt, or desired by the people. One of the best means of effecting this is afforded by newspapers. Again, superior officers of the British Government have often to be informed of the doings of their subordinates, and informed in such a way as to enforce attention. The newspaper press is a most potent instrument for use in such cases. But in the case of social evils, the party to be educated is to a great extent beyond the ambit of the newspaper's influence. It does not often get into the way of the newspaper, and it is too thick-skinned to be touched to the quick on that side. The mode of operation, accordingly, must here be necessarily different, although, of course, even here the newspaper is of use as an indirect means of education by way of "filtration", and also as a means of communication with those sections of the old party that come nearest to the new; and further as a means of communication between the various sections or members of the new party itself However, although reforming activity in the social sphere is thus usually less noisy than in the other sphere, it is not, therefore, any the less real. But before I go into details here, I am free to admit at once that the success we have achieved is excessively slight. But if I admit this, I wish to ask, whether any one is prepared to say that the success we have achieved in the political sphere is so very large after all, even with more favourable conditions? Admitting that we are miles and miles away from the goal in social reform, I hold that we are as yet equally far in political. We have made and are making preparations in both, and in both we have made a similar amount of progress. Let us glance at the facts. Female education is one of our principal items, as it is one of our principal means, of social reform. We have made some progress there. I am myself a great believer in the efficacy of female education, especially in connexion with general social reform of all descriptions. And, therefore, I need scarcely say that what we have done is small enough in all conscience. But we have done something. Our Parsi friends, with my venerable friend now in the chair as one of

their great leaders, have made progress which puts us to shame. But though we are lagging behind, we too are doing something, as I need scarcely tell the members of the Students' Literary and Scientific Society. The girls at the Society's Schools have been for some time increasing in numbers. And recently we have added an Anglo-Vernacular Department to our schools, which, beginning with 12 girls in the first year, and containing 22 in the second, now opens its third year with as many as 60 girls. Again I say this is small enough, as no one can feel more strongly than I do. But it is, I will venture to say, perceptible progress. Then there is also the other great section of the Indian community—the Mahomedan. That section has generally been regarded as averse to improvement—especially of the modern sort. But the important movement started by my excellent friend Mr. Badruddin Tyabji and his colleagues, has by its great success shown that the Mahomedan community, too, is socially moving forward. However, to return to other points connected with the social state of the Hindu community. The question of widow marriage has certainly advanced a great deal beyond the stage at which it was, say twenty years ago. The bonds of caste are getting looser, our friends are going to England with less difficulty, and more frequently, than before. [A Voice—What about infant marriage?] A friend there asks about the position of the infant marriage question. Well, even here we are not so bad as we were within the narrow span even of my own experience. The age of marriage is slowly rising. I admit again it is rising very slowly indeed, and the point it has now reached is low enough. Still there is no retrogression certainly, and there is some progress, however slight. And all these facts being such as I have pointed out, I venture to repeat, that we cannot fairly be censured for giving too exclusive attention to political at the expense of social reform.

And now, after all this discussion, I venture to reiterate the opinion which I stated many months ago, that it is not possible to sever political from social reform altogether; that the two must go hand in hand, although the march may not in the case of both be with absolutely equal celerity. I say we

must and ought to devote the greater portion of our energy to political reform, but so as still to keep alive a warm sympathy for social reform. To one like myself, who believes to a great extent in the philosophy of Mr. Herbert Spencer, this conclusion is not only a correct one, but almost the only one possible. But even to those who may not accept that philosophy, but who will look beneath the surface of things, to them, too, this conclusion must commend itself. Let us then all devote the bulk of our energies to political reform. Let us keep alive our sympathies with social reform and those who undertake them, and let us all help them to the extent of our powers. At all events, for God's sake, let us not set ourselves in antagonism to social reform. In this way only shall we best discharge the whole of the duty which lies upon us, the duty of reform in social as well as political matters. For I must repeat, that in my judgment they are both duties and must both be fairly attended to and discharged according to our circumstances and opportunities.

The Hon'ble Mr. N. G. Chandavarkar on Social Reform.

The following is the full text of the speech delivered by the Honourable Mr. N. G. Chandavarkar, B.A., LL.B., as President of the Fourth Anniversary Meeting of the Madras Hindu Social Reform Association on 28th November 1896 :—

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,—I am giving but a very inadequate expression to my feelings at this moment when I say that it has given me unbounded pleasure to visit this capital of Southern India and to meet in this hall and on this occasion so many of the friends, sympathisers and active supporters of the cause of Hindu social reform. This is an occasion which I cannot very easily forget, and though I must acknowledge my inability to do full justice to the task which the members of the Madras Hindu Social Reform Association have entrusted to me, yet I entertain the hope that the combined sympathies of so many ladies and gentlemen that I see before me for the cause which both you and myself have greatly at heart and the willing confidence with which I have been called to this chair, will

have an inspiring effect upon me and enable me to justify, to some extent at least, that confidence. It looks rather odd that a stranger like me in Madras should be selected for the honor that you have done me by asking me to preside at this meeting. But, after all, I am willing to own that my situation cannot be very odd on account of my being a stranger to Madras, when I remember that this is not the first time when you have selected a gentleman from the sister Presidency to preside at an anniversary meeting of the Madras Hindu Social Reform Association. One far more deserving of your confidence—one who has, by his pure and exemplary life, no less than by his scholarly attainments and moral courage, won universal respect and entitled himself to be regarded as a leading social reformer—I refer to Dr. Bhandarkar—honored this chair at your anniversary meeting held at the end of December 1894 and addressed you on the subject of Hindu social reform in words which, I dare say, have made indelible impression on the minds of all who heard him. But though I happen to be a stranger to this Presidency in the sense that I received my education in Bombay and have made that city my home, yet I may fairly claim not to be an entire stranger amongst you for the reason that I not only come from a district which at one time formed part of this Presidency but from a community which even now is linked with both Madras and Bombay, and derives its influences from, and owes its enlightened spirit to, the one Presidency as much as to the other. It is this feeling which partly encouraged me to accept, without any hesitation, your kind invitation to me to visit this city and to do myself the honor of presiding at your deliberations here. But that is not the only feeling which encouraged me to so readily accept the invitation. For some years now—they may be a very few years, not more than six or seven, but nevertheless they are years which, in my humble opinion, mark a very important epoch in the popular progress of the city, if not of the whole of the Presidency, of Madras—for some years now, I have watched with considerable interest and sympathy, the earnest efforts of some of my friends here to create public opinion in favor of social reform and to awaken the conscience of the country in

general to the social wants and needs of that great and ancient community to which we belong—I mean, the Hindus. These friends of ours, who have identified themselves with the cause and have been striving for its progress—who by precept and example have shown and are showing that they are in earnest—have awakened an interest in the cause which is not confined either to this city or this Presidency alone For one thing, the *Indian Social Reformer* has, during these seven years of its existence, won its way into the hearts of many a sympathiser of social reform, and no better acknowledgment of the service it has been rendering could be made than in the words of three such eminent Hindus as the late Mr Justice Telang, the late Honorable Rao Bahadur K. L. Nulkar, and the late Mr. N. M. Permanand, who were among its most careful readers and its most sincere admirers. They followed its criticisms with great interest and more than once remarked to me that the conductors of the *Indian Social Reformer* spotted out our social defects with a keenness of insight and intelligence of criticism which was admirable, regretting at the same time that in no other part of the country was there a paper similarly devoted to the cause of social reform. For another thing, the Madras Hindu Social Reform Association, whose fourth anniversary meeting we have met to celebrate this evening, shows that there are, amongst you here, men who, convinced of the necessity of organising the forces of social reform, have banded themselves together for the purpose of trying, as far as they can, to realise in their own lives, individually and collectively, that higher and richer ideal which social reform, rightly understood, holds out before us as the true embodiment of social as well as individual existence. It is to the call of such ardent and sincere champions of social progress that I have deemed it my humble duty to respond ; not because I claim to have done anything worth the name of a social reformer to deserve the high honor you have done me by selecting me as your Chairman, but because I feel proud to stand by the side of those here, with whose thoughts and actions I am in hearty sympathy.

THE NEED OF SOCIAL REFORM ORGANIZATIONS.

And I do not know, I cannot indeed conceive, of a duty

higher, nobler and more imperative in these days than that of co-operating as far as one can co-operate, with an organization such as the Madras Hindu Social Reform Association.. If the cry of the social reformer has been a cry in the wilderness—if the cause of social reform has not been able to make appreciable progress, the cause is to be sought mainly in the fact that its advocates have not shown sufficiently that spirit of organization and association without which no great reform can be effected and no change for the better brought about in either the ideas, or the ideals, or the conduct, of any class of people. We live in times when, more than in any other, the necessity is felt of men sharing common opinions on great questions affecting the public welfare combining together and working by means of such combinations for the fulfilment of their ideals and the realization of their objects. But the value of such combined activities has not yet been felt in all its force in regard to this great work of Hindu social reform in many places, and it is on that account more than any other that the cause suffers. Those of us who feel the need of reform in the social customs and institutions of our people, who wish to do all we can to bring about that reform, have need to bear in mind the very wise remark of Goethe that "the individual can accomplish nothing unless he co-operates with the many at the right time"; we have to lay to heart the shrewd observation of a social philosopher, who says that "the insight of any one individual is, in general, but a half-light, and requires to be complemented by combination with the light of others." The Madras Hindu Social Reform Association supplies, therefore, a need of the time, and its claim to the sympathy and support of every well-wisher of the country rests on the ground that, feeling the value and necessity of organised effort in the promotion of social reform, it has pledged itself to carry on its mission *in the first place* by means of lectures and tracts, and *in the second place* by means of personal example and aid to those who take practical steps. The two great influences among mankind, says Carlyle, are *light* and *lightning*—that is, the force of insight on the one hand and the force of practical effectiveness on the other. By means of lectures and tracts you avail yourselves of

the force of *light*—bring out not only the light of knowledge that is in you, but you give it to others and thus help to diffuse a knowledge of our social defects and evils among the people. But what is more commendable in the programme of your Association is that it does not rest content with mere talk but seeks to give practical effect to that talk by means of *action*, which is what Carlyle meant when he spoke of the *lightning* as one of the two great factors in the progress of mankind. The great charge is often made against social reformers that many or most of them are insincere and have not the courage of their convictions. It is not for me to say whether and how far this charge is true, and if it is true, whether it is not a weakness shared by the advocates of social reform in common with the rest of their educated countrymen But it is important to note, at this moment, the stage at which the attitude of our educated countrymen has now arrived. There was a time when educated Hindus did not hesitate to express freely and publicly their opinion in favour of the various measures of social reform. Twenty years ago, no one feared to say, if he felt it, that infant marriage was harmful, widow re-marriages were desirable, and caste distinctions were mischievous. It was a period when no one cared whether those who held those opinions were in consistency bound to act up to them. But that period was soon followed by another, when the voice of conscience began slowly to assert itself. During the preceding period, the question was, *what do I think?* The question during this second period was, *If I think a particular measure of reform good and necessary, why do I think only and not act?* It is during this second period that many of our educated countrymen were made alive to the truth that the expression of a certain opinion in favour of social reform carries with it a certain amount of personal responsibility and that there must be some consistency between our words and our deeds. And we have now arrived at the third stage when educated Hindus stand divided into two camps—firstly, those who give expression to their convictions and are prepared to act up to them, and secondly, those who hesitate to give public expression to their conviction in favour of social reform lest what they say should

be dragged to light and the inconsistency between their opinions and actions exposed some day. Those who belong to the former class are undoubtedly fewer in numbers; while those belonging to the latter may again be divided into two classes—those who refuse to say publicly what they think on social reform and think it prudent to hold their tongues, and those who deem it on the whole expedient to run with the multitude and declare themselves as opponents of social reform. My friend, Prof. Karve of the Fergusson College, who has been collecting opinions in favour of widow re-marriage in order to find out how many of the educated Hindus are prepared to support that reform theoretically and how many are prepared to give it practical support, told me some time ago that a very large number refused to declare openly their opinions on the question, though in private they sympathised with it.

This may be a matter of regret, but we need not be sorry that we have arrived at this last stage, when the necessity of suiting word to action and presenting to the public a life of consistency is making itself felt more than at any of the previous stages through which the course of social reform has run. Your Madras Hindu Social Reform Association is a sign of the times and may fairly be taken as an index of the wholesome change which is taking place in the minds of many of our educated countrymen. No one, I notice, can become a member of the Association unless he is prepared to pledge himself to carry out certain reforms; and by bringing about widow-marriages, endeavouring to create public opinion against what are called *nautch* parties, and, in other ways, you have shown that you are in earnest and determined to fight the battle of reform with courage, consistency, and calmness.

I know that there are not wanting critics who are ready to detect flaws in your programme and say a number of things against your methods of work. It is an old story oft-repeated that you are too hasty and rash, and are by your agitations and activities, your lectures and tracts and newspaper criticisms, doing more harm than good to the cause of social reform, and by creating a prejudice against it, you are retarding it while you think you are endeavouring to promote it. There is noth-

ing new in this sort of hostile criticism, it is the kind of criticism to which reform of all kind, not merely social, has been treated in all ages and in all countries. Whether the measures of social reform which you have proposed and the methods of work which you have adopted are hasty and rash and calculated to injure the cause of social progress among the Hindus, is a subject with which I shall attempt to deal in the course of this address a little later on. But there is one criticism of which I may be allowed to take note just now, and it is this, that it is to be seen whether the activity and enthusiasm, which have animated the members of the Madras Hindu Social Reform Association so far, will endure for a long time to come or evaporate after a certain number of years. Sustained and united action and patient toil in the midst of difficulties, are, we are told, not the virtues for which the Hindu is specially noted; and it is doubted whether an organization of the kind you have started will be able to hold on and last for more than a few years to come. The only answer which we can make to this criticism is that it is not for us either to pry into or to answer for the future, for it depends on a variety of circumstances, most, if not all, of which are beyond human calculation. It is enough for us to answer for the present and to work in the present, in the spirit of faith and hope; remembering that the future rarely fails when those who work for a good cause are animated by that spirit.

THE DIFFICULTIES OF SOCIAL REFORM.

But there are those amongst us who tell us that this problem of Hindu social reform is of so highly complicated a character and surrounded with such innumerable and insuperable difficulties that, in attempting its solution, we have proposed to ourselves not only a tremendous but a hopeless task. This *hobgoblin* argument perpetually reminds us that the Hindu society is not one society but many societies, each having its own customs, traditions and manners and each marked by its own peculiar stages of growth; and that an organization such as the Madras Hindu Social Reform Association is attempting the impossible when, by drawing together a small number of Hindus of different

castes, representing different social customs, it is, through them, seeking the social regeneration of the whole and unwieldy mass of Hindu society. This, we are told, is not the first age or time in the history of that society when men have tried the Herculean task of effecting a reform in its social customs and institutions; there have been periods in that ancient history when men greater than those who now pose as social reformers, girded their loins to reform either the institution of marriage or the institution of caste, and, in spite of it all, Hindu society has gone on in its old ways, and caste and infant marriage and enforced widowhood have continued to rule our social destinies I remember a friend of mine, who was disposed by a variety of circumstances to take a very pessimistic view of the future of Hindu society quoting to me the saying of the ancient Greeks that it is impossible to constitute a State of more than a few thousand citizens and telling me that the very bulk of our numbers, added to the variety of language, custom, and tradition, was our greatest difficulty. Next to this, we are often asked by our pessimistic friends to take particular account of what is said to be the peculiar habit of the Hindu mind—the habit of "innate laziness" or "inborn apathy," which make most of us indisposed to get out of old and established grooves even when we feel convinced that a change is either desirable or necessary This peculiar habit of mind is now observable in the fact that while there are many educated men who feel the need of social reform—while nearly all would say that our social customs require to be changed—there are very few who would think it *their* duty to put their shoulders to the wheel and take their part in the furtherance of the cause of social reform. "What is everybody's business is nobody's business." "Each of us," to express it in the language of an English writer, "is apt to think that the world could get on well enough without his particular piece of service." We are ready to say that social reform is necessary. Even more ready to criticise a Ranade or a Bhandarkar for not doing this or doing that as a social reformer; but it never occurs to us that if we feel that social reform is good, it is our duty also not to shirk our responsibility but in proportion to our abilities and opportunities to bear our share of

the work that has to be performed in bringing about that reform. Then, again, we are told to take a warning and give up our cause, because our pessimists draw our pointed attention to what they call "the spirit of Hindu revivalism" which, in spite of educational and other reforming agencies that have been in our midst working together, has come over the country and seems to be the animating force at the present day. The wave of Hindu orthodoxy is said to be passing over the whole face of Hindu society and throwing back the cause of social progress by years, if not centuries. These and such other signs of the time are held forth not unfrequently as making the situation of social reform one of despair.

But, is there really any reason to be frightened away by these difficulties and to despair? Hindu society is, no doubt, a very unwieldy structure, and is divided into numerous castes. But is it on that account hopeless to expect it to assimilate gradually the ideas of social reform? Though it is divided into castes and sub-sections of castes, innumerable, with peculiarities of custom and tradition distinguishing them from one another, yet it ought not to be forgotten that all these castes and sub-sections rest on a common foundation; they have a sort of inter-dependence and exert mutual influence on one another. The customs and institutions with which the social reformer proposes to deal are common to the higher classes of the Hindu society from whom the lower classes take their standard, and if Hindus of different castes band themselves together for the common object of social reform, it is because they have discerned the fact that one of the difficulties of that reform in any caste is the fear that, if it throws away an ancient custom or gives up an ancient institution, it may lose its prestige in the eyes of the other castes that, together with it, constitute Hindu society. The social reformer has to work, so to say, on the conscience of that society in general; he has to criticise the common foundations on which the social customs and institutions that he seeks to improve rest, and it is in that way that he can hope to awaken the spirit of reform and progress. The part, in the shape of caste and its sub-sections, has grown out of the whole in the shape of Hindu society; and the part will not move

out of its alloted sphere in that society unless the general is also agitated and moved. Hence the necessity and value of social reform organizations, composed of members drawn from different castes; they engage the interest and serve to make a breach in the old-fashioned ideas of all castes. When, again, we are told to take a warning and give up our cause, because even the life-long and devoted efforts of men greater than those now working for social reform ended in failure, and that Hindu society, in spite of the more earnest prophets of social reform in the past continues what it was and has been, the warning means nothing less than a total denial to the Hindus of the power of assimilating new ideas. I am not prepared to admit either the truth or force of this total denial. It is usual to speak of "the hoary and venerable age of the Hindu society", and amidst all its vicissitudes, are we to suppose that it has been able to survive and stand the shock of ages without the power of assimilation, or rather, which is the same thing expressed in different language, without the power of adjusting itself to its environment? "The immobility of the East," "the stolid conservatism of the Hindu," are fine phrases that have passed into proverbs; they have, like all phrases that have become proverbs, a grain of truth in them, but not the whole truth and let us not be enslaved by them. If we try to get inside the notions conveyed by these phrases, we shall find that Hindu society has not been so stolidly impervious to new ideas and new influence as we often suppose it to have been. To tell us that great saints and sages like Ramanuja, Chaitanya, Guru Nanak, Basawa, and Buddha, failed with all their mighty influences to rid that society of some of its evil customs, is to remind us that what has happened in the past in the case of a people, will also happen whether now or in future—that, in other words, history is apt to repeat itself. But, as pointed out by Mr. John Morley, historical analogies are more often imperfect and misleading than true. When we say that history repeats itself and predict that, because events took a certain course in the case of a certain people in some by-gone period, they are likely to take the same course now or hereafter, we forget that each period has its own distinctive features, is

dominated by its own peculiar influences, which make the problem of that period its own Historical generalisations are not without their value. They train the mind to read human nature, and teach us the stages through which human development has passed. But we must, at the same time, bear in mind the warning of a well-known social philosopher that "historical generalisations are apt to hurt the mind in somewhat the same way as glasses hurt the eye. They accustom us to look at things in a particular way, and make it difficult for us to see them in any other way." The social reformer of the present age has no reason to be disheartened by the failures of the past or deterred by the despondent tones in which the history of some ancient movements speak, because he has to deal with the problem of social reform amidst influences which, he may fairly and without any exaggeration say, are peculiarly his own.

CONDITIONS OF HOPE.

It is worth while drawing pointed attention to one or two at least of these *influences*, for on them our hopes of the future as to the social salvation of the Hindus rests and by them the social reformer has every reason to feel inspired and encouraged. When I speak of these influences, I do not wish to confine your attention to such things as our schools, our Universities, and other educational institutions, of which it is usual to say that they are slowly emancipating the intellect of the country and preparing the way for reform and progress in all directions. They are undoubtedly among the great mental levers of the age. But there are other, though more silent yet none the less potent, influences which are working together for our good *in this age*. All of us here have not, I dare say, forgotten the old controversy as to the relative merits of social and political reform, which was raised some years ago, in the form of the much agitated question—*Should social reform precede political reform?*—and on which the late Mr. Justice Telang discoursed at the beginning of the year 1886 with much ability and eloquence. It is a controversy of which we do not hear much now-a-days, probably because we have come to

perceive the sober truth, attested by the experience of every civilized nation that *progress* has no arbitrary laws and that there can be no rank of precedence among the different lines or departments of reform. There are times when religion takes hold of the popular mind and concentrates its attention and energies upon questions affecting its spiritual well-being. There are periods when material progress becomes the rage of the day; and periods when political advancement becomes the ruling passion. It may not be easy to say how and when and why these will precede or succeed one another, but the truth is there that, as pithily put by Mr. John Mackenzie, in his work on "Social Philosophy," "there have been times at which the most pressing problem has rather been an individual one—as, for instance, what must I do to be saved? There have also been times at which the most pressing problem has been political rather than social; and there have been times at which the most important problem has had regard to the discovery of abstract truths or to the advance of material prosperity." But it should not be supposed on that account that the spirit or rather the elements of one kind of reform are totally wanting or absent in any given period, because the predominating spirit then is the spirit of some one of the other kinds of reform. That, however, is not the point I wish to emphasise in asking you to note the favorable influences of the present age amidst which the social reformer is called to do his work. My point rather is that all activities, be they political, material, religious, or social, have a mutually interacting influence. The desire for progress in one direction does tell and must tell, though slowly and imperceptibly, by creating a desire for progress in the other directions as well. To put it in the language used by Mr. Montague in his book called "The Limits of Individual Liberty," "serious opinion on any subject modifies opinion on all great subjects." The system of Copernicus affected religious thought in Europe; and in our own days we see that Darwin's theory of evolution is affecting both religious and political thought there. We no doubt lament at times that the majority of our educated countrymen are for political advancement and indifferent to social reform

that while the number of those who attend the National Congress is very large and the number of those who do not attend it but sympathise with it even larger, the number of those who attend the Social Conference is very much smaller. We sometimes in a spirit of impatience complain that our political activities rather mar than favor the cause of social progress. And in proof of it ask ourselves to note the attempt to exclude the meetings of the Social Conference from the camp of the National Congress. But let us not be misled by such a merely superficial aspect of things. It is said that the growth of the political sentiment—the desire for political advancement—by bringing together men from all parts of the country, giving them a common ground of hopes and aspirations, enabling them to speak from a common platform, is indirectly infusing into them a common spirit of nationality, drawing them, indirectly and slowly no doubt but for all that steadily, out of the narrower sphere of caste and opening before them a wider and higher view of humanity. There is some force and truth in that observation; but even without going so far as that, I think, we may safely say this, that it is not merely the blessings of peace and order which the British administration under which we live, has brought in its train, that we have to be thankful for; but, what we have to value even more than those blessings which we highly prize, is the spirit of enquiry and of individuality which the genius of that administration has a tendency to foster in those brought within its dominion. It is said by some writers on socialism in Europe, that the predominance of the social problem in that continent at the present moment is due, to the increasing preponderance of democratic influences in the modern State. Whether that is a correct representation or not, it is not wide of the mark to say that the Anglo-Saxon character favours individual independence and teaches men to think and feel seriously that they are citizens of a State. When men learn that, a feeling of individual responsibility and dignity is created, and once that feeling is created, it cannot stop there and crop itself up in the sphere of politics alone. It must gradually lead them to perceive that they are not merely citizens of a State, but also members of a

society, and just as they ought to aspire for advancement in the one they must also aspire for advancement in the other. Thus it is that the ground is prepared for the social reformer in our times in a way of which I am not aware any preceding age in the history of the Hindus prepared it. The political spirit of the West, which we are slowly imbibing and which is manifesting itself in a variety of ways, must act on the social spirit also. Though the rank of the social reformers is thinner than the rank of the politicians, who can gainsay this, that since the time the National Congress is said to have awakened our political conscience, the social problem has been thrusting itself forward, disturbing many a caste, and awakening our social conscience also? The fact is that when the politician talks of our rights, our nationality and our claim to be ruled justly and equitably—when he says that the times have changed and with them political institutions and laws must change, the social reformer is able to put his own claim forward and bring to his aid the *progressive* spirit generated by a desire for political advancement. Conscience awakened in one direction rarely fails to be awakened in other directions also. I remember when some years ago some one remarked in a newspaper that the educated native of India was more ready to trouble the Secretary of State than to trouble his mother-in-law, Sir William Wedderburn replied that that was so because it was much easier to beard the high official who presides over the India Office than the mother-in-law who presides over the Hindu home. But the Hindu mother-in-law has since begun to feel that she is not without her share of the bearding too. By the majority of almost every caste in which there is intelligence, it is now conceded that times are changing and must change socially; we may differ as to ways and means, but the number of those who say that there should be no social progress and that we must rest where we are and have been, is getting smaller than it was even ten years ago. In the formation of this opinion, I humbly think that what I have called the genius of the British administration and the political activities which are the outcome of it, must, as they do, imperceptibly bear their share; and that is a force, the influence of which, I say, is pecu-

liar to the present times. Nor should we lose sight of another peculiar influence of the present age, which is spoken of as "facility of movement," of which it has been well said by a writer, that it is "a great means of forming new connections" and of integrating society on an improved basis after first *disintegrating it*. It is *not merely* the railways and steamers that have helped us to move away from one place to another and exchange ideas and draw new light, but the whole world has, so to say, opened to us to an unprecedented extent. We have been caste-ridden; but a wider world unknown to caste is trying to ride us now. We are sought to be influenced, not merely by the particular society in which we are born or the particular religion in which we have been bred up, but also by the West and the East. We leave our homes either in search of employment or for trade, and imbibe new ideas, contract new sympathies, and learn to form new connections. A new and wider kind of sympathy is being generated than that to which the confined atmosphere of caste in the old days accustomed our ancestors.

I have mentioned but two of the peculiar influences of the present age as calculated to favor the cause of social progress and there are others which will perhaps easily suggest themselves to you. I shall not attempt to dogmatise on the subject by predicting that these peculiar influences are sure to lead to the social reforms we advocate; no one can safely prophesy the future. But all I wish to maintain is that we have no reason to be led away by the historical analogies of those, who say that because the social problem did not succeed in the hands of men more gifted than those now working for it, in bygone periods, it is bound to fail now and hereafter also. The social reform of the present day has no doubt the old difficulties still existing, to contend against; and those difficulties seem insurmountable; but the old problem is presented to him now in a new garb; while old difficulties exist, new instruments are at his disposal; and if he works with patience and courage there is no reason why he should despair.

A certain amount of pessimism does no doubt at times come over us in sight of the so-called and sudden revival of

Hindu orthodoxy throughout the country. In almost every newspaper we read, in almost every meeting we attend, in almost every lecture we hear and in a variety of ways that it is unnecessary to particularise, we note this sign of the time, as some people term it, and conclude that the cause of social reform has but a poor outlook when it finds itself confronted by the wave of Hindu revivalism which is passing over the face of the whole country. But I do not know if my friends here will take me to be a man of an unduly and excessively sanguine temperament, if I express my sincere view that this sudden revival of orthodox Hinduism has really no abiding element of danger to the cause of reform and is just one of those things we should expect in the case of people situated as we Hindus just now are. "Progress" it has been well said, "has many receding waves" and whether in the case of political or social reform, we shall, like every other people, be found sometimes moving onwards and at other times seem to be going backwards, but on the whole advancing. That is the law of all progress. In his Essay on Sir James Mackintosh's "History of the French Revolution," Macaulay speaks of the history of progress in England as "a history of actions and re-actions" and compares "the motion of the public mind" in England with "that of the sea when the tide is rising." "Each successive wave rushes forward, breaks, and rolls back; but the great flood is steadily coming in. A person who looked on the waters only for a moment might fancy that they were retiring. A person who looked on them only for five minutes might fancy that they were rushing capriciously to and fro. But when he keeps his eye on them for a quarter of an hour, and sees one sea-mark disappear after another, it is impossible for him to doubt of the general direction in which the ocean is moved." The present is merely a reaction against the notion that the Hindu had nothing good or noble to show, that his religion and his society are a bundle of superstitions. We have now found that like other people we must be proud of ourselves, our country, our religion, our society, and our everything. We feel offended when we are told that we must go to other *revelations* than our own in search of religious truth; when we are remind-

ed that we must adopt foreign customs if we are to become great like foreigners. This feeling of pride and patriotism is the outcome of many causes to but a few of which I have here referred. This feeling of pride and patriotism is perhaps natural under the circumstances, but whether natural or not, and though the present manifestations of it are of the reactionary spirit, yet they have no element of permanence or vitality in them. The complaint is that it is the educated classes who are showing and fostering that spirit by taking a leading and active part in movements professing to plead and encourage the cause of Hindu orthodoxy; but the spirit which is at the bottom of these movements is more *mechanical* than *spiritual*, because it is born of the feeling of pride and patriotism and the feeling of self-assertion to which I have just alluded and not of any real belief in either the dogmas or the institutions of Hinduism on the part of those who are its leaders and promoters. I am doing no injustice to such of my educated countrymen as are now leading and promoting these movements I have no doubt that they sincerely believe that we Hindus ought not to allow our religion and society to be disparaged and that the only way to unite the discordant elements of Hindu society is to work upon those elements by means of the dogmas it believes and the institutions it worships; and there is this apology for them that they are passing through a state of development through which all progressive countries have had to pass before attaining higher and richer forms of life. In his Essay on "The Signs of the Times" published in the year 1829, Carlyle dealt with a somewhat similar phase of social life through which English society was then passing and denounced in no measured terms what he called the entirely mechanical spirit of the age, with belief in outward institutions corresponding to no inward impetus or conviction represented by "spiritual dynamics" in man. Such mechanical conformity to external forms without any vital belief in the principles embodied in those forms is only a mark of the present transition state of Hindu society. We are now passing through a period which is certainly not one of *dogmatism*; but one of scepticism and criticism. The great French writer, De Tocqueville, has pointed out

the peculiarities of such a period in his observation that "in times of general scepticism every one clings to his own persuasion... not so much because he is assured of its excellence, as because he is not convinced of the superiority of any other. In the present age, men are not very ready to die in defence of their opinions, but they are rarely inclined to change them; and there are fewer martyrs as well as fewer apostates.' Our customs and our institutions are now brought into contact with new customs and new institutions; we have opened to us not only the lore of the East but also of the West; the spirit of the age is to ask the why and the wherefore in the case of everything we are asked to accept or reject; and in this chaotic condition when nothing is settled and nearly everything is undergoing a process of disturbance, it is only to be expected that before the old light fades away and the new light begins to shine, the old light will show a sudden blaze before it dies. Our society is now like the man, who fears when he is disturbed in the position to which he has fondly clung for better or for worse for years and asked to move into another position. In the face of the new forces which it has to meet, it feels that the process of its disintegration has commenced and is afraid lest the disintegration completed should totally ruin it. It feels that the powers above it—the powers of authority, tradition, and custom—which have hitherto held it together are growing weaker day by day, and that the powers within us—the powers of "self-reverence, self-knowledge and self-control" are not yet grown strong to protect us from social wreckage—and, therefore, it tries in the midst of this sharp conflict between the old and the new to hold as fast as it can to the old. Through this state of transition every society has passed; and we cannot be exceptions to the general law. There ought to be nothing, therefore, in the sudden revival of Hinduism to discourage the social reformer, provided he is neither idle nor impatient, but works in a spirit neither of pessimism nor optimism, but "in a spirit of cautious Meliorism," strong and unshaken in his faith in the results of patient labour, "unhasting and unresting."

Though a state of transition such as that through which our Hindu society is passing is inevitable under the present con-

ditions and though, like all states of transition, it cannot last long, we should not delude ourselves with the belief that a period of mere scepticism and criticism with mechanical conformity to outward institutions without any inward impetus or conviction must necessarily and unconditionally give way to a better period in the long run. When society is being disintegrated and showing all the signs of disintegration, no hope of a fresher and better integration of it can be held unless there are found even in the midst of the forces that disturb and disintegrate it, what Carlyle calls "organic filaments"—*i.e.*, forces which promise to bring the disturbed elements together and reunite the different and dispersing elements of society on a better and higher principle of life. It is in the formation, and rather to speak more appropriately in the development of these "organic filaments" that the work and value of the social reformer lies; while the forces around us are slowly loosening our faith in the old, snapping the bonds of custom, tradition, and superstition and threatening to lead society into chaos, the social reformer has to bring those very forces to his aid and show the way to the formation of a new faith, a new ideal, and a new bond, which shall enable society to enter into a higher and richer form of life instead of being disorganized.

There are two and only two ways in which we can assist in the formation and development of those "organic filaments." It is usual to speak of the age in which we live as "an age of light and literature," an age of books, pamphlets, lectures, and above all newspapers. Now, there is no doubt that sometimes our very light becomes our very darkness. As some one has said, "literature may prove a Babel instead of a diapason" and "even light from heaven may be used to lead astray." For one newspaper or book or pamphlet or lecture pleading before the people the cause of social reform and trying to enlist popular sympathy on its side, there may be hundreds, as there are hundreds opposing the cause and pandering to the grosser instincts of the people, and striving to catch popular applause and sympathy by championing the cause of custom and superstition. But those who take so gloomy a view of the help that may be given to the cause of social reform by "the diffusion of litera-

ture and culture among the masses" ought to remember that it is not solely because there is such a Babel of tongues that social reform lags behind but rather because our efforts to diffuse that literature and culture by means of books, pamphlets and lectures have not been sufficiently active, systematic, and sustained. I do not mean to suggest this as a special reflection on those who feel for social reform and desire to promote it If any one feels disposed to take advantage of the remarks I have made and make it a point of attack on social reformers, I should remind him that not merely social but all other kinds of reform and activity are sharing the same weakness. But it is only natural that the literature in favor of social reform is in the minority while the literature opposed to it is in the majority. That, again, has been the case in all ages and in all civilized countries in the case of all reforms during their initiatory stage. Even one newspaper well conducted, even a handful of reformers well balanced, can do a great deal and have been able to advance the cause. For instance, your *Indian Social Reformer* has, I know, many critics that are ready to rebuke it for some unpleasant things it says; but I know it also that the critics and many more are led by it to many a searching of the heart; and while it is supposed now and then to sting, it also helps to arouse "the still, small voice" within many a mind that would strangle it for telling unpleasant truth and exposing its weakness. Has not the *Reformer* since it came into existence not only been able to formulate the obscured opinions of many on social reform, but also led to reformed marriages? But why dwell long on the necessity of diffusing the light of social reform by means of pamphlets and lectures and newspapers, when there is hardly any one so disposed to dispute that necessity? The question, however, deserves some special notice because of another question which is intimately connected with it and on which a good deal has been of late said in the discussions on social reform. There are those who maintain that the cause of that reform must be placed on what is called the *Shastric* basis and that we must appeal to the *religious* instincts of the masses. The view is that we must plead for those reforms not on the grounds of natural justice but on the grounds of *Shastric* injunctions. In his

Republic, Plato has mentioned this as one of the means of human improvement and he speaks of the method as "noble falsehood." In his book called "The Promotion of General Happiness," Prof. Macmillan of Elphinstone College, Bombay, hints at it as a valuable method of reform when he says that "religion is much more teachable than morality to large masses of men." And dealing with this question, Mr. Mackenzie in his work on "Social Philosophy" remarks that "at a certain stage, both religion and morality can hardly be taught except in the form of myth. The Begriff must appear in the form of the Vorstellung, reason in the form of emotion." Seeing that religion has so large a hold on the human mind, larger than anything else, and that we, Hindus, have been essentially a religious people, there is some force in the view that we must approach their minds and their hearts by means of the *Shastras* by which they profess to be guided. But the *Shastras* themselves are not agreed upon many points. Those of us who are familiar with Canarese know the proverb which says :

which, translated into English, means that the *Shastras make the din of the market place*, and another proverb which says ·

which means that *the Puranas* are all chaos and confusion. This very circumstance, however, ought to be our help in the promotion of reform. If the Hindu Shastras are wide and comprehensive enough to include any measure of reform, the social reformer ought not to omit to derive support from them and base his cause on them so far as he can base it. But our very *Shastras* have given us a free hand in changing with the times, by agreeing upon one point more than upon anything else—that is, by pronouncing without any hesitation that *custom or usage can supersede the injunctions of the Shastras.* The whole history of the Hindu society has been a history of tumultuous departure, whenever the departure was rendered necessary or expedient, from the laws laid down in the *Shastras*. Every custom marks the beginning of such a departure ; and if the Shastras themselves say that we can make new customs, I do not see why the social reformer should confine himself to the *Shastras* alone. By all means let us not make light of our sacred books ; like the Christian nations of modern Europe, who

owe much to the Bible and cannot, therefore, do away entirely with the influences they have derived from it, we Hindus cannot free ourselves from the influences we have derived from our *Shastras*. The *Shastras* have been more liberal than we care to be, by giving us a free hand to deviate from them when necessary. It is this fact which the social reformer must incessantly din into the ears of the masses; the *Shastras* are a valuable means of showing that our history has been a history of change. As Dr. Bhandarkar pointed out to you in his address from this place two years ago, there was a period when our women were not only educated but learned, when infant marriages did not prevail, widow marriages were not unusual, and caste distinctions did not exist in the aggravated and absurd form in which they exist now. That period was followed by another and we have gone on changing. We made no doubt *bad customs* but we made customs nevertheless and got the *Shastras* to adapt themselves to those customs. Let us now reverse the process and try to make good customs, and call to our aid the *Shastras* when and where we can, and appeal to the liberty of making customs which they have given us where their injunctions are against us.

But mere lectures and newspapers and discussions can never be expected to advance the cause of social reform. The ideas and ideals of that reform will and must remain merely speculative truths and abstract propositions so long as they are confined to debates, writings, and speeches and as long as they are not put to the test of practice. To convert men to the mode of life you recommend them, you must not only give them the impetus of "light" but also the impetus of "warmth." In his highly thoughtful *Journal*, Amiel reminds us that "the *philosophist* party of the last century" was "able to dissolve anything by reason and reasoning but unable to construct any thing," for, says he, "construction rests upon feeling, instinct, and will." And therefore he advises those who seek to reform their people to amend them not by reasoning but by example, to "be what you wish others to become. Let your self and not your words preach for you." The object of all reform is to enable its principles to become the practical maxims of life—to make them so

many "habits"; but, as pointed out by Mr. Montague in his "Limits of Individual Liberty" to which I have once before referred, before the principles gain sufficient strength, they must be something more than an abstract purity, for when you merely canvass the principles too long, you make people doubt them and disregard them, you only breed moral scepticism, since to mere logical discussion people owe very little. "Men," says Tennyson, "since they are not gods, must rise on stepping stones of their dead selves." Hence it is that *example* and *action* more than mere *preaching* and *theory* are so essential to the success of any reform—particularly, social reform. It is the more potent of the two "organic filaments" which go to constitute society on a reformed basis.

But when we speak of the necessity and value of *example* and *action*, we are met with the objection that it is all very fine and very easy to talk in that way and to tell men that they should do as they say and give practical effect to their convictions on social reform. But we are all not born to be heroes and martyrs. We have families to care for; worldly interests to follow; and a society in the shape of our caste to mix with, if we are to get on in the world. Of what use is it to hold before us an almost impossible ideal of conduct and effort, the realisation of which in practice only leads to our ex-communication and persecutions? This is the stock argument of the day and the line of thought manifested by it accounts for "the innate laziness" or "inborn apathy" which I said was one of the difficulties social reform in particular had to contend against. But who has ever been able to improve himself or to improve his fellows by lying on a bed of roses? There is no royal road to reform. A certain amount of risk must attend every great effort and enterprise, and the greater the effort and the enterprise, the greater the risk. Where because of the fear of persecution and excommunication, men allow their higher self to sink into the lower, the cause of reform must suffer. But after all, we are living in times when persecution and excommunication are gradually losing some of their terrors. Society under the press of a variety of circumstances is becoming more tolerant; and excommunication is not, and can no longer be

the dreadful thing it was in former times. But there is a notion widely prevalent that the best way of reforming your society lies in falling in with it and not trying to realise your ideal in your own life. It is supposed that an excommunicated man, by formally ceasing to be a member of his caste, ceases to exercise any influence over it, and thereby frustrates his own object. Now, we have heard this argument a number of times from a number of men, but we have not heard of a single reform of importance effected by those who affect to improve their caste by giving way to its prejudices instead of boldly and firmly standing up for their own views and convictions. Of reformers of this kind, Mr. John Morley has very appropriately spoken in his work on "Compromise" as men who are led away by a spirit of "illegitimate compromise," which in effect makes them say to their society:—"I cannot persuade you to accept my truth; therefore, I will pretend to accept your falsehood." And the notion that because a man who firmly stands up for his own convictions is excommunicated, he ceases to exercise any influence over his caste and retards the cause of reform, is amply borne out to be erroneous by all the movements of history. It is said that when the Roman Senate ordained that "the History of Creomutius Cordo" should be burnt, a Roman stood forth, saying, *Cast me also into the flames for I know that history by heart.* Moralising on this, the great Italian patriot, Mazzini observes —"You may kill men, you cannot kill a great idea." Adopting that line of thought, we may also well say:—"You may excommunicate a man for realising his own ideas of reform in his own life; but you cannot kill either the ideas he represents or the moral influence of the life he leads. It is all very fine to talk of reforming your people by not separating yourself from them. No reformer wishes to be separate from his people; but because the people separate from him by proclaiming the ban of excommunication against him, it is not to be supposed that the separation causes a destruction of his personality and the influence of his example. It would be tiring your patience to illustrate what I say by referring to examples from history and proving that societies have made progress because men have appeared amongst them

who realised the spirit of it in their own lives, withstood calumny and persecution and lived and died for it. It is enough to ask those who talk of reforming their society by moving *with* it, to explain how it was that "a few poor slaves and outcaste Hebrews" were able to hold their own and make conversions of people around them to their faith "while Rome displayed its greatness even in death;" how Luther, far less intellectually gifted than his more learned contemporary Erasmus, was able to influence religious thought and conduct in Europe, though he was an excommunicated man. In fact, the whole history of reform had been the history of men who moved ahead of their society, and, is well summed up by Prof. Muirhead, who says:—"The opponents of useful reforms are drawn from the same class as at the same time blindly resisted the establishment of the form or institution to which they themselves blindly cling. Those who build the sepulchres of the prophets and garnish the tombs of the righteous are the children of those who slew them."

Reform is effected then when those who feel its need and are convinced of its utility, preach it not merely by the force of precept but also by the force of example. We hear a good deal about the necessity of moving with the times; and I noticed only in a recent number of the *Indian Social Reformer* a letter from a Saraswat gentleman—Mr. Bijur Shankar Narain Rao—giving expression to that view by saying that "no one will deny that while we must advance with the times, we must also not go far ahead of the times." I am willing to concede that "we must not go far ahead of the times," for, as pointed out by one of the historians of the present age, the late Prof. Freeman, when you go too far ahead, there is the danger of those who you wish should follow, losing sight of you. Reform, like all growth intended to be lifegiving and sustaining, must be gradual. But, as the same historian points out, you must be ahead or else there can be no progress. The phrase "moving with the times" is meaningless. Time is no agent; it is *men* and not time that are the moving springs of society. Society has naturally a tendency to cast its members in the iron mould of custom and superstition; and it is only those who are educated

who can give it the propelling force. To move with it is to move in the old ways; it is only by moving ahead of it and showing it the way onwards that you can get it to move on. If men who have been to England, had before going there taken the opinions of either the whole or the majority of their caste, would they have been able to make the venture and cross the *Kalapani?* The majority would have for a certainty declared themselves in that case against the step, denounced it as rash and irreligious, and threatened to excommunicate. But it is because the men that did go went without stopping to enquire what the caste would say or do—because one set the example, another followed, and a third did the same—that a change has come about in the sense of many castes, and even the feeling now growing that England-returned men should be re-admitted after *Prayaschitta*, is due to the fact that these men went a little ahead of their fellows instead of what is vaguely talked of as "moving with the times." There are rarely in history instances of any society moving towards a reform, unless that reform was initiated by its more daring spirits who were spirited and courageous enough to go ahead of it and thus inspired into its more timid members some of their own impulse and courage. And the same view is expressed by Mr. John Frier Hibben in his article on "Automatism in Morality," published in the number of the *International Journal of Ethics* for the month of July 1895. He says:—"Progress has often been due to a thorough revolution of existing social conditions and customs, and this in turn has been gradually achieved through the insistence of the prophet of individualism, whose voice has been raised against the trammels of public opinion and the chains of custom. It is impossible to eliminate the individual factor. If it had been possible, we should see greater uniformity than we find."

When we say that, though we should not go too far ahead, yet we must go ahead, we are brought to the question, *what is going ahead?* Are any of the measures of social reform which we advocate so rash and hasty that they propose nothing but a leap in the dark or a sudden revolution in Hindu society? Our critics assume a number of things when they criticise us

and base on those assumptions their conclusion that we wish to run headlong into reforms and move too fast. But a careful consideration of the measures of reform we propose ought to satisfy an unbiassed mind that our *programme* is moderation itself.

FEMALE EDUCATION,

for instance, is the first item of reform on our list. We say that it is our first duty to educate our daughters or other female wards. I do not suppose that there is any one who will seriously maintain that there is anything *radical* or *revolutionary* in this idea about the necessity and importance of female education. But we are told that it is no use talking of that education without or before deciding the kind and character of education that our women must receive. Should they be educated in the Vernaculars or in English? Now, I do not care whether you educate your women *in* the Vernaculars or *in English, though* I consider it absolutely necessary that no one, whether man or woman, should be ignorant of his own Vernacular, provided the education they are given is one which fits them to be the guardian angels of their homes—provided, that is, we enable them to be not only good housewives but also good companions of life. There are branches of knowledge which must improve the minds of women as much as they improve the minds of men; but the biographies of great women, whether of India or of foreign countries, the art of domestic economy and housekeeping, ought to form the special features of female education. Let us leave aside the pedantry that makes this question of female education a matter of academic discussion and busies itself, like the schoolmen of old, in idle speculations and subtle disputations. Let us be more practical by insisting upon this, above all, that whatever else may be necessary or not for women, this we deem absolutely necessary that they should know their own vernacular, that they should know all that can be learnt about housekeeping, and sewing, and the essential truths and the holier and higher and more ancient traditions of the Hindu religion and society and not merely the corruptions into which the vicissitudes of later ages have cast it. If we can teach them more, so much the better for us. But if we cannot soar

higher than that, let us soar so high at least; and see that the work, thus fixed, is done thoroughly. I am entirely with those who hold that such education as we impart to women must not unfit them for the duties and obligations which they have to fulfil as the presiding deities of our homes. There is no fear that our women will neglect those duties because they are educated; they are already good housewives within the circumscribed sphere of knowledge in which society has kept them; but our object is to enlarge that sphere by enabling them to perform those duties more efficiently. Then, on the question of

MARRIAGE REFORM,

what do we propose and pledge ourselves to? It is undoubtedly our object to get rid of the baneful practice of infant marriages and see that the future progeny is not a progeny born of babies. But since the reform in this direction as in all directions must advance by stages, we propose to refrain from marrying our daughters or other female wards before they are eleven years of age in the case of those with whom marriage before puberty is obligatory and in the case of others before puberty. The eleventh year is fixed provisionally as the limit below which no one should celebrate his daughter's or other female ward's marriage. To some it may seem too low a limit; I myself think it might have safely been put at 12; but whether 11 or 12, it is well to begin at some limit and raise it gradually. Is there anything radical in this? Some perhaps may feel inclined to ask—what is the reform you effect by taking such a low limit? My answer is that by fixing upon a limit and determining not to go below it, you take a step forward at a time when the practice is to marry girls when they are 8 or 10. If our limit is 11 to-day, we shall be encouraged to raise it to 12 and onwards. What, again, do we urge in favour of

WIDOW REMARRIAGE,

which is also one of the reforms which we deem essential? We have no quarrel with the sentiment which leads either a woman who having lost her husband or a man who having lost

his wife determines to consecrate her or his life to a life of celibacy out of respect for the memory of the dear departed. Such a sentiment has everything in it to evoke our admiration; and among the many virtues which have raised our beloved Sovereign, Queen-Empress Victoria, immensely in our estimation and taught us to regard her as a model Queen, is the life of noble widowhood which she has been leading since the death of the Prince Consort. But let us not corrupt such a sentiment by sacrificing at its altar, girls who lose their husbands at tender ages, while we allow even men near their graves to marry. I have heard many an orthodox man and many an orthodox woman deplore this accursed custom of enforced widowhood. The sentiment in favour of it has not indeed taken practical shape to a large extent; but it is steadily, though very slowly growing. The object of the reform is only to remove the obstacle enforced by custom, not to compel every widow to marry, but to allow a feeling to grow in society that it is permissive to a widow to marry if she chooses. And what is our programme about

CASTE?

In his address delivered at the anniversary meeting of this Association two years ago, Dr. Bhandarkar said:—"Caste has become so inverate in Hindu society that the endeavour to do so (to obliterate all distinctions at once) will only result in the formation of new castes. But the end must steadily be kept in view. We must remember that caste is the greatest monster we have to kill." There, again, recognising the insuperable difficulty, and the necessity of moving gradually by stages, we propose, to begin with, the amalgamation of sub-castes so far as inter-dining is concerned.

One more question remains and that is about the re-admission into caste of what are called England-returned men. There is no special reference to it in the published programme of the objects and measures of the Madras Hindu Social Reform Association and I should have, if I consulted my own wishes and inclinations, let that question alone without saying a word about it here for the very good and obvious reason that that question more than any other question of social reform has been solving itself and proving too strong for even caste or other pre-

judices. Our interests, our aspirations, our hopes of the future are bound up with England and, whether you will or no, to England Hindus have gone and to England Hindus will go. The tide is too strong for even the united forces of caste, superstition and priesthood and it is as idle to think or even dream of checking that tide as it was idle on the part of Mrs. Partington to stop the waters of the Atlantic by means of her broom. In several higher castes that I know of in Western India, many have got quietly back into their caste without any fuss or hubbub. And even in those castes which are now losing their heads over the question and making a good deal of fuss over it, I feel certain that the force of the times is such that a few years hence their future generations will laugh and wonder at the excitement which their ancestors of the present generation have managed to get up over this question. There are those who maintain that England-returned men ought not to be taken back into caste without the performance of "Prayaschit," and there are others who hold that England-returned men ought not to be re-admitted into caste at all, because a trip to England necessarily involves a violation of the essential rules of caste on the part of those who undertake it by compelling them to eat forbidden food and get contaminated by contact with the *Mlechchas*. Now, my answer to those who take the *prayaschitta* view of this question is this. If *prayaschitta* is penance for a sin committed, there can be on principle no moral objection to those England-returned men doing that penance, if they *sincerely* think that they committed a sin in going to England and pledge themselves not to do forbidden things here and act accordingly. But of what use is a *prayaschitta* if instead of leading to sincere penitence and preventing the commission, it only becomes a promoter and abetter of sin. It has already led many a caste to commit sins, because people think that they can even in penance plan sins anew. I have heard many say :—"I shall violate a caste rule and then take *prayaschitta*." I do not think that those of us who are sincerely anxious for the welfare and progress of Hindu society—who think that *morality* is a greater cementing bond of society than anything else—ought to be parties to a theory which teaches men that

they have a license to sin freely, for every time they sin they can do penance and pass for sinless men. And a *prayaschitta* has already become a license, so to say, for many a sin and many a flagrant departure from the path of virtue. My second objection to *prayaschitta* in the case of England-returned men is, that I do not consider that a trip to England is sinful. This, indeed, is conceded by many who hold to the *prayaschitta* theory. They say that *prayaschitta* is only a formality, and there should be no scruple about it. But no reform ought to be promoted, unless we teach people, both by precept and example that it is a reform which is not only essential but also consistent with the principles of morality. The *shastras* are invoked in support of the theory that going to England is sinful; but the *shastras* knew nothing of England when they were written or "revealed" and all that the *shastras* say is that it is a sin to cross the sea. But what caste has escaped this sin of crossing the sea in these days without going to England? When our opponents, however, find themselves driven into a corner by this argument, they take shelter behind the plausible contention that a trip to England contaminates those who undertake it by bringing them in contact with *Mlechchas* and compelling them, through sheer necessity, to partake of forbidden food. But they forget that they play with edged tools when they use this sort of argument. The contamination of contact with the *Mlechchas* and the partaking of forbidden food, commenced in the case of many a caste in this very country long before any one thought of going to England. If men that go to England partake of forbidden food through necessity, what are we to say of those in many castes that partake of it on the sly and for mere pleasure and to gratify their appetite and taste? One would not like to say much on this delicate subject, but the time is coming, and has come for honest men, to speak freely. If the truth were told, we should have to say, in the language used by Queen Sheba: "The half has not been told." But it is said that the sin of such men is not detected, whereas the "sin" of England-returned men is found out. Then are we to understand that while we talk of God and the holy bonds of society, society is to be guided by

and its members held together on the degrading, vicious and ungodly principle, so eloquently denounced by the late Cardinal Newman as the worst of moral cankers that must ultimately lead to social decay and ruin, "that it is not the commission but the detection of sin" that is to be the social standard of sinfulness? Let men beware that they are playing fast and loose with their responsibilities as members of society and unconsciously bringing about its extinction by becoming parties to a doctrine that is so demoralising. Let them read, mark inwardly, and digest the thrilling words in which Dr. Martineau has pointed out that even in so vast an empire as that of ancient Rome "the most compact and gigantic machinery of society" fell to pieces and "perished like a Mamoth," because the sanctities of life were disbelieved even in the nursery; no binding sentiment restrained the greediness of appetite and the licentiousness of self-will; the very passions with whose submission alone society can begin, broke loose again—attended by a brood of artificial and parasitic vices that spread the dissolute confusion." It is not England-returned men that are breaking loose the moral bonds of our society; the plague-spot is elsewhere and because it requires a microscope to detect its bacilli, let it not be supposed that society is safe. It is the spirit of organised hypocrisy, which sanctions the commission of any sin, provided it is done on the sly, and which the members of every caste tacitly tolerate, that is laying the axe at the root, not only of virtue, but all social union of the true type. It is said that the real difficulty to social reform comes from the stated opposition of our gurus,—those who preside over castes as their spiritual and social heads and dictators. However much or little we may differ from the gurus, I do not think we are justified in laying the blame upon them so much or so entirely as many are disposed to do. The institution of gurus is a holy and venerable institution, which, I have no doubt, has done much good in the past, and we should not be blind to the fact that our gurus exercised in the past a vast spiritual and moral influence over the Hindu community,—and that enabled that community to keep alive the light of virtue even in the midst of its vicissitudes. I am not one of those who think that

an institution which has done so well in the past ought to be lightly dealt with. "But," as pointed out by Mr. Lecky in his address on "History" delivered at the Birmingham Midland Institute a few years ago, "sometimes with changed beliefs and changed conditions, institutions lose all their original vitality," and the only condition of their survival and continuance is "that true characteristic of vitality—the power of adapting themselves to changed conditions and new utilities," *i. e.*, of adapting themselves to new wants. This institution of gurus can only survive subject to that condition. Lastly, I notice with particular pleasure that both in your programme and in your lectures and in your newspaper, you, the members of the Madras Hindu Social Reform Association, lay stress upon

A LIFE OF PURITY.

That, indeed, ought to be, as indeed you have made it, the key-note of the social reform movement. All reform must begin with the reform of the individual and the reform of the individual begins when he lives a life of openness and virtue and makes that the basis of all progress, both individual and social. We complain that Hindu orthodoxy has a deep-seated prejudice against social reform; but once convince it that you are men of moral excellence, that you lead and insist upon others leading lives of rectitude, and that all your plans and proposals of reform centre round that as the cardinal principle of your faith, you cannot fail to attract its attention, engage its sympathies and at last secure its support. Men now may make light of and ridicule your attempt to denounce and put down what are called *nautch* parties; they may laugh at you and take you for visionaries; but be sure enthusiasm in the cause of morality has unrivalled charm and power which does not fail sooner or later to assert itself. Our work of social reform must suffer so long as we do not preach and practise the gospel of a godly life; with that life as the animating principle of our movements, we may prove more than a match to all prejudice and opposition. I believe there is a great deal of truth in what my distinguished friend, the Hon'ble Mr. Pherozsha M. Mehta said at a meeting of the Bombay Legislative Council, when in reply to a member of that Council who pooh-poohed the ladies and

gentlemen in England that have been leading the agitation of purity as mad enthusiasts, he reminded the Council that it is such mad enthusiasts who have, as the pages of English history show, awakened the moral conscience of England and contributed to its progress. The sentiment has taken root in Hindu society that, however good a principle may be, it should not be practised, if it is opposed to public sentiment; and hence it is that wherever a reform is proposed, we are met with the Sanskrit verse, which says :—* * * *i. e.*, although (a thing) is pure, it should not be done or observed because it is opposed to public sentiment. The sentiment embodied in this verse accounts for all ills and evils; it has proved hostile to all reform and progress. We have to strive hard to knock that sentiment on the head; and our lives should, therefore, be so arranged as to enable us to be living protests against lawless modes of living.

I know that the work before us is gigantic, and our difficulties innumerable. Our hearts faint when we see that there is a Himalaya of prejudice, ignorance, and opposition to be got over before we can hope to win and say our work is, or is about to be, accomplished. But if we have our conditions of difficulty, we are also not without our conditions of hope. We have put our hands to the plough, and it is not for us to look back; and we need not look back and despond, if we only bear in mind that, small as our numbers are, uninfluential as people say, as we may be, it is not, as Mazzini in his vigorous language points out, the number but the unity of forces that enables a good cause to win and prosper. Nor should we be impatient of results. It is enough for us, it should be enough for us, if we are able to say that we have not remained idle or inactive, but have done something, even if that something be very little, to carry the work of social reform a little further than we found it and helped our successors to carry it further still. We do not wish to make light of the past, nor do we desire to touch ancient institutions in either a spirit of irreverence or thoughtlessness. It is because we think that social growth is continuous, and that not only "perfect truth," but "perfect development" is "beyond the reach of any one generation" that we hold fast to the principle that each generation ought to endea-

vour to leave society better than it found it by raising its ideals of life and conduct; and if we go on with our work, making an irreproachable life the basis of it, we may be able to say that we have not worked in vain.

Mr. G. Subramania Iyer on "The Principles of Social Reform."

The following is the full text of the address delivered by Mr. G. Subramania Iyer, B.A., at the Fifth Anniversary Meeting of the Madras Hindu Social Reform Association, held in December 1897 :—

THE STAGE OF DISCUSSION IS NOT PASSED.

People, who are not very zealous about social reform, are apt to think that, at this anniversary as well as at our other meetings, we are enacting only a useless show and that every form of activity on behalf of Social Reform except practical action is vain. Practical action is no doubt greatly wanted, but I do not think in this great question the stage of discussion is passed. Not only is the stage of discussion not passed, but there has not been a fraction of the amount of discussion which the great importance of the question demands. Where are the societies, meetings, discussions, pamphlets and books, which are accessories of great reform movements? It is obvious that before the community can accept change, it should be educated. The public mind should be opened to the enormity of the evils that hinder progress; wrong notions should be corrected; prejudices should be overcome; opposition should be baffled, and above all public feeling should be roused. In fact it is not opposition, reasonable or unreasonable, so much as apathy, that is the worst enemy of Reform. Action on a large scale is not possible without a long period of agitation. It must be confessed that the agitation on behalf of Hindu Social Reform has not been vigorous or powerful. At best it has been feeble and spasmodic, and while I shall be the last person to speak disparagingly of the efforts of Reformers of whose difficulties others can have no adequate idea, I must state that what progress has been made in the expansion of reform ideas

and in the weakening of the opposition, is due more to the general progress of intelligence among the people than to the direct efforts of the Reform party. But it is necessary that public intelligence should be directed on wise lines and advancement made less slowly than at present. All discussion is therefore to be welcomed, and every one that talks or writes of reform topics, unless he be a scoffer, should be regarded with sympathy.

THE POLICY OF LEAVE ALONE.

Some people say, why not leave alone. We are happy enough without your reforms—at all events as happy as social institutions can make a people happy. Such changes as are necessary, time will effect without the fussy and mischievous tinkering of so-called reformers. This view is too narrow-minded and altogether wrong. We, reformers, do not mind abuse. We are getting callous to it, our skin being too thick for such missiles. But people who are averse to active efforts for change and would depend on time as the only agency of reform have read history to no purpose. No nation tried this policy of let alone and reaped a more disastrous harvest than we Hindus have done. Have we not for over ten centuries let things alone—let history make itself; and what is the consequence? Political subjection, social prostration, poverty, disease. This is the consequence.

NO RIGHT TO VEGETATE.

Indeed, it cannot be otherwise. No community—any more than an individual—has a right to vegetate. If it does, deterioration must set in. Our sages propose a condition of absolute quietude for individuals. Starvation of the external as well as the internal senses, their severance from their respective objective relations, self-contemplation, quietude, and nirvana—these are the successive stages in the evolution of the individual in a single birth or in a series of births. I do not know if similar stages of evolution are proposed for communities as well. At all events, no community has yet reached that higher plane where nirvana is the goal. Nor do we, Hindus of modern days, aspire for it. We cherish an aspiration to rise to the same level of material and moral condition as other nations. We feel humiliated at our poverty, at our helplessness, at our

defeats, and at the slight and contumely heaped on us by people who do not sympathise with us and whose interests are in conflict with ours. We must then recognize the same law of life that other nations, now dominating the destiny of the world, pursue with success. In fact there is no other law of life. Ceaseless activity, perpetual struggle, rivalry, defeat or success —this is the law. We, Hindus, can no more escape it than we can escape any other law of nature. We may depend upon it,—we shall be shown no mercy. We should either struggle forward or pursue a track of continuous decadence.

HAVE WE THEN DECAYED?

The decadence of a community does not necessarily mean its decadence in numbers. So far as numbers go, thanks to the custom of early and compulsory marriage, we have undergone no decay at all. The contact of a more vigorous and manly race has proved fatal to many an aboriginal race in the world. The ancient Peruvians, the Aztecs and the Caribs were exterminated by the more hardy races of Europe, and in Australia, in Africa and in America the aboriginal races are meeting with the same fate. But in the ceaseless vicissitudes of our history in the past, we have preserved our identity; and not only have we preserved our identity but have even preserved some of the more marked features of our distinct civilization. We have certainly multiplied in numbers. The innate vitality of the race has enabled it to resist the fate that overtook some ancient races and are overtaking the Pacific Islanders, the Maoris, and the Negroes in Africa and America. Still, the degeneration is perceptible along many a vein in the national character. We have preserved many of the softer and more passive elements of character—but have degenerated in the rougher, the more active, and the more manly elements. We are the same patient, peace-loving, orderly, industrious, simple and spiritual people that we were centuries ago. We preserve the same tenderness to animal life, the same sense of family obligations, the same regard for personal purity, the same metaphysical cast of mind. But patriotism, love of enterprise, co-operative faculty, adventure, energy, aspiration, devotion to duty and such like qualities, we have lost, if we ever possessed them. In

fact, as the author of *Social Evolution* would put it, we have lost the qualities which contribute to "Social efficiency."

"SOCIAL EFFICIENCY."

Speaking of the prosperity of nations and the causes of it Mr. Lecky says: "Its foundation is laid in pure domestic life, in commercial integrity, in a high standard of moral worth and of public spirit, in simple habits, in courage, uprightness, and a certain soundness and moderation of judgment, which springs quite as much from character as from intellect. If you would form a wise judgment of the future of a nation, observe carefully whether these qualities are increasing or decaying. Observe specially what qualities count for most in public life. Is character becoming of greater or less importance? Are the men who obtain the highest posts in the nation, men of whom in private life and irrespective of party, competent judges speak with genuine respect? Are they of sincere convictions, consistent lives, indisputable integrity? . . . . It is by observing this moral current that you can best cast the horoscope of a nation." It is this moral current which, according as it is clear, healthy and vigorous, or the reverse, determines the position of a nation in the world. The happiness of man, under modern conditions, depends far more upon what may be called his social qualities—qualities, that is to say, which enable him to act in co-operation with a large number of men—than upon his qualities as an isolated individual. The individual will no doubt continue to wield influence on his neighbours, but the progress of the community no longer depends to the same extent as it did in ancient times, on the towering genius of an individual, be he a ruler, a statesman or a general. It depends on the collective activity of a large number moving together at a time. The power of organization is therefore so important in these days as a factor of progress. It is these qualities that contribute to social efficiency that really constitutes in modern times the superiority or inferiority of race. Says Mr. Benjamin Kidd: "Nor even of the possession of high intellectual capacity, can science give us any warrant for speaking of one race as superior to another. The evolution which man is undergoing is over and above everything else, a social evolution. There is,

therefore, but one absolute test of superiority. It is only the race possessing in the highest degree the qualities contributing to social efficiency that can be recognized as having any claim to superiority. But these qualities are not as a rule of the brilliant order, nor such as strike the imagination. Occupying a high place amongst them are such characteristics as strength and energy of character, humanity, probity and integrity, and simple minded devotion to conceptions of duty in such circumstances as may arise."

THE CLUE TO REFORM ACTIVITY.

It is this test as to the condition of a nation that should supply the clue to true reform activity. Whatever institution, custom, belief or notion retards the development of this social efficiency, should be modified, or discouraged, and others more subservient to this end should be gradually evolved. If we consider the programme of our work having regard to this test, we will see its importance and its wisdom. A baby-born race and a race whose children are brought up by illiterate mothers cannot develop much of the qualities which I have alluded to. We search in vain in such a race for the qualities of courage, of enterprise, of adventure, and of a fearless facing of responsibilities instead of shirking them or flying away from them. Nor can a people who treat their women as if they were intended for no higher duties than the personal service of their husbands, and who heartlessly consign their unfortunate widows to a lot of perpetual privation, shew much of *chivalry*, *generosity*, sympathy with the weak, self-sacrifice and dignity of family life. Nor, again, is it possible that a people divided as the Hindus are into castes with all the narrow feelings and antipathies that they nurse, learn qualities so essentially social as patriotism, fellow-feeling, a sense of the equality of all men, and sacrifice for others. "Caste is the greatest monster we have to kill," said Dr. Bhandarkar speaking in this city three years ago; and indeed it is. More than all other evils of our social system, it has contributed to the crushing of the high moral feeling, of the ethical nature of the Hindu, and of that divine instinct—the sense of man's duty to man irrespective of birth or rank. Take again the foolish custom of looking upon

foreign travel as a violation of religious duty. I do not know that any conceivable state of Hindu Society in the past could have furnished reasons for the necessity of such prohibition. But there can be no doubt that this self-inflicted isolation was the cause of serious deterioration in the character of the people. They became ignorant and conceited, and while they lost one strong incentive to sustained advancement in the arts of civilisation which a free intercourse with foreign countries should have supplied, they lost all knowledge of the outside world, believed that their own country and their own people constituted God's universe, flattered themselves that everything worth knowing they already knew, and that human race could not advance further than the stage they had themselves reached. It is no longer possible for the people of India to remain in this state of isolation. They will have new blood infused into them by a free intercourse with the active races of other parts of the world. This silly prohibition is so opposed to the needs of modern times that an increasing number of Hindus, disregarding this prohibition, visit foreign countries for purposes of education and commerce. The well-known terrors of excommunication are no longer able to stop the flowing tide bursting through this old and time-worn barrier. No healthy social progress is possible without every facility being provided for foreign travel. Fancy what the condition of England would be if a prohibition were placed on her best men leaving their native country! What will even Japan be under such prohibition? The conclusion is therefore obvious that the social customs and prejudices which we are engaged in combating are inimical to the growth of those qualities that I have alluded to as constituting important factors in "Social efficiency."

OUR DIFFICULTIES ARE SPECIAL AND MORE FORMIDABLE.

We are fully sensible of the stupendous difficulties besetting endeavours to sweep away abuses centuries old, to change customs that are interwoven into the very life of the people, and to adapt ancient institutions to modern requirements. These difficulties are special in this country and are more formidable than elsewhere. Because the changes we desire and we strive to

bring about are not like the gradual, natural and organic transformation of an existing institution to suit a fresh want. In Western countries social changes mean more or less improvements on existing bases; the spirit of the nation, of the institutions and of the ends desired, remains the same through successive developments. Each new step marks the continued evolution of Society, helped and directed by the forces it spontaneously developes. But in India, we have more or less to pour new wine into old bottles. The ideals of thinking Hindus in these days are not those that moved our ancestors, of whose conceptions of human well-being, the institutions, customs, &c., that we have inherited are the embodiment. Our modern ideals are more or less derived from the experience of Western countries and the forces that make them living and keep them in operation are also more or less foreign. We want to become a nation like Western nations; we want to be wealthy like them; active, enterprising, free, and moral like them; and our aspirations, it may be safely said, have comparatively little in common with those lawgivers and reformers of old whom we hold answerable for the social features confronting us at the present moment. Many of these features are hostile to these aspirations. Still, we cannot pull down the Hindu social edifice as the tower of the Connemara Library was pulled down the other day, and erect another to suit exactly our new purposes. The process involves a good deal of destructive work, however slowly and cautiously effected. It must be a good deal more than mere adaptation. What process of adaptation for instance, can make the joint family system, degradation of women, and caste, suit modern ends? They must be adapted and adapted until they cease to exist. Changes must be more abrupt, the transition more violent, the old and the new more dissimilar, in this country, than has been the experience in more fortunate countries.

THE PENALTY SHOULD BE PAID.

The Hindu community should pay the penalty of its past neglect. For centuries it has been away from the path of true progress. The peculiar social system of the Hindus worked well enough so long as they were an independent and self-contained

community. But it had within itself seeds of decay, because it was not a self-working system adapting itself to fresh environments as they arose. It was not designed to promote solidarity and a uniform progress of the whole. The spiritual aspiration that dominated the thought and the whole altruistic activity of the higher classes was antagonistic to all material interests and obscured the paramount need of strengthening the social organization in view to security from external danger as well as to internal well-being. The high level of material prosperity which the nation was able to reach on account of favourable physical conditions, soon resulted in effeminacy of character—a result which came about all the more easily by the aversion of the people to material advantages naturally induced by their spiritual ideals. Buddhism went to strengthen this aversion, and by admitting all castes into its spiritual fold, extended it to the whole population. The military defence of the country against external or internal dangers was of course neglected, our ancestors being evidently under the belief that outside India there were no people capable of invading her and establishing a foreign rule subversive of their own religion and civilization. Arts and industries were despised, no social status being accorded to the classes following them. Women were deposed from the position which they had previously occupied, and came to be looked upon as mere instruments of men's pleasure. All education which was not spiritual or ecclesiastical was ruled mischievous. The nation became effeminate, priest-ridden, disorganized, stagnant, and utterly unfit for self-defence. When once the tide of foreign invasion began to flow into the country, the degradation was complete and during nearly a thousand years, the best efforts of its most valiant champions, such as they were, were directed towards keeping the nation up somehow, preserving the prized inheritance of old, in religion, literature and traditions, and towards feeding the people with a hope of a better time, in a future cycle of the world's evolution. During this long period, no original achievement in any sphere of human activity, not even in the intellectual sphere, can be traced to the Hindus. While we were thus in a stagnant condition, other nations of the world made

wonderful progress, and some of them in particular, who were steeped in barbarism at a time when the Hindus were in the pinnacle of glory, have become masters of the world including our own dear motherland. The world has been progressing rapidly, while we were in a trance, and now being roused once more into consciousness by the quickening contact of the West, we find ourselves amidst strange surroundings, which threaten our fresh born consciousness with extinction if we do not accept and assimilate them. The civilization we have managed to preserve through a series of unparalleled vicissitudes, is antiquated and unsuited to modern conditions, and however reluctant we may be to tear ourselves from the past and however difficult the process may be, we must recognise it to be inevitable. We can only do our best to make the transition from the old order to the new as smooth as possible, although, as I have said, it cannot be as smooth as it can be in other countries.

CASTE AS THE BASIS OF THE SOCIAL SYSTEM MUST BE CHANGED.

The Hindu Society is founded on caste, which by its extreme conservatism, by its jealousy of foreigners and by its careful preservation of the purity of blood, has preserved the identity of the nation in spite of the large infusion of foreign elements in its composition. We recognise the service that this institution has done to the people in the past. But conditions have changed and caste too will have to change its spirit if not its form also. The caste basis of society is essentially one of inequality as determined by certain artificial significance of birth and of barriers arbitrarily created to limit the sphere of human faculties. Whatever meaning there might have been in this inequality and restriction in the original conception, it can have no rational meaning whatever in these days. Modern world will not acknowledge special claims of individuals to special means of spiritual salvation. The Pariah as well as the Brahmin will be allowed to seek his own means of salvation. Any application of coercion will only end in the individual or community coerced seeking relief by entering other social systems where greater liberty is promised. Nor is there in our country in these days any temporal authority, as there was in former times, to apply coercion to enforce obedience to a social polity, at once irrational

and degrading according to prevailing conceptions. If equality then must be conceded to all classes in spiritual concerns, it must be conceded in matters temporal too. We can no longer lay down arbitrarily that certain occupations are open to a certain caste and others to other castes. Each person's aptitude and opportunity are the only determining factors in the choice of occupation. The great principle of social relation in these days is a perfect equality of footing to all. The history of the modern world is mostly the history of the struggle against a monopoly of power and prestige in certain classes; the privileged classes having been deprived of their privileges, the masses are emancipated and elevated, bringing together all members of the community on a footing of equality and removing all obstacles placed by society or the State before individuals in the rivalry of life. Thanks to the *Pax Britannica*, the tyranny of caste is being broken down, and theoretically at all events the Pariah and the Brahmin can compete together in life with equal freedom. No Indian is now handicapped for the accident of his birth.

THE POWER OF CUSTOM AS A STANDARD OF CONDUCT SHOULD BE WEAKENED.

Caste, as the basis of society, and custom as the regulating force of its activity, are not a healthy combination. It is wonderful how amongst us custom has usurped the place of reason, sentiment, and religion itself, as a standard of right and wrong. In our social relations it is recognised as a dominant motive of action. In every society custom is no doubt more or less powerful. In the name of fashion, of public opinion, or of social convention, it plays the tyrant. The Englishman is a slave of it in certain spheres of action as the Hindu; but the Hindu is a more craven slave than any other civilised race. The difference is one of degree, but in this world all differences between right and wrong, good and bad, or between opposites of any kind, are ultimately of degree. At all events they are practically so. When therefore a conservative Hindu justifies or defends the intolerable tyranny of custom by referring to a similar state in other countries, his reasoning is specious. Nobody says English society or any other society is perfect, and reformers there too are irritated at the obstruction of custom. It is indeed on-

titled to regard in certain comparatively unimportant spheres of conduct. In dress, in forms of civility, in mere ceremonies, and in conventions generally, the sway of custom is innocuous. Beyond these limits that sway should not be allowed to trespass. On the other hand, when its influence intrudes into relations which underlie the elevation and refinement of human nature and when it obstructs the healthy play of sentiment or the application of reason, it becomes mischievous. I shall illustrate what I mean. The Hindus have their own dress, their own forms of courtesy, their own domestic and social ceremonies. Whether these are altered or whether they remain the same, matters little. The power of custom in these and kindred matters is tolerable. But when it claims control over actions concerning the health and happiness of individuals and of the well-being of the community as a whole, it transcends its limits and should be checked. In the great question of the re-marriage of widows, for instance, our people admit the hardship of life-long widowhood and they also admit the scriptural sanction for re-marriage. They admit too the expediency, from a worldly point of view, of reform. Parents are not callous to the claims of their widowed child on their affection; the widow's suffering, her privation, her disfigurement and her unhappy lot generally, often break their heart. Instances of parents who take their unfortunate child's lot so much to heart that they themselves vow life-long abstinence, are not unknown. They feel that the young widow might be misled, and after their own lives, she will be utterly helpless. Yet, all these considerations, pressing so strongly in favour of the one step that will make themselves and their child happy, are set aside, merely because CUSTOM is opposed to it. Religion is not against it, morality is not against it, nor expediency, nor even the general feeling of the caste. But Custom overrides all, and holds both reason and sentiment captive. Similarly in regard to marriage, it is Custom that limits the field of choice to the caste to which the boy or the girl may belong. The Shastras recognize only four castes, but these four have now become forty thousand, a caste, in some instances, consisting of but a few families. Yet the alliance must be formed within the limits of that caste, and

the result is, marriage at an excessively tender age and at a ruinous cost. These two evils would be greatly avoided if marital relations were allowed within a wider field. As a fact, however, a Hindu parent will rather marry his young daughter to an invalid, to a very old man, to a man without any means of livelihood, than marry her to a boy of a different caste whatever may be his recommendations. Many a young girl and many a young boy are made unhappy all their life in consequence of this restriction. Yet the only justification of this restriction is CUSTOM. There is nothing else prohibiting alliance within a wider area than a single caste. Again, ask our countrymen the reason for the restrictions on the liberty of our women. Ask them why the woman should not move about as freely as the man, why she should not go about with a pair of shoes and an umbrella, why she should not drive out with her husband, why she should not extend her knowledge and refine her manners by mixing in society, why she should not, in fact, do so many other things, which, without offending the orthodox sense of propriety, she might do to understand better the world and human nature and make herself more intelligent and more self-reliant. The reason they will give is CUSTOM. The less advanced the state of Society is, the more extensive and more powerful is the sway of this tyrant. In a primitive state, custom not only regulates social conduct, but controls industry also. It fixes the wages, it limits the market, and determines generally the relation between capital and labour. Modern conditions have almost taken away this latter power from CUSTOM, but they have been powerless to depose it as a ruling moral force.

CASTE SHOULD BE REPLACED BY EQUALITY AND CUSTOM BY REASON AND SYMPATHY.

Caste, then, as the basis of social status should be replaced by equality of footing to all, and custom as a motive of action should be replaced by reason and sympathy. I have already said that so far as the State can help in the establishment of this equality of footing, it is secure to all classes of people. But there are a thousand corners and turns into which the influence of the State does not penetrate and where social deal-

ings are subject to the caprice of public opinion and individual feeling. In the eye of the law, the Pariah and the Brahmin are, no doubt, on a footing of equality, but the law cannot reach the trifles as well as the important transactions of life, and it is quite open to the landlord, the money-lender and the high caste man, to oppress the Pariah in countless ways. Caste breeds pride and selfishness, and the man of the higher caste thinks it his privilege to despise the man of the lower caste. Every endeavour should be made to break down this *spirit*, although the less essential and the more extraneous forms of caste may linger. The position of CUSTOM being taken by reason and sympathy, or rather by sympathy tempered by reason, our social relations will be less stereotyped, and more in accord with the fresh knowledge and experience we acquire every day in consequence of a freer and quicker intercourse among the communities of the world. Sympathy is the first impulse to action, while its form in practical effect is determined by reason. Then the incongruity we perceive, in the light of modern knowledge, between the ideal and the existing state, will press on us with greater force until the desired transition from the old and less rational, to the new and the more rational order, takes place. Mr. Lecky well observes: "An impartial examination of great transitions of opinion will show that they have usually been effected not by the force of direct arguments, not by such reasons as those which are alleged by controversialists and recorded in creeds, but by a sense of the incongruity or discordance of the old doctrines with other parts of our knowledge." It is the duty of all interested in our social well-being to bring home to the popular mind with an ever-increasing pressure this sense of incongruity, which will then raise a general revolt against the sovereignty of the ruling twins—caste and custom.

ELEVATION OF WOMEN.

If the victory of the social feeling over self-love is the key to the regeneration of social existence, if a moral transformation must precede any real advance, and if a pressing sense of incongruity must bring on transition, then this victory, this transformation and this pressure should be manifest in the

family before they can assert themselves outside. The claim of woman to a higher status should be recognised. It is self-love, narrow sympathy, and a low standard of conduct that constitute the cause of the subordination of woman to man. The Hindu conception of society, though fairly cognizant of the respect due to woman, does not provide for the growth of her status into equality with man. Even in Europe the equality of the two sexes is a modern idea, though there is a far nearer approach to it there than in this country. Our joint family system is not favourable to that undisputed sovereignty which she has a right to wield in the home, and even the freedom which is hers theoretically is considerably curtailed. There is no doubt that in ancient and medieval periods the Hindu woman enjoyed both at home and outside a higher status and greater freedom than she does at present. The deterioration is chiefly the result of the backward notions which our Mahomedan rulers brought with them, and to the decay of the Hindu character itself. The Mahomedan rule has to answer for many faults in our social arrangements at present, and among them the selfish and ungenerous view taken of the rights of the other sex is not the least deplorable. Buddhism too contributed materially, I believe, to this result. I do not propose to go here into a historical enquiry of the causes of the present degraded condition of our women, but I may observe that in the more sympathetic and rational views we, Social Reformers—hold on the position of women, we mostly reproduce, to suit modern ideals, the conception of our forefathers. We hold that the true test of civilization is the position of women, and the incongruity between our pretensions outside our home and our practice within it, should gradually lead to a greater harmony between our two lives.

THE HINDU WOMAN WILL LOSE MUCH OF HER DOMESTICITY.

Much as the family is the sphere where the virtues of womanhood have their chief scope, there is no reason why woman any more than man should be dead to all the interests of the world at large. From the experience of European countries it is evident that there is almost an unlimited scope for the benevolent exercise of the peculiar charm and grace

with which feminine nature is endowed. What women do in the Western countries as teachers, nurses, and generally as ministering angels to the poor and suffering, through a hundred means and organizations, that the Indian woman too, can do. As the civilization of our country breaks away from its old moorings and proceeds along Western lines, the Hindu woman will cease to be confined, in her interests as well as movements, within the walls of the home, but will live outside as well as within the house. Imagine what influence the joint family system has on the position of women. It is the feelings and ties that this system generates that procure to the woman some male guardian in all her conditions and stages of life. But if this joint family system declines—which it must as the result of non-agricultural occupations becoming more common—she will have to depend on herself and lose her extraneous support to an increasing extent. She will of necessity learn self-reliance and will be driven to support herself. In proportion as this happens she will lose her domesticity Towards the same result will tend the influence of Western training which is opposed to the seclusion of woman, so that we may predict a serious and radical change in her future position.

HINDU WOMEN SHOULD BE AWAKENED TO THE WIDER INTEREST OF THEIR COUNTRY.

I entirely agree with Mrs. Benson, the lady to whose sympathy and active interest in our social questions we are so deeply indebted, in her opinion that the Indian as well as English women want to be "awakened to an intelligent interest in the social problems concerning them and their children, and to the wider interests of their country." This is a high ideal, and in order that the Hindu woman may perform the part which it should assign to her, she should be armed with the necessary education. How do you expect ignorant mothers to know their duties to their children, realize their awful responsibility not only for the good breeding of their children, but also, through their children, for the well-being of the country at large, and to perform these duties satisfactorily? Recently, a medical authority pointed out that because Indian mothers do not know how to feed their infants, a little more

than one-half of all the infants born survive to enter on a second year of life. Herself miserably ill-fed and hurried into the solemn responsibilities of maternity while yet a child, the mother has not to feed her baby the food which nature provides in her; and resorting without knowledge to methods of artificial feeding, she kills the child out of her very tenderness! How in a hundred other ways the ignorance of the child-mother renders her unfit to discharge her solemn duties and to bring up children morally and physically healthy, you are all as aware as myself Outside the home, there are a hundred ways in which an educated woman can serve her country. The great work of the education of her sex will alone occupy thousands, and what can be more honourable or patriotic than the work of emancipating them from their condition of ignorance which attenuates their faculties and dims their charm? As nurses and physicians, and as inspirers, if not leaders, of every movement aiming at the increase of human happiness or the alleviation of human suffering, they can most worthily fulfil their nature. The ignorance and degradation to which women are subjected by the tyranny of man involve an incalculable waste of beneficent human force which God could not have intended to be so wasted.

WOMEN SHOULD RECEIVE THE HIGHEST AND MOST LIBERAL EDUCATION POSSIBLE.

In order that woman may rise to the full sublimity of her nature, it is obviously absurd to train her in an elementary and in a thoroughly inefficient and milk-and-water system of education, which is all that we have in our country and which many people think is quite enough. My own opinion is that their education should be as high, as scientific and as invigorating as the education of men. We recently heard a high authority saying that female education should proceed in this country on conservative national lines. What these conservative national lines are, it is difficult to say. But it is obvious that in this great question—as in most others—regard should be had more to the requirements of the future than to the facts of the past. You do not expect the educated Hindu of the future to be the same as his educated ancestor of the medieval times

was. As the India of the twentieth century will not be the same as the India of Asoka's or Vikramaditya's time, and as the social conditions and the responsibilities of the citizen will differ from those which were known in the times past, so the training and culture of our future generations will have to differ from those of our ancestors. The educated Hindu woman, any more than the educated Hindu man, cannot possibly adhere to the so-called conservative national lines. The calls on her energy, her sense of duty, and her social virtues will necessarily differ and her education should be liberal and invigorating enough to enable her to meet the changed conditions. Nor is the stress which timid people lay on national continuity so necessary. There is no fear, in these days, of Robespierres of social revolution. There can be no sanguinary convulsions or forcible sweeping away of old institutions such as characterised social transitions in times past. Persuasion and not force is the instrument of change, and though entirely new ideals and thoughts and convictions may come to prevail, the actual transition must be the slow process of peaceful persuasion by example as well as by precept. This transition may be quicker or slower according to the besetting conditions, but it can be no other than peaceful.

THE PARAMOUNT OBJECT IS TO DEVELOP SOCIAL QUALITIES.

Let me go back to my central idea which I want you to keep before your mind while you listen to me, the idea, that is, that social efficiency or social feeling or altruism, as opposed to self-love or egotism, is the true test of the progress of a community. If this standard is to determine the education of Indian women, you will understand how the kind of education advocated in some quarters falls grievously short of the level that has to be reached. I say nothing against the desire—with which I most cordially sympathise—to preserve and not to weaken by a wrong training in schools the peculiar graces of Hindu feminine nature. But I must say that excessive stress on this is apt to become mere cant. These graces, as well as the qualities that are not reckoned *graces*, are the result, so far as they do not arise from the physical and climatic condition of the country, of the habits and activities of life. A well-born Hindu woman,

for instance, will not walk briskly in the street, will not laugh or talk aloud, and will not show off her dress or ornaments. These qualities of modesty impart to our women a peculiar charm. But it is quite possible that altered conditions of life may modify these and other peculiarities, as a similar modification is already taking place in the case of our educated men. The modesty which marked the bearing and demeanour of the late Sir T. Muthusamy Iyer and for which he used to get a good deal of praise, is not the most prominent trait in the character of the younger generation, and in other attributes too which used to be associated with Hindu character, a quiet and perceptible change is taking place; and for that reason we do not mean to demand a change in the educational system and a reversion to the system which trained the mind and formed the character of our ancestors. Similarly, the education of our daughters should not be determined by these comparatively subordinate considerations. The paramount object is to develop social qualities, and whatever education will conduce to this end, that on the whole should be accepted as the best education. Ramayanam, Mahabharatam and Srimat Bhaghavatam afford excellent training in a way, but they cannot be the mental nourishment which God and Nature have provided for the human race for all time and under all conditions. Fancy the education of the Teutonic race being placed altogether on the basis of the New Testament or the History of the Saints!

PATRIOTISM AS A PHASE OF SOCIAL FEELING

I have said that "social efficiency" is the test of progress and that the community that has not developed a sufficient measure of altruism, social feeling or a preference of the common weal over selfish desires, lacks the vitality essential to sustain its progress In a word, wherever a sense of national life is absent, there the fatal germs of decay are at work. No other illustration of this principle is wanted than the history of our own race. Another illustration is furnished by the downfall of the Roman Empire—an empire whose rise and fall seem to be an endless reservoir from which illustrations for principles of social progress are drawn. The Roman Empire fell to pieces,

says the author of "National Life and Character," "not because its administrators were always inefficient, or its armies weak, or its finances and mechanical resources inferior to those of the nations which overpowered it, but because there was really no sense of national life in the community." The author adds: "Unless the general feeling in a people is to regard individual existence and fortunes as of no practical account in comparison with the existence and self-respect of the body politic, the disintegrating forces of time will always be stronger in the long run than any given organization" Not that there was no organization which demanded and received the homage of the Hindus; but this organization was not the State or the community as a whole, but it was the caste; and the caste feeling together with the system of village communities confined the sympathy and activity of the people within extremely narrow limits. They never allowed a national feeling to grow. In fact, the very conception of a Nation, a State, a Commonwealth, was wanting.

THE MOMENTUM MUST COME FROM THE EXAMPLE OF INDIVIDUALS.

Thus, according as such of our social institutions and customs as hinder the growth of what I have called, (borrowing the expression from Mr. Benjamin Kidd—the author of "Social Evolution"), "Social Efficiency"—in other words a spirit of altruism, social feeling, or a sense of national life, are modified or adapted, according as an equality of footing is made secure to all classes in the competition for life, according as the women of the country are educated and enjoy freedom of thought and movement, and according as the people are permeated with this sense of national life, social progress would be made under favourable conditions. But the ground may be cleared, the conditions may be favourable, the fulcrum and the lever may be sound and in their proper place, yet the momentum to lift the lever up may be wanting. And this momentum must come from the example of individuals—individuals such as those that have from time to time in the past history of the race moulded its destiny. Statesmen, poets, men of science, inventors of mechanical contrivances—all these no doubt contribute to progress, but they can help progress and turn its

direction in its advance, but cannot impart the initial moving force, which comes from those great men who by the power of their lofty character and sublime deeds and the burning enthusiasm they impart to masses of men, sweep away abuse and falsehood, stamp out superstitions, open new paths and establish fresh ideals for the elevation and advancement of the human race.

A HIGH AVERAGE OF SOCIAL FEELING HELPS THESE GREAT MEN.

But this initial moving force may come from humble individuals and operate within a limited sphere as well as from those rare geniuses or heroes whose spirit sweeps over a whole country or continent As Mr. John Morley says, "what we see every day with increasing clearness is that not only the well-being of the many, but the chances of exceptional genius, moral or intellectual, in the gifted few, are highest in a society where the average interest, curiosity, capacity, are all highest." The humblest individual can therefore come to the help of the genius and can contribute to the gradual raising of the average standard of national sense in the community. The humblest of us can by diligently using our own minds and diligently seeking to extend our own opportunities to others, help to swell the common tide, on the force and the set of whose currents depends the prosperous voyaging of humanity.

TWO POWERFUL AGENCIES—THE STATE AND THE CHURCH.

Two powerful agencies that have done a great deal to advance social well being in other countries are not available to our cause in this country, namely, the State and the Church. Here the State represents an alien power, which is not well-informed on Hindu Social questions and which lacks that propelling force which the wielders of that power would come under if they were of the people, and if they shared directly in the consequences of our social evils and in the adverse feeling and sense of incongruity they create. Where the ruling power is in the hands of our countrymen such as it is in Native Principalities, you see how it has been possible to move in the direction of reform; and if only the British rulers of India would

realize their responsibilities as Hindu statesmen do, and if they are less timid in facing othodox opposition, a great accession of strength would accrue to forces of reform. In regard to the Church also, we are at a great disadvantage. There is nothing amongst us corresponding to the great and powerful institution called the Church in Christian countries. Our forefathers never thought of giving to their religion the strength of an organized institution, and I must say that the Hindu religion, in its present degradation and weakness, has paid a frightful penalty for this neglect. Our Mathathipathies and priests are themselves corrupt and sunk in ignorance and superstition. If anything, they constitute a force hostile to rational and healthy reform. Fancy the great Sankarachari Swami of Sringeri, disregarding the secession of disciples from whom he derives his temporal affluence and spiritual status, placing himself at the head of the party of reform and while denouncing the evils grossly revolting to humanity and common sense, openly advocating the changes that a true insight into the present and future needs of the country and a genuine and enlightened patriotism demand; how easily, then, will the devoted band of reformers crush opposition and win victories! But this is not to be. Cannot the Reformers instal Swami Vivekananda or some spiritual hero like him into a reform Sankarachari as there was a second Pope for sometime in Europe!

Appendix.

Summary of Resolutions passed at the various Sessions of the Indian National Social Conference.

[When the Indian National Congress was founded at Bombay in 1885, it was felt by the leaders of the movement and some of our English and other friends that the national movement should not be exclusively political, but that side by side with the consideration of political questions, questions affecting our social economy should also be discussed and that the best endeavours should be put forth for ameliorating the existing condition of our society. With this view, Dewan Bahadur R. Raghunatha Rao and Mr. Justice (then Rao Bahadur) M. G. Ranade delivered addresses on Social Reform on the occasion of the meeting of the First Congress at Bombay. In 1886, at Calcutta, nothing unfortunately was done. Discussion, however, was going on among the leaders of the Congress movement and other leaders of educated Indian thought and opinion whether the Congress itself as such should concern itself with social questions or whether a separate movement should be started for the discussion of social questions. There were several very weighty considerations, dwelt upon by Messrs. Dadabhai Naoroji, Budruddin Tyabji and W. C. Bonnerjee in their Presidential Addresses at the Second, Third and Eighth Congresses, why the Congress should not directly concern itself with the discussion of social subjects. So it was at last resolved after mature deliberation by, among others, Dewan Bahadur R. Raghunatha Rao, Mr. Mahadeo Govind Ranade, Mr. Norendro Nath Sen and Mr. Janakinath Ghosal, that a separate movement called the Indian National Social Conference, should be started for the consideration of subjects relating to our social economy. Dewan Bahadur R. Raghunatha Rao may be styled the father of this movement and Mr. Ranade its wet-nurse. Madras had the honour of being the birth-place of the Conference, for the First Indian National Social Conference was held at Madras in December 1887, with no less a man than the late Rajah Sir T. Madhavarao, K.C.S.I., the premier Indian statesman of this century, as the President. The work done at this First Conference, however, was not much. " Among other important resolutions it was agreed by the members then present, that this meeting recognised the necessity of holding Annual National Conferences in different parts of India for considering and adopting measures necessary for the improvement of the status of our society, and of our social usages; that steps should be taken to organise and establish Provincial Sub-Committees of the Conference; that among other

social subjects which the Conference might take up, those relating to the disabilities attendant on distant sea-voyages, the ruinous expenses of marriage, the limitations of age below which marriages should not take place, the remarriages of youthful widows, the evils of the re-marriages of old men with young girls, the forms and evidences of marriages, and inter-marriages between sub-divisions of the same caste—should form the subjects for discussion and determination; that the fundamental principles, implied in the pledge of the membership of each of the Sub-Committees, should be binding upon the members under the penalties agreed upon by the members of such Sub-Committees; and that these principles should be carried out and enforced as regards the members who might agree to be bound by such penalties, (1) by the Sub-Committees themselves, or (2) through their spiritual heads, whenever it was possible to do so, or (3) through Civil Courts, or failing all, (4) by application to Government for enabling the Committees to enforce the rules in respect of their own pledged members." Rajah Sir T. Madhavarao, K.C.S.I., was elected President, Rao Bahadur M. G. Ranade, C.I.E., Vice-President, and Dewan Bahadur R. Raghunatha Rao, General Secretary of the Conference. From that time the Conference has been held every year in the Congress *pandal*, except when the Congress met at Poona in 1895. In that year some reactionaries succeeded in dislodging the Conference from its proper *habitat*, the Congress *pandal*. But since 1896 again, the Conference has been held in the Congress *pandal* itself. Dewan Bahadur R. Raghunatha Rao of Madras is the General Secretary of the Conference; and the Hon'ble Mr. Justice M. G. Ranade, C.I.E., of Bombay, Babu Norendro Nath Sen of Calcutta, Rai Bahadur Lala Baij Nath of the N.-W. P. and Oudh, Professor Lala Ruchiram of the Punjab, and Mr. Dayaram Gidumal of Sindh, are the Joint General Secretaries. Thirteen sessions of the Conference had been held, and the fourteenth met at Lahore last year.

The following will show the places where the Conference met and the names of the Presidents of the Conference.—

No.	Year.	Place of Meeting.	Name of President.
1	1887	Madras	Rajah Sir T. Madhava Rao, K.C.S.I.
2	1888	Allahabad	Rai Bahadur A. Sabhapathi Mudaliar.
3	1889	Bombay	Mr. Justice K. T. Telang, C.I.E.
4	1890	Calcutta	Dr. Mahendra Lal Sircar, LL.D., C.I.E.
5	1891	Nagpur	Mr. Ganesh Sri Krishna Khaparde.
6	1892	Allahabad	Rai Bahadur Ram Kali Chaudhuri.
7	1893	Lahore	Dewan Narendra Nath.
8	1894	Madras	Sir S. Subramania Iyer, K.C.I.E.
9	1895	Poona	Dr. R. G. Bhandarkar, PH. D., C.I.E.
10	1896	Calcutta	Babu Norendro Nath Sen.
11	1897	Amraoti	Rao Bahadur W. M. Kolhatkar.
12	1898	Madras	Rao Bahadur K. Viresalingam Pantulu.
13	1899	Lucknow	Rai Bahadur Lala Baij Nath.

The following subjects were discussed at the Conference:—

Affiliation of Social Reform Associations to the Social Conference, Methods of Social Reform, Recommendations for carrying out the aims and objects of the Conference, Age of Consent, Registration of Social Reform Associations, Widow Marriage Act, Disfigurement of Child Widows, Child Marriage, Work of Social Reform Associations, Restitution of Conjugal Rights, Sea Voyages, Ill-assorted Marriages, Social Reform Fund, *Sulka* or exacting money in consideration of the gift of girls in marriage, Polygamy and Kulinism, Relations between Hindus and Muhomedans, Curtailment of Expenses on marriage and other ceremonials, Female Education, Fusion of Sub-castes, Organising Social Reform Associations, Anti-Nautch and Purity Movement, Temperance, Intercourse with Foreign-travelled Men, Amendment of Act XXI of 1850, Sinpa System, Re-marriage of Widows, Purity of Private Life of Public Men, Re-admission of Converts to Hindu Society, Religious Endowments, Religious and Moral Education, Elevation of Low Castes, Charity, Gains of Learning, Contagious Diseases Act, Consent of Widows and unmarried Girls between the ages of 12 and 16 to personal dishonour at the hands of strangers, Working of the Mysore Marriage Law, Infant Marriage Bills, Malabar Marriage Law, Badala or Exchange Marriage, Physique of Boys.]

We give below one resolution on each of the above subjects, the same being in our opinion the best-worded and most comprehensive of all resolutions that were adopted at the several sessions of the Conference.

1. That the various Social Reform Associations, Sabhas and Caste Unions, which may already be existing or may hereafter be formed in any part of India, be asked to affiliate themselves to, and co-operate with this Conference, so far as their aims and objects are in common with the latter, to send it copies of their proceedings and reports, and to nominate delegates to take part in its annual meetings. *(Res. III, Second Conference, Allahabad, 1888.)*

2. That this Conference recommends the following methods of operation, leaving it to each provincial or local association, to adapt them to its own local circumstances:—*(a)* Formation of a social reform fund. *(b)* Employment of preachers. *(c)* Periodical lectures on social reform. *(d)* Formation of local or caste associations. *(e)* Publication and distribution of social reform literature, both in English and the Vernacular. *(f)* Registration of Associations under Sec. 26 of the Companies' Act VI of 1882 *(g)* Pledges by members against marrying their male or female relations below a certain age, as well as for educating all their female relations to the best of their ability, and in case of breach to pay a prescribed penalty. *(Res. IV, Second Conference, Allahabad, 1888).*

3. That this Conference makes the following recommendations for carrying out its aims and objects, leaving it to each local association to adopt such of them, as may be suited to its circumstances:—(1) Reduction of birth, marriage, death and other expenses, and prescription of scales for persons of various means, as well as for presents made by a bride's family to that of a bridegroom, (2)

The gradual raising of the marriageable age to the standard fixed by the Rajput chiefs. (3) The remarriage of child-widows. (4) Removal of social disabilities attending sea-voyages to foreign countries. (5) Prevention of disfigurement of child-widows prevailing in certain parts of India. (6) Intermarriage between those sections of a caste which dine together. (*Res. V, Second Conference, Allahabad*, 1888.)

4. That in the opinion of this Conference, the distinction made by the Penal Code, between the general age of consent (12 years) laid down in Section 90 and the special age prescribed in Clause 5 and the exception in Section 375, is both unnecessary and indefensible, and that with a view to prevent early completion of marriages, which leads to the impairment of physical health of both husband and wife, and to the growth of a weakly progeny, cohabitation before the wife is 12 years old should be punishable as a criminal offence, and that every effort should be made by awakening public conscience to the grave dangers incurred to postpone the completion of marriage till the age of 14 at least, as being in accordance with the dictates of our ancient medical works and modern science, and countenanced by the approved sentiment and practice of the country that every member, joining any of the Social Reform Associations connected will this Conference should be asked to pledge himself, not to complete in his own case or in the case of his children, who are minors, any marriages before the bride completes her 14th year (*Res. I, Third Conference, Bombay*, 1889.)

5. That the Conference considers it expedient that Act XXI of 1860, under which benevolent and educational Associations can be registered, should be made applicable to Social Reform Associations; that Section 26 of Act VI of 1882, under which Associations not formed for profit can be licensed by Local Governments and registered, should be so amended as to empower such Governments to exempt such Associations from any obligation imposed by the Act upon Mercantile Companies; that under the same Act no fees should be exacted from Associations registered under Act XXI of 1860; and that the General Secretary of the Conference be empowered to send a representation based on this Resolution to the Government of India in the Legislative Department for their consideration. (*Res. VIII, Sixth Conference, Allahabad*, 1892.)

[The General Secretary made a representation to Government accordingly. For particulars, *vide* Res. IX. of the 7th Conference and Res. III of the 8th Conference.]

6. That the experience of the last 40 years' working of the Widow Marriage Act of 1856 has, in the opinion of the Conference, established the fact that the Act fails to secure to the remarrying widow the full enjoyment of her rights in the following respects:—First, that such widow is made to forfeit her life-interest in her husband's immoveable property for doing a lawful act when such forfeiture would not have resulted if she had misconducted herself; secondly, that even in respect of *Stridhan* proper, over which her power of disposal is absolute, there is a general impression that she loses proprietary rights over her moveables in favour of her husband's relations, who otherwise could not have interfered with her

free disposal of the same ; thirdly, in many cases, she and her second husband are not only ex-communicated but the right of worship in public temples has been denied to them, and no relief has been given to them in the Civil Courts ; fourthly, in some parts of the country, she is subjected to disfigurement before she has arrived at the age of majority without any freedom being given to her to exercise her choice. In all these respects the law of 1856 has proved inoperative to protect her, and the Conference is of opinion that steps should be taken by the Social Reform Associations who favour such reform to adopt remedies to relax the stringency of caste usages, and to secure a reconsideration of the principles of the Act with a view to remedy its defects (*Res. VII, Eleventh Conference, Amraoti,* 1897.)

7. That the disfigurement of child-widows, before they attain the age of 18 and even after that age, without the consent of the widow recorded in writing before a Panch and a Magistrate be discouraged, and caste organizations be formed to arrange for social penalties to be inflicted on those who aid in disfiguring child-widows without their consent. (*Res. VII, Sixth Conference, Allahabad,* 1892.)

8. That this Conference is of opinion that the well-being of the community demands that the practice of child-marriage be discouraged by public sentiment, and that within the sphere of the various castes and communities, strenuous efforts be made to postpone the celebration of marriage rites till 12 in the case of girls and 18 in the case of boys, and the consummation of the marriage till after they attain the age of 14 and 20, respectively, and that the members of the various Social Reform Associations in the country should pledge themselves to see that these limits of age are realised in actual practice, and public opinion educated to advance these limits still higher. (*Res. II, Fourth Conference, Calcutta,* 1890.)

9. That this Conference has heard with satisfaction the account of the work done in the promotion of social reform by the various independent and affiliated Associations, established in different parts of the country and it trusts that the good work that has been done during the past year will be continued with the same earnestness during the coming year. (*Res. I, Fourth Conference, Calcutta,* 1890.)

10. That the Conference is of opinion that imprisonment in the case of the execution of decrees for the restitution of conjugal rights, even as a last resort, should be abolished. (*Res. V, Fifth Conference, Nagpur,* 1891.)

11. That, in the opinion of this Conference, it is not desirable to excommunicate persons who undertake distant sea-voyages and that Social Reform Associations be requested to exert themselves to secure the retention by such persons of the social status enjoyed by them in their castes. (*Res. V, Fourth Conference, Calcutta,* 1890.)

12. That in the opinion of the Conference the practice of men of more than fifty years of age marrying young girls below twelve is opposed to the spirit of the Shastras, and is extremely prejudicial to the interests of the community, and that the power of adoption given by the law leaves no excuse for such ill-assorted marriages,

and the Conference therefore affirms the necessity of actively discouraging all marriages where the difference of age between the parties exceeds thirty years. (*Res. VI, Eleventh Conference, Amraoti*, 1897.)

13. For securing more effective co operation of Social Reform Associations in the work of the Conference, and for advising and guiding local efforts, it is desirable in the opinion of the Conference, that Provincial Branch Committees be established in each Province, with special funds of their own to be devoted to the purpose of employing preachers and publishing tracts, collecting information regarding existing social customs and the evils arising therefrom, etc., and that representative Committees should be formed to undertake the work in the course of this year. The Province of the Punjab should take the lead in giving effect to this Resolution. (*Res. X, Seventh Conference, Lahore*, 1893.)

14. Having regard to the conflicting decisions of Indian Courts regarding the validity of the custom of receiving money in consideration of giving a girl in marriage, and to the widespread prevalence of the custom, and being convinced that such a custom is against the spirit of Hindu Law, and is immoral and injurious to the interests of society, this Conference recommends all Social Reform Associations to join together in one effort to denounce and discourage the said custom, and ensure that in case moneys are received by the father or guardian of the girl, the same shall be held as a trust in the interests of the girl, and the trust duly enforced. (*Res I, Fifth Conference, Nagpur*, 1891.)

15. That the Conference strongly denounces the abuse of the institution of marriage practised in certain parts of India and among certain classes where men marry more than one wife without any adequate cause such as is recognised by ancient law texts, and recommends that all Social Reform Associations should discourage this practice of polygamy as at once degrading and pernicious in its consequences, that steps should be taken to enforce that no such second marriage takes place without an adequate provision being made for the discarded wife and children if any; the associations should pledge their members not to encourage such marriages by their presence and support; and that wherever Kulinism prevails, the Reform Associations in those provinces should make every effort to educate public opinion in regard to the evil consequences resulting therefrom and promote inter-marriage independently of the artificial distinctions of Mels, Garhs, and Parjaya. (*Res. IX, Tenth Conference, Calcutta*, 1896.)

16. The Conference regards with the deepest regret the many religious disputes between the lower classes of Hindus and Mahomedans, which have occurred in several parts of the country, and led to serious riots and loss of life. Such disputes are fraught with great danger to the intimate social relations which should bind the two communities together. The Conference is of opinion that if Punchayets were established with the sanction of the authorities, and included the leading representatives of the two communities, and if

these Punchayets exerted themselves to remove by anticipation all grounds for misunderstanding, their efforts will be attended with success. The Conference accordingly recommends that these mixed Punchayets should be nominated by the local authorities and should include the leading members of the two communities, the rules framed by them with the cognizance of the authorities, should be carried out and enforced, and the Punchayet leaders should freely exert themselves to help the authorities in restoring peace and order and reconciling both the parties to live amicably together. (*Res. VI, Fifth Conference, Nagpur,* 1891)

[The suggestion for the formation of Punchayets was accepted by the Government of the N.-W.P. and Oudh and Punchayets were established. They worked very well. For particulars, *vide* Res. IV of the 7th Conference and Res. IX of the 8th Conference.]

17. That in the opinion of this Conference, it is necessary to curtail marriage and ceremonial expenses, and the Conference recommends each community to lay down fixed scales of such expenses, and provide measures for the enforcement of their rules. (*Res. I, Sixth Conference, Allahabad,* 1892.)

18. That in the opinion of the Conference the permanent progress of our society is not possible without a further spread of female education and that the best way is (1) to proceed on national lines by employing in female schools, female teachers of good character and descended from respectable Hindu families, (2) to establish training schools to secure a sufficient number of qualified female teachers, (3) to open home classes for grown up ladies who cannot attend regular schools with extra female teachers to visit and help, at stated intervals, such ladies as read at their homes, (4) to employ a Pundita versed in Sanskrit to read passages from Puranas, and impart religious and moral instruction to ladies, (5) to take steps to publish text books suited to the requirements of female schools, and (6) to impart instruction in needle works, hygiene, culinary art, domestic economy, and training of children in secondary schools. *(*Res. I Tenth Conference, Calcutta,* 1896.)

19. The Conference re-affirms the necessity of further steps being taken by societies for social reform in all parts of the country to remove all hindrances in the way of inter-dining of members of the different sub-sections of the same caste, and to promote inter-marriages between persons who can dine together under existing rules. (*Res. X, Eighth Conference, Madras,* 1894.)

20. That this Conference earnestly urges upon all interested in social reform the absolute necessity of organising Social Reform Committees in all districts, or at least one such Committee in each Province, on the principle of self-sacrifice, and employing at least one full time worker for the purpose of educating public opinion on the subject of social reform. (*Res. X, Sixth Conference, Allahabad,* 1892.)

21. The Conference records its satisfaction that the Anti-nautch movement has found such general support in all parts of India, and

it recommends the various Social Reform Associations in the country to persevere in their adoption of this self-denying ordinance, and to supplement it by pledging their members to adhere to the cardinal principle of observing on all occasions, as a religious duty, purity of thought, speech and action, so as to purge our society generally of the evils of low and immoral surroundings. *(Res. III, Ninth Conference. Poona,* 1895).

22. That the Conference notes with pleasure that, thanks to the noble efforts made by Mr. Caine, Mr. Evans and his native fellow workers, considerable success has attended the efforts of the Kayastha Temperance Society and similar other caste organizations for the promotion of total abstinence, and it feels more than ever the necessity of active co-operation between the Temperance movements in India and those in England and America. The vice of intemperance is not of ancient growth here and is still confined to minorities: and it is in the opinion of the Conference necessary that the majority of total abstainers should exert themselves to popularise their views and should have the power of enforcing them by some adoption of the principle of local option which cannot be secured without the co-operation of the English and American Temperance Societies. *(Res. III, Tenth Conference, Calcutta,* 1896.)

23. The Conference notes with satisfaction that there now exists no difficulty in the admission of foreign travelled people among the Khatri and Sikh communities of the Punjab, and that the admission of similar people in Guzerath and Southern India has been secured during the present year on more easy conditions than were possible some years ago. The Conference recommends these examples to the Kayastha community in the North-West Provinces, where more difficulty has been experienced, and to the Brahmins and other high castes in all parts of the country, among whom the prejudice against foreign travel by sea is still strong. The earnest co-operation of the caste and ecclesiastical leaders must be enlisted in this work, as the final success of all our political, industrial and social activities rests on this movement. *(Res. V, Ninth Conference, Poona,* 1895.)

24. That in view of the conflict of the preamble of Act XXI of 1850 with its operative section as construed by the several High Courts and the unsettlement of family peace in consequence of such rulings, the Conference is of opinion that as the Act was not intended to affect or alter the Mahomedan or Hindu family or personal law, the Government of India be moved to take into its consideration the necessity of amending the Act, so as to limit the operation of the word, 'rights,' used in Sec. 1 of the Act to 'rights of property' only, and not to marital and guardianship rights. *(Res. VIII, Seventh Conference, Lahore,* 1893.)

25. That the Conference is of opinion that the Siapa system of loud mourning and beating of the chest which prevails in Sind, the Punjab, the North-West Provinces, and Guzerath is a very objectionable and unreasonable practice, and entails great misery on the mourners, and it recommends that Social Reform Associations in

those parts of the country should take early steps to discontinue this practice. (*Res. XI, Seventh Conference, Lahore*, 1893.)

26. That, in the opinion of the Conference, it is desirable not to discourage the remarriage of child-widows, when their parents or guardians wish to give them in marriage according to the Hindu Shastras. (*Res. X, Tenth Conference, Calcutta*, 1896.)

27. That, in the opinion of the Conference, it is a matter of satisfaction to find that the educated classes require that private life and morals of public men should be as pure and self-denying as the proper discharge of their public duties demand, and the Conference recommends that every member of societies for social reform should endeavour as far as possible to realise the ideal professed by him in his private life. (*Res. XI, Eighth Conference, Madras*, 1894.)

28. The Conference records its satisfaction that some two hundred converts to other faiths were received back into Hindu Society in the Punjab this year, and that stray instances of such readmission have taken place in other provinces also. Hindu Society cannot afford to be exclusive on this point without danger to its existence, and the Conference recommends the Social Reform Associations to interest themselves in the subject, with a view to facilitate such readmissions in all instances where it is sincerely sought. (*Res. XI, Eleventh Conference, Amraoti*, 1897.)

29. The Conference understands that the principle of the Bill introduced by the Hon'ble Mr. Anandacharlu in His Excellency the Viceroy's Council is to subject the trustees, without any violent disturbance of existing arrangements to an effective moral control of the respectable worshippers of the shrines in the neighbourhood. As such the Conference accepts the principle of the Bill, and would suggest that the trustees or managers of all public endowments should be bound by law to publish full accounts of the management, and that the Temple Boards as suggested below should have the power of suspending defaulting trustees or managers for suspected misconduct, leaving to these latter freedom to clear themselves by a suit in the Civil Court, instead of, as now, requiring worshippers to bring such suits. In the opinion of the Conference, if these measures were adopted, there would be no practical necessity of creating new Central and District and Taluq Boards. The existing Local Fund District Boards and the Jurors' and Assessors' list, would furnish a constituency, out of which the new Temple Boards might be selected according to the respective creeds to which the shrine belongs. (*Res. IV. Eleventh Conference, Amraoti*, 1897.)

30. That in the opinion of the Conference it is desirable that steps should be taken to provide for religious and moral education in Government schools out of school hours, and in private schools during school hours, so as to counteract, to some extent, the evil complained of about the present Western education which is too secular in character. (*Res. VIII, Tenth Conference, Calcutta*, 1896.)

31. That in the opinion of the Conference the education and the social amelioration of the Pariahs and other out-castes in all parts

of India is a duty which rests on all those who have the permanent good of their country at heart and every effort should be made to raise these classes to a position where by education and industry they may rise above the disadvantages of their condition. (*Res, XI, Tenth Conference, Calcutta*, 1896)

32. That in the opinion of the Conference the increase of population and the growing poverty of the country make it incumbent to regulate with discrimination the existing system of public charity so as to diminish the incentives to idleness and pauperism, without at the same time creating indifference to cases of real distress, and the Conference would recommend all Social Reform Associations which interest themselves in the working of charity and benevolence to concentrate the resources available for this purpose, and disburse them under proper control to those who stand in real need of such help, and for such purposes as are likely to wean people from idleness. (*Res. III, Eleventh Conference, Amraoti*, 1897)

33. In reference to the Gains of Learning Bill, introduced in the Madras Legislative Council by the Honourable Mr Bhashyam Iyengar, the Conference is of opinion that the existing state of the law on the subject is both uncertain and unsatisfactory, and that a declaratory Act, giving a wider recognition to the rights of the earning members of a family over acquisitions made by them without the use of family funds, except so far as these funds have provided them with subsistence and education benefiting their position in life, is very desirable in the interests of the social emancipation of those who are members of the Hindu Joint Family System. The Conference further suggests that a compromise which would divide such acquisitions into two equal shares, one part remaining available as joint property for division, as at present, among the members of the family, and the other being treated as separate self-acquired property, would tend to remove many of the objections urged against the Bill and retain the solidarity of interest without producing any mischiefs in the way of checking the spirit of enterprise which leads to such self-acquisition. (*Res. XIII, Eleventh Conference, Amraoti*, 1897.)

34. The Conference notices with regret that, notwithstanding the official condemnation pronounced upon the system once prevalent of regulating the prevention of contagious diseases in large towns and cantonments, the Government of India has sanctioned a relaxation of the policy adopted by it, and has thus surrendered the principle on which such condemnation was based. The natural penalties of indulgence in vice are the only deterrents against such habits, and to remove these natural restraints saps at the root of all real growth of virtue. The Conference therefore recommends that all Social Reform Associations should, in the interests of female purity, make common cause in this matter with the agitation going on in England. (*Res. XV, Eleventh Conference, Amraoti*, 1897.)

35. That as the law at present stands, there is apparently no protection to a widow or an unmarried girl above twelve or below sixteen who is a consenting party to an act of personal dishonour

at the hands of strangers. In the opinion of the Conference the consent of such a girl between twelve and sixteen should, as in the case of kidnapping, be held to be inoperative to protect the man who violates her honour. (*Res. XVI, Eleventh Conference, Amraoti*, 1897.)

36. The Conference learns with satisfaction that the Marriage Regulations in Mysore have been worked by the Mysore Durbar with judicious mildness and with great regard for the feelings of the people concerned, as shown by the small number of prosecutions and convictions. The success which has attended this legislation will, the Conference hopes, encourage other States to follow the example of Mysore. (*Res. III, Twelfth Conference, Madras*, 1898)

37. The Conference learns with regret that the Government of India has refused to sanction the introduction of the Infant Marriage Prevention Bills in the Legislative Council of Madras, on the ground that in its opinion the measures proposed were in advance of public opinion. As both the Marriage Bills were drafted on the lines of the Mysore Marriage Regulations and fixed the minimum limits below the ages which are now observed by most of the classes of people, the Conference hopes that, if the fact were properly placed before the Government, it would be satisfied that the Bills were not open to the objections taken to them. The Conference, therefore, recommends that early steps should be taken by the Associations to memorialise Government with a view that it may be persuaded to appoint a commission of enquiry to ascertain the advance made by public opinion on this subject and to advise Government on the action it should take in this matter. (*Res. IV, Twelfth Conference, Madras*, 1898.)

38. This Conference notes with great satisfaction that although Registrations of Marriages under the Malabar Marriage Law, have not been as numerous as anticipated at first, yet this legislation has been attended with the happiest results, inducing a healthy change in the sentiments of the people on the question and that the people of Malabar subject to their own customary Law have shown a decided tendency to assimilate their usages to those of the other Hindu communities. In the opinion of the Conference time has now come, when the discretion to allow Marriages to be registered at any time might be regulated and that further facilities be afforded for such registration by the appointment of Village Officers to act as Marriage Registrars under the directions and control of the existing official Registrars. (*Res. VI, Twelfth Conference, Madras*, 1898.)

39. The practice of arranging marriages on the Badala or Golawat (exchange) system prevailing in certain castes in the N.-W. P. and Oudh is, in the opinion of the Conference, fraught with the degradation of the marriage tie to the same extent as that of the sale of girls in marriage, and as such, should be discouraged by all means, by gradually enlarging the circle of sub-castes eligible for the choice of marriage alliances. (*Res. XII, Thirteenth Conference, Lucknow*, 1899.)

40. The Conference notes with satisfaction that in the North-Western Provinces and Oudh, the Educational Department has given special attention to physical education and encourages annual tournaments and the giving of prizes to the boys of the Primary and Secondary Schools, as also of Colleges, with a view to improve the physique of boys. Such tournaments and prizes, as also the establishment of Boarding Schools, and the promotion of Brahmacharya are, in the opinion of the Conference the only available means for improving the physical stamina of the younger generation, and as such, should engage the attention of the Reform Associations. (*Res. XIII, Thirteenth Conference, Lucknow*, 1899.)

ADDENDA.

The Inaugural Address

OF THE

HONOURABLE MR. JUSTICE M. G. RANADE.

Fourteenth Conference—Lahore—1900.

Vashistha and Vishwamitra.

About this time last year I had occasion, at the inauguration of the Conference held at Lucknow, to dilate on a text of Nanak, in which he proclaimed himself to be neither a Hindu nor a Mahomedan. To-day, I find myself in the extreme North-West corner of India, in the land of the five rivers, the original home of the Aryan settlers, who composed the Vedic hymns, and performed the great sacrifices. We are met to-day in the land of the Rishis, where Vashistha and Vishwamittra lived and flourished at a time when the caste institution had not taken its root in our Indian soil, when men and women enjoyed freedom and equality, asceticism had not over-shadowed the land, and life and its sweets were enjoyed in a spirit of joyous satisfaction. Punjab during its eventful history has well deserved the compliment that it is the land of the Rishis. The question then naturally arises, who were these Rishis? What was the condition of society when they lived? What thoughts stirred them and what actions ennobled their lives and their struggles? For most of us, long habit has rendered it impossible to imagine a state of society, where men were not split up into petty divisons of caste with its artificial barriers, limiting men's activities and narrowing their sympathies. It is a revelation to many of us to be taken back to two or three thousand years ago, to a state of society when class divisions such as Brahmins and Kshatriyas, Vaishyas and Shudrâs were unknown or not well established, and the only distinction

recognized in practice was between the Aryans and non-Aryans To illustrate the gulf which separates our own times from the days when the Rishis flourished, we need only mention the fact that the daughter of the King of Vidarbha was given in marriage to Agastya. Another Raja, by name Lomapâda, gave his daughter in marriage to one Rishyashringa. The king Trinabindu also thus gave his daughter to Pulasti, and Bhagíratha gave his daughter to Koutsa Rishi. The king Shâryati's daughter was given in marriage to Chyavanya Rishi. Instances where the Brahmins gave their daughters in marriage to kings were also not uncommon. Thus Shukracharyá's daughter Devayani was given in marriage to Yayáti and Kritwi to Aunha, Independently of marriage alliances, stories are told where Rishis, who were born in royal houses or were Rajarshis, became by their sanctity and devotion entitled to be called Brahmarshis. One Priyamedha was so elevated, and Shini, Garga, and Traiyaruni were also so promoted to the status of Brahmarshis. Also Mudgala and Gritsamada, who were before kings, became thus Brahmins. The Brahmins on their side felt no scruple in learning the Dhanurveda or archery. Agasti Muni, as is well known, was skilled in Dhanurveda and conquered the non-Aryan king Ilvala and the Kalakeyas, who were pirates on the sea-coast. Agniveshya was also noted for his skill in archery and he was the teacher of Dronacharya, himself a great Brahmin commander in the wars of the Mahabharata. His son Ashwatthama and his brother-in-law Kripa were similarly renowned. Instances where Brahmins caused the ruin of the kings of the day by their curses are, no doubt, more frequent than those where kings cursed the Brahmins and brought about their ruin. As illustrations of the first class, we may mention stories about King Nahusha and Ven Raja. Nahusha, as is well known, had by reason of his superior merits become the occupant of Indra's throne, but he made the Brahmins carry him in a palanquin; and Agastya Muni resented the ill-teatment and cursed him which led to his downfall. King Ven was similarly dethroned. Similarly Vashistha's curse against Sahasrárjuna enabled Parashurama to lop off his numerous hands. Vashistha is also mentioned as having cursed Raja Kalmashpada, and

Raja Trishanku became Chandala in consequence of the curse. On the other hand Vashistha himself did not escape unharmed. There is besides the story of Ambarisha, who was persecuted by Durvasa and in the result Durvasa had to entreat Ambarisha to grant him pardon and withdraw the Sudarshana which perpetually followed him and gave him no rest. As regards the women, numerous stories are told of their remaining unmarried throughout their lives and of their engaging themselves in the pursuit of devotional exercises or in the study of philosophy. The story of Amba, who remained unmarried all her life, is well known. She wanted to marry with Shalva, but he would not take her and she would not accept the choice made by Bhishma for her. The daughter of Kunigarga also remained unmarried during life. Gargivachaknavi, Vadavapratitheyi and Sulabhamaitreyi—all these are historical names of women who passed their lives in celebacy and engaged in discussions on philosophic subjects in the court of Janaka.

Perhaps the most instructive of these ancient stories is that which is connected with the rivalry of Vashishtha and Vishvamitra. Both these names occur in the Vedic hymns, and though their rivalry is noticeable even in these early hymns, they furnish no authority for the legend which gathered round their names in the period which succeeded the composition of the hymns. Vashistha is a great exponent of Brahmin orthodoxy. The legends seek to make out that Vishvamitra was not by right a Brahmarshi. He was only a Rajarshi and aspired to be a Brahmarshi. Vashistha would not support him in this ambition and that accounted for their strife. Throughout the story Vishvamitra represents the view of those who try to admit the non-Aryans into the Aryan community and seek to elevate them. The story of Trishanku, for instance, notwithstanding its exaggeration, has a moral of its own. Vashistha had without justice condemned Trishanku to be a Chándál simply because he aspired to go to heaven by the force of his merits. Vishvamitra took up his cause and performed the Yagnya, because Trishanku had saved his wife and children during a great famine. The result was that Trishanku was accepted in heaven notwithstanding the curse of Vashistha. The story of Shunashepa,

who was the son of a Brahmin and was purchased as sacrificial victim to be offered to Varuna in the place of the king's son, who was first promised, is also full of the same liberality on the part of Vishvamitra, who saved the Brahmin's life by his mediation. The result of the conflict between Vasishtha and Vishvamitra was a complete victory on the part of the latter, for Vashishta admitted Vishvamitra's claim to be a Brahmarshi. Vashishtha's line was continued by his grandson Parashara. Krishnadwaipayana, Vaishampayana, Yajnyavalkya, Shukra Muni, and Jaimini all belonged to the orthodox side. Vishwamitra's family was connected by alliances with that of Bhrigu, Jamadagni and Parashar. The great Rishis who colonised Southern India were undoubtedly Agastya and Atri who with their wives Lopamudra and Anusuya occupy a prominent place in the story of the Ramayana. King Rama stopped in their Ashram, and Valmiki's description of these Ashrams presents a picture of these holy settlements, which does not lose its charm even at the present day. These settlements were the pioneers of civilization in Southern India. There were similar establishments in other parts of India on the borders of the civilized kingdoms. The Rishi, with his wife and his numerous pupils, kept herds of cows, cultivated the land, and founded colonies or cities and helped the Rajas from the North to establish their power in the South. Jamadagni's story of the conflict with Kartavirya and the subsequent wars between Parasharam and the sons of Kartavirya no doubt refer to such expansion of power. King Rama himself was helped by Agasti in the final struggle with King Ravana. Parashuram is said to have similarly carried on a war with the Rakshasas which was put an end to by the meditation of Vasistha. The early Rishis were great both in peace and in war. In this respect the Rajarshis were as great as the Brahmarshis. Rasabhadeo, for instance, had one hundred sons, of whom nine devoted themselves to meditation and philosophy and eighty-one followed the karma-marga, and the remaining ten ruled over kingdoms. King Janaka was great as a sovereign ruler and greater still as a saint. Vamadeo was noted for his piety, devotion and knowledge which came to him

in his mother's womb. The Brahmin Rishi Balaki was taught higher philosophy by Ajatshatru, the Raja of Kashi. It may be seen that there was no monopoly of learning in those early times and Rajas and Brahmins sat at the feet of each other to learn wisdom. There was in fact no permanent division of functions between the two orders, and therefore they were somewhat like the temporal and spiritual lords we know of in England. They could interchange places and did in fact so interchange them in numerous instances.

This brief account of the time when the Rishis flourished in this country naturally leads to the inquiry as to how it was that in course of time Brahmin Rishis came practically to monopolise the title and deny it to the Rajas. The story of Vasistha and Vishwamitra furnishes some clue to a solution of this difficulty. The great names of Agyastya and Atri, Vasistha and Jamadagni, Bhrigu and Bharadwaja, Parashar and Vamdeo, Vaishampayana and Yagnyavalkya, Valmiki and Vyas, Kapil Muni and Shuka Muni naturally carried influence with all classes of people. The Rajarshis were not much known for their authorship, and when these old families succumbed to foreign conquerors in the early period of the Christian era, the new Rajput or Jat conquerors had no hold on the popular mind, and the Brahmins retained or increassed their hold on the affections of the people. The Puranic literature which had its birth about this time confirmed this superiority of the Brahmins and the result was that the term Rishi came to be applied only to Brahmins as being the only literary or cultured class of the time. Their predominance continued unchecked except so far as the Vaishnava movement came to the relief of the non-Brahmin classes. The Vaishnava movement has struck its deepest root in the Punjab, where the ten Gurus from Nanak to Guru Govind Sing have effected a change, the like of which no other part of India can exhibit. The Granth Sahib has taken the place of the old Vedas and Puranas and the Gurus and their descendants occupy the place of the Brahmins. Since the establishment of the British rule new forces have been in operation and the road is now again open by which the best men of all classes might aspire as in the past to be the true Rishis of the

land. A movement which has been recently started in the Punjab may be accepted as a sign that you have begun to realize the full significance of the need of creating a class of teachers who may well be trusted to take the place of the Gurus of old. The chief point, however, that is to be considered in this connection is who should be these Gurus of the future It is with this view that I have endeavoured to place before you a brief account of the true Gurus of the past, namely the Rishis who were both Brahmarshis and Rajarshis, only distinguished from one another by their individual inclinations and abilities. We must keep that ideal before us if we mean to prove ourselves the worthy descendants of our earliest ancestors. Of course the teachings and the methods and the subjects taught in these days must be made to suit our new exigencies and environments, but the spirit animating the teachings must be the same as that which led the first settlers to cross the Vindhya Range, and establish their colonies in the South By reviving our ancient traditions in this matter we may hope in the near future to instil into the minds of our young generations lessons of devotion to learning, diversity of studies and personal loyalty to the teacher without which no system of school or college education can ever bear any fruit This, however, is not all. In addition to these lessons, our new teachers must know how to introduce their pupils to a correct appreciation of the forces which are at work in the wider world outside and which, in spite of temporary checks or seeming reverses, represent all that is best in human efforts for the elevation and happiness of man. Our teachers must enable their pupils to realize the dignity of man as man, and to apply the necessary correctives to tendencies towards exclusiveness, which have grown in us with the growth of ages. They must see that our thoughts, our speech, our actions are inspired by a deep love of humanity, and that our conduct and our worship are freed where necessary from the bondage of custom and made to conform as far as possible to the surer standard of our conscience. We must at the same time be careful that this class of teachers does not form a new order of monks. Much good, I am free to admit, has been done in the past and is being done in these days, in this as well as other

countries by those who take the vow of lifelong celebacy and who consecrate their lives to the service of man and the greater glory of our Maker. But it may he doubted how far such men are able to relaize life in all its fulness and in all its varied relations, and I think our best examples in this respect are furnished by Agastya with his wife Lopamudra, Atri with his wife Anusuya, and Vasistha with his wife Arundhati among the ancient Rishis, and in our own times by men like Dr. Bhandarkar on our side, Diwan Bahadur Raghunatha Row in Madras, the late Keshab Chander Sen and Babu Pratap Chandra Mozumdar and Pandit Shivanath Shastri in Bengal, and Lala Hansa Raj and Lala Munshi Ram in your own province. A race that can ensure a continuance of such teachers can, in my opinion, never fail, and with the teachings of such men to guide and instruct and inspire us, I, for one, am confident that the time will be hastened when we may be vouchsafed a sight of the Promised Land.

Diwan Sant Ram's Presidential Address—Lahore—1900.

DELEGATES, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,

ALLOW me to thank you most sincerely for the very great honour you have conferred upon me in electing me to preside over the deliberations of this great assembly. I feel most keenly my unworthiness to occupy a position which has been filled by such distinguished reformers and scholars as Sir T. Madhava Row, Dr. Bhandarkar and others, and if I have, not without hesitation, accepted the most responsible duty of conducting the proceedings of to-day, it is only in the hope that my presence here will, in some small measure, further the cause of one much needed reform for which the Conference has been labouring since its very inception, and with which I am also humbly associated.

We in the Punjab are fortunate, that the path of social reform is much smoother here than in other parts of India. Many important reforms which have engaged the earnest attention of

the leaders of the Hindu community in other provinces and which are as far as ever from being carried out, have come to us easily, naturally and without much effort. The sea-voyage question, for instance, which has proved such a stumbling block elsewhere in the way of the legitimate aspirations of many an educated Indian, has lost any significance it ever had here. Again, the caste restrictions, though bad enough in the Punjab, do not possess the same rigidity as they do in the rest of India. We have, therefore, good reason to be thankful for the many encouraging circumstances which make our work in the direction of social reform comparatively easier of achievement. Ladies and gentlemen, I need hardly tell you that we owe these and other advantages to the labours of many noble reformers who have worked so earnestly in the past for the good of the millions of this land. In particular, let us, on this important occasion, turn with grateful hearts to the founders of the great Sikh religion. We feel sure that the spirits of the great Baba Nanak and Guru Govind Singh are looking with approbation on the aims and objects of this great assembly. Their blessings and prayers are with us in our efforts. With their great work the best interests of our country are identified. The conviction is more and more gaining ground in the minds of the thinking portion of the people of India that the remedy of the many evils which are eating into the very vitals of our society lies in our own hands, and that if we but make up our minds, and earnestly and honestly set about it, the salvation of India cannot be long delayed.

It is cheering to note that the forces at work over the length and breadth of India are all in the direction of a clearer recognition of our many national evils and a bolder attitude to combat them. The many reform associations, dealing with specific evils which are spread like a net-work over the country, point unmistakably to the tendencies of modern India. Indian society is at the present moment in a state of transition. There is social unrest everywhere. Even the most orthodox communities are not free from the signs of this new ferment, which is surely, though imperceptibly, leavening the whole mass of our society.

Here in the Punjab, for instance, as you must have noticed from the summary of the reports presented to you the other day, all the castes and their sub-sections are busy (each in its own way) in carrying out important reforms within their own circle. The work done by these associations taken together is such as to encourage us in the midst of our trials and difficulties As illustrating the *modus operandi* and the nature and extent of achievement of these sectional organizations, I may be permitted to refer briefly to the work of one or two Khatri Sabhas culminating in the grand Khatri Conference, which was held within this week and at a place not very far from here. One of the most important of the Khatri associations is the Sarin Sabha. The first Sarin Sabha in the Punjab was established at Lahore in the year 1882. After five years' regular and earnest work, the Sabha found itself strong enough to invite members of their own community from other large towns of the Province to a Conference, which was held at Lahore in 1887. In the following year, another and more successful Conference was held in the same place. This was quickly followed by the third Conference which was held at Hoshiarpur in 1889. In 1892 the fourth Conference was held at Amritsar and in 1895, the fifth and last Conference was held at Hoshiarpur again.* Ladies and gentlemen, it is not easy for me to tell you how much these Conferences have done to advance the cause of social reform in the Sarin section of the Punjab Khatris. Wine and the inevitable nautch-girls have been banished from their marriage parties, unequal matches have not only been condemned, but are made punishable by the Baradari, the marriageable age of girls has been raised, the expenses incurred on festive occasions have been curtailed and regulated, and a healthy opinion on many other social questions has been created and fostered

But if I refer to the Sarin Sabhas and Sarin Conferences, I do so, as I have already said, merely to indicate the character and the influence of caste associations in general. There are many other equally important associations which are engaged in exactly the same kind of work as the Sarin Sabha has been doing. There is hardly a town of any importance in the Punjab which does not boast of at least one or two caste associations, the most

influential of them being, besides the Sarin Sabhas, the Bunjahi Khatri Sabhas, the Agarwal Sabhas, the Kayasth Sabhas and the Arorbans Sabhas. Of the many happy signs of the time, perhaps not the least encouraging is the fact that the new ideas are slowly but surely filtering down to the hitherto impervious strata of rigid conservatism and orthodoxy, and that even the Gaur Brahmans of the sacred land of Kurukshetra have begun to feel their silent influence.

Of the professedly religious societies, the Singh Sabhas, the Arya Samajes and the Brahmo Samajes are doing a great deal to push on the cause of social reform in this Province, and I am glad to notice that during the present year the Singh Sabhas and the Arya Samajes have been particularly active in elevating the social status of certain lower castes of Hindus.

While speaking of these Sabhas and Samajes, I must draw your kind attention for a moment to the very useful work which they have been doing in advancing the cause of female education. In particular, the Kanya Maha Vidyalaya of Jullundur deserves special mention as a leading institution of its kind in this Province. Perhaps the most important feature of the Vidyalaya is the special class for widows and grown-up ladies, some of whom have come from considerable distances and are living in the Boarding House attached to the School. I am also glad to note that arrangements have lately been completed for the teaching of Elementary Science and Drawing, and that it is compulsory for all the scholars to take part in the games for which ample provision has been made. During the present year, there were about 125 girls on the rolls with an average daily attendance of 80 scholars.

Another important private institution working in the cause of education, moral, religious, physical, and technical is the Dayanada Anglo-Vedic College, Lahore. It is the leading institution of its kind and it is hardly necessary for me to dwell at length upon the benefits which it has conferred upon the general Hindu community.

I must also say a few words about the good work which has been done by the several temperance and purity associations

working in the Punjab. Of these, I may be permitted to single out two for a passing reference. The Temperance Association at Amritsar is the most active Association in this Province. It has started several lines of work. It has a paid preacher who visits different stations and gives lectures on the evils of drink. It was the first in this country to make use of the stage for exposing the evils of intemperance. It has composed and put on the stage several Temperance plays which have, I believe, produced wholesome effect on the minds of our young men. It has published and distributed, free of charge, thousands of copies of Temperance tracts. This is the only Temperance Association in India which was represented at the World's Temperance Congress lately held in London, and it is a matter of pride to us that its representative was no other than Diwan Narindra Nath, M A., the worthy President of this Conference at its first sitting in this city. This Association has done a vast amount of good work in the Temperance cause, and I hope that its example will be largely followed by similar societies in other parts of the Province. One suggestion only I would like to make to the Temperance workers, not only in the Punjab but also in other parts of the country. I think much is being done to put the educated classes on their guard against the temptations and evils of strong drink. But, I fear, little or nothing has been attempted to reform the lower classes of our population which are so much addicted to this vice.

The Punjab Purity Association is the other Society about which I should like to say a few words It combines philanthropic and charitable work with the advocacy of the cause of Temperance and Purity. It maintains a charitable dispensary, which is attended by about a hundred patients every day. In the days of trouble which we have just passed, it has been supporting a number of widows with funds specially collected for the purpose. It rendered conspicuous service to the poor homeless Bikaneris who sought refuge in this Province during the last famine. An important institution organized by the Association is the Pavitra Holi, an annual gathering which is held with the object of purging the Holi festival of its obscenity and impurity.

al matters. It is difficult to over-estimate the silent influence that it exerts in educating public opinion. Every year the Social Conference issues and distributes broadcast a large mass of literature on social reform questions. The reports of the Conference are reviewed by the Press of the country, both English and Vernacular, and the resolutions adopted at these annual gatherings are read by thousands and tens of thousands of intelligent people, over the length and breadth of India.

Besides, year by year, the constitution of the Conference is becoming more perfect and the area of its sympathy more extended. Round its flag are gathered together all the devoted workers in the cause of social reform, and their voices cannot but be cheering to all those who labour in the same field.

And yet it is but the small beginning of a movement which is destined to exert a mighty influence upon the future social structure of the great nation which is slowly evolving itself in this ancient land. I believe it is a movement with a great future before it. Hitherto it has confined itself to a review of principal achievements of the year in matters of social reform and the adoption of resolutions indicating the lines on which the reform work should in future be carried on. I think it is time that the movement take a more practical turn. A great deal yet remains to be done, in disseminating social reform literature, in preaching reform ideas to the masses, in carrying the gospel of reform to every nook and corner of this vast land. For this we will require five or six powerful provincial associations working in concert with and under the guidance of the central organization. I am sure there are devoted men enough in each province for carrying on the movement with steady zeal throughout the year.

I am glad to learn that the local Committee of the Conference has resolved to introduce the system of taking pledges for carrying out in actual practice some of the ideas which we have been preaching for so many years. I hope a sufficiently large number of persons will come forward to take these pledges and thus show, by their example, that they are really in earnest about the work which they have been so loudly advocating.

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Ladies and gentlemen, we must always bear in mind all good things are hard to achieve. In a large national many people must be prepared to go through the difficu and trials which have always beset the path of pioneers. this great and sacred work of being pioneers, the Social Co ference calls upon you. The difficulties are both great numerous, but the interests of an entire nation depend u your decision and action.

Providence has been pleased to send us in this centur many heroic men who have tried their utmost to raise the socia and moral condition of our countrymen. A country which ha produced such illustrious reformers as Ram Mohan Roy, Ishwa Chandra Vidyasagar, Keshub Chandra Sen, and Dayananda Saraswati need not despair of its future. Standing, as we do, on the threshold of the twentieth century, let us carry on the work with faith and devotion, let us nourish with all our ca the tree which they have lovingly planted. And may the ne century, which soon dawns upon us, bring the light of tru with it. May the old era of injustice and social tyranny unbrotherliness pass away and the new era of peace, pro and love begin in our midst!

and woman are so varied that it is quite possible that under certain circumstances a man should speak thus about a woman. But when the legislator Manu is equally hard on women, it must be acknowledged that the estimate of the old Arya, of womanly nature is not flattering to them generally. They are debarred from reading the Vedas; any religious rite in which they alone are concerned is directed to be performed without Vedic Mantras. Even the Bhagavad Gita gives expression to the general belief that it is only a sinful soul that is born as a woman, Vaisya or Sudra. Thus women began to suffer in the estimation of men about the time of Yaska; and the downward movement which then commenced resulted in their being subjected to definite disabilities by the fourth century of the Christian era when the metrical Smriti of Manu was written and the Mahabharata retouched; and it has continued to this day and rendered their condition still more deplorable.

Age of Marriage.

Girls.

When the Mantras addressed by the bridegroom to the bride at the time of marriage, the substance of some of which I have given above, were composed, there can be no question that the bride must have been a girl who had arrived at an age of discretion and could understand what marriage meant. In the time of Asvalayana, Apastamba and others who in their Grihya Sutras give the details of the marriage ceremony and say nothing about the age of the bride, we have to suppose that then too she was a grown up girl, and this is confirmed by their allowing intercourse on the fourth day after marriage. Hiranyakesin and Jaimini prescribe in express terms that the bride should be a mature girl who has been chaste; while Gobhila, Gobhilaputra and the Manava Grihya lay down that a girl not having intercourse previously with a man should be married. This also means that the girl

placed the following notice of motion upon the order book of the House of Commons :—

"To call attention to the administration of Excise in India, by which many liquor-shops are being opened in various parts of India in direct violation of the expressed protests of the neighbourhood and in contradiction of the declared policy of the Government of India as formulated in their despatch to the Secretary of State, No. 29, February 4th, 1890, and to move a resolution."

In the meantime, however, the Total Abstinence work, carried on by the Anglo-Indian Temperance Association among the people of India, has made splendid progress. I have paid two more visits to India during the last ten years and more recently the General Secretary of the Anglo-Indian Temperance Association, Mr. F. Grubb, undertook a similar tour. As a result of these efforts a large number of Temperance societes have been established all over India. In this work we have been ably supported by the Rev. Thomas Evans, and by several influential vernacular lecturers, notably the Mahant Kesho Ram Roy, of Benares. This devoted Hindu was the means of inducing whole communities to prohibit the sale and consumption of strong drink among their members by caste rules. His death, which took place five years ago, was a great loss to the movement. In later years the Temperance cause has been admirably served by eloquent Indian lecturers, chief among whom have been Mr. Bipin Chandra Pal (Bengal) who was a delegate to the recent World's Temperance Congress, in London; Mr. Shyam Kishore Varma (N. W. P., Oudh and Behar); and Mr. Yashwant Javagi Dabir (Bombay). As a result of these labours there are now in India 283 societies affiliated to the Association. There is hardly a town of any importance where some organization for the furtherance of Temperance principles does not exist. The societies are encouraged to hold regular meetings, to translate suitable Temperance tracts and articles from our quarterly journal "Abkari" into the vernaculars, to visit the sur-