

CONGRESS GREEN BOOK. No. VIII.

INDIA :

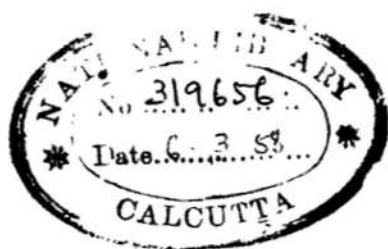
Her Present and her Future.

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INDIA:

HER PRESENT AND HER FUTURE.

Mr. Chairman, Brother Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I frankly confess my utter inability to express to you ~~how~~ deeply grateful I feel for the great honour you have done me in electing me to preside over the deliberations of this Congress. To me it is not a matter of custom or convention, for the Congress and the ideals it represents hold me by the roots and have penetrated into the innermost recesses of my soul. To us, Indians, no higher reward is conceivable than to be called upon ~~by~~ the free choice of our countrymen to preside over what may be justly regarded ~~as~~ the assembly of the Nation; but I am not vain enough to take it as a personal tribute.

THE PRESENT SITUATION.

We meet on this occasion under very grave difficulties. We are in the midst of a great and devastating war, comparable only to the fearful cataclysms of nature; we are involved in a struggle for life and death, and, what is more, between the elemental passions and the higher ideals of humanity. The mind is absorbed in the great issues now hanging in the battlefields of Europe, where our brethren, British and Indian, are mingling their blood in the cause of honour, liberty, and justice. This is not the time to deal with matters upon which we may differ: all controversies must be laid to rest in the presence of the great and awe-inspiring drama of human history now being enacted before our eyes, and we must present to the world the spectacle of a united Empire, animated by the sole desire to bravely combat the dangers with which we are threatened, and to see that not only civilisation but the very soul of humanity may not lapse into chaos and be utterly lost. We hesitated,

therefore, for a long time over the holding of this session of the Congress, and, though I accept the ultimate decision not to have a break in the continuity of the Congress, I confess I find my course very difficult.

CONGRESS : HIS MAJESTY'S OPPOSITION.

For one of the principal functions of the Congress is to discharge the duties of his Majesty's Opposition, with this important difference, that we have at all times been ready to recognise and appreciate the good work done by our Government, which his Majesty's Opposition in England is not always willing to do. It is this function, though exercised with great restraint, that has sometimes caused irritation to Anglo-Indian administrators, impatient of criticism and taught to look upon their system of government as the best that human forethought could devise. Things, however, have vastly improved since the Congress began in 1885 : a growing sense of responsibility on our side and a growing deference to popular opinion on the other, have characterised our mutual relations for some time past ; and we, upon whose devoted heads Lord Dufferin opened the vials of his wrath, have had the high honour of being received by the representative of the Crown in this country and by his Majesty's Secretary of State in England. At the present moment and in the present crisis, this function of the Congress must necessarily remain in abeyance. We have our quarrels, our differences, our grievances, but these domestic matters, however important they may be, must wait ; and we may for the present turn to the other aspect of the Congress, namely, as the voice of United India, which recognises no distinction of creed, caste, or colour—as the embodied expression of national sentiment, national hopes, and national aspirations, and as the great instrument of national education.

OUR FIRST DUTY.

But our first duty to-day must be to express what is uppermost in the minds of us all—to convey through our Viceroy to our Gracious Sovereign the whole-hearted loyalty and devotion of his Majesty's Indian subjects to the

Throne and the Empire. In this respect, as it is rapidly becoming in many other respects, the Mussulman and the Hindu in India are one: and the reason is obvious.

BRITISH RULE NO CHALLENGE TO THE PEOPLE.

British rule in India has not come as a challenge to the Indian people. The first and greatest step in the acquisition of sovereignty was taken at the invitation of the people themselves, harassed under the enfeebled grasp of a decadent administration. There have been wars since, but between brave men who have fought courageously and have accepted the issue as between honourable combatants, our Princes becoming the friends and allies of his Britannic Majesty under solemn treaties, and our people equal subjects of his Majesty under charters and statutes equally solemn: and this mutual relationship and understanding, worthy of those who had the boldness to conceive and found the Empire, though sometimes apt to be forgotten under the passion of dominion or the prejudice of colour to the infinite detriment of both sides, has been on the whole the guiding principle of British rule in India, well recognised by British statesmen and well understood by the princes and people of India. It is this which has reconciled the Government of England to the martial spirit of India, to her ancient civilisation and her pride of race.

INDIA'S NEW HOROSCOPE.

India has recognised that, at this supreme crisis in the life of the Empire, she should take a part worthy of herself and of the Empire in which she has no mean place. She is now unrolling her horoscope, written in the blood of her sons, in the presence of the assembled nations of the Empire and claiming the fulfilment of her destiny.

OUR VICEROY AND SECRETARY OF STATE : TRUE SERVANTS OF INDIA.

And, brother delegates, if India has been doing her part and her duty, the great statesmen who are now serving in her cause have also stood by her, faithful and loyal. I was in England when the first message of our Viceroy, tense

with emotion and solemn as befitting the occasion, reached our King and the British people, conveying to them the whole-hearted devotion and enthusiastic loyalty and support of the Indian princes and the Indian people. I can hardly express to you the impression that that message created; its dignity and simplicity went straight into every heart. All in a moment, England realised the unity and solidarity of the Empire, and the great part India had played and was determined to play. Those great principles of equality and justice on which rest the foundations of British rule in India became invested with the lineaments of life and reasserted their sway over people's minds and hearts. Our Viceroy is truly a worthy servant of India and of England: would God had spared him the sorrow and anxiety of the last few months. His *mind* must be sore, whether in the midst of crowding work or free, if ever it is free in the stillness of solitary rest, with an aching void which nothing can fill, for who will bring to him again that gentle companionship and sweet grace, that steadfast devotion and unselfish love, which must have won for Lady Hardinge the supreme place in the heart of her husband, and which secured her the affection and esteem of all who were ever admitted to her charming and dignified presence? And alas! the void will be all the deeper, all the keener, by the loss of his eldest son, for who will now lighten the burden of a heart overladen?

And, gentlemen, if Lord Hardinge has stood by India, responsive and loyal, the Marquis of Crewe has been a noble interpreter of the sentiments of the people of India to the people of England. *Amidst the solemnity of the British House of Lords and the splendour of its surroundings, in the presence of some of the great pro-consuls who had devoted years of unsparing work to India and of a distinguished assembly, he announced in tones of suppressed emotion and pleasure the magnificent message of India's loyalty, of India's devotion and India's support; and an audience more distinguished for its dignified bearing than even the Senate of ancient Rome threw to the winds all reserve and broke forth into tumultuous applause. Truly, the noble marquis performed his duty on this historic occasion

as the spokesman of India, her accredited representative in England: and no less faithfully and zealously did his gifted Under-Secretary bear his part in the House of Commons. We tender our sincere and grateful thanks to these servants of India, who, though not of our race or our faith, have justly acquitted themselves as the representatives of India at this momentous crisis of our national life.

THE INDIA COUNCIL.

We wish they had greater freedom of action and of initiative. The Council of the Secretary of State, as now constituted, has oftentimes proved a hindrance. We have long pressed for its abolition, for that would be the only means to bring the Secretary of State for India more into line with the other Secretaries of State and place him under greater parliamentary control. The salary of the Secretary of State for India should be placed on the English Estimates. In his Council, consisting of not more than nine members, one-third should be Indians chosen by the elected members of the various Legislative Councils in India, and of the remaining members at least half should be public men of proved ability and merit, unconnected with the Government of India: the functions of the members should be advisory and not executive. A Council so constituted will maintain a fair balance between the different interests involved in the Indian administration, and will secure for its decisions that appreciation and willing acceptance which are essential to all Governments, especially to Governments conducted by an alien bureaucracy.

PARLIAMENTARY COMMITTEES.

Before I pass from this subject, there is one other matter closely allied to which I would call your earnest attention. Royal Commissions may be of great use or may, as some or all commissions do, serve to defer reforms: but there is no question that they collect a vast amount of useful information at very great expense. All this material sleeps on dusty racks. Very few of the men who form the commission are members of Parliament and after the submission of

the report they are unable to turn to any good and effective purpose the instruction which they have received at such great cost to India. If instead of Royal Commissions, we had Parliamentary committees of enquiry, like those that sat in the days of the East India Company on the renewal of its successive Charters, drawn from all parties, we would have a body of men in Parliament who would acquire an interest in India by means of intimate knowledge of her affairs and would be able by reason of independent information to approach the consideration of Indian questions with confidence, and create in the House an atmosphere of enlightenment about India which would continue as a tradition. A system of control and supervision like this would supply the necessary corrective to the Government of India and impart to it a forward impetus which the British democracy have so far failed to give and which the people of India justly claim. It is a reform to which I have ventured to call your attention, as I believe its usefulness must be recognised by all parties and as it may be treated almost as a non-controversial question.

THE WORK BEFORE US.

I now come to the second part of my address—the constructive programme of the Congress, its objects and ideals, our duty to ourselves and our work in the future.

WHERE WE STAND TO-DAY.

For a consideration of these matters, the present occasion is not altogether inopportune; we are removed by force of circumstances from the atmosphere of controversy and if we are deeply stirred, I trust there is room for introspection. But before I go on to the future, the present must claim our attention for a few moments. The Charter Act of 1833 provides that "no native of India, nor any natural-born subject of His Majesty, resident therein, shall by reason only of his religion, place of birth, descent or colour or any of them, be disabled from holding any place, office or employment under the said Company." In the memorable despatch to the Government of India accompanying the Act, the Board of Directors emphasise this provision and say: "It is fitting

that this important provision should be understood in order that its full spirit and intention may be transfused through our whole system of administration. From certain offices the natives are debarred, professedly on the ground that the average amount of native qualifications can be presumed only to rise to a certain limit. It is this line of demarcation which the present enactment obliterates. Fitness is henceforth to be the criterion of eligibility." Then we come to the solemn declaration of the Great Queen :—" We hold ourselves bound to the natives of our Indian Territories by the same obligations of duty which bind us to all our other subjects, and those obligations, by the blessing of Almighty God, we shall faithfully and conscientiously fill."

These form the solid foundations on which the Government of India rests : one removes the disqualification of the subject, the other defines the obligation of the Sovereign. I shall on this occasion refrain from considering how far the injunction of the Board of Directors that the spirit and intention of the enactment should be transfused through the whole system of administration or the solemn declaration of the Sovereign has been loyally carried out and how wide is the gulf which divides our actual position from our legal status. The Government of the country is still vested to all intents and purposes in a foreign Civil Service, which is so recruited that the difficulties attending the path of the Indian, who seeks admission into it, are just as difficult to-day as they were fifty years ago, as is evident from the fact that out of a cadre of nearly 1,400 members there are now less than 200 Indian officers. The Service is composed of men whose sole aim is, no doubt, to do their duty and sole ambition is to govern well ; like the knights-errant of old, they would take all the load off our shoulders, forgetting that in the economy of nature each man has to carry his own burden, to stiffen his back in self-preservation.

We cannot escape the influences of our tradition or environment. In declining to accede to the grant of further powers to the English in India, Sir Charles Wood in 1861 quoted with approval the words of a well-known philosopher and statesman. " Armed with the prestige of the ruling

nation they have the feelings inspired by absolute power without the sense of responsibility." What was true when Mill wrote holds good to-day, for the system of Government is the same, though happier influences have come into play. But the fact remains that the only responsibility which could act and has acted as a check on the Civil Service of India was its self-imposed sense of duty : it is a great check no doubt, but not sufficient when a struggle comes between preconceived ideas and rigid traditions of power and efficiency on the one hand and the nascent growth of popular aspirations on the other. Viceroys and Governors may come and go, but the great Service remains, dominating the life of the people and practically free from all responsibility except what it owes to itself. It forms the ruling factor in the Executive Council of the Viceroy, and also in the Council of the Secretary of State. It thus constitutes a Court of Appeal over itself. It furnishes rulers to six provincial Governments out of nine. The great departments of State including education are under its control and the inspiration and motive power of Government comes from its members. Influence, patronage, authority, power, dominion, the government itself, are all in their hands; and they would be more than human if they did not desire to maintain their position, if from no other motive, at least from a laudable ambition of handing on their heritage unimpaired to their successors, in the honest belief that the Service as constituted was essential for the good of India.

WHAT INDIA WANTS.

Against this state of things we have a people rapidly awakening to self-consciousness; thousands of our boys are receiving education on Western lines in Indian Universities based on Western models; hundreds of them are daily flocking to the Universities of Europe, America, and Japan, and on their return home spreading the knowledge that they have acquired. You may chain Prometheus, but the fire is lighted and cannot be extinguished. India wants a higher life, a wider sphere of activity and usefulness. India wants that her Government should be consistent with her growing self-respect and intellectuality. India wants that the presumption which has all along existed and which the Board of

Directors in 1833 made a vain attempt to dispel, namely, that her sons can only rise to a certain limit, should be removed from the precincts of her Court, as it has been from the Statute Book, and the door for her services should not be closed by artificial barriers against her own sons. India wants that her children should have the same rights of equal citizenship as other members of the Empire. India wants the removal of vexatious hindrances on the liberty of speech and freedom of the Press, fruitless and dangerous alike to the Government and the people. And, above all, India wants that her Government should be an autonomous Government under the British Empire. Then only the great benefits, which have emanated from British rule and which carry with them the memory of doles, will be sweetened with the sweat of her brow.

I know of our aspirations; I have given brief expression to them; are they extravagant and unjustified in the present circumstances of the country? I do not wish to ride for a fall, but I am of opinion that they are not incapable of progressive fulfilment. Do they deserve fostering care and sympathetic attention or stern repression? The answer has been already given by the Government itself.

The Reform scheme of Lord Morley is the beginning of a far-reaching change. The Councils that we have got under this scheme are not altogether so useless as is sometimes inconsiderately asserted. They are, no doubt, very far behind the ideals of to-day, but they mark a notable advance, and it is undesirable and unwise to treat them as make-believes. Let us treat them as mere steps which we must take to reach our goal and let us consider what that goal may be: and in putting this goal before us, let us be frank and honest and let us understand each other and be understood. It is well that there should be no *arriere pensè*, no reservation in the consideration of this great question.

PERPETUAL TUTELAGE ON THE ONE HAND.

The Indian bureaucracy do not offer us any constructive programme for the future of India, no land of promise to her children. They are content to work for the day and take no thought for the morrow. An autocratic Viceroy or Secre-

tary of State may put extra steam into the machinery of the Indian Government or try to shut the safety-valve, but the great fly-wheel is not easily disturbed. And they have been honest and conscientious workmen, not troubled, it may be, with the visions of the future, and they have reason to be well pleased with their work: they have given us internal peace and guarded us from external aggression; the blessings of an ordered administration are apparent on every side. And they may well ask why should India resent? Her Government has always been that of one man's sway whether she was an Empire or broken into small States of varying dimensions. Why should she object to the Government of an alien bureaucracy? My answer is: the days of the lotus-eater are gone, the world is swinging onward on the uplifting ropes of time, and in Europe, the war of nations, now in progress, will knock off the last weights of mediæval domination of one man over many, of one race over another; it is not possible to roll back the tide of wider life which is flowing like the warm Gulf Stream through the gateways of the West into the still waters of the East. You may abolish the study of English history* and draw a sponge over all its story of freedom; you may bar Milton and Burke, Mill and Spencer; you may bend the Indian Universities to your will if you like, fetter their feet with obstructive statutes, but you cannot bar the imponderable influences of an expanding world. If English rule in India meant the canonisation of a bureaucracy, if it meant perpetual domination and perpetual tutelage, an increasing dead-weight on the soul of India, it would be a curse to civilisation and a blot on humanity. But I am doing injustice to a large body of Civil Servants who have loyally accepted the recent reforms and who seek to remain true to the traditions of Munro and Elphinstone.

AND INDEPENDENCE ON THE OTHER.

And let us take the other extreme—of separation from England and absolute independence. It may, no doubt,

* The study of English history has been abolished from the matriculation standards of the Indian universities.

commend itself to the ardent patriotism of youth, for it is the privilege of youth to be fancy free. Let us leave law alone and deal with the question as one of practical politics. I would not hesitate, whatever might be the terrors of the law, from boldly accepting the ideal if I felt convinced that it was possible of attainment, and, I go further, that it was desirable in the present stage of our evolution. I would not flee from my own convictions. I do not like the attitude of being willing to wound but afraid to strike. Let us be frank. Bold issues must be boldly faced. National regeneration requires manliness and is not advanced by the methods of the Camarilla. At the present stage of evolution in India, who would desire or support separation from England? The Indian Princes, secure in their dignity and status, the Indian aristocracy, safe in their possessions and influence, the Indian middle classes, free in their vocations, the toiling masses, sure of the fruits of their labour, and all moving onwards to one common goal with the impetus which a central Government, a common vehicle of thought, common ideals and a growing sense of unity and nationality have given them, will they support this separation, and lose sight of their goal altogether? India, high and low, has published her answer to the world. It is but a dream and may come, as dreams do come when the senses are held in the bonds of sleep, or as they come in the impetuous days of youth when the senses lack the control of wisdom which comes with age. But when you take the idea firmly into your grasp, it breaks away into the dust of the past, bringing no solace but disappointment and sorrow.

SELF-GOVERNMENT WITHIN THE EMPIRE.

The two extremes—the one of separation, the other of subordination—are both equally impossible and must be put out of our mind. The ideal that we must pursue and which the Congress has set before itself is that of co-ordination and comradeship, of a joint partnership on equal terms. I do not say that it must materialise to-day, but I do say that every step that we take or ask the Government to take must point in that direction. India no doubt is a continent and not a country divided into small administrative areas: it is divided

into communities, castes, and sects; it is divided by religion, language, and race, by different types and stages of civilisation and progress, and by different methods of administration. It has within its limits princes of ancient lineage and traditions and people great numbers of whom are still in a state of mental darkness: the educated middle classes are still a small, if no longer a microscopic, minority: there are peoples within its borders who know of nothing else but personal rule, and large classes which are ready to accept a representative Government. Can any system of self-government be evolved in a country like this which will bring into coherence its heterogeneous elements or must India from the very nature of its constitution be for ever subject to foreign domination? I hope I have stated the case fairly. Let us see how we can apply our ideal to a state of things like this: let us clearly realise what that ideal may be. From the very extent of India and the diversity of her population, we must have a system of Government modelled on the lines of the Commonwealth of Australia, or the United States of America, modified according to Indian conditions and presided over by a representative of our Sovereign. In this constitution all will find a place, the Englishman as well as the Indian, the prince as well as the peasant, and all communities, by a judicious combination of the methods of election and selection in the case of the less advanced. I am only suggesting tentative lines of development and not a scheme, and I am aware that it may be laughed at as chimerical: but I shall not complain, as criticism is the touchstone of truth. And I do not despair, for the position is not hopeless. Let us consider our advantages. I might easily turn for analogies to the continent of Europe, but, for the present, I shall direct attention to England of the past and not a remote past, to England in the forties in the 19th century after the accession of Queen Victoria and the great Reform Act of 1832. In many parts, half of its male population and nearly three-fourths of the female population were unable to sign their names even on their marriage register. The test of literacy in India to-day is certainly as high among the higher classes, and taking the

entire male population, children, hill-tribes and aborigines all thrown in, more than 1 in 10 are able to read and write. Religious differences carried then in England a more galling sense of social and political disadvantage than they have ever done in India. Even in Ireland, Roman Catholics were not allowed to hold commissions in the Army until 1793, when an Act was passed enabling Roman Catholics to hold commissions in the Army up to the rank of a colonel and this restricted concession was not granted to the Roman Catholics in England until 1813. It was not till 1829 that Parliament was opened to them. The Protestant dissenters likewise laboured under cruel restrictions: they could not legally baptise their children in their own places of worship, or bury their dead in consecrated ground, except under the ritual of the Established Church, and had no admission to the Universities. Many of us will remember that in 1880 an influential deputation waited on Gladstone to protest against the appointment of Lord Ripon as our Viceroy, because he was a Roman Catholic. Even to-day the question of Irish Home rule is largely a question of religion, of the Protestant against the Roman Catholic; each of the great communities had organised themselves under the leadership of eminent politicians into armed resistance before the outbreak of the war. Is the condition of things worse in India at the present time? Hindus and Moslems had long lived in amity until it was found that their differences might be turned to their mutual disadvantage. I am not drawing upon imagination. It attracted the attention of an historian and statesman like Lord Bryce, who in one of his illuminating essays has observed as follows:—"It has been suggested that when the differences of caste and religion which now separate the peoples of India from one another have begun to disappear . . . new dangers may arise to threaten the permanence of British Power." British administrators happily, and Musulmans and Hindus themselves, are beginning to realise that these differences mean danger to the State and injury to the whole Community.

The cry is raised that it is not only difference in religion that stands in the way, but in a country like India, so wide

and diversified, proper representation cannot be secured. Take again the case of England before the Reform Act. Prior to 1832, to the British House of Commons 70 members were returned by 35 places practically without any electors: 90 members were returned by 46 places with less than 50 electors, and 37 members by 19 places having not more than 100 electors, while Leeds, Birmingham and Manchester went unrepresented: seats were secured by bribery, and when they rested with proprietors and Corporations, were openly sold: in fact, corruption was so rampant that buying a seat was considered perfectly fair. Sir Samuel Romilly, than whom a purer and more virtuous public man was not to be found in his day, actually bought his seat in the House of Commons so that he might be independent of any patron. The difficulty of language need not be considered. In England of the early 19th century there was a diversity of tongues greater than what exists in a similar area in India. The greatest gift of England to India is a common vehicle of thought between the different parts of India and the members of its different communities.

It may also be urged against us that the higher castes in India, the educated communities, under advantageous circumstances, will dominate the lower and the more ignorant. The House of Commons was practically in the hands of the English aristocracy and the upper middle classes till 1832, and to this day it is to all intents and purposes, a house composed of members belonging to those classes. In politics, Anglo-Indian administrators are known to be inclined to the conservative view, which fought so strenuously against the curtailment of the rights of the peers. After all, the spectacle of the more enlightened ruling the less enlightened in the same community is as old as the world. The caste system in India, which is thoroughly democratic within itself, is losing its rigidity as between different castes. I may go further afield and nearer home. Italy in 1860 was more divided in tradition, sentiment and feeling than India is to-day or was at any time in its past history. Conflict between temporal and spiritual powers, rivalry of cities and states, of republics and kingdoms, mutual jealousies and mutual

hatred, the domination and intrigue of a powerful neighbour, these were the difficulties which stood in the way of Italy, since united under one Government. And take Japan of 1860: "The Emperor was the nominal King but the Shogun the actual ruler; a third of the whole Empire was under the direct rule of the Shogun and the revenues were paid into his treasury; the remainder was shared among 260 feudal lords, all of whom enjoyed complete legislative and executive autonomy, including the right of coinage. The Daimio and the Samurai, who combined to form the governing and aristocratic classes, numbered two million souls. Beneath them lay the masses divided by an unfathomable social gulf, across which none could pass, divided into three orders, farmers, artisans and traders, in number about 30 millions, whose sole lot in life was to minister to the well-being and luxury of their superiors. Slavery, abject slavery, was the natural state of the great body of the people. They counted for nothing: their liberty, their property and even their lives were held at the absolute disposal of their immediate rulers: they spoke in subdued tones with bent backs and eyes on the ground. As subjection made the lower classes abjectly servile, so did despotic power and immunity from all the burthens of life render the aristocratic class tyrannical and cruel." I have not indulged in a fanciful portrayal of the condition of the people of Japan in the closing years of the Takagwa régime. I have quoted verbatim from a well-known English work on Japan. India does not suffer very much in comparison to England of the 18th or early 19th century, and stands on a much better footing than Italy or Japan in 1860. I have stated the objections and have tried to meet them. Do not for a moment think, therefore, that I under-rate their importance. I have not shrunk from pointing out the difficulties. To show that the obstacles in our way are not insuperable, I have referred to other countries, not dissimilarly situated; what we want is their patriotism, their devotion, their spirit of sacrifice. In Japan, the Shogun surrendered his absolute authority, the feudal lords gave up their estates and power: the Daimio and Samurai laid aside the pride of birth and caste; the upper classes, from the

Emperor downwards, helped to bring the masses across the wide gulf which for untold centuries had run between them, taking them with the hand as fellow-creatures with equal rights, and thus laid the foundation of a nation which has compelled the attention and respect of the world.

What others have done we may do : the basis of our life, political and social, must be self-respect and mutual goodwill : it has been said that, treated as we are by our own Government, lacking in sympathy and trust, it is no wonder if we slide down the pegs of national self-esteem. I have already referred to the growing consciousness of the people, to their vivid perception of the anomalies of our present position—equal subjects of our sovereign, but unequal citizens of the State. The waves of a new life, bright with the hopes of the future, fall back into empty foam, repelled by the cold wall of ancient prejudice. Signs, however, are not wanting to show that the guardians of the wall are not asleep at their posts : they are beginning to realise that the waves are friendly, and will bring to the land waters which will fertilise into abounding life, and they are opening the sluice-gates. Not so slowly, not so cautiously, is the cry from the land. Lord Hardinge has set the example of courage and trust : he has tried to show that the Government of India is a Government for the people : he has spoken in vindication of our rights of equal citizenship, he has endorsed the action of our countrymen in South Africa in offering and organising passive resistance ; he has upheld the claims of India against the bigotry of race and prejudice of colour, and he has stood by India ready to guard her honour. All honour to him for his courageous advocacy of the cause of India under circumstances of exceptional difficulties in South Africa. I do not know if the English people realise what Lord Hardinge has done for us and for England ; he has revived our waning faith in the declaration of our Sovereign, in the policy of British Rule in India, and, what is more, he has made the Indian people recognise that the self-respect of the nation is safe in his keeping. But more is wanted, for much is wanting in those elements which constitute the self-respect of a people.

RIGHT TO CARRY ARMS.

The right to carry arms, the right to bear commissions in the Army and lead our men in the cause of the Empire, the right to form volunteer corps in the defence of hearth and home, how long will these be denied to the Indian people? How long will India toddle on her feet, tied to the apron-strings of England? Time is she stood on her legs for herself as well as for England. What could be more humiliating to India and to England alike, if England were obliged in the hour of some great danger as Imperial Rome was in her day, to leave India unarmed and untrained to the use of arms as her civil population is, a prey to internal anarchy and external aggression? What commentary would it be on 150 years of British rule in India that England found the people strong though disunited, and left them helpless and emasculated? And what could be more glorious both for India and England than that India, strong in her men, strong in her faith, stand side by side with England, share her troubles and her dangers and be joint defenders of their common heritage?

INDIA A WALL AGAINST GERMANY.

There is no use in vain regrets, but one cannot help thinking that, under different circumstances, England could have put to-day on the battlefields of Europe not seventy thousand Indian soldiers, but a wall of men against which German militarism would have hurled itself in vain. And has not India justified faith in her? In this hour of danger the cry has come from every part of India—from all communities and classes—for a rush to the front: it is oblivious of the past and impregnate with the future. And may I, addressing myself to Lord Hardinge, tell him that this future is in his hands, that it will be a glory all his own, unparalleled in history, if India realises this future before he lays down his office: my appeal to him is not in the name of personal glory, it will be glory to the Most High, for future generations in India and England will bless his name, for he will have done incalculable good to both: and this is not an appeal *ad misericordiam*; we stand at the bar of

humanity and claim the fulfilment of obligations, of declarations and solemn pledges. It is the appeal of Belgium for the enforcement of her guaranteed rights. England is pouring forth her wealth and, what is more, and no wealth can buy, the precious blood of her men for the fulfilment of her plighted word: her name will live as long as human history lives. Will India say that England has failed in her duty to India? It is not a prayer, but a call in the name of the people of India enforced by the moral sense of mankind, which, if religions are not mere myths and their teachings empty shibboleths, will survive the clash of arms and the fate of nations. But, brother delegates, I shall be failing in my duty if I failed to indicate, however briefly, what lies in us to do for the realisation of our destined future.

EDUCATION.

Our groundwork must be the education of our people, the elevation of the masses. To our infinite regret, the State has not responded to our call for even a tentative measure of compulsory education: much as I grieve, I am not hopeless, for it is bound to come. It was not till 1880 that England recognised that no children should be shut out from the benefits of education by the ignorance, neglect or apathy of their parents. Our policy has been to follow the lead of England from a respectful distance. The education of our girls is still in an elementary stage. The Congress may well take a leaf out of the programme of the Moslem League in matters connected with education, for education is the bed-rock on which we must lay the foundations of our national life. To it alone I look for the removal of those galling distinctions resulting from the institution of caste, of those petty misunderstandings which mar the beauty and serenity of our religious life. What does it matter if I spring from the head or the foot of the Creator? Is not the whole universe His footstool? And what does formula matter in religion when God reveals Himself to all who seek Him? Whether we hearken to the voice of the Muezzin or to the pealing of the bells, whether the minaret or the trident

attracts our gaze, whether we assemble in our temples or our mosques, whether we are high or lowly born, it makes no difference: outside these, beyond these, is the sanctuary of the Mother, where the voice of humanity is calling us to worship. There we stand united before her sacred altar, with our feet on the past and our gaze on the future. If only we bear in mind that we are Indians first and Indians always, what does it matter whether one community advances more rapidly than another, whether one receives more favours than another? Let us bear in mind that the advancement of a part of the body-politic means the progress of the whole, that favours to our brethren mean favours to us all: it is the pettiest of petty things that come between us, though these small things, like the grain of sand in the eye, oftentimes cause great irritation: let us brush them aside. Enlightened opinion, Hindu and Moslem, is recognising the essential unity of our lives and striving to put down differences where they exist: these differences are capable of easy adjustment *if only we bear and forbear.*

STATE AID TO INDIAN INDUSTRIES.

We are face to face with our great constructive work, the education and elevation of our people and the obliteration of the lines of caste and creed in the social and political life of the country. And our efforts should not be confined to these regions alone; we have much to do in the domain of Arts and Industries: we must devote our best attention and energy to our industrial education and progress. We have had difficulties to contend with in the past: our Government, following the traditions of England, the richest and most highly developed industrial country in the world, omitted to profit by the examples of the Governments of some of the countries on the Continent of Europe and of Japan, which have succeeded in planting great industries among nations hitherto as much devoted to agricultural pursuits as ourselves. The war has forced on our attention new problems and new methods, and the example lately set by England in coming to the support of the newly started dyeing industry

fills us with hope as to the future of the industries that may with advantage be started in India with the aid of the State.

WORK IN ENGLAND.

And if, brother delegates, I naturally lay the greatest stress on the work among ourselves, I do not forget the work we have to do outside, work of no ordinary magnitude or importance—the enlightenment of the British people about Indian affairs. In them we have got our best allies, for they have not come under the influence of the Poustia which grows on the soil of the East. They are under no illusion, they realise the great truth underlying the dictum of that great statesman who gave peace to South Africa. "Good government could never be a substitute for government by the people themselves." I have always found them, and I speak from personal experience, willing to listen and ready to help.

THE BRITISH COMMITTEE.

The British Committee of the Congress is doing invaluable work in instructing the Press and the public. It owes its usefulness to the influence and indefatigable labours of that veteran friend of India, Sir William Wedderburn, who by his single-minded devotion to our cause, which he has made his own, has laid us under an obligation which we can never hope to repay, and the full extent of which will never be known. But what is wanted is that representative men from India should systematically visit England to bring to the Committee fresh and first-hand knowledge: what is urgently wanted is more funds so that the Committee may extend its sphere of usefulness: and money spent for this purpose will not be ill-spent: it is an investment which will bring rich profit. It may not be generally known, but it was through the influence exerted on John Bright by a retired Anglo-Indian gentleman of liberal views that India secured in 1858 the Magna Charta of her rights. It is essential that members of Parliament, who alone can decide great questions, should be properly instructed, for knowledge means interest, and all we want is a true knowledge of India. If

the future to which we look forward is to be a process of peaceful evolution it must be by co-operation. Hostility will retard and indifference clog the wheels of progress.

OUR PLACE IN THE BRITISH EMPIRE.

The war has come to us as a trumpet call—it has roused enthusiasm in England for India, it has moved the heart of Anglo-India, and has even drawn the British Colonies out of their exclusiveness. Our Viceroy has been telling us of the formation of a new policy of reciprocity between India and the Colonies. No reciprocity except on terms of equality would be acceptable in India. Would the Colonies give it? Not in the past, but now there is hope of a settlement consistent with our position in the Empire, for this is what a leading organ of public opinion in South Australia says:—

“It was only ignorance that thought of the Indians as an inferior race. They are the equals, fully the equals, of the proudest European nation, and they claim, in their own land, to be free citizens, governing themselves, and shaping their own national destiny, within the many-nationed ‘Empire of the Free.’ Who shall say them nay?”

CONCLUSION.

Now is our time: we must throw away our lethargy: let us bind our waist-cloth, head forward to our goal: and that goal is not unworthy of our highest aspirations: it has satisfied the dignity and the self-esteem of the French in Canada and of the Boer in South Africa, who to-day are the staunchest supporters of England: and when it comes to us, as I hope it soon will, it will strengthen and not weaken the bonds that unite England and India. To the spiritual framework of the East has come the inspiration of the West. Let us combine the patience of the East with the energy of the West and we shall not fail. We are better situated to-day than Italy or Japan was in 1860: we are beginning to realise the strength and growing solidarity of the people of India: India has realised that she must be a vital and equal part of the Empire, and she has worthily seized her great opportunity. In the melting-pot of destiny, race, creed, and

colour are disappearing. If India has realised, so has England. Through the mouth of the Prime Minister, the English people have said to us : "We welcome with appreciation and affection your proffered aid, and in an Empire which knows no distinction of race or class, where all alike are subjects of the King-Emperor and are joint and equal custodians of our common interests and futures, we here hail with profound and heartfelt gratitude your association side by side and shoulder to shoulder with the Home and Dominion troops under a flag which has a symbol to all of a unity that a world in arms cannot dissever or dissolve."

It is no use looking backward. Let us be ready for the future, and I see its vision. I see my country occupying an honoured and proud place in the comity of nations. I see her sons sitting in the Councils of our great Empire, conscious of their strength and bearing its burden on their shoulders as valued and trusted comrades and friends, and I see India rejuvenated and reincarnate in the glories of the future broadened by the halo of the past. What does it matter if a solitary raven croak from the sandbanks of the Jumna and the Ganges? I hear it not, my ears are filled with the music of the mighty river flowing into the sea, scattering the message of the future. Brother, delegates, let us live as the ancients lived in the purity of heart so that the message may be fulfilled; let us forget the narrow barriers of man's creation; let us be humble and forget the pride of self; let us step across the barriers of prejudice, let us always be with our hand on the plough preparing the soil for the harvest of the future; let our heart-strings be attuned to God and Country, and then no power on earth shall resist the realisation of that message, the fulfilment of the destiny that is ours. And, assembled in this tabernacle of the people, let us pray to Him Who knoweth all hearts to grant us grace and strength that we may deserve and bear this future and this destiny.