INDIA ON TRIAL

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INDIA ON TRIAL

A STUDY
OF PRESENT CONDITIONS

BY

J. E. WOOLACOTT

FORMERLY CORRESPONDENT OF 'THE TIMES' AT DELHI AND SIMLA

'IN CONDITIONS MORE FAVOURABLE TO COOL JUDGMENT, I SUPPOSE THAT MOST PERSONS WOULD ADMIT THAT BRITISH INDIA AS WE FIND IT TODAY IS A BRITISH CREATION, AND THAT IT IS BRITISH POWER WHICH HAS DURING THE LAST CENTURY HELD TOGETHER ITS CONSTITUENT PARTS. IF THIS CENTRIPETAL INFLUENCE IS IMMEDIATELY OR TOO SUDDENLY WITHDRAWN, IS IT WHOLLY UNREASONABLE TO FEAR THAT SOME, AT ANY RATE, OF THE PARTS MIGHT FLY ASUNDER, AND THE DREAM OF A STRONG UNITED INDIA, A NATION AMONG THE NATIONS OF THE WORLD AS WE MAY SPEAK OF THE BRITISH OR AMERICAN NATIONS WOULD VANISH AND BE DESTROYED?'

LORD IRWIN, VICEROY OF INDIA, IN AN ADDRESS TO THE INDIAN LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY, ON 28TH JANUARY, 1929

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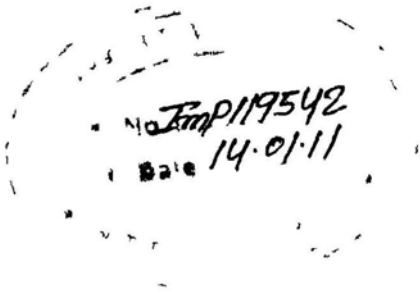
1929



PRINTED IN GREAT BRITAIN

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FOREWORD

THE importance of India to the British Empire is vaguely recognised by many who have no real conception of the problems of that vast country. The responsibility of the British as trustees for the Indian people is also admitted in a general way. It is further realised, at all events by merchants, manufacturers and bankers, that India constitutes the greatest market in the world for British goods, and that the employment of large numbers of British industrial workers is dependent on the maintenance of our commerce with that country. A sense of communal obligation and of enlightened self-interest alike should, therefore, impel every thoughtful citizen to acquaint himself with the achievements of the British in India, the situation which exists in India to-day and the gravity of the Indian problems that await solution. The need for enlightenment is all the more insistent in that within the past few years a number of British politicians possessing a superficial knowledge of Indian affairs have sought to create the impression that our administration is characterised by callous oppression and is perpetuating a system which inflicts poverty and misery on

the masses of the people. How far assertions of this nature gain credence it is impossible to say. But the atmosphere created by the incessant repetition of the fallacious teachings of pseudo-historians regarding the actions of British administrators in the past and the misrepresentation of British policy in the present constitutes a menace alike to Great Britain and to India which it would be folly to ignore. In India itself, especially among the rising generation, the most grotesque fallacies are avidly accepted. It has been my good fortune on a number of occasions to be invited to take part in the discussions of University students in India, and it came as a revelation to me to discover how thoroughly the minds of many young men had been permeated by the doctrines of anti-British propagandists, who, in season and out of season, assert that our rule in India has impoverished the people, and that measures enacted for the protection of law-abiding Indians against the forces of disorder have been inspired by a determination to fix the yoke of slavery more firmly on the neck of India. These misconceptions seemed in the main to be based on honest conviction, and it was of good omen that the students listened with courtesy and obvious interest to a frank exposition of the other side of the question.

Unfortunately for India, sound and sober Indian opinion seldom finds vocal expression.

Emboldened, therefore, by the effect created upon uninformed minds and cherishing the fallacious hope that their impassioned words may cause consternation in this country, Swarajist leaders are declaring their goal to be an independent India. One of the most prominent of these gentlemen, a well-known Bengali politician, in his presidential address to a conference at Poona, recently described the means by which this end was to be achieved. Non-co-operation and boycott on a national scale, would, he said, be possible when the national will was roused. The movement would reach its climax in a general strike or *hartal* coupled with a boycott of British goods, and there would be some form of civil disobedience. There would thus be a paralysis of administration and possibly of foreign trade and commerce. The bureaucracy would then be forced to yield to the demands of "the people's representatives."

The doctrine thus expounded has been preached from many platforms, and it has been made apparent that the industrial classes are regarded by extremist politicians as mere pawns in a sordid and ignoble game. Soviet Russia watches this development with malicious satisfaction, and though hitherto Bolshevist intrigue has failed of its main purpose in India, the danger of civil commotion with all its terrible concomitants is ever present.

The great work of reconstruction carried on under British administration has been impeded in recent years by mischievous and dangerous agitations, and to-day reckless men, who have been justly described by the Viceroy, Lord Irwin, as "false friends" of India, are clamouring for the severance of the British connexion.

What would happen, asked a distinguished Punjabi soldier, Colonel Sir Umar Hyat Khan, in the Council of State, if the British were to leave India? "The Punjab," he said, "would take as large a portion of the country as is near it; Nepal would take another part, and the Ruling Chiefs would take all the territory round them, and so on, until perhaps our friends from the Frontier would come down upon us and sweep us, or perhaps another Eastern nation might attack our seaports." Can it be imagined that the truth of this word picture is not realised by the political orators who expatiate on the necessity of expelling the British? In the hour of danger the value of the British soldier has again and again been publicly acknowledged. In 1919, when an attempted invasion of India by Afghanistan led to the death of many brave British and Indian soldiers in the grim regions of the North-West Frontier, a Bengali journal which is an inveterate and vehement critic of the existing regime in India, almost hysterically called for a cessation of political agitation and for united

support for the Government lest the success of the fierce invaders from the North should bring trouble into the lives of Indians yet unborn.

While, then, the idea of driving the British out of India by force is an idle phantasy, there is grave danger to that country in the agitations set on foot by reckless politicians, who after inflaming the passions of the masses by mendacious propaganda, have not the power, even if they have the inclination, to check the excesses committed by their dupes. The injury inflicted upon the people of India by agitation in the past ten years is incalculable. From the North-West Frontier to Malabar in the far south, and from the Bombay Presidency to Assam there have been witnessed scenes of disorder and bloodshed, often accompanied by barbarous atrocities, to say nothing of widespread destruction of property. No Constitutional reforms within the bounds of reason will satisfy the men whose utterances have been instrumental in causing outbreaks of violence. Their interest in the economic condition of the masses is usually perfunctory and incidental to the agitation of the moment. It may be hoped, therefore, that the policy of attempting to placate the implacable which has too often been prominent in high places has now been definitely abandoned.

In considering the future of India, the natural and laudable desire of responsible Indians to have

an increasing share in the government of their country has to be kept actively in mind. It has equally to be remembered that Western conceptions of government have not the appeal to Oriental peoples that we are prone to believe. That truth has found repeated expression of late and it is likely to be impressed on Sir John Simon and his colleagues. That a strong central Government must be maintained in order to facilitate stability and progress in India is beyond all doubt. The position of the Indian States, whose Princes rule over 72,000,000 subjects, will also have to receive fuller recognition than has been accorded to it in the past.

The task entrusted to the Simon Commission has been described by Lord Birkenhead as a momentous one, and, in view of the vast issues involved, it is essential, in the interests both of the Indian people and of Britain, that those who will have the final decision on the recommendations which the Commission will put forward should possess some clear conception of the achievements of the British in India, the complexity of the Indian problem as it exists to-day, and the danger of embarking on ill-considered experiments in a country which, so far from being homogeneous, is unhappily rent by communal and religious differences. The Government of India Act of 1919, which embodied the present Constitution, was passed with unanimity

by Parliament. But it is hardly too much to say that very few members of the House of Commons realised the implications of the changes to which they assented with the generous hope that they were inaugurating a new era of contentment for India. And how many members of the present House could give an intelligible account of the events which have passed in that country since the Reforms came into operation? The ideas of the British electorate on Indian affairs are admittedly nebulous, and yet it is they who will have the last word in any fresh decision that may be made.

In the following pages it will be sought to show that India has derived inestimable benefits from the British connection; that the administration of India to-day, while sharing the imperfections inherent in all human institutions, is inspired by honesty of purpose and high ideals of duty; and that any weakening of the links which join the destinies of Britain and India would be pregnant with evil possibilities for both countries. The working of the Reformed Constitution will also be examined and the genesis of the many outbreaks of violence that have occurred in recent years will be discussed.

Evidence will, moreover, be cited to illustrate the difficulties which British administrators have had to face in the past owing to the prevalence of deep-rooted customs inconsistent with social

and economic progress, and to show that these customs still form a grave obstacle to India's advance in material prosperity.

The Royal Commission on Agriculture in India, presided over by the Marquis of Linlithgow, has made many important recommendations for increasing the agricultural wealth of the country and raising the status of the cultivator. The Commission's voluminous report, which will be briefly discussed, shows evidence of painstaking enquiry and well-balanced judgment, and while the picture of village life in India which it presents is familiar to British officers who have worked in the districts, the facts put forward deserve far wider publicity than is afforded by the pages of a Blue Book. It is evident that the provision of great financial resources would be necessary in order to give full effect to the Commission's recommendations, and objection to enhanced taxation is more pronounced in India than in countries where the fiscal burdens of the people are much more onerous. It may be hoped, however, that the proposals made will bear fruit in time, and in any event the Commission has been able to focus attention on the real and vital problems of the Indian masses. The Indian villager possesses many attractive qualities, and British officers who have served India, and indeed all who know the hard-working peasant, will sincerely trust that his lot in life may be

made easier as a result of the labours of the Commission.

The attitude of the Swarajists towards the enquiry has been characteristic. The Commission was made the subject of a gibe by the political head of the party when it was appointed, and upon the presentation of its report the leading Swarajist journal declared that it had been called into being with the ulterior motive of causing a set-back to the non-co-operation movement and creating a cleavage between the classes and the masses. It was also, according to this veracious commentator, intended to find ways and means to supply British manufacturers with India's raw materials and "to give the British customer his daily foodstuffs." The Commission, it may be observed, included four Indian members of standing and repute.

I

A MYTHICAL INDIA

> "I see in some quarters a disposition again to-day to repeat what I regard as the nonsensical statement, that when the British first went to India they found her united and prosperous, and that they have made her to-day poor and disunited. It would be impossible to find in any connection so complete a travesty of the facts of history."—EARL WINTERTON, *Under-Secretary of State for India, in the House of Commons, July* 9, 1925.

THE legend of a Golden Age of India which ended with the advent of the British has no foundation. Nor is there any basis in fact for the assertion that an idyllic system of village government existed until it was destroyed by the newcomers from Europe. The evidence available regarding the lot of the people of India during the centuries which preceded the rise of the British power shows that the masses were steeped in misery.

There was splendour in the palace of the ruler and hopeless poverty in the hut of the peasant. Pelsart, the head of the Dutch factory at Agra, writing in 1626, declared that the life of the people could not adequately be described, "for here is the home of stark want and the dwelling-place of bitter woe." The status of workmen.

peasants and shopkeepers, he said, differed very little from voluntary slavery. If an Imperial officer wanted a workman, the man was not asked if he were willing to come, but was seized in his house, or in the street, well beaten if he should dare to raise any objection, and in the evening paid half his wages, or perhaps nothing at all. The shopkeepers, according to Pelsart, were better off than the workmen, and some of them were even well-to-do. But they must not let the fact be seen, or they would be the victims of trumped-up charges and their property would be legally confiscated, for informers swarmed like flies round the officials, perjuring themselves when necessary in order to remain in favour. Bernier, writing in the second half of the seventeenth century, stated that even a considerable proportion of good land remained untilled owing to want of labourers, many of whom perished in consequence of the bad treatment they experienced from their governors. Mr. W. H. Moreland, whose careful researches are of profound value to the student of Indian history, thus describes the position: "Weavers, naked themselves, toiled to clothe others. Peasants, themselves hungry, toiled to feed the towns and cities. India, taken as a unit, parted with useful commodities in exchange for gold and silver, or, in other words gave bread for stones. Men and women, living from season to season on the verge of hunger,

could be contented so long as the supply of food held out: when it failed, as it so often did, their hope of salvation was the slave-trader, and the alternatives were cannibalism, suicide or starvation. The only way of escape from that system lay through an increase in production, but this road was barred effectively by the administrative methods in vogue, which penalised production and regarded every indication of increased consumption as a signal for fresh extortion." The many famines which afflicted India during the seventeenth century were attended with indescribable horrors.

Another Dutch trader, van Twist, has left a poignant narrative of the devastation caused over large tracts of the country owing to the failure of the rains. In the great famine of 1630-31 starvation drove people to cannibalism in Gujerat. Men deserted their wives and children. Women sold themselves as slaves. Mothers sold their own offspring, and children, deserted by their parents, sold themselves. Whole families took poison and thus met a common death; others threw themselves into the rivers and so ended their misery. Even in the streets, and still more on journeys by road, men ran great danger of being murdered and eaten.

While the Mogul Empire was undergoing the process of dissolution, the miseries of the unhappy people were accentuated by the horrors of war.

The story is a harrowing one, and can only be touched upon here. In 1739 Nadir Shah, the Persian conqueror, descended from the North and captured the Imperial City of Delhi. During the Persian occupation a rumour was spread abroad that Nadir Shah was dead. This report led to a rising of the inhabitants, whereupon the Persian king ordered a general massacre which lasted for nine hours. After a stay of fifty-eight days in Delhi, he left for Persia, taking with him enormous wealth which had been extorted from all classes of the population. In 1757 Delhi was again the scene of massacre and plunder, the Durrani Afghan, Ahmad Shah, having invaded India and adopted the traditional methods of the victors of that day. A curious example of the grotesque exaggeration of modern political oratory was provided in recent years by a member of the Indian Legislature, who, in denouncing a measure of which he did not approve, compared the Government of India to Nadir Shah.

With the extension of the British power large areas of country were freed from the excesses of marauders. But it was long before the whole of India emerged from the welter of rapine and war. The early part of the nineteenth century was marked by conflicts between the British and the Marathas, and Calcutta has a reminder in the Maratha Ditch of the raids of these fierce horsemen into Bengal. It is noteworthy that during

this period the inhabitants of territories outside the areas subject to the British, who had suffered from the oppression and cruelties of plundering bands, declared that they had a right to British protection. The directors of the East India Company, so far from desiring to extend their jurisdiction, were averse from accepting fresh responsibilities. But the consequence of their policy of non-intervention created an impossible situation.

In 1816 the widespread depredations of the Pindaris impelled the Governor-General, Lord Hastings, to decisive action. The Pindaris, who first settled in Central India, were banditti of the most ferocious type. Their greed and cruelty defied description. They descended in bands, sometimes numbering several thousands, upon towns and villages, committed unspeakable outrages and destroyed what property they could not carry away. A climax was reached when they raided in force the East India Company's territory in the Northern Sircars. It is recorded that during this raid they plundered 339 villages, killed 182 persons and tortured 3,600 others. On receiving reports of their atrocities Lord Hastings, deeply moved by the harrowing stories which had reached him, decided that stern measures must be resorted to in order to end an intolerable evil. In his Journal, which was subsequently published, the Governor-General cited

a letter he had received describing the horrors experienced by the people of the Guntur Sircar. A village was surrounded by Pindaris, and terrified by the fate that had befallen the people of other districts, the men decided upon the desperate expedient of burning themselves with their wives and children. Hundreds of women in other villages, unable to endure existence after the infamies they had suffered, put an end to their lives. All the young girls were carried off, "tied three or four together like calves on a horse to be sold."

In order to suppress the Pindaris and to cope with any developments that might follow systematic operations against these marauders, an army of some 120,000 men was mobilised, including 13,000 Europeans. The campaign was pursued with relentless vigour, and by the early part of 1818 organised opposition by the Pindaris had come to an end. But the operations undertaken led to a fierce conflict with the Marathas, with whom the Pindaris had had close relations, and the campaign terminated in a settlement which ensured British supremacy in the Maratha country.

It was with no visions of territorial aggrandisement that the British originally entered into relations with India. The East India Company was a body of merchant adventurers; its primary object was the purchase of Indian goods and their

sale in Europe. The export trade in Indian merchandise which it thus established was of direct benefit to the Indian producer as well as to the Company.

While the directors of the East India Company set their faces against the intervention of their servants in Indian affairs, the unsettled state of the country and the chaos arising from internecine warfare made a continuation of this attitude impossible. Hence the creation of what is now the Indian Empire. The most recent extension of British rule dates from 1856, when the annexation of Oudh was decided upon in consequence of the prevalence in that kingdom of terrible and growing misrule. The Punjab had been annexed by Lord Dalhousie in 1849. He resorted to this step on the ground that it was necessary for the establishment of peace over an extensive area. There was, he said, no government in the Punjab, and if he had not proclaimed a distinct policy, the country would have fallen into a state of disturbance and utter anarchy. The prosperity of the Punjab to-day, after less than eighty years of British administration, testifies to the wisdom and the energy of those who have participated in the work of reconstruction and development.

II

BRITISH MEASURES OF DELIVERANCE

"YET such things exist after 150 years of British rule"—how often is this the prelude to a dissertation on the sins of omission and commission of the administrators of India. It may possibly be that the cold weather critics from England who after a brief tour through India find so little to commend in our administration and so much to condemn, could, if subjected to cross-examination, give an intelligible account of the extent of British rule in that country a century and a half ago. But it is charitable to assume that they are not familiar with the obstacles which a handful of British officials had to face before they could even begin to provide India with amenities now regarded as elementary in settled countries of the West. Some years ago an eminent English physician was called in to treat an Indian ruler who had been attacked by a stubborn disease. Most friendly relations existed between the physician and his distinguished patient, but the Prince became restive owing to the slowness of his recovery, and in the end the Englishman was

impelled to say with a sigh, "What the Maharaja wants is a magician, and I am only a doctor."

If British officials had been magicians they might have brought India up to the standard demanded by their critics. But they are only men, and as men they are to be judged. They have made mistakes and miscalculations, but of their work in India as a whole their countrymen have no reason to be ashamed.

Less than a century has passed since Lord William Bentinck penned his famous pronouncement on *suttee*, a rite which involved the immolation of Hindu widows on the funeral pyres of their husbands. The Government as it existed in the early years of the nineteenth century has been charged with timidity in permitting that terrible practice to continue. The critics may have been right, but it is clear from the words of Lord William Bentinck himself, that grave apprehension existed in many minds lest a measure which was opposed to the deep-rooted convictions of the Hindus might precipitate an upheaval that would prove disastrous in its results. Even that enlightened Indian reformer Raja Ram Mohan Roy expressed the opinion to the Governor-General that the practice might be suppressed quietly and unobservedly by placing increased difficulties in the way of its observance and by the indirect agency of the police. He feared that any public enactment would give rise to general

unrest, and that the reasoning would be: "While the English were contending for power, they deemed it politic to allow universal toleration and to respect our religion, but having obtained the supremacy, their first act is a violation of their profession, and the next will probably be, like the Mahomedan conquerors, to force upon us their own religion." Lord William Bentinck happily was convinced that the abolition of *suttee* would appeal to enlightened Hindus, and that when the excitement caused by his decision to abolish it had passed away the Hindu community would "see that there can be no inconsistency in the ways of Providence, that to the command received as divine by all races of men 'No innocent blood shall be spilt,' there can be no exception." It could not, he said, be a dishonest ambition that the Government of which he formed part "should have the credit of an act which is to wash out a foul stain upon British rule and to stay the sacrifice of humanity and justice to a doubtful expediency." He felt that he would be guilty of little less than "multiplied murder" if he hesitated to perform the solemn obligation that lay upon him.

The fears of widespread troubles as a result of the prohibition proved to be unfounded. The opposition in Bengal took a more characteristic form. A deputation of Bengali gentlemen waited upon Lord William to express their strong dissent,

but obtained no satisfaction from him. Meanwhile a committee of protest had been formed, and over eight hundred signatures were appended to a petition to the Privy Council for the restoration of *suttee*. Raja Ram Mohan Roy, who had proceeded to England, threw all his great influence into the opposition to the appeal, and the Privy Council, after listening to the eloquent arguments of the lawyers against "interference with liberty of conscience," rejected the petition.

The edict abolishing *suttee* throughout what then constituted British India came into operation in December, 1829. In the previous year there had been 464 cases of the immolation of Hindu widows in Bengal, where the practice was widely prevalent; indeed, as Mr. Edward Thompson states in his interesting study of the subject, there were instances of the burning of a score or even two score women with one quite unimportant man. But the rite continued to be practised in large areas in Northern and Western India which were outside British jurisdiction. The policy of the Government henceforth was described in Lord Dalhousie's famous minute of 1856, in which he reviewed his administration of India. In the time of those who preceded him, he said, great progress had been made in persuading all Indian princes to unite in denouncing the rite and in punishing those who should disregard the prohibition. The Government of India,

since 1848, had only to follow up the measures of preceding years. When *suttee* occurred in an independent State, no opportunity of remonstrating had been lost. When it had occurred in any district within British control, no indulgence had been shown to the culprits.

It is disconcerting to find that cases of *suttee* still occur from time to time. Mr. E. C. Allen, late of the Indian Civil Service, recently described a notorious instance at Mainpuri, in the Agra Division, which took place in 1913. Mr. Allen, who was then a Sessions Judge, tried and sentenced a number of the men who were charged with having aided and abetted in the crime. The defence attempted to show that the accused were passive spectators; that neither they, the widow, nor anyone else had fired the funeral pyre, which was set alight by mysterious fire from heaven. More recently still, in June, 1928, the Patna High Court had before it the appeals of ten men who had been sentenced by a Sessions Judge to various terms of imprisonment for abetting in a case of *suttee*, and for unlawful assembly. The evidence was to the effect that a young Brahman woman had followed the body of her husband to a burning ghat on the banks of the Ganges, announcing her intention of performing *suttee*. The police vainly sought to dissuade her from her purpose, and when the inspector threatened to arrest her, the widow's relatives undertook to take her back to

her village. This, however, proved to be a ruse on their part; the woman was conveyed instead to the burning ghat, and when the police again sought to intervene they met with threats from the accused men. The crowd by this time numbered about 5,000 and, regarding the situation as out of hand, the inspector decided not to make the arrest. Accordingly, after bathing in the Ganges, the widow seated herself on her husband's pyre, and soon afterwards her clothes burst out into flames. As no one had been seen by the people to apply a light to the pyre, the crowd believed they had witnessed a miracle and raised the cry of "Glory to *Suttee*." The woman later leaped into the river, and after attempts on the part of the police to rescue her had been frustrated, she left the water of her own accord and was taken to a hospital where she died.

It is regarded as inconceivable that *suttee* would again become an established custom if it were no longer a criminal offence. The history of the rite and of its suppression, however, tends to illustrate the nature of the problems with which the administrators of British India had to grapple, and provides an eloquent commentary on many of the impatient and uninformed criticisms of our administration.

Another task which fell to the lot of the British was the suppression of the *Thags*, the most evil association of criminals that ever afflicted India.

These men, who were banded together for the purpose of murdering and robbing peaceful travellers, claimed that in perpetrating most atrocious crimes they were performing a religious duty. The famous Colonel Sleeman, who played a leading part in their suppression and interrogated many of them in prison, declared that "there is not among them one who doubts the divine origin of the system of *Thuggee*, not one who doubts that he and all who have followed the trade of murder with the prescribed rites and observances were acting under the immediate orders and auspices of the Goddess Devee, Durga, Kalee or Bhawanee, as she is indifferently called, and consequently there is not one who feels the slightest remorse for the murders which he may, in the course of his vocation, have perpetrated or assisted in perpetrating. . . . He meditates his murders without any misgivings, he perpetrates them without any emotions of pity, and he remembers them without any feelings of remorse."

The history of the *Thags* and of the methods they employed as recounted by Sleeman is a terrible record of depravity and crime. For many years up to 1829, when their suppression was decided upon by Lord William Bentinck, the *Thags* traversed every great and frequented road from the Himalayas to the Nerbudda river, and from the Ganges to the Indus. What they regarded as religious rites preceded their crimes,

and sacrifices to their goddess followed the murder and burial of their victims. The methods they pursued was to traverse the country in gangs of ostensibly peaceful wayfarers, and to accompany on the road the travellers whom they had selected as their victims. Often they would spend days with the unfortunate people in order to gain their confidence. Then, when the appointed spot had been reached, the *Thags* would suddenly fall upon the doomed persons and strangle them with a cord or cloth. Owing to the murders of sepoys on the road by *Thags*, the Commander-in-Chief was impelled to issue an Army Order warning Indian soldiers to be on their guard against the wiles of strangers who sought their company when they were proceeding on leave to visit their families.

The disturbed state of the country had long facilitated the operations of these criminals, and though in the earlier years of the nineteenth century a number of gangs had been broken up, difficulty was often experienced in securing the conviction of the members. Lord William Bentinck, feeling that the time had come when the *Thags* must be relentlessly put down as a danger to the community decided upon an extensive plan of operations to that end. Captain Sleeman, as he then was, was appointed General Superintendent for the Suppression of *Thag* Associations, and in the course of six years the work proved

successful. Two thousand *Thags* had been arrested and tried; 1,500 convicted and sentenced to death or transportation. In 167 trials the prisoners were charged with the murder of 947 persons, but Sleeman affirmed that the murders for which the assassins were actually indicted "were not commonly more than a hundredth part of the murders they have perpetrated in the course of their career of crime."

British officers engaged in the suppression of the *Thags* remarked that it was painful to observe that landholders of every description were found ready to receive the murderers under their protection, from the desire to share the fruits of their expeditions. The secrecy which attended the nefarious operations of the *Thags* is well illustrated by a statement made by Sleeman himself. A few years prior to the commencement of the systematic suppression of the gangs he was in civil charge of a district in the valley of the Nerbudda, and he was convinced during this period that no ordinary robbery or theft could be committed without his becoming acquainted with it. Yet it was subsequently discovered that a gang of assassins lived within four hundred yards of his court, and that the extensive groves of a village only one stage away was one of the greatest places of murder in all India. The bodies of one hundred travellers who had fallen victims to the *Thags* lay buried in and around the groves of Mundesur.

III

CAUSES OF INDIAN POVERTY

"Our industrial schools, our experimental farms, our co-operative banks and numerous endeavours at economic uplift prove that we are keenly alive to the need of helping India to get bread. But a great unbiassed economist came to the conclusion that 'almost every economic ill in India is rooted in religious and social custom.' Every time you try to lift India economically, you run into a custom that baulks you."—"*The Christ of the Indian Road*," *by the* Rev. STANLEY JONES (*an American missionary*).

WE have seen that the deliverance of India from internal warfare was not completely effected until comparatively recent times. That deliverance, in itself, was an inestimable blessing to the common people. The suppression of *suttee*, the extirpation of the *Thags* and the establishment of security from famine are among the notable achievements of British rule. India, indeed, is advancing in material prosperity, but the task of improving the economic position of the masses and of promoting their physical welfare presents difficulties which are beyond the conception of those who are not familiar with Indian conditions. The population of British India is nearly 250 millions, of whom

the vast majority are dependent on agriculture, and live in the 498,527 villages which are scattered throughout a vast sub-continent. If this great population were homogeneous and animated by an intelligent desire for material progress the task of the administrators of the country would be enormously simplified. Not only is that aspiration absent, but the greater part of the inhabitants of India are wedded to customs which present a formidable barrier to their prosperity and a grave obstacle to the improvement of the public health.

Nearly 700 out of every 1,000 of the population are Hindus, and the objection of the Hindu to the taking of life leads to the destruction of a substantial proportion of the crops by wild animals and birds. The monkey and the peacock and his harem enjoy special immunity on religious grounds. Plague, which is a terrible source of disease and death, is caused by the rat flea, and the black rat, which is the source of infection, consumes grain to the value of at least £16 million annually.

Yet Major Norman White, of the Indian Medical Service, an eminent authority on plague, declared in an official report to the Government of India, that of all preventable diseases none is more preventable than is bubonic plague. "If educated people," he wrote, "would unite in an effort to inculcate far and wide some idea of the significance of the statement that ten million

people in India have fallen victims to plague; of the economic loss that India has suffered from the ravages of plague; of the wholesale disorganization to which industry is liable for several months in severe plague years; of the absolute dependence of plague epidemics on rat infestation, and of the very considerable financial loss suffered as a result of the depredations of rats, the Indian plague problem would find a ready solution."

The report of the Royal Commission on Agriculture in India directs attention to two curious facts related to the problem under discussion. In dealing with sericulture, the report points out that where silkworms can be reared a valuable subsidiary industry is available to the villager; the more so that it provides what is essentially a spare-time occupation. In certain areas and amongst certain classes, however, there are religious prejudices against the processes this industry involves. In regard to the development of a poultry industry, which would be of great value to the consumer and to the cultivator alike, similar prejudices exist, though some evidence is available to show that these prejudices are not incapable of being overcome. Mr. Hubert Calvert, a member of the Commission, again, in his valuable work, *The Wealth and Prosperity of the Punjab*, remarks that the growing of vegetables is looked upon in that Province as degrading to a real agriculturist, and that *malis* (market

gardeners) are actually giving up vegetables for wheat cultivation in order to raise their social status.

Great economic loss arises from the Hindu veneration for the cow. The provision of an adequate supply of milk at a comparatively low price would be a valuable boon to India, and would prove a factor in reducing infant mortality. The yield of milk from the average Indian cow is extremely low, and the religious tenets of the people constitute an obstacle to the improvement of the breed and also lead to the consumption by animals of no economic value of fodder which is badly needed for useful cattle. It has been estimated by a competent authority that the number of these useless animals is not less than 14,000,000 and that in the course of six years, which is taken as their average life, they consume fodder of an aggregate value of about £100,000,000.

A census taken in 1924-5 gave the total number of cattle and buffaloes in British India as 151 millions. The average Indian cow is a poor emaciated creature owing to the methods adopted by the agriculturist in dealing with his stock. In India, the Royal Commission on Agriculture remark, the custom that an animal not actually working should find its food in the jungle when there is no fodder available renders it unusual for the owner to make any sacrifice for the well-being of his cattle. Shortage of fodder is often

accentuated by droughts. It is suggested that fear of loss by disease, moreover, causes many cultivators to keep more stock than is necessary, a custom which increases the difficulty of providing a proper supply of fodder. Lord Linlithgow and his colleagues, after exhaustive enquiry, arrived at the conclusion that India has acquired so large a cattle population, and the size of the animals in many areas is so small, that the task of arresting the process of deterioration and of improving the breed has become a gigantic one. Yet all who have studied the subject will agree with their pronouncement that the prosperity of Indian agriculture is largely dependent on the improvement of the country's cattle.

The loss of cattle through disease must be a crushing burden. It is one of the main causes of borrowing on usurious terms from the village moneylender. Rinderpest is a most fruitful source of cattle mortality, but the methods of stamping out this scourge which have proved successful in European countries cannot be utilised in the Indian villages owing to the religious beliefs of the bulk of the cultivators. In the Punjab alone between £2,250,000 and £3,000,000 annually is believed to be lost through preventable cattle disease.

The agricultural indebtedness of India has been estimated at from £400,000,000 to £500,000,000 sterling, on which very high rates of interest are

usually paid. The cultivator regards debt rather as a permanent feature of his life than as an unfortunate incident. That his indebtedness may partially be due to his legitimate requirements is true, but as has already been shown, mortality among his cattle frequently drives the villager to the moneylender, and cattle mortality could be materially reduced. Extravagant expenditure on ceremonial occasions is a common cause of indebtedness. On the occasion of a wedding, for instance, a man will borrow a sum equal, perhaps, to more than the whole family income for a year, and he may spend the remainder of his life in trying to satisfy the claims of the lender.

The evidence in support of the improvidence of the unfortunate cultivator is overwhelming; it has been emphasised by many investigators whose knowledge and judgment are beyond dispute. In 1892, after having examined the assessment papers of over 9,000 villages in the Central Provinces, Sir J. B. Fuller found that indebtedness arose from "sheer wastefulness and extravagance."

Mr. K. L. Datta, who carried out an enquiry into the rise in prices in India, in a report issued in 1915, again, wrote: "In a good year his (the cultivator's) ignorance and improvidence make him spend the whole of his surplus on marriages and festivities, and his extravagance on such occasions often leads him even in good years to

the doors of the moneylender. A ryat would stop at no extravagance in marrying one of his children or performing any funeral or social ceremony, to show more ostentation than his fellows." The Famine Commission of 1880 arrived at the conclusion that, in the Punjab, expenditure on marriage and other ceremonies was one of the most prominent causes of indebtedness. This problem is the subject of an illuminating chapter in Mr. M. L. Darling's notable book, *The Punjab Peasant in Prosperity and Debt.* The writer, a well-known member of the Indian Civil Service, and an eminent authority on rural economics, cites a case within his own knowledge where a co-operator spent Rs. 1,300 on marrying a son, and Rs. 400 in the next year on marrying a daughter. These combined amounts represented 17 years' rental of his holding of 10 acres; and what made it worse was that he was already in debt to the extent of Rs. 1,500.

It seems clear that the non-productive portion of the debt of the agriculturist is very much greater than the productive portion, and where the cultivator's holding has increased in value owing to the construction of irrigation works and railways, the facilities for extravagant borrowing offered to him constitute a temptation which he is often unable to resist. The alarming rate at which land was being transferred from the

possession of the agricultural classes to the hands of moneylenders has led in several Provinces to the passing of legislation to check that undesirable process, but the process still continues, and the Linlithgow Commission has definitely expressed the opinion that enquiry should once more be instituted into the extent to which the hereditary cultivating class is being expropriated by those who do not themselves cultivate the land.

In Bihar and Orissa a system prevails by which landlords, in return for a loan, secure the services of a labourer for life, and as a fresh loan is granted on the occasion of the marriage of his son, the condition of servitude becomes hereditary. Legislation directed against this system has not so far proved effective, and further measures appear to be essential if the system is to be suppressed.

The wealth of the Indian moneylender is proverbial. In the Punjab, which, under British administration, has become the richest agricultural Province in the country, it is estimated that the 40,000 moneylenders derive an aggregate income of between £6,000,000 and £9,000,000 from the people. The economic loss of the Province through litigation is placed at about £8,000,000.

The passion for litigation which is so prevalent in India may, indeed, be cited as a cause of grave economic evils. A rich Indian will "run" a

lawsuit for sport, just as a rich Englishman will run a racehorse; while among the agricultural masses a case in the Courts gives a spice of excitement to life. Unscrupulous persons take advantage of this weakness of the people and foment disputes for their own pecuniary gain. In a large proportion of the civil suits the amount actually in dispute is small; in 1925, for instance, over a million of these suits were for sums of less than 50 rupees. But the total cost to the community is a very serious matter; in the Punjab, it is estimated that some 2,500,000 persons attend the courts in a normal year, and that the loss of time is not less than ten million days. In fact, as Mr. Calvert has observed, "If the time, energy, intelligence and skill devoted to litigation could be diverted to medical relief, one of the biggest problems of the Province would be solved." Many of the suits arise from the claims of moneylenders, and a vicious circle is established, since litigation constitutes a fruitful source of borrowing. Meanwhile the legal fraternity grows in numbers and in wealth. Thirty-two years ago there were 360 lawyers in the Punjab; to-day there are over 1,200, and the number is apparently still increasing. Mr. Darling refers to a case which vividly illustrates the trivial causes from which litigation arises and the ruinous results which may follow. A villager, in a moment of absentmindedness, allowed his bullocks to stray

into his neighbour's crops. The neighbour appearing on the scene, there was the inevitable volley of abuse followed up by blows, which, however, did no great harm. The injured party resorted to the police, and paid Rs. 45 to have the case registered, as it was a trivial affair with which the police had no concern. His next step was to obtain a certificate from the local sub-assistant surgeon that serious injuries had been inflicted, but, as the damage done was small, Rs. 190 had to be paid before the certificate was forthcoming. Alarmed at the issue of the certificate the other party bestirred himself and commenced spending money to obtain evidence to rebut the charge. At this stage, before proceedings in court had been commenced, Mr. Darling's informant intervened and succeeded in compromising the case, which ended in mutual apologies and an expenditure of Rs. 409.

The report of the Civil Justice Committee, appointed by Lord Reading, provides a mass of astonishing information regarding the abuse of the law courts. The persistence with which an Indian, even of the enlightened classes, will follow up a suit from court to court is amazing. Colonel B. O. Roe, formerly a District and Sessions Judge, who was a co-opted member of the Commission, once asked an Indian country gentleman why he had taken a case to the High Court when he had no possible chance of success. His

reply was that his *izzat* demanded it. *Izzat* is an expression which it is difficult to translate. The nearest word in use in this country is perhaps prestige: Sir Walter Lawrence, in *The India we Served*, defines it as "honour, repute and the world's esteem." Colonel Roe relates an incident which indicates what *izzat* means to the Indian. At a garden party which he attended there was an Indian gentleman who was the centre of considerable interest. On enquiring the reason, Colonel Roe was told that he had just had a lawsuit which was carried to the Privy Council. Did he win it? Colonel Roe asked. "Oh, no, he lost all right," was the reply. "But think of the *izzat*, a case before the Privy Council."

The "fragmentation" of holdings, due to the laws of inheritance, is another obstacle to agricultural prosperity. Under the laws in question, on the death of the head of a family the land he possessed is distributed among his sons, and this process ultimately leads to extraordinary results. In the Punjab there are fields over a mile long and only a few yards wide, and cases have been discovered where a villager's holding was situated in two hundred different places. Sometimes the process of sub-division has been carried so far that cultivation of the land has actually become unprofitable.

India has been a sink of the precious metals from time immemorial; the hoarding of gold

and silver or their conversion into ornaments has deprived the country of the capital which might have been utilised for productive purposes and have given a great stimulus to industrial prosperity. The drain of gold and silver to the East, indeed, is mentioned by the writers of the later Roman Empire, and it was a matter of adverse comment in England in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. In recent years this practice has led to strong opposition being offered to the establishment of a gold currency in India, based on the fear that the coins would either be hoarded or melted down, and that the consequent accentuation of the drain on the world's gold resources would lead to the restriction of banking credit in Western countries, a development which would react on India's trade prosperity. Some idea of the extent of the absorption of the precious metals by India may be gathered from the fact that the net imports of gold in 1924-25 amounted to about 74 crores of rupees, or over £55,000,000 at the present rate of exchange, and the corresponding imports of silver to 20 crores or £15,000,000. These figures are a suitable commentary on the complaint that India is wretchedly poor and also on the rhetorical flights of that section of Indian politicians who incessantly denounce the "exploitation" of the country by British capitalists. The truth is that India is possessed of enormous natural resources, and that

if the wealth sunk in hoards or converted into ornaments had been intelligently applied to industrial development there would have been no necessity for the importation of capital from abroad. As it is, India owes her railway system, her irrigation works, and her jute, coal and tea industries to British enterprise, the only major industries established by Indians being cotton manufacturing, mainly in the Bombay Presidency, and the Tata Iron and Steel works at Jamshedpur. The jute industry has been of great value to the cultivators of Bengal, while the tea gardens have provided profitable employment for hundreds of thousands of landless labourers and given them opportunities of advancement which they would never have enjoyed in the over-populated areas in which they were born.

Within the past few years it has been possible to raise Government loans within the country. Indians have, moreover, acquired large interests in jute mills through the purchase of shares, and they are also beginning to concern themselves in the cultivation of tea. These signs augur well for the future, and are welcomed alike by the Government of India and by the British mercantile community.

In discussions on public health, critics who point to the high rate of mortality in India usually take no account of factors beyond the

control of Government which foster disease and hasten death. The seclusion of women, the custom of early marriage, and the practices followed at childbirth exercise a potent influence in increasing mortality. These questions have been freely ventilated of late, and it is not necessary to enlarge upon them here. The insanitary condition of the water supplies of the villages, which might be remedied by the people themselves, is also a serious drawback to the health of the rural population, while the immunity too often enjoyed by the black rat, which spreads bubonic plague, adds to the death rate. The evidence given before the Linlithgow Commission on this subject by Lieut.-Colonel Grahame, Public Health Commissioner with the Government of India, is of especial interest. Colonel Grahame expressed the belief that it was doubtful whether any Government in the world could show a better record of State aid in regard to medical education and medical relief than the Government of India. "In the matter of public health, however," he declared, "we are at once up against the rooted prejudices of a highly conservative congeries of people in whom, in many instances, religious practices enter largely into domestic affairs, especially in regard to illness and nutrition. It will, therefore, be readily understood why the deliberate policy of Government in public health matters should have been to lead rather than to

compel, and to propagate with a view to creating in time a public health conscience."

Educated Indians gratefully recognise the value of the services rendered to their country by Western medical scientists. The work of Sir Ronald Ross in regard to malaria and that of Sir Leonard Rogers in regard to cholera and leprosy are famous throughout the scientific world, and, with other achievements of members of the Indian Medical Service, have proved of incalculable benefit to India.

IV

A RECORD OF PROGRESS

> "We wish for the Indians immunity from famine and pestilence, steady progress in agriculture and industry, and a safe and material advance in social conditions."—*His Majesty The King Emperor.*

THE British administrators of India would have been inhuman if they had supinely tolerated the ills which afflict the Indian masses. So far from adopting an attitude of indifference, the members of the Indian Civil Service and those who have served India as Viceroys and Governors have worked strenuously for the people, and though blunders in policy have been made, the devotion of the district officer to the peasantry has never wavered. In times of famine and pestilence the members of the Indian Services have worked with untiring fidelity among the people, even unto death, and the efforts made by the "bureaucracy" to rescue the cultivator from debt and to secure to him protection from oppression, deserve generous appreciation from their fellow countrymen. Even to-day, when the disseminators of anti-British slanders are incessant in their attacks on the Services, the district officer over large

areas of country possesses the confidence and even the affection of the peasantry whom he serves, and it is the pens of British officials that have provided the most illuminating literature on the troubles, the difficulties and the needs of the villager. The work of administration is now being shared in an increasing degree by Indians, and, notably in the security Services, Indian officers have shown courage and fortitude which could not be surpassed by men of any other race. It must be remembered that the Indian Civil Service comprises a very small number of men, considering the enormous extent of the country and the vast population committed to its charge. It now consists of 1,250 members in all, of whom 330 are Indians, while the population of British India, as we have seen, is nearly 250,000,000.

In India, moreover, Government is expected to initiate and to carry out every movement for the advancement of the people in material prosperity, for the improvement of agriculture, for education and for the preservation of the public health. The wealthy landlord who seeks to promote the interests of agriculture by example and by precept is a *rara avis*. Men of education, moreover, are seldom found in the villages. This fact was emphasised by the members of the Linlithgow Commission, who wrote in their report: "He (the villager) lacks leadership. No one

corresponding to the squire, the doctor and the parson is to be found in an Indian village. The educated man is not willing to live his life in a village except in a few rare cases where ideals of service overcome the absence of social amenities."

The great majority of the vocal politicians in India are townsmen who possess no acquaintance with rural conditions; hence the minor part that agriculture plays in the Central Legislature. In my long experience of the Indian Legislative Assembly I can remember only one measure bearing directly on agriculture introduced by a Swarajist member. This was a Bill for the prohibition of the export of cattle. The statement of "Objects and Reasons" attached, it was remarked at the time, was reminiscent of *Alice in Wonderland*. It set out that "India is an agricultural country," a truism to which no objection could be taken; nor could the statement be challenged that "cattle are essential to the agriculturist and milk to the great bulk of the population." But the assertion which followed was calculated to excite derision: "A large number of cattle has of late been exported every year for the purpose of the trade. This has naturally appreciably raised the prices of cattle and milk. The scarcity of milk is a serious hardship upon the people in general, but its evil results have been most felt in the case of infants.

The great rise in infant mortality during recent years has been distressing. The object of this Bill is to combat these growing evils to some extent by penalising export trade in cattle." Now in the previous year the number of cattle, not necessarily milch cows, exported was 12,600, equal to one head for every 40 villages in India. The idea that these exports were seriously diminishing the milk supply of the country was so ludicrous that nothing more was heard of the Bill. The actual cause of the inadequacy of the milk supply is the low producing capacity of the Indian cow, the average yield of which during the lactation period is 800 lbs., compared with the 12,000 lbs. given by some of the cross-bred animals produced at the Imperial Agricultural Institute at Pusa. It is in this direction that the solution of the problem of the milk supply lies, yet the remedy proposed by the Swarajist townsman was the imprisonment for six months of anyone convicted of the heinous crime of exporting a single head of cattle, a similar penalty to be inflicted on anyone who abetted him.

It has long been realised that measures for improving agriculture in India must fail to achieve their full purpose unless the cultivator is freed from the burden of unproductive debt. This problem is one of great difficulty and complexity, but there is reason to hope that it

is capable of solution through the agency of the system of co-operative credit. The people themselves, except where the co-operative credit society has made its influence felt, accept their heavy indebtedness, with its evil concomitants, as in the natural order of affairs; they are unversed themselves in business methods, and, as we have seen, educated men of public spirit are seldom found in the villages. The moneylender naturally regarded the incursion of the Government's officers into his domain with indignation and hostility; for his trade is one of the most profitable in India. Before the advent of co-operative credit he had the field to himself. He charged interest ranging up to 40 per cent., and even more, on his loans, and he added to his gains and to the indebtedness of the borrower by malpractices of the grossest kind. One of the commonest devices of the village moneylender was to deduct an anna in the rupee from the sum advanced and to charge interest on the full amount. He kept false books in order to cheat his victim, and resorted to other dishonest devices to fill his coffers.

The co-operative credit movement has been the means of delivering many a cultivator from the toils of the usurer, though the work yet to be accomplished is formidable. But the progress already achieved gives promise of much greater things in the future, and it is no exaggeration

to say that the salvation of the Indian agriculturist lies in co-operation.

This beneficent movement was initiated by Government. The evils arising from rural indebtedness were tacitly acquiesced in by the community at large, for they had existed from time immemorial, and in the early stages of the co-operative credit society little support for the innovation was received from the educated classes. The first step towards inaugurating the movement was the decision of the Government of Madras to depute Sir Frederick Nicholson, one of its officers, to enquire into the working of co-operative credit societies in Europe. Sir Frederick's voluminous report was issued in two parts, the first in 1895 and the second in 1897, and it advocated the establishment of co-operative credit societies on the lines of those founded in Germany by Raiffeisen. Experimental societies were formed in the Punjab by Sir Edward Maclagan and Captain Crosthwaite, and in the United Provinces by Mr. Dupernex of the Indian Civil Service. These societies were constituted under the then existing company law, but, as a result of the recommendations of the Famine Commission of 1901, the Co-operative Credit Societies Act was passed in 1904, and active measures were taken to establish the movement on a broad basis. Members of the Indian Civil Service worked with assiduity to promote its success.

Valuable books showing an intimate knowledge of the troubles, the difficulties and the needs of the cultivator have been published by a number of these officials, notably by Mr. H. Calvert, Mr. M. L. Darling and Mr. C. F. Strickland of the Punjab, and the late Major Jack, who made a most interesting study of indebtedness in the Faridpur district of Bengal.

The progress of the movement is shown by the fact that there are now in existence in British India some 67,000 agricultural primary societies, with an aggregate capital of upwards of £18,000,000. The direct relief afforded by the provision of loans at moderate rates of interest is far from being the only benefit conferred by the establishment of the village society. Wherever the movement has taken root, the charges of the moneylender have been reduced, and a new vision of life has been made manifest to the people. Borrowing for non-productive purposes has been sternly discouraged by the members themselves; extravagant expenditure on marriage and other ceremonies is frowned upon, and drunkards and persons of bad character are refused admission to the societies. Money, moreover, has been voted by the societies for the purposes of education and sanitation. One of the main difficulties experienced in educating the rural population is found in the tendency of parents to remove their children from school

before they have acquired sufficient book knowledge to be of any use to them in life. It is, therefore, of special interest that in the Punjab there are 158 co-operative societies with a membership of 7,000 parents, who have pledged themselves to send their children to school for four years continuously, or until they have attained the fourth standard.

The co-operative principle has been extended to other beneficent objects, though the provision of credit for the cultivator on moderate terms is recognised to be the most important function of the co-operative society to-day. The non-credit societies include organizations formed for the promotion of better farming and better living, for fighting malaria, for extending irrigation and for the improvement of the breeds of cattle. Others are devoted to the encouragement of education, to the sale of improved varieties of seed and to the marketing of produce. In Calcutta a co-operative milk union, to which a large number of rural societies are affiliated, has done valuable work both for the producer and the consumer.

A promising effort to check litigation in the Punjab, which is a curse to the Province, was inaugurated by Mr. Calvert, who then held the office of Registrar of Co-operative Societies. In order to enable the people to avoid resorting to the Courts at ruinous expense, Mr. Calvert

formed arbitration societies, which proved a marked success. In 1922 there were 148 of these bodies in existence with nearly 17,000 members, and as the Civil Justice Committee remarked in their report, many of the cases decided related to cattle trespass and boundary disputes, trivial matters which, however, often lead to riots and costly proceedings in the courts. For some reason or other these societies were closed down by Ministerial order, but they have now been re-started and are said to number 27 and to possess a membership of 3,000.

An attempt has been made in the Central Provinces to deal with the problem of fragmentation of holdings by legislation, the Act rendering it possible for consolidation of holdings to be effected in certain areas where a majority of the landholders involved promote a scheme with that purpose in view. In the Punjab the Co-operative Credit Department has applied itself to the problem with substantial success. By means of patient and well-devised propaganda the officers of the Department have been able to induce the owners of many "fragmented" plots to agree to consolidation projects, although the difficulties, owing to the obduracy of short-sighted individuals among the cultivators involved, have frequently been formidable.

India owes a debt of gratitude to Lord Curzon for the deep personal interest he showed in the

indebtedness of the peasantry and for having been instrumental in passing the Act which made possible the creation of the great network of co-operative credit societies that now exists. On the day that the Act came into operation he made an eloquent appeal to the Indian communities to utilise it for the benefit of the most deserving and helpless class in India. "Government," he said, "has played its part. I invite them to play theirs."

When he was leaving India Lord Curzon enumerated the principles by which he had been guided, prominent among these being regard for the welfare of "the Indian poor, the Indian peasant, the patient, humble, silent millions, the 80 per cent. who subsist by agriculture, who know very little of policies, but who profit or suffer by their results, and whom men's eyes, even the eyes of their countrymen, too often forget." Lord Curzon affirmed that the peasant "has been in the background of every policy for which I have been responsible, of every surplus of which I have assisted in the disposition."

The differences which arose between this great Viceroy and Lord Kitchener are still remembered; but how many people outside India have the slightest knowledge of the great measures inaugurated by Lord Curzon for the benefit of the Indian masses?

The East India Company, even in its earlier

days, devoted some attention to the improvement of crops in India. The promotion of agricultural research on an organised basis dates, however, from 1903, when Lord Curzon decided to establish the now famous Agricultural Research Institute at Pusa, in Bihar. It is worthy of note that a generous gift of £30,000 by Mr. Henry Phipps of Chicago, to be utilised for some object of public utility at Lord Curzon's discretion, was applied towards the cost of bringing the Pusa Institute into being. The scientific work carried on at Pusa and at the various establishments of the Provincial Agricultural Departments has substantially enhanced the income of the cultivating classes. So multifarious are the activities of the officers of Pusa and of the Departments that it is impossible to state in figures the value of their achievements. Some idea of what has been done is, however, to be obtained from the annual reviews of Dr. Clouston, Agricultural Adviser to the Government of India, which are full of encouragement for all who are concerned in the welfare of the Indian cultivator. Dr. Clouston's estimates of the value to the agriculturist of the improved varieties of crops introduced as a result of scientific research and experiment are invariably conservative, and as he himself admits, they undoubtedly understate the case. Still, in his latest review, he shows that, according to official statistics, there were

in 1926-27, 8,816,000 acres sown with these new varieties, and taking the increased value of the resultant crops at Rs. 12, or eighteen shillings, per acre, an addition of some £8,000,000 was made in that year to the agricultural wealth of India. These figures do not, however, state the whole truth. The selected varieties are now so widely grown that departmental statistics no longer represent the extent to which they have spread, and many instances can be cited where a far greater increase in the average yield than Rs. 15 per acre is secured.

In the Central Provinces alone the spread of Roseum cotton has added crores of rupees (a crore is equivalent to £750,000) to the profits of the growers, and improved sugar canes introduced in the same Province have given 8,425 lbs. of *gur* (unrefined sugar) per acre against 4,440 lbs. formerly obtained. The introduction during 1926-27 of an improved variety of groundnut in another area raised the value of the cultivators' crop from about eighteen shillings to £4 10s. 0d. per acre. In a recent year 600,000 acres sown with American cotton in the Punjab enhanced the value of the out-turn by nearly £2.000,000, and in Madras the introduction of Cambodia cotton enabled the cultivator to secure from £11 to £15 per acre from land which had previously given a return from £3 to £4 10s. per acre.

Again, the increased value of the yield of 1,400,000 acres of wheat grown from improved seed amounted in a single year to more than £2,000,000. The fame of the wheats produced at Pusa now extends far beyond the confines of India, and the varieties known as Pusa 4 and Pusa 12 have carried off first prizes at agricultural shows in Australia.

The scientific work for the improvement of Indian crops by the production of new varieties thus covers a wide range of agricultural products, affecting cultivation in every part of the country, and it is gratifying to observe that the area under these improved varieties has increased by 75 per cent. during the past three years, progress having been made at the rate of a million and a quarter acres per annum.

It has already been stated that the evolution of valuable crops is only one of the many beneficent activities of the agricultural officers. Unflagging attention is being devoted to checking the ravages of cattle disease and of insect pests, to the provision of better supplies of fodder, to the reclamation of saline lands, to the problem of fertilisers, to agricultural and veterinary education, to the improvement of the breeds of stock and to the introduction of more efficient agricultural implements. The annual loss from insect pests has been estimated at £135,000,000, so there is an enormous field here for the work of the scientist.

It is obvious that the inferiority of the average Indian bovine animal must be a serious obstacle to the economic progress of a country which is primarily dependent upon its agricultural industry. Constant efforts have, therefore, been made both at Pusa and at the Provincial stations to provide a remedy, and it has been shown to be possible to breed cows which yield from five to fifteen times the quantity of milk given by the average Indian cow during the lactation period. Large numbers of good cattle are issued year by year from the Government farms, and valuable bulls are made available to the agriculturists for breeding purposes. Notable results are, moreover, achieved at the Imperial Institute of Animal Industry at Bangalore, where dairy managers are given a practical training on modern lines. This institution also carries on the breeding of stock, and it has an animal nutrition section which conducts research into the question of the proper feeding of cattle. The Bangalore Institute has the advantage of possessing in its head, Mr. William Smith, an enthusiast of ability and energy, who has emphasised in his official reports the fact that the indigenous milk industry is mainly in the hands of men who are not only illiterate and steeped in what might be classed as "trade superstition," and has worked incessantly to provide a remedy for such a deplorable state of affairs.

The bare recital contained in this chapter is sufficient to show that the Agricultural Departments are doing a great work for India, and if as a result of the recommendations of the Linlithgow Commission, adequate financial resources are placed at their disposal, far greater advances will be possible. The Indian peasant, wedded as he is to social and religious customs which retard his economic progress, is ready to adopt new agricultural methods when it has been proved to him by practical demonstration that these methods will beyond all doubt increase his income. The work accomplished in this field by agricultural officers is worthy of the highest praise; their patience, skill and devotion deserve both gratitude and admiration. Sir James Mackenna, a former Agricultural Adviser to the Government of India and a member of the Commission on Agriculture, once declared with truth that, if results of practical value were to be obtained, the agricultural officer must possess a thorough knowledge of Indian agriculture and a sympathetic feeling towards the people. "The cultivator," as he wrote, "is not concerned with the process of discovery. The concrete results of chemical, botanical and bacteriological research must be presented to him in a form which he can readily apply." The number of practical demonstrations carried out annually now runs into many thousands, and in addition hundreds of

agricultural shows are arranged for the benefit of the cultivator. Cinema films have been used of late to supplement this class of work. Experiments have also been made with trains fitted up as travelling exhibitions, designed to bring home to the people the possibilities of improving their economic and physical well-being which may lie within their reach.

Although India is still backward in education, marked advance is being made. Critics who reproach the Government with the prevalence of illiteracy seldom show appreciation of the fact that the obstacles to be surmounted are unparalleled in any other country. It has been aptly said that the "tradition of education" is non-existent save among certain restricted castes or classes. Only in recent times, moreover, has it been grudgingly recognised that the education of females, who number 132 millions in British India, is desirable. Mr. J. A. Richey, formerly Educational Commissioner with the Government of India, in an address to the East India Association in November 1928, mentioned the decision of an important District Board to close all its girls' schools on the ground that female education was a waste of money. Another drawback is found in the bitter opposition of caste Hindus to the admission of the children of "untouchables" to educational institutions maintained by public funds. Divergences of language add to the

difficulties to be surmounted; in the Province of Bihar and Orissa, for example, there are as many as six recognised vernaculars. Again, the rural classes who constitute the great bulk of the inhabitants of India, are only beginning to realise the value of education. The removal of village children from school before they derive any benefit from the instruction provided has been the cause of enormous waste of money and effort. In the end, the adoption of compulsion will, no doubt, prove a solution for this evil, but while Education Acts giving local bodies the option of adopting compulsory measures have been passed in the seven major Provinces, the results, on the whole, have been disappointing. Mr. Richey is of opinion that elementary education is now of such vital importance for the political, social and economic advancement of India that the responsibility for it should be assumed by Government instead of being left in the hands of municipalities and district boards. Still, the number of scholars in publicly recognised institutions is steadily increasing. Within ten years it has risen from some 7,350,000 to over 10,000,000, and the rate of advance is about half a million annually. The progress of the Punjab, in particular, is highly encouraging. Sir George Anderson, Director of Public Instruction in that Province, has shown that the number of pupils enrolled in the Punjab schools rose from

557,000 in 1920-21 to 1,198,000 in 1926-27, and he states that the marked increase in attendance at secondary schools, especially in backward areas, abundantly proves that many parents who are very poorly circumstanced are prepared to make any sacrifice so that their sons (but unfortunately not their daughters) shall receive the benefits of education. While the political leaders have done much in the Punjab Legislative Council by their speeches and by their support of educational demands, Sir George Anderson considers it probable that this movement has had its genesis in the people themselves, and has not been inspired from above. He further contends that among the causes of the progress recorded is the return of a large number of Punjabi soldiers from the War, men who, as he says, have seen life and the world, and are determined that their sons shall benefit by education. But, according to the same authority, while the political leaders have shown their readiness to vote financial grants for educational purposes, they still think that the needs of the beneficent Departments of Government can be met by a reduction in the police and in the work of general administration.

V

THE CONQUEST OF FAMINE

"The development of irrigation on a vast scale in the Punjab, and to a smaller extent elsewhere, has immensely increased the resources of the country; railways and roads have been extended, and the *effects of the improvements both of internal and* external communications have made themselves increasingly felt. It took India nearly a generation to re-act to the great changes in this respect which have been mentioned, but, since the commencement of the present century, the evidence of growing prosperity has been manifest to everyone whose acquaintance with India extends over the last twenty-five years."—*Report of the Royal Commission on Agriculture in India*, 1928.

THE conquest of famine is the greatest achievement of British administration in India. The task has been a long and an arduous one, and its results are in themselves an enduring monument to the men who participated in its accomplishment. India's crops depend in the main upon the monsoon rains, and the failure of the monsoon still means grievous loss to the cultivator. In the past it meant famine, grim and terrible, and the sufferings of the people were accentuated by deadly epidemic diseases. Famine at other times

has been caused by floods; such is the irony of existence in India.

It is not difficult to realise that if the national industries of England or of the United States were completely paralysed for six months, grave hardships must inevitably ensue. In India the conditions formerly created by the failure of the crops were almost indescribable. The work of protecting a great agricultural population from the effects of famine thus engaged the anxious attention of generations of British officials. In the reports of successive Famine Commissions are to be found careful studies of the varied problems which from time to time presented themselves, and far-sighted recommendations directed towards the provision of effective remedies.

Apart from the direct methods of protecting India from famine which will presently be discussed, the development of the land revenue system under British rule has been of inestimable value in enhancing the ability of the cultivator to face periods of economic distress. The record of rights in land which followed an exhaustive enquiry, converted into a valuable possession property which the cultivator had hitherto found impossible to sell or to pledge when trouble came upon him. The record of rights provided the basis of the Government demand for land revenue, which is now the subject of periodical settlements

(except in the permanently settled areas described further on), every effort being made by the settlement officers to avoid placing undue burdens on the people.

Under the ancient law of India the ruler is entitled to a certain proportion of the produce of the land unless he has limited or surrendered his rights in this respect. The resultant exactions of the State in pre-British days impoverished the cultivator. Extortionate demands made upon an industrious but helpless class perpetuated poverty and rendered it impossible for the agriculturist to make provision for the inevitable day when the crops would fail owing to the absence of rain. In its review of this phase of the agrarian problem, the Royal Commission on Agriculture points out that there were few periods in the recorded history of India prior to the advent of British administration when over extensive areas the internal peace was not greatly disturbed, and when the demands of the rulers on the land were not so heavy as to make its possession a liability rather than an asset. These demands were frequently arbitrary; they "varied with the needs of the time, the embarrassment of the ruler and the temperament and rapacity of the local authorities."

A revolution was effected by the preparation of a full record of the cultivator's rights in the land and the inauguration of a policy which

ensured a just settlement of the extent of his liability for land revenue. It is unquestionable that the land revenue paid to-day inflicts no hardship on the people. From time to time the allegation is made that the charge is excessive, but this contention will not bear investigation, and is often palpably absurd. Sir Michael O'Dwyer, who possesses almost unique knowledge of the Punjab, has pointed out that when the British annexed that Province the selling value of land was five shillings per acre, or only double the heavy Sikh land tax. In 1926, he said, as a result of light assessment, the establishment of security and the construction of railways and irrigation works, the average selling price was more than three hundred times the British land tax, and stood at £33 per acre.

In 1902 the Government of India, in consequence of persistent attacks on their land revenue policy, published an exhaustive Resolution on the whole subject, in which they effectively disposed of the contention advanced by the late Mr. R. C. Dutt and others, that the intensity and frequency of famines had been largely due to the poverty created by over-assessment. This great State paper, drafted by Lord Curzon himself, was remarkable for its close reasoning and the obvious anxiety for the welfare of the cultivating class which inspired it. Fortified by the views of the Provincial Governments, the Government of

India examined in detail the arguments advanced by the critics, vindicated the general policy which had been pursued, and after laying down principles for imparting greater elasticity to assessment and collection, went on to show that the existing system was well suited to the conditions of the country, and more lenient in its incidence than at any previous period in its history. It was pointed out that in the Central Provinces alone successive droughts had during a period of seven years inflicted on the agricultural class losses estimated at upwards of forty crores of rupees, an amount equal to the land revenue for fifty years, while the State had expended in the relief of the distress in this area a sum equivalent to seven years' land revenue.

The critics of the Government's land revenue policy had put forward the remarkable theory that if the Permanent Settlement which still afflicts Bengal had been extended to other parts of the country, India would have been spared the "more dreadful and desolating famines we have witnessed in recent years." The crushing rejoinder contained in the Government of India's Resolution deserves more than passing notice, in view of the immunity from taxation which the landlords of that Province still enjoy. The Permanent Settlement of Bengal dates from the later period of the eighteenth century, when Lord Cornwallis made the grave blunder of

effecting an arrangement by which the landholders were for all time to be subject to no enhancement of their payments to the State. Since that period the value of land in Bengal has undergone an enormous increase, but Government is unable to share in the enhancement, with the result that an unfair burden of taxation has to be borne by other industries. A horde of rent receivers, possessing no interest in the cultivator or in the progress of agriculture has, moreover, been brought into existence.

The Government of India had no difficulty in showing, first, that the cost of famine relief had been greater in Bengal than elsewhere, and that in place of being generously treated by the landlords, the Bengal cultivator was so persistently rackrented, impoverished and oppressed, that it had been necessary to pass a series of legislative measures for his protection. "It was not in fact in the Permanent Settlement of Bengal that the ryot has found his salvation," said the Resolution: "it has been in the laws which have been passed by the Supreme Government to check its licence and to moderate its abuses."

The truth is that the ability of the Indian cultivator to withstand famine is due entirely to the measures inaugurated and carried out under British administration. The record of rights in land, the introduction of periodical settlements

of land revenue, the establishment of co-operative credit societies and the improvement of agricultural methods have all had their part in the work. But the most potent factors have been the construction of railways and the creation of the finest irrigation works in the world.

The Indian railway system comprises nearly 40,000 miles, and it is expected that within the next few years another 6,000 miles will have been added to this total, since a programme of extension is being steadily developed. More capital might with advantage have been expended in the past on railways, but the construction already completed has transformed the economic position. The cultivator need no longer grow sufficient produce to satisfy his own needs and no more; he has been placed within reach of markets, both in India and in countries beyond the seas, which offer him opportunities of profit and provide him with means of meeting with greater confidence a failure of the rains. An illustration of the advantages secured by the agriculturist from access to foreign markets is found in the fact that in the year 1927-28 the value of Indian merchandise exported, consisting to an overwhelming extent of the produce of the soil, was valued at 319 crores of rupees, or nearly £240,000,000.

The extension of railways has synchronized with the construction of great irrigation works, which have converted millions of acres of barren