SPEECHES AND PAPERS

ON

Indian Questions,

1897 to 1900

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BY

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PUBLISHER'S NOTE.

THE speeches made and the papers written by Mr. R. C. Dutt during the four years of his stay in England, from the beginning of 1897 to the end of 1900, deal with current Indian Questions, and have considerable interest for Indian readers. We have been permitted by Mr. Dutt to issue all of them which are of importance in this collected form.

Editors of English and Indian Magazines in which Mr. Dutt's papers appeared have kindly given their permission for the republication of those papers in the present collection.

THE PUBLISHER.

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FAMINES IN INDIA.

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SIXTY years ago, in the very year in which Her Majesty the Queen ascended the throne, her Indian Empire, then managed by the East India Company, was desolated by a great famine. The calamity was confined to the North-Western Provinces of India; but the sufferings of the people, as described by eye-witnesses, were truly heartrending. Villagers lay down in hunger by the wayside, and died with that silent resignation which is more terrible than the wildest excesses and disorder. And famished men and women in the last stage of exhaustion were attacked and devoured by jackals when they were unable to resist or even to escape. There was practically no organization for famine relief in those days, and Lord Auckland's Government could do little to mitigate the sufferings or prevent the deaths of the people.

Scarcely a quarter of a century had passed away when the same Provinces were once more desolated by another severe famine in 1860. Men still in their middle age remember that terrible year, which claimed more victims

in India than the Mutiny, which had recently been quelled. The Government of Lord Canning did what it could to afford relief to the sufferers, and subscriptions were raised in all the towns of British India for this purpose. But in the absence of an organized plan of operation the relief afforded to the sufferers was neither adequate nor very efficacious. A Commission was then appointed to inquire into the causes of the calamity, and we will refer further on to some of the recommendations made by this Commission.

Only six years after this a still more terrible famine broke out in the Province of Orissa. The Government of the day had not taken adequate precautions in time, and when the extent of the distress became fully manifest it was almost too late. Shiploads of rice were hurriedly sent to the suffering Province, but the means of communication were inadequate, and the people in the interior perished in large numbers. Calcutta was flooded by starving men and women with children in their arms, and never did the native population of that great town distinguish themselves in a higher degree by their benevolence and charity than on this memorable occasion. Rich men's houses were converted into relief centres, high officials and merchants went from door to door to collect subscriptions, and tens of thousands of sufferers from Orissa, who had come to Calcutta for refuge, were fed, clothed, and saved by private charity. Those who witnessed the scenes of 1866 are not likely ever to forget them; they are still fresh in the memory of the present writer after a lapse of thirty years.

The next great famine was in Behar in 1874, and this was the first famine in which the relief operations undertaken by Government were adequate, and loss of life was prevented with complete success. The bitter experience of 1866 had left sad recollections, and the Government of 1874 determined to do all that it was possible to do to prevent a repetition of the same scenes. To Lord Northbrook, then Viceroy and Governor-General of India, belongs the credit of having first combated an Indian famine with complete success. The famine was confined to Behar and to parts of Bengal, and the present writer, then a young officer, took his share in the work of famine relief.

A far more terrible famine visited Madras only three years later. In 1877, while Lord Lytton was proclaiming to the great Darbar of Delhi that Her Majesty had assumed the august title of Empress of India, the dark cloud of famine had cast its shadow over the province of Madras. The precautions taken on this occasion were not commensurate with the extent and intensity of the calamity, the operations of relief were not adequate, and the dire calamity counted its victims by the million. Never within the memory of living men, never within the present century, has there been destruction of life so terrible and so great as in the Madras famine of 1877. And when at last that great calamity had subsided and a census was taken, it was found that over *five millions of people* had been swept away. A population equal to the population of Ireland had disappeared under the desolating breath of the famine of 1877.

These figures enable us to some extent to conceive the extent and magnitude of human suffering and death caused by an Indian famine. When we read of the havoc of war or of pestilence in these days, we lament the death of thousands, probably tens of thousands, of our fellow-beings. The Crimean War, one of the most disastrous of modern wars in the loss of life which it involved is said to have cost about two hundred and fifty thousand human lives. The Madras famine claimed *twenty times* the victims of the Crimean War.

The Government of India now awoke to the magnitude of the recurring calamity to which the people of India were subject, and they devised means to prevent a repetition of the scenes of 1877. A Famine Fund was created, partly for the construction of canals and protective railways, and partly as a sinking fund which would enable the Government to borrow with greater facility in years of distress. Much has been said of late of this Famine Fund, and any further remarks on the subject are unnecessary. As Lord George Hamilton stated in the House of Commons, two-thirds of the amount which was proposed to be devoted to famine insurance has been so devoted within the last twenty years. This is eminently satisfactory, and India is better prepared to-day by her railways and canal systems to meet a famine than she was before. But nevertheless one feels a regret that the whole of the amount which was proposed to be devoted to famine insurance in India was not religiously applied to this sole purpose.

Twenty years have elapsed since the famine of 1877,

and within this period there have been famines in Northern India, in Madras, and elsewhere. But in the year 1896 the autumnal rains failed nearly over the whole of India except in the south, and in the present year, therefore, famine has appeared in Bombay and in Bengal, in the North-West and the Punjab—*i. e.*, over a larger area than was ever desolated by famine in any single year, within this or any preceding century, of which any records have been left to us.

Of the preparations which have been made to meet the present famine, and of the endeavours which every official in India, from the highest to the lowest, is making at the present moment to save human life, I need not speak. Ample details are being published day by day in the shape of message and correspondence from India, and my own testimony would add but little to the information now before the British public. Nevertheless, as an Indian myself, and as an official who was engaged only a few months ago in making inquiries into the state of crops and the condition of the people in one of the afflicted parts of India, I consider it my duty to say a word or two, if only for the information of those Englishmen who have come forward so generously to help my countrymen in this time of their sore distress and need. I desire, therefore, to bear witness to the anxious care and solicitude with which the prospects of crops and the condition of the people have been watched by officials in India since the failure of the last autumnal rains; to the inquiries which have been made since to ascertain the stocks of food grain, the outturn of harvests, the

requirements of the people, and the probable deficit in the food supply; and to the plans which have been organised with wisdom and carried out with industry to find out distress by means of test relief works, and to relieve it with all the resources under the command of the Government of India and the Provincial Governments. So far as the resources of India and the watchful care and industry of officials in India can save lives and relieve distress, those great objects shall be achieved in the present year

'My present object, however, is not to describe the relief operations which have been adopted in India in the present year, but rather to impress on my readers the fact that famines are a recurring event in India, and that each year of famine, in spite of the most careful relief measures, is attended by sufferings and deaths to an extent of which it is not possible to form an adequate conception in Europe

It is, therefore, incumbent on us to consider, calmly and dispassionately, what precautionary measures can be adopted to protect the people of India from the worst effects of such dire calamities Indian questions are unfortunately often discussed with much heat and passion, and before we have proceeded very far in the clear understanding of a question it is clouded by unseemly charges on one side and on the other But if ever there was a question which required a thorough and calm and dispassionate inquiry, it is the question of protecting the people of India from famines. For Englishmen of all parties are equally interested in this great question,

as they are interested in the welfare of their Indian Empire and the safety of their Indian fellow subjects.

Replying to Sir William Wedderburn, in course of a discussion in the House of Commons, Lord George Hamilton said: "I agree with the hon baronet that the opportunity this famine affords ought not to be allowed to pass without our taking every opportunity to inquire into and ascertain the best methods of protecting the people of India from the recurrence of similar calamities." To suggest the best methods for securing this object, in so far as my experience and my knowledge of the condition and wants of my countrymen enable me to do so, is the object of this paper. It is certainly possible to *provide remedies which will lessen the force of famines*, or prevent them altogether; and it is incumbent on us to find and to apply such remedies, in order to protect the people from preventible destitution, suffering, and death.

Protective railway works have been constructed all over India. There is no part of the country to which food cannot be transported by rail at a few days' notice. Two hundred million pounds have been spent on railways, and 20,000 miles are open to traffic. No more lines should be constructed out of the public revenues, or under a guarantee of profits from the revenues.

On the other hand, Irrigation works have been neglected. Only twenty million pounds have been spent on irrigation works. Out of 200 million acres of cultivated land in India, only 20 million acres are protected. This is not as it should be. It is possible to construct

canals only in level tracts of the country and in the basin of large rivers; but storage tanks and wells can be constructed every where. The whole country could have been covered by such works within the last sixty years, since the famine of 1837. The Famine Commission of 1880 drew special attention to this, but their advice has been neglected. It is to be hoped that more attention will be paid to Irrigation after the present famine, so that such wide-spread calamities may be impossible in the next generation.

But more important administrative measures are needed to rescue the agriculturists of India from their chronic state of poverty and indebtedness. The first and the most obvious means of improving their material condition is a reduction of the public expenditure, and a corresponding reduction of the taxes which press heavily on those classes. All Indian administrators within the last quarter of a century have contemplated with something akin to alarm the steady growth of expenditure in India, and the corresponding growth of taxation.

The expensiveness of the present system was well described over ten years ago by Mr. Cotton, now Chief Commissioner of Assam, when he stated that India could no more afford such a system than the English farmer could plough with race-horses or the Indian cultivator with elephants. On this point all authorities are pretty well agreed; but no practical steps have yet been taken to give effect to this reduction in expenditure desired by all.

Sir Henry Fowler, when discussing the question of the present famine in the House of Commons, remarked :—"If it should prove to be the fact, notwithstanding the surplus of which the noble lord (Lord George Hamilton) has spoken, that this famine will entail, as I am afraid it will, a very considerable charge upon the revenues of India, for the loss from the land revenue will be considerable, I think that it is time for this House, and I am sure this House will be representing the people of the country—in the same spirit in which it made contribution in the case of the Afghan War to the Indian Exchequer—to make an Imperial contribution to the Exchequer of India in aid of the taxation of India" I am convinced my countrymen will appreciate the spirit in which this suggestion was made. But, nevertheless, if I am capable of forming a judgment in the matter, it is not in this shape that a contribution from the British Exchequer will be most acceptable to them India has always paid for her internal administration, and if the financial relations between England and India were adjusted on a proper basis, India would not stand in need of donations from the British Exchequer for her internal administration

The reference which Sir Henry Fowler made to the contribution made on the occasion of the Afghan War suggests the true and only method in which England could grant relief to India with justice, and India could receive it with dignity. India now pays not only for her internal administration, not only for the army and defensive works within her own limits, but also for the

maintenance of England's Empire in Asia outside the limits of India Burma, including the Shan States, is as large as France, and borders on the dominions of France and China. British possessions in the wilds of Beluchistan, Afghanistan, and Chitral extend for hundreds of miles beyond the natural limits of India, and the expensiveness of the occupation and defence of these places is alarming Little income is derived from the Shan States of Burma, or from Beluchistan, Chitral, or Afghanistan, and India is bled for much of the cost of maintaining these portions of England's Asiatic Empire. England is the richest country in the world, India is one of the poorest And yet India is made to pay for England's possessions and wars in Asia beyond her own natural boundaries

Forty years ago, when India passed under the direct rule of the Crown, a pledge was given that the cost of wars outside India would not be charged to India Within the period of forty years the limits of England's Asiatic Empire (miscalled India) have been extended to the frontiers of China in the east and have been pushed forward into Afghanistan, Beluchistan, and Tartary in the west, and the cost of these outside extensions has been charged to India. And within this period the expenses of India have so enormously increased that every responsible Indian statesman has been filled with anxiety, and every method of taxation, bearing more and more severely on the people, has been tried, with poor and ghastly results We seem to be coming back in despair to taxes which every civilised country

has discarded. A scheme to re-impose tolls on roads and to levy a tax on every marriage is now under the consideration of the Bengal Government.

At such a time of need India can legitimately ask England to contribute a share of the vast military expenditure required to sustain her Asiatic Empire. It may be possible to ascertain roughly what proportion of the military expenditure of India is incurred for England's imperial purposes, and the defence of her distant possessions in Africa and in Asia. As the people of England are disposed, judging from Sir Henry Fowler's speech, to give some substantial relief to India out of the English Exchequre, the shape in which such relief would be most acceptable as well as most equitable would be the contribution of this proportion of the military expenditure which India is no longer able to bear alone.

A Commission is now sitting to make a proper adjustment of expenditure as between England an India. Much valuable evidence has been recorded by this Commission, but I will in the present article refer to the evidence of one witness only. Sir Henry Brackenbury is the military member of the Council of the Viceroy of India, and his opinion may be supposed, therefore, to reflect to some extent the opinion of the Indian Government. I take the liberty, therefore, of quoting a part of his evidence from an Indian paper.

"In the first place, I would say that the army in India is largely in excess of the requirements for the preservation of internal order of India. The strength of the army in India is calculated to allow of a powerful field army being placed

on or beyond the Indian frontier, in addition to the obligatory garrisons required for keeping order in India. The necessity for maintaining in India the powerful field army in addition to the obligatory garrisons is caused by the approach of a great military Power into a position which enables her directly to threaten Afghanistan, to which we are under treaty obligations, and indirectly to threaten the security of India itself. The foreign policy of India is directed entirely from England by Her Majesty's Government, and it is part of British foreign policy generally—indeed, the object of British foreign policy as I believe it to be—to secure Great Britain's rule over her Empire. If we desire to maintain British rule in India only for India's sake, then I think it would be fair to make India pay to the uttermost farthing everything that it could be shown was due to Britain's rule over India. But I cannot but feel that England's interest—or Britain's interest—in keeping India under British rule is enormous. India affords employment to thousands of Britons. India employs millions of British capital, and Indian commerce has been of immense value to Great Britain. Therefore it seems to me that India, being held by Great Britain not only for India's sake but for Great Britain's sake, the latter should pay a share of the expenditure for the purpose. And in estimating what that share should be, I think that England should behave generously to India, because, in the first place, England is a rich country and India is a poor country."

This is a stronger argument than mine, and it is urged by a high authority who has a claim to be heard. The facts and arguments urged by the military member of the Viceroy's Council will no doubt appeal strongly to the minds of all thoughtful Englishmen; and the sad events which are taking place in India before our own eyes in the present year will plead eloquently for a fresh adjustment of the great military expenditure which is necessary for the maintenance of England's Empire in Asia.

For the rest, if England undertakes to pay, not a fixed sum as is sometimes proposed, but a fixed proportion of the total military expenditure now incurred in

India, it will be possible for her to control that expenditure better than it can be controlled in India. From the nature of things, there can be no authority in India able to control any military expenditure which the Viceroy and the Commander-in-Chief consider it necessary to incur; and practically, therefore, there is no control over such expenditure. No doubt every official in India, from the Viceroy and the Finance Minister to the humble district officer, exerts himself to keep down expenditure within the lowest possible limits. But, nevertheless, the most conscientious spending department would be all the better for some efficient control.

I have confined my remarks to military expenditure, as it is that which presses most severely on the resources of India. If India could obtain some relief in that direction, her other expenses could be easily adjusted. The enormous "Home Charges," too, ought to be somewhat curtailed, and the annual drain from India which is impoverishing the country should be reduced.

The second remedy for improving the condition of the agricultural classes which suggests itself to me is a salutary and needful change in our administrative system. This is a very large subject, but I propose to deal with it briefly, and in a general manner. Hard and fast rules and regulations, framed no doubt with the most benevolent objects, often bear hardly on the agricultural classes. Our law courts, which are in themselves excellent institutions, are often taken advantage of by the money-lender to rivet his chains on the indebted cultivator. Both in civil and in criminal matters the people

are compelled to travel to distant and expensive courts, and taught to depend on tutored evidence to win their cases, true or false. Litigation is eating into the vitals of the agricultural population, and no adequate endeavours have been made to organize village institutions for settling village disputes. All power is centralised in district authorities far removed from the homes of most villagers, and no real power is left in the hands of village elders and village unions. I have known an instance in which the people of a village had to wait for days or weeks before they could remove a tree which had fallen across a village path and obstructed the road: they could not do this without orders from the police! Centralisation of power has been carried too far, and has crushed all life out of village organizations.

There is great room for improvement in this direction, and much can be done to save villagers from litigation in our law courts, and ruin through indebtedness. Courts of conciliation should be organized to settle village disputes, and other measures should be adopted to save villagers alike from our expensive law courts and from the tricks of rapacious money-lenders. Agricultural banks should be opened to help substantial tenants, and every endeavour should be made to enable them to stand on their own legs.

The third remedy which I have to suggest relates to land assessments. Over eighty per cent. of the population of India are dependent on agriculture, and it is no exaggeration to state, therefore, that the well-being of the people of India depends on the wisdom and

moderation with which lands are assessed. The Indian Government, and all the local Governments, are no doubt animated by a desire to proceed with moderation in making assessments But, on the other hand, it should always be borne in mind that the land revenue bears a fairly large proportion to the total revenues of India, and an endeavour is naturally made, at every settlement, to raise the land revenue to some extent, in order to obtain a substantial increase in the general revenues. And when it is added that these settlements are made in the same Province and in the same district again and again in a century, and that at each settlement Government expects and does obtain a substantial increase in revenue, it can be understood that the margin of profit left to cultivators can never increase, however much agriculture may flourish in the country.

Thanks to the generous policy of Lord Cornwallis, the greater part of Bengal is free from the increasing demand from the produce of the land No single act of the British Government that can be named has done so much for the prosperity and well being of the people as the permanent settlement of the land revenue of Bengal effected by Lord Cornwallis in 1793 Cultivation has largely increased since that year, and prices have risen, but the profits have remained with the people of the country, and the landlords of Bengal are at the present day among the most contented and loyal classes of people in India. And as the landlords are not subject to increasing demands on the part of the Government, they themselves have been stopped by three successive Acts

from obtaining increase of rent from cultivators, except on the most reasonable grounds. The result is that the Bengal cultivator is more prosperous and better able to stand the effects of droughts and of bad harvests than the cultivator in any other part of India There never has been a serious famine in Eastern Bengal within the memory of living men, or since the permanent settlement of 1793. And when there was a famine in Western Bengal (Behar) in 1874, the measures taken for relief were more completely successful in saving life than any other relief operations that have been undertaken, before or since, in any other part of India And lastly be it added, that in the present calamitous year, when the whole of India (except the extreme south) has suffered, the number of men on relief works in Bengal is, in proportion to her population, less than the number of men in the North-West or in Bombay. The worst cases of distress, starvation, and high mortality are reported not from Bengal, but from the other afflicted Provinces.

Those who know India well know that the peasantry of Bengal are better able to take care of themselves in the worse times than the peasantry of other Provinces. Many instances of the self-reliance of the Bengal cultivators must occur to every administrative officer who has served in Bengal, but I will mention only one instance, which appears to me to be as good as any other. In 1876 a cyclone and a storm-wave, over twenty feet high, broke on the south-eastern coast of Bengal, swept away two hundred thousand poeple, and utterly destroyed the corps in many parts. It was a year of much suffering

and sorrow and death. Dead bodies lay thick on the ground as on a battle-field: some hung on the trees to which they had been lifted up by the wave, and some were floated in and out by every changing tide. The huts of the villagers were utterly demolished and swept away, and men and women and children lived under trees or under the most imperfect shelter which had been hastily constructed. A good deal of their cattle and property was also destroyed, and rest was floated up and down into other villages. Each villager was content to lose what he lost, and kept what he got, so that there was a sort of redistribution of property such as would have delighted the soul of the most thoroughgoing Socialist. To add to the horrors of the year, a cholera epidemic, the like of which I have never seen, and never wish to see again, visited the afflicted parts and carried away tens of thousands of the surviving villagers.

Amidst these appalling calamities the agricultural classes of South-Eastern Bengal showed a resourceful self-reliance which astonished me and every other administrative officer on the spot. From the branches of the innumerable areca-nut trees which grow in these parts they constructed temporary huts for themselves and their families. They searched up and down the country for their lost property and cattle, and recovered what they could find. They gathered in what remained of the much injured harvest, and this served them for a few months. They travelled long distances, sometimes twenty or thirty miles, to obtain cholera-pills and other drugs from the doctors whom Government had sent

to the spot, and did what it was possible to do to lessen the force of that dreadful epidemic. After their store of rice was exhausted, they sold their brass utensils and the silver jewellery of their women, and imported boatloads of rice from other parts of Bengal. They constructed new villages and new markets all over the land, resumed their old industries, and kept off famine by their own industry and resource. As the executive officer in charge of one of the worst tracts during this calamitous year, I undertook some measures for the relief of helpless women and children who had lost their relations. The able-bodied people needed no relief, and asked for none. From the 31st October, 1876, when the storm-wave broke on the land, to the 31st of August, 1877, by which date the autumnal harvest began, the people of South-Eastern Bengal, who had lost their houses, property, and crops, saved themselves from a famine by their own resources. And this was the year when the unfortunate and resourceless peasantry of Madras succumbed to a famine—the worst which has been known in India in this century.

It is needless to multiply instances. From an experience of over twenty-five years, spent mostly among the peasantry, I am able to state—and those who know India best will agree with me—that if the object of the permanent settlement of 1793 was to create a thoroughly loyal class of landlords and a prosperous class of peasantry in Bengal, that object has succeeded beyond all expectation.

The distinction which we perceive to-day between

the condition of the Bengal cultivator and the condition of the North-West cultivator was perceived by Lord Canning as long ago as 1860, and that great statesman did not fail to discover its true cause. After the famine of 1860 Lord Canning appointed a Commission to inquire into its causes. Colonel Baird Smith, R.E., was the distinguished President of the Commission: he found after a careful inquiry that the famine of 1860 had been less disastrous than that of 1837, and he attributed this to the greater fixity of the public demand from the soil in the later than in the former date. Convinced of this fact, he had the courage to recommend a permanent settlement for the North-Western Provinces or for all India. I quote his words below :—

"Such having been the results of the protracted fixity of the public demand, the security of titles, the general moderation of assessments, the recognition and general record of rights, the inference seems irresistible that, to intensify and perpetuate these results, we must proceed still further in the same healthy and fruitful direction. The good which has been done by partial action on sound principles is both a justification and an encouragement to further advances; and entertaining the most earnest conviction that State interests and popular interests will alike be strengthened in an increasing ratio by the step, the first, as I believe, the most important measure I have respectfully to submit is the expediency of fixing for ever the public demand on land, and thus converting the existing settlement into a settlement in perpetuity."

Such a liberal and statesmanlike recommendation was not lost on Lord Canning. A Government resolution was published, which set forth the views of the Government in the following terms :—

"His Excellency in Council sees no reason to doubt that the measure would be in every way beneficient. He believes that the increased security of fixed property and the comparative freedom from interference of fiscal officers of the Government will tend to create a class which, although composed of various races and creeds, will be peculiarly bound to British rule, while, under proper regulations, the measure will conduce materially to the improvement of the general revenue of the Empire."

The different Provinces of India were thus about to obtain, under Lord Canning, that great boon which Bengal had obtained under Lord Cornwallis. The Secretary of State approved of the Viceroy's proposal, and sent a despatch which concluded in the following terms :—

"After the most careful review of all these considerations, Her Majesty's Government are of opinion that the advantages which may reasonably be expected to accrue, not only to those immediately connected with the land, but to the community generally, are sufficiently great to justify them in incurring the risk of some prospective loss of land revenue in order to attain them, and that a settlement in perpetuity in the districts in which the conditions required are or may hereafter be fulfilled is a measure dictated by sound policy, and calculated to accelerate the development of the resources of India, and to insure in the highest degree the welfare and contentment of all classes of Her Majesty's subjects in the country."

India was thus on the eve of obtaining a great boon, when her hopes were dashed to the ground by the death of one man. Lord Canning, who had held firm sway over India during the unexampled disasters of the Mutiny, and whose moderation and sympathies for the people of the country had won him the name of Clemency Canning, left the country in March, 1862

with a shattered constitution, and died in the following June. England honoured the hero who had saved India by interring his remains in Westminster Abbey, and India mourned, with good reason, the loss of one whose large-hearted wisdom did not animate his successors.

After the death of this benevolent ruler, Indian officials formed a different opinion on the question of permanent settlements. Some of them reported that if assessments could no longer be periodically raised in future, it would be, so far, a prospective loss to Government and a sacrifice of land revenue. These counsels prevailed; the idea of a permanent settlement was finally abandoned in 1883, and the North-Western Provinces are subject to increase of land revenue at each settlement.

What is stated of the North-Western Provinces is true also of Bombay and Madras and the Central Provinces of India. Periodical settlements take place in these Provinces, and each settlement means a fresh increase in the rental. Settlement officers, at least in the higher grades, do not consciously make excessive demands; on the contrary, they desire to be moderate and fair. The settlement operations of the Province of Orissa went on before my own eyes during the whole of the last year, and I willingly testify to the moderation and fairness of the young settlement officer who presided over these operations. But, nevertheless, the anxiety to have some increase in the revenue animates all officers from the highest to the lowest, and every increase in the revenue is a corresponding decrease in the resources

of the people, and their capacity to provide against years of bad harvest. The share of the produce from land generally left to the people enables them to live well enough in good years, but it does not enable them to provide against bad times. It is for this reason that we hear of frequent evictions of cultivators in the Southern Provinces, and it is for this reason also that immediately after a bad harvest the tenants of the North-West Provinces, Madras, and Bombay succumb more hopelessly than cultivators in Bengal.

More than a hundred years have elapsed since the time of the permanent settlement in Bengal. Within this time repeated settlements have taken place in the other Provinces of India, and rents have been raised; and the increase in the prices of food grains has not benefited the cultivator in those Provinces as it would benefit the English farmer, and it has benefited the Bengal tenant. Railways and other causes which have led to a rise in the price of wheat and rice in India have largely and steadily added to her land revenue, and have not conduced to make the condition of the rice-grower and the wheat-grower more prosperous. The ever-recurring settlement sweeps away all increase in profits; and, even in this disastrous year, when famine has thrown its dark shadow over the land, the harassing and ceaseless settlement operations are still going on in some parts of India, securing an increase in the Government revenue, and leaving the classes dependent on land a smaller margin of profit than before the settlements.

I have dwelt long on this question because there is no other question which so directly and vitally affects the condition of the mass of the people as this, and because it is often overlooked by those who are not familiar with the details of Indian administration. Land is the source of living of four-fifths of the population: leave them a good margin of profits from land and they are prosperous; sweep away all increase in the profits from land into the Imperial treasury at every settlement, and they are impoverished and helpless.

If, then, it be desired to insure to some extent the Indian cultivator against recurring famines, it is necessary to insure to him the future profits from land. In the words of a former Secretary of State, "A settlement in perpetuity in the districts in which the conditions required are or may hereafter be fulfilled is a measure dictated by sound policy." But if the settlement officer is constantly among the agricultural population, pruning away every increase in the profits from land once in thirty years, or once in fifteen years, it is idle to talk of improvement in the condition of the agricultural population.[1]

(1) Since the above was written I am glad to find that the proposal of a permanent settlement of the land revenue, at least in certain parts of India, has the support of the singularly well-informed and talented writer on Indian Affairs in *The Times*, the well-known Sir William Hunter "Shrewd observers assert that the absence of a permanent settlement operates as a discouragement to improvement, and that, as a matter of fact, the Government pays dearly for its power to raise the rent by checking the prosperity of the people . . . The main fact remains that the Government has given a distinct and a repeated promise (of permanent settlement), and that the time has come to redeem it. The request for the fulfilment of that promise is not made by political agitators but by a body of loyal proprietors who have done their utmost to strengthen the hands of the Government in all times of need, and who believe that fixity of tenure more than any other measure will enable them and their tenants to resist famine."—*The Times*, 27th April, 1897.

The present year is a memorable year in the history of of the British Empire. British subjects, whether they live in Europe or in America, in Africa or in Australia, are rejoicing over the celebration of the long reign of their gracious Sovereign. In India alone a voice of lamentation is heard. Ten times within these sixty years India has suffered from terrible and desolating famines, and the last famine is, in the area affected, the worst known in the history of the country. But out of evil cometh good. And if this great calamity which has overtaken Indian cultivators through the length and breadthe of the country brings about a more liberal policy of land settlements, and secures for India generally the great boon of a perpetual settlement which Lord Cornwallis bestowed on Bengal and Lord Canning proposed to bestow on other Provinces, the three hundred millions of the Queen-Empress's Indian subjects will have truly cause to bless her name and to cherish memory. It will be an act worthy of the gracious Sovereign and the gracious occasion. And the story will be handed down among the Indian peasantry from generation to generation, that the great Empress who, by the grace of God, lived to reign sixty years in England, bestowed the great boon of fixity of rent to the cultivators of India because she loved them well, and was distressed to see them suffering from famine and hunger.

Fourthly and lastly, I would suggest some administrative action to encouarge and revive the ruined industries of India. A nation which depends entirely on agriculture cannot but be poor; and it would be a wise and states-

manlike policy to diversify the occupations of the people of India, and thus add to their resources. It is a large subject which requires full treatment in a separate article; and I therefore content myself by merely mentioning it in this place.

I conclude this article by summarising the suggestions made above. My suggestions are few and simple and, I venture to hope, practicable. They are; *firstly*, a contribution from the British Exchequer towards the military expenses of her Asiatic Empire and a reduction of the annual economic drain from India; *secondly*, a reform in the administration and the removal of certain causes which are palpably leading to the impoverishment of the cultivators; *thirdly*, a settlement in perpetuity of the revenues derived from the soil; *fourthly*, encouragement of Indian industries and manufactures.

My first suggestion contemplates a contribution, which I venture to think is a just and equitable one, from the British Exchequer towards the maintanence of the British Empire in Asia. And my third suggestion contemplates a possible sacrifice of prospective increase in the land revenue of India, although such sacrifice is likely to be more than compensated in other ways if the condition of the agricultural classes is bettered. To those statesmen who shrink from the idea of the smallest concession and the smallest sacrifice my appeal will be made in vain. But I may point out to them that no great result has been achieved without some sacrifice, and that the condition of the peasantary of India cannot be improved by the trick of a conjuror. A famine Code

is an excellent thing, but it prescribes the method of treatment when the disease is on us, and is not a preventive. A Famine Fund is also an excellent provision, but it means additional taxation on the people. The true remedy for famines, therefore, is some measure which will directly decrease expenditure, and will leave something more with the cultivator than he is now allowed to keep. No remedy can be generally efficacious which does not achieve these two objects—decrease in India's expenditure, and increase in the resources of the masses. You cannot eat your cake and give it to the poor. And unless you are prepared to make some reduction—some concession and sacrifice—it is idle to talk of improving the condition of the peasantry of India.

Much has been said of the increase of population in India. But India is not the only country in which population increases. The population of the British Islands was twenty-five millions when the Queen ascended the throne; it is now forty millions, not counting ten millions more who have found homes beyond the seas. The population of India, excluding annexations, has not increased at half this rate. On the other hand, trade and commerce have increased in India, railways and canals have been opened, wastes have been brought under cultivation, and the resources of the country have been developed during these sixty years. The increase of population has not been greater than the increase in cultivation. The increase in population affords no explanation, therefore, for the recurring famines of India.

Let us have done with such generalizations, and go

to the root of the matter. Let us, or those of us who can do so, mark the condition of the Indian cultivator in his home, and find out what causes impoverish him and make him unable to save. The reason is not a want of frugality, or of sobriety, or of prudence. The Indian peasant is the most sober, the most frugal, and the most prudent peasant on the face of the earth. The reason is, that at each settlement the rent payable by him is increased, and his capacity to save is decreased. The reason is that, with no savings of his own, he goes to the money-lender under every pressure, and our Civil Courts, with their hard-and-fast rules, only cast him deeper into the meshes of the money-lender. The reason is that in every petty dispute, civil and criminal, he is compelled to have recourse to distant and expensive law courts. The reason is that he has to pay many taxes in order to maintain England's Empire in Asia.

If, having our eye still on the condition of the Indian cultivator, we desire to remove or lessen one by one these causes which impoverish him, we find that some improvements in the administration must be effected, and some concessions and sacrifices must be made. If we are prepared to make these concessions and sacrifices, we can better the condition of the Indian peasant. If we are not prepared to make any concessions and sacrifices, then this terrible year of suffering and death will have passed away without teaching us any useful lesson, and without leading to the removal of those causes which have intensified famines in India during the last sixty years.

II. LIBERALISM AND PEACE.

[*Speech delivered at Swindon on January, 29, 1898, in support of the Liberal Candidate Lord Edmond Fitzmaurice.*]

A LARGE and enthusiastic meeting was held at Swindon in support of the Liberal candidate for the Cricklade division, Lord Edmond Fitzmaurice, brother of Lord Lansdowne late Viceroy of India, but a true Liberal in English politics. The candidate himself, Lord Edmond, spoke on home politics, and Mr. Romesh Dutt, C.I.E., spoke on Indian affairs for nearly an hour No full report of the speech was published ; the following summary of the speech is taken from *India.*

Mr. Dutt said that he considered it an honour and a privilege to appear in support of the Liberal party and of the liberal candidate Lord Edmond Fitzmaurice. He appeared before them, not altogether as a stranger, but as a British citizen, and as one who was proud to call himself a subject of their beloved Queen. The name of the Queen of England was cherished with affection and love in all the colonies and dependencies of England's world-wide empire, but nowhere did it evoke greater loyalty and affection than among the millions of India. (Cheers.) Nor was this merely a passive sentiment. In times of action the people of India had ever risked their lives for their Queen, side by side with the bravest soldiers whom these islands had sent out,

as was proved by the incidents of the present war. (Cheers.) What was the secret of this loyalty? What was the secret of the British ascendancy in India? Military people sometimes asserted that India was conquered by the sword and held by the sword. (Cries of "No, no.") He was glad that this assertion was so emphatically denied, because a falser assertion was never made. He maintained without hesitation that India was won by good government and was held by good government. (Prolonged cheers) In the last century when the central power of Mogul Emperors had gone to pieces, when lawless freebooters swept through the country, when State warred against State and tribe warred against tribe, the British Power appeared on the scene as the one Power which could give the country peace and rest and settled government and a just administration. The people saw this and felt this, and spontaneously gave their support to this Power. In Bengal, in Madras, in Bombay, in the North West, the silent and efficacious support of the people, and not victories on the battle-field, had helped the rise of the British power, and maintained British power in India. To this day, the silent and efficacious support of the people supported the government, which in spite of blunders and mistakes meant to be just to the people. All administrative officers knew this. He himself had taken his humble share in the work of administration under the Government of India for over twenty-five years; he had charge of Indian Districts with areas of four to six thousand square miles, with populations of two to three millions;

situated hundreds of miles from the nearest seat of the army, and having for his support only a few subordinate civil officers, and a body of police less than five hundred strong. But under these circumstances he felt perfectly secure in the exercise of his power and authority, because of the silent and efficacious support of the people among whom he worked, and who knew that whatever his blunders were, whatever the blunders of the Government were he was trying honestly to promote their welfare, secure peace and do justice between man and man. (Cheers.) India was thus held not by the sword but by good government. If the government turned unwise and foolish and oppressive, the seventy thousand British troops could not hold together a population of over two hundred millions for a single generation—not for a single decade. (Cries of "No, they could not.") And if the Government were wise and recognised the claims of the people for reforms and popular privileges, nothing could sever India from England. (Cheers.) Looking back to the history of the past forty years, he maintained that, generally speaking, whenever the Liberals had been in power for a long period, India had enjoyed peace and good government, and whenever the Tories had been in power for a long time, India had drifted into foolish and unjust annexations, into sinful and disastrous wars. (Loud cheers.) He pointed to the period of sixteen years since the abolition of the East India Company, from 1858 to 1874, during which the Liberals were in the power at home with brief interruptions, and during which India enjoyed

peace under wise rulers like Lord Canning and Lord Lawrence, Lord Mayo and Lord Northbrook. He pointed to the next period of six years, 1874 to 1880, when the Tories were in power, and when an unwise Viceroy was sent out to carry out an unwise policy which ended in disaster and war. He pointed to the third period of 1880 to 1885, when the Liberals were in power, and India enjoyed peace once more under the beneficent administration of Lord Ripon, than whom no better or greater Viceroy had ruled in India. And he pointed to the last period, 1885 to the present date, when the Tories were in power with brief interruptions, and during which successive Viceroys,—Lords Dufferin, Lansdowne, and Elgin,—had wasted the revenues of impoverished India in making unprofitable annexations and useless forts beyond India, in weakening the frontier and making enemies of friendly tribes. (Cries of "Shame.") Mr Dutt then referred to the calamities which had crowded on India in the year of the Queen's Diamond Jubilee—famine, plague, and a needless and iniquitous war. Amidst these complications, in the face of the vast expenditure which had to be incurred for the relief of the famine and the prosecution of the war, India expected some help, some relief from the British Exchequer. The Chancellor of the Exchequer had given some hope of relief about a month ago, and had then turned round and said that the Indian Government did not want the money from the British Exchequer. The reason of this sudden change had leaked out through a paper in India, which had mysterious access to the views of the

Indian Government. That paper had said that Parliamentary interference in Indian concerns had done mischief in the past, and it was undesirable to let the British workman pay for the Indian war, lest he enquired too minutely into the causes and the necessity of the war! It came to this, that the Indian Government were so afraid of the British public enquiring into Indian wars and Indian administration that they would rather have no help from the British Exchequre than ask for help which might be followed by enquiry (Cries of "Shame.") But he hoped that the British public would enquire into Indian questions, and he hoped that his hearers would support that great Liberal party which had in the past identified itself with peace and domestic improvement in India.

There was loud and prolonged cheering for nearly a minute when Mr. Dutt resumed his seat, and when he left the room a few minutes later to catch the train for Oxford, the audience left their seats, shook hands with him, and followed him with cries of "God bless your countrymen."

III FRONTIER WAR AND FAMINES.

[*Speech delivered at Oxford on March 7, 1898*]

On Monday evening a public meeting was held in the Corn Exchange under the auspices of the Oxford Liberal Association, when Mr Romesh Dutt, C I E, was invited to deliver an address on the question of "Frontier War and Famines in India" Among those present were Professor Sidgwick (who presided), Professor Macdonell, the Sheriff Mr Cooper, Alderman Downing, Councillors Dodd, English, Moore, and J. R. Salter, Messrs J Massie, S Ball, Snow, A M. Bell, Norman Smith, Grubb, A' Bear, Wintle, Watts, Jackson, Miss Weld, Mrs Peters, Miss Goodwin, &c. The following summary of the speech is taken from the *Oxford Journal*

The lecturer at the outset described the Lawrence policy of the Liberal party, and the Lytton policy of the Tory party, and said that, without going into details, if they looked back upon the history of the past forty years, they would find that whenever the Liberals were in power in this country they had tried to maintain what was known as the Lawrence policy, and endeavoured to promote the peace and happiness of the people of India, but whenever the Tory party was in power for any length of time, they had followed the Lytton policy, and had tried to discover a scientific frontier in India which had not yet been found! He did not make this as a

sweeping statement, but it was a fact that the Liberal Government had always been more or less mindful of the needs of the country, while the Tories had always aspired to foolish expeditions and conquests. He was glad to tell them this guest after an undiscoverable frontier had at last come to an end, and that Lord George Hamilton had at last accepted the Lawrence policy with regard at least to the greater part of the Indian Frontier. The question arose however, now that the war was over, who was to pay the cost of this war that had taken place? The war had been imposed upon India not by the policy of India but by the Imperial policy of England, and question was, if the Imperial Exchequer should not meet the expense. They would remember that seventeen years ago, during Mr. Gladstone's administration, the same question was debated in the House of Commons, and Mr. Gladstone and his cabinet with a sense of fairness and of justice came to the conclusion, that as England was responsible for the war of 1878, she should bear at least a portion of the cost; and five millions were contributed by this country to the cost of that Afghan War. (Applause). The same reasons still held good, and they all expected that, in view of the special calamities under which India was suffering, the Tory Government would have the justice at least to contribute some share of the expense of the late war. But no, that was not the Tory policy. Their policy was to run the empire on the cheap, and to go to war and make other countries pay for it! Wisely, England

had so far avoided wars in various parts of the world; she had avoided war in China, in Crete, and in South and West Africa. He said wisely, because he was always glad to see war avoided as long as it could be avoided, consistently with the honour of the nation. (Hear, hear). In two places only had England gone to war—on the frontier of India, and on the frontier of Egypt, but in both cases they made other countries pay, while England had declined to contribute anything towards the cost. If the nation wanted war, and thought its honour was involved, the nation ought to be prepared to make the sacrifices; but to make war from a spirit of Jingoism and make other nations pay, was a proceeding which would not have the approbation of Englishmen. (Applause). He asked them as men of ordinary common sense, was it possible that India in the present year should meet the enormous expenditure incurred by this war on the frontier? From their own admission, between five and six millions had been spent in consequence of the famine;—was this a year in which India should bear the burden of a war without some assistance? He said emphatically it was not, and the reason England was not asked to pay any share of the cost was this, that when an Englishman paid, wanted to know the reasen why. And it would be difficult indeed for the most ingenious Cabinet Minister to find out a reason for this unnecessary and senseless war. (Hear, hear). The speaker then referred to the effects upon India of the famines of 1837, 1860, 1866, 1874, 1876, and of 1896, and remarked that the last

famine was more wide-spread than any previous famine that had occured in the present century. The civil officers did their very best to relieve the sufferers, and when Englishmen undertook to do a thing, they knew how to do it, and did not spare themselves. All this was very satisfactory, but the deeper question arose, why should there be so many famines in India, why such a terrible death-rate from starvation? They never heard of such famines in any other civilised country of the world. They sometimes heard of scarcity, but they never heard in any civilised country of famines so desolating, so destructive of human life and so frequent as in India He had seen this question answered in various ways, but the answers were both unsatisfactory and untrue. It was sometimes said the population of India increased beyond the ordinary rate of increase in Europe, and that when a population increased to such an extent, they must make up their mind to die by famine. But the population did not increase at a larger rate or even at the same rate as the population of these islands. It was also said that the peasantry of India were wreckless and unthrifty, and that one could not help people who would not help themselves. But he (the speaker) knew of no peasantry who were so sober, frugal, and so absolutely parsimonious, as the peasantry of India. No, the real reason lay in the fact that the expenditure of the Indian Government, with its wasteful wars and a vast army, was far more than the population of India could bear. Quite four-fifths of the population depended entirely on agriculture; therefore if they so

adjusted taxation as to leave a fair margin of profit to the agriculturists, the people would be prosperous. But if they raised the land tax from time to time so as to leave no margin to the people, nothing could save them from poverty and indebtedness, and from famines whenever there was a bad harvest. All this talk about improving the material condition of India was idle mockery. If they were earnest in their desire to improve the condition of the people of India, two things were necessary; first, the reduction of expenditure, and secondly, a reduction of taxation on land on which and which alone the people lived. A strong, good government always secured peace and economy; feeble and fussy governments suffered alternately from panic and vain-gloriousness. The speaker therefore appealed to them to administer India again as it had been administered by wise statesmen in the past, and to renew the policy of men like Lord Canning, Lord Lawrence and the Marquis of Ripon. (Applause).

On the proposition of Mr. Ball, seconded by Mr. Dodd a hearty vote of thanks was accorded to the Lecturer, and a similar compliment was paid to Professor Sidgwick for presiding.

IV. NEW IMPERIALISM IN INDIA.

[Speech delivered at the Sixth Annual Conference of the Women's National Liberal Association, on May, 17, 1898]

THE Sixth Annual Conference of the Women's National Liberal Association was opened on Tuesday morning in St. Martin's Town Hall, London. There was a large attendance, the hall being well filled. Lady Hayter presided at the morning session, and among those on the platform were Mrs. Boyce, Miss Shaw-Lefevre, Miss Orme, Mrs. Grimwade, Mrs. Crossley, Mrs. Reeves, Sir Francis and Lady Evans, Mr. and Mrs. Byles, Sir Arthur Hayter, Mr. Ellis Griffith, M.P., Mr. Herbert Paul and Mr. Romesh Dutt. C. I. E. The following report of Mr. Dutt's speech is taken from *India*.

Mr. Dutt said: I consider it an honour and a privilege to be asked at this great annual gathering to say a few words on India, and I respond to the call with the utmost satisfaction, because there never was a time probably within this generation, when Indian affairs demanded your attention more urgently, and when my countrymen needed a larger share of your help and your sympathy. You are aware that last year, at the very time when the people of this country, and the people of British colonies and dependencies all over the world, were celebrating the Diamond Jubilee of the reign of their beloved Queen, India was passing through a series of

calamities which find no parallel in the previous history of the country. A famine, wider in the area affected than any previous famine of which there is any record, desolated the fairest provinces of India. A plague, unprecedented in its extent and virulence, half depopulated for a time our fairest towns, and has travelled from Poona to Bombay, and from Bombay to Calcutta. And, as if these natural calamities were not sufficient, the Government brought upon themselves a disastrous war with tribes living beyond the Indian frontier, who are our best friends if we leave them alone,—(Cheers),—and who are our worst enemies if we interfere with their tribal independence, (Cheers). But it is not of these great calamities that I wish to speak this morning. The famine happily is over, and the one consoling incident connected with this famine is the sympathy and the help which were exhibited by the people of this country with their fellow subjects in India. You ladies and gentlemen, sent out from your private purses over half-a-million of English money for the sufferers in India ; it was a kind act, which has not been forgotten, and will not be forgotten, by the people of India. But though the famine of the past year is over, the question will arise in thoughtful minds why India is afflicted by such frequent famines under British rule. It was the tenth great famine which has visited India within the sixty years of Her Majesty's reign, and these ten great famines have swept away more than ten millions of the population of India. It is a sad chapter in the history of British rule in India, and the lesson which these famines teach us is that so long as an ever-

increasing land tax is raised from the poor cultivators of the soil, their condition can never improve, and they can never be safe from famines and deaths in the future. We in India are not now a great manufacturing nation, nor are we a great commercial nation; but we are a great agricultural nation, and four-fifths of the population of India subsist directly or indirectly on agriculture. If the Government of India places some reasonable limits on the Land Tax, the cultivators can save something in good years to meet the calamities of bad years, as they do in Bengal. But if the Government of India continuously enhances the land revenue at each recurring settlement as they are now doing, the cultivating classes must necessarily be impoverished and indebted, and must perish in large numbers at each famine. Nowhere probably during the last year was the famine severer and more fatal than in the Central Provinces of India. And yet while the people were dying by the ten thousand, the settlement operations were proceeding, and the revenue was being enhanced. One of our best friends in the House of Commons, Mr. Samuel Smith (Cheers) asked the Secretary of State for India, if, in view of the famine from which those Provinces have lately suffered, he would postpone for a few years the introduction of the enhanced assessment. The Secretary of State for India declined to do so. (Shame). If policy like this is pursued in India there can be no improvement in the condition of the masses, and no protection from poverty, starvation, and deaths from famine. The frontier war too is happily over, and I

need not say much about it except to remind you that the present Government which brought on the war by reversing the Chitral policy of their predecessors have had the kindness and the generosity to throw the whole pecuniary burden of the war on the famine-stricken population of India! If there had been a frontier war in any of the self-governing colonies of England under similar circumstances, do you think England would have sent the bill of costs to the colony for payment? And is it fair or just or righteous that the famine-stricken people of India should be treated differently because they are not self-governing, because they trust in the good faith and honour of England? Far different was the treatment which we received from the Liberal Government of that just and great and righteous statesman, whose name is as lovingly cherished in millions of grateful hearts in my own country, as it is in this country where he has lived and worked. (Prolonged cheers). Seventeen years ago, Mr. Gladstone was in power when the Afghan war was concluded, and with that fairness and sense of justice which were a part of him he contributed five millions of money from the English Exchequer towards the cost of that war. Contrast that action with the ungenerous and unjust decision of the present Government, which is distributing doles to all its friends and supporters, but cannot make a contribution which India demands with justice. But I turn from the subject of the frontier war, to the internal administration of India. You would expect naturally that in a year in which we have suffered so much from

an accumulation of disasters and calamities, we would at least receive some sympathy and considerate treatment at the hands of the Government. The fact, however, is that a change has come over the spirit of the Indian administration, and New Imperialism is signalizing itself in India by measures of coercion and acts of confiscation. I can remember the administration of India from the time when it passed from the Company to the Crown, forty years ago, and I do not exaggerate when I state that among all the dark periods of British rule in India within these forty years, there was not a darker period for repressive legislation and for coercive measures than the present. You have heard how two respectable and honoured citizens of Bombay were deported by the Government, and were kept in confinement for nine months without a trial, and that even now they have not been released from all restrictions. You have heard of the prosecution instituted against the Indian Press, and of the monstrous sentences passed by Indian judges on editors of newspapers, sentences which have shocked public opinion in this country as well as in India. And you have heard of the Acts recently passed by the Indian Government to virtually gag the Press of India—in spite of the opposition of all classes of the Indian Community. I will not go into the details of these Acts, but I may merely allude to one or two of their clauses to give you an idea of this strange Draconian law. One clause is that if an Indian speaker or writer says or writes anything, in this country, which may bring the Government of India into contempt, that

Indian speaker or writer may be prosecuted for it—not here, not before a British judge or British jury, but on his return to India, before an Indian magistrate, who is also the head of the police. We in India have the very highest respect for authority and for the Government, but I am not sure that it is possible even to mention some of its recent doings without exciting some feelings other than respect! And if what I have said this morning has excited in the minds of my fair listeners any unamiable feelings towards the Government, I may look forward to the pleasure and the luxury of a prison home when I go back to India, whether it be six months hence or six years hence. (Laughter). Another clause is that magistrates are empowered to demand security from editors of news papers, and in default to imprison them with hard labour. (Shame). Imagine how much of the liberty of the Press would remain, even in this country, if every Police Magistrate were empowered to require security for good behaviour from editors of London and country papers, and in default of such security to cast the editors into prison. Such a suppression of the Press would be a folly and misfortune in England; it is ten times more a folly and a misfortune in India. For in this free country you have the House of Commons and a hundred free institutions to give expression to your sentiments. In India we have no House of Commons and no free institutions, and to suppress Press would be to suppress the only possible expression of public opinion. It would render despotism more despotic, it would silence

criticism and suppress public opinion, it would endanger the empire. For if there be dissatisfaction in the land with certain measure of the Government, is it not far better and far safer that the people should speak it out—(Cheers)—and that you should know it—(Cheers)—that you should try to remove it—(Cheers)—than that the dissatisfaction should work in the dark and end in a catastrophe? This is the just, the statesmanlike, and the true Liberal policy, and this was the policy of the great Liberal leader who is departing from us. Twenty years ago the Tory Government were unwise enough to pass a law to gag the Vernacular Press of India. But when Mr. Gladstone came into power, I need hardly say the foolish Act was expunged from the Statute Book of India. And the people of India confidently trust and believe that when a worthy successor of Mr. Gladstone will come once again into power, the Gagging Act now passed will once more cease to disgrace the Statute Book of India. (Cheers.) Ladies and gentlemen, I have one more word to say before I conclude. You are all aware that the present Government has declared its intention to demolish the self-government of London, and to destroy the great municipal powers enjoyed by the London County Council. You know how arduously the Tory leaders strove to influence the London elections in their favour, and how the great people of London have given the Government an answer whose import cannot be mistaken. And if the Government still persists in bringing forward a Bill, you may be quite sure that it is for the sake of

appearances, and for gracefully retiring from the attitude they were unwise enough to take up. So, gentlemen, the thunderbolt which was so assiduously manufactured for London by the Tory Government has really fallen on our devoted heads in Calcutta. Twenty-two years ago the Municipality of Calcutta received a constitution by which two-thirds of the members of the Corporation were elected by the tax-payers. The system has worked well, and the people receive this limited right. But the present Government sickens at the very idea of working through the people, and by means of a popular institution, and they have introduced a Bill in the Bengal Council, virtually taking away all real power from the elected Municipal Commissioners of the Capital of India! A blow is aimed at the root of self-government in Calcutta, and it is dreaded as the beginning of the end of all municipal self-government in India! Ladies and gentlemen, I thank you sincerely for the kind attention with which you have listened to me. Do not adopt this New Imperialism,—this method of coercion and repression—that will not save your Indian empire. Continue the policy which you adopted in the past, of trust and confidence in the people, of accepting the help and co-operation of the people in the management of their concerns, (Cheers,)—and the empire of India will be based on the firmest of all foundations, the affection and the loyalty of a great nation. (Loud cheers.)

V. DEATH OF MR. GLADSTONE.

[*Speech delivered at Derby on May*, 20, 1898]

THE annual meeting of the National Reform Union was held at Derby on May 20, in the Temperance Hall. On account of the death of Mr. Gladstone only formal business was done and the annual report adopted. The Hon. Philip Stanhope, M.P., who presided, then spoke of the services which Mr Gladstone had rendered to his country, and the loss sustained through his death. Mr. F. Maddison, M.P., spoke on behalf of the labour party, and he was followed by Mr. Romesh Dutt, who spoke on behalf of India. The following summary of his speech appeared in *India*.

Mr. Dutt said; I feel it a mournful duty to add a few words on this sad occasion, at the death of one whose name is as lovingly cherished in millions of grateful hearts in my own country as in this land where he lived and worked. (Cheers) For the loss which has been sustained at the death of Mr. Gladstone is not a loss to England alone; it is a loss to the whole British Empire, and a loss to the cause of humanity. (Cheers). Your country, sir, is rich in illustrious men, whose genius has shed light and lustre in all parts of the world, men whose burning thoughts and burning words have raised a joyous echo in the remotest corners of the earth for freedom and for justice. But I doubt if even in this illustrious land there has lived within this century a man whose heart yearned more truly and nobly for the

oppressed and the suffering than Mr. Gladstone, or whose voice pleaded more eloquently for right and for justice. For half a century Mr. Gladstone's name has been identified with the cause of right and justice, and has been cherished by nations of the earth far beyond the limits of the British Empire. In Italy, in Greece, in Armenia, in Crete, in Bulgaria, in Montenegro, wherever nations have struggled against oppression and wrong, Mr. Gladstone's voice has made itself heard, Mr. Gladstone's influence has made itself felt. (Loud cheers). Sad recollections come to one's mind on the present mournful occasion. I had the great good fortune, sir, to be in this country thirty years ago, when the great election of 1868 brought the Liberals to power. And I had the proud privillege of seeing Mr. Gladstone when he sat as Prime Minister in the House of Commons for the first time. You know the noble results of that brilliant administration (1868-74), one of the noblest administrations of this century. The Irish Church was disestablished, the first Irish Land Act was passed, and a system of national and compulsory education was organised for this country. (Cheers). I was again in this country, in 1886, and was present at those great debates in the House of Commons which followed Mr. Gladstone's introduction of his first Irish Home Rule Bill. One again, in 1893, I was here, and was a silent and admiring witness to that prolonged and persevering fight by which the venerable statesman succeeded in getting his second Home Rule Bill passed by the House of Commons. Then Mr. Gladstone

retired from the scene of his labours to well-earned repose, but he never, to the last day of his life, ceased taking a lively interest in what he considered to be right and just. One private incident I wish to mention, because it illustrates the characteristic sympathy of Mr. Gladstone for the people of India. Last year, when Mr. Gladstone was living in retirement at Hawarden, I had the honour of sending him a copy of a small book on "England and India," in which I had indicated some needed reforms in the methods of Indian administration. The book had little interest for the general reader, but it had great interest for Mr. Gladstone, and I had the proud privillege of receiving a letter from him in his own handwriting, in which he thanked me for the gift, and expressed a hope that my little work would have some effect in awakening Englishmen to their duties towards their Indian fellow-subjects. (Cheers). But I do not wish to dwell on these personal recollections. I desire rather to refer in a few words to those great services which Mr Gladstone has rendered to my country and to my countrymen. Not once or twice, but repeatedly, did the great and venerable statesman turn from the turmoil and bustle of British politics to render services to India, which have drawn towards him the hearts of my countrymen. In referring to some of these services, I will carefully avoid all political controversy, which is unsuited to this solemn occasion, and I will remember your injunction, sir, to exclude all discussion of party politics. I will barely mention one or two facts, and let the facts speak for themselves. You have all heard,

ladies and gentlemen, of the frontier war into which India drifted during the last year, and which has been happily brought to a close. Twenty years ago India drifted into another such war with Afghanistan, during the administration of Lord Beaconsfield. As you all remember, Lord Beaconsfield's Government fell, and Mr. Gladstone came into power in 1880; he terminated the Afghan war; and with that sense of justice and fairness which was a part of him he decided that as the Afghan war was more an Imperial than an Indian war, a portion of the cost of the war should be contributed by England. Five millions of English money were contributed from the Imperial Exchequer towards the cost of that war. I need hardly remind you that the decision of the present Government with regard to the recent frontier war has been different; the whole cost of this last war has been charged to India. I will cite another instance. Under Lord Beaconsfield's administration the Government of India thought fit to pass an Act to restrict the liberty of the Vernacular Press of India, a liberty which it had enjoyed under British rule for half a century or more. As I said, Mr. Gladstone came into power in 1880, and the Press-gagging Act was expunged from the Statute Book of India. On this point too, the decision of the present Government had been different; they have passed two new Acts this year to restrict the liberty of the Press in India. Permit me to cite yet one more instance illustrating the spirit of Mr. Gladstone's legislation for India. Within the same brief period of Mr. Gladstone's second administration, to which I have

already referred, and which lasted from 1880 to 1885, a noble and well-beloved Viceroy, the Marquis of Ripon, laid the foundation in India of what is known as local self-government. District boards and local boards were created; members were elected to these boards by the people, and they were entrusted with the management of roads, primary schools, dispensaries, and other local institutions. Tax-payers in towns were allowed to elect representatives, and Municipalities were allowed to elect chairmen. On this point also the spirit of Mr. Gladstone's administration differs from that of the present administration, for a Bill has been introduced this year by the present Government to take away from the Municipality of Calcutta those powers of self-government which it has enjoyed for many years past. Ladies and gentlemen, I need not allude to other instances, nor shall I on this solemn occasion discuss the current politics of India. India has fallen upon evil times, and we are passing through dangers which threaten to overwhelm us and wrest from us those humble rights and privileges which we have enjoyed in the past. We are filled with alarm, but not with dispair. Standing—if I may say so—by the grave of the greatest statesman of this century, we cannot think that wise Government is dead even in the dependency of India. The great heart of England is sound to the core—(Cheers)—and England, which is just and true to her colonies all over the world, cannot be unjust and untrue to India—at least, as long as England can cherish and love and venerate the name and the memory of Mr. Gladstone. (Prolonged cheers.)

VI. THE NEW SEDITION LAW.

[*Speech made at a Conference of Indians held in St. Martin's Town Hall, London, on June 20, 1898.*]

THE following report of Mr Romesh Dutt's speech is taken from a published report of the proceedings. He moved the following resolution.

"That this meeting condemns the new Sedition Law of India, (1) which makes invidious distinctions between different classes of Her Majesty's subjects, (2) which seeks to restrict the free discussion of Indian measures by Her Majesty's Indian subjects in England, by threats of prosecution on their return to India; (3) which takes away the liberty of the Press that has been enjoyed in India for over half a century, and substitutes a method of repression unworthy of the British Government, (4) which empowers magistrates in India, who are heads of the police, to demand security for good behaviour from editors of newspapers, to refuse such security when offered, and to send the editors to gaol with hard labour, *without trial for any specific offence*; (5) and lastly, which is based on suspicion and distrust against the people, and is thereby calculated to alienate the people and weaken the foundations of the British Empire in the East."

Mr. Dutt said: I feel some hesitation in rising to move this resolution because, as you are aware, I have spent the best years of my life in the service of the great Indian Government, and I feel a pardonable pride in having done my humble little in serving the cause of good government in India. (Cheers.) I felt, therefore, some hesitation in accepting an invitation to speak on the

subject of the blunders of the Indian Government. But the blunder on this occasion has been so serious, and is liable to be followed by consequences so disastrous, that I felt I should not be doing my duty towards my countrymen, or to the Government which I have served so long, if I did not on this occasion raise my warning voice against this unwise piece of legislation. (Loud cheers.) The idea of gagging the Press of India is not a happy one, not even a new one. As most of you are aware, about twenty years ago another Indian Viceroy, Lord Lytton, who waged another frontier war, conceived the idea of silencing criticism in India by means of gagging Act. He gagged the Vernacular Press by an Act in 1878, and you know what followed. The Liberal Government came into power two years after, and that Act was expunged from the Statute Book of India—(Cheers)—by that great and righteous statesman whose recent death has caused sorrow and lamentation in India as well as in England. Once more, now, we have a Viceroy who has passed another law, gagging this time not only the Vernacular Press but the whole Press, English and Vernacular, Native Indian and Anglo-Indian. I shall be very much surprised if this act remains very long on the Statute Book. I feel perfectly sure that, if the universal sorrow which has been manifested at the death of Mr. Gladstone indicates some appreciation of those righteous principles which guided his life, then there is not the remotest doubt that the leaders of Liberal thought in England will take an early opportunity of removing from the Statute Book an Act which is a disgrace to British Legislation.

(Cheers.) With these few remarks I think I will now at once go into some of the details of the Bill. You know that, about this time last year, a hint was received by some members of the House of Commons that it was contemplated to pass an Act to silence criticism in India and to gag the Press. The Leader of the Opposition put a question to the Secretary of State for India, asking him whether, before such an Act was passed, he would give the House of Commons an opportunity of knowing and discussing the details of the measure. Lord George Hamilton replied that the Indian Government was primarily responsible for the maintenance of peace in India, and the Indian Government, therefore, should have the initiative on all Indian measures. I particularly invite your attention to this reply, because I am going to show from the Blue-book which I hold in my hand that Lord George Hamilton has not acted in accordance with this statement. He has not allowed the Indian Government to act on its own opinion with regard to this Act, but he has in some respects forced the Indian Government to go further in the methods of repression than the Viceroy intended or desired to do. Soon after this, Parliament was prorogued, and the House did not re-open until February. Then the question was raised by one of our truest friends in the House of Commons, Mr. Herbert Roberts—(Cheers)—who discussed this proposed law in an eloquent and convincing speech. I will not repeat all the remarks he made on that occasion, but there is one sentence which I wish to read, because it truly describes the nature of the Act which has since been passed. He

said, "The result of the new law, if passed, will be to open up an endless vista of prosecutions against editors of newspapers in India." Another member who sits on the Government side of the House, Mr. Maclean, said, "You can govern India by your justice and generosity, and in case of need by force of arms, but you will never do it by preventing the free expression of opinion among the people" (Cheers) What was the reply of Lord George Hamilton? He assured the House that the law was under the consideration of the members of the Viceroy's Council, and that it was not then the proper time to discuss it in the House of Commons. He said that after the law had been passed it would be published, if desired, and opportunity would then come for discussion. The papers have since been published, but no opportunity for discussion has been given; nor will it be given until the closing days of August, when the Indian budget will be discussed, as usual, before empty benches. (Cries of "Shame.") I am not at all surprised at this unwillingness of the Government to discuss it, because the Act contains provisions so antagonistic to the principles of British law that the most powerful Government we have known for many years may well hesitate to bring it before the House of Commons. The law consists of two amending Acts. One amends the Penal Code, and the other amends the Criminal Procedure Code. With regard to the Penal Code, section 4 is repealed and the following is substituted for it. "The provisions of this code apply also to any offence committed by any native Indian subject of Her Majesty in any place