

journals which introduce this element of contempt and hatred in the discussion of administrative questions are creating difficulties for the British Government, and sowing seeds of evil in India. It is by some degree of sympathy, some degree of good feeling and neighbourly courtesy and not by Sedition Laws that the relations between the different sections of the Indian community can be improved. As one who has passed the best years of his life in administrative work, I have noticed that every improvement in the tone of the English press is warmly responded to by the Indian press, and that every want of kindliness and good feeling adds to the difficulties of administration and weakens British rule in India.

Calcutta Municipality.

But I pass over this subject, because it is not my object to-day to make my speech a criticism of the Sedition Law, or of other measures already passed. I wish also to pass over with very few remarks the controversies relating to recent municipal laws, and to the Calcutta Municipality. These controversies are fresh in your minds, and the subject will, no doubt, receive ample justice from other speakers before we have closed our proceedings. To me one most consoling feature in the history of this unfortunate measure is the help rendered to our cause by so high an authority as the Right Honourable Sir Henry Fowler. It was my privilege to be a listener in the House of Commons on the memorable night when the late Secretary of State spoke from the Liberal front bench, supporting Mr. Herbert Roberts,

and condemning the virtual withdrawal of that boon of self-government which it is the proud boast of England to have conferred on the metropolis of India. Gentlemen, even Sir Henry Fowler has spoken in vain—at least, for the present—but we are none the less grateful to him for his strong advocacy of a just and righteous cause, the cause of self-government in India. Nor are we less grateful to those who have fought the same battle in this country, foremost among whom stands Raja Binay Krishna Deb, a worthy scion of a worthy house which has been loyal and friendly to British rule in India since the days of Clive and Hastings. To our friends who fought in the Legislative Council, and to others who were true to the cause of our progress is due our warmest acknowledgment and our deepest gratitude. Gentlemen, their example, their endeavours and their sustained effort will live in the memory of our countrymen, and will find a place in the history of our country. A constitutional battle so fought is not fought in vain, and our children and our children's children, to whom we shall hand down the heritage of a loyal and constitutional agitation for self-government under the imperial and progressive rule of England, will look upon the closing of the nineteenth century as an epoch in the history of the land, and will draw new inspiration from the example of the men of this century who have lived and worked and fought—not in vain. There are defeats which are more glorious than victories; and the defeat which we have sustained will strengthen our hearts, freshen our hopes, and nerve our hands for new endeavours.

With regard to the actual result of this battle, I do not know if there is any class of men in Calcutta who in their hearts like it much. I have asked myself if there is any Englishman familiar with the history of the Calcutta Municipality who thinks that the new measure will improve administration, promote sanitation, or secure the willing co-operation of all classes of citizens. I do not know if the officials of Calcutta who have done so much in the past to foster municipal self-government will contemplate with gratification the ruin of the noble edifice which they built up after the labours of a quarter of a century. I do not know if the European merchants of Calcutta, who are busy, practical men, and have lived in amity and good feeling with the Indian population, will like the idea to spread over the country that wherever English trade prospers not only Indian manufactures, but Indian political and municipal rights, too, must be sacrificed. I do not know if the new City Fathers of Calcutta contemplate with joy their prospects of success, or the odium of a failure, with difficult sanitary problems before them, and a poor, inadequate, almost beggarly income. What the elected Commissioners have done in the way of sanitary reforms with this poor income is a matter of history. Gentlemen, I remember Calcutta some forty years under the administration of Government officials, when we as school boys had to walk to school by open drains and reeking filth. I remember Calcutta as it was under the Justices of the Peace, some thirty years ago, with its awkward tale of waste and jobbery. And I have seen year after year the improvements effected, the

sanitary reforms done, the wasteful expenditure cut down, and every department of the office brought to order, by the elected Commissioners within the last twenty-five years, by some of the best men whom our country has produced, and who have given years of their life to this patriotic work. Their work has been consistently recognised in past years by successive rulers of the land, but it is necessary to give a dog a bad name in order to hang it; and it was reserved for Sir Alexander Mackenzie who was a friend of self government under the administration of Mr. Gladstone and Lord Ripon, to end his career in India by giving the self-government system in Calcutta a bad name and then effectually strangling it. Gentlemen, I feel sad whenever I think over these matters, and I feel sad when I recollect that this thing has come to pass in the first year of Lord Curzon's administration. I honestly believe that no Viceroy ever came out to India with a more sincere desire to work for the good of the people, and with the help and co-operation of the people. I honestly think that his Lordship in Council gave a most careful consideration to the question before he issued his own proposals; and if that Council had contained a single Indian member to represent the Indian view of the question, and to explain the true history of the municipality during the last forty years, I am persuaded Lord Curzon would have taken the same view as Sir Henry Fowler has taken, and would have effected the needed reforms in the Calcutta Municipality and strengthened the executive, without virtually sacrificing self-government. But our difficulty and our

danger lie in this, that great administrative questions are discussed and settled in Executive Councils where we are not represented and not heard. I do not say that the official view is necessarily wrong, and that our view is necessarily right; but I do say that both views should be fairly represented before the tribunal which shapes our destinies. I do not say that we have more knowledge or more experience or more ability than the high officials who represent the official view of the question, but I do say that we view questions from a different point of view, and that there should be a constitutional channel for the representation of our views in the Executive Councils of the empire. For when the Executive Councils have decided a question, the thing is done—the Legislative Councils simply carry out the official mandate with unimportant alterations, as the Bengal Council has done in the case of the Municipal Bill.

Famine of 1899.

But, gentlemen, I must extricate myself from this subject and pass on at once to the great calamity which now stares us in the face, the famine, from which millions of our countrymen are suffering even now; and with your permission I will devote all my remaining time to this one great subject—which appears to me to be one of paramount importance—the famines of India, and the condition of our poorer classes. Gentlemen, you are aware of the prompt measures which have been already adopted by the Government of Lord Curzon for

the relief of distress in British territory and for helping Indian Princes to relieve distress in Native States during this time of trouble and anxiety. And those of you who have had experience of relief operations in previous famines will feel confident that Englishmen when they have once put their hand to the plough, will not leave the work half done. It is with a pardonable pride that I recall past days when I myself was employed along with my English colleagues in famine relief operations, or in providing against impending famines, in 1874, in 1876, and in 1896; and judging from my past experience, and judging from the measures adopted this year, I feel confident that no effort, no expenditure, no means humanly possible, will be spared by a benevolent Government to save life and to relieve distress among the millions of our suffering countrymen. And in the face of that calamity it behoves us all, it behoves this National Congress, to do all we can to strengthen the hands of the Government, to offer our help according to our capacity and power, and to place our suggestions before the Government, not in a spirit of criticism, but in a spirit of loyalty and co-operation, for the relief of the present distress and for the prevention of such distress in future.

Alleged causes of Famines.

It is in this spirit that I suggest that the time has come when it is desirable to take some effective measures to improve the condition of the agricultural population of India. Their poverty, their distress, their indebted-

ness, all this is not their fault. Sometimes it is asserted that the poverty of the people and the famines which we witness in India, and in no other well-governed country on earth, are due to the over-increase in population: Gentlemen, this is not so. If you go into figures you will find that the population does not increase in India as fast as it does in many European countries like Germany and England. And if you read the paper written by Mr Baines, the late Census Commissioner of India, in the first volume of the British Empire Series recently issued in London, you will find the Census Commissioner himself admits that the growth of population in India is not so fast⁹ as that in Germany or in England. Sometimes again it is asserted that the poverty of the Indian agriculturist is due to his own improvidence, wastefulness, and folly. Gentlemen, this is not so. Those who have passed the best portion of their life among the Indian cultivators, as I have done, will tell you that the Indian cultivator is about the most frugal, the most provident, the most thoughtful about his future among all races of cultivators on earth. If he goes to the money-lender it is not because he is in love with the money-lender, but because he has nothing to eat. If he pays 25 or 37 per cent. as interest on loans, it is because he cannot get loans on lower interest on such security as he can offer.

We are all aware that the Government of India are at the present time endeavouring to safeguard the interests of the cultivators in the Punjab and elsewhere from the claims of money-lenders on their land. I do not wish to

speaking on the merits of the Bill, because I never wish to say a word or to express an opinion on inadequate information, and the information I have been able to gather about the condition of the Punjab tenants is not yet as full and complete as I could wish it to be. All that I can say is that this idea, that the condition of cultivators can be improved, not by helping them to save, but by restricting their right of sale and mortgage, is an old idea which has been found utterly unsound in Bengal. The policy was advocated when the Bengal Tenancy Bill was under discussion fifteen years ago ; I myself took my humble part in strongly resisting the policy ; and if I remember correctly, the able Revenue Secretary of Bengal, who is now the Lieutenant-Governor of these Provinces took the same view. I allude to these views because they are no secret, and will be found published in the *Calcutta Gazette* of that year. The absurdity of relieving the cultivators by virtually taking away from the market value of the one property they have on earth was strongly exposed, and the idea of placing any restrictions on mortgage and sale of lands was ultimately abandoned.

Curiously enough, the question was mooted again in Bengal only three years ago, showing what vast importance is attached to official views and ideas formed in close council chambers. The fear was entertained that land was slipping away from the hands of the cultivating classes to the hands of the money-lending classes, and that to restrict the right of sale and mortgage was the only remedy. I happened to be then acting as Commissioner of Orissa, a part of Bengal, which is not permanently settled, and where

the condition of the cultivators is worse than in other parts of Bengal. If the free right of sale or mortgage has worked evil in any part of Bengal, it must have done so in Orissa. But I was able to show from the records of half-a-century that, although the right of sale and of mortgage had been freely exercised, land had not slipped out of the hands of the cultivating classes, and that to take away from the market value of the land was not the best way to help the cultivators. Fortunately, the greatest revenue authority of Bengal, Mr. Stevens, who afterwards acted as Lieutenant-Governor of Bengal, took the same view, and the idea of helping the cultivators by decreasing the market value of their land was once more abandoned. I do not wish, gentlemen, to generalise on these facts; I do not wish to infer that what would be needless and mischievous in Bengal and Orissa may not be needful and useful for the time being in some parts of India where matters may have reached a more acute stage. But what I do wish to emphasize is that such remedies cannot permanently improve the condition of the cultivators; that in order to improve their condition, we must make it possible for them—as it is possible in Bengal—to save in good years against failure of harvest in bad years.

Real Cause of Famines and the Remedy

Gentlemen, the real cause of the poverty of our agricultural population is simple and even obvious, if we have the courage and the honesty to seek for it and to grasp it. It is not over-population, for the population

does not increase faster than in European countries, does not increase faster than the area of cultivation. It is not the natural improvidence of the cultivator, for those who know the Indian cultivator will tell you that with all his ignorance and superstition, he is as provident, as frugal, as shrewd in matters of his own interest, as the cultivator in any parts of the globe. The real cause of his wretchedness and indebtedness is that except in Bengal and a few other tracts, the land assessment is so heavy that the cultivator is not able to save in good years enough to meet the failure of harvests in bad years. All our village industries, like spinning and weaving, have been killed by a free competition with the steam and machinery of England. Our cultivators and even our village industrial classes therefore virtually depend on the soil as the one remaining source of their substance. The land assessments should therefore be made in a liberal and even a generous spirit. There is every desire in the high officials to make the assessments in a liberal spirit, but as the people have no voice in controlling these assessments, they are found in the actual working to be often illiberal and harsh. They do not leave the cultivators enough to be able to save ; and cultivators therefore fall victims to famine whenever the harvests fail.

Bengal.

The old Hindu law, based on the actual experience of thousands of years, sanctioned one-sixth of the gross produce of the land as the maximum rent. The experience of modern times confirms the wisdom of this

ancient rule. In Bengal, where the Permanent Settlement and the land laws of 1859, 1868 and 1885 save the cultivators from the undue enhancements, the average rent paid by cultivators to landlords does not exceed one-sixth the gross produce in any district, and falls far short of it in eastern districts. The result is that Permanently Settled Bengal, which suffered from the most terrible famine in the last century, has been generally free from destructive famines in recent times. The famines of Behar in 1874 and 1897 were comparatively mild, and there was no loss of life. Extend the Bengal rule to other parts of India, make one-sixth of the gross produce the maximum rent leviable from cultivators in other provinces, and the problem of preventing famines in India is solved.

North-Western Provinces.

In the North-western Provinces and Oudh the cultivators are generally speaking, not safeguarded by a Permanent Settlement. Each new assessment means an increase in Government revenue. Let us find out in what position the actual cultivator is left by such settlements. The system of settlements in the North-western Provinces has often been described, but I have never seen a more lucid account of it, within a brief compass, than in the evidence of Sir Antony Macdonell before the Currency Committee which lately sat in London. Read His Honor's answer to questions Nos. 5737 to 5740, and you have a clear account of the North-west settlements in a nut-shell. There are two salient facts which

I will place before you from this account. 'In the first place the Government allows the landlords to make their own arrangements with the cultivators, and then demands one-half of what the landlord actually gets, after making certain reductions. In the second place, under these arrangements the landlords are actually getting about 20 per cent. of the gross produce in money, and the Government share is one-half of that, or ten per cent. of the produce. Gentlemen, these arrangements are better than those in many other parts of India, and you may be sure the rules are worked considerately, and even leniently, by a ruler who yields to none in India in his real sympathy for the actual cultivator. But nevertheless I should have been relieved to learn that the 20 per cent. of the gross produce represented the maximum limit of rent, and not the average rent. Without such a maximum limit the cultivator has no assurance against over-assessment and undue enhancement. And a landlord who has submitted to an increase of the Government demand at a settlement has the temptation to reimburse himself by raising his rents—as a squeezed sponge fills itself when thrown into the water—to be squeezed again at the next settlement, thirty years later. Adopt the ancient Hindu rule, which is virtually still the rule in Bengal; make one sixth the actual produce—or even one-fifth the actual produce—the maximum-limit of rent under all circumstances, and you make the cultivators of these provinces as prosperous as they are in Bengal, and the problem of disastrous and fatal famines is virtually solved.

Madras.

The state of things is far worse in Madras. Some portions of the Madras Presidency are permanently settled, but in the greater portion of the Province the revenue is not permanently settled; there is no class of landlords, and the Government demands as revenue one-half of the net produce of the land, *i.e.*, of the produce after deducting the cost of cultivation. For a clear, and luminous, and brief account of how this system has worked I would refer you to the speeches made in recent years by the Raja of Bobbili, the Hon'ble Subba Rao and by Mr. Venkataratnam, himself a large landholder, and President of the Godavari District Association. They point out that the rights of the Madras cultivators have not been strengthened, as in Bengal, by successive Acts within this half-century, but have been weakened by successive measures of the Government. They point out that in 1857, the proprietary right of the cultivator with fixity of assessment was admitted by the Government; that in 1882 under Lord Ripon's administration a virtual pledge was given that no enhancements would be allowed except on the equitable ground of a rise in prices; and that at the present day these pledges are ignored, these safeguards are withdrawn and enhancements are actually made on the ground of reclassification of soils as well as of rise in prices. More than this, I read a passage in the Madras Standing Information of 1879, that the land-tax estimated at one half of the net produce should not exceed 40 per cent. of gross produce where the land is irrigated at Government cost, and

should not exceed 33 per cent. of the gross produce in the case of lands not so irrigated. When I read a rule like this, I am filled with bewilderment and pain. Let me mention, gentlemen, that when the Tenancy Bill of Bengal was under discussion in 1884, I had the honour to recommend that 20 per cent. of the gross produce—which is a little over the old Hindu rate—should be fixed as the maximum of rent payable by a cultivator. My proposal was accepted by the then Revenue Secretary of Bengal who is now the honoured ruler of these North-west Provinces and Oudh. The proposal accordingly found a place in the Tenancy Bill drafted by the Government of Bengal, but it was not ultimately passed into law, because in many parts of Bengal, the zemindars were getting much less than 20 per cent. of the produce; and to frame a rule about maximum rent might induce landlords in all parts of Bengal to screw up the rental to that maximum. The argument was good, and I was not sorry that my proposal was rejected. But it is somewhat curious that while the Government declined to fix for *private Zemindars in Bengal* a maximum rent of 20 per cent. of the produce, there is actually a rule in their Standing Information Book fixing 33 and 40 per cent. of the gross produce as the maximum land-tax or revenue *realizable by the Government!* Are you surprised that under the circumstances there should be such repeated and disastrous famines in Madras, and that as pointed out by Mr. A. Rogers—late of the Indian Civil Service and a high authority in revenue matters—a great deal of land is

out of cultivation because cultivators cannot pay the tax that is demanded by the State? The rule in Madras is as I have said before, to demand one-half the net produce—*i.e.*, the value of the produce after deducting the cost of cultivation. Gentlemen, if this means one-half the economic rent, as Sir Charles Wood desired it to be in his despatch of 1864, then the tax should not exceed one-sixth the produce of any field, and should, for the whole Province, be about one-tenth the average produce as it is in Northern India.

Bombay and the Punjab.

Gentlemen, I have not time to-day to go over the land revenue arrangements in other parts of India—of the Bombay Presidency or of the Punjab. In Bombay we have generally the same system as in Madras, the Government generally receiving the tax direct from the cultivators. But the settlement officers in Bombay take into consideration what has been paid by cultivators in previous years without difficulty, and do not endeavour to estimate the field produce at all;—under such a system, where is the security to the cultivator, where is the motive to save? In the Punjab the land-system is somewhat similar to that of the North-Western Provinces; but you will find on examination that neither in Bombay nor in the Punjab is the cultivator assured an adequate proportion of the produce of the land he cultivates; and without such assurance his condition cannot be improved and he cannot be saved from famines merely by tuckering with his relations with his money-

Member. I am not discussing to-day the merits of the different systems prevailing in the different Provinces of India—the *Zemindari* system of Bengal, the *Talukdari* system of Oudh, the *Mahaliwari* system of the North-west, the *Malguzari* system of Central India, or the *Ryotwari* system of Southern India. Nor am I discussing the desirability of extending the Permanent Settlement to all parts of India as was recommended by Lord Canning in 1860, though I myself think, that would be a wise and a generous measure to which the Government is pledged by its many promises in the past. I am not entering into these subjects in order to avoid all discussion, all controversy; and I am laying down a proposal which must receive universal assent without any controversy—*viz.*, that the cultivator should be assured an adequate share of the produce of his land if he is to be saved from indebtedness and poverty, distress and famine. I have confined myself to the actual condition of the cultivator and incidence of the land-tax on the cultivator, for in India the cultivator is the nation. Never mind under what system or under what settlement he lives, assure to him an adequate proportion out of the produce of his land, and he is saved, and the nation saved.

Central Provinces.

But before I leave this subject I must say one word about the Central Provinces of India, which have suffered so disastrously in the famine of 1897, and which is suffering once more under the famine of 1899. The

Central Provinces have suffered more from recent famines than any other part of India because the land-revenue settlements have been more severe and more harsh, not in their intention, but in their actual operation, than any other part of India. I constantly heard in England, as I have no doubt you constantly heard in this country, of the disastrous results of the recent revenue settlements in that Province, initiated by Sir Alexander Mackenzie. But I will not mention here what I have heard, I will limit my remarks entirely to the facts contained in official reports, and stated in the House of Commons by the Secretary of State for India in reply to questions put to him in March last year, by one of the truest friends of the Indian cultivator, Mr. Samuel Smith.

Gentlemen, there is a healthy rule, generally followed in the North-Western Provinces, that settlements are made for thirty years, because it is undesirable to harass the people with frequent enhancements and frequent settlement operations. Sir Alexander Mackenzie departed from this rule, and ordered the present settlement for twenty years, save in a few backward tracts, where I suppose still shorter settlements have been made. There is another healthy rule, followed in the North-Western Provinces, that the land-revenue is fixed at one-half the rental received by landlords. Sir Alexander Mackenzie cancelled this rule, and the Government revenue is now fixed at 50 to 60 per cent. in the recent settlement. Add to this certain local rates, and the Government demand on the Malguzars comes to nearly

70 per cent. of their supposed collections. I ask every impartial man, every fair-minded administrator, why settlements have been made in the Central Provinces for twenty years or less when settlements are made in the North-West for thirty years? I ask every responsible ruler why the Government should demand 60 per cent. from the Malguzar of the Central Provinces when the Government, receives only about 40 per cent. in North-West according to the evidence of Sir Antony Mac-Donnell? These differences in figures may not mean much to the theoretical statesman, but they mean life and death to the Indian cultivator. Every tampering with the settled rules in land settlements, every lowering of the period of settlements, every increase in the proportion of the Government demand means the further impoverishment of the cultivators, means increased wretchedness and indebtedness in ordinary times, increased deaths in famines. Why gentlemen, this very experiment was tried in these North-Western Provinces; the Government demand at first was not half but two-thirds of the assests of the landlords; and that rule created a degree of suffering to the people greater than all the wars of the first half of this century. That rule was ultimately abandoned in 1855, and the Government demand was fixed at one half the rental of the landlord; and is it fair that we should go back in the Central Provinces to the old rule which our experience has taught us here to be harsh and cruel to the cultivators? If the people had any control over the executive action in the Central Provinces, the tampering with the

old established settlement rules would not have been allowed. If the people had been represented in the Viceroy's Executive Council to press these matters, no Viceroy of India would have permitted such departure from the usual settlement rules, a departure which has been disastrous in its consequences on the condition of the people and increased the deaths from famines in the Central Provinces.

Gentlemen, I have detained you longer on this subject than I had intended, but the importance of the subject is my excuse. I state my deliberate opinion, based on a careful study of the question for thirty years, that the land-revenue arrangements in India are responsible, not for bringing on famines, but for deepening the effects of these famines; and secondly, that if the position of the cultivator was assured, if the demand from him were fixed within equitable and fixed limits, loss of lives could be prevented on the occurrence of famines, as it has been prevented in Bengal. British administration has done much for us; it has given us internal peace, it has given us education, it has brought us nearer to western civilisation. But British administration has not performed all its duty so long as the country is desolated by famines, unheard of in any other civilised and well-governed country. My conviction is, and I lay it loyally before the Government, that these frequent and acute famines are mainly owing to the cause that *our village industries are gone, and our village lands are over-assessed.* My conviction is, and I lay it loyally before the Government, that this enormous loss of lives is preventible, and

could be avoided through more considerate land settlements, assuring to the cultivator in every province an adequate proportion of the food that he produces.

**Military Expenditure, National Debt, Currency,
Industries, Services.**

Gentlemen, there are various other causes of the poverty of India under British Rule which I have not touched upon to-day, and which I do not wish to touch upon, because they have been discussed ably, eloquently, and repeatedly by yourselves at previous meetings of this Congress, and some of them will be discussed again this year by other speakers. There is the question of the enormous Military Expenditure, and the maintenance of a vast army out of the resources of India, not for the requirements of India, but for the requirements of the British Empire in Asia, Africa, and even in Europe. There is the question of the National Debt, which, in Great Britain, has been reduced by about 175 millions since 1860, and which has gone up by over 100 millions in India within this period, causing an increasing drain out of the revenues of India for the payment of interest in England. There is the question of the Currency which has been lately settled by the Currency Committee in a manner not conducive to the interests of the millions of cultivators whose debts have been increased, and savings depreciated. There is the question of encouraging and helping the Industrial Classes ruined by unfair competition, a question which has been ably and exhaustively dealt with by one of the most learned and thoughtful

writers of our generation, the Hon'ble Mr Justice Ranade of Bombay. And there is the question of the possible saving in expenditure by the larger employment of the educated people of India, not only in the Indian Civil Service, but in the higher grades of all services, Educational and Medical, Police and Engineering, Post Office, and Telegraph. Three generations of Indians have been educated in English schools and colleges in India ; they have proved their fitness and capacity in every place they have held ; and yet they are virtually Uitlanders in their own country so far as a real control over administration is concerned.

I pass over these and other cognate subjects because I have no time to deal with them, and because you have often dealt with them eloquently and exhaustively, and will deal with many of them again. I will only repeat that it is perfectly possible to cut down expenditure, to moderate land assessments, to revive industries, and to prevent deaths from famines, if there is a real and honest determination to rule India for the good of the people, and with the co-operation of the people. Gentlemen, I wish with your permission to add one or two words on this last subject, *viz.*, the desirability of enlisting the co-operation of the people in the work of administration,—the desirability of bringing the administration in closer touch with the people, and bringing our rulers in closer touch with ourselves. This is desired by every enlightened and far-sighted ruler as well as by ourselves ; and this is calculated to improve the administration and to make British rule in India stronger and more popular. A

commencement has been made in this direction since the days of Munro and Elphinstone and Lord William Bentinck ; and what I will suggest is not a new departure, but a progress on the lines already laid down. I do not myself believe in new departures and novel experiments in administration ; having passed the best years of my life in administration I naturally have more faith in gradual and cautious progress on the lines which have already been laid down.

Village Unions.

Gentlemen, I will begin with villages—because, as I have already said, in India villager represents the nation. In village administrations there is no touch between the rulers and the people, the only link between the administrators and the people in civil administration is hated link of the police. It is a misfortune and an administrative mistake that our District officers should have so little direct touch with the villagers and their natural leaders, and should work so entirely through the police. If there is distress in the land, the police makes enquiries ; if there is cholera epidemic in the land the police distributes cholera pills ; if a village tank has given way or the the village water-supply dried up the police reports and organises help ; if a tree has been blown down and obstructs a village path, (I have seen instances of this myself), the villagers are powerless to help themselves until the police comes and removes the obstruction. It seems to be a mockery that the very country which was the first to organise village communities, village Panchayets, and

village self-government, and cherished these institutions for 3,000 years, should be rendered so absolutely helpless, and should be ruled through the undesirable agency of the police. Gentlemen, the mistake has been discovered and Village Unions have been formed or are in the course of formation in most Provinces in India. Make these Village Unions real centres of village administration in so far as is consistent with good Government. Parcel out each Sub-division into twenty or thirty Village Unions, entrust the Union Committees with the charge of village roads, village tanks, village drainage, village education, and village hospitals, and send over to them all petty civil and criminal cases, not for judicial disposal, but for amicable settlement. A great deal expensive litigation and bad feeling in villages can thus be stopped, a great deal of useful work can thus be done, and what is more, the natural leaders of the village population will thus come in touch with the Sub-divisional and District administrators, and will form the agents of village administration in so far as they are fit to take that position. An un-sympathetic system of rule through the police will thus be replaced by a rule with the co-operation of the people themselves.

Municipal Towns.

From the subject of Villages I come to the subject of Municipal Towns which are receiving a great deal of attention now. Gentlemen, I consider it of primary importance that we should insist on efficient municipal administration, and that power should be given to the

Government to ensure such efficient administration if the Municipal Commissioners are slack. Such power is retained by the Government in England, and it is more necessary that such power should be retained by the Government in India. But having provided for this, I am of opinion that the work should be done through the elected Commissioners and not through the officials or secretaries appointed by the Government. The latter system ruins self-government, and is not needed. I have myself supervised the work of every Municipality in a District as a District-Officer, and I have supervised the work of all the Municipalities in a Division as a Divisional Commissioner. The Municipal Commissioners were sometimes zealous and sometimes slack, sometimes they went the right way and sometimes the wrong way ; but I have never found them obstructive ; I have never found them averse to sanitary improvement or general progress ; I have never found them other than amenable to reason and advice. With some tact and patience and sympathy we can get all that we want to do through the men elected by people themselves ; and it is unwise and undesirable, it is a confession of our own incompetency and want of sympathy, to try to replace the elective system by men appointed by the Government to do Municipal work in the small District towns of India. The aptitude of Self-Government in towns and villages is, in India, a heritage of three thousand years, and to seek to ignore it is an administrative blunder, and a confession of our own incompetency.

District Boards.

Coming next to the subject of District Boards, the question is often asked why non-official chairmen should not be appointed over these Boards. The reason, gentlemen, in the generality of cases, is that non-official gentlemen who know their own villages and estates well, have not the same knowledge of the District as a whole as the District Officer. We must, above all, insist on efficient work being done—and generally the District Officer is the only man who can in the ordinary course of his tours supervise and secure efficient work throughout his District. At the same time I would not make any hard and fast rule ; and where we have retired Government servants or private gentlemen who know their Districts well, and who have the capacity and the time for administrative work, it would be a gain and not a loss to our administration to see such gentlemen appointed chairmen of District Boards ; and I sincerely hope to see a beginning made by the Government in this direction. Another question which is often discussed in connexion with District Boards is the poverty of their income. This, gentlemen, is a real and a grave evil ; and it has become not only desirable but necessary that for large provincial schemes of irrigation and drainage the resources of the District Board should be supplemented by provincial grants. You are aware how much good is done in these provinces by a system of irrigation-wells ; and there is no reason why the work of the maintenance of a sufficient number of such wells and of other works for the preven-

tion of famine should not be made over to the District Board on allotments made by the Provincial Government. In Bengal the crying evil is bad drainage, which causes that malaria which is the curse of one half of the province. There is no reason why a provincial grant should not be made to every District Board for the proper drainage of the District. Gentlemen, I have said it elsewhere that the money spent on one needless trans frontier war, if spent in improving the drainage of Bengal, would save millions of the people permanently from one of the direst curses of the present age. My advice is, make the District Boards real agents of beneficent administration with the co-operation of the people ; don't strangle them by the shackles of officialism ; don't starve them by want of funds.

Provincial Legislative Councils.

And now, gentlemen, I come to the important subject of Provincial Legislative Councils, and on this subject also my suggestion will be to proceed on the lines already laid down and not to take a new departure. The object of allowing District and Municipal bodies to elect members of these Councils was to allow the views of the people to be represented, and I think every responsible administrator in India will admit that this wise step has improved and strengthened the legislative machinery of the Government. Even when the views of the elected members are rejected—and they are often rejected—even then the expression of their views is a gain to the cause of administration. The time has now come when a fuller

scope may be given to this expression of our views and the representation of our opinions. Half-a-dozen members, elected under somewhat complicated rules can scarcely give expression to the views of a province with a population of thirty or forty millions or more. Is it too much to hope that in the not remote future the Government will find it possible to permit every District to be represented by its own member? I do not object to the number of official and nominated members being also increased; I do not object to the Councils sitting five days or six days in the week instead of one day; and I do not object to the head of the Government reserving the power of vetoing a measure, even against the views of the majority of the Council, in urgent cases as the Queen of England has theoretically the power to refuse her consent to a measure passed by both Houses. With these safeguards, I would suggest an expansion of the Provincial Councils on the bases of each District being represented by its member, so that there may be an adequate expression of the people's opinions and views on every question. We do not wish for the absolute control of the administration of the country, but we do demand an adequate means of placing our views before the Government before it decides on questions affecting our welfare.

Provincial Executive Councils.

But, gentlemen, the Legislative Councils deal with legislation only, there are large and important measures of administration which do not come within the scope of these Councils. The weakness of the present system

of Government is that in the decision on these administrative measures the people have no voice and are not heard at all. To take one instance out of hundreds which will no doubt suggest themselves to you, the people of the Central Provinces of India had no constitutional means of declaring whether the revenue settlement should be for twenty or thirty years ; whether the Government demand should be 50 per cent. of the Malguzars' assests, or 60 per cent.; and the decision to which the Government arrived without the constitutional advice of the people has been disastrous. Gentlemen, this defect can be rectified, this weakness may be removed. There are Executive Councils in Bombay and in Madras ; similar Executive Councils may be formed in the North-West Provinces and the Punjab, in the Central Provinces and in Bengal, and at least one member of the Executive Council should be an Indian gentleman with experience in administrative work, and representing the views of his countrymen. It is usual for a member of an Executive Council to have a portfolio, *i.e.*, to have one department of work assigned to him ; and the work which I would assign to the Indian member is Land Revenue, Agriculture and the Industries. There is no department of work in which an Indian member can make himself more valuable to the voiceless millions of cultivators and artisans. The addition of one Indian member will not weaken Provincial administration. It will strengthen such administration, make it more sympathetic and bring it into somewhat closer touch with the people.

The Viceroy's Executive Council.

And, gentlemen, am I aspiring too high when I hope for similar seats for Indian members in the cloudy heights of Simla? Am I urging anything unreasonable when I propose that the Viceroy who has the benefit of consulting experienced English administrators in his Executive Council, should also have the advantage of hearing the views and opinions of a few Indian members in the same Council before he decides on questions affecting the interests of the people of India? Am I urging anything unwise when I propose that the Viceroy, when he considers measures affecting the condition of the indebted cultivators, the operations of the plague and famine relief, the rules of land-revenue settlements, the questions affecting Hindu and Mahomedan customs and manners, should have by him, in his own Executive Council, a few Indian gentlemen who represent the views, the opinions and the feelings of the people? An Executive Council cannot be much enlarged without loss of efficiency but surely the Viceroy's Council could make room for three Indian gentlemen, one to represent Bengal and Assam, another to represent the North-west and the Punjab, and the third to represent Bombay, Madras and the Central Provinces. The selection should rest, of course, with the Viceroy himself, for anything like election into an Executive Council would be absurd; and the three Indian members should be entrusted with the departments of Agriculture, Industries and Land Revenue of their respective provinces. The wise

and magnanimous Akbar entrusted his Land Revenue arrangements to a Todar Mall; and the British Government may consider it wise and statesmanlike to avail itself of the experience of Indian gentlemen in controlling Land Revenue Settlements and generally in improving the condition of the voiceless and impoverished cultivators and manufacturers of India. I myself think that the administration of the country would be vastly improved by such representation of Indian opinions in our highest Councils and that the Government of India and the Government of the Provinces would be brought in closer touch with the people.

Progress in the future.

And now, gentlemen, it only remains for me to thank you once more for the great honour you have done me by electing me to preside on this occasion, and for the kind and patient hearing you have given me. I have been somewhat of an optimist all my life, I have lived in that faith and I should like to die in that faith. The experiment of administration *for the people*, not *by the people* was tried in every country, in Europe in the last century, by some of the best-intentioned sovereigns that ever lived, who are known in history as the Benevolent Despots of the 18th century. The experiment failed because it is an immutable law of nature that you cannot permanently secure the welfare of a people if you tie up the hands of the people themselves. Every country in Europe recognises this truth now, and England foremost of all. Every English colony has obtained a system of

self-government, and from being discontented and disaffected they are now the strongest supporters of the British empire. And a system of complete Self Government in local affairs was conceded to Ireland by the present Government less than two years ago, when Lord Curzon was a distinguished member of that Government. The conditions of India are different, and I admit freely and fully that we want a strong centralised Government here; and if the moderate scheme I have proposed tended in any way to weaken the Indian Government, the proposal, gentlemen, would not have come from me. But I have discussed the subject with many eminent Englishmen now in England and possessing vast experience in Indian administration, and I have asked them to reject my scheme if they thought it would weaken the Indian Government instead of greatly strengthening it. Gentlemen, I have never been told in reply that the scheme would weaken the Government. It is isolation, it is exclusiveness, it is want of touch with the people, which weakens British rule in India, and my desire is to strengthen that rule by bringing it in touch with the people, by enlisting the zealous co-operation of a great and loyal nation.

Permit me, gentlemen, to refer for a moment to my own experience as a District Officer. You are aware that a District Officer is liable to frequent transfers; and I was sometimes in charge of districts where 75 per cent. of the people were Hindus, and at other times of districts where 75 per cent. were Mahomedans. I may remark in passing that everywhere I received the cordial co-operation

of the people in my administrative work. and the sympathy and support which I received from Mahomedan zemindars and the Mahomedan population generally enabled me to administer with some degree of success such vast and difficult districts as Backergunj and Mymensing. But what I wish specially to mention is that in these Mahomedan districts the Government always employed a number of able Mahomedan Deputy Collectors to advise and help the District Officer in his work ; and in all questions relating to the social and economic conditions of the Mahomedan people, and to their public feelings and religious sentiments, I received the most valuable help and advice from my Mahomedan colleagues in the work of administration. Gentlemen, the duties and responsibilities of a District Officer are humble compared to the manifold duties and high responsibilities of a Viceroy or the Governor of a Province ; and I therefore often ask myself if those statesmen do not sometimes feel, as we, humble District Officers, always felt, that it would help and improve administration to have a few true representatives of the people by their side and in their Executive Councils. And I cannot help replying to myself that the advice and help of some Indian colleagues would greatly strengthen the hands of wise and sympathetic statesmen in solving the great problems which lie before them, none of which is more momentous and more pressing than the condition of the Indian agriculturist and the Indian manufacturer.

Gentlemen, from whatever point of view I examined the question, whether in the light of European history,

or of the spirit of British institutions, or of the requirements for good government for India, I feel convinced that to associate the people of India more largely in shaping the administration of the country is not only the wisest but the only possible path before us. It is true we have not been moving onwards in this path in recent years; we have actually stepped backwards in these years of misfortunes and calamities and panic; we have even been deprived of those rights and privileges which we secured in years of wise and sympathetic administration. But such years of retrograde movement come to all nations from time to time, even to those who are most advanced. Remember England at the close of the last century, when to talk of political reforms was punished as sedition and crime, when coercive measures were passed to stop public meetings, when reactionary laws were enacted to restrict the liberties of Englishmen. The panic passed away after the Napoleonic wars were over, and the Reform came in 1832. The reactionary period through which we are passing will end before long, and wise English statesmen will perceive in the future, as they have perceived in the past, that England's duty and England's interests are the same in India, to consolidate British rule by extending, not restricting Self-Government, by conciliating, not alienating a vast and civilised nation.

Gentlemen, it is possible to avert distress and disasters and deaths from famines, to spread prosperity and contentment and peace, and to evoke the zealous and loyal and spontaneous support of a grateful nation,

only by conceding to the people, with due and proper safeguards, the rights of Self-Government. It is not possible, without such concession, without admitting the people to a real share in the control of their own affairs, to save India from distress and discontent, from impoverishment and famines. Therefore, as an old and faithful servant of the Indian Government, I have thought it my duty to raise my voice and urge the adoption of the better and the wiser course, the only course which can save our country from preventable misfortunes and disasters, and can consolidate the British Rule in India.

X. FAREWELL SPEECH IN CALCUTTA.

*[Delivered in the Town Hall on February 23, 1900, in
reply to an Address presented by the
citizens of Calcutta.]*

FRIENDS AND COUNTRYMEN,

I am unable to find words to adequately express my feelings on an occasion like this. You overwhelm me by your kindness and by your cordial appreciation of the humble services which I have attempted to render to the cause which we all have at heart. Your kindness and your appreciation will live in my memory through years of future toil and endeavour. I shall remember that you did not forget your humble fellow-worker, who shared your aspirations and shared your endeavours during years of absence from his country ; and I shall remember that on his return amidst you, you extended to him the hand of kindly appreciation and of brotherly love. There are ties which are stronger than the ties of blood, and they are the ties of a common country, common aims, and common endeavours. These are the ties which bind all castes and creeds in India as one united people, and these are the ties which will nerve our hands and strengthen our hearts in our future endeavours.

It is not possible for me, gentlemen, to refer to the various matters which you have dwelt upon in your kind Address, nor is it possible for me, to make an adequate reply to all that you have stated. You will permit me

therefore to confine my reply to only one or two salient points in your Address, and to say a few words on our present situation.

Literary Work of Educated Indians.

You have alluded in flattering terms to that humble literary work which has been, not a task, but a recreation and a joy to me during the last 30 years. That work has beguiled my saddest hours, solaced me in lonely hours, and refreshed me in the midst of overwhelming work of a different nature. I remember the solitary evenings when I was encamped in the midst of the rice-fields of Dakkhin Shahbazpur, a sea-washed island in the mouth of the Ganges, when I read Grant Duff's inspiring work on the History of the Mahrattas, and spent my nights in dreaming over a story of Sivaji. I remember the days when I travelled over Tippera, and occasionally crossed over to Hill Tippera, with Tod's spirited History of Rajasthan in my knapsack, and when I ventured to compose a story of Pratap Sinha. I remember how, after weary days spent over official work and official bundles in the heavy District of Mymensingh, I sought recreation and rest amidst the countless volumes of European and Indian scholars who have written on Indian Antiquities and I conceived the idea of writing a connected history of Civilisation in Ancient India. In my long furloughs, and with the help of many Pandits whose learned names grace the pages of my works, I placed before my countrymen, in original and in translation, the substance of that vast body of Sacred Hindu Literature which is the

noblest heritage of the Hindu nation. And I did not consider that task complete till I was able, after my retirement from service, to place before the modern world, in a condensed and readable form, the great Epics of India. This, gentlemen, has been recreation of my life ; it has strengthened me and sustained me amidst multitudinous work, and I hope it will continue to help and sustain me in all my labours during the remaining days of my life.

Gentlemen, other and more gifted men than myself have devoted themselves to literary work during this half century, and surveying their work as a whole, it is possible to discern a certain direction which our literary work has taken. In one word, all the greatest works of the half century, about to close, centre round the cardinal idea of *Service to our Mother Land*. Till the middle of this century, we were taught to regard our ancient religion as a system of superstition, our ancient history as fable, and our own languages as unfit for ambitious literary endeavours. That we have outlived those times, that we have discarded those degrading notions, is due to the endeavours of our own countrymen, to that band of noble-hearted and patriotic men who explained to us our ancient religion, elucidated our ancient history, created our modern literature. The venerable Vidyasagar led the van of progress, and explained to us, when we were little children, what was great and glorious in our ancient religion and literature. The talented Madhu Sudaṇ Datta turned away from fruitless compositions in English to his native language, and constructed that splendid fabric of Epic Poetry which is now the pride of his

countrymen. And the inimitable Bankim Chandra devoted a well-spent life in creating a body of literature which strengthens and inspires us, while it charms and fascinates. These were the pioneers of our contemporaneous literature, and I know of no truer patriot and no truer servant of his country than these gifted men who taught us to regard our country's religion and history and literature with a legitimate and manly admiration. For, gentlemen, that nation has no future which has no faith in itself; that nation will know no progress which is not conscious of its own strength; and our first and greatest indebtedness for the progress of this half century is to those who have taught us to have faith in ourselves. That progress has not been altogether perfect. We have great sins to answer for. No one knows, better than ourselves, our little weaknesses, our petty jealousies, our vanity and disunion, our self-seeking and selfishness. But making every allowance for our sins—and they are many—we may still confidently declare that in the broad results we have made a distinct progress in this half century. We stand farther ahead than where we were fifty years ago. We feel more strength in our endeavours and more faith in our hearts than we did fifty years ago. And we have more confidence in our country's cause than we had fifty years ago. To those who were the first pioneers in this progress is due our utmost gratitude and our loving homage. And we, who humbly follow in their footsteps, shall do well to remember that literature itself adds to its own title to glory, if it is consecrated by the love of mother land. If following the great masters of

this generation, we too succeed in contributing towards this end, and in inspiring in our children a firmer faith in our country's religion, a loftier admiration of our country's history and a manlier pride in our country's literature, our own literary work, humble and poor as they may be, shall not have been done in vain.

Administrative Work of Educated Indians.

Gentlemen, you have alluded in flattering terms to my administrative work during more than a quarter of a century. I look back with pleasure on those long years of my life during which I worked in friendliness and perfect good feeling with other members of the great Civil Service of India. Gentlemen, we understand them better, and they understand us better, when we work together with the same common object, and to the same common purpose. We learn to appreciate their hard work and devotion to duty, and they learn to appreciate our fitness for serving our own country. I can look back through long years to those days when I served under men for whom I still feel the highest admiration, and something more than admiration—men like Sir Charles Stevens, sometime Lieutenant-Governor of Bengal, like Sir Antony MacDonnell, now Lieutenant Governor of North-West, and Sir Steuart Bayley, now Member of the India Council. It is a pleasure to work and agree with such men, it is a pleasure even to differ from them in opinion. For, gentlemen, not unoften we discussed in perfect friendliness our opposing views, and I may say the value of the admission of Indians in the Civil Service consists

in the fact that they represent the views of their countrymen which do not often coincide with Official views. The weakness of the Civil Service lies in the fact that, with all its ability and honest work, it is not in touch with the people and does not know the people. And I look forward to the admission of more Indians in the Service to counteract this defect, and to make the administration of the country more sympathetic, more efficient, more in touch with the people.

Political Creed of Educated Indians.

Gentlemen, you have also alluded in exceedingly flattering terms to the humble endeavours I have made to advance the political cause of our country. Our political aim and endeavour, as I understand them, and as you all understand them, may be described in two words. We identify ourselves with the British rule and pledge our support to that rule at every sacrifice. And we demand under the British rule a larger share in the administration of our own concerns. This is my creed, and this is your creed, and there is not an educated Indian at the present day who does not in his heart subscribe to this creed. Educated India has identified itself with the British rule, and educated India seeks, through the continuance of the British rule, that larger measure of self-government and representation which it is our aim and endeavour to secure

Self-government, under necessary control and supervision, is the secret of good government among all civilised communities. "It is an inherent condition of human

affairs," says the greatest political thinker of this century; the late John Stuart Mill, "that no intention, however sincere, of protecting the interests of others, can make it safe or salutary to tie up their own hands." This is a truth which has been illustrated in every page of the administration of India within the present century. There is no civilised country in the world in which the administrators are inspired with a more sincere desire to promote the material welfare of the people than India, and there is no civilised country in the world where that desire has been so imperfectly fulfilled, because the people have not been consulted, and have had no voice in the control of their own affairs.

I do not propose this evening to go over the entire field of Indian administration. But the attention of the whole country is at the present moment directed to the great famine which is desolating the western portions of India, and I wish, with your permission, to say a few words on the land-revenue administration of the last 40 years, which is mainly responsible, not in bringing about this famine, but in deepening and accentuating its disastrous effects.

Land Administration during 40 years.

Gentlemen, when the history of the Land Revenue Administration of India during these 40 years is fully written, it will be found to be one of the strangest and saddest in the annals of mankind. Forty years ago, India was desolated by a great famine, and I remember the days when as a school boy I heard harrowing

accounts of death and starvation in Northern India, when as school boys we were asked to contribute our humble mite for the relief of suffering and distress. The years of famine was at last over, and Lord Canning, who was then the Viceroy of India, sought to introduce some remedial measures, such as would permanently improve the condition of the people and make them more prosperous and resourceful.

Lord Canning's scheme of Land Settlement.

You know that an enquiry, instituted by Lord Canning, was made under the guidance of Col. Baird Smith, and that a recommendation was made that the Permanent Settlement of the Land Revenues, which had secured prosperity to the peasantry and the landlords of Bengal, should be extended to other parts of India. Lord Canning had the courage to place this recommendation before the Secretary of State for India, and the Secretary of State recorded a memorable resolution, describing the proposal as "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."

Had Lord Canning lived 5 years longer, India would have received this covered boon. But the great statesman died in 1862, and then followed one of those long and fruitless controversies which have so often ruined the best intentions, and marred the noblest objects of British rulers in India. The controversy went on for

twenty years, between the Secretary of State's Council and Viceroy's Executive Council in India, and the strangest part of it is, that the people of India, whose welfare it was intended to secure, were not consulted and not informed as to what was going on. Gentlemen, we are not a race of savages, incapable of understanding our own material interests, nor have we been wanting in experienced and moderate and trusted leaders, commanding the confidence of the Government and the confidence of the people. In Bengal we had wise and thoughtful men like Ram Gopal Ghose, and Digambar Mitter and Kristo Dass Pal, and other provinces produced even more eminent men, like Madhava Rao and Dinkur Rao, who virtually ruled kingdoms, and secured order and prosperity out of chaos and misery. If these men had been consulted, if these men had seats in the Executive Council of the Viceroy, and even in the Council of the Secretary of State, if these men had been allowed to plead the cause of their suffering countrymen and to represent facts in their true light, the decision on Lord Canning's proposal might have been other than it was. But by a strange irony of fate, a strange exclusiveness on the part of the British Government, the leaders of the Indian nation were not consulted with regard to a measure intended to secure the welfare of the Indian nation, the long controversy was carried on among alien administrators secretly and in the dark, and in the end the interests of the people, who were not represented and not heard, were sacrificed. The proposal for a Permanent Settlement was rejected in 1883, and

the policy of continuing recurring settlements and recurring enhancements of revenue was continued to the impoverishment of the nation. Gentlemen, at the present moment we are hearing a great deal of the poverty of the Indian peasantry, and it was only last week that the present Viceroy of India raised his voice in this very hall for raising subscriptions for the relief of suffering and distress. Our sincere gratitude is due to that kind-hearted nobleman, who is struggling in the midst of appalling difficulties to relieve the suffering and distress of our countrymen; but I will say this—and few who know the revenue history of the country will contradict me—that if Lord Canning's noble remedial measure had been passed after 1860, it would have been unnecessary for Lord Curzon to appeal to the generosity of the Indian nation for a distress so intense and so appalling in 1900.

Lord Ripon's Scheme of Land Settlement.

Gentlemen, I have brought down the history to 1883. Permit me to narrate the subsequent events in a few words. (The Marquis of Ripon was our Viceroy from 1880 to 1884, and while His Lordship consented to the abandonment of the original proposal of a Permanent Settlement, he at the same time made a fresh proposal in a modified form. Looking at the harassing nature of the recurring settlements in Madras, Lord Ripon, in his Despatch of the 17th October, 1882, made a proposal that in all Districts which had been once surveyed and settled, the assessment should be regarded as final and

permanent, subject only to variations on the sole ground of rise or fall in the prices of food grains. You will see that this was not a Permanent Settlement such as Lord Canning had proposed ; it permitted the future increase of land-revenue on the ground of a rise in prices ; but subject to this one condition it was a Permanent Settlement of the land assessment and saved millions of cultivators from repeated and harassing surveys and re-classification of soils. Gentlemen, this equitable proposal was cordially accepted by the Madras Government in 1883, and for a time there was some hope again for the oppressed and impoverished cultivators of India.

But History repeats itself, at least in the revenue administration of India, and Lord Ripon's proposal had the same history as Lord Canning's previous proposal. For two or three years, Lord Ripon's proposal was under the consideration of the India Office at Whitehall. We, the people of India, knew nothing of it, our leading men were not informed, our representative men were not consulted. In the prolonged discussions which took place in the dark and secret chambers of Whitehall, we were not permitted to express our views or to plead our cause. In the equally dark and secret chambers of the Viceroy's Executive Council, our voice was not heard, and our eyes could not penetrate. While our attention was engrossed in a *Legislative* measure known as the Ilbert Bill, an *Executive* proposal of far greater importance, because concerning the well-being or poverty of millions of our suffering and voiceless cultivators, was discussed by our alien rulers, here and in

England, and they did not think it worth their while to consult the leaders of the nation for whose welfare the proposal was meant. The result followed which might have been expected. So long as Lord Ripon remained at the helm of affairs in India, the India Office held its silence. Lord Ripon retired from India in December, 1884, and in January, 1885, came the reply from the India Office vetoing Lord Ripon's fair and moderate proposal. Gentlemen, I know of no sadder incident in the history of British rule in India than a decision like this, arrived at by the India Office at Whitehall, rejecting the moderate and beneficent proposals of the Indian Government, and condemning the population of India to continued poverty, misery and indebtedness. I repeat that if we had representatives in the Viceroy's Executive Council and in the Council of the Secretary of State, if we had been permitted to represent our interests and our wishes when Lord Ripon's proposal was secretly debated, the decision on the proposal might have been different. Madras would have been saved from harassing and repeated surveys and unjust enhancements; and if the proposal had been extended to Western India, Western India would have been free from the present famine in its intense form.

Mr. Cotton's scheme of a Land Settlement.

One more word on this subject, and I have done. There are still some administrators among us who are inspired by the benevolence of a Canning or a Ripon, and who place the happiness of the people before the

interests of land-revenue, and one of such administrators is now the Chief Commissioner of Assam. That Province, Gentlemen, has vast possibilities in the future, for most of the cultivable land in the Province is still waste grass-jungle. But it requires capital, it requires enterprise, and it requires leadership to bring the vast country under cultivation, to import cultivators, to build huts and villages for them, to supply them with ploughs and bullocks, to dig tanks for them, to do all that a far-sighted and benevolent Zemindar can do when he wishes to reclaim waste lands. Some sort of a Permanent Settlement is necessary to induce capital and enterprise, and the Chief Commissioner of Assam recommended some sort of a Permanent Settlement for Assam in order to open up the country. But the prospect of private Zemindars reaping the future benefits from the extension of cultivation in Assam did not commend itself to our rulers, and Mr. Cotton's proposal has been virtually disallowed. Much regret is often expressed by responsible rulers at the want of capital and enterprise in India. Gentlemen, if some of these fine words could be translated into deeds in the land-revenue department, if measures were adopted which would help enterprise in our cultivators, and lead to accumulation of capital in the hands of our landlords, India would not be so utterly resourceless as she is to-day. And I repeat, gentlemen, that if we had been represented in the Viceroy's Executive Council, if we could have taken a share in the discussions which took place in that Council over

Mr. Cotton's beneficent proposal, if we could have represented there the interests of the people for whose good all righteous Governments exist, the decision on the proposal might have been different from what it is. But we are not admitted to these secret discussions, the people are not allowed to speak in those Councils which shape the administration and decide on the fate of the Indian nation, and the result is that the land-revenue administration of India during these 40 years has, in spite of the best intentions, been fatal to the welfare of the nation.

General Administration during 40 years.

You will pardon me, gentlemen, for dwelling so long on the subject of land administration. Land is virtually the one means of subsistence left to us as a nation after our various industries have been killed by an unequal and unfair competition, and land-administration concerns our well-being as a nation more intimately than administration in any other department. And blunders in land administration are mainly responsible for the frequency and intensity of recent famines. I do not wish to take up your time by reviewing the administration in other departments ; but you will find on examination that, in every department, the administration, inspired by benevolent intentions, and carried on with undoubted ability, has failed to safeguard the interests of the people, because it has chosen to tie up the hands of the people. England and India have both enjoyed uninterrupted internal peace during the last 40 years ; within this period the

Financiers of England, working under popular control and inspired by the genius of a popular leader like Mr. Gladstone, has reduced the public debts by over a hundred and seventy millions; but in India our finance ministers, working without the control of the people, have added to the people's debts by over a hundred millions sterling. England pays the whole or a part of the cost of the Imperial troops maintained in every self-governing English Colony; we, in this country, have in the midst of our distresses and famines to pay for the entire army, European and Indian, maintained in India, not merely for the defence of India, but for the safety of the British Empire in Asia and Africa. Every self-governing English Colony has taken measures to protect its infant industries against unfair competition; in India our ancient industries have been ruined, and no adequate measures have yet been taken by the Government to revive, as far as may be, those ancient industries on modern lines. Every self-governing English Colony protects its own interests against foreign labourers, in the most complete and efficacious manner, and you know the harsh laws of Natal against Her Majesty's Indian subjects who wish to work there for a living. In India cheap labour is free from the danger of foreign competition, but we are virtually excluded from the higher ranks of all services. From a Parliamentary return issued in 1892, it appears that nearly one-fifth of the revenue of India went in the payment of salaries to Europeans; and since 1892, the posts open to the people of the country have not been

widened, but rather contracted under an ungenerous and reactionary policy especially in the Education and the Engineering Departments.

Gentlemen, I bring no charge against any class or individuals for these disappointing results of the last 40 years of British rule. I have said repeatedly, and I firmly believe, that there is a sincere desire in the higher administrators to promote and safeguard the interests of the people, and many of them, whom I have the honour of knowing, are men who are incapable of passing an order which they consider detrimental to the good of the people of India. But the most beneficent desire fails in its object, unless it is accompanied by a willingness to concede to the people some share in the control of the administration. Good administration in a great and civilised country is an impossibility, unless the people are allowed a share in the administration, and therefore, gentlemen, we ask for and demand a share in the control of the administration of our own concerns.

Lord George Hamilton on the Congress.

This is the claim which you have put forward loyally before the Government for years past, and this is the claim which I repeated in my Presidential speech at Lucknow in December last. I explained our common object as clearly and as forcibly as my knowledge of the English language enabled me to do, and while I expected my proposal to be criticised, I certainly did not expect it to be misunderstood. Nevertheless, I find that my proposal has been misunderstood by so high

an authority, as the Secretary of State for India, Lord George Hamilton. In a speech which His Lordship made recently in London, he used these words in reference to my speech.

"I read the other day a remarkable speech by no unfriendly critic of British Administration in India. He admitted frankly and fully that British Administration had conferred great benefits on India, and that it was conducted *for* the people, but he wished to substitute another phase, that Government in India should be conducted *by* the people."

Gentlemen, I feel flattered by the kind and complimentary remarks made by so high an authority about my speech, but I wish to point out once more, as I have already pointed out elsewhere, that nowhere in my Lucknow speech did I propose to substitute the present form of Government by another phase, a Government conducted entirely by the people. *Theories*, as such, have no attraction for me; I always endeavour to find out what is *practicable* under existing circumstances; and all that I claim under the existing circumstances of India, is that we should have a voice, a share, in the control of administration of our own concerns. This I stated distinctly in my Lucknow speech, and this I repeat on the present occasion.

Exclusive Rule unexampled in History.

Gentlemen, History records scarcely any example of a great and civilised nation permanently placed under a system of government which allowed them no share in

the control over their own concerns. In ancient India, the entire village administration was in the hands of village communities or local landlords, and though there was no representation in its modern forms, kings and potentates listened to the wishes of the people and the leaders of the people in deciding on great questions of administration. In ancient Europe the policy of Imperial Rome was inspired by the same spirit, and you no doubt recollect the eloquent words in which Gibbon has described the treatment of conquered provinces by Rome :—

“The grandsons of the Gauls, who had besieged Julius Cæsar in Alesia, commanded legions, governed provinces, and were admitted into the Senate of Rome. Their ambition, instead of disturbing the tranquillity of the State, was intimately connected with its safety and greatness.”

The history of Moghal Rule in India may also be described in almost the same words, and we can truly say :—

“The grandsons of the Hindus who had fought against Babar in the field of Fatehpur Sikri, commanded legions, governed provinces, and were admitted into the Councils of Akbar. Their ambition, instead of disturbing the tranquillity of the State, was intimately connected with its safety and greatness.”

Shall we for ever continue to describe British Rule in India in words the reverse of this? Shall we for ever have to say :—

“The grandsons and great-grandsons of those who

helped the British in the field of Plassy and Wandewash, of Laswari and Assye, were excluded from the command of armies, from the government of provinces, from the Council of the Secretary of State for India, from the Executive Council of the Viceroy, from the Executive Councils of the Indian Provinces ?”

Future Prospects.

Gentlemen, the prospect before us is not inspiring. We are living in reactionary times ; we have achieved nothing of late ; we have lost a great deal of what we possessed before. I have felt this, as well as any of you ; I have made my humble endeavours against the tide of reaction ; I have struggled to save the wrecks of our established rights ; I have seen the object of my endeavours snatched away from me almost at the moment of triumph ; I have been beaten, defeated, swept away by the overwhelming tide. It would be idle to pretend that I did not feel the disappointment as bitterly and acutely as any one of you ; but I can truly declare before you that I have never, in bitterest moments of disappointment, been filled with despair. Our cause is so just, our demands are so moderate, our claims are so much in consonance with all wise governments, ancient and modern, that they are bound to triumph. We desire the continuance of the British rule in India ; we desire a strong and centralised British Government to maintain order and peace in this vast Empire ; but consistently with these objects, we desire admission in the Councils of the Empire, and a share in the control over the admi-

nistration of our own concerns. These are just and righteous and reasonable concessions, which the British nation shall not refuse, and which we are bound to obtain, if we are true to ourselves.

[The following was the text of the Address to which the above speech was a reply.]

We, the residents of Calcutta in public meeting assembled, beg to convey to you our deep sense of gratitude for the many services rendered by you to the cause of our country.

Being one of the earliest among our countrymen to enter into the Indian Civil Service, you have had a long and distinguished official career. As a Revenue and Settlement Officer, as the head of the Executive of many first-class Districts, and finally as the administrator of an important Division of these provinces, you won not only the admiration and confidence of the Government under which you served but also the respect and gratitude of the people over whom you ruled.

We are aware that one of the principal reasons of your early retirement from the Indian Civil Service was desire to be more useful to your country and an anxiety to direct the attention of our rulers to the aspirations and grievances of the people of India from a position of greater freedom. The way in which you have employed your time since your retirement has fully justified the wisdom of that step. You have, within a short time, done much, through the press and the platform, to

inform and enlighten public opinion in England on some of the most momentous questions of Indian administration—particularly about the recent change in the law of sedition in India and the Calcutta Municipal Bill. You have also sought to explain Indian questions to Members of the English Parliament and have made timely representations to the India Office regarding them. While helping in the election of some members of the British House of Commons, you have availed yourself of the opportunity thus afforded of pleading the cause of your countrymen before the English people. You have also spoken to crowded English audiences on several occasions on Famine and Land-assesment in India, and have been earnestly endeavouring to impress upon the authorities the close relation the one bears to the other. For these services and labours, so disinterestedly and ungrudgingly rendered, your grateful countrymen elected you President of the 15th Indian National Congress, the highest office in the gift of the people of this country.

Your services to literature have been no less conspicuous. You have considerably enriched our national literature by your works of fiction, presenting an important period of our past history in a most vivid and attractive form. By your scholarly and faithful translation of the Rig-Veda, you have helped to diffuse a wider knowledge of its treasures among our countrymen. Your masterly exposition of Ancient India in your historical works and your rendering of our great national epics into English verse have served to interpret