

Political Reconstruction

think that from the period of the conquest of Tashkend, some ten years ago,¹ every one must have felt that it was almost inevitable that all of these khanates would be conquered by Russia. Some gentlemen think that this advance of Russia ought to be nipped in the bud. But nipping it in the bud means that the English Power should have proceeded beyond our Indian boundary, and should have entered on a most hazardous and, I should say, most unwise struggle. I am not of that sort which views the advance of Russia in Asia with deep misgivings." These remarks of Lord Beaconsfield indicate with prescient sagacity that the simplest, safest, and cheapest way of solving the so-called Central Asian difficulty is by trusting to the natural defences of India as the best protection of that country. The war parties in England and Russia alike are equally a curse to the progress and prosperity of mankind. Aggression on the part of Russia into India would be as suicidal in her case as the aggression on the part of England towards Herat would infallibly result in the destruction of any army despatched thither. War, of course, may result from the folly and wickedness of the rulers of either country, but the invasion of

¹ This was said in 1876.

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India by Russia, appears to me one of the most improbable of contingencies. In any case our surest safeguard is the existence of a federated and contented nation to which the largest concession of political rights has been accorded and the amplest justice rendered. Russia would be as powerless against a united India as Europe has shown itself to be against China. Professor Seeley has shown that in the proper sense of the word India was never conquered by England. The people of India never united to oppose the English. Whenever one Indian state has been overthrown, it has almost invariably been with the help of some other Indian state. There was no Indian nation, and there has therefore been no real English conquest of India. No foreign Power could conquer India if she were a true nation. The present form of British administration cannot survive the fulfilment of those national tendencies which we have ourselves brought into existence. But India is bound to England as England is to India. The future of India will be a federation of independent states cemented together by the authority of England. India so constituted will afford from its own resources the most powerful check against aggression for all time. The close connection of England with India, the attitude

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of the foster-mother country under the proposed colonial relations, and of the free cities, which must always be English in tone and spirit, will not only tend to prevent a short-sighted jealousy, but will materially strengthen the United States of India in presenting an unbroken front of opposition to a common foe.

In any case it may be argued that it would not be difficult for England on the withdrawal of her own standing army to secure treaty rights for India from the European Powers. Such rights would be the easier to negotiate for if it were seen that England were honestly giving up its policy of self-aggrandisement. The evidence of honesty of purpose so recognised would inexpressibly benefit the cause of peace and future progress.

THE SOCIAL AND MORAL CRISIS

IT has been justly said that the India of the present is no more like the India of Lord Ellenborough than the England of to-day is like the England of Queen Anne. This remark is equally true in respect of moral, social, and intellectual advancement as in regard to material affairs. But, morally and socially at least, the change is far greater than this analogy would imply. In England there has been evolution, not revolution. The change has been the result of natural spontaneous progress brought about by the action of internal forces. In India the change has been artificial and forced from without. It is the product of the relationship between two civilisations at an unequal stage of development in immediate contact with one another. The question in India, therefore, is not one of progress only; the movement, so far as it has gone, is revolution pure and simple: in other words, it is the introduction of the complex

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machinery of Western civilisation into the simple society of the East.

The moving spirit of this revolution is English education. Under its solvent influence the old organisations are crumbling up, and the Indian races have entered upon a long career of transition preparatory to the establishment of a new order. The immediate inevitable result of this is disturbance. Our admiration for Western civilisation would be blind indeed if we were not able to see that grave evils are likely to attend upon its transplantation to Indian soil. The actual Hindooism of the present has behind it a polytheistic past of thirty centuries or more, which must inevitably mould and colour its future, whatever the form it may hereafter take. The effect of English education is to break this continuity. The habits and opinions of the people are modified, and even their mode of life is changed, but the hereditary tendencies by which the progress of the race must ultimately be determined are left untouched. There is no power of guidance or consolidation. It is possible for government to exercise an ennobling influence upon a people with whom it is completely homogeneous. But where this homogeneity does not exist, the influence of the governors is of a very different

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character. It is not possible to effect permanent good by educational establishments which are in the hands of an alien power, and therefore of men who cannot fully sympathise with the wants of the people. It is not possible to successfully disseminate Western ideas through an official channel. The Roman prefects of old were all unequal to the task of Christianising the Empire ; far less is the de-polytheising of India a task reserved for officials to undertake. Such a change can only be effected by voluntary efforts, partly foreign and partly indigenous, the doctrine coming in its main features from the West, but being moulded into appropriate forms by Eastern intellects.

It is certain that the regenerating doctrine must arise in the West. The vanguard of Humanity is in the West ; and, the development of the race everywhere being due to the same fundamental laws, must correspond in its main features with the earlier development of its most advanced portion. But if we look at the West as it actually is, we find a state of utter confusion in every department of human energy. Nations, Churches, and classes are at war with one another, and disunited among themselves. It is a serious symptom of insufficiency that there should be found among us those who hope

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to establish a national organisation upon the disorganised forces of Christendom. It is even more deplorable that any should advocate the wholesale importation into India of European civilisation in its most material and anarchical form, without any moral safeguards. The present anarchy which prevails in Europe characterises the transitional epoch between the repressive policy of the old Catholic *régime* and that healthier policy of the future which is destined to rest upon the basis of a stable and progressive public opinion. But what does such anarchy become when transplanted to the East? There it is the natural product of no such period of transition; it is a disintegrating force intruding into an alien order of things; it is an agent of destruction, of which the disastrous effects will have to be carefully eliminated at some future period. The West must be itself united before it can expect to produce a salutary influence upon the less advanced populations. Any present movement is premature. Such as was the dominion of Rome in the East, such must be that of Great Britain in India; and with England as with Rome the simple keeping of the peace must be the main object. The principal end of our government should be to maintain the *status quo* until modifications can be introduced which

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shall enable the passage from the old to the new order to be accomplished with the least perceptible disturbance.

We may be thankful that our action affects at present only a small portion of the community, and that the vast bulk of the people of India is still unmoved by any of the moral or civilising influences which contact with the missionaries or the efforts of the Department of Public Instruction might be expected to impart. Nothing but disaster could ensue from unsettling the beliefs and prejudices of the multitude at too early a stage of its development. It will be time enough when the *élite* of the Hindoo community is thoroughly initiated into the civilisation of the West to consider how changes can be best introduced among the masses of the people.

Still more cause for thankfulness is there in the fact that the preliminary period of the revolution, during which the educational machinery has been under the direct control of a foreign Government, is drawing to a close. Official interference was unavoidable in the first instance—in no other way could a beginning have been made—but the educational movement in India now stands in need of no such stimulus. The sense of utter dependence on Government

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for support has given way before the progressive, enlightened, and independent spirit to which English education itself has given birth. The cry for English education which rings through all the Presidencies is sufficient evidence that there exists in India, as well as in Europe, a worthy instinct among the people, a popular craving for education demanding satisfaction, and not an obstinacy requiring that it should be thrust upon them. Educational institutions, unaided by Government or by missionary societies, independent in the strictest sense of the word, are now flourishing with hundreds of English-speaking scholars, and set an example in instruction, discipline, and moral training which the older schools and colleges may well envy. It is in matters of education more than any other that the people of the country have become ripe for local self-government. The fact that large and high-class educational institutions can be effectually managed by native agency alone no longer admits of doubt. Systematic education is already falling into the hands of private enterprise. The time has come for the Government to transfer its educational endowments to the custody of those who have been educated in them. The present system of University administration, which is most

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unsatisfactory in all respects, should be reconstituted on a representative basis. The policy of Lord Curzon, which proposes to knit together still tighter the bonds of official control, is absolutely retrograde. It has been condemned by every section of Indian opinion; and though it may temporarily prevail, it will be as evanescent as it is unsound. The problem of grafting Western ideas on to an Oriental stock is now ready for solution in the only way in which a successful solution is possible—by means of Orientals who, having been thoroughly imbued, under our present system of education, with a knowledge of Western civilisation, have at the same time not lost sight of the traditions of their past.

It is no longer possible for the Government to exercise any beneficial interference in this direction. Its function is exhausted, and its chief end in view should be to maintain order while the remaining period of transition is in the hands of those who may be able to control the movement. The true attitude, for some time to come at least, should be one of conservation and the encouragement of a system of protection. Its wisest policy will be to refrain from any action which leads directly to collision with the old theocratic organisation. The old

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Hindoo polytheism is a present basis of moral order, and rests upon foundations so plastic that it can be moulded into the most diverse forms, adapting itself equally to the intellect of the subtle metaphysician and to the emotions of the unlettered peasant. It combines in itself all the elements of intensity, regularity, and permanence. Its chief attribute is stability. The system of caste, far from being the source of all the troubles which can be traced in Hindoo society, has rendered the most important services in the past, and still continues to sustain order and solidarity. The admirable order of Hindooism is too valuable to be rashly sacrificed before any Moloch of progress. Better is order without progress, if that were possible, than progress with disorder. Hindooism is still vigorous, and the strength of its metaphysical subtlety and wide range of influence are yet instinct with life. In the future its distinctive conceptions will be preserved, and incorporated into a higher faith; but at present we are utterly incapable of replacing it by a religion which shall at once reflect the national life, and be competent to form a nucleus round which the love and reverence of its votaries may cluster.

The task now before us is to preserve order as far as may be practicable, and not to excite

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unnecessary disturbance. This duty is paramount in its political aspect, but it is, if possible, even more incumbent on us in its social and moral relations. The existing social order demands, therefore, our first attention, and to this end I can find nothing more essential than a careful study and correct appreciation of the Hindoo caste system. That system has its defects undoubtedly, but they are defects more than counterbalanced by the services it renders. Those reformers who are in the habit of describing caste as the root of all evils in Hindoo society overlook the impossibility of uprooting an institution which has taken such a firm hold on the popular mind. They forget that the attempt to abolish caste, if successful, would be attended with the most dangerous consequences, unless some powerful religious influence were brought to bear upon the people in its place. They forget also that caste is still stronger as a social than as a religious institution, and that many a man who has entirely lost his belief in his religion is zealous and tenacious of his position as a high-caste man, and scrupulously performs all customary rites and ceremonies. Caste is now the framework which knits together Hindoo society; it is the link which maintains the existing religious system of Hindooism in its present

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order. The problem of the future is not to destroy caste, but to modify it, to preserve its distinctive conceptions, and to gradually place them upon a social instead of a supernatural basis.

- The Christian missionary condemns caste because he finds it hard to destroy a priesthood which receives a support from the people when nothing in the shape of spiritual assistance is rendered in return. The British administrator condemns the institution because he cannot on account of it override the internal discipline of a subject community, and finds himself ranked by them, for all his authority, with their veriest outcasts. I remember well the impression created in my own mind on my first arrival in India, when, on walking out in the evening with a Brahmin subordinate, the Hindoos whom we might meet would accost me with the respectful gesture they will always accord to official rank, while they would prostrate themselves and rub their foreheads in the dust before my companion. To him they rendered a genuine obeisance ; to me they showed a sign of artificial respect only. The sense of official relationship was entirely swallowed up by the stronger feeling of social subordination. It is not only the lower orders that are inspired by this feeling ; all are affected

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by it. Caste still exercises a predominant influence among all classes of the community. Educated Hindoos are puzzled to make out what they owe to their society, and why they render to caste their tribute of submission when there is nothing to compel their obedience. Nevertheless, the institution is as powerful among those who disregard many of its rules as it was with their fathers who rigidly observed them all. They find it as hard to bear excommunication themselves, and are as disposed to inflict that punishment upon wrong-doers of their community, as was the case with their ancestors in the past. They find it as desirable to cling to their caste-fellows, despite many disagreeable features in their life and character, as their predecessors may have done. Even those who are outside the pale of Hindoo caste seem anxious to organise an institution resembling caste among themselves. The Eurasian community seems to have already formed into a caste, and the native converts to Christianity, as well as the more self-assertive portion of the Brahmo community, appear to be in the course of forming into new castes. Even a Khalsa Sikh will be found after a time to assume an attitude of marked respect towards Brahmins, and to entertain the most delicate scruples on

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the subject of caste. Even Mahomedans have been so far infected that they have broken up into separate castes with the *jus connubii* as distinct as it is amongst Hindoos.

Caste is thus the existing basis of social order, as the Brahminical polytheism is of Hindoo morality. Supplemented by such sister institutions as the joint family and the village community (both of which are also in transition and have been greatly changed), it has already been subjected to modifications, and is destined to be still further modified by the external influences which are brought to bear on it. Its future must, however, remain a mere speculation so long as the Hindoo nation cannot assume the responsibility of working out its own social evolution. In their present condition the Hindoos cannot possibly have an ideal of their own. Bereft of political independence, their ideas of collective action cannot bear that impress of sound logic and morality which collective action alone can impart to them. A considerable degree of unity in thought and action has lately been established in political matters, and it may be hoped, therefore, that there will shortly be a similar manifestation in regard to moral and social questions. The problem is a difficult one, and in proportion to its difficulty will be the merit and the reward

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of those who succeed in solving it. There is neither difficulty nor merit in merely cutting the Gordian knot, which is the method of procedure pursued by Government. The necessary changes must be wrought by the people themselves, arising from national aspirations and emanating from a spontaneous impulse. The changes effected by an alien and benevolently despotic administration are spasmodic and artificial, and they cannot be of permanent value because they are not spontaneous.

The truth is that the moral and social reformation of India, as of every other country, if it is to be effective, must result from the action of internal forces. Its tendencies must be moulded by the accumulated influences of the past and by the direct action of the present. It cannot disconnect itself from the associations which have grown up around the family for generations. It must begin among the domestic *lares* and *penates*. And this is why civilisation through a foreign government, the popularisation of Western ideas through official insistence, a system of education through officials employed under the Department of Public Instruction, must always fail. Education will never be in a healthy condition so long as the teaching of the home is at utter variance with the teaching

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of the school or college. Anyone who is acquainted with the conditions of an ordinary Hindoo family at its home must have been struck with the bewildering contrast between the domestic environment of the young Hindoo, amidst which his active life is spent, and the intellectual atmosphere he breathes during his college hours. The domestic life of the Hindoo is indeed in itself not more immoral than that of a European home. Far from it; there is so much misconception on this point that it is desirable to state what the facts actually are. The affection of Hindoos for the various members of the family group is a praiseworthy and distinctive feature of national character, evinced not in sentiment only, but in practical manifestations of enduring charity; the devotion of a parent to a child, and of children to parents, is most touching. The normal social relations of a Hindoo family, knit together by ties of affection, rigid in chastity, and controlled by the public opinion of neighbouring elders and caste, command our admiration, and in many respects afford an example we should do well to follow.¹ There is nothing radically wrong in the young

¹ The existing Hindoo family system is an organisation in transition along with other national institutions. I publish in an Appendix a letter I addressed on this subject to a Hindoo friend in 1881.

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Hindoo's home associations. But the life he leads does present a painful contradiction where, to take an ordinary type, the family idols are tended by the mother and the other female members of the family at sunrise and sunset with flowers and ablutions and ceremonial observances; and in the meantime the midday occupation of the student consists in analysing, it may be, Milton's *Areopagitica*, a favourite textbook in my day, or some other scathing exposition of priestcraft and idolatry. The professors of the Educational Department deliver their lectures and discourse on Milton or Mill in the same spirit as a magistrate dispenses justice in his cutcherry. They do their official duty, but they make no attempt to exert a moral influence over their pupils, to form their sentiments and habits, or to control and guide their passions. The moral character is left to be wholly moulded by the associations amidst which the young are placed at home, without any endeavour to modify or improve it. There is thus a great gulf fixed between the relative position of the intellectual and of the moral culture. Collegiate impressions are at present, like a tinselled outdoor decoration, discarded by their possessor as a superfluity in private. And in the majority of cases they are, at all

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times, apparent rather than real; for though the educated natives lose their belief in Hindooism as an intellectual system, it still continues in a marked degree to mould their social and moral prejudices. The result is an anarchy for which the Government is responsible and which it is powerless to remedy. A tendency to look to the State for assistance, a disposition to exaggerate the power of political action over social events, is natural; but while in some cases no doubt the evils felt fall legitimately within the scope of politics, in others—and these are the vast majority—the Government is powerless to effect a cure, or can at best employ but palliative measures. Government can do little more than hold the purse and keep the peace, and put down practices like *Suttee* which are positively murderous; but even in a case like this, it cannot eradicate the sentiment upon which the practice depends.

The situation is now one of extreme social anarchy, and although the disturbance is not widespread, but prevails only among a limited section of the people, the mere existence of a disorganised class within the community is in itself no small evil. I am not blind to the defects of this class. I count among its members innumerable friends of sterling merit, and of a high order of probity and ability. No

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English official has been more indebted than I have been for Indian aid and co-operation most generously accorded at all times. I would be the last to speak unkindly of friends, colleagues, and comrades in a distant country. And yet I cannot but observe that the class as a whole labours under defects which are not less serious because they are the result of circumstances over which it has little or no control. The class is educated—highly educated as compared with the mass of the people: who can wonder that it should be conceited? The class is debarred from holding the highest offices under Government: who can wonder that it should be discontented? The class is an artificial and exotic product: who can wonder that it should be internally torn by a life of self-contradiction more or less in almost every individual instance?

Such are the penalties which the early pioneers of English education in India have had to pay for the knowledge and power they have acquired. The strength of national associations and social sentiment has fortunately sustained them for the most part with their own personal character untainted by demoralisation. It is true that they have not altogether escaped the vices of the West; but the virtues of the West, which they have successfully assimilated, im-

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measurably turn the scale. The difficulties under which they labour are occasioned by the abrupt departures from old habit and custom, the domestic discords, the social dissensions, the religious confusion, the tenebrous rationalism which • insufficiently supplies the place of a belief in the old theology, the bitter and increasing sense of political discontent, the growing irritation arising from the existence of racial disability and prejudice, and the very life of concealment and even of self-deception which as individuals they are so often compelled to lead. The gravity of these difficulties it is almost impossible to exaggerate.

Enough, however, of such criticism. It is not my object to depreciate the importance of passing events. I have shown no desire to extenuate the difficulties through which India must pass during this revolutionary transition, or to minimise the troubles of the existing crisis. It is certain that when the State endeavours to impart higher instruction, and thereby, as is implied, to direct and mould the national mind, it deviates from its proper sphere, and inflicts injury upon intellectual and moral progress. The unavoidable symptoms of social disorder created by such interference are readily recognisable, and have often been the occasion of unfriendly comment. But when I bring the evil

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done into comparison with the good: when I take into consideration not only the actual benefits received, but the potential good which must ultimately extend to the whole population: when I recall that English education has burst upon the natives of India for a period of two generations only: when I observe its effects on all sides and weigh them in the balance, I cannot hesitate to affirm that, notwithstanding drawbacks of all and whatever kind, the dissemination of Western ideas has proved of inestimable advantage to the country.

The beneficial tendency of this revolution is undoubted. In ever-widening circles it must gradually extend among classes of society at present undisturbed, and as natural forces are encouraged to take the place of artificial development, the demoralisation inseparable from change will become less apparent. And if its injurious tendency is also undoubted, it must be remembered that periods of transition are always accompanied by more or less disturbance. To me, indeed, it seems more noticeable that the community affected should have passed in so large a measure unscathed through the ordeal than that it should have been demoralised so far as to allow in some respects the vices of Europe to supplant virtues of a

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distinctly Oriental type. If we may observe in the minds of many educated natives an undisguised contempt for the simple faith of their forefathers, if we must admit the existence of a tendency to exaggerate the value of modern at the expense of ancient achievements, if we cannot deny that one effect of our education has been to undermine the social feelings of attachment, obedience, reverence for age, and respect for ancestors—if these are evils which English education has encouraged—I make bold to say that among the leaders of the Indian community and among the mass of the people who follow their guidance there is little or no sympathy with these tendencies. The vast majority of Hindoo thinkers have formed themselves into a party of reaction against the voice of a crude and empirical rationalism which seeks only to decry the social monuments raised in ancient times by Brahmin theocrats and legislators, to vilify the past in order to glorify the present, and to sing the shallow glories of an immature civilisation with praises never accorded to the greatest triumphs of humanity in the past. The innate conservatism of the nation is beyond the power of any foreign civilisation to shatter. The stability of the Hindoo character could have shown itself in no way more conspicuously

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than by the wisdom with which it has bent itself before the irresistible rush of Western thought, and has still preserved amidst all the havoc of destruction an underlying current of religious sentiment, and a firm conviction that social and moral order can only rest upon a religious basis.

THE RELIGIOUS TENDENCIES OF INDIA

ONE of the earliest and best established principles of British administration in India is that of religious neutrality. The Government of India, as between its subjects and itself, does not assume the truth or falsehood of any religion. It allows perfect freedom and liberty to the professors of all creeds. In accordance with this principle, the various provisional phases of religious speculation (the intuitive outcome of Western thought) which are to be found in more or less restless activity among the educated classes of India have not been subjected to any form of official interference. The Government is, perhaps, open to reproach for using its power unduly to advance Christianity when it supports bishops, archdeacons, and a considerable staff of Anglican and Presbyterian chaplains out of revenues almost wholly raised from Hindoos and Mahomedans. There are cases in which high

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officials have injudiciously identified themselves with the promotion and propaganda of their Christian creed. Still it is undoubtedly the case that, like the Roman prefects of old, our Indian administrators have in general been careless about spiritual matters. The Government has, broadly speaking, exercised no influence whatever to induce the natives to become Christians, and the natives have responded to their indifference by showing no desire whatever to become converts to the State religion. When Hindooism ceases to be a living power in the minds of the young men who frequent our English schools and colleges, Christianity rarely, if ever, takes its place. The very fact of its profession by the foreign rulers of the country has been represented to me by Indian gentlemen as a valid reason for their aversion to it.

The strong missionary body, which is more of an educating than a proselytising force, offers some substitute for the beliefs which it destroys. Our State colleges are content with chaos; their results are subversive only; the old belief is thrown off, the consequent disturbance issues in no real substitute, and the mental and moral state suffers from the negation. The missionary scheme does contemplate the establishment of an order. It is to the credit of the missionaries

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that they have ever held the right end in view, viz. the substitution of a definite social and religious conception for the old Hindoo polity, the downfall of which they foresaw. In the main they have done a good work, and done it bravely. But their failure has been complete. Far be it from me to depreciate the wonderful moral efficacy of Catholicism and the remarkable example of self-sacrifice it once set in a portion of Southern India. But a retrospect of the past no longer presents a promise of any successful proselytism in the future. Wherever there is a highly organised religious creed, Christianity fails to make conversions on any large scale. It is absolutely powerless when brought face to face with Islam; and among Hindoos its influence is confined almost exclusively to the very lowest classes,¹ where the mental development has

¹ It has been shrewdly remarked by a competent Catholic writer on this subject, that "at the very outset of missionary enterprise, the progress of Christianity among the lower castes only, tended to augment tenfold the repugnance and hostility of the Brahmins and other high-caste Hindoos. It cannot be too often insisted on that caste is a social as well as a religious distinction. Christianity thus not only appeared in the eyes of Hindoos as a religious innovation, but as the creed of socialism and license which allied itself with all that was lowest and most infamous in the country. In propagating opinions of any kind it is always hazardous to ignore the natural leaders of a community, and attempt to win over the multitude without their co-operation."

—*Dublin Quarterly Review*, October 1868. I cordially endorse

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not advanced much beyond the earliest stage. Though here and there an educated native may have been brought to Christianity, the educated natives, as a body, have not been slow to perceive that the intellect of Europe is drifting away from the traditional religion. Whatever change may eventually be effected, the change from Hindooism to Christianity is perhaps the most improbable ; the people will not accept it.

The remarks of Dr Congreve on the prospects of Christianity in India, and on the relations between Christianity and Hindooism and Islam, are so apposite that I cannot do better than quote them in this place. He writes :—

We have two religious systems to deal with in India, the Mahometan and the Brahminical. Both are yet powerful—on neither can we make any impression. If in his contact with Brahminism the missionary puts forward the philosophical side of Christianity, the subtle mind of the Brahmin delights in the combat, and meets him with a counter-philosophy. There is matter for endless dispute, but there is no result. If more wisely advised, the missionary rests on the simple statements of Christianity, on the facts of its history and its appeals to the conscience of men ; he spares himself personally the annoyance

these remarks, which exhibit a thoroughly just appreciation of the course to be pursued in all important social or religious movements.

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of defeat in argument, or the pain of seeing his arguments make no impression, but for his cause the effect is the same. For the religious system of India leaves its worshippers no sense of want, that primary condition of the acceptance of a new religion. The contest is not such as it was with the polytheistic systems of Greece and Rome, which were profoundly undermined by the philosophic culture of the educated, by the moral dissatisfaction of the multitude. In India such would not seem to be the case; and when you add to the absence of this the force of traditional associations and long organisation, the power of which was tested in the case of the Greek and Roman world, and not broken but by four centuries and a barbarian conquest, you have then the measure of the missionary's difficulties in dealing with Brahminism; you may form an estimate of the hopelessness of his task.

For the second great religious system with which we are in contact, little need be said. The verdict of history is definite and unimpeachable. On Mahometanism Christianity has made no impression, has tacitly renounced the attempt to make any. The rival Monotheisms met in the middle ages. The issue of the struggle was not doubtful. Greek Christianity succumbed. Latin Christianity waged successfully a defensive war. More than this it was unable to accomplish. Each of the rivals claims for itself an exclusive possession of the religious belief of mankind. Both alike are rejected by the other. They rest side by side, convincing monuments of the exaggeration of their respective claims.

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And so Comte writes in his preface to the Catechism these striking words :—

Five centuries have passed since Islam renounced the conquest of the West, and Catholicism abandoned to its eternal rival even the tomb of its pretended founder. In vain did the two religions aspire to spread themselves over the whole territory comprised within the dominion of the Roman Empire. That territory is divided with an almost equal division between the two irreconcilable Monotheisms.

Again, Colonel Osborn, speaking of the missionary failure from another point of view, observes with equal truth :—

The chief obstacle which besets the missionary is that occasioned by the peculiar relationship which exists between Englishmen and natives. The English are not merely the rulers of the country, but rulers in whose inner life, as individuals, the people are of no account—that is to say, the English in India form no attachments, no friendships with the people of the country. A few among them may associate with the natives from a sense of duty, but for their mental and moral needs their own countrymen are sufficient, and not one Englishman in a thousand, when the hour comes of leaving India for good, is sensible of a wrench, of a void being created in his life by the separation from any native whom he has known. No greater obstacle in the way of missionary work can be conceived than a state of mind such as

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this. It denotes the want of that touch of nature which makes the whole world kin, and yet it is a defect from which the English missionary is, of necessity, as little exempt as the English official. . . . Contrast this attitude of aloofness with the feelings of the Apostle Paul towards individual members of the churches which he had founded, and we shall find little difficulty in understanding why Christianity in India does not spread and develop as in the days of Imperial Rome.

To these remarks I only wish to add that there is now within my own observation, an increasing opposition to Christianity among the educated classes, a greater repugnance to its doctrines, and a more effective desire to prevent it spreading in any way among the rising generation. The spread of education has enabled the people to bind together with more cohesion and unity against a form of proselytism they so much dislike, and conversions to Christianity, otherwise than among the very lowest classes of the people, who are attracted to Christianity because it raises their position in the social scale, among famine remnants who have been taken over in large numbers by missionary bodies, and among the aboriginal tribes, are far less frequent than was formerly the case. During my long residence in India, I can scarcely recall

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the conversion of a respectable Indian gentleman to Christianity.

Nevertheless, although the educated Hindoos do not become Christians, they do not as a rule get rid of their belief in a supreme government. The Hindoo mind naturally runs in a religious groove of thought, and recoils from any solution of its present difficulties which does not arise from the past religious history of the nation. And therefore the vast majority of Hindoo thinkers do not venture to reject the supernatural from their belief. They adopt Theism in some form or other, and endeavour in this way to give permanence and vitality to what they conceive to be the religion of their ancient scriptures. At the same time they manage to reconcile with this teaching the ceremonial observances of a strictly orthodox Polytheism. They argue that these rites are embedded in the traditions and customs of the people, that they are harmless in themselves, and that their observance tends to bridge over the chasm which otherwise separates the educated classes from the bulk of the population. Their action is thus animated by a spirit of large-hearted tolerance. And there is nothing in it inconsistent with itself. For there is no direct antagonism between a belief in one supreme being ruling over a number of inferior

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powers, and a belief in several co-ordinate deities, each exercising sovereignty within certain vaguely defined limits. At best, however, their attitude is but a compromise between Rationalism and Hindooism. It is liable to misconception and abuse. And therefore it is distasteful to certain ardent minds which revolt altogether from compromise, and deem it obligatory to purge themselves from all taint of idolatry or superstition by entering a solemn protest against the popular creed, which they regard as at once false and mischievous. It is to such minds that Brahmoism owes its origin and development.

- I have no prejudice against the Brahmos as a body; on the contrary, I have the highest personal respect for many of their number, and especially for their distinguished leaders, who have been endowed with no ordinary share of those gifts which enable their possessors to become teachers of the people. I have been myself a witness at the Brahmo services of the remarkable degree of religious intensity of which the Hindoo mind is capable. I have no question that Brahmoism has proved a haven to many who would otherwise have been cast adrift upon the troubled waves of doubt, and that it has afforded them a religion which satisfies their aspirations and ennobles their mode of life. But I find it

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impossible to regard Brahmoism as a definite belief. It is altogether an esoteric doctrine, not materially distinguishable from the Theism or Unitarianism of Europe. It appeals to the individual, and requires not only a minute process of self-examination, but also a concurrence among individuals in their interpretations of self-consciousness. Its metaphysical dogmas may assist its propagation among a certain class of minds. But that class must always be a limited one. Men in general are so constituted that they prefer to take their beliefs upon trust and not to work them out independently: they require teachers, men who speak with authority, as themselves divine, or as direct missionaries of a higher power, or as interpreters of the knowledge slowly accumulated by Humanity in the past. Even granting that each individual would consent to examine himself in order to elicit the requisite first truths, there is no guarantee that the process would be correctly performed in every case, or that the same conclusions would be invariably arrived at. So far as individuals can be induced to agree in their interpretations of self-consciousness, to that extent Brahmoism offers a basis of organisation; but it is obvious that such agreement must always be confined to a comparatively narrow circle of believers.

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The masses require a less abstract creed, and one that contains a larger infusion of the human element. There are already indications of a modification in this direction; and however much the philosophical party among the progressive Brahmos may disclaim any wish to depart from a purely theistic type of worship, it is certain that such success as they have obtained is at the expense of their theological metaphysics. Instead of trying to controvert this fact, it would be better if they faced it boldly and acknowledged the paramount necessity of grafting the human upon the divine. It is only by accepting such principles and adopting the most liberal modifications, both in doctrine and practice, that Brahmoism can ever hope to spread among the lower or less educated classes. In its present profession it has made no way among the masses of the people. In its present attitude it will never even form a transitional religion enabling the nation to pass through its present crisis: much less will it ever prove a formidable rival to any of the older creeds.

Somewhat similar in its individualistic character is the metaphysical conception of Theosophy which has lately been exercising a transitory influence. The subtleness of its teaching, and the degree of scope which the supernatural

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interference of spiritual, or so-called astral, phenomena afford to the imagination, are features peculiarly congenial to the Hindoo intellect. A belief in the doctrines of Theosophy is consistent with the tenets of Brahmoism, and even with the professions of orthodox Hindooism. The Indian mind has also been able to see that in some occult manner, but with a definiteness and force quite unmistakable, the European adherents of the system have been elevated by a kind of moral regeneration from indifferentism, and sometimes from positive dislike, into sincere and hearty sympathy with the people of the country. The conditions have, therefore, been very favourable to the spread of Theosophy among natives. Tossed to and fro by every blast of vain doctrine, they have rallied round the new-fangled ideas of this weird and obscure system with an eagerness which shows the need among them of a more rational and satisfying belief. But already the enthusiasm of the movement has spent itself. The public exposure of some of the directors of the new cult proved a severe shock to its votaries, and many of them have renounced their allegiance. Although they are full of faith and trust, to an extent which Englishmen of the twentieth century are almost incapable of understanding, they cannot but

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refuse to remain permanently enslaved by a belief in phenomena which are not only incapable of demonstration, but are alleged on credible testimony to be propped up by fraud.

More valid than these metaphysical tendencies is the advance which has been made, especially in Upper India, of the position and prospects of the Arya Samaj. This movement is the direct outcome of the conservative and reactionary Hindoo feeling which sighs for the visionary Golden Age, and finds the remedy for the defects of modern Hindooism, tainted by its contact with Western civilisation, in the inspiration and glories of the past. It is based, like the Brahmo Samaj, on pure Monotheism, but appeals more strongly to the intellectual Hindoo by its adherence to the philosophy and cosmogony which are familiar to him, while it attracts the masses by its maintenance of the inspired character of their ancient scriptures. "Back to the Vedas" was the persistent cry of Dayanund Saraswati, and the belief in an inspired scripture is a living force to those who are unable to find adequate moral or religious sustenance in the eclectic principles of Ram Mohun Roy or Keshob Chunder Sen. The strength of the movement lies in its indigenous source, with its roots in the past, adhering to the ancient ritual

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and a modified caste system, and retaining a not unfamiliar attitude in respect of pantheism and idol-worship : its weakness lies in its strained and unnatural interpretation of the sacred books, and above all in its complete alienation from Western thought. There is no blend, or sign of blending, between Aryas and the followers of any other creed, Eastern or Western, thus fundamentally differing from the Theism of the Brahmo Samaj ; and their attitude towards Christianity and Islam is distinctly hostile. It may be in consequence of this attitude that the doctrines of the new sect have rapidly spread, and are already exercising a powerful influence, socially and politically, among large numbers of the people. It is certain that, in spite of its dogmatism, the Arya Samaj is working as a remarkable force for the amelioration of India, and the history of the movement is one of the most important and interesting chapters of modern Hindoo thought.

Absolute Nihilism, Brahmoism, Theosophy, Theism which conforms to Hindooism, and, lastly, Christianity, these generally are the varying creeds which among Hindoos survive the wreck of their early faith. As a rule the Hindoos retain their religious instincts ; but there are no signs at present of the predominance of any creed. Wandering hither and thither like sheep

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without a shepherd, they beat the air in the vain pursuit after religious truth. We cannot tell what the future—and doubtless it is a far distant future—is destined to bring forth. But I for one cannot bring myself to doubt that the

- Eastern nations will some day be brought with the rest of the world under one common faith, towards which all discordant religions will eventually converge. I cannot doubt that by distinct but equivalent courses the great nations of the East will rise by natural progression to the definitive level of the West, and embrace the final universal and human religion which has its roots in man's
- moral nature—the same in all ages and climes—while it will not fail in each case to reflect the national life and give expression to its distinctive aspirations. Although the prospects of moral progress in India are threatened by gathering clouds, I derive encouragement from a contemplation of the brilliant success attained by evangelists of an earlier generation. No beneficial impulse is likely to be produced by the mere official experiments of a Government which is alien to the people, and which, from no fault of its own, is necessarily unsympathetic with caste and polytheism. The Educational Department possesses no adequate force for revolutionising the thoughts and manners of the people.

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The missionary bodies are now as incapable as laymen of sympathising with the special idiosyncrasies of the Hindoo intellect. But the admirable efforts of the Jesuit missionaries in China and in Southern India have shown the possibility of surmounting obstacles at first sight fairly insuperable. Had they possessed a more tractable dogma, they would doubtless have overcome the moral difficulty for themselves. Even in their failure they accomplished a great work, and have set an example of procedure that succeeding missionaries must follow.

It is to the labours of St Francis Xavier during the sixteenth century that Indian Christianity is chiefly indebted for its distinctive characteristics. He addressed his teaching almost exclusively to the lower orders, and made no systematic attempt to gain over to his side the aristocracy of Hindooism. A more decisive step was taken in the beginning of the seventeenth century when the celebrated Jesuit, Robert de Nobili, well knowing how important it was to receive the co-operation of the upper classes, commenced his labours, after the manner of St Paul, by becoming a Brahmin to the Brahmins. He and his colleagues assumed Hindoo names and introduced themselves as Brahmin priests of a superior order from the Western world.

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"They renounced all riches, dignities, honours, friends and kindred; they desired to have nothing of this world; they scarcely took the necessaries of life; attention to the body, even when needful, was irksome to them.

"They were given as an example for all religious, and ought more to excite us to make good progress than should the number of the lukewarm make us grow slack.

"Their footsteps remaining still bear witness that they were right holy and perfect men, who waging war so stoutly trod the world under their feet."

Their success was due to their wonderful power of sympathy, and their rare facility of adaptation to unaccustomed modes of thought and action. They possessed in an eminent degree the apostolic faculty of being all things to all men without compromising the fundamental principles of their creed. Like skilful pilots, they steered clear of an absolute enforcement of doctrine, and instinctively adopted a theory of relativity in all their dealings with the social customs and religions of the Eastern world. They displayed, on the one hand, that

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just conciliation which is the key-note of the principles they had to offer in dealing with other modes of thought ; and, on the other, that life of example of which the effect is beyond all precept, and without which all precept is in vain. The evangelists of the future, with all the enthusiasm they may derive from a religion which shall inspire a loftier ideal and a more human goal, will find no nobler exemplars than St Xavier and De Nobili in their genuine zeal and self-sacrificing spirit in the propagation of a new faith.

• APPENDIX.

*Being a Letter addressed to an Indian Friend
on the Hindoo Joint Family System.*

UNITED SERVICE CLUB,
CALCUTTA, June 24, 1881.

MY DEAR SIR,—Your long and interesting letter¹ of May 16 deals with the most important principles of the Hindoo Social System, and raises difficult questions which I am very imperfectly prepared to answer. Moreover, as you are aware, I have little leisure to give to the subject. I venture to offer you only the following observations.

We are accustomed to the conditions of a Hindoo Joint Family differing from those of a family which we look on as the unit of society. The Hindoo Family System is the result of a past history to which Europe presents no

¹ The substance of that letter was reproduced in an article entitled "Our Joint Family Organisation," and published in the *Calcutta Review* for October 1881.

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parallel. Taking its remote origin from the same sources as caste, it has been largely modified by the existence of the tribal *gotra*, which may be described as a caste within a caste, the members of which are of equal rank, but are precluded from intermarriage, until it has developed into its present phase of coparcenary relationship with all the members of the same family. It is unnecessary that I should follow you in your inquiries into the antiquity of the system. I take it as you describe it in its normal type as consisting of seven generations of agnates, who are entitled to a common mess, to common worship, and to a share in the common estate. Only, I may add, that in practice other relations join the family who are not entitled to commensality, but who are admitted to the enjoyment of their share by charitable considerations.

From the nature of the case, therefore, the Hindoo Joint Family System consists of a large number of persons, many of whom depend upon it for their general support, and, as you point out, joint families certainly serve to maintain a number of idle mouths. This I look upon as an evil. The climate of India is enervating, while the necessities of life are very easily and cheaply obtained ; and there is a tendency in consequence among a great mass of the population to become idlers, and to rest content with the support they receive from the charity of the central family.

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These drones of society are, in fact, a very numerous class in India. It is this state of things which I condemn as a bad one. It is desirable to encourage among individuals not only a sense of self-reliance, but a desire to be independent, and a feeling of shame in receiving support from the charity or labour of others without the return of any corresponding equivalent. It is only the sick and infirm, women and children, and, for special reasons, the priesthood, who are rightly supported by the labour of others. The able-bodied man must work, and the necessity of work is a principle which, above all others, requires to be implanted in the mind of the Oriental, whose home is in a hemisphere where the bounty of nature seems almost to remove every physical stimulus to exertion. The dignity of labour is a faint glimmering light even in Western Europe; but in India such an idea is not only unknown but repellent, and it is considered disgraceful in a man to work for his livelihood by the labour of his hands. Therefore I believe that in India any system of social life which indirectly or directly may be said to afford encouragement to sloth is injurious, and that we should do our best to modify or eradicate it.

At the same time I agree with you in recognising the value of the Hindoo Joint Family System even in this particular aspect. Too much stress cannot be laid on the importance of encouraging the charitable sentiments to

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which it gives occasion. These sentiments, you truly remark, evoke a large measure of kindness on one side and reverence on the other.

I can, however, by no means admit that the system affords a practical solution to the difficulties of the pauper question in India. I think you somewhat unnecessarily assume that if the family drones were bereft of family support they would sink into the condition of paupers, and become a burden upon the general community. This argument may be unduly pressed. For there is indeed little or no analogy between the problem of pauperism in Europe and of poverty in India. In ordinary times—famine and other similar calamities apart—the pauper of India is not like the pauper of England, for whom sustenance can only be found at the public cost; and the reason of this is that the necessities of life in an inclement country like England are so immeasurably greater and more expensive than they are in India. In ordinary times I should have no fear of the pauperisation of India if the Hindoo Joint Family System ceased to exist. There is no pauperisation among Mahomedans with whom no such system prevails. In times of crisis the charity of the joint family dries up unavoidably, and the misery and starvation among the idle mouths dependent on it for their support is even greater than it would have been if they had previously been in the habit of endeavouring to support themselves. These

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drones are paupers already. They should be compelled to work, but the existence of the Family System removes the necessity. Only in time of famine it is that they are cast out, a useless number of mouths to feed, who in no inconsiderable degree enhance the difficulty of the problem of famine administration.

My principal objection to the influence of the Hindoo Family System is based on these grounds. But there are other objections which at first sight may appear even stronger than these. You do not hesitate to draw prominent attention to them when you write :—

A family like this cannot dispense with the *Purda* System.¹ A numerous group like our joint family, between whom the bonds of natural affection are very unequal, cannot, I fear, be allowed the fullest social intercourse, and that within the seclusion of the home, without serious danger to their moral purity ; and the *Purda* being thus necessary within the family, it cannot be dispensed with in respect of outsiders.

The *Purda*, as well as the subordinate organisation of the *Zenana* System, requires that the newly married wife should be trained to the habits and ways of the society she enters into. To this end infant marriages are indispensable more or less.

I am not competent to say, with reference to the above remarks, whether you are justified

¹ *Purda* means a curtain. The *Purda* System means the system under which women are secluded in the *Zenana* or women's apartments.

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in assuming that the fullest social intercourse between the sexes within the seclusion of their homes is calculated to endanger their moral purity. There is a great difference between Eastern and Western homes in this respect. In the mere construction and disposal of the rooms, an English dwelling-house affords complete privacy to the women of the family; while, at the same time, the men and women meet together in the discharge of their daily domestic duties with perfect freedom, and without the faintest sense or trace of any impropriety. But an Indian home is different: the fewer rooms and comparative absence of privacy, the larger and more varied elements of the household, even the character and limited quantity of clothing of both sexes necessitated by the exigencies of climate—these reasons, it may be, lead to the imposition of some restrictions as a wise arrangement. But, if so, the result is to be deplored, and I can never be persuaded to look upon the *Purda* System as consistent with the relationship which should exist between the members of a family. It consigns women to a condition of subordination and subjection which experience shows us is inseparable from a life of domestic servitude. It is based upon a coarse view of life, which has no other bond of union between the sexes than a mere sensual idea, and, as you are forward to admit, it is entirely incompatible with the important functions which Western civilisation prescribes for women.

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The *Purda* and *Zenana* Systems you describe as indispensable complements of the Hindoo family as it at present exists, and, this being so, you add that infant marriages are also indispensable, more or less. I am obliged to accept your statement of this part of the case; but, if the facts are so, it is almost unnecessary to adduce any other evidence to show that the conditions of a Hindoo Joint Family are irreconcilable with the ideal requirements of a Family System. I have never heard any sound argument adduced in favour of the institution of infant marriage. It is intended, no doubt, as a preventive of immorality. But even from this aspect it is a failure, for it allows boys and girls a free scope for indulgence in their passions, at an age when they have reached neither their physical nor mental maturity, and when the observance of chastity ought to have been enforced on them as a moral discipline. I need add nothing about the physical deterioration in the offspring of such marriages: it is a notorious fact, too patent to be ignored. I will only point out another evil result of the practice, in that early marriage often leads to early widowhood, and the abundance of young widows in India, as the police annals of the country amply testify, is a fruitful source of immorality and crime. There is something, no doubt, to be said for the *Purda* and *Zenana* systems, but nothing, that I can see, for infant marriage; and, looking to its effects in

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the domestic circle as well as more generally in society, both in its present influences and future results, I can but declare that the institution is one which should be unreservedly condemned—condemned in the same category as polygamy, for instance.

I have already said that my principal objection to the Hindoo Family System is the opportunity it affords to a large proportion of the able-bodied population of the country to live in idleness: without your authority I should never have been prepared to admit that the seclusion of women and infant marriage were essential concomitants of the system. I regret that the system should be held responsible for having done something more than accord to these evil customs its baneful sanction. For I am not blind to the excellencies of your family organisation; and I desire to especially acknowledge the admirable domestic influence it exercises upon its members. As an Englishman, with my home in a country where the family tie is comparatively lightly regarded, and the members of a family tear themselves asunder as a matter of course and almost without compunction, and settle apart from one another in all the quarters of the globe, I cannot but appreciate the immense affective superiority of the organisation you enjoy. Properly speaking, it is only by the natural cultivation of the family affections that a man is able instinctively

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to into existence dispositions calculated to fit life individually for public life. In your family arrangements you possess, therefore, through a process of progressive development, the necessary panoply of life, and I trust that this high recognition of the urgency of domestic sympathy will never be forgotten, whatever may be the vicissitudes the Hindoo Joint Family System is destined to experience.

In conclusion, I will only add, as you have pointed out in your letter, that the whole force of the British administration has been directed to break up the existing social order; and though the influence of a foreign domination is superficial in most respects, it has been able at least to undermine the foundations of the Hindoo Joint Family System, which, partly from this cause and partly from its own inherent defects, I cannot but look upon as a doomed institution. I am not inclined to overrate the force of Government as a solvent power in any social direction, but in this case the action of Government is, so far as I can judge, in consonance with a natural and even healthy tendency of events. The interference of Government in this case is therefore not altogether matter for regret, and, in my opinion, it only remains for the leaders of the Hindoo community, by gentle and judicious guidance, to control the period of transition, so that it may be passed with the least possible disturbance.

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rejecting the environments which prejudice and disfigure the present system, to reorganize the excellent materials which are available on their purpose upon a sound basis.

I am, my dear Sir,

Yours very sincerely,

H. J. S. COTTON.

TO BABOO

