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THE INDIAN NATIONAL CONGRESS.

PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS *

DELIVERED BY

THE HON. DR. RASH BEHARI GHOSE, C.I.E.

Brother-Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen,—My first duty is to tender you my thanks for the signal honour you have done me in asking me to take the chair. Believe me, I am more than grateful for the distinction you have conferred on me, unsought and unsolicited—a proud distinction, the proudest in your power to confer, but a distinction which carries with it a very heavy responsibility. For the position which I am occupying so unworthily is full of anxiety and was never more so than at the present juncture when heavy clouds have floated into the political sky; and in standing before you to-day I feel as if I was summoned to drive the chariot of the Sun; and if I am spared the fate of Phaeton, I shall owe my good fortune only to your forbearance and indulgent kindness on which I am confident I can safely rely. I can rely, too, with confidence on your willing co-operation; for are we not all animated by one common purpose and do we not know that co-operation is the very life of concerted action which can never thrive in an atmosphere of continuous strife and difference?

Every one must admit that we are passing through a sad and eventful period—a period of stress and storm—and if ever there was a time when we ought to close up our ranks and present a

* Delivered in part at the Indian National Congress, Surat, 1907.

firm, serried and united front, that time is this ; for the situation is of more than ordinary gravity. It is full of difficulty and full of peril, and unless we are imbued with a strong sense of discipline and of responsibility, the vessel of the Congress may be steered direct upon the rocks. It would be idle to deny, and I do not deny, that domestic dissensions have raised angry storms which are now sweeping across some parts of the country ; but there is no real occasion for pessimism or despair, though the incidents which recently occurred at Nagpur might well fill some minds with misgivings. There is, however, every reason to think that these disturbances were mainly the work of some misguided young men who had been carried off their feet by the wild talk of irresponsible persons. Of one thing, however, I am certain : those who have compelled us to change our place of meeting have no right to be proud of their achievement.

And here, on behalf of the assembled delegates, I must gratefully acknowledge the readiness and alacrity with which the people of Surat invited us to hold our sittings in their historic city. In offering their hospitality to the Congress they have only acted in accordance with their traditional generosity ; for they are citizens of no mean city. Surat, as history tells us, was the queen of Western India, a busy and famous mart before the lake-village of Llyndyn was staked out and long, long before Venice rose from the sea. But, perhaps, her greatest distinction, it is certainly her best title to our gratitude, is that Surat was the first resting place on Indian soil—where dissent was never suppressed by the sword, the gibbet or the stake—of the Parsi pilgrim fathers who cheerfully left home and kindred for the sake of conscience and whose descendants have inherited the virtues with the blood of their ancestors and repaid their debt a thousand-fold to India ; for I make bold to say that there is no

community whose love for the country is greater than that to which so many of our leaders belong, and which has given to us our "Grand Old Man."

I am glad to see in this assembly almost all our prominent leaders—men whose names are as household words and who have already taken an abiding place in the minds of the people. But I miss some well-known faces. Kali Churn Banerjee is no longer amongst us. A pious Christian, an accomplished scholar, an eloquent speaker and an ardent patriot, he was an ideal leader, respected by every community in the country. A most strenuous and earnest worker, his whole heart was in the Congress and his love for it was strong even in death. For who does not remember how he left a sick bed to attend our last meeting in Calcutta? Who does not remember how, though overcome by the heat and warned by the doctors, he refused to leave the assembly till he fell into a swoon and had to be carried out of the pandal? He died only a few days afterwards and when we think of the lonely Scotch cemetery in Koraya, where his remains were laid, we cannot help feeling how much learning, how much modest and unassuming simplicity, how much piety, how much winsome tenderness and how much patriotism lies buried in the grave of Kali Churn Banerjee. That hand which everybody was glad to touch is vanished. That voice which every body was glad to hear is still. But if to live in the hearts and memories of those whom we leave behind is not to die, Kali Churn is not dead but is still alive. True he no longer lives in his own person but he lives in us and will live on in those who succeed us, enjoying an immortality which is not given to all the sons of men. Pandit Biswambharnath, too, of Allahabad has been gathered to his fathers and we shall miss his mellow patriarchal wisdom in our councils. But though his work on earth has been done,

privilege, which may be claimed by the meanest criminal, was denied to one of our foremost men; and if Lala Lajpat Rai is now regarded as a martyr by his countrymen generally, it is the Government and the Government alone that have elevated him to that position and placed that priceless crown of thorns upon his head. If the Fort of Mandalay is now regarded as a holy place, as I know it is by some of my countrymen, it is the Government and the Government alone that have invested it with that holiness.

THE RAWALPINDI CASE.

In Etawah, too, a similar tragedy would have taken place had it not been averted by the good sense of Sir John Hewett who was able to see through the disgraceful conspiracy which had been so cunningly planned. But the spectre of an impending mutiny had obscured the vision of the Punjab officials and they saw in a mob riot a deep-laid scheme for the overthrow of the British rule. The result was the Rawalpindi prosecution which has thrown a lurid light on the methods of sedition hunters. Men occupying the highest position in society and looked up to as their leaders by the people in the Punjab were placed in the dock as felons who had by their seditious speeches incited violent riots. For six long months these men were detained in prison, as bail was refused on the ground that they could not, with safety to the State, be allowed to be at large. But what was the end of this prosecution? A complete vindication of their innocence and a most scathing exposure of the case for the Crown. The judgment of the Special Magistrate shows that panic had magnified into rebellion a perfectly lawful agitation against very substantial grievances. The evidence on which the six lawyers had been kept in prison for months was "suspicious if not fabricated" and there was not the shadow of a shade of evidence

to establish any sort of complicity on their part with any conspiracy against the British Crown.

And this leads me to remark that the situation in the Punjab was succinctly summed up by Lala Lajpat Rai in a letter which was written by him only a few hours before his arrest. The discontent he said was due to several causes which he set forth in chronological order.

(a) The letters and articles that appeared in the *Civil and Military Gazette* some time in July and August last year under the heading "Signs of the times."

(b) The prosecution of the *Punjabee* coupled with the refusal of the Government to take similar action against the *Civil and Military Gazette*.

(c) The Colonisation Bill.

(d) The Land Alienation Act Amendment Bill.

(e) The increase of the Canal rates on the Bari-Doab Canal.

(f) The abnormal increase of Land Revenue in the Rawalpindi District.

(g) The appalling mortality from plague which had made the people sullen and labour scarce, and raised the wages abnormally.

This diagnosis was perfectly correct, for as soon as the most pressing grievances were removed, the Punjab became quiet. Though the bureaucracy will probably persuade themselves that this happy result was entirely due to the deportation of Lala Lajpat Rai and of Ajit Singh, and that another mutiny had been averted solely by their foresight and timely precautions.

PRESS PROSECUTIONS.

The Press prosecutions, too, which were entered upon so lightly by the Government did not show much wisdom. In some instances the Crown failed to secure a conviction and a

defeat in such cases must always cover the Government with humiliation. Then, again, the prosecutions in Calcutta showed unmistakably the new spirit with which the people are prepared to face all attempts at coercion. In many of these cases the defendants refused to plead and cheerfully went to prison and they must be blind indeed who cannot see in it a new consciousness of nationality which at the present day inspires Young India and has penetrated even the seclusion of the zenana. When the Editor of the *Yugantar* was sent to jail, there was a crowded meeting of Indian ladies in Calcutta, not to condole but to present a congratulatory address to his mother, and what did the old lady say in her reply? "Bupin's useful career has just begun," she said, "with his recent incarceration and his example will do more good than his mere presence as a humble worker in the midst of his countrymen." Again, at the Barisal Conference, which was forcibly dispersed, some ladies flung away their ornaments on witnessing the humiliation of their husbands and sons and took a vow to forego all luxuries till the men had learnt to assert their lawful rights. Not satisfied with these prosecutions the Government undertook a crusade against mere schoolboys and our young barbarians were either publicly flogged or condemned to hard labour. Is it a matter for wonder that all this should have called for the most intense indignation throughout the country? The official may not believe it but we can assure him the Indian has eyes and hands, organs, dimensions, senses, affections, and passions.

Is it a matter for wonder that the political movement should have waxed stronger and stronger, driving even many moderate men into active sympathy with those whom they had previously regarded as impracticable visionaries.

And this brings me to the unrest in Bengal, the partition of which has not only strained the loyalty of many people but has led to tragic results which ought to have been foreseen by the author of that measure. One of its objects was to strengthen the Mahomedan influence in East Bengal. That influence has been strengthened; but its strength has been manifested in a peculiar way. I do not wish to dwell on the Mahomedan riots and the atrocities which occurred in East Bengal, but this I am bound to say, that the local officials were lacking in that firmness and impartiality which are the best title of England to our allegiance. I wish to speak with moderation, but what are we to think when a Sessions Judge divides witnesses into two classes, Hindus and Mahomedans, and prefers the evidence of Mahomedans to Hindus, because they are Mahomedans. This avowed bias has naturally alienated Hindus who are burning with resentment.

Every one familiar with the recent history of Macedonia—and our officials are certainly familiar with it—knows that it is very difficult for a country to obtain autonomy when it is torn by religious and racial hatreds. To divide and rule, however, is a maxim which must be hateful to every Englishman and we should be sorry to charge any English official with such tactics. But the fact remains that, for the first time in Bengal, racial and religious hatreds have been surging in the new Province among communities who formerly lived on the most friendly terms. Lord Curzon, I find, protests against the notion that he meant to play off the Mahomedans against the Hindus, and we are bound to accept His Lordship's denial; but there is a well-known maxim in law that every man must be presumed to foresee the consequences of his own acts; though in the case of His

Lordship, with his well-known foibles, we are not driven to rely upon this old legal saw.

The officials still fondly believe or pretend to believe that the Mahomedans were goaded to madness by the boycott movement of the Hindus; and that this was the real cause of the general lawlessness of the lower classes among the Mahomedans which burst into flame in East Bengal only a few months ago. It is, however, singular that this lawlessness did not reveal itself when the movement was at its height. Again, if the official view is correct, we have a remarkable instance of the innate perversity of the Oriental mind; for the boycott benefited the Mahomedans and not the Hindus, by reviving the weaving industry on which they had lived for generations. It is, however, unnecessary to discuss this question at length, because it has now been placed beyond all controversy by the solemn judgments pronounced not by Hindu but by English and Mahomedan Magistrates.

At Jamalpur, where the disturbances began in the Mymensingh District, the first information lodged at the Police Station contained no reference whatever to boycott or picketting. Mr. Beatson Bell, the trying Magistrate at Dewangunj, observed that boycott was not the cause of the disturbances. Another Special Magistrate at Dewangunj, himself a Mahomedan gentleman of culture, remarked: "There was not the least provocation for rioting; the common object of the rioters was evidently to molest the Hindus." In another case the same Magistrate observed: "The evidence adduced on the side of the prosecution shows that, on the date of the riot, the accused had read over a notice to a crowd of Mussalmans and had told them that the Government and the Nawab Bahadur of Dacca had passed orders to the effect that nobody would be punished for plundering and

oppressing the Hindus. So, after the Kali's image was broken by the Mussalmans, the shops of the Hindu traders were also plundered." Again, Mr. Barniville, the Sub-divisional Officer of Jamalpur, in his Report on the Melandahat riot said: "Some Mussalmans proclaimed by beat of drum that the Government had permitted them to loot the Hindus." And in the Hargilchar abduction case the same Magistrate remarked that the outrages were due to the announcement that the Government had permitted the Mahomedans to marry Hindu widows in *nikka* form.

The true explanation of the savage outbreak is to be found in the "red pamphlet" which was circulated so widely among the Mahomedans in East Bengal, and in which there is not a word about boycott or Hindu volunteers. "Ye Mussalmans," said the red pamphlet, "arise, awake, do not read in the same schools with Hindus. Do not buy anything from a Hindu shop. Do not touch any article manufactured by Hindu hands. Do not give any employment to a Hindu. Do not accept any degrading office under a Hindu. You are ignorant, but if you acquire knowledge you can at once send all Hindus to Jehannum (hell). You form the majority of the population of this Province. Among the cultivators also you form the majority. It is agriculture that is the source of wealth. The Hindu has no wealth of his own and has made himself rich only by despoiling you of your wealth. If you become sufficiently enlightened then the Hindus will starve and soon become Mahomedans." The man who preached this Jihad was only bound down to keep the peace for one year! You are probably surprised at such leniency. We in Bengal were not, or were only surprised to hear that the man had been bound down at all!

At the present moment there is undoubtedly a lull in East Bengal: but who knows that the Province may not be

swept again by another violent storm of wild frenzy and brute ferocity? For the devil of religious jealousy and hatred may be easily evoked; it cannot be as easily dismissed.

THE SEDITIOUS MEETINGS ACT.

The partition of Bengal is at the root of all these disorders and the discontent created by it has spread to other parts of the country. The result is a general unrest, and, in the opinion of the Government, the situation is becoming serious. But is not the solution of the problem within easy reach? You cannot govern India without the sympathy and confidence of the people. That sympathy and that confidence have been imperilled by Lord Curzon's autocratic measure and the only way to win back our sympathy and confidence is its reversal and not the Seditious Meetings Act which was passed on the 1st November last. Of that Act I find it difficult to speak with patience. But, as my honourable friend Mr. Gokhale said in the Council Chamber, even more dangerous than the Act itself is the policy that lies behind it—a policy which is unwise in the highest degree and which is bound to fail in India as it has failed everywhere else. It will burn into the minds of the people harsh memories which even time may be powerless to efface, and will, there is every reason to fear, enhance the very evil which it is intended to control.

We hope, however, that this new weapon with which the Executive have been armed will be very sparingly used. For the Prime Minister said only a few days ago that he was in favour of the free toleration of all agitation that is not directly and openly subversive of order. And I have no doubt that these principles of toleration will be loyally carried out by the Indian Government, when they recover from the panic which has seized them. All agitation is not subversive of

order. Every agitator is not a rebel though he is labelled as such by a section of the Anglo-Indian Press. A speech may be objectionable in expression and temper, but it ought not to be repressed merely because it might indirectly be subversive of order.

LORD CURZON.

By a strange irony of fate, it was left to a sympathetic Viceroy and a Liberal Secretary of State to adopt a policy of repression which Lord Curzon never ceases to remind us he had no occasion to call in aid. But the responsibility for this new policy primarily rests upon His Lordship, not upon Mr. Morley or Lord Minto who did not come into a "haven of peace." Heavy storms had broken out before the retirement of Lord Curzon, who left undone everything which he ought to have done and did everything which he ought not to have done. People for the first time began to distrust the good faith of their rulers, for His Lordship made no secret of his conviction that England's true mission was to govern India, but not through the people or with their assistance. The commercial exploitation of the country and its administration by Englishmen were his ideal of imperialism. Indians were to be excluded from all offices of trust and responsibility and were to be denied even all opportunities of qualifying themselves for such offices, which were to be reserved exclusively for the ruling race. And in every department of the public service a large number of highly paid offices were created by him to be filled by his own countrymen.

We have, gentlemen, a long and heavy indictment to bring against Lord Curzon. We charge him with having arrested the progress of education. We charge him with having set back the dial of local self-government. We charge

him with having deliberately sacrificed the interests of the Indian people in order to conciliate English exploiters and administrators. And, lastly, we charge him with having 'set Bengal in a blaze. It is Lord Curzon and Lord Curzon alone who is responsible for the rise of the new party, for he drove the people to despair and to madness. It is true Lord Curzon has retired, and yet the new party is growing in numbers. But we maintain that Lord Curzon is responsible for this growth, and if it is also growing in bitterness, Lord Curzon and Lord Curzon alone is responsible for it. Mr. Morley speaks of his duty to arrest the hand which would set the prairie on fire. Why did he not then, though in opposition, seek to arrest Lord Curzon's hand? He could not have rendered a greater service both to England and to India, for no Englishman has done more to undermine our loyalty than the Viceroy who sought to humiliate not only His Majesty's Indian subjects but also the great ruling chiefs. It is quite possible we have failed to appreciate His Lordship's good intentions, but the herald who recalled only the other day the virtues of Lord Clive may console himself with the reflection that justice may yet be done to him in the avenging pages of history—in the Greek Kalends.

If the Punjab is quiet, it is only because the grievances of the people have been redressed. If Bengal is still in a disturbed condition, it is only because the partition of Bengal is a festering sore which will not be healed. Let the Bengali-speaking people be placed under a Governor with an Executive Council, and you will see the winter of our discontent made glorious summer. Force is no remedy, and the best security for the peace of the country is the conviction that all real grievances will be redressed, not deportations or coercion Acts; and I have no hesitation in saying that timely concessions alone can arrest

the progress of the discontent which, though at present is a cloud, no bigger than a man's hand, may in time overshadow the whole land.

MR. MORLEY.

And this reminds me that Mr. Morley made a fatal mistake, fatal to his reputation as a Liberal and a statesman, when he refused to undo the partition of Bengal and sought shelter behind a settled fact. If he had only shown more courage Bengal would not have been convulsed and there would have been no excuse for the reactionary policy which has done so much to tarnish his fair fame as a Liberal statesman. And yet though unwilling to disturb the partition of Bengal, in his first Budget speech Mr. Morley spoke sympathetically of the new spirit which is abroad in India. The Indian system of government could not, he admitted, move in the old narrow groove but called for improvement. Speaking of the Indian Congress, he said that there was no reason to be frightened at its demands, as it did not insist on any violent or startling new departures. Dissatisfaction with the administration, said the great disciple of Mill, is not disaffection. It is true he did not think that India should have universal suffrage or be placed on the same footing as the self-governing colonies, but he insisted upon the spirit, the temper, the principles and the maxims of English institutions being applied to the government of India. Mr. Morley also said that a definite and deliberate move ought to be made with a view of giving competent and able Indians the same access to the higher posts in the administration that are given to their British fellow-subjects, and pointed out that the Proclamation of Queen Victoria should be construed in a liberal and generous sense and not refined away with the ingenuity of a quibbling attorney's clerk. We should be untrue, said the

friend and biographer of Gladstone, "to all the traditions of this Parliament and to those who, from time to time and from generation to generation, have been the leaders of the Liberal Party; if we were to shew ourselves afraid of facing and recognising the new spirit with candour and consideration." We know how these professions have ended. They have ended in deportations, ordinances, public prosecutions, punitive police, military constabulary and the Public Meetings Act.

On the last Budget debate this great Liberal Minister boldly said that he had no apology whatever to offer for the deportations in the Punjab and he recommended a policy of firmness which in India means repression. Now we are quite willing to believe in Mr. Morley's kindness, sympathy and love of justice, though it may cost us a painful mental effort, but when he says his anchor still holds, we are bound to remind him that his vessel has veered round with the tide. He will not probably admit that he has changed his ground, but he has certainly changed his front. It is not, however, at all difficult to account for this sad change in Mr. Morley's attitude. He has been evidently misled by his responsible advisers whose knowledge of the condition of the country is derived from secret police reports, and who told him of widespread sedition and the imminence not of a mere mutiny but of a revolt against the English rule with all its attendant horrors,—a rising of the women and children against the men. A large section of the English Press also sought to create enmity between the two races by stirring up the memory of the dark days of the Indian Mutiny, stained with so many crimes and so much carnage; and the *London Times*, true to its traditions, recounted the old story with embellishments in order to embitter our rulers against us. What wonder, then, if that

apostle of freedom, to whom reasons of State are only the tyrant's plea, has been compelled to yield to the pressure put upon him by responsible advisers and by the Press. I will not say, with the Tory Press in England, that Mr. Morley has been translated, but we are painfully reminded of Ariel in the hateful bondage of Sycorax. The truth is politics, even in our day, is like pitch. You cannot touch it without being defiled, and the Secretary of State might have profited by the warning of Comte that a philosopher who holds up from his closet lofty ideals of conduct should not take an active part in the practical administration of a country like India where a Liberal statesman must frequently stoop to arts which may be reconciled to the official conscience but not to the conscience of the plain man.

Mr. Morley, I repeat, has fallen under the spell of the bureaucracy. We are quite willing to believe he means well. Indeed, the India Office, like the floor of the House of Commons, is paved with good intentions. But under the present system of administration it is impossible for any single man to do any real service to us. The Secretary of State has to take his facts from the Indian officials, and the only public opinion of which he knows anything is not the public opinion in India, but the public opinion in England, nourished upon the lies told by unscrupulous correspondents which are faithfully reproduced in the English Press.

THE GROWTH OF A NEW PARTY.

The growth of a new party in India has also served as a very useful excuse for delaying all reforms. I am, however, bound to say that this party is not, at the present moment, at all dangerous. Every sensible man disapproves of its methods; if the Government can only rally the Moderates to their side by gradually preparing the country to take its position as a self-governing

State or a federation of States united together under the supreme authority of England, they will extinguish the new party completely, and the ominous shadow which has projected itself over the future fortunes of the country will disappear. The bureaucracy, however, is unable to distinguish, or refuses to distinguish, between those who earnestly seek for reform and the irresponsible agitators who would have nothing to do with the Government. They are all tarred with the same brush. Those who demand a larger share in the administration of their country, as essential to the welfare and the stability of the British Government, are confounded with the pestilent demagogue who would drive the hated foreigner into the sea. Those who counsel their countrymen to have patience, confident that their rulers would in time give them all they can reasonably want, if they confine their agitation to constitutional methods, are confounded with those who assert that nothing good can come out of England, and that passive resistance if persisted in would compel the English to retire from the country. But is it not a serious blunder, which in politics we all know is worse than a crime, to denounce the whole of the educated classes as disloyal? Such denunciations have sometimes a fatal tendency to realise themselves.

WHO ARE THE ENEMIES OF ENGLAND.

Mr. Morley recently spoke of the "enemies of England," but who are these enemies? Not certainly the educated classes who represent the better mind of India. The real enemies of England are those Englishmen who lose no opportunity of showing their hatred and contempt for the people of this country. Flushed with the insolence of a ruling caste they treat them as an inferior race with whom friendly or sympathetic relations are impossible.

The danger of such an attitude was clearly discerned by Lord Salisbury, who, when he was Secretary of State for India,

addressed this memorable warning to the Cooper's Hill College students more than thirty years ago.

"No system of government," he said, "can be permanently safe where there is a feeling of inferiority or of mortification affecting the relations between the governing and the governed. There is nothing I would more earnestly wish to impress upon all who leave this country for the purpose of governing India than that, if they choose to be so, they are the only enemies England has to fear. They are the persons who can, if they will, deal a blow of the deadliest character at the future rule of England." Since this warning was given the relations between the two classes have grown worse and have given rise to racial hatred which is sure to cause serious trouble; for, as Mr. Morley said only the other day, bad and overbearing manners in India are a political crime.

The real enemies of England are those who talk of the lofty duty of England towards India but believe or pretend to believe, that this can only be discharged by a foreign bureaucracy and that, in the interest of the people themselves, they ought not to have any real share in the administration of the country. For, as Mr. Morley, the most tender, lofty, cheerful and delicately sober of all moralists, says, "the usual excuse of those who do evil to other people is that their object is to do them good."

The real enemies of England are those who try to stir up racial hatred in the press by the most unblushing lies whenever reform is in the air. I am afraid to trust myself to speak of the conduct of these men who are a standing menace to British rule, and will only say that we deeply regret that at this critical period the Government of India should have selected a correspondent of the *Daily Mail*, to supply them with Indian news

at an extravagant salary. Who does not know the achievements of that paper in all parts of the world,—in Africa, in China, and in India? Who does not remember the story of the “coronation” of Babu Surendranath Bannerji, of the reign of terror established in Eastern Bengal by the “National Volunteers”, the “Barisal Scare,” the incipient mutiny and last, though not least, the treasonable incitements of Mr. Keir Hardie? This is certainly not the way to restore the confidence of the people who are overcome by a sense of utter helplessness and despair.

CONGRESS DEMANDS.

Mr. Morley said in his last speech that he could not discover what we want our rulers to do which they are not slowly and gradually taking steps to accomplish, and seems to think that we were crying for the moon. But the National Congress does not surely cry for the moon when it asks for the reduction of the military expenditure. The National Congress does not surely cry for the moon when it protests against degrading Colonial Ordinances and demands for the Indian the ordinary rights of British citizenship in the Colonies. The National Congress does not surely cry for the moon when it seeks the separation of Judicial from Executive functions or protests against the partition of Bengal. The National Congress does not surely cry for the moon when it insists upon the extension of primary education or the limitation of the revenue on lands which belong to the State. The National Congress does not surely cry for the moon when it insists upon a truly effective representation of the people in the Legislative Councils or upon their representation in the Executive Councils of the Viceroy and of the Governors of Madras and of Bombay.

We do not demand the immediate recall of Lord Kitchener or the disbandment of the Indian Army. We do not demand universal suffrage. And yet these were some of the red herrings Mr. Morley dragged across the path of English public opinion in his Abroath speech. What we do demand is that our rulers should introduce reforms as steps towards giving us that self-government which is now the aspiration of a people educated for three generations in the political ideas of the West. Mr. Morley admits that the English are here not for their own interest but for the interest of the millions committed to their charge. Now, though this assertion has an unctious theological flavour about it, and must be taken with a few grains of Kurcutch salt, I take it no Englishman will deny that the supremacy of the English is not to last for ever and that their real object is to teach India to rule herself. I am confident that every true Englishman who has an inborn sense of freedom and justice has faith in self-government. And I can affirm with equal confidence that, however beneficent a foreign rule may be, no people in whom all manhood has not been killed out will ever willingly submit for ever to the yoke though it may be wreathed with flowers. This is a natural sentiment which must commend itself to every true-bearded Englishman. The "brightest jewel in the British Crown" must not be regarded merely as a market for British goods or a field for the safe investment of British capital or as opening a dignified career to "our boys." Now, can any one honestly say that England has done all that she might have done towards accomplishing her mission? What, I ask our rulers, have you done during the one-and-half centuries of your stewardship? Given increased material prosperity? Granted; though the people with oriental perversity still continue to die of famine. Given us high

education? Granted; though here again in ways peculiar to the East where the law of cause and effect does not hold good that education has, according to you, led not to contentment but to disaffection. But if that education, as we assert, has with all its faults given you public servants as able and as loyal as their English brethren, has not the time come to give the educated classes a larger share in the administration of the country? We look at the achievements of Japan in less than fifty years. We look at Persia, we look at China, and our minds are filled with despair. We cannot any longer be fed with wornout platitudes; and when Mr. Morley deals in them he forgets that we too may claim to have kindled our modest rushlights at Burke and Mill's benignant lamps. We too know the painful journey that lies before us before we can be welded into the political unity of a nation. Long, long is the way, rugged is the ground and the weary steps must be trodden with bleeding feet, with bleeding knees and with bleeding hearts. But do not, we pray you, stand with a drawn sword to impede our journey.

I repeat that we are not crying for the moon. I repeat, that all we ask is that our country should take her rightful place among the nations under the ægis of England. We want in reality and not in mere name to be the sons of the Empire. Our ambition is to draw closer to England and to be absorbed in that greater Britain in which we have now no place. The ideal after which we are striving is autonomy within the Empire, and not absolute independence. Let England help us in attaining our object and her name will continue to shine with undimmed glory, even when the New Zealander sits on the ruined arches of Westminster Bridge.

A new spirit is abroad in India which calls for an improvement in the Indian system of government which has now become an anachronism. Men nurtured on Western ideals and literature must be animated by new aspirations which must be satisfied. The time that Macaulay foresaw—the most glorious day for England—has now arrived. With the growth of new ideas and new aspirations the Indians insist upon a greater share in the administration of their own affairs. This demand is resisted by an autocratic bureaucracy who are jealous of the slightest encroachment on the privileges of their order. It is admitted on all hands that the people of this country are most docile and law-abiding and yet portions of the country are in a state of ferment. This is due not only to the resistance to the demand of the people for a larger share in the management of their own affairs, but also to the reactionary policy persistently followed in recent years by the Government, and their contempt for public opinion and the legitimate aspirations of the people. Political life is stirring in India which must be faced in a considerate spirit; but there has been, as yet, no serious attempt to do so by the Government. The result is general discontent. The bureaucrats are certainly wise in their generation. They defer all reforms till the discontent gathers in volume and leads to seditious movements, when they readily seize on them as a pretext for repression and for indefinitely postponing any experiment in self-government. The Spanish matador, as we all know, maddens the bull with his muleta and then plunges his sword into its neck.

The supreme necessity of the hour is sympathy. We wish to see less and less of the strong hand, and more and more of the strong nerve, the strong head and the kind heart. As the Prime Minister recently said, the Indian Administration should be

brought into closer contact with the Indian people, and that it is only by an honest, courageous and persistent attempt to do so that England would discharge her momentous trust,—the 'most momentous trust that was ever committed to a great State. And there never was a time when sympathy was more needed; for India is truly a country of many sorrows and is stricken sorely by plague and famine.

And this brings me to the reforms which Mr. Morley shadowed forth towards the end of his speech on the last Indian Budget debate. These were, in addition to a Royal Commission to enquire into the evils of over-centralisation, (first) the institution of an Advisory Council of Notables, (second) the enlargement of the Legislative Councils, (third) the fuller discussion of the Budget in the Viceroy's Council, and (fourth) the nomination of one or two Indians to the Secretary of State's Council in London.

It would be premature to express any opinion on the work of the Decentralisation Commission. We have, however, every reason to think that it will strengthen the elective element on Municipal and Local Boards and that the representatives of the people will be associated with the District officer in the work of local administration. I know that most people distrust Commissions, though Lord Curzon was free from any such weakness. But we trust that the Decentralisation Commission will prove an exception to the general rule and lead to great improvements in the administration, as the terms of reference are wide enough to include proposals for advancing the cause of local self-government by strengthening and developing Municipal and Local Boards and by decentralising District Administration. The distribution of power between the Supreme and Provincial Governments is a matter of secondary importance to us. But to what extent our

control of local affairs in Municipalities and District and Local Boards is real—also to what extent the administration of a district by the Collector and District Magistrate is influenced directly and indirectly by the opinion of the people of the district—these are matters of supreme importance. Though we may not be yet in a position to make a correct forecast of the result of the labours of the Commission, our best men must direct their energies towards making these labours fruitful, and this can only be effected by our coming forward in sufficient numbers to give evidence before it. Of course, only such persons should come forward for the purpose as have a fair grasp of these questions and some personal acquaintance with either local self-government or district administration. The present disposition which, I fear, is general all over the country to leave the Commission alone is most unfortunate and will only do us harm. We should insist that the composition of Municipal and District and Local Boards should now be entirely or almost entirely elective. We should also insist that the resources at their disposal should be larger than at present. And we should lastly insist that the control of Government over local bodies should be similar to that of the Local Government Board in England, and, as there, it should be exercised only in the interests of efficiency and purity of administration, and that, subject to this control, local bodies should be free to manage local affairs and spend local resources as they deem best. Then, and then only, would they feel a real sense of responsibility in the matter of local self-government which can never be developed under the present system of constant and harassing interference on the part of officials. As regards district administration, everybody will admit that the Collector and District Magistrate should be emancipated from

the present excessive Secretariat control, and, in place of it, every head of a district should have associated with him a Board composed of elected and nominated members, which may at first be entirely or almost entirely advisory, but which, in course of time, should be entrusted with definite and gradually expanding powers of control. All important administrative matters concerning a district, except such as may have to be treated as strictly confidential, should be laid before this Board for advice, which the Collector and District Magistrate should not be at liberty to set aside except for reasons to be recorded in writing. If the experiment succeeds, as it is bound to do, the Board should be empowered to exercise substantial control over most matters of district administration like the administration of excise and forest rules, famine and plague administration.

The first three reforms adumbrated by Mr. Morley are now embodied in what is known as the Simla scheme, and I propose to deal with these reforms very briefly. The idea of a Council of Notables is not quite new. A similar measure was tried by Lord Lytton in 1877, but, as Mr. Morley admits, it was a complete failure; and I fear that unless the scheme is considerably modified, the proposed reform will share the same fate. For the Council is sure to be a reactionary body,—an Indian House of Lords, with this difference, that the English House of Lords contains many able and accomplished men who have been trained in politics from their earliest youth and who are in a large measure in touch with the general trend of public opinion. I do not, however, deny that the proposed Council, if it is properly constituted and its functions enlarged, may be a useful institution. But the present scheme is open to a variety of objections. In the first place, though

ruling princes may well be invited to a Council which has to deal with matters touching the welfare of their States or their relations to the paramount power, British subjects alone should be eligible as members of a Council which will have to deal exclusively with questions relating to administration in British India on which ruling chiefs are not likely to be able to give much useful advice.

The proposed Council is also open to objection on the ground that the Councillors are not to be consulted collectively but only individually. Then, again, it is absolutely necessary, in order to create confidence and to secure in some measure popular representation, that a certain proportion of the members should be elected by the different Provinces. The Council should also meet at stated times, and whenever any proposed measure is not accepted by a majority of the members it should be dropped, or, at any rate, postponed, for further consideration. You cannot invite opinions only to flout them.

The proposed reform of the Viceroy's Legislative Council is also open to very serious objections, if indeed it is not a step backwards. It has been almost universally condemned, as the proposal to allow the local Councils to return only seven out of fifty-four members would seriously reduce the influence of the educated community who, notwithstanding the sneers at intellectuals, lawyers, and schoolmasters, are the real leaders of public opinion. Distrust, we all know, breeds distrust, and the Government ought not to be surprised if my countrymen regard their proposals with the same suspicion with which the Trojans regarded the friendly gifts of the Greeks.

The functions of the Council should also be enlarged and the debate on the Budget ought to be made a reality instead of a mere academic exercise. This can only be done by allowing the

members to divide on any question on which there may be a difference of opinion on any head in the Budget. The Council should also be given an opportunity of discussing, under proper safeguards, questions relating to administration on which there is a strong public feeling.

The Provincial Councils should also be expanded on the same lines and every district should be allowed to return a member. And the Advisory Boards for assisting local Governors in carrying on the administration should be constituted on the model of the Council of Notables. All important matters connected with local administration should be referred to these Boards for opinion before any action is taken. This is the only way to bring the administration into touch with the people.

I would ask you to consider the reform scheme carefully, for I am sure the Government will give due weight to any recommendations which may be made by you. It has been put forward before the public for criticism and it is our duty to suggest such additions and alterations as would, in our opinion, improve the scheme. It would certainly not be wise to reject the proposals simply because they do not go far enough in a petulant spirit. On the other hand, the Government have no right to be surprised if, in their present mood, my countrymen refuse to be consoled by these rather doubtful concessions for the deportation of British subjects without a trial or the partition of Bengal.

It remains only to add with regard to the fourth proposal of Mr. Morley, that it has already been carried out. It is no doubt a great step forwards but its usefulness will entirely depend on the careful selection of the members. But the selections which have been made, have not commanded general approval. Such approval can only be secured by

giving the people a voice in the selection. We must, therefore, ask that whenever an Indian has to be appointed all elected members of the several Legislative Councils should be invited to submit three names to the Secretary of State, who should then select one out of the three.

I will now pass on to the present position of the National Congress. Gentlemen, it has been said that there is a hopeless division in our ranks and that we have now come to the parting of ways. It has been said that we are divided into two parties,—those who place their faith in constitutional methods and those who have lost all faith in them—and that it is impossible for the two parties any longer to act together. Now in a vast organisation like the Indian Congress, which embraces every section of the community, differences of opinion must be inevitable; though they cannot be allowed to reach a point which would paralyse our action. Quarrels when they stop short of this only prove not the weakness but the strength of our combination. They show the vigour of life and not the langour of decay. One thing, however, we must not forget. We must not forget that the National Congress is definitely committed only to constitutional methods of agitation to which it is fast moored, and if the new party does not approve of such methods and cannot work harmoniously with the old, everybody must admit it has no place within the pale of the Congress. Secession, therefore, is the only course open to it. But I most fervently hope and trust that nothing of the kind will happen, for are we not all soldiers fighting in the same cause and under the same flag marching together to the golden trumpet note sounded by Dadabhai Naoroji last year for the great battle of *Swaraj*? Are we not all inspired with the same ideas, the same thoughts, the same desires and the same aspirations? The Congress exists to draw us together and

not to divide us. It stands pledged as ever to the larger employment of the people of this country in the public services so as to gradually dispense with the present expensive administration. It stands pledged as ever to our larger representation in the Legislative Councils. It stands pledged as ever to the reduction of the enormous military expenditure and to a more equal division of the burden between England and India. It stands pledged as ever to the limitation of the land revenue. It stands pledged as ever to the separation of Executive and Judicial functions. It stands pledged as ever to the *Swadeshi* movement. It stands pledged as ever to the resolution that the boycott movement in Bengal inaugurated by way of protest against the partition of the Province is a legitimate movement. It stands pledged as ever to the reunion of the people of Bengal under one administration. And, lastly, it stands pledged as ever to win gradually for the country by all constitutional means that autonomy which England has so wisely granted to her colonies.

We all recognise the supreme need of unity and of patriotic sacrifice. We are all agreed that nations are made by themselves. We are all agreed on the necessity of education on national lines and the general elevation of the masses so essential to the attainment of a higher political life. We are all agreed on the necessity of industrial development. For even deeper than political reform, before mere forms of Government, lies the great question of the industrial regeneration of the country. Let us stand by the *Swadeshi* movement which is founded not on hatred but on love—love of our own country, not hatred of the foreigner. Our creed is short and consists in the development of India for ourselves; but *Swadeshi* within the limits of the law. It is a patriotic sentiment which

involves no disloyalty. We are determined not to use foreign goods so far as practicable, and no amount of repression will deter us from carrying out our resolution. We cannot protect our industries by tariff legislation, but we can show our love for the country by our sympathy for the masses who are now steeped in unspeakable poverty. The Anglo-Indian community, however, have taken fright at this movement and the Government too have been infected by it. They draw a sharp distinction between *Swadeshi* and boycott; but unless boycott is accompanied by violence is there any real difference between the two?

I confess I see no reason why we should not still be able to work in harmony. A house divided against itself cannot stand, and we must be on our guard against the deadly peril of disunion. The race may not always be to the swift nor the battle to the strong, but depend upon it, without patient discipline and self-control, without courage and determination, without a sense of loyalty, of order and of duty, our enterprise is bound to fail. The citadel of bureaucracy is much stronger than the walls of Jericho. Brother-delegates, the night is dark and tempestuous. Let us hold together and wait in patience for the dawn, not resting till the bright morning comes, fearless in our faith and strong in our hopes. But this I am painfully compelled to say, that unless wiser counsels prevail, there is bound to be a cleavage when we must part company and the Congress left free to follow the path of constitutional agitation marked out by its founders,—the only path which promises a successful issue.

The new party seems to have persuaded itself that it is hopeless to expect any concessions from our rulers and that political agitation on the lines of the National Congress are a delusion and a snare. The true bureaucrat, it says, does not

appreciate moderation and always treats the constitutional reformer with secret contempt. Like the Sin Fein party in Ireland, it has lost all faith in constitutional movements but it must be said to its credit that it has also no faith in physical force; nor does it advise the people not to pay taxes with the object of embarrassing the Government. I am of course speaking of the leaders. All its hopes are centred in passive resistance of a most comprehensive kind, derived, I presume, from the modern history of Hungary, the pacific boycott of all things English. If I understand its programme aright, we must refuse to serve Government in any capacity either as paid servants or as members of Legislative Councils, Local Boards or Municipalities. British Courts of Justice too should be placed under a ban and courts of arbitration substituted for them—a proposal, by the way, which shows that the agitation is not the work of hungry lawyers. All schools and colleges maintained by the Government should also be boycotted. In a word, we must get rid of our habit of leaning on the Government and create in its place a habit of thinking and acting as if the Government were not. All this, however, is to be effected not by physical force but by social pressure; for there has as yet arisen no party to counsel violence or any other breach of the law.

Now it seems to me, to put it mildly, that this is a counsel of despair which may appeal to "the impatient idealist," but which is foredoomed to failure. I speak not in anger but in sorrow, for it is quite possible to sympathise with this new phase of patriotism, this yearning for an unattainable ideal. But we must look facts in the face. We must recognise them loyally, and if it is true that no man is ever good for much who has not in his youth been carried off his feet by fiery enthusiasm,

it is equally true it needs the bit and the bridle. For enthusiasm, unless controlled by sound judgment, frequently ends in ghastly tragedies.

You all know the story of the city with the three gates with their inscriptions; the first said "Be bold," the second "Be bold and ever more be bold," while the third and last inscription which the horseman read was "Be not too bold." You forget that rashness is not courage. You forget that hasty maxims drawn from the history of other nations and other times are extremely dangerous, as the conditions are never the same, and action which produces a certain result in one country at one time may lead to a directly opposite result in another country and at another time. You forget that there is no doctrine so universal and comprehensive that you are bound to act upon it at all hazards. You forget, it may be a cynical remark, but it is perfectly true, that though a martyr may be worshipped for his sufferings and his sacrifices, he is not always counted among the wisest of men and his example is more frequently admired than followed. I need not go far afield to seek for illustrations. You pride yourselves on the idea that you alone have the courage of your convictions and that the Moderate party are disloyal to their country and would betray her with a kiss. But you forget that there is a faith, and, perhaps, as has been rightly said, a deeper faith which knows how to stand still and wait patiently till the fruit is ripe and may be gathered without violence. Your aims may be generous but do not drag the country into perils which you do not foresee but which are sure to follow on your methods. The millennium surely will not arrive when all Government colleges and schools are closed, when all Municipal and District Boards are abolished and elected members refuse to sit in the Legislative Councils.

of the Empire. Petulance is not manliness. It is easy to revile authority in season and out of season, but not so easy to build up a nation. Of one thing I am sure. One thing I know. Mere rant, however full of fire, will not help us. What we want is action, leadership and discipline. What we want is earnest work in co-operation with the Government, if possible, but in any case in conformity with moral and constitutional methods. Temporary failures must not discourage us. Hopes deferred must not sicken us. We must pursue our course with that courage which inspires the soldier in a forlorn hope with heart for any fate, conscious of our integrity and conscious of the nobleness of our cause.

I implore you not to persevere in your present course. Do not be beguiled by mere phantoms. You cannot put an end to British rule by boycotting the administration. Your only chance under the present circumstances of gaining your object lies in co-operation with the Government in every measure which is likely to hasten our political emancipation ; for so long as we do not show ourselves worthy of it, rely upon it England will maintain her rule, and if you really want self-government, you must show that you are fit for such responsibility. Then and then only will the English retire from India, their task completely accomplished, and their duty done.

THE NEW PARTY NOT TO BE TAKEN SERIOUSLY.

But suppose your movement is successful and the English retire from the country, leaving the people to stew in their own juice. Imagine the chaos and disorder into which the whole country would be immediately plunged. I really cannot—I hope to be forgiven for this remark—take the members of the new party seriously ; I believe they are at present only in a sulky mood, because constitutional and peaceful methods

have failed. They say that the National Congress has been for years only ploughing the sands of the sea-shore, that all prospects of reasonable concessions are more and more receding into the distance and that we are deluding ourselves and our countrymen in persevering in our mendicant policy. Arguments, they say, are of no avail nor supplications however humble. They are always met by insult and by contempt. Now I venture to think that this mood betrays an impatience which the history of every reform shows to be in the highest degree unreasonable—a sullen and angry mood which may readily slide into a temper which would be a menace to law and order and would furnish our enemies with the plea that the public tranquillity can only be secured by repression. You may deny it, but I fear you are in danger of slowly but surely drifting into treason.

Do not, I beseech you, play the game of our enemies but be staunch to the Congress as ever and abide by the principles, and follow the chart laid down by its founders. Do you believe that we do not feel as strongly as you do the unjust disabilities under which we labour? Do you believe that we do not feel as strongly as you do our exclusion from our legitimate share in the administration of the country? Do you believe that we do not feel as strongly as you do the annual drain which is impoverishing the country? Do you believe that we do not feel as strongly as you do the burden of the military expenditure which arrests all progress and but for which the country would have been covered with a network of schools, with free primary education within the reach of the masses? Do you believe that we are not as determined as you are to work out our political emancipation?

But I ask you seriously if it would not be madness to give up constitutional agitation either here or in England, specially

in England, where public opinion, not of the classes but of the great democracy, is now the dominating factor in politics. I do not invite you to supplicate with bated breath and whispering humbleness, but to demand of a nation, jealous of its honour, a fulfilment of the pledges which have been repeatedly given to us. What lies in our way is the utter ignorance of the English people about us. They have been led to believe that the administration of India is perfect; but if they were made acquainted with the real condition of the country, at the present day, they would gladly support such reforms as we demand; though we must be prepared for the opposition of those classes whose vested interests might be imperilled by any reform. We must, therefore, try to educate English public opinion. And that public opinion, when well informed and not warped by lies, is sure to be essentially just. It is only by enlisting such opinion on our side that we can hope to achieve our objects. We must, therefore, endeavour to place our views before the people of England by every means in our power, by active agitation on the platform and in the Press. Remember that we have very powerful enemies, who try their best to mislead the nation, and we can only hope to meet them by creating a powerful body of opinion, in our favour, among the people who have been so recently emancipated and whose sympathy must always be with those who are only claiming the ordinary rights of British citizenship. This is now the task of the British Committee in London, whose services, however, have not received that recognition or support, which is undoubtedly due to them. Our friends in England have been unremitting in their exertions and if we have escaped more rigorous repressive measures, we owe it to them and to them alone. They have not only laboured to promote our welfare but have spent their own money for us, and I am not using the language of exagger-

ation when I say that they have poured out money like water in our cause.

‘I do not deny that we must rely on our own right hand to build up our national strength ; but the only power that can control the bureaucracy now is to be found in England. Depend upon it, political agitation in England is not a mere waste of energy and of money. It is sure to improve the system of administration and to galvanize it into new life. Measures like free primary education, for instance, will appeal readily to the sympathies of the English people and will be forced on the bureaucracy, who, if left to themselves, would put it off indefinitely ; for they have studied one art in perfection, the art of writing minutes and of not doing anything. Then, again, the exposure of official wrong-doing is sure to have a sobering effect on the bureaucracy. Agitation, therefore, in England must be carried on actively and persistently, not apathetically or intermittently, and I would specially recommend this question to the attention of the Congress. But we must work with courage and determination, without expecting immediate results and confidently leave the issue to time. Above all, we must try to win back the confidence of the English nation which has been forfeited by the wild utterances of some irresponsible agitators and the lies and calumnies industriously spread by those who hate the people and would keep them in a state of perpetual tutelage. It is these men who led Mr. Morley and the Indian Government to believe that there was real danger of a conflagration, which, we know, never existed. It is these men who have deterred a Liberal Government from making any substantial concessions. It is these men who have induced the English people to distrust not only our loyalty but also our competency to manage our own affairs.

I repeat that though our progress may be slow, we must not lose heart; no, not even if the dial is set back; for such things are inevitable in the course of human affairs. But depend upon it, unless history is a record of lies, Englishmen love freedom as their most cherished possession; but do not forget that the freedom they love is freedom broadening slowly from precedent to precedent. I repeat that our object can only be achieved by constitutional agitation and not by leaving Government severely alone. Visions may be sublime but they are not real; and a universal boycott, which would make administration impossible, seems to be the figment of a disordered imagination. Privileges have to be manfully fought for and it would be puerile to turn away from the struggle, simply because our first attempts are not crowned by tangible immediate results. For my part, I have never despaired, and I refuse to despair.

WELCOME ADDRESS *

BY

MR. TRIBHUVANDAS N. MALVI, M.A., LL.B.

Brother-Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen,—I consider it an inestimable privilege to have this opportunity of offering to you from my fellow citizens of Surat most sincere and cordial greetings of welcome to this city on the occasion of the 23rd Session of the Indian National Congress. My fellow citizens, let me assure you, consider this assemblage in their midst of Indian brothers coming from all parts of the country belonging to all religions and creeds to be the greatest honour to themselves and their old historic, but now fallen, city. They welcome you in words as well as by deeds from the bottom of their hearts. Such a gathering is an unparalleled event in the annals of this city, replete as it is with memories of its past. This year has been one of exceptional good fortune for Surat, inasmuch as it has been honoured by the sittings of the Provincial Conference as well as by those of this larger and more important body. This city was once so prosperous and rich and so famous and well known, that it had almost become a synonym for the whole of our country in the countries of Europe in the 16th and the 17th centuries. Our city was at one time the Gate of Entrance for Europeans into India, just as Bombay, the *urbs primus in Indis* now is, and the Surat of yore, can justly be said to have been in early times the predecessor of the present capital of the Presidency in its manifold prosperity. Ours was the first city in India

* Delivered as Chairman of the Reception Committee.

which foreign merchants and travellers of all nationalities visited during their tours through India. At least no merchant or traveller ever thought of returning to his home from India unless he had paid a visit to our city. All European Powers of importance in the times of the Great Moghul in India had considered it worth their while to have their factories in our city, and it is on land where the French Government had once their factory that we meet to-day. Our city was the first in India to have a factory of our Rulers in its midst and in the present fulness of the glory and the prosperity of the British Empire in India, the inhabitants of Surat cannot help recalling to their minds the fact of their city being the cradle of the British Empire in the East. And now, gentlemen, the citizens of Surat will remember in future the fact of the wise men from all parts of India having condescended to select our city as the most suitable place this year for their annual conclave to deliberate upon the ways and the means of securing a steady reform of the government of the country, and continued usefulness for their national movement.

The tide of fortune, however, soon changed with Surat as it does with everything in Nature. When the great Mahratta warrior and founder of the Mahratta Empire, Shivaji Maharaj, was attempting to wrest the Indian Empire from the Moghuls and establish a Hindu Empire in India in its stead, this city happened to be under Moghul rule, and its very prosperity and fame became one of the chief causes of its ruin. Surat was the first to attract Shivaji's attention as a Moghul possession in Western India worth having, and he invaded it on no less than three occasions. During the invasions we did not escape the usual pillage and damage at the hands of the invaders, but as the trade of the city continued to be prosperous owing to the favoura-

ble situation of its port, the pillage of its stored wealth could not affect the condition of the city and its inhabitants in any appreciable degree. A rival port was, however, coming into existence in the Konkan, and it was destined to play an important part in the downfall of Surat, to rise from the ashes of Surat as it were, to appropriate to itself all the glories and grandeur and to be its successor as the first city in Western India. It is well-known history that the Island of Bombay was presented to the English King Charles II. by the Portuguese King as part of the dowry of his daughter Catherine who was married to the English King. The Island had a fine harbour, in fact owed its very name Bombay to the situation of its harbour. The East India Company had their eyes turned to the Island long before the acquisition thereof by the English King. They thought that, if they got Bombay, it would be the most convenient and central place of safety from which they could keep a careful watch over their possessions and trade on the Western Coast of India and in the interior. Soon after the English King got it, the East India Company began to negotiate for its transference to themselves from the Crown and within half a dozen years succeeded in securing a lease of the Island from the Crown. Gerald Aungier, who was then the Governor of Bombay and is regarded as the founder of Bombay, transferred the seat of Government from Surat to Bombay, and this event marks the second stage in the downward course of the fortunes of the city. With the transfer of the seat of the Company's Government most of the foreign trade of the city was also gradually transferred to the rising city. Reverses after reverses followed, the Empire of the Great Moghul was completely annihilated by the British, Surat itself was taken by the British and was thenceforward reduced to the position of a minor city under the Governor

the loaves and fishes within the gift of the Government. It was accused not only of harbouring impracticable and chimerical views about Government but also of deliberately putting forward impossible demands. In some quarters, hints were also thrown out that the movement was seditious and subversive of the British Government. Hostile feelings towards the Congress were roused even among a section of the Indians themselves, and matters were carried so far that a counter-movement to support the bureaucracy was actually set on foot. Nothing daunted, however, the institution has gone on working and has survived all criticisms and attacks and has grown up and flourished, thanks to the foresight and the good sense of the patriotic helmsmen steering its ship through these storms! Their deliberations and resolutions bore on the very face of them marks of sobriety and moderation, usefulness and practicability, necessity and importance, and last though not least, complete unity and harmony among the men taking part therein. The counter-movement was found to be such a weakling that it could not live for any appreciable length of time and had to be carried to the grave in its infancy. The critics of the Congress, both Indian and Anglo-Indian, were then forced to retreat from the position they had taken up, and began reluctantly and slowly to admit its usefulness if not its importance and necessity. It was now admitted that the movement had not its origin in the ambition or avarice of briefless Hindu lawyers, but that Indians of all religions and creeds, professions and occupations, took part in its meetings and conducted their proceedings with unanimity, and that it was the Indian National Congress not merely in name, but in reality also. It also began gradually to dawn upon the members of the bureaucracy that there was some meaning after all in the annual complaints of these "agitators,"

that some of the defects alleged by them did exist in the administration carried on by the "infallible" British administrators, and that there was room for improvement therein on the lines suggested by the Congresswallahs. The claims of the Congress to the sympathy and support of the Rulers of India have been steadily coming to be recognized more and more by the British public and even the British Parliament. Retired Civilians and Members of Parliament like Sir William Wedderburn and Sir Henry Cotton have thought it an honour to accept the Presidentship of the Congress Sessions. Even those Members of Parliament who had not even so much as seen India before, like the late Mr. Bradlaugh, or like Mr. Keir Hardie and our present guest, Dr. Rutherford, have made no secret of their sympathies with the movement, and have openly advocated its cause. Some of them have even undertaken the trouble and the expense of a voyage to India simply for the purpose of attending the Congress. Thus Mr. Bradlaugh had come out in 1889 for the special purpose of attending the Congress presided over by Sir William Wedderburn, and Dr. Rutherford now attends as a delegate from our British Committee.

The Congress thus has not only succeeded in securing a recognition of its character, but, besides, several of its demands have had to be conceded, and its resolutions acted upon, by our Rulers. One of the most prominent changes introduced by our Rulers in the system of administration of the Government in this country in consequence of our annual meetings and annual resolutions was the expansion of the Legislative Councils in 1892. It is well known how in the past the non-official members of the Legislative Councils were at times mere nonentities nominated by Government and what part favouritism played in such nominations. Some of

the nominated members knew very little of the language in which the proceedings were conducted, and in voting invariably sided with the official members. Instead of this, we have now some members elected by the people, who are in every way qualified and competent to represent their constituents as regards their aims and desires and their difficulties and grievances, who are fully capable of forming independent judgments of their own as to what is best in the interest of the country, and who are perfectly unfettered in giving their votes. A scheme to further enlarge the Councils and to constitute Advisory Councils is at present on the anvil, but it is not for me to enter at present into a detailed consideration of this subject. The scheme forms one of the items of deliberation this Session and will be fully discussed by abler gentlemen later on. Suffice it to say that the Government have deemed it advisable to recognize the necessity of further improving the Councils, though the proposals drafted are, as they stand, of a most disappointing character. Another important reform urged by the Congress year after year is the separation of the Judicial and the Executive functions, and it has recently been announced that the Secretary of State has resolved to try in some parts of the country an experimental measure of that reform.

An important concession has been made in regard to the Council of the Secretary of State for India. The right of Indians to seats in the Council has been recognised, and two Indians have already been appointed as members. The advocacy of the Congress for an advance in the direction of local self-government has resulted in that subject being entrusted to the Royal Commission on Decentralisation for inquiry. The Madras and Bengal Governments have thought it worth their while to inaugurate a system of consulting non-official members before framing

their budgets, and I trust other Local Governments, as also the Government of India, will imitate their example. We have also succeeded in getting the incidence of taxation lightened in some cases, *e.g.*, the reduction of the salt tax to less than half of what it formerly was and the raising of the limit of taxable incomes under the Income Tax Act from Rs. 500 to Rs. 1,000 per annum.

These results are not to be altogether despised. But what is of more importance is that the Congress has now attained to a position of considerable influence and weight with the Government, both here and in the United Kingdom. Only the other day, the *London Times*, the most Conservative and Imperialistic journal in the British Isles, thought it necessary to admit this fact though somewhat unwillingly, and referred to the Congress in terms which, having regard to its general attitude towards Indians, must be regarded as appreciative.

The Congress has not only to maintain the present position and prestige it has acquired, but, as time goes on, to acquire fresh weight and influence. A great many more and important things have yet to be done for India in order to secure to her the full benefit of the privileges promised to her people by her late lamented Majesty Queen Victoria, in her memorable Proclamation of 1858. In achieving this end, the weight and influence of this body will be of very great use and help to the Indians. It must not be forgotten that this weight and influence has been acquired in the past by the exercise of moderation, firmness, and unity in the expression of its aims and desires, and the conduct of its deliberations. It is, therefore, incumbent on all true patriots of India, to maintain and strengthen the Congress and its reputation and position by persevering in the same policy of moderation, firmness and unity which have stood us in good stead and proved so beneficial. Any

departure from this track may involve us in difficulties of which few can have any real idea. Those who have been forced to abandon their hostile attitude towards the Congress are on the alert, and will, on the least sign of any departure from the old policy of the Congress, resume their former attempts to strangle it, and if the mischief is once done, it will be very difficult, perhaps impossible also, to repair it afterwards. Differences of opinion there will exist, as they must, but, in the interests of national unity, it is necessary to keep them from going beyond a certain limit.

Since the Congress met last year, we have passed through very troublous times indeed. Eminent Indians have been seriously suspected of and charged with the highest offences against the State, viz., exciting sedition, rioting and the like, in most cases without justification. Somehow the idea became prevalent among the ruling class that the present year being the 50th year of the Indian Mutiny, Indians were preparing for a similar revolt, and a sort of panic seized them. To check this imaginary revolt all sorts of repressive and reactionary measures were taken. Old obsolete enactments, of the existence whereof even no one ever dreamed, were brought into requisition for the purpose of punishing people for undefined offences assumed to have been committed without giving any notice to the victims of the charges laid at their doors or giving them an opportunity of meeting these charges. The people in certain localities were assumed to harbour treasonable intentions and meetings were prohibited in those districts, at first for a time, and we have now a very dangerous statute, in the shape of the Seditious Meetings Act, capable of general application throughout the country by a notification in the *Government Gazette*, thrust upon us.

No one deplores these incidents of the past 12 months more than ourselves, and we should not be doing our duty to our countrymen if, assembled as we are in our representative National Congress, we omitted to take notice of these deplorable events, and you will no doubt consider how best we are to give expression to our feelings and opinions in this matter. Any reactionary policy on the part of the Government is bound to cause irritation, which can be allayed by a resort to conciliation, and we ought to tell the Government so. Our countrymen on their side also owe a duty in this respect to themselves and to the Government. It is their duty to keep their heads perfectly cool and steady in such times, and to take all reasonable care that their representations and comments in expressing their disapproval of questionable measures do not give ground for any suspicion of a seditious movement lurking behind.

A great calamity is just now staring us in the face. Providence seems somehow to be against us, and the failure of the September rains and the complete holding off of the monsoons since the middle of August threaten us with a failure of the khariff as well as the rabi crops this year almost throughout India. The country has been unfortunately, for about 10 years last, suffering from famines and droughts almost every third year. Past famines have already prostrated the poorer sections of the people, and especially the poor agriculturists, and how they will face this famine is a very difficult problem. The land tax, especially in the Bombay Presidency, presses very heavily on the poor. The Government must be appealed to for the adoption of a liberal policy, the opening of relief works, making of advances to poor agriculturists, and the refunds and remissions of revenue. The people are totally unable to provide against the impending famine, and unless a liberal and sympathetic

policy is extended to them, the end of the year will see a heavy mortality and devastation of large arable lands. We have had, however, during all our troubles of the year one great consolation for which we cannot be too thankful to Providence. Our Grand Old Man, the nestor of Indian politicians, Mr. Dadabhai Naoroji, has recovered from his somewhat alarming illness and I trust that an earnest and fervent prayer from every one present here will go up that the Great Dispenser may spare him to us for a long time to come to assist and bless us in our work. Even in his present old age the old man is actively striving for our country, and it is no exaggeration to say that it will be impossible for us to find an equal to him.

We have seen how we have succeeded in eliciting a favourable consideration of a great many of our representations in the past, by making them firmly and unanimously and in a spirit of complete loyalty and absolute moderation. It would be simply presumptuous on my part to say anything about the future policy of the Congress, but, in my humble opinion, if the same policy is pursued we should meet with a similar success in the future, and that a departure from such lines would be exceedingly disastrous. Loyalty, moderation, firmness and unity in all our deliberations, resolutions and representations should be our mottoes and we cannot keep them too much in sight.

I again tender to you a warm and hearty welcome on behalf of the Reception Committee and the inhabitants of Surat and request you to proceed with the business of the Session. The Hon'ble Dr. Rash Behari Ghose, the eminent lawyer of Calcutta and member of the Council of the Governor-General, who is so well known all over the country, has been designated President of the Session by the Reception Committee in pursuance of the resolutions passed at the last Sessions, and he has kindly accepted the post. His election will have to be formally proposed and seconded before he takes the chair, and I request Dewan Bahadur Ambalal Desai to put the formal proposition before the meeting.

THE INDIAN SOCIAL CONFERENCE.

PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS

BY

MR. LAL SHANKAR UMIASHANKAR.



I beg to offer you my heartfelt thanks for the great honour you have conferred on me by asking me to preside over your deliberations on this occasion. The duties of the office involve a grave responsibility for which I feel that I am unequal, and I crave your indulgence for any deficiencies that you may notice in me and in my work.

We are met in the old historical city of Surat which has ever held a prominent position in advancing the cause of social reform. It was the birthplace of reform in Gujerat. The earliest prominent Gujerati reformers—the late Messrs. Durgaram Mehtaji, Mahipatram Rupram, Kavi Narmadashankar Lalshankar, Nandshankar Tuljashankar and Navalram Laxmiram—were born in Surat. Mr. Mahipatram Rupram was the first Gujerati high caste gentleman who undertook a travel to Europe. It was in Surat that the reform struggles first began and the question of foreign travel was grappled. Surat has not merely the credit of initiating reforms, but it has also the credit of carrying them near completion. It was not long ago that the Vaishya Mahajan and the Nagar Brahmins of Surat solved the question of foreign travel. A few days ago the Anavla Brahmin community of this district

expressed their approval of a widow remarriage at their caste meeting and declined to outcaste the married pair. It was in this city that a large number of the Lad Vantias at a caste meeting expressed themselves in favour of widow remarriages. It is gratifying that we meet in a city which has distinguished itself so well in connection with this movement.

In recounting our losses during the year I must note with great regret the removal from us of Mrs. Dhankorbai Madhavdas. She was the earliest and the most prominent lady worker in the widow remarriage cause. Hers was amongst the earliest and most respectable widow remarriage in our Presidency. A lady born in one of the leading families of Kapol Vania caste of Bombay, married after widowhood to a prominent reformer in well-to-do circumstances, with a family of her own born after her remarriage, and leading a happy unostentatious and quiet life, she furnished a most instructive and encouraging example to widows who were thinking of remarriage. Widows from different parts of the country willing to remarry sought her protection and remarried in her house. In her death the reform cause has sustained an irreparable loss. We have also to record the death of Thakore Shri Jasvantsingji of Limbdi who had been selected to preside at the last Provincial Social Conference held in this city. In his death the reform cause has lost one of its principal supporters among the ruling chiefs on this side of India.

Social rules and customs are the result of men living in society. They came into existence for the benefit of society and must be such as to promote its welfare. They cannot be regarded as unchangeable and ought to be altered when they cease to answer their purpose and become harmful. If the conditions and surroundings of a society are altered in such a way as to

render the retention of old rules and customs harmful, and yet no alteration is made in them, the society would inevitably become degraded and demoralised and would be thrown backward instead of moving forward. It is, therefore, the duty of the patriotic leaders of a nation to examine its rules and usages from time to time and ascertain how far they have become injurious to its welfare and unsuited to its conditions and surroundings and make such modifications and alterations as may be demanded by the change of circumstances. This is the great secret of the high position that Japan has been able to win among the nations of the world.

In our country our early ancestors never regarded the customs and usages as immutable, and they readily made changes whenever they found them desirable. When the Smritis composed by the different Rishis are compared, many instances are found of usages once common becoming obsolete, and of customs and practices recommended and approved of by one sage being disapproved and forbidden by another. Their more recent successors, however, failed to do this and the result has been that our society has retrograded and our country has fallen behind in civilisation, wealth, industries and arts; and, instead of being one of the foremost nations of the world, we are regarded as one of the most backward, and many nations who were much behind us have gone ahead of us.

The early reformers who commenced agitation for social reform found that the result to our society of our neglect to adjust our usages and practices to the conditions and surroundings was a most deplorable one. All classes of people were plunged in ignorance and superstition, women were forbidden education and their status, dignity, and position had been lowered, and they were kept in a condition of dependence and

seclusion. The practice of infant marriages was rampant; out-casting meant a complete severance from society; prejudices against widow remarriage, foreign travel and inter-dining and inter-marriages with members of different castes and different sub-sections of the same caste were so strong that nobody would even dare talk in favour of these questions.

A society reduced to such a low social condition cannot expect to advance in other directions. Arts, industries and trade were decaying, and progress in every direction was retarded. The social, intellectual, moral, industrial and political condition of the country being unsatisfactory, it is necessary that efforts for reform should be made in all directions. It is not possible for the same body to be able to devote its energy to all reforms; and therefore different workers should apply their energies to the different branches of reform on the principle of division of labour, so that simultaneous progress may be made in all directions. It is a good sign of the time that persons have come forward to devote their attention to each branch. As activity in every direction is impeded by our social conditions, as the objectionable practices interfere with our national welfare, and as the solution is in our own hands without the aid of outside help, the social reformers think that social questions are among the most important problems which claim the attention of all who have the welfare of the country at heart; and they, therefore, devote themselves to this cause.

Some persons think that the question of social reform may be left behind in order that the other reforms may be pushed forward. In my humble opinion this is a grave mistake. Questions regarding political, industrial, economic and other branches that affect the welfare of society are all in one sense social problems. They are all inter-dependent. Social reformers do not

oppose reform in any other branch, as they think that progress in one helps progress in the other. Reformers in other branches who put obstacles in the way of social reform ought to remember that their act is suicidal, and by so acting they injure their own cause, as the effect of retarding social reform must react on their own branch.

Social reform questions have been under discussion for so many years by different gentlemen and from different points of view, that you cannot expect me to say anything new. But the arguments have to be repeated so long as the evil exists and a conviction is created in the people and they are moved to united action. The reformers are mostly opposed on religious ground, and I therefore propose to consider the reform questions from that standpoint within as brief a limit as my address will permit.

Our social customs and practices are so mixed up with religion that the cry of "religion in danger" is often raised against the efforts of social reformers. —I am one of those who place religion above everything. All our acts must be based on true religion and morality. I shall be the last man to do or to advocate any act that would endanger true religion in the least degree. I say that the cry of "religion in danger" raised against social reformers is groundless, and that those who raise it show their ignorance of true religion. I shall briefly consider different heads of reforms from a religious point of view.

Can any religion prohibit education to develop faculties that are common to man and woman? There are instances in ancient time of educated women like Gargi, Lilavati, &c., discussing religious and scientific subjects. Our Rishis advocated female education and treated women with due respect and equality. Manu says: यत्रै नार्यस्तु पूज्यन्ते रमन्ते तत्र देवताः (Devatās

are delighted where females are respected). All our religious acts are enjoined to be performed by husband and wife together. The wife is called गृहिणी (manager of domestic affairs) and also सह चारिणी (the companion of her husband). She must, therefore, be fit by her education to be the husband's companion and to perform her domestic duties. The reform, therefore, of spreading female education and raising the status of women is not opposed to, but is supported by, the Shastras.

Child-marriage and early consummation thereof violate the law of nature which no true religion can permit. Our religion not only does not allow child-marriages but prohibits marriage before finishing the ब्रह्मचर्य stage of life, i. e., before finishing the course of education and training. Both the sexes are to pass through the ब्रह्मचर्य stage. They are to marry when they are fit by age and education to enter into गृहस्थाश्रम. The religious ceremony prescribes vows which can be taken only by persons who have attained majority. The old and much approved practice of Swayamvar shows that marriage after puberty was not regarded as opposed to religion. Thus the laws of nature and religion enjoin late marriages. Early marriages come in the way of the due performance of religious duties. It is, therefore, they who advocate early marriages and oppose reform that are really endangering religion.

The question of widow remarriage has been under discussion on the ground of religion and Shastras for many years; but prejudice arising from habits and customs and false pride has come in the way of correct interpretation and right conclusion in this matter. It cannot be fully discussed here in a short time. There are Vedic texts as well as the texts of authoritative Smritis showing that widow remarriages were permitted. Impartial and critical Sanscrit scholars have accepted the refor-

mers' interpretations of the Shastras in this matter. The Shastras ought to be interpreted consistently with the laws of nature and principles of morality. The Shastras aim at the moral elevation of the people. To lead a moral and married life is the motive of a marriage. For this purpose the Shastras enjoin that a female after she attains puberty should choose her own husband if her guardians neglect their duty to get her married. The purpose of marriage cannot be served when a girl becomes a widow before she attains puberty and is not allowed to remarry. To enforce widowhood on such a girl is, in effect, to prohibit her proper marriage which is against the spirit of the Hindu Shastras. To insist on the marriage of girls before puberty and, at the same time, to oppose the marriages of widows who have not attained puberty, are positions which are inconsistent with each other. Young widows are exposed to temptations, fall into vice, and commit very grave crimes and are consigned to a life of misery and degradation. We see the evil and immoral effects resulting from enforced widowhood. The authors of the Shastras who were moral and pure and were well-wishers of the people cannot be supposed to have sanctioned anything tending to their moral degradation. If Manu, Yagnawalkya and other greater Rishis were to rise to-day they would be astonished to find their works, intended to elevate the people and raise their moral tone, perverted to support practices that tend towards immorality and degradation. Those who use the Smritis for the purpose of supporting improper practices, do injustice to their authors. Castes which prohibit widow-remarriages must bear in mind that they thereby create impure and unclean surroundings about their own families, which would have the effect of lowering them morally and religiously. The priests

who advocate and the heads of caste who enforce this unnatural and cruel custom, are more responsible before God for the child murders and other unnameable crimes which are brought about by enforced widowhood, rather than the unfortunate woman whom they make the instrument of these crimes.

Some people say that love is the essence of marriage, that it is not separable even after death, and that this high ideal of Hindu marriage is lost by allowing widows to remarry. Love certainly is and ought to be the essence of a happy marriage. But love, to be real, must be mutual and reciprocal. No real happiness can be derived if love is one-sided. To be just, one must apply the ideal equally to man and woman. Does the husband preserve the high ideal when his wife dies before him? The husband marries another wife, sometimes within a few days of the death of his beloved consort. When the husband cannot maintain the high ideal, it is improper to use it against the weaker and more helpless sex.

But if the high ideal is intended only for women, it must be real and not exacted by force. Real love is and must be spontaneous. It loses its value and merit when force is used to give effect to it. It can be tested only when the action is optional. In practice we observe that it is not love but a cruel custom that restrains widows from remarrying. There is no meaning in an ideal when the ideal is never understood as such by the person to whom it is attributed. If remarriages are left to the choice of the widows, then only we can know who restrain themselves from remarrying on account of real love? By enforced widowhood we put all widows, whether pious or otherwise, on equal footing, leaving no opportunity to widows devoted to their departed husbands to follow the high ideal voluntarily. In this we do injustice to pious widows, who prefer to lead the

life of ब्रह्मचर्य. For the sake of maintaining the high ideal, therefore, option to remarry should be given to widows.

Such love as would restrain a widow from entertaining an idea of remarrying, could only grow when the woman has remained in her husband's company for some time. In the case of a child widow, who has never met her husband, such love can never exist. By prohibiting her remarriage, she is prevented from realizing the ideal of love.

Some of the persons who advocate enforced widowhood and are cognisant of its evil effects, suggest the establishment of widows' homes to enable them to lead a pious and useful life. How much honesty there is in those who use this argument as a ground for restraining widow remarriages, will be evident when we consider whether the opponents of widow remarriages have ever thought of establishing such institutions. They have done nothing in that direction. On the other hand, it is the reformers who have established such homes in Poona, Madras, Calcutta and other places, and have also taken other measures, such as training widows as school mistresses and nurses, etc., with a view to ameliorate their condition. The reformers have thus taken steps for those widows who do not want to remarry, to enable them to lead useful and moral lives. The reformers do not advocate enforcement of widow remarriages. What they say is that widows' homes do not solve the whole question, and that obstacles in the way of widow remarriage should be removed, and that young widows who wish to remarry should have the option to do so.

The question of widow remarriage has, in some places, now become a question of necessity. The number of female population in India is smaller than the number of male population. The number of widows below 19 years is 46,499, according