flicker of a big lamp they had fitted upon the platform. The waning moon rose late and shapeless among heavy clouds, and the dark faces reappeared, outlined in silver; but still the crowd sat on.

All were men, and most of them were young. They had assembled to show their joy at the release of Ajit Singh and Lajpat Rai—both inhabitants of the far-off Punjab, one till lately an unknown youth, the other till lately hardly known to any one in Madras, and only known anywhere as a reformer of Hindu superstitions, a man of austere private life and inexhaustible liberality to his own people.* Now both had been raised by their deportation and imprisonment without trial to the position of heroes and martyrs, and their recent release (Nov. 11, 1907) had been greeted with joy throughout the country, though not with gratitude; for there is no great cause for gratitude when a wrong-doer undoes the wrong.

Through the middle of the crowd came a line of white-robed students carrying a yellow banner with a strange device. "Bande Mataram! Bande Mataram! Hail to the Motherland! we bow before our mother!" rose the familiar cry from the thousands seated there. But there was no wild gesticulation, no frantic excess, such as we might imagine in a fanatical East. A Trafalgar Square crowd is more demonstrative and unrestrained.

* Introduction, p. 20.

Nor was a single soldier or policeman visible, though the occasion had been publicly announced as a meeting of the Extremists. In the audience I was of course the only European present.

A little boy with head half shaven and a long tuft of black hair at the back stood up before the platform, and amid complete silence sang in his native Tamil the Bengali song of "Bande Mataram," which has now become the national song of India. The music is of that queer Eastern kind, nasal, quavering, full of turns and twists, such as one may hear from the Adriatic to Burma, and very likely beyond. In origin I believe it to be Persian; at all events I have heard it in highest perfection on the Persian frontier and sung by Persian musicians. Usually—in Greek for instance—the words are rendered difficult to distinguish owing to the twists and long-drawn phrases, but in this boy's singing the words were fairly distinct, and the repeated cadence gave a certain solemnity.

The words of the song were by a Bengali poet, Bankim Chandra Chatterji, who introduced it into his historic novel called "Anandamath," or "The Abbey of Joy," a romance upon the rebellion of the austere Sanyasi Order against the decaying rule of the Mohammedans in Eastern Bengal when Warren Hastings was the real power. The best-known translation is by Mr. W. H. Lee, late of the Indian Civil Service. It is fairly close, but English

cannot reproduce the compression of the original Sanscrit and Bengali mixed :—

"My Motherland, I sing
Her splendid streams, her glorious trees,
The zephyr from the far-off Vindyan heights,
Her fields of waving corn,
The rapturous radiance of her moonlit nights,
The trees in flower that flame afar,
The smiling days that sweetly vocal are,
The happy, blessed Motherland.
Her will by seventy million throats extolled,
Her power twice seventy million arms uphold ;
Her strength let no man scorn.
Thou art my head, thou art my heart,
My life and soul art thou,
My song, my worship, and my art,
Before thy feet I bow.
As Durga, scourge of all thy foes,
As Lakshmi, bowered in the flower,
That in the water grows,
As Bani, wisdom, power ;
The source of all our might,
Our every temple doth thy form unfold—
Unequalled, tender, happy, pure,
Of splendid streams, of glorious trees,
My Motherland I sing,
The stainless charm that shall endure,
And verdant banks and wholesome breeze,
That with her praises ring."

It is obviously too tender for a stirring "Marseillaise." There is not enough march and thunder either in words or tune to enflame the soul of trampling hosts. The thunder comes in the cry of "Bande Mataram!" But the tenderness, the devoted love of country, and the adoration of

motherhood are all characteristic of the Indian mind.

When this national anthem was finished, the Tamil poet of Madras recited a lament he had written for Lajpat Rai at the time of his deportation. It was the common lament of exiles—the fond memory of home, the deep attachment to the land of childhood, the loneliness of life among strangers and unknown tongues—all very quietly and simply told. Then by a sudden change, the poet turned to satire, and described a dialogue between Mr. John Morley and India, on the subject of Swaraj or Home Rule :—

"You are disunited," says Mr. Morley; "what have you to do with Home Rule? You don't speak the same language, you haven't got the same religion; what have you to do with Home Rule? You cannot fight, you are too fond of law, you are the victims of education; what have you to do with Home Rule? You are born slaves, you prostrate yourselves before the Englishman: what have you to do with Home Rule? You are seditious, you are a prairie on fire, you are a barrel of gunpowder, you cry for the moon, you are not fit for a fur coat; what have you to do with Home Rule?" *

To which India makes firm and dignified reply. She has tasted freedom, she has learnt from England herself what freedom is; even John Morley has been her teacher, and she will not cease to labour

* See Introduction, p. 26 ff., Mr. Morley's speech at Arbroath.

for Swaraj. Having drunk the nectar of freedom, can she turn back to the palm-tree "toddy" of a Government shop, or cease to labour for Swaraj? She claims the right of other nations, the rights for which England herself has fought; she claims the same freedom of person and of speech, and she will not cease to labour for Swaraj. From north to south her people are becoming united, from east to west the cry of "Bande Mataram" goes up, and slowly the sun of freedom is arising: it may rise slowly, but India will not cease to labour for Swaraj.

The chairman rose, and the darkening air glimmered with the petals of flowers thrown in handfuls, as the custom is. Round his neck heavy garlands were hung, pink and white, to match the lesser garlands which surrounded the photographs of the two national heroes on the table. He spoke in English, like all the subsequent speakers till the last. One felt at once how great a contribution to Indian unity the English rule makes in the gift of a common language which all educated men can understand, while even in Madras alone four distinct native languages are spoken. He summarized the history of the last year of suspicion, repression, deportation, imprisonment, flogging of boys and students for political causes, and the Seditious Meetings Act. It was all done without passion or exaggeration, and he ended with a simple

resolution calling on the Government to repeal the deportation statute as contrary to the rights which England had secured for herself under the *Habeas Corpus*.

Four speakers supported the resolution, and all spoke with the same quiet reasonableness, so different from our conception of the Oriental mind. But for clapping of hands, and occasional shouts of "Bande Mataram!" or "Jai!" (literally "Victory!" or "Long live So-and-so!"), the immense crowd remained equally calm. There was no frenzy, no disorder, no excitement, beyond intense interest and desire to leave no word unheard. If a speaker was just a shade too emotional the crowd laughed a little scornfully, just as an English crowd does. They laughed when one speaker—a well-known writer and journalist of Madras—just overstepped the limits in recalling, with tears in his voice, those happy days when as a student he had sucked the enthusiasm for freedom from John Morley's own books, and had learnt to regard him as one of the gods of literature and liberty, in the same great pantheon with Mill and Burke and Milton. The crowd knew the man was in earnest, and they applauded, but they laughed just a little scornfully. For the rest, the speaking was average straightforward stuff, free from flowers, and even free from quotations, which are the besetting tendency of many Indian minds. Indeed, I remember only

one quotation—just a hint at a parody on Mark Antony's speech, with John Morley and the Liberal Government as the honourable men.

Only Anglo-Indians could have called the speeches seditious. To a common type of Anglo-Indian mind any criticism of the Government, any claim to further freedom, is sedition. But though this was avowedly a meeting of Extremists, the claim in the speeches was for the simple human rights that other peoples enjoy—the right to a voice in their own affairs, and in the spending of their own money. As to the increased suppression and persecution now overhanging them, they might well be driven to despair. Other grievances they had long known, and ever since Lord Curzon came to India their complaints had been augmented. But they had always kept a belief in England's respect for personal rights and freedom, till Mr. Morley, of all statesmen, came to overthrow it. What was left to hope for now?

So the meeting went on, till four speakers had spoken long, and the late moon was moving up among the clouds and stars. Then a new speaker rose—tall, dark, and aged, with clearly cut features, and a shaven head. His dress was of deep salmon-coloured cotton—saffron, with a tinge of red—and in one hand he held a wanderer's staff, symbolic of control over thought, speech, and action. Once he had been a rich man, a barrister, a councillor, a

leader of public life. Now he had given away all he possessed. He had discarded the mark of worship and the sacred thread. Having said farewell to family and friends, to business, politics, and all transitory things, he had set off with only a staff to wander through India, begging his bread and teaching the divine realities, on which he meditated day and night. To this meeting he had come, not to discuss mortal justice or the British rule—things that hardly throw a shadow on the radiance of eternity—but only to say that in his wanderings he had met with Lajpat Rai, and had found in him a saintly human soul, simple-hearted, austere, and regardless of possessions. He spoke in his childhood's Tamil, and when he had finished speaking he went upon his way, while the meeting dispersed, and dying shouts of "Bande Mataram!" mingled with the roaring of the surf.

CHAPTER VII

The Floods of Orissa

The holy region of Orissa, where stand the temples of Juggernath, "Lord of the World," and of Tribhuvaneshwar, less famous but "Lord of Three Worlds" all the same, needs what wealth of holiness it has got, for its earthly fortunes are small. The ancient Uriya people live there, speaking a strange and separate language, though it is said to be near akin to an ancient Sanscrit form, and using a script like wire netting or a series of circles in a row. In the southern district near Ganjam they are still counted as part of the Madras Presidency, but all the rest of their country is now limited to Bengal, and its officials are responsible to the Lieutenant-Governor in Calcutta. The greater part of the land is held by Tributary Chiefs and Rajahs, under the control of a Political Agent, but a good deal is owned by ordinary zemindars or landlords who sub-let to peasants much in the usual way, come under the authority of the usual Commissioners and Collectors of the Civil Service, and about two-thirds of them

pay a land-tax or rent to Government, nominally fixed every thirty years, because they are not included in the Permanent Settlement of Bengal. There are also a few cultivators holding direct from Government.

So far the peasants of Orissa are not worse off than other people who have to live at the mercy of landowners. Their special hardship comes from the nature of the country and from "visitations of God," as they are called; though why God's visitations are regarded only as evil it is difficult to understand. Looking inland from the coast, one can see the beginning of mountain ranges running far into the interior, and it is there that the Tributary Chiefs and Rajahs have their territories, there that hill-tribes live, and wandering elephants abound. But between the mountains and the sea lies a broad belt of alluvial plain. It is under British control, but permeated by uncertain and changeable rivers that issue like wild animals from the mountains and refuse control of any kind. Such rivers are the Byturni, a sacred stream, where millions of pilgrims bathe on their way down the Grand Trunk Road to the shrine of Juggernath; the Brahmani, also sacred as its name denotes, but the chief cause of the present profane disasters; and the Mahanadi, which threatens the old capital city of Cuttack, and is sometimes a desert of sand, sometimes a sea.

In August rain had fallen on the mountains for

fifteen days and nights without ceasing. Foot by foot the water in the sacred rivers rose. The islands disappeared, the broad miles of sand disappeared, the water reached the edge of the steep mud banks. Forty years before it had done the same, and old people began to awake their appalling memories. At a point called Janardan Ghai, not far from Jenapur, upon the Brahmani, the embankment had then given way. The breach had never been properly repaired; only lately a rubble "bund" or break-water had been constructed, and now on August 20th, in the middle of the night, it gave way again. In a dark torrent, bearing sand and stones with it, the irresistible river streamed over all the lower lands around, covering the crops and melting the mud villages away like ant-heaps. The land is flat, but in the confusion and darkness the people crowded up any little slope for safety, or climbed into trees; and one woman had her baby born as she supported herself among the branches. When morning came, eight feet of turbulent water lay over their homes and crops. In November I could still trace the tidemark of the flood by tufts of dried grass and drift-wood sticking in the trees high above my head, as you may do in early summer on the banks of the Severn.

When I reached Orissa, the first sign I saw of the calamity was a band of thirty or forty brown skeletons crawling towards me as I stood in a garden at Cuttack. They said they had walked from their

HUNGER.

[Face p. 136.

ruined homes beside the Brahmani, looking for work or food, and hundreds were wandering over the country in the same way, even as far as Calcutta, which they counted a fortnight's walk from there. Probably they had heard of my arrival, and collected in the vague hope of some kind of assistance, or perhaps simply from the instinct that makes most people fling their misery before any human being for sympathy. Very likely some were habitual beggars, worn thin by man's want of charity, and taking the advantage of extra numbers to impress me. A man of stone would have been impressed. There is no need to describe a brown skeleton—the projecting ribs and spiny backbone, the legs and arms like withered sticks, the deep pits at the collar-bones, the loose and crinkly skin. But when a party of brown skeletons fling themselves flat on the ground before you, with arms outstretched beyond their heads and faces rubbing in the dust, when they take your feet in their bones and lay their skulls upon your boots, what are you to do? What are you to do when there are fifteen hundred men, women, and children only waiting to catch sight of you that they may make the same irresistible and hopeless appeal?

I went to the officials. The Collector, under whose immediate charge the problem of relief came, was away, but I had a long interview with the Commissioner in his beautiful home, built on an ancient

stone embankment that protects the town from the river, then hardly visible in the wide expanse of sand. In the case of both officials I observed the same difficulties that I found in official life wherever I came across it in India. Both I believe to have been entirely honourable and conscientious men, devoted to their rather monotonous but responsible work, from which they could gain no great glory beyond the usual steps of promotion, ending in retirement to the obscurity of some English golf-links. One of them, as I heard afterwards, had a high reputation among his colleagues in the Service for his solicitude on behalf of the people under his charge. He studied their language and customs with enthusiasm, and on one occasion had displayed conspicuous gallantry in defending them from a gang of pillaging outlaws, whom he captured single-handed. Yet he was not the more popular of the two ; and though both were, I think, rather exceptional public servants, they were regarded with more hostility than veneration. The curse of ordinary officials is that reform means change, and change means trouble. But a conscientious official has the further curse that, under the constant pressure of work, he is compelled to spend most of his time among papers, statistics, and abstractions. To preserve his sanity under these conditions, the Indian official is forced to the Club, where he can relax his mind among his own people, speak his own language,

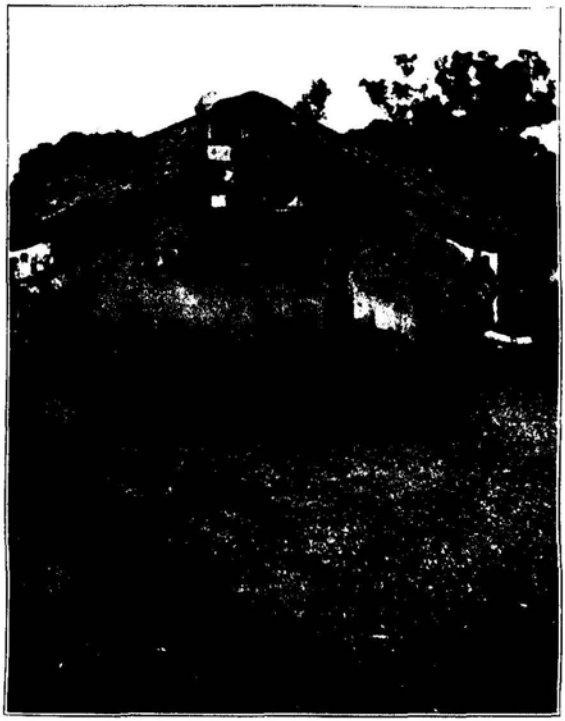
and follow the pursuits that really interest our race, and so, little by little, the people of the country, for whose sake alone he is supposed to be there, appear to him only under the form of cases or numbers—inhuman subjects, to be avoided in polite conversation.

The Commissioner, from among his barricades of reports, abstracts, and regulations, gave me the official figures of distress, as far as was ascertained at the end of the third month after the disaster. They showed an estimated area of 460 square miles affected by the flood, with a peasant population of over 300,000 ; also so many houses swept away, so much loss in cattle and horses, so many deaths from cholera after the flood (nearly 2000), and so many rupees already distributed in relief. From what I saw and heard afterwards, I should put the numbers reduced to a skeleton condition at about 5 per cent. of the 300,000 population. That does not sound very much, but if you work it out, it gives 15,000 brown skeletons close to the touch of death by hunger.

For myself, I cannot think in thousands. I trust economists and officials to do that for me. But there was one phrase in the official statement that appeared quite comprehensible even to me : it was, "Deaths from starvation, nil." Nothing could well be more explicit, yet even that simple assertion began to look as elusive as other economics when I

went out into the villages and saw the bony corpses and was told the official cause of death is always some innocent and unavoidable sickness like cholera or "bowel complaint," and that the official mind has a rooted objection to starvation.

First I went up the line to a place called Balasore, and late at night visited two Settlement Camps, where a revision of land-titles was slowly going on, in view of the next great Settlement which was to take place in twenty years' time. It was a recent idea of Sir Andrew Fraser, Lieutenant-Governor of Bengal, who with Scottish providence aimed at thus reducing the work that would await his fourth successor in office for the year or two before the next Settlement came. It is true that the present revision would require further revisions before then, but that did not matter. With this laudable object, Indian officials were seated in their tents, and just visible by lanterns a crowd of forty or fifty small holders from neighbouring villages were gathered round them, all clutching their precious title-deeds to their bosoms. For six days they had been waiting there from nine in the morning to eleven at night, just at the time when harvest needed them most. An official told me it took about a month to complete the revision in a circle of twenty-one villages, and the work never stopped but for the rains. Outside one tent an enterprising shopkeeper had opened a little store of plantains, rice, and cakes to feed



My Elephant.

A Village Crowd. [*Face p.* 149.

the patient crowd. Some were little boys whose fathers had died, some represented widows. So under the dispensation of Scottish providence they waited, and one can only hope that the officials of eighteen or nineteen years hence will think of them kindly while enjoying the far-off interest of their tears.

Next day I returned to Jenapur, and mounted a large elephant, which, sad to say, could heartily enjoy a daily meal that would keep any Hindu in prime condition for six weeks. As upon a watch-tower, for the next few days I passed up and down the long line of flat country that had been flooded beside the Brahmani, sometimes crossing over into the basin of the Kharsua, another of the uncertain rivers that alternately save and devastate the land. Where it was not devastated, the country was thickly cultivated in little fields of rice, pulse, and a kind of millet, and the numbers of planted mango-trees gave it much the same look as an elm-row part of Essex or the Midlands. Throughout the district rice was certainly the staple crop, because, though it is so risky and wants so much water, its yield is magnificent when it yields at all; and it was one of the ironies of India that, while here the land had been ruined by the deluge of rain, on the way up from Madras I passed through miles on miles of rice fields where the crops stood dying of drought, or were already cut as straw for thatch or as fodder

for the sacred cow. Even here the drought had been so severe since the flood that the inferior crops of grain and pulse had failed and could not be used to alleviate the distress.

But in many of the villages that I visited neither flood nor drought will matter for many years. Sand like the seashore had covered crops, and fields, and boundaries, and homes in one indistinguishable desert. At the first village I came to after my elephant had waded through the numerous shallow channels into which the river had now sunk, a crowd of naked people—two or three hundred, I suppose —had assembled round a Government agent who was issuing little doles of rice. Similar doles had been issued soon after the disaster three months before, but otherwise the people had received nothing from a fatherly Government, because rain was officially due, and they ought officially to have lived on the subsidiary crops nurtured by the rain. But the heavens did not comply with official expectations; cholera came instead, and now the people were dying, not, of course, from starvation, but from "bowel complaints."

At sight of me upon the elephant, the people left their doles and flung themselves prostrate upon the hot sand which had ruined them. Some brought hoes, and digging three feet down, they showed a few withered blades from what had once been a rice-field. To that thickness the sand lay over

acres and miles of country along the low land beside the river, and now on the top of the sand the hungry villagers flung themselves flat in their appeal. Surely a man who rode an elephant and wore a helmet, and was white by courtesy, could save them! What could I do? There were 15,000 living skeletons ready to join in that prayer, and I had one pocketful of coppers. Rice was selling at 1½*d.* a pound; it takes two pounds a day to feed a man decently, and the full wage for a working cultivator was twopence in ordinary times. Where is charity when things are like that? And where are economics?

As usual, it was the hangers-on to life who suffered most. Weavers are useful people, and the village weaver with his wooden hand-loom can hardly be called a hanger-on in a land where every man and woman wears several yards of woven cotton, and washes the garment at least once a day. But how can a weaver live unless women buy his stuff? And how can a woman buy his stuff when she has just sold her doorposts and the family brass dish to buy food for her children, or to pay the police tax for the protection of property? She makes her old rags do, and the weaver starves. There were starving weavers in all the villages, and some it seemed impossible to save even with the food represented by a gift of twopence.

It was the same with the landless labourers who

worked under the ryots for wages. It was the same with the village blind, the village idiots, and the lepers. No one could afford to employ labour now or to give alms. In one village a labourer had scooped a little hole in the ground, and fitted a plantain leaf neatly into it as a bowl for gifts. But charity was as dry as the heavens, and no alms fell. I saw the plantain leaf still vainly appealing, but the man had died of hunger. In another village they were carrying a body to the fire, and they laid the poor, naked thing down for me to see. It was a woman's body, a labourer's sister, shrivelled and spiky with hunger, like the skeleton of a starved cat found under the slates. In defence of her brother, the labourer himself, I must say that he was dying of hunger too.

The village houses in this part of Orissa, as in most parts of India, are built of mud plastered on to a bamboo framework, with wooden doorposts and rafters. They are thatched with rice straw or palm branches. At the first rush of the flood, the houses dissolved like children's castles in the tide, and I saw flat and bare plots of land where they had stood. Even the houses that had escaped the water were almost as bare, for the people had been obliged to sell the scanty stock of furniture that Hindu villagers possess—brass pots and plates, a corn bin, cooking vessels, and perhaps a bed—in order to pay the rent which the zemindars or landlords continued to

exact, though I was told the officials had ordered a suspension.

The native official "tahsildars," acting as village tax-collectors, had also compelled them to sell everything they had, even to their wooden door-posts, as I said, for paying the "chaukidari" tax (or "tikut," as they call it) which supports the village police. It is a small tax, paid quarterly, and running from a halfpenny up to 1*s.* 4*d.* a month per house, but the police pay used formerly to be raised from special plots of land set apart in each village for the purpose, and the imposition of a hut-tax for the purpose ten years ago had always been regarded as a grievance. Nor does it matter whether a tax is great or small when you have to sell the family plate, valued at eighteenpence, to pay it. Just before my journey through the country, this tax had also been officially remitted, but it was collected up to a day or two previously, and was always mentioned by the people as one of their most irritating grievances. No one loves a tax-collector, but in time of famine there is something particularly galling in selling one's property to feed the police for preserving it.

In Orissa itself and in Calcutta the British officials were being rather angrily criticized for negligence, but apart from the necessary failure of a system which tries to administer welfare through foreign rulers who live completely isolated from the

people, I do not think the officials were to blame. They had given a little relief at first. When the rains that ought to have fallen did not fall, they gave a little more. They remitted a tax, and called on the zemindars to remit rent. They did not discourage a band of Indian volunteers, some of whom belonged to a reforming Vedantic Order in Calcutta, from distributing private relief. Sir Andrew Fraser, Lieut.-Governor of Bengal, who was then on progress through Orissa, and spent a day in the famine district, told me relief works were just going to be undertaken, and the Government expected to spend about £20,000 on the business of keeping alive and starting again. He probably knew as much about starvation in the abstract as any official could, for he was in control of the relief in the Central Provinces during the terrible famine of 1900.* The officials had also made the usual advances, called "takavi" loans, to holders of two to ten acres for the purchase of new seed and stock upon the security of their holding.

On the whole, the violent personal attacks upon the officials appeared to arise chiefly from the habit of all peoples who are compelled to submit to a fatherly despotism. Being themselves excluded from a voice in their destiny, they turn savagely upon the Government whenever distress or disorder

* "The Great Famine," by Mr. Vaughan Nash (Longmans, 1900).

supervenes, and the only real hope I could see in the situation was the appearance of the little bands of volunteers who in true Swadeshi spirit were spreading the conception of self-reliance throughout India. Sir Andrew Fraser and the higher officials welcomed their efforts, but the average Anglo-Indians and the journalists of Calcutta either treated them with contempt, or shrieked "sedition!"

Whatever blame lay with the authorities seemed to arise from the usual official tendency to make light of distress for fear of increasing difficulties, and to temper benevolence with bad manners. I think both tendencies were interestingly combined in a Bengali Deputy Magistrate, who was superintending the relief in one of the larger villages. I was myself travelling with Mr. Madhu Sudan Das, a resident of Cuttack, highly educated on European lines, the only Uriya graduate of Calcutta, and a man well known throughout India for his unlimited generosity and devotion to his own people, whose rights he had often vindicated against aggression. From early manhood he had been a Christian, though perhaps not a very dogmatic and ecclesiastical Christian, his faith being founded entirely upon his heartfelt admiration of Christ's prayer, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." "The man who could utter that prayer while dying under torture was divine," he often said to me. "The moment I heard the prayer, I

recognized that truth, and I have never doubted it since."

But Christian though he was, and though his daughter had studied in Cambridge, and now lived in Cuttack like an English lady without a shade of "purdah," he was almost worshipped as the saint of Orissa by the poor among his countrymen. I have seen a man with a frightful running sore entreat Mr. Das to lend him the eighth of a penny that he might touch the sore with it and be healed. Another came with a brass bowl and implored Mr. Das to dip his finger into the water that his wife might be delivered from her dangerous labour, and the moment he dipped his finger into the water, the child was safely born.

Unhappily, in spite of his Christianity and saintly reputation, Mr. Das appeared to act on official minds much as a hedgehog would on a naked man who found one rolled up in his bed. On arriving one night at a dak-bungalow or rest-house, we found that two of the three rooms were occupied by a Bengali magistrate and a colleague. So having arranged that Mr. Das, who was oldish and invalid, should have the other room while I slept in the free air like the elephant, we sent in our names to the Deputy Magistrate and were invited to enter. Knowing Mr. Das well by reputation, he had evidently determined not to fall below the standard of European dignity. Consequently he received us

with his legs on the long arms of his deck-chair — an attitude which, I suppose, he had observed as customary among English officials when they receive "natives," and I could not correct his impression.

Mr. Das began by requesting him to hear the petitions of three or four widows who stood lamenting outside the door because their husbands had died of starvation. Entrenched behind his legs, the official refused to comply, stating that he had already heard their cases, and had proved to his own satisfaction that the men had not died of starvation, but of something else. Mr. Das then went through a number of other cases, in most of which the official said he thought he had made examination, but could not be sure. Anyhow, all charges of neglect or harshness against the officials were absolutely false, and he was not there to be cross-examined. With prickly insistence, Mr. Das continued his interrogations upon the complaints of the villagers, till at last the Deputy Magistrate, irritated past human endurance, refused to say any more, and waving good-night to his boots we left the room.

On our return journey, a day or two later, we discovered that he had sent out orders by the *chaukidars* or village police to all the villages round, commanding the people not to come out to meet us under threats of unknown penalties. So great

is the terror inspired by officials and police under a bureaucracy, that very few came of the hundreds who had before thronged our path in hopes of winning some assistance, or merely of seeing the elephant and their national favourite. The few who did come told us the truth with fear, and perhaps we should never have got at the real facts if we had not found a chaukidar in one village actually going round from house to house with the order. Yet Mr. Das was a man whose assistance in such a crisis any one but an official would have been delighted to secure; for the people trusted him absolutely, in spite of his foreign religion, and no one living understood them better. It was only that he was the kind of man who perturbs tabulated columns.

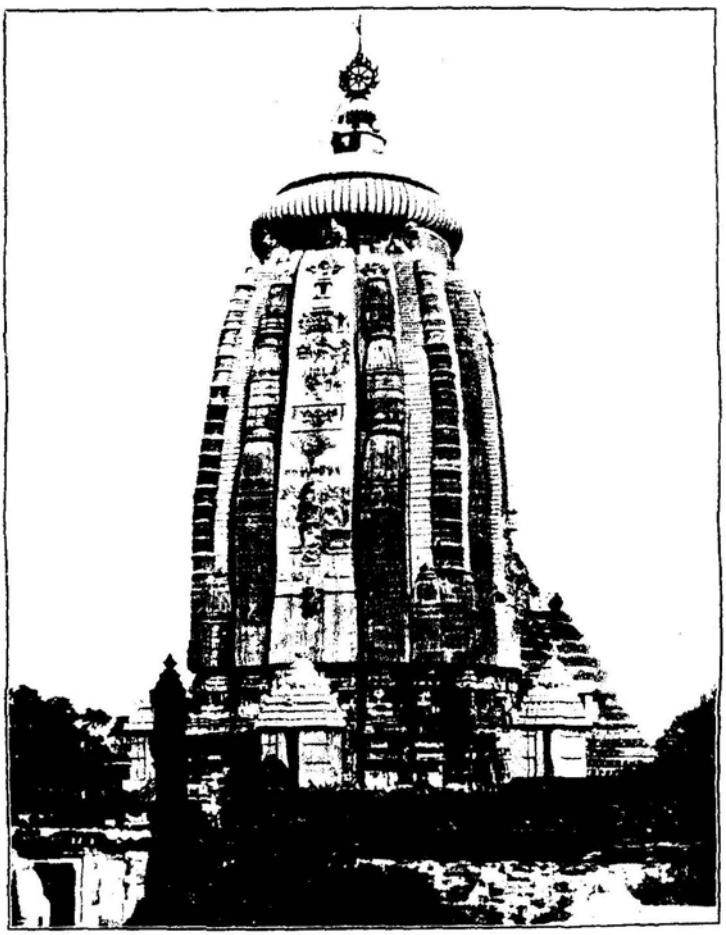
Most administrators would find it much easier to appreciate a Rajah or Tributary Chief who lived about twenty miles from Cuttack, and expended, as I was told, £335 on a breakfast which he expected to offer the Lieutenant-Governor with the usual trimmings of dancing-girls, fireworks, and other delights. At such a breakfast cases of starvation could hardly occur, and nothing would interrupt the cheers, loyalty, and good-will, such as Simla and the Anglo-Indian papers were expecting from the proposed Advisory Councils of Notables. Yet £335 did seem a largish sum to consume at one meal in the midst of a starving people. Perhaps the

Lieutenant-Governor thought so too, for I believe he continued his progress without accepting the entertainment. One would like to know how that meal was ever consumed. Perhaps the elephants were called in to help.

CHAPTER VIII

"Lord of the World"

From every part of India, by day and night, the pilgrims come, and the roads to the great temple, by the sea at Puri, are always open and always thronged. The pilgrims come from behind the white mountains, and from the purple lands of the south, and across the hot plains from the other ocean. The train that shot me out upon the sand amid a crowd of dim white figures at three o'clock one morning raises a high dividend from religion. Hundreds come by it every day, for it saves time—and under British rule even devotion goes by time. But worshippers still think it more religious and purifying to make the whole journey on foot, visiting other sacred temples upon the road, bathing in holy rivers, and turning at every dawn towards the rising sun, as all mankind instinctively turn for worship, just as for love we turn towards the sunset. To take years upon the journey only extends the glory of expectation, and if you have the holy patience to travel the Grand Trunk Road, measuring every two yards of



THE TEMPLE OF EQUALITY.

[*Face p.* 152.

its thousand miles by prostrating your body along the dust, what is space, what is time, when you are on the way to God?

Children and young mothers come if the entire family sets out for holiness, but the best time for the great act of worship is late in middle-age, when for many years the field has been sown and reaped, the buffalo fed, the taxes paid, the children tended, the cotton garment daily washed. Then the present career upon this visible world is almost over, the shadowy gate to the next stage upward is almost in sight. Then men and women long to go on pilgrimage, and, untouched by the cares of fortune, family, or any transitory things, they travel forth in calm elation of soul, their thoughts fixed only on the lasting realities of eternity, till they hear the thud of the long waves upon the sand, and before them rises the great white tower of the Lord of the Universe, surmounted by its wheel and flag. There stands at length the beatific vision, there the end of all these labours, the revelation of the Divine Essence for which they had waited so many years of repeated seasons in the fields.

It is the ancient temple of Juggernath, "Lord of the World," to which they have come. Yes, our old friend Juggernath, of childhood's stories and journalistic tags—the God in the Car, before whose bloodstained wheels the benighted heathen were driven by deceiving priests to fling themselves

shrieking down, before the days when enlightened missionaries and British rulers combined to clean up India's coral strand. Since then, as is well known, such extremity of devotion has been prosecuted as the law directs, and the guide-book tells us that "of recent years much has been done to improve the sanitation of the place." Both signs of progress are good. But, after all, it is only an Englishman whose first thought is of sanitation when he approaches the divine presence, and the British missionaries who first told that weary old tale of the car were as incapable of understanding the divine passion that, even at the cost of life, yearns for union with eternal powers, as they would have been of understanding the passion of a woman whose grandson described to me how, with proud bearing and joyful face, she walked from her chamber and sat down in the midst of the flames beside her husband's body till their ashes lay indistinguishably commingled. Sanitary appliances and the "Merry Widow" appeal more successfully to our Western minds.

The fame of Juggernath may be due, as scholars say, to some ancient attempt to conciliate under his symbol the new Buddhistic reformers with the primeval Hindu worship. It seems to be certain that his temple as it stands shows the trace of Buddhistic influence—the teaching of Buddha who made the great renunciation, Buddha who received

the poor and all mankind beneath his blessing. It is a shrine of peace and conciliation, perhaps the one place in India where former generations saw some hope of acquiring the new purity and kindliness of life, without rejecting the sacred traditions of immemorial wisdom brought by unknown ancestors from lands of bitter cold. And it may have been this bright hope of peace that first established the unaltering rule of Juggernath's worship, that before his sight all castes and ranks and riches are equal, and the woman is equal with the man.

Lions and monsters guard the four gates of his enclosure, but when once they are passed, all the earthly distinctions of mankind fall away, and only the naked soul remains to worship. Within that oblong wall, Brahman may eat with sweeper, and warrior with the retail seller of flesh for carrion Europeans. Along the inner side of the south wall are simple kitchens, where the god's four hundred cooks daily prepare the sacred food for pilgrims, beggars, and all who come. One is served with another, and all may eat from the same dish, side by side, without contamination. Thousands of monks in the service of the god carry the food far through the country, and the pilgrims themselves take some of it home in their brazen vessels, so that the villagers and children left behind may taste of wisdom, and share the blessings of pilgrimage. For wherever the sacred food is eaten, worldly differences

disappear, and soul stands bare to soul. It is the sacrament of equality, the consecration of mankind.

Side by side with Juggernath, within the dark and secluded shrine, upon which no alien may look, stand his brother and little sister—quaint figures all of them, hideous as gollywogs with symbolism—the round and staring eyes of eternal vision, the atrophied hands and feet of eternal meditation. Every year new cars are built for them, and every twelve years the gods themselves are made anew of wooden blocks, while their old forms are sunk into a pit to perish. This was told me by the treasurer and chief trustee of the god's vast estate, who traced to this renewal the well-known story of the physicians appointed to minister to the deity's health, and put him to bed if he ails. He informed me this was a popular error, but there is a Rajah who is hereditary guardian, and also hereditary sweeper of the temple, and he, as I understood, had rather frequently to be put to bed by his physicians, so that possibly the two cases have become confused.

It would be, perhaps, too curious to identify the little sister of Juggernath with Liberty, and his brother with Fraternity. But Juggernath, "Lord of the World," has beyond question the attribute of Equality, and it seems possible that it is just this glorious attribute, and no deeper metaphysic reason, which gives his temple its place as the most worshipped fane of India, and inspires the common

people with a passionate desire even to touch with one finger the painted board of which he is made. Many people worship what most they fall short of, just as in England we struggle to worship Christ, whose character and manner of life differed so entirely from our own. And of all great virtues the Indians, perhaps, have been most wanting in the sense of equality. Their whole system of existence is based on inequality, inevitable and permanent. The man who is born to study the Vedas will continue to study the Vedas, and so will his son. The man who is born to carry sewage will continue to carry sewage, and so will his son. Nor could the daughter of a millionaire ever hope for marriage with a man of learning, since wisdom lies beyond the dreams of avarice.

This ancient basis of inequality has made the Indian people the easiest in the world to govern. It lies also, I think, at the bottom of their almost excessive politeness, their reverential manners, their courtly deference to any one who appears to have been born of higher station, or with higher advantages. No one denies the charm of such qualities. It is an education in behaviour to pass from a Scottish or American crowd to the streets of an Indian city. The obligations of high caste—such things, I mean, as cleanliness in food and life, intellectual alertness, and disregard of wealth—are as valuable as any obligations laid on Europeans by noblesse. The only

weakness about both is that they are restricted to caste or class, and are not considered universally binding, as such principles must be.

There is much to be said for reverential manners; but take a race which has very little notion of manners of any kind—a race not very sensitive, not very imaginative or sympathetic, trained from boyhood to think little of personal dignity, and nothing at all of other people's feelings; take such a race and set its most characteristic members from the well-to-do middle classes, with the help of rifles and batteries, to dominate an entirely different people, among whom reverential manners are ingrained by birth, and see what evil effects for both races will result! Watch the growing arrogance of the dominant people; watch their demands for deference, their lust for flattery, their irritation at the least sign of independence, their contempt for the race whose obeisance they delight in, their rudeness of manner increasing till it becomes incredible to the relatives they left at home, and would once have been incredible to themselves. Then turn to the subordinate race, and watch the growing weakness of character, the temptation to cringe and flatter, the loss of self-respect, the increasing cowardice, the daily humiliation. In that hideous process—that degeneration in manners of two great races, each of which has high qualities of its own, we recognize the true peril which has been advancing upon Indians and ourselves for

the last ten, or, perhaps, fifty years of Indian history. It is not a question of loss of power, or loss of trade. It is a question of a much more serious loss than these.

But what if all this so-called unrest is only the beginning of another great humanistic reform, another incarnation of that "Lord of the World" whose attribute is equality? Throughout India we are witnessing the birth of a new national consciousness, and with it comes a revival of dignity, a resolve no longer to take insults lying down, not to lick the hand that strikes, or rub the forehead in the dust before any human being, simply because he wears a helmet and is called white. Like pilgrims bound for the shrine of Juggernath in an ecstasy of devotion, the leaders of India are inspired by that longing for equality which is always springing afresh in human minds. If any one chooses to say that equality is like Juggernath's Car, crushing everything equally flat, he is welcome to his little jest. But as I saw the white-robed pilgrims passing into the temple, there to partake of equality's sacrament, I knew that these outward things were but the symbols of an invisible worship, which may renew the face of the Indian people, and save ourselves from a threatening and dishonourable danger.

CHAPTER IX

The Divided Land

The plains of Eastern Bengal have been formed grain by grain from the washings of the dividing range of Asia brought down by melted snow on its way to the sea. Rivers that rise not very far apart on opposite sides of the Himalaya here unite at last after their thousand miles of circuit, and finish their course by broad and quiet streams, which lose the sacred names of Ganges and Brahmaputra. Some of the rivers also spring from the hill-country of Assam and the ranges where the pleasant station of Shillong offers a summer residence for the new Lieut.-Governor of Eastern Bengal as comfortably isolated from his capital at Dacca, as Simla or Darjeeling is from Calcutta. Thus the whole country is intersected with vast waterways and streams as slow and curling as the Ouse. Railways are built only in short sections, as it were to connect the rivers, and continuous roads must be very few. Everything goes by water, and the only trouble is that the rivers sometimes change

ON THE BRAHMAPUTRA. (Face p. 160.

their course, owing to an earthquake or other natural caprice. Their channels, too, are continually silting up, so that the course of the steamers upon their broad surface is always a little dubious, and, in spite of its slip of railway, the new capital of Dacca is even now being cut off from the world.

But for the square-sailed junks that the Indians use, and for the long black boats with pointed prow and stern pitched high in air, the rivers form a fine system of traffic; and if the water takes a fancy for a new passage through miles of cultivated land the owners of the fields simply stake out their claims upon the surface, confident that in God's good time the river will withdraw, leaving the soil to future generations only the richer for its deposit. The whole country is, indeed, one of the richest parts of India, and the rivers pass between flat lands of mangoes and palm trees, jute or yellow rice. At times the size and stillness of the streams reminded me of the Oil Rivers of Southern Nigeria; but how different here are the firm and fruitful banks from those gloomy creeks and forests of the slime! When they are not busy in their sunny fields, the people are chiefly engaged in washing themselves, their babies, and their brazen vessels. Large numbers are also occupied in fishing, especially for a bony fish like a gigantic perch, which they drive into the nets with tame otters, captive in long leashes. Others live by converting the clay of the

banks into enormous potting jars that serve as stores for grain, *ghee* (clarified butter), and other food. The waterways also still carry a certain amount of the country's ancient industries—the gold and silver work, the bangles and ornaments cut from white conchs, and, above all, the hand-woven muslins for which Dacca was once celebrated throughout the world.

Since England killed the Indian cotton industry for the benefit of Lancashire, first by imposing duties on imports from India, and then by the present excise of 3½ per cent. upon Indian cottons manufactured for India itself, that ancient fame is chiefly found in museum specimens of past splendour, and in lingering words like the French "Indienne" for calico print. Even in Dacca the very finest muslin, such as the cows used to lick up with the grass, feeling no difference between it and gossamer, is no longer made. It has fallen out, partly owing to Manchester, partly because there are no longer enough rich Indians to buy it. But still the great caste of weavers have clung to their hand-looms as fondly as starving ryots cling to the land. There is hardly any difference of race in Bengal, but it so happens that nearly all the weavers are Mohammedans, descended from the old Hindu families who changed their religion to please their conquerors in the days when Dacca itself was an Islam capital of empire. In the last three years, the Swadeshi

movement, which officials have told Lord Morley is specially abhorent to Mohammedans, has enormously increased their industry. It has revived the ancient craft just as it was dying, and so I found the weavers in every town and village sitting on the floor, with legs stuck under the wooden loom, plying their thin-spun thread with hereditary skill—plying it sometimes under water, so that a woman's skin should hardly feel a stuff so fine and soft.

But one can never be sure how long a handicraft, no matter how beautiful, can hold its own against the mills. Even under Swadeshi the hand-looms will probably disappear, and the main produce of Eastern Bengal is no longer the most delicate fabric in the world, but the roughest. It is jute. It is not literally true that this dark and fibrous plant, something between a mallow and a flax, grows only in East Bengal, but it grows best there, and almost all that is used in the jute factories of Dundee is imported from this land of rivers. I believe it was through the Dundee shippers, not more than one generation ago, that jute first came to the Tay, but since then the prosperity of the jute wives on the Tay has varied with the prosperity of the peasant wives on the Ganges, and, unhappily, it has often varied inversely.

It is very doubtful whether the immense increase of the jute crop has been of real benefit to the peasant. The price is variable. In 1906, for

example, it went up to 14*s.* 8*d.* a maund (82 lbs.), and all the peasants laid down their land in jute, thus creating such a scarcity of rice that its price went up more than double—from an average of 5*s.* 4*d.* to 12*s.* a maund. In some districts rice rose to more than three times its normal price. Drought and flood combined to increase the scarcity, and a terrible famine ensued. Of course, it ought not to have been so. Economists would say that the sale of the jute and the export of the rice should bring in money with which the peasants could purchase food. The trouble was that reality refused to support the economic doctrine.

Jute, like flax, is a very exhausting crop, yet I have seen it actually planted on the same field with rice, and at the same time, because it grows quicker, and can be harvested while the rice is green and short. Nothing but a deluge can restore the soil so treated, and, at the best, jute wants more room and more labour. Then there are the middlemen to be considered—the British and Jewish middlemen who swarm at the centres of the jute trade, where the heavy wooden junks lie thick as a town upon the rivers. Lastly, there is the zemindar or landowner. He comes under the Permanent Settlement of Bengal, and his rent or tax to Government is fixed for ever. But within limits he can raise the rent on the cultivator, and it is in the nature of landlords to raise the rent. They are not rich

themselves, these zemindars. Throughout Bengal I heard lamentable stories of their genteel but increasing poverty that reminded me of the distressed Irish landlords of twenty years ago. Like the French, they have the custom of dividing the land equally among the children, and the Mohammedans endow their daughters in the division, which is very nice of them, but only hastens the family ruin. Unless a zemindar family launches out into other forms of labour beyond eating its rents, the number of hangers-on to small parcels of land increases, and their condition is often pitiable. All the more because, though the Settlement is permanent, the cesses or rates nominally levied for roads and District Boards, but really applied to all manner of other purposes, are continually increasing, and the curse of malaria, which saps the vitality and rots the brain, appears to be falling with peculiar virulence upon the zemindar class.

It is a question whether jute and the export of rice have benefited any one except the merchants and middlemen. Owing to the fall in jute, the peasants were growing quantities of rice again when I was there; but next year the rice might go down and jute up, and so they live in a gambler's uncertainty, and lay up no store of food, as the custom used to be, against the evil day. They sell everything as it grows, and with the money buy Rangoon rice which makes them sick. Many paternal officials,

though bred on our university economics, told me that to save the people they would even prohibit jute, tax exported rice, and abolish the cotton excise.

So far we may say the contest lies between Dundee and Eastern Bengal, but though I believe it to be a vital matter, that contest is tranquil and slow compared to the dramatic battle raging between Eastern Bengal and the British cities of Liverpool and Manchester. Liverpool stands for salt, Manchester for cotton, and Eastern Bengal has taken a solemn vow not to touch either their salt or their cotton till the burning wrong of Bengal is redressed. By the burning wrong they mean the Partition of the Bengali people into two separate and unconnected governments, Bengal proper to contain 18,000,000 of the race, and Eastern Bengal to contain 25,000,000. With the addition of the outlying and alien provinces of Behar, Chota Nagpur, and Orissa, Lord Curzon estimated the population of Bengal under the old capital of Calcutta at 54,000,000, of whom 9,000,000 would be Mohammedans; while, including the outlying and alien province of Assam, the population of "Eastern Bengal and Assam" with a new capital at Dacca would come to 31,000,000, of whom 18,000,000 would be Mohammedans. Throughout the whole of Bengal, whether East or West, it must be again remembered that the people are homogeneous, both Mohammedans and Hindus belonging to the Bengali

race, speaking the same language, living in amity side by side for generations past, and only divided in religion because some of their number, chiefly of the lower and less educated castes, had long ago embraced Islam for the most persuasive of reasons.*

Various schemes for sharing out the administrative burden of the vast province with its dependencies had been discussed for at least twelve years before, and there were obvious ways in which it could have been done—by creating the three contiguous districts of different race into a new western province with the capital at Patna, or by placing them under Chief Commissioners, while in either case Bengal should be raised to a Presidency under a Governor in Calcutta, enjoying the same privileges as Madras and Bombay. By the Charter of 1833 we promised a Governorship for Fort William (Calcutta), and the promise was renewed by Lord Dalhousie in 1853. It is hard in England to understand the difference that Indians feel between a Lieutenant-Governor trained in Anglo-Indian routine and a Governor appointed from among the leading men of England, and coming to their country free from the narrowing routine of the Service and Anglo-Indian society. But a very short time in India shows what that difference means.

Far from carrying out these pledges or following

* See Introduction, p. 10 ff, and for the history of Eastern Bengal see Mr. Bradley Birt's "Romance of an Eastern Capital," *i.e.* Dacca.

a smaller scheme of devolution favoured by Mr. Brodrick (Lord Midleton), at that time Secretary of State for India, Lord Curzon determined to split the Bengali people roughly in half and give them two Lieutenant-Governors instead of one—with a view, of course, to "greater administrative efficiency"; for, as Mr. John Morley somewhere remarked, "the usual excuse of those who do evil to other people is that their object is to do them good." The first sign of Lord Curzon's purpose was Sir Herbert Risley's letter of December 3, 1903, announcing a Partition in the name of the Government of India. The scheme then proposed was instantly met by a storm of opposition throughout Bengal, among Mohammedans and Hindus alike, and to the credit of Anglo-Indians it must be said that the opposition of the Bengalis was supported by many of the officials and by the leading Anglo-Indian newspapers, though the worldly success of officials and newspapers largely depends on Government favour.

Always impatient of criticism, Lord Curzon hastened through Eastern Bengal, lecturing the Hindu leaders and trying to win over the Moslems. With the Moslems, by one means or another, he partially succeeded, but the opposition among the bulk of the Bengal population continued as determined as ever. Hundreds of indignation meetings were held; I believe about two thousand in all. Great petitions were presented; one with 70,000

signatures attached was sent to the Home Government. But it was all in vain. The English people paid no attention; they were not sure where Bengal was; most of them had never heard of it apart from tigers, and did not care what Partition meant. The Home Government perhaps had its own reasons for "letting Curzon down gently." The scheme was hustled through almost in secrecy, and almost avowedly against his better judgment, Mr. Brodrick gave his assent. The fatal "Government Resolution on the Partition of Bengal" was issued from Simla on July 19, 1905; it was followed by the Proclamation of September 1st, and a blow was given to the credit of our country and to her reputation for justice and popular government, from which it will take us long years of upright administration and reform to recover.*

On October 16th of the same year the Resolution took effect, and the Partition became what Mr. Morley in an unhappy moment called "a settled fact." The anniversary of that national wrong has now become the Ash Wednesday of India. On that day thousands and thousands of Indians rub dust or ashes on their foreheads; at dawn they bathe in silence as at a sacred fast; no meals are eaten; the shops in cities and the village bazaars are shut; women refuse to cook; they lay aside their ornaments; men bind each other's wrists with

* See Introduction, p. 12.

a yellow string as a sign that they will never forget the shame; and the whole day is passed in resentment, mourning, and the hunger of humiliation. In Calcutta vast meetings are held, and the errors of the Indian Government are exposed with eloquent patriotism. With each year the indignation of the protest has increased; the crowds have grown bigger, the ceremonial more widely spread, the fast more rigorous.

Such was the Partition of Bengal, prompted, as nearly all educated Indians believe, by Lord Curzon's personal dislike of the Bengali race, as shown also by his Convocation speech of the previous February, in which he brought against the whole people an indictment for mendacity.* The Partition marks the beginning of the "unrest" in its present form. I think some kind of unrest would have been developed within the next few years in any case. It arises from all manner of deep-lying causes—from the success of Asiatic Japanese in war against a great European power, from the general communication by railway, the visits of even high-caste Brahmans to Europe, the use of English as a common tongue, the increasing knowledge of our history and liberties, and the increasing study of our great Liberal thinkers and John Morley's works. Add to these things the growing alienation of the subject races, owing

* See Introduction, p. 7 ff.

to notorious cases of injustice in the law courts, ill-mannered arrogance on the part of certain Anglo-Indians, abusive incitements to violence by Anglo-Indian newspapers, and a system of espionage by the police and postal officials. It would be a wonder indeed if any people with a grain of self-respect left in them had remained unmoved. But beyond question it was the Partition that directly occasioned the present outbreaks of distrust and hostility. When their petitions remained unanswered, and their public meetings had no effect, when the Partition was carried out with despotic indifference to their feelings and interests, the Bengali people, and through them the vast majority of educated Indians, unwillingly became convinced that England no longer cared what happened to them or their country, provided they paid the revenue and kept quiet. It was a dangerous conviction to which they had been brought. England as a whole neither knew nor cared anything about it. She thought she had done enough when she had entrusted Lord Curzon and the Home Government with the duty of knowing and caring.

All advocates of the Partition, from Sir Harvey Adamson downwards, have continually sneered at the Bengali objection to having their country cut in half as "sentimental."* By "sentimental" I find

* Sir Harvey Adamson's speech at St. Andrew's Dinner in Calcutta, 1907.