

of India desire no more than to be governed well, and to withhold from them some systematic method of representation touching their local wants and grievances is for the Government to withhold from itself an invaluable source of strength and support. It is by the adoption of some such method that more government on the spot can be established, without dislocating the powers of existing bodies and without dividing the responsibility of the head of the district by the constitution of another authority. These Assemblies promise to become electoral units for a Chamber of Deputies, which will be a branch of the Legislature in direct contact with the people, while the existing Councils will be representative of institutions and interests. To ignore the need for devising some method by which more government on the spot in this sense can be introduced, is to forgo the maximum of benefit to be obtained by a minimum of change in an undoubted sphere of good government. Should the representation of grievances at these conferences fail to afford relief, the subject will naturally attract attention in the Provincial Legislative Council. Such a prospect is enough to ensure attention to the grievances, and a good deal of avoidable discontent would be remedied at the outset and not left to take root and develop in course of time into a hardened spirit of antipathy. The revolution that should be effected in District Administration is that the Collector should become a live beneficent administrator instead of a mere official figurehead. He must be in more intimate contact with the subordinate officials and the people of the district. He must be to his district what a Dewan is to a Native State. He must have greater powers of

initiative in promoting its industrial and agricultural welfare, and must be kept in the district for a minimum period of fixed working years. In bringing about such a transformation the institution of District Assemblies is an invaluable and almost an indispensable factor. The Collector is now in most cases represented by a mere illegible official signature; he is so often on leave and so constantly transferred that he has become more and more of a technical requirement in the constitution of the district officialdom than an actual official; and as for being an *administrator*, he will himself in most cases smile at the idea.

With a thorough separation of judicial and executive functions, with the establishment of District Assemblies, with a radical change in the policy of the Government in regard to the frequent transfers of Collectors, with a better knowledge of the vernaculars, the head of the district will become a responsible administrator whose interests are centred in the well-being of the district placed under his charge, and who will therefore be an irresistible power for good. Such a change in the position of the Collector reveals a prospect of strength and stability to the British cause and of abiding good to the people, to postpone which must be accounted culpable apathy if not an incredible lack of political understanding.

CHAPTER XI

VILLAGE AUTONOMY

SECTION I

Where the British Axe really fell

EMINENT Anglo-Indian authorities have regretted nothing more keenly as a consequence of British reorganisation of India than the disappearance of "the village community," the merits of which early British rulers of India completely failed to understand. During centuries of frequent dynastic changes in the kingdoms that formerly constituted the Indian Empire, and in spite of the foreign invasions that flowed through the land and vanquished the supreme authority for the time being, the village community had stood as the country's normal and imperishable system of administration. It was a system assimilated to the very soil, and Asiatic rulers were quick to perceive that it was at the bottom of much of the prosperity of the country, and that any rude interference with it would mean handing over the people to perpetual privation and the land to unending disorder. They saw that they might sack the capital of a ruler, pillage a prosperous town, plunder a great centre of trade or a sacred shrine, and yet leave the country to recover its former prosperity

if the village organisation survived their attacks and atrocities. They knew that it was the source from which the stream of prosperity traversed the land, and that if the source were dried up the bed would remain for all time a parched and sandy tract, a reminder of past fertility and a standing witness of present and future desolation. No ruler, therefore, ventured carelessly to interfere or to start any manner of experiment with what was religiously believed to be the perennial spring of the country's well-being, wherewith it healed itself time after time in spite of the afflictions to which it might have been subjected by nature and man. They not only recognised in the village community a system bound up with the land itself, but found in it a social and economical organisation which formed the very fibre of the nation. They could not help appreciating the methodical way in which the whole organisation worked with clock-like precision, subtle and strong, each part co-ordinated with the others to perfection, the whole scheme a social masterpiece. The best of the Mahomedan, Mahratta, and Karnatic rulers, the best of the Dravidian chiefs of the south, the feudatory sovereigns and territorial magnates of upper India, did all they could to uphold the strength and prestige of the autonomy of the village community and the authority of the village 'Panch.' The worst of them refrained from interfering with it in any manner. When the British took the administration of the country into their own hands, they thought that an efficient centralised system of government would be incompatible with village autonomy, and proceeded to supplant the powers of the village Panchayets by appointing village officials

subordinate to Taluq authorities, who in turn carried out the mandates of the district officers in direct contact with the Local Government. The revolution was accomplished with scarcely any thought of the consequences of such a tremendous innovation. Those who were responsible for it believed that they were doing a perfectly innocuous piece of work bound to bring about a wholesome change in the system of administration. This same change might have been accomplished as easily by the governments that preceded the British Government, but they knew that to meddle with the village community would be to throw the country into chaos. They looked upon it as a basic principle which should remain intact however much the exterior structural aspect might be changed. The British rulers, in perfect good faith, removed with strenuous endeavour every vestige of the old foundations and brought into existence a system of administration neither British nor Indian, nor even a faulty combination of the good and the suitable elements of both. It was the work of amateur constitution-mongers who were all alike in the faith they had in governing from without, and would not brook the notion that government of any kind from within was possible in India — this after destroying the magnificent village autonomy which India alone of all countries in the world had enjoyed for centuries. The effect has been that administrative departments have been multiplied for purposes of provincial and imperial revenue, and the wealth thus drawn from the rural areas goes, not mainly to promote the prosperity of those areas, but to maintain the costliest administration in the world. Before

the advent of this centralised system of government the wealth largely remained in the villages themselves, distributed in each village according to social habits and conducing to a plentiful supply of the necessaries of life and consequently to popular contentment. That contentment has now all but disappeared so far as the masses are concerned, and has been replaced by a perpetual apprehension of destitution. In addition to this, in the old days the Panchayet decided all communal disputes, agrarian suits, and all questions relating to succession and partition, according to the custom of the community; now a system of endless appeals to the Privy Council has been established, with the result that civil justice has become ruinously costly, and the confusion in Hindu law immense and amazing.

The outcome of all this is that the contentment of the masses, which began to disappear on the disappearance of the village community, has given place to a sense of despair which looks upon any and every contingency as a probable occurrence to which it must be prepared to succumb. The creation of a relentless form of centralised government with its powerful tentacles stretching out on all sides in the shape of the Excise, the Forest, the Settlement, and similar departments, dealt blow after blow to village autonomy and transferred the wealth of the rural areas to the coffers of the Imperial Exchequer, giving back an almost negligible portion to the villages themselves and retaining the largest bulk of it, firstly for the pay and the upkeep of the Military and Civil Services, secondly to meet the requirements of the men living in large cities and municipal areas who composed these services, and thirdly to maintain

those institutions which supply the men for them. Village sanitation, village education, village pasturage, village irrigation, village granaries, in a word, village plenty and prosperity, have all been laid under contribution to develop the amenities of city life and for the maintenance of the most luxurious service to be found in any part of the civilised globe. Although the official, the semi-official, and the pushful trading classes form now a larger and wealthier section of the population than ever before, the condition of the great mass of the people, including the middle classes, has become one of unprecedented trial and of acute struggle to make both ends meet. Perpetual need, if not perpetual hunger, seems to be their lot in life. Not only has the socio-economic organisation of the village disappeared under the assumption of authority by the British, not only has the autonomy of village administration been completely obliterated, but the very necessities of life have been transferred from the village to the city. The vast rural area of the country has been converted into a source of unfailing supply for the serenity and comfort of the superior and subordinate services, civil and military, for the installation of the conveniences of life in cities, and for all kinds of civil and military enterprises, without any adequate return to the communities whose resources are continually drained for such purposes. The neglect of village prosperity in a country like England is not a serious neglect, because the wealth of England lies in the prosperity of its great centres of manufacture, in its dockyards, in its shipping companies and exchanges. In India our source of wealth will and should remain for a long time in the rural area ; if we draw upon this

source without adequate provision for replenishing it, we exhaust it and impoverish ourselves in course of time. Such a policy of neglect is not far different from the conduct of the man who had no idea that the goose only laid golden eggs but did not contain them.

The Oriental governments took what they wanted from the village in varying proportions, but the balance which now comes away in Court fees, stamp and registration fees, lawyers' fees, and in scores of other ways, was in the possession of the village itself and was returned to it to add to its prosperity or to sustain it in distress. The demand of the State might have varied from one-sixth to one-third of the produce; of the balance, however, the village was assured, and that balance included all the rural sources of wealth, such as Forest, Excise, and Salt. Now the resources of the village are in their entirety the resources of the State, and the village fails to get even an adequate sustenance for itself. The cattle have deteriorated, the peasant has deteriorated, the labourer is for emigrating, the landlord is an absentee proprietor, the village in many instances a mere set of mud walls, its forest wealth, fuel and manure, a monopoly of the State, the pasturage, if any, an arid waste, and the price of agricultural commodities has fearfully advanced, benefiting the middleman and the merchant, but nobody else. The prosperity of the middleman and the merchant is assuredly not the same as the prosperity of the producer or of the consumer. The producer must sell in an increasing number of instances even before the harvest; the clever broker, the vigilant money-lender, and the exploiting trader benefit by the necessitous condition of the producer;

and with the supply lagging behind the demand for consumption at home and export abroad, prices have been going up by leaps and bounds. Land is being purchased at an increased price, not because it yields more to the owner, but because it is a safe and secure investment on which money can be raised easily by hypothecation, although at a low rate of interest. The irony of it is that the assessments in Ryotwari tracts are raised because the prices are high, and again the raising of the assessments is a cause contributory to the rise in prices! The burden on all classes, excepting the infinitesimal section of prosperous merchants and *sowcars*, a few high-placed Government servants, and the leading men of the learned professions, is becoming crushing. Necessaries have become luxuries, and luxuries at the same time have become necessities by our perpetual contact with a foreign civilisation which in every department of life has raised the standard of life and the cost of living. The cost of education, on top of all this economic devastation, is proving a strain too heavy for endurance by all except the really prosperous strata of society.

SECTION II

The Work of Restoration

If the vitality of the people is to be restored the beginning should be made with the villages, and a good deal of what has been taken from them should be given back. The question of permanent settlement, or of long-period settlement wherever permanent settlement does not obtain, is not a question which can be decided on theoretical assumptions

about rent and revenue or on flimsy data furnished by rise in prices. Neither the necessities of the Imperial Exchequer nor the assumed universal landlordship of the Government could furnish all the grounds on which it calls for examination. A long period of settlement, if not an absolutely permanent one, is necessary as the only method of ensuring the return to the land of a portion of what is taken from it. The prosperity of the agricultural owner means well-fed cattle, well-manured soil, a tenantry with enough to eat, and therefore contented, laborious, and efficient, and above all a state of financial stability in which the landlord can withstand the temptations of the advances of the broker and keep himself and his holding from encumbrance. If the owner is not to be entitled to the value of his improvements and to the benefit of a rise in prices, there is no method by which this prosperity of the owner can be made to ensure the prosperity of the land. The State may, by periodical un settlements, derive a larger revenue, and this process may be deemed a process of nationalisation of the land; but it is a steady process of starving the landlord and with him the soil and the livestock, and in addition of casting the landlord to the mercy of the money-lender. The State cannot assist the owner by a grant for better manuring his lands or for more satisfactorily feeding his cattle because it appropriates a larger share by its periodic enhancements. On the other hand, if the State took from him a fixed amount for purposes of revenue and left him master of his increased income, there can be little doubt that his prosperity would be a productive factor of immense value in

increasing the fertility of his soil, bettering the condition of his live-stock, and making him less susceptible to loss and suffering in times of distress. There are cases in which the best way of making a grant is to take less, the best method of restoring is to be moderate in demanding, and the best course of ensuring the stability of prosperity is not to be too clamorous in claiming a share in it. Rural agricultural prosperity is at the bottom of the prosperity of the whole of India; it is different in England, where industrial prosperity lies at the foundation of the country's well-being.

It is impossible to promote rural prosperity without promoting the well-being of the landlord, and this again depends on his being entitled to the natural advantages of his position, advantages which a system of periodical unsettlements is certainly not calculated to secure. What free trade and the absence of tariff walls is to a great industrial and carrying country like England, a fixed assessment and freedom from perpetual enhancement is to an agricultural country like India. Nor is the surplus revenue of the State a recompense for an exhausted soil, an enfeebled live-stock, a famished peasantry, and an encumbered landed proprietary. In pre-British days the absence of periodical enhancement of revenue was, as a rule, at the bottom of the conservancy of the wealth of the villages which ensured agricultural prosperity. In these days, however, not only is there a periodical enhancement of revenue, but there are many other calls made on the owner of land. He has to pay road cess, irrigation cess, grazing fees, besides indirect taxes. Each of these levies may be justifiable, but

the net result of all is that the *owner of land is more profusely bled than any other individual, and that is a result directly affecting the well-being of the mass of the people.* The least that can be done not only for the good of the agriculturist, but for the good of the whole country under these circumstances, is to introduce a long-period settlement for a term of ninety years at least as the first essential requisite in rehabilitating village prosperity.

It may be too late now to revive the village community; for the village community meant more than the village population. It was a socio-economic organisation, self-contained, self-governed, and self-serving. The changes that have rapidly overtaken Hindu sociology make the revival of the village community well-nigh impossible; but the revival of village autonomy is not a hopeless task, if undertaken in a spirit of unfaltering faith and with a resolute confidence in the ultimate success of the scheme. The village Panchayet must become a living reality and must be entrusted with administrative powers in the affairs of the village, without being subject to frequent interference on the part of the Taluq and district officials. The Panchayetdars may all of them be elected in big villages, may be partly elected and partly nominated in others of moderate extent, and wholly nominated in the small ones. All complaints of encroachments, all disputes between landlord and tenant, all questions relating to agricultural custom and contract, in short all claims in the nature of agricultural obligation which, computed in money value, will not exceed a certain amount, should be left to be decided by the Panchayet. The money limit may not be the same in all villages,

but may differ with each, as its size and the intelligence of its people may demand. The pecuniary limit may range from 20 to 200 Rs. All disputes before the Panchayet should be conducted by the parties themselves, or in special cases by their nominees, but not by pleaders or professional agents or Mukhtears; and there should be no appeal from the decision except on the certificate of a prescribed proportion of Panchayetdars that the matter is fit for the final consideration of the District Munsif within whose jurisdiction the village is situated. All questions relative to village sanitation, medical relief, education, grazing reserves, improved methods of cultivation, cattle preservation, and village industries, should be left to the disposal of the Panchayet.

Under each head the Panchayet may for every year frame a budget of expenditure which should be met partly from the Provincial and partly from the District Board funds, as the Government may determine, except when for special purposes it chooses to raise special contributions from the village. The Panchayets should have freedom to develop the resources of the village, and the co-operation of the District authorities and the Provincial Government should be ungrudgingly given whenever sought. The main endeavour of the Government should be not only to enable the villages to manage their own affairs so far as may be consistent with the ends of individual justice, but to place the villages themselves in a position of the greatest possible advantage as habitable parts of the country. The attractions of village life have to be restored, and it should be not only enduring but capable of affording opportunities for communal co-operation and exertion.

Then will begin a new era of rural prosperity which cannot but provide a generous contribution to the sustaining power of the vast bulk of the people, who have now to reconcile themselves to a condition of hopeless struggle. The autonomy of the Government of India and the autonomy of the Provincial Government, however complete in themselves, cannot secure that general prosperity which the autonomy of the village can secure. Political rights and privileges doubtless safeguard great interests, but can hardly ensure that prosperous state of the nation which a self-adjusting system of village organisation can bring about. It is a mistake, a serious and deplorable mistake, in an agricultural country like India, to hold that the owner of land should be deprived of his unearned increment or compelled to share it with the State besides the extra amount he will have to pay as tax on his income. That theory may prove harmless or beneficial in a pre-eminently industrial country, but can only prove disastrous in a purely agricultural country like India. When the landholder is in addition subjected, on account of his being a landholder, to a variety of imposts, his position becomes dreary, cheerless, and insupportable; but the cup of distress becomes full to the brim when he is, as is often the case, the first and foremost prey, if not of the principal, at least of the inferior members of the subordinate officialdom of the district, in having to bear the weight of unauthorised demands and customary exactions. Neither his heart nor his purse can be in the cultivation of his land to the best advantage, and the decadence of the village is an inevitable outcome of the losing game in which he must engage with the

Government and the money-lender, with the ever-present risks and oppressive responsibilities of cultivation, and the trying anxieties of domestic life. The landlord in India is not the landlord in England, the source of the country's wealth is not industry but agriculture; hence we must look to rural prosperity as the root of general prosperity; and the former cannot be guaranteed unless the village regains its wealth and its individuality, the fruits of its own resources and its communal autonomy with a certain measure of judicial and administrative control. Its ancient authority, its pristine perfection, the village community may not again have in its completeness; but to revive the autonomy of the village is a grave economic and political necessity, and its resources must be allowed to fertilise and enrich it.

"We know and respect," ran the Proclamation of Queen Victoria, "the feelings of attachment with which natives of India regard the lands inherited by them from their ancestors, and we desire to protect them in all rights connected therewith, subject to the equitable demands of the State; and we will that generally in framing and administering the law, due regard be paid to the ancient rights, usages, and customs of India." The periodical unsettlements; the rapid flow of title-deeds of lands "inherited from ancestors" into the hands of money-lenders, followed in a vast number of cases by the expropriation of the owners; the complete disappearance of the village autonomy—an ancient right; the restrictions on account of the Forest Reserve, which has been encroaching on the communal right as well as the communal area; the excise monopoly of the Government, which drives every labourer to empty his

slender purse in a licensed tavern which provides every possible temptation to enfeeblement and impoverishment, when according to ancient usage and custom he would have had his copious but not impoverishing, his stimulating but not ravaging, draught of sweet toddy in front of his hut and at the foot of the few palms that stood near by; and lastly, the salt monopoly, which interposes the arm of the State between the poor and the right to the salt of the sea and the salt of the uncultivable earth—all these show how much has been wanting in "due regard being paid to the ancient rights, usages, and customs of India." The Reform Scheme has not touched even the fringe of these grievances, in which the contentment of the rural classes and the economic prosperity of the whole country are deeply involved, and for remedying which political privileges alone are useless. In his despatch of October 1908 Lord Morley declared: "The village in India has been the fundamental and indestructible unit of the social system, surviving the downfall of dynasty after dynasty. I desire your Excellency-in-Council to consider the best way of carrying out a policy that would make the village a starting-point of public life." Not simply of "public life," but also of the country's prosperity, should the village become the starting-point, if progress as well as prosperity be the end in view of its rulers. This means that the Government should secure the progress as well as prosperity of the men whose interests are centred in the lands they own and cultivate; yet the owner of land in India, under the misleading appellation of "the Middleman," has remained the pet aversion of the bureaucracy. The officialdom would be glad

to see him annihilated ; but since that cannot be effected, it suffers him to exist on terms which not only run counter to justice and equity, but are subversive of the permanent interests of the country as a whole. He is required to pay from 33 to 50 per cent on the income he gets out of the land, whereas the tax on other incomes averages 3 per cent. Again, whereas all incomes below a certain amount are exempt from taxation, the owner of land is denied all such consideration. It would be an economic heresy in the view of the bureaucracy to plead for such a concession in favour of a tiller of soil who is also the owner, because he is not a paid labourer, although the land he tills can bring him no more than a miserable pittance for himself and his family. His income may be just enough to ward off starvation, nevertheless he must pay his tribute to the Exchequer of the State, and thereby acknowledge the benignity of the universal landlord. The Government in India, which pretends to be the successor of all previous universal landlords, has magnanimously placed itself under a disability to forgo rack-renting such a tenant. But worse is behind. He may not get any income at all, he may have been a victim to malaria, his family may have been ravaged by small-pox, he may have been in the grip of a vexatious and prolonged litigation ; but whether or not the plough touched even the fringe of his land, he must pay the *kist* of the *sirkar*, that impersonal being whose only material attribute seems to be universal landlordism. This universal landlord, in the conception of the poor man of India, is a peculiar organism ; it has a capricious but capacious stomach, powerful arms and legs, and an acute brain ; the only

organ it lacks as a matter of economic conviction is what is described as the human heart. A Greek priest would have shuddered at it as a beast unfit for sacrificial purposes. Yet that is the reputation which the Government in India has been strenuously building for itself by adhering through thick and thin to the theory of State landlordism.

The result of the land revenue policy of the Government is, in brief, that the owner of land is penalised for owning it. He stands virtually in a category of his own, being reduced to the plight of a person who has, when he gets no income, to pay a poll-tax and a few auxiliary taxes as well. He has to pay a road cess, a percolation cess, and sometimes a railway cess (if the District Board vote for it); and, besides the authorised cesses, he has to pay customary dues, and bear the expense of the enforced hospitality he has to extend at the *Jama-bandy*, the annual visitation of the revenue authorities for settling all outstanding claims of the State, and for bringing up to date the revenue ledger of the village. The worst, however, has yet to be told; if he insure against drought by sinking a number of wells at his own expense, he has in some provinces to pay an irrigation cess. According to a recent admission of the Member for Land Revenue and Agriculture, the State gets an annual revenue of a million sterling by taxing the irrigation improvements carried out at the expense of the owner. The theory is that the State has a right to share in the probable profit the owner may derive by the improvements he makes. This was justified by the civilian Revenue Member of the Government of India, as an "immemorial right" of the State, as though

the British Government has stood by and respected all immemorial rights and not done away with them whenever it suited its purpose. The apotheosis of State landlordism cannot go further in India, but the reputation for exaction that the Government has built up is one no mortal man would envy. The worst result of such a system of land revenue administration lies of course not in fear of any revolt of the peasantry, or of any seditious propaganda by the landed classes. It lies far deeper, and will be more formidable when it comes to assert itself; it will then manifest itself almost as the avenging hand of Providence. The rich neglect the poor, and the poor neglect the laws of health and hygiene; and the epidemic which is only the frown of Providence refuses to differentiate between the rich and the poor. So also when a Government neglects the natural sources of a country's prosperity, and sins in a spirit of economic sophistry against the obvious dictates of fair play, relying on the inapplicable analogies furnished by other countries, the natural consequences of such a policy cannot be arrested by all the authority of the State. It is the play of these consequences, which few people comprehend, that is really at the bottom of the feeling, now becoming dangerously prevalent, that the country has had enough of British rule. Except the few who are rich, almost every man, woman, and child feels the burden of life insupportable. The cause of this feeling lies in the fact that the country's resources have been drawn upon and utilised in a manner that systematically exhausts the source of supply without replenishing it. Will it be a strange phenomenon under these conditions if an economic Nemesis overtake the people in the first instance

and react on the Government in the next? If all the industries in Great Britain were taxed on the principle of the universal proprietorship of the State; the Government enforcing the right to share in the profits of industry as rigorously as it does in regard to returns from land in India; spending a large portion of the income for the upkeep of an equally costly *foreign* service, including the payment of annuities; utilising the balance for the good of far-away rural areas, and reserving a particularly inadequate dole for the special benefit of the industrial centres; the British public may possibly imagine what discontent and distress would confront such a Government, however strong and powerful it might be. The difference in India is that the agricultural classes are more docile than the industrial classes in England; but that difference is compensated by the fact that the starvation of the rural population of all grades must inevitably mean that of all but the very rich.

The theory of State landlordism has had its unimpeded trial, and now a process of escaping from the legacy which it has bequeathed must be devised, not as a concession to any political party, but as the result of that experience which, directed by the deepest feelings of sympathy, we must call to our aid in spite of economic sophistry and historical misconception. Before the problem of hunger, of perpetual hunger, can be solved in India, the autonomy of the village must be restored, the landlord or "the Middleman," as the bureaucracy in a strain of unaccountable jealousy and aversion persist in terming him, must cease to be an object of steady and systematic economic persecution. The assessment

must be fixed for a long term to allow the middleman to thrive for the good of the community, and lastly, as a measure of supreme national importance, the proprietor of small holdings, who is also the cultivator of his own field and whose income does not exceed a small annual amount, say 300 Rs. a year, should be totally exempt from payment of revenue. The result of these generous reforms will be not solely to benefit the agricultural classes, but to revive that rural prosperity which is at the root of the prosperity of the whole realm, the gradual disappearance of which amidst much meretricious progress has been the inevitable consequence of the steady diminution of the former. It is not only "public life," as Lord Morley has pointed out, but public *prosperity* also which in India must originate from the village, and towards such an end Indian officialdom must be directed by discerning British statesmen.

PART III
AUXILIARY

CHAPTER XII

THE PUBLIC SERVICE

SECTION I

The Tribute of a Governing Caste

A TREATISE on Indian Autonomy can hardly be complete without an examination of the organisation of the Public Service and its effects on the material prosperity and general advancement of the country. This is especially necessary as regards India, where the people not only do not govern themselves, but are under the domination of a foreign power, and where the Public Service plays an all-engrossing part. The personnel of the service and the methods of recruitment are of paramount importance, and cannot but invite both criticism and suggestion. Although the scheme of this treatise does not permit entering into detailed consideration of the cadre and recruitment of the several branches of the administration, we cannot avoid examining at some length the basic principles on which the organisation of the Public Service rests. In doing so we shall, at the very outset, frankly accept what India owes to successive generations of Anglo-Indian officials whose industry and ability have evolved order out of chaos in a manner to which history hardly furnishes a parallel. They

have systematised the work of administration in a way which in itself has been a moral inspiration and a political revelation to the people of this country, and has besides operated as a unifying factor of inestimable value in a land of countless differences. In promoting national aspirations, in familiarising the people with civic ideas and responsibilities, in engendering political ambitions, the system and method displayed in the administration of the country have been the most powerful factors, next only in importance to the effects of education on Western lines. The indirect effects of British administration in India have been of far greater consequence in all that concerns the moral advancement and political aspiration of the people than is generally understood. It should be borne in mind that never in its hoary past, in the days of its epic grandeur, in the glorious times of the empire of Asoka, or in the proudest and most prosperous hour of Mughal rule, was there a period, however brief, when the whole country from the tropic regions of eternal snow to the southernmost extremity of the peninsula was under such a uniform reign of law as it has been under British supremacy. The patient and unceasing effort which such splendid power of organisation throughout so vast and diversified an area implies is a moral achievement without an analogous instance, and may be justly regarded as an accomplishment of which humanity may be proud. Where there were pillage and plunder, rapine and slaughter, no security of life, religion, or property, and perpetual fear of molestation, there have been installed for decades past safety, freedom, and readily available legal processes. The conscience of man forbids the idea of damning with faint praise so stupendous and

striking a transformation, or treating it as a change that England needs must have brought about in her own interest. One may as well hold that the man who saves another in the grip of despotism, destitution, and disease is bound to act as a saviour for his own gratification. According to such a notion the good man is bound to be good and the bad man is equally bound to be bad, and there is no merit in being either good or bad. Such a travesty of political criticism is a stigma on the idea of patriotism, and is no less than a wanton abandonment to intellectual perversity. At the same time, it does not call for any profound intellectual grasp to realise that British rule in India has constantly to adapt itself to changed conditions, and that the ideal that held good half a century back may have to be dismissed to-day with a summary conviction of its utter incompatibility with the altered conditions of the present. It has been often pointed out that the test, not merely of statesmanship but of efficient life, of life which can grow and expand and progress, is its capacity of adaptation to fresh conditions and to new environments. That test has for some time now been applied to British rule in India. It is on the successful emergence from that test that the future of political cordiality between India and England will largely depend. In two respects that test must be met: firstly, in regard to the absolute exclusion of all racial disabilities in the government of the country; and secondly, in regard to the reconstitution of the Public Service of India on lines called forth by the actual needs of the country, and not on lines which furnish a variety of openings to persons of British descent. From the very beginning of British ascendancy in India there was available

in every part of the country the willing co-operation of Indians of marked political and administrative aptitude, who recognised in the authority of the East India Company a providential termination of the chronic strife and the endless turmoil to which the country had been subject. At every subsequent stage it was the readiness and thoroughness with which Indians of all grades everywhere laboured for the cause of British authority that led to its advancement and permanence. To-day the contribution of the Indian element in every branch of the administration is as striking a feature of British rule as anything else. Unless one is determined to ignore the value of the British spirit of organisation and method, or the value of the initiative and co-operation of Indians, one cannot treat with contempt either the British or the Indian element in the administration of the country. To give full and free play to both of them, having close and unfailing regard to the economic interest of the governed, is the proper method of dealing with the problems that recruitment to the services naturally produces.

The theory of the inherent inferiority of the Indian has been fully exploited, avowedly and unavowedly, in the open highways as well as in the concealed bypaths of Indian administration. Reserved areas for the exclusive occupation of the Briton have been maintained with no semblance of justification, and where the work and responsibility are equally and identically onerous, the pay and consequently the status of the Indian have been by law and regulation subordinated in a manner that cannot but rankle in the mind of any self-respecting

person. Indians have been debarred from appearing for certain qualifying examinations, simply because they are Indians. The exclusive holding of some tests in England has had the practical effect of shutting out a very large number of capable Indians from the superior ranks of other departments. The throwing open of half a dozen high-placed appointments to the natives of the country cannot allay the embitterment of feeling which has possessed them for too long a period now. If the absence of a rational and righteous principle in regard to so important a matter cannot be too much deplored, the half-heartedness with which responsible and patriotic men in England have chosen to approach this question makes one almost despair of British insight and intelligence. What has induced the British Government in India with the unprecedented strength and solidarity which it has always commanded is the fact that in a land of numerous differences, that Government alone has, more than any other, respected the principle of equality in the eye of the law. This comparative merit of British rule has, however, been undermined by the reservations made on behalf of Anglo-Indian officials and non-officials. Every Indian now believes that, individual merit and demerit apart, there is no racial inferiority and superiority for purposes of administrative work except what the law and policy of the Government may choose to invent. The continuance of a policy of differentiation on the ground of colour and race is fraught with no little danger, especially after the repeated protestations and solemn disavowals made. To make a man's birth a barrier when he can satisfy the legitimate requirements of an office is to punish him for his parentage ; and to despise

a man's parentage and to permit it to come between him and his deserts is to have the foundations of racial discontent deep and well-laid. A lasting connection between Great Britain and India is possible only on one condition, which the British nation has recognised again and again, and has solemnly undertaken to observe, but which the governing British caste in India has evaded time and again. That condition is that IN OUR OWN LAND OUR BIRTH SHALL NOT BE A DISQUALIFICATION. It is a matter of comparatively secondary importance what our status may be decreed to be in other countries within and beyond the British Empire. It may even be that, during all the time that Great Britain has control of the destinies of India, it may not once be governed quite exclusively in its own interests as is the right of every self-governing colony; but no Indian can reconcile himself to his country's being governed to the positive detriment at once of his interests and of his self-esteem, both at home and abroad.

Recognising the inestimable benefits of British rule, the people of India have all along been prepared to share with their fellow-subjects of Great Britain all the opportunities which the administration of the country and the development of its resources naturally involve. But to go further and demand that we shall labour under disabilities because we are of our own country and are not of the race of the British is, notwithstanding the contrary testimony of the few Indian sycophants of the Civil Service, to make an impossible demand. Because she could not govern herself without having recourse to a policy of differentiation on account of birth and religion, India had to come under the sway of

Great Britain. If Great Britain cannot do what we were unable to do, the reason of the British occupation of the country disappears. The substratum of British rule in India is that it is a rule pledged to mete out equal opportunities and equal justice to all. It has fulfilled the pledge with no little success so far as the relations between the races of the natives of the country are concerned, but in apportioning opportunities between the British and the peoples of India it has often violated the pledge and employed one measure in dealing with the Indian and quite a different and a more generous measure in dealing with the Briton. The times have so changed that this differential treatment could not but inspire in the Indian mind a feeling of legitimate discontent, and the very foundations of British supremacy have consequently been weakened. The interests at stake are of such a vital and far-reaching character that it will be nothing less than political imbecility to treat the subject with supercilious unconcern, and nothing less than a political crime to mislead the British public as to its gravity and possibilities. Providence has not ordained the Indo-British connection for the paltry purpose of creating a governing guild and a ruling caste with special privileges and exemptions. All that such a connection stands for, and all that it implies in the future, has too great a significance for both countries and the cause of higher civilisation to be sacrificed on the altar of petty racial bias. The silent assumption that India is a land of differences, and that the recognition of a ruling caste with privileges and exemptions of its own is therefore in the natural fitness of things there, is one that will guide the vessel of

Empire to the very rocks on which every ship of state has been wrecked in the past. It is by listening to this siren voice of evil counsel that every one at the helm of Indian destiny has come to grief in the history of India. It may be true to some extent to hold that India will be the prize of the Power that has the command of the sea, but it is truer still that she will remain in the possession of the country which, rising above the promptings of self-aggrandisement, holds aloft the sceptre of a sovereign before whom all are equal subjects with equal rights to the same opportunities.

The supreme test of self-denial is the test that, consistently throughout her history, India has employed in the case of every successive suitor. The Indo-Aryan, who was, in the days of his glory, great in arms, formidable in his intellectual grasp, obstinate in his questionings of objective nature and the great Reality behind it, who, as a conqueror and governor, ever strove to bring about a fusion of sentiments and civilisations, fell a prey to his spirit of exclusiveness and sense of detachment—and this not only enslaved him but condemned his political greatness to decay. The Semitic conquerors of India, whose sinewy arms and fiery zeal and cohesive personality were the greatest assets that any conquering community can desire, lost hold of the empire they had built by consigning their achievements to the flame of religious bigotry and the passion for communal preference. Racial bias, as a working factor in the government of millions of people, has nothing more to commend it to the acceptance of statesmen than religious bias. To disregard in the case of India the fundamental need of equal laws and equal opportunities is to

surrender the very title-deeds of empire and to enter a plea of inability to comply with the paramount condition of over-lordship. A true and unerring comprehension of Indian history ought to warn the British rulers of India that, in a land of differences, that Government alone will be stable which makes no difference between man and man as such, but only between competence and incompetence, between legality and illegality. If the British rulers of India cannot surpass their predecessors in grasping this crucial fact of Indian government, they cannot expect their empire in India to be *fundamentally* different from that of their predecessors, however much better it may be comparatively in other respects. On the other hand, being foreigners, they may fare worse, being essentially no better. It will therefore be a fatal self-delusion to believe that, in a land of differences, the British Government can afford to make differences between men of British and Indian descent. Excuses of little intrinsic value have often been advanced for justifying differences in the pay, prospects, and status of Indians and Europeans in the Public Service. One reason usually assigned is that the standard of living of the Englishman in India is higher than that of the Indian, and that the former has to incur expenditure on account of having to bring up his children in England. But if the standard of living is higher in the case of Englishmen, the standard of the domestic and social obligations of Indians is far higher than that of Englishmen; at the same time the standard of living of Indians has also considerably risen of late, the people of India being indebted for this to the influence of Western ideas and the introduction of articles of Western manufacture.

An Englishman lives for himself, his wife and children; whereas an Indian lives not only for his wife and children but for his parents, his brothers and sisters, and for a host of relatives whose children he feeds, clothes, and educates, and the expense of whose marriages he very often undertakes. An Indian in fact lives least and last of all for himself. Such a system of life may or may not be worthy of approval; there is no reason for carping if it be another's ideal of domestic responsibility, any more than we can question an Englishman's standard of living; but we cannot ignore it when taking into account the cost of living, if cost of living could ever be relevant. Indians in increasing numbers are also beginning to educate their children abroad, and, taking everything into consideration, an Indian finds it more difficult to make both ends meet and satisfy his domestic obligations, the demands made on his position and dignity, and the conveniences which a strenuous official life requires. It is this fact that has made differentiation between Indians and Englishmen more galling than it would have been if a mere sense of self-respect alone underlay the discontent. That intense dissatisfaction has in fact both a material basis and a moral justification.

If it be absurd to attribute racial inferiority to Indians on the score of their peculiar racial characteristics, if it be more absurd to deduce from such alleged inferiority any justification for excluding Indians theoretically or practically from any branch of the Public Service, if the plea that disabilities and differences fit in with the Indian view of things be a totally erroneous reading of the drift of Indian history, the declared policy of British rule in India

is clearly opposed to differentiation on the score of racial distinction.

The era of progressive statesmanship in the government of India may be said to have begun with the passing of the Charter Act of 1833, which terminated the trading functions of the East India Company and reformed the Government of India as a trust of the British Crown. That is the starting-point of the Government of India as an organisation purely political in character, conducted on behalf of the British Crown and Parliament in conformity with unblemished political and ethical conceptions. The Act itself was the outcome of one of the choicest periods of British history, and as a foundation of political supremacy over a foreign country, deserves to be regarded as the highest and wisest exposition of statecraft. It was the handiwork of men who belonged to an age when political ideals took precedence of political expediency, when political duty weighed more with those who had the conduct of affairs than political makeshift. After enacting provisions for the winding up of the concerns of the Company as a trading corporation, for the better government of the country, for the codification of laws, and the administration of justice, it enunciated what was to be the basic principle of British rule in India. It was provided by section 87 of that Act that "No native of the said territories nor any natural born subject of His Majesty resident therein shall by reason of his religion, place of birth, descent, colour, or any of them, be disabled from holding any place, office, or employment under the Company." British ministers and Indian politicians have frequently referred to this section, but the full range of

that clause will become clear only if we refer to the perspicuous despatch of the Board of Directors which they forwarded along with the Act to the Government of India. The wording of the section itself is beyond all possibility of perversion, and not even the most self-confident politician of our times can hope to distort its plain meaning. Religion, place of birth, descent, colour, or any of them shall not disable any native or natural born subject of His Majesty from holding any place, office, or employment under the Company. This section has not been abrogated by any of the succeeding enactments, and is therefore still in force, but has yet to be enforced in its full significance. If any proconsul of the day had objected to the insertion of this clause as detracting from the prestige of the ruling race, the objection would have been spontaneously dismissed, as making an infamous suggestion which wholly trespassed on the political morality of the age. Had any official on behalf of the Board of Directors sought to put a gloss on the section in communicating it to the Government of India, his presumption as well as political ineptitude would scarcely have been tolerated for the space of a week. For we have only to refer to the despatch of the Court of Directors to realise the importance which they attached to it politically, and the unreserved sincerity with which they sought to impress the Government of India that both Parliament and the Court of Directors fully meant what they said. They designated the subject-matter of the clause as "of the greatest moment, although not strictly of a legislative or superintending character." Nor did they look upon it as a provision intended to do credit to their sense of political justice, to remain an honour-

able feature of the Statute Book, a serviceable testimonial to national vanity, and no more than a flattering promise to the ear of the governed. The very reference to this section is preceded by the observation "that this important enactment should be understood in order that its *full spirit and intention may be transferred through our whole system of administration.*" It was not, in the considered opinion of the Court of Directors, for the purpose of being honoured in the breach that Parliament enacted it. They both were convinced that it could and should be fully observed in every branch of service. Nor did they seek to conceal from themselves or others the real nature of the provision. "You will observe," they wrote, "*that its object is not to ascertain qualification but to remove disqualification.*" They further thought it necessary to explain what they meant by the phrase "remove disqualification." Removing disqualification by reason of race and descent on one side necessarily meant abolishing all monopoly on the score of race and descent on the other side. The Court of Directors did not for a moment shrink from the fullest and frankest acceptance of such a logical consequence, and enlarged on the significance of the section as follows: "*The meaning of the enactment we take to be that there shall be no governing caste in British India, that whatever other tests of qualification may be adopted, distinctions of race or religion shall not be of the number; that no subject of the King, whether of Indian, British, or mixed descent, shall be excluded either from the posts usually conferred on our uncovenanted servants in India or from the covenanted service itself, provided he be otherwise eligible consistently with the rules and agreeably to the conditions*

observed and exacted in the one case and the other." No spokesman of any Indian political organisation, no radical member of Parliament has used stronger or plainer language in regard to the policy that ought to guide recruitment to the services of India. And yet, after the lapse of eighty years, there are Anglo-Indian worthies to-day clamouring for the perpetuation of a governing caste with an exclusive charter of monopoly, exemptions, and privileges. To them the mantle of Manu and the robe of Aurangzeb have an inexplicable fascination, quite incompatible with the robust and manly sense of self-respect of the race to which they belong, and the dictates of justice and expediency as understood by their countrymen of eighty years ago. "*Whatever OTHER tests of qualification may be adopted, distinctions of race or religion shall not be of the number.*" How direct and unmistakable the mandate! The advocates of the racial inferiority of Indians seem to have been taken in hand even then, and their plea fully and unmistakably understood and put out of court with no kind of express or implied reservation. Addressing the Government of India, the Court of Directors said, "You well know, and indeed have in some important respects carried into effect, our desire that natives should be admitted to places of trust as freely and extensively as a regard for the due discharge of the functions attached to such places will permit. Even judicial duties of magnitude and importance are now confided to their hands; partly no doubt from considerations of economy, but partly also on the principles of a liberal and comprehensive policy; still a line of demarcation to some extent in exclusion has been maintained; certain offices are appropriated

to them, from certain others they are debarred—not because these latter belong to the covenanted Service, and the former do not belong to it, but professedly on the ground that the average amount of native qualifications can be presumed only to rise to a certain limit. *It is this line of demarcation which the present enactment obliterates or rather for which it substitutes another*, wholly irrespective of the distinction of races. *Fitness is henceforth to be the criterion of eligibility.*” The sum and substance of the above is that not only was fitness to be the criterion of eligibility, *but there was to be no presumption as to the maximum limit of fitness that might be possessed by men of Indian or mixed descent.* The Court of Directors in enforcing this train of thought went a step further. They were not only convinced of the fitness of Indians, just as they were of the fitness of Europeans, but they enjoined upon the Government of India the establishment of institutions whose function it would be to impart to Indian youths the education and culture which would enable them to compete on *equal* terms with the European candidates for office, who enjoyed the benefits of such institutions in their own country. They drew the attention of the Government of India to this aspect of this question in the following words: “While on the one hand it may be anticipated that the range of public situations accessible to the natives and mixed races will gradually be enlarged, it is on the other hand to be recollected that, as settlers from Europe find their way into the country, *this class of persons will probably furnish candidates for those very situations to which the natives and mixed race will have admittance.* Men of European enterprise and education will appear in

the field ; and it is by the prospect of this event that we are led particularly to impress the lesson already alluded to on your attention. *In every view it is important that the indigenous people or those among them who by their habits, character, or position may be induced to aspire to office, should, as far as possible, be qualified to meet their European competitors.* Thence there arises a powerful argument for the promotion of every design tending to the improvement of the natives, whether by conferring on them the advantages of civilisation or by diffusing among them the treasures of science, knowledge, and moral culture." The Court of Directors, instead of postulating the racial inferiority of the Indians as an article of faith, declared in the first place that there was no justification for maintaining a line of demarcation between the natives of India and the natives of Europe as to the presumptive capacity of each race. In the next place, and as a consequence, they repudiated alike the justice and the expediency of making provision for "A GOVERNING CASTE." Thirdly, to effectuate their convictions in regard to what they declared "a matter of the greatest moment," they urged the "promotion of every design tending to the improvement of the natives." By the side of such an enunciation of the policy of British rule in India at the very moment when it was by statute constituted a trust for the Crown, it is both immoral and impolitic in the highest degree, after a lapse of eighty years, to press for the continuance of racial disabilities against Indians, as a political creed, or to delay the total removal of all racial barriers in the government of the country.

When we reach the next great stage at which the

principles of Indian Government were affirmed once again, we come to the assumption of the government of the country by the Crown of England. Although the immediate cause of that event was the Mutiny, it is needless to labour at great length the inference that all influences were clearly in favour of the transfer of India to the direct control of the Crown, and of the abolition of the government of the country by a corporation. Nail after nail had been driven into the coffin of the Company's political and sovereign rights, till at last, nearly four years before the Mutiny, even its right of patronage was taken away from the Court of Directors. That sanguinary outbreak only precipitated what was bound to follow so far as the assumption of direct control of Indian territories by the Crown of England was concerned. Is it to be presumed that any statute enacted or proclamation issued in 1858 would have rendered nugatory privileges conceded a quarter of a century before, when India was declared a trust of the Crown? The principle of equality of treatment promised in the proclamation of Queen Victoria, as the first sovereign ruler of India, was merely a solemn reiteration of the principle enunciated in the Charter of 1833. It was merely pledging the faith of a Sovereign to what Parliament and the British Constitution had already conceded as a statutory right. The very first promise to the peoples of India is, "We hold ourselves bound to the natives of Indian territories by the same obligations of duty which bind us to all our other subjects, and those obligations by the blessing of Almighty God we shall faithfully and conscientiously fill." England does not lie under one kind of obligation to Englishmen and under

another kind of obligation to Indians. England, at any rate, has forbidden herself to subordinate the interests of Indians to those of Englishmen, whatever Anglo-India may hold to the contrary. In particular regard to offices under the Crown, Queen Victoria stated in her proclamation, "It is our further will that so far as may be, our subjects of whatever race or creed be freely and impartially admitted to offices in our service, the duties of which they may be qualified by their education, ability, and integrity duly to discharge." A notable but most humiliating attempt was once made by the last of the Viceroys of Queen Victoria to distort the plain meaning of this clause by reading into it a warrant for the maintenance of racial differences in the admission to higher offices. Since, however, Lord Morley in his capacity as the responsible Minister for Indian affairs has definitely and unequivocally repudiated that perverse and perverted interpretation, it is needless for us to discuss the wholly untenable and utterly ridiculous part that Lord Curzon deigned to play in a matter of utmost importance to the interests of the British Empire. We are bound to state that in nothing else that he did or said was the brilliant ex-Viceroy guilty of such reckless disservice to the cause of the Empire as on that occasion. He caused a serious diminution in the faith of India in British rectitude and British regard for the pledge of a Sovereign given on her accession to the Sovereignty of India. It was not until Lord Curzon sought to repudiate the full force of the proclamation and to deprive it of the very significance which India had passionately attached to it for half a century, that she came to feel humiliated and

crestfallen for all the trust she had implicitly placed in the words of her first great Sovereign. But Lord Curzon's folly, except for the disservice that he rendered, deserves to be ignored in any reference to the proclamation of Queen Victoria. Although as a sober fact it has not given the people of India anything more than the Act of 1833 gave, and has not laid any greater emphasis on our claims than the Despatch of the Court of Directors did, its profound importance in the eyes of Indians has been due to the reverence in which this country holds the promises and pledges of a Sovereign. The proclamation has consecrated the statute of Parliament and the guarantees of the Court of Directors. The British nation stands pledged by the act of its Supreme Legislature and the word of its Sovereign to remove every vestige of disqualification on the ground of descent, and to afford equal opportunities to the peoples of India to prove their fitness for entering every section of the public service of the country. To persist in an attitude of sullen or active antagonism to so deliberate and solemn a pledge is to be politically fatuous, and indeed immoral to an extraordinary extent. It is wilfully to undermine the faith of the governed in the honesty of purpose not of a band of official mandarins, but of the very nation which secures to the sway of its Sovereign an Empire the like of which no emperor has ruled over in the past. Nor can the official hierarchy concerned be judge of the situation in so momentous a question; it cannot even be a competent witness, being in fact the party against whom judgment long ago delivered has been awaiting execution. It must therefore be obvious to every one who can think without bias that it

is useless to expect judgment to be executed with the consent of the party affected. The British nation cannot continue to ignore the want of policy in leaving things as they are, until its hands are forced by a widespread agitation which, however legitimate in its object, and however loyal in its outlook, cannot but intensify the sense of injustice which is already sufficiently keen in the country.

The first reform necessary as regards the services is an absolute removal of all racial disabilities in any branch of the civil administration of the country. Although the holding of the Civil Service Examination simultaneously in England and India has attracted greater attention, still it is a question of secondary importance compared with the total exclusion of Indians from certain branches of the Public Service. There is no racial bar as regards the Civil Service, but its scheme has operated against the interests of Indians, and has contributed to an economic loss. In the case of the other branches, they have not only adversely affected our economic interests, but have violated both the letter and the spirit of the statutes and proclamations which guarantee to every Indian freedom from disqualification on the ground of his parentage. It is one thing to hold a qualifying or a competitive examination in England or India only, or in England and India simultaneously; it is an entirely different thing to confine such an examination to British candidates or to man any branch of the Public Service exclusively with a staff of British race. For instance, to provide that no Indian should be eligible for the Police Examination held in England, or that the Indian Educational Service should be reserved to Europeans, is a plan that can

hardly be condemned in measured language. All such disabilities must be banished from the realms of Indian administration by a stroke of the pen.

On turning to the framework of administration, the first criticism to be offered is that every department has been so organised as to furnish an avenue of employment to Europeans on a handsome scale of pay and pension, regardless of the burden of the tax-payer and the needs of the country. If India has to pay a tribute to England, let it be levied in a manner just and equitable to both without impairing the rights, interests, and self-respect of the natives of India. By all means let them be asked to contribute to the Imperial expenditure on the Navy, and let this contribution go towards a reduction *to some small extent at least of the burden of taxation of the ENTIRE British nation.* Indian loyalty is such that India will be proud to render unto Cæsar what is Cæsar's; she cannot but feel unhappy and aggrieved if she is asked to bear the white man's burden when he chooses to load her with all the paraphernalia of rules and regulations, codes and covenants, designed for the perpetuation of a governing caste. Let India be governed honestly and sincerely in her own interests, and she will not only be prepared to pay the price for this, but to reward the service with her whole heart and strength as no self-governing colony can bring itself to do. If the position of India is such as at times to excite pity, at times contempt, at times an arrogant disregard of her protests and appeals, India is for all that a country which, if rightly understood and properly served, will be an unfailing storehouse of power and strength for the nation that has the possession of her heart and hand. Among

the countries of the world she is the priceless divine Cow of the *Puranic* lore which could satisfy every longing of the heart, and whose original home was in the abode of the gods; she is the divine tree of legendary tradition, to sit under which and wish is to have the wish fulfilled. What Great Britain and every previous ruling power has tried to extract from her is as nothing when compared with what she can give out of the abundance of a full heart. Let the British nation, let even the Civil Service, which can at times think unselfishly, consider in all seriousness whether it is not nobler and more profitable in the long run for both nations to exact the tribute of India in a form honourable to both and not calculated to dwarf Indian manhood, blunt Indian susceptibilities, and furnish cause for perpetual antagonisms and antipathies. The payment for protection is not half as vicious in its nature or effect as the imposition of the burden of a governing race *on the soil of the country*, and a monopoly of places of power and authority to the prejudice and exclusion of the children of the land. This monopoly can neither cement the bonds of mutual esteem and trust, nor benefit the entire British nation. So long as India has to employ such a large number of well-paid Britons, it will not only be false to aver that Great Britain rules over foreign countries without exacting a tribute, but nearer the truth to affirm that so far as India is concerned, she exacts it in a highly odious and grossly injurious form, which does not benefit the governing country as a whole, and makes the governed poorer in many ways, not financially alone.

We deduce, then, two principles which should be

the foundation of the administration of India : firstly, the absolute and entire abolition of all racial disability ; and secondly, the fashioning of the services in regard to pay, prospects, and pension so as to meet the actual needs of the country, and not so as to furnish a selection of offices and openings for men of British birth. We do not mean to say that the latter change can be accomplished in a moment, although the former can be and ought to be ; but British statesmen and the flower of the Indian Civil Service (not that portion which is ever ready to make an unbecoming exhibition of racial bias, but the thoughtful, the spiritually inclined, the manfully patriotic section) ought to undertake a reorganisation of the services on these lines. The task is easy, but the difficulty has been for a long time in the unwillingness of England to respond to our call, in the stifling of her own political conscience.

SECTION II

The Evolution of an Indian Executive Service

A wholly wrong turn has been given to the discussion about the Civil Service Examination. On the one hand it has been made to appear that the British Government would dissolve and cease to be, were that examination held in England and India, while on the other hand, that arrangement has been sought after, as though it would be a panacea for all our ill-luck as a nation. The primary question of supreme importance to this country in regard to the Civil Service as well as the other services, however, is not whether the examination should be held in one or two countries, but

whether such a service as the Civil Service, with its present cadre and scale of pay and pension as the *exclusive higher* service of the country, is at all justifiable in the economic interests of India and from the standpoint of the future of Indian administration. It should also be borne in mind that an era of expenditure on education in all its branches, on sanitation, rural and urban, on public works, productive and unproductive, and on improved and extended road and railway communications, has already dawned. All of them demand equally earnest and equally prompt attention although the allotments made in each case may differ. A cumbrous administration combined with an excessively costly system of military defence has for a long time prevented a sufficient provision for these purposes. The taxation of the country, especially that imposed on all incomes and more particularly on incomes of temporarily settled lands, has reached the breaking point. Under such conditions the primary consideration should be to ease the burden of administration by reorganising the services in a manner that will effect substantial economy without impairing efficiency. This is possible only by a considerably larger employment of qualified Indian agents in the higher branches of administration. It will be easily realised that such a change can hardly be accomplished by merely holding the Civil Service Examination simultaneously in England and India. Although we consider on the highest political and economical grounds that no difference in point of pay should be made between a European and an Indian when the office filled is the same, still there can be no manner of objection to an Indian Executive Service organised on

principles that will effect economy and retrenchment, and at the same time throw open to the natives of the country a large field of employment in the higher ranks of the Public Service. There are a few propositions that can be confidently laid down in this connection which may be expected to find acceptance in all quarters, except the extremist sections of Indians and Europeans. These are, firstly, that the bulk of the places in the higher ranks of the Public Service should be reorganised so as to effect a substantial saving to the Treasury consistent with the employment, irrespective of racial considerations, of efficient and honest men; secondly, that the system of appointment should be such as to allow competent natives to gain admission without being called upon to face unusual risks for the mere chance of it; and thirdly, that in effecting these two reforms regard should be had to the fact that India is not yet in a position entirely to dispense with all such provisions as are intended to secure a certain proportion of the British and the "British-trained Indian element" in the controlling staff of the Public Service. All of these propositions, although of necessity they are stated seriatim, are of equal importance in intrinsic value. Any scheme that secures these requirements may nevertheless be open to objections on other grounds, but one which satisfies them in the main will be preferable, notwithstanding such objections, to another that lacks this essential element.

The scheme that will best serve such a purpose will divide the Public Service of India into two main classes: (1) the technical, and (2) the general and administrative. The higher staff of all the departments

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of a technical character such as the medical, public works, forest, and educational, which require expert knowledge, should be recruited by Europeans or Indians with European qualifications who have passed a qualifying or competitive examination in England, or by distinguished Europeans in any of the above branches for temporary periods on special terms. Indians with special aptitude for any of these departments as shown by their collegiate qualification in India should be enabled by a fairly large number of scholarships to go to Western countries to acquire the necessary higher training. At the same time the educational institutions in India in these branches should be continually improved so as to dispense in course of time with any need for recruitment in England. The subordinate ranks of these services should be recruited partly by nomination from among candidates passing a qualifying or competitive examination in this country, and partly by the promotion of competent men from the lower ranks of the Service, no difference being made in point of pay and pension between these two classes of the Subordinate Service. A certain percentage of the places reserved for men of British training should be kept open for highly competent members of the Subordinate Service.

The general and administrative branches fall naturally under two divisions, judicial and executive. The judicial comprehends the entire province of administration of justice on the civil and criminal side, while all offices other than judicial and technical will come under Executive, which under the proposed scheme will consist of two services, the Indian Civil and the Indian Executive. The judicial

should be placed entirely under the authority of the High Court, and the recruitment to it should be partly from among the members of the Bar directly, partly from among the members of the Subordinate Judicial Service, and partly from among the members of the Executive Service who may have aptitude for judicial work. Judicial officers of the same branch must draw the same salary, although in regard to annuities they may fall under different classifications according to the conditions of recruitment. With regard to the Executive Service the most desirable course would be to amalgamate the administrative staff of all sections of the Revenue, Police, and Excise departments, and include in the cadre of the Service all places which carry a monthly salary of Rs. 400 and upwards. Any place in these departments which carries such pay will belong to a member of the Indian Executive Service, unless it is held by a member of the Indian Civil Service—the total number of all such places should be equally divided between the members of the Indian Executive and Indian Civil Services. The scale of pay of the Indian Executive Service should be from Rs. 400 to Rs. 1600, and its members should be entitled to a pension of Rs. 600 after an active service of twenty-four years. This would only include privilege leave for a maximum period of two years (which should be permitted to accumulate for six months at a time) and exclude all other kinds of leave. Furlough for a total term of two years on half pay, and leave on medical certificate on such terms as may be determined, should be excluded from the term of active service. The recruitment for the Indian Executive Service should be made entirely in India and confined to natives

of the country of pure or mixed descent. Appointments should be made only after a competitive examination conducted by the Civil Service Commissioners (in England), provision being made for one of them to come out to India annually for purposes of the examination. This should be held only at Bombay under the direct supervision of the Home Secretary to the Government of India and the Civil Service Commissioner. The standard of the examination should not be below the M.A. examination of any Indian University, and regard should be had to the conditions of Indian education. Only graduates of Indian or British Universities, of a good physique and character, not below twenty-two and not above twenty-five years of age, should be eligible, and should not be allowed to compete on more than two occasions. With regard to the field of employment all branches of land revenue and administration, police and excise, and a certain proportion of places in the higher ranks of the judicial department, should be open to the members of the Indian Executive Service. They should be posted as the exigencies of the Public Service may demand, although usually natives of one province will not be posted to another, as a knowledge of the people, customs, and language will be of advantage to them in the execution of their duties. Confirmation in their appointments should depend upon their passing all the necessary tests within a period of three years. A member of this Service would be entitled to retire on being qualified for full pension or on the completion of three years thereafter, beyond which no extension should be available, provided always that no extension would

be available in any case after his sixtieth year. Invalid and proportionate pensions should be allowed on the same terms to the Indian Civil and Executive Services. Every member in the Indian Executive Service should be guaranteed to rise up to Rs. 1200 within a certain time, and the periodical increment to the salary should be regulated accordingly by the device of posting a member to an office carrying his particular grade of pay in any of the branches open to him, with due provision for retaining in any particular branch those who have a marked aptitude for it without prejudice to their emoluments. The financial department may continue to be recruited as at present, except that the Secretary of State should have in his patronage more nominations for Indians only.

The proposal to distribute the more highly-paid offices in the police department between the members of the Indian Executive and Civil Services calls for a word of justification. From the very beginning the superior ranks of the Indian police have been placed within easy access of the inefficient cousins of the members of the Civil and Military Services of India, and of others who without any particular aptitude or claim have been the favoured recipients of the patronage of the India Office. The examination held in England for recruitment to the Indian police has been, in clear and deliberate violation of the statute of Parliament and the proclamation of the Queen, exclusively reserved for candidates of British parentage, with the result that the standard of that examination has been kept low, and with the more deplorable consequence that the lower ranks of the Service have escaped that supervision which

competent Indian officers alone could have exercised over them. The recent reforms as regards the admission of Indians as Deputy Superintendents of Police have not achieved and cannot achieve the necessary modicum of success until the superior staff placed over them is thoroughly overhauled and its members drawn from a much better class, intellectually and socially, than is the case at present. Unless this is done, Indians of good families and high University qualifications will continue to find it rather a trial to serve under men who are not only of a far lower calibre in every respect than the members of the Indian Civil Service, but of distinctly inferior attainments compared with themselves. It is a notorious fact that most of the European members either remain ignorant of the vernacular or pick up only a very limited knowledge of it, are led by their camp clerks, do not bring to bear on their work a necessary knowledge of the country and its affairs and a sufficiently industrious devotion to duty, and are further deficient in cultured dealing with their Indian subordinates of rank and position—all of which failings detract from an efficient and successful control of district police work. Of greater consequence is their inability, due to their social isolation, to keep themselves in touch with public opinion as to the work of the police staff and the doings of their subordinates. They are ignorant of how the subordinate police officials exercise the authority vested in them, and to what purposes they employ the large powers with which the law of the country must arm them. If a subordinate can manage to be a paragon of departmental obedience, and to ingratiate himself in some agreeable cases with

the European Superintendent, his authority becomes paramount in spite of a well-informed intermediary in the person of the Indian Deputy Superintendent of Police. One reason why the work of the police in most of the progressive native states is far superior to the work of the British Indian Police, and why the subjects of native states of fairly respectable position are to a considerable extent exempt from the *zoolum* of the police, is that the controlling heads of the department as well as the district heads are natives of the country, whom every important event reaches through a hundred channels of information. No police official can practise extortion, fathering on innocent parties any kind of serious misconduct in the detection or prevention of crime, without the head of the department and of the district coming to know of it. It is the fact that the superior officers who are natives of the country are certain to be apprised of his misdeeds that keeps the subordinate police official in the native state within bounds. In British India these conditions are wholly unknown, and the consequent fear is entirely absent. The subordinate has only to behave to the satisfaction of the superior in order to have his own way with those who are committed to his authority; and there is no method whereby that superior can know anything of his subordinate's ways and means. *It is impossible to make the European Superintendent a native of the country*, and so long as he has not those channels of obtaining information which are naturally open to the natives of the country, he must labour under a serious disadvantage, and the result of it must be to affect the *moral* of the force. Real reform of the police must therefore begin *from the top*, and

the best way of doing it is to appropriate not less than two-thirds of the higher offices to the Indian Executive Service and the other one-third to the Indian Civil Service. Provision must also be made for engaging the services of competent British police officers for temporary periods on special terms for the introduction of up-to-date methods of police work.

To turn to the Indian Civil Service, the scale of pay and pension must be retained as it is, but the total length of service should be twenty-four years, only including privilege leave for two years within the term of service counting for pension, and excluding all other kinds of leave, as proposed in the case of the Indian Executive Service. The Civil Service Examination should continue to be open to Indians and Englishmen alike, and should be held only in England under arrangements essentially identical with the present scheme. This will secure the third requirement laid down above as to the necessity of guaranteeing the inclusion of the British and British-trained Indian element in the higher ranks of the Public Service. There need be no fear that to keep this examination open to Indians, without any restriction on the number who may be admitted, will materially minimise the number of British candidates entering the Service. The formation of an Indian Executive Service almost analogous to the Indian Civil Service and of sufficient prestige and substantial prospects, will afford adequate incentive to most of the deserving aspirants in India; and of the remainder, few only will prefer the risks involved in competing for the I.C.S. If at any time there should be found sufficient grounds to warrant a belief that a limit should be placed on the number of Indians thus

entering the Service in order that a reasonable percentage of Britishers in the Service may be secured, any reasonable limitation that the circumstances then justify might be adopted. If such a time comes, instead of considering such limitation necessary, perhaps the British nation and the Civil Service itself may conclude that it is an evidence that the shrinkage of the British element in the Public Service of India need not cause uneasiness, being but a necessary consequence of British progress in India. Anyhow such a contingency need not be considered before it has arisen.

Administrators may ask whether members of the Indian Executive Service would have to be content with a maximum pay of Rs. 1600 per month, and whether none of the higher offices would be open to them. We must give an unequivocal reply in the affirmative, after a careful consideration of all the issues involved. After all we must recognise that the Public Service of a country is not the only source or even one of the best sources of enrichment for its people. The fact that India is industrially backward, coupled with the circumstance that it is governed by a foreign country and administered by a close bureaucracy, has been the primary reason for the predominant influence of the Public Service in India. It would be an evil day should the belief become prevalent that every one who could get or wished to get 3000 and 4000 rupees a month might get it out of the public coffers. Equally important is the consideration that, if such places are not reserved for the members of the Indian Civil Service, there will be absolutely no inducement for Indians of ability to compete for the Civil Service Examination, and we shall have to forgo the

benefit of having British-trained Indians in the higher ranks. Again, it may occasionally be necessary to take some of these places out of the hands of the regular "Service men," and to fill them by competent outsiders from England or by capable non-official Indians. For instance, there should be no superstitious objection to our giving the Inspector-Generalship of Police to a competent British police-officer unconnected with the Indian Civil Service, or to a distinguished Indian whose administration of the department would be certain to bring it into line with the actual needs of the community. Just as a non-official Indian has been made a member of the Executive Council, there is no reason why a competent non-official Indian should not have a departmental portfolio for a quinquennium. *As India progresses, the Service men will come to take the place they occupy in England and in every politically advanced country; they will occupy a rank below those who, by reason of a capacity to fashion the work of a department so as to suit the public needs, will do better justice to its control than men who have aged in the work of the department, and are therefore incapacitated from bringing a fresh mind and new ideas into it.*

The departure proposed above will lead to an abolition of all the "listed" places and confine the provincial service to salaries up to Rs. 400 a month. The provincial service will include—(1) in the judicial department, three grades of District Munsifs who may be invested with criminal powers also as a necessary result of the separation of judicial from Executive functions, and who may be classified under three scales of pay, Rs. 200, 300, and 400; (2) in the revenue department, three grades of Deputy Collectors on

Rs. 250, 350, and 400 ; (3) in the police, three grades of Deputy Superintendents on the same pay as above ; and (4) in the Salt, Abkari, and separate revenue department, it will include four grades of officers on Rs. 250, 300, 350, and 400.

The task of co-ordinating the cadre of the Indian Executive Service and that of the Indian Civil Service will call for a patient handling, but no insurmountable difficulty need be expected. In certain departments, such as the Police and Excise, the proportion may be two-thirds of the Indian Executive and one-third of the Indian Civil Service ; in the branches of Land Revenue and Administration below district charges, it may be in equal proportions ; while in regard to district charges it may be in any suitable proportion between one-third and two-thirds, and half and half. For instance, out of 27 offices of the grade of District Collector in the Madras Presidency, 12 instead of 6 may be included in the third grade, but on a salary of Rs. 1600 only, and these 12 may go to the Indian Executive Service ; out of the balance of 15, 5 may be in the first grade and 10 in the second grade, both of which may be reserved to the Indian Civil Service. In offices below the rank of district charge the division may be in equal proportions, but a uniform designation of Assistant Collector alone may be adopted. Such a system as this does not perpetuate the injustice of one salary for Indians and another for Englishmen in the same office and in the same grade, but reserves one of the grades entirely to the Indian Executive Service, and therefore cannot be considered objectionable on the above ground.

We have now to refer briefly to the proposal of a simultaneous Civil Service Examination as an

alternative solution. Our objections to it are—(1) it will not effect appreciable economy especially because of the enormous amount now most unproductively consumed in the payment of annuities on a lavishly high scale to the retired civil servants; (2) it will not open out such a large field of employment to Indians as the proposed scheme; and (3) there are practical difficulties in the way. Everybody knows that the Civil Service cadre is meant not so much for India as for the Englishmen who come out to India. Should the task of framing a scale of pay and pension be left to Indians, they will certainly not frame it on the same excessive scale as now. Therefore we do not see why, simply because we claim a larger opening for Indians, we should fall back upon a scale of emoluments so very much in excess of the actual requirements of the case. Our object should therefore be to take out of the fold of the Civil Service a substantially large number of offices which can be efficiently occupied by Indians, so as to bring about simultaneously economy in administration and greater justice to the claims of Indians. Should we simply persist in demanding that the Civil Service Examination should be held simultaneously in England and India, we should be only insisting on a perpetuation of a cumbrous and costly system of administration for the country. Again, a scheme of simultaneous examination will not result in opening out such a large field of employment to Indians as the other proposal. Those who are trained in Oxford, Cambridge, and London by expert coaches and can take up a number of languages, and have, further, the advantage, by no means slight, of the English climate, will be in an infinitely

better position. If a few of those Indians who are in the Indian Civil Service could come forward and say that they would have found a place within the required number had they prosecuted their studies and appeared for the examination only in India, there would be some ground to hope for beneficial results from a simultaneous examination; but we do not believe such a testimony is likely to be forthcoming at all. In fact it will be unfair to subject Indian and British candidates to the same competitive test under these conditions. The probabilities are that the concession will be found not much more than an apple of Sodom for a long time to come, and, during this period, we shall be in the position of those who have cut from beneath their feet the ground for demanding other concessions. The "listed" posts would be out of our hands, the simultaneous examination will not materially add to the total area of employment under Indian agency, while the burden of administration will continue to remain the same as it is. We do not deny that by dint of perseverance a few (but hardly ever more than six) Indians sitting in India may come out successful; but of what value is that compared with the gain of annexing at a sweep, to the cause of administrative economy, and for the benefit of the largest number of the most capable among the young men of India, practically half the domain now occupied by the Civil Service? Again, there are practical difficulties in the way. Apart from the impossibility of the examination being literally simultaneous, the main question is whether those Indians who get through should be compelled to undertake a stay in England as is urged by a considerable section of

public opinion. If they are to be so compelled, the justice as much as the expediency of the compulsion is open to grave question. It is one thing for a student to be required to resort to a place of examination, but it is an entirely different thing for him to be compelled to go on a semi-superstitious pilgrimage after passing the examination, merely to show that he was at least for a time in a casteless country. There is no ostensible object in requiring him to do so except that he must have emerged from the "purification" or the "pollution," as it may be regarded, of having stayed in England. There is no question but that travel is good; there is no denying that one who has not gone to the West is ignorant of a mighty type of civilisation, just as there is on the other side the fact that a European who has not set foot on Eastern soil is ignorant of a current of thought and an aspect of life which have a sublime and an awe-compelling meaning to those who come to understand them. All this is beside the question at issue. What is there to occupy an Indian who passes the Indian Civil Service Examination in India for a term of at least two years in England? He has no examination; he has no responsibilities; he has solved the problem of livelihood; and his temporary migration and stay in England, all at the cost of the Indian taxpayer, is an exciting excursion. Of course it would be an admirable thing, should he do it at his own cost. As a scheme of things to be enforced by the Government and borne by the taxpayer it seems to be an utterly grotesque proposal. Nor can it be said in most cases that on his return from England he will be in all essential respects a man changed for the better. He is certain to resume his place in society,

and although he may allow himself a wider margin of liberty individually, he is scarcely likely to become a "black European." The result of the elimination of such a condition will be, on the other hand, that there will come into existence a class of Indian civilians who, on account of all absence of contact with the West, cannot but suffer in prestige in the eyes of the Government and in the eyes of their fellow-members as an anomalous section of the Civil Service. They will be all the same in receipt of a scale of pay and pension which can be looked upon only as an unmerited exaction for intellectual merit of a kind. While that scale of pay and pension was originally framed for Englishmen who took risks in coming out to India, and for Indians who also took risks in going out to England, the step suggested will seriously tend to lower the prestige of the entire service. To place them on a lower footing in regard to pay and pension because they pass the examination in India and are not required to go to England either before or after, will be from all points of view inexpedient in the highest degree, since they will be of the same service with identical qualifications but differently situated in regard to pay and annuity. Above all, the real need of the country is the constitution of a service which will afford reasonable scope in its higher ranks without requiring Indians to face such unreasonable risks as under the present system. The larger conceptions of nationality and patriotism, the desire for the opportunity to obtain a decent start in the public service (not as a matter of patronage or favour, but as a matter of merit and therefore as a matter of right), are the promptings that have to

be met and satisfied ; and the simultaneous examination will not provide the most suitable method of doing it, while from the point of view of the interests of Indians also, judged from the actual needs of the situation, economical as well as political, it will be far wide of the mark. There are two considerations that may be enforced on the thoughtful section of the British and Indian public, two considerations that are in fact two aspects of the same position and of equal importance. These are, firstly, that the time is not come for us to dispense with the maintenance of an Indian Civil Service which will continue to possess the prestige of being wholly recruited in England, whatever may be the proportion of Indians and Englishmen on it ; and secondly, that the time has come for us to have in India on sound and satisfactory lines almost analogous to the Indian Civil Service and next to it only in point of prestige, an Indian Executive Service which, when the time comes, can replace the Indian Civil Service completely and necessitate the importation from the ruling country of no more than heads of provincial governments, experts in special fields of knowledge, and financiers and councillors. The organisation of such a service is of immense importance, having regard to the present and future requirements of India. What we want is to see the beginnings of an era when India will be governed in India and administered by Indians ; what will be of greater service to us is a wider training of a larger number of Indians in the more responsible sections of the Executive Service ; and the bringing into existence of an Indian *corps d'élite* which will be of increasingly greater value because possessing all the efficiency

of an excellent Civil Service at a cost appreciably less than that which we have now to pay; in a word, an Indian, and not merely a provincial service, is the need of the country both from an economical and political standpoint. In order that this may be more effectively possible, in order that the prestige of the Indian administration may not suffer during the evolution, improvement, and perfection of such a service, it is essential that the Indian Civil Service should be continued and should enjoy substantially its present emoluments, and that it should have as a whole the prestige of being recruited by an examination in England only. To put it in another way, the demand made on the Indian Civil Service is to help in the creation of its present coadjutor and its future successor. A completely autonomous India cannot without exciting ridicule and suffering a heavy financial handicap, recruit its Civil Service in England, but that recruitment as India advances must be confined to India and India alone. In order that this may be possible at the right time, the organisation of an Indian Executive Service is of vital importance, much more than an objectless and nerveless and economically unserviceable concession of a simultaneous Civil Service examination with all the drawbacks and difficulties that it involves.

If such a service as we have described above is not to be organised, if the holding of the Civil Service Examination simultaneously is to be withheld, and if the question is to be solved by an addition to the number of listed posts, we may take it as a sign of British failure to cope with Indian problems in the right spirit, with sufficient vigour, under-

standing, and insight. Not concessional crumbs, not a workhouse donation, not a poor-box gift, not a charity dole—not this, but the facing of the real situation, the solving of a problem that has been shirked and shelved time after time, the requisition of finer powers of organisation, and the display of a higher capacity for progressive government, is what is wanted now. If there comes an intelligent, cordial, and sincere response to this call, the withholding of a simultaneous examination need not be regretted, and the labours of a Royal Commission on the Public Services in India, some of whose members at any rate do not lack the unclouded discernment of statesmen and the imperial patriotism of the British race, and none of whose members can be totally oblivious to the gravity of the situation, will not be in vain.

Briefly to recapitulate. Conformably to the provisions of Parliament and declarations of the Crown no disability should be imposed on the natives of the country on the score of descent; the Public Service should be reorganised so as to effect substantial economy and to afford a much larger area of employment in the higher ranks to a large number of competent Indians; and lastly, an Indian Executive Service should be evolved which will displace the Civil Service within a prescribed period and occupy its place in the administrative machinery of a self-governing India. A solution such as this will meet the crying needs of economy in administration, and will also satisfy the demands made by education, interprovincial unity, and the assimilation of ideas of a common political nationality under the British *ægis*.

CHAPTER XIII

THE PROBLEMS OF INDIAN EDUCATION

SECTION I

The Toll of a Foreign Rule

THE difficulties that are in all countries generally attendant on any attempt to devise a sound system of education in science or art are accentuated in the case of India by the fact that the government of the country is in the hands of a foreign nation, and the medium of instruction necessarily a foreign tongue. Consequently the very purpose of education has had to be subordinated to the demands made on educational institutions for the supply of the necessary personnel for the recruitment of the subordinate branches of administration. The higher aims of mental culture, scientific research, intelligent exploration of the treasures buried in the ancient classics of the country, and the co-ordination of knowledge, have all had to be persistently kept in the background. If we try to imagine a country of the size of Europe without Russia, subject to the centralised control of a body of persons foreign to it in every respect, we can guess how the system of education would be made subservient to the needs of its administration. Even though we realise the

enormity of the evil of a system of education in which administrative exigencies are so predominant, we cannot free it from the thralldom of those exigencies. The price of intellectual subordination that was perforce paid for this purpose during a continuous series of years, accounts for the intellectual barrenness of India in recent times. Although the payment of the price could not be avoided, the time is now come for the authorities to be aware of it and do all they can to mitigate its effect. There can be no question under the circumstances of the obligation of the State in the field of education. It has assumed, in addition to the ordinary responsibilities of education in any country, the custody of the moral and intellectual advancement of the people, and it must therefore widen its vision so as to perceive the full extent of its responsibility. For a long time now the Government has concentrated its attention on, and more or less confined its financial assistance to, that kind of education which would supply an adequate number of employees for its own service or for the purposes of those professions closely identified with the administration of the country. The recognised duty of the State as regards universal elementary education, the starting and equipping of model technical institutions, the inspiring and aiding of scientific research, have remained practically outside the purview of the Government. It has become necessary, however, to inaugurate a new era of State obligation in the field of education, which will furnish at the same time a powerful incentive for the community to play its own part in the diffusion of knowledge, the promotion of culture, and the encouragement

of mental effort. Further, the success of all administrative undertakings and reforms in a land of illiteracy such as India, which is also governed by a foreign nation, depends so much on a sound conception of State obligation in regard to education, that it will be a serious omission to ignore the problems of Indian education in a treatise concerning the government of the country. Modern civilisation and the canons of political responsibility in many advanced states render free elementary education the duty of the State, and regard secondary and technical education as the duty, and higher education as the privilege, of the parent. In many countries, just as the State has a right to compel its subjects to observe the rules of sanitation for the common good, so also has it taken upon itself the right of compelling every boy or girl to be educated at its own cost. For to be illiterate is to be potentially insanitary and ineligible for the exercise of many of the privileges of a citizen, and nowadays even to be considered an undesirable immigrant. That India, which has been the cradle of learning, should be so appallingly illiterate among the civilised countries of the world cannot but throw a stain on the high aims of British rule. We do not imply that British rulers in India have loved ignorance for its own sake, and have sought to keep millions of their subjects under the most inglorious bondage of absolute illiteracy. But they have dealt with this question of elementary education as though its solution were bound to last through a whole eternity, and as if they were to remain in India throughout this period slowly but surely to solve it. They are still avoiding a definite programme in regard to reducing

illiteracy, and at times seem prepared to perplex themselves with wholly irrelevant issues. The sins of commission have been as great as the sins of omission in the policy they have followed in the past, particularly in the sphere of primary education. Just as the early British rulers destroyed without a thought the most magnificent system of village autonomy in the world, so their later successors uprooted an indigenous system of primary education that was ideally suited to the needs of the people. There are certain things which are assimilated to the soil of the country, and the system of infant education is one of them; and such a system was torn up without a thought, in the passion for centralisation, in the firm conviction that Eastern conditions were Western conditions. With the best of intentions, those with whom lay the shaping of the early government policy have done their worst, and that is precisely the reason why it is so difficult for British administrators to realise the magnitude of the evil. At the base of the indigenous system was the "pial" school, or street school, in every village; and the village schoolmaster was one of the esteemed functionaries of the place, his office in most cases hereditary. He was paid in kind by every household which sent a boy to school: his modern prototype gets the magnificent pay of less than half a dozen rupees a month and has probably to await the arrival of an inspecting schoolmaster. The teacher in India was always held in high esteem, and the teacher of children was no exception. The respect for him in the mind of the child was instilled by the respect which every parent showed him, and his jurisdiction over the boy was complete and unqualified. Within the school the arrangement

was such as showed at a glance that the inclinations of childhood had been thoroughly understood and provided for. Anybody who knows anything of child nature knows that it cannot keep quiet or attentive except under conditions of criminal cruelty. It must be moving its limbs and making a noise, and if possible must have at its disposal a quantity of sand. The system of instruction in the indigenous primary school provided for all these; each child freely squatted on the floor, and was not perched up on a bench; each had a quantity of sand spread before it, and all the children simultaneously and lustily pronounced each letter of the alphabet as they traced it on the sand with their tiny fingers or with a small piece of stick. There was enough sand and ample scope for the noise which children love so much, and which is so greatly conducive to their health. The primary schoolmaster of those days would have thought one of his calling a dangerous lunatic if he had kept his school still and silent. The task was as nearly assimilated to play as possible, and the merry, sonorous sing-song noise with easy recourse to sand took them on the wings of playfulness, with nothing of the deleterious effects of the oppressively silent model schoolroom of the present day, constructed by the Public Works Department and presided over by a qualified primary-school teacher. All that has been reformed out of existence now. The primary school has become the first rung in a highly centralised system of departmental education. The scheme of primary education then was a consistent whole in itself and aimed at the imparting of the amount of learning essential for every man, whatever his work in life was to be. The boy learnt reading, writing,

and arithmetic in a finished manner. As oral lessons he was taught multiplication tables, including fractions, as a piece of exercise for the lungs, *in fact as an arithmetical song*, without any effort to his memory. A sum in simple fractions, or the calculation of compound interests involving fractional rates, the old school men were able to solve by a process which had become a habit of the tongue. To-day, on the other hand, our graduates of modern English education will require a quarter sheet of paper and a pencil for the same sum before they hazard an answer. Yet those were days when the Public Works Department did not plan, estimate, and supervise the school building where the boy had his instruction. Blackboards and slates and pencils were unknown. There were no registers, returns, and inspections; there was no demi-god of a Director of Public Instruction and no super-divinity of an education member to interest himself in the nature, scope, and efficiency of the instruction imparted by the village-teacher. The elaborate centralised tomfoolery that now prevails in primary education has come as a blight and a curse, and the bureaucracy is altogether unable to grasp the fact. The notion of that estimable Englishman who told his colleague that the British Government should make immediate provision for giving socks and boots to the people of India, at least to those who bore palanquins, has been given full play by the men who have shaped the policy of the Government in regard to primary education. Under the old method of instruction, along with reading, writing, and arithmetic, moral aphorisms were ingrained in his mind with the earliest recollections of school life; a little more time spent in