

1876



PART II
INDIA IN PARLIAMENT
AND ABROAD

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INDIA IN PARLIAMENT AND ABROAD 1917-19.

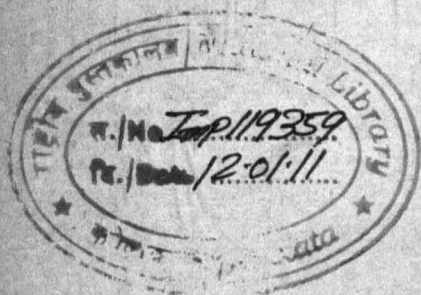
BEING A RECORD OF PROCEEDINGS ON INDIAN
AFFAIRS IN BOTH HOUSES OF THE
BRITISH PARLIAMENT, AND A
COLLECTION OF SPEECHES
AND WRITINGS ON
INDIA IN ENGLAND,
AMERICA, THE
DOMINIONS,
ETC.

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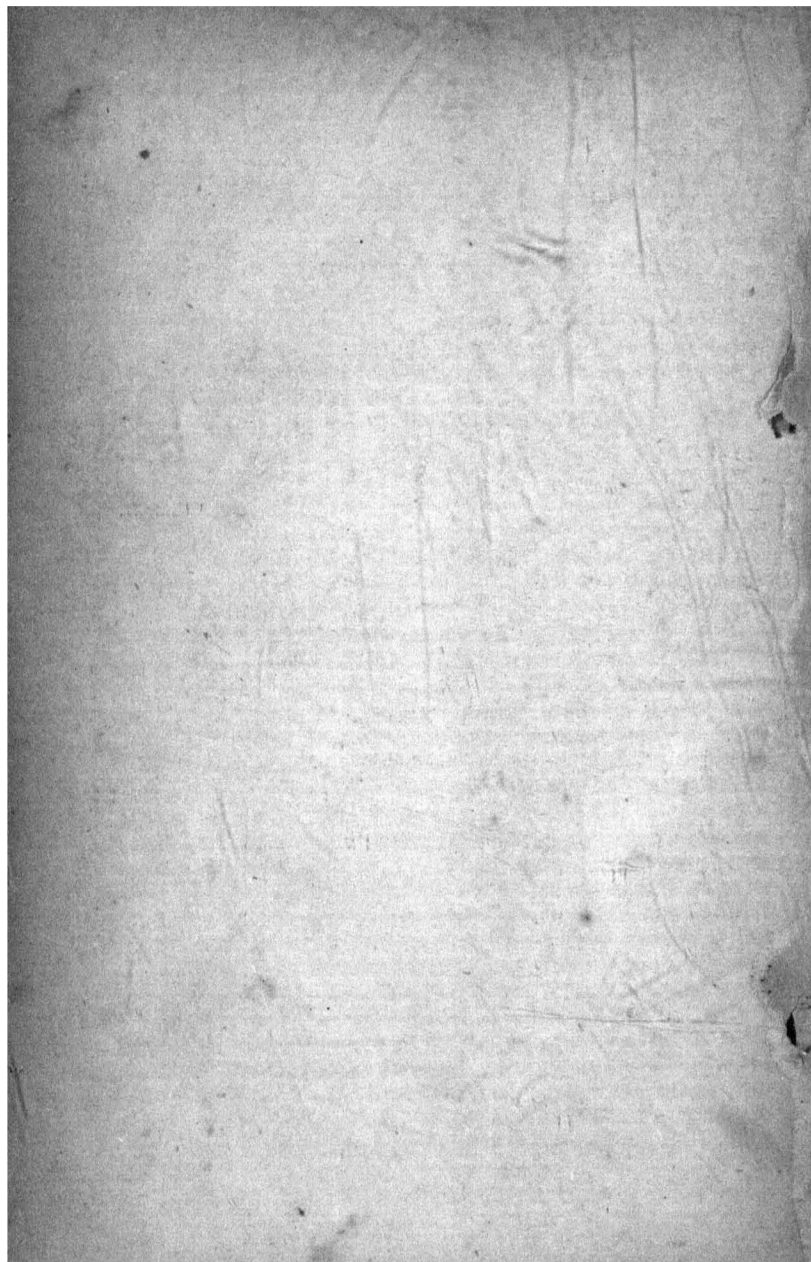
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INDIA IN PARLIAMENT.



INTRODUCTION.

The following pages compiled from Hansard, Parliamentary Debates, are intended to present to the Indian public an account of the proceedings in the British Houses of Parliament of matters Indian, and if possible, to show the trend of events which contribute to the shaping of India's political destiny so far as it is directed and led by Parliament. The volume opens with the now famous announcement of 20th Aug. '17, declaring, in the carefully worded language of politicians, the policy of His Majesty's Government with regard to India. The causes which led to that announcement are now matters of past history which it is not the object here to open. But it may be recalled, in passing, that that declaration was made under a strain which has now passed off. Good intentions are often expressed and resolved upon, alike by Nations as by individuals, under the compelling force of some adventitious unthought of emergency but people do not live in strain for ever; it passes off, and with it many a good resolve! That announcement was made when the British Empire was in peril, and not a day too soon or too late. India herself was in a state of ferment and things were so drifting as to throw all thought, all sections, all creeds—Hindus and Moslems, Brahmins and Pariahs, townsmen and village-folk, agitators and merchants—all into an united common stream of thought and action and ideal. Discerning people in high and responsible quarters saw that some remedy was required. Accordingly the War cabinet in England forged a remedy and hurled it over the seven seas to India! Came the Declaration of August 20th to India and with it the Apple of Discord! The drift of things into a common channel stopped; streams rolled back. Lines became distinctly discernible: Extremists, Moderates, Home Rulers, Brahmins, Non-Brahmins, etc a thousand sects and creeds of thought ran helter-skelter all scrambling for the apple. So far the announcement was well aimed and it well served its purpose!

Mr. Montagu—the Man.

The central figure in the current phase of India's Parliamentary history is the Secretary of State, the Rt. Hon. Edwin Samuel Montagu. His connection with Indian affairs dates officially from 1910 when he was chosen by Lord (then Mr.) Morley to be the Under-secretary of State for India. He has had a thorough grinding in the Morleyan code of Liberalism and whether his present actions reflect some of the haltering and unconvincing principles of that code, history has yet to judge. His earlier speeches in Parliament on Indian affairs, particularly the budget speeches of the four years 1910—13, the period of his Under-secretaryship, however, breathe a spirit of liberalism and exhibit a breadth of heart rare even in those halcyon days of liberalism. For one thing he has ever carried with him an air of warm fellowship with his Indian fellow-subjects, and privately and in the platform, outside office, he has championed the cause of India and sympathised with her woes, as few else have championed and sympathised since the days of John Bright. Office, especially the unenviable office of the Indian Secretary of state with its unavoidable bondage of system and tradition, may and do sometimes appear to have cast a shadow on the real man, but the time is not yet to judge if the man or the machine has outgrown the other. History stores ample proof of cases where the machine breaks the man, system clogs his activity and tradition wrecks society. Mr. Montagu has already shown rare tact and ingenuity in the handling of problems where all that is old and rotten of an old world stand in the path of progress. He has travelled far all over India more than once and his utterances reveal that he has travelled and learned from his travels as only one who has a heart instinct with feeling can learn and understand.

He was for the last time in India in 1917—18 as the special representative of His Majesty's Government in order to discuss with the authorities and representatives of the people here the various questions concerning constitutional changes in the "too wooden, too iron" Government of India. A characteristic of the man, one perhaps flowing from the same rare tact and ingenuity inherent in him which has enabled him more than once to ply through difficult waters, is his knack of keeping himself, his personality and egotism, far away behind the true issues he wants carried. This serves to mark him off from the pattern of junkers of whom India knows unfortunately too well and too many. The power of such a man, be it for God or evil, is far greater than that of a pack of blustering junkers put together, and India requires equal ingenuity and skill to watch the doings and sayings of such a skilful person.

Immediately before he took his seat in the Cabinet as Secretary of State for India, he told his constituencies at Cambridge :—

I take up the work where Mr. Chamberlain left it a few days ago. As a private member of the House of Commons, when I had no sort of notion that I should be asked to fill any vacancy in the India Office, I made a speech on Indian affairs. That speech embodied the opinions I held and still hold. Mr. Chamberlain told the House of Commons that the reform of the Govt. of India was now under discussion between him and his Council and the Viceroy and his Council and advisers in India. I take up that discussion, I hope, without interruption where he left it, and in due course the Govt. will announce their policy.

The speech referred to is his well known speech in the House of Commons, 12 July, 1917, on the Debate on the Mesopotamia Commission's Report, in which occur that famous denunciation of the Govt. of India which is so often quoted :—

"The Govt. of India is too wooden, too iron, too inelastic, too antediluvian, to be of any use for modern purposes. I do not believe that any body could ever support the Govt. of India from the point of view of modern requirements.

"I tell this House that the statutory organisation of the India office produces an apotheosis of circumlocution and *red tape* beyond the dreams of any ordinary citizen."

Below is given an extensive extract from that speech from which it may be gathered with what mind he came to the India office. The Mesopotamian affair of 1917, it may be necessary to point out, was a hopeless muddle. Troops were sent without provision, provision was sent without direction, conflicting orders from authority paralysed action, and the man at the spot, General Nixon, had to retire after the battle of Ctesiphon. A Commission of enquiry was issued and it scathingly attacked the Sec. of State (Mr. Chamberlain), Lord Hardinge (the Viceroy), and others of the Government of India. The virulence with which the press in England attacked Lord Hardinge, whom India will ever remember as one of her very few well-wishers and sympathisers, was after all prompted by party tactics. The immediate effect of the storm raised was the resignation of Mr. Chamberlain and the appointment of Mr. Montagu as the Secretary of State.

On the **Debate on the Report of the Mesopotamian Commission** in the House of Commons, 12 July 1917, Mr. Montagu in the course of his speech said :—

"I will now turn to Lord Hardinge. There can be no doubt in the mind of anybody who is acquainted with recent occurrences in India that Lord Hardinge when he left India left it by the universal opinion of all Indians, people and Princes, as the most popular Viceroy of modern times.

"He is censured by this document (the Report) for what, for the fact that he relied too much upon those who had been chosen to give him military advice. Among the many things we have never decided in this country are the relations between politicians and soldiers. On the same day you may read two newspapers : sometimes, I think, you will read in one newspaper trenchant criticisms against the Government for overruling or discrediting or attempting to hamper the action of their military advisers, and on the other hand you will find peremptory demands that they should so hamper, overrule or criticise their military advisers. The two accusations are not in harmony with one another, and the true relation of the responsibility of politicians and soldiers has never been satisfactorily decided in this country, or as far as I know, by any Government. But the mistake that Lord Hardinge made, if it be a mistake, is the same mistake as my Right Hon. friend made when he relied upon Lord French and Sir Douglas Haig, and the same mistake he is making when he relies now on the advice of Sir Douglas Haig.

"Lord Hardinge's reliance upon Sir Beauchamp Duff is not different from that of my Right Hon. friend opposite. Lord Hardinge in this regard cannot be treated as an isolated figure. I think the real charge against the Indian Government is a charge in which I want to include Lord Hardinge and my Right Hon. friend opposite (Mr. Chamberlain) and his predecessor in office, Lord Crewe.

"It is so easy to be wise after the event. At the beginning of the war I believe there was too great doubt of the loyalty and co-operation of the Indian people. The *Times* newspaper, day after day for sessions and months past, had articles pointing out that sedition was supposed to be rife. It loomed certainly much too large in the discussions of the House. It misled the Germans into thinking India was disloyal, and the deliberate policy of the Government in regard to India during the War seems to me to have been this : Let us make as little contribution as we can from India : Keep the War away from India ; we will take Indian soldiers and put them into France, and lend Indian civilians to the Home Government. India geographically as a country should be content with defending its own frontiers, and in maintaining order—a very great responsibility—inside the continent of India. Apart from that it was to do nothing near itself in the War. The people of India were not even asked to contribute to the War, although they asked Parliament that they should be allowed to contribute. I am told that volunteers were asked for in Bengal for certain purposes, and afterwards were told they were not wanted. I am talking now of the beginning of the War. The policy was that we did not know

whether India should co-operate in this War or not ; we did not trust them; we dare not trust them—I am not criticising them from that point of view—let us keep the War far from India. Then events proved that the Indian people were anxious to co-operate, and the share of the Indian people in this War, from beginning to the end, has always been greater than the share of the Indian Government in this War, and always more willing than the share of the Indian Government. When this atmosphere had been created, when Indian troops had been sent to France, and as Lord Hardinge said, when India had been “bled white” suddenly there comes a change of policy, this expedition to Bagdad, a complete reversal of policy, unaccompanied, so far as I can see, with any big enough effort to put the Government and organisation of India, which was then on a peace footing, on a war footing, for an aggressive war, comparable to the change in policy. Therefore, the machinery was overturned; there was no equipment for war, and when expeditions were sent abroad they ought to have been equipped in a way comparable to the equipment of the expeditionary forces in this country and in our Dominions. As a matter of fact, here comes what I regard a true reduction from this source. The machinery of Government in this country, with its unwritten constitution, and the machinery of Government in our Dominions, has proved itself sufficiently elastic, sufficiently capable of modification, to turn a peace-pursuing instrument into a war-making instrument. It is the Government of India alone which does not seem capable of transformation, and I regard that as based upon the fact that the machinery is statute-written machinery. *The Government of India is too wooden, too iron, too inelastic, too antediluvian, to be of any use for the modern purposes we have in view.* I do not believe that anybody could ever support the Government of India from the point of view of modern requirements.

The Ghost of an Indian Debate.

“The tone of those Debates was unreal, unsubstantial and ineffective. If estimates for India, like estimates for the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs and the Colonial Secretary were to be discussed on the floor of the House of Commons, the Debates on India would be as good as the debates on foreign affairs. After all, what is the difference? Has it ever been suggested to the people of Australia that they should pay the salary of the Secretary of State for the Colony? Why should the whole cost of that building itself, in Charles Street, including the building itself, be an item of the Indian taxpayer's burden rather than that of this House of Commons and the people

of this country? If I may give one example of the inconvenience of the existing system, I would refer to the Indian Cotton Duties debate which occurred in this House this year. The Cotton Duties had been imposed and there was no possible way of undoing that. That is the attitude in which we always debate Indian affairs. You have got no opportunity of settling the policy. It has been sometimes questioned whether a democracy can rule an Empire. I say that in this instance the democracy has never had the opportunity of trying. But even if the House of Commons were to give orders to the Secretary of State, the Secretary of State is not his own master. In matters vitally affecting India, he can be overruled by a majority of his Council. I may be told that the cases are very rare in which the Council has differed from the Secretary of State for India. I know one case anyhow, where it was a very near thing, and where the action of the Council might without remedy have involved the Government of India in a policy out of harmony with the declared policy of the House of Commons and the Cabinet. And these gentlemen are appointed for seven years, and can only be controlled from the House of Parliament by Resolution carried in both Houses calling on them for their resignations. The whole system of the India Office is designed to prevent control by the House of Commons for fear that there might be too advanced a Secretary of State. I do not say that it is possible to govern India through the intervention of the Secretary of State with no expert advice, but what I do say is that in this epoch, now after the Mesopotamia Report, he must get his expert advice in some other way than by this Council of men, great men though no doubt they always are, who come home after lengthy service in India to spend the first year of their retirement as members of the Council of India. No wonder that the practice of telegrams backward and forward and of private telegrams, commented upon by the Mesopotamia Report, has come into existence.

Red tape in India Office.

“Does any Member of this House know much about procedure in the India Office, how the Council sits in Committees, how there is interposed between the Civil Servant and the political Chiefs, the Committees of the India Council, and how the draft on some simple question comes up through the Civil servant to the Under-Secretary of State, and may be referred back to the Committee which sends it back to him, and it then goes to the Secretary of State, who then sends it to India Council, which may refer it back to the Committee, and two or three times in its history may

go backwards and forwards? I say that that is a system so cumbersome, so designed to prevent efficiency and change that in the light of these revelations it cannot continue to exist. I speak very bitterly, and I speak with some feelings on this subject, for in the year 1912 a very small modification in this machinery was attempted by Lord Crewe, and a Bill was introduced into the House of Commons. On the motion of Lord Curzon, it was thrown out on Second Reading in another place. Its authorship was attributed to me, and I was supposed to have forged it on my Noble Chief, because I found that the machinery of the India Office was not good for my own purposes. My only desire then, as it is now, was to try and find something which had some semblance of speedy action. Government offices are often accused of circumlocution and red-tape. I have been to the India Office and to other offices. *I tell this House that the statutory organisation of the India Office produces an apotheosis of circumlocution and red-tape beyond the dreams of any ordinary citizen.* Now I will come to one particular detail of the India Office administration before I pass from this subject. I think the Mesopotamia Report stigmatises the conduct of the Stores Department as in the one respect unbusinesslike. The Stores Department of the India Office is a Department whose sole function—a most important function certainly—is the purchase of millions of pounds worth of equipment for the Indian Army, clothing and such like. It is presided over by a Civil servant; in the year 1912 or 1913 a vacancy occurred in that office, and it was suggested then that the proper man to superintend mere purchasing operations of that kind was a business man, an institution of the policy always associated with the Prime Minister. Great difficulties appeared in the way of the appointment of a business man, and a Civil servant was appointed. But it was agreed then that the next occupant of the office should be a business man. My right Hon. Friend, the Secretary of State, told me yesterday that a Civil servant had again been appointed.

Too Rigid Government.

"I come now to the question of the Government of India from India. I think that the control of this House over the Secretary of State ought to be more real, and I would say further that the independence of the Viceroy from the Secretary of State ought to be much greater. You cannot govern a great country by the despatch of telegrams. The Viceroy ought to have far greater powers devolved to him than is at present the case. When I say that, I do submit that you cannot leave the Viceroy as it is. Are there four much more busy men in this country than His Majesty

the King, the Prime Minister, the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, and the Speaker of the House of Commons? Yet the analogous positions of these four posts are held by one man in India, and he is expected to be responsible and closely to investigate the conduct of a great expedition like this! You cannot find an individual who can undertake the work. Your executive system in India has broken down because it is not constituted for the complicated duties of modern Government but you cannot reorganise the Executive Government of India, remodel the Viceroyalty, and give the Executive Government more freedom from this House of Commons and the Secretary of State, unless you make it more responsible to the people of India. Really the whole system has got to be explored in the light of the Mesopotamian Commission. It has proved to be of too much rigidity. My Hon. and gallant friend opposite (Com. Wedgwood) in his Minority Report, I think—certainly in the questions he has asked in this House—*seems to advocate a complete Home Rule for India*. I do not believe there is any demand for that in India on a large scale. I do not believe it will be possible, or certainly be a cure for these evils.

Commander Wedgwood :—I want that to be the goal towards which we are driving.

Mr. Montagu : As a goal, I see a different picture; I see the great self-governing Dominions and provinces of India organised and co-ordinated with the great principalities, the existing principalities—and perhaps new ones—not one great Home Rule country, but a series of self-governing provinces and Principalities, federated by one central Government. But whatever be the object of your rule in India, the universal demand of those Indians whom I have met and corresponded with is that you should state it. Having stated it you should give some instalment to show that you are in real earnest; some beginning of the new plan which you intend to pursue; that gives you the opportunity of giving greater representative institutions in some form or other to the people of India, of giving them greater control of their Executive, of remodelling the Executive—that affords you the opportunity of giving the Executive more liberty from Home because you cannot leave your harassed officials responsible to two sets of people. Responsibility here at home was intended to replace or be a substitute for responsibility in India. As you increase responsibility in India you can lessen that responsibility at home.

The Will of the Indian People.

“But I am positive of this, your great claim to continue the illogical system of Government by which we have governed India in the past is that it was efficient. It has been proved to be *not* efficient.

It has been proved to be not sufficiently elastic to express the will of the Indian people, to make them into a warring nation as they wanted to be. The history of this war shows that you can rely upon the loyalty of the Indian people to the British Empire—if you ever before doubted it! If you want to use that loyalty you must take advantage of that love of country which is a religion in India, and you must give them that higher opportunity of controlling their own destinies, not merely by councils which cannot act, but by control, by growing control of the Executive itself. Then in your next war—if we ever have war—in your next crisis, through times of peace, you will have a contented India, an India equipped to help. Believe me, Mr. Speaker, it is not a question of expediency, it is not a question of desirability. Unless you are prepared to remodel, in the light of modern experience, this century-old and cumbrous machine, then I believe, I verily believe, that you will lose your right to control the destinies of the Indian Empire."

Mr Montagu's liberal ideas are best expounded in his own **speech at Cambridge on Liberslism** delivered on the 28 Feb. 1912, the year of the great Imperial Durbar at Delhi when he was the Under Secretary. In the course of his address he said:—

"The keystone of Canadian loyalty is the freedom of the Canadian people. Canada has not moved a step towards separation or Republican institutions, yet Canada is divided only by an imaginary line from the greatest and most progressive Republic in the world, and the tie of free association within the Empire has held in face of the strongest natural and political attractions. From that the Conservatives ought to have learnt a lesson in Empire-building, but they learnt nothing. When more than fifty years had passed, when Canada was becoming increasingly loyal and prosperous, we came to South Africa. Had the Conservatives learnt anything in Empire-building? The Lyttelton Constitution, rejected by the Dutch, fraught with friction and irritation at every step, was their best performance. When fortunately and by the mercy of heaven the end of their reign came and Sir Henry Campbell Bannerman, by his application to South Africa of the liberal principles of freedom, laid the foundations of the South African Union, of another Canada in Africa, which in my opinion justified the policy of the British Empire in the eyes of the world, yet the then leader of the Conservative party, Mr. Balfour, called our policy the most reckless experiment of modern times.

The Turn of India.

Well, then, when these principles of self-government had been applied in their most extreme form, came the turn of India, when Lord

Morley introduced his Indian Councils Act in 1909. Here was no far-reaching scheme, here was no reckless experiment, merely a cautious attempt to associate the governed with the governor and to give expression to popular opinion in India. And we had the late Lord Percy in the House of Commons saying ! "Therefore, although it is our duty to warn the Government of the dangers which in our opinion attend many of the steps which we are recommending, the responsibility of acting upon or neglecting the warning must rest with the Government themselves." And we had the usual carping criticism of Lord Curzon. Well, nobody can doubt the success of the Indian Councils Act, but still the Conservatives have learnt no better. The latest efforts in Imperial workmanship were the far-reaching reforms announced the other day at Delhi as the central feature of His Majesty's successful visit to his Indian dominions. It would be improper for me to discuss these reforms without prefacing my remarks with a word of my own personal belief that the great outstanding triumph of that Indian tour was the personality of King George himself. The good results of his gracious voyage to India will long outlive the pleasure afforded the Indian people by the opportunity of demonstrating their overwhelming loyalty to the British Throne.

The Durbar Announcements.

"In the House of Commons Mr. Bonar Law dismissed it with two criticisms : firstly, that it would cost money ; and, secondly, that the reversal of the partition of Bengal, as he called it, was a damaging blow to our *prestige*. I would say in passing that the complaint about expense as the first objection to a great Imperial measure is typical of modern Conservatism. To them ideals, poetry, liberty, imagination are unknown ; they reduce Empire to a profit and loss account ; their ideal is one of a cash nexus, and a million or two is to them far more important than the fact that the transfer of capital provides India with a new city, in a historic place, amid the enthusiastic welcome of the whole of a tradition-loving people. And as for prestige—O India, how much happier would have been your history if that word had been left out of the English vocabulary ! But there you have Conservative Imperialism at its worst : *we are not there, mark you, to repair evil, to amend injustice, to profit by experience—we must abide by our mistakes, continue to outrage popular opinion simply for the sake of being able to say, "I have said what I have said."* I have in other places and at other times expressed my opinion freely on prestige. We do not hold India by invoking this well-mouthed word ; we must hold it by

just institutions, and more and more as time goes on by the consent of the governed. That consent must be based on the respect which we shall teach them for the progressive justice of the Government in responding to their legitimate demands. But Mr. Bonar Law knows nothing of India, as he will be the first to admit, and it is to the House of Lords that we must turn for a more exhaustive criticism of our proposals.

Lord Curzon !!

"In the lengthy speech which he delivered last week in the House of Lords he did lip-service to Parliamentary control, but notwithstanding the fact that Lord Midleton was sitting next him, notwithstanding the fact that it was Mr. Brodrick, as he then was, not Lord Curzon, who was technically responsible for a large part of the Curzonian administration, he never mentioned the ex-Secretary of State in the whole course of his speech, nor did Lord Midleton speak himself. Lord Curzon has chosen as a point of survey for the work of which he is so proud—a point in which he is in his own light, and his shadow is over everything that he has done. It is not "Hands off India" that he preaches : it is "Leave Curzonian India as Lord Curzon left it." To alter anything that Lord Curzon did would be damaging to our prestige !!!

Why the Partition was Reversed.

"Next, Lord Curzon stated that our policy involved a reversal of his policy. I trust Lord Curzon will forgive me for saying that he never had a policy at all. (*Laughter and applause.*) He was a mere administrator, an industrious, fervid, and efficient administrator. He was, in a word, a chauffeur who spent his time polishing up the machinery, screwing every nut and bolt of his car ready to make it go, but he never drove it ; he did not know where to drive it to. (*Applause.*) He merely marked time and waited until a reforming Government gave marching orders. If he were to claim that the partition of Bengal was more than an administrative measure, designed as a part of a policy, then I say that it was even a worse mistake than I thought it, for the making of a Mahomedan State was a departure from accepted British policy which was bound to result in the antithesising and antagonising of Hindu and Mahomedan opinion. I had always hoped that this was the unforeseen result, and not a deliberate achievement, of Lord Curzon's blunder. It has always been the proud boast of English rule in India that we have not interfered between the different races, religions, and creeds which we found in the country.

The New Policy.

"Where the difference lies is in this : that we have endeavoured to look ahead, to co-ordinate our changes in Bengal with the general lines of our future policy in India, which is stated now for the first time in the Government of India's despatch that has been published as a Parliamentary Paper. That statement shows the goal, the aim towards which we propose to work—not immediately, not in a hurry but gradually. Perhaps you will allow me to quote the sentence in the despatch which contains the pith of the statement : "The only possible solution would appear to be gradually to give the province a larger measure of self-government until at last India would consist of a number of administrations, autonomous in all provincial affairs with the Government of India above them all, possessing power to interfere in cases of misgovernment, but ordinarily restricting their functions to matters of Imperial concern." We cannot drift on ever without stating a policy. A new generation, a new school of thought, fostered by our education and new European learning, has grown up, and it asks : "What are you going to do with us ?" The Extremist politicians, who form the outside fringe of this school, have made up their minds as to what they want. One of their leaders, Mr. Bepin Chandra Pal, has drawn up and published a full, frank, detailed, logical exposition of the exact form of "swaraj," or, as may be roughly translated, "Colonial self-government," that they want. The Moderates look to us to say what lines our future policy is to take. We have never answered that, and we have put off answering them for too long. At last, and not too soon, a Viceroy has had the courage to state the trend of British policy in India and the lines on which we propose to advance."

House of Commons—20 Aug. 1919.

THE DECLARATION OF POLICY.

Mr. C. Roberts asked the Sec. of State for India whether he is in position to make any announcement as to the policy which the Government intend to pursue in India?

Mr. Montagu—The Government of India have for some time been urging that a statement should be made in regard to Indian statolicy, and I am glad to have the opportunity afforded by my hon. Friend's question of meeting their wis hes.

The policy of His Majesty's Government, with which the Government of India are in complete accord, is that of increasing the association of Indians in every branch of the administration and the gradual development of self-governing institutions with a view to the progressive realisation of responsible government in India as an integral part of the British Empire. They have decided that substantial steps in this direction should be taken as soon as possible, and that it is of the highest importance, as a preliminary to considering what these steps should be, that there should be a free and informal exchange of opinion between those in authority at Home and in India. His Majesty's Government have accordingly decided, with His Majesty's approval, that I should accept the Viceroy's invitation to proceed to India to discuss these matters with the Viceroy and the Govt. of India to consider with the Viceroy the views of the Local Govts., and to receive the suggestions of representative bodies and others. I would add that progress in this policy can only be achieved by successive stages. The British Government of India, on whom the responsibility lies for the welfare and

advancement of the Indian peoples, must be judges of the time and measure of each advance, and they must be guided by the co-operation received from those upon whom new opportunities of service will thus be conferred and by the extent to which it is found that confidence can be reposed in their sense of responsibility. Ample opportunity will be afforded for the public discussion of the proposals, which will be submitted in due course to Parliament.

The same statement will be made today in India.

Sir. J. D. Rees—When is it decided that the right. hon. Gentleman is to go to India?

Mr. Montagu—During the winter.

Com. Wedgwood—May I ask whether in view of this admirable statement, there is any chance of an amnesty of people imprisoned in India?

Mr. Montagu—I cannot add anything to my statement. As my hon. and gallant friend is aware, the responsibility for the maintenance of order in India rests on the Govt. of India.

Mr. Hewins—May I ask whether the principles on which the right hon. gentleman proposes to act were correctly outlined by him in the speech he made prior to his appointment?

Mr. Montagu—That speech was made when I was a private member, and represented my own views. I am now acting as the spokesman of His Majesty's Government.

Mr. Hewins—May I ask if those views have been accepted by his Majesty's Government?

Mr. Montagu—I do not think I can make an announcement of policy when the decision of the Cabinet is that we should proceed to elaborate that policy by conversations between the India office and the Government of India.

Mr. Hewins :—Is the right hon. Gentleman aware that statements of policy were put forward by himself on that occasion and also by Lord Islington and we want to know whether those statements represent the views of the Government?

Mr. Montagu : I have today announced the views of the Government. I do not think I can be cross-examined about a speech I made when I was a private member.

Mrs. Besant's Internment.

House of Commons—16 October, '17.

Political agitation in India—Mrs. Besant's Internment.

Sir J. D. Rees asked the Secy. of State whether he can make any statement to the House regarding the orders passed in India for the internment and for the release of Mrs. Besant and her associates?

Mr. Montagu—I do not think that I need say much to-day as to the restrictions placed on Mrs. Besant, Mr. Arundale and Mr. Wadia under the defence of India Regulations. But it is important to say this : that the action taken by the Government of Madras in June was essentially precautionary rather than punitive. The Madras Government have repeatedly stated that they had no wish to check constitutional agitation as such, but that they considered that the methods employed by the agitators left them no option but to remove Mrs. Besant and her associates from Madras by recourse to the Defence of India Regulations. But restrictions of this kind must lead to a consideration of the date of their removal, for there was obviously no date set and obviously also they were not intended to last for ever. It would be reasonable to expect that the restrictions would be removed when the Government of India was satisfied that their removal would not lead to the recurrence of practices which they were designed to prevent.

Accordingly when I made the announcement on 20th August last as to the policy of his Majesty's Government in regard to India, I asked the Viceroy whether the Government of India would consider in view of the alteration of circumstances, the question of removing the restrictions imposed upon persons who rely on account of their violent or improper methods of political agitation had been dealt with under the defence of India act. Subsequently I asked that in view of the meeting of Parliament and the possible necessity of laying papers if it was decided to maintain the restrictions upon her, a decision as to Mrs. Besant should be taken as soon as possible.

The action taken by the Government of India was taken on their own responsibility, but we were all anxious to secure a tranquil

atmosphere in the future, and this does not mean that I am not in complete accord with their action.

He then quoted the question and answer in the Imperial Legislative Council, India, of the 5th September, '17 referring the matter in question, and continued :—

Afterwards the Government of India received assurances from influential sources as to Mrs. Besant's conduct which they considered satisfactory, and therefore decided to recommend to the Madras Government the removal of the restrictions on Mrs. Besant and her colleagues, as they regarded the retention of these restrictions as not being necessary in view of the altered situation created by the announcement of policy. The Viceroy received a telegram from Mrs. Besant conveying to him an assurance that she was ready to co-operate in obtaining a calm atmosphere during my visit.

I would remind the House that although Mrs. Besant had been dealt with by the Government of Madras, her sphere of influence and action extended to other provinces, and the removal of these restrictions was thus of more than provincial interest. The course followed in now way implied any criticism of the action originally taken by the Local Government which was in fact approved by the Government of India, and has never been questioned by me.

Mr. Joynson-Hicks enquired of the Leader of the House whether seeing that this important matter should be discussed before Mr. Montagu left for India, he (the Leader) could give a day—even half a day—to debate this question?

Mr. Bonar Law :—I do not think a discussion would be of advantage at the present moment, but it might be discussed on the adjournment.

Com. Wedgwood : May I ask whether the relaxation and amnesty will extend to the Mahomedan Leaders who are excluded on the same terms as Mrs. Besant.

Mr. Montagu : I do not know to what Mahomedan leader my friend refers. There are certain Mahomedan gentlemen who are interned at the present moment but not for the same reason as Mrs. Besant.—They are interned because of their promoting sympathy with his Majesty's enemies, and they cannot be considered coming under the same category.

On the Motion for Adjournment.

Mr. Joynson Hicks said :—The points I desire to raise are as to whether Mrs. Besant was rightly interned, and I think that the House will agree that she was; whether there was any reason to alter the decision, and whether the release is likely to make for peace and quietness in India. I want the House to understand that

has during the last two or three years, during the strain of this war, deliberately made speeches and issued writings exceedingly detrimental to the peace and well-being of India. Every other person in India, particularly the moderates, have agreed to abstain from all political agitation. In 1916 when the war was well under way, Mrs. Besant started "New India." Her writings were so bad that the authorities compelled the paper to furnish a guarantee of Rs 2,000, and last year that money had to be forfeited. Mrs. Besant appealed and questioned the legality of this action. This was heard by 3 judges, 2 of whom were Indians and they unanimously came to the conclusion that Mrs. Besant had held the Government up to ridicule and contempt, and that her articles had a tendency to disseminate disaffection through out India.

In March last the Viceroy referred to Mrs. Besant's action and noted from her paper. He said (after reading extracts from her paper) "what is this but to exaggerate the ills of India and to ascribe them all to the Government"? The Viceroy also quoted Mr. C. J. "This seems to me most pernicious writing, and writing which must tend to encourage political assassination." The Viceroy then went on : What are these but stirring up hatred and contempt ; you suggest that language like this can have no ill effect ?

Upon this decision Lord Pentland came to the conclusion that the stop must be put to Mrs. Besant's activities, and he with the assent of the Viceroy and of the Sec. of State (Chamberlain) decided to take further action against her. He sent for her and personally tried to dissuade her from carrying on his propaganda during the war, asking her for an undertaking not to do so. She declined and then with the assent of the Viceroy he had her interned.

I want to ask my Rt. hon. friend (Montagu) if he will give the House the papers so that we may get the whole of the details. It is quite clear that he did write or telegraph something to India very soon after he entered office, partly in view of his going to India and partly to ask the Viceroy whether he would grant an amnesty to these particular prisoners.

My Rt. hon. friend told us this afternoon that Government had received undertakings from influential friends of Mrs. Besant that they would abstain from violent methods of political agitation during the war. But there has been no undertaking from the lady herself. She has, since her release, been going about India stirring up agitation ; she has openly stated that she has entered into no conditions whatever with regard to her release ; she has conducted a triumphal tour throughout India. In consequence of her action she has been elected president of the National Congress. The action taken by the Right hon. gentleman (Montagu) is presumably

in order that he may have a peaceful progress in India when he makes his visit. But I think that that will have a reverse effect. The whole of Anglo India today is in a ferment. They are strongly of opinion that the release will be disastrous to India.

[The speaker then referred to various telegrams from Anglo-Indians and also to several statements made by the late Sec. of State, Mr. Chamberlain, as to the violent character of the agitation conducted by Mrs. Besant. He continued :—]

I do not want to go back on the Home Rule speeches of the hon. gentleman (Montagu). It is very regrettable, I think, that what the voice of his predecessor is still hot in the ears of the public here should suggest that this lady should be released. He is going out to India as a missionary of peace and goodwill. He is responsible for the Government not only of the Indian Extremists but also of the loyal Indians. He is also responsible for the well-being of the Anglo-Indians.

What I am asking my Rt. hon. friend to do is to make a statement here before he goes to India that he will assuage as far as he can the ferment which has undoubtedly arisen in the Anglo-Indian Community by assuring us that he is not going to India to express any such ideas as Home Rule for India, and that he will show that he has no sympathy with Mrs. Besant or with the extremist agitation.

Sir J. D. Rees : I confess I do not know what good, and I do not feel that much harm, may result from the speech which my hon. friend has made. What, after all, is it he wants? Does he want the Government of India to cancel the order for the release of this lady and her companions and to shut them up again? Does he want that? If he does not, what is to be the practical outcome of this discussion? I disapprove of Mrs. Besant as heartily as my hon. friend. I think it would have been to the advantage of India if she could be induced to leave India altogether. But there are many other political associations established in India, and you cannot keep them permanently shut up. I never was an advanced reformer but whenever the question of deportations and internments have been brought forward, the great object of most of those concerned has been to get the prisoners released as soon as possible, for they are more troublesome and more dangerous in confinement than they are outside.

My hon. friend was no doubt right in saying what is the general feeling of Anglo-India on this point, but there is room in this particular case for a difference of opinion. The very paper which is the byword of Anglo-Indian officialism in India, "the Pioneer", said in its issue, 8th Sep. '17.

"It is only fair to acknowledge that Lord Chelmsford is not the stamp of an untamely to submit to acting against his convictions or to be at all likely to seek cheap popularity at the expense of the administration of which he is the head. If he is ready to show leniency to those who have for political reasons been interned, it is because he is honestly anxious to do all in his power to promote that spirit of mutual goodwill and confidence which he believes to be so necessary for the future welfare of India."

There is another point. Part of the gravamen of this complaint is that it is asserted that the Government of India, an independent administration overrode the Government of Madras, as independent administration. That is not the position. The Government of Madras is a subordinate administration. The Government of India was responsible to this House for the internment, and not the Government of Madras. The Govt. of India is responsible for the release. Lord Chelmsford has most expressly, publicly and fully, shouldered that responsibility, and there are some of the strongest opponents of the advanced party in India, like the Pioneer and myself, who think that Lord Chelmsford in this matter had probably good reason for what he did, and should be supported. In a letter to the Times, Lord Sydenham unintentionally misrepresented the situation. He was Governor of Bombay, and, like everyone else, is inclined to magnify his own office.

I presume the position to be this. I take it the Governor Genl. of India in Council considered that some eirenicon was necessary as his new policy was announced. It was announced and decided upon that it should have a fair chance, and if you have got the whole of the Congress Party—let me say they are not my party—in a state of ferment protesting against the internment of this lady, of whom, of course, they have made an absolute idol since she was interned—if that is going on, there is really no fair opportunity for the new departure. I do think that if the House is not to give a chance to the present departure, if it were to accentuate the very great difficulties which the Sec. of state will have going to India to discuss these questions, if we are not to endeavour to produce a "calm atmosphere", what possible chance can they have?

Is it statesman like of us, whatever our individual views may be, to endeavour to put a spoke in the wheel of this all important experiment? If Mrs. Besant and her friends again misconduct themselves, the Governor General in Council can move the Government of Madras, or the Government of Madras with the permission of the Governor General in Council, can again intern them. Until that happens what earthly use can result from my hon. friend raising this matter to-night?

The Sec. of State for India (Mr. Montagu) : I have very little to say on this matter ; the answer I gave this afternoon contains a complete account of the circumstances. There is very little for me to defend or to justify. I say again, the action of the Government of Madras was approved by the Government of India, approved and defended in this house by my predecessor, and it never fell to my lot to question it—I had no reason to concern myself with it. When my predecessor was in office my Rt. hon. friend, the Member for Cleveland (Mr. H. Samuel) from the Bench opposite asked him if he would lay papers about Mrs. Besant before the House of Commons. My predecessor said he would consider the matter. When I entered office it was necessary for me to consider carrying out the consideration which he had undertaken. The papers were not complete. With a view to laying those papers, I asked for complete papers (from India). But when the announcement of 20th Aug. was made, which in my view made a new situation, I suggested to the Viceroy, not that he should release Mrs. Besant, but that he should consider the release of all people who had been dealt with for unconstitutional agitation in connection with reforms.

Does my hon. friend (Mr. Joynton-Hicks) suggest that it is wrong for a secretary of state, who receives by many telegrams and letters,—even by suggestions in this House that the relaxation of those restrictions might be considered, is it suggested that it is wrong that I should convey that suggestion to the Viceroy? The situation was this. A large amount of agitation had been going on in India because there was a demand for an announcement of policy. An announcement of policy was not forthcoming. My hon. friend knows and the House knows, that the Govt. of India had been pressing for an announcement of policy for some months. An announcement is made—an announcement with which we were all in complete accord. The Government of India think that the consequences of that announcement will be that there will be a cessation of that agitation and that everybody concerned will lay their heads together to work out the policy which results from that announcement, and therefore a new situation occurs. There is no question of reversing the former policy, but a question of seeing whether the new circumstances will allow a relaxation of restrictions. The justification for that wholly depends on whether the people who are freed from restriction do not offend again. The justification depends on whether they have assurances or not which lead them to believe they will not offend. The Government of India told the Legislative Council and authorised me to tell the House that they have received such assurances. My hon. friend says he has evidence of a recrudescence of those practices. I have not. Surely my hon. friend

does not suggest to me that I should tell the Government of India that I question whether the assurances are satisfactory? Evidence shows that Mrs. Besant and her friends who present a portion of the problem, but only a portion, are willing to co-operate in the discussions which arise. Therefore by her release you have assured the cessation of those practices. This was done by the Government of India, and if it is not impertinent for me to say so, I think that they acted in a wise and statesman like manner.

Regarding the Anglo Indian Community Mr. Montagu said :—

The views of the Anglo-Indian community will of course be considered. It would be monstrous if they were not, for after all they have played an enormous part in building up the material prosperity of India. As regards Home-rule and policy, that is what we are going to discuss in India. I am not going to make any further pronouncement upon it at all, and I am sure my Hon. friend will not press me to go beyond the announcement of 20th August. That is the policy of His Majesty's Government and the policy of the Viceroy and his Government. If the Hon. member will read that announcement over again he will see that many of the dangers which he anticipates are safeguarded by the very words of that carefully drawn up pronouncement of policy, and all we ask is that all those people who in different ways and directions are anxious for the well-ordered progress of India towards the end which is declared in that pronouncement will proceed together to a discussion of this matter, eventually in full publicity, in order that we may lay firm foundations of that future and uninterrupted progress, and get out of the way of the agitation which has been aroused in other circumstances by the action of the Government of India. That seems to me to be a step which no one in the House has a right to quarrel with.

Commander Wedgwood said he could not understand what was gained by branding everybody who advocated Home-Rule as disloyal. The people would be far more disloyal to the traditions of Great Britain if they did not advocate Home-Rule. Personally he was glad that the Government has released Mrs. Besant, and he hoped she would continue her Home-rule agitation in India, because, he said : "you cannot grant Home-rule to any people without benefitting not only those people but the British Empire. Our traditions are based on freedoms, and one of the most remarkable examples of the confidence and reliance we may place on our freedom is to be found in the case of South Africa."

House of Lords.

Wednesday, 24th October 1917.

The Situation in India.

Lord Sydenham had the following notice on the Paper—

To draw attention to the present situation in India, with special regard to the internment and release of Mrs. Besant ; and to move for Papers.

The noble Lord said : My Lord, it is always an exceedingly difficult thing to say where a line ought to be drawn in checking freedom of speech or of writing, but I think it will be agreed to by everybody that such freedom must be curtailed if it is used to threaten public order or to sow the seeds of murder and of outrage.

In India it is absolutely necessary that restrictions of this kind should be enforced. The mass of the people are ignorant and perfectly ready to believe any false statements that may be made to them ; they are credulous to a degree that can hardly be conceived here. I should like to give one instance of that, of which your Lordships may not have heard. When we first started plague inoculation in India, a story was widely circulated in the Bombay Presidency that a holy man had said that an Indian with white blood would drive the English into the sea, and that we are pricking the arms of Indians in order to find the Indian with white blood and kill him off in good time. Besides that, the peoples of India are very easily excited, and serious disturbances often occur through the passing round of some obvious fiction which in Western countries would not attract a moment's attention. Every one who has lived in India must know many cases of that kind, and when disorders, thus promoted, occurs, then the most hateful duty of Government comes into play, and you have to put them down by force, with the sad result that in many cases some few perfectly harmless people may lose their lives.

But we have more direct evidence than this of the necessity of these restrictions in India. All political agitation in India, from the first, has been accompanied by assassinations, and in many cases

the assassins have themselves named the newspapers and the speakers from whom they drew the inspiration of murder. Mr. Jackson, a most valued Indian civilian, a student of Indian language and literature, and devoted to the people, was shot at an entertainment given to him by Indians, and the young assassin in his trial made this confession. He said—

“I read of many instances of oppression in the *Kesari*, the *Rashtra-mat*, the *Kal* and other newspapers. I think that by killing Sahebs my people can get justice. I never got justice myself, nor did any one I know. I now regret killing Mr. Jackson. I killed a good man causelessly.”

Could a more tragic confession ever have been made? And was that young decadent Brahmin the real criminal? Other murderers have told exactly the same story in different words, and surely all such cases as that show that we can not allow speech and writing which is proved effective in leading young Indians into crime.

Mrs. Besant, who was formerly a student of theosophy, joined the ranks of the extremists and started a Home Rule movement of her own. She wrote a book which contains more reckless defiance of facts that I have ever seen compressed into the same small space, and in her paper *New India*, she appeared anxious to imitate the most dangerous language in which the Indian Press has indulged. She told excitable young Indians that India was a “perfect paradise” for 5,000 years before our advent, and that it had become a “perfect hell” owing to the “brutal British bureaucracy.” Those are her expressions, not mine. She said that India had been “converted into a land of permanent famine and pestilence, and its children into a race of effeminate weaklings”. She accused the British Government of “depriving a weaker people of their liberty, and retaining them under rule in perpetual slavery under the plea of civilising them and bettering their lot.” There are no freer people in the world than Indians under our rule, and such oppression as exists is that of Indians by Indians, and it would be increased a hundred fold if we handed over the reins to the small body of Brahmins and lawyers whom Mrs. Besant is trying to lead. Surely language of that kind is exactly calculated to arouse an excitable people to rebellion. And would not rebellion be fully justified if even become a public duty if the British Government were really inflicting permanent famine and pestilence on India and holding Indians in perpetual slavery?

To those of us who have been called upon to play a part in governing India, and whose only thought has been to do the best we could for the people of India, such expressions, of course, seem

the wildest possible nonsense, but there are millions of people in India who are perfectly ready to believe them. In olden days, pestilence and famine were attributed to be the work of the Gods. It is an Englishwoman who tells Indians that they are due to a Government which has done the utmost with great success to combat both pestilence and famine.

But Mrs. Besant's libels on our countrymen do not end with false assertions of that kind. In a book which is now about to be republished in India to gain the advantage of her fresh access to notoriety, she states that for every wrong done to a white woman in Africa "tens of thousands of Kaffir women are outraged." I think the noble Earl and the noble Viscount who filled with great distinction the office of High Commissioner in South Africa would warmly repudiate that statement.

Mrs. Besant then goes on to generalise. She says that—

"It is there that lies one of our greatest sins ; the utter disregard of morality where coloured women are concerned ; the shameful disregard of womanhood in every country whereunto Britain has entered and where Britain rules."

That is a specimen of the mental food which Mrs. Besant provides for excelling Indian students in a country where the treatment of women is one of the great bars to progress. In her purely theosophical days, Mrs. Besant had distinguished herself by violent attacks on missionary bodies in India, and by strong opposition to the teaching of the Christian religion in India. I cannot speak too highly of the British and American missions who are doing to my knowledge a wonderful work in uplifting the depressed classes of India.

Since Mrs. Besant combined theosophy with politics her language and activities and writings have taken a peculiarly dangerous form. Those activities were first brought to my mind by a very distinguished Mahomedan who wrote to me that he could not understand why the Government permitted a propaganda which was having a disastrous effect upon Indian minds. At length the Government of Madras decided to enforce the provisions of the Press Act and Mrs. Besant was ordered to give security for the good conduct of her paper. As the violence of that paper, *New India*, continued quite unabated, the security was sequestered. That gave her a right of appeal to the High Court of Madras. The case was heard by three Judges, of whom two were Indians, and the action of the Madras Government was confirmed. I will quote some fragmentary

passages adduced at the trial which may have had an effect in influencing the decision of the High Court.

"When crimes are committed legally ; when innocence is no protection ; when we live in a state of anarchy. We should be better off in a state of savagery, for then we should carry arms and protect ourselves. We are helpless. We pay taxes to be wronged."

There has been no more tranquil province in India than Madras until Mrs. Besant took up her residence there. Here is another passage—

"News of Prussian aggression and German atrocity are communicated to India to bewilder the Indian imagination. They are committed under pressure, under passion, they are common. But what does this mean, this perpetration of atrocity in civic life in peaceful times, in a peaceful province ?"

The German crimes are excused and compared most favourably to the mild and ineffective action of the Government of Madras. One passage in New India, quoted at the trial, was written by a notorious extremist who commented on the recent assassination of a every valuable Indian officer in Calcutta. He said—

"No reasonable Indian has ever publicly encouraged these crimes. There was quiet and even courageous determination in the conduct of the assassins.

They are idealists, though heroism may, according to some people, be too noble a word to apply to them. In consequence people are not even moved by a spirit of retributive justice towards them. We might recognise them as political offenders."

Well might one of the Judges point out that this was "pernicious writing which must tend to encourage assassination by removing public detestation of such a crime."

The decision of the High Court and the sequestration of the security given produced no effect whatever on the editor of the New India, and after further considerable delay the Madras Government resorted to the Defence of India Act, which gives powers of internment. Lord Pentland explained his action in a speech which was calculated to allay any kind of public misunderstanding. It was a most excellent speech, and I am informed it had the full approval of all real Indian opinion in Madras. It has been suggested that Mrs. Besant was doomed to languish in prison, and in a very mischievous manifesto addressed by her, "Brothers and sisters in India," she announced that she was about to be "dropped into the modern equivalent of the Middle Age *Oubliette*." There is a very considerable difference between an *oubliette* and a comfortable residence in the delightful climate of Ootacamund, which Mrs. Besant selected for her internment. At Ootacamund she was free to walk about, see

her friends, and help in working up a violent agitation for her release. But she was prevented by the "brutal British bureaucracy" from continuing to fly the Home Rule flag over her residence.

The Viceroy approved the internment of Mrs. Besant ; and the late Secretary of State in another place, on June 26, also approved the action of the Government of Madras, and stated his opinion that Mrs. Besant's propaganda was dangerous to the peace of India. An eminent Hindu wrote to me these words—

"Ever since her internment a virulent agitation has been going on for her release. The Home Rulers met in conference and decided to carry on passive resistance unless she was forthwith released."

He added—

"If she is released unconditionally without giving any assurances as to the future, the position of the Government of Madras would be extremely critical. I do not think that they could maintain peace and order after such a blow to their prestige."

On July 30 a Joint Conference of the Congress and the Moslem League sent to the Viceroy and to the Secretary of State a long resolution, most discourteous and menacing in tone, demanding the immediate sanction of their political proposals and the immediate release of Mrs. Besant and party.

Lord Sydenham then referred to the importance of maintaining the prestige of British officials in a country like India, and continued—

It was declared that the release was decided upon in order to tranquilise the present situation. My Lords, does concessions made to flagrant breakers of the law ever tranquilise any situation ?

The British Community in India is a very small body scattered over vast areas. The services which maintain order and conduct the administration are a mere handful of men amongst 315 millions of people. Their authority and even personal safety depend upon the visible strength of the Government of India. I know very well that the word "*prestige*" is hateful to every true democrat, but in Eastern countries the prestige of the Government is the only possible guarantee of the authority which is required every day for the preservation of public order. What would be the position of the two or three British officers in a far remote country district if they had not behind them the full support of a Government known to be strong ? If the masses of India ever come to realise that the Government can be coerced by the threats of a noisy minority, then India will be launched well on the road to anarchy.

Then he said that India is extraordinarily prosperous (!) just now, and that the extremists have chosen this time for a break down of the Government. They have captured the Congress, he said, and the Moslem league, and are working up a large number of excitable youths. Such conditions very closely resemble Ireland where laxity of Government has led straight to Sinnism. He then drew an analogy with Russia, and said that the masses of the uneducated Russians are a prey to the agitators. He concluded by saying that he spoke not in British interest, "but in the true interests of the Indian peoples for whom, as long as I live, I shall cherish affection" !!!

The Under secretary of state (Lord Islington) summarised the debate under two heads : (1) exception to the reversal of the Madras Governments order on Mrs. Besant, and (2) apprehension of the result and effect of the Secretary of State's mission to India.

With regard to (1) he said that the position in India in June when the Madras Government interned Mrs. Besant was different from now. The change came about the time of the Announcement of Policy, 20th August, and the decision that the Secretary of State would visit India. The effect of that announcement, it was believed and desired, would be tranquillising, and it was believed that Mrs. Besant would refrain from her violent agitation. He said further :

My Lords, thousands of moderates all over India saw in the restrictions imposed an attempt to suppress free discussion of questions of self Government, although it was only her unconstitutional methods which it was desired to check. Holding these certainly mistaken view, they were very little likely, so long as the restrictions on Mrs. Besant remained, to accept as made in good faith the Government investigations of possible methods of reform. They would no doubt have devoted their energies to obtaining her release, and to maintain a controversy most distracting to those who are about to investigate and quite inimical to the calm atmosphere which is so desirable. Mrs Besant free will mean greater tranquility than Mrs. Besant interned.

As to the 2nd point, it has been asked why hopes of self Government as the ultimate goal have been excited. In reply Lord Islington assured their Lordships that that course of action has not been entered upon by the Secretary of State on his own responsibility or in any light-hearted fashion. They have not been wilfully provoked by his Majesty's Government. They have agitated for years. Lord Hardinge had to deal with them. Lord Chelmsford in referring to the 20th August announcement to his Council claimed that that policy was practically indistinguishable from that which the Govern-

ment of India had themselves put forward. He (Chelmsford) explained that but for the War the announcement would have been made much earlier and mentioned that he had himself invited the Secretary of State to India ; that Mr. Chamberlain was on the point of accepting when he resigned ; that he renewed the invitation to Mr. Montagu and was very gratified when the Cabinet decided that Mr. Montagu should accept the invitation.

For some time before the decision of the Cabinet the Viceroy had written and telegraphed constantly that agitation was increasing and would increase in the absence of a declaration of policy and that the situation was getting more and more grave in India. Mrs Besant and her Home Rule propaganda were a symptom of that unrest. Her cause attracted adherents and her influence was dangerous because of this silence and uncertainty. The announcement of August 20th cleared the air, and enabled the Government of India and other Indian authorities to know where they stood and gave them freedom to explain the promising position, the tranquilising of India, and to ask for cessation of agitation and for a calm atmosphere.

With regard to Lord Sydenham's request for papers, Lord Islington said that it is undesirable to lay the papers as desired, for there were naturally in those documents much that were of a highly controversial character which could not but give rise, if published, to much further discussion. It was the avoidance of such discussion which was desirable and he hoped the noble Lord would not lend himself to the creation of difficulties.

After Lords Middleton, Crewe, Carmichael, Lansdowne and Curzon had spoken the motion of Lord Sydenham was by leave withdrawn.

House of Commons—Wednesday, October 31. 1917.

Silver Currency Policy in India.

Mr. Gersham Stewart asked the President of the Board of Education, as representing the Secretary of State for India, whether, in view of the fact that for some time the price of silver had been above the equivalent of rs. 4d. to the rupee, the Indian Government had incurred any loss in supplying the necessary rupees for military operations in Mesopotamia and other places and, if so, could he state the amount of the loss and how it would ultimately be met; whether the Indian Government had drawn on its reserve of rupees coined before the rise in silver, replacing them in India by a currency of notes of a low valuation; could he state the amount of the new issue of small notes; whether this form of currency was as acceptable to the native population as the metallic currency to which they had been so long accustomed; and whether the Indian Government was prepared to consider the advisability of joining in any movement to stabilise the price of silver and mitigate the constant oscillations and gambling in this currency medium.

Mr. Herbert Fisher: The purchases of silver above parity have been very recent. There is no reason to believe that rupees coined from such silver had gone to Mesopotamia. This being so, the second and third parts of the question do not arise. As the proposed notes for $2\frac{1}{2}$ and 1 rupees have not yet been issued, the answer to the fourth part is in the negative; and the fifth and sixth parts cannot yet be answered. With regard to the last part, the Secretary of State for India would, of course, consider anything put before him from a responsible quarter.

Mr. Stewart: Will the right Hon. gentleman endeavour to persuade the Government of India to modify the hostile attitude towards silver which they have adopted of late years?

Mr. Fisher: I was not aware that there was any hostile attitude.

H. of Coms.—Monday, November 5, 1917.

The Madras High Court.

Mr. Snowden asked the President of the Board of Education, as representing the Secretary of State for India, if the Imperial Government had deviated from the policy laid down in the Charter Act that the appointment of judges to the Madras High Court should rest with His Majesty; if these powers had been delegated to the Governor General in Council; and, if not,

why two of the four temporary judges acting since 1914 had been placed on the permanent strength of the High Court of Madras.

Mr. Herbert Fisher : The Government of India Act, 1915, empowers the Governor-General in Council to appoint temporary additional judges for a period not exceeding two years. Four additional judges had been so appointed and were serving in Madras when the Secretary of State in Council decided to increase the permanent strength of the Court by two judges. The two persons whom His Majesty has been pleased to appoint permanently to the Court, under the provisions of the Indian High Courts Act of 1861, were at the time of their appointment serving as temporary assistant judges. There has been no deviation from the policy laid down by Parliament.

RAID ON HOME RULE LEAGUE OFFICE.

Lajpat Rai's Book "Young India."

Commander Wedgwood asked whether the office of the Home Rule for India League in Robert Street, W C, has been raided; whether the aims or methods of this League are considered or suspected of being seditious or illegal; and whether legal proceedings are contemplated?

Sir G. Cave : The Office of this league was searched by the police on the 3rd November for copies of a book containing statements which encouraged sedition and assassination. The papers seized are under examination, and I am not at present prepared to express any opinion upon the aims or methods of the league, or whether criminal proceedings are likely to be taken.

Com. Wedgwood : Was not the book seized the book to which I wrote a preface?

Sir G. Cave : Yes : I think that the Hon. and gallant Gentleman did make himself responsible for it.

Com. Wedgwood : Am I to be prosecuted as well as anybody else? It is a travesty to say that any such suggestion was made in that volume. Was this search undertaken after consultation with the India Office or not, or is it held to be in support of decent relations between Anglo-Indians and Indians in India?

Sir G. Cave : It was taken after consultation.

Mr. King : As it has taken over a fortnight to decide whether the Hon. and gallant Member's references are seditious, will the right Hon. Gentleman say when he will come to a decision?

Sir G. Cave : I do not say that the writings of the hon. and

gallant Gentleman himself are seditious, but the book in itself encourages sedition.

Commander Wedgwood : It certainly does not

Mr. Lynch. Why do the public spirit and virtue of the right hon. Gentleman evaporate at a certain grade of society ?

H. of Coms.—November 22nd, 1917.

Com Wedgwood asked the Prime Minister whether he is aware that charges have been made by the Home Secretary against an hon. Member of this House of supporting a publication which advocates assassination as a political weapon in India ; whether he is aware that the charge is unsupported by any evidence but is made to discredit the Indian Home Rule movement in the interest of the Anglo-Indian irreconcilables, contrary to the wishes of the India Office, by a Home Secretary insufficiently acquainted with the gravity of Indian politics ; and whether he will allot time to have this charge against the honour of a Member of this House discussed ?

Mr. Bonar Law : I cannot agree with the suggestions contained in this question, nor do I think it necessary to give a special opportunity for the discussion of the subject.

Com. Wedgwood : Am I to understand that a charge of such gravity can be made against a Member of this House by the Home Secretary without any further proceedings being taken and without any opportunity being given of showing that it was without a shadow of foundation ?

Mr. Bonar Law : I have read the question and the answer, and I have not drawn that inference from it. After the answer which I have given, perhaps the hon. Member would address his question to the Home Secretary ?

Com. Wedgwood : I beg to give notice that I will raise the matter on the adjournment to-morrow.

Com Wedgwood asked the Home Secretary (1) if he will state on what date the Home Office or police intimated to the India Office their desire to have the office of the India Home Rule League raided : whether the India Office concurred verbally or in writing ; in view of his accusation against a member of this House, will he lay Papers showing the responsibility of both the India Office and the police for the raid and for the assassin charge ; (2) whether he will indicate the passages in the book "Young India" by Lajpat Rai, with an introduction by the hon. Member for Newcastle, which he holds to advocate assassination ; whether he read these passages before making the charge or whether he was merely stating the opinion of Sir Archibald Bodkin ; (3) whether the idea of the raid

on the Indian Home Rule League originated with the Home office, the police, or the India Office ; (4) whether the India Office recommended the Home Office, or the police to raid the offices of the Home Rule for India League ; whether he was cognisant and approved of the raid before it took place.

Sir G. Cave : On the 31st October, the India Office notified my Department that the British branch of the Home Rule for India League were publishing a reprint of a book called "Young India," by one Lajpat Rai. The India office pointed out that this book had been prohibited in India, and that its importation in this country had also been prohibited, and expressed the view that its circulation was undesirable. I personally examined the book, and came to the conclusion that it contravened the Regulations under the Defence of the Realm Act and contained passages sympathising with extreme revolutionary methods (including the use of the bomb and the revolver) and condoning crimes of assassination which had been committed in India. I will give the hon. and gallant Member a note of some of the passages upon which my opinion was formed. The decision to have the premises searched, and the book seized, was thereupon taken with the concurrence of the India Office. I may add that there is (as I am informed) cause to suspect that the author is subsidised by German agents in the United States of America, and it is certain that he uses language regarding British rule in India which is indistinguishable from that found in enemy propaganda.

The hon. and gallant Member will perhaps allow me to add that I have never suggested or for a moment believed that he would give his countenance to a publication which he knew to be of the character which I have described, and I am confident that, when he expressed his approval of the book in question, he had not realised the nature and tendency of some of the passages contained in the book.

Com. Wedgwood : May I ask whether the Right Hon. Gentleman read the book or whether it was read by Sir Archibald Bodkin ?

Sir G. Cave : I read the book from cover to cover.

Com. Wedgwood : Is the right hon. gentleman aware that 1,000 copies of the book were printed, and that they were sent to the Members of this House and to members of the House of Lords ?

Sir G. Cave : I am aware that the edition published in this country was a small one—1,000 was given to me as the number—

but you could not pass over even this small edition without it being said you could not suppress the rest.

Com. Wedgwood: Is it worth while in order to show the powers of the Home Office under the defence of the Realm Act to antagonise all those people in India who are pressing for Home Rule, and at a time when the Secretary of State for India is about there for this country?

Sir. H. Craik: Is it not the fact that Lajpat Rai was himself about ten years ago dealt with for seditious conduct in this country?

Sir G. Cave: Yes.

Com. Wedgwood: Is he not at the present moment free in India?

Sir G. Cave: I believe not.

Mr. Chancellor: Are any steps to be taken against the publisher, so that he may bring the matter before a Court—is he to be prosecuted?

Sir G. Cave: That is not in my province?

Mr. Outhwaite: Were those steps taken in order to make the world free for democracy?

Mr. Fisher: Free from assassination!

Com. Wedgwood: If you read the book, you would not talk rot like that.

H. of Coms.—November 26th, 1917.

“Young India”.

Com. Wedgwood asked the Secretary of State for India whether he is aware that “Young India” by Lajpat Rai, was published more than two months ago; and why the notification of the alleged dangerous character of this book to the Home Office was postponed till after the Secretary of State’s departure for India?

Mr. Fisher: The India Office was not aware of the publication of the book in this country until some days after the Secretary of State’s departure for India.

Com. Wedgwood asked in what country Lajpat Rai is at present; and whether he is at large?

Mr. Fisher: Lajpat Rai is in the United States of America. So far as is known he is at large.

Commander Wedgwood asked the Home Secretary whether he has any documentary evidence that Lajpat Rai is subsidised by

German agents in America ; if this evidence comes from the American Government ; and if it can be shown to the hon. Member for Newcastle-under-Lyme ?

Sir G. Cave : It would obviously be against the public interest to answer the first two parts of this question. The third part therefore does not arise.

H. of Coms.—November 28th 1917.

DEFENCE OF THE REALM REGULATIONS. YOUNG INDIA.

Com. Wedgwood asked the Secretary of State for India whether the Secretary of State in India or the Viceroy has been communicated with respecting the raid on the Indian Home Rule League's premises ?

Mr. Fisher : Not before the event. The Secretary of State was on the high seas when the India Office notified to the Home Office the fact that the book, the importation of which into this country and India was prohibited, has been published in England.

Com. Wedgwood : He was not on the high seas, as I understand, when the raid was sanctioned.

Com. Wedgwood : Is the right hon. Gentleman aware that the book was sent to Mr. Montagu personally, and to all Members of the House when it was first published, and can he explain how it was that the India Office was not acquainted with the fact ?

Mr. Fisher : I do not know whether Mr. Montagu reads every book he receives.

Mr. Pringle : Will the Government now withdraw the ban upon this book, in view of the fact that the hon. and gallant Member who wrote the preface is now an official of the Government ?

Com. Wedgwood : I will raise this question at eleven o'clock to-night.

Com. Wedgwood asked the Secretary of State for India if he will state in what country Lajpat Rai is at present ; and whether he is at large ?

Mr. Fisher : Lajpat Rai is in the United States of America. So far is it known he is at large.

Com. Wedgwood : Has the Government of the United States been communicated with with a view to the internment of this

extremely dangerous person who, according to Sir Archibald Bodkin, advocates sedition and assassination ?

Mr. Fisher : Not so far as I am aware of.

Mr. Adderson asked the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs whether his attention has been drawn to the fact that the German Government, whilst extensively circulating amongst their troops and their people complacent official literature dealing with the War and War aims suppress or subject to severe censorship all leaflets and pamphlets of an independent character bearing on the same question ; and whether he can take steps, with the help of the War Aims Committee, to place before the British people this example of the effects upon liberty of opinion of Prussian militarism ?

The under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs (Lord R. Cecil) ; I have no reason to doubt the accuracy of the facts stated in the first part of the question. The second part is not a matter which concerns the Foreign Office.

General Croft . Is the Noble Lord aware of the fact that pacifist utterances in this country are very freely circulated in Germany in order to encourage the troops ?

Lord Cecil : Yes, Sir ; that is so.

DEFENCE OF THE REALM REGULATIONS. YOUNG INDIA.

Com. Wedgwood asked the Home Secretary if he can state how many copies of "Young India," by Lajpat Rai, were seized in the recent raids ; and whether other owners of the work may expect the attention of the police ?

Sir G. Cave : Six bound copies of this book and a number of unbound sheets were seized. Any copy of this book is liable to be seized under Regulation 51, but it is not proposed to take action with regard to copies that may be in the possession of innocent holders.

Com. Wedgwood asked the Home Secretary whether his advisers have yet come to any decision as to the prosecution of the publishers of "Young India" ; and has the India Office been consulted in the matter ?

Sir G. Cave : No criminal proceedings are at present contemplated. The India office has been consulted in the matter.

The remaining Orders were read and postponed.

COMMANDER WEDGWOOD'S SPEECH IN THE.

H. of Coms.—December 5, 1917.

I explained before that there is no objection, from my own point of view, to this book circulating in any country in the world, but seeing that it was limited to an edition of 1,000 copies, circulated only to Members of this House, and to Members of the House of Lords, I think the seizure by the Home Office was an act of pure obscurantism and of the most lamentable unwisdom—Prussianism. Here is a book which puts before the responsible public of this country the Indian point of view so far as the British Government of India is concerned. Surely we realise that before any assembly is capable of judging such matters as the government of India it ought to have both sides put before it. We are capable of judging whether or not the book trenches on dangerous ground. It is bad enough for the Home Office to try to decide what the people shall read, but when it comes to trying to decide what Members of this House shall read it is going beyond the limits set by any previous Government in this country. Listen for one moment to what the "New Statesman" says of this particular volume. They say,

This is emphatically a book to be read by the Secretary of State for India himself as well as by members of the Council and the clerk's in the India Office. It ought to be pondered over by every Indian civilian."

That is exactly the conclusion I came to after having read the book carefully; that it ought to be in the hands of every man who goes out to help govern India. They should see the other side, in order to be capable of assisting the administration. By shutting your eyes to the native point of view, by accepting the doctrine of Rudyard Kipling, you enormously handicap the administration of the country. I have been told that by writing a preface to this book I have been responsible for encouraging sedition and assassination.

Sir G. Cave. No!

Com. Wedgwood : I am quoting.

Sir G. Cave : Not quoting but misrepresenting.

Com. Wedgwood : I have been told that I was responsible for a book which recommended assassination and sedition. The Home Secretary has been good enough to send me a list of passages which he regards as recommending assassination. Unfortunately, his Office has been careful to send me, not passages but a series of pages—sometimes ten at a stretch—which he regards in that light. It is impossible for me looking through these pages, to define exactly what he means by encouraging sedition and ass-

assassination. I want the House to understand the nature of this book. It is a passionate plea for self-government in India. Is there any Member of this House who is capable of writing a passionate plea for the independence or autonomy of any country in Europe who would not make out as strong as possible a case against the existing administration: You cannot agitate without painting in the blackest permissible colours the existing administration, and Lajpat Rai who is incapable of advocating assassination, has undoubtedly painted in such colours the whole administration of India by the British.

One passage to which the Home Secretary calls my attention described the method by which the British Administration was spread throughout India in the eighteenth century but that passage was simply milk and water compared with passages which might be quoted from Edmund Burke dealing with exactly the same period: The next passage to which the right hon. Gentleman calls my attention is the description by a modern Indian of the six Repressive Acts passed in 1909. I myself in this House, and with the sympathy of this House, denounced them and I can honestly say that the description by Lajpat Rai of these six Acts by no means exceeds the justifiable criticism which any Liberal might pass on those Acts. Listen to what he says in the passage described by the Home Office as being tendentious in the worst degree:

"The penal code has been amended to make the definition of sedition more comprehensive. The criminal procedure code has been amended to facilitate conviction and to accelerate trials. The Seditious Meetings Act has been enacted to make open propaganda impossible. The Press Law has been passed to muzzle the press-Spies and detectives have been employed out of number."

Hon. Members who have read the memoirs of Lord Morley could quote from those memoirs statements about suppression of the freedom of the Press, equally violent and equally tendentious. Surely it is monstrous to say that a passage such as that, a mere statement of fact from the liberal point of view, about suppression of the freedom of association and freedom of the Press, should be condemned in this House, without any opportunity for defence in a Court of law, by the Home Secretary.

The gravamen of the charge against this book is that in the last half it proceeds to describe sketchily, photographically almost the various grades of Indian reformers and Nationalists. It takes those who believe in revolution—who do not advocate assassination but revolution; then it refers to such men as Arabinda Ghose and Savarkar, men in whom politics are blended with a kind of religious

fanaticism : then it deals with the terrorists, who believe in the bomb and the daggers ; then with the Constructional Nationalists of whom Lajpat Rai is one ; then with the Congress Party, the reformists of the Gokhale kind. It deals with them and puts before the people of this country the different classes of Indian reformers, with the ideals they have and the methods they employ. If you are once to pronounce that it is not permissible to state in print in this country the facts about the various parties in India, or in any other part of the globe, you are obstructing the best opportunities we can possibly have of governing India not only in the interest of Indians, but of the British Empire itself. I wish to illustrate in one word what Mr. Gokhale himself said about Mr. Lajpat Rai, because, to my mind Lajpat Rai is an enormous asset to this Empire and ought rather to be encouraged than to be reprobated as an encourager of assassination. This is what Mr. Gokhale said in a speech delivered in the Council of the Governor General after his Lajpat Rai's deportation.

“Lajpat Rai was a religious, social and educational reformer who was loved and respected by large classes of his countrymen all over the country.”

It is the misfortune of all great reformers and all agitators—such as I myself am—to be reprobated and denounced by those in authority ; but at least we might ask authority to use language which is in some measure governed by the responsibility of their position, and at the same time by the moral character of those who advocate more extreme doctrine than the Government of the day is willing to recognise.

Home Office Denounced.

I do not mind in the least about accusations against myself in this matter. The House knows me better, and is quite capable of assessing at its true value any charge against myself. What I am here to denounce and deplore is the attitude, of the Home Office, and I suppose the attitude, one might say, of the India Office, as it is bereft of the Secretary of State for India—the attitude of these two Government Departments, on which so much depends, towards a legitimate movement for self-government in India.

I think it is unnecessary for me to say anything about the constitutional question in India. Everyone here knows that India itself is in an extremely touchy state at the present moment. You have a raid like this carried out by the Home Office with the consent of the India Office, but in the absence of the chief of the India

Office. You have this carried out regardless of the effect that it will have on public opinion in India. I say that it is a lamentable thing to be done irresponsibly by the Government of the day, which does not really recognise its responsibility towards India at present. Anyone who has any connection with India knows that it is of the greatest importance at the present time that the mission of the Secretary of State for India should meet with the warmest and most accommodating reception not only from the Indian people, but from the Anglo-Indians of India as well. We have here this irresponsible Government throwing into the midst of this amicable association in India this stupid bombshell of the arrest and seizure of a book which was only circulated to members of the Legislature of this country. Beyond the Indian question altogether surely we have here an illustration of the employment of the Defence of the Realm Act which is utterly unjustifiable at the present time. The Defence of the Realm Act is meant not to have any influence whatever upon the future government of our great Indian Empire. It is meant to have influence on the conduct of the War itself. How does the seizure of a book dealing with the future Government of India affect the conduct of a war in this country? This book does not get to India. There is no fear of that. No Sir. This is a case where the authority, having got a brief control of the police of this country, so far as it affects opinion in this country has used that authority madly in order to put down anything of which the holders of that authority for the moment disapprove.

Anti-Jacobin Legislation.

It is impossible to conceive that if we had a Liberal Home Secretary that we should have had this book seized under the Defence of the Realm Act. It is impossible to conceive that if we had a Liberal Home Secretary we should have had the Defence of the Realm Act extended so as to deal with a purely Indian question which has no effect whatever upon Germany or the War at all except in so far as it is an example of Prussianism in our midst in this country. The book in question may be an example of all that the Home Secretary said. It may be that the book is a pernicious book but every one here who has had any education in British history and in British traditions knows that to strangle a book because some people in authority think it is bad is neither good politics nor good ethics. The advertisement which this book has got from this prosecution is far greater than it would get from any number of reviews at the illimitable expenditure of somebody's money. I believe this book was published at the expense of Lady Delaware. She was

not prosecuted, no-body will be prosecuted. But it is not merely that this prosecution involves an advertisement for a book which the Home Office believed to be seditious but that this prosecution is a return to the days of the anti-Jacobin legislation of this country. It is a return to the days of Lord Eldon and Lord Erskine.

GERMAN MENACE AND THE ROUTE TO INDIA.

The following are extracts from two very remarkable speeches of Mr. Mc Callum Scott in the House of Commons delivered in March, 1918, when the Russian Revolution and the Vote of Credit were discussed. They throw considerable light on the reasons which led to the Imperial War Conference at Delhi held on the 27th April, 1918, in which the Viceroy read messages from the King Emperor and the Prime Minister to India calling forth help against the grave situation of the Empire and the imminent menace to India.

We were suffering severely from the evils of our centralisation, and the movement for decentralisation was coming here and coming strongly, though gradually. In Russia it has come like a flood, a deluge ; it has shown us what disasters may occur when reforms are delayed. It is part of the genius of the people of this country that they know how to take occasion by the hand, and make the bonds of freedom wider still. It would be well to recognise that the great movement which has started in Russia is something cognate to the highest objects we have in the War and also to the essential reforms which are due in this country, reforms that would bring under the direct control of the people those matters which affect their daily and domestic life. I have been led to develop this aspect of the subject rather more fully than I had intended. My first reason for objection to Japanese intervention is that it will lead us into dangers with which we are not confronted at present. My second reason is that it will not meet the danger actually threatened in the East. The Hon. member referred to Vladivostock. I wish Vladivostock were the only danger with which we are threatened in the East. As to the stores and munitions accumulated there, that is a small matter relatively to the grave dangers that face us. Even if we lost the munitions, even if they were put on the railways and transported straight to Germany we would know exactly what we had to face. But that is insignificant in comparison with the great danger with which our whole campaign and our whole strategy are threatened in the East. The question

of these stores and supplies could easily be solved by landing a few battalions and providing shipping for their transport ; they could easily be brought away. But that has nothing to do with Japanese intervention on a large scale in Siberia. The real danger threatens not Siberia at all ; it lies in the fact that the Germans are on the North West Frontiers of India and the frontiers of Afghanistan and Persia. The real danger lies in the fact that the Germans have got two railway lines in direct contact with these frontiers—the Trans-Caucasus Railway and the Trans-Caspian Railway. We know that in the past our statesmen and our soldiers have had many anxious moments on account of German intrigue and German menace on the North West Frontier of India. That menace has now matured in an urgent form. But a Japanese occupation of Siberia would not help us in the slightest in regard to it ; even though they advanced as far as the Urals it would not affect either of these two railways.

I do not want to pose as a strategist. I believe there are two schools with regard to the nature of this War : the Western school and the Eastern School. Personally, I have always belonged to the Eastern school ; I have regarded the War as an Eastern War, not merely because there we can make the most effective attack on German ambitions and cut Germany off from her objects but because in the East is our Achilles heel. The Eastern Front is the British Front not the western. I do not believe that this War can be ended on the Western Front. I do not believe any blow can be struck by either party which will determine it. Germany holds that front strongly in well-fortified and very short lines compared with the lines she has hitherto held, and at the present time she is able to take over new territories unchecked by anything we can do on the Western Front. Unless we are prepared to deliver a blow that will force her hand, unless we are prepared to do that and force her from sheer necessity to withdraw large numbers of troops from the Western Front and send them Eastwards to save her Empire, we shall not determine the War. An Hon. member asked me where that blow should be struck, and, although I do not pose as a strategist, I have no objection in telling him where, if I were Commander-in-Chief, or Prime Minister or if I had the power, I would act. I would send the troops to Mesopotamia and the North-West Frontier of India. I believe it is on those fronts that the Empire can be saved. It is no use saying it is difficult, and that there are transport difficulties. The question is, is it necessary and are we threatened there in a vital manner ? If we are, then we should send the troops there.

We have heard much talk about an alternate Government and the difficulty of finding one. I do not believe there would be any difficulty. You could constitute twenty or thirty alternative Governments out of this House, Nothing would be easier. What is wanted is an alternative policy and, I am sorry to say I do not see any sign of such a thing on the part of any alternative Government. It has been freely rumoured for long that the Prime Minister holds the Eastern view, that he regards the Eastern Front as our vital front, and that he has been in favour of making far larger efforts in the East. That has been stated time and again, and never, so far as I know, has it been contradicted. The Noble Lord, the Minister for Blockade, believe this is the vital front where a knock-out blow could be delivered, then he ought not to remain in his present positions if he cannot succeed in inducing the Government also to take that view. I hold this view so strongly that, if I could see any alternative Government prepared to pursue it, I would be willing to give it my support.

"THE ROUTE TO INDIA."

Towards the end of 1915, after Serbia had been crushed, there appeared in the "Daily Mail" a map, which was entitled "**The Route to India,**" and which excited a great deal of attention. I am not accustomed to taking political guidance from the columns of the "Daily Mail," but I thought this map was an important document. It showed the connection of Berlin and Vienna with the Baghdad railway and the Persian Gulf. It showed that the narrow corridor between Germany and Asia Minor, through the Balkans and through Constantinople, which had hitherto been blocked by a hostile Serbia and a neutral Bulgaria, had been burst through, that the area was clear, that Germany was in direct communication with Bagdad, and that the war was open to her, in her drive towards the Persian Gulf, towards Persia and towards Afghanistan. Of course nobody is ignorant of the geography of the situation, but this map did really show the route, and figuratively and picturesquely it showed the German purpose. It was my opinion then, and it is still my opinion, that this map was one of the most valuable documents published since the War began. It incurred very grave censure at the time from the Front Bench. It was referred to almost as a treasonable document, as a dangerous document, which might stir up alarm amongst the people, which would give comfort and consolation to the King's enemies, and which would be an occasion for jubilant propaganda by them. I

wish it had stirred up more alarm. The real cause for alarm lay not in the map itself ; but in the facts of the situation which it revealed in the German purpose in the route that lay open to Germany to achieve her purpose, and on the nakedness and defenceless state of the Empire, as we then stood against that menace. Unfortunately, it caused very little alarm save on the Front Bench. They were alarmed lest the people should be alarmed. I doubt very much whether the "Daily Mail" was alarmed. I think probably it was only a piece of topical sensationalism which they forgot about the next day. If the "Daily Mail" had only pursued this subject it might have achieved useful results in awakening public opinion in this country to the real nature of the danger to which the Empire was exposed in the East. If there had been that stirring of public opinion whether it was wise or foolish, they would have been moved to give further consideration to this aspect of the world War than they have done in the past.

THE THREE PHASES.

This menace, dimly apprehended by the people, divined only by a few of our statesmen and soldiers, has been inherent in the situation from the very beginning of the War, and since the beginning of the War it has passed through, three phases. Three phases really sum up the War in the East. There was, first of all, the Balkan Baghdad phase, then there was the Persian phase ; and then the Russian phase. The possibilities and the danger of a German drive through the Balkans towards Baghdad and the Persian Gulf were realised by few of our statesmen ; and it was to meet this menace that the Dardanelles Expedition was first planned. That was an attempt to defeat that menace by cutting through the narrow neck of the German enterprise, but cutting through the corridor, at its narrowest. That attempt failed. It failed for the simple reason that the Western view prevailed. It was held that the first call upon all our resources in men and material must be for the purpose of maintaining a great attempt to break through on the West ; and that only after the predominant claim of the offensive campaign on the West had been met would such forces as could be spared be available for the East. Accordingly, the attempt in the East was made with inadequate forces and failed. For the same reason the proposals which were made, and made with the same object, to go to the aid of Serbia, in the early days of the War, or to effect a landing at Alexandretta and cut through the Baghdad railway at another portion, failed to materialise because the Western view prevailed. And for the same reason also the

expedition to Salonika has been neutralised and stultified ; and with the crushing of Serbia and the withdrawal of our forces from Gallipoli the triumph of Germany in this phase of the Eastern menace was complete.

Sir J. D. Rees :—In order to follow the argument of the Hon. Gentleman, will he say what he means by cutting the Baghdad railway at Alexandretta, which is some hundred miles from it ?

Mr. Scott :—What does one mean by attacking the Germans in France ? You must begin somewhere. There was no object in landing at Alexandria unless it was to advance and attempt to cut the Baghdad railway. The next phase of the Eastern menace is what I think may be called the Persian phase. After Germany had succeeded in bursting through the barrier of the Balkans and maintaining unfettered communication with Baghdad, then we had to do something at the other end of the road. It was then that the first advance towards Baghdad was commenced and the expedition was sent forward and pressed without adequate preparations so that it ended disastrously at Kut. At that time the Russians had failed to advance from the Caucasus through Armenia, our own expedition had capitulated at Kut ; and Caucasus and the lower waters of the Euphrates fell into their hand, and through that gap there was unfettered communication between Germany and Turkey and Persia. Through that gap German agents, German arms, material, and German propaganda were constantly pouring. German influence penetrated and permeated Persia. It reached Afghanistan and the frontiers of India.

THE THIRD PHASE OF THE DANGER.

Here I may be thought to be treading on delicate ground, but I have nothing to say on this subject except what has already been said in another place by present Ministers and late Ministers. I have here one or two extracts from the Debates in another place which show to what extent this danger had gone, and to what extent it was reaching India. On the 20th February 1917, there was a Debate in the House of Lords, inaugurated, I think, by Lord Bryce on the subject of Sir Percy Sykes's expedition to Persia. Lord Curzon said :—

"At one time there were quite 100 of these German Agents, good fellows of the baser sort, scattered about in different parts of Persia, terrorising the peaceful tribes, and offering bribes to their chieftains. They further succeeded in attracting to their side a number of seditionists from India..... They carried their operations as far East as Persian Beluchistan, in the neighbourhood of the British Indian border and they even penetrated in small well-organised

groups, into Afganistan, where they were heard of at Herat and at Kabul where a German deputation was kept for some months in the hope of seducing the Amir of that country from his loyalty to ourselves."

On the 12th July last year there was a further Debate in the House of Lords, with special reference to the Report of the Royal Commission on the Mesopotamia expedition. The Marquis of Lansdowne said :—

"Persia was passing more and more rapidly under German influence. The attitude of the Amir, which in the end proved so satisfactory was at the time doubtful, and it is very hard indeed to say whether Lord Hardinge would have been able to give your Lordship the satisfactory account which he gave the other evening of the temper of the Indian people, if we had shown at the very outset that we had not sufficient courage to strike a blow where a blow was likely to be most effectual."

In the course of the same debate the Marquis of Crewe, who was justifying the attempt to advance on Bagdad, which ended disastrously, made these observations :—

"At that time the Russians had not advanced in Asia, nor had they proved that they could advance. There was nothing apparently to prevent the Turks from directing a force on Kermanshah and obtaining control in Persia. If Persia had gone Afghanistan might have followed suit. The Amir has shown the most signal loyalty to his engagements and a wise understanding of the situation. But he might easily have been swept off his feet, and it is impossible to say what a blaze might have been created. At Bagdad a force would have been on the flank of any such advance by the Turks into Persia which supplies a further reason for making the advance."

That was the form which the Eastern menace had taken at that time, the same menace that has existed from the beginning—German penetration of Persia and through Persia to Afghanistan and the agitations on the Indian Frontier. The menace of a rising of the wild tribes on the Northern Frontier has always been the nightmare of Indian statesmen. We have prevented it in the past on any very large scale by preventing arms and munitions reaching those tribes. We have kept them disarmed by means of the patrol which we have exercised in the Persian Gulf and adjacent quarters to prevent gun running. That patrol was useless at this phase of the War; and there was a constant stream of weapons, machine guns and rifles, and of skilled German agents, penetrating through Persia up to Afghanistan and the north-west frontier. It was to meet this menace that the second expedition was sent forward on a larger scale and pressed forward to Bagdad and beyond, in fact almost until it joined hands with the Russians who had advanced through the Caucasus and through Armenia. The gap was closed, and there, for the time being, was the end of that particular phase of the

menace. The misfortune was that we treated it merely as a local danger, as a temporary threat, and we were content with stop-gap measures. The third phase of this danger has come with the collapse of Russia, and it is by far the most dangerous menace.

ROADS THROUGH WHICH GERMANS MIGHT PENETRATE.

The roads through which the Germans might penetrate through Persia to the north-west were wild tracks. There were no bridges and no railways, but a long and arduous and dangerous journey. But through Russia they are now in direct railway communication with the frontier and Afghanistan. There are two railway lines, either of which they might use. There is the Trans-caspian railway and another railway line. Any one who knows the country will know how dangerous they are. They are military railways, designed for technical purposes. The Transcaspian Railway runs from Krasnovodsk, on the eastern shores of the Caspian, skirting the northern frontier of Afghanistan.

Sir J. D. Rees. A desert.

Mr. Scott: Yes, but a railway. It is all very well to say, "a desert," but a railway bridges a desert. The port of Karsnovodsk is directly opposite the port of Baku, which is the terminus of the Caucasus Railway. It is in direct communication with Batum, and the whole journey from Berlin is direct by railway to the port of Batum. There is only steamer transport across Caspian, and then you have railway communication direct to the Afghanistan frontier. Do you think the Germans are going to remain oblivious to the possibilities of that railway communication? Why, only in Wednesday's papers we can see what it means. I find in the "Times" this morning a message from the Berlin semi-official agency referring to what is called the economical-political appendix to the treaty just concluded between Russia and Germany. There it is stated that by the establishment of free transit direct commercial communication is secured via Russia with Persia and Afghanistan which was hitherto barred. But that railway communication is not all. On the South something has happened also. The Russian forces, cut off from all supplies, cut off from all external aid, have not been able to hold their own in Armenia and the Caucasus. They have fallen back. The gap is still open. Northern Persia is unmasked; and through that gap once more rifles, machine guns, supplies and German propaganda are permeating Northern Persia. Along the whole Southern frontier, along the Western frontier, they

have practically encircled Afghanistan. They have proved themselves most loyal in the past. I believe they are still, and I believe they will remain so. But it is easy to see that their hands may be forced. The rule of the Government of Afghanistan over the wilder tribes is a shadowy and a vague rule. If these tribes are armed with weapons of precision and they are subject to the incitement of German agents, there is no saying what may happen. The Afghan Government may be overthrown. Why not take it into consideration? It has been suggested in the House of Lords by His Majesty's Ministers; and if it is suggested there why not suggest it here, and ask for adequate consideration?

Frontier rising in India.

Do they realise that we are now faced with the imminent possibility of a frontier rising in India on an unprecedented scale?

Sir J. D. Rees: There is no sign of it.

Mr. Scott: There have been many signs of it, and I can quote statements from His Majesty's ministers to justify it. I want to know whether the Government are alive to that danger. I do not ask what measures they are taking to provide against it. It would not be proper for them to disclose in this House what are the measures whereby they propose to meet it. I believe adequate measures can be taken. If it were not that I thought it would be an improper aspect of the subject to discuss in this House I would suggest now the measures which I think ought to be taken, can be taken, and which would provide against the materialising of the danger.

The last point which I wish to make is this; that this Eastern menace is the greatest danger to which we are exposed in this War. It is the vulnerable flank of the British Empire. There is a great difference between the two; and I believe it is that margin which will meet the situation in the East. I have no expectation of a breakthrough ever being achieved on the West. The forcing of trench after trench, mile after mile one behind the other, there is no chance of a breakthrough; but on the East there is a danger that while we are lavishing our strength on the fruitless effort to achieve an impossible task we may ourselves be exposed to a blow which will be fatal to our continuance in this War.

THE SUBRAMANIA LETTER.

House of Commons—3 June '18

Mr. Joynson-Hicks asked the Sec. of state (1) whether his attention has been called to the letter of Sir Subramaniya Aiyer to President Wilson; whether this letter was grossly defamatory of British rule in India; whether any action been taken against him under the Defence of India act; (2) whether he was among those making representations to him (Montagu) during his recent visit.

General Croft asked a similar question and also enquired if the gentleman (Sir S. Aiyer) has fallen under the influence of Mrs. Besant; and what action is proposed to be taken with a view to putting an end to such propaganda?

Mr. Montagu—The disgraceful letter is correctly described. Its impropriety is all the more inexcusable because of the position of the writer. But the assertions in the letter are too wild and baseless to receive notice from any responsible authority. No action has as yet been taken but I am in communication with the Viceroy.

Sir. J. D. Rees—Is the right hon. gentleman aware that this member of a short-lived race is already upwards seventy-seven years old, and that this is a senile production?

Debate in the Lords.

In the House of Lords, on the 18th June, Lord Harris was:—

To ask His Majesty's Government whether their attention has been called to a letter alleged to have been addressed by Sir S. Subramaniya Aiyer, K.C.I.E., late Acting Chief Justice of the Madras High Court, to President Wilson attributing to the British Government in India misrule, oppression, the grant of exorbitant salaries, the refusal of education, the sapping of the wealth of India, the imposition of crushing taxation, the imprisonment of thousands of people, and the deaths of civilian prisoners from loathsome diseases; and if so, whether they propose to take any steps in condemnation of the same; and if they have not had their attention called to it, whether they will make enquiries.

Lord Harris said :—My Lords, my question has been deferred, at the suggestion of my noble friend Lord Curzon for, so long that answers have been given in another place (H. of Commons) which practically dispose of any obscurity there may be in it; but I shall take the liberty, thanks to the elasticity which is accorded to questions in this House, of offering a few remarks upon the reply of the Secretary of State.

The Secretary of State has stigmatised this letter as "disgraceful and improper," but notwithstanding that the Government of India has decided to take no further notice of it than the reproof which had been described by the Secretary of State—namely that "they ex-