NATIONAL EVOLUTION

A BRIEF SURVEY OF
THE ORIGIN AND PROGRESS OF
THE INDIAN NATIONAL CONGRESS
AND THE GROWTH OF INDIAN NATIONALISM

BY

AMVIKA CHARAN MAZUMDAR.

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NOTE TO THE SECOND EDITION.

The first edition of this book was brought out in September, 1915. Advantage has been taken by the author of the issue of this second edition to add more incidents in connection with the origin and early stages of the Congress Movement and to bring the book itself up to date *i.e.* down to the last Congress at Lucknow of which the author, the Hon. Mr. Amvica Charan Muzumdar was the President.

The publishers are gratified at the ready welcome accorded by the public to the account of the national movement from the pen of one of the oldest of the congress veterans.

It is hoped that this new and revised edition will meet with equal success.

November, 1917. *The Publishers.*

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the Educational Statement of March, 1914. Mr. Satyananda Bose, the energetic Secretary of the Bengal Provincial Congress Committee, was good enough to supply me with the papers relating to the Surat incident which will be found in an appendix. Lastly, I am highly indebted to my friends Mr. Amrita Chandra Ghosh of the Ripon College, Calcutta, and Mr. Prithwis Chandra Ray, late Editor of the *Indian World*, who kindly undertook to read my proofs when my eyes being affected I was incapacitated from dealing with them myself.

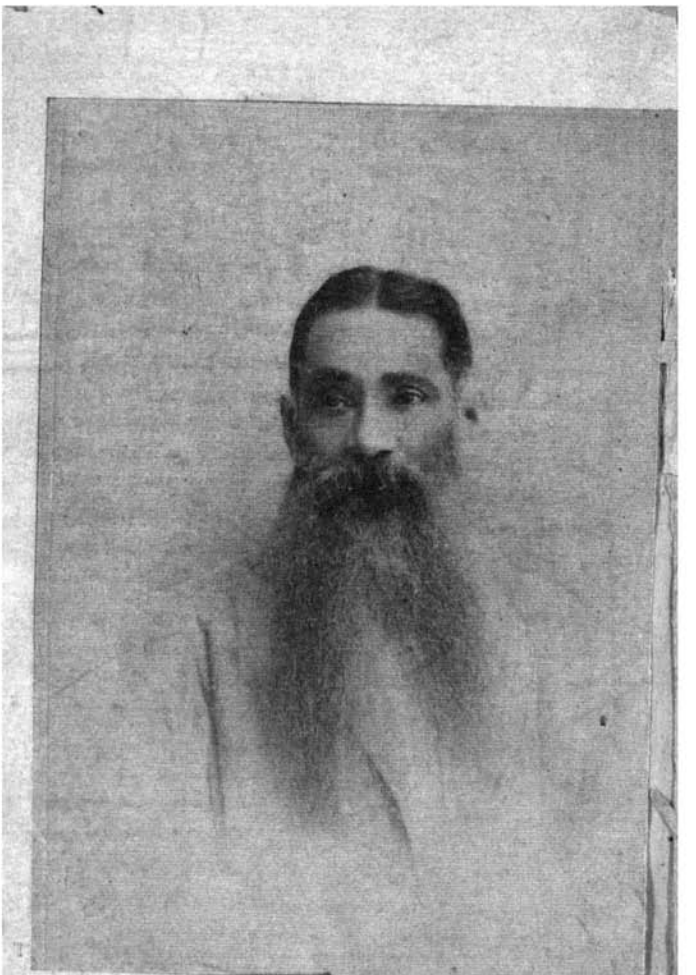
I am perfectly conscious of the many defects which will be noticed in these pages mostly written at intervals of a protracted and distressing illness. These defects may, however, stimulate others to write a more careful and exhaustive book on the subject. If in the meantime these imperfect and desultory notes will attract the attention of my young friends of the rising generation and direct them to a careful study of the Indian Problems and of the Indian Administration, I shall deem my humble labours amply rewarded.

FARIDPORE,
Sept. 1915.

AMVIKA CHARAN MAZUMDAR.

THE VENERABLE VETERANS.

HUME DADABHAI WEDDERBURN



W. C. BONNERJEE
PRESIDENT, 1885.

of Government, it was deemed proper and expedient to defer its publication until the War conditions were fairly settled. Those conditions having passed the doubts and uncertainties, as well as the excitement. of the preliminary stage and taken a definite shape as also a favourable turn, the book is now issued to the public.

My most grateful acknowledgments are due to my esteemed friend and chief, the Hon'ble Mr. Surendranath Banerjea, who not only readily supplied me with whatever information I wanted from him, but also in the midst of his multifarious duties, kindly went through a considerable portion of the manuscript. I am also deeply indebted to my esteemed friends, Mr. D. E. Wacha and Mr. G. Subramania Iyer for a lot of valuable information which they from time to time gave me regarding their respective Presidencies. To Sir William Wedderburn I am no less deeply indebted for the kind permission which he gave me for the free use of his excellent memoirs of Allan Octavian Hume, though I was precluded from using any of his private correspondence. Mr. G. A. Natesan of Madras materially helped me with a number of his valuable publications bearing on the Congress; while to the Education Department of the Government of India I feel deeply obliged for the courtesy and readiness with which they supplied me with

PREFACE TO THE FIRST EDITION.

Sometime in August 1913 at the instance of some friends I undertook to write a few articles for a magazine on the Rise and Growth of the Indian National Congress, the most important and phenomenal movement in the political history of new India. After only a few pages were written, it was discovered that such a subject could not be properly dealt with in the spare columns of any magazine in the country without taxing its capacity to an unreasonable extent and that for a much longer period than was perhaps consistent with the sustained interests of such a review. The idea was, therefore, abandoned. In January following while turning over some of the materials which I had collected and arranged for the articles, it occurred to me that these might be published in the form of a pamphlet so that they may be of some use to any one who may be disposed to write a well-digested history of this evolutionary movement. That is the origin of the little volume which is now presented to the public. The book was fairly completed by July 1914 when it was partly handed over to Mr. G. A. Natesan of Madras, who kindly undertook to illustrate and publish it. In August the great War broke out and as the book necessarily contained occasional criticisms

INDIAN NATIONAL EVOLUTION

CHAPTER I.

INTRODUCTORY.

A FULL and critical account of the origin, progress and development of an epoch-making political event in any country is always a very delicate and difficult task; for, the secret and sometimes silent origin of such a movement, like the many-sided meandering course of a deceptive rivulet at its source, is often shrouded in the mazes of imperfect records and conflicting reports; while the subtle influence of jealousy and spite on the one hand, no less than that of suspicion and distrust on the other, leading to misrepresentations and exaggerations, serves not a little in its onward course to obscure the vision and warp the judgment of contemporary minds. Then the effects of divergent views and colliding interests have also to be reckoned with to no small extent. Even the histories of such great events as the birth of American Independence and the establishment of the French Republic, not to speak of the Great Revolution, have not been altogether free from doubts, difficulties and contradictions. But if the histories of revolutions are sometimes so varying

and divergent in their accounts, the history of an evolution must be still more obscure and defective in its narratives. There a much larger area of time and space is covered by the slow and silent trend of gathering events which in their noiseless progress at first naturally attract much less attention and are more tardily recognised than the sensational and dramatic developments of a revolution, and then by the time the tangible results of these events begin to be realised much of the historical accuracy of the process is lost, if not actually sacrificed, to the extravagant demands of either individual or sectional pride and egotism. The history of the Indian National Congress is the history of the origin and development of national life in India, and a bare epitome of that history would involve a critical analysis of the diverse phases of that life in its different bearings and with all its recommendations and its lapses, as well as its successes and its failures during the past thirty years. The object of this book is not, however, to attempt such a venturesome task, nor has the time probably fully arrived for a complete and well-digested history to be written on this great evolutionary movement. Its humble aim is to record a few contemporaneous events and impressions which, in the peculiar shortness of Indian memory on matters historical, are already fast drifting towards the realm of faint traditions, and thus to rescue them from possible oblivion, so that they may be of some use to the future historian. For a correct and adequate appreciation of the movement, it would, however, be necessary to recapitulate, though

very briefly, the condition of the country immediately preceding its inauguration, as well as the circumstances which gradually led up to its inception.

The Indian National Congress marks an important epoch in the history of British Rule in India. Apart from the questions of reforms with which it is immediately concerned, it is engaged in a much wider and nobler task for which it has already laid a fairly solid foundation —the task of Nation-building in India after the model of modern Europe. Coming in contact with Western people and Western culture the Indian mind could not fail to expand in the direction of Western ideas and institutions. It is as impossible for one civilization, whether superior or inferior, to come in touch with another civilization without unfolding its own characteristics, as it is impossible for one vessel to throw its search-light upon another without exposing its own broad outlines to the gaze of the latter. A barbarous race may become extinct; but two civilized people coming in close contact are in spite of all their differences and conservatism bound to coalesce and act and react upon each other. The superior may dominate the inferior; but cannot transform it altogether: while the latter, however vigorously it may struggle to maintain its peculiar identity, is bound gradually and even unconsciously to imbibe and assimilate, either for the better or for the worse, some of the properties of the former. The Indian National Congress and the evolution which is slowly working its way through almost every phase of Indian life, are the natural and visible manifestation of such a contact.

CHAPTER II.

The Genesis of Political Movement in India.

Raja Ram Mohan Roy, the recognised progenitor of modern India, was the first apostle of a political creed based upon constitutional agitation in this country. But the political gospel which his versatile genius preached was, under the circumstances of the country very properly subordinated to the prior claims of religious, social and educational reforms, and like all gospels of truth, which have revolutionised human society whether in ancient or modern times, it naturally took time to establish its hold upon the public mind and present any tangible results. His mission to England in 1832 was no doubt a political one; but the remarkable evidence which he gave before a committee of the House of Commons attracted more attention in England than in India, and although that evidence was largely responsible for some of the reforms effected in the Indian administration shortly after his death the Indian public were very little influenced by it at the time. It was not until the fifties of the last century that with the dawning light of Western Education, of which the pioneer Indian Reformer was perhaps the greatest champion of his time, the public mind began to expand and political ideas and activities began to manifest themselves in one form or another in different parts of the country. Since then an association here and an association there sprung up, like a few oases in the desert, some of which no doubt possessed

a degree of vitality, but most of which were of ephemeral existence. The British Indian Association in Bengal and the Bombay Association in the Western Presidency were almost simultaneously started about the year 1851, the former under the guidance and inspiration of stalwarts like Mr. Prasanna Kumar Tagore, Dr. Rajendralal Mitra, Mr. Ramgopal Ghosh, Raja Digamvar Mitter, Mr. Pearychand Mitter and Mr. Harish Chandra Mukherjea, the pioneer of independent Indian journalism; while the latter owed its origin to the patriotic labours of Mr. Jugganath Sankersett, who was the first non-official member of the Bombay Legislative Council established in 1863, and of that venerable political Rishi who, thank God, after a strenuous active life extending over half a century, now sits in his quiet retreat at Versova as the patron saint of the Indian political world silently watching and guarding its interests and occasionally cheering it with messages of hope and confidence—Mr. Dadabhai Naoroji.* As the genius of Mr. Kristodas Pal ultimately raised the British Indian Association to a power in Bengal, so the Bombay Association owed not a little of its usefulness to its subsequent acquisition of the services of Sir Mangaldas Nathubhoy and Mr. Naoroji Furdunji who for his stout and fearless advocacy of the popular cause received, like Ramgopal Ghosh and Kristodas Pal in Bengal, the appellation of the "Tribune of the People" in connection with his many fights in the Municipal Corporation of Bombay so graphically described in that excellent book which has

* *Died on June 30, 1917.*

recently been written by Mr. Dinshaw Edulji Wacha on "*The Rise and Growth of Bombay Municipal Government.*"* But while the British Indian Association has vigorously maintained a useful existence for more than half a century, the Bombay Association did not survive more than a decade, and although it was revived in 1870 and galvanized into fresh life by Mr. Naoroji Furdunji in 1873, it shortly became practically extinct in an unequal competition with the East India Association which again in its turn fell into a moribund condition in the early eighties. The Southern Presidency was still more slow in developing its public life; there was an old association called the "Madras Native Association," chiefly worked by some officials, which possessed very little vitality and had practically little or no hold upon the public mind in Madras. Madras was first vivified into life by that able and independent journal, *The Hindu*, which was started in 1878 under the auspices of a galaxy of stars in Southern India composed of Ananda Charlu, Veeraraghavachari, Rangiah Naidu and G. Subramania Iyer (alas! all of whom have now vanished into space). At Poona the *Sarvajanik Sabha* was started towards the middle of the seventies under the management of Rao Bahadur Krishnaji Laxaman Nulkar, Mr. Sitaram Hari Chiplonkar and several other gentlemen of light and leading who gave the first impetus to public activities in the Deccan.

These were practically all the important public bodies in the country between the fifties and the early

* *The Rise and Growth of Bombay Municipal Government.* By D. E. Wacha. G. A. Natesan & Co., Publishers, Madras.

seventies of the last century which, though exercising no inconsiderable influence within their limited spheres of particular activities, were but the general exponents of particular interests and for a long time devoted mainly to occasional criticisms of important administrative or legislative measures affecting their respective provinces. Constructive policy they had none, and seldom if ever they laid down any programme of systematic action for the political advancement of the country. In fact the idea of a united nationality and of national interests; the cultivation of politics in its wider aspects as the fundamental basis of national progress and not merely as a means to temporary administrative make-shifts; the all-embracing patriotic fervour which like the Promethean spark has now made the dead bones in the valley instinct with life; and, above all, the broad vision of political emancipation which has now dawned upon the people and focussed their energies and has directed their operations towards a definite goal and common aspiration, throwing all local and sectional considerations largely into the background—these were still very remote though not altogether foreign to the aims and objects of these Associations. But from this it must not be inferred that it is at all suggested, that these conceptions were the sudden evolution of a single year, or the revelation of a single evangelist who saw them in an apocalypse and proclaimed them to a wondering people at a single session of the Congress in the blessed year of 1885. Great events always cast their shadows before. Prior to 1880 even the semblance of a political status the

people had none, while their economic condition was becoming more and more straitened every day. Indian wants and grievances were accumulating with the rapidly changing conditions of the country, education was expanding Indian views and aspirations and Indian thoughts from various causes had been for a long time in a state of ferment vainly seeking for some sort of palliatives for the complicated diseases from which the country had been helplessly suffering in almost every direction. Many were thus the causes at work which contributed towards forcing the educated Indian mind into new channels of thought and action.

CHAPTER III

The Early Friends of India.

It must be gratefully recorded that while India was thus struggling in a sub-conscious state, alternating between hope and despair, painfully alive to her sufferings, yet quite helpless as regards any appropriate and effective remedy, she was not a little comforted by the fact that even among Englishmen, who were held responsible for the situation, there were men who, though they belonged to a particular nationality, were men born for justice and fairness towards suffering humanity. Since the time of Edmund Burke scarcely a voice had been heard in England in favour of the "voiceless millions" of India until John Bright sounded his warning note against the injustice systematically

done to this country. In 1847 Bright entered Parliament and he was not long in the House of Commons before his generous impulses turned his attention to India. From 1847 to 1880, amidst his multifarious duties as a British politician and cabinet minister, he worked for India as none had worked before him. In the famous debate on Sir Charles Wood's India Bill of 1853, Mr. Bright entered a vigorous protest against the system of Government established in India and categorically pointed out nearly all the defects of that system some, if not most, of which are still applicable to the present-day arrangement. In his passionate eloquence he called the attention of the House to the extreme inadequacy of Parliamentary control over the administration of India which both sides of the House formally agreed in proclaiming as a "solemn sacred trust", though neither side raised its little finger even to treat it as more than a grazing common. He held that there was no continuity or consistency of any settled policy with regard to India, while everything was allowed to drift, there being no real disposition to grapple with any difficulty; that Indian opinion was unanimous in calling for a constitutional change and in complaining of the delay and expense of the law courts, the inefficiency and low character of the police and the neglect of road-making and irrigation; that the poverty of the people was such as to demonstrate of itself a fundamental error in the system of Government; that the statute authorising the employment of Indians in offices of trust was a dead letter; that the continuance of the system of appointments and

promotion by seniority in the covenanted service was a "great bar to a much wider employment of the most intelligent and able men among the native population;" that taxation was clumsy and unscientific and its burden intolerable to a people destitute of mechanical appliances; that the salt-tax was unjust and the revenue from opium precarious; that the revenue was squandered on unnecessary wars; that the Civil Service was overpaid; that there was no security for the competence and character of the collectors whose power was such that each man could make or mar a whole district; that Parliament was unable to grapple fairly with any Indian question; that the people and Parliament of Britain were shut out from all considerations in regard to India, and that "on the whole the Government of India was a Government of secrecy and irresponsibility to a degree that should not be tolerated." In the peroration of this remarkable speech referring to the Indian people John Bright said:—

"There never was a more docile people, never a more tractable nation. The opportunity is present, and the power is not wanting. Let us abandon the policy of aggression and confine ourselves to a territory ten times the size of France, with a population four times as numerous as that of the United Kingdom. Surely, that is enough to satisfy the most gluttonous appetite for glory and supremacy. Educate the people of India, govern them wisely, and gradually the distinctions of caste will disappear, and they will look upon us rather as benefactors than as conquerors. And if we desire to see Christianity, in some form professed in that country, we shall sooner attain our object by setting the example of a high-toned Christian morality, than by any other means we can employ."

Again in 1858 when the question of the reconstitution of the Government of India came up for

discussion in Parliament after the Mutiny, John Bright submitted a scheme of his own for the better Government of India embodying many a liberal principle which have not yet been fully accepted. He contended that

> "The population of India were in a condition of great impoverishment and the taxes were more onerous and oppressive than the taxes of any other country in the world. Nor were the police arrangements, administration of justice, the educational policy and the finances in a satisfactory condition."

And he urged that what was wanted with regard to the administration of India was "a little more daylight, more simplicity and more responsibility." It may not be generally known that, although Lord Derby had a just tribute paid to him for the drafting of the Great Proclamation of 1858, its original inspirer was John Bright. In the celebrated speech to which reference has just been made, he said:

> "If I had the responsibility of administering the affairs of India there are certain things I would do. I would, immediately after the Bill passes, issue a Proclamation in India which should reach every subject of the British Crown in that country and be heard of in the territories of every Indian prince or *rajah*."

Much of what he suggested was actually embodied in the Greart Proclamation and almost in the form and style in which the originator of the idea put it. According to Bright's biographer, the opportunity of "administering the affairs of India" was actually offered to him by Mr. Gladstone in 1868, but unfortunately for India he did not see his way to accept the Indian portfolio, not only because the task was too heavy for his delicate health, but also because he thought

that public opinion in England was not sufficiently advanced to allow him to adopt his views with regard to the Government of India. But although he declined to be the Secretary of State for India he never lost sight of India during his active Parliamentary career which extended down to 1886. So great was his genuine sympathy for the Indians, that when on a certain occasion a responsible member in the House of Commons made certain unparliamentary observations with regard to the people of India Mr. Bright indignantly observed :—

"I would not permit any man in my presence, without rebuke, to indulge in the calumnies and expressions of contempt which I have recently heard poured forth without measure upon the whole population of India."

And in that last great speech, which he made touching India in the House of Commons, he poured forth his genuine love for the Indian people in the following pathetic strain :—

"All over those vast regions there are countless millions, helpless and defenceless, deprived of their natural leaders and their ancient chiefs, looking with only some small ray of hope to that omnipresent and irresistible power by which they have been subjected. I appeal to you on behalf of that people. I have besought your mercy and your justice for many a year past : and if I speak to you earnestly now it is because the object for which I plead is dear to my heart. Is it not possible to touch a chord in the hearts of Englishmen, to raise them to a sense of the miseries inflicted on that unhappy country by the crimes and the blunders of our rulers here? If you have steeled your hearts against the natives, if nothing can stir you to sympathy with their miseries, at least have pity upon your own countrymen."

It may be interesting to learn that the great Indian orator, the late Mr. Lal Mohan Ghose, was a political

disciple of John Bright and the masterly diction and style which he commanded in his orations he inherited from his great master. The one great lesson which he learnt from John Bright, as he himself once said to the writer of these pages, was to make as few speeches as possible, but always to make those few speeches telling and effective—a lesson which the apt Indian pupil religiously enjoined upon himself with rather too much austerity in his after-life.

Next to John Bright, Henry Fawcett was one of the greatest and truest friends of India in England. He was a trained financier and economist and entering Parliament in 1865, he soon found ample materials to direct his attention to the Government of India which soon earned for him the sobriquet of "Member for India" by his close vigilance and unremitting attention to the Indian finance. Mr. Fawcett always maintained that "the natives of India should be given a fair share in the administration of their own country" and that the ablest among them should be provided with "honourable careers in the public service". In 1868 he accordingly moved a resolution in the House of Commons for holding the Civil Service Examination simultaneously in Calcutta, Bombay and Madras, as well as in London. It was precisely the same resolution which 25 years later Mr. Herbert Paul moved and carried in the House to be only ignominiously consigned ultimately into the dusty upper shelves of the India Office. He bitterly complained of the culpable apathy and indifference of the British Parliament towards the grievances of the Indian people. Twitted in Parliament

and not unoften charged outside it with neglecting the interest of his own constituency, Fawcett fought for India single-handed with a resoluteness of purpose, sense of justice and mastery of facts which extorted the admiration of even his worst critics. Addressing his own constituency of Brighton in 1872, he said :—

"The most trumpery question ever brought before Parliament, a wrangle over the purchase of a picture, excited more interest than the welfare of one hundred and eighty millions of our Indian fellow-subjects. The people of India have no votes, they cannot bring even so much pressure to bear upon Parliament as can be brought by one of our Railway Companies ; but with some confidence I believe that I shall not be misinterpreting your wishes if, as your representative, I do whatever can be done by one humble individual to render justice to the defenceless and powerless."

While on another occasion speaking from his place in the House of Commons he boldly said, that all the responsibility resting upon him "as a member of Parliament was as nothing compared with the responsibility of governing 150 millions of distant subjects." In 1870 Fawcett vehemently protested against the orthodox practice of introducing the Indian Budget at the fag end of a session to be silently debated before empty benches. He maintained that India was a poor country and complained that the British public failed to appreciate the dangerously narrow margin upon which the mass of the population lived on the verge of starvation. In 1871 it was at his instance that a Parliamentary Committee was appointed to inquire into the financial administration of India, he himself being elected as its President. All this time India was keenly watching the movements of the one man who was single-handed, fighting her cause against

tremendous odds, and in 1872 a huge public meeting in Calcutta voted an address to Fawcett expressing India's deep gratitude towards him and urging him to continue the fight in defence of her dumb and helpless millions which he had voluntarily and so generously espoused. At the general election of 1874, Fawcett, like many other Liberals, lost his seat for Brighton and for the first time in those days, India seemed to have practically risen to the exigencies of the situation. A subscription was at once started in this country and a sum of £750, in two instalments, was remitted to England to enable Fawcett to contest another seat at the earliest opportunity, and soon after, Fawcett was returned member for Hackney. In 1875 Fawcett vigorously opposed Lord Salisbury's well-known ball to the Sultan of Turkey at the expense of India. Fawcett was not satisfied with his specious plea and pointedly asked Lord Salisbury how he could "reconcile it to himself to tax the people of India for an entertainment to the Sultan" in England. It was on this occasion that Fawcett coined that smart expression which has since become so familiar in English phraseology. He described the ball as an act of 'magnificent meanness" which in later years Lord Morley by slight embellishment converted into "magnificent melancholy meanness" on the occasion of the Suakim Expedition. The "magnificent meanness," the first of a series, was committed in spite of Fawcett's spirited protest and was soon followed by the Abyssinian war when the member for India again stood in defence of the dumb Indian tax-payer, and it was owing to his

repeated protests that at last the cost of that unrighteous and abortive war was divided between England and India. Fawcett again protested when the Duke of Edinburgh's presents to the Indian princes were also debited to the Indian account, and violently opposed another proposal for display of "magnificent meanness" by debiting the entire expenses of the Prince of Wales' visit to India to the Indian revenues, and as a result of this protest poor India escaped with the payment of £30,000 only, making the *magnificence* of the *meanness* still more visible. In 1877 he denounced Lord Lytton's unjust and indefensible sacrifice of the cotton import duties for the sake of party interest in England and raised, though ineffectually, his loud voice against the unconscionable extravagance of the Delhi Assemblage in the midst of a terrible famine. Lord Lytton's Afghan War also came under the searching examination and scathing criticism of Fawcett who, in 1879, brought forward another motion asking for the appointment of a Select Committee of the House to enquire into the working of the Government of India Act. In 1880 Fawcett had the satisfaction of seeing at the end of a series of extravagance of a dark and dismal administration the dawn of a bright morning ushered by the appointment of the Marquess of Ripon as Viceroy and Governor-General of India.

Last but not least there was Charles Bradlaugh, the poor errand boy, who had by the sheer force of his character raised himself into a power in British politics of the nineteenth century. Born of the people

THE MARQUIS OF RIPON.

LADY RIPON.

HENRY FAWCETT.

CHARLES BRADLAUGH.

his attention and sympathies were naturally directed towards the people. Charles Bradlaugh was however slow in developing his sympathy for India; but having once developed that sympathy he became the staunchest friend of the Indian people. It has been truly said that "slow rises merit when by poverty depressed," and added to that this freedom of conscience proved a serious obstacle from his early career towards his advancement in public life. But even in the midst of the deadly struggle in which he was engaged, with very few friends to back him up and a host of enemies to put him down, in his legitimate way to Parliament, he never ceased to study Indian problems. His prominent attention to India was drawn by the Ilbert Bill agitation of 1883. The man who in his early career had espoused the side of Republican France against Imperial Germany, the man who had enlisted his sympathies for the Italian patriots, Garibaldi and Mazzini and congratulated Signior Castela upon the establishment of a republic in Spain, was not likely to tolerate the grossly selfish and insensate opposition raised against a measure which aimed at nothing more than the removal of an unjustifiable stigma on the Indian judiciary in the administration of their own country. Mr. Bradlaugh's subsequent labours in the cause of India relate to a later period and will be noticed in their proper place.

These three remarkable British statesmen were among the early pioneers of Indian reform in the British political field. Most of their projects no doubt failed, as they were bound to fail in a cold atmosphere of

ignorance, apathy and indifference: but they largely succeeded in drawing the attention of the British public to the affairs of India and in impressing them with the idea that there was at least something rotten in the state of Denmark. They also by their example served in a large measure to conciliate Indian feeling and inspire the Indian mind in the seventies and early eighties with the hope that all may still be well. There were many in those days to twit these political philosophers and brand them as visionaries; but the time may not be far distant when they will be fully recognised by all parties concerned as the truest friends of both India and England.

Following in the footsteps of this distinguished triumvirate there were also a few other fair-minded Englishmen who interested themselves in Indian affairs at this early stage. Among these may be mentioned Sir James Caird, Sir William Hunter, Lord Dalhousie, Mr. R. T. Reid, M. P., Mr. Slagg, M. P., Mr. Baxter, M. P., and last but not least that extraordinary Englishwoman who, having passed through different phases in her life and undergone persecutions of no ordinary character, has at last made India her home and her special interest—Mrs. Annie Besant. In 1878 when Benjamin Disraeli was the Premier and Lord Lytton the Viceroy of India, Mrs. Besant, who was then the friend and co-adjutor of Charles Bradlaugh, wrote a little book entitled *England, India and Afghanistan* exposing the misrule in India in such fierce and bitter language that it has been truly observed by a shrewd writer that "if it were published by an Indian at the

present time he would likely enough strand himself into difficulties of a highly serious character." Lord Ripon's sympathies for India even after his retirement were too well-known to require any mention. If the utterances of these early friends of India in England failed to render any immediate practical good to India, they at all events served to inspire men of light and leading in this country with the hope and confidence that if they could organize themselves and carefully formulate their grievances, men would not be wanting in England to defend their cause either on the floor of Parliament, or at the bar of public opinion in Great Britain.

In India and among the Anglo-Indian officials, Mr. A. O. Hume was for a long time noted for his strong sympathies for the Indian people. His kind and considerate treatment of the people of Etawah during the dark days of the mutiny endeared his name throughout the Punjab and led the people of the country justly to regard him as a friend and as a rare officer truly worthy of the administration of Clemency Canning. Sir Henry Cotton in Bengal and Sir William Wedderburn in Bombay also developed their love for the Indian people from an early stage of their Indian career, and both of them suffered not a little in the hand of the bureaucracy for their remarkable independence and strong sense of justice and fairness. These three Anglo-Indians were regarded as the most sincere friends of the people and the brightest ornaments of the Indian Civil Service.

CHAPTER IV.

THE INDIAN PRESS.

While the public associations were thus slowly but steadily inoculating the educated community in the country with political thoughts and ideas, and the early friends of India in England persistently, though ineffectually, drawing attention of the British public to Indian affairs, there was yet another and a more powerful agency at work silently moulding and shaping public opinion on a much larger scale throughout the country. The Indian Press, which, like the public Associations, was founded after the Western model, was with the rapid spread of education steadily gaining in strength and rising into power. The early history of that Press does not date back earlier than 1780 when the *Bengal Gazette* was started in Calcutta. From that time to the first decade of the nineteenth century it was practically an English Press conducted in English and managed and edited by Englishmen only. The Indo-English and the Vernacular Press were of much later growth and strange as it may sound, the Vernacular Press preceded its Indo-English comrade. The Vernacular papers were at first few and feeble and not much given to politics. The *Sambad Kaumudi* of Raja Ram Mohan Roy, the pioneer of pure Indian Journalism, sometimes purveyed but rarely criticised the acts of the administration. It was generally devoted to social, religious and educational

questions, although it must be conceded that as the Raja was the founder of the Bengali Press he was also the first and foremost advocate of the liberty of the Press in India. From 1799 to 1834 the Press in India was kept under strict censorship and instances were neither few nor far between where European editors sharply criticising the Government were visited with deportation to Europe. In 1835 the Government of Sir Charles Metcalfe restored the freedom of the Press and it was from this time that the Vernacular Press began to make rapid strides and the Indo-English Press gradually came into existence. The *Probhakar* of Iswarchandra Gupta was probably the earliest Vernacular paper in the country, which ventured to tread on political grounds though not without a faltering step and quivering hand. The Gagging Act of Lord Canning, necessitated by the exigencies of the Mutiny in 1858, was in force only for a year and did not much interfere with the normal expansion of the Press. The *Hindu Patriot*, the *Hurkura*, the *Indian Mirror*, the *Amrita Bazar Patrika*, which was at first an Anglo-Vernacular paper, the *Brahmo Public Opinion* which, under the name of *Bengal Public Opinion*, was subsequently incorporated with the *Bengalee*, the *Reis and Rayet*, the *Somprokash*, the *Nababibhakar*, the *Sulabh Samachar*, a pice paper, the *Sanjibani*, the *Sadharani* and latterly the *Hitavadi* and several others in Bengal; the *Rast Goftar*, the *Bombay Samachar*, the *Indu Prakash*, the *Jam-e-Jamshed*, the *Maharatta* and latterly the *Dnyan Prokash* and the *Kesari* in Bombay; the *Hindu*, the *Standard*, the *Swadesha Mitran* and several other papers in Madras,

and laterly the *Tribune* in Lahore, the *Herald* in Behar and the *Advocate* in Lucknow became powerful instruments of political education for the people and exercised considerable influence over the public mind up to the eighties of the last century. In spite of all that was said, written or done against it, the growth and development of the Indian Press was almost phenomenal, so that in 1875 there were no less than 478 newspapers in the country the bulk of which were conducted in the vernacular languages and freely circulated broadcast throughout the country. In Bengal particularly quite a number of cheap news sheets, written mostly in the Bengali language, purveying all sorts of informations and criticisms, sometimes ill-informed and sometimes over-balanced, but seldom losing touch with the new spirit, rapidly sprung up, and congregations of dozens of eager, illiterate listeners to a single reader of these papers at a stationery stall or a grocer's shop in the leisurely evening became a common sight. Thus from the petty shop-keeper to the princely merchant and from the simple village folk to the lordly landed aristocracy all were permeated with the spirit of this Press. The Anglo-Indian Press, though now naturally jealous of its formidable rival, was in those days sometimes conducted in a more liberal spirit and contributed not a little to the diffusion of western methods of criticism and the expansion of the political views of the people. It is not contended that a section of this Press was not altogether amenable to the charge so often levelled against it, that it was as inefficient as it was ill-informed and injudicious; but it can hardly be denied that on the whole the much-abused

Indian Press acted not only as a powerful adjunct towards popular education, but might have with a little more sympathetic treatment been easily turned into a useful guide to a more popular administration. John Bright, speaking of the Indian Press of the time, once made the following trenchant observation :—

"There are two sets of newspapers, those first,—which are published by Englishmen, and these being the papers of the services, cannot, of course, be in favour of economy. They assail me every time I mention India in a speech, if it is even only in a paragraph, and no doubt they will do the same for what I am saying now. Then there are the native papers; and although there are a great many published in the native languages, still they have not much of what we call political influence. The Government officials look into them to see if they are saying anything unpleasant to the Government—anything that indicates sedition or discontent, but never for the purpose of being influenced by the judgment of the writers and editors. The actual press of the country, which touches the Government is the press of the English, and that press, generally, has been in favour of annexation of more territory, more places, more salaries and ultimately more pensions."

What a mastery of facts relating to India which he had never visited and what a remarkable insight into its internal administration with which he was never connected? It would perhaps be no wonder if Indian youths of the present generation, who know nothing about the situation in the seventies and eighties of the last century, were to regard the above observation as only a prophetic pronouncement of the present-day condition of the Indian Press clothed only in the language of the past. Lord Lytton, like Lord Wellesley, became nervous and, at the instance of an impatient bureaucracy, gagged the Vernacular Press in 1878. Four years later the Vernacular Press Act was repealed

by Lord Ripon as an early instalment of his noble policy of conciliation. The subsequent history of the Indian Press is well-known and though not altogether irrelevant, it seems hardly necessary to pursue it for the purpose of this narrative. Suffice it to say, that with all its defects and lapses, as well as its numerous disadvantages, difficulties and disabilities, the Indian Press has played an important part in the evolution of the national life, and its chequered history is no mean evidence of the sustaining energies of a growing people. It has suffered in the past and is passing through a severe ordeal at the present moment. From the proud position of the Fourth State it has been reduced since 1910 to a humble suppliant before a district officer with the halter tight around its neck, and yet there is no knowing when that halter will be either removed or relaxed to enable it to breathe more freely. But there is no cause for despair. The Indian Press Act of 1910, with its drastic provisions for security, forfeiture and prosecutions without any remedy and the almost arbitrary powers vested in the magistrates, is no doubt a serious menace to the healthy growth of public opinion in the country and has practically paralysed for the moment all honest and independent criticism; but all violent measures defeat their own end and the vitality of a national life gathers strength not so much from easy indulgence as through violent repression. Liberty is always nurtured on the lap of Persecution and "action and reaction" is the law of Progress in all living organisms.

CHAPTER V.

THE GATHERING CLOUDS.

Those who confidently indulge in lavish criticisms of the present unrest as a sudden and unprecedented development of public agitation in this country would do well to remember, that it is not altogether a new organic change in the body politic, but only a recrudescence of the malady, though somewhat in an aggravated form, from which the country has suffered in the past and is likely to suffer still more for some time at least in future. The Government of the East India Company was largely tainted with corruption, and the trial of Warren Hastings and the judicial murder of Nund Coomar were only typical illustrations of the kind of administration established in this country since the battle of Plassey. The military rising of 1857 was a protest against that scandalous administration, although for the time being religion was the ostensible compelling force. Though the people wisely and loyally dissociated themselves from that protest, there are enough evidence on record to show that there was as much discontent among them as there were insecurity, inequality and injustice prevailing in the country. The transfer of the sovereignty of the country from the Company to the Crown in 1858, therefore, led not a few to suppose that a millennium was at last in sight and the change was hailed by the people with a deep sigh of relief; while the great Proclamation simultaneously issued to the princes and the peoples of

India filled the public mind with high hopes of reform and progress. But a few years' experience greatly disappointed them. For, although peace was restored and substantial measures were adopted for the improvement of the administration of justice and three Universities were established in the three Presidencies for the spread of education among the people, the political aspect of the defunct administration remained altogether unchanged, if it did not in some respect become even more retrograde. The Secretary of State for India became a more autocratic and irresponsible substitute for the Court of Directors without, however, a Board of Control to supervise his action; while the control of Parliament which used periodically to enquire into the affairs of India upon the renewal of the Company's charter at the end of every twenty years—a salutary check faithfully exercised since 1773—was practically wholly removed. A whole nation was disarmed and the entire administration was vested in a bureaucracy which with all its recommendations became in its gradual development as imperious in its tone and as unsympathetic in its attitude as it was saturated with the principles and prejudices of autocratic rule. That bureaucracy was no doubt at times and within certain limits, generously disposed to grant patronage and extended favours of a minor description to any native of the country who might successfully court them: but as regards any material advancement and participation in the administration, the entire population were jealously kept at arm's length and the slightest indication on their part of a desire to enter even the border land of its close

preserves was resented as an intolerable and dangerous trespass. In fact no better expression than "benevolent despotism" could be coined honestly to denote the form of administration established in the country. The vast mass of the people were suffering from abject poverty and practically living on "one meal a day"; while at recurring intervals of few years they were decimated not by hundreds or thousands, but by hundreds of thousands, through famine and pestilence. The indigenous industries of the country were ruined and the bulk of the population driven to the soil to eke out a precarious subsistence as best as they could and left wholly without any substantial means to keep the wolf out of the door. The people had neither any share nor any voice in the administration which was conveniently allowed to drift according to the current of events and circumstances. The feeble and ineffectual complaints from time to time made either by the public Associations, or by the Press, and the failure of the spasmodic, though perfectly honest, efforts made by Government towards a superficial treatment of these organic deseases caused a deep and widespread commotion among a patient and docile people until a strong tide set in to swell the wave of popular restlessness and discontent. The invidious distinction sharply drawn along the whole line between the ruling race and the ruled, and the repeated instances of glaring and irritating miscarriage of justice in cases between Indians and Europeans—a most deplorable phase, if not a foul blot, still extant—served as a constant reminder to the educated community, which every year received fresh accessions to its strength, weight and

importance, that some solution must be found for this highly unsatisfactory, if not intolerable, situation. That situation however reached its climax during the weak and extravagant Viceroyalty of Lord Lytton who in his innate love for the romance came with a light heart to play the role of an administrator in a country fabled for its romances. The military ruled, while a selfish, short-sighted bureaucracy found it convenient to pander to the extravagant tastes and designs of a modern Dupleix without however the consummate powers and abilities of the great French adventurer. The costly and gigantic farce of the Delhi Assemblage was enacted in 1877 while a terrible famine was committing havoc among millions of helpless population in Southern India whose dire effects were severely felt even in Bengal and the Punjab, and which led an intrepid veteran journalist in Calcutta openly to declare that "Nero was fiddling while Rome was burning." The wanton invasion of Cabul, the massacre of Sir Louis Cavagnari, and his staff followed by the Second Afghan War; the large increase of the army under the hallucination of the Russian bugbear; the costly establishment of a "scientific frontier" which afterwards did not stand the test of even a tribal disturbance, the complete disarming of an inoffensive and helpless population, although the Eurasians were left untouched; the gagging of the Vernacular Press as a means to stifle public voice against all these fads, which led another indomitable journalist in Bengal to convert in one night a Vernacular paper into an English journal; the sacrifice of the import cotton duties as a conservative sop to

Lancashire, and the unmerited and undignified rebuff administered by the Viceroy personally to a leading association in the country which had the temerity to raise its voice against this iniquitious measure and which was deeply resented by the entire Indian Press not altogether unsupported even by a section of the more fair-minded Anglo-Indian journalists, followed in quick, bewildering succession; and at last a reckless bureaucratic Government, as bankrupt in its reputation as in its exchequer, sat trembling upon the crumbling fragments of a "mendacious budget" on one side and the seething and surging discontent of a multitudinous population on the other. The theory of the disappointed place-seekers" and the "microscopic minority" of the educated community was invented to minimise the importance of the growing unrest. The educated community in the minority in every country, but none the less it is everywhere the mouthpiece of the majority and the exponent of the popular voice. History does not perhaps present a single instance where the mass has been actively associated in any evolution, although it has everywhere been largely in evidence in a revolution. Besides, if any evidence were needed to show that the discontent had sunk deep into the mass, enough of such evidence was furnished to an unbiassed mind by the mass-meetings held at Jhingergacha, Salem and other places where the people attended in their thousands to ventilate their grievances though they were unable to formulate any remedy.

It was about this time that the Indian Association was established in July 1876 with the object of

organising a system of active political propaganda throughout the country and to rouse the people to a sense of political unity and concerted activity. As the British Indian Association was mostly composed of the landed aristocracy, the Indian Association became the centre of the educated community in Bengal. Its moving spirit was Mr. Surendra Nath Banerjee who had, luckily for himself and for the country, been recently discharged from the Civil Service and whose talents and abilities, but for this incident, would in all probability have remained buried among the dusty shelves of either a Divisional Office or a Secretariat and entirely lost to the country. In the establishment of the Indian Association, Mr. Banerjee was associated with that brilliant star of Eastern Bengal, Mr. Ananda Mohan Bose, and assisted by a band of energetic men among whom the late Mr. Dwaraka Nath Ganguly, Mr. Bama Charan Banerjee, the brother of Mr. Justice Pramada Charan Banerjee and the founder of the Utterparah Hitakari Sabha, Mr. Bhairab Chandra Banerjee, cousin of Mr. W.C. Bonnerjee, and Mr. Jogendra Chandra Vidyabhushana who was one of the early pioneers of practical social reform and a remarkably independent member of the subordinate Judicial and Executive Service, are worthy of particular mention. The first president of the Association was that eminent jurist, the author of the *Vyadastha Darpan*. Mr. Shama Charan Sarkar who was shortly afterwards succeeded by the illustrious savant and linguist, the Rev. Dr. K.M. Banerjee. The first secretary was Mr. A. M. Bose both on account of his high attainments as well as probably because it was not deemed expedient at

the outset to place a "dismissed servant of Government" at the executive head of a newly established political association. That "dismissed servant of Government" has however long outlived that dreaded disqualification which was not only voluntarily removed by a Lieutenant Governor, but acted as no bar to his being twice elected by his countrymen as president of the great National Assembly, four times as their trusted representative in the Bengal Council and at last as a prominent member of the Supreme Legislative Council. The Indian Association was hardly a year old when the Government of Lord Salisbury reduced the age-limit for the Civil Service examination to nineteen years. Strong and emphatic were the protests raised throughout the country and none stronger or more emphatic than that entered by Mr. Dadabhai Naoroji, a host in himself, through the columns of the English Press. The new Association however went upon a somewhat different plan. It at first organised a representative meeting held at the Calcutta Town Hall and armed with its mandate opened a political campaign, the first of its kind throughout the country. Mr. Surendra Nath was chosen as the first missionary to undertake this active political propaganda. He made his first tour in the summer of 1877 all through Northern India from Benares to Rawalpindi. The principal questions raised in this campaign were (1) the raising of the age-limit for the Civil Service examination which a conservative Government had reduced to such an extent as to practically shut out all Indians from admission into that service, and (2) the establishment of Simultaneous Examinations held both in England and

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in India for the recruitment of the service. Meetings were held and adressed by the rising orator at Benares, Allahabad, Lucknow, Cawnpore, Meerut, Agra, Delhi, Aligarh, Amritsar, Lahore and Rawalpindi, at all of which he was listened to with breathless attention which led Sir Henry Cotton to make pointed reference to this significant incident in his *New India*. At the Aligarh meeting Sir Syed Ahmed himself presided and strongly supported the proposed Simultaneous Examination, though for reasons best known to him, as a member of the Public Service Commission, he afterwards resiled from that position. The great meeting at Lucknow was held in the historic *Burdwari* palace and was attended, as at Aligarh, by a large number of respectable Mussalmans who form such an influential majority in that city. On his return journey Mr. Banerjee stopped at Bankipur and addressed a meeting there. The tour was a grand success and, as remarked by Mr. Nam Joshi of the Poona Sarvajanik Sabha, fully demonstrated that educated India, despite all racial and linguistic differences, could easily be brought upon a common platform on political ground. It will be remembered that Mr. Banerjee also attended the Delhi Assemblage as the representative of the *Hindu Patriot*. Men like Sir Jamsetji Jeejeebhoy, the second baronet of that name, Mr. Viswanath Narain Mandlik, Sir Mangaldas Nathubhoy and Mr. Naoroji Furdoonji with many others from different parts of the country witnessed the brilliant function. It must have struck these men of light and leading, that if the princes and the nobles in the land could be forced to form a

pageant for the glorification of an autocratic Viceroy, why could not the people be gathered together to unite themselves to restrain, by constitutional means and methods, the spirit of autocratic rule? Mr. Banerjee personally gave expression to a similar sentiment on a subsequent occasion which will be noticed in its proper place. The idea worked and was freely, though somewhat vaguely, discussed in the Associations, as well as in the Press. The platforms had not up to this time come into such prominent use as now for the discussion of political subjects. Verily good often cometh out of evil, and if the idea of a united India was presented by a spectacular demonstration, the Delhi Assemblage of 1877 was, in spite of its extravagance, truly a blessing in disguise. Mr. Murdoch gives currency to an opinion that "the idea of a Congress was suggested by the great International Exhibition" held in Calcutta in 1884. But the more generally accepted and consistent theory seems to be that it had its inspiration from the Delhi Assemblage of 1877. The Exhibition might have supplied an immediate impulse to put the idea into execution, but if ever there was an object lesson, as contemporary testimony bears out that there was, for the great movement, that lesson could only have been furnished by the Assemblage and not the Exhibition, as the one could appeal only to the passive admiration of the people for the economic and scientific development of the world; while the other was calculated directly to force their attention to the political aspect of it, and as the country secretly resented the useless display, the princes on account of their humiliation and the people

for its painful extravagance, it is not unnatural to suppose that it created a general desire to draw some honey out of the sting. Besides, the object-lessons presented by the Assemblage could not be wholly lost upon the mind of a quick and imaginative people. Encouraged by the success of his first tour Mr. Surendra Nath Banerjee undertook a second tour in the following year. In 1878 he travelled through Western and Southern India holding meetings at Bombay, Surat, Ahmedabad, Poona and Madras, and as a result of this campaign an All-India-Memorial was presented to the House of Commons on the Civil Service question.

CHAPTER VI.

The Clouds Lifted.

Whether it was a mere accident, or the part of a settled policy, a progressive and broad-minded statesman of the School of Bentinck and Canning followed a short-sighted and reactionary administrator of the Dalhousie type: Lord Lytton was succeeded by Lord Ripon. He was evidently chosen by the Government of Mr. Gaidstone to save the situation, and inspired by a genuine desire for the permanent good of England and India, Lord Ripon came holding the olive branch of peace, progress and conciliation for the people. Landing in Bombay in January 1880 the first words which the noble Marquess uttered were:—"Judge me by my acts and not by my words." And judged he was by

his various acts of beneficence and high statesmanship which, in spite of the systematic attempts of successive administrations to stunt, stint and starve, if not actually rescind them, stand to this day as the strongest cement which not only successfully averted at the time the severe shock of a lowering storm, but still holds a discontented yet grateful people reconciled to the unpopular methods of a bureaucratic administration. Few Englishmen in this country probably even now realise and appreciate what and how much they owe to that large-hearted nobleman and far-sighted statesman whom they were not ashamed at the time foolishly to hoot and insult even under the gates of Viceregal palace. Lord Ripon at once put an end to the Afghan War and further development of the Scientific Frontier which with the reckless expenditure of the pageant show at Delhi had drained the public Exchequer to such an extent as to compel the author of these extravagances ultimately to submit to the humiliation of having recourse to a secret loan raised at the metropolis with the help of a plastic lieutenant and through the good offices of a prominent leader of the people who acted as a non-commissioned broker in the transaction. Lord Ripon concluded an honourable treaty with the Ameer which has since proved a much stronger bulwark against Russian invasion than the fortifications in the Khyber and Bolan Passes. Lord Ripon understood that the most effective defence of India lay in the construction of a *rational interior* rather than of a *scientific frontier* broad-based upon the contentment, gratitude and loyal co-operation of a prosperous people, and one of the first

acts of his great administration was the repeal of the obnoxious and invidious Vernacular Press Act amidst the rejoicings of a whole nation when not a few of those who had stood at the baptismal front to announce themselves as its godfather eagerly came forward with their "shovelful of earth" to bury the ill-starred measure. Then came the inauguration of Local Self-Government throughout the country, the greatest measure ever inaugurated by any Viceroy either before or after him. It was the first step taken towards the political enfranchisement of the people. In foreshadowing the future of the measure the noble Viceroy courageously observed that "Local Self-Government must precede National Self-Government." With all its drawbacks and difficulties it has initiated the people in the art of local administration and supplied a nucleus and a basis for the recent expansion of the Legislative Councils. It may not be known to many that Lord Ripon also contemplated a tentative reform of the Indian Legislative Councils. But there was yet another measure of his reign which further stimulated the political activities of the people and roused their national self-respect. In evolution the highest successes are often achieved through reverses and the Ilbert Bill turned a signal defeat into a decisive victory. Lord Ripon made a desperate attempt, even at no small personal risk, to remove the racial bar which he found to be one of the foulest blots in the administration of criminal justice in this country. The matter was initiated by a spirited note submitted by Mr. B. L. Gupta to the Government of Sir Ashley Eden in 1882. In the autumn session of 1883 the Hon. Mr. C.P. Ilbert, as Law Member to the Council

introduced a Bill which afterwards went by his name with the object of removing the improper disqualification attaching to the Indian Magistracy in the trial of European and American offenders. It was a spark thrown into a powder magazine, and the entire Anglo-Indian community, both official and non-official, at once rose in arms headed by a rebellious Lieutenant-Governor to oppose the innovation, not so much from a real sense of actual danger as through pride and vanity of a ruling race coupled with a feeling of practical immunity which they enjoyed under the existing system. Lord Ripon stood alone having his own Council, including the Commander-in-Chief, divided against him, with only the nominal support of the framer of the Bill and of Major Baring, now Lord Cromer. We have it on the authority of Mr. Buckland that "a conspiracy had been formed by a number of men in Calcutta who had bound themselves in the event of Government adhering to their projected legislation to overpower the sentries at Government House, to put the Viceroy on board a steamer at Chandpal-Ghat and send him to England *via* the Cape." The existence of this conspiracy, it is said, was known to the Lieutenant-Governor of Bengal and also to "the responsible officer" who subsequently gave this information to the author of "Bengal under the Lieutenant-Governors." The Europeans have taught many a lesson to the Indians, but, thank God, they forebore to teach them this one lesson of supreme folly. An Anglo-Indian Defence Association was hurriedly organised and at its instance a wanton and savage attack was made upon the natives of the country by a rising English counsel in Calcutta,

which was followed by an equally virulent rejoinder from an eminent Indian member of the same bar, and the estrangement of the two communities was complete. But while the opposition to the Bill was so well organised, the support given to it by the Indian community was certainly very weak and extremely inadequate. The agitation stirred up the public mind only in Bengal and Bombay. An influential public meeting was held in the Bombay Town Hall which voiced Indian public opinion in the Western Presidency and several demonstrations were held in Bengal in support of the measure. But the agitation produced little or no effect in Madras, while the N.W. Provinces and the Punjab were perfectly silent. Practically most of the agitation was confined to violent recriminations in the columns of the Press. Lord Ripon's just and generous attempt practically failed and a *concordat* was arrived at towards the close of the year 1883 upon a bare recognition of the principle in the case of the District Magistrates and the Sessions Judges only. A section of the Bengal public seemed at first irreconcilable to the "Compromise" and it was feared that it was going to "throw native Bengal into a fury" making the position of the great Viceroy still more critical. Bombay discovered the rock ahead and promptly issued a manifesto counselling the country to stand by the much-abused Viceroy. This timely action successfully baulked the Anglo-Indians and their organs of their secret desire to see the Viceroy suffer as much in the hands of the Indians as he had suffered at their own. But though the measure failed, it opened the eyes of the people to two cardinal

points in the case. It was recognised that the failure was largely owing to the want of adequate, vigorous and united support throughout the country to counterbalance the spirited and well-organised opposition of the Anglo-Indian community, and it was further felt that if political advancement were to be achieved it could only be by the organisation of a national assembly wholly devoted to wider politics than hitherto pursued in the different provinces independently of each other. The Ilbert Bill agitation thus went a great way towards impressing the Indian races, that in the political world success did not depend so much upon men as on organized efforts and so paved the way to united and concerted action. It also proved an eye-opener to those talented and highly educated Indian gentlemen who having returned from England and adopted English habits and manners had lost nearly all touch with their countrymen and were apparently seeking to form a class by themselves in the vain hope of assimilating themselves as far as practicable with the Anglo-Indian community. Forces were thus at work driving the people from different points of the compass to a common fold and to concentrate their thoughts, ideas and activities to a common focus for the attainment of the political rights and privileges of the people who being under a common rule, it was understood, could have but a common goal and a common destiny. All the time the Indian Press throughout the country was incessantly urging the people to unite under a common standard.

CHAPTER VII.

THE DAWNING LIGHT.

Almost simultaneously with the close of the Ilbert Bill agitation, the new idea, as indicated above, forcibly burst forth into the minds of the people, and Bengal, Bombay and Madras set to work to put their own houses in order and prepare themselves for the coming struggle. In Bengal, a new institution was started in 1884 which, in its constitution, as well as in its aim and object, bore unmistakable testimony to the fact that the old orthodox associations of the previous generation were also caught in the rising tide and had considerably drifted away from their original moorings. The National League was established under the leadership of Sir Joteendra Mohan Tagore, who was then the first citizen in the metropolis and one of the central pillars of the British Indian Association, with the question of representative institutions for India in the forefront of its programme.

But there was yet another movement in Bengal which seems to have anticipated the Congress by two years and in a large measure prepared the ground for the great national assembly. At the instance of the Indian Association a National Conference was held in Calcutta in 1883 with almost the same programme which was subsequently formulated by the first Congress held two years later in Bombay. The Conference was held at the Albert Hall, opposite the old Hindu and

Sanskrit Colleges on the south and the new Presidency College buildings on the west. It is a historic place associated with the Royal family and other memories and a wise and thoughtful government has recently saved it from a threatened destruction. It was an unprecedented gathering attended by a large number of educated men from different parts of Bengal and in which old men like the venerable Ramtanu Lahiri rubbed their shoulders with a much younger generation headed by Messrs. Ananda Mohan Bose and Surendra Nath Banerjee. It was an unique spectacle and the writer of these pages still retains a vivid impression of the immense enthusiasm and earnestness which throughout characterised the three days' session of the Conference and at the end of which everyone present seemed to have received a new light and a novel inspiration. It was in his opening address at this Conference that Mr. Surendra Nath Banerjee referring to the Delhi Assemblage exhorted the audience to unite and organise themselves for the country's cause. It is worthy of note that Mr. Wilfred Blunt and Mr. Seymour Keay, M. P, were present at the Conference. Mr. Seymour Keay spoke at the meeting, while Mr. Blunt has left a pointed notice of this significant movement in his personal memoirs. In the following year, when the great International Exhibition was held in Calcutta, the Conference could not somehow be organised ; but this year Mr. Surendra Nath made his third tour visiting this time Multan and other places in the Punjab where he preached the importance of national unity and the necessity of establishing a

national fund for the systematic carrying out of a political propaganda.

In Madras the old "Madras Native Association" which, in the words of Mr. G. Subramania Iyer, dragged on for some years only "a spasmodic life" died a natural death with its last feeble gasp over the Self-Government Resolution of Lord Ripon's Government. But the quiet and steady people of the Southern Presidency at this stage organised a more powerful and energetic political association to keep themselves abreast of the sister presidencies in the coming struggle. The "Madras Mahajana Sabha" was established early in 1884 under the auspices of those thoughtful and sagacious publicmen who had started the *Hindu* in 1878. This new association was invested with a truly popular and representative character and it naturally very soon enlisted the active sympathy and co-operation of almost all the culture and public spirit of the presidency. As the popular Viceroy could not arrange to pay a parting visit to Madras before leaving for England at the close of a most brilliant and beneficent reign, the Mahajana Sabha sent a deputation to Bombay to bid farewell to Lord Ripon whose departure from this country was marked by an outburst of popular demonstration simply unparalleled not only in India but also probably in the history of any other civilised country. Before the deputation started there was also a Provincial Conference held in Madras. Both in the capital city as well as in the districts of the Presidency several active and energetic men came into prominence and began to work harmoniously under the guidance of the *Hindu* and the "Mahajana

Sabha " for public weal. It seems worthy of remark that though Madras was rather slow in developing her public life, she has been most forward in associating herself with the work of the Congress since its establishment. Not only in the first session but in almost all the subsequent sessions of the Congress, she has, despite her distance and other inconveniences, both climatic as well as social, contributed a larger contingent of delegates than any other province, the particular province where each session was held being of course excepted.

A great development also took place at this juncture in the politicial life of Bombay. Ever since the collapse of "the old Bombay Association" that great city of light and leading had no popular political organisation to join hands with the sister presidencies in undertaking any common political movement. But from this it is not to be understood that she was altogether a *Sleepy Hollow*. Apparently cold, calculating Bombay was usually immersed in business taking things quite easy under ordinary circumstances, but when the wind blew high she at once put forth all her sails and was seldom found to lag behind any of the provinces in any public movement, although the occasion and its turmoil over, she again relapsed into her ordinary calm. But this was not a condition which was permissible in the coming contest. " Even five years before," wrote a political Rishi in 1885, " the country was wont to set its eyes on Calcutta and take its inspiration more or less from her." " The luminous intellect," he added, " and the spirit of eloquence which

the Babu carries about him wherever he goes, as if it were his natural birth-right, gave him a vantage ground over the rest of India." But the new situation demanded all the provinces not only to rally under one common standard, but also to share equal responsibility and to assume equal command. Bombay was equal to both. A public meeting of the citizens of Bombay was convened on the 31st January, 1885, at the Framjee Cowasjee Institute in response to an invitation from that distinguished triumvirate who largely controlled the public life of the Western Presidency, the Hon. Mr. Budruddin Tyabjee, Mr. Pherozeshah Mancherjee Mehta and the Hon. Mr. Kashinath Trimbak Telang. The meeting was presided over by the distinguished Parsi baronet Sir Jamsetjee Jejeebhoy, and the present "Bombay Presidency Association" was ushered into existence under very happy auspices and with imposing ceremony. Mr. Pherozeshah Mehta, the Hon. Mr. K. T. Telang and Mr. Dinshaw Eduljee Wacha were appointed Joint Secretaries, a position which the last named gentleman still holds with no small credit to himself and to the Association.

Another incident, as narrated by Mrs. Annie Besant in her admirable book, *How India Wrought for Freedom* took place about this time. In December 1884 there came a number of delegates from different parts of the country to the Annual Convention of the Theosophical Society at Adyar. After the Convention was over seventeen prominent Indians met in the house of Dewan Bahadur Raghunath Rao in Madras. They were the Hon'ble Mr. S. Subramania Iyer, Mr. P. Rangiah Naidu

and Mr. P. Ananda Charlu of Madras, Messrs. Norendra Nath Sen, Surendra Nath Bannerjee, M. Ghosh and Charan Chandra Mitter of Bengal; the Hon'ble Mr. V.N. Mandlik, the Hon'ble Mr. K.T. Telang and Mr. Dadabhai Naoroji of Bombay; Messrs. C. Vijiaranga Mudaliar and Pandurang Gopal of Poona; Sirdar Dayal Singh of the Panjab; Mr. Haris Chandra of Allahabad; Mr. Kaliprosad and Pundit Lakshminarayan of N.W.P., and Mr. Shri Ram of Oudh. These seventeen "good men and true" met and discussed various problems affecting the interest of the country and probably supported the idea of a national movement started at the Calcutta Conference of 1883.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE INAUGURATION AND THE FATHER OF THE CONGRESS.

The country was thus fully prepared both in men as well as materials for the construction of a national organisation. It only required the genius of an expert architect to devise a suitable plan and lay the foundation stone truly and faithfully. That architect was found in Allan Octavian Hume, now known as the "Father of the Indian National Congress." Mr. Hume, who was Secretary to the Government of India in the Home Department in 1870 and then in its newly created Department of Revenue, Agriculture and Commerce from 1871-1879, had closely followed the trend of events

particularly during the Viceroyalty of Lord Lytton and anxiously watched the gathering clouds which were slowly but ominously rising above the horizon. The more he watched and studied the situation the more he became convinced that some definite action was called for to counteract the growing unrest. When therefore in 1882 he resigned service Mr. Hume settled at Simla and began to apply his great and almost inexhaustible energies and his intimate knowledge of the people, as well as of the Government, to the task of directing the popular impulse into a channel of constitutional agitation for the common benefit of both. As the worthy son of the founder of the Radical Party in England, Mr. A. O. Hume was essentially democratic in his instincts, but as a shrewd Scotchman he was also fully conscious of the limitations which must be imposed on and the safeguards to be provided against democratic institutions in a country governed like India. The first step he took towards the realisation of his plan was shadowed forth in an open letter dated the 1st March, 1883, which he addressed to the "Graduates of the Calcutta University" as largely representing the educated community in the country. In its deep pathos and fervid eloquence, no less than in its burning zeal and warm sympathy, this remarkable letter reads like St. Paul's epistle to the Romans. For a full and adequate appreciation of this spirited appeal to educated India reference is made to Sir William Wedderburn's excellent memoir of Mr. Hume which has recently been published by T. Fisher Unwin, London. The writer of the present article cannot, however, resist the temptation of quoting

the concluding portion of this memorable letter which runs as follows:—

"And if even the leaders of thought are all either such poor creatures, or so selfishly wedded to personal concerns that they dare not strike a blow for their country's sake, then justly and rightly are they kept down and trampled on, for they deserve nothing better. Every nation secures precisely as good a government as it merits. If you, the picked men, the most highly educated of the nation, cannot, scorning personal ease and selfish objects, make a resolute struggle to secure greater freedom for yourselves and your country, a more impartial administration, a larger share in the management of your own affairs, then we, your friends, are wrong and our adversaries right, then are Lord Ripon's noble aspirations for your good fruitless and visionary, then, at present at any rate all hopes of progress are at an end, and India truly neither lacks nor deserves any better government than she enjoys. Only, if this be so, let us hear no more factious, peevish complaints that you are kept in leading strings and treated like children, for you will have proved yourself such. *Men* know how to act. Let there be no more complaints of Englishmen being preferred to you in all important offices, for if you lack that public spirit, that highest form of altruistic devotion that leads men to subordinate private ease to the public weal, that patriotism that has made Englishmen what they are,—then rightly are these preferred to you, rightly and inevitably have they become your rulers. And rulers and task-masters they must continue, let the yoke gall your shoulders never so sorely, until you realise and stand prepared to act upon the eternal truth that self-sacrifice and unselfishness are the only unfailing guides to freedom and happiness."

This passionate appeal did not go forth in vain. Men who had already waked up and were only looking for a *modus operandi* mustered from the different provinces at the trumpet call of a beloved friend and a trusted guide and the "Indian National Union" was formed towards the close of 1884 which, however, like the proverbial crab died immediately after the birth of its issue. A lot of correspondence passed between Calcutta and Bombay, though it is now difficult to trace them accurately with the exception of one addressed by Mr.

Telang to Mr. Surendra Nath Banerjee enquiring about matters connected with the National Conference of 1883. In March 1885 it was decided by the Union to hold a meeting of representatives from all parts of India at the forthcoming Christmas in Poona which was considered the most central and convenient place for the purpose, and in April the following manifesto was issued and circulated throughout the country :—

"A Conference of the Indian National Union will be held at Poona from the 25th to the 31st December, 1885."

"The Conference will be composed of delegates—leading politicians well acquainted with the English language from all parts of Bengal, Bombay and Madras Presidency."

"The direct objects of the Conference will be—(1) to enable all the most earnest labourers in the cause of national progress to become personally known to each other, (2) to discuss and decide upon the political operations to be undertaken during the ensuing year."

"Indirectly this Conference will form the germ of a Native Parliament and, if properly conducted, will constitute in a few years an unanswerable reply to the assertion that India is still wholly unfit for any form of representative institutions. The first Conference will decide whether the next shall be again held at Poona, or whether following the precedent of the British Association, the Conference shall be held year by year at different important centres."

"This year the Conference being in Poona, Mr. Chiplonkar and others of the Sarvajanik Sabha have consented to form a Reception Committee in whose hands will rest the whole of the local arrangements. The Peshwah's Garden near the Parvati Hill will be utilised both as a place of meeting (it contains a fine hall, like the garden, the property of the Sabha) and as a residence for the delegates, each of whom will be there provided with suitable quarters. Much importance is attached to this since, when all thus reside together for a week, far greater opportunities for friendly intercourse will be afforded than if the delegates were (as at the time of the late Bombay demonstrations) scattered about in dozens of private lodging houses all over the town."

"Delegates are expected to find their own way to and from Poona, but from the time they reach the Poona Railway Station

until they again leave everything that they can need, carriage accommodation, food, &c., will be provided for them gratuitously."

"The cost thus involved will be defrayed from the Reception Fund which the Poona Association most liberally offers to provide in the first instance, but to which all delegates whose means warrant their incurring this further expense will be at liberty to contribute any sum they please. Any unutilised balance of such donations will be carried forward as a nucleus for next year's Reception Fund."

"It is believed that exclusive of our Poona friends, the Bombay Presidency including Sindh and the Berar will furnish about 20 delegates, Madras and Lower Bengal each about the same number and the N. W. Provinces, Oudh and the Punjab together about half this number."

Mr. Hume was wisely and appropriately placed at the head of the movement and the task of framing an organisation and settling the details naturally devolved on him. A preliminary report was issued to the members of the Union, that "so far as the Union was constituted there was absolute unanimity that unswerving loyalty to the British Crown was the key-note of the institution," and that the Union was also "prepared when necessary to oppose by all constitutional methods all authorities, high or low, here or in England, whose acts or omissions are opposed to those principles of the Government of India as laid down from time to time by the British Parliament and endorsed by the British Sovereign." As has already been stated, Poona, the capital of the Deccan, was selected as the place of the meeting and the historic place of the Peshwas, the *Heerabag* standing on the lake at the foot of the famous Parvati Hill from the windows of whose sacred temple the ill-fated Peshwa Baji Rao witnessed the fatal battle of Khirki, was chosen both for the Conference as well as for the residence of the delegates. Those who attended the eleventh

session of the Congress held at Poona in 1895 must have visited this interesting spot. As stated in the manifesto quoted above, the "Poona Sarvajanik Sabha," the most important and influential public body in the Deccan, generously undertook all the necessary arrangements including the feeding of the delegates; in fact it assumed all the functions of the latter day Reception Committee to the Congress. When all the preliminaries were thus settled, Mr. Hume left for England to consult friends and particularly with the object of guarding the British public against all possible misrepresentation, suspicion and distrust to which the new organisation was naturally exposed. Like the shrewd Scotchman that he was, Mr. Hume cautiously cleared his way in this country also before leaving for England. He saw Lord Dufferin and explained to him the scheme which had been settled. We have it on the authority of Sir William Wedderburn, based upon Mr. Hume's own notes, that "whereas he (Mr. Hume) was himself disposed to begin his reform propaganda on the social side, it was apparently by Lord Dufferin's advice that he took up the work of political organisation as the matter first to be dealt with. Lord Dufferin seems to have told him that "as the head of the Government he had found the greatest difficulty in ascertaining the real wishes of the people, and that for purposes of administration it would be a public benefit if there existed some responsible organisation through which the Government might be kept informed regarding the best Indian public opinion." His Lordship is said to have further observed, that owing to the wide differences in caste, race and religion, social reform in India

required local treatment, rather than the guidance of a national organisation. There is a further corroboration of this interesting episode from no less an authority than the late Mr. W. C. Bonnerjee than whom no other Indian perhaps ever enjoyed a closer touch and greater intimacy with Mr. Hume. Writing for the *Indian Politics* issued by that enterprising publisher Mr. G. A. Natesan of Madras in 1898, Mr. Bonnerjee recorded his testimony as follows :—

"It will probably be news to many that the Indian National Congress as it was originally started and as it has since been carried on, is in reality the work of the Marquess of Dufferin and Ava when that nobleman was the Governor General of India. Mr. A. O. Hume, C B , had in 1884 conceived the idea that it would be of great advantage to the country if leading Indian politicians could be brought together once a year to discuss social matters and be upon friendly footing with one another. He did not desire that politics should form part of their discussions, for there were recognised political bodies in Calcutta, Bombay, Madras and other parts of the country, and he thought that these bodies might suffer in importance if, when Indian politicians from different parts of the country came together, they discussed politics. His idea further was that the Governor of the Province where the politicians met should be asked to preside over them and that thereby greater cordiality should be established between the official classes and the non-official Indian politicians. Full of these ideas he saw the noble Marquess when he went to Simla early in 1885 after having in December previous assumed the Viceroyalty of India. Lord Dufferin took great interest in the matter and after considering over it for some time sent for Mr. Hume and told him that in his opinion Mr. Hume's project would not be of much use. He said there was no body of persons in this country who performed the functions which Her Majesty's Opposition did in England. The newspapers even if they really represented the views of the people were not reliable, and as the English were necessarily ignorant of what was thought of them and their policy in native circles, it would be very desirable in the interests as well of the rulers as of the ruled that Indian politicians should meet yearly and point out to Government in what respects the administration was defective and how it could be improved; and he added that an assembly such as he proposed should not be presided over by the local

Governor, for in his presence the people might not like to speak out their minds. Mr Hume was convinced by Lord Dufferin's arguments, and when he placed the two schemes, his own and Lord Dufferin's, before leading politicians in Calcutta, Bombay, Madras and other parts of the country, the latter unanimously accepted Lord Dufferin's scheme and proceeded to give effect to it. Lord Dufferin had made it a condition that his name in connection with the scheme of the Congress should not be divulged so long as he remained in the country and this condition was faithfully maintained, and none but the men consulted by Mr. Hume knew anything about the matter."

And it is an open secret that Mr. W.C. Bonnerjee was one of the men who were associated with Mr. Hume in organising the new movement and who were consulted by Mr. Hume on the subject of this important and interesting interview.) Those who at a later period openly charged the Congress as being an unsavoury political organization fraught with dangerous consequences might well have profited by the information, that though the main idea was that of Mr. Hume and his co-adjutors its immediate political aspect was due to the suggestion, though not the actual initiation, of a responsible Viceroy and a statesman of no ordinary distinction who had added a territory of over 150,000 square miles to the British Empire. The subsequent change which apparently took place in the attitude of the great Viceroy and of which so much was at one time made by the critics of the Congress will be noticed in its proper place.

In the meantime encouraged by the success of the first National Conference of 1883, the three leading Associations in Calcutta, the British Indian Association, the Indian Association and the National Mahomedan Association conjointly invited and organised the second

National Conference which met in the spacious hall of the British Indian Association on the 25th, 26th and 27th of December 1885. Nearly all the districts including many of the sub-divisions and even important villages of Bengal were represented at the Conference. Nor did the other provinces go wholly unrepresented. Bombay was represented in the person of the Hon. Rao Saheb Viswanath Mandlik and Behar in the person of His Highness the Maharaja of Darbhanga as the President of the Behar Landholders' Association. Delegates also came from such distant places as Assam, Allahabad Benares and Meerut. Among the distinguished visitors present there were His Excellency the Ambassador of Nepal, Mr. H. J. S. Cotton, I.C.S. and Mr. Ameer Ali. All the representatives of the ancient houses of the Ghosals of Bhukailas, the Singhs of Paikparah, the Mookerjees of Utterparah, and the Tagores, the Mallicks and the Laws, as well as the Marwaris of Calcutta were there; while the intellectual aristocracy of Bengal was fully represented in the persons of Dr. Gooroodas (afterwards Sir Gooroodas) Banerjee, Messrs. Kali Mohan Dass, Mohesh Chandra Choudhury, Peary Mohan Mookerjee, Surendra Nath Banerjee, Kali Charan Banerjee and Dr. Trailokya Nath Mitter. Mr. Ananda Mohan Bose was at this time touring in Assam in connection with the political mission of the Indian Association. There were nearly 200 delegates to the Conference, while the visitors densely crowding the back of the hall, the corridor and all the passages from where a glimpse of the assembly could be secured numbered over a thousand. It was a grand spectacle

where the old and the young vied with one another in their enthusiastic zeal and patriotic fervour under a new inspiration. On the first day Rajah Durga Charan Law, the merchant prince of Calcutta presided, on the second day that half-blind astute statistician, Mr. Joykrishan Mukherjee, who was not inaptly called the Indian Fawcett, and on the third and last day Maharaja Narendra Krishna, the heir and successor to the historic Nabakrishna, occupied the chair. The Conference in its three days' labours discussed and passed six resolutions on (1) the Reconstitution of Legislative Councils, (2) the modification of the Arms Act, (3) the retrenchment of public expenditure, (4) the Civil Service Question, (5) the separation of the Judicial from the Executive functions and (6) the Reconstitution of the Police. It will be seen later on that the programme of the Conference was practically the same as that of the first Congress, with this noticeable difference that while the Congress did not, the conference did, take up and thoroughly discuss the important question of the separation of the Judicial and the Executive Functions in the Criminal Administration of the country. It is worthy of remark that Mr. H. J. S. Cotton (now Sir Henry Cotton) who at the time was on active service not only attended the Conference as *Amici curie*, but also took part in its deliberations. Speaking on the important and foremost question of the reform of the Legislative Councils, Mr. Cotton said:—

"Even in India amongst members of my own service and out of it, I do not think many will be found who deny that a change must now take place in the constitution of our Legislative Councils. And I am quite certain that in England all liberal politicians will

be found to take this view. The view of Lord Ripon, as he himself told me when discussing it with me last summer, was almost identical with that stated to you by the mover (Mr. S. N. Bannerjee), and there can be no doubt that he would use his powerful influence in England in assisting any proposal which the natives of this country may make in this direction."

The Cottons and the Wedderburns, who have for three generations served India, have always been among her best and truest friends whether here or in England, and Mr. H. J. S. Cotton in speaking of the members of his own service could only speak of the Cottons and the Wedderburns, but not of many others of his service. The conference was a great success, and on the last day on receipt of an information that on the following day the First Indian National Congress was going to meet in Bombay, the whole assembly went into a rapturous acclamation, and a message was despatched from the Conference welcoming the birth of the long expected National Assembly. Both the Conference and the Congress were thus the simultaneous offshoots of the same movement; but the Bengal leaders wisely and patriotically merged their movement in that of the one inaugurated at Bombay, as it had indeed no necessity for separate existence except to the detriment of the other, or possibly of both.

To return however to the main topic and to Mr. Hume. In England Mr. Hume saw Lord Ripon, Mr. John Bright, M. P., Mr. R. T. Reid, M.P., (now Lord Loreburne who has figured so prominently in connection with the Home Rule agitation in England), Lord Dalhousie, the heir and successor of the renowned Indian Governor-General, Mr. Baxter M.P., Mr. Slagg, M.P., and many other friends of India. He explained to them

the critical nature of the situation, the aims and objects of the new organisation, its constitutional character and the dangers which it was intended to forestall. Under the advice of Mr. Reid he saw nearly 150 members of the House of Commons and succeeded in obtaining from them a promise, though not a pledge, that they would pay some attention to Indian affairs, and also made arrangements for the reception and publication of the Union's messages by a section of the Liberal Press. Having fortified himself with these measures and assurances, Mr. Hume returned to India in November when he found all the arrangements complete, but a discussion was going on as regards the name by which the new organisation was to be baptised. Some were for calling it the National Union, some National Conference, while the majority were for christening it as the Congress, though not a few of them were afraid that it might carry a bad odour in certain quarters. At last it was decided that it should be styled as the Indian National Congress. It may be remembered that early in 1885 a deputation was sent to England composed of Mr. Manomohan Ghose of Bengal, Mr. Narayan Ganesh Chandavarkar of Bombay and Mr. Sivalaya Ramaswami Mudaliyar of Madras. They were called Delegates and to distinguish from them it was further decided that the members of the Congress should be called Representatives. It may not be known to many at this distance of time, that it was at first actually proposed to ask Lord Reay to preside at the first Congress. Lord Dufferin was approached on the question, but the Viceroy, while welcoming the proposal "as

shewing the desire of the Congress to work in complete harmony with the Government" considered such a step inadvisable as many difficulties might arise both for the people as well as for the Government if a high official were to preside over such an assembly. The proposal was therefore dropped. But nevertheless the first Congress received official sympathy in an unstinted measure.

CHAPTER IX.

The First Session of the Congress.

When all the arrangements were thus complete an untoward circumstance happened. Several cases of cholera appeared in Poona and it was considered unsafe and inadvisable to put the representatives coming from long distances and under fatiguing journey to any risk or possible danger. To the infinite disappointment of the good and patriotic people of Poona it was decided to change the venue of the session from Poona to Bombay. It was thus that the beautiful and romantic island city on the Malabar Coast with the Arabian Sea perpetually leaving her feet and the sombre Ghat Mountains mounting guard over her from behind acquired the honour of being the birthplace of the Indian National Congress. The newly established Presidency Association readily supplied the place of the "Sarvajanik Sabha," and the authorities of the Gokul Dass Tejpal Sanskrit College

came forward to sanctify and immortalise their institution by lending its grand buildings, as well as its boarding houses, for the meeting and the accommodation of the representatives. The place is situated on the Gowalia Tank Road of the city and any one feeling interested on the subject may yet visit the sacred hall where the brave band of 72 Representatives met and discussed the first programme of the first National Assembly of India.

By the morning of the 27th December the Representatives from different parts and provinces began to arrive and were duly conducted to the Gokul Dass Tejpal College. In the evening some of the leading official and non-official gentlemen came to the College to meet the Representatives. Nearly two hours of the evening were devoted to the reception of the Hon'ble Sir William Wedderburn, the Hon'ble Mr. Justice Jardine, Colonel Phelps, Professor Wordsworth and a large number of other distinguished citizens of Bombay who came to the College to welcome the Representatives and express their sympathy with the work on which they were about to enter. "During the whole day," says the official reporter, "and far into the night of the 27th, informal discussions were carried on between the Representatives and the proceedings of the next three days were settled. The number of Representatives registered was 72, distributed as follows:—Calcutta 3, Bombay 18, Madras 8, Karachi 2, Viramgam 1, Surat 6, Poona 8, Agra 2, Benares 1, Simla 1, Lucknow 3, Allahabad 1, Lahore 1, Amballa 1, Ahmedabad 3, Berhampore (Madras) 1, Masulipatam 1, Chingleput 1, Tanjore 2. Kumbakonum 1, Madura 1,

Tinnevelly 1, Coimbatore 1, Salem 1, Cuddapah 1, Anantapore 1, and Bellary 1. The Bengal contingent was numerically weak owing, as the president said, to a series of misfortunes arising from death, illness and the like, but perhaps chiefly on account of the National Conference which was almost simultaneously holding its second session in Calcutta. Nearly all the prominent men of Bombay and Madras were present, while Bengal was represented by Mr. W. C. Bonnerjee, Mr. Norendra Nath Sen and Mr. Girijabhusan Mukherjee whose premature death was a heavy loss to the Bengal public. That silent and devoted votary of the Congress who never missed a single session of it, although seldom taking any prominent part in its deliberations in any, Mr. Janaki Nath Ghosal, came from Allahabad while Mr. Ramkali Choudhury represented Benares. It seems worthy of note that Mr. Hume although coming from Simla appears to have sat as a representative for Bengal probably as it would seem to make up considerably for the weakness of her numerical strength.

The first meeting of the Congress took place at 12 o'clock noon on Monday the 28th December 1885 in the Great Hall of the Gokuldass Tejpal Sanskrit College where all the Representatives were assembled amidst a distinguished, though somewhat limited, gathering of officials and leading citizens of Bombay. It was a solemn and imposing spectacle where all were animated, both the representatives and the visitors, the officials as well as the non-officials, with intense interest and inspired with noble enthusiasm on the birth of a new epoch. There sat Mr. Woomesh Chandra Bonnerjee, the

Doyen of the Calcutta Bar and the first Indian Standing Counsel in a Chartered High Court, in his tall and graceful figure with broad forhead and beaming eyes calmly awaiting in his firm attitude and sober dignity the great and unique honour which all the provinces were about to confer in his person upon their eldest sister province of Bengal.// There was that slim but godly figure shining like a chiselled marble statue, short in stature but colossal in intellectual equipments, whose national turban considerably made up for his height and in whom nature seemed to have wonderfully blended the dwarf and the giant, the Grand Old Man of India,—Mr. Dadabhai Naoroji. There sat that intrepid journalist in his flowing hairs reaching down to his broad shoulders and with the fixed glare of a bull-dog countenance which quailed not even under Viceregal palace, the brave editor of the *Indian Mirror*—Mr. Narendra Nath Sen. There were those two out of that bright constellation of the three rising stars of the Western Presidency, who formed a happy conjunction combining patriotism with sobriety, enthusiasm and moderation of three different races,—Messrs. Kashinath Trimbak Telang and Pherozeshah Mancharjee Mehta, while the position of the third was not unworthily filled by another luminous member of his race, Mr. Rahimatulla Sayani. There sat beside the Grand Old man that well-posted statistician and indefatigable worker who has never flagged in his zeal and devotion during the lifetime of a generation in the service of the Congress,—Mr. Dinshaw Eduljee Wacha. There was that unostentatious, silent worker who was behind almost every public movement in the United

Provinces, but whose modesty seldom pushed him to the forefront in any, although grown grey in the service of his country—Mr. Gangaprasad Varma; while from the Punjab there was that quaint and caustic critic whose familiar face has seldom been missed in any of the subsequent Congresses,—Lala Murlidhar. There also sat that level-headed, sober yet keen-sighted veteran lawyer, Rangiah Naidu, the respected President of the Mahajana Sabha, supported by that noble band composed of Messrs. Subramania Iyer, Ananda Charlu, Veeraraghavachariar, G. Subramania Iyer and Sabapathi Mudaliar of whom Madras has been ever so justly proud. There came from Poona Krishnaji Luxman Nulkar, the President and Sitaram Hari Chiplonkar, Secretary of the Sarvajanik Sabha, who but for the unfortunate accident already noticed would have had the honour of being the host to the delegates to the first session of the Indian National Congress; and above all, there sat the "Father of the Congress;" who had refused a Lieutenant-Governorship to serve a people, beaming with anxious joy and hope at the birth of his own child and inspiring and moving all with the magnetic current of his own ardent soul,—Mr. Allan Octavian Hume. Among the distinguished visitors there were men like Mr. Dr S. White, President of the Eurasian Association, Dewan Bahadur Raghunatha Rao, Collector of Madras, the Hon. Mahadev Govinda Ranade, Judge, Small Cause Court, Poona and a member of the Bombay Legislative Council, Lala Baijnath of Agra, Professor Abaji Vishnoo Kattawatha of Ahmedabad, Professor Kadambi Sundararaman of Arcot, Professor R. G. Bhandarkar of the Deccan College,

and many others who, with two notable exceptions, sat as *Amici Curiæ* only to listen and advise.

On the motion of Mr. Hume (Bengal), seconded by the Hon. Subramania Iyer (Madras) and supported by the Hon. K. T. Telang (Bombay) Mr. W. C. Bonnerjee was unanimously elected and duly installed as President of the Congress, "the wise and firm hand that took the helm when the good ship was launched." The Reception Committee and its Chairman's address which has now assumed such indordinate proportions, probably beyond its legitimate scope, have been a later development, and consequently the first Congress opened with the inaugural address of the President of the Congress. That speech though condensed and short was fully worthy of the man and worthy of the occasion. Mr. Bonnerjee, who was eminently a practical politican, after graphically describing the representative character of the gathering, laid down the objects of the Congress with great force and sober dignity which drew the unstinted admiration of all sections of the Press. The address concluded with the following pregnant and pithy observation :—

"She (Great Britain, had given them order, she had given them railways and above all she had given them the inestimable blessing of Western Education. But a great deal still remained to be done. The more progress the people made in education and material prosperity the greater would be the insight into political matters and the keener their desire for political advancement."

He thought their

"desire to be governed according to the ideas of Government prevalent in Europe was in no way incompatible with their thorough loyalty to the British Government. All that they desired was that the basis of the Government should be widened and that the people should have their proper and legitimate share in it."

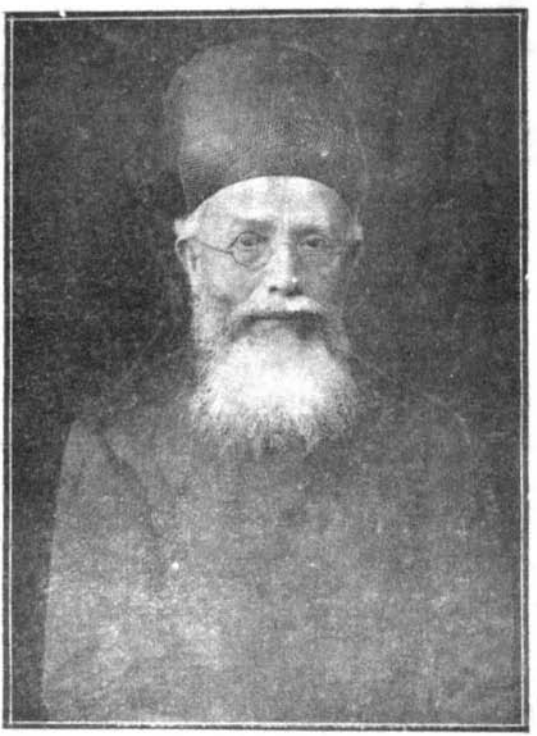
The proceedings of the meeting were marked by sobriety, judgment and firmness and the speeches characterised by dignity, independence and deep study of the subjects, which have probably been seldom surpassed in any subsequent session of the Congress. The subjects discussed were :—(1) Enquiry into the working of the Indian Administration by a Royal Commission, (2) the abolition of the Council of the Secretary of State as at present constituted, (3) the reform and expansion of the Imperial and the Local Legislative Councils, including the right of interpellation and the submission of the Budgets to the Councils, (4) the simultaneous Examination for the Civil Service, (5) the reduction of Military Expenditure, (6) the re-imposition of the import cotton duties and extension of the License Tax, together with an Imperial guarantee to the Indian debt and (7) separation of Burma from the Indian Viceroyalty. It was also resolved that the foregoing resolutions of the Congress be forwarded to all the political associations in the country with request to adopt such measures as may be calculated to advance the settlement of the various questions dealt with in those resolutions. It was decided that the next Congress should re-assemble in Calcutta.

Among the official visitors, that intellectual giant of the Deccan, the Hon'ble Mahadev Govinda Ranade, who did not find it impossible for him boldly to attend many a session of the Congress, and whose loftly patriotism combined with honest loyalty always bore him straight, was the only person who could not forbear from addressing the meeting on the second day upon

the hotly debated question of the proposed abolition of the Council of the Secretary of State ; while Mr. D. S. White, the President of the Eurasian Association struck a most important note which although somewhat lightly treated at the time has now assumed considerable importance in connection with the labours of the Royal Commission which is now conducting its investigations and particularly in the light of the opinion which has been so forcibly expressed by that staunch friend of India, Sir Henry Cotton, through the columns of the *Contemporary Review* on the question of the reconstitution of the Indian Civil Service.

After the three day's labours the Congress was dissolved with the customary vote of thanks to the president which he more than deserved, for the great tact and judgment with which he had tackled many a knotty point during the debates and for his "very able conduct in the chair:" This was followed by "three cheers" for Mr. Hume which the "Father of the Congress" ever since received as an annual tribute at every session of the Congress until his death, and by an outburst of loyal demonstration when Mr. Hume called for "three times three cheers" for Her Majesty the Queen Empress.

Here closes the narrative as regards the origin of the great national movement. Twenty-nine sessions of the Congress, with one lamentable break, have since been held in different centres of British India, the history of which is well preserved in the records of the Congress which may be said to form a most valuable compendium, if not a library, of the modern Indian



DR. DADABHAI NAOROJI
PRESIDENT, 1886, 1893 & 1906.

BUDRUDDIN TYABJEE
PRESIDENT, 1887