political literature of more than a quarter of a century. It is perhaps not necessary to agree with all or any of the conclusions arrived at in these voluminous records to form a just and adequate estimate of the encyclopedic character of the mine of informations which they contain, the vast amount of thought and reflection on various subjects which they embody and the awakening of self-consciousness among a rising people, as well as the trend of popular ideas and aspirations, which they disclose at a momentous period of transition in a world of rapid changes and transformations. All these materials are there for the future political historian of India. But a brief survey of the various phases through which the Congress has passed, the trials and tribulations it has undergone, the difficulties it has overcome, the success which has so far attended its labours and the prospects it has opened for future progress, may not be altogether out of place and without some interest.

CHAPTER X.

THE CAREER OF THE CONGRESS.

It was Mr. George Yule who, in his presidential address at the fourth session of the Congress held at Allahabad, said that there are three phases through which all important movements have to pass:—that of

"ridicule," "abuse," and "partial concession," which with a slight modification might be termed the stages of Ridicule, Opposition and Surrender. It was truly a prophetic pronouncement which is fully illustrated in the history of the Congress. At first the movement was ridiculed by its critics as a fantastic dream which they confidently hoped would shortly meet the fate of Alnasker's glass-wares. The first stage was, however, quickly got over: for, although Anglo-India at the outset pooh-poohed the idea of a United India, it was shortly disabused of its delusion and impressed with the serious nature of the business to which the educated community had solemnly and deliberately put its hand. But the second stage was a rather prolonged period during which the Congress was engaged in a desperate struggle against calumny and misrepresentation on the one hand and the difficulties of defeat and despair on the other. The stubborn opposition of a powerful bureaucracy, backed by the Anglo-Indian Press and coupled with the growing despondency of the people themselves, made the position of the Congress at times almost critical. The leaders, however, learnt to "labour and to wait" with the fullest confidence in the justice and righteousness of the cause and in the ultimate triumph of British statesmanship until, as a reward for their honest perseverance, the third and the last stage of "partial concession" may fairly be said to have at last dawned upon the country.

Although the Congress was born in Bombay its real baptism took place with all the formal rites and ceremonies in the following year in the metropolis of the

Empire under the high prelacy of the Nestor of India, Mr. Dadabhai Naoroji. In the Calcutta Congress of 1886, a Reception Committee was formed with that illustrious savant and antiquarian, Dr. Rajendralal Mitra, who was then the President of the British Indian Association, as its chairman, and the representatives (henceforth styled delegates) were formally elected either by established associations, or at duly organised public meetings held throughout the country. The representation thus secured was naturally much larger and more thorough than at the first Congress. The number of delegates rose from 72 to 406 and included all that was best in the land whether in point of intellect, wealth or influence. An opening address by the Chairman of the Reception Committee welcoming the delegates was introduced, and for its graceful language, fervid eloquence and patriotic zeal, no less than for its political insight, the spirited address delivered by the learned doctor on the occasion stands to this day as a model for the Reception Committee's address of welcome to the delegates. The Presidential Address of the Grand Old Man, embodying the results of a lifelong study of Indian problems and the direct experience of English politics, was listened to with reverent attention by an assembly of over four thousand educated people. The meeting was at first arranged to be held in the hall of the British Indian Association where the National Conference had been held in December previous; but judging by the number of the registered delegates, as well as the vast number of expected visitors, it was wisely removed to the Calcutta Town Hall with the Hooghly

decked with its splendid shipments on one side and the grand *maidan* with the imposing Fort William and the beautiful Eden Gardens on the other. The historic hall was densely packed to its utmost capacity and a small temporary platform had to be improvised for the President in the middle of the southern side of the spacious hall, as he would have been otherwise lost to view amidst the sea of faces around him. The large *dais* which now adorns the eastern end of the hall was not then in existence. The subjects discussed at this session were also more comprehensive and better digested than at the first Congress and included the important question of the separation of Judicial from Executive functions in the administration of criminal justice in the country. As a practical step towards the working of the Congress, Provincial Committees were also established throughout the country. The session marked throughout by unabated enthusiasm and earnestness as well as by animated debates, some of which had to be settled in committees, was a grand success and staggered not a few among the Anglo-Indian Community who had lightly indulged in a belief of the "effervescent character" of the movement. At the close of the session, Lord Dufferin very courteously received a deputation from the Congress headed by the President.

If the Congress of 1885 was little more than an experiment, and the Congress of 1886 marked a period of vigorous adolescence, the Congress of 1887 "bore every appearance of its having become a permanent national institution." The third Congress held in Madras evoked still greater enthusiasm and the

number of delegates rose to over 600, of whom fully 250 hailed from outside the Madras Presidency. The bulk of the Bengal delegates, numbering about 80, chartered the B and I. Company's *S. S. Nevassa* which, starting from Calcutta and after experiencing a severe gale continuously for three days and three nights in the Bay, at last landed the delegates from Bengal in Madras amid the hearty cheers of a vast and expectant crowd awaiting the distressed vessel on the magnificent beach of which Fort St. George is so justly proud. It was in Madras that for the first time a special pavilion was constructed for the meeting of the Congress, which in Tamil was called *Pandal*, and this term has since been accepted by all the provinces for the pavilion at all successive sessions of the Congress. That veteran statesman who, after a long and distinguished career as the Prime Minister of three of the most important independent principalities of Travancore, Indore and Baroda, each and all of whom owe their advancement in no small measure to his genius, had retired into private life, was drawn from his seclusion in his old age to assume the function of Chairman of the Reception Committee; and the masterly address with which Raja Sir T. Madhava Rao cordially welcomed the delegates may even to this day be read with much profit both by the members of the Congress as well as its critics. Referring to the latter, he said :

"Judged most unsparingly, the worst feature of gatherings of this description might be super-abundance of enthusiasm and youthful impetuosity. But, as a great thinker has said, men learn to run before they learn to walk; they stagger and stumble before they acquire a steady use of their limbs. What is true of

individuals is equally true of nations; and it is uncharitable to form a forecast of the future from the failings and weaknesses, if any such *should* exist, incidental to a nascent stage."

Addressing the members of the Congress, he counselled moderation and forbearance. "It is the character of renovated youth," he said, "to be carried away by excessive zeal. Steer clear of such shoals and quicksands. Discuss without prejudice; judge without bias; and submit your proposals with the diffidence that must necessarily mark suggestions that are tentative in their character." The President of the Congress this time was the Honourable Mr. Budruddin Tyabji, at that time a distinguished member of the Bombay Bar and the first and foremost Mahomedan who if he failed actually to attend the first Congress yet heartily supported the movement from its very inception. It was at this session that a constitution was also sought to be provided for the institution. A committee was formed which drafted a set of tentative rules, and an attempt to adopt these rules was repeated from year to year without any decision being arrived at until it was overtaken by a catastrophe twenty years later. But for the vacillation and indecision of the leaders, who had been repeatedly warned of the dangers to which such a huge organisation was naturally exposed in the absence of fixed rules and regulations defining its constitution and laying down a procedure for its working, that catastrophe might possibly have easily been avoided.

For a closer touch among the delegates some sort of social entertainments were contrived from the beginning of the Congress. In Bombay, the Representatives

besides being housed at one and the same place, were taken to a visit of the celebrated cave temples at Elephanta. In Calcutta, although the large number of delegates did not admit of their being accommodated in one and the same house, a magnificent steamer party was organised by Mr. Moheschandra Choudhury, a leading vakil of the Calcutta High Court and a prominent member of the Congress, in which several prominent officials, including the Hon'ble Mr. Justice, afterwards Sir. Chunder-Madhav Ghose joined ; and pleasant entertainments were combined with serious business as some of the matters referred to a Committee of the Congress were discussed and settled on board the vessel as it glided along the Hooghly, decked with hundreds of flags, amidst the playing of bands on the flats on either side and the cheerings of thousands of spectators who lined all the way up along the shores. At Madras, it was understood that Lord Connemara was personally desirous of attending the Congress ; but Lord Dufferin thought it would be preferable for the Governor to receive the delegates. Lord Connemara accordingly first attended the magnificent reception given by Mr. Eardley Norton and on the following day, himself received the delegates at Government House in a manner befitting his exalted position and fully worthy of the occasion. It was a brilliant function in which His Excellency freely mixed and conversed with the delegates and gave unmistakable evidence of his sympathies with the movement. Sumptuous refreshments were also provided for the delegates and the Governor's own band was in attendance.

But here the curtain dropped over official sympathies for the Congress and the fourth session at Allahabad witnessed a complete change in the official attitude towards the movement. The Anglo-Indian community and their organs had from the beginning ridiculed the idea of a United India and although the Indian Civil Service made no secret of its dislike for the movement it was precluded from manifesting any open hostility to it owing to the sympathies evinced by the heads of the administrations. It is a significant fact that the first and the third Congresses were held within Presidency Governments and although the second was held within the territories of a Lieutenant-Governor, it was held in the capital of the Empire where his presence was completely overshadowed by the higher personality and influence of the Viceroy. Thus it was not until the Congress removed its seat to within an independent Lieutenant-Governorship that the official circle found a free scope to vent its antipathy towards the new movement. A few perfectly harmless leaflets, such as "the Old Man's Hope," written by Mr. Hume, a catechism in Tamil written by Mr. Veeraraghava Chariar and a parable in the form of a dialogue between one Moulvie Fariduddin and Rambuksh, circulated among the people for attracting public attention to the movement, were regarded in official circles as savouring of the practice of the Anti-Corn Law League in England; and the Reception Committee of the Fourth Congress headed by that enthusiastic congressman and recognised leader of public opinion in the United Provinces, Pundit Ajudhya Nath, experienced considerable difficulty in procuring a

suitable site for the *Pandal*. They were driven from pillar to post both by the civil and the military authorities until that patriotic nobleman of Behar who was a Gothic pillar of the Congress. Maharajah Sir Luchmeswar Singh Bahadur of Dhurbunga, came to the rescue. He hastily purchased Lowther Castle just opposite Government House and at once placed it at the disposal of the Reception Committee saying, that the first use to which the newly acquired property was to be dedicated was the service of the motherland. Sir Auckland Colvin left Government House and went out on tour shortly before the sitting of the Congress. The interest and enthusiasm of the people however rose in proportion to the opposition which they received, and Pundit Ajudhya Nath with his characteristic genial good-humour bulletined from day to day the large number of delegates who were pouring in by almost every train into the city. There were two prominent men at this time who rose to greater prominence by their opposition to the Congress : one was Sir Syed Ahmed Khan of Aligarh and the other Rajah Siva Prasad of Benares. Rajah Siva Prasad, apparently bent upon attracting pointed attention of the authorities by openly denouncing the Congress, managed to secure a representation from the Benares division, which however was strongly repudiated by the other delegates from that division as a fraud, and personally attended the Congress. His fellow-delegates from Benares though submitting to the decision of the Congress authorities declining for several reasons to exclude him from the meeting, had to be partially reconciled by allowing him

a seat outside the delegates' enclosure and far away from their block. It may be noted here that the practice of arranging the delegates in groups or blocks according to provinces was started at this session and Rajah Siva Prasad though admitted as a delegate had to be provided with a separate seat close under the presidential platform. The Rajah though appearing in the garb of a delegate took advantage of his position to pronounce, like Balaam, an anathema on the movement which so much exasperated the vast assembly that at the end of the day's proceeding he had to be sent to his quarters under a strong escort supplied by the Reception Committee. All the leading men of all the provinces were present at this session which besides being held at the most central city in India also carried with it the additional attraction of a sacred place of great antiquity and the just pride of a spot where the Great Proclamation of the "White Queen" was announced to her Indian subjects in 1858. The Presidential Address of Mr. Yule, who as the recognised leader of the European mercantile community in Calcutta was a tower of strength to the Congress and whose association with the movement was a powerful vindication of its legitimate character, was a masterly document unsurpassed by any in the annals of the Congress either in manly dignity, sober judgment, or fearless independence. The vigorous correspondence which followed between Sir Auckland Colvin and Mr. Hume, the former attacking and the latter defending the Congress is well-known to the public and need not be re-capitulated here. The Anglo-Indian Press, which had from the beginning showed

no sympathy, active or passive, towards the movement, now began to manifest symptoms of open suspicion and distrust of it. The *Pioneer* led the cry against the Congress and the whole *Jingo* Press yelled out in a responsive chorus denouncing the movement and its methods as resembling Irish Fenianism and strongly savouring of a lurking seditious organisation devoid of representative character and substance. It was, however, a significant feature of the situation that the supreme head of the administration, the Viceroy, imbued with the spirit of the British constitution and accustomed to the methods and practices of public agitation at Home, never winced, and although surrounded by bureaucratic influences that supreme authority was generally found to regard the movement as perfectly constitutional. It is perhaps as true of the moral as of the physical world that the higher one mounts, the purer becomes the atmosphere. Lord Dufferin who courteously received the delegates to the Second Congress openly said that the proposal for the separation of the Judicial from the Executive functions was a "counsel of perfection" to which he was ready to subscribe, though on a subsequent occasion the same strong Viceroy appears to have succumbed to his stronger environment and characterised the Congress party as a "microscopic minority" and their ultimate ambition as a "big jump into the unknown." He apparently forgot his early conversations with Mr. Hume and his own share in the business, though it must be said to the credit of the leading congressmen who were in the known that they could hardly be

persuaded even under extreme provocation to abuse the confidence reposed in them. The after-dinner speech of Lord Dufferin was however promptly met by a most caustic rejoinder from Mr. Eardley Norton, whose "open letter" to His Lordship was received with the utmost gratification throughout the country and created a sensation in the official circle. The whole Indian Press joined in the protest in some cases even bordering on disrespect to the high authority from whom the unfortunate observations emanated, as it formed also the subject of not a few severe though well-restrained comments at the next session of the Congress. But there was yet another and a more powerful man possessed of "a frame of adamant and a soul of fire" who stood to defend the Congress and its propaganda against these light-hearted strictures. Charles Bradlaugh's attention was drawn by a report in the *Times* to Lord Dufferin's speech delivered at the St. Andrew's Dinner in Calcutta on November 30, 1888, and the "Member for India" in a great speech made at Newcastle at once replied to Lord Dufferin's criticisms with such driving force and convincing arguments as made the latter unreservedly to climb down, if not actually come down on his knees, before his powerful antagonist. Lord Dufferin forthwith wrote to Mr. Bradlaugh explaining himself. In his letter Lord Dufferin assured Mr. Bradlaugh :

"That he had not misrepresented the Congress, that he neither directly nor by implication suggested that the Congress was seditious, that he always spoke of the Congress in terms of sympathy and respect, and treated its members with great personal civility, that he was always in favour of Civil Service Reform, so that Indians might obtain more appointments in it, as proved by

his appointment of the Indian Civil Service Commission and that he himself was in favour of such a reform of the Provincial Councils in India as he (Mr. Bradlaugh) appeared to advocate."

Then after his retirement from the Viceroyalty of India at Lord Dufferin's special request an interview was arranged and held in London between the two, in which Lord Dufferin further explained himself; while in writing to Mr. Bradlaugh after his appointment as Ambassador in Rome, Lord Dufferin said:—

"I think our efforts should be applied rather to the decentralisation of our Indian Administration than to its greater unification, and I made considerable efforts in India to promote and expand this principle. In any event, I am sure the discussion which you will have provoked will prove very useful, and I am very glad that the conduct of it should be in the hands of a prudent, wise and responsible person like yourself, instead of having been laid hold of by some adventurous *franc tireier* whose only object might possibly have been to let off a few fire-works for his own glorification."

As regards his "big jump into the unknown," he had no doubt his defence as well as his explanation; but if the conqueror of Burma had been living to-day, he would certainly have had the gratification to find how grievously mistaken he and his advisers were and that in spite of his and their warning at least an initial step towards the "big jump" has been taken without the Government either in England or in India being any the worse for it.

The most brilliant session during the first period of the Congress was however that of 1889, commonly known as the "Bradlaugh Session," held in Bombay under the presidency of Sir William Wedderburn. The number of Delegates who attended the session was 1889

a figure strangely coinciding with the year, and it has been the highest on the record up to this day. It was a historic session which attracted an unusual number of people, including even officials in disguise, to see and hear the great commoner, the hero of a hundred fights on the floor of the House of Commons and one of the early friends of India in the pre-Congress period, who by his unswerving conviction and dauntless courage, as well as by his sympathies for poor suffering humanity, had created a name known throughout the civilized world and which was almost a household word among the educated community in India.

Although the question of the Congress-constitution was repeatedly postponed from year to year, an important rule was passed at the fifth session of the Congress by which the number of representatives returnable from each Congress circle was limited to five per million of its total population. This salutary provision was found necessary party to avoid disproportionate representation of the various provinces and partly to check the enormous size to which the assembly was growing; but this rule seems never to have been strictly observed except at two or three sessions of the Congress.

Speaking of the Congres of 1889 it is impossible to avoid a passing reference to an important debate which took place at this session on the Bill which the "member for India" himself had drafted for introduction in the House of Commons for the reform of the Indian Councils. One of the objects of Mr. Bradlaugh's coming out to India was, as he himself, said, personally to ascertain the views of the Indians on the spot as

regards the provisions of his Bill, and he had the pleasure of listening to a full dressed debate on the subject. How that Bill was superseded by a tinkering measure of Lord Cross and the cherished hopes of the Indian Nationalists deferred for another decade is well-known to congressmen. But if a kind Providence had spared Charles Bradlaugh for another ten years he would have had the satisfaction of seeing that his own Bill was accepted as the substantial basis for the reform and expansion of the Legislative Councils in India at the hands of a future Secretary of State. At the conclusion of the proceedings of the session an address was presented to Mr. Bradlaugh from the Congress, and quite a pile of addresses in silver and gold caskets as well as other presents from different parts of the country were laid covering the large presidential table, which could only be taken as read. Mr. Bradlaugh then delivered an address which in its earnestness, sincerity, as well as fervid eloquence, made a deep impression on the minds of the audience, which comprised also a section of the European population of Bombay. In his deep, resonant voice, which held the vast assembly spell-bound, the great friend and champion of India said :—"For whom should I work if not for the people? Born of the people, trusted by the people, I will die of the people." Here was a man who was a fearless advocate of truth and justice, who "never dreamed, though right *were* worsted, wrong *could* triumph;" and when shall England and India have such another!

The next Session of the Congress held under the leadership of Sir Pherozeshah Mehta in 1890 in the

city of Calcutta was distinguished no less for its splendid organization than for its enthusiasm. It thoroughly exposed the secret antipathy of the bureaucracy and at the same time established its own claim and position as a legitimate representative institution. The amusing incident which drew this important declaration from the Government of India is quite illustrative of the temper and attitude which the Civil Service has throughout maintained towards the national movement. On the eve of the sixth session of the Congress in Calcutta the public were surprised by a notice which appeared in the various Anglo-Indian newspapers in the metropolis which ran as follows :—

"THE CONGRESS."

"The Bengal Government, having learnt that tickets of admission to the visitors' enclosure in the Congress Pavilion have been sent to various Government officers residing in Calcutta, has issued a circular to all secretaries and heads of department subordinate to it pointing out, that under orders of Government of India the presence of Government officials even as visitors at such meetings is not advisable, and that their taking part in the proceedings of any such meetings is absolutely prohibited."

And this was followed by a characteristic reply from Belvidere to the Secretary to the Congress Reception Committee, who had with respectful compliments sent some cards for the use of His Honour the Lieutenant-Governor and his household :—

"BELVIDERE, *25th December, 1890.*

"DEAR SIR,

"In returning herewith the seven cards of admission to the visitors' enclosure of the Congress pavilion which were kindly sent

by you to my address yesterday afternoon, I am desired to say that the Lieutenant-Governor and the members of his household could not possibly avail themselves of these tickets, since the orders of the Government of India *definitely prohibit the presence* of Government officials at such meetings."

This communication, which was read by the Anglo-Indian Press as a highly gratifying snub administered to the Congress, was over the signature of Mr. P. C. Lyon who was then the Private Secretary to Sir Charles Elliot and who in his subsequent distinguished career found much ampler and freer scope for associating his name with circulars and manifestoes which, though no longer extent, have acquired a historic fame. This strange correspondence formed the subject of a heated discussion in the Congress in course of which that level-headed typical Scotchman, Mr. George Yule, described it as the production of "some Dogberry clothed in a little brief authority" and characterized it as "a piece of gross insolence" offered to a body of men who were perhaps in no way inferior to any official in the land either in their "honesty of purpose," or "devotion to the Queen." Mr. Yule visibly waxed red when he said from his place in the tribune, "any instructions, therefore, which carry on their face, as these instructions do in my judgment, an insinuation that we are unworthy to be visited by Government officials, I resent as an insult and I retort that in all the qualities of manhood we are as good as they." A reference was made to H. E. the Viceroy who at once declared that the Belvidere interpretation of the order of Government of India was based upon a clear misapprehension, that in the opinion of Government the

Congress Movement was "*perfectly legitimate in itself*," that the "*Government of India recognise that the Congress Movement is regarded as representing in India what in Europe would be called the more advanced Liberal Party, as distinguished from the great body of Conservative opinion which exists side by side with it*," and that *the real attitude of the Government was one of perfect "neutrality in their relation to both parties."* The Private Secretary to Lord Lansdowne while clearly indicating that it was only *participation* in its proceedings from which Government officials were necessarily debarred concluded this important letter, addressed to the General Secretary to the Congress, with the following observation :—

"In reference to a specific question which you addressed to His Excellency, I am to say, that the orders apply only to those who are actually, at the time being, Government Servants but not to pensioners and others who have quitted the service of the Government for good."

A pointed reference to this passing incident has been deemed necessary not only to exemplify the secret disposition of the Indian bureaucracy towards popular institutions, but also to remove, if possible, the lurking suspicion which, having regard to that disposition, yet prevails in certain quarters and particularly among a class of Indian officials, that the Government is really ill-disposed towards the Congress and that it is not safe for pensioners or even retained Government advocates to express any sympathy for the Congress movement. It cannot, however, be denied that although the Supreme Government has been generally quite frank and intelligible in the exposition of its views

about the Congress, the ideas of the subordinate administrations in their practical application have seldom been free from a distinct bias against it; and those who had from an early stage of the Congress looked through the rose-tinted official spectacles and could never discern the rock ahead regarded the movement with positive jealousy and suspicion, and ever since the fourth Congress at Allahabad a systematic campaign was kept up not only to discredit the organization, but also to calumniate it before the British public. The bureaucracy as a whole was like Narcissus of old so enchanted with the loveliness of its own shadow that it had neither the leisure nor the inclination to contemplate beauty in others: while those placed high in offices resented all suggestions at improvements as a direct reflection against them.

It was at this session of 1890 that a decision was arrived at for holding a session of the Congress in London in 1892. Owing, however, to the impending general election in 1891 the proposal was subsequently postponed and never afterwards revived owing to a difference of opinion as regards the relative advantages and disadvantages of such a venturesome step. In 1892 Sir Charles Elliott's notorious Jury Notification was published and the whole country was convulsed by the threatened abrogation of a valued, vested right. Bengal naturally led a violent agitation; but the country was no longer a congeries of disintegrated peoples and the Congress at once took up the question in right earnest. A Jury Commission was appointed and in the end not only was the obnoxious notification withdrawn, but a

distinct advance was secured towards a further, though limited, extension of that system.

Another brilliant session of the Congress was that held in 1893 in the historic capital of the Punjab. Mr. Dadabhai Naoroji, M. P., who recently returned to Parliament by the British constituency of Central Finsbury was the first Indian that sat in the British House of Commons, was again unanimously elected as President of the Congress this year The tremendous ovation which he received from the warm-hearted and chivalrous people of the land of the Five Rivers resembled more the triumphal entry of a conquering hero than a customary ceremonial demonstration : and a conquering hero it was who had not only opened the gate of the Mother of Parliaments to the Indian people ; but also came out triumphant with the famous Resolution of the House of Commons of the 2nd June on the important question of the Simultaneous Examinations for the Indian Civil Services. Mr. Dadabhai also brought with him the welcome messages of good will and sympathy not only from his own constituency, but also from the Irish Labour and Radical members of the House, who through their accredited mouthpiece, Mr. Davitt, charged him on the eve of his departure from England,—"Don't *forget to tell your colleagues at the Congress that every one of Ireland's Home Rule members in Parliament is at your back in the cause of the Indian People.*" A session of the Congress held under such happy auspices and under the leadership of such a man was bound to be a most

unqualified success both in form as well as in substance. It was at this session that the question of the Medical Service, of which the late lamented Dr. Bahadurji of Bombay was such a staunch advocate, received the earliest attention of the national assembly, and the important question of the Separation of Judicial and Executive functions assumed a practical shape in the appointment of a Committee of the Congress to formulate definite schemes for the proposed reform. But perhaps the highest interest evoked at this session was embodied in the protests which the Congress entered against the closing of the Indian mints to private coinage of silver, whereby the people were subjected to a further indirect taxation and some of the most important trades and industries in the country seriously disorganized and injured, as also against a system of State-regulated immorality practised in the Indian cantonments which had been dragged into light by a Purity Society in England, specially under the indefatigable exertions of Mrs. Josephine Butler, whose thrilling revelations were at first stoutly repudiated by Lord Roberts, then the Commander-in-Chief in India, but were ultimately fully confirmed by a Departmental Committee appointed by the Secretary of State to independently investigate into the matter. It must be said to the credit of Lord Roberts that when the odious charge was proved beyond question, the gallant soldier voluntarily came forward to offer his unqualified apology to Mrs. Butler and her colleagues among whom were included two American ladies who were also members of the Society and had taken a prominent part in the

shameful disclosures which, in the words of Mr. D. E. Wacha who with his characteristic force of facts and figures moved the resolution, at last "unmasked the organized official hypocrisy of those in India who had so long successfully misled the British public."

The Madras Congress of 1894 under the presidency of Mr. Alfred Webb, M.P., was marked by considerable excitement over the questions of two fresh imposts proposed to be laid on the already overburdened Indian taxpayer: one was called a countervailing excise duty on Indian cotton manufactures evidently introduced under pressure from Lancashire; while the other was the levy of an arbitrary penalty in the shape of costs of punitive police forces quartered in disturbed areas under an amendment of the Indian Police Act of 1861. The excise duty has done its best to cripple the infant textile industries of Bombay, while the police-penalty has ever since fallen heavily on the guilty and the innocent alike and is most sorely resented by a suffering people as being due solely to the incompetency of the ordinary police to preserve peace and order in the country. It is felt and regarded by the people as one of those avenging thunderbolts, too common in India, which are visited on the Indian peasant when Jupiter himself is in the wrong.

Another most successful session of the Congress was that held at Poona in 1895. Having lost her first opportunity the capital of the Deccan had to wait for ten long years to secure her turn in the yearly expanding cycle of the gigantic movement. Mr. Surendranath Banerjee, whose name was a signal for popular

enthusiasm, was the President at this session and the remarkable address which he delivered *extempore* for over two hours and a half was a masterpiece of eloquence combining facts with rhetoric. The country was at this time threatened with another reactionary measure of far-reaching consequences to the national movement. The legal practitioners formed the bulk of the independent educated community, who led public opinion and guarded popular rights and privileges in the country. Being directly under the authority of the High Courts they were comparatively free from the nightmare of local official influence, and in 1894 a Bill was introduced in the Supreme Legislative Council, at the instance of a bureaucracy which was never shown to devise means for striking at the root of the rising spirit, to amend the Legal Practitioners' Act of 1879, by which the provincial legal practitioners were sought to be completely subordinated to the District Judges and the Revenue Commissioners. Bengal again led the opposition which the other provinces soon joined, and the Congress of 1895 entered a vigorous protest of the united country against this mischievous measure. The High Courts generally and the High Court at Fort William in particular here supported the people and as in the case of the Jury Notification so in the case of the Legal Practitioner's Bill a threatened danger was turned into a signal success. The legal practitioners were not only saved from the clutches of the bureaucracy; but the dignity of their position was further enhanced by the repeal of the degrading provisions in the existing law as regards imprisonment in certain cases of

professional misconduct. In 1897 the people were rudely apprised of the existence of three rusty but deadly weapons in the armoury of Government to summarily dispose of the liberty of a British subject. The Sirdars Natu brothers were deported by the Bombay Government under Bombay Regulation XXV of 1827 without a trial and without their offence being made public, and the Congress of the years entered a vigorous protest against the use of an obsolete Regulation which was expressly intended to meet the circumstances of a time when British power was hardly established in the country and was positively threatened with internal commotions of no ordinary magnitude. The Congress also urged for the repeal of the three cognate measures for the three Presidencies which, like the three Gorgon Sisters, had but one eye and one object to terrorize the people—the Bengal Regulation III of 1818, the Madras Regulation II of 1819 and the Bombay Regulation XXV of 1827. Unfortunately however a nervous bureaucracy was unwilling to part with even the most indefensible of the offensive weapons in its possession, and neither the religious nor the social reformer, nor the educationist, nor the political demagogue has since escaped their ruthless operation; while the barbarous measures are still suspended like the proverbial sword of Damocles over the heads of a devoted people living in British territories. It was in this year also that the initial step was taken towards widening the scope of the law of sedition by amending Section 121-A of the Indian Penal Code against the pledge of the expert political juggler, Sir James Fitz

James Stephen, and the first foundation laid for the suppression of liberty of speech and freedom of the Press. The Congress at once raised its voice against this dangerous innovation in the law of the land, but that voice went altogether unheeded in the rising temper of the bureaucracy with what result is now well-known to the country. The Congress of 1901 under the presidency of Mr. D. E. Wacha was remarkable for the interest it evoked in the question of immigration in Assam and the "melancholy meanness" to which the Government of India had submitted in postponing the very small relief which Sir Henry Cotton had fought so hard to grant to the indentured labourers in the tea-gardens.)) It was at this Congress also that, with a view to meet the deficit of the expenses of the Congress organ *India* and of the British Committee in England, the "delegation fee" was raised from Rs. 10 to Rs. 20 with effect from 1902. This increase was to no small extent responsible for thinner attendance of delegates at some of the subsequent Congresses and continued to be a source of bitter complaint until the Bankipur Congress of 1912, when it was remitted to its former incidence.

The Bombay Congress of 1904 under the presidency of Sir Henry Cotton and the Benares Congress of 1905 under the leadership of the Hon'ble Mr. Gopal Krishna Gokhale were also among the remarkable sessions of the National Assembly. The former dealt with the reactionary policy of Lord Curzon's administration as evidenced by the Indian Universities Bill, the Bengal Partition Scheme and the Official Secrets

Bill ; while the latter witnessed the first manifestation of the new spirit evoked by the recently established Swadeshi movement consequent upon the Partition of Bengal, which will be separately dealt with later on.

It has been already observed that whatever the attitude of the Anglo-Indian bureaucracy was that supreme head of the administration had throughout maintained an attitude of perfect neutrality between that bureaucracy and the people as represented by the Congress. It was, however, reserved only for Lord Curzon to thoroughly identify himself with the bureaucracy and to treat the Indian National Congress, as indeed everything Indian, with positive discourtesy. He refused to receive a deputation which proposed to wait upon His Excellency under the leadership of Sir Henry Cotton with the resolutions of the Bombay Congress of 1904. The refusal though meanly discourteous was not altogether unexpected. The Congress of 1904 had not only entered its protests against the officialization of the Universities and the newly hatched scheme of the Partition of Bengal, two of the most cherished fads of the Indian Kaiser, whose chief enemy according to the *Times* was his own tongue next to his manners ; but it was this time presided over by a man whose pro-Indian tendencies had been long known to the bureaucracy, a man whose stern opposition to any scheme of dismemberment of a province, which he was proud to call the land of his adoption for which he earned the sobriquet of the "White Babu" from the demoralized members of his own service, was pronounced as long ago as 1896 and

whom the "Superior Person" had not only treacherously thrown to the wolves for his benevolent efforts to add an *eight anna* silver piece to the hard lot of legalized slavery in the tea gardens of Assam, but had actually removed out of his way by effectually barring him from the Satrapy of Bengal even at the risk of sacrificing another valuable life, and above all a man, whose immense popularity in the country could by no means have been pleasing to the proud Viceroy, was perhaps not the man whom his Magnificence could have consistently with his high dignity and higher insolence admitted to his august presence. Sir Henry Cotton, however, presided at a huge anti-partition demonstration held at the Calcutta Town Hall and then went to Assam the closing scene of his distinguished official career in India. Such was the demoralisation of the bureaucracy that there too he had to encounter a worthy lieutenant of a worthy general. His successor Mr. J. B. (afterwards Sir Bamfylde) Fuller treated him with such gross discourtesy as was utterly repugnant to the ordinary rules of hospitality in Eastern countries, and people were not wanting who actually gave expression to a supposition that the Chief Commissioner acted either under inspiration, or through intution. But Sir Henry had his ample compensation in the unique hearty reception which the people of Assam gave him on the occasion to the infinite chagrin and mortification of the future hammering *Lat*, who to avenge a supposed insult thus offered by the people completed the triumph of his magnificent meanness by ordering the removal of a silent portrait which a grateful people had presented

to the Gowhati College whose name however he was unable to efface. In 1902 when Sir Henry Cotton left Assam he received such an ovation as had never been accorded to any administrator of that planter-ridden province, and so great was his popularity in Bengal that a whole district town came with a farewell address to receive him at a railway terminus on the sandy banks of the Ganges where he first touched the soil of Bengal on his return journey, while the warm reception given to him in the metropolis of the empire was second only to that of the Marquis of Ripon in 1884. The people had, under the inspiration of the Congress, learnt to rise above the frown of official displeasure, learnt to respect themselves and learnt to honour those to whom honour was justly due.

But perhaps the most brilliant session of the Congress held since the Bradlaugh Congress of 1889 and undoubtedly the most stormy session that came to a successful termination was that held in Calcutta in 1906 under the third and last presidency of Mr. Dadabhai Naoroji. It was at this session that the long pent-up resentment of the people at the apathy and indifference of the Government towards popular demands, intensified by an avowed policy of reaction and retrogression along the whole line, burst forth into a blaze and the Congress was for the first time threatened with a split which only the strong and revered personality of Dadabhai averted for the time being. In this Congress the four famous resolutions were passed which embodied the spirit of the time and afterwards became at least the ostensible cause of a most regrettable

schism in the Congress camp. It was at this Congress that Mr. Dadabhai in his Presidential Address used that historic expression *swaraj*, which was subsequently used as a watchword by a section of the Nationalist Party leading ultimately to an ugly development of the new situation. These will be noticed in detail later on.

Such is the short summary of the strenuous career of the national movement during the first twenty-two years of its life. All the twenty-two sessions were marked by unflagging zeal and earnestness and by a spirit of self-sacrifice which alone could have kept the fire burning in the midst of the frosty atmosphere by which its path had been throughout surrounded. The abortive session of 1907 opened a new chapter in the history of the movement which with its subsequent career is reserved for separate treatment. If only a few of the sessions have been selected for special reference in this report it is simply with a view to direct the attention of the young student of Indian politics to those landmarks which may serve as a useful guide to a careful study of some of the important stages through which the Congress has passed in its evolution of the national life. Among the various subjects, embracing nearly all the political issues, material to the development of that life, which have received the attention of the Congress during this period, the reform and expansion of the Legislative Councils the separation of Judicial and Executive functions, simultaneous examinations for the Indian Civil services, the reduction of Military Expenditure and a fair adjustment of account between the Indian and the British Exchequers, the

larger employment of the children of the soil in the Public Services and the maintenance of strict economy in the most costly, if not the most extravagant, administration in the world, the reform of the Executive Councils of the Governor-General and of the Secretary of State by the admission of qualified natives of India into them, the position of Indians in the Colonies of Great Britian, the expansion and improvement of Education in all its branches, and the economic development of the country as a means to prevent periodical visitations of famine, and a fair reduction of the heaviest of taxations upon the poorest of people in the world have been the most important and common to all the Congresses, although new facts have been adduced and fresh lights thrown on almost each of these questions at every succeeding session. The many-sided activities of the movement, together with the vast amount of thought it has given to nearly all the grievances of the people, the means which the collective wisdom and patriotism of the country have been able to formulate for their remedy and above all the path which it has so clearly and definitely laid out for the ultimate attainment of the salvation of the country, will be found writ large in the pages of the Congress records and it will be for the future historian to critically analyse and sift them for the student of Indian politics.

The history of the Constitution of the Congress of which so much has been made in latter years may also be briefly noticed here. It was at the third Congress held at Madras in 1887 that a Committee was appointed to frame a set of rules for the guidance of the

Congress. The Committee submitted a set of well-devised rules which the Congress from year to year put off for the consideration of each succeeding session. In fact some of the leading members, pointing to the unwritten constitution of some of the most advanced representative institutions in the world, vehemently opposed the formulation of a hard-and-fast constitution for the Congress. In 1898 the matter being closely pressed, the Congress passed a resolution asking the "Standing Congress Committees" appointed by the Second Congress in 1886 to form "Central Committees" in their respective provinces and appointed another Committee to consider the Draft Constitution circulated by the Reception Committee of Madras. In the following year when the policy of procrastination could be carried no further, the Congress at last passed eleven good rules defining the object of the Congress, though somewhat loosely expressed, as being the "promotion by constitutional means of the interests and the well being of the people of the Indian Empire." The other rules provided for the establishment of a Committee styled "The Indian Congress Committee," afterwards known as the "All-India Congress Committee" and the appointment of "Provincial Congress Committees" at the capitals of the different Provinces. It was at this Congress also that the nomination of the Congress President as well as the drafting of the Resolutions were formally made over to the Indian Congress Committee. The maintenance of the British Committee in England was also made obligatory on the part of the Congress. Then there was a lull until 1906 when the

rules were further extended and revised. This time the Standing Congress Committee was fully organised by a fair re-distribution of its members among the various provinces, the rule for the selection of the President made still more circumscribed and the decision of the Standing Congress Committee on the nomination of the President-Elect made final to avoid an ugly discussion on the subject at any session of the Congress a tendency which had manifested itself at some of the preceding Congresses. For several years past some difficulty had been experienced in forming a properly representative Subjects Committee and one of the rules now framed not only limited the number of members for the Subjects Committee, but also distributed the number fairly among the different provinces. The Congress broke down in 1907 and the next step taken by the Congress was the comprehensive and codified regulations provided by the Allahabad Convention of 1908. Mr. Hume was the General Secretary of the Congress from its very beginning. It was several times proposed to install him once in the Presidential Chair; but the "Father of the Congress" could never be persuaded to exchange the sword for the crown and so he continued to be its Secretary till his death in July 1912. In 1890-91 Pundit Ajudhyanath and in 1893 Mr. Ananda Charlu acted as Joint General Secretaries. Mr. Hume left India in 1894, and Mr. D. E. Wacha was appointed Joint General Secretary to act for him in India from 1895, Mr. Gokhale being appointed Additional Secretary from 1903. Since 1912 Mr. D. E. Wacha and Mr. G. K. Gokhale were Joint Secretaries.

Mr. Wacha still holds his appointment, but Mr. Gokhale was succeeded by Mr. Daji Abaji Khare in 1908. The birthplace of the Congress has long maintained the executive leadership of the organisation ; but it has recently been transferred to Madras. In 1889 Messrs. W. C. Bonnerjee, Pherozeshah Mehta and Ananda Charlu were appointed Standing Counsel of the Congress to advise the Secretary in all matters of importance, an arrangement which afterwards ceased to be necessary under the subsequent Constitution of the Congress. In point of organising spirit evoked by the Congress, Bombay again heads the list among all the major provinces. While it has been so far possible for Bengal and Madras to hold their turn of the Congress Sessions only in the two capital cities, and for the United Provinces in three places, Bombay has held the Congress at five different centres within the Presidency with equal zeal and enthusiasm.

Upon a careful examination of this eventful career of the Congress movement, it will appear that its one object has been the upbuilding of an Indian National life and to that end it has throughout laboured to generate forces for the fusion of a heterogeneous population into a homogeneous mass and then to direct its weight and impetus to operate against the stubborn resistance of an impregnable bureaucracy as strong in its organization as it is conservative in its instincts and traditions. The various questions, to which the Congress has drawn attention, are all supplementary to that one great object, and although they are apparently independent of one another, they form as it were close links

in a chain which drawn like a cordon converges to a common point encircling a common centre. It is some times argued that the Congress might have done better by concentrating its attention only to a few important points instead of dissipating its energies over an immense area. But it is as often overlooked that such a selection is only possible where the contending forces are fairly matched, and both sides command a base for their respective operations. Here the entire ground being in the effective occupation of one party, the other side was bound to deliver an attack everywhere to gain a footing somewhere. The work of the Congress at the outset was more of new creation than of normal development. It had to produce men as well as materials and to devise plans for the execution of its uphill work. There was not a single ground upon which the people could stand on their legs. Every avenue in political life was closed against them, while the people themselves were disintegrated congeries without any clear perception of the various disabilites under which they laboured and without any *locus standi* anywhere in the administration of the country to press for their solution. They were practically Utilanders in their own native land. Besides, where a body suffers from serious complications of a number of acute maladies, it is difficult to prescribe or rely upon a single specific as a panacea for all the complaints. The Congress was therefore, fully justified, at all events in its initial stage, to draw attention of both the people as well as the Government to all the grievances from which the country suffered, and which were its avowed object to remedy by constitutional means and methods.

CHAPTER XI.

THE SURAT IMBROGLIO AND THE ALLAHABAD CONVENTION.

Twenty Sessions of the Congress were held in perfect peace and patience supported only by an unswerving confidence of the people in the strong sense of British justice and the ultimate triumph of British statesmanship of which it was confidently affirmed that if it had blundered in many places, had failed nowhere at the end, although within this sufficiently long period the only concession of note obtained was a half-hearted measure of nominal reform of the Indian Councils under a Parliamentary Statute of 1892 which the Government of India took precious good care still further to restrict in its application as an experiment. It was a reform to which the Congress had attached the greatest importance from the very beginning and for which it had made no small sacrifices both here as well as in England. In 1890 Charles Bradlaugh on behalf of the Congress at last introduced in the Commons a Bill for this reform and the Government of the day, true to its conservative instinct and tradition, seeing that a change was inevitable adroitly wrested away the proposed legislation from the hand of a private radical member and introduced a Bill of its own which was a perfect counterfeit, both in form as well as substance. In vain Mr. Gladstone expressed the hope that in its practical operation it might carry some value with the people and Lord Cross' so-called reform measure

fell flat upon the country. As regards the other complaints of the Congress and the people not even a courteous reply was vouchsafed to any of them. A feeling was thus gradually gaining ground in the country, in spite of the robust optimism of its leaders, that the Government with all its commissions and committees, as well as its elaborate minutes, despatches and resolutions, was not disposed to make any real concessions to the people: that its settled policy was to keep the people under perpetual tutelage and govern the country by its annual pyrotechnic displays of honours and titles and by occasionally throwing, when absolutely necessary, a morsel here and a morsel there to the children of the soil in the public services and above all by steadfastly clinging to the pestilental doctrine of *divide-et-empira*. The feeling was perhaps somewhat exaggerated and not fully justified; but there it was among a considerable section of the people who sincerely believed that the authorities were, as a whole, strongly opposed to the slightest modification of the vested rights and privileges of the bureaucracy upon whose inviolable strength the safety of the Empire was supposed to be based and that as such they were fully prepared to treat Indian public opinion as voiced by the Congress, as well as the Press, with perfect indifference if not with absolute disregard and contempt. Men were not indeed wanting even in high places who decisively snapped their fingers at the suggestion of driving discontent underground. The regrettable feeling became further intensified during the weak Viceroyalty of Lord Elgin, when the bureaucracy attained its highest ascendancy and secured a complete

mastery over the administration. When King Log was succeeded by King Stock the position of the Congress became still more critical. No Viceroy ever came out to India with brighter prospects of success and left it with greater unpopularity than Lord Curzon. The retrograde policy which he so vigorously and unreservedly initiated in all directions culminated in a series of unpopular measures which successively marked the unfortunately extended period of his Viceroyalty. The Official Secrets Act, the Indian Universities Act and last of all the Partition of Bengal followed in quick succession and the wave of popular discontent began to surge from one end of the country to the other. He was reported to have actually proposed the appointment of a permanent Viceroy for India, and whether he had an eye on himself or not it was a most fortunate circumstance both for India as well as England that such an extravagant proposal was not entertainable under the British constitution. The effects of the Congress during this period were almost paralysed, and the bulk of the people nearly lost all confidence in its propaganda.

Towards the end of 1905 the Liberals came into power with Mr. John Morley as Secretary of State for India. The people who had the utmost confidence in Mr. Morley's liberalism fondly hoped that with the change of government a change would also be perceived in the policy of the Indian administration. In this they were painfully deceived, and a section of the Nationalist party, as represented in the Congress, feeling themselves tired of what they called the "mendicant policy" of the movement wanted to divert it on new

lines. This the sober leaders, backed by an overwhelming majority in the Congress and the country, stoutly resisted and the result was that the people were divided into two camps, the Moderates and the Extremists—terms invented by the official organs since 1904, but which are used in these pages in no offensive sense. The earliest symptom of this difference appeared at the Benares Congress of 1905, and the first open rupture manifested itself in the Calcutta Congress of 1906 when a small body of these Extremists finding themselves unable to have their own way rushed out of the Pandal leaving, however, no perceptible void in the densely packed assembly of over sixteen hundred delegates and five times as many visitors. It was no doubt true that the whole country had grown dissatisfied with the stolid indifference and immobility of the Government and that an overwhelming majority of the educated community had taken deep offence at the constant flouting of public opinion and the deliberate substitution of a policy of reaction in almost every branch of the administration. Moderates and Extremists alike and with equal emphasis protested against the attitude of the Government and with equal firmness deprecated an ignominious begging spirit and urged the people to take their stand more upon justice than upon generosity and upon their own just rights more than upon concessions of Government. There was however this difference, that while the majority of the Nationalist party knew what they were about, the minority hardly knew their own mind and in a spirit of exasperation lost their balance. At this memor-

able session held under the third and the last distinguished presidency of the Grand Old Man of India, the Congress unanimously passed four important resolutions which bore unmistakable evidence of the spirit of the times, confining itself however within the strict limits of constitutional agitation and in keeping with its original constitution as well as its past traditions. These were Self-Government on the Colonial lines, National Education, Swadeshi and Boycott of foreign goods. The first had been the avowed object of the Congress almost from the very beginning. It was now laid down with precision and firmness as the ultimate goal of the National Assembly. The second resolution was felt as necessitated by the officialization of the Universities and the threatened curtailment of Education under the policy inaugurated by Lord Curzon ; the third was deemed imperatively necessary for the protection and encouragement of the dying industries of the country ; while the fourth and the last was intended as a protest against the systematic flouting of public opinion in the country, as also to draw the attention of the British public and Parliament to the grievances of the Indian people. The first resolution was announced by the Extremist press as the *Swaraj* resolution though the dubious word *Swaraj* was to be found nowhere in the resolution itself, and was used only once by the President in his inaugural address, of course, in a perfectly legitimate sense. The separatists evidently smarted under a sense of wrong and throughout the year that followed kept up an agitation through the columns of their papers as well as

upon the platforms decrying the Congress and preaching the "utter futility" of the Congress propaganda; although what other propagandum there was to present to the country, they were able neither to formulate nor to indicate. Theirs was apparently a work of destruction and not of construction.

The next Congress was to have been held at Nagpur, but some serious local differences arising, the All-India Congress Committee had to change the venue of the session from Nagpur to Surat which was the rival candidate for the honour at the previous session of the Congress. Early in November 1907 a rumour was circulated by some mischievous or designing people that the Twenty-Third Session of the Congress would have nothing to do with the four new resolutions of the preceding session and this *canard* was persistently kept up till the 24th and 25th December when all the delegates to the Twenty-Third Indian National Congress arrived at Surat, although no one, when asked, was able precisely to refer to the source of his information.)) It was evidently like the proverbial story of the ghost whom every one had heard of, but none had seen. The Extremists under the leadership of that remarkable man, Mr. Bal Gangadhar Tilak, encamped themselves at a place three miles distant from the Congress camps, and many were the rumours afloat that something serious was going to happen at this session of the Congress. The baseless accusation about the exclusion of the four resolutions was again repeated; but it was at once refuted not only by the verbal assurances of the responsible authorities of the Congress, but also by the subsequent

production of an agenda paper containing those resolutions. The oppositionists then laid hold on the question of presidentship and urged that Lala Lajpat Roy and not Dr. Rashbehary Ghose should have been nominated as president-elect. The patriotic Lala however cut the Gordian knot by publicly declining to stand as candidate for the presidential chair. Upon this another person was mentioned as a probable candidate for the post. It seemed rather difficult to ascertain what really the motive was in all these manœuvres; but people were not wanting in the Congress camps who actually believed that the speech of Dr. Ghose, the president-elect, had somehow leaked out and that the extreme section of the Congress party having discovered that there were certain caustic observations regarding them and their ideals in that speech they were determined at all hazards to prevent that speech from being delivered at the Congress. However that may be, the Congress met on the 26th December at about 2-30 p.m., on account of the sudden death of a Sindhi delegate, in the grand pavilion constructed by the Reception Committee in the old historic French Garden, which had been converted into a pretty little town for the occasion. Full 1,200 delegates and over 5,000 visitors were assembled in the Pandal. Every face was beaming with enthusiasm and as every prominent man passed on to the *dais* he was lustily cheered. At last the president-elect entered the hall in a procession and he received such a tremendous ovation that the last shred of doubt and suspicion about the success of the session seemed at once to have vanished from the hall. No sooner calm was restored a

whisper was however heard going round a very limited block that all was not well and that an untoward incident was brewing somewhere; but not a few among the robust optimists confidently hoped that the lowering cloud would instantly pass away and the session prove a brilliant success. The rest of the painful and humiliating episode may, however, be narrated, for merely historical purposes, in the words of an impartial observer. The following telegraphic report, under date the 26th December, from the special correspondent of the *Statesman*, appeared in that paper and was reproduced in the *Pioneer* of the 30th idem:—

The twenty-third National Congress met on Thursday afternoon in the grand pandal at Surat at a place known as the French Garden. The pandal is a large square with seating capacity for over 7,000, and the whole place was filled to its utmost capacity. Long before the President-elect, the Hon. Dr. Ghose, arrived the delegates and spectators had taken up every available seat and some of the busy Extremist leaders took occasion to harangue their followers. Mr. Khare, an Extremist leader of Nasik, intimated to a group of Mahratta Extremists that the Congress should be asked to include the resolutions on boycott, swaraj, and national education in the year's programme and if this was not considered favourably, Mr. Tilak was to oppose the motion formally voting Dr. Ghose to the presidential chair. This announcement was received with approval and applause by the Poona Extremists, and also elicited approbation from the feeble ranks of the Madras Extremists. There were appeals made to the excitable spectators by irresponsible and mischievous preachers in the pandal, with the result that for over an hour before the President's arrival, the scene was one of excitement among the Extremists and intense anxiety among the Moderates.

Meanwhile the leading Congressmen from several parts as they arrived were received with ovations. Lala Lajpat Rai's arrival was the occasion for the greatest enthusiasm, demonstrated in a most unmistakable manner. He was conducted to the platform and took his seat between Dr. Rutherford and Mr. Surendra Nath Banerjee. Sardar Ajit Singh also received some demonstrations. The long platform at the western end of the hall was occupied by a distinguished gathering of the principal Congressmen and visi-

tors. There were among those present at the Congress, leaders like Sir Pherozeshah Mehta, the Hon. Mr. Gokhale, Sir Balchandra Krishna ; merchant princes like the Hon. Vithaldass Damodar Thakersey, Lalubhai Samal Dass, Ibrahim Adamji Peerbhai from Bombay ; patriots like Surendra Nath Banerjee and Bhupendra Nath Basu from Calcutta ; and Punjab leaders like Lal Harkisen Lal and Lajpat Rai from Lahore, and the Hon'ble Krishnasami Iyer and Govindaraghava Iyer, N. Subha Rao and others from Madras ; also Extremist leaders, Messrs. Tilak and Khaparde.

Dr. Ghose arrived, accompanied by Sir Pherozeshah Mehta and other members of the Congress executive, and was welcomed with loud and prolonged cheering, not unmingled with stray shouting of "Shame" from some of the Extremists.

As soon as Dr. Ghose took his seat the Chairman of the Reception Committee (Mr. Thribhuvandas Malvi), delivered his address of welcome to the delegates, in the course of which he referred to the great historic antecedents of Surat and its subsequent downfall as a commerical centre, and in consequence, the rise of Bombay. He also dealt with the good work which the Congress had done in the past in the cause of the country, and hoped that it would continue its policy of moderation, loyalty, firmness and unity.

This statement roused the fire of the Extremists, who hissed and cried "No, no" and otherwise attempted to interrupt him whenever they heard him preach moderation

When he sat down Dewan Bahadur Ambalal Sakar Lal Desai proposed that Dr. Ghose do take the presidential chair, in a short speech in which he extolled his patriotic services, and he, too, was again interrupted by cries of "No, no" from the Extremists.

Then Mr. Surendranath Banerjee rose to address the assembly. It was hoped that he would be able to command the audience with his powerful voice and compelling eloquence ; but the moment he uttered the first word the Extremists were determined to give him no chance. The greatest disturbance proceeded from the front rows of the Madras and Deccan blocks of delegates which were nearest the platform, and the rowdy section among the Extremists made a determined effort to obstruct the proceedings. They called loudly for Mr. Tilak and Lajpat Rai, and would have none of Mr. Banerjee ; but the Moderates urged him to go on and he made repeated attempts to make himself heard, but scarcely a word could be heard above the noisy clamour of the Extremists. They were only about 30, the majority of these coming from Madras. At this stage the Chairman of the Reception Committee stood up and warned the Extremists that, if they kept up like that, the sitting would be impossible, and he would be compelled to suspend the Congress. Even he was not heard,

Mr. Banerjee made another futile attempt and was obliged finally to retire, giving rise to great shouts of triumph on the part of the disturbers.

Meanwhile some parleying went on among the leaders and a movement in the direction of Messrs. Tilak and Khaparde was noticed with a view to persuade them to intervene. This attempt was unsuccessful. Either they did not intervene, or only did so in an equivocal manner, so that their following could not understand them. Meanwhile the Bengalis in particular, and the audience in general, resented the insult offered to the great Bengali leader and orator, and would not hear any one in preference to him. The rowdies, however, continued their noisy demonstration and the Chairman was compelled to declare the Congress suspended for the day, and the leaders retired. But for long afterwards the Extremists held possession of the pandal, men of both parties crying "Shame" against each other.

It is obvious that the disturbance during the afternoon was the result of a deliberately pre-concerted plan of action on the part of the Extremist leaders. These seeing that they and their party were in a hopeless minority were determined not to take defeat on the industrial resolutions before the Congress and so resolved to make the situation impossible at the outset and wreck the Congress. The ostensible pretext of the Extremists in support of their conduct is the alleged omission of the Congress authorities to include resolutions on boycott, swaraj, and national education, which turns out to be absolutely unfounded. A statement denying the rumours set afloat by scheming Extremist leaders was circulated over the signature of the Secretary, but apparently they were spoiling for a split, and they have succeeded in creating an impasse.

Telegraphing on the 27th the same correspondent added :—

"Since last night a manifesto has been issued over the signatures of about twenty leading Congressmen of all parts of the country appealing to the delegates. The manifesto is signed for each province by the respective leaders and runs as follows :—

'Babu Surendra Nath Banerjee, who was to second the proposition moved by Dewan Bahadur Amba Lal Sakar Lal Desai, for the election of Dr. Ghose as President of the Congress has been prevented from speaking against the established practice of the Congress and violation of old traditions. The session of Congress has had to be suspended for the day. If similar obstruction continues it might be necessary to close the session of Congress, a situation which is humiliating for all delegates and an event

which will bring disgrace to the country. It is requested that all delegates to the Congress of all shades of opinion will express their differences in a proper constitutional manner and it is hoped that all will use their influence towards this end."

The Congress assembled at 1 p. m., a large number of visitors and delegates were present. The proceedings began where they were left yesterday by voting Dr. Ghose to the Presidential chair. This was supported and declared carried. Dr. Ghose stood up, but before his address began Mr. Tilak went up on the platform. The audience would not hear him and cried "Shame." Great confusion then ensued. Mr. Tilak would not leave the platform despite pressing requests from eminent men, including Dr. Rutherford. Dr. Ghose then proceeded with his address whereupon Mr. Tilak appealed to his followers, who were considerably excited and rushed up to the platform and attacked every one with sticks with which they were armed. The ladies were removed in safety. Confusion still reigns supreme. The police came in and made arrests. The Magistrate of Surat on the afternoon of the 27th, telegraphed to the Government of India that, "Indian National Congress meeting to-day became disorderly blows being exchanged. The President called on the police to clear the house and the grounds which was done. Order now restored. No arrests. No one reported seriously hurt. No further hurt anticipated." As a matter of fact some arrests were made, but the Reception Committee declining to proceed the prisoners were at once released by the police.

The following official statement was issued on the 28th Friday evening by the Hon. Dr. Rash Behari Ghose, President, Mr. Tribhuvandas N. Malvi, Chairman of the Reception Committee, and Mr. D. E. Wacha and Mr. G. K. Gokhale, Joint General Secretaries of the Indian National Congress :—

"The twenty-third Indian National Congress assembled yesterday in the Pavilion erected for it by the Reception Committee at Surat at 2-30 P M. Over sixteen hundred delegates were present. The proceedings began with an address from the Chairman of Reception Committee. After the reading of the address was over Diwan Bahadur Ambalal Sakerlal proposed that the Hon. Dr. Rash Behari Ghose having been nominated by the Reception Committee for the office of President under the rules adopted at the last session of the Congress, he should take the Presidential chair. As soon as the Dewan Bahadur uttered Dr. Ghose's name, some voices were heard in the body of the hall shouting "No, no"

and the shouting was kept up for some time. The proposer, however, somehow managed to struggle through his speech; and the Chairman then called upon Babu Surendranath Banerjee to second the proposition. As soon, however, as he began his speech —before he had finished even in his first sentence—a small section of the delegates began an uproar from their seats with the object of preventing Mr. Banerjee from speaking. The Chairman repeatedly appealed for order, but no heed was paid. Every time Mr. Banerjee attempted to go on with his speech he was met by disorderly shouts. It was clear that rowdyism had been determined upon to bring the proceedings to a standstill, and the whole demonstrations seemed to have been pre-arranged. Finding it impossible to enforce order, the Chairman warned the House that unless the uproar subsided at once, he would be obliged to suspend the sitting of the Congress The hostile demonstration, however, continued and the Chairman at last suspended the sitting for the day.

The Congress again met to-day at 1 P.M., due notice of the meeting having been sent round. As the President-elect was being escorted in procession through the Hall to the platform, an overwhelming majority of the delegates present greeted him with a most enthusiastic welcome, thereby showing how thoroughly they disapproved the organised disorder of yesterday. As this procession was entering the Pandal a small slip of paper written in pencil and bearing Mr. B. G. Tilak's signature was put by a volunteer into the hands of Mr. Malvi, the Chairman of the Reception Committee. It was a notice to the Chairman that after Mr. Banerjee's speech, seconding the proposition about the President was concluded, Mr. Tilak wanted to move "an amendment for an adjournment of the Congress." The Chairman considered a notice of adjournment at that stage to be irregular and out of order. The proceedings were then resumed at the point at which thay had been interrupted yesterday, and Mr. Surendranath Banerjee was called upon to conclude his speech. Mr Banerjee having done this, the Chairman called upon Pandit Motilal Nehru of Allahabad to support the motion. The Pandit supported it in a brief speech and then the Chairman put the motion to the vote. An overwhelming majority of the delegates signified their assent by crying "All, all" and a small minority shouted "No, no." The Chairman thereupon declared the motion carried and the Hon. Dr. Ghose was installed in the Presidential chair amidst loud and prolonged applause. While the applause was going on, and as Dr. Ghose rose to begin his address, Mr. Tilak came upon the platform and stood in front of the President. He urged that as he had given notice of an "amendment to the Presidential election," he should be permitted to move his amendment.

Thereupon, it was pointed out to him by Mr. Malvi, the Chairman of the Reception Committee that his notice was not for "an amendment to the Presidential election," but it was for "an adjournment of the Congress," which notice he had considered to be irregular and out of order at that stage; and that the President having been duly installed in the chair no amendment about his election could be then moved. Mr. Tilak then turned to the President and began arguing with him. Dr. Ghose in his turn, stated how matters stood and ruled that this request to move an amendment about the election could not be entertained. Mr. Tilak thereupon said, "I will not submit to this. I will now appeal from the President to the delegates." In the meantime an uproar had already been commenced by some of his followers, and the President who tried to read his address could not be heard even by those who were seated next to him. Mr. Tilak with his back to the President, kept shouting that he insisted on moving his amendment and he would not allow the proceedings to go on. The President repeatedly appealed to him to be satisfied with his protest and to resume his seat. Mr. Tilak kept on shouting frantically, exclaiming that he would not go back to his seat unless he was " bodily removed." This persistent defiance of the authority of the chair provoked a hostile demonstration against Mr. Tilak himself and for some time, nothing but loud cries of "Shame, shame" could be heard in the Pandal. It had been noticed, that when Mr. Tilak was making his way to the platform some of his followers were also trying to force themselves through the volunteers to the platform with sticks in their hands. All attempts on the President's part either to proceed with the reading of his address or to persuade Mr. Tilak to resume his seat having failed, and a general movement among Mr. Tilak's followers to rush the platform with sticks in their hands being noticed, the President, for the last time, called upon Mr. Tilak to withdraw and formally announced to the assembly that he had ruled and he still ruled Mr. Tilak out of order and he called upon him to resume his seat. Mr. Tilak refused to obey and at this time a shoe hurled from the body of the Hall, struck both Sir Pherozeshah Mehta and Mr. Surendranath Banerjee who were sitting side by side. Chairs were also hurled towards the platform and it was seen that Mr. Tilak's followers who were brandishing their sticks wildly were trying to rush the platform which other delegates were endeavouring to prevent. It should be stated here that some of the delegates were so exasperated by Mr. Tilak's conduct that they repeatedly asked for permission to eject him bodily from the hall; but this permission was steadily refused. The President, finding that the disorder went on growing and that he had no other course open to him, declared the session of the 23rd Indian National Congress suspended *sine die*. After the

lady-delegates present on the platform had been escorted to the tents outside, the other delegates began with difficulty to disperse, but the disorder, having grown wilder, the Police eventually came in and ordered the Hall to be cleared."

The heavy Deccan shoe which hit Sir Pherozeshah Mehta and Mr. Surendranath Banerjee may be still in the possession of the latter, and if its fellow could be found it might well have been preserved by the former also, and both might have left them either as a trophy or as a memento from their countrymen for their lifelong services to the country. On the evening of the 26th the bulk of the Bengal delegates issued a manifesto protesting against the proceedings of the day and the insult so gratuitously offered to Mr. Banerjee; while the leading delegates from all the provinces belonging to the moderate camp issued an appeal to all the delegates imploring them to use their influence to effect a settlement and avert a catastrophe. But all was in vain; the Congress was broken up. Statements and counter-statements were subsequently issued by both sides each presenting its own view of the case, for a better understanding and fair judgment on the merits of which all these papers are published in an appendix.

On the evening of the 27th after the Congress was suspended *sine die*, the leading delegates met and discussed the situation, and on the 28th nearly 900 of the delegates in the presence of a large number of visitors, who had been greatly excited over the disorderly proceedings of the previous day, again met in the Congress pavilion and adopted a manifesto calling upon the country to subscribe to an article and revive the Congress under convention. A committee was formed

to frame a well-defined constitution for the Congress and it was decided that this committee should meet at Allahabad in April next.)) After this a few speeches were made by some of the prominent speakers present for the satisfaction of the Surat people and with a view to alleviate to some extent the grievous disappointment and mortification of the Reception Committee who had worked so hard and incurred so much expense for the session ; but no business of the Congress was or could be transacted and the meeting dispersed in solemn silence as on a mournful occasion.))

Thus ended the Twenty-Third Session of the Indian National Congress which had promised to be one of the most brilliant sessions of the National Assembly.)) The Anglo-Indian Press of the time while generally deploring the incident could ill-disguise its secret satisfaction at the threatened collapse of the national movement. One paper used the incident as a most powerful argument, as it thought, for its invincible contention, that the Indians were unfit for representative institutions and that if the Indian Legislative Councils were made elective they would soon be converted into so many bear-gardens, conveniently forgetting of course that even graver incidents not infrequently occurred in the British House of Commons and French Chamber of Deputies, although these two were the highest exponents of democratic evolution in modern European civilization. The great Liberal organ of the *London Daily News*, however, with its characteristic firmness and frankness observed that it " hoped that the fiasco at Surat may do good, and that the failure of the Moderates was due to the slow

pace and grudging scope of British reforms," and it urged the "adoption of a policy of restoring faith in British wisdom and justice." In closing this lamentable incident it should however be remarked, whether it is very material or not, that there seemed to have arisen considerable *bona-fide* misapprehension either on the one side or the other as regards the actual purport of Mr. Tilak's missing slip to the Chairman of the Reception Committee, and that however deplorable the action of the rowdies was and however mistaken Mr. Tilak may have been in assuming the attitude, which he ultimately did assume on the platform, it is hardly conceivable that a man of Bal Gangadhar Tilak's position and patriotism could have knowingly and willingly associated himself with any plan of action calculated to wreck the Congress. Whatever may have been his actual share in the business Mr. Tilak has since paid heavier penalties for his courage of conviction and undergone severer trials and tribulations for his rare freedom of thought and expression, and it is very much to be hoped that his services to the country will not be lost for ever.

THE CONVENTION AND AFTER.

Agreeably to decision arrived at Surat, over a hundred delegates from the different provinces met at Allahabad in April 1908, and at two long sittings held in the Town-Hall of that city on the 18th and 19th April, discussed and settled a constitution for the Congress and passed a set of rules and regulations for its management. The object as set forth in the constitution was commonly known as the inviolable creed of the Indian National Congress to which every member was required uncondi-

tionally to subscribe before he could take his seat in the assembly. It may be here remarked that the Bengal delegates, numbering no less than 38, supported by a few delegates from the other provinces, strongly urged that the Rules and Regulations so passed by the Convention Committee should be submitted to a whole house of the Congress at the next session. The proposal, however, did not recommend itself to the majority of the Committee.

The first Congress under the Convention was held at Madras in December 1908 with Dr. Rash Behary Ghose as its president and under the happy auspices of Lord Morley's Reform scheme. How sad it is to contemplate that if these reforms had been inaugurated one year earlier the deplorable split among the Nationalists, nor the yet more deplorable consequences which have since flowed from it, might have happened. Born at Bombay and buried at Surat, the Congress attained its resurrection at Madras, purged and purified through years of persecutions, trials and tribulations, it rose from its grave in triumph vindicating the truth of its gospel and restoring public hope and confidence in the ultimate success of its mission. It was a red-letter day in the history of the country when after twenty-two years of patient and persistent knocking, the barred gate was at last opened unto the people. Though attended only by the conventionists, the Session of 1908 was a most enthusiastic one, at which nearly all the veterans of the Congress were present. The masterly address of the learned president enlivened by his forensic skill and flashes of caustic good humour, no less than by its

manly dignity and incisive arguments, presented a most graphic account of the origin and character of the prevailing unrest which at the time engrossed the attention of the Government and the public. The Madras Congress of 1908 was recorded as the 23rd Congress, the people having like Alexander Selkirk in crossing the burning Equator lost a day in their political almanac. Although the Bengal proposal was rejected by the Convention Committee, the Rules and Regulations passed by it were formally laid on the table of the Congress of 1908 and duly adopted at the Calcutta Congress of 1911, whereupon Mr. A. Rasul, than whom a more ardent lover of his country's cause was scarcely to be found on either side of the Nationalist party, with a few others rejoined the Congress. These Rules and Regulations with certain amendments were again, submitted to and re-affirmed by the Bankipore Congress of 1912 ; but the rest of the separatists have still held out although upon what reasonable ground it is difficult to appreciate.*

In 1909 Lord Morley's reform of the Legislative Councils came into operation and the Hon'ble Mr. S. P. Sinha was appointed as the first Indian member of the Viceroy's Executive Council and the Right Honourable Mr. Ameer Ali as a member of the Privy Council ; but the Congress while fully appreciating these liberal measures of reform had the misfortune to enter its emphatic protest against the Council Regulations which in a large measure neutralized the effects of these wholesome changes. In the following year

* The Nationalists have since joined the Congress.

Sir William Wedderburn, who came out for a second time as President of the Congress, made a vigorous effort for a *rapprochement* between the Mahomedans and the other communities so fully represented in the Congress, and long and earnest were the debates which took place in Committees on the Council Regulations in course of which prominent Mahomedan leaders frankly admitted the unfair and disintegrating tendencies of the regulations and the anomalous distinctions introduced by them in the composition of the Councils. The Congress of 1911 witnessed a complete change in the political atmosphere of the country. The King personally appeared on the scene, modified the Partition of Bengal and sounded the watchword of hope and contentment throughout the country. The long-deferred policy of conciliation was at last substituted for the policy of repression which had been tried for seven long years and found wanting. With the dawn of the fresh bright morning, the great Mahomedan community also awoke to a consciousness of their situation, and in 1912 the Moslem League under the guidance of that distinguished and patriotic Mahomedan leader Sir Ibrahim Rahimtullah, openly accepted the Congress ideal and the Congress programme for the realization of the inter-dependent, inter-woven, and inseparable destinies of the diverse communities owing allegiance to a common Mother-land. The Congress this year was appropriately held under the guidance of another patriotic Mahomedan leader in the new Province of Behar, where the Hindus and Mahomedans had lived for generations in perfect peace, amity and concord, and it laid the foundation

for the re-union of the two great communities which was materially advanced twelve months later in the rising capital of Guzerat under the presidency of Nawab Syed Mahomed of Madras.

Upon a careful examination of the political situation of the country during the last six or seven years it will appear that the Surat incident marks a turning point in the history of the Indian National Congress. It has given a definite shape and form to that movement and marked out a well-defined course of action for the Indian Nationalist. It has also dispelled some of the crudest and most fantastic misconceptions with which its aims and objects were shrouded at the hands of its critics ever since its birth. If it has to some extent thinned the ranks of the Nationalists, it has, on the other hand, strengthened the movement by laying its foundation upon a sure concrete basis and by investing it with the unassailable character of a constitutional organization completely divested of all wild fancies and feverish excitements of impatient idealism.)) Every great movement has its ups and downs, its successes as well as sit reverses. All evolutions in human society are marked by a 'continuous struggle between divergent currents of thought and action, and a virile people ought only to gain and not lose by occasional differences of opinion in its rank, when such differences are inspired not by any sordid motive, but by a common impulse towards its general advancement. In England the political field is held by a number of factions arrayed in hostile camps and representing different shades of opinion and interest. These divergent forces at times seem to shatter the

constitution, but in reality they serve only to strengthen it. The Tories and the Whigs, the Liberals and the Conservatives, the Radicals and the Unionists, and the Labourites and the Socialists are all but the diverse manifestations of two grand evolutionary forces tending towards the maintenance of an equilibrium which is so essential to the growth and preservation of the entire system. If one of these two main opposing forces were to be either destroyed or removed, the other would fly off at a tangent leading either to anarchy or despotism. No honest differences of opinion in politics can, therefore, be either unwelcome or undesirable, provided they are all constructive and not destructive in their tendencies and are sincerely prompted by a healthy patriotic impulse for the common good of the community. If the separatists at Surat had, instead of attempting to wreck the Congress, started a counter organization with a definite policy and programme, they might well have established their position either as progressives or conservatives in Indian politics; and if even after the regrettable incident they had openly and earnestly placed a legitimate scheme before the country instead of sulkily retiring to their tents and dissociating themselves from all practical politics, they would not have been charged with committing "political suicide," and they could have in all probability gained and not lost by their opposition. Healthy opposition is the highest stimulant of political life, and if both parties to a question can honestly carry on their propaganda beyond the range of mere destructive criticism, the direct result of such contests can only

tend towards the invigoration of both and the ultimate attainment of their common object.

Upon the Reform of the Councils the force of reactionary policy was supposed to have spent itself, and it was confidently hoped, that the tide would now roll back removing one by one some, if not all, of the ugly stains which that policy had engraved on the administration as well as on the national character, healing the wounds it had inflicted upon the public mind and restoring peace and confidence in the future administration of the country. But here again the people were doomed to considerable disappointment. Lord Morley's reform was no doubt a substantial measure of improvement, though by an irony of fate the Rules and Regulations framed by the Government in this country considerably neutralized its effects and largely frustrated its objects by providing watertight compartments for the Councils, unfair distribution of seats, differential treatment of classes and communities tending towards a disintegration of the national units and by placing the educated community which had fought for the reform under considerable disadvantage. People were, therefore, not wanting who openly indulged in the belief, that when the long discussion over the reform of the Councils was nearing its conclusion and a change in the constitution could no longer be deferred, the bureaucracy at first attempted to divert it by certain fantastic proposals for the establishment of Advisory Councils of Nobles and Princes to the practical exclusion of the People; but when this idea of creating an irresponsible House of Lords without a representative House of

Commons for the Indian administration was stoutly opposed by the people and a Liberal Government was found ill-disposed to repeat a blunder in India which they were bent upon rectifying in the constitution at Home, that bureaucracy apparently summoned all the resources of its ingenuity to devise means for the maintenance of its own threatened prestige, for accentuating racial differences by dangling the bait of communal representation before certain classes and above all for avenging themselves upon those who were primarily responsible for these disagreeable changes of far-reaching consequences. There was no doubt the other side of the shield; but in their positive distrust the people were ill-disposed to turn to it. Lord Minto succeeded to a legacy of serious troubles left him by his predecessor, and though his administration was marked by a series of repressive and retrograde measures, it must be admitted that he had to deal with a situation of enormous difficulties for which he was hardly responsible, except for the extreme remedies with which he was ill-advised to combat it. The violent dismemberment of Bengal and the other reactionary measures of Lord Curzon still rankled in the heart of the people who were goaded to desperation under the relentless operation of a number of repressive laws, recklessly driving discontent underground, when the hydra-headed monster of anarchism at last reared its grim head in a country where its existence was wholly unknown and unsuspected. The hammering lieutenant, whom the real author of this ugly development had left in charge of the new province and whose unhappy allusion to his "two wives" disgusted the Hindus and Mahomedans alike,

went on with fad after fad until Lord Minto was compelled to take him up in hand and send him away bag and baggage to England. But even Lord Minto ultimately succumbed to the irresistible influence of the bureaucracy and in an evil hour lent his sanction to the forging of the most indiscriminate and drastic measures for the treatment of the situation. Conciliation was regarded as a sign of weakness although the fear of being regarded as weak was perhaps a much greater weakness, and the situation without being in the least improved began to grow from bad to worse. During this period the Congress was driven to a position very nearly between the devil and the deep sea. On the one hand there were the forces of disorder which very much weakened its position and hampered its work, while on the other an unrelenting bureaucracy found ample opportunities of attacking it with redoubled violence and fury. The Congress, however, went on urging its demands with calmness and moderation laying particular stress on the adoption of a policy of conciliation. While strongly denouncing lawlessness, it clearly pointed out that conciliation and not repression was the true remedy for the situation. But the Government turned a deaf ear to its advice and went on forging one after another a series of repressive measures muzzling the press, closing the platforms and placing even the colleges and schools under surveillance. In an apparent display of its undisputed power and strength the Government betrayed in no small degree the nervousness from which it suffered. The plainest suggestions for peace were regarded with suspicion and the most friendly warnings

were mistaken for covert threats. In 1910 the vexed question of Separation of Judicial and Executive functions, which was at the root of most of the troubles, was taken up for decision and it was indeed understood that a despatch was also sent to the Secretary of State with definite proposals on the subject. But again a nervous bureaucracy stood in the way and taking advantage of the alleged disturbed state of the country succeeded in shelving the measure in the India Office. All measures of progress were stopped, the spirit of repression was rampant and even the genius of British justice seemed for a time to stand in a state of suspended animation. The advent of a strong Chief Justice for the High Court of Judicature at Fort William in Bengal at this juncture was the only redeeming feature of the desperate situation. If Lord Morley has established his claim to the lasting gratitude of India by his reform of the Indian Legislative Councils, he will also be long remembered for his most judicious appointment of Sir Lawrence Jenkins at the head of the highest tribunal in the most disturbed province at this critical time. The chartered High Courts in India form the only palladium for the protection of the rights and liberties of the Indian people and constitute the sole counterpoise to an absolute, autocratic rule in the country. But even the High Courts, being only the expounders and not the framers of the law, were hardly able to maintain the balance in a position where the Legislature was practically a machinery in the hands of the executive to decree and register the fiats of a bureaucratic administration. Thus matters went on from bad to worse until 1911

when the King, who in a single previous visit to this country appeared to have studied the people far more accurately than his responsible officers during the long tenure of their service, at last personally appeared on the scene and with the single stroke of a policy of conciliation, for which the Congress had so long vainly pleaded, dispelled all the figments of sedition and disloyalty and restored peace and order, pouring oil upon troubled waters and reviving faith and confidence in British justice.

Henceforth the Congress found itself upon a much firmer ground and in a more secure position. The royal message of good-will and confidence which the Congress of 1911 received in return for its loyal welcome to His Majesty set as it were a royal sanction to its perfectly legitimate character and constitution; while the outburst of stupendous ovations which spontaneously greeted the royal progress throughout the country at once hushed the insensate cry of sedition into silence. Fortunately also there was a strong and far-sighted statesman at the head of the Indian Government at this time. Lord Hardinge, who was primarily responsible for the modification of the Partition of Benal, firmly took the bull by its horns, and impressed upon the bureaucracy that despite its long legend of infallibility and inviolable prestige, its orthodox practices and tactics of mutual admiration and whitewashing must have a limit prescribed to them. The firmness with which he was understood to have handled the local authorities in connection with a serious riot in course of which the metropolis of the Empire was disgracefully allowed for

three days to be in the hands of an organized mob before the eyes of the ambassadors of the civilized world, and which was supposed to have compelled another bureaucrat to retire before his time, and the bold magnanimity and keensighted statesmanship with which he rectified the bunglings of an incompetent Executive in a most regrettable dispute over a mosque in defence of which half-a-dozen unarmed people lost their lives, clearly marked him as the strongest of Viceroys who had come to rule India in recent years ; while the extraordinary fortitude with which he bore a most dastardly attempt on his own life, which under another Viceroy since Lord Ripon would undoubtedly have set in motion the most drastic of punitive measures, and the calm and self-sacrificing spirit with which he faced the situation without budging an inch from the declared policy of trust and confidence in the people, filled the country with a thrill of gratitude and admiration unparalleled in the history of British rule in India since the dark days of the Mutiny of 1857.

In higher politics Lord Hardinge's famous despatch of August 1911 contained the first recognition of the ultimate aim of the Congress and foreshadowed the future destiny of India in the evolution of her national existence. As a preliminary step towards the solution of that problem, Lord Hardinge took up the thorny question of the position of Indians in the colonies of Great Britain. The question had engaged the attention of the Congress ever since 1894 when delegates from Natal and other South African colonies first joined the national assembly and explained the barbarous treatment accorded to the

Indian settlers in South Africa. The Government of England, although it referred to the Indian question as one of the grounds justifying the Boer War, again relapsed into its normal apathy and indifference when that war was ended and the Union Government established. The Indians in South Africa were not only not allowed the ordinary rights of citizenship, but were actually treated as helots burdened with disabilities and penalties of the most outrageous description, while the colonists themselves were free to emigrate to India and enjoy all the rights of British citizenship in this country. The question was at last brought to a head by a resolution moved by Mr. Gokhale in the Supreme Council and which was accepted by the Government of Lord Hardinge restricting Indian Emigration to South Africa. But the Union Government, in its utter disregard for all consideration of justice and fairness, went on forging the most humiliating and exasperating conditions against the Indian settlers whose services they could not dispense with, but whose personal rights and liberties they would neither recognize nor respect beyond those of hewers of wood and drawers of water. One brave Indian like Hampden at last rose against this selfish confederacy of burghers whom a conquering nation had in its generosity granted an autonomus Government over a territory four times the size of their original country. Mr. Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi, assisted by a band of noble-minded Englishmen among whom Mr. Polak was the most noted, organized a fierce passive resistance in course of which hundreds of men and women with dauntless courage suffered incarceration rather than submit to the indig-

nities of legalised slavery in which even the sacred ties of marriage rights were not respected. In this struggle Lord Hardinge, as the responsible protector of the Indian people, threw the whole weight of his authority with the resisters and by his firmness, no less than by his tactful intervention, in the face of not a little hostile criticism even in England, at last succeeded towards the beginning of 1914 in bringing the question of the South African imbroglio to a temporary solution and thus paving the way to a final adjustment of the Indian question in all the British colonies on the basis of perfect reciprocity. It undoubtedly marks an important landmark in the evolution of Indian National Life.

CHAPTER XII.

THE WORK IN ENGLAND.

It has already been stated that early in 1885 Mr. Hume visited England and in consultation with Mr. Reid, Mr. John Bright and other parliamentary friends of India arranged for a Congress propaganda in England. The first step towards the establishment of a Congress organisation in England was taken by Mr. Dadabhai Naoroji who volunteered to act as a Congress agent before the British public. But nothing important was done until 1888 when Mr. W. C. Bonnerjee and Mr. Eardley Norton joined Mr. Dadabhai and succeeded in enlisting the sympathies of the great labour leader, Mr. Charles Bradlaugh, who with the consent

of his constituency of Northampton openly assumed the title of " Member for India." A British Committee of the Indian National Congress was established in July, 1889, and it was confirmed by the Congress of that year held at Bombay which voted Rs. 45,000 for its maintenance. Now the chief difficulty in the successful working of the Committee lay in the Council of the Secretary of State which, composed mainly of the veterans of the Indian Civil Service, always presented a roseate view of Indian affairs in the House of Commons and thus prevented the British Committee from obtaining a fair hearing either in the House or from the British public. This led to the organisation of an Indian Parliamentary Committee in 1893 chiefly through the exertions of Sir William Wedderburn and Mr. W. S. Caine both of whom were members of Parliament at the time. The apathy and indifference of the authorities in India who had not evinced the slightest inclination within a period of nine years towards meeting even in a small degree the crying demands of the people, or for removing any of their long-standing grievances, fully convinced the leaders of the movement that there was no hope of success in India unless pressure could be brought to bear upon the Indian Government by the British public and the British Parliament. Mr. Hume accordingly finally left India in 1894 and threw himself heart and soul into the working of the British Committee of the Congress and the India Parliamentary Committee in the House of Commons. Towards the close of the session no less than 154 members of the House joined the Indian

Parliamentary Committee and for a time the star of India seemed to be in the ascendant. The result was at once manifest. With the support of this formidable array of members, among whom were included men like Messrs. Jacob Bright, W.S. Caine, John Ellis, W. A. Hunter, Swift MacNeil, Herbert Paul, C. E. Schwann, Herbert Roberts, R. T. Reid, Samuel Smith, Sir Wilfred Lawson, Sir William Wedderburn and many other friends of India, the British Committee of the Congress was able in 1894 to address Sir Henry Fowler, then Secretary of State for India, pressing for a searching enquiry into Mr. Westland's Budgets under the weak Viceroyalty of Lord Elgin. This led to the famous debate in Parliament which resulted in Mr. Dadabhai Naoroji's motion for a Parliamentary Enquiry and eventually obliged Sir Henry Fowler to appoint a Royal Commission, known as the Welby Commission, on Indian Expenditure. Then for nearly nine years the Conservatives were in power and the Indian Parliamentary Party gradually thinned away. At the General Election of 1906, the Liberals again came into power and Sir William Wedderburn, who has been the most steadfast moving spirit of the Congress movement in England, lost no time in resuscitating the Indian Parliamentary Committee under the leadership of Mr. Leonard (afterwards Lord) Courtney. Nearly 200 members of the House joined the Committee, and among the new members there were distinguished men and sincere friends of India like Sir Henry Cotton, Sir Charles Dike, Dr. Rutherford, Mr. Ramsay Macdonald and many others. The invaluable services which they rendered

particularly at a most trying and troublous situation are all recorded in the Parliamentary proceedings of the period and are well-known to the Indian public. Though the Liberals are still in power, the Indian Parliamentary Party gradually became very much weakened by the retirement from the House of devoted and ardent workers like Sir Henry Cotton, Sir William Wedderburn and Mr. Dadabhai Naoroji, and by the death of powerful friends like Charles Bradlaugh, W. S. Caine, Schwann, John Bright, Sir Charles Dike and Lord Ripon, and has now practically ceased to exist.

In England no reform, whether social, economic or political, can be achieved without the aid of the Press which has thus come to be recognised, along with the two Houses of Parliament, the Church and the Sovereign, as the Fifth Power of the State. In the earlier stages of the Congress the British public were found densely ignorant of the real state of things in India, while the natural pride, so common even in individuals, which makes people loath to believe in their own shortcomings, often prevented even enlightened Englishmen from easily crediting any story of injustice or wrong perpetrated by their accredited agents ten thousand miles away and who were besides invariably supported by the minister in charge with a council mostly composed of retired Anglo-Indian fossils whom it may be no disrespect to describe as King Arthur's Knights of the Round Table. An incident fully illustrating this ignorance, apathy and indifference of the ordinary British public was not long ago quoted in an English paper. Two average Englishmen, says the paper, were one day travel-

ling in a railway carriage. It was the day following the death of Lord Northbrook, late Viceroy and Governor-General of India. One of them looking through the news columns of the paper in his hand quietly asked, "Who is this feller Lord Northbrook that snipped off yesterday?" "Who knows," replied his equally indifferent companion, "may be some relation of Lord Cromer." Whether Lord Northbrook was a relation of Lord Cromer, or Lord Cromer was a relation of Lord Northbrook, the pathetic humour of this simple incident was quite characteristic of the prevailing temper and attitude of the British public in general towards Indian affairs. To acquaint that public, who are the virtual makers of the House of Commons and of the Ministers of the Crown, with the actual state and condition of Indian administration was the first and foremost duty of the national party in this country. It was early recognised that the battle of India must be fought, if it has to be fought, on British soil, and in that fight the British Press must be our ally to guide and direct the operations if not actually to deliver the frontal attack. The journal *India* was accordingly started by the British Committee in 1890 for a correct and faithful statement of India's complaints and with a view to popularise Indian thoughts and aspirations in England, as also to interest the British public generally on Indian questions. It was at first conducted by Mr. William Digby and is now edited by Mr. H. E. A. Cotton, that worthy son of a worthy father who ever since his return home has been closely following in the footsteps of his illustrious parents in watching and serving the interests

of India. The Cottons have for three generations steadfastly served India and loved her devotedly, as only few Englishmen have done, through good report and evil report and often at no small personal sacrifice. It is a great pity that so few people in this country have even now fully realised the importance and necessity of maintaining the British Committee and the journal *India* in an efficient condition. True it is that a lot of money has been spent upon them and there may or may not be any just ground for the disappointment felt in some quarters at the present working of these agencies. But it was clearly understood at the very outset that it was an uphill work and the country must be prepared to make enormous sacrifices both in money as well as in patience for it. Then it would be quite unfair to deny that both the Committee and the paper have advanced the Congress cause a good deal in England. It must be gratefully acknowledged that all the prominent men in the British political field and a large number of influential men outside Parliament now know more and discuss more seriously about the Indian polity, and India is no longer that *Terra Incognita*, that region of romance and "barbaric gold," which it used to be even fifty years ago; nor is England so profoundly apathetic to-day towards the Indian administration as she was even twenty years before. India has now become an important factor in the policy of the Imperial Government, and she looms very much larger in the eyes of British statesmen on either side of both the Houses. Indian grievances, which sometimes fail to attract the

attention even of the local administrations, do now go seldom unnoticed in the House of Commons. An act of oppression in a tea-garden, a gross insult offered to an Indian gentleman in a railway carriage, the mal-practices of the police and the bunglings of the Executive, though these scarcely find a remedy, now all find their way into Parliament, and indirectly exercise a chastening influence upon the Indian administration. The questions of the separation of Judicial from Executive functions, of simultaneous examinations for the Civil Services, of the expansion of the Councils and of the admission of the children of the soil into the administration of the country, as well as the other reforms formulated by the Congress, are now all nearly as familiar to the enlightened British public as they are in this country. India now finds greater notice in the British Press and there is now a marked disposition on the part at least of the thinking portion of the British public to know more of the country which really constitutes the British Empire. All this has been the work of the British Committee and its organ *India*.

After years of stress and storm the tide seems to have at last set in for India, and it would be not only deplorable, but simply disastrous, if Indians should at this opportune moment give up their oars and cry out in despair, that they have worked at them hard and long and can now work no more. If they give up now the agencies which have been established at such immense sacrifice, they simply lose the money they have spent as well as the opportunities which they have created. Even in ordinary life no substantial business

can be carried on without suitable and properly equipped agencies at all important centres and particularly without necessary advertisements and reliable quotations of its principal market. There may be occasional lapses and failures of such agencies; but no prudent man can dispense with them unless he means to close his business and go into voluntary liquidation. The Moslem League is quite a recent case in point. If it had not its London Branch, the Mahomedan community in India could hardly have made one-tenth of the progress it has made during the last few years. If the British Committee of the Congress is no longer as active as it used to be at one time, the true remedy lies not in either abolishing or starving it, but in improving or, if necessary, in reconstructing it and galvanising it into fresh life again. These remedial measures may not be altogether free from practical difficulties; but they have to be boldly faced, discussed and solved if the labours of a generation are not to be thrown away in a fit of vexation or distemper.

People are not wanting who, in their earnest desire to hurry up, simply retard progress. With them the work of the Congress in England though a foreign agency is practically at an end and other means should be devised to give it a fresh start. It is vaguely urged that we must stand on our own legs. Standing on one's own legs is undoubtedly a counsel of perfection, provided it is not used as a pretext for sitting altogether idle. Besides, until the legs are sufficiently strong it would not do to throw away the crutch because it fails to help us in running. Noble things are better said

than done. and nothing seems easier than to talk of putting in "fresh blood" in a long-standing public institution; but it ought to be remembered, that true blood, whether fresh or old, is always thicker than water and that there can hardly be enough of superfluous blood to be gratuitously spared for us in an alien country and by an alien people ten thousand miles away. The idea of placing the management of the British Committee and of the paper *India* in "Indian hands" may be refreshing; but let us first arrange for the *hands* and then there will be enough time for arranging the *management*. There was not perhaps an abler or more generous "Indian hand" than Mr. W. C. Bonnerjee practically settled in England, or one who has more freely spent his blood as well as his purse in the Congress cause, and yet he did not feel himself equal to the task of directly managing either branch of the agency. As to the suggestion made in certain strange quarters for managing the Committee or editing the paper *India* either from Calcutta or Bombay—well, that is an idea which does not strike very forcibly the average Indian intellect however tempting to its ambition it may be. If the British Committee were to be discarded like an opera house that fails to produce fresh sensations every night, or the organ *India* either discontinued or supplanted by a "live paper" because it has yet failed to fit up an Argonautic expedition in search of the "golden fleece," it is very much to be doubted if the Indian Nationalist will ever achieve any more progress than present the same texture every day and count his time like the faithful Penelope unraveling by night

what is woven by day. The work of destruction is always much easier than the process of construction and the people are not wanting who in the name of the one contribute simply to the other. It is want of proper nourishment more than any organic disease that often causes anæmic condition in a system. The Congress agencies seem to be all right. Give them sufficient food and exercise, or to be more explicit, put sufficient money into their pockets, and the necessary *blood* will come of itself.

DEPUTATIONS TO ENGLAND.

Another means adopted by the Congress for popularising its propaganda in England and acquainting the British public with the wants and wishes of the Indian people was by sending from time to time deputations of competent men to England. The earliest of such deputations, since the time of Rajah Rammohan Roy, was that sent under the auspices of the Indian National Union in 1885. It was composed of three of the ablest public men of the time, *viz* :—Mr. Monomohan Ghose of Bengal, Mr. Ganesh Narayan Chandavarkar of Bombay and Mr. Sivalaya Ramaswami Mudaliar of Madras. They formed as it were the advance guard of the Congress mission. The first Deputation formally appointed by the Congress was in 1889 and it was composed of Mr. George Yule, Mr. A. O. Hume, Mr. J. Adam, Mr. Eardley Norton, Mr. Pherozeshah Mehta, Mr. Surendranath Banerjee, Mr. Monomohan Ghose, Mr. Sharfuddin, Mr. R. N. Mudholkar and Mr. W. C. Bonnerjee. The work done by this deputation was

simply invaluable; for while Messrs. Bonnerjee, and Norton succeeded in thoroughly establishing the Congress agency, Mr. Surendranath Banerjee made a profound impression upon the mind of the British public by his able and eloquent exposition of the Congress propaganda. It was on this occasion that Mr. Hume saw Mr. Gladstone and urged him to support Mr. Bradlaugh's India Bill, when the great Commoner was reported to have said, "I wish your father were present to-day." Mr. Bradlaugh's Bill forced the Government to introduce a Bill of their own and the historic speech which Mr. Gladstone made on the occasion of the passing of that Bill is well-known to the public. He asked the Government to construe that half-hearted measure in a liberal spirit and clearly foreshadowed the real reforms that were demanded and which sixteen years later were carried out by his friend and biographer. The next deputation appointed by the Congress was in 1890 and it was composed of Messrs. George Yule, Pherozeshah Mehta, W. C. Bonnerjee, John Adam, Monomohan Ghose, A. O. Hume, Kalicharan Banerjee, Dadabhai Naoroji and D. A. Khare. It should be gratefully recorded that Mr. W. C. Bonnerjee and Mr. Dadabhai Naoroji, both of whom practically settled themselves in England in the service of the country, were among the strongest pillars of the movement, as they were among its original founders, and neither grudged their time, energies or money in the sacred cause to which they had consecrated their lives. In 1889 Mr. D. E. Watcha, Mr. G. K. Gokhale and Mr. Surendranath Banerjee were deputed to give evidence

before the Royal Commission on Expenditure and the remarkable evidence which they gave not only fully justified the confidence reposed in them, but also vindicated the character and weight of the political organization started in India. The next Congress deputation in 1904 consisted of Mr. G. K Gokhale and Mr. Lajpat Rai. Mr. Gokhale was again sent in the following year and on both the occasions he made such an impression as to mark him as one of the foremost politicians in India. For careful study, lucid marshalling of facts and incisive arguments, no less than for his unassuming manners and devotion to duty, Mr. Gokhale stands out a most prominent figure in the Indian political world.)) If Mr. Surendranath Banerjee towers head and shoulder over his colleagues in his stupendous energies and matchless eloquence, Mr. Gokhale* also appears to be unsurpassed in his mastery of facts and close reasoning for which Sir Guy Fleetwood Wilson went so far as to compare him with Mr. Gladstone. But through a strange irony of fate, for which India is not at all responsible, neither of these trusted leaders of the people has yet been found worthy of a place in the bureaucratic administration of the country. The last deputation sent by the Congress was that authorised by the Karachi Congress of 1913. It was composed of Mr. Bhupendra Nath Basu (Bengal), Mr. Sarma (Madras), Messrs. M. A. Jinnah and N. M. Samarth (Bombay), Messrs.

* Since these pages were sent to the press Mr. Gokhale has been cut off in the prime of his life, and both the Government and the country have now come equally to mourn the irreparable loss.

S. Sinha and Mazhar-ul Haque (United Provinces and Behar) and Lala Lajpat Rai (Punjab). In one sense it was a most unfavourable time for an Indian deputation, as the British public were almost distracted over the Irish Home Rule Bill introduced in Parliament and which obliged the King to make an extraordinary step of summoning a conference of all the leading politicians in the country to avert a civil war with which it was threatened; while on the other hand it was a most momentous occasion for India when Lord Crewe introduced in the Upper House a Bill to amend the constitution of the India Council in Whitehall. The extremely unsatisfactory composition of that Council was fully discussed by the first Congress in 1885 which passed a resolution for its absolution in the form in which it stood at the time. Lord Morley, along with his Reform Scheme, considerably liberalized the constitution of the India Council by an informal admission of two Indian members into its composition. Lord Crewe proposed to go a step further by giving a statutory sanction to the Indian element of the Council and by providing a system of nomination for this element out of a panel of forty to be elected by the various Legislative Councils in India.)) It was of course not a measure of perfection, while its proposal for instituting a departmental system of administration by the Council was certainly open to grave objection. But the Bill contained germs of great potentialities and if passed through the Lords might have undergone further improvements in the Commons, and there is an overwhelming body of opinion in this country that there was a great tactical blunder committed in allowing Lord

Curzon and others of his school to be able to lay hold on Indian opinion, of whatever character or complexion, as an additional weapon of attack in their opposition to the proposed legislation. It is to be deeply regretted that in this, as in not a few other cases, India has inadvertently played into the hands of her shrewd adversaries. It is, however, no use crying over split milk. Attempts should now be made to have a Bill introduced in the Commons at an early opportunity to deal with the question. If one thing has been made clearer than another by the failure of Lord Crewe's Bill it is the fact, that there should be some Indian representative in England to work in conjunction with the British Committee, to stimulate British sympathy and to take time by the forelock at every opportunity to further the interests of India at the seat of real power. Such were the works which were at one time done by Messrs. Dadabhai Naoroji and W. C. Bonnerjee and means should be devised to install at least one such Indian representative in London.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE CONGRESS: A NATIONAL MOVEMENT.

For a long time the claim the Congress to be styled a national movement was strenuously, if not quite seriously, disputed by its critics. Some derisively called it a "Bengalee Congress," although the Bengalees had clearly no more hand in it, either in its inception or in its development, than the Parsis,

the Maharattas, or the Madrasis, and the Bengalees would have been simply proud to accept the doubtful compliment paid to them if only it were the barest truth ; others, professing to be a little more catholic dubbed it as a "Hindu Congress," as if the Hindus were altogether a negligible factor in the country and that such a disqualification was sufficient for its disparagement in the estimation of the public and to discredit its weight and importance with the authorities : while the more adroit among these critics denounced it as an organization of the "Educated Minority" in the country, as though it were an established fact, that the recognized political associations in all other civilized countries were, as a rule, composed of their illiterate majority and that where such an element failed an organization, however strong in its moral, intellectual or material equipment, must stand forfeited of all claims to be recognized as a national institution. The truth, however, seems to be, that early exiled from the healthy public life of their own native land, trained in all the ways of a dominant race in a subject country and nurtured in the traditionary legends of their racial superiority, the Anglo-Indian community naturally received a rude shock at the first appearance of the new spirit and taxed all the resources of their ingenuity to nip it in the bud. These captious critics, to whom history apparently furnished no logic of facts, had the catching expression of "microscopic minority" coined for them by a high authority, while they themselves were not slow to invent a few more smart phrases to discredit the movement in this country and prejudice

public opinion in England. No abuse was deemed too strong and no criticism too severe for the condemnation of the new movement whose aims and objects were regarded not only as a threatened invasion of their prescriptive rights and privileges rendered indefeasible by long enjoyment, but also as a serious disturbance of the established order of things permanently sanctioned by custom, usage and tradition of the country. "Dreaming idealists," "impotent sedition-mongers," "self-constituted delegates," "disappointed place-seekers," "pretentious body of irresponsible agitators," and many other elegant phrases of the same description were among the weapons offensive and defensive forged by these critics to dispose of the members of the Congress and to discredit the movement. But if the movement was really as nothing, it is rather difficult to appreciate why so much powder and shot were simply wasted for destroying such a tiny gnat and why such severe attention was paid to a handful of political somnambulists. It was, however, not found possible to sustain these reckless charges for a long time, as quite a different verdict was pronounced at an early stage both here as well as in England establishing the claim of the Congress to represent the enlightened views of the Indian public without distinction of caste or creed, colour or race. It may be perfectly true, that all the communities in the country have not equally distinguished themselves on the Congress platform; but it can hardly be denied that the better minds of every community have been throughout in perfect agreement with its aims and objects and have never dissented from its programme.

It has already been pointed out, that so far back as 1890, when the Congress was but five years old, the Government of Lord Lansdowne recognised that the Congress was regarded as representing the advanced Liberal Party in India as distinguished from the powerful body of conservative opinion ruling the country. Since then Lord Morley, Mr. Justin McCarthy, Sir William Hunter, Sir Charles Dilke, Lord Randolph Churchill, Mr. Herbert (now Lord) Gladstone, Sir Richard Garth and many other distinguished and responsible authorities have from time to time admitted the character of the Congress as a national assembly fairly representative of the Indian people. Speaking in 1890 Sir Charles Dilke said :—

"Argument upon the matter is to be desired, but not invectives, and there is so much reason to think that the Congress movement really represents the cultivated intelligence of the country that those who ridicule it do harm to the imperial interests of Great Britain, bitterly wounding and alienating men who are justified in what they do, who do it in reasonable and cautious form and who ought to be conciliated by being met half-way."

There is the testimony of Mr. Herbert Gladstone who said that :

"The national movement in India, which has taken a purely constitutional and loyal form and which expresses through the Congress the legitimate hopes and requirements of the people, is one with which I sincerely sympathise. I should consider it a high honour in however small a degree to be associated with it."

Sir William Hunter, than whom there is hardly a more experienced Indian authority, observed :

"The Indian National Congress is essentially the child of British rule, the product of our schools and universities. We had created and fostered the aspirations which animated the Congress, and it would be both childish and unwise to refuse now to those aspirations both our sympathy and respectful consideration."

Lord Morley, speaking from his place in the House of Commons as the responsible minister for India, said:—

"I do not say that I agree with all that the Congress desires, but speaking broadly of what I conceive to be at the bottom of the Congress I do not see why any one who takes a cool and steady view of Indian Government should be frightened."

The Right Hon. Sir Richard Garth, K.C., Chief Justice of Bengal, writing in 1895, said:—

"It seems to me that so far from being in any way objectionable, the Congress affords an open, honest and loyal means of making the views and wishes of the most intelligent section of the Indian people known to the Government."

And, above all, His Imperial Majesty George V, was himself pleased to accord his recognition to the Congress by accepting its message of welcome and thanking it for its loyal devotion to the Throne on the occasion of his auspicious visit to India in 1911. It seems unnecessary to multiply further evidence in support of the official as well as the popular verdict in favour of the claim and character of the Congress as a representative institution. It may simply be added for the satisfaction of those who may still continue to be at heart dissatisfied with that verdict, on the ostensible ground of the mass of the population not being in evidence on the Congress platform, that the "microscopic minority" in every country, whether in the East or in the West, have always represented the telescopic majority, and that nowhere have the inarticulate mass of a people spoken except through the mouth of the educated few. Then as regards the old, orthodox and favourite argument of the Anglo-Indian community based upon the assumed differences between the classes and the masses it were