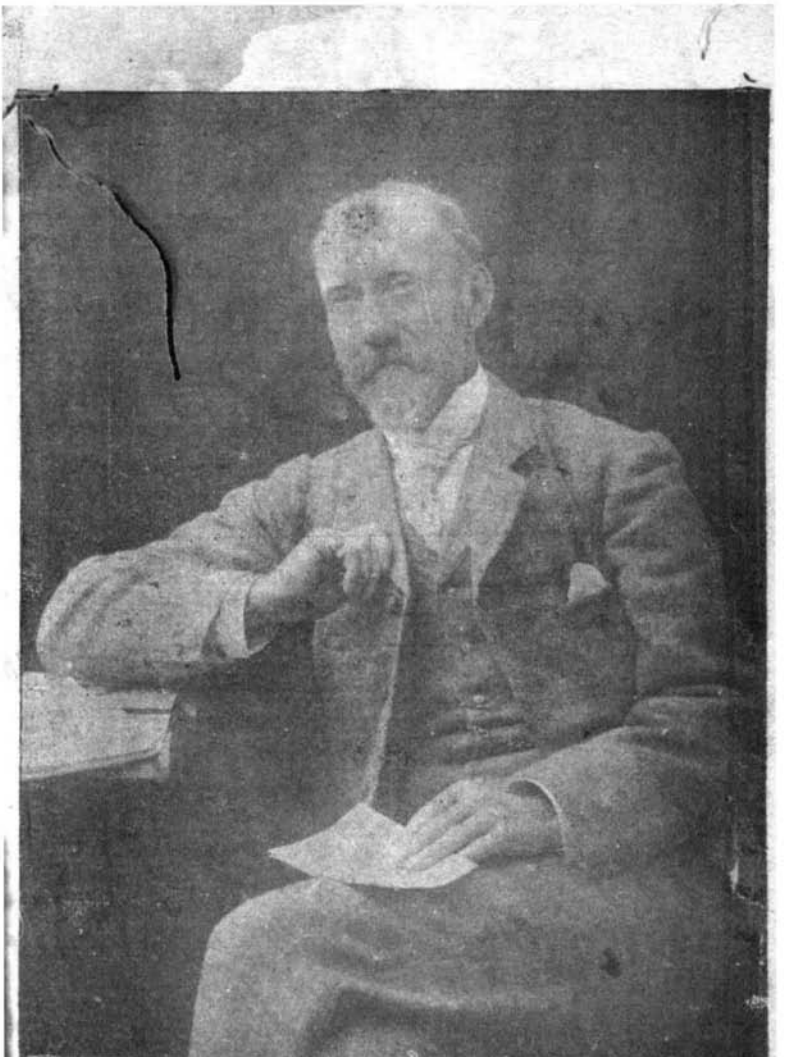


W. W. Woodbridge

PRESIDENT, 1889 & 1910.

GEORGE YULE
PRESIDENT, 1888.

SIR P.M. MEHTA
PRESIDENT, 1890.

well to remember, that even in the seventies of the century that has just closed over us John Bright had to complain that the Parliament of Great Britain was not after all a "transparent mirror of public opinion" and that the Labour party in that Parliament representing the masses of England is only of very recent growth and as yet furnishes but a wholly inadequate representation of its immense working population. It may be no mere disputatious argument to advance, that if the Mother of Parliaments, which in its origin was no more than an assembly of a handful of "wise men," and which even in its later developments was composed of a hereditary aristocracy and a few hundred chosen representatives drawn only from the ranks of advanced enlightened communities could have constitutionally governed for centuries the destinies of the greatest empire in the world, it would hardly be decent to put forward any pretext based upon a question of class interest to dispute the representative character of an advisory political organization without any legal origin or statutory constitution. Nobody contends that the Congress is a "transparent mirror of public opinion" in India ; but if it is not so transparent as the Parliament of Great Britain, or the Chamber of the French Republic, is it really very much more opaque than the Duma of Russia, or even the Reichstag of Germany, as far as reflection of public opinion is concerned? If there has been no objection to the National League representing the cause of Ireland for more than half-a-century, with one of its four divisions in open arms against it, the title of the Indian

National Congress, with only one of its many communities partially standing aside as neutral and passively watching the fight, may not be deemed so extravagant as to form a point in a serious discussion on such general issues as are involved in this great movement. The Congress is not even thirty years old, and if within this short period it has established its claim to be the mouthpiece of the teeming millions of India even in some respects and has never done anything to forfeit their tacit confidence, then nobody need fairly grudge its just and legitimate aspiration to be called a National Assembly.

It is certainly not the essential condition of a national institution that every member or even every community of the nation should be actively associated with it; for if it were so, even the most thoroughly representative of Parliaments would cease to be a national institution. An institution is quite national if it possesses in the main a representative character, embodies the national spirit and is guided by aims and objects of national advancement. It may sometimes fail to be a transparent mirror of public opinion particularly where such opinion is in such a nebulous condition as to be unable to cast a distinct reflection even on the most powerful camera; but it is always expected faithfully to reflect an interest which once it is presented in proper shade and light, at once catches the attention of the public and attracts the national sympathies and energies towards its attainment. In this way national organizations have everywhere preceded national awakening in its widest sense, and sometimes a single individual gifted with extraordinary vision has

revolutionized an entire national life. Nations are not born but made, and the highest evolution of national, like individual, life is attained through a slow and laborious process of organized efforts. Judged by the above test the claim of the Congress to be recognized as a national assembly could hardly be disputed by any but the most perverse critics. If Mr. Disraeli, Lord Hartington, Mr. Joseph Chamberlain, Mr. Balfour and other millionaires could represent the labouring classes of England, because a percentage of them were able to exercise their forced votes in their favour, then surely men like Dadabhai Naoroji, W. C. Bonnerjee, Pherozeshah Mehta, Surendranath Banerjee, Rash Behary Ghose, Kashinath Trimbak Telang, Budruddin Tyabjee, Gopal Krishna Gokhale, Abdul Rasul, Ananda Charlu, Krishnaswami Iyer, Sirdar Dyal Singh, Lajpat Rai, Madan Mohan Malaviya, Muzur-ul-Haque, Hasan Imam and many others, men all born of the people, might well have been depended on to voice forth more faithfully the wants and wishes of the voiceless millions of India than the editors of the *Pioneer*, the *Civil and Military Gazette*, the *Englishman*, the *Statesman* and other birds of passage of nearly the same feather, whatever their pretensions may be in the position which they occupy in the administration of the country.

Among the Indians themselves the Parsis as a community were no doubt for a short time wavering in their attitude; but the great personality of Mr. Dadabhai Naoroji and the firm attitude of men like Sir Pherozeshah Mehta and Mr. Dinshaw Edulji Wacha

settled the question, and that important community bodily cast in their lot with the national movement. The Eurasian community, having its stronghold in Madras, did not fail to realise its true position during the Ilbert Bill controversy and having wisely stood aloof, at least in the Southern Presidency, from that controversy it heartily joined the new movement under the leadership of Messrs. W. S. White, and W. S. Gantz; while Captain Banon from the Punjab, Mr. Howard, the President of the Anglo-Indian and Eurasian Association at Allahabad, Captain Hearsay from Debra-Dun, Mr. Crowley of the firm of Messrs. Crowley & Co., and Mr. George Yule from Bengal with many other Europeans and Eurasians of note from time to time joined and strengthened the rank and file of the organisation.

An artificial and mischievous manœuvre was engineered by a section of the Anglo-Indian Press which with the active support of a shortsighted bureaucracy doted on the mean policy of *Divide-et-impera* and captured the great but backward Mahomedan community who were taught the unworthy tactics of lying in wait for the other communities to draw the chestnuts out of the fire, so that they might comfortably mounch them without burning their fingers in the fire of official displeasure. At the first Congress in 1885 Mr. Rahimtullah Sayani was the only Mahomedan present, and the Anglo-Indian Press of the time complacently remarked that even he did not take any active part in its deliberations. But it would appear from the subsequent presidential addresses of both Mr. Budruddin Tyabji and Mr. Rahimtullah Sayani that they were

heart and soul with the movement from the very beginning. In the Second Congress the number of Mussalman Delegates was 33, while at Madras in 1887 their number rose to 81. At the fourth Congress at Allahabad the Mahomedan Delegates numbered 221 out of a total of 1,248 Delegates. Thus the interest of that great community in the national movement, in spite of the syren song of the Anglo Indian press, was steadily and rapidly increasing. But since the Allahabad Congress, when the attitude of the authorities become more pronounced, the Mahomedans began to secede, and their "approved loyalty", which some silly persons on the other side irreverently called "oilty", was turned into a "valuable asset" by certain designing people.

It is no doubt true, that in the fifth session of the Congress held at Bombay the number, though not the percentage, of Mahomedan Delegates rose higher than at the preceding session at Allahabad. There were 254 Mahomedans out of a total of 1,889 Delegates. But it should be remembered that it was a historic session commonly known as the "Bradlaugh Congress" which, as has been already pointed out, attracted an unusually large number of people, including even officials in secret to see and hear the great champion of democracy, and that a large majority of these Mahomedan Delegates attended from the Bombay Presidency where the Mahomedan community, though numerically smaller, has been until very recently ever more progressive than in the rest of India. It is however worthy of notice that two of the Mahomedan Delegates at this

very Congress, one hailing from the Punjab and the other from the United Provinces made no secret of their racial opposition to the Congress proposal as regards the reform of the Legislative Councils. Besides, the remarkable dearth of Mahomedan Delegates at all subsequent sessions of the Congress, until the last sessions held at Karachi, conclusively proved that the official reporter of 1889 was quite premature in his forecast of growing Mahomedan interest in the national movement. It is doubtless true that advanced Mussalmans like Mr. Abdul Rasul in Bengal and Mr. Comuruddin Tyabji in Bombay not to speak of stalwarts like Messrs. Budruddin Tyabji and Rahimtullah Sayani, never swerved from their allegiance to the national cause; but the bulk of the Moslem community were led astray and successfully kept back for a long time from joining the movement. Several unfortunate incidents also contributed towards widening the breach between the two main communities in the country, while their separation from a common platform served not a little to make the relation between them more and more strained under the continuous fanning of the Anglo-Indian community who scarcely made any secret of their policy of playing one against the other. But the game has happily been almost played out. The intelligent Islamic community, with the rapid growth of education, are gradually awaking to a consciousness of the ignominious position into which they have been led and are steadily pressing forward to take their legitimate place by the side of the other communities, fighting shoulder to shoulder for the attainment of their common destiny.

The Moslem League, whatever the object of its founders and the attitude of some of its early members may have been, has, in the dispensation of an inscrutable providence, done for the Mahomedans what the Congress had done much earlier for the other communities in the country. It has slowly imbued them with the broad vision of national interests and inoculated them with ideas of common rights and responsibilities, when at the last Session of the League they openly embraced the common political faith so long preached by the Congress. If men like Mazur-ul-Haque, Hassan Imam, Wazir Hussain, Ibrahim Rahimatullah, Jinnah, Mahomedali and last but not least the present Agah Khan could have appeared in the Eighties and joined hands with Messrs. Budruddin Tyabji, Rahimatullah Sayani and Abdul Rasul the history of the Indian National Congress might now have been written in an altogether different style. But it must be said to the credit of the Mahomedan community, that although for a long time they kept themselves aloof from the Congress, they never could be persuaded to start any active movement to counteract its progress. The fictitious counter-agitation was kept up only by the selfish Anglo-Indian press at the instance of a narrow and nervous bureaucracy in the ostensible name of the Mahomedan community, and there is sufficient reason to believe that intelligent Mahomedans were not wanting who saw through the bluff and thoroughly understood in whose interest the agitation was really engineered, though from prudential considerations they were unable openly to denounce it. The great sage of Aligarh, who during his lifetime was the recognized leader

of the community, did not fail frankly to acknowledge that the Hindus and the Mussalmans in India "were like the two eyes of a fair maiden" and that "it was impossible to injure the one without affecting the other," and, he might well have added, without disfiguring the maiden altogether. It is worthy of remark, that the Congress from an early stage took care to safeguard the interests of all minorities and with a view to remove all possible misapprehension from the minds of the Mussalmans distinctly provided, that when any community in the Congress being in the minority should appear to be even nearly unanimous in opposing any motion such motion shall be dropped. Besides, it is an incontrovertible fact that the Congress has up to this time never passed a single resolution advocating the interests of any particular community, or of the classes against those of the masses. On the contrary it has throughout recognized that the future destiny of the country largely, if not solely, depended upon the harmonious co-operation of all the communities and the amelioration of the condition of its huge working and agricultural population, and has as such persistently urged for educational facilities for the backward communities in the country. Education is the only leaven that can leaven the whole lump, and the Congress has never failed to realize that as education advances the apparently heterogeneous elements in the country are bound to coalesce and solidify into a homogeneous mass.

In the meantime, however, in the midst of the perennial controversy that raged between a jealous

bureaucracy and a distrustful public and in spite of the opposition, calumny and misrepresentation which never ceased to dog its footsteps, the movement went on gaining strength both in volume and intensity every year. In its majestic march it swept away all obstacles presented by differences of creed and caste, of language as well as of customs, habits and manners, and the process of unification went on apace rounding off those local and racial angularities which stood in its course and bearing down those treacherous shoals and bars which the opposition fondly hoped would wreck it one day. It has passed through many trials and tribulations and tided over many dangers and difficulties which lay in its way. Many were the "candid friends" who in season and out of season raised their warning voice against what they deemed its "mad career"; but the collective wisdom of a renovated people under the guidance of a higher inspiration has gone on working in the sacred cause with stout heart and sincere devotion. The acuteness of the opposition has now nearly died out; while with the falsification of the ominous prophecies of the "birds of evil presage" their shrieks are heard growing fainter and fainter as the day of the inevitable seems to be approaching. It is no less an authority than Sir William Hunter who has borne his ungrudging testimony to the fact that "the Indian National Congress has outlived the early period of misrepresentation; it has shewn that it belongs to no single section of the population"; while it may be fairly remarked, that Hindus, Mussalmans, Parsis and Christians, all have been proud of the honour of occupying the presidential chair of the Congress as the

highest distinction in the gift of the country and its people.

It is however still argued, that although the Congress may be a national assembly it can never hope to attain its chimerical object in view—the establishment of an Indian nationality; for there are said to be four essential conditions for the constitution of a nation, in that there must be a common race, common government, common tongue and a common religion, and that India being a congeries of people lacking in all these essential elements can never hope to evolve a nationality out of a Babel of confusion into which she has been hopelessly plunged by centuries of revolutions and changes unparalleled in the history of the world. These are all plausible arguments no doubt; but not one of them will probably stand the test of careful examination in the light of modern political evolution of the world. The race question, strictly speaking, is more or less of a larger or smaller formula of ethnological classification. The modern Indians are broadly divided into two races, the Hindus and Mussalmans, the former having larger and sharper sub-divisions than the latter; but both descended from a common *Aryan* stock, more agnatic in their relation to each other than most of the European peoples. The Hindu anthropology indeed traces them to one common descent within the legendary period of ancient history. However that may be, the question is, does this difference in races constitute a permanent bar to their so uniting as to constitute a political unit or nation? Without going far back into antiquity it may be confidently asked, is there any

nation of modern times which is not composed of distinct and different racial units which have been welded together by forces other than those of mere ethnology? The Picts and the Scots, the Angles and the Saxons, the Celts and the Welsh are all incorporated in the great British nation, although they one and all still retain distinctive racial characteristics of their own to no small extent. In Germany the Teutons and the Slavs, the Prussians, the Bavarians and the Silicians and in that curious Dual-Monarchy of Austria-Hungary the Germans, the Magyars or Hungarians, Czechs, Poles, Slavs, Serbs, Croats and Roumanians are all distinct racial units consolidated into a national federation of no ordinary solidarity and strength. So it is idle to contend that racial differences in India can by themselves stand as an insuperable difficulty in the way of the Hindus and Mussalmans, with an intermediate link of the Parsis between them, coalescing and forming a political unit. The process has already started and it is only a question of time when they will become completely fused into a consolidated national organization.

As regards religion, it must be admitted, that although in the early stages of social evolution and even down to the end of the middle ages religious faiths constituted the strongest cement of national unity, a mighty change has taken place in modern times all over the world. With increased facilities of communication, both through land and water, and ever increasing expansion of trade and commerce a rapid diffusion of people throughout the world has taken place converting every civilised country into a congeries

of people, each with distinct habits, manners and religious beliefs. The ancient territorial distributions on the basis of religious ties have all been broken up and with the advancement of science and development of materialism a nation has received the connotation more of a political organization than of a religious confederacy. Freedom of conscience and religious toleration have revolutionized every country and every society, and different and even divergent faiths no longer count against the forces of a national evolution. Even education has been secularized throughout the world, and the spirit of Martin Luther's reform, which first effected in Europe a permanent divorce of Education from Religion has permeated the entire civilization of the world and considerably weakened, if not completely shattered, the influence of the church and clergy of every creed in moulding and shaping the destinies of nations. A nation therefore is now more a political unit than a religious organization. The differences between the *Saivas* and *Vaishnavas* and *Saktas*, or for the matter of that between the Hindus and the Buddhists, the Jains and the Sikhs are not more marked than those between the Catholics and the Protestants, the Methodists and the Greek Church. Then are there not Unitarians and Positivists, Free-thinkers and Non-conformists side by side with members of the Orthodox Churches in every country in Europe and America forming integral parts of one, indivisible nation? No man now cares more about the religious convictions of his neighbour than of his private character. It is now the public life of a people, as reflected in

public interest and public opinion, combined with a singleness of purpose and unity of aims and objects which constitutes the national spirit. It is not at all suggested that other moral and spiritual qualities do not go far to exalt the individual as well as the nation; but these higher attributes are not among the inseparable accidents of national life.

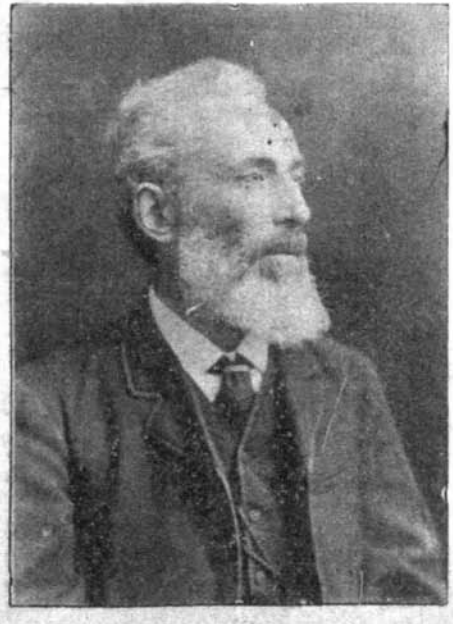
Common government and common language no doubt form the basis of a national organisation, the one furnishing articulate expression of common interests and common sentiments and the other translating them into action. In India the English language has become the *lingua franca* of the educated community whose number is daily increasing and whose ideas, thoughts and actions are purveyed to the rest of the population through the medium of a number of allied dialects all derived from a common source, and it is no more difficult for the people of the different provinces to understand each other than it is for the mass of the Irish, Scotch and Welshman to understand the Englishman. A common script for all the Indian languages would undoubtedly facilitate, as it has facilitated in the case of Europe, the study of the various dialects in this country; but even if that is not possible the difficulty may be solved by introducing some of these languages in an interprovincial curriculum of the departments or universities at certain stage of the educational system of the different provinces. The Bengalee, the Hindustani, the Mahrattee and the Telugu are the most important among the spoken and written languages in the country and if these are taught in our schools or colleges

of all the provinces the linguistic connection between the different races may be satisfactorily established.

As regards government, the Indian peoples occupy a still more favourable position. For the evolution of a national life it is absolutely necessary that the entire population of a geographical unit, whatever differences there may be in their racial, linguistic or religious composition, should be under one and the same rule. Where this condition fails there is disintegration even among people belonging to the same race, speaking the same language and professing the same faith, and each integral section under a separate rule forms a distinct nation. As has already been said, a nation in the modern acceptance of the term is now a political unit formed out of community of interest, community of laws and community of rights and responsibilities. These are all created and conserved under the guidance and inspiration of a force which is generated by a common rule whether it be monarchical, democratic or republican in its character. There was a time when the Bengalees, the Punjabis and the Mahrattas formed distinct nations, as the Prussians, the Bavarians and the Silicians on the one hand and the Bohemians, the Magyars, the Czechs and the Slavs on the other did at one and no distant time. But being brought under the same rule, subject to the same laws and invested with the same rights and responsibilities, emanating from the same fountainhead, the Bengalee, the Panjabi and the Mahratta are now but different factors of one and the same political unit or nation. Thus the Parsi or the Mahomedan in India no

longer owes any temporal allegiance to the Shah of Persia or the Sultan of Turkey, nor do they belong to the Persian or Turkish nation. They are both incorporated in the body of the vast Indian Nation. The Government is the cement of a national organization and without such a cement even the most advanced countries in the world would fall to pieces like a house of cards. It is quite true, that under the existing conditions it is simply impossible for India to aim at sovereign independence and yet maintain its nationalism ; for no sooner such an attempt is made it must stand split up into its racial factors, the cement would be gone and the vast fabric of its national organization tumble down entirely broken up. There may be then a Bengalee, or a Punjabi, or a Mahratta State, but no longer an United-India, or an Indian Nation. For the higher evolution of such a nationality the Indian National Congress from the very beginning set up an ideal on the permanent basis of a great confederacy under a common rule such as was furnished by the paramount authority of Great Britain. The Congress certainly aims at freedom ; but not at separation. On the contrary it is the freedom of the different members of a body which while they are perfectly free to discharge their respective functions independently are at the same time dependent upon one another for their vital existence as a whole, and which in their mutual relation imply no subjection, but enjoin equality and interdependence. It is in this conception that lies the true inwardness of Indian nationalism and it is this ideal which constitutes the just claim of the

Indian National Congress to be styled a national movement. Lord Hardinge's famous despatch of the 25th August 1911 gives a correct expression to the spirit of that movement and clearly indicates the only legitimate development of a permanent British rule in India. However much British diplomacy may turn and twist the plain terms of that important document to wriggle out of an inevitable situation, it is bound to work out its peaceful solution at first in the formation of a confederacy of autonomous units within the country and at the consummation in the evolution of a larger, stronger and prouder unit, self-contained, self-adjusted, self-reliant, and standing side by side and co-operating with the other self-governing limits of the Empire. Such a conception must no doubt take time to materialize itself; but it is by no means a fantastic dream. Besides, the world has always dreamt before its waking and evolved its sternest realities out of its wildest dreams. But even without indulging in dreams it is permissible to read the signs of time which in its onward and irresistible march is visibly arraying the moral forces of humanity for a thorough revision and re-adjustment of the destinies of the world from which India alone cannot be excluded. If the Philippines in the Pacific, the Poles in Central Europe, and even the Negroes of Liberia have succeeded in evolving their destinies as self-governing people, the claim of India for an equal partnership in the federation of the British Empire may be neither so extravagant, nor so remote and visionary as to be altogether beyond the range of practical politics.



ALFRED WEBB
PRESIDENT, 1894.

RAI BAHADUR P. ANANDA CHARLU
PRESIDENT, 1891.

R. M. SAYANI
PRESIDENT, 1896.

HON. BABU SURENDRANATH BANERJEA
PRESIDENT, 1895 & 1902.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE SUCCESS OF THE CONGRESS.

Unification

Human nature, says Hobbes, is a strange admixture of contrarieties. It is always dissatisfied with the present, and while the eternal law of progress incessantly impels it to court the future, it seems never tired of its lamentations for the "good old days" which it has deliberately changed and which never can return. If such inconsistency is only an aberration of human nature in general, it is the marked characteristic of the Indian temperament. To the Present it can hardly be reconciled until it has vanished into the Past, while its feeble attraction for the Future looses all its force even as it makes a new approach to the living Present. While the robust living nations of the world, believing as they do in its perpetual evolution, generally look to the past only to receive inspiration for the future, old decaying people like the Indians, whose only pride is in their past, regard the moral progress of that world as having long passed its meridian and as now being on its descending node. They have no faith in the world's resurrection until its annihilation and as such very little confidence in its future. Centuries of revolutions and changes have made them sceptical of the justice and conscience of a materialistic world, while the teachings of a mystic philosophy, which represents that world as a delusion, furnish them sufficient

consolation for patient submission to "the slings and arrows of an outrageous fortune." Like hopeless bankrupts they fondly dote upon the legends of their vanished glories and while bitterly complaining of the present they are more inclined to suffer the evils which they know than fly to others which they know not. Their loyalty and devotion to time-honoured institutions and established order of things make them generally averse to a change and naturally dispose them to drift. Their contact with Western culture has however gradually changed the angle of their vision and from the dreamland of their mystic philosophy they are slowly awakening to the realities of a living world. The Congress working on Western ideas and ideals has been largely instrumental in breaking down this inertia and in infusing a spirit of useful activity in the national character. It has dissipated the wildest fancies of a people who, in their philosophical contempt for this life, seemed to have acquired more intimate knowledge of the unknown than of the known, more of the next world than of this. It has inspired them with a living consciousness which has diverted their mind from the dead past to the living present and fixed their attention on the coming future with hope and confidence. But though the consciousness has come, the latent poison in the system seems not to have entirely lost its deleterious effects. In the Indian temperament a moral aversion to fight and a habitual love of repose act in the first place as a deterrent to the assumption of an aggressive attitude for the assertion of any right, and when force of circumstances constrains it to take the defensive, or to seek for a

change, that temperament cannot keep up a long and sustained struggle and naturally demands a speedy solution. One score and eight years are nothing in the life of a nation, and yet within this short period there are not few people who seem to have become tired of the fight. It is besides a strange feature of the situation, that those who have rendered the least active service are the most sceptical of success and in their inert pessimism despondently, if not derisively, ask what has the Congress done for a quarter of a century? But a little reflection would show that the Indian National Congress has done more for India in twenty-five years than what the National League with all its superior advantages did in about fifty years for Ireland.

Next to the national consciousness which it has awakened the first and foremost work done by the Congress is the unification of the various and diverse races inhabiting this vast country. It has moulded a vast heterogeneous population into a homogeneous whole. If the Congress had done nothing else, this one achievement alone would have justified its existence for twenty-five years. A generation ago the stalwart and turbulant Punjabi, the intelligent and sensitive Bengalee, the orthodox and exclusive Madrassi, the ardent and astute Maharatta, the anglicised Parsi and the cold, calculating Guzerati, were perfect strangers to one other, and if they happened to meet anywhere they learnt only to despise each other. Their hereditary tradition was one of mutual distrust, while their past history was marked only by internecine feuds, pillage and bloodshed. But

what are they to-day? They are now all united by a strong and indissoluble tie of brotherhood, overriding all distinctions of caste and creed, and inspired by mutual appreciation and common fellowship. Hatred has given place to love and callousness to sympathy. In the prophetic words of Dr. Rajendralala Mitter "the scattered units of the race have coalesced and come together." The "geographical expression" has become a political entity and the "congeries of people" have come to form a nation. The descendants of the Burgis* are now among the fastest friends of the Bengalees and many a young man now in the Gangetic delta wonder why there ever was such a thing as the Maharatta Ditch, or how the sweet lullaby with which the Bengalee baby is composed to sleep was ever invented by the matrons of an earlier generation. A magnetic current has been established from North to South and from East to West and a common pulsation now vibrates throughout the land. A Land Alienation Bill or a Colonization Bill in the Punjab, a revision of Land Settlement in Bombay or Madras, a territorial redistribution in Bengal and a mosque dispute in the United Provinces—now all strike the national chord and the whole country resounds in unison, and whatever administrative measure injuriously effects one

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* As the Germans are nick-named by the French as *Boches*, so the Maharattas who used to carry on depredations in Bengal and levy the *chouth* were called *Burgis* by the Bengalees. The doggerel to which reference is made may be rendered as follows:—"My baby sleeps; the neighbours have gone to rest; but the *Burgis* have come; the locusts have destroyed the crop, and whence shall I ay the *chouth*?" The *Burgi* at one time was the *Bona* of India.

province is now sorely felt and automatically resented by the other provinces. India is no longer a menagerie of wild and discordent elements and its peoples can now hardly be used as game-cocks to one another. They are now imbued with a national spirit and are daily growing in solidarity and compactness. The Congress has thus laid the first concrete foundation for the colossal work of nation-building and the establishment of an united Indian federation under the ægis of the British Crown.

DEVELOPMENT OF NATIONAL CHARACTER.

During the last thirty years the national character and characteristics have also undergone a remarkable change. As under the breath of the new spirit the popular mind has expanded and narrow communal sentiments have broadened into wider visions and conceptions, so the national character has also acquired a corresponding hue of healthy tone and complexion. Ideas of self-respect, self-reliance and self-sacrifice, though not yet fully developed, are quite manifest in almost every grade of society and in nearly every phase of life; while greater love of truth, courage and straightforwardness, sometimes bordering even on impertinence, are among the notable traits in the character of the educated young men in the country. The sense of humiliating dependence even in domestic relation is fast dying out, while in some places even the time-honoured corporate character of the family, the special feature of Indian social organisation, has become so much loosened as to be almost threatened with a collapse. Individualism is the most marked characteristic

of the educated community and whether young or old they are all animated by a manly desire to think and act for themselves, although this tendency is too often carried to extravagant excess, on the one hand through blind, indiscreet attempts to enforce implicit obedience, and on the other hand from inordinate conceit and impatience of control. It is in fact in this development of their character, even more than in their higher conceptions of future hopes and aspirations, that the educated community as a whole have come into direct contact and conflict with the notions and traditions of an orthodox bureaucracy which, unable to divest itself of its long-standing prejudices, starts at every change and suspects every fresh development to be a malignant growth. A claim for better treatment, a tendency to resent gratuitous insults and resist forced exactions of homage, so long enjoyed as *abwabs* by a dominant race, and above all a demand for justice and fairness are the natural outcome of the education which the people have received and the new consciousness to which they have awakened. Whether in official or public life there is no longer in the country that heavy atmosphere of cringing servility which provoked Lord Macaulay's highly coloured picture of the Indian character towards the middle of the last century, and if the noble lord had been living to-day he might well have been surprised to find, that while the people themselves have so largely shaken off the moral weaknesses with which they were so lavishly charged, there are those among his own countrymen who secretly regret the change and would fain perpetuate in this country the spirit which he so strongly and

eloquently condemned. It may be said with pardonable pride that in uprightness and integrity, in honesty of purpose and devotion to duty, in fortitude and patience no less than in their intelligence and aptitude for work, Indians in the inferior ranks of the public services, to which their lot is generally confined, fully hold their own against Europeans who are sometimes very much their artificial superiors in position, authority and influence; while as regards the larger body of the educated public it may be no exaggeration to say, that with all their defects and shortcomings, they are on the whole now a manlier race imbued with higher ideas of public duties and responsibilities in the discharge of which their own patriotic impulse supplies the only motive power and for the fulfilment of which they neither claim nor expect a higher reward than the appreciation of their countrymen and the approbation of their own conscience. Whether it be a disastrous flood or a decimating famine, an awful outbreak of pestilence or an overwhelming pressure of a vast religious concourse, everywhere they are ready bravely to face the situation and make the necessary sacrifices. Even in anarchism, the ugliest development of the present situation, which is regarded in this country not simply as a social crime but as a mortal sin, there is a spirit of wreckless courage which, if directed in proper channels, might have proved a valuable asset towards a higher development of the national life, and many a young man like Kanayelal Dutt might have under better guidance and with proper opportunities died as martyrs, rather than as murderers, in the service

of their King and their country.* It is not at all suggested that this national character is above reproach, or has become even properly developed. On the contrary it still suffers from many a serious defect which severe training and systematic discipline alone can eradicate. It lacks that vigour and tenacity, patience and perseverance, and above all that stiffness and elasticity which constitute the backbone of a people and make human nature proof against reverses and despair. People still want that confidence in themselves and trust in others which respectively form the asset and credit of the corporate life of a nation. However unpalatable and humiliating the confession may be, if we are only true to ourselves, it must be frankly recognized that one of the darkest spots and weakest points in our national character is jealousy. Many years ago in course of a private conversation, a European friend, who subsequently rose to the position of Commissioner of a division, asked the writer of these pages,—What was the distinguishing feature between the Indian and European character which made merit rise so slow in India and so fast in Europe? The writer began by referring to the superior intelligence, sagacity and industry of the European; but before he could proceed further his friend interrupted him saying, that he was mistaken and going in a wrong line, as the real explanation lay in another and in quite a different direction.

* The present European war has opened such an opportunity. Indeed the French who are nothing if not original in everything have formed regiments of their "criminal heroes" who are giving good account of their desperate character and a similar experiment in this country might prove equally successful.

The average European, he said, was not more intelligent than the average Indian, while as regards industry he had always found to his surprise that the ill-paid Indian ministerial officers worked more assiduously and with greater devotion than any European officer could be expected to work under similar conditions. The real answer to his question according to him was to be found in the national trait and not in any individual characteristic of the two races. "In a Western country," he said, "when a man shows signs of any extraordinary talent in any direction the whole community rushes in to push him up; but in India the general tendency is to pull him down." Although there are other material differences in the circumstances of the two races and much may be said against a generalization of this kind, it seems impossible to deny that there is considerable force in this observation. The Indian character has no doubt attained, as has already been observed, a higher level in many directions; but it can hardly be denied that even now public men have more detracters than admirers and that appreciation of public services, which is the most potent incentive to public action, is yet very feeble and inactive in this country. If we are really anxious to elevate ourselves in the scale of nations we must not deceive ourselves by putting the flattering unction to our soul. True patriotism does not consist either in blind, idolatrous veneration of a dead past, or in subtle ingenuity to extract metaphysical secrets out of metaphorical aphorisms for the gratification of vanity and egotism. A thoughtful writer has somewhere

observed, that "there are natures which can extract poison from everything sweet," and it will be found upon close examination, that a spirit of captious criticism wanting in due appreciation of merit, whether in a friend or an adversary, is a mental disease which in its chronic stage works as a slow poison to the understanding as well as to other mental faculties and in the end terminates fatally to the moral nature also. There are always two sides to a question, and a cultivated mind ought carefully to weigh the *pros* and *cons* before pronouncing judgment on it. A well-regulated, disciplined character is the first requisite of a national development. As license is not liberty, so arrogance is not independence. Leadership is not a privilege but a responsibility, and one must learn to follow before he can aspire to lead a community where everybody is ready to command and none to obey must be either a Babel, or a Bedlam, or a Billingsgate.

SOCIAL AND INDUSTRIAL PROGRESS.

Next in order of importance is perhaps the inauguration of social reform and industrial development to both of which the Congress has so largely contributed. It will be remembered that at the outset many were the "candid friends" who advised the movement to be directed towards social and industrial reforms rather than towards premature political activities. The members of the Congress, however, neither overlooked nor underestimated the importance of these reforms, as they were perfectly conscious that in the process of an evolution all the three were handmaids to one another, although it

was equally clear to them that with all the diversities of manners, customs, habits and even laws and religions of the various races inhabiting such a vast continent, it was not possible directly to bring all the people together except upon a political platform. As the three reforms were inter-dependent, moving on a common axle, they understood that if a force could be imparted to one of the wheels the other two also would automatically move with it. It is a well-known fact, that it was largely the members and the supporters of the Congress who individually and in their respective spheres of influence started social and industrial movements which gradually spread throughout the country, the Congress itself being the centre from which the forces emanated in different directions. The Social Conference started in 1888 and the Industrial Conference inaugurated in 1904 were two important bodies, which, like two satellites revolving each on its own axis, have moved round the Congress in its annual course and contributed not a little towards social and economic advancement of the country. The Hon'ble Mahadev Govinda Ranade on the social and the Hon'ble Rao Bahadur R. N. Mudholkar on the industrial side are two of the outstanding figures of the Congress whose services to the cause of these reforms must be acknowledged with gratitude and respect. The Congress as a huge deliberative body cannot, as a matter of course, concern itself with the details of these reforms which depend upon different conditions in different provinces, but it cannot fairly be denied, that it has always acted as the pivot of all the public movements and the mainspring of all the activities.

which are now at work in all directions and throughout the country. Whether it be the question of sea-voyage or of the "depressed classes," whether it is the cause of marriage reform or scientific education, the actual working bodies may and must be different; but the motive impetus generated and manifested in all these directions may easily be traced to one common source—the spirit of national consciousness evoked by the Congress. It has roused a slumbering people from the lethargy of ages and vivified them into new life. The Indians have drifted too long; but they are no longer disposed to drift. Conferences, associations and organizations have become the order of the day, and whether it be literary or historical researches, or scientific studies, or the resuscitation of decaying arts and industries, or the solution of knotty social problems, everywhere there is the manifestation of a new spirit. The restlessness and commotion which are observable almost in every walk of life, the zeal and earnestness which characterise the activities of almost all classes and communities for bettering their status and prospects in life and the high ideals which animate the people, are all symptoms of a mighty evolution that is noiselessly working its way. In the ferment of this evolution some objectionable things here and there have no doubt come to the surface, but this was unavoidable. It is impossible to extract the crystal without bringing the impurities of sugar on the surface in the boiling cauldron. The Congress no doubt is primarily a political organisation; but its social and economic aspects cannot also be disputed. Mr. Hume in his celebrated reply to Sir Auckland Colvin

clearly enunciated the real aim and object of the movement. They were, he said, at that early stage of the institution, "the regeneration of India on all lines, spiritual, moral, social, industrial and political." "The main body of the Congress," he added, "was directed to national and political objects upon which the whole country was able to stand on a common ground." But, as was pointed out, "the social requirements varied according to race, caste and creed, so that they had to be dealt by separate organizations suited to each province or community." Thus while the actual working machineries were different, the electric installation which supplied the motive power for all of them was one and the same, which led Sir William Wedderburn to point out that as a matter of fact "the workers for political progress were the most active friends of social reform," and, he might well have added, that they were also among the early pioneers of the industrial movement and the founders of not a few of the small industries which made such marked progress during the last few years. Some of these enterprises have no doubt suffered a serious collapse; but these occasional lapses are almost incidental to a nascent stage. Children stagger and stumble before they acquire a steady use of their limbs. Want of training and absence of sound knowledge and experience and possibly some lack of moral strength also are at the root of these failures which, however deplorable in themselves, afford no just ground either for alarm or despair. The South Sea Bubble in England and the Panama enterprise in France were far greater disasters; but both the British and the French people have long

outlived these misadventures. A spirit of enterprise once created cannot die; but fanned by its own wings Phœnix-like it is bound to rise out of its own ashes.

The much-abused Swadeshi movement has a history of its own. Bombay was earlier in the field of industrial development with modern appliances and machineries; but Bengal and Madras had an indigenous textile industry on a more extensive scale which was practically extinct under foreign competition. The situation was everywhere viewed with grave anxiety, though nowhere, except in the Western Presidency, any active effort was made to grapple with it until a cry for the revival of the indigenous industries was raised in Bengal where the immortal patriotic song of Mr. Mon Mohan Bose, the founder of the now defunct Swadeshi Mela, is still heard with thrilling interest. The necessity for preferential treatment of indigenous article was vigorously pressed at some of the earlier Provincial Conferences in Bengal, notably at Burdwan in 1894, and also on several other occasions where ardent Congressmen drew prominent attention to the growing poverty and helplessness of the people for want of sufficient encouragement of indigenous industries. A formal proposal for preferential treatment of home-made products was for the first time submitted to the Subjects-Committee of the Congress held at Ahmedabad in 1902; but owing to a divergence of opinion it failed to pass through the Committee. In 1905, the people of Bengal exasperated by a violent disruption of the province adopted a general boycott of all foreign articles. On the 7th of August, a huge and unprecedented

demonstration was held at the Calcutta Town Hall, in which at a modest calculation over thirty thousand people took part in three different sections, two in the upper and lower floors of the historic hall and the other and by far the largest section in the spacious open *maidan* in front. So intense was the feeling that the spirit of the movement marched like wild fire and the contagion spread in no time from Lahore to Tuticorin and from Assam to Guzerat. It was generally based upon economic grounds; but it cannot be denied that the movement had its origin in Bengal as a protest against the Partition. The Congress, while not countenancing the boycott, gave formal sanction to the *Swadeshi* in 1906 and enjoined the people to give preference to indigenous articles "wherever practicable and even at a sacrifice." With all its lapses and indiscretions, which are almost inseparable from all movements which have their origin in tremendous popular excitement, the Swadeshi movement must be admitted to have given a great impetus to the development of indigenous industries in this country. That development may not yet have been very remarkable; but it is doubtless gratifying that it has revived the weaving industry and directed the energies of the people into new channels of activity. For soap and scent, shoes and trunk, nib and ink, socks and vests, pottery and cutlery, as well as various kinds of woollen and silken stuff, the country can now well afford to stand, though not in the best style, substantially on its own leg; while the Bengal Chemical and Pharmaceutical Works started under the initiative

and guidance of that eminent Indian scientist, Dr. P.C. Roy, have elicited the unstinted admiration of even those who are disposed to draw a sharp distinction between true and false *Swadeshi*.

Above all the patriotic labours of Mr. Jamsetji Nesservanji Tata have created an epoch in the industrial regeneration of India. Bombay received her early initiation in Industrialism from the American Civil War of 1861-65 when her attention was drawn to her opportunities in cotton trade. Although Bombay has never ceased to complain about the arbitrary and exacting system of her land settlement under the operation of which the fruits of the agricultural labours are periodically shorn off like the proverbial sheep to meet the demands of the State, she may yet find sufficient consolation in the thought that the industrial activities and enterprises of her people may be due in no small measure to the depressing conditions imposed in their case upon agricultural pursuits which appear to have so largely absorbed the comparatively indolent population of the permanently settled provinces; while her own people driven from the fields to the factories have found ample compensation for the precarious doles of nature in the larger bounties of arts and industries. The first cotton mill in Bombay was started in 1855 by Cowasji Nanabhoy Davar who was followed by a noble band of equally enterprising industrialist among whom the names of Roychand Premchand, Sir Jamsetji Jejeebhoy and Sir Dinshaw Manekji Petit are known throughout the country. But the greatest and brightest of this galaxy of stars who ushered in the industrial renaissance of modern India was

perhaps Jamsetji Nasservanji Tata. Full of patriotic ideas and sentiments Mr. Tata established in 1886 a new cotton mill which he appropriately styled the "Swadeshi Mills." But the greatest work of Mr. Tata which will ever enshrine his name in the grateful memory of his countrymen is the Scientific Research Institute for which he made a princely donation of 30 *lakhs* of rupees and which planned and matured during his lifetime was subsequently established, with the help and co-operation of the Government of India and of Mysore, by his worthy son Sir Dorab Tata at Bangalore within the territories of the latter. Mr. Tata's Vulcan Steel and Iron Factory recently established at Sakchi within the territories of another Indian prince, the Maharajah of Morbhunj in Orissa and his Electric Installation at Bombay for utilizing the waters of the Western Ghauts, are colossal projects which bear testimony not only to his extraordinary genius and enterprise, but also to the vigour and robustness of the industrial renaissance which has dawned upon the country with the first awakening of its national consciousness. Truly has the biographer of Mr. Tata remarked that he "was a Swadeshi of Swadeshists long before Swadeshism was boomed in Bengal."

The Co-operative Movement, which has made such rapid strides during the last few years throughout the country and particularly in Bengal, is another evidence of the spirit of self-help which has come to animate the national character and of the aptitude which the people have acquired for the management for their own affairs. It is indeed a matter of as much regret as of gratification,

that in all this healthy developments the people had so little to count upon the active help and co-operation of the State and so largely to depend upon their own resources. With the notable exception of the Tata Iron Works there appears to be no industrial project in which the Government has as yet either taken the initiative or generously extended a substantially helping hand. Whether for training men in scientific and industrial education in foreign countries, or in starting new industries at home, the people have had practically to depend upon their unaided efforts and their extremely limited resources; while the examples of Japan and China in the East and of the Philippines in the West have served only to tantalize and mortify a people proverbially the poorest in the modern civilized world. The patriotic efforts of Messrs. Norendra Nath Sen, Jogendra Chandra Ghose in Bengal and J. N. Tata in Bombay for giving technical education to our young men were movements in the right direction; but for want of adequate support and encouragement they practically collapsed after a short but very useful career of existence. It may be remembered, that even in the seventies and eighties of the last century it was almost a fashion in certain quarters to twit the people with their universal hankering after services under the State which it was truly impossible for any Government to satisfy; but now that the people have realized their mistake and turned their attention to industrial and other developments, men in authority are not wanting to remind them that "India is essentially an agricultural country," and that as such their hands should be directed

to the plough and not to the steam-engine: while a responsible member of the Supreme Government, being recently driven almost to a corner on the question of State aid to some of the crippled industries in the country, plainly said, that India need not care about her industrial development when there was England to supply all her requirements.' What a frank confession and a bitter disappointment! If England could have supplied all the wants of India it would not have been possible for Germany to swamp her market. Besides, where is the Ordinance of Nature which has made this classification among mankind and provided that some people must not learn to govern themselves, but be content with being well-governed, and that some countries must extract only raw materials from Mother Earth leaving others to convert them into more valuable finished articles? Providence certainly has nowhere prescribed these conditions and sanctioned this division of labour. True it is that all people are not at all times equally trained and equally competent to participate in the blessings of arts and sciences; but it should be the highest aim of a benevolent Government, whether foreign or indigenous, to foster and stimulate as far as lies in its power the energies and activities of the people committed to its care in every right direction for the advancement and amelioration of their economic condition. Even free and resourceful countries like Germany and Japan have had to count upon state bounties and subsidies for their economic development, and India cannot fairly be expected to work out her salvation through more enquiries, reports and exhibitions.

The present European war has opened a vast field for the expansion and development of Indian industries. The extensive trades of Germany and Austria have been driven out of the Indian market and if prompt measures could be taken to replace them by indigenous productions, the economic problem of the country might be easily solved and at the same time the position of Government materially strengthened. But the Government seems hardly to realize the importance of this opportunity which has arisen as a unique good coming out of a dire evil. The Congress at its last session as well as the Indian public, earnestly pressed the question on the attention of Government, nor has the European mercantile community altogether failed to express its views on the subject. Mr. Ledgard, as Chairman of the Upper India Chamber of Commerce, is reported to have pressed at its last annual meeting "the importance of vigorous preparations for stepping into Germany's shoes in the matter of trade" and regretted that the "Government had not been able to give any indication of a policy of assistance towards industrial enterprise that might enable the country to take advantage of the situation." It may, however, be hoped that it is not yet too late to indicate that policy, so that the precious opportunity may not be entirely lost.

Local Self-Government and Reform of Judicial Administration.

The efforts of the Congress towards the expansion of Local Self-Government and the reform of the Judicial

Administration have not, however, met with any encouraging success. Nearly thirty years have elapsed since Lord Ripon introduced the principle of Self-Government in the administration of the local affairs of the people in the ardent hope that it might prove the stepping-stone towards their attainment of National Self-Government in the higher administration of the country. But within this period the institution has not advanced one step forward and it is still held in the same leading string with which it was started, though it seems doubtful if in certain directions its tether has not been even appreciably shortened. The number of the municipal corporations, which are properly speaking the really self-governing bodies in the country, has undergone no perceptible increase, while their powers and privileges have clearly not been enhanced, although in not a few cases they have been ruthlessly curtailed. As regards the larger bodies of District and Local Boards, these have been practically converted into a department of the District Administration directly under the District Officer, and it certainly looks strange that not a single District has been found within the life-time of a generation fit to be entrusted with a non-official Chairman for this institution. Times without number has the Congress pressed for a provisional experiment which the law expressly provides, and at least one Commissioner of an important division in Bengal strongly recommended such a trial. But a consideration of the official prestige of the District Officer, who must be provided octopus-like as it were with a number of tentacles to enable him to maintain

his position and dignity, has apparently overridden all claims of justice and fairness, and perhaps it would be no exaggeration to say that the Local Self-Government Acts of the different provinces are, to all intents and purposes, a misnomer and the institutions themselves have become fossilized without any possibility of growth of development, though they may of course be liable to further decay. There can be no reasonable complaint against legitimate control. But if the Government has a responsibility in supervising the workings of these popular institutions, it is also not without its corresponding obligation to foster, develop and improve them. Control without co-operation is only another name for obstruction. It is in the air, that it is in the contemplation of Government also to officialize the Co-operative Credit Societies which the people have evolved and worked out partially to relieve their economic pressure. It is to be hoped that a powerful government will not lay itself open to the charge of assuming the sponsorship of institutions in whose baptism it had little or no hand, and however justly responsible it may feel for safeguarding the honesty and integrity of these institutions, it may be fully expected that nothing will be done either to stunt their growth, or to alienate popular sympathies and confidence from them.

As regards the reform of the Judicial Administration, the first principle enunciated by the Congress is practically admitted, and it is no longer disputed that the administration stands in need of revision; but here also, as in the case of Local Self-Government, the

morbid bugbear of official prestige stands in the way. The Decentralization Commission simply evaded the question; but the present Public Service Commission will have to decide it either one way or the other. Various palliatives have been suggested by those who are no longer able to defend the existing system, but are at the same time unwilling to part with it. But these are mere makeshifts which can only defer and not solve the question. The question has considerably matured itself and the Congress will have to start a fresh campaign in the light of the Royal Commission's pronouncements to drive the discussion to a satisfactory conclusion.

Parliamentary Enquiries.

As has already been observed, the last Parliamentary enquiry into Indian affairs was made in 1854, and ever since the transfer of the rule to the Crown in 1858 both Parliament as well as the Government, whether Liberal or Conservative, were alike indifferent to the Indian administration which was complacently left into the hands of a close bureaucracy. The very first Congress of 1885 vigorously protested against this indifference and pressed for a Royal Commission to enquire into the Indian administration. In 1897 the Welby Commission was appointed, and since then there have been the Decentralisation Commission in 1902 and the Chamberlain Commission and the Islington Commission which are now carrying on their investigations. The Government of India also instituted the Education Commission of 1882 and the Police Commission of 1902. The results of these Commissions may not have so far

come up to the fullest expectations of the people and may have in some cases proved even disappointing to them. But they bear undoubted testimony to the growing interest felt both in England, as well as in this country, in the increasingly important and complicated administration of India. It is in the nature of all bureaucratic rules to accord a readier acceptance to retrograde suggestions than to progressive recommendations; but the Indian Nationalist need not despair. However cautious or dilatory the Government may be giving effect to the various wholesome recommendations of these Commissions, it can never hope to set them aside. There they are among the permanent archives of the Government laying down policies and principles which may be carried forward, but upon which it would be difficult, if not absolutely impossible, to go back. Stern, necessary changes may be deferred, but cannot be averted when they are pressed by the irresistible force of time and circumstance.

Public Men and Public Spirit.

The vitality of a nation is gauged by its power of producing capable men at all critical stages of its life. Mazzini and Garibaldi in Italy, Thiers and Gambetta in France, Yungshi-kai and Sun-Yet-Sen in China, Enver Bey and Izzat Pasha in Turkey,—all have proved, that though passing through the severest ordeal of their national existence, neither the Italians nor the French, neither the Chinese nor the Turks were among the dead nations of the world. The Indian National Congress, though dealing with a subject race, labouring

under enormous difficulties and disabilities, has produced a class of self-sacrificing, self-reliant, resourceful, robust and patriotic men some of whom, at all events, under more favourable circumstances might well have taken their places by the side of some of the foremost men in European politics. Their lot might have forbidden them from commanding the applause of the political world and consigned them to the strictures and captious criticisms of an orthodox and inflated bureaucracy; but there are men among them who, if their Sovereign had commanded, might have formed a cabinet or held a portfolio. The most obdurate of pessimists will probably admit and the most cynical of critics acknowledge, that with all their shortcomings these men are not altogether unworthy products of the modern Indian renaissance which has dawned under the ægis of the British rule. They have at all events conclusively proved that most of the Indian races still possess sufficient vitality and moral stamina to aspire to a place in the comity of civilised nations in the world. The public men whom the Congress has produced and the spirit of self-help which it has evoked are perhaps among the most valuable working capital of the country.

The nineteen eminent Indians who have so far adorned the presidential chair of the Congress will, no doubt, go down to posterity as among the pioneers of Indian nation-builders. They are all men who have made their mark in Indian History. But besides these, the Congress has produced a galaxy of men of whom any country might be justly proud. Dr. Rajendra Lala

Mitra, Rajah Peary Mohan Mukherjee, Sir Romesh Chander Mitter, Sir Goorudas Banerjee, Mr. Monomohan Ghose, Mr. Norendra Nath Sen, Mr. (now Mr. Justice) Ashutosh Choudhury, Mr. Baikunta Nath Sen, Dr. Rabindra Nath Tagore, Mr. A. Rasul, Mr. Motilal Ghose. Mr. Kalicharan Bannerjee and Mr. Bhupendra Nath Basu,* in Bengal; Maharajah Sir Luchmeswar Singh, Mr. (now Mr. Justice) Hasan Imam, Mr. Dip Narain Singh, Mr. Guruprasad Sen, and Mr. Mazar-ul-Haque in Behar; Pundit Ajudhya Nath, Pundit Biswambhar Nath, Dr. Sunderlal, Mr. Ganga Prasad Varma and Raja Rampal Singh in the United Provinces; Sirdar Dayal Singh Mejhatia, Lala Lajpat Rai and Mr. Mahomed Ali in the Punjab; Mr. M.G. Ranade, Mr. K. T. Telang, Mr. Daji Abaji Khare, Mr. Luxman Nulkar, Mr. Hari Chiplankar, Mr. Bal Gangadhar Tilak, Sir Ibrahim Rahimtullah, Dr. Bhandarkar, Mr. Setalvad and Mr. Mahomedali Jinnah in Bombay; and Mr. Krishnaswami Iyer, Mr. G. Subramania Iyer, Mr. Veeraraghava Achari, Mr. Ramaswami Mudaliar, Sir Subramaniya Iyer and Mr. Veejararaghava Achari in Madras,—all rank among the shining lights of this period. Many of these distinguished men would ere long have taken their places in the illustrious roll of the Congress Presidents but for premature death which seems to be the prevailing curse of India. The public services of some of these men have also been recognised by the Government, while all of them occupy a high position in the estimation of their countrymen as their trusted guides and leaders.

* Since elected President of the Madras Congress of 1914.

THE PUBLIC SERVICES.

From the very beginning the Congress has persistently urged the larger admission of the children of the soil into the public services of the country, and a mere glance through the pages of the Civil Lists will at once show what substantial advancement the country has made in this direction. Even up to the Sixties of the last century the average people were under the impression, that the Principal Sudder Ameen on the one side and the Deputy Collector on the other were the highest appointments open to the children of the soil and the idea of a native of India sitting as a Sessions Judge or as a District Officer appeared only as a dream. The first Indian Civilian who was a Bengali was not appointed to his own province; while the distinguished triumvirate, also Bengalis, who followed in the next decade, received an ovation upon their return in 1871 which is now seldom accorded to the Governor of a province. Whole Calcutta went to the Seven Tanks Gardens in the Belgachia Villa to witness as it were an exhibition of a curious specimen of speaking lions brought from Europe; while no less a sober person than the venerable Dr. K. M. Banerjee in his patriotic pride and exultation cried out at a public meeting that the event was the "second great battle of Plassey fought on British soil." Many a "battle of Plassey" of the same description have since been fought and won without attracting much attention. Compare the earlier picture of the public services with the present and there will be no difficulty in realising the actual measure of the inwardness of that robust optimism which possess the minds of the veterans of

the Congress as regards the future prospects of the people in the administration of the country. Even so late as the Eighties of the last century none dared seriously entertain the faintest hope of seeing Indians on the Council of the Secretary of State, or in the Executive Councils of the Governments in this country, or even in a Provincial Board of Revenue. Yet all these are now accomplished facts. The Indians have now fully established their claims from the chartered High Courts and the Executive Governments downwards to almost every branch of the Civil administration, and the question now is only one of percentage, regard being had to alleged efficiency of the services and exigencies of the State. There is still a sharp distinction drawn between what are called the Imperial and the Provincial Services in the general administration, as well as in the Education, Medical and almost all other departments of the State; but this is a shallow, artificial devise to keep up a monopoly which cannot, however, be long maintained, and a systematic vigorous campaign is all that is necessary to break down this racial and colour-fencing which still bars the people's entrance into the inner sanctuary of the administration. But as the irritating and invidious distinction cannot be defended on any rational principle and as breaches have been effected at certain points, the surrender of the strongholds of a close, selfish bureaucracy can only be a question of time. Attempts may be made, as are not infrequently made, to repair these breaches, but the ultimate fall of these citadels is inevitable. It is, however, a matter of great regret, if not of surprise, that men are not

wanting even among people of this country who having themselves risen high in the rung of the public services as the result of persistent public agitation, should be among those who denounce such agitation lest further agitation might interfere with their future prospects. There is a grim humour about such an attitude which is not unlike that of a belated railway passenger who, before he reaches his station, eagerly wishes that the train might be a little late; but as soon as he has comfortably secured his own berth begins to grow impatient that it should be any more late in starting. Apparently with a view to cover their own selfishness these good people confidently assert, that public agitation has stopped the right of public meeting and necessitated the Press Law. But can these critics picture even in their own mind a public meeting without some sort of agitation behind it? Or, can they conceive of any use of the valued right of the freedom of public meeting and of speech if it were to be divorced from agitation either for the removal of existing grievances, or for the acquisition of fresh rights? Public meetings cannot be always confined to singing *requiem* to an ex-judge or a retired magistrate however brilliant his career may have been, nor does the salvation of the country wholly depend upon the success of a few subservient officers who seem to have learnt the art of "kicking the ladder behind" almost to gymnastic perfection. As for the new Press Act, or the other repressive measures which the Government has latterly introduced, it is the grossest ignorance that can attribute these to public agitation which the British constitution

not only allows, but also encourages. Even the authors of these reactionary measures did not attribute them to public agitation, but to some other condition too well-known to require any particular reference. It is healthy agitation that invigorates public life in every civilised country; and it is a well-recognised fact that it is opposing forces which, in their resultant action, keep up the vitality of a system, and serve to maintain and strengthen it. Those who are afraid of agitation and enamoured of the calm repose of an easy-going, smooth, indolent life ought to remember that the stagnant water of a pool, though transparent and tempting to the naked eye, is always full of noxious germs and injurious to the system: while the muddy water of the running stream is not only wholesome to drink, but is also fertilising to the ground which it inundates.

The Young Men Volunteers.

Another achievement of which the Congress may justly be proud is the healthy and vigorous impetus which it has given to the development of moral courage and discipline of the Indian youths. The system of "Volunteers," which was first introduced in connection with the Second Congress held in 1886 and was more fully organised in Madras in the following year, was a very useful institution for the training of our young men not only for the immediate object with which it was started, but also for preparing them to become proper and efficient citizen-soldiers for the battle of life. These "Volunteers" no doubt came to carry a bad

odour with the authorities at a subsequent stage and in connection with a situation for which no one perhaps deplored more deeply or suffered more grievously than the Congressmen ; but the Indian public have never been able to divest themselves of the belief that the "Congress Volunteers" were really more sinned against than sinning and that they had a bad name given to them only to justify their being afterwards hanged for it. If their open and occasional services to the Congress really could have anything to do with the secret, abominable practices of a disreputable gang of fanatics, why, then, the drilling and the gymnastic exercises in the schools and even the laboratories in the colleges, for which the Government itself so amply and generously provided, might with equal, if not greater, propriety have been held responsible for these untoward and disgraceful developments. It seems to have been well remarked by a shrewd Frenchman that "when John Bull begins to suspect he generally begins at the wrong end." This suspicion has no doubt succeeded in a large measure in segregating the youths of the country, not sparing even young men in colleges, from the sphere of all political activities ; but no reasonable explanation is forthcoming as to how beardless boys are strangely developing criminal instincts and dispositions being practically confined within what may not be improperly called as insecure goals under a strict politico-educational surveillance. In a laudable anxiety to protect the boys the schools have been practically converted into plague camps where, completely cut off from the bracing atmosphere of healthy public

influence, these unsuspecting and impressionable innocents fall easy prey to the insidious, pestilential spirits which are abroad and which, working in secret, find ample opportunity to penetrate into the closest recesses to misguide these immature lads under grossest misrepresentations and allure them to their ultimate ruin. It seems extremely doubtful if the moral nature of man can be entirely governed by physical laws and regulations. Stunt that nature in its normal development in one direction, it will burst out in a malignant growth in another. Besides, there are to be found a few black sheep in almost every flock to poison the rest. Thus schools may be barricaded and students segregated and circularized; but there seems to be no island of Juan Fernandez where a resourceful mind may not devise means for its occupation and ultimately escape out of it. It seems a grievous mistake to exclude impressionable young minds altogether from the chastening influence of public opinion and try to turn useful citizens out of cloisters and dormatories. The public is a great monitor and a force, and if it sometimes misleads, it oftener exercises a healthy influence in shaping and moulding social life. Whatever that may be, the Congress Volunteers practically discharged from the Congress service have found scope for more active occupation in other and more useful directions. Mr. Gokhale's "*Servants of India*" in Bombay and Mr. Krishna Kumar Mitra's "*Irregulars*" in Bengal are highly useful bodies whose invaluable services in time of distress and difficulty have not failed sometimes to elicit the unstinted approbation

and admiration of even responsible officers of Government. They may not yet be recognized as occasional, useful adjuncts to the administration; but they are undoubtedly a most valuable help to the public on many a pressing occasion. On the whole these institutions are a training academy for the Indian youths which have made them ever so manly, so enduring, so courageous, so resourceful and so self-sacrificing in their life and conduct.

The Expansion of the Legislative Councils.

Among the many minor reforms effected at the instance of the Congress may be mentioned the increase in the taxable minimum for the Income Tax; the raising of the age-limit for the Civil Service Examination; a further extension of Trial by Jury though on a very limited scale; a partial redress of forest grievances; the re-imposition of the import duties on cotton, though with a countervailing excise duty on the indigenous products which practically operates as a protection to British manufactures, and the repeal of the English duty on Silver plates, for all of which the Congress carried on a persistent agitation both in this country as well as in England. But by far the greatest political achievement of the Congress is perhaps the reform and expansion of the Legislative Councils and the appointment of Executive Councils for the major provinces in which at least one Indian member has found a place. All the provinces and administrations, whether under Lieutenant-Governors or Chief Commissioners, are provided with local

Legislative Councils of their own. The number of members for the Councils has been increased and the area of representation considerably widened. The right of interpellation with the power of putting supplementary questions and the right of moving resolutions and introducing Bills, are all important privileges secured, the value of which cannot be under-estimated. The Congress strenuously fought for these reforms ever since 1885, and it is these substantial privileges, which were partially conceded in 1892 and more fully granted in 1910, that have led many an alarmist to cry 'halt' and to urge that the Congress having achieved its main object has no just ground for its further existence. To the Indian Nationalist, however, it is only the thin end of the wedge, and if ever there was a time to strike vigorously that time has now arrived. The Congress has never made any secret of its ultimate goal, and while that goal is yet faintly looming in the dim, distant future, it cannot afford to rest on its oars, nor regard its mission as even partially fulfilled. If the attainment of national Self-Government within the Empire is its aim, if India is to throw off the yoke of a Dependency and acquire the status of a Dominion, then it must be admitted that the Congress has only just entered on a career of useful existence and that these reforms mark only the beginning and not the end of its arduous task. It is no doubt a matter of rejoicing that a breach has at last been effected in the outer ramparts of a benevolent Despotism; but if the inner citadel be the real objective it would be simply foolish to pass the live-long day in only dancing and revelling over that

breach. Besides, what are the reforms that have really been effected? Without being guilty of want of proper appreciation it seems quite permissible to point out that these reforms are mere faint adumbrations of a rough political sketch, the full representation of which in its true colours has yet to be evolved. It is only the shadow and not the real substance which has been thrown on the screen. The representation granted is still very inadequate and the electorates highly defective; the majority is still with the Government and where it has been conceded to the people it is simply nominal and illusory. The representatives of the people have yet no control over the finances and the resolutions which they are privileged to move, and upon which they are entitled also to divide the councils, too often prove to be the proverbial Dead-Sea Apple that crumbles to the touch. They have yet no binding force and cannot influence the policy of Government. As regards the substantial modification introduced in the composition of the Executive Councils of both the Imperial and the Provincial Governments it has to be noticed, that public opinion does not count for anything and popular representatives of unquestioned ability, judgment and independence, who fought for the reform, are carefully excluded from the list. Men like Sir Pherozeshah Mehta, Mr. G. K. Gokhale,* Mr. Surendra Nath Banerjee and Dr. Rash Behary Ghose have no place in these

* Alas! Mr. Gokhale is no more! Since these pages were sent to the press the saintly politician has passed away leaving a void in this ill-fated country which is not likely to be soon filled up.

Councils, and the people cannot be very much blamed if they still labour under the impression that the bureaucracy are ill-disposed to admit their equals and that there is still a marked tendency to take away with one hand what is given with the other. The voice of the people thus still continues to be practically the same cry in the wilderness that it used to be before, with this difference that, that voice has found a channel for its articulation and cannot now be stifled. People are not therefore wanting who honestly think, that the present Councils are at best counterfeit representations of representative institutions as understood in the British constitution. They certainly bear a striking family resemblance to not a few of the mimic reforms which have found their way in this country and among which mention may be made of the system of trial with the aid of assessors with which a renowned political juggler, more than thirty years ago, hoodwinked the people of this country as being a fair substitute for Trial by Jury. From this, however, it must not be inferred that these reforms are altogether discounted. In fact they are neither such shams as some hyper-critics among us would represent them to be; nor are they the very quintessence of British statesmanship as Sir Valentine Chirol and others of his school would have us believe. They undoubtedly mark a distinct advance in Indian politics and constitute a substantial instalment of political enfranchisement of the people. If they have done nothing else, these reforms must be admitted to have furnished the people with powerful weapons for

clearing the ground before them, while they are not yet out of the wood. Lord Morley's imagination may not be able to pierce through the prevailing gloom to catch the faintest glimpse of India's future destiny ; but all the same he may have been the unconscious instrument in the hand of an inscrutible Providence to work out her salvation, and it may be the proud privilege of the future historian to reckon him as the Simon de Montfort of an Indian Parliament. The Congress from the very outset pressed either for the abolition or for the reform of the Council of the Secretary of State. Although no statutory reform has yet been introduced, the appointment of two Indians to this Council has gone a great way towards a fair recognition of the principle of representation in this Council so persistently advocated by the Congress; while the recent attempt of Lord Crewe for the reform of this Council was an augury of considerable importance towards a satisfactory solution of the question, though unfortunately that attempt has proved abortive at least for the present.

Such is the brief survey of the work done by the Congress during the last twenty-eight years of its existence. With all its lapses and shortcomings, it must be fairly conceded even by its worst critics, that this is no mean record of its achievements ; while its friends will readily admit that the Congress has worked out almost a revolution in the country unprecedented in the history of a subject people under an alien rule. Apart from its political aspects the Congress has been the fountain-head and mainspring of not a few of the activities which have manifested themselves in various directions

during the last quarter of a century and inspired the people with ideas of a nobler, manlier and healthier life.

THE NATIVE STATES—AN OBJECT LESSON.

It may not be in the recollection of many at this distance of time, that at one of the early stages of the Congress a question was actually raised and discussed in the Press as to whether the sphere of the movement should not be extended to the independent Native States. It was, however, wisely decided that the subjects of these States should be left to themselves and the work of the Congress confined to British India only. But the blessed contagion did not take much time in crossing the frontiers and spreading far beyond the British territories when the echo of the Congress was also heard in some of these independent principalities, although it was there the Princes rather than the People who took time by the forelock and adopted the initiative in advanced administration. The enlightened rulers of Baroda, Mysore and Travancore have set an example even to the paramount power, the significance of which cannot be lost upon the minds of the more advanced British subjects. Much has been said and written on the supposed differences between the East and the West and where logic has failed, fallacies have been invoked to support the contention that India is constitutionally unfit for the advanced institutions of the West and that no attempt can therefore be made to cultivate them even in a hot-house in this country. But these Indian Princes have, among other things, conclusively proved that representative institutions are not altogether foreign

to Indian instincts and that there need be no nervousness about either the introduction of free and compulsory education among the masses, or in the separation of the judicial and the executive functions of a State. What a sad commentary this to the vacillating policy of a mighty, distrustful bureaucracy!

CHAPTER XV.

THE PARTITION OF BENGAL.

There are certain paradoxes which the accumulated experience and the collective wisdom of ages have accepted as established truths all over the world, and "good cometh out of evil" is one of them. Of all the blessings in disguise, which ever fell to the lot of the Indian people, the Partition of Bengal by Lord Curzon was perhaps one of the most remarkable in the history of British rule in India. If the Ilbert Bill agitation first opened the eyes of the Indian people to the utter helplessness of their position and forced their attention to the real source of their national weakness, in the Partition of Bengal and its sequel they received the first open challenge for a trial of the moral strength which they had steadily developed during the past twenty years under the guidance and discipline of the national organization. The Congress has made the dry bones in the vally instinct with life and breathed a new spirit into them under the spell of which the "scattered units of the race" had coalesced

and come to realize that in national evolution unity was the main cement and that in the race of life firmness, determination and perseverance were the only passports to success. Little perhaps did the vigorous author of this violent measure and his advisers calculate, that although hammering was one of the orthodox methods of effecting division and disintegration, it served sometimes also to beat soft metals into solid, hard lumps. They were also probably unaware of the real extent to which the Congress had worked towards infusing fresh vitality in the people, in unifying them for common action and in stiffening their backs against reverses. It was apparently overlooked that the India of 1903 was no longer the India of 1883, and that within a single decade the force of a new spirit had completely transformed the caterpillar into the butterfly. New ideas had burst upon the eyes of the people and new ideals had taken possession of the public mind. In the new cult preached by the Congress the people had received a higher revelation under the inspiration of which they had renounced individualism and embraced nationalism as their common article of faith. Twenty years had wrought a great transformation, if not a complete revolution, in the country, and a people who in 1883 scarcely knew how to organize themselves even in support of the Government were now fully prepared to oppose that Government in defence of their just rights and were certainly not disposed to take lying down any outrage upon the cherished ideas and sentiments of a growing nationality. The history of the ill-starred measure of the

Partition of Bengal and the various phases through which it passed may not strictly appertain to this narrative; but a brief survey of its origin, the part played in it by the Congress and the influence it exercised on the national character may not be deemed irrelevant and out of place.

Although the project of dividing an indivisible people was entirely his own, the idea of territorial redistribution of Bengal did not originate with Lord Curzon. The proposal to dismember the largest and premier province of the Empire sprang from a very small beginning. In 1874 the two districts of Cachar and Sylhet, which formed part of Bengal, were for administrative convenience transferred to Assam. There was hardly any public opinion at the time and the severance of two frontier districts did not attract much public attention. In 1891 a small conference between the Lieutenant-Governor of Bengal, the Chief Commissioners of Burma and Assam and a few military authorities was held to consider measures for the greater protection of the North-Eastern frontier. It was then proposed to transfer the Lushai Hills as a further addition to Assam coupled with a recommendation that the Chittagong Division might also go with them. In 1896 Sir William Ward, who was then the Chief Commissioner of Assam, submitted an elaborate scheme for the transfer of the Chittagong Division and expressed, in a general way, a hope that the two districts of Dacca and Mymensingh also might eventually be given to Assam. It was precisely the old story of the camel and the tent-keeper. Fortun-

ately, however, just at this time Sir Henry Cotton succeeded Sir William Ward and the broad-minded administrator, who could never be persuaded to sacrifice the interest of justice and fairness to an aggrandisement of his own power and authority, lost no time in nipping the project in the bud. With his intimate knowledge of Bengal and the Bengalees, with whose legitimate aims and aspirations he always sympathised, Sir Henry Cotton opposed the scheme of his predecessor and condemned the idea of severing the Chittagong Division and the two important districts of Dacca and Mymensingh and thereby emasculating a rising people. The result was that only the Lushai Hills, which were mainly inhabited by a number of wild tribes, were made over to Assam and the question of the transfer of the Chittagong Division and the two trans-Gangetic districts of Bengal was entirely dropped.

Then came the vigorous administration of Lord Curzon who was nothing if not original in everything. Full of the idea that the past administration of India was a series of blunders he was reported to have come with "twelve problems" in his pocket with which he was resolved to overhaul every branch of that administration and recast it in a new mould. In course of this Herculean adventure a series of reactionary measures were passed which naturally produced widespread alarm in the country. The first ordinary period of his Viceroyalty, though not quite sensational, sufficiently disclosed the original bent of his mind. In 1899 when he assumed charge of his exalted office he began his policy of *efficiency* by reducing the elected members

of the Calcutta Corporation to half their original number and practically vesting the administration in a General Committee in spite of strong protests on the part of the electors. This was followed by his honest denunciation of a British battalion in Rangoon, some privates of which were believed to have outraged a native woman to death, but could not be detected owing to a conspiracy of silence among the members of the battalion. This gave umbrage to a section of the Anglo-Indian community with whom the honour and life of a *native* woman were apparently not of much consequence when compared with the position and prestige of the British soldier in India. In the following year Lord Curzon increased his unpopularity among the same class of Anglo-Indians by punishing the 9th Lancers because at Sialkot two other privates were charged with having beaten a *native* cook to death for having refused to procure a *native* woman for them and who likewise remained undetected. In the same year Lord Curzon carved out the North-West Frontier Province, and the last year of his administration of this period was signalized by a costly Durbar at Delhi which bore striking resemblance to the Imperial Assemblage of 1877 in that it followed upon another terrible famine which decimated the Central Provinces in 1900-1. Unfortunately for India, as well as for his own reputation, Lord Curzon obtained an extension to his Viceroyalty and it was within this extended period that were crowded almost all the violent, reactionary measures with which his *efficient* administration is so largely associated. In all these measures the Indian public

saw nothing but a deliberate reversal of the generous policy which, laid down by the Proclamation of 1858, had been the recognized guide of successive administrations and which if not uniformly observed in practice had never been openly violated in principle. Lord Curzon began by laying the axe at the root of Local Self-Government and emasculating the premier corporation of the metropolis of the Empire. Then the officialization of the Universities, the curtailment of high education, the abolition of open competitive tests for the Provincial Civil Services, the penalization of the civil official secrets followed in succession, and nowhere were these retrograde measures more keenly resented, or more sharply criticized, than in Bengal which the official barometer always pronounced to be the centre of political disturbances in the country. Lord Curzon determined to break this centre to facilitate the progress of his policy. He turned up the old records which had been consigned to the upper shelves of his Secretariat and ransacked them to reopen the question of the territorial readjustment of Bengal, and on the 3rd December 1903 there appeared the famous Resolution of the Government of India over the signature of Mr. now Sir., Herbert Risley, then Secretary to the Home Department, announcing the intention of Government to revive the question of the transfer of the entire Chittagong Division and the two districts of Dacca and Mymensingh to Assam. Without any complaint from the local Government, without any suggestion from any quarter and without a warning, Lord Curzon proceeded to relieve the Government of Bengal of its heavy burden, and his proposal

fell like a bomb-shell among the people. But the people though surprised were not staggered and the very announcement of this Resolution was the signal for an outburst of opposition throughout the Province which, in its magnitude, volume and intensity was simply unprecedented in the history of public agitation in this country. It stirred the public mind in Bengal to its very depth, and the rich and the poor, the prince and the peasant, the educated and the uneducated all rose as one man to oppose the violent dismemberment of their ancient province, and with it the dissipation of their cherished hopes of forming a united nation. From December 1903 to October 1905 over 2,000 public meetings attended by 500 to 50,000 people were held in the two parts of Bengal at which Hindus and Mahomedans with equal zeal and earnestness joined in the protest. The late Nawab Sir Salimullah of Dacca at an early stage of the agitation was reported to have denounced the scheme as a "beastly arrangement," though at a later period he seceded from the opposition for reasons well-known to the public.

As the agitation began to increase Lord Curzon grew more and more nervous; while public criticisms both in the press as well as on the platforms gradually made him more and more relentless. In February 1905 Lord Curzon made his famous speech at the Convocation of the Calcutta University in which he would not tread, as he said, on the "dusty fields" of education; but read a homily on the difference between Eastern and Western ethics and wantonly charged the

oriental character with want of veracity, He had evidently drawn his inspiration from Macaulay, but had failed to study the character of the people who had long outgrown Macaulay's over-drawn picture. The *Amrita Bazaar Patrika* at once met this sweeping denunciation with an equally scathing retort. An ugly incident from an account of his lordship's early travels in the Far East was unearthed out of its forgotten pages, with which he was rudely reminded of the trite old saying, that it was unwise for one who lived in a glass house, to pelt stones at others. This was followed by a huge demonstration at the Calcutta Town Hall where on the 11th March 1905 the people of Bengal met to protest against the utterances and proceedings of the Viceroy which had irritated the people beyond all measure of endurance. The meeting was presided over by Dr. Rash Behary Ghose who, deeply immersed in his professional business, had so long held himself aloof from all political discussions in the country and whom the sheer necessities of the situation forced to throw himself into the vortex of the agitation. The meeting after reviewing the entire administration of Lord Curzon passed a Resolution condemning all his retrograde proceedings culminating in the proposal for the disruption of an advanced province and of an extremely sensitive people passionately attached to their country. This was the first time when the people met openly to pass a vote of censure upon a Viceroy. This was, of course, too much for an equally sensitive Viceroy to tolerate and, descending from the proud pedestal of a Viceroy, Lord Curzon assumed the rôle of a political

agitator which he had so strongly condemned in his convocation speech. Fully resolved to crush this new spirit by dividing the people against themselves, Lord Curzon proceeded to East Bengal and there at large meetings of Mahomedans, specially convened for the purpose, explained to them that his object in partitioning Bengal was not only to relieve the Bengal administration, but also to create a Mahomedan province, where Islam would be predominant and its followers in the ascendancy, and that with this view he had decided to include the two remaining districts of the Dacca Division in his scheme. The Mussalmans of East Bengal headed by Nawab Salimullah of Dacca saw their opportunity and took the bait. Henceforth the Mahomedans of Eastern Bengal forgetting the broader question of national advancement and ignoring the interests of their own community in Western Bengal deserted the national cause and gradually began to secede from the anti-partition agitation. It is, however, only fair to admit that the most cultured and advanced among the Mussalmans did not flinch and speaking at the Congress of 1906. Nawabzada Khajah Atikullah, the brother of Nawab Salimullah openly said, "I may tell you at once that it is not correct that the Mussalmans of Eastern Bengal are in favour of the Partition of Bengal. The real fact is that it is only a few leading Mahomedans who for their own purposes supported the measure." The Central Mahomedan Association in Calcutta, in submitting its opinion to the Government through its Secretary, the late Nawab Ameer Hossain, C.I.E., observed :—"My Committee are of opinion that

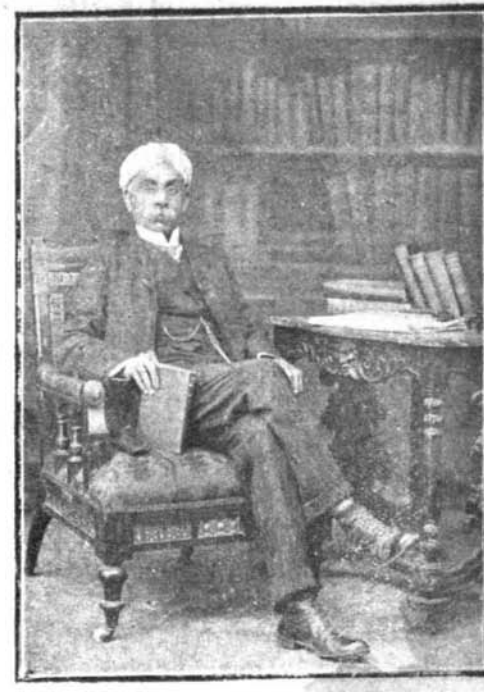
no portion of the Bengali-speaking race should be separated from Bengal without the clearest necessity for such separation, and they think in the present case such necessity does not exist."

The agitation, however, went on in course of which hundreds of memorials were submitted to Government as well as to the Secretary of State, one of which was submitted over the signature of 70,000 people of Eastern Bengal. But the Government maintained an attitude of mysterious silence until July, 1905, when a Government notification suddenly announced that the Secretary of State had sanctioned the Partition with effect from the 16th October 1905 and that the new Province was also to include the six districts of Northern Bengal. The people of Bengal would not however yield and took courage from despair. The idea of protecting indigenous industries had been long before the country, and now the people in different places began to discuss the question of eschewing British articles, when that devoted and unostentatious worker, Mr Krishna Kumar Mitra, openly advocated a general boycott in the columns of his well-known paper the *Sanjibani*. About a dozen of the leaders in Bengal met to discuss the situation at the Indian Association and after solemn deliberation resolved to boycott all foreign goods as a protest against this act of flagrant injustice. And on the 7th August was held the memorable meeting which inaugurated the Swadeshi Movement Such was the intensity of feeling created and such the stubbornness acquired by the national character, that on the fatal day of 16th October the

HON. SIR DINSHAW EDULJI WACHA
PRESIDENT, 1901.

HON. SIR C. SANKARAN NAIR
PRESIDENT, 1897.

ROMESH CHUNDER DUTT
PRESIDENT, 1899.



SIR N. G. CHANDAVARKAR
PRESIDENT, 1900.

scene in Bengal became one of wild demonstrations unparalleled in the history of the country. As on the day of the execution of Maharajah Nund Coomar the people of Calcutta rushed to the banks of the Ganges and bathed themselves in its sacred water as an expiation of the sin they had committed in witnessing for the first time a judicial murder in the land, so from the early morning of the 16th October, 1905, corresponding to the 30th Aswin 1312 of the Bengalee Era, the people in their hundreds and thousands in every city, town and village marched in solemn processions bare-footed and bare-bodied chanting, as dirges, national songs and repaired to the nearest channel or stream and after performing their ablution tied the *Rakhi*, the silken band of unity and fraternity, round one another's wrists when amid the deafening cries of *Bandemataram* took the solemn vow in the name of God and Motherland, that united they stood and no earthly power should divide them, and that so long as the Partition was not undone they would eschew, as far as practicable all foreign articles. They fasted the whole day during which all shops were closed and business and amusements stopped, while many were the towns which even according to official reporters wore the appearance of the city of the dead. Men, women and children all joined in the demonstration. So intense and widespread was the outburst of this unprecedented upheaval of the popular sentiment that the authorities had to take, in many places, particularly in the several districts, extraordinary measures in anticipation of breach of the peace. But the leaders had strictly resolved upon

passive resistance and constitutional agitation and everything passed off without any hitch anywhere. In their utter dislike of the Partition the people nicknamed the new Province as Ebassam and to accentuate their solidarity paradoxically designated the two severed Provinces as United Bengal. For seven long years the people persistently carried on the struggle and every year with renewed vigour and energy observed the 7th August as the day of national rejoicing and the 16th October as the day of national mourning.

Thus the Partition of Bengal was forcibly carried out in the teeth of a most frantic opposition, and although Lord Curzon appeared to have been fully justified in his bold assertion that, as far as the British public were concerned, the opposition would end in a blank volley of "a few angry speeches" on the floor of Parliament, he was entirely mistaken in his calculations that the last words on the subject would be heard in the House and that the people would after a short struggle quietly submit to the inevitable accepting his decision as a final settlement of their destiny. As has already been said Lord Curzon was reported to have come to India with "twelve problems" in his pocket: but whatever the other problems were, the three which he had put forward on Local Self-Government, Education and Administration were sufficient to convince the people that he came with a veritable Pandora's Box and let loose all the forces of disorder in the country, Hope alone remaining. Even the Anglo-Indian Press which was ever so loyal to the bureaucracy found itself unable to support his extravagant measures which, in the name of

efficiency, aimed at a complete revision, if not a revolution, of the entire system of British rule in India. The *Times of India* remarked :—

"One might well wish that Lord Curzon had not returned to India for the second time, for he could not have chosen a more effective way of wrecking his reputation than he has done."

Another Anglo-Indian paper observed, that :—

"Best of the measures (of Lord Curzon's administration) against which public criticism has lately been directed are designed to check a development which has at once been the conscious aim and the justification of British rule in India, and the worst of them are nothing more nor less than deliberate steps in reaction, opposed in method and in character, to those traditions which underlie what is commonly allowed to be, not only the greatest experiment, but the most remarkable attempt towards the government of an alien people of which the modern world has any record."

The *Englishman*, writing shortly after the Town Hall Meeting of the 7th August, 1905, said :—

"The change which is threatened has been determined upon in the teeth of a practically unanimous public opinion. There is no reason to suppose that this public opinion will become silent or non-existent as soon as the Partition is carried into effect. The situation will therefore be this : An administrative *Coup d' etat* without precedent will have been carried out. The people who will have to live under its results will be dissatisfied and uneasy. Now all governments, even the most despotic, are obliged to rule in the long run in accordance with the wishes of the governed, or at least to refrain from governing in direct opposition to those wishes. The difficulties of the Governor of the new province under the peculiar circumstance of its emergence would, one fears, be extreme, if not insuperable."

The *Statesman* of Calcutta wrote :—

"There never was a time in the history of British India when public feeling and public opinion were so little regarded by the Supreme Government as they are by the present administration. In this matter of the Partition of Bengal the force of public opinion has been remarkable. It could not indeed be otherwise, for in spite of their parade of consulting the 'legitimate interests' of the districts involved in the proposed separation, the Government is well aware that its scheme is a direct attack upon the

solidarity and the growing political strength of the Bengali race. * * * The Government may or may not choose to give weight to the outburst of feeling on the subject of the Partition, but it will necessarily recognize the new note of practicability which the present situation has brought into political agitation and it will sooner or later realise, that just as religions thrive on persecution, so there is nothing half so effectual as the systematic disregard of public opinion for fostering political discontent."

The following is taken from a leading article which appeared in the London *Daily News*:—

"Very little is known in this country concerning the scheme for the partitioning of Bengal as to which our Calcutta correspondent addresses us. Even the India Office is so much in the dark as to the merits and demerits of the proposal that it was unable to provide Mr. Brodrick with an intelligible brief when the question was raised by Mr. Roberts a week ago in the House of Commons. In India the announcement seems to have come as a complete surprise. In 1903 Lord Curzon was compelled to bow to the storm of criticism aroused by a much smaller readjustment of areas, and positive consternation has been created by the present proposal under which twenty-five millions of the people of Bengal are without a word of consultation to be handed over to a new local administration. . . . The inhabitants of Bengal contain a large proportion of educated persons, very many of whom occupy positions of influence and responsibility. What was there to prevent Lord Curzon taking counsel with the leading citizens and ascertaining the views of the localities concerned before enacting this tremendous change? We are afraid the only answer is, that Lord Curzon well knew the views of the people, but declined to argue with them, or to endeavour to persuade them. . . . That re-consideration is desirable, is obvious from every point of view. It cannot be good statesmanship to launch these new provinces in a condition of seething discontent, or to alienate a third of our fellow-subjects in India. There is no suggestion that the matter is a pressing one, and whatever elements of good the scheme may contain are likelier to be appreciated if a truce is called for the present than if Bengal is incontinently hurried up. The cost of the new administration, which is put in some quarters at nearly three millions sterling, calls for special attention at a time when India is suffering from heavy additional charges. We are convinced that Mr. Brodrick would greatly add to the service which he has already done to India if he could call a halt in this matter of the Partition."

Such was the verdict pronounced upon the *efficient* administration of the *brilliant* Viceroy who after seven years of vigorous rule found his unpopularity to be so universal that he advisedly left India as it were by the backdoor without paying even the customary farewell visit to the Metropolis where the historic Viceregal Palace recalled to him, as he himself said the memories of his baronial castle at Keddlestone.

The Congress usually dealt with questions affecting the whole country; but it also occasionally interested itself in matters of special local importance. Although the Partition of Bengal was apparently a provincial grievance, in its wider aspect it was regarded as a national question of the gravest significance, and as such the Congress took it up at its very inception in 1903, and year after year persistently repeated its protest in different centres until the whole country resounded with the voice of that protest. Apart from the special grievances of Bengal the measure involved a question of far-reaching consequences which was in conflict with its propaganda and threatened its ultimate aim of nation-building and national evolution with a collapse. The whole country, therefore, took this flagrant act of high-handedness as a most outrageous flouting of public opinion and a most callous disregard of the feelings and sentiments of the people. Besides it was pointed out that if such could be the fate of Bengal, what guarantee was there that a similar fate might not in future overtake the other provinces also? While, pointed reference was made to Sindh as a probable factor in the not too unlikely contingency that

might arise in the case of Bombay. Thus the Parsi, the Maharatta, the Madrasi, the Sindhi and the Punjabi rose as one man with the Bengali to undo the "settled fact." Speaking at the Congress of 1908, the Hon'ble Mr. Krishnan Nair of Madras feelingly observed, "the Partition of Bengal affects the whole country like a deep, bleeding and unhealing wound. So long as such a wound exists in the human body it is difficult, if not impossible, for that body to know peace or enjoy repose." Severe unrest prevailed throughout the country, while a most distressing development of the situation manifested itself both in Bengal as well as in the Deccan. The contemptuous treatment of public opinion by the authorities and their absolute indifference to every proposal of the Nationalists became the theme of public discussion both in the Press as well as on the platforms throughout the country ; while a series of repressive measures inaugurated by the Government of Lord Minto in quick succession to one another instead of providing a remedy for the situation served only to intensify the popular discontent. Advantage was taken of an old obsolete Regulation to deport, without a trial, men whose only fault lay in stubbornly opposing the "settled fact." Sober and dispassionate men like Mr. R. N. Mudholkar from the Berar and Mr. Subba Rao from Madras earnestly appealed to Government for a modification of the ill-starred measure, and none more passionately joined in the appeal than that young lion of the Deccan, Mr. Gopal Krishna Gokhale, who from his place in the Supreme Legislative Council, addressing the Viceroy, said, "My Lord, conciliate Bengal." But

in an atmosphere of prejudice and passion, the *fetish* of Prestige was in the ascendant and all the protests and appeals went unheeded. Mr. Gokhale went to England as an accredited representative of the Congress in 1905 and 1906, and on both the occasions he used his great powers of persuasion to impress the authorities as well as the public in England with the extreme inadvisability of persisting in the unpopular measure adopted by the Government of India. Mr. John Morley, who was then the Secretary of State for India, was by no means satisfied with the performance of Lord Curzon. But, although he found that the Partition had gone "wholly and decisively against the wishes of the majority of the people concerned," and openly characterised it as not being a *sacrosanct*, he dismissed the question as being a "settled fact." His predecessor in office Mr. Brodrick (afterwards Lord Middleton) had also in a spirit of half-heartedness, while not fully approving of Lord Curzon's proposals, sanctioned the Partition, and all the voluminous representations submitted to him, including the one containing over 70,000 signatures from Eastern Bengal, went for nothing. It has always been like this in India. She has suffered for things for which she could be hardly held responsible. Mr. St. John Brodrick had to provide an unguent for the wounded pride of a meddlesome Viceroy in the Curzon-Kitchener controversy; while Mr. John Morley, the author of *Compromise*, had to pilot his Reform Scheme through both the Houses of Parliament. There never was perhaps a better case so summarily dismissed in all its stages. People

in this country who had all their life worshiped "honest John" with almost idolatrous veneration lost all confidence in him, while men were not wholly wanting who actually went so far as to regard British Liberalism, so far as applicable to India, as a meaningless creed. Men like Sir Henry Cotton, Mr. Hebert Paul and Mr. Keir Hardie, however, kept up a continuous fire over the burning question in the Lower House and it is believed that it was this incessant heckling over Indian questions which was responsible for Mr. Morley's translation to the calmer region of the Upper House and his ultimate resignation of the Indian portfolio. In the Lords also the noble Marquess of Ripon in his old age raised his trembling voice against the infamous measure; while Lord Macdonald openly denounced it as "the hugest blunder committed since the battle of Plassey." And Lord Curzon finding that there was "none so poor as to do him reverence" attempted to throw the responsibility, like a hot potato, on Lord Ampthill and Lord Ampthill on Mr. Brodrick. But although the measure was thus denounced on all hands and there was none so bold as to claim its authorship, it yet seemed to possess a charmed life.)) At last Lord Morley was succeeded by Lord Crewe and in May, 1911, Mr. Bhupendranath Basu was deputed by the Indian Association, Calcutta, to represent the case of Bengal to the new Secretary of State, as it was felt that the forthcoming Coronation Durbar in India might be a fitting occasion for a satisfactory solution of the situation. No better selection could have been made and the trained lawyer and astute politician performed his mission in an eminently

satisfactory manner. With the help of Lord Reay Mr. Basu obtained an interview with Lord Crewe about the end of June and explained to him, with a degree of fulness and clearness hardly possible except in a personal interchange of views, the intolerable situation which had been created by the Partition and the remedy suggested by the people which was calculated not only to mend that situation, but which also afforded the most legitimate solution for the administrative difficulty of the vast Province. Lord Crewe gave him a patient and sympathetic hearing.// This was the first practical step taken by the people since the Partition was effected towards the solution of the thorny question which had set the country ablaze and let loose such harrowing miseries and disquietude throughout the country as even the Council reforms of Lord Morley were unable to remove. At this juncture, happily for India, as well as for England, Lord Hardinge succeeded Lord Minto with the rich legacy of a multitudinous population driven almost mad by a violent disruption of an ancient province and exasperated by a series of repressive and retrograde measures which a bold Indian jurist, enjoying at the time no less confidence and respect of the Government than of the people, openly denounced as "lawless laws." It has been truly said that history repeats itself; and Lord Hardinge like Lord Ripon came at a critical moment holding the olive branch of peace, sympathy and conciliation for the people. Lord Hardinge assumed office in November, 1910, and the leaders of Bengal at once organised a fresh campaign of anti-partition agitation.

Arrangements were made some time in May following for holding a demonstration of United Bengal in the Calcutta Town Hall as a signal for a fresh agitation under a new Secretary of State and a new Viceroy. A police officer was at this time assassinated in the streets of the metropolis evidently by an anarchist; and Lord Hardinge at once sent for Mr. Surendranath Banerjea and asked him not to create further public excitement at such a juncture, adding at the same time that if the object of the proposed demonstration was to draw attention of the Government, then the best course for the people was to submit their case quietly to the Government of India, and he assured Mr. Banerjea that such representation would receive his most careful consideration. The proposed campaign was accordingly dropped and a memorial was drawn up briefly reviewing the history of the disastrous measure and narrating the grievances of the people as well as the disturbances which had flowed from it. The memorial also dealt with the financial aspect of the question which the author of the partition had studiously avoided in the formulation of his scheme and finally, among several alternative suggestions, it earnestly prayed for a re-union of the several provinces of Bengal under a Governor in Council as in Bombay and Madras. The memorial concluded in the following words:—

"In conclusion, we beg to submit that for the first time in the history of British Rule in India His Majesty the King of England will be proclaimed Emperor of India on Indian soil, and His Majesty's loyal subjects in this great dependency look forward to the auspicious occasion with the sanguine hope that it will be marked by some substantial boons to the people. We venture to assure your Excellency, that as far as the bulk of the Bengalees are concerned, no boon will be more warmly