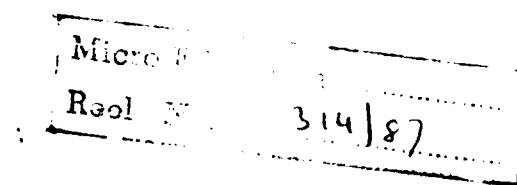


INDIA AT THE CROSSWAYS



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THE Vice-Chancellor has been influenced by memories of almost forgotten days in doing me the high honour of nomination as Rede lecturer. For that coveted post the qualification, I understand, is eminence in science or literature; and to that I cannot pretend. My only literature has been that of blue books; and my only science the somewhat empirical science of administration, practised in a distant region of our Empire. Coming fresh however from the task of administration in India, I am more than grateful to the Vice-Chancellor for straining his powers and affording me an opportunity of appealing to the University of Cambridge, to extend not only its sympathy, but its powerful help, to India at a crisis in her history. As my theme develops, I trust it will be apparent how that help can be given.

At a time when our minds are laden with the immensity of the task which

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confronts England in restoring the world to health after the cruel surgery of war, it is natural that most of us should have little leisure or inclination to reflect on the change in our imperial polity which will take place in India within the next few months. That change was not heralded by war or revolution. Its policy was enunciated in a brief reply given one August afternoon in the House of Commons to a seemingly casual question. Its evangel is an official report which some of you may never have seen. Its charter is a short Act of Parliament, 47 sections in length, which conveys, except in its preamble, little hint of its wide possibilities. And yet the change which is now being initiated in India may have consequences for the human race more momentous than those of the Russian revolution or the new map of Europe.

Stated briefly; the change in question is the establishment in India of legislative bodies in which the majority of members will be chosen by popular constituencies under a system of direct election. From these legislatures in each province will

be drawn ministers, to whom will be entrusted the executive control of certain departments of government. Powers of direction and veto will be reserved to the Viceroy, and within his province to each official governor. And for the departments which are not transferred to ministers but left under the old official agency, an emergency right to legislate by mandate will be vested in the same authorities, for use if necessary laws or the necessary supply are refused by the legislature. Ten years hence, a parliamentary commission will enquire and advise on the propriety of adding other branches of the administration to those under the control of ministers and reducing *pro tanto* the jurisdiction of the permanent officials. In technical summary, this is the new Indian polity which is to be inaugurated next January. I need not weary you by elaborating the contrast between it and the present system of government in India, where the ordering of the state rests in the hands of salaried officials appointed by the Crown and responsible only, in the last resort, to the British Parliament.

Hitherto the country has been ruled from without for what seemed to us to be its good, not always in consultation with the people, and sometimes in known opposition to their wishes. Henceforward there will be rule from within by representatives of the people, and in accordance with the will of the people as declared at the polls. It is true that the field of this new rule will at first be restricted, though in education and public health it includes at least two departments of vital national importance; but the decennial enquiries will inevitably lead to its extension. It is true also that the first electorates will be small and largely untaught; but they will be relatively as large as those which the Reform Act of 1832 created in England, their power will be real, and they will learn to use it. It is further true that the ultimate sovereignty will continue to reside as at present; but in practice its exercise will be moderated, as always in our Commonwealth history, by the growing momentum of the elective and representative principles. It is ostensibly an experiment,

this new method of government; but, unless the present temper of the world alters, it can have only one issue. What we are introducing into India is the machinery of western democratic government. Even in the west its powers and tendencies have not been fully tested: in the east they are all but untried and incalculable.

There are those who deny any novelty to the democratic principle of representative government in India. Their general arguments are as generous a reading of history as that of the patriotic Hindus who find allusions to aeroplanes in the Sanscrit epics. Their more precise contention is that democratic institutions, in the form of limited monarchies, city states and village councils, have been familiar in India from the earliest times. When we turn to sober annals, we see in the Greek historians some glimpses of republican states in northern India, governed apparently by aristocratic oligarchies. We are told that, in the great Hindu kingdoms which belong to India's golden age, there were consultative assem-

blies; but the latest historian of India, Mr V. A. Smith, gave it as his verdict that the normal government of these kingdoms was 'always untempered autocracy or despotism.' And here in Cambridge, to one of whose great jurists we owe the reconstruction of the village-community, we must not forget the venerable tribunal of the Village Elders. Maine himself however was most guarded in his description of their functions; he defined them as quasi-judicial, quasi-legislative, and made no claim for them to executive or fiscal authority. Later research has made it doubtful whether, over any substantial area in India, the council of five, as the village elders were generally called, was ever a real administrative organ, or anything more than a tribunal for simple justice and the settlement of social disputes. There is thus no evidence, other than of the most limited and local character, that the organization of Indian life was ever distinguished by those features which are now regarded as the essentials of a democratic society. Their introduction into

city life of recent years has been halting and indecisive: their incursion into the sphere of the state opens up a new world.

Turn now for a moment to India's past, and consider how far it has trained her for the use of this new machinery of social life. It is a favourite pastime with historians to divide the story of a country into periods, corresponding to their estimate of the stages in its growth. To those who see in the history of mankind the slow unrolling of a continuous plan, teleological or evolutionary, this partitioning of time has little real value, except perhaps mnemonic. The only true epoch is that which covers the growth and fruition of an idea. But ideas have a habit of overlapping, of ignoring geographical boundaries, and of converting themselves into practice at very different places in different lands. The stratification of history into periods is thus a complex and unsatisfactory device. Particularly is this the case in India, whose isolation warded off the disintegrating forces of new ideas and social experiments; and if we search for

a principle of existence or growth which shall transcend the text-book periods of Indian history, I think we shall find only two great epochs in her authentic story. These cover, first the consolidation, and second the ossification (if, failing a clearer term, I may use that word without offence) of the Hindu system. My audience to-day needs no reminding that the Hindu system includes in closest union both the social and the religious organization of Hindu life.

The first of these periods begins in that mist of mythology which veils the whole social structure of India before the seventh century B.C. The Aryan immigrants were permeating the country, subjugating the scattered indigenes, and forming that obscure association with the Mongolian powers in north-east India which was to be so fruitful in results. The priesthood were engaged in their secular struggle for social ascendancy; and out of their intolerance emerged in revolt the Jain and the Buddhist churches. In the end those gentle faiths were beaten, the former into obscurity, the latter into exile; and

Brahmanism remained triumphant. Its weapon of caste was completely forged. Society assumed the form of horizontal layers. On the summit sat the Brahman, secure in his ceremonial sanctity; at his right hand stood the warrior king or emperor; and in concert, these two organized Indian life until the epoch closed. How Hindu civilization would have developed if it had been left alone, or if it had had sufficient cohesion to repel the Moslem invasions, who can tell? For our present purpose, we are concerned only with the civic life of the people; was it touched in any way by the spirit of democracy, or practised in free institutions? Dim and accidental are the tapers of history on that distant scene; but all our materials point to a negative answer. Under the Mauryas, contemporary with Alexander the Great, there was stringent centralization and capable officialdom, a great empire held together by militarism and espionage, an efficient but wholly autocratic state. The Guptas, several centuries later, left ample evidence of growing culture and diffused prosperity,

of greater tolerance and freedom, but no trace of any democratic elements in the administration. Later again, in the mediaeval flux of Hindu kingdoms before the Mahomedan invasion, art and literature abounded ; but, to quote again from Mr. Vincent Smith,

the never-ending dynastic wars and revolutions did not bring about any development of political institutions. No republics were formed, no free towns were established. All the states continued to be governed in the old-fashioned way by despotic Rajas, each of whom could do what he pleased, so long as his power lasted, unless he suffered his will to be controlled by brahman or other religious guides.

The second epoch began with the inrush of the Mahomedan conquerors. On their story, from the twelfth century until they were finally displaced by the British power, it is unnecessary to dwell. Like the invaders themselves, their social and administrative system was exotic ; and under its pressure the Hindu cosmos ceased to bloom, and set into the rigidity of a struggle for life. The miseries of the people during those six centuries are not our immediate concern. We may perhaps be apt to exaggerate them, as we read the

endless chronicles of conquest and rapine and exactions, and it may be that away from the routes of the imperial armies life was reasonably secure. But its anxieties were too insistent to allow of any searching after political growth ; and the energies of Hinduism were spent in resisting destruction. It is their device for that purpose which is the characteristic political feature of this, our second epoch in Indian history. Briefly speaking, and subject (like every generalization about India) to infinite local reservations, the old stratified Hindu society broke up into vertical sections for defence. Centralized authority disappeared, and a mass of local organizations took its place. Their type, in northern India at least, was always similar and is admirably described in Mr. Benett's introduction to the *Oudh Gazetteer* of 1877. The old alliance between the brahman priest and the warrior raja continued. The raja ruled whatever territory he could seize and retain ; the brahman supported him and interceded between him and his subjects. With the people under his sway, he had no ties of

blood. They paid him rent for their lands, and a long tale of manorial dues. In return he gave them justice, protected them from the myrmidons of the Court, trained them as a rough militia, and led them in battle. It was feudalism, not only blessed by the Hindu religion, but forming an integral part of it; and thus it commanded the implicit allegiance of Hindu society. The status of the raja fluctuated inversely with the strength of the imperial power, and directly with his own skill in absorbing his smaller neighbours. On succeeding to the Delhi throne, we found rajas of every magnitude. Some of them, whose descendants are among the princes of Rajputana, had states larger than the minor countries of Europe; others ruled over a few acres; and there was vast variety between. But in all there was one common feature; they were despots, benevolent often, but never dependent on the people's will. The raja, as Mr Benett is careful to point out, was not to be compared with the chieftain of a clan or the patriarch of an eastern tribe. He and the brahman

ruled the physical and the spiritual life of his people, whose duty was only to obey.

Here then we stand in India, with two great historical epochs behind us; and my thesis is that a third is opening. In the first Hinduism was forming itself in a wholly favourable environment, embodying itself in a social system and a culture which were only in the making when the curtain was rung down. In the second epoch all development stopped, and Hinduism was forced in upon itself by foreign domination. Congealed in opposition to the ruling power, it degenerated into feudalism and split into countless petty geographical sections. Meanwhile the tyranny of caste hardened, family life got more exclusive, and all reform in faith and doctrine was stifled. In neither period was there any shadow of responsible institutions or of democratic rule; and in the second there was forced into the Indian polity a foreign and incompatible element—the Mahomedan settlers, numerous and restless, fervent proselytizers, utterly incongruous with

the Hindu system, and contemptuous of political union.

Believe me, in all this prolix argument from the past, I have had no thought of disparaging the policy of the future. My purpose has been solely to explain how new and strange is the democratic principle of government to the masses in India, and to justify my contention that we are on the threshold of a third historical epoch. Even that contention I should not labour as I have done, save as a measure of the gravity of the change and of our responsibility for it. This third epoch has long been foretold by thinkers of vision, like your historian Seeley. But the ordinary Englishman has put it off as a question of no practical urgency. Benevolent statesmen have spoken of it as a comforting doctrine for the distant future. That future is now upon it, and its problems are knocking at our door.

I should like however to guard myself against appearing to suggest that the change has come without warning or some degree of preparation. No great

social or political change is ever a cataclysm to those who are patient to read the signs of the times; and the Indian reforms are no exception to this truth. The view is frequently expressed that British rule in itself made the coming changes inevitable; but without thus begging the question, the facts are sufficiently explicit. The British rule has now been acting for a century as a slow unacknowledged solvent of the hard combinations and the sharp antagonisms which we have seen to be the dominant features of Indian society since the Mahomedan invasions. The feudal system, except where we left it enthroned in the Native States, has broken down. It is the British officer who now administers justice, and takes the revenue from the land, and protects the people from armed force: the Raja's work is over. In many cases his prestige endures, through the permanence of Indian sentiment and his own personal qualities; but far oftener he has disappeared, or remains only as an unpopular landlord, whom his tenants fight in our rent-courts as often as they

our education, it has been electrifying. From us they have been learning all that we could teach of the equality of men and their birthright of political freedom, to say nothing of the more recent catch-words which festoon the doctrine of self-determination. So taught, they perceive the obvious discrepancies between our theory and our practice; and out of the soil thus prepared and nurtured there has grown the tree of Nationalism. The story of the rise of Nationalism is one which I could not sketch today: those who care to study it will find it told, with lucidity and fairness, in a volume¹ by one of my late colleagues in the Indian Civil Service, Sir Verney Lovett. Nor is it my design today to attempt a judgment upon it or its fruits. Nationalism is with us in India, a growing power in the land. Its methods may be crude, and its idealism may be, as it has been, perverted by unscrupulous agents into anarchical crime. But the indwelling spirit is at work, and it is the spirit

¹ *A History of the Indian Nationalist Movement*, by Sir Verney Lovett: John Murray, 1920.

which now animates an ever-increasing majority of the intellectuals whose co-operation we must have in the government and development of the country.

Such in briefest outline are the leading tendencies that have been preparing India for the new era. To some it may seem that the preparation has been inadequate, even if they accept the *dénouement* as inevitable. The Nationalist spirit, whatever its merits, has been working in a vacuum of inexperience; opportunities have been lacking for its infusion into the practical work of politics. In the social fabric, change has been timid and partial. We have stood aside from the work of social reform; our influence has been disintegrating rather than constructive. The advent of democracy has outrun the training for it. The slow philosophy of India is not yet seised of the theory; and still India hopes to achieve in a generation or two what has cost England long centuries of patient toil. It is as if in English history we could conceive Runnymede, and Cromwell's commonwealth, and the

and between them there is often much mutual esteem and neighbourliness, especially among the humbler classes. It is precisely among those classes however that religious intolerance, when occasion happens to arouse it, is most dangerous. Unfortunately such occasions are frequent, especially in northern India. Let me mention one of the commonest. In the Hindu faith no tenet is more universal than the sanctity of the cow; to kill a cow in the sight or hearing of a Hindu causes him deep and unfeigned distress; I have seen a most accomplished brahman weep at the mere mention of it. On the other hand, the poorer Indian Mahomedan has come to regard it as an act of special piety to sacrifice a cow on the great annual festival which commemorates the episode of Abraham and Isaac on the mountain in Moriah. In many a quiet countryside tension becomes acute every year over this perennial dispute: Hindus endeavour to prevent the sacrifice by force, and the Mahomedans are equally violent in its defence. If the strong arm of the law succeeds—though

it frequently fails—in averting riot and bloodshed, the Hindus probably retaliate later in the year by leading noisy marriage processions past their neighbours' mosque during the days when Islam is in deepest mourning for the tragedy at Kerbala. Bludgeons are out again, and passion runs high for weeks. Friction of this sort may seem to us trivial and childish, but it touches most sensitive chords in the hearts of the common people, and no solution of the cow-killing question has yet been found acceptable to pious Hindus. Among the upper classes there is not the same vehemence in matters of faith: but it is replaced by economic rivalry. The Mahomedans have been left somewhat behind in the race for education and public office; and they resent loudly the share of loaves and fishes enjoyed by the Hindus. At the same time they offend the Hindus by pretensions to social and political superiority. There is a tendency among the less considerate of them to be contemptuous of Hindu literature and culture generally; and privileges are claimed on

conciliable, divergence of racial and sectional interests in India. When Mr Montagu and Lord Chelmsford set out in the winter of 1917 to examine plans for the new constitution, nothing was more striking or, to friends of India's progress, more disquieting than the manner in which they were bombarded from every quarter by demands that representation should be reserved on the new Councils for special interests. The territorial system of election was scouted. Mahomedans, Sikhs, Europeans, Marathas, Eurasians, Indian Christians and other less known sections of society were claimants for exceptional treatment. Landed, commercial and money-lending classes joined the throng; and if the prayers of one tenth of the applicants had been acceded to, the new legislatures would be nothing but a congeries of sectional labels. In only one point did the various petitioners agree,—their certainty that they would not meet with justice at the hands of the majority. There was thus a definite rejection of the cardinal principle of the democratic

state, that the minority may influence, but must ultimately obey, the will of the majority. So widespread and genuine was the alarm that Mr Montagu and Lord Chelmsford had reluctantly to yield and provide for the communal representation of certain prominent classes, the Mahomedans in particular. To do otherwise indeed would have been to doom the new constitution to failure from the outset: for so strong is the mistrust of the different communities for each other that in no other circumstances could they have been induced to work together. But here again is a test for the future. How long will India tie itself to a principle of government which places sectional above national interests? how long will it crystallize the present class divisions, and imprison the smaller communities within walls which, raised ostensibly for their protection, merely debar them from adding their weight to the public good? It is easy for us to ask these questions. We have no temptation to mark off certain seats in the House of Commons for which only members of the labouring

classes may be returned, others for which only Roman Catholics, and others for which only Scotchmen. We have long outlived a state of society where such a device would be necessary; but with India's history it is at present unavoidable. It will be through experience and tribulation that men's minds will come to perceive how communal isolation in the agencies of government weakens the body politic and retards its growth into the perfect state where, as Aristotle puts it, "all the citizens must alike participate in an alteration of rule and subjection."

One other question in political pathology before we leave this branch of the subject. How are the new popular legislatures going to organize themselves into that antithesis of parties which Englishmen conceive as essential to political health? There are at present no parties, in our parliamentary sense, in the Indian province. Nationalists are divided temporarily into moderates and extremists; the former ready to work the new constitution and prove their capacity for wider powers; the latter insistent on the

Dominion type of responsible government, not by instalments, but in full and at once or within a definite period. This hardly seems to be a partition which will survive the absorptions of actual administrative work when once its difficulties are realized; and fresh creeds, or at least fresh labels, will replace it. Meanwhile the first elections will be decided almost wholly on issues personal to the candidates; and ministers will come into office with little or no assurance of the organization on which they may count for support, or of the organization to which they may look for criticism. Conjecture points to an initial system of groups; and though it may well be that our familiar party government is not the last word in political wisdom, yet little confidence could be felt, in India's present circumstances, in government by a shifting combination of sectional groups. Bad as it is, however, even this would be preferable to any arrangement of parties on racial grounds; for it is not easy to conceive a greater danger than the crystallizing into parties of the Hindu-

Moslem cleavage. The normal classification of political mankind is into those who wish to stand still and those who wish to move forward; and that would seem by far the most natural balance in India.

So much for the mechanism and methods of the new polity. Let us turn now to by far the most difficult country which lies in front of us at the crossways. It is covered with the undergrowth of a depressing philosophy and archaic social conditions; and it may be divided into the three fields of education, economic progress and social reform. Without the first of these, the other two are impossible, and the second is impossible without the third.

Your Regius Professor of Modern History has recently set the world a thinking of its good fortune in living at a time when progress has become an axiom of life. To the Hindu mind the universe is only a passing stage in an endless round of birth, growth, decay and death. Human effort and prayer are powerless to avert the ruin of all that

human energy has built up; and there is no hope that the next re-birth will be on one whit a higher level than its fore-runners in aeons past. We are now in a period of decadence, moving back into primeval nothingness, and the best inventions of man are only part of the Creator's inflexible plan for his ultimate destruction. Combine this psychology with the Moslem's acceptance of almost anything as the divine will. Add a climate which saps energy and discourages initiative; and you have all the ingredients of what is known as oriental fatalism. It is this philosophy of despair which the British administration gives its whole mind to combating. It is the dead hand on Indian life, the heaviest burden which the Indian statesman will now have to undertake.

In practical business, fatalism translates itself into a facile contentment with the second-best. Of no function of the state is this more true than of education. Our whole energies, in so far as the government controls education, have been bent in the direction of greater efficiency; and we have always felt that the Nationalist

party tended to throw its influence into the scale against us. With Sir Michael Sadler's monumental report on the Calcutta university in your libraries, you will not expect me to expound either the official theory of educational progress, or the popular rejoinder. Here they are however in as few words as possible. The ordinary Indian university, as we fear, being solely an examining body, has a tendency to become too generous in the grant of degrees; and there is a grave danger of creating a discontented mass of unemployed and poorly equipped literati. To avert this, the university must be endowed with a teaching and a residential character, and it ought to raise its standards so that its degree is the hall-mark of a sound and useful education. In the present condition of our colleges and schools however, the degree standard cannot be stiffened up without a dangerous proportion of failures. Our colleges accordingly must specialize more and employ more competent teachers. The schools which feed the colleges must provide a longer curriculum and more intensive

training. In brief, larger expenditure is wanted on salaries, and a limitation on the size of classes. All this, we hold, is equally true for literary, scientific or technical education; primary instruction is entirely a question of money and the more energetic training of schoolmasters. Such are our pleas. Our critics retort that we think too much of quality and too little of quantity; that there is nothing cryptic in the art of teaching; that what India most needs at this stage is cheap and abundant education; that it will be time enough to raise standards when the universal cloud of ignorance begins to lift; and that meanwhile our policy is hampering India's progress. On these lines there is controversy over every improvement in the educational machinery which the official government attempts. Each side fights its case with fervour and in perfect good faith, and remains unconvinced by the other. The improvement, if it is carried out at all, has to be enforced under protest or by a heavy lubrication of grants-in-aid.

I apologize for wearying you with

these details; but they illustrate the eternal conflict between the second-best and something better. In this particular field the contest has been closed by the decision to place the department of education, from universities downwards, in charge of ministers. It was against the advice of the Government of India that this decision was reached, and anxiety may well be felt as to the consequences. Indian opinion however was unanimous in its demand for popular control over education; there was a general feeling that our direction of it had not been successful, and that the spirit of Nationalism is needed to vivify it, while ministers alone will be able to raise the necessary enthusiasm and money for its development. And so the matter is settled; but a heavy obligation has been laid on ministers, and their control of education will be the severest test of the new constitution.

To economic progress in India the second-best will be an equally deadly enemy; and its chief henchman will be waste. There is waste everywhere in the

country. Nature, at least to our finite understandings, is wasteful in her denudation of mountains and the ravages of her great rivers. Man follows her example in his social practices and his work. Society swarms with parasites; and the whole organization of industry and wealth is backward. Nationalists place among their first ambitions the development of industries, so as to reduce the enormous export of raw materials. With this they combine the demand for a high tariff, to protect local enterprise and exclude foreign rivals. And yet the country cannot at present manufacture a power loom or a railway waggon. In thinking of the organization of the national wealth, the mind naturally reverts to the shocking history of rural credit, and the abuses which we have done something, though still far too little, to amend. The relations between the ignorant peasantry and the village usurers, between improvident landlords and their professional creditors are bad enough in their moral and political aspects; but they are even worse in their implication of wasted

capital and uneconomic effort. To rectify all this and to employ the savings of the prudent in honest banking enterprise is work that has not yet, except in Bombay, attracted Indian talent. It is a task upon which the best minds of the community can be worthily engaged. The charge of industries, like that of education, is being laid upon ministers; and in no department will they be more dependent upon the help of western experts. This is indeed one of the thorniest of the paths which Indian statesmanship will have to explore.

Entirely dissimilar from any of the administrative problems that we have been considering, is the third field for political energy that we descry from the crossways, the field of social reform. It is essentially work for the people themselves, under prudent and enlightened leadership, and without our help. The more closely therefore will their success or failure be watched, as a gauge of their fitness for complete responsibility. To survey the field today in detail would be impossible, and would in any case involve

some risk of wounding Indian susceptibilities. There are certain outstanding features however which are the world's property. First and most prominent is the treatment of caste. On this pillar of the Hindu structure no political Samson is likely to lay impious hands. But it will require no ordinary casuistry to reconcile caste disabilities with democratic theory; and, as a practical question, the exaggerated vocational exclusiveness of caste is a serious handicap to the efficiency of industry. Conventions may arise—they are not beyond brahmanical ingenuity—to ease the situation; and a movement, which is already on foot to recognize inter-caste civil marriages, may go far to restore balance to a system which, despite some admirable features, has largely outgrown its usefulness. Indian gentlemen of the upper castes who are prominent in public life have given repeated assurances of their anxiety to mitigate the severity of intercourse with the lower castes, and have pointed to the social service work that is now being done among the lower orders in

many parts of India. They may have further opportunities of advancing the good cause when they come to deal in authority with labour conditions. For considerable temptations will offer themselves to wealthy and aristocratic employers, in the course of industrial expansion, to exploit the defenceless helot castes for their own advantage. The higher patriotism of enlightened political leaders will no doubt be on guard against such abuses.

Next, and most difficult of all, is the future of women, on which it is necessary to speak with the utmost reserve. Enthusiasts for women's rights, in their eagerness to secure the consent of Parliament last year to female suffrage in India, left the British public under the impression that the seclusion of women (the *parda* or *gosha* system) is disappearing. Nothing could be further from the fact. Save with a small emancipated minority, the seclusion of women after they pass early childhood is still, in the greater part of India, a sign of respectability among the middle and upper classes, both

Hindu and Mahomedan. Many of my Indian friends are confident that the lady behind the screen is often as intellectual, as good a mother, as shrewd a ruler of the home, and certainly as contented, as her open-air western sister. Others believe that the absence of women from society in which men do congregate makes for the greater happiness of the greatest number. Without either traversing or accepting these statements, one may nevertheless doubt whether seclusion, as it is necessarily practised in households of moderate means, is humane or hygienic, or provides robust mothers for the coming generation. This is a question which India must settle for herself, not forgetting its bearing on the social relations in private life between India and other nations.

On a kindred group of questions, though no outside interference is conceivable, the attitude of new India will be anxiously awaited by her friends. I refer to premature marriages (as opposed to infant betrothal), to the enforced celibacy of young Hindu widows, and to the

care of the young mother; and having mentioned them, I say no more. Those who know India have some dim conception—it can hardly be more than that—of the immense volume of human misery and suffering which lie behind these phrases; and we may hope that political freedom will bring with it the necessary courage to deal with them.

There remains the question of female education, a branch of our work in which we have had little success, and less support from the people. In theory the schooling of girls is accepted as a desirable thing; in practice it is desperately neglected. The stimulus to improvement must come from within, and the case for it is unassailable.

One problem there is, facing us at the crossways, which is not one exclusively of politics, or of economics, or of sociology, but partakes of all three. In a country so largely agrarian as India, the rural vote must become an immense power in the future. It is now being fixed, for a period presumably of ten years, on qualifications which, though

they seem to us extraordinarily low, will enfranchise only a small fraction of the cultivating classes. An extension of voting power is inevitable, and the first representatives of the people will have to consider how to prepare for it. The voter of the future will have to be educated, not only in the three R's, but also in the bigger political issues which he will have to decide. This means propaganda in the villages; and political campaigns in the villages involve two dangers. One is the danger of disturbing the minds of an ignorant and highly inflammable people, among whom misunderstanding rapidly spreads and violence is easily aroused. The other is peculiar to northern India, where landlords are interposed between the state and the cultivator, and are responsible for paying the revenue from the land. Here the constant demand of the cultivator is for fair rents and fixity of tenure; and if one political party or group should elect to use these privileges as a battle-cry, the situation between landlord and tenant might become acute: there are already faint

whispers of such an opening, including a No-Rent campaign. The political leaven working in the vast rural areas of India may thus imperil both the peace of the country and its exchequer; and the greatest possible restraint and prudence will be required in nursing the rural voter. Where there is a defined landlord class, as in Bengal, much will depend on their sagacity. Hitherto they have shown little interest in political developments; but they will almost certainly be stung into action by the urban politician; and if their interposition is wisely planned, their administrative experience should be of much value in the new régime.

And now I am conscious of having kept you standing too long at the cross-ways. My endeavour has been to show how little preparation India as a nation has had for the plunge into democratic institutions; how foreign to the democratic principle are her history, traditions and social usages; and how sharply the democratic idea of progress will impinge upon the whole organization of her peo-

ple's life. With this prelude I then tried to depict the complexity of the political problems which lie before her. It is true that among these problems there are some—labour, education, land tenures—which are familiar enough in other countries; but how different is the machinery for handling them. In countries with an older political life, the electorate is practised in watching its own interests, in organizing opinion and bringing it to bear on the legislature. In India a small section of public men have to work upon a perfectly raw electorate, to create public opinion before they can lead it, to take decisions and initiate policies with no defined party behind them. This responsibility will be fastened upon them while they are handicapped by administrative inexperience, and uncertain of the grouping of discordant interests which will determine their tenure as parliamentary leaders. Even the commonplaces of political advance will thus assume difficulties of their own in India. Other complexities there are, of a character wholly peculiar to India. Some of them

are of surpassing intricacy, as they touch the roots of a social system which interlaces with the national religion and has been indurated by centuries of resistance to outside pressure. Their solution calls for the genius of the statesman as well as the adroitness of the politician.

I wish to be careful against overstating the position. The new popular element in provincial governments will not be saddled with the care of foreign affairs, the defence of the country, its railways, tariffs, posts and telegraphs: these will remain under the central authority of the Government of India, an executive body directly responsible to the British Parliament, and exempt in all essentials from popular control in India. Likewise in each province the Governor and his permanent staff will retain, for at least ten years from now and probably for much longer, the responsibility for law and order, the courts of justice, and the more important sources of revenue. In a sense therefore the new ministers will be given breathing-space and protection in grappling with their domestic problems:

otherwise their position would be impossible and the scheme of reforms a mockery. Even as thus lightened, their burden will be heavy. The unaccustomed daily administrative detail of their departments will be exacting. In the parliamentary sphere, the acknowledged leadership will be a station of little ease, as party discipline will be lacking and there will be much intrigue for place and power. The legislative councils too have to be dissolved every three years; and it will take several triennial elections to determine the grouping of interests and the balance of parties. And yet, during all these pre-occupations, it will be necessary for ministers to be testing ideals and formulating policy. For the problems before them are alive; they are in permanent contact with the administration of the hour; and they have to be handled in such a way as will convince the British Parliament of the fitness of the popular government for further power when the constitution is next revised.

Fortunately, during this period of strain

and transition, ministers will have at their command a permanent public service, trained in the routine of administration and imbued with honourable traditions. It is hardly to be expected that the minister will lean easily on the civil servant at the outset; for their association does not begin under the happiest auspices. With the consent, or through the apathy, of Parliament, the civil service has been the *de facto* ruler of India for sixty years, and it will not abdicate without reluctance and misgiving. Moreover, as a body, they are unhappy about the new constitution, believing that it goes too far and too fast. On the other hand, a section of the Nationalists have untiringly painted the civil service as the arch-enemy of their ambitions, determined to make all reform a failure. It will need mutual goodwill to heal the breach; but I am confident that the civil service may be relied upon, now that a course has been set for them, to abide by it in all loyalty, and to give ministers their best support and counsel.

Later the situation will change. The

leaders of the people will acquire confidence. Some sort of party machinery will be set up. Clearer issues will go before the electorates, and the electorates will gain practice in expressing their wishes. The true Indian policy will then begin to develop. The exact lines of its development no man living, however intimate his knowledge of India, can possibly foretell. They will probably be very different from anything we imagine today; they will certainly be very different from our English models. There is no distaste for those models, which the Indian thinker respects and admires; but the divergence of origins, of race instincts and, above all, of religions, makes any ultimate spontaneous identity of institutions unthinkable. We may leave this to the future; but there is one tempting field for speculation in the political relation between the different geographical divisions of India. The British provinces will no doubt continue to be held together by the central government as arbiter in their differences and as warden of their outer marches. But

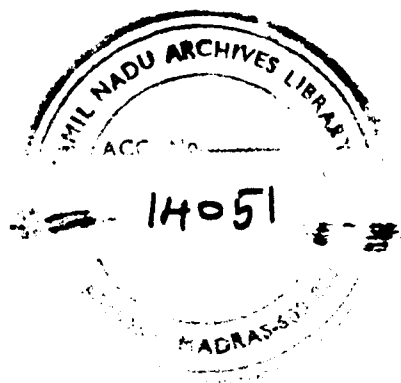
for domestic policy and their many common interests they will tend towards an association of a federal type. And what of the Native States? It seems humanly certain that, if democracy takes root in British India and is nurtured wisely and well, it will spread into the adjoining territories of the Indian Princes, and invite them to exchange their present rôle for that of constitutional rulers. Is it not an attractive vision, this great sub-continent of the future, comprising many daughter powers, varying in their political status as in their natural gifts, vying with each other in the growth of a new eastern civilization, at one in their common allegiance to the British crown,—the United States of India?

Let it pass as a vision, and let us come back to the practical business of the middle future. It is at this stage of Indian life, when the first real stirrings of democracy are visible, and when the ship of state sets full sail into uncharted seas, that our association with Indian politics will be of consuming interest. According to the gloomy Hindu philosophy, we live in the

Kali-yuga, or iron age of decay and faithlessness, which culminates in the destruction of the world, an age when all efforts are vain and all hopes illusory. With human nature's happy habit of paradox, India is full of hope and effort today; but she needs our help to bring them to realization. I renew my appeal therefore to the men of action, the statesmen, the philosophers, now in embryo at this University. I appeal more particularly to those who are interested in the Indian Civil Service, and the Indian Educational Service. The number of Englishmen in those services will tend to diminish, and the conditions of their work will not be so easy or pleasant as a generation earlier. But their responsibility in their different spheres will be higher and their real power greater; for they can be, if they choose, the guides and trusted counsellors of the forward movement. I have never been content to believe that an English administrator's best work is completed when he has restrained the lawless, or redeemed the wilderness, or transmuted order into chaos. There is

anner work even than that—the building up of a nation, and the helping of it along, strange paths into a new light. Such is the mission of the Civil Service of India in the future ; and hand in hand with it must go the work of the trained educationist. If Cambridge can send a few of its best men every year to qualify for those high callings, it will be adding to its many claims upon the gratitude of the world. But from your University India would ask even a larger gift—your recognition of the long road which lies before her, and your sympathetic tolerance of what may often seem her slow and painful progress along it.

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