

ie Hon. Mr. G. K. Gokhale's
Speech

AT THE INAUGURAL MEETING

OF

the Madras Elementary ::

:: Education League

ON 22nd AUGUST 1911

MADRAS: G. C. LOGANADHAM BROS.
THE "GUARDIAN PRESS," MOUNT ROAD

1911

THE ADDRESS OF THE HON'BLE MR. G. K. GOKHALE ON THE
OCCASION OF INAUGURATING THE ELEMENTARY
EDUCATION LEAGUE IN MADRAS,

22-7-1911.

MR. CHAIRMAN, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,—I really do not know how to express my thanks to this large and representative gathering of the citizens of Madras for the extreme kindness and cordiality of the reception which they have been pleased to accord to me this afternoon. This enthusiastic meeting in this hall, the distinction which has been lent to it by the presence of so many of the best men of Madras here and, last but not least, the fact that you, Sir, venerated and beloved not only in this Presidency (cheers) but throughout the whole country, should, in spite of the growing weight of infirmities, have come here to bestow your blessing on this movement, all this constitutes an encouragement of which any public worker in the country may be proud and which, to my mind, is an augury of the speedy triumph of the great cause which we all of us have so much at heart.

This League of which we hold to-day the inaugural meeting has been brought into existence with the declared object of organising public opinion in support of the Elementary Education Bill which was introduced into the Viceroy's Legislative Council last March. As I happen for the moment to be identified in a special measure with that Bill, may I take this opportunity of conveying an expression of my profound gratitude to the leaders of public opinion and the public bodies of Madras for the almost unanimous, the whole-hearted and enthusiastic support which they have given to that measure? Those of us who are acquainted with the condition of the different parts of India, the three leading Presidencies of this country, *viz.*, Bengal, Bombay and Madras, sometimes feel that while the gift of spiritual vision has been given to Bengal in a pre-eminent degree and that of practical action to Bombay, in regard to deep and acute thinking Madras carries the palm. When a proposed measure receives a unanimous and enthusiastic stamp of approval from the people of Madras, the framers of that measure have

every reason to regard the situation both with hope and satisfaction. This is the first occasion after the introduction of the Bill on which I am speaking publicly on the subject. And that being so, I hope you will not take it amiss if I take this opportunity to make a further statement on it. Last March, in speaking of this Bill at the time of its introduction, I ventured to say in Council that if the Council granted me the permission that I sought at its hands to introduce the Bill, the discussion of the measure would then be transferred from the Council Chamber to the press and platform of this country. That idea at any rate has been amply justified. In fact, all those who are interested in this measure had no reason to be dissatisfied with the amount of attention which the measure has called forth in every part of India. It has been my duty to follow with the closest interest all the criticisms, friendly and otherwise, that have been passed on this measure and, having followed the criticism in that close manner, I think that certain misapprehensions which have been expressed in certain quarters may well be removed on this occasion. At any rate, I may try my best just now to remove them. If you examine the Bill, you may divide it into portions that concern the principles of the Bill and portions that are merely details. The principles on which the Bill is founded stand on a different footing from its details. What are those principles of the Bill? That is the first question to answer. And then what are the details which call for the most attention and criticism? That would be the next question to answer.

To my mind there are three principles in the Bill. First of all, the Bill aims at introducing the principle of compulsion into the elementary education system of this country. Secondly, it seeks to do this not by going in for compulsion at once, but gradually, by empowering local bodies whose areas are ripe for compulsion to go in for compulsion. And the third principle is that the initiative in regard to compulsion is to be taken by local bodies, the sanction of Government being required before compulsion is introduced, and Government also having to find a certain proportion of the total cost. But the chief responsibility for initiating this compulsion rests on local bodies. All these three to my mind are fundamental portions of the Bill. And I do not think that it is possible to change any

one of these principles or to suggest or arrive at any compromise in regard to them. Not that I mean that if anything stronger than this Bill were possible I should hesitate to propose that stronger thing. But, taking the country as it is, considering the state of things throughout all parts of India, nothing stronger than this is possible. That is my firm conviction. Therefore, we who are friends of that measure, must stand by these three principles. As regards the details I must say a few words later on.

First, the Bill aims at introducing the principle of compulsion into the elementary education system of the country. On this point I really do not think that I need add anything to what has just now fallen from Dr. Nair who, in his lucid, eloquent and altogether admirable speech has dealt with the principle of compulsion. All over the civilized world it is now an axiom that unless there is compulsion introduced in regard to elementary education there is not much chance of elementary education spreading throughout the country. We must profit by the examples of other countries. We are already lagging behind and we cannot make experiments of our own in the maintenance of ignorance. Therefore we must also go in, in our own way, for compulsion. Those who stand up for individualism—there is not much of individualism in this country—they and we must agree to differ in regard to this. Though it may be agreed that compulsion is necessary, the question is how this compulsion can be introduced. There are three possible positions with regard to this compulsion : either you may have universal compulsion throughout India at once or you may have no compulsion at all, or you may have compulsion piecemeal, area by area, as each area is ripe for compulsion. All those who know the state of things in this country, both urban and rural—and you must remember you will have to legislate for the whole country—will at once see that universal compulsion introduced at once will only defeat itself. We are not yet ripe, all parts of the country are not equally ripe for the introduction of compulsion. Therefore this course which the Gaekwar of Baroda has now adopted—he first made the experiment in one of his Talukas—is impossible in regard to British India. As regards having no compulsion in India I have already stated my view. There remains only the third position, the introduction of compulsion gradually, piecemeal, area after area, as

each area considers itself ripe for compulsion. That is precisely what the Bill proposes to do. Even here we have a precedent to follow. In England and Wales they proceeded on somewhat similar lines; this was more so in Ireland where they legislated on permissive lines. The Irish Act empowered local bodies to introduce compulsion, and the Government undertook to find a certain proportion of the costs, so much per head in many districts. The state of things here is similar to that which prevailed in Ireland. That is the best and safest example for us to follow. It is on this account that the Bill provides for what may be called "permissive compulsion." As each area finds itself ripe for compulsion the local body may try to take advantage of the provisions of this Bill and, after obtaining the legal sanction of the Government, apply the provisions to the local area. The third principle is that action must be taken by local bodies. This is as important a point as any of the other two. We have to face the facts of the situation in this country fairly and squarely. We have to realise that it is a foreign Government that is ruling here. There are many things which an indigenous Government may do which are not open to the foreign Government to do. The foreign Government is bound to be anxious before it enters upon a course which the indigenous Government may enter upon without the same amount of anxiety. A measure of compulsions is bound, in the first instance, to be somewhat unpopular with those to whom that compulsion is extended. It is no use denying that. It has been the experience of all countries; but the rulers of those countries have not hesitated to accept that unpopularity. The British Government in this country, which has already difficulties of its own, may well be excused; at any rate, we can understand its position when it shrinks from incurring the unpopularity of compulsion. It is necessary, therefore, that we should see how far we can help ourselves with the assistance of Government. The sanction of Government is necessary because the Government has got to find large sums of money. Everywhere else in the world, the central Government finds a proportion of the cost of compulsory education and we expect the British Government to do the same. With this safeguard, the initiative ought to be taken by our own people. It is not fair to expect Government to do this. If we expect Government to do this, we shall have to wait for a very

very long time indeed. Therefore, we must help ourselves and I have enough faith in the patriotism and the enthusiasm of our educated men for the welfare of the masses, to lead me to trust that, when this will pass into law, a number of people will go about and stir up public opinion by inducing local bodies to take up this measure and to apply this measure to local areas. What we need now is the power to do it. At present, no matter how intense your patriotism may be, how keen your enthusiasm may be on the subject, you cannot expect to go very far on a voluntary basis. Voluntary effort has been a failure everywhere else in the world and is bound to prove a failure in this country. These are the three principles on which this Bill is based. As regards them, there can be no compromise, no modification as far as I am able to see just now. If you take away anyone of them, to that extent you impair the usefulness of this Bill.

Coming to the details, there are several details that are very important and others that are comparatively unimportant. With regard to any one of these details, I say they are all open to discussion and if the weight of public opinion in this country is in favour of modifying any one of the details important or unimportant, then everything will be done in the subsequent stages of the Bill to give effect to that opinion. They are all details that do not affect the principles of the Bill and, therefore, any good suggestions are welcome. There are four or five important details, to which I will just now refer.

There has been a great deal of controversy with regard to one of these details, namely, the clause which empowers local bodies to levy a special educational rate, if necessary, and to earmark the proceeds of the rate for the purpose of elementary education. There is a misconception about this clause and I shall try to explain what I mean. I fear I was not sufficiently full when I explained it in the Council. Judging from the misapprehensions, I wish to explain once more my ideas in regard to this clause. That clause is, in itself, a permissive clause. It does not say "every local body shall levy a rate." It only says "every local body may levy a rate when necessary." Dr. Nair just now gave you an instance. Following what he said just now it appears to me probable that, in Madras, they may not require extra taxation. There are certainly other corporations which take the same

view of the situation. In Bombay, the Corporation of Satara feels it will be able to carry out this Bill without recourse to extra taxation. Therefore, this Bill does not require any local body to introduce extra taxation necessarily for carrying out this Bill. If, however, any local body finds itself unable to take advantage of this Bill without additional taxation, this Bill says that body may go in for extra taxation. There is a difference between District Boards and Municipalities. Municipalities already have power to impose extra taxation. So far as they are concerned, the only new thing this clause will do is to confer on them the power to earmark any particular tax for any particular purpose and that is entirely in favour of these bodies. I know for certain many cases where it has happened that when a Municipality imposed extra taxation for one purpose, the Executive Government came down upon it and compelled it to apply the proceeds of that tax to another purpose. It has happened in our own days when plague broke out in Poona, every other expenditure of the Municipality had to be cut down. Roads were allowed to be in a most miserable condition. Every rupee on which hands could be laid was seized in order that it might be utilised for combating plague. Thus you see that this new power that the Bill proposes, *viz.*, the power of earmarking the proceeds of the education rate exclusively to educational purposes is exceedingly valuable. In regard to the District Boards, they have not now got the power to impose fresh taxation. But I expect that, in the near future, very few District Boards will come under this Bill. One of the provisions of the Bill is that the Government of India ought to lay down what should be the extent of the spread of education in a locality before the local body of that locality may take up this question of compulsion. In introducing the Bill, I suggested a percentage of 33, *i. e.*, a fairly workable percentage. In England when the system of compulsion was introduced, there were 43 per cent. of the children of school-going age at school, in Japan the figure was 28 per cent. We might have proposed 25 or 30 per cent. but I think it best to be on the safe side, and therefore propose 33 per cent. There are few District Boards—there may be one here and one there—in which 33 per cent. of the school-going age are already at school. The bodies then that I have in view at present are Municipal bodies.

This is the first detail about which I wanted to explain matters. The second detail about which there is some misapprehension is about the levying of school-fees from parents whose income is more than Rs. 10 a month. I share with Dr. Nair the view that when education is compulsory, it follows as a corollary that it should be free. Last year, when I introduced my resolution on the subject in the Viceregal Council, I urged that when education was made compulsory, it should be made free. But we have to face facts also in this matter. The question of making education free involves the question of cost. The question was taken by the Government of India five years ago. It appeared for the time that in the hands of liberal statesmen primary education would soon be made free. That was because the Government of India at that time had a large surplus in their hands and wanted to give relief to the tax-payers. Two years ago, when the financial situation was suddenly changed the Government of India also changed their views in this matter. More than that, when the local Governments were consulted in regard to the making of primary education free, all the local Governments with the exception of one opposed it strongly. That is a fact we have to take into consideration. The finances of the Government will not bear the same strain now in regard to primary education as they could have done at that time.

Besides, we must remember that even in England education was made free 20 years after it was made compulsory. In Japan, education was made compulsory in 1872. It is not even now free. Therefore let us first of all try to make education compulsory. That is more important now than making it free. But let us try to make it free to the poorest, and after that as our means and opportunities permit, let us try to extend it further. I had at first intended to put down in the Bill that parents should be charged fees only if their monthly incomes exceeded Rs. 25. But I was advised by friends for whose opinion I have the utmost respect that it would be well to bring down the limit still further, for really fees in primary schools are not very high, and it is desirable that the difficulties in the way of inducing compulsion should be removed as far as possible. Our friend Sir Gurudas Banerjee especially was of this opinion. In deference to his opinion I put down the limit as low as Rs. 10.

That is, however, a detail and there is nothing to prevent us from raising the limit to Rs. 20 or Rs. 25 and if funds are available to make primary education free altogether. Remember this clause gives latitude of action to Municipalities and local bodies. All that the clause says is this :—That so far as parents are concerned whose income is less than Rs. 10, the education of their children shall be free. As regards those whose income is more than Rs. 10, the local bodies may charge fees in their discretion. If a local body finds itself with money enough it can indulge in the luxury of free education. It may impose a special rate and then it may not charge any fees at all. There is a good deal of theoretical objection to levying fees in the case of those people who pay the special education rate ; it is not desirable that the same burden should fall twice on the same persons, once in the shape of a rate and once in the shape of a fee. In some cases, the Municipality may levy a low rate so that it might not yield the amount it wants for primary education. It may then supplement the proceeds of that rate by taking fees from those whose income is, say, Rs. 50 a month. Another Municipality may levy a higher rate and dispense with fees altogether. The provisions of the Bill are therefore sufficiently elastic. If the weight of public opinion is in favour of any particular provision, there is nothing to stand in the way of that opinion being carried into effect. That is about the second detail. Then there has been some criticism passed about a third detail of the Bill. The Bill gives to the Government of India the power to lay down what should be the proportion of those who are already at school to the children of the school-going age before compulsion is introduced. Now, I may tell you that I did this on the advice of some of those who are connected with the Government of India on this subject. Circumstances in different provinces differ. If you lay down a hard and fast rule for all provinces some local Governments might raise objection to the Bill. It was therefore thought better to make the provision elastic like this. There is nothing to prevent us from altering the detail. The fourth detail is in connection with the proportion the State has to bear of the cost of compulsory education. I think it is necessary to deal with this question at some slight length. I hope you will not mind my doing so. There is no doubt whatsoever that it will be more satisfactory if the Bill laid

down as one of its provisions the proportion of the total cost of compulsory education which should fall on the State. I may tell you that my own view was to have that in the Bill. A serious difficulty, however, confronted me under the rules and regulations of the constitution of the Council of the Government of India. You cannot introduce a Bill which throws a financial burden on the Government without the previous sanction of the Viceroy and in financial matters the sanction of the Viceroy means a reference to the Secretary of State. If therefore I said that two-thirds of the total cost of compulsory education should be borne by the State and one-third should fall on the local body, the Government of India may take the view that it was throwing the financial responsibility upon the Government of India and the Viceroy's sanction would be required necessitating a reference to the Secretary of State before this Bill could be introduced. That would mean the loss of one full year. Some of our best men in Calcutta, acute lawyers, advised me to evade this difficulty in this manner and urged that the proportion should be mentioned in my speech. When the Bill goes to the Select Committee there is nothing to prevent us from substituting a definite proportion in place of the present vague provision. It would not be unfair by any means. Government will be strongly represented in the Select Committee. After all, unless Government is willing to give assistance in the matter the Bill has no chance of success. There is an official majority in the Viceroy's Council. I may tell you that if the Bill is so fortunate as to receive the support of the Government of India, we shall have an opportunity of negotiating with them, and then I am quite sure we shall be able to arrive at some satisfactory conclusion on the matter. Then the Government of India may lay down by rule in what proportion the cost should be divided between the local Government and local bodies. Under the present state of things local Governments are in charge of education and therefore whatever contributions are made by the Supreme Government in aid of the spread of primary education will have to go through the local Governments. The distribution therefore will have to be made between the local Government and the local bodies. It is understood that the additional money that will be required by the local Governments for this purpose

should be found by the Government of India. I certainly think if anybody proposes that this proportion should be fixed by the statute that is not at all antagonistic to the spirit of this Bill. In fact, it would rather strengthen our hands if there was a general demand that the proportion should be fixed in the Act itself. These are the four important details of the Bill. There are some minor details and the objections taken have not been very serious in regard to them. I therefore do not deem it necessary to deal with them. The only other criticism referred to by the critics of the Bill has come from those who are mostly friends of the Bill. Many of these are of opinion that the compulsory period of four years is altogether inadequate. They suggest that the period might be longer. It should be six years—six to twelve as it is at present in Baroda. You have to be satisfied with small beginnings. I myself should be glad to extend it further; but an additional year means that so much more of money will have to be found generally by local bodies and local Governments. On a careful consideration of the whole situation with those whom I consulted, I think for the present at any rate we should be satisfied with a compulsory period of four years. That is what Japan did. In Japan the compulsory period was at first four years. They have now extended it by three more years. In Italy they began with a compulsory period of three years. I should therefore suggest that at the very start we may begin with four years. I do not mean to stop with four years; in course of time, I should look forward to the day when the compulsory period will be extended from four to five or six and even to seven years, as it is at the present moment in some of the western countries.

There are two other suggestions which have come from certain Mahommedan friends, and I shall tell you what those suggestions are and my attitude with regard to those suggestions. It has been represented to me by the Hon'ble Mr. Ibrahim Rahimtolla, who has been a warm friend of compulsory education for many years that a bare majority in a local body can sometimes cause difficulty and compulsion is rather a serious matter especially in this country with conflicting creeds and other conflicts of interests. Therefore, it would be desirable to provide for a substantial majority of two-thirds. "Well, I do not want to

commit myself to any statement in any way. But there is a good deal of force in this suggestion. What we want is a cautious beginning and if the principle is secured and there should be a fairly large body of public opinion in favour of a two-thirds majority before compulsion may be introduced, there is nothing to prevent us from going in for a two-thirds majority. The second suggestion of our Mahommedan friends is to add one exemption to the exemptions under the Bill. It has been represented in certain parts of Upper India, especially in the Punjab, that the compulsory powers of this Bill may be used to compel the Mahommedan boys who are in a minority to attend a Hindu school and to learn Hindi. I recognise that, if there is such an apprehension, no room must be given to it. I am therefore quite prepared to add another exception to the number of exceptions we already have. A parent may object to sending his son to a school, the vernacular of which is not the vernacular of the child. I think, we must be prepared for it, when the Bill comes up before the Select Committee.

I will now briefly refer to a few objections raised to the general policy of the Bill. They are from friends who are with us, whose voices will not be raised against us. But they are men of little faith, and they ask, "Do you really think it is time for compulsion to be introduced?" If they are in public meetings they will willingly accord their support to us. They will raise their hands but still they would ask, "Is it really time for compulsion to be introduced in the matter of education?" I want to say to those friends that as far as my personal opinion is concerned—it is based on a life-long study of the question of education—that time for compulsion has not only come, but compulsion has been long overdue. Let us see how these things are in Baroda, an Indian feudatory State. Compulsion there is universal to-day. Are the people of British territories behind the people of Baroda? Are not things which are possible in the State of Baroda, possible also in British India? Take Ceylon for instance, where the large part of the population is of Tamil origin. Yet, one-third of the area of Ceylon is now under the system of compulsion. If compulsion could be introduced among the Tamil population of Ceylon, I really do not see why it should not be introduced in this Presidency also. Take the case of the Philippines; there all the Municipalities have by their own ordinances made

education compulsory. It is thought by some that these local ordinances are not legal, yet by means of those ordinances they have made primary education compulsory. Are we behind the Filipinos, we of Aryan descent? To those of us, who despair of the time for compulsion being introduced, I say to them, have a little more faith in the cause. All this distrust will be found by ourselves to be absolutely groundless.

Well, gentlemen, there is another objection raised by some friends of primary education. Not that I doubt their sincerity, but they are mentioning difficulties which may impress the unwary and take in the simple. They ask, where are the teachers to teach boys? Where are the school buildings to accommodate large numbers of boys, and what do you mean by proposing compulsion? To them I will only recommend a careful study of the state of things in other countries. In England the same cry was raised. In Japan also, there are records of the time to show that this difficulty was sought to be made much of. What did the people of Japan do? They did not propose buildings in every street. They held classes in verandahs, held them morning and evening. In that famous declaration of 1872 the Emperor of Japan said "Our ambition is that there shall not be an ignorant family in a village and an ignorant member in a family." It appeared to be a most ambitious statement to make in 1872, but within less than 30 years this has been made true by the people of Japan. They did not shake their heads about difficulties over getting trained teachers. You have not trained teachers to-day for all your schools. You have them only for a fraction of your schools. Let new schools be satisfied with untrained teachers. Our fight is not to give a high degree of primary education but to give rudimentary education to the masses and to banish illiteracy. As time advances, you will get better and better teachers. Teachers will be trained to meet the requirements. The responsibilities rest with the local bodies to open training schools. There is no difficulty about getting clerks and there will be no difficulty about getting trained teachers. The current will be diverted. It is the same in regard to your buildings. Let schools be held in verandahs. There is nothing beneath our dignity in that. What was not beneath the dignity of Japan cannot be beneath the dignity of India.

Then there is the third objection raised by people who apparently talk as though they knew a great deal, but whose knowledge when closely examined you find to be astonishingly small. They ask, "Why don't you throw the whole of this cost on the Government of India?" If you examine the whole question you will find this is a most dangerous suggestion. Nothing is more calculated to wreck this Bill than the suggestion to throw the whole of the cost on the central Government. Secondly, there is no justification for the suggestion in the experience of any country whose history we can study. In the first place our compulsion is not to be universal, it has to be gradual. If it is to be universal, it may be said, "Let the State levy taxation." It would be the same thing whether it is imperial taxation or local taxation. But this Bill does not propose to make compulsion universal throughout India. It is proposed to proceed by areas. The area which wants to have recourse to compulsion must bear a certain proportion of the cost, because it is only fair to the other areas. That is the first answer. The second answer is that nowhere else in the world, except in the solitary instance of Ireland, is the whole cost borne by the central Government. I did not care much to emphasise this point in the two speeches that I made in the Viceroy's Council on the subject, because it would have amounted to a direct suggestion to throw a larger burden on local bodies. I think it is best to know how things are in other parts of the world. In England at the present moment about 55 per cent. of the total cost is borne by the State and 45 per cent. by local bodies. In Scotland little less than two-thirds is contributed by the State and one-third by local bodies; in France two-thirds by the State and one-third by the local bodies. In Germany, America and Japan two-thirds of the burden falls on local bodies and less than one-third in the case of one of those countries falls on the central Government. Our proposal throws on our local bodies far less than what is being borne in those three countries. All that we urge is that one-third of the burden of compulsory education should be borne by the local bodies. In Ireland, about 90 per cent. falls on the central Government and 10 p.c. on local bodies. The financial relations between Ireland and Great Britain have a history of their own. Ireland has been complaining for a long time that the central Government was taking

more from them than it should. Protests have been made from time to time and at the present moment a Commission is sitting to consider the financial relations between the two countries and what relief should be given to Ireland, in consideration of its complaints on this subject. Therefore, when this permissive compulsory Act was introduced into Ireland, more relief was given to Ireland and more liberal treatment to its local bodies than to those of Scotland and Wales. But the case of Ireland does not apply in regard to other countries. The best examples on which we might base our case are those of Scotland and France, where two-thirds of the cost comes from the State and one-third from the local bodies. That is what we are asking. If we ask for this strongly, firmly and strenuously, I think, if not this proportion, at least something like it, will ultimately be forthcoming.

There is one more objection raised that I should notice. It is said that by introducing compulsion piecemeal, and by giving these local bodies extra assistance, you are introducing inequalities in the taxation of the country; you are giving advantage to certain local areas and to that extent you are placing other areas under a disadvantage. It is a perfectly theoretical argument, advanced to pile up difficulties in our path. Are there not inequalities to-day in the distribution of revenues under the provincial contracts? No two provinces are fairly equal. From some Provinces nearly 50 per cent. more is taken for imperial purposes more than from others. Is there not inequality there? Take the case of cities like Calcutta, Bombay and Simla. Dr. Nair raised the question in Madras. I do not know how far Madras has succeeded. These cities get large grants for improvements, whereas places of secondary importance like Poona and Ahmedabad are practically left to shift for themselves. There is this injustice of 50 lakhs being given to Simla, 100 lakhs to Calcutta and 50 lakhs to Bombay, while other towns of importance are left to shift for themselves. Take the new policy of the Government in regard to drainage and water works. Under this new policy certain substantial assistance is given by local Governments to local bodies which go in for these works. There is inequality in this. That inequality does not differ from the inequality proposed in the Bill. What is done is to get the inequality caused by the introduction of this Bill to be as low as possible. As a matter of fact the very inequality

will be a very powerful force pushing other local bodies to come up and range themselves alongside this Bill.

These are the objections against the general policy of the Bill which have been urged in various quarters, which I have thought it worth my while to notice on this occasion. I fear I have trespassed unduly long on your patience. As I have already said, this is the first occasion on which I am speaking publicly on this Bill since the Bill was introduced, and therefore I thought I might utilize this occasion for making a further statement. This question of universal education is really at the root of the question of the moral and material condition of the masses of our people. Whether it is destitution, whether it is misery, whether it is squalor or whether it is disease that you want to fight, you are forced to this conclusion that the first remedy of all remedies is to be able to remove the ignorance of the mass of the people and to give to people the benefit of education. If you want to increase the wage-earning capacity of the worker, if you want the peasant to grow stronger and take better care of himself in his dealing with the money-lender, if you want him better to understand the benefits of sanitation, if you want him to grow out of superstitious beliefs—if you want to do any one of these things—you will find that the first and foremost thing to do is to give him the rudiments of knowledge. Without that you could do nothing with him. With that you can do everything. Therefore, this question lies at the root of the moral and material advancement of our people. You will remember that that is recognized everywhere else in the world both by the Government and the people. In this country, if we are jealous of our good name, if we do not want to be reckoned with uncivilized nations, we ought to realize towards our poorer brethren the same responsibility which the State and people are realizing in other countries. This is a matter of absolute justice to the poorer people of our land. They have got the faculty of receiving the rudiments of knowledge, the same as other people. It is a monstrous and cruel wrong that millions and millions should be left without that knowledge and that the joy of that knowledge should be absolutely unexperienced by them. I think the conscience of our people has been sleeping much too long, and it is time some of us roused that conscience as vigorously as we can. It is not only the conscience of the people that has been sleeping, the conscience

of the Government also has been long sleeping in this matter.

ever, there are signs that the conscience of the people is awakening that the conscience of the Government is also awakening. I have no doubt that those who are responsible for that extension of knowledge to the Government of India and the Secretary of State, are anxious to promote primary education almost more than any other branch of education. This year I venture to think there are special circumstances why this question should receive specially favourable attention. The King-Emperor is visiting this country. It will be a historic occasion and I think the Government of India will do well, do wisely, if they will try to commemorate this great and historic occasion in some striking manner. What commemoration would be more striking than the conferring of this boon of universal education on the masses of the people of this country? But whether the Government do confer this boon or not, so far as we people of this country are concerned, our duty in this matter is clear. It is, not to rest till we have secured this boon for the people of this land. I therefore rejoice that you have brought into existence this Elementary Education League. Let me point out to those who have organized this League that they have thereby undertaken no light responsibility. Dr. Nair referred in his speech to the Birmingham League that you want to do anything in the direction of what that League did you have to be up all the time. I want you to realize that you will be confronted with many difficulties in this work, but the difficulties will vanish and success will be yours if you only have faith in the cause. If you will continue to work with stout hearts fully persuaded that in the present state of the country no work is more necessary, more urgent, more patriotic, or more blessed than this work of spreading mass education in the country, if you are firmly persuaded of the truth of this, then I am quite sure you will be able to discharge this solemn responsibility which you have undertaken! Otherwise you will only be adding one more instance to the long list of failures which we have to deplore in the cause of our land. I want you to realize the responsibility that you have undertaken by bringing this League into existence. If you discharge this responsibility well or ill, so will you deserve well or ill of your children and children's children. I thank you most sincerely for the kind and patient manner in which you have listened to me.