# JOHN BRIGHT.

A SKETCH OF

## HIS LIFE AND HIS SERVICES TO INDIA

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# JOHN BRIGHT.

IT was the happy lot of Mr. Bright to unite so many and such distinguished intellectual gifts that, if we had need to dwell upon them alone, we should have presented a dazzling picture to the world; but it was also his happy lot to teach us moral lessons, and by the simplicity, by the consistency, and by the unfailing courage and constancy of his life, to present to us a combination of qualities so elevated in their nature as to carry us at once into a higher atmosphere. The sympathies of Mr. Bright were not only strong, but active; they were not sympathies which can answer to the calls m le upon them for the moment, but they were the sympat ies of a man who fought far and near for objects on which to bestow the inestimable advantages of his eloquence and his courage. In Ireland, in the days when the support of the Irish cause was rare; in India, when the support of the native races was rarer still; in America, at the time when Mr. Bright probably foresaw the ultimate issue of the great struggle of 1861, and when he stood as the representative of an exceedingly small portion of the educated community of this country—although undoubtedly he represented a very considerable part of the national sentiment—in all these cases Mr. Bright went far outside the mere necessities of his calling. Not only subjects which demanded his attention as a member of this House, but whatever touched him as a man, whatever touched him as a Christian, and whatever touched him as a member of the great Anglo-Saxon race—all these questions obtained not only his unasked and sincere advocacy, but his enthusiastic aid. [Gladstone's Speech in the House of Commons on the death of John Bright, March 29, 1889.]

John Bright was one of the most high-souled Englishmen of the nineteenth century. He lived upon the confidence, the approval and the applause of the people. But, as Gladstone said, for the sake

of the right and his own conscientious convictions he readily and unhesitatingly parted with popular sympathy and support. Never was there an occasion when he, with a view to stand well with his countrymen, employed the facile art of the party politician in a country where political interests and the party whip often settled grave issues of right and wrong. Though he was a Liberal he was in the strictest sense of the term a non-party man, a great humanitarian statesman. He found himself among the Liberals because his own convictions brought him into line with them. He had, on some occasions, to cut himself off from both parties and criticise their policy. He did not obstinately cultivate what is called a cross-bench mind. He knew that to be effective in criticism organised action, under the disciplinary conditions of party, was necessary. But he scorned to wear the party plush. He examined the premises before him in a calm and dispassionate spirit, often from a detached position, and arrived at his own conclusions; and when once his conclusions had been formed, through the strictest logical processes, no considerations of party or unpopularity influenced his public conduct. He was dealing with the interests of large masses of

mankind, and he strove to do justice to them irrespective of the consequences to himself as a politician. Love of justice, righteousness and humanity were the feelings that dominated him, influenced his judgment and directed and controlled his actions. His heart was moved before his head, and hence his moral elevation. He was able also to infect others with his own enthusiasm by his unsurpassed gift of persuasive speech. In his time and generation he was one of the three great statesmen who laid down the principles of the Liberal party and inspired and animated it with ideas. In conjunction with Gladstone and Cobden he reconstructed the Liberal party and improved its efficiency as an instrument of good,—as a great factor in modern political progress. No one since the days of Burke understood better the growing magnitude of the Indian problem, and no one, surely, having understood it, laboured harder to impress its gravity upon his countrymen. His name will continue to shine, with ever-increasing lustre, in the pages of history, as that of an Englishman who fought against almost immeasurable odds for a liberal policy and for the introduction of the modern spirit in the Government of India.

## EARLY LIFE.

John Bright was born at Rochdale on November 16, 1811. He was the second son of his father who was a manufacturer in easy circumstances, known and respected for his piety, integrity, generosity and kindliness of nature. Young Bright's education was only such as a private nonconformist school could give. "My limited school-time," he said in 1886, "scarcely allowed me to think of Greek; and I should now make but slow steps in Latin, even with the help of a dictionary." He had, however, a genuine love of reading, and, besides, practised the art of speaking at the meetings of a local Literary and Philosophical Society. He discussed contemporary events and problems with earnestness and zeal and became so intensely devoted to politics that he applied the political standard almost to everything. His father and his ancestors for generations were nonconformists and members of the society of friends; and he remained faithful to the religious and political traditions in which he was brought up. His religion was the very foundation of his public as well as of his private character. Unlike many a politician of his time he formed his conclusions from premises not drawn from recorded history

but from his religious convictions ; and hence his disdain of compromises so necessary to a parliamentary tactician. Indeed, a distinguished Frenchman deduced Bright's public character from his Quaker training. His school education came to an end at the age of fifteen, when he was set to learn his father's business. He was not a rich man, but had enough to live in comfort and satisfy the simplicity of his tastes. His growing interest in public affairs and his capacity for the task were early recognised by his brothers, who released him from the necessity of devoting his attention entirely and exclusively to business, by themselves undertaking the responsibilities attached to the position of a businessman. It is worthy of note that his energies were first absorbed in the activities of his native town. But from Municipal to Imperial politics the stage was easy. He attained his majority in the year of the Reform Bill, and after that he made several public appearances. His first speech on the free trade controversy was made in 1838. In the same year he became a member of the first provisional Committee of the Manchester Anti-Corn-Law Association, the body out of which was subsequently evolved the Anti-Corn-Law League in the year following.

But active work was not begun by him until 1841. On the 13th of September of that year he formed the friendship of Richard Cobden.

### COBDEN AND BRIGHT.

Early in 1838, Bright invited Cobden to speak at a Rochdale meeting on the subject of education. Cobden accepted the invitation and spoke at Bright's meeting. He there heard Bright speak and was impressed with the eloquence of the young orator. He apparently resolved in his own mind that Bright would be a most powerful adherent to the cause which he had made his own just at that time. The rest of the story may be told in the words of Bright himself.

"I was at Leamington when Mr. Cobden called upon me" writes he. "I was then in the depths of grief,—I might almost say of despair,—for the light and sunshine of my house had been extinguished. All that was left on earth of my young wife, except the memory of a sainted life and of a too brief happiness, was lying still and cold in the chamber above us. Mr. Cobden called upon me and addressed me, as you may suppose, with words of condolence. After a time he looked up and said, "There are thousands of homes in England at this moment where wives, mothers and children are dying of hunger. Now, he said, 'when the first paroxysm of your grief is passed, I would advise you to come with me, and we will never rest till the Corn Law is repealed.' I accepted the invitation. I knew that the description he had given of the homes of thousands was not an exaggerated description. I felt in my conscience that there was a work which someone must do. From that time we never ceased to labour hard on behalf of the resolution which we had made * * *".

The dauntless two carried on the war with an energy, determination and self-sacrifice which upset the calculations of parties, converted Sir Robert Peel, the most powerful statesman of the time, and, in four years time, led to the repeal of the Corn Laws.

In the country they carried on a regular and strenuous campaign. Meeting after meeting was held at which the half-hearted policy of the Whigs and the rigid protectionism of the Tories were alike condemned, and converts to the Free Trade creed multiplied fast. But both Cobden and Bright were till now outside Parliament, though they had in Mr. Villiers a consistent and tireless champion of the cause in the House of Commons. In 1842 Cobden was returned to the House of Commons as member for Stockport, and in July 1843 Bright followed him as member for Durham city. He made his maiden speech in the House in the month of August, in which he condemned protection and declared his abiding faith in the healing virtue of Free Trade.

Both Cobden and he realised that the conversion of the House of Commons would follow upon the education of the people out of doors, in the

doctrines of their fiscal creed. Having, in the first instance, accomplished the conversion of the manufacturing towns they addressed themselves to the task of enlisting the support of the farmers, which was indeed a far more arduous task; and yet with resistless zeal and eloquence they went about the country conquering stronghold after stronghold of their enemies till at last even the *Times* was forced to exclaim that "a new power has risen in the State." "If I were the Conservative party of England," said Carlyle, "I would not for a hundred thousand pounds an hour allow those corn laws to continue." Carlyle's broad vision never took in the prevailing impression more rapidly and accurately.

The term 'protection' was synonymous with the "protection of native industry." But the two eloquent missionaries of the new faith were able to stimulate enquiry even among those who were strong protectionists. In the course of one of his tours through the agricultural districts, after depicting the penury of the agricultural labourer, Bright said; "I tell you what your boasted protection is. It is a protection of native idleness at the expense of the impoverishment of native industry". He then dealt with the whole question as bearing on

the economic condition of the poorer sections of the population and concluded in these words :

**If the Corn Law has scourged us with thongs, it has lashed you with scorpions, it has made your trade fluctuating and hazardous, it has deprived you of political independence, it has surrounded you with discontented and impoverished labourers, it has raised your poor rates; and by making you compete with each other for farms, it has raised your rents; and all this has been done under cover of professing to protect you. We come among you to ask your assistance in the great struggle we are engaged in, a struggle which will be crowned with complete and early success, a success which will deliver you and our country from the most destructive and disgraceful imposition which any Government ever practised upon any people."**

It is not the purpose of this sketch to go into the history of the agitation against the Corn Laws. If we refer to the subject it is only to draw attention to certain features of the life and career of Bright. No two men ever co-operated with each other for the attainment of a public object more whole-heartedly and in a spirit of greater self-sacrifice and self-denial than did Cobden and Bright, and none whose efforts were more completely crowned with success. In a famous passage in Mr. John (now Lord) Morley's "Life of Cobden," he points out the different characteristics of the two great leaders of the Corn Law agitation.

"It has often been pointed out," says Lord Morley "how the two great spokesmen of the League were the complements of one another; how their gifts differed, so that one exactly covered the ground which the other was predisposed to leave comparatively untouched. The differences between them, it is true, were not so many as the points of resemblance. If in Mr. Bright there was a deeper austerity, in both there was the same homeliness of allusion, and the same graphic plainness. Both avoided the stilted abstractions of rhetoric, and neither was ever afraid of the vulgarity of details. In Cobden as in Bright, we feel that there was nothing personal or small, and that what they cared for so vehemently were great causes. There was a resolute standing aloof from the small things of party, which would be almost arrogant, if the whole structure of what they had to say were less thoroughly penetrated with political morality and with humanity. Then there came the points of difference. Mr. Bright had all the resources of passion alive within his breast. He was carried along by vehement political anger, and, deeper than that, there glowed a wrath as stern as that of an ancient prophet. To cling to a mischievous error seemed to him to savour of moral depravity and corruption of heart. What he saw was the selfishness of the aristoracy and the landlords, and he was too deeply moved by hatred of this, to care to deal very pertinently with the bad reasoning which their own self-interest inclined his adversaries to mistake for good. His invective was not the expression of mere irritation, but a profound and menacing passion. Hence he dominated his audiences from a height, while his companion rather drew them along after him as friends and equals."

The eloquence of Bright and the political resources of Cobden happily combined with the moral fervour and tenacity of purpose of both won all along the line. Public opinion was on their side, and the responsible leaders of both

parties resolved finally to carry the public mandate into action. In 1846 Sir Robert Peel's Ministry repealed the Corn Laws and, thereby, proved the political prescience and established the reputation of Cobden and Bright on a solid foundation.

### GAME LAWS.

Bright had even then turned his attention to the reform of the code of laws protecting the landlords' game. These laws were held to be among the results of class legislation—a lingering remnant of feudalism. The system of game preservation had a close connection with the interests of agriculture and the supply of the nation's food. The land was kept bound up in enormous parks, woods, warrens or holdings, so that it was all but impossible for the labourers to secure decent homesteads, or for the artizans to provide themselves with wholesome tenements. Vast tracts were kept out of cultivation, and the growth of food was thus rendered limited; and where food was grown, the former was helpless to resist the ravages of the protected creatures. Bright was convinced that a whole nation was injured for the amusement of a few wealthy men. In February 1845, he moved for and obtained a

select Committee to enquire into the operation of the Game Laws. It sat for more than a year and submitted a report full of valuable information. Bright and his colleagues, however, drew up a separate report setting forth their conclusions and recommendations the substance of which was that nothing short of the wiping out of the game laws would conduce to the prosperity of the bulk of the agricultural population, who, Bright held, were ruthlessly kept out of their natural rights and the fruits of whose labour were freely allowed to be destroyed by the sacred animals of their sport-loving landlords. He delivered many a speech on the subject which in after years, became the armoury of the Game Law repealers. But at the time of the controversy regarding the Corn Laws, the disorganisation of both the political parties and other public embarrassments prevented Parliament from taking up the question and carrying out the suggestions left untouched in the report of the Select Committee. Nearly thirty-three years later several of the changes for which Bright fought were carried out. He was perhaps, far in advance of the time. But what is noteworthy is that Bright was roused to activity on account of the injustice and oppression from

which the British farmers and British agricultural labourers suffered. His opposition to the Game Laws arose from the same cause that led him to throw his heart and soul into the agitation for the repeal of the Corn Laws.

### THE CRIMEAN WAR.

History has vindicated the conduct of Cobden and Bright in regard to the Crimean War. That war, like many other wars before and since, was popular; and, as in more recent times, those who were against it were stigmatised as enemies and traitors to their country. Neither Cobden nor Bright cared for the applause of the crowd or the good opinion of unwise statesmen. They placed themselves at the head of "the Peace Party." The flood of popular fury seemed at one time to sweep them out of existence. Not only jingo prints and fire-eating orators, but even responsible statesmen did not spare them. On one occasion, Lord Palmerston, full of the wrath of the patriotic statesman, speaking in the House of Commons, was so lost to all sense of decorum that he described Bright as "the honourable and reverend gentleman" and went on to say that "I treat the censure of the honourable gentleman with the most perfect indifference and contempt." Insults and opprobrious

epithets were freely flung at Cobden and Bright on all sides. But they were as firm as adamant. In a letter in reply to an invitation to attend a meeting at Manchester Bright said :

"I cannot go with you. I have no part in this terrible crime. My hands shall be unstained with the blood which is being shed. The necessity of maintaining themselves in office may influence an Administration ; delusion may mislead a people ; Vattel may afford you a law and a defence ; but no respect for men who form a Government, no regard I have for going with the stream, and no fear of being deemed wanting in patriotism, shall influence me in favour of a policy which, in my conscience, I believe to be as criminal before God as it is destructive of the true interests of my country."

Stronger language than this he used against the war both in the House of Commons and on the platform. He faced his opponents with a courage, serenity and resourcefulness which, though they were little appreciated at the time, contributed not a little to his fame as the Tribune of the People. His speeches on the Crimean War are among the best of his public utterances. They have found a permanent place in the treasury of British eloquence. He stood out essentially for the moral law and for social peace and happiness and international amity. In the course of a great speech in Birmingham in 1858 he said :—

I believe there is no permanent greatness to a nation except it be based upon morality. I do not care for military greatness or military renown. I care for the condition of the people among whom I live. There is no man in England who is less likely to speak irreverently of the Crown and Monarchy of England than I am, but Crowns, coronets, mitres, military display, the pomp of war, wide colonies, and a huge empire, are, in my view, all trifles light as air, and not worth considering unless with them you can have a fair share of comfort, contentment, and happiness among the great body of the people. Palaces, baronial castles, great halls, stately mansions, do not make a nation. The nation in every country dwells in the cottage; and unless the light of your Constitution can shine there, unless the beauty of your legislation and the excellence of your statesmanship are impressed there on the feelings and condition of the people, rely upon it, you have yet to learn the duties of Government.

Peace at any price was not, however, the policy pursued by Bright and his comrades. He was for war in a good and righteous cause—if arbitration or negotiation failed. He seldom failed to insist that the country should be provided with adequate and scientific means of defence. But his enemies in their denunciations ignored this aspect of his criticisms. When the Crimean War fever was at its height, people grew delirious and saw not the straight path of duty. Bright and Cobden cared not for popularity at any price, and history has fully justified their conduct. There is hardly anyone now who does not regard the Crimean War as an act of insane

folly. But it required almost preternatural courage at the time to resist the war party and condemn the war. Bright's unpopularity cost him his seat in Parliament. He was ill when the election came on, but his spirit was unbroken. In the course of a farewell letter to the electors of Manchester after his defeat, he said :

> I feel it scarcely less an honour to suffer in the cause of peace, and on behalf of what I believe to be the true interests of my country, though I would have wished that the blow had come from other hands, at a time when I could have met face to face those who dealt it.

Soon after his rejection, that is in 1858, he was returned to Parliament by Birmingham.

The watchwords of "The Manchester School" were peace, retrenchment and reform. Between Bright and Cobden there was, however, a slight difference in methods in regard to the agitation for the reduction of expenditure ; Cobden pleaded for retrenchment without direct reference to the lowering of the political franchise. Bright, on the other hand, advocate as he certainly was of reduction of expenditure, held that it could be effected by making Parliament a really popular institution, an image and mirror of the people, and not of the wealthier classes alone. He appeared

to think that peace and retrenchment would follow upon Parliamentary reform. But this order of his ideas did not abate the vigilance or the trenchancy of his criticisms of public acts and measures. Indeed, throughout his whole political career he placed faith in the common sense of his countrymen; and he laboured hard for the political enfranchisement of the masses. In the years following the termination of the Crimean War, both in the agitation for Parliamentary reform in the sixties of the nineteenth century and afterwards during the term of office of Gladstone's second Ministry, no statesman raised his voice for the enfranchisement of his countrymen more effectively. Nor was he less active in denouncing injustice by whomsoever committed. He was essentially a man of peace. But during the American Civil War, when the South and the North joined issue on the question of the emancipation of the Negroes, as in the case of the Crimean War, he cut himself adrift from the bulk of his countrymen and supported the cause of the North because he knew it to be the cause of justice and humanity. For nearly the same purpose he became a champion of the oppressed Christian subjects of the Sultan of

Turkey. He was always on the side of the weak and the voiceless.

INDIA.

A well-informed English writer has said that Bright

**Will always deserve applause as the first private member of Parliament since the days of Burke, who set himself with diligence and ardour to investigate and redress the wrongs of the voiceless millions of India.**

Bright had some at least of the great qualities of Burke. He possessed the keen sensibility and the spirit of reverence which stirred the wrath of that philosophic statesman against those who held sway in India towards the closing decades of the eighteenth century. Like Burke he had no personal knowledge of the country and its people. In those days there were no public organisations and no independent press in India to represent the interests of her sons and keep Parliamentary activity alive on their behalf. But those who read the speeches of Bright will be struck with the firm grasp of facts uniformly displayed by him in his survey of Indian affairs.

He had not been long in the House of Commons before he turned his attention to India. The Manchester Chamber of Commerce had taken a lively interest in the development of the Indian

cotton industry, and as a representative of Manchester he bestowed his thought on Indian problems. In 1847, he asked for a Committee of the House of Commons to enquire into the cultivation of cotton in India. Lancashire was directly interested in the progress of cotton cultivation, and the Manchester Chamber of Commerce was obviously dissatisfied with what the East India Company had done in the matter. Bright foresaw the effect of a cotton famine on the condition of his own county and its principal industry. In 1848, the Committee he asked for in the preceding year was granted. He was appointed its chairman, and, in the usual manner, it proceeded to collect evidence. It reported that the natural conditions of soil and climate were favourable to the cultivation of cotton and the people accustomed to the work. But there were four conditions unfavourable to the success of the industry which, Bright held, could at least be mitigated by good Government. These were, bad roads; insufficient irrigation; the condition of the industrial population, who were too poor to avoid recourse to the money-lender to buy seed and who often mortgaged growing crops; and bad fiscal arrangements, especially the land

assessment, which was regarded as rent paid to the State, but differed from rent in not being determined by the free competition of landlords for tenants and of tenants for land. He ascribed the first two evils to the niggardliness of the Company, whose expenditure on roads, bridges, canals and tanks was only one-half per cent. of their revenue. The condition of the people, he declared, could not be improved without the interference of Parliament. He accordingly asked for a Royal Commission, a request which, though it was supported by Sir Robert Peel and Lord George Bentinck, was refused by the President of the Board of Control, Sir J. C. Hobhouse, afterwards Lord Broughton; and nothing came out of the labours of the Committee.

But Bright's interest in any subject once aroused was never allowed to sleep. His friend Cobden, as Lord Morley tells us, "had always taken his place among those who cannot see any advantage either to the natives or their foreign masters in this vast possession." Bright, on the other hand, was impressed with England's duty towards India.

**"I accept," he said, "our possession of India as a fact. There we are; we do not know how to leave it; and therefore let us see if we know how to govern it."**

In this spirit he went to work. Like Edmund Burke and Charles James Fox before him, he was thoroughly dissatisfied with the Company's rule and with the system of dual control involved in that arrangement. His interests, of course, were many. But he found time, amidst his numerous preoccupations, to study Indian questions and place his conclusions before Parliament. From 1847 down to the last day of his life, his interest in India never grew languid; and many of the reforms of a later time may be traced to his sagacious counsel.

In 1853, soon after the Coalition under Lord Aberdeen assumed the reins of power, Sir Charles Wood, afterwards Lord Halifax, who was President of the Board of Control, brought in his India Bill, in order to improve the relations between the Board of Control and the Directors of the East India Company. The new measure reduced the number of members of the Court of Directors from twenty-four to eighteen, of whom twelve were to be elected as before, and six nominated by the Crown from Indian servants who had been ten years in the service of the Crown or the Company. Nominations by favour were to be partially abolished, in favour of the institution

of open competition by examination for admission to Hailebury. The Governorship of Bengal was to be separated from the office of Governor-General, and the Legislative Council improved and enlarged. During the debates on this Bill Bright made three speeches, the effect of which was so considerable that in reference to the first of them Macaulay wrote: "Some of Bright's objections are groundless, and others exaggerated, but the vigour of the speech will do harm. I will try whether I cannot deal with the Manchester champion." Macaulay did not deal with the Manchester champion from all points of view. He confined himself to a characteristic defence of the proposed system of competitive examination. Bright's speech covered the entire field of Indian administration. He contended that the plan which the Government proposed would not be one particle better than that which existed at the moment. He held that the representation of the Indian Government in Parliament was unsatisfactory; that the Presidents of the Board of Control were so often changed that there was no continuity of policy and no disposition to grapple with difficulties; that the division of authority was fruitful in procrastination; that Indian

opinion was unanimous in calling for a constitutional change and in complaining of the delay and expense of the law courts, the inefficiency and low character of the police and the neglect of road-making and irrigation; that the poverty of the people was such as to demonstrate of itself a fundamental error in the system of Government; that the Statute authorising the employment of Indians in offices of trust was a dead letter; that the continuance of the system of appointments and promotion by seniority in the covenanted service would be a "great bar to a much wider employment of the most intelligent and able men among the native population"; that taxation was clumsy and unscientific, and its burden intolerable to a people destitute of mechanical appliances; that the salt-tax was unjust and the revenue from opium precarious; that the revenue was squandered on unnecessary wars; that the civil service was over-paid; that there was no security for the competence and character of the collectors whose power was such that each man could make or mar a whole district; that Parliament was unable to grapple fairly with any Indian question; that the people and Parliament of Britain were shut out from all consideration in regard to India;

and that the Government of India was a Government of secrecy and irresponsibility to a degree that should not be tolerated. The peroration was alike worthy of the speaker and the occasion.

This is no question of Manchester against Essex—of town against country—of Church against Nonconformity. It is a question in which we all have an interest, and in which our children may be more deeply interested than we are ourselves. Should anything go wrong with the finances, we must bear the burden; or should the people of India by our treatment be goaded into insurrection, we must reconquer the country, or be ignominiously driven out of it. I will not be a party to a state of things which might lead to the writing of a narrative like this on the history of our relations with that empire. Let the House utterly disregard the predictions of mischief likely to result from such a change in the Government of India as that I advocate. When the trade was thrown open, and the Company was deprived of the monopoly of carrying, they said the Chinese would poison the tea. There is nothing too outrageous or ridiculous for the Company to say in order to prevent the Legislature from placing affairs on a more honest footing. I object to the Bill, because—as the Right Hon. Gentleman admitted—it maintains a double Government. In the unstatesmanlike course which the Right Hon. Gentleman is pursuing, he will, no doubt, be especially backed by the noble Lord, the Member for London. I only wish that some of the younger blood in the Cabinet might have had their way upon this question. Nothing can induce me to believe, after the evidence which is before the public, that this measure has the approbation of an united Cabinet. It is not possible that thirteen sensible gentlemen, who have any pretensions to form a Cabinet, could agree to a measure of this nature. I am more anxious than I can express that Parliament should legislate rightly in this matter. Let us act so at this juncture that it may be said of us hereafter—that whatever crimes England

originally committed in conquering India, she at least made the best of her position by governing the country as wisely as possible, and left the records and traces of a humane and liberal sway.

I recollect having heard the noble Lord the Member for Tiverton (Viscount Palmerston) deliver in this House one of the best speeches I ever listened to. On that occasion the noble Lord gloried in the proud name of England, and, pointing to the security with which an Englishman might travel abroad, he triumphed in the idea that his countrymen might exclaim, in the spirit of the ancient Roman, *Civis Romanus sum.* Let us not resemble the Romans merely in our national privileges and personal security. The Romans were great conquerors, but where they conquered, they governed wisely. The nations they conquered were impressed so indelibly with the intellectual character of their masters that, after fourteen centuries of decadence, the traces of civilization are still distinguishable. Why should not we act a similar part in India? There never was a more docile people, never a more tractable nation. The opportunity is present, and the power is not wanting. Let us abandon the policy of aggression, and confine ourselves to a territory ten times the size of France, with a population four times as numerous as that of the United Kingdom. Surely, that is enough to satisfy the most gluttonous appetite for glory and supremacy. Educate the people of India, govern them wisely, and gradually the distinctions of caste will disappear, and they will look upon us rather as benefactors than as conquerors. And if we desire to see Christianity, in some form professed in that country, we shall sooner attain our object by setting the example of a high-toned Christian morality, than by any other means we can employ.

It was of course not to be expected that the Government would accept their critic's plan, though the speech remained practically unanswered. It was the first of a series of great

speeches on India which opened out to view the path along which the reformer should proceed and which, indeed, British Indian reformers have since followed. Perhaps, the Education Despatch of 1854 was not without its bearing on Bright's speech of 1853. What with the fierce controversy excited by the Crimean War, what with Bright's general attitude towards questions of peace and war and the absorption of the energies of Parliament in matters connected with these topics, he could not devote much attention to India during the years immediately following the passing of Sir Charles Wood's India Bill. But the question of the constitution of the Government of India came up before Parliament for consideration in 1858 soon after the suppression of the Sepoy Mutiny. Though the elements of disorder were put down, the unfortunate outbreak awakened thought and enquiry in England, with the result that both parties agreed upon remodelling the constitution of the Government of India.

Lord Palmerston's Government introduced a Bill with the object of putting an end to the Company's rule and placing its territories in India directly under the Crown. But a few days after its introduction the Palmerston Government

was overthrown, and the Bill was withdrawn. The Government which succeeded it introduced a Bill of its own which too was withdrawn at the suggestion of Lord John Russell who proposed that the Government should proceed by way of resolutions in order to arrive at a generally satisfactory scheme. Mr. Disraeli as leader of the House of Commons accepted the suggestion ; and the Bill embodying the proposals contained in the resolutions—which afterwards became the Government of India Act of 1858—was brought in by Mr. Disraeli, and it came up for second reading on the 24th of June, 1858. It was on this occasion that Bright delivered the celebrated speech in which he propounded a scheme of his own for the better government of India and threw out the suggestion accentuating the necessity for the issuing of a great Proclamation, indicating, at the same time, the lines on which it should be drawn up. Even to-day that speech retains its full interest and may be read with profit by every student of Indian affairs.

Bright began by dealing with the general question of Indian Government ; he described the cumbrous machinery then in existence and drew attention to the inadequacy of the plan proposed. Like John

Stuart Mill he objected to the proposed India Council which he thought would complicate matters. What was wanted with regard to the Government of India was, said he, 'a little more daylight, more simplicity and more responsibility.' The population of India were in a condition of great impoverishment and the taxes were more onerous and oppressive than the taxes of any other country in the world. Nor were the police arrangements, administration of justice, the educational policy and the finances in a satisfactory condition. The position of the Governor-General of India was unique among the rulers of mankind. Upon him no control could be exercised, and he himself could not with any degree of satisfaction deal with the manifold interests of the population committed to his care.

"I contend," said Bright, "that the power of the Governor-General is too great and the office too high to be held by the subject of any power whatsoever, and especially by any subject of the Queen of England. I should propose, if I were in a position to offer a scheme in the shape of a Bill to the House, as an indispensable preliminary to the wise government of India in future, such as would be creditable to Parliament and advantageous to the people of India, that the office of Governor-General should be abolished * * * I believe the duties of the Governor-General are far greater than any human being can adequately fulfil. He has a power omnipotent to crush anything that is good. If he so wishes, he can overbear and overrule whatever is pro-

posed for the welfare of India, while as to doing anything that is good, I could show that with regard to the vast countries over which he rules, he is really almost powerless to effect anything that those countries require. * * * I do not know at this moment, and never have known, a man competent to govern India; and if any man says he is competent, he sets himself up at a much higher value than those who are acquainted with him are likely to set him. Let the House look at the making of laws for twenty nations speaking twenty languages."

The speaker then went on to indicate in broad outline his alternative scheme. He said:

I would propose that, instead of having a Governor-General and an Indian empire, we should have neither the one nor the other. I would propose that we should have Presidencies, and not an empire. If I were a Minister—which the House will admit is a bold figure of speech—and if the House were to agree with me—which is also an essential point—I would propose to have at least five Presidencies in India, and I would have the Governments of those Presidencies perfectly equal in rank and in salary. The capitals of those Presidencies would probably be Calcutta, Madras, Bombay, Agra, and Lahore. I will take the Presidency of Madras as an illustration. Madras has a population of some 20,000,000. We all know its position on the map, and that it has the advantage of being more compact, geographically speaking, than the other Presidencies. It has a Governor and a Council. I would give to it a Governor and a Council still, but would confine all their duties to the Presidency of Madras, and I would treat it just as if Madras was the only portion of India connected with this country. I would have its finance, its taxation, its justice and its police departments, as well as its public works and military department, precisely the same as if it were a State having no connection with any other part of India, and recognized only as a dependency of this country. I would propose that the Government of every Presidency should correspond with the Secretary for India in England, and that there should be

telegraphic communications between all the Presidencies in India as I hope before long to see a telegraphic communication between the office of the noble Lord (Lord Stanley) and every Presidency over which he presides. I shall no doubt be told that there are insuperable difficulties in the way of such an arrangement, and I shall be sure to hear of the military difficulty. Now, I do not profess to be an authority on military affairs, but I know that military men often make great mistakes. I would have the army divided, each Presidency having its own army, just as now, care being taken to have them kept distinct; and I see no danger of any confusion or misunderstanding, when an emergency arose, in having them all brought together to carry out the views of the Government. There is one question which it is important to bear in mind, and that is with regard to the Councils in India. I think every Governor of a Presidency should have an assistant Council, but differently constituted from what they now are. I would have an open Council.

What we want is to make the Governments of the Presidencies Governments for the people of the Presidencies; not Governments for the civil servants of the Crown, but for the non-official mercantile classes from England who settle there, and for the 20,000,000 or 30,000,000 of Natives in each Presidency.

If the Governor of each Presidency were to have in his Council some of the officials of his Government, some of the non-official Europeans resident in the Presidency, and two or three at least of the intelligent Natives of the Presidency in whom the people would have some confidence, you would have begun that which will be of inestimable value hereafter—you would have begun to unite the Government with the governed; and unless you do that, no Government will be safe, and any hurricane may overturn it or throw it into confusion.

The great orator did not stop here. He laid down the basis upon which the whole structure of the Government of India should rest. He continued:—

We must in future have India governed, not for a handful of Englishmen, not for that Civil Service whose praises are so constantly sounded in this House. You may govern India, if you like, for the good of England, but the good of England must come through the channels of the good of India.

Now, as to this new policy, I will tell the House what I think the Prime Minister should do. He ought, I think, always to choose for his President of the Board of Control or his Secretary of State for India, a man who cannot be excelled by any other man in his Cabinet, or in his party, for capacity, for honesty, for attention to his duties, and for knowledge adapted to the particular office to which he is appointed. If any Prime Minister appoint an inefficient man to such an office, he will be a traitor to the Throne of England. That officer, appointed for the qualities I have just indicated, should with equal scrupulousness and conscientiousness, make the appointments, whether of the Governor-General, or (should that office be abolished) of the Governors of the Presidencies of India. Those appointments should not be rewards for old men simply because such men have done good service when in their prime, nor should they be rewards for mere party service, but they should be appointments given under a feeling that interests of the very highest moment, connected with this country, depend on those great offices in India being properly filled.

Bright then made a vigorous and manly defence of the Indian people against the calumnies then levelled at them and pleaded earnestly for sympathetic and courteous treatment. He praised their virtues and declared:

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

He pointed out that as a preliminary to the

inauguration of the new scheme of Government, a Proclamation must be issued. He addressed this portion of his speech especially to the Government.

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

What he would put in such a document he set forth with his usual simplicity, wisdom and force. Much of what he suggested was embodied in the great Proclamation of Victoria the Good, almost in the order and form in which the originator of the idea put it,—the Proclamation which Indians justly regard as their Great Charter. Perhaps, not many are aware what share Bright had in originating and conceiving it. His idea or outline of the Proclamation included and comprehended a new system of Government, the object of which was to enlist the co-operation of the people, redress their grievances as they arose promptly and without delay and generally to ensure the peaceful progress, the happiness and contentment of the people of India; and it is worthy of note that some of the reforms he then advocated have taken practical shape only recently.

But there can be no doubt that the speech produced a deep and abiding impression. It will continue to be a source of inspiration to Englishmen and Indians who have to deal, directly or indirectly, with the affairs of India.

It is a curious circumstance that just when the question of the future government of India was engaging the attention of Parliament, an Indian subject affecting a portion of the country and involving a great principle of justice was suddenly thrust upon the attention of the House of Commons. On March 3, 1858, Lord Canning, the Governor-General of India, issued a memorable Proclamation. It was addressed to the Talukdars of Oudh and it announced that with the exception of the lands then held by six devotedly loyal proprietors of the Province, the proprietary right in the whole of the soil of Oudh was transferred to the British Government which would dispose of it in such manner as might seem fitting. To all Chiefs and landholders who should at once surrender to the Chief Commissioner of Oudh it was promised that their lives would be spared, provided that their hands were unstained by English blood murderously shed; but it was stated that as regards any further indulgence,

they must throw themselves upon the justice and mercy of the British Government. Even the favoured landholders were given to understand that they retained their estates by the favour of the Crown and as a reward for their loyalty. Sir James Outram wrote at once to Lord Canning that the effect of the Proclamation would be to confiscate the entire proprietary right in the Province and to make the Chiefs and landlords desperate. Lord Canning did not, however, admit the truth of the criticisms of his Proclamation. It reached England in the usual course. Lord Ellenborough, the President of the Board of Control, disapproved of it and sent a despatch to that effect to the Governor-General in India. This despatch was laid before both Houses of Parliament. An outcry was at once raised against Lord Ellenborough at the premature publication of the despatch, who, to save his colleagues, resigned office. The Opposition in the House of Commons gave notice of a resolution condemning the despatch. On May 14 it came up for discussion, and Bright, who took part in it, dissociated himself from the Liberals and condemned the Proclamation while saying not a word against Lord Canning personally. The resolution

of censure was after a long debate withdrawn. Bright's speech on the occasion turned the tables and impressed the Opposition with the weight and closeness of his reasoning. He characterised the Proclamation as unjust and impolitic. It introduced and sanctioned, he contended, a policy of confiscation, the effect of which would be serious. He then went to explain what proprietary right meant and said.

**And what is it that is meant by these proprietary rights? We must see what is the general course of the policy of our Government in India. If you sweep away all proprietary rights in the kingdom of Oude you will have this result—that there will be nobody connected with the land but the Government of India and the humble cultivators who till the soil. And you will have this further result, that the whole produce of the land of Oude and of the industry of its people will be divided into two most unequal portions; the larger share will go to the Government in the shape of tax, and the smaller share, which will be a handful of rice per day, will go to the cultivator of the soil. Now, this is the Indian system. It is the grand theory of the civilians, under whose advice, I very much fear, Lord Canning has unfortunately acted; and you will find in many parts of India, especially in the Presidency of Madras, that the population consists entirely of the class of cultivators, and that the Government stands over them with a screw which is perpetually turned, leaving the handful of rice per day to the ryot or the cultivator, and pouring all the rest of the produce of the soil into the Exchequer of the East India Company.**

And yet Lord Canning's Proclamation sanctioned such a policy, and Bright contended that

the highest court of appeal, the Parliament of Great Britain, should forthwith disallow it, and Parliament acted upon his advice.

In the month of August of the same year he delivered yet another great speech on India. Sir Charles Wood introduced the Indian Budget into the House of Commons. Among other things he asked that the Government should be empowered to raise £5,000,000 in Great Britain in order to meet the demands of the year. The Bill empowering the Government to raise the loan, of course, passed through both Houses of Parliament. Bright availed himself of the occasion to survey the state of affairs in India for the third time, within a period of three months. He first grappled with Indian finance. His conclusion was that for the past twenty years the Government had had deficit on deficit and debt on debt. He enumerated the ways in which expenditure had been accumulating. Frontier wars, the Military Service, an overpaid Civil Service, the policy of annexation and a few other questions he enlarged upon in order to show how expenditure increased, how little of control there was, and the want of public opinion in the country. The Cabinet in England sanctioned wars for which the Indian taxpayers

had to pay, but which in justice should be paid for by the British taxpayers; the expenditure on the army instead of being reduced, was added to; and, lastly, responsibilities were undertaken by means of annexation which could not be adequately discharged. Power was lodged in the hands of the Civil Service which exercised it practically without any control from outside. Incidentally, Bright pointed out that the official who turned reformer was regarded as a dangerous innovator, and referred to Sir Charles Trevelyan, Governor of Madras, in the following appreciative terms:—

The noble Lord opposite (Lord Stanley) did an excellent thing. He did honour to himself by appointing a man of a new sort as Governor of Madras. I have not much acquaintance with Sir C. Trevelyan, but I believe him to be a very intelligent man and very earnest for the good of India. But he finds that at Madras he is like a man who is manacled, as all the Governors are. He is able to do almost nothing. But he has a spirit above being the passive instrument for doing nothing in the hands of the Governor-General, and he has been disposed to make several changes which have looked exceedingly heterodox to those who are connected with the old Government of India, and which have shocked the nerves of the fifteen old gentlemen who meet in Leadenhall Street, and their brethren in India. I find that among the changes endeavoured to be effected by Sir C. Trevelyan, the following are enumerated:—He has endeavoured to conciliate the Natives by abolishing certain ceremonial distinctions which were supposed to degrade them when visiting the Government House; he

has shown that personal courtesy to them which appears to be too much neglected in India; he has conspicuously rewarded those who have rendered services to the State; he has made one of the Natives his aide-de-camp; he has endeavoured to improve the land tenure, to effect a settlement of the Enam, and to abolish the impress of cattle and carts. He has also abolished three-fourth, or perhaps more, of the paper work of the public servants. He also began the great task of judicial reform, than which none is more urgently pressing. But what is said of Sir C. Trevelyan for instituting these reforms? He has raised a hornets' nest about him. Those who surround the Governor-General at Calcutta say, 'We might as well have the Governors of the Presidencies independent, if they are to do as they like withont consulting the Governor-General as has been done in past times.'

In the course of this speech Bright returned to his argument that the Governor-General could do nothing to resist the influence of his official environments. Said he:—

The Governor-General of India goes out knowing little or nothing of India. I know exactly what he does when he is appointed. He shuts himself up to study the first volumes of Mr. Mill's *History of India*, and he reads through this laborious work without nearly so much effect in making him a good Governor-General as a man might ignorantly suppose. He goes to India, a country of twenty nations, speaking twenty languages. He knows none of those nations, and he has not a glimmer of the grammar and pronunciation or meaning of those languages. He is surrounded by half-a-dozen or a dozen gentlemen who have been from fifteen to forty years in that country, and who have scrambled from the moderate but sure allowance with which they began in the Service to the positions they now occupy. He knows nothing of the country or the people, and they are really unknown to the Government of India.

He is surrounded by an official circle, he breathes an official air, and everything is dim or dark beyond it. You lay duties upon him which are utterly beyond the mental or bodily strength of any man who ever existed, and which he cannot therefore adequately perform.

The great statesman then protested against the frequent transfers of officials and their appointments to offices for which they were not trained and pleaded for the principle of decentralisation, so that every part of the country might receive the benefits of official watchfulness and care without constant intermeddling by authorities far away, who were absolutely unacquainted with local wants. The question of simultaneous Civil Service examinations, the spread of education, religious neutrality, the necessity of showing sympathy, regard and courtesy to Indians, and respect for the rights of Indian Princes were among the other subjects dealt with in the same speech.

And the peroration was as follows:—

All over those vast regions there are countless millions, helpless and defenceless, deprived of their natural leaders and their ancient chiefs, looking with only some small ray of hope to that omnipresent and irresistible Power by which they have been subjected. I appeal to you on behalf of that people. I have besought your mercy and your justice for many a year past; and if I speak to you earnestly now, it is because the object for which I plead is dear to my heart. Is it not possible to touch a chord in the hearts of Englishmen, to raise them to a sense of the miseries inflicted on that unhappy

country by the crimes and the blunders of our rulers here? If you have steeled your hearts against the Natives, if nothing can stir you to sympathy with their miseries, at least have pity upon your own countrymen.

Three years later the same eloquent voice was raised against what appeared to be a discreditable affair—discreditable to the parties concerned. Certain discrepancies between certain sets of documents, relating to the Afghan War of 1837-38, were discovered. It secured that some passages in the despatches of Sir Alexander Burne had been mutilated, in order to make it appear that he advised a policy which he actually condemned. A motion was brought forward for the appointment of a Committee to enquire into the alleged mutilation of the despatches presented to the House. With the help of a well-disciplined majority, the Government got the motion knocked on the head. In the course of the debate on it Bright made an effective attack on the officials concerned and so grappled with Lord Palmerston, the Prime Minister, that though the resolution was lost, the impression left in the public mind was deep.

Engaged as he constantly was in the discussion of British political questions, he never once lost sight of India, the affairs of which either by means of questions or by speeches he frequently brought

before Parliament; and his activity in this respect was fruitful of good in a variety of ways, not the least important of which was the forming of a body of British politicians who were keenly interested in India, of whom Henry Fawcett came next in rank to the great leader and organiser of the party.

Sir Arthur Cotton was on a visit to Manchester and the Indian Association in that city convened a meeting in the Town Hall, with a view to elicit the opinions which Sir Arthur entertained as to the means of preventing famine in India. Bright was invited to be present and to speak on the subject. His speech on the occasion was a comprehensive survey of the economic condition of India. He described the system of Government and pointed out that the country was on the verge of bankruptcy and held that taxation had reached the highest limit though British politicians believed that India was a land flowing with milk and honey. At the time the speech was delivered a famine was raging in India, and he naturally indulged in a retrospect in order to show how often India had been afflicted with famines and how its vitality had been sapped, and yet Secre-

taries of State and the rulers sent out from England lived in a paradise of their own.

Once before he had referred to the way in which a new Governor-General prepared himself for his task. On the present occasion he was able to give his audience what had come to his own personal knowledge.

**"I recollect", said he, "meeting a Governor-General with whom I was acquainted, just after he was appointed. I met him at Euston Station in London and I observed that he had got a book under his arm, and was hurrying away. I spoke to him and said, 'If I were in the habit of laying wagers I would lay a wager that I could tell the name of the book under your arm.' Well, he looked surprised, and said. 'What is it?' I said, 'I think it is Mill's British India.'**

**"He said it was quite true."**

Bright then went on to observe that Indian questions should not be studied in a purely academic spirit, and that of all Indian questions the one that then riveted their attention most was famine. He pointed out on the authority of three such distinguished Anglo-Indians as Sir Charles Trevelyan, Sir Bartle Frere and Sir Arthur Cotton that the spread of irrigation works was one of the most effective remedies against famine and emphasised the fact that while the extension of railways was far more a question for the English, as a power in India, that which

vitally concerned Indians was the extension of irrigation works. He then discussed the competing advantages of railways and irrigation works at some length and stated his deliberate conviction that what India stood more in need of were irrigation works. But he said that that view would not commend itself to Anglo- Indian critics in India. In this connection he referred to the Indian and Anglo-Indian press. He said :—

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

Bright was a profound student of Indian conditions and Indian politics, and what is significant is that the abuse now hurled at the friends of India in the House of Commons by a section of

the Anglo-Indian press was, during his time, heaped upon his own devoted head.

During the second administration of Disraeli, and especially in connection with its handling of what was called the Eastern Question, India occupied a place in the indictment framed by their opponents against Disraeli and his colleagues. Bright was one of the most prominent statesmen who contributed to the final overthrow of that administration. He spoke often on Indian topics such as the Afghan War.

In April, 1879, he delivered a great speech in Birmingham on "The Eastern policy of the Government and the prospects of finance in India." He dealt with the whole frontier question and spoke of the Afghan War as "deformed by falseness and by dishonour." He then went into the whole question of Indian Administration. Speaking of the millions of India he said :—

**They are poor to an extremity of poverty of which the poorest class in this country has no conception, and to which it affords no kind of parallel. They are over-taxed to a degree of which in the worst days of taxation in this country you had no knowledge * * * * * * It is oppressive to such a degree that all the authorities in India say you cannot turn the screw any more, and that if you do, something worse than a deficient revenue may follow.**

He proceeded to offer suggestions for the reduc-

tion of Indian expenditure. He wanted a peaceful frontier policy, internal economy especially by a gradual reduction of the military expenditure; and, lastly, he pleaded for the adoption of measures calculated to mitigate the evils of poverty and to stimulate the progress of the Indian people.

He did not live to see the full fruition of his hopes. But he laboured hard, down to the last day of his life, for the advancement of the interests of India. Lord Ripon followed out in practice some of the principles laid down by Macaulay and Bright; and writing to an Indian correspondent Bright said :—

**The principles which have distinguished the administration of Lord Ripon seem to me to be those which promise to be beneficial to you and creditable to us.**

But he always held the view that the system of government existing in India should be radically altered if its peaceful and steady evolution should be effectively secured. He had indicated the lines on which, in his judgment, India should be governed, and he never departed from them. From an account of what passed between him and the late Mr. Protap Chunder Mozumdar in 1883, recently reproduced in a Calcutta paper, it is clear that even long after he

explained his own plan of Indian Government, he was of opinion that India could not be governed satisfactorily by a central body like the Government of India, but should be cut up into different States under separate Governments subject, of course, to the control of Parliament. His system (he said) would foster the growth of several self-contained Indian nationalities which would ultimately be capable of self-government. He did not believe, we are told, that India would ever become a single nation. It was absurd to think, he said at the time, that 250 millions of men and women could consider themselves one people; so that the best way of connecting them together would be to help them to form a number of small distinct nationalities according to their origin, antecedents, sympathies and dialects. He maintained that it was the duty of the English people to teach Indians how to govern themselves, and that his plan (if put into practice) would gradually tend to that result. He proceeded to discuss the system of government as it existed in 1883. He started his favourite proposition that there was no man who could do justice to such a position as that of the Governor-General of India; and turning to his contemporaries he said:—

**There is no man fit to govern India at the present moment except perhaps Gladstone; but we cannot expect more than one Gladstone in a century, and he has plenty to do at home.**

On the same occasion Bright let drop another obiter dictum which is worthy of being recalled and preserved. The account says:

**Mr. Bright sets his face against violent agitation of every kind. He said, "never be persuaded to use violence either in speech or act. Every reform has to be won constitutionally, inch by inch, in this country. Be not tired to try to obtain your rights. You have already obtained some, you shall have more. But never be violent in anything. All progress has its laws, and laws act slowly. If you do not get all you want, your children will. What our fathers did not have we have. The future must be allowed to mend the past.**

It may not be generally known that for over a generation Bright had practically been leading the party of progress in India. When Indian deputations or Indian politicians like the late Mr. Lal Mohan Ghose went on special political missions to England, he helped them by his advice and sympathetic guidance.

### AS CABINET MINISTER.

Like his friend Cobden, Bright had no fascination for office. But he could not resist the influence of his leader and friend, Gladstone, who, when he formed his first Administration in 1868, pressed Bright to join it, and Bright yielded. The rest of the story may be told in his own words,

publicly spoken, soon after his acceptance of a seat in the Cabinet. He confided the secret to a Birmingham audience in these terms :—

Mr. Gladstone told me that he did not wish me to accept any office that was inferior in importance or in emolument to any held by any one of his colleagues, and he proposed that I should accept the position of Secretary of State for India. Now, very many of my friends have urged in past times that I should undertake this office, and not a few have expressed regret that I have not accepted it now. In a sentence, therefore, I think it right to explain why I took the course which led to my declining such an important post. You know that twelve years ago, just before I came here, I suffered from an entire break-down of my health, which cut me off from public labours for about two years. The Indian department, I believe, is one of very heavy work, and I felt I was not justified in accepting it unless there were great probability of some useful result which could not be accomplished under any other chief of that office. I still retain the opinion that the views which I have expressed in times past—especially in the year 1858, when the India Government Bill was passing through Parliament—are sound, and that the time will come when it will be necessary to apply them to the Government of India. But I believe that public opinion is not sufficiently advanced to allow us to adopt them, and that if I had taken that office I should have found myself unable to carry into effect the principles which I believe to be right with regard to the Government of India. At the same time I will confess freely that it did not appear seemly for me—and that I should have been in a wrong place, holding the views which I have held from my youth upwards—if I had connected myself distinctly with the conduct of the great military departments of the Indian Government. Looking, therefore, at these points, I felt it my duty to decline the proposition ; and I said that if I was to accept any seat in this Government, I should prefer to take the office of President of the Board of Trade. In that

**office I may do a little good, and perhaps, I may prevent some harm. At least it will not, I hope, so burden me that I may be unable to take a part in the discussion of the great questions which must come very speedily before the House of Commons.**

In December, 1870, owing to failing health he had to retire from the Cabinet, which he rejoined in 1873, not as President of the Board of Trade, but almost as a sinecure, as Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, a position which he again occupied in the second administration of Gladstone in 1880. Bright was not cut out for office. He cared not for the details of administration, and his health did not permit him to be an industrious and vigorous administrator. His services to his party and to the Government of which he was a member were all rendered on the floor of the House of Commons,—in great debates; and they were only less valuable to those of the Prime Minister under whom he served. It is also worthy of note that on great questions of principle he had sometimes to follow his own course irrespective of the behests of his party or the inclination of the Government of which he was a member. On no occasion did this quality of his come out more prominently than in connection with the Bradlaugh episode. He fought for the

admission of Bradlaugh into Parliament at every stage of the controversy. He pleaded earnestly and eloquently for liberty of conscience, for the right of electors to choose whomsoever they liked to represent them in Parliament and Bradlaugh's victory was due not less to Bright's lofty eloquence than to his own undaunted courage and ceaseless efforts.

THE END.

Bright was a Radical. But on the question of Irish Home Rule, which split up the Liberal party in 1886, he left Gladstone and made common cause with the dissentient Liberals. He was already old and infirm, and perhaps his mind (unlike Gladstone's) ceased to grow with the growth of ideas. As a Unionist Liberal he did or could then do nothing beyond writing letters. His political separation from his friend and leader (Gladstone) whom he loved and admired beyond measure was evidently too much for him. He made his appearance in the House of Commons very rarely. He was broken down in health, and he knew his end was near. His last speech at Birmingham was delivered on March 29, 1888. Since that date he did little or no work but prepared himself for the end. After many hours

of unconsciousness he passed away early in the morning of March 27, 1889. His death cast a gloom over the United Kingdom. Tributes to his memory were paid in both Houses of Parliament, and the speech delivered by Gladstone as leader of the Opposition on the character and attainments of his departed friend was one of the finest of his efforts. But in no land was the loss more keenly felt than in India. Bright had a hand in the making of modern India. His services to her were so vast and of such a character that his memory will ever be green in the minds of the Indian people.

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