India

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NOTES AND NEWS.

WE have now before us the text of the circular recently issued by the Government of India with the view of increasing the strictness of administration of the famine districts. The Governor-General in Council invites the local governments "seriously to consider with him whether the principles or practice of famine relief have in particular or any particulars been imperceptibly relaxed, and whether the extreme readiness which the people have evinced to throw themselves on the charity of the State, and to avail themselves of every form of relief does not require a corresponding strictness on the part of those charged with the duty of administering it." The suggestion of possible laxity on the part of the famine officials is put merely as a point for enquiry; and every one will agree that it is the duty of the Government to see to the careful administration of relief. But, as the *Friend of India*, an Anglo-Indian journal of an independent turn, properly remarks, "the demoralisation of the people is spoken of as an ascertained fact." Our contemporary pointedly remarks:—

> What ground have the Government of India for the allegation made and repeated in this Resolution with an assurance that implies absolute conviction, that the people of the country have developed, during the past three years, a readiness to have resource to public relief which is not only opposed to all past experience of their disposition, but implies a lack of proper pride and self-reliance entirely foreign to their character? . . . Apart from the fact that privations which the Government admits to be altogether exceptional have been attended by an increase in the numbers having recourse to relief which is disconcerting, but which it does not venture to pronounce disproportionate, it offers not a particle of evidence of the reality of this astonishing metamorphosis.

Such an offensive allegation ought not to have been made except on evidence of the most cogent character, and evidence too submitted to the public.

The *Friend of India* very naturally fails to understand the puzzle that is vexing the Government, for, of course, "so far from there being any difficulty in finding another reasonable explanation of the facts, the account of the prevailing conditions put forward by the Government in this very Resolution leaves nothing to be explained but its own inability or unwillingness to see what must be plain to every unbiassed observer." This is a hard stroke from a friendly hand, but it is well deserved. Our contemporary is quite impatient at Lord Curzon's lack of logic. Thus:—

> So far from its being at all strange, in view of the facts admitted, that the numbers on relief works are greater this year than they were at the same period three years ago, and are rising more rapidly, it would be marvellous if it were not so, and the inevitable inference in that case would be that aid was not being given freely enough. As a further justification of their mistrust, the Government of India gravely cites the fact that the proportion to population of persons in receipt of relief in certain districts already exceeds that which the Famine Commission of 1878 thought likely to be so in the worst months of the year; as if Nature could be tied down by the opinion of the Commissioners, or conditions which the Government admits to be unprecedented could be deprived of their natural effects by the fact that the Commissioners had not anticipated them.

This is well said indeed. But, then, that wonderful surplus is slipping away irretrievably, and the *Friend of India* has no bowels of compassion for a Government at its wit's end for a possible means of saving some fraction of it. But it will be fatal to save rupees at the expense of people's lives. Let the Government make no mistake about that.

Lord Curzon in Council (Jan. 19) defended the Government circular on the point of stringency in the application of the famine test, and even advanced what he intended as proof of the obnoxious allegation. The *Times'* correspondent at Calcutta reports that he "emphasised his remarks by showing from personal experience gained during his late tour how people comparatively poor in circumstances were seeking relief and actually saving a portion of the famine wages." If this be so, then it ought not to be so, and the unnecessary relief should at once be cut short; there is no question about that. But there must be question about the validity of Lord Curzon's personal observation. In any case, it is so extraordinary that the facts ought to be published in detail. Lord Curzon could see only what the attendant officials gave him the opportunity to see, and there ought to be no difficulty in setting out the precise facts. Besides, how is it to be supposed that any official would allow such a lavish mode of relief to go on, with his code of rules open before him; or without code of rules at all? There is no doubt of Lord Curzon's good faith, but even Lord Curzon is not infallible as an observer of facts, especially of facts in the habits or conduct of races that he cannot personally understand from his own experience. When he speaks of the serious criticism to which a Government would lie open if it "imperilled the financial position of India in the interests of the prodigal," we confess we feel exceedingly suspicious of the ground of his fierce economy. To justify restrictions such as seem to lie behind the unlucky circular, the prodigality would really have to be evidenced on a much wider scale than even a Viceroy's personal experience. The whole episode is disquieting in the extreme.

The extent and the intensity of the famine were both pictured in lurid colours at the same session of the Viceroy's Council by Mr. Ibbetson, the Home Member. The prospects are good only in Bengal, Burma, and the North-Western Provinces and Oudh; fair in the irrigated tracts of Sindh and South-West Punjab; indifferent in Madras and Mysore; and the rest of the country is famine-stricken. Take the summary of the famine districts.

> Punjab: Autumn harvest is worst on record for many years; coming spring harvest in unirrigated tracts occupies half the area sown in the last two years.
> Bombay: No previous record of so extensive and total a failure of crops.
> Central Provinces: A failure so severe and widespread as has never been experienced before. Rice crop, the mainstay of the eastern portion, is more completely lost than 1896. Millets, in southern districts, little better. Cold weather crops, in west and north, probably worse than in 1897.
> The Berars: Cotton crop almost wholly lost; all other crops practicaly an entire failure.
> Rajputana ... / South-East Punjab / Central India (West) } Drought without parallel in extent and intensity.

The true famine area is 300,000 square miles, with a population of 40,000,000. Add to this an area of general scarcity and distress estimated at 145,000 square miles, with a population of 21,000,000. No wonder the Government is uneasy, and Lord Curzon turns his eyes wistfully, yet hopelessly, towards the Mansion House. Yet India has sent some £30,000 to the South Africa Fund. Is it not possible for Britain to spare a thought or a copper for the Indians in the calamity of famine?

The difficulties of famine relief have been brought out clearly by the letter addressed by the Central Government to the Provincial authorities. Therein it is pointed out

that the Famine Commission in laying down the lines of the present relief system thought that not more than 15 per cent. of the population in the famine-stricken area would require relief in the worst months, nor more than 8 per cent. throughout the whole period. But already, so intense is the distress, 15 per cent. are receiving assistance in many districts, while in some parts of the Central Provinces, the numbers have gone up to 30 per cent. Under these circumstances the *Pioneer* thinks that the Government is justified in reconsidering the whole question of famine relief lest the finances of the country should be submitted to a strain greater than they can bear. It pities, however, the unfortunate officials bound under penalties to steer between the Scylla and Charybdis of prodigality and inhumanity. The *Pioneer*, we are pleased to see, is brought by these difficulties to the position taken up in INDIA, for speaking of pauperism it says :—

> The only satisfactory treatment of such a disease is to lay hold of the sources of the disease and to stop them up. Any other treatment is palliative, not remedial.

But it is to be feared it will not support Sir W. Wedderburn's proposed village enquiry.

"It is obvious (writes a correspondent) that the policy of the Government as regards relief is approaching a crisis. Some evidence of a hesitating attitude and uneasiness as to the probability of famine expenditure largely exceeding estimates was made apparent a month ago in a Calcutta telegram (December 29) through Reuter. The drift and tendency of that ominous message were explained and exposed in your columns on January 5. The Resolution of Enquiry to which the telegram referred has not yet been published here, as we regard it is desirable; but, it has been accessible in India, its line of argument and significant hints towards 'precautions' are easily traceable in the Bombay overland journals of the week ending January 6, which thus follows on the telegram. Meantime, the weekly telegraphed statistics from the Indian Government and your columns, so far as restricted space permits, have furnished afflicting evidence of the extension of area affected and the intensity of privation; also, as we are glad to testify, to the increased activity of District and other officers in energetically carrying out the comprehensive methods prescribed in the now completed Famine Codes and local regulations. And now we have further indication of the creeping 'influenza' that is, apparently, affecting the departmental counsels of the Indian Government, the symptoms of which are 'precautions' and financial apprehensions.

"Such indication is palpable in another Reuter's telegram (dated January 19) in which are too briefly summarised Mr. Secretary Ibbetson's estimate of the situation last week—22 millions in British and 27 millions in the Native States under pressure of severe privation, the cost of relieving whom, up to the end of March only, is estimated at from three to four millions Rx., 3½ millions of persons being dependent on 'relief' of unprecedented magnitude. What is more to our present purpose is that we have placed before us, though in condensed form, Lord Curzon's remarks in the open Legislative Council, expanding the views imputed to His Excellency in that official telegram of a month ago. The two antithetical precepts of his survey are crisply stated thus: 'It is the duty of Government to spend its last rupee in saving life; *but* it is also its duty to jealously watch and conserve the *character* of the people.' Now, we fully and frankly recognise the entire sincerity of the Supreme Government's attitude in this phase of the present calamity; and as regards the District Officers, on whom falls the brunt of relief administration, everybody accepts His Excellency's generous testimony that they 'are simply and silently laying down their lives in the service of the poor suffering Indian people.'

"Yet we fear that those who can recall the history of the Madras and Bombay famine of 1877-9, when five millions of people perished, must have been uncomfortably reminded by these recent hints about 'precautions,' 'adequate tests,' and large expenditure, of the sinister counsels of the Strachey-Lytton Executive in 1878, when Sir Richard Temple was sent down to the Deccan to check 'indiscriminate Government reliefs,' which resulted in the 'one pound ration' policy with its disastrous consequences. There cannot and must not be excuse for anything of this sort now. Declarations in every form of words, alike by the authorities in India and the Secretary of State in Council here, have assured the British public and the outer world that Imperial credit and reputation are pledged, as Lord Curzon so aptly says, 'to spend its last rupee in saving life'—that is, 'to make war on famine' (Sir Bartle Frere's phrase) regardless of cost. On the other hand, the Famine Commission Report of 1880—utilised in your last week's issue—as supplemented by Sir J. B. Lyall's Report founded on the new experience of 1896-7, afford detailed guidance, as fully as wit of man can devise, for every phase of distress, from scarcity to intense famine as is the present. Hence while it may be well, as Lord George Hamilton remarked at the Northcote dinner, that Government should 'carefully watch the famine,' this new and sinister talk about 'precaution' and 'close control' seems suspiciously superfluous. Thus the net anxiety at the moment becomes simply a question of ways and means. It may be vain to ask, What about the seven crores' worth of gold now locked up to provide for the perilous experiment of an artificial currency system? But there is one obvious resource, mention of which is carefully shunned by Lord George and the rest—that is, a free grant from the British Treasury of, say, two or three millions, to avert by so much the withdrawal from India of a corresponding amount of this year's Home Charges. Let not this wealthy kingdom talk of expense, for such a grant to suffering India would be but a flea-bite compared to, and even concurrently with, the scores of millions now being spent like water on the great war into which the present Ministry weakly drifted or wantonly plunged this country."

The Indian Association of Calcutta has recently made a strong representation to the Viceroy-in-Council in favour of the employment of more Indians in the minor Civil Services. Dealing with Bengal only and with the Forest, Customs, Salt, Opium, Postal, Telegraph, Survey, Gaol, Police, and Public Works Departments, it gives some striking statistics. In the Forest Department, out of 24 appointments, only 2 are held by Indians. In the Customs, out of 33 superior posts, 1 is held by an Indian and 1 is vacant, while 31 are held by Europeans and Eurasians; and this although Sir Charles Trevelyan declared that "the whole of the appointments in the Customs might be filled by Natives." In the Opium Department, only 8 places, and those all in the lower grades, are held by Indians out of 77. The Public Service Commission recommended twelve years ago that recruitment for this department should be subject to the general principle of equality of treatment of "all classes" of her Majesty's subjects; yet Indians are now debarred from being Opium Agents or Factory Superintendents. In the Salt Department, out of 29 superior officers, there is 1 Indian, and out of 81 inferior, there are 18.

As the *Hindu* points out, this state of affairs is in direct opposition to the reports of the Finance Commission and the Public Service Commission issued more than twelve years ago. Moreover, matters are not very different in the other Provinces of India. Little effort has been made either by the Supreme Government or by the several local governments to carry out the recommendations of these commissions. And yet, as our contemporary says :—

> This question of employing a larger number of Natives of the country in the public service of India is one on which depends the solvency of the finances of Government quite as much as the efficiency of the service itself.

The *Hindu*, however, has now some hope, judging from a Resolution of the Government of India on the Imperial Forest School at Dehra Dunn, that a movement in the right direction is beginning.

The *Times* was in fine form on Sir William Lee-Warner's lecture on "Our Work in India in the Nineteenth Century." It quite agreed with the lecturer that "we might stand with perfect confidence at the bar of history;" and, indeed, there is no lack of confidence in "our" breasts, stand where "we" may. But the bar of history to which the *Times* followed Sir William so confidently was the old story of incomparable achievement and benefaction; there was no judge on the judgment seat, and the advocate had it all his own way. "It is far from true, as Sir William Lee-Warner points out," says

the subservient *Times*, with banality incredible, "that we have not permitted Natives to take part in the administration." Who on this earth ever made the allegation that we had not? It would have been to some purpose to let the world know why the Act of 1833, and the Proclamation of 1858, have been so little honoured on this point. The *Times* has discovered a fresh proof of Indian confidence in our rule: it is the expansion of population. We have indeed made our mistakes, but "they are rarer than they were, and they are at most an insignificant set-off to the multitude of benefits which Sir William Lee-Warner enumerated." This sort of soft sawder grateful to an uninstructed public as well as to a successful official, but it is not the kind of material to stand a strain. If a strain were to come in India as it has come in South Africa, the Government would soon have reason to curse its flattering friends who give it unctuous phrases instead of bracing criticism.

The *Mahratta* publishes an interview with the Sirdar Balasaheb Natu, from which we learn with great pleasure that the release of the brothers was unconditional. It is rather amusing to hear that the Collector at Belgaum, in informing the Natus of their release, warned them "not to do so again"; but as the prisoners were never informed what they did to bring about their arrest, in spite of continual requests for the information, the Collector's warning was wanting in lucidity.

The *Times of India*, continuing its crusade on behalf of the Indians in Natal, prints a long letter from a correspondent at Durban on the subject of Dealer's Licences, to which we have often drawn attention in the columns of INDIA. As the writer says, the true culprits are those Imperialist patriots, the Natal townsmen. The licensing offices, who refuse licences to Indians, are usually Town Clerks or Town Treasurers, and therefore dependent on the Town Councils, and the Councillors are themselves elected by the people of the towns, on whom the ultimate responsibility must rest. That the Indians who have been refused licences have suffered on account of their nationality is openly admitted. For instance, a Durban Councillor said:—

> The reason was not because the applicant or the premises were unsuitable, but because the applicant was an Indian . . . . Personally, he considered the refusal of the licence a grievance to the applicant, who was a most suitable person to appear before the Council to ask for a licence.

Such is the advantage of being a citizen of our free and united Empire.

On behalf of the Indian merchants and storekeepers in Durban, Messrs. M. C. Camroodeen and Co., sent (November 25) to the Treasurer of the Durban Women's Patriotic League the sum of £62 odd. The apology for the smallness of the contribution is worth reproduction:

> We feel that we have not subscribed enough, but the subscription for the support of the families of the Indian volunteers in the event of their services being required, the heavy strain put upon our resources for feeding and housing thousands of Indian refugees, not only from the Transvaal, but also from our up-country Districts at present occupied by the enemy, and the enormous losses sustained owing to the virtual suspension of business, have crippled our pecuniary strength. We know, however, that the Volunteers who have dedicated their lives to the Colony and the Empire, as also those they have left behind, have performed an act of self-sacrifice before which anything we have done dwindles into insignificance. What little, therefore, we are able to send herewith is merely as a token of our heartfelt sympathy and admiration of our brave men who are fighting for us all.

The *Natal Advertiser* (November 27) acknowledges that the contribution is "a gratifying proof of the loyalty and public spirit of the Indian community in Durban," and that the apology was "unnecessary." The *Natal Mercury*, too (November 28), declares it to be "a very acceptable and eloquent expression of the feeling of the Indian people," and "a token of their devotion to the Queen Empress and to the country in which they have come to reside." "Nothing," justly adds the *Mercury*, "can better show the real feeling that animates this portion of our population, who too often have very little said on their behalf, than such a display of loyalty." It should be added that Indian ladies are working for the wounded soldiers and volunteers, like their British sisters.

Such appreciation of the Indians is very satisfactory, but the fear of business competition makes itself heard amidst the din of war. A "Refugee Briton," writing to the *Natal Mercury* (December 8), says the Indian traders are anticipating an Indian rush into the Transvaal and the Orange Free State "when the British flag is hoisted at Pretoria." He sets out the competitive argument with British frankness:

> I know many people who would like to see Indian traders turned out of Natal, but I think that both impossible and unjust, as there are many in Natal who own property, and have been here for many years; but to allow unlimited numbers of Indians to rush into the Transvaal and Free State as soon as the war is over would be, I think, almost a crime. The war has ruined many refugee storekeepers, and an influx of Indian storekeepers is the only thing needed to complete their ruin. Many European storekeepers have, until now, paid their assistants £20 to £25 a month. If the Indians are allowed in the Transvaal and Free State, they will employ Indian assistants at £2 a month and rations. To compete with them the European storekeeper can only pay his assistant £10 a month. Many of these assistants are now spending their blood in defence of Natal, and their fear is that when they return to their homes their prospects will be ruined by Indian competition.

This typical "Imperialist" proposes a "remedy." He suggests that a committee of refugee storekeepers and storekeepers' assistants "who have not gone to the front" should send a petition to Sir Alfred Milner. But as Sir Alfred Milner is not yet charged with the government of the Transvaal and the Orange Free State, the terms are of no immediate consequence. We should hope that this "Refugee Briton" stands alone in his appreciation of the loyalty and willing services of the Indians, apart from all considerations of mere common justice.

Even in Rhodesia, the Indians have offered to raise a body of one hundred, to take part in any operations the authorities might choose. Many of them, it is said, have undergone training in India. The authorities, however, while thanking them for this proof of their loyalty, have for the present declined to accept them. "It will not be forgotten, when the war is over," says the *Bulwayo Chronicle*, "that in the hour of danger the Indians of Rhodesia volunteered to take part in the defence of Rhodesia." We trust it will not be forgotten. But we shall see.

The evacuation of the Khaibar Pass was completed on December 27, and the *Pioneer* says "the withdrawal of the troops was without any particular incident." Really, there was not the slightest ground for the expectation that there would occur "any particular incident." But the fact is sufficiently significant in itself. It marks the reversal of the projects of forward movement that some people were rather keen upon two or three years back, and it establishes an exception to Mr. Balfour's boast that where British troops go there they stay. In any case, it is an unmixed blessing to have a visible and tangible sign of the Government's intention to keep to our own side of the march. All will be well on the other side so long as we maintain our own positions quietly, and let the tribesmen severely alone.

It is a very rare thing to find an Indian barrister practising at the English bar. It seems rather interesting, then, to note that Mr. J. M. Parikh, of Ahmedabad, formerly of the Bombay Educational Department at Nawanagar, and now a barrister of the Middle Temple, has just conducted a difficult case in company law during six days in the Chancery Division of the High Court, and substantially won it for his client. Other interests were represented by numerous counsel, among whom was Sir Edward Clarke. Mr. Parikh, however, proposes to make a specialty of Privy Council appeals, in which the prospects of an Indian barrister seem more favourable.

The *Amrita Bazar Patrika* cries out for the restoration of trial by jury so far as it was withdrawn by Sir James Stephen. Its complete abolition, which Sir Charles Elliott afterwards contemplated, was stayed by opposition from the Bench and the non-official Anglo-Indian community; and a Commission of Enquiry showed that the system had worked exceedingly well. Trial by jury bears a close resemblance to the *panchayet* system, which it supplanted, only to be soon taken away itself. Our contemporary in suggesting its restoration points out that this will require no administrative changes and will cost no money.

THE GOVERNMENT AND THE FAMINE.

NOW that the full text of the Resolution of the Government of India on famine relief is before the English public, its true seriousness is apparent. Whether it be taken as a sign of the unexpected—it might almost be said, unprecedented—intensity of the calamity, or as a first step towards the reversal of the policy so long pursued by the Indian Government in such cases, its importance can hardly be magnified. Obviously the rise in the numbers taking advantage of the relief works has caused no slight alarm in Calcutta. The calculations of the Famine Commission have already been belied. The Commissioners thought that the numbers receiving assistance from the State would not exceed 15 per cent. of the population of the part affected even at the worst moment, nor an average of 8 per cent. throughout the whole period during which relief works were necessary. Now the numbers have risen to 30 per cent. in some Districts of the Central Provinces, and the time of trial is only just beginning. That under these circumstances the Government should be desirous, not merely of checking waste, but of reconsidering the whole system under which relief is afforded to the famine-stricken, is not to be wondered at. It is—or should be—the guardian of the public purse. It has to keep the scales even between the different parts of India, not unnecessarily sacrificing the Provinces which are free from the scourge to those which are suffering, not mortgaging the future to the needs of the present. But when all is said, it still would seem that the Government misunderstands both the true interest of the country and the ultimate cause of that early seeking after relief which has awakened so much alarm.

For good or evil India has become under English rule a living whole. Those who think to make the work of Government easier by exaggerating or even fomenting the divisions of the governed may still enumerate the old distinctions of race and clime, of situation and religion; but the pressure of alien rule, and still more the similarity of financial and economic position, unite the interests of all Indians. The burdens of debt and taxation, which are shared more or less by the whole country, make every part share in the prosperity or adversity of every other. And in this united India, 80 per cent. of the population depend on agriculture. Therefore the salvation of the peasantry is the chief interest of the whole country. If the resources of the Provincial Governments are insufficient to cope with the famine, then the Indian Treasury must come to their assistance. So far, and in such general terms, the duty of the Government of India would probably be recognised by all. But if the principles on which relief has been given in former famines, while imposing a heavy tax on those not directly affected and laying up burdens for the future, tend also to demoralise the sufferers themselves, then, indeed, there would be good ground for reconsidering the methods employed. But this is just where the Government is deceived. It thinks that the rayat no longer clings to his homestead till he is driven out to seek relief by the whip of famine, but that he now looks for help at the first touch of scarcity; and that in this demoralisation of his nature is to be found the true reason of the numbers who are flocking to the works. But this is to overlook the points in which the present famine differs from that of 1897; and differs in every case for the worse. First, it differs in intensity. All authorities agree that, though the area is less, the want of rain has been greater within that area than on the occasion of the former visitation. Secondly, the dearth of fodder and consequent loss of cattle have been without precedent. All the accounts tell of beasts sold for the merest trifle—beasts which were the stay and most precious possession of the farmers. Nay, we hear of the long train-loads of hides going down to the sea, while the bones of the cattle are whitening the fields. And thirdly, this famine treads on the heels of the last. Barely three years have passed since India was in the throes of what has been described as the worst famine of the century. From that famine the country has had no time to recover, and now one that is even worse is upon it. Statistics which we quoted only a short time ago show that the diminution in the number of cattle was still apparent, even though the mortality of cattle was much less in the last famine than in the present, and we may be sure that it was not only in cattle that the country had failed to recover itself completely. The great famine of 1897 left the people weaker in body and poorer in resources and so less able to meet and overcome a new misfortune. It must never be forgotten that poverty is the cause of famine; that it is poverty which makes the rayats unable to obtain food in a time of scarcity and bad harvests. If they have grain, or the wherewithal to buy grain, sufficient to tide them over the time of dearth, there will be no famine. If they have grain to last one, two, or three months, by so much will their advent at the relief works be delayed. But if they have no store laid by, if they have nothing which they can turn into grain, if they have only just sufficient to last till the usual time for reaping the new crop—then if that crop fails them, they find themselves at once destitute and dependent on public help. Now it is obvious that the resources of a people who have not yet recovered from a famine are less than the resources of those who have been many years without encountering that affliction. And surely with this reason to account for so many hastening to the relief works at so early a period of the distress, it is unnecessary to believe that the profuse assistance given in the past has broken down the independence of the Indian villager, and turned him into a village pauper. Accounts that have found their way into the newspapers tell a different tale. We hear of a mother murdering her children because she could not satisfy their craving for food; of many arriving at the works so weak that they were unfit for any labour; of some who delayed so long that they perished by the way. It is in the Central Provinces that the number receiving aid is greatest; and it must not be forgotten that that part of India, suffering intensely now, also suffered intensely in the famine of 1897.

The Government now lay down the principle that it is no part of their duty to undertake the prevention of all suffering. If they can secure that no one shall die of starvation, they have fulfilled their task. Else they seem to fear that all the resources of the Government of India will be swept into the bottomless pit of famine expenditure. Even the giving up of adventures beyond the frontier—necessary for other reasons—and the postponement of all schemes of railway extension are not enough. Fewer English troops have now to be supported by India—for it is an ill wind that blows nobody good—but still the Government is frightened at the cost of the famine. But is not this a confession of the unstable character of Indian finance? The Government of India remains the most expensive in the world; but no one proposes to make it cheaper. Thus, when a pinch comes, the Government is at once in financial difficulties, with the result that even the relief of famine must be subordinated to a misplaced economy. The proudest laurels of the Indian Government have been obtained by the war it has waged against such calamities; is it now at last about to lower its standard and give up the fight? If so, the suffering that will befall the famine-stricken people will not be the only result. There will be a still more enduring effect—the loss of "prestige" to the Government.

This may seem too severe a view to take of what, in the eyes of some, is only an attempt to check extravagance and waste. But it must be remembered that in no previous famine were the people so dependent on the Government. Not only have the peasants not yet recovered from the effects of the famine of 1897, but other classes too, who then came to their help, are in the same condition. And the ears of the English public are now closed. The Imperialists, in the hour of sunshine, find the Empire none too large for their ambitions; but in the time of trouble one small corner fills all their view. Millions of their fellow-citizens may be without food in India; but what is that compared with a few thousand voluntary exiles who are without votes in the Transvaal? The English public that seemed so large-hearted and sympathetic but three short years ago, now without a pang, almost without a thought, leaves India to starve in her misery. Is it too late to remedy this? And if India cannot hope for anything from English generosity, has she no claim on English justice? India has spent millions on the wars upon the Afghan border. They were Imperial in purpose. They were opposed by the public opinion of India. They were paid for entirely out of the Indian Treasury. It was supposed to be India's contribution to the defence of the Empire. And all the time she was making another contribution by maintaining many more English battalions than were necessary for her own

defence—troops which could be taken in the hour of danger to fight elsewhere. Is it more than justice to ask that the cost incurred in maintaining these troops should be repaid to India from the Imperial Treasury?

REMEDIES FOR FAMINE.

THE inelasticity of official minds is strangely illustrated by the slowness of the authorities to hitch themselves out of the ruts of relief routine in coping with the recurrent visitations of famine during more than a century. According to the Report of the Indian Famine Commission of 1878, "the first occasion on which a famine formed the subject of a special enquiry" was in 1860-61, when over 20,000,000 of a population were affected in the North-Western Provinces and the Punjab and some of the adjoining Native States. During this famine, the same principles of relief were adopted as in 1837—namely, "that the duty of the State is to provide employment for those that can work, and of the public to support by charitable assistance those who cannot." The special enquiry was conducted by the distinguished and able Colonel Baird Smith, who was deputed, during the progress of the scourge, "to examine into and report on the causes, area, and intensity of the famine, the economic facts it disclosed, and the best measures to be adopted for its relief." It is startling to be reminded that the Orissa famine of 1865-68, which swept away one-third of the population, took the officials wholly unawares. "As no such calamity had occurred in the whole Province for nearly a century, it had to be dealt with by a body of officials necessarily ignorant of the signs of its approach, unprepared to expect it, and inexperienced in the administration of relief measures." It was not till the next great famine in the North-Western Provinces and the Punjab, in 1868-69, that "it was declared for the first time that the object of the Government was to save every life, and that district officers would be held responsible that no preventible deaths should occur." In the Behar famine in 1873-74, the Government took the new step of distrusting the capabilities of private trade and taking on itself the responsibility of providing the distressed districts with the whole quantity of food likely to be required. The great famine in Southern India in 1877 was combated by further experiments in relief. It was left to the Commission of 1878 to "formulate a policy and to evolve general principles for guidance in the actual presence of famine." But more important still, they were directed to enquire "how far it is possible for Government, by its action, to diminish the severity of famines, or to place the people in a better condition for enduring them."

The Second Part of the Report of 1880, then, is devoted to "measures of protection and prevention." It will be well to recall the views of the Commission. We may leave aside their statistical review, although it undoubtedly puts important points, if not all the important points, in an effective way. Their examination of the administrative system may also be neglected at present, for it aims simply at finding out how far improvement is needed in order to aid famine relief, and it substantially recommends that the most capable men should be in charge, that the districts should be readily manageable, and that inspection should be regular and vigilant. Surely there is no great originality in these suggestions. There is deeper matter in the next stage of the enquiry, which investigates the relations of the Government to the landholder and of landlord and tenant. The second branch is the more important. "The character of the tenure, as affecting the rights and general position of the occupants of the soil," the Commissioners point out, "is of more vital importance in India than in countries where there are other fields of employment for the masses of the population, to which, if unable to earn a fair subsistence as tenants, they can turn for the means of livelihood and the opportunities of acquiring wealth." Now what have the Commissioners to say about this matter of specially "vital importance"? They find that in Bengal "the relations of landlord and tenant are in a specially unsatisfactory condition." They "feel no doubt that the condition of the rent law and the way in which it is administered in Bengal are," as it was described to them even by a high official of the province, "a very grave hindrance to its agricultural prosperity, and that large portions of the agricultural population remain, mainly owing to this cause, in a state of poverty at all times dangerously near to actual destitution, and unable to resist the additional strain of famine." Looking over the whole of the provinces of Northern India, they feel no doubt that in all of them, and particularly in Bengal, "it is the duty of the Government to make the provisions of the law more effectual for the protection of the cultivators' rights," basing this opinion on economic considerations, but primarily "on the historical ground that they have a claim as a matter of strict justice to be replaced as far as possible in the position they have gradually lost." The various modes of landlord oppression are set forth. In Bombay, recent legislation stopped an expression of opinion; but in Madras, they say that "the postponement of legislation cannot fail to prove detrimental" to zemindari tenants, and they extend their opinion to "the occupants of land in villages owned by imamdars or other persons to whom Government has transferred all or part of its right to the land revenue." Since then, of course, there has been plenty of legislation, but we should like to see some evidence that it has effectively remedied the grave state of things adumbrated by the Commissioners of 1878. The Government Resolution appointing the Commission of 1897 gives an assurance that the programme generally "has been actively prosecuted." But that is not convincing on the point of actual results—to the cultivators.

It is hardly worth while to consider the treatment of the assessment of the land revenue. It is but feeble at best, and the existing practice is so cruel as to throw earlier criticisms in the shade. We repeat certain outstanding points which were set forth forcibly by Mr. Romesh Dutt in his recent Presidential Address to the National Congress. In Bengal, the Permanent Settlement has at least had this good effect, that it has formed a first barrier against enhancements of rent beyond the one-sixth of the gross produce sanctioned by the old Hindu law. In the North-Western Provinces, the landlord and the Government divide 20 per cent., and that, being an average, is of course not the maximum. But elsewhere the screw is turned more severely still. "The rule in Madras is to demand one-half the net produce—that is, the value of the produce after deducting the cost of cultivation." This Mr. Dutt declared to be "a ruinous rate of land-tax, which is bound to bring the cultivating classes into wretchedness and poverty and to disastrous famines in every year of the failure of crops." The Bombay principle is like that of Madras, but is tempered by the fact that "the settlement officers take into consideration what has been paid by cultivators in previous years without difficulty." In the Punjab the system approaches that of the North-Western Provinces, but neither here nor in Bombay "is the cultivator assured of getting an adequate proportion of the produce of the land he cultivates." In the Central Provinces, where the famine is now the fiercest, and which have suffered more seriously than any other part of India in recent times, "the land revenue settlements have been more severe and more harsh, not in their intention, but in their actual operation, than in any other part of India." The settlement is for 20 years, not for 30—a recurrence to a principle abandoned elsewhere. "Will you believe it," asked Mr. Dutt, "that in the Eastern and Southern Districts of the Central Provinces the Government revenue was fixed between 55 and 75 per cent. of the rent of the previous settlement, and between 50 and 60 per cent. in the recent settlement? Add to this another 12 per cent. for certain local rates, and the Government demand on the Malguzars comes to about 72 per cent. of their supposed collections." If famine is to be struck at the roots, it is plain that over-assessment like this must, at all hazards, be definitively brought to an end.

"No subject," said the Commissioners of 1878, "has been more strongly and frequently pressed on our attention than the evil results which spring from the degree to which the landowners are sunk in debt, the asserted rapid increase of their indebtedness and the difficulty which they find in extricating themselves from such burdens." No doubt, as in all other communities, debt was more or less prevalent at all times, but the Commissioners admit that "individuals or classes may have fallen into deeper embarrassments under the British rule than was common under the Native dynasties which preceded it." The Commissioners think, however, that "the class (of landholders) as a whole has prospered under British adminis-

tration"—an opinion that could not be easily supported now, after twenty more years of British rule. The cultivators have been steadily going into the hands of the money-lender. Neither "failure of crops from drought," nor "expenditure on marriage or other ceremonies," nor "general thriftlessness," nor "an improvident use of sudden inflations of credit," nor "the exactions of an oppressive body of middlemen" would, singly or together, have ever produced such a ghastly social condition in a hard-working, thrifty, and well-behaved community, apart from an overpowering external cause—"administrative errors such as unsuitable revenue settlements." The Commissioners minimize the effect of "the system of rigid and regular collection of the land revenue," but on a wholly mistaken ground—mistaken from the point of view of to-day at least—namely, "the small proportion which the land revenue bears to the gross produce of the land." The action of the Civil Courts, too, notwithstanding all recommendations, persists in pressing severely upon populations to which they are largely unsuitable. We have already, over and over again, pointed out thoroughgoing remedies for this appalling and ominous indebtedness.

Every improvement in agriculture, every movement for the encouragement of industries, every step towards the diffusion of technical knowledge and training, is something to the good. The misfortune is that, in all such attempts, there is too little disposition to take the Natives into counsel, and hence a step forward has too often been inevitably retraced. A little humility of mind would go a long way in the right direction; for the Natives, too, have had their practical experiences. The Congress has just urged more irrigation in preference to more railways, and by all means let us have more irrigation where it is physically possible on reasonable financial terms. Much may be done by the reversal of the "improvident denudation" of the country of its forests. But the first thing of all must be relief of the rayat from over-assessment and the general help that must come to him from a rigid restriction of the national expenditure. At the same time a series of village enquiries would bring out more effectively than anything else the precise facts that are most important for us to know. The Government is now bound to probe the question to the very bottom, without reserves.

NOTES FROM BOMBAY.

THE CONGRESS AT LUCKNOW.

[From an Indian Correspondent.]

Bombay, January 6.

The fifteenth sitting of the Indian National Congress opened, under the distinguished presidency of Mr. Romesh Chunder Dutt, on December 27 and closed on the 30th. In spite of the many obstacles that had to be overcome, the Congress proved to be an eminent success. The Lucknow Congress will be memorable in the history of our national organisation for more than one reason. Firstly, thanks to the perseverance, energy, and patience of the active members of the Reception Committee, especially its Chairman, Mr. Bunsalal, and its Secretary, Mr. Gangaprasad Varma, Lucknow, which is a stronghold of intolerant militarism, was taken by storm. It was in reality a moral bombardment of the town, not by disloyal revolutionaries, but by pacific and constitutional reformers. Their tactics and strategy overcame all, and the hostile forces arrayed against these sturdy men melted away like snow. Tact, judgment, and moral suasion had their influence in overriding every obstacle. Every difficulty which was thrown in the way of the organisers was met in detail and with success. In this respect it may be said that Amraoti, Madras, and Lucknow have taught our Congressmen a new and most wholesome lesson in the art of gaining one's object by the most peaceful and persuasive means. All honour to the men who have achieved this moral success for the Congress during the last three years against official opposition, mostly of a frivolous character, urged under the pretext of preventing plague. But for that broad-minded statesman who has now the reins of administration of the United Provinces in his hands, our Congressmen might have been put into more serious difficulties than those actually experienced. However, all has ended well, and I will not relate the history of the opposition with which Congress has become now exceedingly familiar.

Secondly, for the first time a lady, an English lady, the special delegate of the British Congress Committee, was a speaker, and a most fluent and discreet speaker too, on the Congress platform. The presence of Miss Alison Garland was indeed a great encouragement to Congress men. On her part she may be said to have nobly fulfilled the mission for which she was delegated. The visitors, ignorant of English, were quite electrified by the flow of her eloquence, given in ringing tones, and with a quiet emphasis which was indeed most pleasing. She also assisted at the Subjects Committee. In short the British Congress Committee may be congratulated on the jewel they have discovered to help India's cause.

Thirdly, it was the first time that the Congress had for its president an Indian official of great administrative experience and knowledge. Ten years ago, at Bombay, when the ever to be lamented Mr. Bradlaugh honoured the Congress, of which he, in turn, was eminently proud, we had for our President the universally beloved Sir William Wedderburn, who also was an official of immense and ripe experience and unbounded sympathy, but an Englishman. Mr. Dutt was able to speak with an authority which no non-official president, however able, could command. This may be taken as the third important incident of the Congress.

Fourthly, not since the date of the institution of the Congress had there been such a large number of Mahometan delegates of education, position and influence. There were as many as 350 of them, the most prominent of whom took an active part in the deliberations of the Congress. Several harangued in Urdu for the benefit of that part of the delegates who were unfortunately ignorant of English. It was indeed a sight to witness the way in which the Mahometan speakers vied with the Hindus in their patriotic ardour and enthusiasm. Half-a-dozen of them were quite vigorous in their candid criticism of the hostile camp, consisting of members of the great Mahometan community who a month ago got up a kind of scratch assemblage to curse the national organisation. Lucknow, it is superfluous to say, is the stronghold of Mahometanism. Hence the presence in the Congress camp of as many as 350 delegates was certainly an event. It is a sign that the Congress is slowly disintegrating those forces of Islam whom the late venerable leader of Aligarh misled from their true path. The monster mass meeting held on Christmas eve in the magnificent Congress pavilion, which the genius of the architect, Mr. Roy, reared in the heart of the town—a unique pandal of indigenous material, but a thing of joy and beauty—was crammed to its uttermost capacity. There were fully 10,000 citizens in it, of whom half were Mahometans, while in the spacious enclosure outside the pavilion there were as many as 15,000 to 20,000 people who could not gain admission. Among this surging mass, too, Hindus and Mahometans seemed to be equally divided. At one time I grew sceptical and wondered whether I could believe my own eyes, that in so backward and official-ridden a town as Lucknow, with its military jingoism rampant everywhere, it was possible to have a mass meeting so enthusiastic about the Congress. It was not mere sight-seeing that had attracted Lucknow to the centre of Congress activity. No; it was the curiosity to know what the "Kangreess" was and what it inculcated which had brought together the surging mass of Hindus and Mahometans. Thus was the moral bombardment of Lucknow achieved by the sturdy Congress leaders of Lucknow. I am quite convinced that the educating effect of the Congress week in Lucknow has been immense. The seed has been fairly sown, and is as certain to be fruitful as years roll on as it has been at Lahore, where the advent for the first time of the Congress, under the presidency of Mr. Dadabhai Naoroji (a name which in India is never mentioned without eliciting roars of applause and cheers), awoke the torpor of the Punjabis. Thus Congress, within the period of six years, has by dint of perseverance and energy, born of the righteous cause for which it is spending its best efforts and making all manner of sacrifices, captured two strongholds which only ten years ago were considered out of its reach, and impervious to Congress propaganda. Let our rulers at Simla and Westminster take note of this signal fact.

Having said so much about what may be termed the accidents of the Fifteenth Congress I have very little room left to dilate on the salient features of the Congress proceedings. But this much may be said, that the interest in Congress matters has not flagged; while half-a-dozen new topics have been discussed, the most important of them being the retrograde

Punjab Land Alienation Bill. The Congress had also to say a great deal on Famine, and agricultural indebtedness, on which the President discoursed so earnestly and with such a wealth of experience and knowledge. For the first time the Congress also agreed to have a constitution on paper, on which for the last six years it has set its heart. How the new rules, about which I shall have to say something another day, will work in practice, remains to be seen. I am no lover of paper constitutions. If there be not the men to carry them out faithfully not all the piles of parchment and most exquisitely drafted constitutions will do good. I have more faith, I repeat, in the earnestness of the workers and in the ability of these to raise the necessary sinews for successful agitation. Let the constitution take care of itself. Let our first duty be to raise the necessary funds to keep on the actual work of the Congress here and in the United Kingdom.

As to Indian affairs generally, you have no doubt noticed a somewhat enigmatic manifesto which the Government of India has issued under the signature of Mr. Holderness about the prevailing famine. The Government is alarmed at the rapidity with which millions of people weekly swell the number of the recipients of State—organised relief. Why that should be the case, it is impossible to say. Is the treasury again showing signs of depletion or what? My fear is that there is something beneath the surface. In all probability it is the alarm raised by the Financial Department, which for some months past has been engaged in the pastime of building up a gold reserve to bolster up its artificial currency. That this nice pastime should be thwarted by famine is, of course, very disagreeable. It goes to mar all their nicely laid secret plans. So Mr. Secretary Holderness raised the bugbear that the subordinate Governments and their famine officials are not quite rigid in controlling famine expenditure. In fact, without a tittle of evidence the Government creates quite a consternation, the effect of which will be to upset arrangements. Suddenly, the Government thinks a large number of people coming on relief are unnecessary; that is to say they are those who are *not* in want of relief. How it has brought itself to this conclusion we have no means of knowing. But under this pretext it has been suggesting to the local Governments that famine wages might be reduced, as if those wages were not in all conscience illiberal enough and reduced to the point of bare subsistence. Only the other day Lord Curzon boasted in magniloquent terms of the philanthropic work of the British Government in relieving famine. But before those words are forgotten comes this precious State Resolution. I must mention two very able articles which have appeared in the *Statesman* of December 31 and January 3 severely criticising this threatened new departure in famine policy which, it is to be feared, will culminate most disastrously for the starving and cover the Indian Government with obloquy. Currency projects of a most speculative and unwise character have to be launched at once on the country. Hence measures for relieving famine are to be subordinated to this enterprise. Such is the statesmanship at headquarters.

LETTER TO THE EDITOR.

SIR W. WEDDERBURN'S PROPOSED INDIAN VILLAGE ENQUIRY.

To the Editor of "India."

Sir,—In your first leading article in last Friday's India, when dealing with "The Causes of Indian Famines," you strongly urge the adoption of Sir W. Wedderburn's proposal that an enquiry be made in certain typical villages in India, as to the real condition of the people and the resources, if any, which they possess. Sir William's proposal carries with it the good wishes of all who desire well to India combined with a belief on the part of some of us that such an enquiry, honestly conducted, could not fail to render certain a great change in our mode of ruling India. In my humble opinion such an enquiry by a competent Commission, on which non-officials were represented as well as officials, would be almost terrifying in the details which would be made manifest. I argue thus because even an official enquiry—of a kind—into certain typical villages in various parts of India is as unpleasing reading as one can want to come across. I refer to the enquiry made in 1887 and 1888 on instructions from Lord Dufferin, then Viceroy of India. I have read the volumes containing the reports of District officials and the comments of Secretaries. Some extracts from them will be found in India for April 10, 1891. I invite your perusal of pp. 105 to 109 of that issue. It will be seen from what appears on those pages that the Government of India is not likely to be in a hurry to give Sir William the enquiry he wants.

Perhaps, just now, when what Lord Curzon of Kedleston calls a "terrible" famine is getting worse and worse day by day in India, you might do the community some service if you were to reprint those particular pages. Nearly nine years have passed since they were printed. Most of us who are readers of India will have forgotten them. With such facts brought freshly before us there will not be much surprise that famine in India has come—to *stay*.

Yours obediently,

Jan. 21, 1900. D.

THE FAMINE IN INDIA.

THREE AND A-HALF MILLIONS ON RELIEF.

The Secretary of State for India has received (January 23) the following telegram from the Viceroy on the subject of the famine:—

"In North-Western Provinces and Oudh crops have much benefitted by good rain, which has also fallen in parts of Punjab, Central Provinces, and Central India, though unfortunately benefit in affected tracts is small. South Central Madras has also received useful showers. Number of persons on relief:—Bombay, 749,000; Punjab, 132,000; Central Provinces, 1,450,000; Berar, 243,000; Ajmere-Merwara, 119,000; Rajputana States, 245,000; Central India States, 146,000; Bombay Native States, 341,000; Baroda, 65,000; North-Western Provinces, 2,000; Punjab Native States, 1,000; total, 3,483,000."

The *Times* (January 22) publishes the following telegram (dated January 21) from its Calcutta correspondent:—

The extent to which the greater part of India is affected by the famine was made clear at Thursday's meeting of the Viceroy's Legislative Council. Mr. Ibbetson, home member, read a statement showing that every factor of the situation, as presented last October, had turned out unfavourably. "The usual winter rains," he said, "have failed, except in the case of a portion of the country, in the last few days. 'Exceptionally' high temperatures have also prevailed. These conditions have still further injured the autumn crops, which have suffered from the early cessation of the monsoon and the contracted area and diminished prospects of the spring harvest, thereby enlarging the famine area, intensifying the distress, and increasing the demand for relief in the tracts originally affected. Taking the country in detail, the prospects are good in Bengal, Burma, and the North-West Provinces and Oudh; indifferent in Mysore and Madras; fair in the irrigated tracts of Sindh and South-West Punjab; while the rest of the country is famine-stricken. The Punjab autumn harvest is the worst on record for many years. The coming spring harvest in the unirrigated tracts occupies half the area sown in the last two years. In Bombay there is no previous record of so extensive and total failure of crops. In the Central Provinces the Chief Commissioner reports a failure so severe and widespread as has never been experienced before. The rice crop, the mainstay of the eastern portion of those provinces, is more completely lost than in 1896. Millets in the southern districts have fared but little better, and the cold weather crops in the west and north are probably worse than in 1897. In the fertile Berars the cotton crop is almost wholly lost. All the other crops have practically failed entirely. No such calamity has ever before befallen this part of India. Similarly throughout Rajputana, South-East Punjab, and the Western half of the States of Central India the present drought is without a parallel in extent and intensity. In a large portion of the area affected it follows close upon a famine of great severity, and is accompanied by an unprecedented scarcity of fodder and water. There seems reason to fear that in many places the destitution has reached or will reach a higher stratum of society than has ever been affected before since the country came under the British."

Summarising the situation, Mr. Ibbetson said that the aggregate of the true famine area was 300,000 square miles, with a population of 40 millions. There was a further area of 145,000 miles, with a population of 21 millions, where more or less general scarcity and distress prevailed. The expenditure up to March 31 would be over three crores.

The Viceroy, in an impressive speech, compared the present position with that in January, 1897, when only one and a quarter million of people were on the relief lists. Lord Elgin, presiding over a public meeting in that month, said that the occasion had no parallel. Now, with three and a quarter millions of people on the lists, the parallel had come and had been left far behind. Lord Curzon, continuing, said: "There is another respect in which the conditions are entirely different now. At that time the attention of England, one might almost say of Europe, was turned upon suffering India. Hun-

dreds of thousands of pounds were contributed and sent out by generous hearts and eager hands; the whole external world seemed to share our sorrow in the different forms open to it, and contributed to the alleviation of Indian distress. Now we have to suffer and struggle alone. It is not that England or the British Empire or humanity at large has become less sympathetic or more niggardly; our troubles in so far as they are known in England will excite just as genuine and poignant emotions as on the previous occasion, but, as we all know, the whole thoughts of England and of almost every Englishman throughout the world are fixed upon the war in South Africa, and upon that alone. Even in this country we feel patriotic excitement and nervous strain, whether we be Europeans or Natives, and how much more must it be so in England, where the honour and prestige of the old country are felt to be at stake, where almost every hearth has given some near or dear one to danger. And equally, if war absorbs all interest, so does it exhaust the national generosity. I am afraid it is too much to expect that England can again come to our rescue this time as she did so splendidly in 1897, or that, so far as can at present be judged, we can anywhere outside this country expect more than passive sympathy with our misfortunes. It is clear that we must fight our own battles with our own means. Speaking for the officers of the Government, I am sure that the last thing they desire is any public advertisement; whilst if we cannot look for financial help from outside our own backs must be broad enough to bear the burden with patience and fortitude. We must pursue our task, conscious that though we are not engaged in the stirring deeds which affect the fate of empires, we are yet performing our duty—English duty, Indian duty—and that we are trying to do what no war on the face of it does—namely, save from death many millions of human lives."

The Viceroy defended the recent circular of the Government enjoining greater stringency in the application of the famine test, with a view to eliminating from the lists persons not really requiring relief. He said that any Government which imperilled the financial position of India in the interests of the prodigal would be open to criticism, while any Government which, by indiscriminate almsgiving, weakened the fibre and demoralised the self-reliance of the population would be guilty of a public crime. He laid it down as an initial proposition that an obligation lay on the Government in times of famine to save human life and to prevent starvation or extremity of suffering dangerous to life. No Government could undertake in such a time, any more than at other times, to prevent all suffering or become a universal almsgiver to the poor. Indiscriminate private charity was mistaken, because it was a rule misapplied, but indiscriminate Government charity was worse because it sapped the foundations of national character.

Lord Curzon emphasised his remarks by showing from personal experience gained during his late tour how people comparatively comfortable in circumstances were seeking relief and actually saving a portion of the famine wage. Rules regarding relief should not err on the side of severity, but the obligatory relations upon which society based the duty of a landlord to his tenant, a tenant to his labourer, a community to its items, the father to his family, and man to himself, should not be ignored. If for all these relations at any period of emergency you hastily substitute a duty on the part of the State to its subjects, you extinguish all sense of personal responsibility, and destroy the economic basis of agrarian society. Lord Curzon recognised the generosity of the Native rulers in dealing with the famine, and concluded by referring to the noble manner in which British officers sacrificed their lives to save the Indian poor from starvation. Speaking particularly of such officers who perished in the Central Provinces during 1896-7, he said: "I do not desire to exaggerate these sacrifices. Englishmen are ready to perform them everywhere and unflinchingly. The Government is not behind its subordinates in alacrity and zeal. But let not our efforts be weakened by any ungenerous discordant note. The crisis is one which, not less than an Imperial war, demands the loyal and enthusiastic co-operation of all who love India. To that co-operation, in the months of trial that lie before us, on behalf of the Government I unhesitatingly appeal."

The *Manchester Guardian* (January 23) wrote:—

It is high time that the English public began to realise the magnitude of the disastrous famine that is raging in India. Lord Curzon's speech on Friday last in the Legislative Council and the official statement then read by Mr. Ibbetson show only too plainly that the present famine is the very worst that has been known since British rule was established in the Peninsula. The famine of 1896-7 was one of unparalleled severity, but this far surpasses it in rigour. One criterion by which to estimate the gravity of a famine is afforded by the number of persons in receipt of relief from the Government. Now in January, 1897, the average number relieved daily was 1,923,000; but the number relieved daily in the week ending last Tuesday was 3,178,000. That is to say, this famine is half as bad again as the last. Another way of comparing the two famines is to take the area and the population affected. In 1897 the famine affected an area of 303,000 square miles, or two and a half times the area of the United Kingdom; the present famine affects an area of 445,000 square miles, or nearly four times that of the United Kingdom. Again, in 1897, 63,000,000 people suffered more or less severely from scarcity of food when the famine was at its height; at this moment a population of 61,000,000 is suffering from a famine which, so far from having attained its maximum severity, is certain to become more serious during the next four or five months. In other words, a population half as large again as that of the British Isles is starving or on the brink of starvation. It has to be remembered, too, that the greater the area affected the more difficult relief operations become and the heavier is the mortality. It will be a far harder task to bring effectual relief to the scattered population of Central India, which is hit hardest by this winter's famine, than it was to carry relief into the densely populated North-Western Provinces and Oudh which suffered most three years ago.

The calamity is the more terrible because it was unexpected. "The Government of India," the Famine Commissioners of 1878 declared, "must be prepared for the occurrence of scarcity, in some degree of severity, and in some part of the country, as often as two years out of every nine; and great famines may be anticipated at average intervals of twelve years. The danger of extreme famine in any one province or locality arises on the average not oftener than once in fifty years; though drought followed by severe distress must be expected as often as once in eleven or twelve years." But India is now confronted with a second great famine after an interval of only three years, and, worse than that, some of the districts which were most severely affected in 1897—notably in the Eastern Central Provinces round Jubbulpore and in eastern Bombay—are again the chief sufferers, though, according to the law of averages formulated by the Commissioners, they should have been exempt from the scourge for half a century. Famine has thus dealt India a second terrible blow before she has properly recovered from the first. It is often said by writers on Indian affairs that a single good harvest seems to give the peasantry new life, after they have been reduced to the depths of misery by famine. This pleasant theory may be true of the more fertile portions of India, but it is to be feared that it does not apply to the districts of Central India, where the failure is officially declared to be "so severe and widespread as has never been experienced before." In these poor and backward districts the peasantry seem always to live on the margin of subsistence, as an economist would say, and, like the peasantry in parts of the West of Ireland, never know what plenty is. The prospect before these unhappy people now is indeed gloomy, however zealously the relief authorities may endeavour to mitigate the distress. The outlook is hardly less black elsewhere, in Bombay, Sindh, Rajputana, and the Deccan. For, as the Indian Government well understands, it is not only a question of saving as many people as possible from death by starvation—and this in a vast area that is still imperfectly supplied with railways is a most difficult and costly task—but it is necessary also to prevent the whole social system from being broken up. Great central relief works on the old plan were found to draw the peasants from their homes and lands and to break up the village communities, so that when the famine ended it left behind it social chaos. The Government now attempts, therefore, to bring relief to the peasantry in their homes, so as to prevent the famine from having any permanently disastrous effects upon their welfare. As agriculture is the predominant industry of India, and as all the peasantry in British India outside Bengal are tenants of the Government, it is obviously desirable that this should be done. But it greatly complicates the problem of famine relief, and involves far greater devotion on the part of the administrators and far greater outlay than the old system. However well prepared the Famine Department may be, so terrible an outbreak as this must tax its powers to the uttermost, and the Indian exchequer is none too well able to stand the strain of an expenditure which will be counted in millions before the crisis is over.

Distressing as this calamity is, the speech in which Lord Curzon took it for granted that England would do nothing to help India in her time of need is more distressing still. "I am afraid," he said, "that it is too much to expect that England can again come to our rescue this time as she did so splendidly in 1897, or that, so far as can at present be judged, we can anywhere outside this country expect more than passive sympathy with our misfortunes." If this is true—and Lord Curzon evidently thinks that it is—it is most discreditable to us as a nation. We Englishmen are never tired of pointing to the benefits that our rule has conferred upon India, and a hostile foreign critic cannot wound our national pride more deeply than by declaring that we drain India of her wealth and give her little in return. Are we then going to justify such ill-natured and, on the whole, unfair criticism by turning a deaf ear to the appeal of India for help in this dreadful crisis? We prefer to believe that the English people is not so forgetful of its responsibilities nor so completely absorbed in the South African war as Lord Curzon supposes, and that as soon as it is really awakened to the gravity of the case it will respond as liberally to the demand for assistance as it did in

1897 and often before. Certainly, Lancashire, to which the Indian trade means so much, will not be slow to express its sympathy with the famine-stricken millions of our Indian subjects. All that is needed is for someone to take the initiative.' Mr. Ogden suggested in our columns yesterday that the Lord Mayor of Manchester should be asked to open a Famine Relief Fund forthwith, and this would be most desirable. As the case is urgent, whatever is to be done should be done at once.

[The *Manchester Guardian* of Thursday, January 18, reproduced in full the first leading article from INDIA of the preceding Friday.]

The following letter to the editor appeared in the *Manchester Guardian* for January 22 :—

Sir,—Those who read the brief telegraphic report of Mr. Ibbetson's and Lord Curzon's speeches in the Viceregal Council yesterday will, I cannot doubt, feel, as I do, the necessity of taking some immediate action to show that we in the Manchester district, who owe so much to India, ought not to remain impassive under such a dreadful state of affairs as those speeches set forth. Although our anxieties in connexion with South Africa are great, and might be urged, as Lord Curzon seems to infer, as some excuse for not realising our full share of responsibility for the succour of these fifty millions of Natives now threatened with plague and death, I hesitate to believe that Lancashire would not suitably respond to a call for subscriptions if some of our leading citizens should think fit to initiate it.—Yours, etc.,

97, Bridge Street, Manchester. H. J. OGDEN.
January 20.

A Correspondent signing himself "Urgent" had the following letter in the *Manchester Guardian* of Wednesday last :—

Will you allow me a line or two to back up the letter in to-day's issue by "Lancastrian"? The need in India is great, and it is immediate. It may be that the authorities in London have their hands full, but Manchester has the greater responsibility in this matter. Many of us here get our living by Indian trade, and amongst those who are not directly engaged in trade with India there are many who profit thereby. I am convinced that Lancashire is willing to rise to this responsibility, and certainly I can say that out of a score of people to whom I have mentioned it to-day I have not found one who does not think that we should do what we can—and speedily. Who will take the lead? Shall it be Sir Frank Adam, Mr. Macara, or who?

THE RELIEF FUND.

We have received from one of our readers ("A Friend of India") a postal order for ten shillings and sixpence for the Indian Famine Relief Fund.

The *Westminster Gazette* wrote (January 20) :—The famine in India goes from worse to worse, and has now attained a magnitude which is nothing short of appalling. This is what the Viceroy said on the subject yesterday :—

The famine-stricken area had expanded to a degree surpassing the worst fears, and the country was now face to face with a scarcity of cattle, water, and food terrible in character and intensity. Nearly three and a-quarter million persons were now receiving relief.

England on the occasion of previous famines has always been a most liberal contributor of aid ; but at this time there have been so many appeals in connexion with South Africa that assistance to anything like the former extent—or even assistance at all—is, we suppose, out of the question. INDIA this week, we notice, pleads for a thorough investigation by a committee, in selected typical villages, to see whether some remedy for the recurring scourge could not be devised. Such an investigation could certainly do no harm. These famines have come to be looked upon as inevitable—as, indeed, they may be—but any proposal favoured by leaders of Indian opinion towards their mitigation deserves at least a hearing.

The *Morning Leader* (January 24) said :—It is many weeks since we warned our readers of the approach of the appalling famine which is now affecting in India an area four times as large as the United Kingdom, and a population exceeding sixty millions. Already three and a half millions of persons are on relief in the affected tracts, and it is certain that the famine must grow worse and worse until May or June. Period for period this famine is far more severe than the famine which devastated India in 1896-7, and unless every known mode of calculation is fallacious it will be the most terrible famine of the century. Yet, if we may believe Lord George Hamilton and Lord Curzon, no appeal is to be made to the liberality of the British public. The theory is that we are all utterly absorbed in the war, and therefore that an appeal would meet with a response worse than nothing. We dispute both propositions. To our personal knowledge there are many who would subscribe if they knew of a responsible quarter to which subscriptions might be sent. And in a matter where lives may depend upon a few shillings even the smallest subscriptions are of use. The reluctance of the India Office to invite, or rather to permit, generosity on the part of the public has been noted on former occasions. It is merely outrageous. But perhaps it is what might be expected from an incapable Minister like Lord George Hamilton who, in a temper of optimism run mad, habitually prates to the House of Commons about the prosperity of the Indian peasant and the recuperative power of the country. We hope that the goodwill of charitable people will either force the hand of the India Office or secure some other channel for such donations as may be forthcoming.

The *New Age* (January 25) says :—Sir William Wedderburn tells that in his civilian days the rayat had usually a store of grain for two or three years ahead. Where is that store now? The plain fact is that it has been sold to pay increased revenue demands, and the Government has squandered it on the barren rocks and sands beyond the frontier. The Government must be held to its responsibility, and now that the madcap adventures on the North-West have received a momentary quietus, must practice a rigid economy and allow the rayat some opportunity for providing for the inevitable day of stress from failure of the rains. Sir William Wedderburn's urgent suggestions, pressed home by the National Congress, and illustrated in other fields, continental as well as English, can be no longer ignored. A local enquiry in a few typical villages of India would be a simple and inexpensive matter, and the agricultural bank is a well proved institution. The ingrained reluctance of the Government to get to the root of the mischief must be overcome at whatever expense of *amour propre*. The practical extirpation of famine in India is the problem before the Government, and it is a problem that will brook no further tinkering.

The *Friend* concludes an article upon "How to prevent Indian famines" as follows :—The argument may be summed up in a few natural syllogisms : (1) That India can be freed from famine only by an adequate supply of water to the land under cultivation ; (2) that in the great systems of the peninsula there exists a supply of water abundantly sufficient in most districts, if wisely applied, for this purpose ; (3) that at present, in a great part of the country, almost the whole of this plentiful supply of untold value is allowed to flow uselessly to the sea ; (4) that, given the engineering skill competent to deal with the continent on a large and comprehensive plan, there is no reason why the greater part of the area should not be permanently protected from famine ; (5) and lastly, that the necessary hydraulic works, and the outlay on their construction and maintenance, would be repaid over and over again in the ever-increasing prosperity of the country.

The Hindus can appreciate an applied Christianity, and if our Government, in its beneficence, by bridling the rivers and by water-storage, will fertilise our great dependency, it will commend to its peoples the glad tidings of the River of Life that flows for the healing of the nations.

THE INDIAN NATIONAL CONGRESS.

LECTURE BY PROFESSOR MURISON.

Last Sunday afternoon (January 21) PROFESSOR A. F. MURISON delivered a lecture on "The Indian National Congress," in the Great Hall, Tunbridge Wells, Mr. F. Lawson Dodd, M.R.C.S., D.P.H. (Lond.), etc., in the chair. After sketching the extent of the British Indian Empire and the characteristics of the population, he outlined the hierarchy of government, conducted by a handful of aliens in the midst of a multitude of Natives. Naturally the civilians had developed an *esprit de corps* which too often tended to contempt or at least belittlement of Native ability and Native opinion, and sometimes even strained the virtues of British justice. The resulting isolation of the rulers from the ruled was a serious obstacle to satisfactory administration, for how could the administration, however well-intentioned and however energetically conducted, prove a success when the administrators were, as they confessedly were, gravely ignorant of the real thought and feeling of the people? The responsibility of British Indian civilians to their superiors was less efficient for the just protection of the Natives by reason of the racial and official *esprit de corps ;* and the responsibility of the Secretary of State in the last resort was purely nominal. In the palmy days of John Company, the Court of Directors was checked by the Court of Proprietors, and behind the Court of Proprietors was the Board of Control, and a well founded complaint from India had a good chance of judicial consideration. But just as this system of checks got whittled down to a secret autocracy of the President of the Board of Control, so now the formal restraints were reduced to an open autocracy of the Secretary of State. The Government of India takes its orders from Whitehall, introduces legislation at the direction or with the previous approval of the Secretary of State, and thus an appeal from India against any legislative proposal is resolved into an appeal from the Secretary of State to the Secretary of State. The solidarity of the Cabinet ensures that the Secretary of State will be supported in Parliament by the full force of the Government majority ; and it is all but impossible that any protest from India, backed by whatever argument short of imminent or actual insurrection, should prevail over the determination of the Secretary of State, however perverse or ignorant. Hence the supreme importance of a fuller and clearer light on Indian thought and feeling in the constituencies of Great Britain.

The Indian National Congress, which endeavours to enlighten both the Indian Government and the British people on Indian needs and desires, was an inevitable outcome of British rule and was actually established on lines immediately suggested by a British Viceroy. The resolution to diffuse education in India and the Act of 1833 expressly providing that no Indian "shall by reason only of his religion, place of birth, descent, colour, or any of them be disabled from holding any place, office, or employment" under the Company, awakened aspirations that could never afterwards be put to sleep. If the plain intention of the legislators of that period had been fulfilled, and the like intentions of the Proclamation of 1858 had not been frustrated by what Lord Lytton called "deliberate and transparent subterfuges," and converted, as Lord Salisbury phrased it, into a "political hypocrisy," there would have been no need for an Indian National Congress. When the day dimly anticipated by Lord Macaulay as "the proudest day in English history" dawned—the day when the Indians, "having become instructed in European knowledge," demanded European institutions, or, what is the same thing, an expansion of their own immemorial institutions in the light of their European education—the demand was but reluctantly and tardily and imperfectly conceded, the concessions were hampered in

operation, and in recent years a gravely retrograde movement has set in. Thus British distrust, or lack of statesmanlike courage, rendered the Congress necessary to voice the Indian demands of fulfilment of deliberate and solemn British promises, and the strange increase of distrust (explicable enough by the loss of touch with Native feeling, by a misunderstanding of the lessons of the Mutiny, and by a lack of realisation of the transformations of the past forty years) has multiplied both its necessity and its importance. Dr. Murison explained the original project of Mr. A. O. Hume, C.B., and the final form it assumed under the suggestions of Lord Dufferin. The Congress thus in a manner represents in India "the functions of her Majesty's Opposition" in England; and it meets annually in some important centre and "points out to the Government in what respect the administration is defective and how it can be improved"—notable and valuable examples of its beneficent work being open to the world in the series of Presidential Addresses and Congressional Resolutions.

It was scarcely worth while to defend the Congress now against the charge of disloyalty and sedition. The official revilers of the Congress used these ugly words simply to express the intensity of their dislike or difference of opinion; and the manifestations of loyalty in India on every occasion when Russia made a move in Central Asia, and now when our hands are full in South Africa, might well dispense with argument. Professor Murison insisted on the representative character of the Congress, showing the mode of election of delegates, and quoting Sir Richard Garth's analysis of the attendance at Allahabad in 1888 as amply illustrative. If the number of voters actually taking part in the election was insignificant in view of the immensity of the population, we should do well to consider that in all movements of the kind it is the instructed and energetic men that lead the rest, and to remember the state of representation at home before 1832—and even at this day and year of grace. The Congress was an established institution, and its far-reaching influences were seriously considered by the Indian authorities, however much they might dissemble, and by every man of Indian experience that had eyes to see the trend of political developments. It concerned itself solely with politics, at the same time living on most friendly terms with the complementary organisation of the Indian Social Conference. Its ground plank is, as has been publicly stated by Mr. W. C. Bonnerjee, the first (and eighth) President, "that British rule should be permanent and abiding in India;" and, granted this, "that it is the duty of educated Indians to endeavour to the best of their power to help their rulers so to govern the country as to improve her material prosperity and make the people of all classes and communities happy and prosperous and contented as subjects of the British Empire."

Turning to the work of the Congress, Dr. Murison said he could not do more than select a few examples of the many resolutions that had been passed, some of them year after year. Perhaps none of them was more fundamental than the incessant demand for a prudent limitation of the expenditure. In addressing them last year, he had shown how thoroughly justified the Congress was in protesting against the waste of little short of a hundred millions on warlike expeditions beyond the North-West frontier since the revival of the forward policy in 1878. There was scarcely a single obstacle of moment in the path of the Government that did not, on close examination, resolve itself into a lack of money. Why were there only 13 per cent. of the population in the primary schools? Lack of money. Why were the police so inefficient and so untrustworthy? Lack of money. Why had the separation of judicial and executive functions been urged in vain for nearly the whole century by officials and Indians alike? Lack of money. Why was famine rampant in the land? Lack of money. Why was India saddled with a ridiculous gold standard? Lack of money. The whole country had been sucked dry in order to pour the narrow earnings of a miserably poor people upon the barren rocks and sands beyond the frontier, and to give exercise, promotion, and honours to a vastly overgrown military force. We prided ourselves on our keeping the peace; but it had yet to be shown, in spite of all the current laudations of our rule, that the Indians were not more prosperous under the most devastating conquerors than they are now under the British peace. If railways have opened up the country, they have betrayed wholesale the ancient industries of the people. The sole industry is agriculture, to which four persons in every five must look for a livelihood. Now famine at short intervals sweeps remorselessly over the land. The latest telegram from Calcutta tells that 27,000,000 persons in Native territory and 22,000,000 in British territory are in its grip. Only three years ago some 60,000,000 were in like calamity. The Government blames the drought and applies relief—no doubt with the utmost energy. But the Congress demands that the Government should probe the evil to the bottom. It asks where are those stores of two or three years' provision of grain that the rayat used to possess a generation back. These stores have been sold to meet enlarged demands of the revenue officer—to be cast over the frontier. The Congress urges that expenditure should be reduced, so as to give the rayat a chance to accumulate a protective provision, and that steps should be taken for the resuscitation of Native industries.

As regards justice, the High Courts were the most respected of British institutions in the country. Outside the High Courts, there was vast room for improvement—improvement dependent on money. Dr. Murison explained the obnoxious and oppressive operation of the union of judicial and executive functions, against which the Congress had fought so energetically, and illustrated it by the Chupra case. He also spoke of the protest made by the Congress in favour of freedom of the person, as exemplified in the scandalous imprisonment of the Natus, and of the contentions for freedom of opinion, as exemplified in the protests against the Sedition Acts and the pending Telegraphic Press Messages Bill. Finally, he contended that the legitimate claims of the Indians to a larger share in the work of legislation and administration must be frankly conceded, not merely for the peace, but also for the prosperity, of the country. In the legislative councils, in the municipal councils, in the educational, military, and other departments of Government, the services of Indians might, and ought to, be utilised to a far greater extent. Even in the Executive Council of the Viceroy and in the Council of the Secretary of State, the doors of which had never yet been opened to Indians, the counsel of Natives would be an extremely valuable accession. The rulers of India, with every allowance for their good intentions and their great performance, have yet to learn the value of a fair estimate of the ruled and of a just sympathy with them. No words could be finer than Lord Curzon's; no promises could be more gratifying than the Act of 1833 and the Proclamation of 1858. But, as Burke said, "men will not look to Acts of Parliament, to regulations, to declarations, to votes, and resolutions"; they will ask what is the road to power, credit, wealth, and honours; "it is your distribution of these that will give the character and tone to your government—all the rest is miserable grimace." The husks looks uncommonly well; but what the Congress wants is the kernel. And the sooner the Indians have their reasonable share conceded, the sooner shall we be on the only sure path towards the peaceful consolidation and prosperity of the British Indian Empire.

AN INTERVIEW WITH THE ELDER NATU.

[From the "Mahratta."]

Soon after the Natu brothers arrived at their home our representative made a demand for an interview upon the attention of the older one which was willingly conceded. Our representative says that Sirdar Balasaheb bears quite a cheerful mien and though he has grown evidently weaker than at the time of his arrest, he is apparently in good health. It seems that he has had no unpleasant experiences which he may like to keep back in the relation of his story; nor does his imprisonment seem to have cowed him down. He speaks with a remarkable freedom born however not of defiance but of conviction and courage.

Question: What is at present the condition of your health?

Answer: I am as you see not very much reduced; but I was not so in Ahmedabad. I think I have recouped a good deal since my transfer to Belgaum. The diabetes which I am sure I first contracted at Ahmedabad is still on me, and it gives me trouble as often as I am subjected to any physical or mental strain. The hot climate of Ahmedabad had very nearly killed me.

Q.: What do you say with regard to your treatment while in imprisonment?

A.: I must at once say this, that after I left Poona so far as the executive officers were concerned I had no complaint whatsoever. On the contrary I am bound to say that so far as the rules and regulations should allow I was shown full toleration, or I may say even a little indulgence. I do not think I had one cross word with any of the officers I had to deal with. My special thanks are due to Mr. Vincent, Police Commissioner, Bombay, Mr. Gibb, the Ahmedabad Collector, Mr. Fry, the Ahmedabad Sessions Judge, Mr. Pegg, Superintendent Ahmedabad Gaol, Messrs. Drew and Carmichael, Collectors of Belgaum; and Rao Bahadur Lalu Bhai, the Huzur Deputy Collector, Belgaum. I have mentioned this fact and these names in my recent yadi of thanks to Government written after my release.

Q.: To what would you attribute their uniform kindness?

A.: I can't say. But I think as sensible men they could not possibly enter into the feelings of Government about me. My imprisonment, at least my prolonged and unaccounted for imprisonment, was as much a mystery to them as myself.

Q.: You seemed to be making a reservation in regard to your treatment in Poona; how is that?

A.: Yes! I was told so at the time of my release. But I was pointing out to Government their liability in the matter from the very beginning. I don't know if they took counsel's opinion in the matter; but I must say they have at last done ample justice to me in the matter.

Q.: Is your release conditional?

A.: No! It is quite unconditional. I was often while in prison tempted by officers to express my sorrow. I refused to express sorrow at anything except the mistake committed by Government. The Collector, of course, warned me not to do so again, but unless I am told what I did, I cannot say how far I shall be able to act up to the warning. If I do "so" again, my penalty would be, as the Collector told me, forfeiture of my Sardarship and the State prisonership again. I am of course ready not to do what Government want me not to do. My only difficulty in the matter is that I am not told what I am not to do. In fact, I have told Government as much clearly in my latest yadi, and I am hoping that Government will realise my responsibility and be a little more communicative than they have hitherto been.

Q.: As you are upon that subject I may as well ask you what you think about your yadis to Government and their answers to them.

A.: To speak plainly I must say that for all my scores of yadis I never received any reply that was either simple or straightforward and to the point. In fact, they refused to hold any parlance with me. Even the few formal replies that they vouchsafed to me were overdue by weeks or months. I do not think Government ever treated any of their prisoners before in this fashion. By experience, however, I had formed one crude test as to the probable fate of any of my yadis. If the answer came within a few days the prayer was to be summarily refused. If it was delayed by a month or so, even then

the prayer was to be refused, but after consideration; perhaps the law was on my side, or, perhaps the conscience of Government.

Q.: Is it a fact that Government has decided to bear all your maintenance charges?

A.: Well my stay as a State prisoner in Poona was of a few hours duration; but during that time I was riddled through by annoying and disrespectful questions. But I should not have minded that. Mr. Kenedy, the Poona Police Superintendent would go further, and gave me the character of being a fool. Well I must say I did not like it. I told him that he was only a policeman with a warrant in hand and that I knew my duty as an arrested person, being a Magistrate for a long time. Giving characters was no legitimate part of the execution of a warrant; and I would return such courtesies if they were shown me any longer. I think I am keen on the point. Though I was a prisoner I was certainly a respectable gentleman and I should say it is cowardly for a man in authority to abuse another man helplessly in custody. Then again I have to complain about one thing. I was arrested in the early morning; but till late in the noon they did not allow me to take the usual bath or even to answer the calls of nature. Would you believe it? Do you know anything more unreasonable?

Q.: What do you say with regard to your arrangements in prison?

A: For a few days at the beginning of my imprisonment there were absolutely no arrangements made about me, much less arrangements suitable to a man in my condition; though as you know the charter of my misfortunes, I mean the Regulation, directs such to be made. If you would believe it, even my gaoler was not properly informed of my arrival, I mean in the necessary formality, and could have refused me. In fact, I do not know how anyone can defend that part of the Government's conduct. But perhaps the experience was altogether unique and novel to them.

Q.: May I ask you what do you think may be the probable grounds on which Government made you a prisoner? Of course none are stated by Government in reply to your repeated enquiries?

A.: None of course! But I may tell you my inferences. Everybody has his; and you may take mine for what they are worth. In the first place the total failure of the Poona police to implicate my younger brother in the Ganpati riots of 1894 marks in my opinion the beginning of my misfortunes. To be suspected of such implication was in itself a misfortune; but perhaps as I now find it, it was much better than to have succeeded in disproving that suspicion in an open court of law. Here was my fault No. 1. It is no use protesting anything upon my conscience in an interview like this; but I may as well tell you that the suspicions directed against me and my brother were absolutely unfounded. My fault No. 2 is that I was an Inamdar; not, perhaps, that I was simply an Inamdar, but an Inamdar who would stand up on his rights and earnestly advocate them in such matters as the Inamdar's right to the possession of the papers and documents belonging to his village, the open option and full discretion vested in Inamdars to accept or not as they like, survey by Government officers. In revenue matters, too, I had my differences of opinion with the Revenue authorities. I must point out that in many of these questions I had successfully asserted my rights with the help of law. But now I see that perhaps the general effect of it all upon the mind of Government may have been that I was not just as mild and pliable an Inamdar as I ought to be. Nevertheless whether in all this there was anything like sedition it is for the public to judge. My latest contribution to the catalogue of my faults was perhaps that I was a plague volunteer, but here again not as *yielding* a volunteer as I ought to be. In fact I soon began to find it inconsistent with self-respect to act as a plague volunteer, under the direction of the late Mr. Rand, and I soon yielded up the office.

Q.: But what has all this got to do with your imprisonment?

A.: Yes! I come to the point. Government were informed, by whom I do not care to guess, that I was the man who wielded the whole public force in Poona and turned out the Social Conference out of the Congress Pandal. *Such* a man as I was, I *must* know who had committed the Ganesh Khind murders, even granting that I had no direct hand in it. Perhaps Government thought that the shortest cut to getting the required information was to keep me under restraint, but they had no definite charge to make against me and that I suppose accounts for the use of the Regulation. But even this does not explain away my prolonged imprisonment. But as I have already said it was a novel experience for Government; and they must have found the situation growing more awkward every day. They could neither speak out nor be silent. They have ultimately ended it all by giving my release the appearance of a *decree of mercy*. Even mercy, I need hardly say, cannot possibly fully turn the attention away from the question of the *grounds* of my imprisonment; but I accept the mercy, and mercy it certainly is when I knew that Government could have prolonged my imprisonment, even indefinitely. Apart from the question of right and wrong I am fully conscious that there was nothing to prevent them from so doing. I have written a yadi to Government in which I have sincerely thanked them for my release.

Q.: Can you say you are obliged to any one in particular for your release?

A.: Lord Sandhurst, of course. But I cannot say that the matter had altogether escaped the attention of the Viceroy. In fact I was told by a friend while at Kudchi towards the end of 1899 that Lord Curzon soon after being appointed to the Viceroyalty had called for the precis of the official papers about several questions and one among those questions was the question of my imprisonment. Well, it is better after all to give the credit for my release to the British sense of Justice which may slumber but succeeds. I do not think my thanks would be less appreciable to anyone if put in this general form.

Here the conversation ended with a hearty shake of the hand. Our representative thinks Sardar Balasaheb would have enlightened him further; but unfortunately he himself did not know anything more about the whole mysterious affair which however has ended so happily.

INDIA IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY.

Commenting on Sir W. Lee-Warner's essay, the *Manchester Guardian* wrote: Sir W. Lee-Warner, addressing the Society of Arts last night, expressed concern at the "hostile attitude" of the vernacular press in India. Macaulay pleaded for higher education, "to form a class who may be interpreters between us and the millions whom we govern," but the result, in Sir W. Lee-Warner's eyes, is disappointing, as the educated "interpreters" who have founded a native Indian press often speak very harshly of the Indian Government. But before ceasing to educate Indians we should reflect that some persons who are worth hearing say just as hard things of a large part of the Western press as Sir W. Lee-Warner says of part of the press of India. Mr. E. L. Godkin, the late editor of the New York *Evening Post* and *Nation* and one of the first of living journalists, speaks frankly of what the Americans call the "yellow press" in some "Recollections" just published in the *Evening Post*:—

"In all the free countries of the world, France, America, and Italy, though in a less degree in England, it constitutes the great puzzle of contemporary political philosophy. It is ever substituting fleeting popular passion for sound policy and wise statesmanship. Democratic philosophers and optimistic clergymen are naturally unwilling to admit that the modern press is what the modern democratic peoples call for, and try to make out that it is the work of a few wicked newspaper publishers. But the solemn truth is that it is a display of the ordinary working of supply and demand."

We think Mr. Godkin's view too gloomy. Still he is so far right that India is not the only place where education would have to be put down if it were held responsible for bad newspapers, and that if a popular press devotes itself largely to the expression of discontent it probably does so because its readers are discontented and demand that expression of their feeling. And if so, is not this wicked press an interpreter between us and India after all?

INDIAN TRADERS IN NATAL.

The recent refusal of Sir George White to permit a large number of Indian refugees from the Transvaal to enter the beleagured town of Ladysmith has provoked a certain amount of acrimonious comment in some quarters. Such criticism is manifestly unreasonable, for only the direst necessity would have induced Sir George White to ignore the ordinary dictates of humanity. With the prospect of a prolonged siege confronting him, and a supply of stores which was not illimitable, it was impossible for him to encumber himself with a throng of non-combatants. The Indian refugees only shared the unfortunate fate of many of the British colonists of Northern Natal. When the evacuation of Newcastle and Dundee was rendered imperative, the inhabitants of those towns were compelled to face the severest privations in their flight southward. They have lost their homes, and many are irretrievably ruined. It is the fortune of war, and non-combatants must accept the disabilities thrust upon them with as much grace as they can command. Indians and British alike have had to embrace the common lot of misery, and no special sympathy can be expended upon the Transvaal Indians who failed to find in Ladysmith the city of refuge they sought. But the particular grievance of Indians in Natal, ventilated in an article in another column, comes within a different category. Perhaps this is not the most opportune moment for calling renewed attention to it. The gaze of the public is so intensely concentrated upon the exciting events taking place at the theatre of war, that it has little inclination to turn aside and listen to the complaints of a comparative handful of natives of India. Yet, as we believe we have been almost alone in raising our voice against the inequitable treatment meted out to Indian traders in Natal, we feel constrained to plead their cause once more. After all, it is not inappropriate, at a time when Great Britain is fighting for the rights of her own subjects in an alien State, to point out an injustice recently wrought upon British subjects beneath the British flag. The Natal Dealers Licence Act, against which we again print a convincing indictment, affords a parallel to some of the worse specimens of repressive legislation conceived by President Kruger and his satelites. It is inspired by a spirit of racial jealousy, and administered with a flagrant disregard of common principles of equity. The very moderation of the request of the Indian traders is the best proof that their grievance is well founded. They do not ask the Imperial authorities to intervene on their behalf over the heads of the colonial administration. All they desire is that they shall be given a right of appeal from the decision of Town Councils regarding their licences to the Supreme Court of Natal. They have sufficient confidence in the purity of the judicial administration to believe that the justice of their cause will not escape recognition. Surely a more modest and reasonable plea for fair treatment has never been preferred?—The *Times of India*.

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