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INTRODUCTION.



An "introduction" is rather a pretentious word for the few remarks I am about to make as regards the subject of the following sketch. I had no voice in the choice. It had been chosen and made public before I was aware of it and could alter it. It has, therefore, to be put up with, whether I like it or no. In the sense of letting the readers into anything they do not already know of Mr. Keir Hardie, the task is hopeless. Every body has noted all the good features that are in him. The anti-Indian section of the Press, here or elsewhere, have not been unalert in imputing to him all imaginable faults, so that, if there were any undiscovered defect in his character, a suspicious seeker has an abundant supply in which to search for it. I, for one, have noticed none of the latter kind—unless manliness is a draw-back or frankness, a black-spot. Before he came in our midst I wrote about him thus :—

He has impressed me and a whole heap of others that the *Satwic* element predominates in him; and *this* loveable feature—so refreshing as compared with the *Rajasic* and *Thamasic* manifestations which with some honorable exceptions, surround them—is the true

secret why my countrymen flock to him or are attracted by him. By religion, by tradition, and by habit transmitted or acquired we are taught to value *satwic* natures.

Since then he has been face to face with us—high and homely alike—and there is absolutely no reason to qualify the good opinion we had formed of him, or to diminish the profound respect with which we had been inspired by what we had learned of his life, of his actions, or of his attitude towards men's legitimate claims, no matter where. He has been fairly outspoken, at the same time he was reasonably discreet, a combination of traits which none but the bitter Anglo-Indian would deny in him.

He has told us some truths, some of them are no more flattering to us than to his countrymen. We, for our part, have not liked him any less on that account. Thereby he has rather enhanced our esteem for him. Once convinced that a person is honest and straightforward, it has been invariably the case with the people of this country. In every one of such sort, we recognise an influx of *Satvic* divinity and overflow with affection for him, irrespective of who he is and what he can do for us. Mr. Keir Hardie has impressed us to be such a person and he has walked straight into our hearts and won them outright. In producing this

result, we have perhaps been negatively aided largely by his adversaries *i. e.* those who virulently criticised him; for we are well aware from what motives such criticisms emanated.

We have been taught how to interpret them *i. e.*, how it is always safe to distrust in men and things they praise and to believe in those they endeavour to discredit.

That Mr. Keir Hardie will turn to the best account the amount of precise knowledge he has laboured to acquire while in India, is beyond a question. The amount of benefit which will accrue to us from his single-handed, though honest and energetic labours when he goes home, may perhaps be inconsiderable. He told us so; and it is not a mere language of modesty; for we, who are not blind to the overwhelming odds and to the multiplicity of obstacles in his way and in the way of the like of him, can adequately realise his more than humble estimate of what the outcome of his efforts might be. To repeat a remark I made some time ago in the columns of the "Madras Standard" I in common with a large number of my countrymen regard him as a disinterested and estimable witness of truth to dissipate the numerous and malicious falsehoods and gross exaggerations disseminated against us among his cleverly deluded countrymen at home. We hope

fully look forward to his speaking out the whole of his mind when he gets back to the scene of his life-long labours and pointing out fearlessly that, if there has been unrest all these harrowing months it was in his peoples minds and not in India or her people. We may also feel that, while giving his evidence against the phantom of a frenzied or frantic India, conjured up by heartless maligners and malicious sensation-mongers, hired and unhired, he would not minimise or throw a gloss over the profound discontent which has manifestly struggled to the surface for one reason or another, in all classes of the people throughout the length and breadth of the country; for he has tapped all the available sources of information, among officials, among town-folk and among unsuspecting and unmanipulated villagers on whom he alighted, unawares in pursuing his lines of enquiry. He would be doing yeoman service to his countrymen no less than to us, if he could enable them to take their ostritch heads, off the sands of little knowledge, which as the poet has said, is a dangerous thing, when it is not accompanied by Gladstone's proviso that it is recognised and realized to be no more than little. He would tell them how it is a legitimate and loyal discontent, disloyal only in the eye of those who are not themselves loyal to their duty or to their sovereign's plighted word, vouch-

safed as the mouthpiece and the symbol of the British nation.

A certain simile, employed by Sir Arthur Helps in another context may be quoted here (slightly changed) as aptly describing one of the important roots of the wide-spread discontent which must have been aident to him as for every observant person who cared to study the situation here and read aright the signs of the times. That simile is as follows:—

“It is like placing young forest trees in a hot-house and saying, grow so far, if you like, expand to the uttermost in the space allowed to you. But there is no more room after you have attained these limits; thence forward grow inwards or downwards or wither away.”

This and other manifestations of the causes which embitter feelings, create chargin and elicit murmur, more or less loud, we anticipate Mr. Kier Hardie to be bold and the foremost to hammer into the phlegmatic or as yet unpenetrated minds of his well-meaning countrymen, for whom this country is a valuable asset and on whom lies the burden of responsibilities, the weight or the true nature of which the bulk of them are as yet only dimly conscious.

In these exigencies, we shall be quite content, if the subject of the following sketch is the heroic first in the line of good and clear-sighted men, who have begun to feel inwards qualms and to visit us to study us and our requirements aright—not merely to gloat with pride over the vastness of their Country's empire in the East.

