

Indian Opinion

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NOTES AND NEWS

THE death, on the 8th instant, of Mr. Percy Binns, K.C., Chief Magistrate of Durban, removes a prominent figure from the public life of the Borough. He had been ailing for a long time but he persisted in performing his duties at the Law Courts even when he was really unfit. His devotion to duty was remarkable, and it is said that he was a martyr to overwork. We join the community in sympathising with his widow and relatives in their sad bereavement.

At a meeting of the Durban Indian community which took place in Mr. Parsee Rustomjee's premises under the chairmanship of Mr. Omar Hajee Amod Jhaveri, a resolution of sympathy with Mrs. Percy Binns and family in the sad and irreparable loss sustained by them by his lamented demise, was passed.

A large number of Indians attended the funeral of the late Mr. Percy Binns the following day, and a wreath was sent from the community. Indians of South Coast Junction and Isipingo also passed resolutions of sympathy, and decided to close business at the time of the funeral. The Influenza Relief Committee, in whose work Mr. Binns took a keen interest, expressed their condolences by a resolution forwarded to Mrs. Binns.

A special service was held at the Umbilo Hindu Temple in connection with the death of Mr. Binns. Mr. B. Maharaj officiated, and made feeling references to the services rendered by the deceased to the community in general. The services ended with a special prayer of peace for the soul of the deceased.

By the death of Mrs. Shaikh Mehtab on the 30th ultimo, there passes a woman of remarkable character. Unknown to the public, she, at the time of the great Passive Resistance struggle, had been reading of the indignities suffered by Indians regarding their marriages. The result was that she quietly determined to join her sisters and brothers who had challenged the Union Government.

Owing to her husband's financially poor condition was a difficult question for Mrs. Mehtab as to how and where she should find the means to proceed to the Transvaal. Ultimately she decided to sell her personal jewellery and thus provide the means to reach the borders of the Transvaal. Her aged mother also, determined to accompany her daughter to gaol. They were both arrested at Volksrust and sentenced to three months imprisonment.

The example set by these noble Mahomedan women in humble position is one that will not be forgotten by Indians both here and in India. The present times demand such determination and courage as displayed by the late Mrs. Shaikh Mehtab. With that spirit everything worth gaining can be won. Without it, all the protesting in the world cannot avail.

With this issue we present a portrait of Mrs. Mehtab which will help to keep in memory her sacrifice and public spirit.

The *Times* (London) correspondent at Bombay, in a message dated Jan. 1, says it is the general impression that the extremists have captured the National Congress, and it will not be surprising if every single moderate stands outside future Congresses, as the situation, which is rapidly developing, makes it impossible for them even to maintain a formal connection there with. Resolutions passed by the Congress on the treatment of Indians in South Africa and East Africa again draw attention to Imperial difficulties on this most vexed question. If the Imperial Government is unable to obtain fair treatment from the Dominions and Colonies it must accept the Indian demand for retaliation.—*Reuter*.

Mrs. Sarojini Naidu cabled from London the following inspiring message to her countrymen:—

I earnestly pray that the Martyr City of the Golden Temple may prove a true shrine of reconciliation and reunite all divided patriotic ideas and energies in an invincible fellowship of selfless national service. The measure of our unity is the sole authentic measure of our real worth to serve India fruitfully and fearlessly, to defend her rights, to avenge her wrongs and set her high in the federation of strong, free nations.

We are pleased to state that a cablegram definitely announcing the departure of Mr. Andrews from Mombasa on the 12th instant by the *Karva* has been received. He will arrive probably, about the 24th instant.

Messrs S. Emmamally and Beethasee Maharaj have kindly consented to act as joint personal secretaries to Mr. Andrews, and they have been officially appointed by the Durban Reception Committee.

In order to relieve Mr. Andrews of all unnecessary worry, the public will do well to approach the secretaries regarding appointments, etc. By so doing, valuable time will be saved and the work more expeditiously carried out.

The Bombay correspondent of the London paper the *Daily Mail* states that the Indian National Congress held at Amritsar, adopted a resolution by Mr. Gandhi, who in condemning the excesses of the mob at Amritsar, said the key to future success lay in the hearty acceptance of the resolution. He agreed that the Government was gravely provoked to the arrest of the leaders, including himself. "Both we and the Government went mad at the time, but do not return madness with madness, but sanity, and the whole of creation is yours."

A delayed Reuter message from Amritsar, dated Dec. 30, says the Indian National Congress unanimously passed a resolution demanding that, in view of the

revelations contained in the evidence given before the Hunter Commission, General Dyer be removed from his command.

The resolution also demanded that, in view of Sir Michael O'Dwyer's endorsement of the report of firing on the crowd at Jallianwala Bagh, and the brutal treatment meted out to the Punjabis, the British Government be requested to relieve him of his duties as a member of the Esner Committee as a preliminary to legal proceedings.

Calcutta, Jan. 4.—Sir Siyaswamy Aiyer, a member of the Council of the Madras Legislative Council from 1912 to 1917, presiding at the All-India Moderate Conference, in the course of a speech, stated that as India was an original member of the League of Nations, Britain was bound to protect the rights of Indians in South Africa.

The Sydenham Hindu Young Men's Society expresses its gratitude to the Jagan Madana Srama Company for staging in aid of this Society the famous dramatic play entitled, "Latharam," on the 27th December last at the Royal Picture Palace, Victoria Street, Durban. The Society greatly appreciates this company's magnanimity in giving the whole of the proceeds of the entertainment to the Society's Vernacular School Fund.

The strike of the Durban Municipal Employees, based on a claim for recognition of the Employees' Society in connection with an enquiry into allegations against the Assistant Town Clerk, Mr. Kemp, affected to some extent the farmers and stallholders attending the Indian Municipal Market.

On the second day, says a newspaper report, consternation was created at the Indian Municipal Market when farmers began to arrive from the outlying districts with their produce and found the doors closed against them. After waiting for an hour or two, the majority returned to their homes taking their fruit and vegetables with them. Negotiations were opened up by the Indian Market Association and the Strikers Committee, and subject to the orders of the latter, the stallholders and squatters were permitted to resume business at 9 o'clock that morning, but in the interval the three best trading hours had been lost, thus involving considerable hardship on the poorer class of basket squatters who depend solely on the proceeds of the first few hours for their daily bread.

A deputation waited upon the Mayor in the matter. The Civic Chief said at the moment he was powerless in the matter unless the Council was to resort to force. This they did not intend to do, but they were to meet in committee that forenoon when it was to be hoped some definite settlement of the dispute, would be arrived at. On the formation of a Municipal Board of Control by the Society, the strike came to an end in the evening.

One thing strikes us as being rather unaccountable regarding this stopping of sales on the Indian Market. Whilst it might be expected that the European officials of the Market, including the Market Master, would suspend operations and close the Market, the fact that farmers and market gardeners, having to squat, as they always have to do, in the street, would have led one to suppose that the strike would not have affected them at all. But the strikers were out to make a demonstration of their power and to cut off supplies, so the poor Indian producers were made to suffer quite unnecessarily.

CONQUERING HATE BY LOVE

We take the following from *Young India* dated the 26th November, 1919:—

Mr. Andrews has left for South Africa to add to the many services he has rendered to India and he has left to us a brief speech of matchless beauty for us all to ponder over and act up to. The speech was delivered by him in answer to the farewell speeches made at the Bradlaugh Hall at Lahore on the eve of his departure for South Africa.

To understand the speech we must know the speaker. He has spoken through his heart. He has given a message of hope and comfort. He spoke to an audience that had felt the warmth of his deep affection. He spoke to those whom he had hastened to help. He was prevented by a Government that had become insane for the moment. He returned as soon as ever he could and worked tirelessly in their midst and in so doing he suffered insults perhaps from his own countrymen. Those for whom he laboured did not fully realise the measure of his service.

Mr. Andrews has spoken in measured and deliberate language of the Jallianwala Bagh Massacre. He has likened it to the Glenco Massacre. He feels as we do for the sufferers and has done much more than most of us have done and would care to do. Everyone of his acts has been "in very truth an act of penance, of atonement, an act of reparation for my countrymen." If he has identified himself completely with us, it is not because he has ceased to be an Englishman or because he feels less for England. Indeed he believes he is more truly English because of his becoming identified with us.

And if he feels even as we do, does he also feel as Englishmen as some of us undoubtedly do? He has pointed to those of us who hate, a true path. In his very life he says to us, "Conquer hate by love." He says by his action, "You may speak of English officers' deeds in as strong a language as I do but you will not conquer them by your hate." It is easy to say, "No more love alter the Amritsar Massacre." Mr. Andrews says we shall see if we take the seemingly easy path. They fired, and we burned their buildings and murdered some of them. It was easy, it was simple. But if we had, if we could have restrained our anger, if we had not retaliated them, the very firing upon us would have returned itself upon them and the hatred would have thus spent itself. They forgot, we forgot. They forgot more and—? The gulf can certainly go on widening.

Must we then forget Jallianwala Bagh? Never. But we must not harbour revenge; neither must we be cowed down. It is clear, whatever other findings there may be by the official or the non-official Committee that the Massacre was a brutal and barbarous act of revenge intended to cow us down. If we refuse to be cowed down, there never will be a repetition of Jallianwala Bagh. And the way not to be cowed down is either to be as they or out of our strength to disdain to retaliate. What is that strength? It is the ability to undergo voluntary suffering. When their bullets, their prisons, their floggings and their gallows do not frighten us, their use will have gone.

John Bunyan so loved his persecutors that he would not harm them, neither would he submit to their unlawful orders. He, therefore, rejoiced in his sufferings in his prison. Miranbal would not submit to her husband's unjust wishes but she loved him and therefore suffered at his hands. Prahlad resisted his father's commands and joyfully bore the persecution through which he had to go. This voluntary bearing of suffering requires infinitely more courage than giving blow for blow.

If we would honour Mr. Andrews, we would refuse merely to appropriate his services, whilst we are not affected by the lesson they teach. Such appropriation would be parasitical. We may not love Mr. Andrews and not love Englishmen. The only recompense

acceptable to him can be a consistent, studied effort on our part not to hate his countrymen if only for his sake.

The Punjab can easily assimilate Mr. Andrews' message. The Punjabis are physically the bravest among Indians. They, therefore, are the fittest to learn to love. Geographically they stand at the top. May they stand at the top morally also, and learn from untold sorrows the power of love!

THE MASSACRE AT AMRITSAR

COMMENT BY AN ENGLISH PAPER

The *Saturday Westminster Gazette* writes:—

Although there have been for some time rumours of drastic steps taken in the Punjab in order to deal with the disturbances consequent upon the Rowlett Act, the public had not been prepared for anything so horrible as the story told by General Dyer himself to the Hunter Commission. To a certain extent judgment must be reserved until the evidence is before us in full, together with the findings of the Court, but the facts of the massacre in the sunken garden at Amritsar need no further proof; we have them from the mouth of a man who ordered and superintended it. Something, in our purely individual judgment upon General Dyer, as an individual and not as a public servant, we may allow for the Mutiny background, which is a terror to some Anglo-Indians, and something for the behaviour of the mob at Amritsar, which had murdered Englishmen and tried to murder an Englishwoman. But nothing can justify the slaughter in a sunken garden of an unarmed crowd who were given an previous opportunity to get away. Nothing can justify the continued fire upon them when they were trying to disperse, and the leaving of the dead and wounded, untended on the ground, denying them the merciful attentions which civilized people extend to their enemies in the field. We feel that Mr. Justice Rankin, in asking whether this were not "a form of frightfulness," expressed the general verdict of the British people, and that they will not tolerate the retention of General Dyer in a position which gives him the power to do such deeds. Of this officer himself it is most charitable to suppose that, weighed down by the considerations to which we referred above, he lost his head. This judgment, indeed, is borne out by his ludicrous order that no native should pass, unless he crawled on all fours, through the street in which Miss Sherwood was attacked—an order which was speedily revoked by a higher authority. General Dyer apparently intended to bring home to the Indians the unspeakable horror of that particular crime, but the lesson must have lost most of its point when several culprits were compelled to crawl through that same semi-sacred street for the terrible offence of not saluting to British officers.

Not the least disquieting feature of this episode is Mr. Montagu's admission in the House of Commons that he knew none of the details until they appeared in the papers. The Secretary of State for India was kept no better informed than the British people of events which he himself now describes as profoundly disturbing. It is quite inconceivable that the Government of India was not in full possession of the facts. It must have heard of them, both from official and unofficial sources. General Dyer himself, we presume, made a full report of the actions he had felt compelled to perform. We have here a repetition of the Mesopotamia scandal, when the then Secretary of State was kept completely in the dark by the authorities at Simla. Such a position is intolerable. The British people are responsible as a community for the government of their wide dominions, and they can only exercise the control which goes with responsibility through Parliament and the members of the Cabinet. We look upon an explanation of the relations between the Viceroy and

Mr. Montagu in this matter as of equal importance to the report of the Hunter Commission. The whole story, and particularly this feature of it, is but another nail in the coffin of the old system of British Government in India, now happily to be gradually transformed. The government of India has always been incompletely controlled by Parliament. It has been a lonely bureaucracy working too much on its own initiative. While it is difficult to bring it more completely under the authority of Parliament, though there is no excuse for the failure to inform the Secretary of State of events so important as these, the time has now come to begin to make it responsible to the people over whom it actually rules.

PROFESSOR PARMANAND

PATHETIC CONDITION OF WIFE AND FAMILY

DESCRIBED BY MR. ANDREWS

Mr. C. F. Andrews contributes the following to *The Tribune* (Lahore) regarding the condition of the wife and family of Prof. Parmanand, who is known and respected by many in South Africa:—

In the densely crowded city of Lahore there are narrow lanes, which never appear to receive the light of the sun into their lower rooms. In such a narrow lane, and such a sunless room, I saw recently the wife of Bhai Parmanand and his two young children early in the morning.

The room was of the smallest dimensions,—cold and dark. It seemed to be her only home. It was indescribably poor, and she herself was nursing, on her lap, her sick child, while the other child was sitting by the mother, wan and listless and pale.

The child in the mother's lap had fever, and the mother herself told me how her eldest child had died of phthisis only six months ago. It was easy to see, from the dark ill-ventilated room and the poverty-stricken condition of the family, how the eldest daughter had caught the disease. When the mother told me how the youngest child in the lap had, each day, a low fever I greatly feared that the disease itself had already spread to the other members of the family.

I found out, on enquiry, that the wife of Bhai Parmanand had been living recently on the scanty (pay of seventeen rupees a month, which she obtained by teaching in an Arya Samaj Vernacular Primary School. Bravely she had struggled to keep her independence, but what a struggle it had been! For more than four years she had kept her home together, going out each day to the school, in order to earn sufficient for herself and her family to live on. She used to take her children with her in the school, because there was no one to look after them if they remained behind.

Bhai Parmanand's wife, at the time of her husband's arrest, was deprived of everything that she had. Even the small household utensils, which imply so much to a woman who has cleaned them for use day after day, were taken from her. There is an utterly barbarous law, which disgraces the Indian Penal Code, that, for certain political offences, the wife and children must be reduced to beggary by "forfeiture of property," if the husband and father is found guilty. This "forfeiture of property" ought to have been cancelled as a punishment a century ago. It is a relic of the Dark Ages. But still it lingers on, baldly and brutally unmodified; and, in this case, it was evidently administered with all the harshness of an unscrupulous police administration.

Even this vindictive punishment, unworthy of a civilized government, was apparently not sufficient. The poor woman told me, in her own simple words, how in her pitiful struggle for an independent livelihood, she had tried to get admitted, for training as a vernacular teacher, into the Lahore Normal Training School classes; but she had been refused even this request because of her husband.

One single personal possession, belonging to Bhai Parmanand she still treasured. Some illuminated addresses of welcome, from the Indian citizens in South Africa, which had been presented to her husband during his visit, had been handed back to her from the D. A. V. College after the "forfeiture of property" had taken place. I read the names of the cities in Natal, which he had visited, and I could easily picture to myself the presentation of these addresses and the pleasure they had given. Mr. Gandhi has told me how inspiring his visit was, and how noble the character of his message.

Personally I have never met Bhai Parmanand; but from all that I have heard of him, I should be proud to meet him. I believe him to be absolutely innocent of any deeds of cowardice or meanness. If he held at any time, extreme revolutionary views (I have not full evidence before me and cannot say whether this was proved) yet it is as clear as the day to me that his whole character was transparently honest. His political opinions, such as they were, were those of an idealist, not those of a base and sordid nature. His historical conclusions were those of a student and a scholar, with the natural bias of an ardent patriot. Historical and political truth can never be reached by penalising honest opinion.

I have seen Bhai Parmanand's letters, written from Port Blair Prison, in the Andaman Islands. There is the true ring of a noble character in these also. Furthermore, they reveal a clarity of intellectual vision and a deeply religious mind. Throughout the whole series, there is not one word of meanness or of hate; nor is there a single phrase that is not brave and generous and true. In the jail he has found an inward peace and joy, which no imprisonment can take away.

The thought has come home to me, again and again, while reading these letters,—how futile, how stupid, how insensate it is, to keep one of the brightest and keenest intellects in modern India, a man with such noble qualities of mind and heart, imprisoned, along with the lowest criminals, for the rest of his life, and engaged in the useless, senseless, meaningless occupation of grinding and grinding and grinding, day in, day out, hour after hour, hour after hour, at a mill! God has given such precious mental gifts as his to enrich our human nature; and this is all the use that man can make of them!

As if this were not futility enough the Government needs go on still further to punish him through his helpless wife and little children, by forfeiture of all his property. Can civilisation devise no better use than this for a political idealist? We have got rid, long ago, of the thumb-screw and the stake; but have we even as yet considered the question of *mental* torture at all? There is a story, which I have heard from an authentic source, that has haunted me ever since,—how, at the time of a visit of one of the highest officials to the Andamans, a prisoner who was a political idealist and revolutionary, with his nerves racked beyond human endurance, implored the visiting official to send him to be hanged. That fate would be better than a lifelong mental torture.

We know that a Prison Commission appointed by the Government of India is inspecting the prisons of the world. I fervently hope that their very first recommendation will be the abandonment of the Andamans altogether. Meanwhile, the utmost consideration should be given by Government to the cases of those whom the authorities have sent, for political reasons, to such a place.

The trial of Bhai Parmanand was conducted, in the year 1915, in war time, under the Defence of India Act. The evidence against him was so slight, that Mr. Bevan Petman, the Government advocate, advised the Punjab Government to drop the case altogether. I believe it is literally true, that he would never have been condemned at all, if he had not been so sincere and open in his statements during his trial. I know personally that Sir Ali Imam, the Legal Member of

Council, was greatly troubled and exercised in his mind about this case, as to whether on legal grounds he could possibly advise his release. From first to last all through his life, Bhai Parmanand seems to have been nobly careless about protecting himself against suspicion. The spies and informers in America, who were used as tools by the Punjab Government, were for this reason able to incriminate him.

The Great War, under stress of which Bhai Parmanand was condemned to transportation for life with forfeiture of property, is now at an end. The Punjab Government authorities will soon have an opportunity, which I understand, the Imperial Government has already sanctioned, of revising the sentences of those political prisoners who were convicted during the War. There is no one of these whose release would give more universal satisfaction than that of Bhai Parmanand.

THE SOUTH AFRICANS' LEAGUE

BRANCH FORMED AT KRUGERSDORP

Johannesburg, Jan. 8.—At a public meeting at Krugersdorp last night, a branch was formed at the anti-Asiatic organisation, the South Africans' League.

In the course of a speech, Mr. L. J. Phillips said Natal was no longer a white man's country. Thirty years ago Indians were unknown there, and now the latest census showed that they outnumbered the white population, and they were continuing to out-breed the whites by three to two. Once over the Transvaal border the change was apparent. At every station an Indian had a store, and in Natal towns Asiatics worked in printing offices, furniture manufactories, and even in the mines. There were Indian overseas who worked, not as assistants to white men, but to the exclusion of the white men.

Johannesburg, he said, felt absolutely secure in regard to the Asiatic trading, and it was little known that there were 5,000 Indian licences existing to-day. At Zeerust, Vereeniging, Pietersburg, and other Transvaal towns Asiatic licences were in the big majority, and they were closing up white traders rapidly. In Krugersdorp there were five white general grocers' licences and 27 Asiatic licences. A white trader paid his assistants a minimum of £25, while in Krugersdorp an Asiatic paid his assistants from £2 to a maximum of £8, and in a fairly large establishment there was a margin of, roughly, £100 a month in favour of the Asiatic.

The continuance of the growth of Asiatic trading concerns inevitably meant the exclusion of the white man, and even in Johannesburg the Indian would be on top within 20 years. People of the Transvaal were to blame for the present state of affairs, and any white person who contributed to an Asiatic store contributed to the downfall of the white people.—*Natal Mercury*.

THE PUNJAB LEADERS

REFUSED TREATMENT OF ORDINARY CRIMINALS

On 15th November, Mr. Gandhi wrote the following letter to the Private Secretary to the Lieutenant-Governor of the Punjab:—"Will you please tell his Honour that I informed the members of the Congress Sub-Committee yesterday that he had kindly consented to concede the principle advanced by the Sub-Committee to the extent that six leaders could be released on parole for the day or days they might actually be giving evidence before the Disorders Inquiry Committee. The members admitted that the concession satisfied the principle just barely but was of no practical value, if, on the other days, they were not permitted as prisoners in custody to attend the Committee meetings in order to instruct counsel in matters specially within their knowledge. This would mean the attendance of say Drs. Kitchlew and Satyapal in custody during the

Amritsar hearing generally and their release on parole on the day they might be examined. I felt that the point raised was clear and covered by Lord Hunter's letter to Pandit Malaviyaji but Mr. Andrews offered to have it definitely cleared. Deep, therefore, was the disappointment when he returned to say that his Honour would not allow the leaders to attend even in the manner suggested. The Congress Sub-Committee had therefore no course left open to it but to adhere to its decision not to appear before Lord Hunter's Committee. I cannot help expressing my great regret that his Honour should have declined to grant what an ordinary criminal could claim as a matter of right."

MR. C. F. ANDREWS' APPROVAL

Mr. C. F. Andrews has made the following statement to a representative of the Associated Press of India with regard to the decision of the Congress Sub-Committee re the Hunter Committee. "Before sailing for South Africa I wish to identify myself with the decision of the Congress Sub-Committee not to appear and lead evidence before the Disorders Enquiry Committee at Lahore. While I recognise the conciliatory attitude of Sir. Edward Maclagan in offering to release on parole the Punjab political leaders during the time when they might be called upon to give evidence I regard His Honour's decision to withhold from them the right of even ordinary criminals to be present under police escort when their own cases are being tried as not only nullifying the value of the concession, but also as depriving them of an important safeguard against injustice. It appears to me to be opposed to every canon of fairplay that serious allegations reflecting on the character and honour of these gentlemen should be allowed to be made behind their back and they themselves prevented from confronting their accusers on the spot.

THE INDUSTRIAL PROBLEM IN INDIA

PAPER BY MR. N. C. KELKAR

The following paper was read by Mr. N. C. Kelkar, member of the Congress Deputation, before the Conference of India held in London on October 4:—

I have been asked to say a few words on the subject of the "Industrial Problem in India." The time at my disposal is necessarily limited, and I should, therefore, content myself with dealing with only one or two points of the problem which appear to me to be very important. I will frankly admit that I am not a close student of economics. But the truths underlying the Indian industrial problem are so obvious that nothing more than the common-sense of an uninitiated layman is required to perceive them.

The bed-rock of the industrial position in India is poverty. To avoid controversy, however, in this matter I will only reply on the utterances of the officials themselves. The annual income of an average Indian does not exceed two pounds, as calculated by Lord Curzon himself. "Of poverty, misery, and destitution there is abundance in India," said his Lordship in his Budget speech in 1901. It may, however, be argued that the law of averages is a misleading guide, and that this average of two pounds proves not the poverty of India but the unequal distribution of wealth among the different classes of the Indian people. The reply to this argument is found to be in the 135th para of the Joint Report of the Viceroy and the Secretary of State, which say that that number of persons enjoying a substantial income in India is very small. "In one Province the total number of persons who enjoyed an income of £66 a year was only 30,000; in another Province, 20,000. It is evident, to quote the words of the report, that "the curve of wealth descends very steeply and the enormous masses of the population have little to spare for more than the necessities of

life." The poor in India are very poor, of course, but even the rich are not very rich, and not many of them rich enough.

That, in brief, is the present condition. But all knowledge is the result of comparison and contrast; and as against this gloomy picture of poverty, let us recall the pleasant picture of Indian wealth and prosperity in pre-British days as painted by the Englishmen themselves.

A PICTURE OF ANCIENT INDIA

Says Thornton, in his "Description of Ancient India": "Ere yet the Pyramids looked down upon the valley of the Nile, when Greece and Italy, those cradles of European civilisation, nursed only the tenants of a wilderness, India was the seat of wealth and grandeur. A busy population had covered the land with the marks of its industry; rich crops of the most coveted productions of Nature annually rewarded the toil of husbandmen; skilful artisans converted the rude produce of the soil into fabrics of unrivalled delicacy and beauty, and architects and sculptors jointed in constructing works, the solidity of which has not, in some instances, been overcome by the evolution of thousands of years. . . . The ancient state of India must have been one of extraordinary magnificence."

The question, therefore, naturally arises what is it that has brought this great change? Who is responsible for this economic degradation of India? Can it be that Indian people themselves have wrought their ruin apart from their political condition? No, we find it nowhere alleged and proved that the advent of the British in India saw a decline already dead set in the physical, mental or moral constitution of the Indian people, so that they might forget their commercial traditions, unlearn their skill in crafts and industries, become suddenly insensible to economic impulses and ambitions and thus deservedly forfeit their material prosperity.

METHODS OF EAST INDIA COMPANY

The evidence, on the other hand, is quite clear that the economic degradation of India is both directly as well as indirectly traceable to the economic policy of the British rulers. I do not want to weary you with a catalogue of the sins of commission of the East India Company in this respect as those of you who have read Mr. Dadabhai's and Mr. Romesh Dutt's books must be acquainted with melancholy chapter in the history of British rule in India. The East India Company happily no more. The last of the Company's fat annuitants, let us believe, has passed away like the last of the tall Mutiny veterans. Let the oblivion bury its dead. The past is past and could not be recalled, let us therefore cling to the living present and also try to visualise future prospects. But do we really perceive here a change for the better? Has the displacement of the East India Company by the Crown and Parliament made any material difference in the condition of things? Has the mentality of the rulers as economic exploiters altered appreciably? Let us answer the question without mincing matters. To my mind, we in India are in that respect as we were under the East India Company, or even worse. It is true that the savagery of the methods of the East India Company will necessarily be toned down, and we shall no more hear of getting their own of thumbs cut by skilful Indian artisans to escape being compelled to manufacture equally precious goods for a rival nation. But the change will not be really more significant in the essentials of the economic character of the British rule than the time-wrought change from the uncouth, romantic, muffled, long coat of the 17th century English merchant to the trim, matter-of-fact tweed suit of his present-day prototype. The reason is simply that matters change, but men seldom, if ever. And British merchants will be British merchants all the same, whether the flag follows trade as it did in India before or the trade now follows the

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