

583
INDIA IN ENGLAND,

VOLUME II.



BEING

collection of speeches delivered and articles

WRITTEN ON THE

Indian National Congress,

IN ENGLAND IN 1889,

WITH

AN INTRODUCTORY ESSAY

BY

PANDIT BISHEN NARAYAN DAR,

(*Barrister-at-Law.*)

LUCKNOW:

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of the reform Bill "that they had to consider whether there was not on the whole, a general representation of the people in that House, and whether the popular voice was not sufficiently heard. For himself he thought that it was." A still more remarkable declaration was made by the Duke of Wellington. "He was fully convinced that the country possessed, at the present moment, a legislature which answered all good purposes of legislation and to a greater degree than any legislature ever had answered, in any country whatever. He would go further and say that the legislature and system of representation possessed the full and entire confidence of the country."

While ministers were comforting themselves and Parliament with these declarations—while the wisdom of the wisecre saw perfection in the existing order of things—a profound change was passing over the public opinion of the country, the influence of the Reformers was permeating every pore and fibre of the body politic, the national conscience was becoming sensitive to evils of long-standing, the value of political organisations was being recognised by the people, the hostility of Parliament to all measures of reform was gradually forcing itself upon the national mind which had hitherto been apathetic to its political fortunes, and a great flood of political enthusiasm was rising which was destined to destroy, ere long, the old fences of unjust privileges, and to sweep away for ever those evil and artificial barriers which the selfishness of the governing classes had built up to check and retard the progress of the just, lawful, and constitutional liberties of the English nation. The nation was at last awake, and its influence was soon felt upon the decisions of Parliament. The declaration of the Duke of Wellington against Reform, aroused the enthusiasm of the masses, and Brougham, with a very correct apprehension of the popular sentiment, gave notice of a motion on the subject of Parliamentary reforms. Within a fortnight, the Duke's Government fell, and Brougham's motion contributed, in a considerable measure, to its fall. Mr. Grey, who was now Earl Grey became the new Minister, and the first measure which he promised to introduce into Parliament was, of course, regarding the reform of the elective system. This was the first time when the Government pledged themselves to a measure of Parliamentary reform. While the ministers of the day had expoused the cause of the reform, the influence of the Reformers was spreading rapidly in every quarter of the country. Public meetings were held: large associations were formed, numerous petitions were signed, and the whole machinery of the press was directed in favour of Reform. Still there were great prejudices to be overcome, great obstacles of sectarian biases to be surmounted. The King was opposed to reform; the House of Lords was opposed to reform; and a majority of the House of Commons was opposed to reform. There still existed a strong Tory spirit in the country which was averse to

every kind of innovation in the existing political institutions. On the 1st March 1831, Lord John Russell introduced the measure in the House of Commons. After a long debate, the Bill was brought in ; its second reading was carried by a majority of one only in a house of 608, and in going into committee, the ministers found themselves in a minority of 8, which sealed the fate of the bill. The ministers were defeated on another side issue, and Parliament prorogued by the King in person "with a view to its immediate dissolution." The action of Parliament convulsed the country with a great agitation ; the ministers appealed to the nation, and the nation pronounced its verdict in a most emphatic manner in favour of Reform. A large body of Reformers was returned to Parliament, and after a long and heated debate, the Bill was passed in September, by a majority of 109. The Bill was sent up to the Lords who were as opposed to it as ever, and who in spite of popular excitement and the enthusiasm which prevailed in favour of reform, rejected it by a majority of 41. Ministers who were confident of their strength and who knew that the mind of the nation was with them, did not care much for the adverse vote of the House of Lords ; but brought in another Bill in October, which was passed by the Commons in March 1832, and was again before the Lords. The hostility of the Lords to reform had not abated ; but they saw that they were running a great risk in rejecting a measure which was supported by the unanimous verdict of the English people. Popular feeling was strung to the highest pitch of excitement ; the abuse of the system were felt to be intolerable, and the obstinate and defiant attitude of the House of Lords, endangered for a time the peace of the country, by inducing the people to resort to questionable means of violence and revolution. It was a great crisis in the history of England, and the Lords ranged themselves against reform, with a courage and obstinacy worthy of a better cause. They proposed to make certain material alterations in the Bill to which the Commons would not assent, and the time had come now when either the peers must yield to the national will, or the minister must resign, The King was asked to create peers in order to secure the success of the measure in the upper chamber, but the King refused to do so, whereupon the ministers resigned and their resignation was accepted. The confidence of the country in the reformers was unabated. The King saw that the tide of national feeling was running high in their favour, and that to stand against it would be to endanger the foundation of the constitution itself. With a keener insight into the state of public sentiment than the peers had yet shown, he changed his attitude, became an ardent reformer, and recalled Lord Grey to his Councils. The opposition of the Lords was gone, and the Great Charter of 1832, at length received the Royal Assent.

Thus ended in triumph a great struggle which had commenced in 1770, which for more than two generations seemed to be a hopeless

battle of the Titans against the Gods ; when in the beginning was carried on only by a very small band of wise and foreseeing men and was opposed by the bulk of the masses for whose good it was waged as well as the governing classes whose exclusive privileges it tried to curtail, which from very small beginnings grew into one of the greatest movements of the present century, and the influence of which, like freedom, 'broadened slowly down from precedent to precedent.' The history of this struggle teaches some very instructive lessons to the friends and advocates of the Congress movement. It teaches in the first place that the governing classes, even when they do not belong to an alien race, have always been opposed to every innovation which seemed in any way to ruffle the quiet surface of routine, and have stood against all measures of reform which were, in any degree, calculated to curtail their power. Not only the ruling classes, but even the masses have always been indifferent to their political amelioration and those who championed their cause fared on better at their hands than at the hands of those whose unjust monopolies they assailed. It teaches, in the second place, that the influence of the reformers has grown in Parliament in proportion to their influence in the country, that when the country was indifferent to their teachings, they were powerless and even unpopular in Parliament, and that when they had enlisted the forces of popular zeal and earnestness on their side, they succeeded in making their will prevail in the councils of the realm. There is another moral which we may draw from the Reform Bill agitation and it is this that in every just cause early defeats are the sure preludes of success ; that the trials, the difficulties, the dangers which beset the path of the pioneers of thought are but the stepping-stones to final victory that the qualities which have enabled mankind to rise above the rank steaming valleys of sense and to scale the Alpine height of knowledge and progress, have been moral rather than intellectual—Congress, perseverance, a single-minded devotion to truth, and an unquenchable zeal for the public good rather, than extensive knowledge, a strong reasoning faculty, and a keen mental vision. Besides, it is clear from the history of the Reform Bill that when a great question has once received the unanimous approval of the nation, when the will as well as the intelligence of the country has ranged itself on its side then the best considerations of policy require, as indeed the highest principles of justice dictate, that the Government should give a fair and sympathetic hearing to that question and whenever a Government, under the influence of evil councils fails to do so, then a reactionary effect is produced upon the minds of the people, who losing all faith in the wisdom and virtue of their rulers and in the efficacy of peaceful and ordinary constitutional means, are driven to resort to violent and revolutionary weapons. Lastly there is another moral which the Reform agitation teaches and which it will well for us to bear in mind and it

is this that no great Reform has succeeded in a day ; that fifty years of hard struggle had elapsed before the first step in the direction of Reform was taken by Parliament.

Connected, and almost contemporaneous with the Reform Bill agitation is the agitation for the liberty of opinion. Few of us by whom this liberty is enjoyed as one of the undisputed rights of man, are aware what bitter struggles it has cost those heroic men who have in far darker and rougher times wrested it from the hands of despotism and bequeathed it to all future generations. When the reform agitation had commenced, the necessity of moulding public opinion through the instrumentality of the press and public meetings was at once realised. A fresh life was infused into the press ; the publication of political tracts and pamphlets became very common ; and a number of political associations sprang up in different parts of country. The governing classes at once saw that the press and political associations were the chief enemies of the abuses upon which had rested for centuries the basis of the English constitution, and that the liberty of saying and publishing things meant the destruction of those abuses. But the idea of yielding one jot or tittle of their power or privilege in the interest of the common weal, the King and the nobles were not prepared to tolerate, and every effort was made to extinguish the lamp of liberty in the heart of the nation, and to keep it in a state of object surivitude. The age of the licencer, the Star Chamber, the dungen, the pillory, and the stake had passed, but the spirit of persecution was still active and alive, and manifested itself in scarcely less cruel forms. The trials of Wilkes, Thorn, Paine, Horne, Tooke and others have become historical, and show in what light the publication of political opinions was looked upon by the people of England half-a-century ago.

Every opinion which was thought to make the people discontented with their political condition was branded as dangerous and seditious, and the whole machinery of Law was set against its author. A clever young lawyer, Thomas Muir who was charged with having taken an active part in the unpopular cause of parliamentary reform, was tried for sedition before the High Court at Edinburgh. The judges were the avowed enemies of Reform, and all the jurymen selected by the sheriff and picked by the presiding Judge, were members of an association which had erased Muir's name from its book as an enemy of the constitution. He objected to these Jurors on the ground that they had prejudged his case, but he was told that he might as well object to his judges, who had sworn to maintain the constitution. "The witnesses for the prosecution failed to prove any seditious speeches," while throughout the trial the Defendant was browbeaten and threatened by the judges. He was denounced by the Lord Advocate "as a demon of sedition and mischief." He

admitted that he had taken an active part in the promotion of Reform, and upon this charge, which the judges said was one of sedition and even high treason he was sentenced to fourteen year's transportation. Several legislative measures were passed with the object of stemming the tide of public opinion which was rising gradually in favour of the Reform movement. "Every justice of the peace could issue his warrant against a supposed libeller, and hold him to bail; the Secretary of State, armed with the extraordinary powers of the Habeas Corpus Suspension Act, could imprison him upon bare suspicion. Defendants were punished, if convicted, with fine and imprisonment and if even acquitted, with ruinous costs. Nor did the judges spare any exertion to secure conviction."

The fate of public meetings was not a whit happier or more secure. The Government feared the people and viewed large assemblages with dread and suspicions. All political meetings were looked upon as seditious, and a Proclamation was issued against them in 1819. A great meeting was held in Manchester with the object of presenting to Parliament a petition for the reform of the elective system. About 40,000 men assembled bearing flags, on which were inscribed "universal suffrage," "Equal representation or death" "No Corn Laws." The conduct of the meeting was perfectly orderly and peaceful; but as soon as the Chairman had commenced his speech the cavalry at the command of the Magistrates, advanced upon the people. All was riot and confusion; the meeting was dispersed, the leaders were arrested; many were cut down by the sabres or trampled upon by the horses; about 400 were wounded, and a few lives were lost. The Magistrates complimented the military, and the Government the Magistrates, upon their tact and promptitude in maintaining the public peace. But "The Manchester Massacre" as this riot was called, sent a thrill of indignation throughout the length and breadth of the country. In spite of the hard, despotic policy of the Government, influential meetings were held in the chief towns, condemning the conduct of the Magistrates, and expressing sympathy with the sufferers. A public inquiry was demanded, but in vain. Lord Fitz William was dismissed from his lieutenancy, because he spoke at a meeting which demanded inquiry into the Manchester affair. Parliament refused inquiry and introduced more stringent measures for the repression of free opinion. They were called, "The Six Acts." "This first deprived defendants in cases of misdemeanour of the right of traversing; by a second it was proposed to enable the court on the conviction of a publisher of a seditious libel, to order the seizure of all copies of the libel in his possession, and to punish him on a second conviction, with fine, imprisonment, banishment, or transportation; by a third, the newspaper stamp duty was imposed upon pamphlets and other papers, containing news, or observations on public affairs, by a fourth, no meeting of more

than fifty persons was permitted to be held without six days notice being given by seven householders to a resident justice of the peace; and all but freeholders, or inhabitants of the county, parish, or township, were prohibited from attending under penalty of fine and imprisonment. Lecture and debating rooms were to be licensed and open to inspection. By a fifth, the training of persons in the use of arms was prohibited; and by a sixth, the Magistrates, in the disturbed counties, were empowered to search for and seize arms."*

But the coercive policy of the Government was not strong enough to crush down the expansive faculties of a progressive nation. Instead of checking the progress of free opinion, it accelerated its pace, by intensifying and stimulating the zeal and energies of the leaders of reform. The feeling of anger against the Government grew stronger day by day, the defiant attitude of Parliament inflamed the national conscience and lashed into fury the hitherto dormant passions of the masses. The influence of the press went on growing steadily, and the spirit of political organisation assumed larger proportions. When the Government thought that they had almost extirpated every opinion which was in any way adverse to their tendencies, and levelled to the dust all associations of a seditious character, a great organisation was formed which was destined to play a very important part in the political History of the country.

The political claims of the Roman Catholics were advocated by Burke in Parliament, but at that time, neither the Government nor the people were prepared to accord to them a fair and impartial hearing. The first association for the emancipation of the Catholics from Civil and Political disabilities was formed in 1809, and O'Connell, the great Irish patriot was a leading member. The work of the association was to prepare petitions, hold meetings, and otherwise encourage and stimulate discussion upon the subject of the Catholic disabilities, and to arouse the Catholics to a sense of the wrongs and injustices under which they suffered. For some years, the association did not excite much interest; but in 1823 it was formed on a wider basis, embracing Catholic nobles, gentry, priesthood, peasantry; and thus it became a sort of National Parliament, holding its Sessions in Dublin, appointing Committees, receiving petitions, and levying contributions in the form of a Catholic rent upon every Parish in Ireland. Its debates were published in the papers, and among its greatest orators were O'Connell and Shiel. The Government saw that they were face to face with a great power, and that they must either suppress it or concede its demand? They were not yet prepared to dissolve the chains of the Catholic disabilities, and consequently they resolved to suppress the association. A Bill was

*May's constitutions History, Vol. II., p. 199-200.

passed in 1825, to amend the laws relating to the unlawful Societies in Ireland. It prohibited the permanent sitting of Societies, the appointment of Committee beyond a certain time, the levying of money for the redress of grievances, the exclusion of persons on the ground of religion and the administration of oaths. This measure suppressed the Catholic association ; but a new association embracing the same object, but constituted so as to be beyond the grasp of the law, was formed. Its ostensible object was to promote education and other charitable works, but its real object was political. It appointed permanent Committees and through its Church wardens collected the Catholic rent in every Parish. The Government saw that in suppressing the first association they had only killed the body, while the spirit had transmigrated into another organisation; but they were powerless. The Acts under which the old Catholic association had been suppressed was to last only for three years, and after the expiration of that period, that association was again revived. The agitation in favour of the Catholic emancipation was spreading all over the country. The continued discussions of the association had awakened the mind of the English nation to the political grievances of the Catholics, and although Parliament was obstinate in its refusal of the Catholic demand, yet the country was willing to concede it. The transfer to their side of the public opinion of England strengthened the hands of the Irish patriots, and the agitation assumed such grave and portentous proportions that the Government once more resorted to the policy of repression and proclaimed all such meetings against the law. The Catholic leaders, strong in their faith in the justice of their demand, and confident of the support and approval of the entire body of English public opinion, quietly yielded to the Government. Public feeling was strung to such a pitch of excitement, the defiant and provoking attitude of Parliament became so intolerable, the inequities of the political servitude of large portion of the people became so palpable, and the agitation stirred the enthusiasm of the masses to such an extent, that the Catholic emancipation was at last accepted by a hostile king and reluctant Parliament as an alternative to civil war.

From the foregoing illustrations it is clear how even that freedom of opinion which is a most marked characteristic of the English people, was till the other day enjoyed only by the privileged classes and denied to the masses, and how many lives were wrecked, how much innocent blood was shed—before it was placed on a safe and secure footing. There was a time—not very far remote in the life of a nation—when even in free England, the champion of liberty was the object of public contempt and execration, when his voice in the cause of freedom was the voice of one crying in the wilderness, when the rulers dreaded free criticism, and adopted every means to put it down, when the law instead of being the instrument and handmaid of justice was the engine of oppression and persecution ; but as the

intelligence of the country advanced and the teachings of Reformers kindled the national conscience, the people awakened to the sense of moral bondage in which they had been held by their rulers ; by slow, but steady efforts they marshalled their forces, and when the right hour had struck they assaulted the citadel of unjust privileges and worn-out institutions, and after a sharp struggle which put to the severest test the courage, patience, and energy of reformers, planted the flag of victory upon the top of the Capitol. Thus has the cause of justice triumphed in every age and every clime.

There is another movement of a purely moral character, which has removed one of the foulest blots from the face of modern civilization, and the history of which affords a very striking and encouraging parallel to the National Congress. The change which has during the past fifty years, taken place in the moral sentiments of Europe is so great that the people can hardly realise now the state of feelings which sanctioned and kept alive for centuries the buying and selling, like ordinary goods, of human beings among the European nations. But there was a time when the slave trade was common in Europe and was considered one of the most lucrative sources of wealth. Millions of negro slaves were brought and sold like flocks of sheep, and it was estimated that not less than 97,000 negroes were taken from Africa in a single year. The rulers as well as the wealthy classes of every civilized country had a material interest in the trade, and it seemed at the time an impossible task to persuade them, on mere moral considerations, to give up one of the most coveted prizes of life.

But an imperceptible change was taking place in the moral feelings of the times and some great men who anticipated the higher ideal of a later age raised their voice against the abuses of Slavery. Wesley, the great Methodist preacher published in 1774 his "Thoughts on Slavery" in which he strongly denounced the system. David Hartley brought the question before Parliament by moving a resolution "that the slave trade was contrary to the laws of God and the rights of man." The motion was defeated without having excited any interest either in or out of Parliament. Meanwhile the Quakers had thrown themselves into the cause of the Abolition of the trade. They had passed resolutions condemning it in 1727 and in 1758. They even excluded from membership any Quaker who was concerned in the trade and branded it as an altogether criminal practice. They formed associations to discourage the introduction of slaves into their provinces, and to encourage their liberation, and in these philanthropic exertions they were supported by Benjamin Franklin. The agitation had as yet assumed no organised form, although here and there the signs that the conscience of England was awakening to the evils of slavery, were increasing.

In 1780, a small Quaker Society was formed with the object of moving public opinion in the direction of the abolition, and a petition for the same purpose was presented by it to Parliament in 1783. The minister of the day while sympathising with the object of the petition, was constrained to declare that the trade had become "in some measure necessary to almost every nation in Europe, and that it would be next to an impossibility to induce them to give it up and renounce it for ever." Although Parliament was deaf to these moral appeals, yet the mind of the nation was gradually becoming susceptible to them, and the cause was taken up by some great men who were the intellectual ornaments of their age, and who by their heroic endeavours for the moral regeneration of mankind, have left permanent foot-prints on the sands of time, for the guidance and encouragement of succeeding generations. Clarkson appeared on the scene, and Wilberforce, and Granville Sharp. Wilberforce concentrated his chief efforts in Parliament; Granville Sharp formed the "Society for the abolition of the Slave Trade," which was destined to become one of the most successful organizations in modern history. This society consisted, at first, of only twelve members, and its object was to abolish the slave trade and mitigate the condition of the slaves. Who could have imagined that this small society of 12 men would carry one of the greatest moral reforms of the present century; yet were the righteousness of their cause, and confident of that victory which crowns every just and noble effort, and against which even the stars, in their courses, fight in vain. The first thing that this Society did was to collect materials. Clarkson devoted himself to the arduous task of collecting facts and figures, and when the huge mass of materials was thus collected and placed before Parliament it revealed horrors and atrocities of the trade which shocked the conscience of England and aroused feelings of righteous indignation against the barbarous system, in the breast of every man and every woman.

The agitation which had hitherto been confined to a small band of philanthropists and religious teachers now passed on to the people and assumed national importance. In some parts of England, the people agreed to leave off the use of sugar, as being a product of slave labour; numerous associations for the abolition of the trade were established and affiliated to the parent Abolition Society in London; numerous public meetings denouncing slavery were held in different parts of the country, and in one year about 519 petitions were presented to Parliament for the abolition, while there were only four against it. The King and royal family were extremely hostile to this agitation, and all great assemblages of men were dreaded and discouraged. But Wilberforce was fighting the battle of the abolition within the precincts of Parliament, and Pitt was on his side. The former brought a motion for the immediate abolition; policy of the gradual abolition was proposed by Dundas and carried by 193 votes to 125.

The House decided that the Trade should cease in 1796; but the bill was sent up to the House of Lords, and there it was lost. The abolitionist, however, had no cause to despair; indeed, considering the great change they had produced in public opinion, within a short time, they had every reason to hope for an early triumph of their cause. Wilberforce again revived his exertion in Parliament, in the following year, and although he was again beaten on his motion for the abolition, yet he had succeeded so far that even his opponents felt the necessity of passing some measures for the mitigation of the enormities of the trade. "A Parliamentary address was carried to the governors of the colonies, calling on them to take means to promote the welfare of negroes, so that the trade should ultimately become unnecessary. An act of George II which authorised the sale of slaves at the suit of their masters creditors was repealed."* In 1798 and 1799, Wilberforce was again defeated. Thornton, another great abolitionist leader, introduced a measure against the purchase of negro slaves. It passed the Commons in 1799, but was defeated by the Lords. For some years, the cause of the abolition did not seem to make much progress; and although Wilberforce brought in his motion every year in Parliament, yet he was each time defeated. He and his colleagues did not lose heart by these apparent defeats; but adhered to their cause with increased tenacity, firmness, and patience, and continued their unremitting exertions in instructing public opinion upon the subject and in winning over to their side the support, the sympathy, and the moral enthusiasm of the nation.

The death of Pitt placed the reins of Government in the hands of Fox who was a staunch abolitionist, and a new ray of hope fell upon those Reformers who had hitherto addressed their appeals to an apathetic Parliament. A measure forbidding British subjects from taking any part in supply foreign powers with slaves, was passed. This was but the precursor of the measure for the total abolition of the slave trade, to which Fox pledged Parliament. But Fox died and Lord Granville fulfilled the pledge, and in 1807, the slave trade had ceased to exist in the British Empire. The complete success of the abolition society was achieved in 1833, after which it was dissolved, having accomplished one of the noblest moral reforms of the nineteenth century.

The anti-slavery agitation is perhaps the most remarkable instance of a just but unpopular cause, overcoming appalling obstacle, conquering unyielding opposition, rising in public estimation, however, gradually and slowly, but always steadily and surely, not, by any bloody or violent means, nor by any of those revolutionary earthquakes which are so often caused by the folly, the insolence, and defiant conduct of the rulers, but by placing its reliance upon

* Lecky's History of England Vol. VI., p. 296.

the efficacy of moral suasion, by appealing to men's rational judgments and striking in their breasts the tenderest chords of sympathy and humanity. Although the clouds of temporary defeats darkened the course of the abolitionist, although, over and over again Parliament refused their prayers, and although, the representing as they did the higher morality of a later era they stood isolated from the rest of their fellow countrymen fighting for a cause against which were arrayed the forces of rank, and wealth, and privilege, and preaching a doctrine which ran counter to the prevailing sentiments of the age, yet, were they not disheartened, nor dismayed, nor discouraged, but nerved by difficulties and chastened by misfortunes, they stood firm like a rock amid the vicissitudes of social and political changes, and carried to its final victory a movement which has emancipated, redeemed, and regenerated the lowest of mankind.

These great historic movements—the reform agitation, the Catholic Emancipation, the Anti-slavery Association—present striking and instructive analogies to the Congress movement, wherein are centred, for the present, the hopes and aspirations of the most advanced and patriotic section of the Indian community. The National Congress, too, as it has been already stated originated with the cultured few, but as time rolled on, its influence filtered down to the less advanced classes, until it has nearly touched the very base of our social pyramid. The number of the delegates has been almost doubling itself every year, and even Mahomedan defection is now known to be the phantom of an old man's over-wrought brain. Just as in England the classes dependant upon the Crown and the Lords were the staunchest opponents of reform, so here those who depend upon the bounties of the Government—indeed who owe their position and even their existence to the Anglo-Indian ascendancy, such as the Taluqdars of Oudh, the Nawabs, and the title-hunters—have been opposed to every popular movement. The aristocracy in England did not in the day of its power view with favour the increasing liberties of the people, nor have we any reason to think that our aristocracy will hold any more favourable attitude towards us. The growing strength of the populace made the governing classes in England a little unscrupulous in their dealing with the people; and in this country the signs are not wanting which indicate that unless, kept down by the strong arm of Parliament, the official class will have no scruple or hesitation in crushing down our activities, as soon as it sees that they are likely to become successful. As during the Emancipation agitation Parliament suppressed public meetings, so Lord Lytton, at a time, when the discussion of a great question was most necessary, gagged the Indian press in order to keep the English nation utterly in the dark regarding the state of public feeling in this country, and so indeed some *Patriots* have suggested that the Congress should be “proclaimed” and its leaders

hung, drawn and quartered for their seditious and disloyal teachings. But, as in England so in India, every reform has proceeded from the cultured few ; been opposed by the privileged classes, but as soon as accepted by the masses, been successful. In England the constant refusal of their demands, drove the people into rebellion, in India, it is to be hoped that the indifference, and even the unsympathetic attitude of our rulers will not lead to similar results, for such a course will be like inexpedient and morally wrong—inexpedient, because living under a foreign rule our motives and actions are apt to be easily misunderstood and our temporary fits of excitement may very easily be set down as the mutinous and disaffected traits of our national character ; morally wrong, because the real culprits who ignore our interests and entreaties are the officials who are loth to part with one iota of power or privilege, and not the English nation and English Parliament, who, although our real rulers, are ignorant of our real state, and to whom we are bound by the strongest ties of affection and gratitude. In 1830, such a sagacious statesman as Peel, failed to read the signs of the times and pronounced against the Reform Bill which was to become law two years later, and who know if Lord Dufferin and Sir Auckland Colvin are not equally mistaken in their estimate of the political meteorology of India, when the style as “ a big jump into the unknown ” those proposals of reform which are as harmless as they are just, and ere long be taken up and dealt with by Parliament.

Indeed there are some very encouraging signs visible on the horizon, which indicate that a great change is taking place in the minds of our rulers in favour of the National Congress. It is no more lightly spoken of in political circles, nor are its leaders looked upon as a set of nonentities. The old wave of abuse and vituperation now seems to have spent itself ; the cry of sedition is for the present silence ; at the panic which was caused by the two famous “ Parliaments ” and when drove some of its critics beyond all bounds of propriety, has subsided ; and we no more hear of petitions to Government for the suppression of the movement. The Report of the last Congress has met with a most favourable reception both in England and India. The entire body of the English Press, with the exception of a few papers, has expressed its approval of our political demands. There are a few papers which are still opposed to us, but we hope that when the light of facts dawns upon them, they will change their opinion. We are afraid not of the enlightenment of our critics, but of their ignorance which induces them to believe such absurd inventions as Sir Elward Watkin's that the Congress is carried on by Russian gold. However the drift of public opinion is very hopeful. Even the *Times* which is one of the most powerful supporters of the Anglo-Indian ascendancy, has come “ to recognise with satisfaction the general moderation and propriety of tone in the speeches

delivered" at the Congress and sees no reason to quarrel with or criticise severely the Resolutions passed on such subjects as popular education, fiscal reform, appointments to the Civil Service," and says what indeed some of our Anglo-Indian critics have not yet had the charity to say that it has "never treated the promoters of the movement, as a set of dishonest and disloyal intriguers." The Liberal Press is enthusiastic for the Congress; and the general tone of the Conservative papers, too, is of approbation, if not of eulogy. There is not a single town of importance in Great Britain where the name of the Congress is not known; and events have occurred during the last two years which show that a considerable portion of the British public is beginning to take a deep and real interest in the progress of political thought in this country. Great public meetings are held in London and other places at which eminent politicians address the people on the Congress question. Mr. Bradlaugh—his name alone is sufficient to confer lustre upon any movement with which he allies himself—has delivered powerful speeches on our political demands, and we may be sure that he who has fought and won almost single handed, a great constitutional battle in Parliament, is not likely to fail in his noble and chivalrous exertions on behalf of the suffering millions of India. The Liverpool meeting at which Mr. Caine and Mr. Yule, spoke is another proof of an increasing interest in our political questions in the minds of the English people. Some English ladies lately held a meeting in aid of Indian political reform, in "Kidderpur house," the London residence of Mr. W. C. Bonnerjee. Every one remembers the "Blackman" episode; and whatever may be said by those whose chief occupation is to minimise the importance of everything which tends to denote, in any measure the success of our cause the dinner given to our illustrious countrymen, Dadabha Nowrojee by the National Liberal Club was one of the most remarkable demonstrations in favour of our political reform, the image and omen of the feelings of good-will and affection which the English people cherish towards the people of this country. Besides, some of our leading men, like Mr. Bonnerjee, go out to England every year to make direct appeals to the English nation on behalf of their country, and this plan has done much good by diffusing among them correct information regarding the aims and aspirations of the people of India.

But the most useful engine of our political reform is our London Agency under the wise superintendence of Mr. Digby. Mr. Digby has earned the lasting gratitude of all India for the invaluable services he has rendered to the Congress-movement. To his exertions we owe the keen interest which some eminent politicians have begun to take in our progress. It was he who obtained for us assurances of sympathy from the greatest statesman of the age. It was he who

agitated the Kashmere question ; who addressed two powerful letters to the Secretary of State on the Public Service question ; and who defended the Congress against the unjust and cowardly attacks of Sir E. Watkins and others. The diffusion in England of Congress-literature is due in a considerable degree, to him ; and if the Indian Agency has become a centre of political weight and influence in London, it is because his literary ability, his vast knowledge and experience of Indian politics, his overflowing, regard for our well-being, have combined together in the furtherance of our great National cause. Institutions, like the Indian Agency have played such a useful part in English history, the Colonies have profited by them so much, they have been such efficacious instruments for turning the currents of public opinions in favour of Reforms that we may, without any hesitation, impress upon our countrymen the extreme necessity, importance, and usefulness of keeping up in London, at all costs and hazards, an organisation, which has already done so much to popularise our political movement, and which may, in future, become the chief medium through which the national mind of India may commune with the national mind of England.

Thus much for the changes of opinion outside Parliament : it remains to be seen now how far our cause has progressed in Parliament. In the House of Commons it is championed by Messrs. Bradlaugh, Caine, Smith, Macferlane and other leading lights of the party. They have during the present year raised a host of questions in Parliament on Indian topics. To those whom the indifference of Parliament towards Indian matters had grown wearisome and painful, the change in its attitude and the interest which it has begun to take in our movements, is as remarkable as it is encouraging and hopeful. Although Indian questions occupy as yet a very insignificant place in the field of parliamentary discussion, although our Budget is even now disposed of in a few hours with a few speeches from some independent members addressed to empty benches, although there is not any party in Parliament which has made Indian Reform one of the chief articles of its political faith, although, otherwise independent but in Indian matters, Parliament allows itself to be guided entirely by the Secretary of State, who is swayed by the Indian Council composed of retired Anglo-Indians, who on Indian questions are at least a quarter of a century behind the aged and have little sympathy with the aspirations of a "New India;" while the Secretary of State's Council generally backs up the Viceroy's Executive Council, which consisting of members who are bound to support the Government, is influenced by the bias and opinions of the rank and file of the official classes ; yet there are certain signs of the times, which those who run may read and which indicate beyond all doubt, that the present system of governing India

has been weighed in the balance and found wanting, that the mind and conscience of England are awakening to her solemn Imperial responsibilities that some English statesmen, with that courage and perseverance which marked the pioneers of the Reform-Bill Agitation and the Catholic Emancipation, are coming to the front and willing to lay their lance in rest for a cause which is the cause of justice and freedom and the ultimate triumph of which would tend as much to the fame and glory of England as to the social and political elevation of a weak but aspiring people. The question put by Mr. Bradlaugh on Indian matters are the first beginnings of a great change. Their success may be judged by the degree of discomfiture they cause to the exponents of official views in this country. The Abkari Reform—one of the chief proposals of the National Congress, has been taken up by Messrs. Smith and Caine who have come off with flying colors from the first battle. The division on the Abkari question was a great event in the history of our political agitation. The debate took place in a House of about 500 members, and Liberals as well as Conservatives pronounced their emphatic condemnation of the excise policy of India. This is not a trifling victory; it has that within which passes show. It is a proof positive of the fact that however deep rooted political abuse may be, as soon as its nature is one realised by the British House of Commons, it is sure to be destroyed and the whole army of Anglo-Indians cannot save it from destruction.

The Draft Bill of Mr. Bradlaugh's is perhaps the greatest triumph of the Congress, cause. The aim and object of the bill, the spirit in which it is conceived, the circumstances to which it owes its birth, its place among our proposals of reform, its influence—direct and indirect, near and remote—upon our political destinies, the ability, the wide human sympathy, the fame, the courage, and the high statesman-like qualities of its author, invest it with an importance and significance which can scarcely be over-rated. The reform of the Legislative Council is admitted, by common consent, to be the foundation of all reforms; but the essence of that reform is the adoption by the Government of the principle of representation and election in the constitution of its Council. The Congress has always attached the greatest weight to this proposal, and yet this is the proposal which excited the most adverse criticisms. Lord Dufferin said that our object was to bring the executive into subjection to our will and to Sir Auckland Colvin the Reform of the council upon the lines suggested by the Congress will be as miraculous an event as the appearance of an elephant in a Scotch mist or a banyan tree in Parliament Street. A Raja, under an inspiration from high quarters, published an essay on "Democracy not suited to India," and another Raja whom years have failed to bring the philosophic mind, addressed a petition for the suppression of the Congress, to the Government. Sir Syed

Ahmed raised up the phantom of another mutiny if any representative element was going to be introduced into India, and in this mischievous attempt he was backed by the whole body of Anglo-Indian Officials. The Bureaucracy knows that the success of the demand for a modified form of representative system means the curtailment of its unjust powers, that the day the true voice of the nation finds an expression in the Supreme Council and is able to influence its decision, will ring the death-knell of that despotism which tempered by justice and benevolence as it is, is yet marked by many faults and failings, the most serious amongst which are its total ignorance of the real wants of the people and its utter disregard and want of sympathy for the new aspirations to which the growing intelligence of the country is giving birth; and it is because it is aware of this that it is straining every nerve to discredit the Congress movement in the eyes of the British Public by giving false and perverted versions of its real aims and by impeaching, with a very slender regard for Truth, the motives of its leaders. In spite of all this opposition, Mr. Bradlaugh, realising the justice of our demand and that "the critical agency in political causation which men vaguely call the force of events,"* has lifted up a great question, which even its most ardent advocates were prepared to see ignored for some years, into the regions of practical politics; and whatever may be the fate of his Bill, certain it is that its introduction into Parliament will, mean the introduction of the chief proposal of the Congress—the recognition, in a most empathic manner of the weight and influence of our great national movement, and will inaugurate a new era in the history of our political agitation. Whatever may be said of the wisdom or the unwisdom of our demand, whatever charges of unpracticalness, selfishness, ignorance, and political incapacity may be brought against our leaders, it will not be said now that there is any taint of sedition or disloyalty in the objects or the methods of the Congress when its cardinal principle is accepted by one who is one of the most distinguished members of the Liberal party and is going to form, in the shape of a Bill, a subject of parliamentary debate. Thus it appears that after all the banyan-tree is going to grow up in Parliament Street and that the House of Commons, moved by a generous sympathy for the oppressed and guided by true Imperial instincts, is going to accord a fair and indulgent hearing to a question which has passed through the various phases of ridicule, abuse and mis-representation, and has been pooh-poohed by our Supreme and Local Governments.

The change which has occurred in English public opinion and in the attitude of Parliament with regard to the National Congress, has influenced in a decisive manner the policy of the Government of India, and instances may be cited which will show that even in this

* John Morley in the *Nineteenth Century*, January 1887.

country, the agitation has not failed to bear fruit. The first Congress had insisted upon establishing Provincial Councils for the N.-W. P. and the Punjab, and the Government gave a Council to the United Provinces. Lord Dufferin in his famous minute approved of the suggestions of the separation of Judicial from Executive functions, and of the reconstitution of the Councils on a wider basis. Lord Lansdowne has declared that the Budget will now be subjected to discussion in the Council, and that within certain limits, members will be allowed to exercise the right of interpellation. These were two important items in the demands of the Congress, and they have been granted. The great Public Services Question has been decided to a certain extent in our favour. The labours of Sir Charles Atchison, Sir Charles Turner and others have not been wholly resultless, for the age limit as demanded by us has been raised and the statutory restrictions which had hitherto obstructed our progress in the Public Service, have been somewhat relaxed.

This is a brief record of the successes which the Congress has achieved within a short time. They are due to the same causes to which the success of English political agitations is due. The Anti-Slavery Society was successful because the cause it had espoused was just because the means by which that cause was advocated in and out of Parliament were loyal and constitutional as they were the means of free and fair discussion because the intelligence and patriotism of the cultured classes were first enlisted and then the enthusiasm of the masses was appealed to ; and finally because even in the midst of reverses and defeat, the leaders of the movement did not lose heart, but with an unflinching faith in the ultimate triumph of truth, kept alive the torch of civilization amid the hurricanes of evil passions and ignorance. If the Congress has achieved certain successes, which are but the presages and forestalment of that which is in the womb of time, it is because its demands are national, and just and command the approbation of the English people ; for in these days of free discussion when upon almost every question, the democracy is the final court of appeal, no movement which is of a vicious nature or is based upon a mischievous principle, which lends its countenance to methods not sanctioned by the laws of morality, and which fails to strike the chords of national sympathy, can ever hope to maintain its position in public estimation.

Following in the wake of great English reformers, the chief organisers of the Congress movement, have relied more upon the strength of moral conviction and less upon the adventitious advantages of rank and wealth, have directed their efforts, by means of speeches, articles, pamphlets, tracts in English as well as in the various dialects of the country, to the elevation of the ignorant masses to a higher level of political intelligence, have organised centres of political activity in almost every important town, have made modera-

tion, the essential feature of their demand and loyalty and patriotism the watchword of their endeavours, have appealed by the open straight forward means of public discussion to the heart and mind of England, and have succeeded in winning over to their side, the sympathies and approbation of considerable section of the British nation. The active sympathy manifested by men like Mr. Bradlaugh and Mr. Caine, Sir W. Hunter and Sir Richard Garth, Sir Charles Turner and, Sir William Wedderburn, Sir Charles Atchison and Lord Ripon, the words of hope and encouragement which have fallen from Mr. Gladstone—that most distinguished friend of oppressed nationalities; the great support of Mr. Hume who has suffered, as no other has, for the Congress cause, but whose name will go down to posterity as that of the greatest Englishman whom Providence has sent to our succour at a great critical moment in our history—all this shows that the cause in which we are engaged is neither disloyal nor seditious, but is carried on by wise and constitutional means, and is conducive alike to the good of India, and the glory of England. The forces of the opposition have been scattered; the Patriotic Association which was started for the purpose of counter-acting the influence of the Congress, by distorting, perverting, falsifying its objects, is now dead and buried; and the great political movement of Modern India, supported by the whole force of the National party, and backed by the moral enthusiasm of the British public is rising gradually in public estimation, and is winning its way, by persuasion and by calm consideration into the rational minds of men. If there are some to whom the progress of the Congress does not appear rapid enough, let them reflect in their mind upon the courses of some other great historic movements which took generations to accomplish their ends: let them bear in mind that the reform agitation which succeeded in 1832 had been commenced in 1770, that 70, years of hard struggle were needed to achieve the Catholic emancipation; but also let them remember that as in England so in India, the principles of loyalty and patriotism, controlled and guided by the still higher dictates of justice and moral rectitude are the first conditions of success; that no sacrifice is too great which must be made, no hardship too severe which must be borne, in order to keep alive and burning in the national mind the flame of loyal and patriotic feelings: and that we, who are engaged in a great cause should in spite of the obstacles which may be thrown in our way by those who ‘nod and wink’ behind a slowly dying fire’ hold the banner of reform bravely aloft in weal and woe, over the stormy seas upon which our lot is cast, and we may rest assured that as certainly as the sun rises from the East, the cause of Justice will prevail; the buttresses of unjust authority, the fortresses of political abuses will fall before the moral force of a new and enlightened public opinion, as fell the walls of *Jericho* at the trumpet’s peal, and England, the august mother of free nations will confer upon us the boon

of those political rights and privileges which far from weakening and sapping, would strengthen and consolidate the mighty fabric of her world-wide Empire.

December 15th, 1889.

B. N. DAR.

