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TOPICS OF THE WEEK.

THE conscience clause provided for in the Madras Elementary Education Bill is of a very restricted character. In the first place, it is only in single-school areas that the rights of conscience are to be respected, though even here to a limited extent. And the protection that is afforded is of a curious sort. It is provided that the District Educational Council should persuade the managers of private schools to exempt scholars from attendance during religious instruction, and if the Council should fail in this attempt, the responsibility is cast upon it of starting an alternative school. It is difficult to see how the Council can discharge this duty, lacking as it does all independent power. It is no use the legislature saying that the District Educational Council shall arrange with the local authority concerned for the establishment of a school, when the Council exercises no sort of control over the local authority, with whom alone rests the final word in the matter. But apart from it, is it just that because the managers of private schools refuse to come to an understanding, the Council or the local authority should be made to open new schools? It is only in this matter that some sort of compulsion is contemplated in the Bill.

WHAT really is wanted is the application of the principle in its full force, that, with perfect freedom of religious teaching on the one hand, there should be perfect freedom of withdrawal on the other, in State-aided schools. The parents have a right to the secular instruction imparted in every such school for their children, and if religious instruction should also be imparted in the school, they ought to have the right of conveniently withdrawing their children from it. As Mr. Forster said: "We wished to give every parent the most complete power to withdraw his child from any religious education of which he might dis-

approve, and at the same time we desired to provide that his child should not lose the secular instruction to which he has a right and for which the rates are paid." This right of withdrawal holds good irrespective of whether there is or is not a public school in the neighbourhood of the private school where religious instruction is given. Both in single- and in multiple-school areas relief of conscience must be equally provided for.

THE Madras Bill, again, requires a written request for withdrawal on the part of the parents who may object to their children receiving the religious instruction imparted in any school. The conscience clause introduced in Mr. Forster's Bill also had originally such a provision requiring the parent to send his objection in writing to the manager of the school. But it was felt that such a proviso might prove onerous to the illiterate parent and that the conscience clause would not be availed of. The proviso was therefore eventually removed. The time-table conscience clause which was ultimately adopted is reproduced below for ready reference :

(1) It shall not be required, as a condition of any child being admitted into or continuing in the school, that he shall attend or abstain from attending any Sunday school or any place of religious worship, or that he shall attend any religious observance, or any instruction in religious subjects, in his school or elsewhere, from which observance or instruction he may be withdrawn by his parent, or that he shall, if withdrawn by his parent, attend the school on any day exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which his parent belongs;

(2) The time or times during which any religious observance is practised, or instruction in religious subjects is given at any meeting of the school, shall be either at the beginning or at the end, or at the beginning and the end of such meeting, and shall be inserted in a time-table to be approved by the Education Department, and to be kept permanently and conspicuously affixed in each school room; and any scholar may be withdrawn by his parent from such observance or instruction without forfeiting any of the other benefits of the school.

THE attitude adopted by the Nationalists of Poona to the compulsory education of girls ought to be a standing warning to those to whom it may fall hereafter to frame a law for compulsion. It must not be possible any longer, without the strongest reason, to introduce compulsory education for boys alone, and to postpone girls' education indefinitely. Three alternative schemes were proposed in Poona

which, while bringing down the expenditure to the point desired by the Nationalists, made compulsory education available for children of both sexes, but the extremist party do not deign even to consider the schemes. They quietly vote down these proposals in the municipality and insist upon limiting compulsion to boys. When any local body thus wantonly leaves behind the education of girls the Government must have the power in law to reject its proposal for applying compulsion only to boys. We are glad that the Madras Government definitely takes this power under its new Elementary Education Bill. One of the provisos in the compulsory clauses runs: "Provided further that if the resolution (submitted by the local authority to the Government that compulsion shall be introduced within its area) extends only to the children of one sex, the Governor in Council may reject it unless satisfied that sufficient accommodation is or will be provided as required by sub-clause (b) of the foregoing proviso for all the children of school age of the other sex resident in the area or for such proportion of them as the Governor in Council may in each case direct." This at least insures that the education of the other sex will not be altogether neglected.

At the Belgaum District Conference also the present delegates were refused free admission, again under the inspiration of the Poona Nationalists. Here, too, no excuse was left to the organisers of the conference to pretend either that the request was made too late, or that the peasants themselves had made no applications in due form to the authorities—the extremists are so quick in adopting the bureaucrat's ways and expressions. Nor can it be pretended that the exigencies of space rendered the admission of tenants impracticable, they not being admitted even in limited numbers. It is not to be wondered at that the extremists in the Deccan fear an awakened tenantry will not make the most docile of followers and therefore shut them out from their gatherings. The Reception Committee of the Bombay Provincial Conference have already been approached with a request to admit ryots free, but it is to be feared that the Committee being under the domination of the very men who manoeuvred their exclusion from the Poona and Belgaum conferences, the request will meet with a refusal. (We understand that the authorities of the Conference propose admitting 65 cultivators from the whole presidency!) In the Deccan, thanks to the awakening of the ryots, the Nationalists, although they have captured the Congress organisation, find their position challenged in every place wherever a crusade is carried against caste distinctions.

THE *Mahratta* lays great store by the fact that, although the Chairman of the Reception Committee of the Poona Conference flatly refused to admit any cultivators free, the Subjects Committee resolved to admit five such men from each taluka

committee. Will our contemporary say how many taluka committees at all exist in the district, and how many cultivators could come in under the terms of this resolution, 5 or 10? He makes so much of the resolution, because it clearly shows, so he thinks, that the Nationalists in the Deccan are not opposed in theory to the admission of peasant delegates. We will concede as much to our contemporary, and even more. The extremists are not opposed, even in fact, to admitting cultivators free, only provided that the cultivators are of the political complexion desired by themselves. But the question is: What if the complexion is different? The extremists have given an answer which there can be no mistaking.

THE effort recently made by the Liberal party and the leaders of the backward classes to assert themselves at extremist conferences so that the ascendancy of reactionary views which is a mark of these gatherings may be broken down has not been altogether fruitless. The mouthing of progressive sentiments in which Mr. Tilak indulged at Belgaum is a direct consequence of the vigorous activity of the Liberals. People in the Deccan know that his pronouncement in favour of social reform is not to be taken at its face value, but that he is constrained to do lip homage to ideals which he spent the best years of his life in denouncing is itself a very promising sign of the change that has come over public opinion in regard to social matters. Mr. Tilak declared that he would rejoice if even all political power was conferred upon the non-Brahmans alone, and if the Brahmans did not share at all in it; and yet in his papers of this very week he vehemently maintains that no more than two or three seats, if any, must be reserved for the Mahrattas in the whole of the Deccan. Such discrepancies are only to be expected from Mr. Tilak. No matter. But that he voices such generous sentiments, though it be as a mere rhetorical flourish is itself an encouraging sign.

AGAIN, as a counterpoise, perhaps, to his refusal to sign the anti-untouchability manifesto, Mr. Tilak also expressed willingness to dine with untouchables for the general weal if and when the latter required it. He will soon have an opportunity to say if, in the existing circumstances, the public weal does require it. One may well anticipate his answer. But we attach greater importance to his declarations than to his personal conduct, for the former indicate the enormous change that has taken place in public feeling, while with the latter we are not concerned. With one point in Mr. Tilak's speech, however, it is necessary to deal. An unwary reader may gather the impression that Mr. Tilak all along was favourably disposed to social reform, but that only his close absorption in politics prevented his active participation in social reform propaganda. Nothing is farther from the truth. He did not remain neutral

to social reform, but exerted himself to the extent of his capacity in opposing it, and, what is worse, helped in the persecution of reformers like Agarkar in ways over which it were best now to draw a veil.

THE Commissioner of Labour appointed by the Madras Government has set to work vigorously to improve the lot of the untouchables. The note just presented by him is full of melancholy interest as showing the many grievous disabilities to which the Panchamas are still subjected. We commend it to the earnest attention of those who are working for the betterment of these classes. In six districts these classes are theoretically forbidden to come within a distance of 64 feet of higher castes, and, though largely neglected, the restrictions are still effective in some parts, especially on the west coast. "Even to this day the Nagadis who live largely by begging have to leave their clothes on the roadside and retire to some distance whence they call out to the passers by to deposit their alms upon the cloth. Slavery has been forbidden for many years by the Penal Code, but in C. A. Nos. 26 and 27 of 1917 the High Court of Madras had a case before them which they instance as an undoubted example of the sale of a slave. The public water-supply has been absolutely forbidden in nearly every village to castes which number one-sixth of the people of the Presidency. Many of the hamlets where these people live... are cut off from access to the main village or the road except at the good will of the owner of the fields they must traverse. To get to their water-supply (such as it is) or to their burial or burning ground they are often similarly at the mercy of the land-owners. The system of non-mortgage by which the labourer binds himself and frequently his heirs to service till a debt is redeemed is well-known." The degrading conditions here depicted are of too long a standing to be remedied at once, but the Government must adopt a bolder policy than it has done. For instance, the note says: "If orders be passed that no public money should be spent on water-supply for particular classes, till a supply open to all is assured, the pace at which these poor people are supplied would be appreciably quickened." This must be done forthwith.

"I think," said Dr. Macnicol of Poona about Cristian missionaries, "that those who say that we held our peace in the matter of the Punjab disorders in a way that was cowardly have justification for their charge against us." Fortunately, however, there are not wanting missionaries who have condemned the Amritsar massacre in no hesitating terms. Mr. Winslow, replying to Canon Guilford's letter, says in the *Challenge*: "There are hundreds of Englishmen who in their dealings with Indians are animated entirely by the spirit of Christ; and they are the salt of the British raj. But nothing is gained by trying to conceal in the country the fact of the wide prevalence in India

of a different temper—the temper which looks upon the 'native' as an inferior order of being to the Englishman; whose business is to know his place and to keep it; whose feelings don't matter so long as they don't become inconvenient in their expression, and the thought of intimate friendship with whom, as brother with brother, is one to arouse only feelings of amusement or repulsion. It is this fundamental denial of the Gospel of Christ of which the Amritsar massacre was one outstanding and appalling consequence against which Christians must unitedly set their faces. Had the victims been English, we know that a veritable tornado of denunciation would have followed. Shall we condone or palliate the act because they are Indians? That is the issue."

THOSE who claim for Mr. Tilak that he advocated India's right to self-determination before the Peace Conference know not what that term means. To ask that the British Parliament should pass a more liberal measure than the one introduced by Mr. Montagu is not to claim self-determination for India, but to accept other-determination in the plainest terms. The *New Statesman's* following observations with regard to Ireland are quite apposite to India's case:

Self-determination clearly means a great deal more than home rule. Home rule may mean anything, from a mere devolution of certain powers to local bodies up to the kind of limited autonomy granted under the Act of 1914. But self-determination can only mean that the Irish people are to determine their own future fate and devise their own constitution; that they are not merely to exercise certain powers of self-government, but are themselves to define those powers. That is what is meant wherever it has been applied in the resettlement of Europe; and, indeed, to suggest that it would mean anything less would be to make it meaningless. A devolution of powers whose limits, however wide and generous, are determined by some outside and higher authority plainly cannot be termed self-determination.

AN idea of the heavy burden thrown upon the Indian exchequer by the enormous increases in the salary of the Imperial services may be gained from the statement laid upon the table of the Indian Legislative Council by the Finance Member. The Indian Civil Service is responsible for an increase of Rs. 36,00,000 per annum; the Indian Medical Service for Rs. 25,00,000; the Indian Education Service for Rs. 10,00,000, and so forth. While the pay of the already excessively paid services is thus increased, the provincial services have shared to a very small extent in this general increment. Thus, the Provincial Civil Service, with its far larger cadre, receives an addition of Rs 13,00,000 to its salary, while the superior service receives an increment of nearly thrice as much. The Provincial Education Service receives Rs. 6,00,000, while the Imperial service receives Rs. 10,00,000. The scale of salaries indeed requires readjustment, but not in the direction in which the Government are effecting it.

REVERSE COUNCILS.

THE loud and persistent outcry of the Indian mercantile community against the continued sales of reverse councils carried on by Government evoked from the Finance Member a lengthy exposition of the whole question in the Indian Legislative Council. Last month Government sought to justify their policy connected with reverse councils by saying that the sale of the drafts was necessary to enable those people in this country who had accumulated large war profits to remit them to England in view of the new rate of exchange, which had been fixed in conformity with the recommendations of the Currency Committee. Government knew perfectly well that the demand for reverse councils proceeded very largely from speculators who were trying to take advantage of a high sterling exchange to send funds abroad only to bring them back later on when the rate declined. It, therefore, decided to discriminate between *bona fide* purchasers of sterling drafts and speculative remitters of funds, and to require that a part of the purchase price of the reverse councils should be laid down at the time of bidding for remittance. This procedure did not result in any abatement of the demand for drafts, and Indian merchants found that the discrimination was, in effect, practised against them. Government sold drafts at rates which were appreciably higher than the market rates, and those who would secure the drafts were able to make a profit on them. This was the position with regard to exchange when the Hon'ble Mr. Hailey was called upon to defend and justify the policy pursued by Government.

In explaining the attitude of Government, the Finance Member travelled over extensive ground and dealt at length with the different aspects of the problem of our currency and exchange. He started with a fair statement of the case of Government's critics and of the situation as it strikes the man in the street. This case is based upon a two-fold objection. First of all, Government is selling reverse councils at a time when the balance of trade is not adverse to India and when exchange does not presumably require propping up. Government is not only selling remittances week after week, but is selling them at rates which are more than three pence above the rate which the remitters could obtain in the open market. This acts like a bonus at the expense of the Indian taxpayer to people who are lucky enough to obtain the drafts sold by an obliging Government. Secondly, the sale of reverse councils is nothing less than an invitation to people to transfer capital out of India to the serious detriment of the industries and trade of the country. Mr. Hailey attempted to demolish this case by showing how a high exchange would enable Government to obtain a larger amount of sterling in London against rupees paid out in this country, to purchase an adequate quantity of silver, and thus

successfully to dodge the nightmare of inconvertibility and to combat the evil of the high level of prices from which so many of India's population are suffering. He proceeded to place before his hearers the bait of the gains from exchange which could be utilised to relieve provincial Governments of the contributions they are expected to make to the central Government. A high exchange rate obviated the necessity of immediate additional taxation and of demanding larger financial contributions from the provinces. The Finance Member had to admit that the saving made by Government on the remittance of home charges to the extent of 12½ crores would fall upon the producer who would have to bear this indirect tax; but he minimised the effect of the burden by saying that a considerable portion of it was borne by the foreigner.

The statement of the Hon'ble Mr. Hailey that the loss of the Indian producer would be inconsiderable and that it would be made good by the high prices obtainable in foreign markets, was not accurate. The loss on other remittances from this country abroad must be taken into account and much reliance ought not to be placed upon the high prices of Indian commodities exported to foreign markets. Conscious of the weakness of this argument, the Finance Member drew a dark picture of the situation as it would develop if a low rate of exchange were to be adopted. There would be high prices, and serious discontent and a financial disaster would stare Government in the face. Proceeding to attack the problem of sterling drafts direct, he stated that the exchange policy recommended by the Currency Committee and accepted by the Secretary of State could not be effectively carried out unless Government provided trade with the remittance it required at the fixed ratio. This was the crux of the whole question. The position was this. Government linked up the rupee to gold and, having done that, was bound to maintain the ratio by selling reverse councils, if there was a demand for them owing to the low rate which prevailed in the market. Leaving the rupee to find its own level was to abandon the exchange value of the rupee fixed in relation to gold. Whether the trade balance was adverse or not, there was the demand for remittance which tended to depress exchange and to break the fixed parity, and it was the duty of Government to support it by the only means at its disposal, viz. reverse councils. There is indeed a wide gap between the market rate and the theoretical gold rate, but it would have been wider still if reverse bills had not been sold by Government.

With regard to the loss on exchange, Mr. Hailey stated that in any case it was there and could not be avoided. The reverse councils did not produce the loss which arose out of the depreciation of sterling; and India's funds in London must be transferred back to this country at a rate higher than the one at which they were originally

remitted to England. We are afraid the Finance Member here assumes that the rate of exchange at which the reverse bills have been sold will not decline and ignores the consideration that if the transfer of Indian reserves in London is made at a later date, when the sterling-dollar exchange improves, our loss will be reduced. But Mr. Hailey goes further and states that the loss involved in the sale of reverse councils is not a loss at all, but the expenditure necessary to earn the advantages which India will secure on the saving in the home charges and many other directions. The country wants to benefit by a high exchange, he argues, and it must be prepared to pay the necessary price of this great advantage. Does not this argument come to this, that the rate of exchange has been fixed high to enable the Government of India to levy indirect taxation upon the people and that the currency policy of India is subordinated to the supreme object of reducing the expenditure of the State on the remittance of home charges? It is difficult to say if the Currency Committee itself would have accepted this line of reasoning as a justification of the high rate of exchange, in view of the fact that it regarded the saving in the case of home charges as an incidental advantage merely. Everybody knows that the Committee did not expect the severe slump which has taken place in the sterling-dollar exchange, and did not contemplate the sales of reverse councils at a rate in excess of the market rate by a margin of three pence. The Secretary of State ought not to have adopted the recommendation of the Currency Committee with respect to the exchange rate when the circumstances were so different from those which the Committee had taken into consideration. The very fact that the Government of India has made suggestions to the Secretary of State with the object of bringing the market rate of exchange and the rate at which they are selling reverse councils in harmony with each other, is enough proof to show how the present policy is wrong. Mr. Hailey, representing the Government of India, which is only carrying out the instructions of the Finance Committee of the India Office, has dutifully and ably put up the best defence he could, and it is not his fault if the Indian public is not impressed by his arguments. We are of opinion that the whole policy underlying the sale of reverse councils is wrong, and that the attempt which the Finance Member made to defend it has exposed its weakness and aggravated public dissatisfaction.

THE FINANCIAL STATEMENT.

EXCHANGE and military expenditure are the two factors that dominate the Financial Statement that Mr. Hailey has laid before the Council. While presenting the estimates for the current year Sir James Meston took the gain on exchange at a little over a million sterling and described the figure as "high." The revised estimates show

that in spite of the loss due to the sale of reverse councils, the net gain is expected to be 11¼ crores. But for this loss-it would have amounted to 23¾ crores. And for next year it is estimated to amount to 30¾ crores. But these huge figures do not furnish matter altogether for congratulation. They represent a large addition to our resources, but fluctuations in the medium of exchange produce economic disturbances of a far-reaching character. They dislocate trade, alter the relation between debtors and creditors, and create an uncertainty which is highly prejudicial to the economic development of the country concerned. The maintenance of the standard of value is, therefore, a subject of grave concern to everybody, and no change should be made in it except for imperative reasons.

The appreciation of the rupee was the result mainly of two causes, the rise in the price of silver and the increase in the trade balance in India's favour brought about by the war. Exchange, however, need not necessarily have followed the rise in the price of silver. It is impossible for laymen to be dogmatic on so technical a subject, but Mr. Dalal gives strong reasons in his minority report for believing that Government was in no small degree responsible for the rise in the exchange value of the rupee. Whatever may be thought of his recommendations, his criticism of the policy pursued by Government seems to be thoroughly sound. The greater part of the rise has taken place since the conclusion of the war. It occurred after 1918, when demands for war requirements were at an end. Besides it was not necessary to force India to receive the balance due to her in silver. If gold had been allowed to be imported freely after the United States had removed the embargo on its export, it appears that the present situation would not have arisen. The demand for silver would have slackened and there would have been no need to push up the exchange. But, as Sir Stanley Reed stated in the memorandum submitted by him to the Currency Committee, in spite of the pronouncement of the Chamberlain Commission, Government have not allowed India to determine for itself the form in which its debts shall be paid. Council bills have been sold when the Secretary of State's requirements had been satisfied, with the sole object, it seems, of diverting gold from India. It is principally this policy which has created the problems which the Currency Committee was appointed to solve. As Sir Stanley Reed observes in the memorandum above referred to, "the present exchange and currency difficulties have largely arisen from the arrest of the normal flow of gold to India and the substitution of credits abroad by Government for the liquidation of the large balance of trade. Deprived of the normal supply of gold bullion, India has turned to the only precious metal available, and has absorbed coined rupees in prodigious quantities."

But, howsoever open to attack the official manipulation of the currency may have been, our immediate interest lies in seeing how the gain due to

exchange is to be disposed of. No portion of it is to be credited to revenue in the current year. Out of 11¼ crores, 7¼ crores will be credited to the railway, irrigation, and Delhi capital accounts, and 4½ crores utilized for making up the loss due to the fall in the rupee value of the sterling holdings. Next year 12¾ crores will be used for the former purpose and 12 crores for the latter, while the revenues will get the benefit of the remaining 6 crores. The railways account chiefly for the proposed increase in capital expenditure. The addition is justified by a curious argument. For every million pounds spent on the purchase of stores and machinery in Europe or America, says the Finance Member, "the actual cost to the Indian taxpayer is now very considerably less than previously, and it would clearly not be right to charge the capital accounts of our railways with amounts which are fictitiously inflated, and have not actually been spent thereon. We have decided, therefore, in view of the large sums involved, that our capital accounts should properly get the benefit of the higher rate of exchange prevailing." Payment for purchases made in Europe has to be made in gold. We require, accordingly, as many rupees as will be equivalent to the value in gold of the articles bought, and when the exchange value of the rupee rises, it is obvious that fewer rupees will be needed to make the necessary payment. If the accounts are still kept on the old basis, the allotment for railways (in sterling) ought to be represented by a smaller figure. But to maintain it at the old figure and then to use it as a ground for increasing the capital outlay (in rupees) on railways is merely to juggle with words. Why not say frankly that, with the partiality which Government have always shown for the railways, they have decided to increase the capital expenditure on them, because they have more money in hand now?

In providing £17.7 million for the railways during the current year, Sir James Meston stated that it was "the largest amount that has ever been allotted to railways in any one year." It was probably higher by 50% than the highest grant made till then. The railways have been starved during the last five years. On account of want of funds and the difficulty of obtaining materials, they have not been kept up to the standard, and have suffered a great deal of deterioration. It is not unreasonable, therefore, that Government should take the earliest opportunity of making good the large arrears that have accumulated. The railways are a valuable asset to the State and a source of rapidly expanding revenue. They should, therefore, be maintained in a high state of efficiency. But the standard represented by the current year's estimate, the whole of which has not been spent owing partly to the failure of English supplies, should have sufficed for this purpose.

The railway department is not the only one that has suffered on account of the war. The departments which have an intimate bearing on the

welfare of the people, have suffered equally, if not more. Money is required urgently for education, sanitation, medical relief and a number of other vital purposes. The additional sum which has been assigned for railways may well have been spent on these objects. And the same remark applies to the increase in the capital expenditure on railways provided for in the Financial Statement for next year. But there is not the slightest reference in the Statement to these matters, which are, even from the economic point of view, of greater importance than the extension and development of railways. In spite of the war and a falling exchange, England has added considerably to her expenditure on education. But the Government of India have not been able to make even the most meagre provision in that direction.

The policy of Government in regard to the sale of reverse councils has been sharply criticized in Indian commercial quarters. It has been pointed out that they are being sold at a time when the balance of trade is in India's favour, and it is being asserted that the interests of the people are being sacrificed to those of European merchants and exchange banks. The Finance Member has devoted a large portion of his statement to an elucidation of the exchange, but has significantly refrained from referring to the above-mentioned topic. His silence can only lead the country to the conclusion that the position of the critics of the Government is not one which can be easily assailed.

Including the contribution to H. M.'s Government, the budgetary provision for military expenditure has been taken at £40 million. Of this £38.55 million will be available for the army services. The burden is staggering, but we are told that if the operations on the frontier continue, even the expenditure proposed may not suffice. The defeat of Austria and Germany and the disappearance of Russia from among the European powers has brought no relief to India. The anarchy in Russia threatens India with a greater danger than did the armies of the Czar. Government is bound to take all necessary measures to protect India from external aggression, and in such a matter it must act on the opinion of its military advisers. But it must be pointed out that the Indian army is not maintained solely with a view to the defence of India. It is also meant to serve Imperial purposes. Besides, high as the expenditure on it is, it is in-expansive. It is not backed up by a territorial force or a system of reserves. Generally speaking, increase in its numbers can be secured only by a proportionate addition to its cost. Again, the almost complete exclusion of Indians from commissioned ranks prevents them from regarding it as a national army. It is to them an instrument in the hands of Government not merely for repelling foreign foes, but for keeping the people of the country in subjection. So long as the resources of India do not grow, the financial burden involved in maintaining it will remain a crushing one, but the denial to Indians of all opportunities of receiving military

training or occupying responsible positions in their own army considerably reinforces their opposition to the growth of military expenditure.

Without admiring the currency policy of Government, one may well be glad that the rise in exchange will enable the provinces to start on their new career with much greater resources than they would otherwise have enjoyed. The Montagu-Chelmsford report anticipated an Imperial deficit of 13½ crores. But in view of the new rate of exchange recommended by the Currency Committee (10 Rs. for a gold sovereign), the Government of India have informed the Committee on Financial Relations that the Imperial deficit may be reckoned at 6 crores. They have further indicated that they "propose to assume the liability for extinguishing these contributions within a measurable time."

H. N. KUNZRU.

THE MADRAS ELEMENTARY EDUCATION BILL.

THE Madras Elementary Education Bill, besides introducing permissive compulsion, also seeks to improve the existing voluntary system, and for this purpose power is to be taken under the Bill to organise a District Educational Council in every district whose function it will be to co-ordinate and direct the activities of the various agencies working in the field of elementary education. This proposal to form an independent *ad hoc* body in every district for ascertaining its educational needs naturally suggests the analogy of Mr. Forster's Act of 1870 in England which provided for the creation of School Boards. Several of the provisions in the Madras Bill are no doubt copied from the English Act, but a closer examination of the two measures reveals more points of contrast than of resemblance. Altogether, compared to the great Act which established a complete system of national education in England, the Bill put forward by the Madras Government is a puny thing, which has nothing in it which will inevitably tend to make education universal within a short period or even to quicken the pace of educational expansion. The principal feature of the Forster Act was, in Mr. Forster's own words, "a legal enactment that there shall be efficient schools everywhere throughout the kingdom." Although the Act left compulsory attendance of children to the opinion of local bodies, it made, be it remembered, compulsion in the matter of provision of adequate school accommodation absolute. It fastened on a school district the duty of providing schools sufficient to accommodate all the children of school age resident in the locality. The agency to enforce this compulsory school provision was that of the School Board, and the inquiry to find out the educational want, provided for by the Act, was only preliminary to the taking of necessary steps to supply the want. The Madras Bill also has the inquiry, but, under it, no action need

follow upon the inquiry. A liberal minded Government will no doubt take suitable measures for the spread of education after the inquiry has revealed the extent of the deficiency, but no statutory obligation rests either upon the Government or the District Educational Councils to be brought into existence, or the local bodies to supply it in any measure. That is the great lack of this Bill, and that is why it is not to be compared with the Act of 1870. The scope of this latter measure will be properly appreciated when it is remembered that its author and the Government of the time expected that in two or three years after the Act came into operation, elementary education would become universal in England, or at any rate the means of it would be within the reach of every home. Mr. Gladstone, the then Prime Minister, described the Act in the following terms. "Let us ask ourselves," said he, "whether any epithets except the largest and strongest are sufficient to describe the scope and purpose of a measure which contemplates universal education in a country which, even according to our present statistics, already presents a very large—I will not say an unmeasurable—void. In truth, we cannot fairly describe the popular education of this country by anything weaker than this, that down to the present moment—quantity and quality taken together—it remains miserably deficient. Well, the Government have endeavoured to construct a machinery . . . that shall be equal to the gigantic task—as I may venture to call it—of bringing within the course, perhaps, of two or three years, or a period extremely short, the means of popular education up to such a point as that they shall be able to grapple effectually with the entire necessities of the country." The educational destitution in the Madras Presidency is, if anything, graver than that which faced the statesmen of England half a century ago, but the machinery provided in the Madras Elementary Education Bill to meet it is thoroughly ineffective.

The District Educational Councils are to collect information regarding the existing provision for elementary education and the further provision necessary to place elementary education within the reach of all children of school age. Such a preliminary census is, of course, necessary, but what next? The Councils are then to prepare, in consultation with the authorities concerned, schemes for the extension of elementary education in each taluk board and municipal area; and to arrange, again, in consultation with the authorities concerned and with other educational agencies, for the opening of additional schools and the expansion of existing schools with a view to giving effect, as funds permit, to such schemes. It will thus be seen that the Councils wield no independent power to increase school provision to any extent; the local bodies are to retain their authority, and the Councils must get everything done through them. If the local authorities present a blank *non possumus* the Councils become

powerless. Now, contrast with this the position assigned to the School Boards formed under the Act of 1870. Under this Act, the whole country was properly mapped and divided, and power was taken to collect returns showing what in each district was the number of schools, of scholars and of children requiring education. Power was also taken to send down inspectors to test the quality of the schools. This inquiry was made, it should be noted, not by School Boards—they came in at a later stage—but by the Department. Where the existing provision was found insufficient, either in quality or quantity, and after taking into account the necessities, not only of the would-be scholars, but of all the children of school age, a period of six months was allowed within which voluntary agencies might, if they chose, supply the deficiency. Where, at the expiration of this period, sufficient school accommodation was not provided, the State stepped in and required the formation of a School Board, upon which was cast the duty of providing the means of education for every child of school age within its area by means of levying upon the locality the necessary rate. Ordinarily, the rate was not to exceed 3d. in the pound, but whatever money was required to finance the education of all the children in the district under the rules framed for the purpose, the School Board was, not empowered, but required to raise by rates. The purpose of creating School Boards was thus, not to make an inquiry into the educational condition of the country—that was already done by the Education Department—but to find the necessary funds. As Mr. Forster said: "The object of School Boards was rating. There were other duties for them to perform, but that was the one thing for which they were called into existence." The Board was to be elected by the general body of rate-payers; and if the rate-payers of any locality were perverse and refused to elect the Board with a view to the avoidance of rates, the Education Department was empowered to form a Board by nomination and to confer upon it the power of rating. This insured complete provision of educational facilities. It will thus be seen that the District Educational Council in the Madras Bill is not the equivalent of the School Board in the English Act, having neither the function nor the power attached to the latter. What is mainly required for the extension of education in Madras or in any other province is the provision of larger funds; the constitution of District Educational Councils does not assist in this object. These bodies, therefore, while they are not directly useful, may even prove an unnecessary encumbrance.

Circumscribed as is the scope of the proposed District Educational Councils, it is hardly necessary to consider their composition. The provisions regarding this matter are rather complicated, but, briefly, the Government are empowered to nominate one-fourth of the total number of members, the Collector and the Inspector and Assistant Inspector of Schools being appointed *ex officio*. The

District Boards created under the English Act, on the contrary, were wholly elected by the rate-payers. The Government had at first proposed that they should be elected by the town councils and vestries. It was feared that the body of burgesses would be guided by narrow pecuniary considerations, and it was also felt that the town councils would better discover men suitable for appointment to the Board than the mass of rate-payers. The Government, having no decided opinion on the matter, yielded to the pressure of men like Sir Charles Dilke who preferred election by rate-payers. What the Government were decided against, however, was nomination by themselves or the appointment of any *ex officio* members. They felt that if the Government took any share in appointment of members they would diminish their power of dealing with the Boards in cases where the latter did not do their duty and therefore they decided that it was "far better to rely upon the results of inspection than upon any control to be exercised by the nominees of a Government Department." The following remarks of Mr. Forster are noteworthy in this connexion:

Now, they had not thought it right that Government nominees should be appointed with a view to secure the proper performance of the duties of the Board. If members were appointed by the Government, even if they were overruled by their colleagues, it would be very difficult for Government, through its nominees, not to be responsible for the doings, and, possibly, even for the misdoings of the Board. It had always appeared to him that they could exercise more influence over the Board by trusting them entirely, and by giving them considerable powers; for if the Board did not in that case do its duty, they could more easily interfere and insist upon the performance of what was necessary, saying to them—"We tell you clearly what you have to do, if you do not do it we will step in and do it ourselves."

Of *ex officio* members he said:

We might certainly add *ex officio* members to the School Board; but we have come to the conclusion that no real strength would be given to a Board by putting *ex officio* members on it. We believe that the very men fit to be *ex officio* members would come in with greater influence and almost with equal certainty, if subjected to popular election.

The English Act conferred upon the Education Department the power of dissolving School Boards if they neglected to do their duty and requiring new boards to be elected. This provision has been incorporated into the Madras Bill; but the other provision requiring a report of the cases in which this power had been exercised to be made to Parliament annually—which is a safeguard against its possible abuse—is not adopted in any form by the Madras Government. The relevant clause in the Act ran as follows: "The Education Department shall cause to be laid before both Houses of Parliament in every year a special report stating the cases in which they have made any order under this section during the preceding year, and the reasons for making such order." The obligation to state reasons for the exercise of this power should be particularly noted.

Since so much parallelism is found with the

English Act of 1870, which was introduced soon after the extension of the franchise to the working classes, I may as well quote the following extract from the speech of Mr. Forster in introducing the Bill, which is so very apposite to our case, as we are on the eve of the establishment of a wide franchise in consequence of the recent constitutional reforms:

Upon this speedy provision (of elementary education) depends also, I fully believe, the good, the safe working of our constitutional system. To its honour, Parliament has lately decided that England shall in future be governed by popular government. I am one of those who would not wait until the people were educated before I would trust them with political power. If we had thus waited we might have waited long for education; but now that we have given them political power we must not wait any longer to give them education. There are questions demanding answers, problems which must be solved, which ignorant constituencies are ill-fitted to solve.

S. G. V.

MILL LABOUR IN BOMBAY.—III.

THAT the Bombay mill-hand is a workman of very low efficiency goes without saying. His physique is poor and he is not capable of strenuous work. Mr. H. G. Wells has made a humorous reference to this condition of the Bombay mill-hand in one of his novels and characterised it as juvenile labour, because even the adult workman looks like a child so far as his stature is concerned. The mill-hand's physique is not only poor, but in fact deteriorating. Apart from considerations of humanity, we cannot hope successfully to compete with other nations in the industrial field with this sort of labour. Japan has proved by her efforts that the poverty of physique can be remedied, and now, thanks to the strides made by physical development in that country, a man measuring six feet tall is not a rare phenomenon. The causes of the physical inferiority of the Bombay mill-hand are various. They ought to be carefully investigated and concerted measures must be taken by the State, mill-owners and the general community. The mill-hand's low vitality renders him an easy prey to diseases like tuberculosis and epidemics of cholera, influenza, &c. Not only that, but the consumptive mill-hand, who generally goes to his native village to die there, carries the seeds of infection with him and unconsciously becomes an instrument in spreading the white plague among his fellow-villagers. These far-reaching consequences of the neglect of the labour problem deserve to be seriously considered.

The mill-hands are a floating population in Bombay, and urban working-classes of a permanent character are yet to come into existence. The mill-hand of to-day is partly an agriculturist and partly an urban workman. He becomes the latter out of pure necessity and never feels at home in Bombay. He is extremely conservative in his attachment for his native village and the ancestral plot of land. There is the joint family system and also there is the subdivision of ancestral

landed property, both of which help to maintain the mill-hand's connection with his native village. Moreover, what is there in Bombay except the means of making a little addition to the family exchequer that the mill-hand should forget his native village altogether? The climate of Bombay is enervating, the whole atmosphere is uncongenial to the man who has spent the days of his boyhood in a village, and the surroundings are unhealthy. Is not, then, the man who spends a few months of the year in his native village well advised in doing so? That is the only way in which he can recuperate his health and thus increase his life by a few years. In short, the mill-hand does not look upon his work in the mill as his western comrade does, and thus he has no heart in it.

The mill-hand is illiterate and possesses very little skill. The State has not yet made primary education free and compulsory, and the illiteracy which has resulted from this policy of neglect is responsible for not a few evils. You may try your best to educate the mill-hands by starting newspapers, by issuing pamphlets and leaflets on their rights and duties and on subjects like sanitation, co-operation, &c., but so long as the present extent of illiteracy continues, only a microscopic fraction can be touched. Illiteracy means ignorance, and the evils which ignorance brings in its train are a legion. Had the mill-hands been literate as a class, they would have long ago organised themselves. Self-conscious, well-organised and well-disciplined working-classes must ever be an important asset in the all-round progress of a nation. Also it must be remembered that an illiterate population can never be expected to produce efficient workmen, workmen who can do their work skilfully and with as little waste of time and material as possible in the conditions of modern industrialism. It is not possible to impart technical education to those who are unacquainted with the three R's. Want of education has also tended to keep down the standard of living to its present level.

When a strike occurs the mill-hands are completely in the hands of irresponsible and reckless men among them. Very few of these men are regular workers and are losers under no circumstances. They are active, and some of them are intelligent too. They are, however, unprincipled and unscrupulous and totally unfit to assume leadership. In the absence of better leaders and on account of the unorganised condition of labour, they find it easy to constitute themselves as leaders of their less active brethren. When a strike is on, these people create rumours, raise false hopes, bar the way to compromise, and, when other means fail resort to intimidation. Thus, negotiations on a systematic basis become impossible, and the mass of the strikers has to suffer on account of the loss of wages consequent on the unnecessary prolongation of the strikes. It is not an unusual thing to find that when a strike occurs some of the strikers are unable to tell why they have struck work, and it becomes a difficult task to ascertain the cause.

Those of the strikers who can describe the grievances which they want to have redressed are as often as not afraid to come forward to do so, fearing lest their names should be put down in the black list by the employer. Really speaking, the mill-hands have no leaders, whether belonging to their own class or to the educated classes, who can authoritatively speak on their behalf. There are men who claim to be the Keir Hardies, Bob Smillies, Tom Manns, &c., of the Bombay mill-hands, but the only pity is that they are leaders without any following! Some men belonging to the educated classes move among the mill-hands. A few of these are the workers of the Social Service League who carry on welfare work, and they do not lay any claim to leadership. The rest of the educated people are divided into two parties, and there is a regular tug of war for leadership between them. There are several "Labour Associations and Unions," and they belong to either of these parties. None of these so-called Associations or Unions has even a few hundred members. There is only one 'Labour Association' which is quite a non-party affair, and it is the oldest of all. But, with a big signboard of that name, it is nothing more than a mere notice office. The newer institutions are little better. One of the said parties rely on some *Talimwallas* and a few jobbers for their leadership and seek its recognition specially in the official world, and the other consist of some political enthusiasts of the extreme school whose only object in espousing the cause of mill-hands is to gain influence over them and utilize their numerical strength for political purposes. These people rely for their leadership upon some half-educated boys who happen personally to know a few mill-hands. One of such would-be leaders of mill-hands has provided employment for some boys in his private concern. There is a mill-hands' union, the name of which is every now and then boomed in certain vernacular prints. This Union has the distinction of having a boy of eighteen as its chairman. This boy was selling newspapers only a few months back! Democracy with a vengeance, indeed! The guiding spirits of these bogus unions welcome the opportunities that are afforded by a general strike and suddenly leap into prominence. Those who practically know nothing of the mill-hand's life come forward as labour leaders. So long as these outsiders encourage the strikers in their uncompromising attitude their advice is listened to, but as soon as they utter a word unpalatable to the mob they are hooted out and pelted with stones. The last strike has clearly demonstrated that the mill-hands have no leaders worth the name. This chaos is only due to want of education and organisation.

As regards the economic condition of the mill-hand, it can be safely stated to be far from satisfactory. Over 75 p. c. of the Bombay mill-hands are in debt. Marwaris and Pathans drive a roaring trade among them, and the debts are contracted at an usurious rate of interest. Most of the mill-

hands are thriftless, and once they are in the clutches of the Marwaris they are doomed to perpetual indebtedness. The co-operative credit societies started by the Social Service League are doing much to counteract this evil, and with the extension of the movement a considerable improvement in the economic condition of the mill-hands will be effected. The improvidence of the mill-hand is largely responsible for his indebtedness. Some of his social customs involve extravagant expenditure; but the greatest evil is drink. All the mill-hands are not, it should be remembered, poorly paid. Men working in certain departments of the mill are, no doubt, very inadequately paid; but the wages of certain classes of workers are not insufficient, considering their standard of living. Even before the last general strike an ordinary weaver, for example, used to earn something between Rs. 40 and Rs. 70 per month, an income that may be envied by a number of the poorer middle classes. The former has to pay less for his house-rent, food and clothing than the latter, who has also to provide for the education of his children. The mill-hand's women and children are also earning members, and with all this the mill-hand's economic condition is, on the whole, much worse than that of a poor middle class man. Drink forms a big item in the mill-hand's budget, and most of his misery must be attributed to it. No temperance propaganda can root out this evil. The Government must radically change its Abkari policy, which in its present form has proved the ruin of the mill-hand's domestic happiness, physical fitness and economic well-being. If America can afford to go 'dry,' why should it be impossible for India to adopt the policy of total prohibition? Any man who cares to visit the mill localities will find that in the heart of each locality and at the most prominent centres there are liquor shops, and some of the owners of these shops have become enormously rich. The Abkari revenue is tainted with the very life-blood of the nation, and no sacrifice will be too high to effect its extinction.

PARELWALLA.

A LETTER FROM LONDON.

(FROM OUR OWN CORRESPONDENT.)

LONDON, FEBRUARY 12.

MR. N. M. JOSHI'S IMPRESSIONS.

MR. N. M. JOSHI has now returned from America and looks well and active. He has thrown himself into fresh work here with his accustomed energy, and hopes to leave for India in about a month's time with a whole store of fresh information regarding labour conditions here. He has undoubtedly come back a more convinced admirer of this country than ever. As regards organisation and method, he cannot speak too highly of America; but for humanity in the treatment of labour and consideration for the whole labour problem, he is of opinion that America has a very great deal to learn from England. His observations coincide with the opinion of most other people who have

investigated American conditions. And he is under no illusion at all as to the character of the support given in America to anti-British propaganda. It is not always because the Americans are really friendly to the causes that they are publicly advocating with such an appearance of enthusiasm, but often because these are useful and convenient channels for the expression of none too friendly sentiment towards the country. Here, too, he confirms the views of so experienced an observer as the *Times*' correspondent at Washington. As to Mr. Joshi's work as a member of the British delegation as a non-official representative of Indian labour, you have already published his excellent speech in favour of the raising of the age of employment of children in industry in India, and that, I believe, is a good index of his activity. His influence has been a sober but broadening one. No one could reasonably say that his opinions were not sufficiently advanced, or that they were put forward in any hesitating manner, and he appears, from independent accounts, to have gained the confidence and esteem of his colleagues and others who came into contact with him, for his ability, knowledge, earnestness, and thoroughness. He speaks in very high terms of Mr. Lajpat Rai's work in the States.

THE STATE OF BRITISH PARTIES.

The new session of Parliament that has just been opened in great state by the King in person is likely to be a historic one in the history of this country, apart altogether from the heavy programme of legislation foreshadowed in the King's speech. Upon the course of business will largely depend the future of the present Government and the prospects of a General Election, which the Prime Minister professes to regard with confidence. For the moment affairs in Parliament are dominated by what is happening outside. Within a fortnight we shall know the result of the Paisley by-election, where polling takes place to-day. There are only three candidates—Mr. Asquith, Mr. Biggar (Labour) and Mr. Mackean (Coalition Unionist). As to the last, his candidature is not regarded seriously, save in so far as it helps to deprive Mr. Asquith of votes most of which would otherwise be cast for him. Mr. Biggar stands as a Labour and Co-operative candidate and claims to have the support of the great bulk of co-operators and Irish voters in the constituency. If his claim be correct, he will undoubtedly be elected. But it is believed that he exaggerates his prospects, and undoubtedly Mr. Asquith has greatly improved his own during the last four days. He has treated the country to orations on foreign and domestic politics on the big scale, and has been proving that, so far as sheer ability and experience are concerned, his opponents cannot reflect even a pale light, as compared with himself. Lord Haldane's scarcely veiled invitation to the electors of Paisley to oppose his former chief has been treated with the seriousness that it deserves, but Mr. Asquith has boldly accepted the challenge,

and has declared that, in matters of political idealism, Liberalism has nothing to learn from and much to teach Labour. Two instructive events have just happened. It was only natural that the shade of Gladstone should be invoked at Paisley by so accomplished a campaigner as Mr. Asquith. But within the last four days he has received encouragement of a less shadowy kind. Lord Robert Cecil, who carries great weight as a moral force in this country and who is an independent-minded Coalition Unionist, with a useful following in the House, has sent a letter to Mr. Asquith expressing the hope that he will head the poll and return to the House of Commons. Lord Chaplin, a Tory of the old school, has also written to Mr. Asquith in the same sense, on the ground that a strong and effective Opposition is a necessity of good government in the country. With all praise for and appreciation of his work in the House as leader of one of the two Opposition parties, Sir Donald Maclean has none of the fighting qualities of the leader of men. He is a lieutenant, though a very capable one. In his speech on Tuesday, in the course of the debate on the Address in reply, Mr. Lloyd George caustically reminded Sir Donald Maclean that he should not speak disrespectfully of Coalitions, but not even the most sanguine Liberal could hope that his party, unaided by other political factions, would be able to return to office.

THE SITUATION IN GERMANY.

The German situation has once more become acute by reason of the Allied demand, for the surrender of war-criminals under the Treaty. All Germany is aflame with bitter indignation, and no one seems disposed to surrender the 900 persons, high and low, who are demanded in expiation of war-crimes. Some of the names are obviously unsuitable, unless the high moral issue is taken that the supremely guilty are those who, by letting loose this horrible catastrophe upon mankind, have the chief responsibility for all the acts of cruelty and horror that intensified its awfulness. But the general feeling seems to be that a neutral court would be better than an Allied one, and against which Germany could not legitimately protest; and also that the demand should be limited to those who have actually and personally offended against the laws of war. It is difficult to see how the present impasse is to be escaped from.

THE AMRITSAR MASSACRE.

Sir Michael O'Dwyer has succeeded in heaping coals of fire upon his head for his ill-judged attempt to browbeat the *Times* into a resiling from the position that it had taken up on the Amritsar scandal. All he has done by his insolent intervention is to induce that paper to reiterate its views on what took place and the responsibility for it in even more forcible language, and to deliver upon him a well-merited castigation for his attempt to hinder the paper in the performance of its public duty in commenting upon the affair. Amritsar will not be forgotten here for many a long day, and the heroes of it will not be Dyer and O'Dwyer.

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