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TOPICS OF THE WEEK.

THE coal situation in England appears to have slightly improved. The miners are certainly in no mood to listen to the voice of compromise and would dictate their own terms without abatement. But their leaders have shown signs of a tendency to moderate the Labour demands and Government may succeed in tiding over the crisis. In Ireland, however, the position is going from bad to worse every day. The Premier has made a pronouncement as to the Irish policy of his Government and has had a sharp passage at arms with Mr. Asquith. The fate of Ireland will obviously depend upon the attitude of the Ulsterites and the Nationalists as Sinn Feiners cannot count in the solution of the question. If these parties agree between themselves and the British Parliament offers them a liberal measure of self-government, the salvation of Ireland will not be far off.

THE reported readiness of the Bolsheviks for an armistice with the Poles lends support to the idea which has been gaining ground for some weeks past that the Red Armies have sustained irretrievable defeats on their western frontiers. It is to be hoped that things will settle themselves in that quarter of the world, and that Polish independence will become an accomplished fact in a short time. No doubt it is rather premature to build hopes of a satisfactory permanent settlement of outstanding issues between the Bolsheviks and the Poles on the slender evidence that is forthcoming, but it is something to have a cessation of hostilities in anticipation of a peace. In the meanwhile, the Bolsheviks have not succeeded in convincing the British Government of the integrity of their policy and their mutual negotiations have been marked with protests and recriminations.

THE strong public feeling which has recently found expression in the press and on the platform, against Government's intention to allow the export of a stated quantity of food grains is natural and cannot be regarded as unreasonable. Large masses of the people have been hit hard by the high prices which have prevailed in the country for the past few years. The monsoon has been defective this year over large tracts; and had it not been for the rains which have recently fallen in some districts, we should have had a widespread famine in our midst. Under these circumstances, India's stocks of food-grains must be carefully husbanded and Government should take every practicable measure to distribute and cheapen foodstuffs so as to relieve the severe economic pressure felt by the people. The impression has been created that Government is itself arranging the export of food grains to foreign countries and thus ignoring the effects high prices have produced upon the working and other classes in the community. Government knows only too well that the existing unrest in the country is mainly due to the increased cost of living and it ought to do everything in its power to lighten the economic burden.

IT is interesting to note the conflicting demands made in this connection. A class of merchants is asking for unfettered freedom to export foodstuffs on the ground that State control has inflicted serious losses on them. The recent decline in sterling exchange has led importing merchants to look to a brisk trade in the export of wheat to turn the balance in their favour. With increasing exports, they expect a sufficient supply of sterling bills to come into the market and thus to enable them to make remittances at a higher rate of exchange. These merchants would stimulate the export of India's raw materials and food grains and are not satisfied with the quantity of wheat and rice the export of which Government is supposed to be contemplating. It is further contended that the proposed export of wheat will be a profitable disposing of surplus crop in the interest of the cultivator who will suffer if the large stocks that are available are to be sold in the country at low prices. It is further stated that the quantity proposed to be exported is insignificant compared to the aggregate production and that, therefore, the outcry that is heard in certain quarters against the policy of Government is baseless. The whole problem is thus extreme-

ly complex and involves competing interests. The urgency of ensuring a supply of cheap food is, however, paramount, and the State has a clear duty to perform in this behalf. We hope Government will give no legitimate cause for complaint in such a matter of vital importance.

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FROM the instructions drafted by the Non-Co-operation Sub-Committee, the All-India Congress Committee has omitted the portion in which the interpretation of the adjective "gradual" as applied to the boycott of schools and law courts was given. It has also deleted the observations as to the impracticability of the boycott of British goods. The result is that in the non-co-operation resolution viewed in the light of the All-India Committee's instructions there is quite a large expanse of what one may call no man's land. No one exactly knows what one's duty is in regard to the most important items of the non-co-operation plan. As to the withdrawal of children from schools and colleges, the instructions make it clear that the boycott of State-maintained or State-aided education is not to be postponed till national institutions are established. The public are bidden to rely in the meanwhile upon private education or even to forego education for the sake of carrying the programme of non-co-operation into execution. By parity of reasoning lawyers ought to have been enjoined upon not to defer suspension of practice till national courts of arbitration are set up. As it is, they are left without specific directions as to the time when they should withdraw from practice. It is of course not sufficient to say that those who are willing to retire from practice immediately should fulfil present engagements without accepting fresh briefs.

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IF the word "gradual" is to be made a stalking-horse, as it will be made in practice, to cover the unwillingness of many professed adherents of non-co-operation to carry out the boycott of schools and courts of law, one might expect that in the matter of the boycott of foreign goods, which is not qualified in the Congress resolution by any limiting phrase, there would be no such pretext and that an immediate and absolute boycott would be regarded as binding upon all non-co-operationists. Since it is sinful frankly to characterise this part of the resolution as an unfortunate mistake, there is really no alternative but to carry it out at once and to the full extent. The only effect, however, of the protest of Lala Lajpat Rai and others has been to drop the characterisation and quietly to treat the resolution as if its execution was intended by the Congress to be more than gradual. All that the non-co-operationist is expected to do is to minimise his wants and to dispense with luxuries dependent on the use of foreign articles. It is a far cry from this to the boycott of foreign goods, and yet the All-India Committee pretends that the two are identical. The principle of social boycott is to be resorted to

to give effect to the decrees of the arbitration courts. This will open perchance a door to underground intimidation and even open violence which will, apart from other things, bring ruin to the non-co-operation movement.

* * *

THE All-India Committee, though it has left some items of non-co-operation vague, could not of course go back from the programme sanctioned by the Congress, and those who are entirely out of sympathy with the most important of those items, as several prominent Nationalists in Madras are, had no alternative except to resign their seats on the executive bodies of the Congress. Thus more than a dozen Nationalists from the southern presidency have given up their places on the executive of the Provincial Congress Committee. This is the only course left open to those who cannot bring themselves to carry out the resolution on non-co-operation in its entirety. The Nationalists in other provinces who are in similar case to their brothers in Madras are, however, sticking on. Perhaps the most flagrant instance of those who are opposed to the non-co-operation programme and yet continue to number themselves among those pledged to carry it out is supplied by the Deccan Nationalists. Mr. Kelkar and others, besides retaining their seats on the Council of the Bombay Provincial Committee, have also formed another Committee to do propagandist work in favour of the plan approved by the Congress. Till now, however, they have been carrying on a propaganda against this plan both in the press and on the platform. Only the other day, *i.e.* on 5th inst. Mr. Kelkar spoke in Bombay severely condemning the abstention of students from schools and lawyers from courts as both unpractical and undesirable, and the next speaker, who is a disciple of Mr. Gandhi, had to contradict him in much of what he had said.

* * *

THE Deccan Nationalists differ from the Madras Nationalists only in this, that they bow to the Congress decision in the matter of council elections, and even in that for the time being; for they hope to vote down this item along with others at the Nagpur session of the Congress. They are unwilling to get the voters to declare, as the All-India Committee requires, that they do not desire to be represented on any legislative bodies until full Swaraj is established. They would, on the contrary, make the voters say that they are opposed to the boycott of councils and are prepared temporarily to waive their objection and abstain from participating in the elections--till the Congress revises its decision. It passes one's understanding how anyone can make himself responsible for the execution of the programme who has such a vital reservation to make in regard to the only serious item of it in which he is only prepared to acquiesce for some months and who offers uncompromising opposition to all the rest. It is of course a matter between him and his conscience

but we are entitled to say, in answer to the venomous attacks that are being levelled against the seceding Nationalists of Madras, that it is the only possible position to take up for men who hold the views they hold.

* * *

THE secession of Mr. Jinnah, however, not only from the executive of the Swaraj Sabha but from the Sabha itself, seems to us to be entirely without justification. The ruling of the president may be right or wrong; Mr. Jinnah will himself grant that the ruling, however mistaken or even arbitrary, does not by itself warrant the extreme step which he and others who have followed him into secession have taken. What would have justified the resignation of membership by them is a radical alteration in the Sabha's constitution, before the constitution of the Congress to which the Sabha is affiliated undergoes a similar alteration. Mr. Jinnah and the other secessionists contend that such a change has been effected, but as we showed last week, the contention is groundless. The change which they imagine has already been made in the constitution of the Swaraj Sabha will as a matter of fact take effect only after the Congress constitution is modified accordingly. Such a modification in the Congress constitution is under contemplation, and perhaps the alarm which Mr. Jinnah and the others have taken arises from the fact that they think the modification will be carried in the Congress. The time for any such action will conceivably be when the Congress has declared for a severance of the British connection and the adoption of extra-constitutional methods of work and not till then. The impression which they give to the country by their decision to go out of the Swaraj Sabha is that they were in search for a colourable excuse to detach themselves from Mr. Gandhi's influence, and that they could not even wait till a suitable opportunity offered.

* * *

THE presence of Mr. C. Vijayaraghavachariar at a social party given by a Government official has occasioned well-nigh a sensation. It is eagerly pointed out by the Nationalists that this action, when the non-co-operation movement is in full blast, is in flagrant opposition not only to the resolution adopted by the Congress, but also to the alternative plan suggested by Mr. Pal, and it is suggested that such a barefaced violation of the Congress resolution must render one who is guilty of it unworthy of the Congress presidentship. Commenting upon this incident, the *Janmabhumi*, a Nationalist organ, observes: "In the history of the Madras Nationalists, this comes with no new savour, for if report be true, we have all heard how the leaders struggled to get a chance for their young orators to speak at the public meeting convened to welcome the Prince of Wales and how Lord Willingdon would not agree, and how at least one of them (the tallest too) went to Lord Pentland to take leave of him on the eve of his departure." The candidature of Messrs. Satya-

murti and K. Vyasa Rao for election to the Madras University Senate has also attracted some attention in that presidency as grossly inconsistent with the Congress policy for it is clear that abstention from election to the University, being implicit in the withdrawal of children from colleges, must be held as binding upon all who favour non-co-operation. As the Madras, Khilafat Committee observes: "To ask the students to come out of their colleges and at the same time vote for the Senate election is a manifest absurdity."

* * *

MR. AUROBINDO GHOSH declared in his last political will and testament, avowedly intended to furnish guidance to the Nationalist party in future years, that even if the department of education alone were to be transferred to popular control, the Nationalists were bound to take it over and to that extent to offer co-operation with Government. But, it is asked, will the transferred departments come under really popular control under the reforms, or will the Governor govern in fact while the ministry will reign in theory? The Joint Select Committee of Parliament has laid so much emphasis on the independence of the popular section of the Government that if provisions are carried out in the spirit as well in the letter, there will be little ground for complaint. On the other hand, Mr. Ghosh would have his countrymen accept responsibility for the management of education on terms on which Lord Reay was willing to make it over to popular bodies. Lord Reay in fact did nothing more than give effect to the policy recommended by the Education Commission of 1882 of replacing, wherever possible, Government by State-aided education. He accordingly proposed to the Deccan Education Society to merge the Deccan College into the Fergusson College which the Society had just started, on terms which were not acceptable to the Society, and Lord Reay's project thus miscarried. He was more successful in the case of the Gujarat and Sind Colleges. The policy was certainly liberal, considering the time when it was formulated, but it conferred little independent power on private bodies. On the most unfavourable view of the constitutional reforms, the ministers would wield much greater power than Lord Reay could possibly have thought to give to the people.

* * *

"BUT if the nation is prepared for non-co-operation," writes *India*, "it must be prepared to adopt it without compromise. . . . You cannot adopt non-co-operation in compartments. The whole meaning of it in principle is that you intend to stand by yourself, that you will have nothing to do with a Government and a system in which you have lost faith, for which you have no respect, and which you believe is intrinsically detrimental to the interests of the country and inimical to the welfare of the people. You cannot compromise with a position like that. You must take it all or leave it all, if you are going to be effective."

THE BEGGAR PROBLEM.

THE non-official Committee appointed by the Government of Bombay to suggest remedies for the stamping out of professional beggary has done its work well. The beggar problem naturally falls into two divisions, the repression of beggary and the relief of the poor and the destitute. The latter is by far the more important part of the task, but it cannot proceed beyond a certain point unless power is taken to send persons who live on beggary to the poor asylums and keep them there. The existing law on the subject is inadequate and remains a dead letter. The Committee has therefore recommended that it should be strengthened in some particulars: namely, that begging in streets and public places, whether importunate or not, should be made penal and that it should be made a cognisable offence, so that the police could arrest those who commit the offence without a warrant. Sadhus and Fakirs will not be exempt from this punitive measure; they, in common with others who beg in public places, will be liable to arrest and detention in recognised workhouses or settlements, unless they show valid reason to the contrary. This is a reasonable proposal. Begging has acquired a spurious sanctity in India, but unless the State puts the horde of religious mendicants on the same footing with other beggars, so far as they obtrude themselves on the general public, it cannot go a long way in tackling the problem. The State is surely entitled to bring within the ambit of such legislation even Sadhus and Fakirs who beg in the name of religion, because it does not interfere with any of their religious beliefs or practices. Such begging in public as is really a matter of religion will be allowed by the proposed legislation; all else deserves to be stopped. An educative propaganda designed to enlighten the public on the scope and object of the law must precede its actual operation, and the operation itself may well be graded in stringency, but no valid objection can be taken to the enactment which the Committee has recommended.

Suppression of mendicancy by legislation is, however, only preliminary to the institution of relief to the poor. Poor relief has ever been held by the Government in this country to be a matter for private charity and private organisation. This view has, however, long been exploded in every civilised country, and has to be discarded here. The Committee divides the paupers for whom provision is to be made in suitable asylums or to whom out-relief is to be given into three classes; the able-bodied, the infirm and the juvenile beggars, and considers in detail what measures would be required with a view to relieving their distress. For the able-bodied beggars it recommends the establishment of settlements on the lines of the criminal tribes settlements in preference to forced labour-houses. In regard to the other two classes of beggars, the Committee is in-

clined to the view that the present Sadavarts, orphanages, and other institutions, if well co-ordinated, will give shelter to most of those who will need relief. As to the necessity for co-ordination there can be no two opinions; but it may well be doubted whether the Committee does not take too roseate a view of the extent of the present charities. The duty of maintaining an adequate number of institutions for the relief of destitution ought to be laid on the local bodies, and the Committee suggests—we doubt not, tentatively—that the cost should be divided equally between the Government and the local bodies. One cannot help feeling after a perusal of the report that a much bolder line of policy than the one outlined by the Committee is needed at the present time. It may be necessary for a long time to walk warily and hasten slowly in this matter which is entirely new to the civic life of India. We grant the force of such a caution, but the Committee's survey might well have been more comprehensive and the formulation of remedial measure conceived on a more generous scale.

More than the relief of destitution, it must be the aim of the State to prevent the very occurrence of destitution. In England where the system of Poor Relief has been in operation for nearly three centuries, it has been conclusively proved that prevention is not only better but in the long run more economical than cure. And what does the prevention of destitution mean? It implies that to every man, woman and child a certain minimum of civilised and comfortable existence will be guaranteed. The responsibility which a Government undertakes by prevention of beggary is no less than this, and it will not do to minimise its extent. Above all, the moral factor has to be entirely eliminated from the discussion of the causes of destitution, for the experience of England is that at least nine-tenths of pauperism is due to the failure of the State to come to the aid of its citizens in good time. Mr. and Mrs. Sidney Webb observe, in reviewing the report of the Royal Commission on Poor Law: "Deferring for the moment any question of human fallibility," or the 'double dose of original sin,' the investigations of the Royal Commission reveal three broad roads along one or other of which practically all paupers come to destitution, namely: (a) sickness or feeble-mindedness, however caused; (b) neglected infancy or childhood, whosoever may be in fault; and (c) unemployment, by whomsoever occasioned. If we could prevent sickness and feeble-mindedness, howsoever caused, or effectually treat it when it occurs; if we could ensure that no child, whatever its parentage, went without what we may call the national minimum of nurture and training; and if we could provide that no able-bodied person was left to suffer from long-continued or chronic unemployment, we should prevent at least nine-tenths of the destitution that now costs the Poor Law authorities of the United Kingdom nearly twenty millions per annum." This will give an idea of the magnitude of the responsibility which the State assumes

directly it takes in hand the prevention of beggary; but the responsibility, however great, must be boldly undertaken.

THE EXCHANGE MUDDLE.

THE Government of India's suspension of the weekly sales of reverse councils has caused what appears like consternation in certain commercial circles. The exchange has recently collapsed from one shilling ten pence to one shilling six pence and this sudden fall is attributed to the stoppage of the sales of sterling bills by Government. Import merchants have rushed into print seriously complaining about the disaster that has overtaken them. They point out the enormous losses they have incurred as the direct effect of the fall of exchange and call upon the Government and the banks to go to their relief. Contracts made with foreign manufacturers on the basis of a higher rate of exchange must be fulfilled at a loss when the rate has declined by no less than four pence per rupee. Further imports must be negotiated at ruinous prices and must, for the time being, be stopped. Government is therefore asked to resume the sale of reverse councils and raise and maintain exchange at a high level.

The Bengal Chamber of Commerce has telegraphed to the Government of India, drawing its attention to the enormous losses that have been and are being incurred by all importers and to the paralysis which has struck export business. The Chamber's Committee wants to know whether it is the definite intention of Government to jettison the recommendation of the Currency Committee with reference to the policy of supporting a weak exchange. It goes on to say that if Government wants to carry out that recommendation, "the present constitutes a period of exchange weakness demanding weekly sales of reverse councils to the full extent of Government's resources." The Committee insists not only upon the resumption of the sale of reverse councils but of gold as well, because the low exchange has encouraged large purchases of gold for import into this country, entailing a heavy demand for remittances to finance them and thus contributing materially to the slump in exchange. In its latest announcement, Government had declared that a reconsideration of the whole policy relating to exchange had become necessary and the Bengal Chamber is anxious to have an immediate pronouncement on the subject.

The collapse of exchange has been construed by many as a vindication of the wisdom of Government's sales of reverse councils and as an utter discomfiture of those who strenuously opposed those sales. The supporters of the artificial bolstering up of the exchange are triumphantly exclaiming: "We had told you how necessary it was to prop up exchange by the sale of reverse councils and how foolish it was to cry down the policy of Government in that connection. Now you find the whole trade of the country thrown into confusion and importers landed into a disaster." We

must frankly say that we are not impressed with this supposed vindication of a prophecy and the justification of the defence of Government's continued sales of reverse councils. Government's currency and exchange policy has been a chapter of mistakes from beginning to end. The first blunder it committed was the attempt to make effective the rate of exchange recommended by the Currency Committee and to help speculators to make profit out of remittances. This blunder Government admitted by abandoning the idea of trying to maintain exchange at 24d. gold. The sale of reverse councils was, however, persisted in. Only, the new rate adopted was 24d. sterling. Despite the weekly offer of one million of sterling drafts at this lower rate on the Secretary of State, the Government of India never succeeded in bridging the gulf between its own rate and the market rate of exchange. And now the hopeless effort has been given up because there is a limit to the sale of reverse councils and Government cannot indefinitely go on subsidising importers and because the natural movement of trade was expected to stabilise exchange.

As a direct consequence of its obstinate policy of supporting a high exchange in circumstances which did not warrant it, Government finds itself in an awkward hole. However disguised, official *communiqués* on the subject have amounted to a confession of failure. The gold exchange standard system has collapsed and the rate of exchange fixed by Government, first 24d. gold and then 24d. sterling, it has been found impossible to maintain despite the sale of 60 million worth of reverse councils. Importers who were led to believe in a continuance of Government's exchange policy now feel aggrieved that they have been let down at a very inconvenient moment and have been left to incur large losses without assistance from Government or from the exchange banks. Our sympathy goes out to these people. But what lesson are we to draw? Certainly this, that exchange should have been left to and its own level and that Government should not have aspired to "peg" it at a high rate. No reverse councils should have been sold to help people who had accumulated large profits during war time to remit them abroad. At any rate, Government should have withdrawn its offer of sterling drafts and should not have pursued the mirage of a 24d. gold rate and later on a 24d. sterling rate. The recent passage of the Coinage Act legalising the 24d. gold rate internally, has only added to Government's difficulties. Government thinks that now "an opportunity of reconsidering the whole question has presented itself" and hence the cessation of the sales of reverse councils. The question should have been reconsidered long ago, in any case before the passing of the two currency measures. "Decide first and think afterwards" cannot be the right course to follow. What is Government going to reconsider? Is it going to reconsider if the sale of reverse councils should

be resumed, at what rate they should be sold, and how they should be met in England? Or is it going to consider the desirability of altering the monetary ratio? To judge from the haste with which the Coinage Act was passed, we are afraid Government cannot be expected to reconsider its currency policy from the latter point of view. The only thing it will do is to tinker with the problem and to wrestle with the details of the wrong system it has set up. Let the merchants who are clamouring against the collapse of exchange urge Government to consider the whole exchange question afresh and give them a sound and automatic system. Temporary relief by means of palliatives cannot cause a satisfactory cure.

V. G. KALE.

HINDU LAW IN THE NEW ERA.

IV.*

PEOPLE who are old enough to clearly remember the turmoil and agitation that arose in Hindu society on the introduction into the Imperial Legislative Council of what is known as the Age of Consent Bill in 1890 need not be reminded as to the lengths to which orthodox (and even English-educated) Hindus can go in defence of what they deem to be the injunctions of the Rishis in regard to the rights of Hindus under the Hindu Law. The issue involved in that Bill was a very simple one and need not have engaged any Legislative Council for more than five minutes in arriving at the only rational answer possible on that issue. Whether a child-girl between the ages of ten and twelve is old enough to consent to sexual intercourse by her husband is a question which it would simply be criminal folly to answer in the affirmative. And yet learned Pandits and English-educated graduates of world-wide renown were found among the ranks of those that clamoured for an affirmative answer being given by the legislature to that simple question. Hindu society was convulsed with indignation and the reformers were pelted with stones and brick-bats for their hardihood in advocating a negative answer. The wealth of quibbling and hair-splitting logic that the trained lawyer could produce in support of his Rishic principles was simply overwhelming to the mind of the ordinary man in the street, and the result was that it was only the determination of the Government to remove at all costs that blot from the statute book that steeled their minds to pass the Bill into law, in spite of the tremendous opposition inside and outside the Legislative Council.

There was one apparently very good reason that the agitators against the Bill could put forth before the common people to unfailingly win them over to their side. They urged with a very great air of patriotism, that their objection to the Bill was not based on whether a girl under 12 could or could not give a valid consent to her

husband, but that it was based on far deeper grounds, viz. whether a foreign and alien Government should be permitted by the Hindus to dictate to them the age at which they should go with their wives! They claimed that an alien Government was taking undue liberties in presuming to interfere by legislation on such delicate topics and that, therefore, irrespective of the intrinsic merits of the question, every patriotic Hindu with a particle of self-respect in him was bound to oppose the proposed legislation tooth and nail. If the Legislative Council were their own, if the members were elected by the Hindus themselves, if there was no packed majority on behalf of Government, the Hindus themselves, the agitators said, would be the first to pass the Bill with acclamation, or even would consent to raise the age of consent still higher than 12 as proposed by Government; but they strongly objected to the aliens dictating to them their orders on such delicate topics and so they felt bound to leave no stone unturned to stop the passing of the Bill into Law.

It must be confessed that there was an irresistible show of reason on their side when the arguments were advanced in this way, and that on such a plea the agitators generally found themselves masters of the situation in any meeting of common people. The fact that Government had already legislated in the matter in declaring that consent of a wife under ten would be invalid could not be denied, but one wrong would not, the agitators contended, entitle an alien Government to perpetrate a second wrong; two wrongs did not make one right. The reformers had to admit defeat on such a plea—at any rate, they had no chance of success with the man in the street who felt bound to throw his weight on the side of the agitators.

But in the coming era this weapon would not be available to the opponents of social reform. The Legislative Councils would be no more alien bodies, there would no more be packed majorities in favour of the alien Government, and the extended franchise would return the councillors on a broad basis to those Councils. The weapon that was so successfully used against the old Councils is no longer available. The Hindus are now their own masters as regards the Hindu law and can, if they so wish, repair the mistake of a whole century. We shall pay them the compliment of believing them to be sincere in their former protestations, and we shall assume that Nationalists are now anxious to bring to bear upon the Hindu law all the principles of modern justice, equity, and good conscience that they were unwilling or unable to bring on account of either the alienness of the Government or the declaration of that Government about non-interference. In short, we shall assume that anti-reformers as well as reformers are now ready to consider upon their merits all the amendments that are called for in the Hindu law as it obtains at present. We can hardly believe that any Hindu gentleman is satisfied

*Previous articles in this series appeared in the issues of September 9 and 23 and October 7.

with the Hindu law as he at present finds it, nor can we believe that any person yet supposes that it is the old Rishi Law that he is at present living under.

The Hindus are thus going to be put on their mettle as soon as the New Era comes to be ushered in. They will have to take stock of what havoc has been wrought during the last century of unnatural stoppage of normal growth, and they will be called upon to declare how far they approve or disapprove of the irregular and abnormal shoots that have developed at the instance of pleaders and European judges.

We would appeal to our Nationalist friends to clearly realise the importance of what all this means. It is all very easy to chafe at restrictions imposed by others on oneself; the really difficult part of the matter commences only when those outside restrictions are removed, and one is given full liberty to shape one's destiny in the best way one can. The true criterion comes in only when one begins to assume the responsibility and shapes his destiny with a conscious determination to do the right thing. The time will thus shortly come when the Hindus as a body—reformers and anti-reformers—will have to give proof to the world of the real mettle that may be in their community.

We may as well confess that it is with no feelings of unmixed pleasure that we look forward to the prospect that is going to be opened out before our community. Barring a few notable exceptions, we are unable to look with confidence at the ranks of the Nationalists and to feel assured that they will face their responsibilities in a straight manner. We are afraid the prevailing note in the new Legislative Councils may be reactionary as regards social legislation, and we feel bound to express our fears that Hindu law stands to lose in the new Councils some of the equitable principles that European judges have introduced therein. To take the instance of maintenance of widows, we feel that reformers and justice-loving people will have to exert themselves strenuously if they want to retain intact the small fraction of liberty that the Privy Council has granted to them as regards residence with people other than their husband's family.

Thus, the liberty to legislate in Hindu law matters is a double-edged weapon which can be used by reformers to obtain more liberty as well as by reactionaries to curtail what has been already obtained. The Hindu nation has thus to pass through very trying tests and to justify their protestations about their love for liberty, equality, and fraternity by positive enactments than by lip-protestations as hitherto. May the Almighty in His wisdom grant them the strength of mind and clearness of vision that they will eminently require if they are to stand this bold test!

In our subsequent issues we hope to indicate very briefly some of the various directions in which Hindu law will have to be modified by the

Hindu nation, if it wants to be considered alive to the claims of liberty, equality and fraternity in the personal law that governs its most intimate relationships, viz. marriage, adoption and succession.

LXX.

ROYAL TITLES AND REFORMS.

HIS MAJESTY by the proclamation issued in December last was graciously pleased to announce his intention of opening the new councils at the hands of His Royal Highness the Prince of Wales. Owing to the strain, which is entailed on the constitution of the heir-apparent to the throne by the long and arduous tour in Australia, His Majesty has now decided to postpone the visit of the Prince of Wales and to send his uncle His Royal Highness the Duke of Connaught to inaugurate the new era. As the occasion is very solemn and as it distinctly marks an important change in the constitution of this country, the propriety of the title assumed by His Majesty as Emperor of India, deserves to be considered in the light of events which have happened during the last forty years. The Royal Titles Bill was introduced in Parliament in the early part of 1876 with a view to enable the sovereign to assume a title to indicate the transfer of Government from the East India Company to the Crown. It was thought necessary by the then advisers of the Crown to make an addition to the existing Royal titles of "Empress of India". The Duke of Richmond on behalf of the Cabinet stated that the "title of Empress implies more directly the sovereignty which Her Majesty exercises over the Native Chiefs and I do not think the title of Queen does imply that kind of sovereignty." The then Lord Chancellor also stated: "We govern a large part of India directly as dominions of the Crown and we govern the Native States indirectly. I take the term Empress as a sovereign who governs not directly but through other sovereigns and in this sense I believe the term Queen is inappropriate and the term Empress is an appropriate one." Throughout the most exciting and interesting discussion of this Bill in both the Houses of Parliament, it was never suggested that the title would be appropriate, so far as British Indian subjects were concerned. The title was intended to connote the relations existing between the paramount power and the Native States of India and the justification of the title of Empress was solely based on this ground. If we compare the populations of British India and Native States, we find that the proportion is three to one. When nearly 20 crores of people were under the direct control of Her Majesty in British India, the justification for this addition ought to have been supported by sound reasons. But it is a matter for intense regret that this aspect of the question entirely escaped the attention of the statesmen of that time. To our mind the justification for the assumption of the title Empress, so far as British

India is concerned, could not be that the Indian Government was a despotic government. Mr. Percy Wyndham, one of the members of the party in power, openly stated in supporting this title that "it must be a title showing that Her Majesty was at the head of a despotic Government and suzerain over chiefs who had the power of life and death over their dominions. The Queen was at the head of the constitution of this country and therefore her title here was Queen. But in India she was the head of a despotic government and therefore her title must be Empress." The Prime Minister, Mr. Disraeli, who was listening Mr. Wyndham, and who was a member of his own party, did not raise any protest against this view. It will thus be quite evident that in the year 1876, as the form of government in British India was despotic, the title Empress was not so jarring to the British ears. There were no councils. There were no elected representatives of the people. There were no executive councils and the Government was, in the words of Mr. Newdgate, "a system of absolutism."

Times have entirely changed. Representatives of the people have been associated with the administration. The racial bar has been literally removed by the appointment of Lord Sinha as Governor of Bihar and Orissa, so far as the civil administration is concerned. The goal of the administration has been distinctly pronounced to be the attainment of responsible government by the development of self-governing institutions in this country. The amendment of the Government of India Act is the most important piece of legislation which affects the constitution of this country. The new reforms have actually invested the people with some real political power, however inadequate it may appear for the present. This will unmistakably point out that, so far as the constitution of this country is concerned, we are progressing from the despotic to the representative form of Government. A new era is dawning on the land. The importance of this event is appreciated by the Government and by His Majesty. The hopes which were expressed forty years ago by men like Mr. Anderson and Mr. Pease are now about to be realized. Mr. Pease then observed in opposing this title: "I look upon the word Empress as an insult to the people of India. We call her Empress because we have conquered India and that is the reason why we refuse it to the United Kingdom. Is the day never to come when Indian institutions are to be made more constitutional?" Mr. Anderson in opposing the title pertinently remarked: "Was the House to stamp that despotic title on the people of India in perpetuity and would it not be far more worthy of the country and safer for our rule to leave India a share in our own old constitutional title and a hope that they might in time, without revolution and without upsetting the British Raj, work out for themselves by degrees some of those constitutional forms of government which were the chief glory of ourselves and our colonies, but

which were hardly compatible with the title of Empress."

How prophetic these words were, it is superfluous to state. We have been through exactly the same process of evolution which Mr. Anderson anticipated some forty years back. Is it not therefore necessary to change the title of Emperor of India and make the whole Royal title read as the "King of Great Britain and Ireland and India?" This will be entirely in consonance with the spirit of the times, with the ideal which has been laid down in the pronouncement of August 1917, and befitting the elaborate scheme of reforms which is to be ushered into existence in the coming year. And what more gracious act could we imagine on the part of His Majesty in bringing home to the minds of his Indian subjects his determination to give self-government to India than the exercise of his Royal prerogative in deleting this despotic title "Emperor" from his Royal designation which "engrafts the name and style of military, autocratic, irresponsible and arbitrary power on the constitution."

The despotic character of the title "Empress" or "Emperor," the unhappy associations connected with it, the intense opposition of the subjects of the United Kingdom to this title, the undertakings given by the then ministry and by the proclamation subsequently issued to legalize the title in India and not to use it in the United Kingdom, convincingly prove that the title "Empress," however plausible it might have been in 1876, is antiquated and smells of by-gone times. It is no longer compatible with the constitutional forms of government introduced at present in India. Its continuance after the reforms would inevitably lead to the conclusion that His Majesty's Government does not want to divest itself of despotic forms, and desires still "to masquerade," to use the words of Sir William Harcourt, "under Eastern titles and manners." The strength of the British Government does not depend so much upon its autocratic character but mainly on the distinctiveness of its Western civilization, Western culture and its solid faith in representative institutions. The discussion of the Reform Bill in Parliament has abundantly shown the desire of Englishmen to widen the liberties of the subject races and to remove the fetters of bondage from them. The glory of the United Kingdom consists in this. Will the ministers of the present Government advise His Majesty to effect a necessary reform by the exercise of his prerogative with the deletion of the title Emperor and assumption of the title "King" which is held in reverence alike in the United Kingdom and in this country?

At the time of the assumption of the title "Empress" it was not supported by public opinion in this country. In the course of the passing of the Bill through both the Houses, minister after minister was asked to produce evidence in his possession to show that the title was desired by the Indian Princes and the people. A distinct

challenge was given by Mr. Earnest Noel to place on the table of the House the despatches and the papers showing the wishes of the Indian Princes and people about this new title "Empress." Except the solitary opinions of the Maharaja of Jaypore, the Raja of Dholpur and the ex-King of Oudh, who were very facetiously compared with the three tailors of Tooley Street by Mr. Pease, the views of Indian Princes on this subject were not communicated to the House. The views of the then Government of India and the Council of India about this title were studiously withheld from Parliament. The Indian newspapers after the new bill was published in India, had expressed strong disapproval about this new addition. It will thus clearly prove that this title of Emperor or Empress was not the outcome of the spontaneous wishes either of the people or the princes in India. Now that even the apparent necessity for this title has entirely disappeared, it is no longer wise or statesmanlike to adhere to this antiquated designation.

It will thus appear that, so far as British India is concerned, the title "Emperor" has no foundation either in reason or in necessity. If it is argued that so far as the Native States are concerned it is necessary to connote the paramount position of the Crown, we even demur to this proposition. The illustrious authors of the Joint Report have outlined a federal ideal for India and they have distinctly stated that the Native States also have a place in this constitution. If they are to form part of this body politic, what useful purpose would be served by accentuating differences which touch the susceptibilities of the people? The Earl of Shaftsbury in this connection gave expression to a noble sentiment which deserves to be remembered even to-day by every statesman: "A time may come when after a long course of happy rule we may surrender it (India) to natives grown into a capability of self-government. Our prosperity may then see an enlargement of the glorious spectacle we now witness when India shall be added to the roll of free and independent powers that wait on the mother-country and daily rise up and call her blessed; but to attain this end we must train them to British sentiments; infuse into them British principles; imbue them with British feelings and rising from the vulgar notion of an Emperor, teach them that the deepest thought and the noblest expression of a genuine Briton is to fear God and honour the King." Will Mr. Montagu rise to the occasion and suggest to His Majesty the wise exercise of Royal prerogative of abandoning the title "Emperor" in order to commemorate this new era?

G. R. ABHYANKAR.

A LETTER FROM LONDON.

(FROM OUR OWN CORRESPONDENT.)

LONDON, September 23.

DISINGENUOUS.

THE Workers' Welfare League of India has issued a letter addressed to the Secretaries of the Coun-

cil of Action in which it is stated that "the relations between Britain and India have again taken an adverse turn, apparently almost in defiance of the voice of the six million workers who constitute your Council's authority, and this time the action of the Prime Minister coincides with the sending out of large contingents of Indian troops to Mesopotamia, which constitutes a back entrance to Russia." This statement of the case is characteristically disingenuous. In the first place, the Council of Action is self-appointed, and, as a very prominent trades unionist leader said a few days ago, it is an undemocratic and autocratic body enjoying no one's suffrage. But assuming that it is representative of something or other, what is it that it has set out to do? On the authority of some of its most prominent members, it has two objects and these only. When they are achieved it will put up the shutters and go out of business. These two objects are the preservation of the integral independence of Poland and the establishment of peace between this country and Bolshevist Russia. It is thus only by endeavouring to make it seem that the moving of Indian troops, into Mesopotamia (which has been most strongly condemned, not in Labour circles but in the editorial columns of the *Times*) is in some way connected with the second of the objectives of the Council of Action that the League is able to appeal at all for its benevolent intervention. Now Mesopotamia has been defined in many ways from time to time, but I have never yet seen the country described as a back entrance to Russia. The writer of the letter in question seems to have a very hazy idea of topography and does not appear to be altogether a good guide on these subjects of high policy. The suggestion is that the British authorities have the full resources of Britain and India at their disposal with which to fight Labour either at home or abroad, and that, by using Indian workers and soldiers, military forces and armaments can be used in a backstairs way against Russia without the British workers being any the wiser for it. Amazing as are the follies of the British Government and the British War Office, it is inconceivable that they can be so absolutely insane as to attempt an invasion of Russian territory or an assault upon the Bolshevik forces by way of Mesopotamia and Persia. Nor, if they did, would it be in any way effective or capable of concealment. Altogether, the fear seems to be unfounded, and the suggestion somewhat far-fetched. But even stupider is the suggestion by the League that a representation from the Council of Action to the Maharaja of Kapurthala, urging him to consider that he would be doing a better service in spending his wealth and resources upon the betterment of the conditions of his own people rather than upon a foreign military adventure, might have some useful effect. What this has to do with the Council of Action passes comprehension. Assuming that the League is right in its view as to the way in which the Maharaja should spend his wealth, why not communicate with him direct? Or is the idea

to arouse in the minds of Labour leaders hostility towards the Indian princes rather than to improve the condition of the Indian masses?

HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR INDIA.

The announcement of the appointment of Sir William Meyer as High Commissioner for India in this country has now been officially made, though the appointment has been privately known and publicly spoken about for some time. Sir William, I understand, is already at work, using the India Office as his headquarters until his official headquarters in Grosvenor Place is ready for occupation. He does not actually enter upon his duties until October 1, but there is a great deal of preliminary work to be done, and from that date he expects to be in independent telegraphic communication with the Government of India, from whom he will be taking his instructions and whom he will be directly representing. It is announced that in future the High Commissioner will be responsible for the purchase of stores, the accounts section of the Stores department, the Indian Students' department, and the office of the Indian Trade Commissioner. It has evidently been considered to be premature to transfer to him the Accountant-General's department, which, subject to any necessary reservations, including the retention of work connected with higher finance, was recommended by the Crewe Committee. Sir William's appointment has been well-received here, and eulogistic reference has been made to his many services to India and the Empire, his great abilities, and his wide experience. Mr. A. F. Whyte's appointment to preside over the deliberations of the Indian Legislative Assembly has aroused singularly little comment. Mr. Whyte is not widely known in this country, but his record is nevertheless a good one. His Parliamentary experience especially fits him for the office that it is expected he will fill adequately, and his Liberal politics ought to make him welcome in Indian political circles. In addition, he possesses an excellent knowledge of foreign affairs, which will be increasingly useful in the development of Indian foreign policy, and he will be a mine of information for those Indian leaders who wish to specialise on the subject. No one here seems to know anything to the official discredit of Mr. Muddiman, so his appointment as President of the Council of State has, too, passed almost unobserved.

UNDER-SECRETARY OF STATE.

To-day's papers contain the announcement that the choice for the Under-Secretaryship of State for India has fallen upon the Earl of Lytton, who bears a famous name, being the son and grandson of distinguished men, and himself born in India. He has been a member of the Government, principally at the Admiralty, since 1916, and is regarded as one of the ablest of the younger Ministers. So far no announcement has been made of the selection of the new Viceroy, though the announcement should be made shortly. The *Observer*, ever an admirer of Mr. Montagu, strongly urges his appointment, but realising that this will, in all probability, have to be ruled out, speaks of Lord Selborne as possessing the necessary qualifications, though it is recognized that "the task ahead would demand the utmost energy and elasticity of a younger man." Failing Mr. Montagu, therefore, the paper suggests that Sir George Lloyd should be nominated. I imagine that you would prefer to be ruled by Sir George Lloyd than by Lord Selborne. The latter is certainly insufficiently elastic, and he suffers from the

unpardonable fact that he voted for Lord Finlay's motion in the Dyer debate.

CONDEMNATION OF DYERISM IN BRITISH PRESS.

Commenting upon the influence of that debate upon the present situation in India, the *Observer* remarks: "Even the blindest Dyer-hards who did not realise how utterly India had changed may have their eyes opened by the perilous crisis which has abruptly arisen. There has been nothing like it. It would wreck reform, if the extremists get their way, before it could shake the pillars of British rule. . . General Dyer's action set the match to an emotional powder-magazine. We said from the beginning that it would prove to be one of the most dangerous blows ever struck by a British hand against British dominion. The vote of the House of Lords for the reactionary view of the case did immeasurable harm." The *Star* regards the new problems in India as the fruits of Dyerism, and says: "The reactionaries here and in India had better realise the mischief they are doing before all India is in ruins. We are tired of hysterical letters declaring that General Dyer saved India from another Indian Mutiny, when the European majority of the Hunter Commission specifically found that there was no evidence of any danger of that kind." It comments severely upon the inadequacy of the telegraphic information appearing in the Anglo-Indian press, fed apparently solely upon the *Morning Post* pabulum, in respect of the real feeling of this country in regard to the Dyer affair, in consequence of which it is encouraging the Anglo-Indian public to go on resisting reasonable reforms and to promote a mischievous campaign in favour of General Dyer. The *Star* hopes that the Unionist Party, at home will realise the harm caused by such propaganda, and will cease to assist the Indian extremists by any more Dyerism. The *Daily Telegraph* thinks that patience is the greatest need of the present situation, and is satisfied that "of this at least Mr. Montagu has sufficient, where Indians are concerned." The *Yorkshire Observer* considers that "the handling of the troubles in the Punjab and the General Dyer incident in particular have done infinite harm, and, unhappily, the mischief was widened and deepened by the vote of the House of Lords against the official censure, and by the institution of the fund for General Dyer. In the British news circulated in India the general condemnation of General Dyer seems to have been very indifferently represented in comparison with the publicity given to the House of Lords verdict and the white-washing fund." Meanwhile, the message that the Viceroy had disallowed Mr. Sastri's amended resolution, with the subsequent action of several of the Indian members of the Legislative Council in withdrawing resolutions, has been widely circulated.

In yesterday's *Times* there was an excellent and unexpected leading article in support of the Burmese protest against the official constitutional reform proposals and their claim to receive at least the modicum of advantage enjoyed by the other Indian provinces. It dissents strongly from the doctrine of isolation and separation of Burma from India, and declares that for a number of all-important reasons, Burma will be better advised to put aside all ideas of this.

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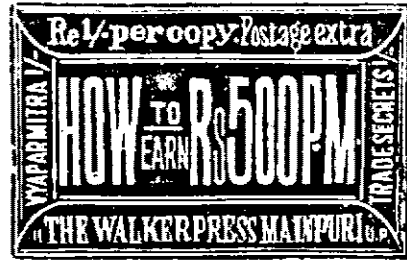
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