

# PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS

OF

The Hon. Mr. Surendranath Banerjea

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ALL-INDIA MODERATES' CONFERENCE

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*Bombay, November 1, 1918.*

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,

I desire to thank you most heartily for the great honour which you have done me by asking me to preside over the deliberations of this Moderate Conference, the first of its kind. There is a special appropriateness both as regards time and place in holding this first session of the Moderate Conference. To-day is the sixtieth anniversary of the great Proclamation of Queen Victoria. Here in Bombay 33 years ago, the Indian National Congress first saw the light. Bombay, the capital of Western India, which its patriotic citizens are proud to call the first city in Asia, was the cradle and the nursery of the Indian National Congress. From here the movement grew and spread until the Congress became under the leadership of "the men of yesterday" a vast national organization which from 1885 to 1917 voiced the national sentiment, moulded and focussed the national aspirations and stirred the Government into the paths of political reform. May the stars shine as auspiciously upon the great Conference which to-day is launched into being. May it grow and thrive and prosper until, representing all that is best and truest and sanest in the public life of the country, it serves to help forward the progressive realization of responsible government in India and the fruition of the cherished hopes associated with the inauguration of that great experiment.

#### THE WORD MODERATE.

Sir, I confess I do not like the word Moderate. I use it because it has come into vogue and because it connotes qualities—the qualities of prudence, moderation, and self-restraint—which, I greatly value and which, I hope and trust, when the heat and the dust of the present controversies will have been allayed, will become the enduring assets of our national life. I myself would prefer the term "centre wing of the nationalist party" as applicable to ourselves. For we are and always have been the centre, the focus, the starting-point of all rational political activities standing between the extreme views of reactionaries on the one hand, and of thoughtless and reckless reformers on the other, seeking to guide, control and regulate them, and to lead them on into useful and fructifying channels, in conformity with our environments and the high ends of national progress. I desire to employ in relation to

ourselves a term which is in use wherever Parliamentary Government in some form or other prevails and which will be understood by all who, in other parts of the world, are working for the same cause. I look forward, to the day when we shall become a world-wide party in politics and take our place among those who in other fields and other countries, inspired by the same principles and animated by the same motives, are seeking to advance the cause of human progress by steady and rational methods, avoiding the dangers of cataclysm and the equally serious menace of stagnation.

### REVOLUTION AND EVOLUTION.

We, call us for the present the Moderate party if you like, are the friends of evolution and the enemies of revolution. We abhor revolutions alike in our own interests and those of the Government. We deprecate all methods calculated to develop or strengthen the forces of revolution. We have witnessed the nameless horrors of revolutions in France, in Russia, and in other countries, how too often they have been followed by reaction and repression and the enthronement of despotic authority. The execution of Charles I was followed by the autocracy of the Lord Protector, Oliver Cromwell. The French Revolution was the precursor of the military despotism of Napoleon Bonaparte and the unsettlement of the social and political order in France, with its prolonged agony, lasting for nearly a century. The revolutionary movement in Russia has inaugurated a reign of terror which humanity contemplates with a shudder. Let us beware of revolutionary movements and those wild and extravagant ideals which, as all history tells us, are their breeding-ground. Nor are the rulers of men left without light and guidance from these cataclysms. Injustice revenges itself with compound interest, says Carlyle, in French Revolutions and events of that order. The longer the dues of nations are kept in arrears, the heavier becomes the payment. For the truth cannot too often be repeated—it should be burnt in upon the souls of men in authority—that reforms indefinitely postponed, or inadequate in their scope and comprehension prepare the ground for revolution. They are the seedlings upon which the revolutionary instinct feeds and from which it derives its sustaining and vitalizing influence. The Moderate party is the friend of stable and orderly progress, resolute in its denunciation of methods which in

the name of liberty are calculated to weaken the foundations of social and political order, strengthen the hands of the Executive Government for purposes of repression and offer a plea for postponing the day of India's political emancipation.

#### OUR CREED.

Our creed is co-operation with the Government whenever practicable, and opposition to its policy and measures when the supreme interests of the Motherland require it. Our guiding principle is—"co-operate when we can; criticize when we must". It is not "criticize when we can; co-operate when we must." We deprecate opposition for the sake of opposition. Opposition must always produce excitement and unrest and is justified only by the ample reward of all legitimate opposition which is the redress of national grievances and the enlargement of popular rights. No one can say that those who led the opposition against the partition of Bengal and got the 'settled fact' unsettled do not know how to conduct a campaign of opposition if the circumstances require it, or that in the course of less than a dozen years they have gone back upon their ancient political principles. We raised aloft the standard of opposition and clung to it with undying faith, even in moments of the deepest darkness and depression; and our faith was justified by the result, because it was a faith founded upon the absolute justice of our cause and the righteousness of the methods which we followed. Let the occasion arise, and let me assure you and all else whom it may concern that we of the Moderate party, and I am sure I am permitted to speak in their name and on their behalf, are prepared to repeat the same chapter in our national history. But God be thanked, the times are changed—the angle of vision of our rulers has undergone a profound transformation. A change, a welcome change, has come over the spirit of their dreams, and they have extended to us the hand of fellowship and friendship. Let us grasp it with alacrity and enthusiasm and, in co-operation with British statesmanship, let us march forward to the accomplishment of the high destinies that under the Providence of God are in store for us. It is because the leaders of the present-day Congress movement will not recognise the change, the profound change in the spirit and the policy of the Government, and persist, despite the altered conditions, in a campaign of opposition, that we are here on this platform holding

a separate Conference of our own, where in an atmosphere of harmony, of unity of views, ideals and aspirations, we can formulate our proposals with regard to the great constitutional issues with which we stand confronted to-day.

### THE REFORM PROPOSALS.

The message of the 20th August 1917 marks an era in the history of our political progress. It is the greatest of our charters, greater than the Charter Act of 1833, or the Queen's Proclamation of 1858, or even the Despatch of the 25th August, 1911, promising to us the boon of provincial autonomy. It represents a striking and memorable departure in the history of our relations with the British Empire. It marks the termination of the old and the inauguration of what I may call the new regime. For the first time the objective of British rule in India is clearly defined; and the message proclaims, as if with a resonant blast on a golden trumpet, the great mission of England in the East. The vessel of State is no longer to drift aimlessly without rudder and compass, but is to be steered, slowly, steadily and majestically, into its haven of rest, under the guidance of British statesmanship aided by the co-operation of the people of India. Self-government within the Empire is to be the end and aim of British rule, and it is to be attained by progressive stages of realisation. Such is the message of the 20th August, 1917. In the words of the illustrious authors of the Report :—

“The time has now come when the sheltered existence which we have given India cannot be prolonged without damage to her national life; we have a richer gift for her people than any we have yet bestowed upon them. Manhood within the Empire represents something better than anything she has yet attained.”

A high moral purpose thus pervades the great declaration and inspires the framers of the Report in making their proposals. England desires to confer upon our people a gift, greater, richer, nobler far than any she has yet bestowed—the gift of an elevated manhood, of responsible public life, of increased and increasing national self-respect, the inevitable concomitants of the enjoyment of free institutions.

### MISTRUST OF THE PEOPLE.

And here I must pause for a moment to refer to the charge of mistrust of the people which, it is alleged, the authors of the Report exhibit in their proposals. Such a charge is inconsistent with the spirit and essence of the noble message which I have just quoted and with the general breadth and liberality of the proposals themselves, which in the opinion of all, friends and foes, critics and advocates alike, are admittedly a great advance upon the existing state of things, and in the opinion of many, and they form the majority, constitute a definite stage towards the progressive realisation of responsible government. In judging of the proposals contained in the Report we cannot overlook the qualifying clauses. Responsible government, under the terms of the declaration of the 20th August, 1917, is to be attained by and through progressive stages. We cannot go behind that declaration. We of the Moderate party take our stand upon it, 'the basic pledge,' to quote the words of H. E. the Viceroy. We cannot repudiate it because we have not been consulted, or because it is a foreign Government that issued it; and taking our stand upon it and consistently with its spirit and essence, we may press for modifications and improvements. But the announcement is there—our pillar of smoke by day, our column of fire by night. Full autonomy, Provincial or Imperial, we cannot have all at once. The stages are indicated in the Report. They are progressive in their character. There can only be a difference of opinion about the pace. The question of mistrust does not and cannot arise in view of the qualifying conditions of the 'basic pledge'. The whole fabric of reform, which is admittedly an advance upon the existing state of things, is based upon the confidence of its framers that the people of India will rise to the height of the occasion and justify the great experiment.

### THE LIMITATIONS.

The limitations are dictated by the caution of statesmanship and by considerations of expediency. They give shape and form to the qualifying clauses of the message. The message is the message of a Coalition Government consisting of statesmen belonging to different parties. The recommendations based upon it, must,

before they can be placed on the statute-book run the gauntlet of Parliamentary criticism and be acceptable to the great British democracy. Say what you like, the English people are essentially conservative in their character and temperament. Behind the Radicalism of the most Radical, there is an underlying vein of caution which Imperial responsibilities have imposed upon the national character. In inaugurating a great experiment, in making a new departure in the government of the greatest dependency the world has ever seen, the average Englishman, no matter what may be his political nomenclature, Liberal, Conservative or Radical, is swayed by the traditional caution of his race; he will move but slowly and steadily. The illustrious framers of the Report must have borne this fact in mind and in submitting their Report felt bound so to frame their proposals as to make them acceptable to all classes of British politicians, and it must be said to their credit they have been marvellously successful in their effort. When the proposals were first introduced in the House of Commons, by Mr. Montague, they were greeted with a chorus of approval. Members of Parliament, belonging to opposite schools, vied with one another in supporting the scheme in its general outlines. Sir John Rees and Commander Wedgwood found themselves ranged on the same side. It was a triumph of cautious statesmanship. This unanimity of support where we should have expected a division, barring, of course, the artificial agitation got up by Lord Sydenham, and his party, is a striking testimony to the wisdom of the authors of the Report in submitting proposals that commended themselves to the general acceptance of the British public. His Excellency the Viceroy was pleased to observe the other day, while presiding at a meeting of the Imperial Legislative Council, that he and the Secretary of State had gone as far as it was possible for them consistently with the message of the 20th August, 1917. Whatever differences of opinion there may exist with regard to this view, it is impossible to dispute the fact that the proposals have been cast upon lines which on the whole have received a gratifying measure of support from the British public. They introduce important constitutional changes with safeguards which rouse no misgiving or suspicion among the Conservative elements of British society. I therefore dismiss the plea of mistrust of the people brought against the framers of the Report. The Report

does not go far enough in some respects from our standpoint. It may in our judgment need modification and improvement. But caution, even when carried to the verge of timidity, is not mistrust. Caution is an intellectual quality : mistrust is a moral distemper : and when widely divergent opinions have to be conciliated, boldness has to be combined with caution. I cannot leave this part of my subject without paying the tribute of my admiration in which I am sure you will join to the illustrious authors of the Report. It is not for me to anticipate the verdict of history, but when the heat and the excitement of the present controversies will have disappeared and things are seen in their true perspective, a grateful posterity will recognize Lord Chelmsford and Mr. Montagu as among the truest benefactors of the Indian people and the Report will take its place among the great State papers of this generation, worthy to be ranked with Lord Durham's Report on the question of Canadian Reform.

#### STEADY CONSTITUTIONAL PROGRESS THE AIM OF THE CONGRESS.

Let us not overlook the fact that we of the Congress, from the time that we took up self-government within the Empire as the principal plank in our platform, have advocated steady, gradual and progressive advancement. So far back as the year 1902, speaking as President of the Indian National Congress at Ahmedabad, I observed :

"We have no higher aspiration than that we should be admitted into the great confederacy of self-governing States of which England is the august mother."

And then I added, and this is the most relevant part of the statement :—

"We recognise that the journey towards the goal must necessarily be slow and that the blessed consummation can only be attained after prolonged preparation and laborious apprenticeship. But a beginning has to be made....."

"Prolonged preparation and laborious apprenticeship" are the words I used sixteen years ago as indicating the stages through which we must pass in order that we may qualify ourselves for a full measure of self-government. The late Mr. Gokhale speaking as President of the Benares Congress in 1905 urged the same view in similar language. He said :—

"For better, for worse, our destinies are now linked with those of England and the Congress freely recognises that whatever advance we seek must be within the Empire itself. That advance, moreover, can only be gradual, as at each



stage of the progress it may be necessary for us to pass through a brief course of apprenticeship before we are enabled to go to the next one. For it is a reasonable proposition that the sense of responsibility, required for the proper exercise of the political institutions of the West, can be acquired by an Eastern people through practical training and experiment only. . . . While, therefore, we are prepared to allow that an advance towards our goal may be only by reasonably cautious steps, what we emphatically insist on is that the resources of the country should be primarily devoted to the work of qualifying the people by means of education and in other ways, for such advance."

Mr. Gokhale used almost prophetic language. He repeated that we must pass through a period of apprenticeship before we can come to the next stage in our progress, and this is exactly what the scheme provides—gradual stages of advance, all in sight, one following another, not indeed automatically, but as we prove our fitness and establish our capacity. Now, let us hear what India's other great political saint said in what may be regarded as his political testament, the last great pronouncement that he made as a public man. Speaking as President of the Calcutta Congress of 1906, Mr. Dadabhai Naoroji observed :—

"It is no use telling us, therefore, that a good beginning cannot be made now in India for what Mr. Gladstone called "living representation." The only thing needed is the willingness of the Government. The statesmen at the helm of the present Government are quite competent and able to make a good beginning so that it may naturally in no long time develop itself into full legislatures of self-government like those of the self-governing Colonies."

Thus Mr. Dadabhai Naoroji speaks of "a beginning which will develop itself into full legislatures of self-government." There is thus to be in the opinion of one of the greatest of Indians, "a beginning and a development." But this is not all. The first article of the Congress creed, its basic principle, embodies the views of the Presidents of the Congress to whom I have referred. The Article says :—

"The objects of the Indian National Congress are the attainment by the people of India of a system of government similar to that enjoyed by the self-governing members of the British Empire and a participation by them in the rights and responsibilities of the Empire on equal terms with these members. These objects are to be achieved by constitutional means, by bringing about a steady reform of the existing system of administration and by promoting national

unity and developing and organising the intellectual, moral, economic and industrial resources of the country."

Thus, according to the basic principle of the Congress such as the Congress was, self-government is to be attained by "a steady" gradual reform of the existing system of administration, and the principle embodies the definite and pronounced views of three ex-Presidents, two of whom representing the greatest names in modern Indian annals. They declare that a beginning has to be made, that our progress must be gradual, and that we must pass through a period of laborious apprenticeship before the final goal is reached. Does not the Montagu-Chelmsford Scheme substantially comply with these conditions? It places the final goal within sight. It provides intermediate stages of loyal co-operation and laborious apprenticeship which are to qualify us for the attainment of the fullest measure of responsibility. I am, therefore, justified in holding that if the illustrious men, now alas dead and gone, who made the Congress what it was, were now in our midst, if Dadabhai Naoroji, Gopal Krishna Gokhale, W. C. Bonnerjee, Sir Pherozeshah Mehta, Sir William Wedderburn and others had been spared to us to lead and guide our counsels, they would have welcomed with alacrity the Reform proposals as formulated by His Excellency the Viceroy and the Right Honourable the Secretary of State, subject, of course, to the necessary improvements. They are in conformity with the principles laid down by the great Congressmen of the past whose memories we venerate and whose precepts are our guide. It is said of the ancient kings of Arragon and Castille that when they found themselves confronted with difficult problems, when their minds hesitated and their judgments wavered, they appealed to the venerable oracles of their ancestors for illumination and guidance. May we not in the same way with bended knees and in a spirit of pious reverence approach the great oracles of the Congress? And we know what their verdict would be.

#### CONGRESS-LEAGUE SCHEME.

I am well aware of the objection that will be urged. It will be said in reply that the latest pronouncement of the Congress on the subject is the Congress-League scheme which was authoritatively adopted at Lucknow in December, 1916, but which is cast upon different lines. Now that scheme was avowedly a transitory arrange-

ment. It was framed before the announcement of the 20th August, 1917. It did not and could not deal with the new situation created by the message of the 20th August. There is no mention in it of responsible government. The great message deals wholly and solely with responsible government and provides for its progressive stages. The Congress-League scheme creates, in the words of the *Manchester Guardian*, a directorate with an executive subordinate to the Legislature, but not removable at its pleasure. It creates opportunities for full free criticism, but does not provide for responsibility. A new situation having been created by the message of 20th August, a new programme had to be followed; and the special session of the Congress adopted such a programme. Recognising the scheme as a factor which has to be dealt with, it sought to work into its frame-work the leading features of the Congress scheme with the result that it practically transformed it out of recognition. It amounted to rejection by a flank movement. Our procedure is different. As I have already observed, we take our stand upon the basic pledge of the 20th August, and our suggestions for the modification and expansion of the scheme are in entire conformity with the spirit and essence of the great pledge, not seeking to tamper with it or to go beyond it, but to keep within its broad and beneficent lines. We recognise that no private Bill has, in these days, any chance in Parliament. Here is our chance, our only chance, which has occurred after ceaseless and strenuous effort extending over the life-time of a generation by the most illustrious of our men, and the plainest considerations of patriotism and expediency demand that we should not in the exuberance of our zeal or in the wantonness of our indiscretion allow this chance to slip by. It may never again occur. There are tides in human affairs, says the great master-singer, which, taken at the flood, lead to fortune. Such a tide has set in in our favour with an irresistible current. Let us ride on its crest until we are swept by its onrushing flow into the Promised Land, the dream of the greatest, the wisest and the noblest of our race.

#### OUR FUNDAMENTAL DIFFERENCES.

And here I must pause to refer to the fundamental differences between the two wings of the nationalist party which have brought about this Conference. It was not without a wrench that we seceded.

from the Congress, and absented ourselves from its Special Session held in August last. To many of us, to me in a special sense, the absence was painful. Some of us have contributed to build up the great national institution with our life-blood. There was no sacrifice which we were not prepared to make, no toil which we were not ready to undergo, for the sake of the Congress. We watched it at its birth, nursed it at its cradle, and rejoiced with parental jubilation at its growing maturity. My venerable friend, Sir Dinshaw Wacha, was present at the first meeting of the Congress in 1885 in this city, and though I had not that great honour and privilege, yet from 1886 to 1917, I attended every session of the Congress, save and except the one held at Karachi. We have helped to rear up this great national organisation and to steer it through the perils of childhood and the temptations of adolescence and manhood, and now when we are within view of the crowning reward of our life-long labours, we find the voice of conflict and controversy, of bitter opposition, charged with the elements of personal and partisan rancour, raised in what had been the temple of our national unity, and the healing counsels of moderation, of prudence, and expediency dictated by the highest patriotism, consecrated by the noblest examples, cast to the winds. We could not but secede; for the difference between those who had captured the machinery of the Congress—call them Extremists for want of a better name—and ourselves were fundamental, and that upon a matter equally fundamental—of supreme and vital importance—*viz.*, the question of self-government for India. The Congress was an organisation for the attainment of self-government, the opening words of the first Article of the Constitution of the Congress being:—

“The objects of the Indian National Congress are the attainment by the people of India of a system of government similar to that enjoyed by the self-governing members of the British Empire, and a participation by them in the rights and responsibilities of the Empire, on equal terms with those members.”

The Congress exists—the Congress was called into being—for the attainment of self-government. But we knew that extreme views would prevail at its last special session; we knew that the Scheme would be condemned there and the interests of responsible government jeopardized. The Congress was a means to an end, the attainment of self-government. We sacrificed the means for the end, the organization of the Congress for the sake of self-government in India,

### THE PREMONITORY SYMPTOMS OF THE SPLIT.

We made the sacrifice in anticipation of coming events and the sequel shewed that our fears were abundantly justified. Even before the publication of the Report, the Extremist leaders, their organisations, and their organs in the Press, had assumed a hostile and even bellicose attitude in regard to proposals of which they knew little or nothing. On the 2nd June, 1918, fully five weeks before the publication of the Report, the Bengal Provincial Congress Committee sounded the tocsin of alarm, as if a great danger was impending and preparations had to be made to meet it. They issued a circular in which they said :—

“You keep yourselves ready to hold public meetings to attend the Congress and the Conferences in very large numbers and to fearlessly criticise the proposals if they fall short of our ideal.”

On the 8th July, the very day of the publication of the scheme (and the scheme be it understood covers 179 printed pages of foolscap), Mrs. Besant thus wrote in her own organ, *New India* :—

“The scheme is unworthy to be offered by England or to be accepted by India. It is petty where it should have been large, banal where it should have been striking. There is about it no spacious and far-seeing statesmanship, no constructive genius, no vision for India of even future evolution into freedom.”

On the same day, the 8th July, a manifesto condemning the scheme was issued by fifteen gentlemen of Madras in which they said :—

“The Scheme is so radically wrong alike in principle and in detail that in our opinion it is impossible to modify or improve it. Nor do we think it possible to devise any system of safe-guards against the mischievous working of the whole complex scheme. It cannot consequently form the basis of discussion or compromise by the people or their representatives. . . . We are satisfied that unless the present scheme is altogether abandoned as to the political reform of the Government of the country and another substituted, embodying principles or plans in consonance with the inalienable rights of the people of this country to achieve responsible government, which is different in nature and magnitude from a vaguely recognized right of co-operation, a deep wide-spread and enduring national discontent would be the consequence.”

On the following day, the 9th July, the day after the publication of the Scheme Mr. Tilak wrote : “The Montagu scheme is entirely

unacceptable," and his paper the *Kesari* said: "It has dawned, but where is the sun?" All this appeared within twenty-four hours of the publication of a scheme of considerable length and of immense complexity, dealing with problems difficult and delicate, which had taken the Secretary of State, the Viceroy, the Government of India and the authorities concerned nearly six months to elaborate. Could the Report have been carefully read by those who were so early in condemning it? No wonder that Commander Wedgwood should have said that the Indian opposition did not count. But the mischief had been done. The cry raised by the Extremist leaders was taken up with eager avidity by their followers; and in their various Conferences at Madras, in Calcutta and Akola, they condemned the scheme as "unsatisfactory," "disappointing," "unacceptable." At some of these Conferences, the Moderate representatives tried to reason and to argue but all in vain. Bitter passions had been roused. The Moderates were howled down. At Akola, an ex-President of the Congress, specially invited to attend the Conference, had to withdraw with his friends after a vain effort at a reasonable understanding. We of the Moderate party had to decide whether we should attend the Special Session of the Congress, where these extreme views were likely to dominate its counsels and to lend them the weight of our authority, or to abstain from all participations in its deliberations? As I have said, we decided to abstain; and it can no longer be said that the Resolutions of the special session of the Congress represented the united voice of India. It is possible that our abstention had a moderating influence upon the views of the Extremist leaders, and it is but the bare truth to state that our firm and courageous stand has had the effect of somewhat modifying the wild and extravagant opinions that found so much favour in the early stages of the discussion. We no longer hear the words "undiscussable" or "unacceptable" or the cry of "rejection in toto." We have emerged from that stage. The frontal attack has given place to a dexterous flank movement so prominently in evidence in the deliberations and the Resolutions of the Congress. The Viceroy and the Secretary of State are thanked for their good intentions, and their genuine effort is even appreciated, but the Scheme remains where it was—it is declared to be unsatisfactory and disappointing, unless and until certain suggested modifications which will transform it out of shape have been accepted.

The earnestness of the attempt is recognised but the achievement is belittled. Our view is wholly different. We regard the proposals, in common with the various Legislative Councils in the country which have yet spoken on them, as an advance upon the existing state of things and a definite stage towards the progressive realization of responsible government. We press for modifications and expansion upon the lines of the message of the 20th August, 1917. Specially do we urge this view in connection with the Government of India, but I will say this—that if unfortunately no advance is made, I trust this will not be the case, even then we shall be ready to accept the scheme as an improvement upon the existing state of things and an advance (it may be only a small advance) towards responsible government. The Extremist leaders would reject the Scheme unless the fundamental changes which they have suggested were embodied in the proposals. The cry of rejection still lurks in their attitude, though in a somewhat disguised form. There being this difference in fundamentals, a common platform was out of the question. No useful purpose is served by a patched-up truce. Let each party worship in its own temple according to its own lights and convictions. "I do not believe", said Mr. Gandhi, "that we should at a critical moment like this be satisfied with a patched-up peace between the so-called Extremists and the so-called Moderates, each giving up a little in favour of the other. I should like a clear enunciation of the policy of each group or party."

#### ATTEMPT AT COMPROMISE.

It has been said that we should have attended the special session of the Congress, urged our views and, if outvoted, then and then only should we have seceded and held this Conference. This procedure did not commend itself to us. We did not wish to add to the bitterness of a situation which was already sufficiently painful, by a heated controversy on the Congress platform. If we were outvoted as we were sure to be, we felt that the influence of a Moderate Conference with the stigma of defeat (which did not represent the real sense of the country) would weaken our just influence and take away from the weight of the deliberations of our Conference. It would be the Conference of a defeated party. I may here add that I tried my best to come to an understanding but all in vain. On the 7th August, full

three weeks before the meeting of the Congress, I wired to the Joint Secretary and to Mrs. Besant to postpone the special session of the Congress for a short time for an interchange of views which might help to bring about an understanding. The request was not complied with, and at the last moment, just 24 hours before the sitting of the Congress when a final effort at reunion was made, it was far too late, the psychological moment having passed by.

There is yet another consideration in this connection which is not to be overlooked. While the Scheme is being opposed in England by the Indo-British Association, Lord Sydenham, Sir John Hewett and others of that ilk, the *Morning Post*, the *Spectator* and other such papers, and while Lord Curzon is withholding his support from it; while, in India, the Bengal Chamber of Commerce, the Calcutta Trades' Association, the European Association, the Anglo-Indian Association, the South-Indian Liberal Federation, the Madras Dravidian Association, the New Zemindars' and Landholders' Association of Madras, the Moslem Defence Association, the Islamia League, etc., etc., are all opposing the Scheme; should Congressmen also oppose it, though from a different point of view and increase the difficulties of our friends in England and help to wreck the Scheme? Yet this is what the Special Congress did. Hence this Conference has become an urgent national necessity.

#### THE SOUNDNESS OF OUR POSITION.

And the soundness of our position with regard to the Reform proposals cannot be questioned. In the first place, it is supported by all our English friends, by the great organs of English public opinion interested in the political advancement of India and by the British Committee of the Indian National Congress. Mr. Polak wired out to this country to say that it would be perilous to reject the scheme. What did this ominous message mean? It implied that if the scheme was dropped in consequence of our opposition, the prospects of responsible government would be indefinitely postponed. The British democracy, in view of our opposition, would say "well, if you don't want it, we drop the scheme altogether." And is there any other scheme to take its place? None that I know of.

#### OPPOSITION TO THE SCHEME.

Indeed the opposition to the scheme raised by the Extremist



leaders and their followers is a real difficulty in our way which has to be met and overcome. Lord Sydenham, in the debate which took place in the House of Lords early in August, quoted Mr. Tilak in support of his condemnation of the Scheme and in urging that it should be dropped. It is a strange alliance. Once again the truth is illustrated that extremes meet. But it is an alliance, not indeed ratified by convention or consent, (though both parties want the same thing, *viz.*, the rejection of the scheme), is disastrous to the best interests of India; and our English friends are insistent in their appeal to us to unite in our support of the Reform Scheme and to unmistakably demonstrate our acceptance of it. Sir Herbert Roberts says :—

“The prospects of carrying the proposed reforms will depend very largely on the concentration of the utmost Indian support. Details must be considered later on, but at the present juncture it is imperative that India's acceptance of the Report as a whole should be unmistakably demonstrated.”

The *Manchester Guardian* complains that the extremists are playing into the hands of Lord Sydenham and his party and, by adding to the difficulties of the Government, may make it reluctant to proceed with the reforms at all. It is a warning-note which should appeal to all patriotic Indians, and we may be sure that the *Manchester Guardian*, a tried friend of the people of India, would not write in this strain, if the danger was not real. In the hope that all interested in the cause of Indian reform may recognise the gravity of the situation, I quote an extract from it :—

“The danger-point in the career of the Montagu-Chelmsford report was clearly indicated in the course of yesterday's debate in the House of Commons. It is the danger which lurks in the course of all schemes for the enfranchisement of an unrepresented or incompletely represented class or sex or nation. There comes a stage in the demand for such enfranchisement when the principle is accepted by the majority of moderate men. But every concrete proposal for its realisation has to run the gauntlet of a double opposition, on one side from extremists of the all-or-nothing type, on the other hand from a section of stern and unbending conservatives. The two sections play into one another's hands. The extremists get more angry with the moderates than with the out-and-out opponents. The out-and-out conservatives make play with every utterance of extremists. Between them, a Government committed perhaps to a moderate scheme finds reason after reason for delay in its concrete application. Each

delay stimulates the extremists to wilder speech, or perhaps to desperate action, and so plays again into the hands of the conservatives. Demands rise in the scale, and as the difficulty of satisfying them increases, the reluctance of Government to do anything at all grows in proportion."

Similar testimony comes from the London Correspondent of the *Hindu*, who thus summarizes the views of the friends of India in the House of Commons in regard to the Reform proposals :—

1. The scheme now promulgated, although it falls short of what most of us desire and of what India is entitled to claim, is a reasonable instalment of that full responsible self-government which is now the acknowledged goal of statesmanship.

2. It concedes many of the reforms for which Indian Nationalists have been striving for a generation past.

3. There is nothing in it to prevent a further advance towards more complete self-rule at a comparatively early date ; on the contrary, it clearly opens the way to the full accomplishment of Indian nationhood within a reasonable period of time.

4. In discussing the scheme we must have regard to the principles on which it is based and not make too much of minor imperfections and subsidiary details.

5. The scheme has many drawbacks, as will appear in course of examination and discussion, but they are out-weighed by the advantages which will accrue to India from its general adoption.

6. Given adequate support, it is possible to carry the main features of this scheme into effect; but if it is rejected outright or menaced by undue criticism resulting in its withdrawal or serious mutilation, there is nothing else to take its place.

7. No party in the State can attempt to carry, under present circumstances, a more liberal measure of Indian reform than this.

We would do well to lay to heart the warning-note which has been raised in the messages I have quoted. They point out to us the dangers which beset our path. They call upon us to give adequate support to the Reform proposals. India's acceptance of the proposals must be unmistakable, says Sir Herbert Roberts. If they are opposed, there is nothing else to take their place, so say our friends in the House of Commons. What then is our duty? I should like to appeal to all, Extremists and Moderates, to rally to the support of the Scheme. Our detailed criticisms may be valuable, but let us not magnify their importance and wreck the scheme in our insistence upon their

acceptance. Responsible government is assured. The intermediate stages are transitional, and their smooth working and their ultimate success will largely depend upon the co-operation between the Government and the representatives of the people. It is the spirit more than the paper-guarantees that counts; and though we must have some of these guarantees to begin with and to set us up on the road, far more will depend upon the atmosphere that is created and upon the spirit of mutual help, mutual confidence and mutual co-operation which the inauguration of the great experiment will not fail to engender, to foster and to stimulate. Let us rely upon these impalpable and invisible forces, and we shall not have relied upon them in vain. How few are the paper-guarantees of the British constitution and how that venerable and wonderful institution has worked out its development, in spite of them, above them and beyond them? Take the safe-guards which have been provided. I am sure that in the actual working of the Scheme, many of them will be found to be superfluous. I am perhaps talking in a somewhat optimistic vein. I have throughout my life been an optimist of the most confirmed type. Age has not abated the ardour of my optimism; and I have found that it always pays morally, if not commercially. The ominous warning which has been given by our friends and to which I have referred means that the Scheme may be dropped owing to our opposition and the prospects of responsible government indefinitely postponed. Do not indulge in the foolish talk about the intervention of President Wilson or what may transpire at the Peace Conference. Let us descend from these aerial flights of the imagination to the hard, solid ground of facts, and deal with them, in the cold, clear, colourless atmosphere of sober reason and good sense, as they have been presented to us by our English friends so deeply interested in our political progress.

#### NOT MET OUT OF THE WOOD.

We are not indeed out of the wood. The recent debate has opened our eyes to the gravity of the situation, to the rocks ahead. Lord Sydenham leads the anti-Indian party in Parliament and out of Parliament. We have a complaint against you, citizens of Bombay, for he was your Governor. To us people of Bengal, it is a matter of pride and gratification to find that after Lord Sydenham had sat down, having done as great a disservice as he could to the people whose salt he has

eaten and whose friend he professes to be, Lord Carmichael, our late Governor, rose to reply to him, and said in his quiet but impressive style, "there could be no standing still, no swerving from the path which led to responsible government" and that "if we rejected the Scheme, many Indians would consider that we had committed as bad a breach of faith as any Government had ever been guilty of." Strong language this, coming from one of the temperament of the late Governor of Bengal, but it would not have been used if the occasion did not require it. Lord Sydenham, on this occasion, somewhat deviated from the beaten track of his accustomed arguments. No longer did he stand forward as the champion of the masses or of the military classes. These weapons by frequent use had apparently become blunt. He broke new ground on this occasion. He spoke *for* the Viceroy and the Indian Civil Service as if they needed his advocacy and were not able to take care of themselves. He urged that if the proposals were given effect to, the authority of the Viceroy would be weakened and the present standard of the Indian Civil Service destroyed; yet, it was a Viceroy who was one of the authors of the Scheme and it was the Executive Council of the Viceroy, consisting of the most distinguished members of the Indian Civil Service and entitled fully to speak in their name and on their behalf, who unanimously supported it. Nor is this all. It appears that the Secretary of State and his Council, among whom are many distinguished representatives of the Indian Civil Service, backed by an influential deputation, have entered into an unholy combination to reduce the authority of the Viceroy and "to destroy the high standard of the Civil Service." The idea is too ridiculous to be seriously entertained, and we are surprised that so irresponsible an utterance should have proceeded from one who not long ago occupied the responsible position of Governor of Bombay. But we live to learn.

#### THE ATTITUDE OF GOVERNMENT.

But though we may dismiss the arguments of Lord Sydenham as unworthy of serious consideration, the attitude of the British Government as disclosed in the speech of Lord Curzon is a matter of grave concern and even anxiety. Lord Curzon somewhat separated himself from the Secretary of State and the India Office, as if they were not a part of the Government, and observed that "the Govern-

ment was uncommitted in the matter, because they had not the time to consider it." "Their inability," Lord Curzon went on to add, "to make up their minds at the present moment was not only due to the great pressure resulting from the pre-occupations of the war, but to the fact that they had not yet received that information which they pledged themselves before Parliament to await before making up their minds." Now you will permit me, on your behalf as well as on my own, to enter our respectful but emphatic protest against this non-committal attitude. I hold that the Government stands committed, irrevocably committed, by a series of proceedings to which it has been a party. There is no escape from this position, as I shall presently show, at least in the judgment of the people of India, the party most vitally concerned. In the first place, we have the message of the 20th August, 1917. It was the message of the British Cabinet of which the Secretary of State for India was the spokesman, and it was announced in Parliament by the mandate of the Cabinet. In pursuance of this message and with a view to give effect to it, the Secretary of State came out to India accompanied by a Deputation, and that with the full concurrence of the Cabinet. In due time, the Report was submitted and was published for criticism again with the full consent of the Cabinet. Now, I ask, if the Report had not been generally approved of by the Cabinet, would they have allowed it to be published? The permission for its publication implies a general acceptance by the Cabinet of the principles and provisions set forth in the Report. But let me proceed. Within the last few days, two Committees recommended in the Report, the Committee on Franchise and the Committee on Transferred and Reserved subjects, have been appointed, and, we may take it again, with the full concurrence of the Cabinet. The appointment of these Committees by or with the assent of the Cabinet, implies that the division of transferred and reserved subjects and the recommendation in the Report that the electorates should be based upon as broad a franchise as possible are accepted by the Cabinet or at any rate are regarded by that body as worthy of consideration. In view of these facts, I confess I fail to see what justification there is for the British Government to hold now, at this late hour of the day, that its attitude is one of non-committal. Step after step has been taken with the concurrence of the British Government to give effect to the

message of the 20th August, and to the proposals contained in the Report. If not in words, at any rate by its deeds, the Government stands pledged to carry out the great message even according to the spirit and substance of the proposals contained in the Report. Let us hear what an independent observer, Mr. William Archer, says on this subject in the *Fortnightly Review* of August last :—

“If ever one people stood pledged to another, we stand pledged to India. The formal pronouncement of August 20th, 1917, declaring “the progressive realisation of responsible government in India” to be “the policy of His Majesty’s Government,” passed wholly unchallenged in either House of Parliament. In pursuance of that policy and on the invitation of the Viceroy, the Secretary of State proceeded to India to investigate on the spot the conditions of the problem. A winter’s work resulted in the production of this Report, signed by the Secretary of State and the Viceroy, which, having been officially given to the world, must be presumed to have received—in principle, at any rate—the sanction of the Government. Could any cause of action have been more carefully calculated to awaken in the Indian people the most confident expectation of the dawn of a new era in the political history of their country? There must be time, of course—the pronouncement said so explicitly—for mature consideration and criticism. No one can reasonably object to that. But India would have very just ground for resentment if the necessary consideration were unduly postponed, and the subject were dropped out of sight.”

#### A PROPOSED SELECT COMMITTEE.

But disappointing as Lord Curzon’s statement was in the House of Lords in respect of the attitude of Government, even more unsatisfactory were his observations regarding a proposal made by Lord Selborne for the appointment of a Select Committee of both Houses to enquire into and report upon the whole question of constitutional reforms. The Earl of Selborne suggested that when the Government were prepared with their recommendations to Parliament, for consideration, it would be a convenient way of dealing with the matter, by the aid of a Select Committee of the two Houses. Lord Curzon said, that the suggestion of the noble lord was one worthy of consideration. “It had been before the minds of the Government, and no doubt at a later stage an announcement would be made on the subject.”

Now I desire to enter my most emphatic protest against the proposal to appoint a Select Committee of both House to deal

with the recommendations of the Government on the eve of the introduction of the Bill. This would mean postponement; it would involve delay and might even come to shelving the measure; and in the meantime the popular impatience would grow, and popular discontent would deepen and spread. What would have satisfied popular aspirations now would be out of date a year hence. Time is a great factor in popular concessions. The story of the Sybiline books embalms an eternal truth applicable to all departments of life. We pray that the blunders of British administration in Ireland may not be repeated here, and that the words 'too late' may not be written on British policy in India in the most psychological moment of her history. What need is there for an enquiry by a Select Committee of both Houses in view of the full, the ample, the comprehensive Report submitted by His Excellency the Viceroy and the Right Hon'ble the Secretary of State for India? "The great point," says Mr. William Archer, whom I have already quoted, "is that the Bill to be founded on the Report should be brought in as soon as possible." The feeling in India should be taken note of; and delay caused by the appointment of a superfluous Select Committee to thresh out details which have already been most carefully considered by the highest authorities would aggravate the situation which is already one of great tension and would be little short of a political blunder of the gravest magnitude. I can only hope that the British Government will not commit this mistake; and may I appeal to His Excellency the Viceroy and the Government of India to intervene betimes and prevent this unnecessary postponement in the enactment of a measure which the people of India are looking forward to with a degree of hope and expectancy such as they had never before felt in relation to any great public question?

#### THE ANGLO-INDIAN COMMUNITY.

I have observed that we are not out of the wood. There is no royal road to political advancement. The journey of the children of Israel to the Promised Land lay through the trackless desert; and the Prophet of their race had only a glimpse of the glories of Canaan from the heights of Pisgah. The Biblical story is typical of the sacrifices to be incurred and of the dangers and difficulties to be faced in the grand march to the land of freedom. We are indeed more fortunately situated; for we reap the fruits of the glorious heritage of experience

which the freest nation in the world have laid in store for the benefit of mankind. Nonetheless we have our troubles, our difficulties and our dangers. There is the Left Wing amongst our own countrymen, professing advanced views, who would improve the scheme away; there are Lord Sydenham and his followers who would not move at all; and lastly, there is the local Anglo-Indian community with their Chambers of Commerce and their political organizations half-inclined to follow the lead of Lord Sydenham. I could only wish that the Anglo-Indian community had thrown in their lot with us and stood by us in this struggle for political advancement. The whole Indian movement for constitutional freedom bears upon its face the imprint of its English origin. It is the direct product of our contact with the West, of our familiarity with English culture and the stirring lessons of English history. The founder of the Indian National Congress was an Englishman; its most prominent workers in the early days of its growth and development were Englishmen, now alas dead, but whose memories are enshrined in our grateful hearts. One of the earliest Presidents of the Congress was an English Merchant of Calcutta, an ex-President of the Bengal Chamber of Commerce. From the modern representatives of English commerce and culture we had a right to expect a full measure of co-operation in the great task upon which the Government of India is now embarked and which in its culmination will mark the indissoluble union between England and India, by making India an equal partner in the great confederacy of the free States of the Empire. But we have been disappointed. We fear the extremists here as elsewhere have had their way. Extreme opinions have a fascination all their own for those who have no definite or settled convictions, or only a superficial acquaintance with the orderly march of human events. Their minds are a blank and the extremists capture them with fatal facility. Englishmen having a stake in this country and residing therein have like other sections of the community a right to be adequately represented in the Legislative Councils under a responsible Government, but to say that the measure of responsible government such as is proposed under the Montagu-Chelmsford Scheme would be disastrous to the interests of the country, and would leave the masses unprotected, or that it would disturb economic conditions and dislocate trade and commerce is to indulge in the language of wild and baseless panic. It is safe to assume that Government of India



which is primarily responsible for the well-being of all sections of the community and for the due preservation and expansion of trade and commerce and which might be expected to be thoroughly familiar with the condition of the country would never think of starting proposals which would have such disastrous results. Governments are all, by temperament and tradition, cautious. Indeed they are over-cautious and very slow to move. That the Government is at all moving demonstrates that the balance of advantage is all in favour of the movement.

But let me pass on from authority and discuss the matter on its own merits. The changes proposed under the Scheme are not of a catastrophic or revolutionary character. The advance is slow, so slow that many of us think that it would have been better if the pace were quicker. The Anglo-Indian community manifest deep concern in the well-being of the masses and the interests of trade and commerce. Let me consider each of these questions separately. As regards its masses, let me ask, who could be better guardians and protectors of them than their educated countrymen? They are the bone of our bone and the flesh of our flesh. We claim to be their natural leaders, their heaven-appointed guardians. If we had the power as we have the will, we should be their trustees; and in the political activities of the last thirty years we have shown how eminently qualified we are for this exalted function. Every question affecting the masses has, since the political awakening of modern India, received the closest and most sympathetic consideration of their political leaders. Who are they who in season and out of season have urged the Government to introduce primary education, who are they who have pressed for the abolition of the salt-tax, the reform of the Police, the separation of judicial and executive functions, the raising of the taxable minimum of the income-tax—all questions intimately connected with the well-being of the masses? The last striking illustration of our concern for the masses was afforded by the unanimity with which the non-official Indian members of the Indian Legislative Council urged, when voting for £45 millions of war-grant, that no taxes should be levied which would press upon the poor classes—a view which the Government accepted with cordiality. Then as regards the protection of the masses, it has to be borne in mind that in the first five years among the reserved subjects to be under the control of the Government will be Law, Police and Justice. Thus when the experiment of

responsible government begins, the Police protection of the masses will be, as now, in the hands of the Government. It is only when the experiment succeeds and the Indian ministers rise to the height of their responsibility that the Government of India will make over to them the branches of the administration affecting Law, Police and Justice. As for the larger questions of trade and commerce, they will be under the control of the Government of India which it is not proposed to modify in any way at present, though we wish this could be done. Altogether therefore the apprehensions of the local European community are unfounded. I invite them to reconsider the matter aided by the common sense and business-aptitudes of their race and I am sure that they will revise their attitude and join us in the holy work, so worthy of the best traditions of Englishmen, of inaugurating the beginnings of responsible government in this ancient land, where many of them have passed the best years of their life-time, and which some of them have made the land of their adoption.

#### THE REFORM SCHEME : PROPOSALS FOR THE PROVINCES.

So far I have said nothing about the Reform Scheme. The matter has been discussed threadbare in the Press, on our public platforms and in our Conferences. I take it, that with the general features of the Scheme, every one is more or less conversant; I further take it that there is amongst us absolute unanimity in favour of the view that the Reform proposals represent a distinct advance upon the existing state of things and that there is an overwhelming consensus of opinion that they constitute a definite stage towards the progressive realization of responsible government. It is upon the reform of the provincial administrations that the authors of the Scheme concentrate their attention; and its merits are to be judged by their proposals in this connection. Let me briefly indicate their proposals. They recommend that every province, major or minor, big or small, excepting, of course, the North-Western Frontier Province and Burma, should have a Governor and Council, which means that the Indian element is to be associated in the work of the highest Council of every Indian province. Secondly, they recommend a complete division of Provincial and Imperial finance, a reform which we have been urging for the last thirty years, but so far in vain. Then they propose that there should be a substantial majority of elected members in every Provincial

Council to be returned by electorates constituted upon as broad a franchise as possible. The Executive Government is to consist of a Governor and two Councillors, of whom one is to be always an Indian, and Indian ministers to be appointed by the Governor whose number in the major provinces cannot be less than two in view of the subjects that are proposed to be transferred, and in the minor provinces, there will be at least one such minister. The effect of this arrangement will be that in the major provinces, the personnel of the Executive Government will have an Indian majority, and in the minor provinces, there will be an adequate representation of the Indian element. Thus, both in the Legislature and on the Executive Government of the major provinces, there will be an Indian majority, and in those of the minor provinces there will be an adequate representation of Indian members. The Budget will be prepared by the Executive Government as a whole, and will be submitted to the Legislative Council for adoption, and the Resolutions of the Council on the Budget will be binding on the Government, save and except any item in the reserved subjects in regard to which the Governor may certify that it is necessary for the public safety and tranquility or for the discharge of his responsibilities in connection with the reserved branches of the administration. It is a special power, and as such, I take it, will be used only on emergent occasions. Lastly, I come to the division into reserved and transferred subjects which constitutes perhaps the most vital feature of the Reform proposals. Certain subjects which are called transferred will be made over to Indian ministers to be appointed by the Governor. What these transferred subjects are to be will be determined by the Committee that has been appointed. We are not however left altogether in the dark about this matter. The transferred subjects are to include Sanitation, Education, Local Self-Government, Co-operative Credit Societies, Agriculture and so forth. Now I desire to invite your attention to the nature and character of some of the subjects that are to be transferred to Indian ministers. Among the transferred branches are those which, in my opinion, and I think in the judgment of all impartial men, are nation-building subjects. Let us take one of them for instance,—Education. The control of primary and technical education is to be made over to Indian ministers. What does that imply? It means this—that the Indian ministers or the representatives of the educated

classes will be brought into actual living contact with the illiterate masses of their countrymen, shaping, guiding and moulding their minds and aspirations, leading them onward and upward to the upbuilding of a true national life. It is quite clear that the illustrious framers of the Report who made the recommendation were anxious that an Indian nation should spring up, which is to be the basis of responsible government. Then there are to be Standing Committees attached to departments or groups of departments; these Committees to consist of members to be elected by the Legislative Council. Their capacity would be advisory, but they would be trained in executive and legislative work. Lastly, members may be appointed to positions analogous to those of Parliamentary Under-Secretaries. All this is an indication of the genuine desire on the part of the framers of the Report to prepare a training ground for the future ministers of a responsible government.

You have, in these recommendations, the beginnings of responsible government and a definite stage towards its realization. You have responsible government at the first start though in a somewhat indirect way. You have a larger measure of it in the intermediate stage, and practically complete autonomy after ten years. Let me illustrate this.

The Indian ministers are to hold their offices during the lifetime of the Legislative Assembly, that is to say for a period of 3 years. They will be eligible for reappointment in the event of their being re-elected by their constituencies. Therefore, their continuance in office as Ministers after their first term of office will depend upon the suffrages of their electorates. From the very first it will be their duty, as it will be their interest, to try to please their electors and to obtain from them a re-election for the second term. It seems to me, therefore, that the accountability of these Ministers to their electorates begins from the very first stage, but more than that. Their responsibility to the Legislature is enforced in a more direct way. The supplies, relating to the transferred branches, will be voted by the Legislative Council. In the case of an unpopular Minister, the Legislative Council may refuse to grant him the supplies. Thus, even in the first stage, I say there is responsibility to the electorate in a modified form and in a larger measure to the Legislative Council. And, after 5 years, the salaries of the Indian ministers will be placed on the estimates and voted upon every year, and after 10 years, there will be complete responsibility. You have responsibility or the beginnings of respon-

sibility at the first stage, a greater measure of responsibility at the intermediate stage, and a complete measure of responsibility at the final stage.

#### GOVERNMENT OF INDIA.

I am sorry I am not able to speak of the proposals relating to the Government of India in the same strain. The message of the 20th August lays down that responsible government is to be introduced by progressive stages. Surely it may be possible to introduce a stage, it may be only a small stage, in the Government of India. But there are no signs of it. There are no transferred branches, no popular ministers, no definite popular control over any section of the Budget. His Excellency the Viceroy was pleased to say that the authors of the Report had gone as far as it was possible for them. We are grateful, deeply grateful, for the recommendations so far as they go; but I submit that it is perfectly consistent with the letter and the spirit of the message of the 20th August to introduce, in part at least, the system of responsible government in the Central Government also. We earnestly hope that this part of the recommendations will be revised and enlarged before their final adoption by Parliament.

#### OTHER PROPOSALS.

But the Report contains proposals other than those immediately connected with the question of responsible government, but intimately bearing on the general problem of Indian advancement. In the speech with which His Excellency the Viceroy opened the autumn session of the Imperial Legislative Council in 1917, His Excellency observed that the Indian constitutional problem was divisible into three parts, all interlinked and interdependent upon one another. In the first place, there was the question of the Indianization of the Services. In the next place, there was the problem of local self-government, and lastly, there was the question of constitutional reform, involving the reconstitution and the expansion of the administrative and legislative machinery of the Government. With regard to the first of these questions, *viz.*, the Indianization of the Services, a distinct advance is recommended in the Report though we may yet have our criticisms to offer upon the detailed proposals. All racial bars are to be abolished; a system of appointment to all the public services is to be established

in India. In the Indian Civil Service, the percentage of appointments to be filled by Indians is to be 33 per cent. of the superior posts every year, increasing annually by  $1\frac{1}{2}$  per cent.

In the domain of local self-government, the Report recommends complete popular control over local bodies as far as possible. Apart from the increased authority over local affairs which this recommendation, if given effect to, will confer upon local representatives, its value from the popular and political point of view is not to be over-estimated. The local bodies, thus reconstituted and liberalized, will serve, in the words of Lord Ripon's great Resolution, as instruments of popular and political education. As such they will help to foster and to strengthen the electorates of the future, so indispensable to the success of any system of responsible government.

#### COMMISSIONED RANKS.

The Report deals mainly with the question of constitutional reform. But the political problem is bound up with cognate considerations which in practical life act and re-act upon one another. We claim as part of our right as citizens of the Empire to bear arms in its defence on a footing of equality with British subjects in other parts of the Empire. We claim the right by the blood of our countrymen shed on the battle-fields of Flanders, of Gallipoli, of Mesopotamia, of Palestine and of Eastern Africa. It has cemented our union with the Empire, but it has also established our claim to equal citizenship and the equal opportunities which the Empire affords to all her children. As we urge this right, our good wishes follow those who are now fighting the battles of the Empire, and our sympathies go out to the near and dear ones of those who have fallen in this great world-conflict. May India commemorate in a suitable manner, by an All-India memorial, the heroism of those who have fallen fighting for the Motherland and for justice and freedom? "The demand has become insistent," as the authors of the Report rightly observe, "since the outbreak of the war," and the Delhi Conference of the Princes and the People of India, which met in April last with His Excellency the Viceroy presiding, recorded a unanimous resolution urging the more liberal grant of King's Commissions to

Indians. With regard to this important matter, the Report says :—

“It is not enough merely to assert a principle. We must act on it. The services of the Indian army in the war and the great increase in its numbers make it necessary that a considerable number of commissions should now be given. The appointments made have so far been few. Other methods of appointment have not yet been decided on, but we are impressed with the necessity of grappling with the problem. We also wish to establish the principle that if an Indian is enlisted as a private in a British unit and His Majesty’s army, its commissioned ranks also should be open to him. The Indian soldier who fights for us and earns promotion in the field can reasonably ask that his conduct should offer him the same chances as the European beside whom he fights. If he is otherwise qualified, race should no more debar him from promotion in the army than it does in the Civil Service; nor do we believe that it is impossible to carry this principle into effect without sacrificing paramount military considerations. We feel sure that no measure would do so much to stimulate Indian enthusiasm for the war.”

We trust that in this crucial matter of the admission of Indians into the commissioned ranks of the army, the principle of equality will be asserted and the prejudices which have so long denied us justice, equal treatment and equal opportunities will wholly disappear. Our rulers are as much on their trial as we are, and by their deeds, and not only by their professions, will they be judged.

#### THE INDUSTRIES.

The political problem is indissolubly linked with the industrial. Political discontent has sometimes its roots, and always draws its sustenance and inspiration from economic conditions. Hunger and revolution are twins that are born together and walk through life together, while economic prosperity is a stimulus to orderly political advancement. It is such advancement that the authors of the Report propose to foster and encourage, and naturally enough, they call prominent attention to the question of our industrial development. We need not rake up the dismal record of the extinction of our indigenous industries. It can serve no useful purpose, but will only help to recall unpleasant memories that must interfere with the healing operation of the conciliatory measures which the Government is about to inaugurate. Suffice it to say that the “laissez faire” policy of isolation and detachment which the Government have hitherto

followed in the matter of our industries is discountenanced in the Report, and the Government is invited "to follow a forward policy in industrial development", not merely, to quote the words of the Report, "to give India economic stability, but in order to satisfy the aspirations of her people who desire to stand before the world as a well-poised up-to-date country; in order to provide an outlet for the energies of her young men who are otherwise drawn exclusively to Government service or to a few over-stocked professions; in order that money lying unproductive may be applied to the benefit of the whole community; and in order that the too speculative and literary tendencies of Indian thought may be bent to more practical ends and the people may be better qualified to shoulder the new responsibilities which the new constitution will lay upon them." In the concluding words of the sentence which I have just quoted the indissoluble union between the industrial and the political problem is recognised. A forward step has indeed been taken in this direction by the appointment of the Industries Commission. That Commission has closed its labours and published its Report. Too often have Commissions and Committees reported. Too often valuable time has been wasted in the prolonged consideration of their recommendations which have at last found their resting-place in the dusty recesses of the Secretariat from which they have never emerged into day-light. Indian opinion will not tolerate any trifling with the recommendations of the Industries Commission or any disposition to waste time over them. It will insist upon the simultaneous solution of the industrial and political problems. The Government must place itself at the head of the industrial movement and help forward the development of our industries, as other Governments have done, so that India may become self-contained, self-reliant, a store-house of the Empire, its strongest bulwark in the East against the machinations of its foes, open and secret. India is an epitome of the world. Illimitable are her resources. If they could have been utilized, even to a moderate extent, how priceless would have been the measure of our help in this crisis of the Empire. In the highest interests of the Empire, we call upon our rulers to endow India with the fullest opportunities and the amplest facilities for her political and industrial development; so that the Empire, strengthened and fortified by the loyalty and devotion, accentuated by their self-interest, of three hundred millions of our people, may bid defiance to any combination



that may be formed against it and may gaze with serenity upon those vicissitudes which have wrecked the fortunes of States and Thrones which rely upon the paramountcy of a ruthless militarism as the bulwark of their power.

#### PARTY IN POLITICS.

To-day is the first day of the first session of the Moderate Conference. To-day we enter upon the threshold of a new epoch in the history of our national evolution. To-day marks the starting-point of a new party organisation in our midst. It is the natural and inevitable product of our political growth. It means the vitality of life and not the stagnation of death. When the national consciousness has been roused, when political feeling has spread far and wide among a community and when politics has passed from the stage of amateurish work into the serious business of life, the formation of party organisations and their division into groups become inevitable. That is the history of political organisations all over the world. To some of us it may be a wrench to form ourselves into a new party though with the old ideas; but we must move on with the times and the developments of the times, and face a situation, however unpleasant it may be to some of us, with equanimity and courage and even with tolerance and charity for those who may not worship with us in the same temple and who in moments of forgetfulness may be apt to misjudge us and to pelt stones at us.

#### CENTRE WING OF THE NATIONALIST PARTY.

We begin work to-day as the centre wing of the nationalist party. We have arduous duties before us. We need for their due performances the ardour of youth, the maturity of experience and the undying faith which is the mainspring of all public movements. It is this faith which built up the Indian National Congress. It is this faith combined with work which will rear up our new organisation. We want to over-spread the country with a net-work of organisations. Above all, we want men to work them—men fired with apostolic fervour who will go from town to town, from district to district and from province to province and spread the glad tidings of great joy, the blessed lessons of patriotism

combined with devotion, moderation and self-restraint, so needful in the new era which is about to dawn upon us. Where are these men? I am sure they will not be wanting in the ranks of the great party, whom I have the honour to represent here to-day. Is the fire which glowed in our bosoms thirty years ago, now extinct, or are there none amongst us to wear the mantles of those who have died in the service of the country and whose memories we adore?

#### DEPUTATION TO ENGLAND.

There is a crowning achievement yet in store for you that invites you and must stir your deepest feelings. You are within measurable distance of victory. Victory may be said to be within your grasp if you are true to yourselves. You have only to follow up the work of the past and to crown it. The question of responsible government is now before the British public. Your enemies are hard at work to undo the gracious pledge of a beneficent Government. Your friends here, professing advanced views, who call you timid, vacillating, weak and even not wholly disinterested, are playing into their hands with a blindness that we must all deplore. The situation is grave, critical, pregnant with the fate of future generations. Will you allow judgment to go by default? Will you not send your best men, representing the culture, the wealth, the public spirit of this great country, to plead before the bar of British public opinion, to support the scheme with such modifications, as may be necessary, and to avert the grave peril with which the future of self-government is threatened? They will, I am sure, plead with an irresistible eloquence. For Heaven touches with celestial fire the lips of those who plead for justice and freedom. The gift of tongues will be theirs. The fishermen of Gallile had that gift. *Saraswati* will sit on their lips. And they will plead before the most freedom-loving nation in the world, reborn, purged with the baptism of fire, after the war. I assure you of the fullest measure of success. The organisation of a deputation to England to express your views upon the Reform Scheme is the most serious work to which you must at once address yourselves. Choose your delegates, name them, send them forth on their blessed errand with your prayers and good-wishes, and the benedictions of Almighty God will attend them.

### OUR WORK HERE.

But there is also other work before you. Each era entails upon its children special obligations, and each individual has his share in the discharge of those obligations. A new era has dawned upon us, the enduring achievement of those illustrious men who have lived and died for their country. Their labours and sacrifices have brought us in sight of the promised land. They have fallen in the grand march. We are the inheritors of the fruits of their splendid devotion. Talk of the time-forces, of the impetus to human freedom which the war has given. No one seeks to belittle them. But do not eliminate the personal elements in the grand evolution of Indian freedom. Render unto Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's. Salute the great dead of India. I am a hero-worshipper to the marrow of my bones. The mighty stream may flow on in its majestic course without spreading the beneficent treasures of its fertilising load to far-off lands. Who were they who tilled and toiled and prepared the ground for those life-giving seeds which are now about to be planted and which in the fullness of time will ripen into a rich harvest of freedom? But for the Congress and the work of the great leaders of the Congress in the past, India would not have been prepared for, India would not have asked for, the great boon which our rulers have promised her and of which we hope she will soon be the recipient. Blessed be their memories! The most distant generations of India will cherish them with affectionate reverence. Their task is done. Creators of modern India, they sleep the blessed sleep of the good and the true. Lost comrades now in heaven, may your spirits be ever-present with us, lifting us to a higher manhood, a nobler nationhood, tempering the fervour of our patriotism with moderation and self-restraint, blending harmoniously the ideal and the practical in our public life, softening the acerbities of our debates with the spirit of sweet reasonableness and of tolerance and charity!

### OUR NEW DUTIES.

The work of propagandism is well-nigh finished; that was the achievement of the old era. The work of construction will be the destined portion of the children of the new age. To that task you and I must address ourselves. The political enthusiast who has

roused the feelings of his countrymen and has created the most stupendous transformation in modern India, to whom all honour is due, must now give place to the practical statesman. Comparing great things with small, we have had Indian Mazzinis, without Mazzini's revolutionary ideals, appealing to their countrymen with impassioned fervour to rally round the banner of Indian constitutional freedom; but now we want Indian Cavours, who, aided by the genius for construction, will lead us on through wary, steady and progressive stages, without disturbance, without dislocation, with due regard to existing conditions to the final goal of full and complete autonomy. That is the great work before you, the mission of the present age, the legacy which it has received from the past. No reaction, no revolution; but steady, continuous, unbroken progress broadening from precedent to precedent, until, we have become equal partners in the great Confederacy of free states, rejoicing in their indissoluble union with England and the Empire. There are the electorates to be created, filled with citizens, manly, loyal and patriotic, inspired with a true sense of their civic rights and obligations, safe-guarded by the strongest of all safe-guards, the bulwark of responsible public life against the gusts of wild ideals, pestilential in their fury and disastrous in their consequences. For this great work we need all the patriotic enthusiasm, all the capacity for self-sacrifice, all the moderation and self-restraint we have shown in the past. A new chapter is opening out in our history. We are undoubtedly the inheritors of an inspiring past: let us prove ourselves the progenitors of even a greater and nobler future. We claim to have helped to create modern India. Now, let us aspire to a higher and nobler distinction. Let us be the makers of India of the future, a free and rejuvenated India, where good-will and amity will prevail among all sections of her vast population, where co-operation with the Government will be substituted, so far as may be, for opposition,—an India, rejoicing in the freedom of her institutions, in the growth of her commerce and her industries, in the expansion of her agricultural resources and in the creation of the amplest opportunities for the fullest development of those gifts and faculties with which an All-Bounteous Providence has so plentifully dowered our people. If we can help forward by ever so little this noble consummation, great will be our reward in the blessing of

Almighty God, in the approbation of our consciences and in the loving regard of a grateful posterity which will salute the names and adore the memories of those who have prepared for them the noblest of earthly possessions, the heritage of an enlarged freedom.

Standing before the bar of history at the parting of the ways, listening with ears attuned to the voices of the future, to the foot-falls of coming generations, marching to the goal of freedom, may I appeal to you to address yourselves to this task, and I am sure I do not appeal in vain.

#### CONCLUSION.

In conclusion, I have a word to say not to the Government of India, but to the British Government at home. I have a warning note to sound. It was my high privilege to have appealed to my countrymen to co-operate with the Government in view of the new policy of conciliation and concession inaugurated by the message of the 20th August and ratified by the recommendations of His Excellency the Viceroy and the Right Honorable the Secretary of State. My appeal has evoked a sympathetic response throughout the country which was conspicuously in evidence in the debates of the last autumn session of the Imperial Legislative Council. We have endeavoured to do our duty. The Government must fulfil its part. The attitude of the British Government in England in regard to the Reform proposals is, so far as one can judge, unsatisfactory and even ominous. If the enactment of the Reform proposals is unduly postponed, if they are whittled down in any way, if the whole of what is recommended is not given (and I think that in regard to the Government of India, there ought to be a greater advance) there will be grave public discontent, followed by agitation, the magnitude of which it would be difficult to exaggerate. We want peace and rest. We want steady progressive development accomplished by co-operation between the people and the Government. We firmly believe that the Reform proposals with modifications on the lines of the message will accomplish this great object. But this bright prospect will, if the Reform proposals are dropped, or their beneficent scope curtailed, be overshadowed by the dark cloud of contention, controversy and agitation, the future of which none can divine; there will be agitation on the one hand, intense, bitter, widespread, accen-

tuated by deep national discontent, all parties joining in it; there will be repression-on the other, leading to God alone knows where. Is this a prospect which any Government can contemplate with equanimity? Are the days of the anti-partition agitation to be renewed, aggravated a hundred-fold by the intenser public life of the India of today? Is India to be converted by the unwisdom of our rulers into a greater Ireland? Let the British Cabinet make its choice. But I have no doubts, no misgivings. The good-sense of the British democracy will prevail; its freedom-loving instincts will assert themselves. It cannot be that the civilized world has spent its blood and treasure, and that India has taken her part in the supreme sacrifice of the nations, in order that this ancient country, the home of a great civilization, may continue to be a hewer of wood and a drawer of water, barred out of the heritage of universal freedom. The Prime Minister has told us that the principle of self-determination was no longer to be circumscribed by considerations of latitude and longitude, and the Secretary of State has assured us that India must be firmly set on the road to complete self-government. Are these messages of hope and sympathy to be cast to the winds and the seeds of deep and abiding discontent sown in the public mind of India? Lord Carmichael said the other day that if the Scheme was dropped, many Indians would believe that the Government had committed as bad a breach of faith as any Government had ever been guilty of. The same impression will be created if the Scheme is whittled down. "British power and influence", said Lord Ripon on a memorable occasion, "rest upon the conviction of our good faith more than upon the valour of our soldiers and the reputation of our arms". Let nothing be done by the rulers of India to shake this faith which is the strongest bulwark of States and Thrones.

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