

## SIR WILLIAM WEDDERBURN, BART.

*A Sketch of His Life and His Work for India.*

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### HIS FAMILY HISTORY.

§ SIR William Wedderburn was born in Edinburgh on the 25th of March 1838, being the third son of Sir John Wedderburn on the retired list of the Bombay Civil Service. The family is an ancient one, the name of Walter de Wedderburn appearing among the barons of Scotland who signed what is known as the "Ragman Roll" at Berwick-on-Tweed in 1296. Members of the family were strong supporters of the Scottish Reformation during the 16th Century, and were the reputed authors of the "Gude and Godlie Ballatis", and the "Complaynt of Scotland," which exercised an important influence on the side of the reformers. In the reign of Queen Anne, a baronetcy of Nova Scotia was conferred on the family. But during the rebellion in Scotland, Sir John

Wedderburn went out on the side of the Stewarts, and having been taken prisoner after the battle of Culloden, was tried for high treason and executed on the 28th of November, 1746. His eldest son John was Sir William's grandfather. As a youth of 17 he fought at Culloden, holding a commission in Lord Ogilvie's regiment; so that Sir William can say (the case is no doubt unique) that his grandfather fought in a battle on British soil 164 years ago. In 1803, a new baronetcy, of the United Kingdom, was conferred on Sir William's predecessor.

As regards the family connection with India Sir William, some two years ago, wrote as follows: "As long as I can remember anything I was destined for the Indian Civil Service. My father had served 30 years in the Bombay Civil Service, which he entered in 1807, now 100 years ago, before Haileybury College existed. My eldest brother John joined the Bengal Civil Service in 1844, by nomination to Haileybury, and served until his death in 1857, during the Indian Mutiny. But when my turn came, nominations to Haileybury had ceased,

with the demise of the old East India Company, so that I went to India as a 'Competition-Walla,' joining the Bombay Civil Service in 1860, and continuing a member of that service until my retirement in 1887. Thus our family had a long and intimate connection with the Government service in India; and it will readily be understood that we all took an excessive pride in that service. For myself I can say that I always regarded this hereditary profession, which was also the profession of my choice, as the noblest career open to youthful aspirations. I lay some stress on this point, as it shows that if, at various times, I have come into collision with the dominant powers of the great Indian bureaucracy, the cause must not be sought in any inbred hostility to the service, nor in any want of *esprit de corps*. In every way I came out to India under pleasing circumstances. The friends of my father and my brother were in high office, and willing to give me all reasonable chances of advancement. Also, at that time there still existed among the seniors in the service some social

prejudice against the new race of Civilians, who were coming out under the competition system ; so I found myself warmly welcomed as one who, by successfully passing through the fiery ordeal (I took 3rd place in the list), had upheld the credit of the [old Anglo-Indian families ”.

Sir William's own connection with India has now continued unbroken for half-a-century ; and his work may conveniently be notified under three headings : (1) His official career in the Civil Service ; (2) his sympathy with Indian reform, especially as affecting the condition of the ryot ; and (3) his work, after retirement from the service, in Parliament, and as Chairman of the British Committee of the Indian National Congress.

#### HIS OFFICIAL CAREER.

As regards (1) his official career, it must be said that his lines fell in pleasant places : Under-Secretary to Government ; Registrar of the High Court ; Judicial Commissioner in Sind ; Secretary to Government in the Judicial, Political, and Educational Departments

and Judge of the High Court ; of all these coveted and influential appointments, he enjoyed his full share, after he had served his apprenticeship as one of the rank and file in the mofussil. In connection with his political work, one or two points may be noticed. Sir William held pronounced views in favour of strengthening the position of Indian princes. He considered that the Indian people were happiest under a well-administered Native State, where, free from the evils of overcentralisation, local feelings could be best consulted, and local resources most effectively developed. To these views he was able to give effect when in charge of the Political Department, under sympathetic Governors like Sir Seymour Fitzgerald and Lord Reay ; and he thus took part in establishing (a) the Rajkumar College at Rajkot, under Mr. Chestre Macnaghten ; (b) the Joint Administration at Bhaunagar, under Mr. Percival and Mr. Gaurishankar, the distinguished Minister of the late Maharaja ; and (c) the Grassia Court at Kathiawad. These measures all tended to give

strength and permanence to the administration of the States concerned. The Grassia Court, a tribunal mainly representative of the reigning chiefs, disposed finally of the disputes between the chiefs and their feudatories' disputes which had long agitated Kathiawad, and led to outlawry and brigandage. The Joint Administration of Bhaunagar was a new experiment. Hitherto during a minority, Native States had been placed in the charge of a Political Officer, who often made vital changes in the existing system, thus breaking the continuity of the chief's administration. On the other hand the Joint Administration, by exercising the usual powers of a Durbar, preserved the continuity of the State tradition, while securing a general accordance with the spirit of British policy. Lastly, the Rajkumar College, by giving the young chiefs a sound education, laid the foundations in each State for a stable and enlightened rule. In connection with his career on the Bench of the Bombay High Court it may be sufficient to say that he won the confidence of the people

by his adamantine impartiality as much as by his benignity and courtesy. Sitting on the Appellate Bench with his Indian colleague, the first of his race, the late Mr. Nanabhai Haridass, he had often the disagreeable necessity to enhance sentences of a most inadequate character passed by the District Judges—sentences altogether most disproportionate to the crime committed. These light sentences had scandalised the Indian community and to Sir William and his colleague belong the high credit of having effectually put an end to the scandal. They were nicknamed "Enhancement Judges" by a section of the rabid Press, but everybody knew how they had greatly improved the administration of criminal justice in the Mofussil. The Session Judges were made to remain on their good behaviour. When Sir William left the service in April, 1887, the Government of Lord Reay issued a Gazette Extraordinary expressing regret at his retirement: "Sir W. Wedderburn has been intimately associated with the Government as Acting Chief Secretary, and for a short time

as Member of Council. And it is a great pleasure to His Excellency in Council to acknowledge the valuable assistance and advice for which he has been indebted to him, both as a Secretary and as a colleague. . . His enthusiasm in the cause of education, and his anxiety to promote all measures which would, in his opinion, conduce to the moral and material progress of the natives of this country, have, as His Excellency in Council believes, won for Sir W. Wedderburn the confidence and the gratitude of those in whose cause he has laboured." It is pleasing to record that for the strenuous service he rendered to the cause of India and the active sympathy Sir William uniformly displayed towards their legitimate ambition and aspiration, the grateful people of Bombay voted him a handsome purse. Part of the moneys subscribed were devoted to an oil-painting of Sir William and the bulk was handed over to the Bombay Presidency Association as the nucleus of a permanent fund, the income of which was to be utilised in the political ad-



vancement of the people of this Presidency. The portrait costing 600 Guineas was painted by Mr. Herkomer. It is a speaking likeness of the great and conscientious Englishman and adorns the rooms of the Bombay Presidency Association.

#### HIS WORK AS AN INDIAN REFORMER.

Leaving now the subject of official services, we come to (2) Sir William's personal work in India, when co-operating with Indian reformers. He had the advantage of familiar converse with more than one generation of Indian reformers. Among the early pioneers in Bombay were Mr. S. S. Bengalee, Mr. Nowrozjee Furdonjee, Mr. Dadabhai Naoroji, Dr. Bhau Daji, Sir Mangaldas Nathubhai, and Rao Saheb Wishwanath Narayan Mandlik. Then followed Mr. Justice Ranade, and the distinguished triumvirs, Sir Pherozeshah Mehta, Mr. Justice Telang, and Mr. Justice Tyabji, who represented the cordial alliance of Parsee, Hindu and Moslem, bound together as Indians for the cause of India. In conference with advisers so well understanding the condition of the people, and also with the

younger generation of educated men, Sir William soon began to learn where the Indian shoe pinches, and to realise that the destitution of the masses is the one great fact of the Indian problem. In searching for the causes of this excessive poverty, and the practical remedies, he found himself in agreement with his Indian friends, who prescribed as among the most immediate requirements, the limitation of the Government demand; the provision of agricultural capital at moderate rates; and the settlement of disputes without expense by friendly arbitration, in the place of litigation in the Civil Courts. Accordingly he brought forward (A) a scheme for a permanent settlement in the Dekkhan; and laboured to establish, (B) a pioneer agricultural bank; and also to place upon a firm basis, (C) the system of "Lawad" or Conciliation Courts, organised by his friend Mr. Ganesh Wasedeo Joshi. It was when at work on these practical remedies that he first came painfully into collision with the machinery of the great centralised departments, which have

practically absorbed all authority in the administration. The consequent fate of the three schemes noted above may briefly be narrated. (A) The proposed permanent settlement was based on the old law of Manu, under which the ryot paid his revenue in kind, as a fixed share of the gross produce. Sir James Caird, as one of the Famine Commissioners, had recommended that in a few selected villages experiments should be made on this basis; and accordingly Sir W. Wedderburn organised an experiment in a village near Ahmednagar, the proposal being that the ryot should give to the Government in kind 1-16th of the gross produce, with the option of paying a fixed quit rent in cash, when, by reason of his improvements, it was advantageous for him to do so. In organising this experiment much assistance was given by the American Missionaries, who cultivated a considerable amount of land held from Government on the usual terms, and who were willing to be responsible for the arrangement with the villagers. All parties concerned were pleased with the scheme,

and the Collector of the District forwarded it to the Government with an expression of his approval. The scheme would have freed the ryot from the power of the money-lender, and would have provided an increasing revenue to Government. It might therefore have been expected that the proposed experiment would have been welcomed by the authorities. But this was not so. The Collector, who sent up the scheme was sharply rebuked for seeking to interfere with the existing order of things; and the proposal was nipped in the bud. A subsequent attempt met with a similar fate. But it may be noted that H. H. the Gaekwar has in the last few years inaugurated an experiment on these lines under the management of his Revenue Secretary, the lamented Mr. Romesh Chunder Dutt.

(B) The scheme for establishing a pioneer Agricultural Bank at Saswad, near Poona, had a more fortunate career, and was only wrecked when it reached the India Office in London. The object of the promoters was, to provide for the settlement of old debts; to restore the

friendly relations between the ryots and the money-lenders ; to secure the hearty co-operation of both these classes ; and to induce the local capitalists to give their financial support to an Agricultural Bank on the lines of those which had achieved such a brilliant success among the rural populations of Europe. After much careful enquiry, and many local meetings, all parties agreed to co-operate. A public meeting was then held at Poona, under the presidency of the Collector of the district, resolutions were passed for the establishment of an Agricultural Bank, and an influential Committee was appointed. This Committee waited upon the Governor (Sir James Fergusson) and set forth their proposals for an experimental bank at Saswad in the Purandhar Taluka. His Excellency received the deputation in a very cordial manner, expressed himself favourable to the scheme, and agreed to forward it to the Government of India. The Marquis of Ripon was then Viceroy, and Sir Evelyn Baring (now Lord Cromer) who was Finance Minister, had

personal experience of Agricultural Banks, so that the Poona scheme received immediate and sympathetic consideration; and a very important despatch dated December 5, 1882 was sent from Simla to the Bombay Government. Subject to certain minor conditions, the Government of India accepted the Poona proposals. They were willing to appoint a Commission for the liquidation of the ryots' debts within a limited experimental area; they would advance the cash (some 6½ lakhs) necessary to compound the old debts; and they would concede to the bank the privilege of recovering the advances through the revenue officers on the same footing as advances made by the Government. In conclusion, the Government of India, stated that they attached very great importance to the experiment, and asked the Bombay Government to undertake the working of the measure. To this the Bombay Government agreed; and on the 31st of May, 1884, an unanimous despatch, signed by the Viceroy and his colleagues, was forwarded to England, asking the sanction of the Secretary of State to the proposed experi-

ent: "We are anxious," they said, "to give effect to a scheme which we believe to be advocated on purely disinterested grounds, which can under the experimental conditions proposed be carefully watched, and which is likely, if successful, to be productive of much benefit to the country." A long and wearisome correspondence followed. The India Office raised every sort of theoretical objection; and finally in August, 1887, in reply to a question of Mr. Samuel Smith in the House of Commons, flatly refused to allow the experiment to be made. But the prescience and wisdom of that scheme, strange to say, has now been acknowledged. The Credit Co-operative Societies are the forerunners but India is now within a measurable distance of the establishment of Agricultural Banks, more or less on the principles of the Egyptian. The fossils of bureaucracy have been obliged by the whirligig of Time to unbend.

(C) There remains to notice the case of the Arbitration Courts. The proposal was to revive the old Mahratta system of Ram Shastri and Nana Farnavis, under which

no dispute came before a Judge until every form of arbitration had been tried, and failed. The "Panchayat" system is dear to the Indian mind, as exemplified by the phrase "Panch Parameswara", an Eastern equivalent of "Vox populi, vox Dei"; and in 1876, a strong movement was initiated by that noble old patriot Mr. Ganesh Wasedeo Joshi and his friends, which resulted in the establishment of "Lawad" or Arbitration Courts in Poona, Satara, Sholapur, Ahmedmagar, Thanna, Ratnagiri, Nasik, and Ahmedabad, with Branch Courts at the smaller towns. In the Poona Court alone 3,000 suits were disposed of in the first two years, with great satisfaction to all parties concerned. Sir W. Wedderburn, who, as a District Judge, had painful experience of the ruin brought on the agriculturists by litigation in the Civil Courts, was anxious to give completeness and permanence to these voluntary Arbitration Courts, by incorporating them in our judicial system; and in order to give shape to the project, a large and representative public meeting was held in the Town Hall at



Poona, when a Committee was appointed to prepare a draft bill and report. The Committee consisted of seven Subordinate Judges, two pensioned Subordinate Judges, two pensioned Revenue Officers, three Pleaders, two Bankers, and an Editor; all practical men deeply interested in the welfare of the rural population. Briefly stated, the bill, as ultimately approved, provided that all suits should, in the first instance, be brought in an arbitration court; and if either party was dissatisfied, the case was to be finally disposed of by the Subordinate Judge, going on circuit, and sitting with the arbitrators who had originally dealt with the case. One would have supposed that a practical scheme of this sort, stamped with popular approval, would have at least obtained careful consideration from the authorities. Not so. The popular movement in favour of conciliation was discountenanced by the Government of Sir Richard Temple; the stamp duty upon arbitration awards was increased; and each of the Subordinate Judges who had taken part in the scheme was separately reprimanded.

These attempts to deal with rural distress have been shown in some detail, in the hope and belief that these and similar proposals for the relief of the ryot will receive from the reformed Councils careful and sympathetic consideration.

Sir W. Wedderburn was much interested in education, especially Female Education. At Kurrachee in 1880, the "Wedderburn Hindu Girls' School" was established to commemorate his connection with Sind; and in 1884 he co-operated with Rao Bahadur Mahadeo Govind Ranade in founding the High School for Girls at Poona. As Agent for Sirdars in the Dekkhan, he addressed the assembled Chiefs on the subject at the Annual Birthday Durbar, and obtained from them liberal support; he himself contributing Rs. 10,000 to found a scholarship in memory of his brother Sir David.

In 1885 Sir William, as a coadjutor of Mr. A. O. Hume and Mr. W. C. Bonnerjee took part in organizing at Bombay the first session of the Indian National Congress, an epoch-making event. As showing the spirit in which

the movement was initiated, it may be mentioned that the Viceroy, Lord Dufferin, was approached, with a view to the meeting being held under the presidency of Lord Reay, then Governor of Bombay. Lord Dufferin approved the proposal as showing the desire of the Congress to work in complete harmony with the authorities, but he pointed out that many difficulties would be involved if a high official presided over such an assembly. The idea was therefore abandoned, but none the less the first Congress was opened with the friendly sympathy of the highest authorities. In the same way Lord Lansdowne a few years later, declared that the Congress movement was "perfectly legitimate," and enjoined upon Government servants to abstain from interference. Unfortunately such a policy of friendly neutrality did not commend itself to the dominant faction of officials, and the friends of the Congress were made to feel that official displeasure awaited those who supported this organised movement towards an advance in self-government.

- HIS WORK AFTER RETIRING FROM GOVERNMENT  
SERVICE.

In returning to England, Sir William's special object in life was to co-operate with the Indian National Congress in obtaining for Indians a fair share in the management of their own affairs. From his own experience he was convinced that no help in this direction could be expected from official influences in India. Quite the contrary. Originally he was inclined to believe in the Indian Civil Service as the ordained instrument of India's regeneration: he was proud to take part in an administration which was to bring peace and plenty to the masses; and, as it were by the touch of Ithuriel's spear, to revive the ancient arts, and industries, and learning of the East, while freely offering to those who desired it, the education and science of the West. Such was the dream of youthful enthusiasm. Unfortunately it was but a dream. What was the reality? The fault was not with the individuals who formed the service; it was the system that was in fault, a system tainted with the vices insepa-

nable from bureaucratic domination : a rigid mechanism, highly centralised, secret, irresponsible, and intolerant of outside criticism and suggestion.

Reformers could not expect help to proceed from this stronghold of official privilege : too unsympathetic to persuade ; too powerful to coerce. But if a frontal attack could only end in disaster, much might be accomplished by a flanking movement. For, though the Secretary of State might be inaccessible as the head of a great official administration, he is approachable, and subject to persuasion, from the House of Commons, and the British elector. As regards India, he is an autocrat ; as regards British statesmanship he is a member of a Cabinet depending for its existence on the vote of the House of Commons ; the House of Commons being in its turn dependent on the British electorate. The appeal therefore must be made to the democracy, which, if it understands the facts, will have both the power and the will to do justice to India. Accordingly, the plan of campaign which Sir William has

steadily pressed upon his Indian friends is, to carry on the work of organisation and propaganda simultaneously in India and in England; both are equally important. In India the object has been to develop, by means of the Indian National Congress, an approved programme of reforms, founded upon the widest experience and the wisest counsels available under existing conditions. This has been done; and the Congress programme has become the brief, which the friends of India, working with the British Committee of the Indian National Congress, have been forcing on the attention of the British public, by means of Parliament, the Platform, and the Press. In all these activities Sir William has taken a leading part. As regards the work in India, he returned to Bombay in 1889 as President of the 5th Congress, being accompanied by Mr. Bradlaugh, who had given his powerful aid to the cause of India. Again, in 1904 he accompanied Sir Henry Cotton, who had been elected President, when he received a most cordial welcome both in Bombay and Madras. In

England he has kept touch with India through the British Committee, of which he has always been Chairman. And in 1893 he obtained a seat in the House of Commons for the County of Banff. This he retained until 1900, when he retired. The reasons of his retirement are stated as follows in a letter which, jointly with Mr. Hume and Mr. Dadabhai Naoroji, he addressed to the President of the Indian National Congress: "The work in England is great and difficult, and the workers are few; and these are overtaxed both as to physical endurance and financial resources. That is why one of us who now address you (Sir W. Wedderburn) has been driven to retire from Parliament. For seven years he has had a double burden; direct work for India; together with the wear and tear of contested elections, care for the special interests of his constituents, and the multifarious duties of parliamentary life. He has found it not possible to continue this double burden, and has therefore, with great reluctance, for the present retired from the House of Commons, in

order to economise his resources for the direct work on behalf of India." It must be mentioned here, in bare justice to Sir William, that he has spent over a lakh of rupees from his own pocket in a variety of ways with the sole and exclusive object of advancing the moral and material well-being of the Indian people. His left hand has not known what his right hand did. When at the Bombay Congress, Mr. D. E. Wacha, the Joint-General Secretary, referred to the heavy self-sacrifice undergone by Sir William in the cause of the Indian people, the approbation with which the entire assembly received his remarks was but a small recompense for his magnificent and selfless services. During his time in Parliament he organised an Indian Parliamentary Committee, consisting of about 120 members, pledged to give attention to Indian affairs, and to see justice done. Of this Committee he was elected Chairman, and on various occasions weighty representations, on financial and other questions, were addressed to the Secretary of State on behalf of the



Committee. In 1895 Mr. Dadabhai Naoroji, with the help of the Committee, obtained the appointment of a Royal Commission under Lord Welby to enquire into Indian expenditure and the financial relations of India with the British Empire. During the five years for which the Royal Commission lasted, the case for India was laboriously kept to the front by the minority of the Commission (Sir William Wedderburn, Mr. Caine, and Mr. Dadabhai Naoroji), who represented Congress views. Valuable evidence was obtained from Indian witnesses; and the Indian view received public and official recognition in the Minority report. Hansard's reports will show that, during his time in Parliament, Sir William lost no opportunity of defending Indian interests, but it may be noted that he vehemently protested against the political and military aggressions on the north-west frontier, and denounced the breach of faith which was committed when after the relief of Chitral, Lord Elgin's Government failed to evacuate the territories of the frontier tribes, as they had solemnly promised

to do. In summarising the work done by friends of India in England, there remain to notice the activities in the Press, and on the platform. As regards the Press, the British Committee of the Indian National Congress established "India" as a first class weekly journal, which gives full and special reports of Indian Parliamentary debates, and of Indian meetings, which forms a store house of facts and arguments for journalists and speakers throughout the country, and which keeps before the British public the Indian view of current events. In 1904 it was thought desirable to separate the journal (financially, not politically) from the British Committee, and the "India" Newspaper Company, Limited, was formed to carry on the enterprise. Of this Company, Sir W. Wedderburn became the Chairman. As regards the use of the platform, Sir William has always attached the greatest importance to Indians stating their case at first hand to British audiences, and he constantly urged the despatch to England of qualified and accredited Indian delegates, both to address public meet-

ings, and also to make use of social opportunities to spread correct views about India. Such occasions were provided for the delegates when Sir William invited Members of Parliament and other influential persons to meet them at his friendly breakfasts at the Westminster Palace Hotel. The brilliant success of Mr. Gokhale and Mr. Surendranath Bannerjee in very critical times showed the great value of such visits, and it is only to be regretted that a permanent delegation of qualified Indians has not been retained permanently at the seat of power. It may be here added that Sir William has, all through these 20 years and more, been in almost weekly correspondence with leading Indians like Mr. D. E. Wacha and Mr. G. K. Gokhale keeping himself well in touch with all Congress affairs and Indian public opinion.

During the recurrence of famines, Sir William periodically brought forward a motion in the House of Commons to the following effect :  
 "That looking to the grievous sufferings endured by the people of India, this House is of

opinion that a detailed and searching village enquiry should be instituted, in order to ascertain the causes which blight the industry of the cultivators, and render them helpless to resist even the first attacks of famine and pestilence." This motion was always negatived at the instance of Lord George Hamilton, the Secretary of State for India. So after leaving Parliament, Sir William organized the Indian Famine Union, with Lord Courtney as Chairman, on a purely economic basis for the specific object of investigating the causes of Indian famines, and promoting possible means of prevention. The Union met with great public support; meetings were held; and a memorial adopted asking the Secretary of State for India to cause a detailed enquiry to be carried out in selected typical villages in each of the provinces affected by the famine, with a view to ascertain the actual condition of the cultivator, and to suggest means by which he may be enabled better to withstand the attacks of famine. This memorial was signed by a large number of the most influential persons in the United

Kingdom, including the highest dignitaries of the Church, headed by the Archbishop of Canterbury and the Cardinal Archbishop of Westminster, Members of both Houses of Parliament of all shades of political opinion, retired Indian officials, Civil and Military, who had held the highest offices under the Crown, Heads of Colleges, literary men and women of distinction, Mayors and Provosts of towns, Chairmen of County Councils, and Presidents of Chambers of Commerce. There could hardly be a more representative body of memorialists, and what they asked for was something not only easy and simple, but absolutely necessary; for there was no agreement as to the actual condition of the ryot, the officials alleging that he was prosperous, and increasing in prosperity; while all Indian opinion held that he was chronically on the verge of starvation. It seems almost incredible that such a request, so made, should be refused. But so it was; Lord George Hamilton refused even to receive a deputation on the subject, though it was to be headed by no less a personage than the Marquis of Ripon,

an ex-Viceroy of India. A diagnosis of the patient is the first step towards scientific treatment; and it is a matter for great satisfaction that Sir William has, no intention of allowing this question of the condition of the masses to be dropped. He feels sure that the matter will be taken up when the new Councils in India have had time to settle to their work.

During the summer of 1908 Sir William had a somewhat severe attack of illness. From this he made a good recovery, but he has been recommended to spend his winters abroad. This does not mean that he has in any way stopped his work for India, for though living several miles away from London, he continues his interest in Indian affairs by timely representations to responsible English politicians in power, by communications to the Press and regular correspondence with his many friends in India.

The members of the Indian Civil Service as a class have won just distinction for integrity, industry, and zeal for the good of the Indian

people. Sir William was amongst the few who added to these qualities genuine appreciation and love of those whom they served devotedly. In all matters he gave the first and foremost thought to the interests of the people. Those of his service he would consider it his duty to subordinate when necessary. His own he surrendered with the unhesitating cheerfulness of the true sacrificer. It was part of his nature to treat the Indians with the considerateness due to equals and the tenderness due to those who felt that they were politically subordinate. In one of his recent messages to his Eastern brethren he laments the anti-English feeling that has been a marked feature of one school of Indian agitation, and exhorts them to seek the glory of being perhaps the only nation on earth to ground their political aspirations on the basis of a common humanity. Therein he strikes a note that cannot but evoke a sympathetic echo in the heart of many an Indian who has learned to regard his country as the teacher of true spirituality to the world. In other ways, too, Sir William Wedderburn is a hero after the

Hindu's heart. The most genuine philanthropist of the West is often a bustling individual, constantly adding up his deeds and straining his ears to the sound of popular praise. The perfect self-effacement, the sage-like forgiveness and serenity of spirit of Sir William are virtues which we consider peculiarly ours, and without which, in our eyes, the greatest men lack the supreme element of greatness.

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## APPENDIX.

### *Selections from Sir William Wedderburn's Speeches and Writings.*

#### I. Parliamentary Inquiry into Indian Affairs.\*

The first occasion on which Parliament interfered actively in the affairs of the East India Company was in 1773, when, under Lord North's administration, the Regulating Act was passed, and an attempt was made to place a control on the Government in Calcutta. The experiment was not a success; and in 1782 and 1783, two Committees of the House of Commons were appointed, one presided over by Mr. Edmund Burke, and the other by Mr. Dundas; and these two Committees made not less than 17 Reports, all condemnatory of the Company's Government. Upon these reports the House of Commons passed resolutions for the immediate dismissal of the Governor-General and the Chief Justice of Bengal; the situation being thus described by the Rt. Hon. W. Massey in his *History of England under George III*:—

The Company lay under accusation of having cruelly and scandalously abused the privileges of rulers. Their principal servants had been inculpated of gross malversation by a unanimous resolution of the House of Commons; and the Company had nevertheless upheld their officers in spite of the opinion of Parliament and of the Minister of the Crown. . . . Nor had the Company purchased material prosperity by the open violation of

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\* Reprint from *India*.

the principles on which civil government; nay, society itself, is based. Plunder and extortion had only relieved their immediate and temporary exigencies. The ordinary resources of India were unequal to satisfy the greedy adventurers who were spread over the land, and to maintain the military force which was necessary to support an arbitrary and iniquitous Government. The Company, therefore, came before Parliament as delinquents who had grossly abused their trust, and as bankrupts who were unable to perform their engagements.

Such being the condition of affairs, India formed the most prominent topic in the King's Speech on opening the autumnal Session of 1783; and a few days later Mr. Fox introduced his famous India Bill, to suspend the powers of the Company, and to bring the affairs of India under constitutional control. In 1784, this Bill "for the better government of India" was passed through the House of Commons by a majority of more than two to one in every division. And if it had become law, a strong and independent Parliamentary control would have been established over the Executive in India. Unhappily, the progress of the reformers was stopped by the fall of the Coalition Ministry; and the task of putting a bit and a bridle in the mouth of the great Indian bureaucracy remains unfulfilled to the present day.

Mr. Pitt, who next came into power, passed his India Bill, which established the Board of Control, the President of the Board being a Minister of the Crown. He thus provided for systematic interference in the affairs of the Company; and in 1783, Mr. Dundas, then President of the Board of Control, took advantage of the renewal of the Company's Charter, for a period of 20 years, to consolidate all the existing enactments, thus completing the fabric of the dual government by the Board of Control and the Court of Directors, which lasted some 60 years from this date.

A similar Parliamentary enquiry was held before the renewal of the Charter in 1813, the result of which was that the commercial monopoly which the East India Company enjoyed with regard to India and China, was abolished.

Again, in 1833, when the Charter was renewed, the memorable Act was passed by which it was declared that Natives of India, without regard to colour, descent or religion, should be eligible to every office under the Government which their education and acquirements might qualify them to fill.

Finally, there was the enquiry which preceded the renewal of the Charter in 1853; an enquiry which led to many beneficial reforms, including the abolition of patronage in the Indian Civil Service, the appointments being thrown open to public competition.

From the above meagre summary we can see the immense benefit that India derived from such periodical Parliamentary enquiries; the object of these enquiries being, first, to ascertain the facts as to the condition, the wants, and the aspirations of the people; and, secondly, to decide how those wants and aspirations can best be met, with benefit to all concerned. Experience shows that in each period of 20 years fresh conditions had arisen, and material alterations became necessary both in the framework of the government machine and in modes of administration, in order to meet the social and political developments of the people. But this development and progress has been much more rapid during the half-century which has elapsed since the enquiry of 1853. What has been done since then to realise the situation; to provide redress of grievances; to control the official autocracy; and to satisfy the natural aspirations of the people for self-government, stimulated as it has been by the education and the contact of Western nations? Much was hoped for in 1858, when the old East India Company was disestablished, and the direct administration was assumed by the Crown. But what has been the practical result? The theory, of course, is that the Secretary of State for India is responsible to, and subordinate to, Parliament, and that in dealing with Indian complaints he occupies a position of judicial impartiality. But this is altogether a delusion. The Secretary of State for India, being backed by the Ministerial majority, is in Indian matters, practically the master, not the servant, of the House of Commons; and so far from being an impar-

tial judge, ready to hear complaints, and eager to afford redress, he is in reality the mouthpiece and champion of the official hierarchy, against whom the complaints are made. Deriving his views and information solely from the India Office, he becomes naturally the apologist of all official acts, and resents every complaint as a reflection on the administration of which he is himself the head. So far from things being better now than they were before 1858, they are distinctly worse; and especially in two particulars: In those days India was administered in the name of the East India Company, and there existed a wholesome jealousy, both in the House of Commons and in the country, of a chartered monopoly. That wholesome jealousy has been lulled to sleep since the Crown has openly assumed the administration. The other great benefit that India then enjoyed, and has now lost, was the full and impartial enquiry before each renewal of the Company's Charter. Out of those enquiries arose, as we have seen, all the most useful and progressive reforms by which England has benefited India. Also, the Company used to put its house in order, and redressed grievances, when these enquiries were in sight. Now, all these benefits are lost. Since 1858, there has been no such enquiry; no day of reckoning for the Indian administration; and the Indian people are quite powerless to obtain that thorough and independent investigation into facts which used to come to them automatically, and without effort, once every 20 years. So far from being controlled, the Indian Bureaucracy is always becoming stronger, more reactionary and more aggressive; fortifying itself in the great centralised departments, and grasping the legislative machinery, which it employs to undermine local self-government, to suppress free speech, and to paralyse higher education. Instead of emphasising the difference between British and Russian rule, and developing those free institutions which form the main ground of Indian attachment to England, these blind guides are setting up in India a feeble and foolish imitation of Russian despotism, and are rapidly alienating the affections of a loyal, intelligent and law-abiding people.

Anyone who peruses the earlier debates in Parliament

with regard to the constitutional changes in the Indian Government, will notice the anxious desire of the speakers that due weight should be given to Indian opinion and Indian knowledge. But the difficulty in those early days was to get hold of any authorised and organised Indian public opinion. Now, however, that difficulty no longer exists. Since 1866, several generations of educated men have come forward, trained in our colleges and universities; men who have attained the highest distinction in administration, on the Bench, at the Bar, in science, and all the liberal professions. With such spokesmen India is no longer inarticulate. Nor is Indian public opinion any longer without effective organisation. For the Indian National Congress, freely elected in all the Provinces of India, has now met year after year, for the last 20 years, to voice the needs, the wishes, and the aspirations of the Indian people; and the resolutions, moderate and reasonable, are year by year respectfully submitted for the consideration of the Indian Government. Rightly understood, the interests of India and England are identical, and the cordial co-operation of the educated classes is the most hopeful sign for our successful administration in the future. As a preliminary step towards utilising this source of knowledge and influence, an experienced Indian administrator should be added to the Executive Council of the Viceroy, and several independent representative Indians should be invited to sit on the Council of the Secretary of State for India.\*

At present the Indian Government refuses enquiry into the condition of the Indian rural population, which suffers from famine and plague; and a deaf ear is turned to the memorials of the National Congress, asking for reasonable measures which will improve the condition of the masses. Special Indian knowledge, such as Parliament does not possess, is needed to deal satisfactorily with these vexed questions.

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\* This article was written long before the latest Indian Councils Act.

## II. Agricultural Indebtedness.\*

In this Address you have referred to the impoverished condition of the masses of this country, and you have referred to the interest that I have taken in the ryot, in the great rural population of India. It is quite true, I may say, that for nearly half a century my anxious thought has been for the great mass of the rural population. (*Cheers.*) The great problem is this, the terrible indebtedness of the agriculturist, an indebtedness so great that it paralyzes his energies, it enslaves him, it deprives him of his hereditary acres. That is the greatest misfortune that can happen to the country. This great indebtedness has led, I regret to say, to the destruction of his credit. When a man owes more than he can ever hope to pay, how can he get loans when he is in great difficulties? The consequence is that this excessive indebtedness is, I believe, the main cause of the great mortality during famines. When crops failed in former times a man had some little ornaments remaining to him and he had credit with the money-lender, with the grain dealer; but now owing to his excessive indebtedness, if the harvest fails, he has no money to buy food, no credit to borrow money, and unless he is fed by the State at the expense of the taxpayer, he must die in starvation. That is a terrible state of things. I may say that famine has not been a famine of food, but has been a famine of poverty. In the worst times of the famine and in the worst localities there was always food to be got if the people had only the money to buy it with or had the credit to borrow the money. Therefore, I say this terrible indebtedness is the great cause of the famine mortality.

Gentlemen, with your permission, I would very briefly refer to the efforts which at different periods I have made

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\* Reply to an Address of Welcome presented by the Citizens of Madras on the 6th January, 1905.

in order to deal with this terrible evil of rural indebtedness. From both of these things I had considerable hopes ; but I am sorry to say in both cases those hopes were not realised. (The Chairman ; for the present.) For the present, I am glad to see, the Chairman tells us. The first was in the year 1882 when our beloved Marquis of Ripon (*cheers*) was the Viceroy of India. At that time we made a scheme to deal with the indebtedness of the Taluq of Purandar in the Poona Collectorate. Both the ryots and money-lenders agreed to the arrangements we proposed. The scheme was to make a settlement of the old debts upon an equitable basis with the consent of all parties : the State was to advance the amount of these debts. Having thus cleared the way, we were to establish an experimental Agricultural Bank in that taluq in order that the ryots might receive abundant advances at a moderate rate of interest. To this scheme the ryots had agreed, the money-lenders had agreed—they were to become shareholders in the Bank—the bankers had agreed, the landholders had agreed and we had many experienced Government Pensioners who were willing freely and without payment to administer the affairs of the Bank. Not only that, but the Government of Bombay agreed to this scheme and the scheme went up to the Government of India : and I am glad to say that the scheme was not only approved by the Viceroy, Lord Ripon, but also by his Finance Minister, Major Baring, who is now Lord Cromer. Lord Cromer, when he was satisfied that the people desired the scheme, that it was on good business lines, and that it was likely to be a pioneer that might spread to other parts of the country, was willing to provide the hard cash to make the settlement between the ryots and the money-lenders. He was willing to advance no less than Rs. 6½ lakhs in order to make a complete settlement of the old debts.

This having been agreed upon, a despatch was sent in the year 1882, to the Secretary of State for India in London, asking for his sanction for this great and useful experiment ; and the Government of India said : “ We cannot see that any harm can possibly come from this, and very great benefit might accrue to the whole country.” I am sorry to say—I am not going to call any hard

names, I do not think that any hard names ever break one's opponent's bones nor do any good to one's cause—I shall only say that I regret to say that the Secretary of State for India, after a wearisome correspondence making difficulties and asking questions that could not be answered—we wanted to make an experiment and see how it worked; a man cannot learn to swim until he goes into water, and in the same way we wanted to make an experiment to see how a Bank could be worked—I am sorry to say that after considerable correspondence, the Secretary of State for India ended by giving a negative to the whole scheme without giving any proper reasons for his refusal. (*Shame.*) That was in 1882. Nearly a quarter of a century has elapsed and now at last, after 22 years the Government of India have discovered that Agricultural Banks would be a good thing for the ryots of the country. If they had found out that 22 years ago, we should have found that Lord Cromer, instead of employing his genius and ability in rescuing the ryots of Egypt from their indebtedness, would have employed his genius and capacity to have done that for the ryots of the Empire of India. I have seen the proposals of the Government of India for Agricultural Banks, but it appears to me that they are not satisfactory. They are too much centralised. They depend upon centralisation instead of being adapted to the special needs of the people in the locality. They are too doctrinaire; they are not practical enough and I very much fear that they have not very much hope. But I am glad at any rate that they have taken that one step in 22 years, that they discovered that Agricultural Banks would be a good thing for the people. (*Laughter.*)

The second matter to which I would draw your attention is the Memorial, the very largely and influentially signed Memorial, of the Indian Famine Union, asking for a detailed economic inquiry into the condition of typical villages that have been suffering from famines. The reason that we desired that enquiry was because of the irreconcilable differences of opinion between the officials and the non-officials with regard to the real condition of the Indian ryots; in the Annual Reports we are always being told of the increasing prosperity of the ryot.



If he has been increasing in prosperity every year since I remember official Reports, he ought to be a very fat man by this time. (*Laughter.*) But the non-official opinion is that he is a very poor man, a mere starveling and a victim of famine and plague. Until we decide what the condition of a patient is, how can we possibly apply any remedy? If you have a sick man, we first make a diagnosis of his case and then we know how to apply the remedy. We, therefore, begged the Government of India to make this enquiry. I think I may say that never was a petition more influentially signed, beginning with the Archbishop of Canterbury and going down through every grade of society. I am sorry to say that the Secretary of State and the Government of India both refused to make that enquiry; and I see that in the last day or two, Sir Edward Law has spoken of the general wave of prosperity that has been passing over the country during the last three years. I say this is a statement which ought not to be made unless there is a full enquiry before independent authorities to ascertain what is the real condition of the people. Now, this enquiry was refused for various reasons. One was that it would take up too much time of the Government officials. But I have been able to point out to them that Mr. Thorburn, the Financial Commissioner in the Punjab, made such an enquiry in no less than 742 Punjab villages. He completed the enquiry, I think in six weeks and the whole cost of it was only £300. If that is the case, why should the Government shrink from making the enquiry we ask for? Another ground was that it would raise unfounded hopes in the agriculturists' minds. But in Sir Antony Macdonnell's great Famine Report, he said that one of the greatest evils which the country suffered from was the despairing dependancy of the agriculturists. The first thing he asked to take was the motto "put heart into the people"; that is what is wanted. Therefore to raise hopes in the minds of the people is not a bad thing, but on the other hand a very good thing.

Lastly, they told us a most extraordinary thing; they said that if the enquiry were made it would be intensely resented by the people. Now, I think that it is ar

inquiry which the people have always been asking for ; that it will not be resented by the people is shown by the fact that the Indian National Congress, which represents the people, has twice made the request to Government that the enquiry should be made in accordance with the recommendations of the Indian Famine Union's Memorial. (*Cheers.*)

### III. The Mission of the Congress.\*

I have watched from its commencement the movement which has now culminated in the Indian National Congress. And in my humble judgment the movement is unmitigated good in its origin, objects and its methods. As regards its historical origin, we know that it is the direct result of the noblest efforts of British statesmanship : the natural and healthy fruit of higher education and free institutions freely granted to the people of India. Again what are the practical objects of the Congress movement? They are to revive the National life, and to increase the material prosperity of the country ; and what better object could we have before us? Lastly, as regards our methods, they are open and constitutional, and based solely on India's reliance upon British justice and love of fair play.

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The man who points out the rocks and shoals towards which the ship is moving, is the friend of the captain, not the enemy. And that is the light in which the Government should regard the criticisms of the Congress. The moderate reforms proposed by the Congress will all tend to make the people of India more prosperous and more contented, and will thereby strengthen the foundations of British rule. (*Cheers.*)

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\* From the Presidential Address to the Fifth Congress, 1889.

#### IV. The Congress and the Masses.\*

If we carefully study the Congress resolutions, we shall find that they all point to one main consideration, the condition of the agricultural masses. Upon the welfare of the peasant cultivator depends the prosperity of all India. The one great question, therefore, is how can he be protected from famine and pestilence? How can he be made happy and prosperous? Everything depends upon the answer given to this question. And it is here that the irreconcilable difference of opinion arises between the official and non-official view of the situation; between the Government and the Congress. The Government view is that the cultivator is prosperous; the Congress view is that he is ruined: the Government view is that the official system of centralised departments is the cause of his prosperity; the Congress view is that this same system is the cause of his ruin. Here is a clear issue of fact; and the prayer of the Congress is that this issue should be tried and determined. Is the cultivator prosperous or is he ruined? What we now ask for, as a preliminary step, is a detailed economic inquiry, by an impartial authority, into the condition of a few typical villages; an inquiry after the fashion of that conducted in London by Mr. Charles Booth, and in York by Mr. Rowntree. But this inquiry the Indian Government is unwilling to face. Lord Curzon will not allow it to be made, although it has been demanded by the *Indian Famine Union*, backed by a Memorial signed by leading representatives of every influential class in the United Kingdom.

The situation is, indeed, a strange one. On the one hand, we have Indian public opinion, represented by the Congress, quite solid, but destitute of political power; on the other hand, we have Lord Curzon at the head of the all-compelling official autocracy. The Congress says

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\* From an article on "India Re-Visited" to the "Indian Review" for March, 1905.

that India is suffering; Lord Curzon says: "No, she is happy and prosperous;" and here the matter must stand until inquiry is made, and the facts determined. It is the old dispute between the wearer of the shoe and the maker. The wearer says: "the shoe does not fit; it galls me; I am crippled, and cannot walk; please examine my foot, and you will see that this is the case." The official shoe-maker is indignant that such complaints should be made. He knows what a superior person he is, how skilled a workman, how kindly intentioned. He, therefore, refuses all inquiry; and explains to the British public that these complaints must be unfounded, as his workshop and his work people are the most meritorious that the world has ever seen.

Such is the present situation. But it cannot last. Inquiry cannot be indefinitely postponed; and truth will be out in the end.

## V. A Scheme of Village Inquiry.\*

My scheme is that, after the inquiry suggested is made, each of these typical villages should be put under the charge of an experienced and sympathetic officer with instruction that he should by his own methods of keeping accounts of the cost, etc., bring that village into prosperity. I regard the village community as the unit in India. The result of this experiment would give us a clue to the method for rendering prosperous all the half a million villages of which India is made up. The inquiry suggested is not merely to diagnose the disease but to discover the remedies by experiment.

Each experiment that is found successful would be applied to the neighbouring villages and the remedies would gradually expand from each centre to places which economically are similarly conditioned.

\* \* From an interview given to the Representative of the *Madras Mail* in January, 1905.

"I have passed a quarter of a century among you, and during that period of time I have not known what it was to suffer an unkindness from a native of India. During that period I have been in the service of the people of India, and have eaten their salt. And I hope to devote to their service what still remains to me of active life."—From the Presidential Address to the Fifth Indian National Congress, 1889.

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