

The Policy of the Home
Ruler.

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Bombay Home Rule Series

THE POLICY OF THE HOME RULER.

We dealt recently in a series of articles with the present situation, in which we refuted the charge persistently brought against the advocates of Home Rule of late in the Anglo-Indian press that the aims and methods of the organisers of the movement are inimical to the preservation of British Rule or the maintenance of these amicable relations between the Britisher and the Indian which every well-wisher of this country must desire to exist. We have often had to repeat in these columns, and we repeat it again, that the Home Rule propaganda has as its object nothing more and nothing less than that which is the settled creed of the National Congress viz., the attainment of self-government on colonial lines, that is, the same self-government which the dominions of Australia, Canada, and South Africa enjoy. That is the aim to be worked for. Of course it is inevitable that opinions must differ as to the period within which such a consummation can be attained fully, as well as regarding the actual measure of reform for which the country and the Empire is now ripe as an instalment towards the desired end. But if we are all agreed on the desirability, or rather the necessity of the aim, the legitimate character of the ideal,—and the ideal is cherished as much by Lord Hardinge and Sir Satyendra Prassanna Sinha as by the members of the Home Rule League,—it surely does not become morally culpable to wish to hasten the day of attainment by educative propaganda, or to believe that an essential requirement of the moment is to take a large step

forward in the direction of the ideal, in order to satisfy the political hunger that gnaws at the vitals of the educated community in India.

Our belief is that there is after all very little difference really in the actual position of those who have entered the Home Rule movement and those who have remained outside. We are speaking, of course, of adherents of the Congress creed. The non-official members of the Imperial Council have just presented to the Viceroy a manifesto setting forth their views on the constitutional reforms to be introduced after the war. We have no knowledge of the contents of this manifesto but we should be very much surprised if it contains anything less than the average Home Ruler would ask for, if he were invited to state his views as to the minimum concession that would satisfy the immediate needs of India. The only points on which the Home Ruler,—and we mean by the term the members of the Home Rule League,—differs from the so-called ~~Conservative~~ party in the Congress are, first, his belief in the necessity for constant all-the-year-round agitation and political education on peaceful and constitutional lines, and second, his demand that self government should be something more than a mere vague ideal to be achieved sometime in a distant future, which nobody attempts to measure, but a practical issue to be discussed and set forth in definite terms.

Perhaps it may be useful to examine once again the position of the Home Ruler,—what he stands for and what he asks for. In the first place, he stands, of course, for Home Rule, that is to say, the complete control by the Indian people of their own affairs under the aegis of the British Empire, and for an equal place for India in the supreme councils of the Empire, along with the other self-governing dominions. He does not say that this is immediately attainable, but he does say that it is to be worked for as a practical demand and not merely to be regarded as a distant vision. Secondly, he says that, though

it may not be possible to give India such a full and complete measure at this moment, it is essential that a real beginning should be made and a beginning that will lay the foundation of the future by the definite admission of the principle of the responsibility of the Government to the people and not merely a further extension of the right to discuss and co-operate. India is ripe not only for representative government, but also for responsible government. The legislature must be representative of the people,—the taxpayers,—and the executive must be responsible to the legislature. The immediate demand of Home Rulers,—and we believe it does not materially differ from the demand of congressmen outside the Home Rule League,—may be stated approximately under the following heads:—

- (1) The Executive to be made responsible to the Legislature.
- (2) The Executive, in the proportion of one ~~half~~ ^{one} to be drawn from the Legislature and to be chosen by the Legislature,
- (3) The legislature to be entirely an elective body on an enlarged basis, minorities to be suitably protected.
- (4) Provinces to be autonomous.
- (5) Provincial Governments to spend the provincial revenues, rendering only the Imperial revenues to the Imperial Government.
- (6) The Government of India to enjoy complete fiscal autonomy.
- (7) Indians to have absolutely equal opportunities of entering the higher services, for which purposes simultaneous examinations to be held, all racial distinctions to be abolished and Indians not to be debarred from holding any post.

These are the chief demands of what is immediately necessary. As regards the relations of the Executive and Legisla-