

THE MONTAGU—CHELMSFORD REFORM PROPOSALS

WITH A FOREWORD

BY

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*Together with the Text of the Memorandum of the
Nineteen, the Congress-League Scheme and
a Summary of Indian Criticisms on
the Proposals*

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FOREWORD

THIS book should be useful as offering much valuable information in a compendious form. It is well to reprint the Congress-League Scheme for comparison with the criticisms on it contained in the Report, as it will be seen that those criticisms are more fatal to the Montagu-Chelmsford Scheme than to the one they misjudge. The proposals now offered to India fall far below those of Mr. Gokhale—held up to us as a model of moderation—as well as far below those of the “Nineteen,” and the National Congress and All-India Muslim League, the well-considered reforms demanded by the Indian Nation. Yet all those were formulated in 1914 and 1916, and things have moved fast since then.

But far more regrettable than the limited reforms proposed with the added power of autocracy in the Central Government, is the spirit of the Scheme—the distrust of Indian capacity, the arrogant view of India's unfitness to manage her own affairs, and the assumption that foreigners and not her own people are to determine the stages of her enfranchisement. She is offered Foreign-Determination instead of Self-Determination, and is asked to accept it.

The historical retrospect is purely bureaucratic, waving aside history as it exists in favour of the distorted representations current in Britain and in Anglo-India, and thus gravely prejudicing India's case in the eyes of the British Democracy. I do not believe that it was written in order to delude; I only say that, if it had been so written, it could not have been better wrought out. I acquit the writers of all save ignorance, but ignorance is a disqualification for writing historical essays.

It is of vital importance to India that the Scheme as it stands shall not be accepted. The insertion of the essentials of the Congress-League scheme would make it a short first step towards Self-Government. On that all patriots should concentrate their efforts from the present day until the Bill now drafting becomes an Act.

ANNIE BESANT

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