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THE  
**CO-OPERATIVE ORGANIZATION**  
IN BRITISH INDIA

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## PREFACE

I began the study of Co-operative Organization in India some two years back just to get a modicum of information about it to enable me to talk on it with some confidence to my students in the post-graduate classes. But I found the subject so fascinating, so full of hope for my country that I decided to offer to my countrymen a readable account of what has been done by this movement, and for this movement in our country during the last twenty years.

What Co-operation has done for India during this short period is really wonderful. But what we (educated and well-to-do Indians) have done for it is equally wonderful. It shows how callously indifferent we can be to things that really matter; how we can waste time in a mere war of words. What great capacity we have of hypnotizing ourselves into inactivity, while believing all the time that we are forging ahead towards the much coveted *swaraj*! Let us think dispassionately for a moment and then ask ourselves: "What is our contribution to the building up of the Indian Nation? Have we done anything towards the solution of those much vexed questions such as the Problem of the Depressed Classes or the Problem of Untouchability, or the Problem of Mass-Indebtedness and Poverty—problems on the solution of which the regeneration of India depends?" If I give

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an unqualified answer there is danger of my being run down as a traitor to the country and, worse than that, a henchman of the accursed bureaucracy. And yet to be honest to myself I must say that what we have done indeed in these directions is so little as to be almost negligible. Of course, in words we have done a great deal. Not a day passes when we do not hear of some pious resolution passed on one or more of these subjects in one part of the country or another and that usually after an impassioned harangue in which every one is run down for his or her apathy, of course, the lecturer and his pliant audience excepted. If empty words and pious resolutions had any potency in securing freedom for our country, we should have had it long ago. That we are neither economically nor politically free is beyond dispute and should be enough to convince us that something more than mere words is necessary to take us to the desired goal. And that something is not to be found in any easy short cuts of the quack variety but only in earnest effort, for

*“ Nature a mother kind alike to all*

*Grants her blessings at labour's earnest call.*

She is a wonderful woman who is neither moved by tears nor threatened into submission, but yields of her own accord when impressed by the earnestness of her suitor. And this is what I wish, with all the earnestness at my command, to impress upon every young man and woman in this country. India needs serious, sustained effort not for a day or a month but for years, may be, for a generation or

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two. It is only then that we can hope to achieve *swaraj*. Not till then. And there is no better method either for learning the habit of patient, unremitting toil, or for the exercise of it than actual work in the Co-operative Organization. Within the folds of this movement there is hope for everyone, weak or strong, poor or rich, literate or illiterate, of doing service to himself and to the country of his birth. The strong can teach the weak to get strong, the rich can teach the poor to become rich and the educated can teach the uneducated and thus by the exercise of mutual service raise the nation from the bottomless abyss of ignorance, poverty, debt and disease, in which we find it today, to those giddy heights, which even we in our wildest dreams of yesterday, or tomorrow have not been able and will not be able to picture to ourselves. That is why I look upon Co-operation as the Hope of the Poor, and the Opportunity of the Rich.

Will we young men and women respond to this urgent call of our motherland? I believe we will. But if I have misjudged and the majority of my countrymen will still prefer a life of selfish ease to the life of service and sacrifice, which is the supreme need of our country, the need of the country must be satisfied if not today then tomorrow, if not by the sons of the soil then by her servants from abroad. That she is destined to be great in the community of nations either through our efforts or through the efforts of her adopted sons is not difficult to see even for a casual observer of her history during the last hundred years or so.

I have an unbounded faith in the future of our country. She must be great in days to come. And the only thing that we middle-class young men and women of India can do is to accelerate or retard the day of *her greatness*. The choice is ours. Let us choose with our eyes open. I know that the temptations are great. When it is so easy these days to come in the limelight and to secure greatness in worldly possessions by the mere sharpness of one's tongue either in running down the bureaucracy or in exciting the communal feelings, why should one deliberately take to the other road full of difficulties, and with immediate prospect of unremitting toil? Because we claim to be thinking people, our power of thought should show us that the immediate glory is but a shadow cast in our way to delude us, may be to test our faith and strength of purpose. And the unremitting toil, though it may not individually bring any great rewards to all of us who belong to the present generation, is yet sure to bring freedom—the *highest of all rewards that man can think of*—to our country, our homes and our children. For this then let us be up and doing without thinking of rewards:

*“For we may not all be heroes  
And thrill the hemisphere  
With some great deed of venture—  
Some deed that mocks at Fear.  
But we all can fill a lifetime  
With kindly acts and true  
For there is ample service  
For noble souls to do.”*

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Before concluding it is my pleasant duty to acknowledge with deep gratitude the keen interest taken by my friend Hubert Calvert, Esqr., I. C. S., C. I. E., in this book from its inception to the finish. As it is, it owes much to his esteemed suggestions, and to him I offer my sincerest thanks. However, for the opinions expressed the responsibility herein is entirely mine. I also take the opportunity of thanking the Registrars, Co-operative Societies of the various provinces for supplying me with the literature.

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*1st January, 1927.*

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