For Favour of Review

INDIA
AND
OTTAWA.

"No Ottawas For Us"

—V. J. PATEL, ex-Speaker, Indian Legislative Assembly.

BY

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With a Foreword by

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PREFACE.

I am greatly flattered by the numerous requests from friends to make the ten articles I have lately contributed to the columns of the local "Tribune" available in a collected form. I am glad to find that the forthcoming Ottawa Conference is beginning to attract a good deal of public attention in this country. The whole of my thesis may best be summed up in the four simple words in which Mr. V. J. Patel expressed his views about the Conference the other day: "No Ottawas for us." If there are five Indians outside the prison-walls to-day who are entitled to speak on a question like this in the name of their country, the distinguished ex-Speaker of the Indian Legislative Assembly certainly is one of them.

Prof. Brij Narain, who is a recognised authority on Indian Economics, has laid me under obligation by writing a foreword for this pamphlet. My thanks are also due to Pt. Pearay Mohan Dattatraya, Senior Assistant Editor of the "Tribune," for reading the proofs and seeing these pages through the press.

RUCHI RAM SAHNI.

22, *Rattigan Road,*
Lahore.
5 June, 1932.

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FOREWORD.

Prof. Ruchi Ram Sahni deserves the thanks of the public in general and of the readers of the "Tribune" in particular for educating public opinion on the important questions which will soon form the subject of discussion at Ottawa.

He had set himself a twofold task—that of tracing the evolution of the British Commonwealth in recent years, and of explaining the growth of economic Imperialism. His discussion of preferential trade, based on authoritative sources, will be read with interest and profit by all students of economics; his account of the transformation of the British Empire into the British Commonwealth of Nations will do credit to a professional historian.

The Statute of Westminster turned the Dominions in November, 1931, into sovereign States. As the author remarks, the Commonwealth is an alliance of equals in every respect. This implies the right of secession; the right to make laws; the right to enter into treaties with foreign powers without the intervention of Britain.

India has no place in this Commonwealth. "What has become of England's promises about the liberty of weak nations?", asks the author. Well, these promises served their purpose. They were not meant to be taken seriously.

Since the passing of the Statute of Westminster "we have been receiving even harder kicks than before." We deserve them. These kicks exemplify the "Dominion

Status in action'' towards which we are steadily progressing.

The author, perhaps, cherishes the hope that Britain will, one day, satisfy 'the legitimate political aspirations' of India, when, enjoying Dominion Status, 'with all the rights and privileges of a Dominion', India will accept the principle of Imperial Preference. I am less optimistic. The political history of India is different from that of the self-governing Colonies. No such ties of race and blood exist between India and Britain as bind the Colonies to the Mother country. Britain founded the Colonies; she conquered India by the sword.

All that we may aspire to is Dominion Status with proper 'safeguards', 'in the interests of India', it should be well understood. Whether 'safeguards', such as have been frequently mentioned during the debates on India in the British Parliament, can be reconciled with Dominion Status, I leave others to judge.

A more practical subject is that of the British demand for Imperial Preference. Sometime ago it used to be called 'The Indian Offer of Imperial Preference'. India, of course, never made any such offer to Britain, nor will she ever willingly do so.

The explanation of 'the dramatic change in the economic policy of Britain', from free trade to protection, as well as of the British demand for Imperial Preference, lies, as the author has clearly shown, in the steady decline of British exports in recent years. From 64.2 per cent in 1913-14, Britain's share in our imports fell to 35.4 per cent in 1931-32.

The Congress boycott of British goods has played an important part in reducing Britain's share in our imports during the past two years. But British exports to all countries have been declining for many years. Britain is losing her industrial leadership, which she enjoyed undisputed for a little more than a century after the Industrial Revolution.

This is a very serious matter for the United Kingdom—also for the rest of the British Empire. For the United Kingdom, as the Indian Fiscal Commission described it, is 'the heart of the Empire', on whose strength depends the strength and cohesion of the Empire. The strength of the United Kingdom is bound up with the prosperity of its export trade. The conclusion therefore follows that "Unless the United Kingdom maintains its export trade, the heart of the Empire will weaken, and this is a contingency to which no part of the Empire can be indifferent." From the point of view of India particularly this is a frightful contingency. It must not be allowed to happen. Our responsibility in the matter is all the greater because India is one of the greatest potential markets for British goods. "It has been said", we read in the Report of the Liberal Industrial Enquiry, "that if every Indian ryot could afford one additional dhoti a year, all the mills of Lancashire would have to work full time to meet the demand." India, therefore, can do much to strengthen the heart of the Empire.

But what about our own exports? Will Imperial Preference stimulate them?

In 1903 approximately 43 per cent of our exports went to the British Empire; the average share of the British Empire in our exports during the quinquennium 1927-28 to 1931-32 was 38.4 per cent. Thus at the present time a little more than 61 per cent of our exports find a market in foreign countries.

Lord Curzon's Government regarded the danger of retaliation as real. The examination of the question in 1903 showed that the greater portion of our exports "compete successfully in foreign markets by reason of their cheapness than of their quality or kind", and in this respect there has been no change for the better during the past 30 years. In the midst of war in 1917, when it was thought that the time had arrived for "making the Empire independent of other countries in respect of food supplies, raw materials and essential industries', the Government of India suddenly made the discovery that the retaliatory dangers apprehended by Lord Curzon's Government were not serious, and a Committee of the Imperial Legislative Council declared in 1920 that there was no danger to be feared on that score. In view of the more rapid decline of British exports since that date and the more urgent need for strengthening the heart of the Empire at the present time, it would not be surprising if the Ottawa Conference found that preferential tariffs, so far from provoking retaliation, would so inordinately please foreign countries as to induce them to buy more of our raw materials than before.

Even if foreign countries possess no power of retaliation (which is untrue, considering that more than half of our exports consist of articles in respect of which we enjoy no monopoly of any kind), it is certain that Imperial Preference would cause a heavy fall in the demand of foreign countries for our raw produce and food stuffs.

The object of Imperial Preference is to exclude imports into India from Great Britain's rivals. For example, in the year 1931-32, we imported 775 million yards of cotton piece-goods, of which 384 million yards were British, and 340 million yards came from Japan. If preferential tariffs do not help Britain to capture this market, there is no point in discriminating against the foreigner. The case of other articles is similar. The success of the policy of Imperial Preference will therefore be judged by the extent to which Britain is enabled by this means to recover her lost market here.

But the exclusion of the foreigner from the Indian market must reduce his power of purchasing our raw materials. For example, Japan at present accounts for something less than half of our exports of raw cotton. It is reasonable to suppose that Japan will buy less of our cotton if we make it impossible for her to sell cotton goods here. Even if foreign countries did not wish to retaliate, the loss of the Indian market would inevitably lead to a reduction in their demand for Indian raw materials.

Imperial Preference would impoverish the Indian consumer by raising the prices of manufactured goods; and it would impoverish

the Indian grower of food stuffs and raw materials by reducing the foreign demand for our exports.

Where is the guarantee that as the demand of foreign countries for our exports decreases, the loss occasioned to us thereby will be made good by a corresponding increase in the demand of the Empire?

India has little to gain by Imperial preference. But she may lose much.

A country that largely exports food stuffs and raw materials and largely imports manufactured goods, can grant preferences of substantial value, but receive none of any great value. Take for example our wheat exports. The quantity exported in 1931-32 was a little over 20,000 tons, valued at 15 lakhs. But in 1924-25 we exported over 1 million tons of wheat, valued at 17 crores. Will Imperial Preference revive wheat exports?

No. In the first place, taxation of food would raise the price of food in Great Britain, and would, for that reason, be unwelcome. In the second place, any preference that Britain may be disposed to grant would be shared by India with Canada and Australia, and thus be of little value to us.

This simple example illustrates a general principle: food stuffs and raw materials are, as a rule, not subjected to heavy taxation anywhere; the United Kingdom can confer no great material benefits on us by discriminating specially in our favour in respect of its imports of food stuffs and raw materials.

The Indian Fiscal Commission of 1921-22 were impressed

throughout their enquiry "by the almost complete unanimity with which Indian witnesses (the present writer being one of them) opposed the principle of Imperial Preference." Briefly the position may be summarised thus: Imperial Preference is not acceptable to India as it is a policy conceived wholly in the interests of Britain: It means protection for British manufacturers at the expense of Indian consumers and producers.

Note. That the view taken here of the very limited advantages of Imperial Preference from the point of view of Indian exports is substantially correct is shown by the discussion of "The Possibilities of Imperial Preference" in a recent book entitled "Tariffs" (a joint work prepared by a Committee of Economists under the Chairmanship of Sir William Beveridge; Longmans, 1931). The chapter on "The Possibilities of Imperial Preference" has been contributed by Sir William Beveridge and Mr. J. R. Hicks. The joint authors condemn taxes on primary food as 'bad taxes', 'particularly bad for Britain'. They clearly state that "to tax such foods, simply in order to give a preference to Dominions, might, by its reaction on popular feeling in Britain, do very poor service to the cause of the Empire". They conclude: "To avoid, if possible, the taxation of food and raw materials is a primary British interest" (p. 139).

From the scope of preference two groups of articles have to be excluded: those of which the Empire as a whole has now a substantial export surplus, and those of which the Empire supplies are able to satisfy only a small proportion of the Empire demand.

Wheat, jute and ground-nuts are included in the first group. Preference in such cases would mean that the producing countries take full advantage of the monopoly created within the Empire, and dump outside it.

The second group includes cotton. Britain imports the greater part of her cotton from foreign countries: "a duty on foreign raw cotton would damage British industry far more than remis-

sion of the duty could benefit India" (p. 144).

If Britain, so far as possible, will avoid the taxation of food and raw materials, as she must in her own interests, the benefit to India from Imperial Preference will be so small as to be negligible.

BRIJ NARAIN.

I

From the all too slight notice it has received in the Indian press, it would seem that the full significance and implications of the forthcoming Ottawa Conference have not been clearly understood or realised in this country. It may be, and this is, perhaps, the real reason for the lack of popular interest in the momentous decisions that are going to be taken at Ottawa in July next, that the whole of India is too much engrossed either in carrying on, or in watching with bated breath, the grim struggle between the Congress and the Government, to spare a thought for anything else.

Anyway, we have been, I fear, somewhat remiss in not educating public opinion here about the trends and currents of political thought and action within the British Commonwealth during the last fifteen years or so. What is known as the British Commonwealth of Nations is itself the creation of this period. It is, one may truly say, the fruition of the expansive ambitions and aspirations born during the hard times and experiences of the storm that had overwhelmed the world, and nurtured and sustained with the life blood of tens of thousands of the best and bravest sons of the British Empire.

The transformation of the "British Empire" into the "British Commonwealth of Nations" is an achievement at which the whole world may rejoice and of which the British statesmen may justly feel proud. Tended with gentleness and nursed with political sagacity in the spirit of generous idealism in which it was

conceived, the "Commonwealth" may, in the course of time, become the herald of a new era of world peace.

As we know, it was this spiritual vision of a "Brotherhood"—call it "Federation," if you like—of the Nations and Races of the world, which had, at one time, charmed, fascinated and enthralled the great Congress leaders like Gandhi, C. R. Das and Motilal Nehru. It was under the spell of such a vision that they welcomed the chance for India of a place in the British Commonwealth of Nations for the good of their own country and the greater good of the world at large. There was something inexpressibly grand and glorious in the thought of India becoming, along with the other members of the British Commonwealth, one of the foundation stones upon which, in the fulness of time, may arise the "Palace of Peace," dreamt of by so many prophets, poets, philosophers, sages, and seers of the world.

Deshbandhu Das was an idealist. One may even call him a dreamer. But if he was a dreamer, he was one with a well disciplined mind. In other words, he knew the limitations of his dreams and was not carried away by them. Discussing the comparative merits and demerits of "Dominion Status" and "Independence" for India in his memorable speech at Faridpur a few months before his death, he made a strong plea in favour of "Dominion Status" as a higher ideal than "Independence." He said:—

"No nation can live in isolation; Dominion Status, while it affords complete protection to each constituent composing the great Commonwealth of Nations, called the British Empire, secures to each the right to realise itself, develop itself and fulfil itself. Therefore, it expressed all the elements of Swaraj. To me the idea is specially attractive, because of its deep spiritual significance. I believe in world-peace, in the ultimate federation of the world. The great Commonwealth of Nations called the British Empire—a federation of diverse races each with its distinct mental outlook—if properly led is bound to make a lasting contribution to the great problem of putting the world into the greatest Federation the mind can conceive, the Federation of the human race. Independence to my mind is a narrower ideal than Swaraj."

There were many even among leading Congress men who did not understand the Deshbandhu and thought he had lowered the national flag. Nothing of the kind. The present writer had occasion to hold intimate conversations with the great leader. To him "Independence" was too narrow, selfish and self-sufficient a goal to rouse and strengthen the altruistic idealism of his people. His own religious faith may fitly be expressed in eight simple Biblial words: "Where there is no vision, the people perish." A devotee at the temple of *Daridra Narayan* (God manifest in the Poor), C. R. Dass looked upon every labourer in a good cause as a *co-worker* with God. And the

larger the field of labour, the greater the sufferings and sacrifices, the nobler and higher was the ideal. From this point of view, Deshbandhu Das was capable of thrilling to great emotion at the very thought of India occupying a position of equal partnership in the British League of Nations known as the British Commonwealth which had emerged from the throes of the Great War.

Parliament as a permanent institution for the discussion of subjects of common interest to the constituent parts of the Empire.

But, as we have said, India proved to be the one obstacle and, in view of the prevailing recial prejudice and mistrust, an almost insurmountable obstacle in the way of the realization of the scheme. After her great contribution in winning the War, and the possible need for making a similar call upon her again at a future time. it was felt to be out of the question to exclude her altogether from the Federal Parliament if and when such a Parliament was established. Once admitted into a Federal Parliament, who could resist her demand to be represented there adequately by members of her own free choice? What this would mean and involve one can easily understand. In the event, it was decided to drop the scheme altogether.

An equally serious objection to the Federal Parliament scheme was advanced from a different quarter which finally sealed its fate. An influential section in Canada and, a little later, the newly created Irish Free State (1922), voiced their stoutest opposition to any scheme that was calculated to hamper or restrict their freedom of action as independent sovereign States, the only link binding them to one another in the Commonwealth and to Britain being their allegiance to the Crown, which was at once the symbol and the seal of the solidarty and unity of the Empire.

The plan to establish a Federal Parliament thus ended in a fiasco.

It was still-born. In India not a tear was shed for it, if only because it was conceived in darkness, and was the offspring of an unholy alliance. It will be recalled that the real author of the Imperial Federation was one Lionel Curits of the Round Table fame. His antecedents were all against him, so far as this country was concerned. He was a born South Africander and had been intimately connected with a piece of legislation directed against the Indian settlers in Natal.

Coming out to India in the early years of the Great War, he had thrown himself into the arms of certain high officials and others. He himself named three of his "friends" in consultation with whom the whole plot was hatched. These friends were Sir James (now Lord) Meston, then Lieut. Governor of the United Provinces, Mr. Marris, the civilian Inspector General of Police in the same Province,who succeeded Sir James Meston as Lt. Governor and Sir Valentine Chirol, the able special correspondent of the "London Times." It was this distinguished quartette of politicians who assumed the role of putting forward far-reaching proposals for reorganising the British Empire as soon as the hositilities should come to an end.

Their scheme was as simple as it was innocent. They were all moved by the most altruistic intentions to lead India to the haven of self-government. To this end, they suggested the establishment of a Federal Parliament composed of Great Britain and its five self-governing Dominions with a cabinet at the top of it. The Irish

Free State had not yet come into existence. Mr. Lionel Curtis and his friends could not find a place in the new constitution for India, Egypt and other protectorates and dependencies, because they were "politically backward". But instead of being governed by England, in the more generous dispensation suggested by them these backward States would be placed under the fostering care of the Federal Parliament who would watch their progress and lead them on, step by step, to their destined goal of self-government!

As ill luck would have it, by pure accident a letter of Mr. Lionel Curtis explaining the whole scheme was made prematurely public. It had been printed at the Government Press at Allahabad and it clearly admitted that "it may be taken as representing our joint view", meaning thereby the three gentlemen with whom he had been confabulating in framing the scheme. The letter was meant for certain members of the Round Table Group in London who had sent Mr. Curtis out to India.

The publication of this letter created a furore of indignation and excitement all over India. Many things happened, but, to cut the story short, it may be said at once that although the scheme lingered on for a few years and was discussed in political journals off and on during this time, the bitter opposition it met with at the hands of Indian political leaders squeezed all life out of it and it died a natural death, unwept, unhonoured and unsung.

pride of India more than words can tell. Her contribution towards winning the war was acknowledged with gratitude and admiration by almost every British statesman of position. It was certainly greater than that of any of the Dominions. In a spirit of supreme idealism, she had allowed herself "to be bled white" in the cause of the freedom of weak nations. And yet even now she was not trusted.

But though represented by the Secretary of State for India, it cannot be denied that constitutionally India's position at the Peace Conferences was one of equality with the self-governing Dominions. It was a domestic arrangement that her delegation was not chosen by herself, but was imposed upon her from above. At the Peace Conference table the Indian delegation, such as it was, enjoyed all the rights and privileges of an equal partner in the British Commonwealth.

That this theoretical equality was not without value, becomes apparent from the fact that, having signed the covenant of the League of Nations at Versailles, India was automatically admitted as an original member of the League in her own right, and, in that act, was placed on a footing of absolute equality with the self-governing members of the British Commonwealth. Again, I say that the fact that, the Dominions are represented by their Prime Ministers while India is represented at Geneva by the Secretary of State, is a purely domestic question. In the eye of the law, *so far as the matters of which the League takes cognizance are concerned,* the constitutional status of India is no whit inferior to

that of any of the Dominions and even of any other member of the League of Nations. It is as if the agent in the firm "India" was representing the concern in a Chamber of Commerce without the consent and, indeed, against the protests of the shareholders themselves, while the other members of the Chamber were the chosen delegates of their shareholders.

It is very necessary to stress the point that the "equality" we have been referring to is merely theoretical and, even so, it holds good within a very narrow compass; it has no relation whatsoever with the realities of the life and experiences of Indians. Only one illustration of this divorce between theory and practice may suffice. In the Imperial Conference of 1921, India was represented by the Secretary of State (Mr. Montague) along with the Rt. Hon. Srinivasa Sastri as one of the two Indian delegates. Mr. Lloyd George who led the British delegation made some very feeling observations in the course of which he said:—

"Our foreign policy can never range itself in any sense upon the differences of race and civilization between East and West. It would be fatal to the Empire."

It must have rejoiced Mr. Sastri's heart, as it certainly rejoiced the whole of India to hear the British Premier declare, with all the authority and prestige that belongs to his position, a policy breathing such generous sentiments. No wonder that the Conference passed the following resolution:—

"That there is an incongruity between the position of India as an equal member of the British Empire and the existence of disabilities upon British

Indians lawfully domiciled in some other parts of the Empire. The Conference accordingly is of the opinion that, in the interests of the solidarity of the British Commonwealth, it is desirable that the rights of such Indians to citizenship should be recognised."

But before the Conference dispersed, General Smuts made it perfectly clear to everybody that the Union of South Africa, which he represented, had no intention of abiding by the resolution of the Conference. He dare not have made a similar declaration regarding a resolution of the Imperial Conference touching any other part of the British Commonwealth of Nations. Though theoretically "*an equal member of the British Empire,*" India is invited to the Imperial Conference more as a matter of courtesy than of right. She is there on sufferance, because her representatives who owe their nomination to the British Cabinet cannot resent such remarks.

Two years later, at the Imperial Conference of 1923, the same subject coming up again, another eminent Indian leader, who had now taken the place of Mr. Srinivasa Sastri, made a most spirited speech. In the fewest possible words he very neatly put India's whole case.

"I fight" said Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru, "as a subject of King George for a place in his household and I will not be content with a place in his stables."

IV

In what we have said so far, we have sometimes spoken of the territories owning allegiance to King George, collectively, as the "British Commonwealth of Nations;" at other times we have referred to them by their old fashioned name, the "British Empire." It will have been noticed that, even in the resolution of the Imperial Conference of 1921, which we quoted at the close of the last article, both the designations have been used somewhat loosely, as if they were synonymous terms.

The fact of the matter would seem to be that, since the Paris Peace negotiations (1919) India has been *theoretically and in a purely constitutional sense,* an equal member of the British Commonwealth, though, in practice, she has been treated no better than she was before the War. It is not General Smuts alone who can politely ignore the resolution of the Imperial Conference, and even the more forcible appeal of the British Premier that any discriminations made by the members of the Empire on the basis of "race and civilisation" would prove to be "fatal to the Empire". The treatment accorded to the Indian settlers in the Crown colonies, which are governed directly by Britain, has been only a shade better than that in the virtually independent self-governing Dominions like South Africa, Canada etc. During the War, broad hints were being thrown out that, as soon as hostilities were over, the whole of East Africa, including the German territories which Indian troops had helped so much to conquer, would be reserved for colonisation by the overflow po-

pulation of India. What has actually happened and is happening there, as well as in other Crown Colonies, we all know. The agony of the whole situation is that the continued discriminate treatment of Indians within the Empire is inspired mainly, if not solely, by considerations of racial and cultural cleavages, which Mr. Lloyd George declared to be "fatal to the Empire." For, it should never be forgotten that, as Lord Morley once pithily put it, "*India is the Empire.*" If India is unhappy, sullen and disconsolate, as she is today and will remain so long as she is not assigned her rightful place of equal partnership in the British Commonwealth, the Empire cannot last long.

It is now time to devote a few paragraphs to the wonderful constitutional developments which have taken place in the legal status of the Dominions both in relation to each other and to Britain. It may be said at once that while there has been but little advance in the position of India, the six Dominions (including the newly created Irish Free State) have, during the last dozen years, became to all intents and purposes *independent sovereign States*, the only uniting link left between them and Britain being the Crown. How this transformation has come about forms a story of absorbing interest to Indians at the present moment. No apology need, therefore, be offered for giving it here in the briefest outline.

Before the War broke out, the Prime Ministers and other representatives of the self-governing Dominions and Britain had met, off and on, in Imperial Conferen-

ces to discuss questions of common interest to all of them, the general tendency naturally being towards federalism with one another and the mother country. The talk of an Imperial cabinet was in the air. India was, of course, left out of the reckoning, though her more advanced politicians would also, now and again, lisp similar aspirations.

At the Imperial Conference of 1911, the last one to be held before the strom burst over the world, the Dominions put forward a united demand for a voice in controlling the foreign policy of the Empire, but the British Premier turned it down. Then came the Great War. The need of England was the opportunity of the rest of the Empire. When the need for help from every possible quarter was felt more keenly than ever before, an Imperial Conference was held in October, 1917. For the first time, India was represented in this Conference, though not by her own chosen delegates. As might have been expected, one of the main questions which were placed before the Conference was the question of the "constitutional relations of the component parts of the Empire." But it was felt that a problem of such great importance and intricacy could not well be dealt with during the War. The Conference, however, recorded their view that after the cessation of hostilities a special Conference should be summoned for the settlement of the question. The Conference further placed on record their view that "any such readjustment, while thoroughly preserving all existing powers of self-government and complete control of do-

mestic affairs, should be based upon a full recognition of the dominions as autonomous nations of an Imperial Commonwealth, and of India as an important part of the same, should *recognise the right of the Dominions and India to an adequate voice in foreign policy and in foreign relations, and should provide effective arrangements for continuous consultation in all important matters of common Imperial concern and for such necessary concerted action, founded in consultation, as the several Governments may determine.*"

This resolution was severely criticised in India on two grounds: In the first place, India claimed an *equal place* with the Dominions within the ambit of the Commonwealth. In the second place, she demanded that, in the Imperial cabinet should one be set up, India should be represented by her own elected delegates.

V

The Dominions were not slow to understand the full meaning and implications of the Resolution adopted at the Imperial Conference of October 1917. They soon realized—none better—that a new vista of hope and achievement had now come into view. From the Pisgah height to which they had attained during the critical days of the War, they could command a clear view of the promised land of "sovereign nationhood." The British statesmen, on their part, were not unaware of the new national ambitions which were surging in the hearts of the more advanced sections of some of the Dominions overseas. The Jingo Imperialists were, of course, far from happy over it; but, except in India where their race thrives and flourishes, their ranks have of late been thinning down and their influence has steadily been on the wane.

However, it is humiliating to have to confess that, the Indian leaders failed to seize the opportunities that the Imperial Conference of 1917 had thrown in their path, and to exploit the vantage-ground which, in common with the Dominions, they had come to occupy. It may be pleaded on their behalf that, as soon as peace conditions were restored, the minds of millions of people became absorbed in the Rowlatt Act agitation and the Martial Law happenings with their aftermath of popular resentment, bitterness and political unrest.

In the Dominions, the dominant note was one of impatience, not unmixed, here and there, with mistrust—impatience for the speedy fruition of their aspirations for a freer political life; and mistrust of

England at every measure which she felt called upon to adopt in the interest of the greater security and soldiarity of the distant components of the Commonwealth. For instance, at the close of the war, the British statesmen feeling that, with the collapse of Germany, the centre of naval strategy had shifted to the Far East, lost no time in sending out Admiral Jellico to the Pacific to explore the possibilities of building a strong Naval Base at Singapore and taking other precautionary measures for the better organization of naval defences in those regions. While New Zealand and Australia welcomed Lord Jellico's mission, there were other parts of the Commonwealth, *e.g.* Canada, which were not free from suspicions much as foreign States like America and Japan. Canada, it may be mentioned, was stoutly opposed to every instrument of federalism, such as Federal Parliament, for instance. She scented some "conspiracy" against the "sovereignty" of her own Parliament not only in Lord Jellico's mission, but also in the visit of H. R. H. the Prince of Wales. There was also a party in Canada which advocated secession from the Commonwealth and the immediate assumption of "sovereign nationhood." They resented the very idea of Canadian ships being used as adjuncts to the British navy under British control, exactly as, a couple of years later, Indian politicians were filled with indignation against the recommendations of the Esher Committee.

We have been at some pains in referring to the rapid strides towards "sovereign nationhood" which the Dominions have made during only a few years following

the Great War, and that *only by the processes of discussions* and conferences. India, on the other hand, with all her sufferings and sacrifices, has practically stood still, her political advance being confined, as we have seen, to a shadowy right to call herself an equal member of the British Commonwealth, as indicated by her admission as an original member of the League of Nations. More than this, as an original member of the League, India has not only attained automatically *in theory*, the status of an autonomous state, but she has also acquired *ipso facto* the right and equal status of international States. We believe, we are not wrong in claiming that, like every other member of the League of Nations, India can only be turned out of that body either by her own acts of omission or commission or by a vote of the League, exactly in the same manner as any other sovereign State included in the League. While remaining within the League she has the *theoretical right of* voting against Britain, though in practice it is almost unthinkable that India or any other State will exercise this right.

But these rights were merely inferential and, as such, lacking in practical applicability. The Dominions did not let the grass grow under their feet but at once set about agitating for placing their status of absolute equality with Britain on a *statutory basis*. They even looked askance at the holding of Imperial Conferences, except for defining or clarifying their status of "sovereign nationhood." That was the one thing that mattered most with them at the time. It was, they felt, their immediate and paramount need; everything else

could wait. To this end, therefore, they bent all their energies.

At the Imperial Conference of June 1921, and more specially at that held two years later, the deck was cleared for what looked like a decisive action. Under the impulse of the new quickening spirit, more than one Dominion gave strong, if informal, expression to their desire for a clear definition of the constitutional relations of the various units of the Commonwealth Canada, South Africa and the newly created Irish Free State were particularly loud in this demand. It was well known that what they were aiming at was the securing of a legal status of absolute equality not only among themselves, but with Britain, in domestic affairs and foreign policy alike. Historically, the Dominions were the creatures of the sovereign State, Britain. But they had now attained the stature of adolescent nationhood, and they claimed recognition as so many independent sovereign States, in no way inferior or subordinate to Britain herself. In other words, they desired that the British Cabinet and the British Parliament should no longer be regarded as occupying a position of constitutional superiority to their own cabinets and Parliaments, the common allegiance of all—the creator and the creature States, to the British sovereign being the only symbol and seal of their union in the Commonwealth.

During the next two or three years, the younger Dominions—South Africa and the Irish Free State and, to a less extent, Canada—were in a ferment. Excited debates took place in the Dominion Parliaments backed by vigorous and sustained agitation in the

Press. Some of the speakers openly advocated absolute independence. The older Dominions of New Zealand and Australia where the bulk of the population is of British stock favoured slow and cautious advance. The British statesmen invented the slogans of "national independence" and "equality of status", but even in parts of Canada such expressions were viewed with suspicion and mistrust; they were meaningless phrases so long as the Dominions were not recognised as so many sovereign States. They declared that the recognition of Britain alone as a single sovereign State was incompatible with the claim that any serious change had taken place in the position or status of the Dominions.

In Britain itself the opinion was divided. There were not wanting those who saw danger in yielding to the demands of the more forward among the Dominions. But at the same time it was felt that there may be greater risks in standing still or, what was the same thing, in moving so slowly that the advance would not be appreciated by those for whom it was intended. Eventually, the British genius for accommodation triumphed and from the spring board of the Imperial Conference of 1926, at one leap the Dominions mounted up to a position of sovereign power, authority and nationhood. How this happened we propose to explain in our next article.

VI

Before the Imperial Conference of 1926 met in London, or rather right up to the moment when, a few months back (November 1931), its recommendations were translated into law as the Statute of Westminster, the British Parliament was, under the Crown, the supreme authority in the Empire. The Parliaments of all the other components of the Commonwealth occupied a position of subordination to it. In foreign affairs, it was the British cabinet, or, what is the same thing, the Foreign Office which exercised paramount authority and transacted the business of the Commonwealth as a whole. In their domestic concerns, the constituent units were to all intents and purposes absolutely independent. It is true the British Parliament did possess the right, in theory, to interfere in exceptional cases, but the right had seldom, if ever, been actually exercised. In the sphere of foreign relations also, one or two Dominions had arrogated to themselves the right to enter into treaties directly with foregin States without so much as even a reference to the British Government. A notable instance of this kind was the well known case of a treaty between Canada and the U. S. A. a few years back (1923). Canada went to the length of appointing her own diplomatic agent at Washington direct without reference to London. Such cases of "insubordination" are common experience in every family when sons and daughters are growing to adolesence and claiming their legitimate place of independent existence within the family circle, or even outside of it. In the specific case to which we have just referred,

the British Government, like a prudent parent, overlooked the action of its somewhat wayward child across the Atlantic as a trivial and even natural 'indiscretion.'

The last five years have brought about a tremendous change in the relationship of the Dominions to the parent State. The kick off began at the Imperial Conference of 1926 and the rest was only a question of time and formalities. While the Indian delegates were being coaxed and cajoled with the offer of Provincial Autonomy at St. James Palace at the Second Round Table Conference, the Dominions shot the ball right through the goal at Westminster, and were proclaimed as sovereign States.

The honour of the first kick must be given to General Hertzog, then Prime Minister of the South African Union. Under his determined lead the Dominions of South Africa, Canada and the Irish Free State made it perfectly plain, immediately after the Conference met, that they meant business and that they were prepared to drive the matter to a decisive issue. They declared that the only condition of their continuing to remain contented members of the British Commonwealth was the definite and unequivocal recognition of their status as one of equality in all respects with Britain.

In response to the pressure thus exercised, despite the opposition of New Zealand and Australia both of which sounded a note of warning, it was decided to appoint an Inter-Imperial Relations Committee to consider the whole question and draft a resolution defining the legal relationship of the Dominions to Britain. Lord

Balfour was the Chairman of the Committee. The Balfour Report is a document of momentous and far-reaching character, the full implications and consequences of which time alone will show.

The following paragraphs contain the formula devised by the Balfour Committee with some of its explanations.

"They (the self-governing Dominions) are autonomous Communities within the British Empire, equal in status, in no way subordinate one to another in any aspect of their domestic or external affairs though united by a common allegiance to the Crown, and freely associated as members of the British Commonwealth of Nations.

"The British Empire is not founded upon negations, it depends essentially, if not formally, on positive ideas. Free institutions are its life blood. Free co-operation is its instrument. Peace, security and progress are among its objects. Though every Dominion is now, and must always remain, the sole judge of the extent and nature of its co-operation, no common cause will, in our opinion, be thereby imperilled."

Further:

"Equality of Status, so far as Britain and the Dominions are concerned, is thus the root principle governing our inter-Imperial relations. But the principles of equality and similarity, appropriate to *status*, do not universally extend to *function*. Here we require something more than immutable dogmas. For example, to deal with questions of diplomacy and questions of defence we require also flexible machinery—machinery which can from time to time be adapted to the changing conditions of the world."

The Report was unanimously adopted, but some doubts and difficulties soon cropped up, and these gave rise to interminable debates in the Dominion Parliaments. On all sides there was a demand for a draft Bill to give effect to the agreement arrived at in terms of the Balfour Report. The Irish Parliament was wholeheartedly in favour of translating the agreement into law, but everywhere else, opinion was violently divided. In each Dominion one party hailed the proposed Statute as the *magna charta* of Dominion Independence, while another party condemned it not only as unnecessary but also positively mischievous and likely to lead to disaster.

India was left out in the cold with the usual fine phrased sophistries that it was difficult "to lay down a constitution for the Empire." "Its widely scattered parts," the Report said "have different characters and histories and are at different stages of evolution, while considered as a whole it defies classification, and bears no real resemblance to any other organisation which now exists or has ever yet existed." This is the measure of our "equal partnership" in the Empire. What the Indian 'delegates' at the Conference, who were consenting parties to the "unanimous" adoption of the Balfour Report, thought of this humiliation of their motherland, it is not for us to say. One has no right to expect more from the Maharaja of Burdwan who 'represented' India at the Conference. We may, however, be permitted to say that had the Indian delegate owed his selection to the suffrage of his own countrymen he could hardly have kept silent on the occasion.

VII

The stage was now set for the closing Act of the "British Commonwealth" drama. In response to the insistent demand from the younger members of the Commonwealth, the Balfour Committee's decisions were, before long, embodied in a draft Bill which was circulated to all the dominions and became the subject of long and, occasionally, bitter debate in the 'Dominion' Parliaments. As we have already seen, at every stage the far-reaching character of the new proposals filled not a few statesmen both in England and elsewhere with alarm, but, at the same time, it was felt that it would not only be undesirable to stand still, but that any attempt made to arrest the progress of the emancipation movement might be attended with disaster to the Empire.

A Committee of experts was appointed to examine the existing legislative machinery in each Dominion and suggest such re-adjustments as might be found to be necessary, with a view to the continued smooth working of the administration under the new conditions in all parts of the Commonwealth. The Report of the Committee was ready in 1929 and was formally placed before the Imperial Conference of 1930. The Conference put the seal of its approval on the statutory changes suggested by the Inter-Imperial Relations Committee (Balfour Committee) and the Experts Committee. These changes were embodied in a short enactment, the now famous Statute of Westminster, which was introduced in the House of Commons in November 1931, and became law within the same month.

What is this statute of Westminster and what has it done for the six self-governing Dominions of Australia, New Zealand, New Foundland, South Africa, Canada and the Irish Free State? In the fewest words it may be stated that while, before November 1931, the Dominions were in a position of subordination to Great Britain, both as regards their internal administration and external relations, since the passing of the new enactment, they have all become sovereign States of equal status, powers and authority with Great Britain in all respects. The only tie binding them to one another and to Britain will henceforth be their common allegiance to the Crown.

Speaking of the old-time colonies, Burke once remarked that Britain's hold on them depended upon "the close affection which grows from common names, from kindred bloods, from similar privileges and equal affections." And he went on to add: "these are ties which though light as air are as strong as links of iron". The present day British Commonwealth of Nations is a less homogeneous and less consistent political structure than the old colonial Empire of England, even if we exclude India from it. We can no longer say that all components of the Empire are dominated by people of the British stock or that the ties of community of languages and blood are equally strong everywhere. The very idea of the Commonwealth of nations has grown only recently with the growth of the liberties of its component parts. But considering the varying conditions and circumstances under which it has developed and bearing in mind that some of the

constituents (South Africa and Canada, for instance,) contain large, if not predominant sections of foreign white populations, having little or no attachment to England, it may be regarded as a marvel of stability, soundness and success. Self-interest is the great binding force. It harmonises the unity of aim and purpose with the diversity of means and methods with which they all endeavour to reach their common destiny—that destiny being, in the words of a British writer, to become a sort of "British League of Nations", with the British Sovereign as its patron.

The Commonwealth is simply an alliance of equals *in every respect*, the only tie keeping them all together being their common allegiance to the King. Any member can secede from the Commonwealth at any time simply by passing a resolution to that effect in its own Parliament and informing the other members of it. A Dominion Parliament has full power to make its own laws, including laws that may be repugnant to the laws of England, and to amend or repeal any law passed by the British Parliament so far as it may affect that Dominion. For the future, the British Parliament is precluded from passing a law having jurisdiction extending to a Dominion, without the express desire and consent of that Dominion. It is further provided that such desire or consent shall be indicated in the Act itself. The Governor-General of a Dominion is no longer to be an agent of His Majesty's Government, but a representative of His Majesty himself in that Dominion, where he will exercise the same constitutional powers that

the King does in Britain. More important still, he will be appointed by the King on the advice tendered directly to him by the Dominion Premier (and not the British Premier). The King may not reject the advice so tendered. A Dominion is free to sign treaties with foreign States without the intervention of Britain. A Dominion may refuse to join in a war to which she is not a consenting party. Finally, it is provided that no change can be made in the "Royal style and titles" without the assent of the Parliaments of all the members of the Commonwealth. The plain implications of this provision are that India can only join the Commonwealth with the free assent of all the existing members of it.

The six Dominions together with Great Britain thus form a real commonwealth. The Dutch population in South Africa was waging a bitter war with England barely thirty years back, as were also the French in Canada more than a century ago. It is, therefore, not community of race and language but community of interest or, in Burke's words, "similar privileges" which form the cement of the Commonwealth.

But where is India? Why has she been excluded from the Commonwealth? Was it not Indian troops that bore the brunt of the German invasion in Flanders and stemmed the rising tide of the German onrush towards Paris? Can it be denied that her sacrifices were even greater than those of all the Dominions put together? Was it for the sake of Jallianwala and the present gagging Hoare-Willingdon regime that she allowed herself, as Lord Hardinge put it, to be *bled white?* Let the conscience of England answer. Those are false

friends who say that "all is quiet on the Indian front". India is sore at heart. Let there be no mistake about it. And every day that passes is adding to her soreness and is intensifying her alienation from England.

What has become of England's promises about the liberty of weak nations? Why are British statesmen silent now about the British Premier's *loud-mouthed* doctrine of self-determination? Far from redeeming their pledges and promises, British statesmen have said and done things for which there was no justification. The moral basis of British rule is being fast undermined. England will do well to listen to this note of warning for her own sake and that of India alike.

VIII

Commenting on the present Irish imbroglio, a leading English journal pithily remarked, a few weeks back, that with the passing of the Statute of Westminster the old political Empire of Britain had "painlessly come to an end" and that preparations were afoot for laying "the foundations of a new Economic Empire at Ottawa." The observation is certainly striking, but the point of interest for us Indians is that it contains only half the truth.

Doubtless the Statute sounded the death knell of the political supremacy of the British Parliament *over the Dominions*. But as every Indian is conscious—painfully conscious—the British Empire is very much alive and kicking in India today. We see it all around us. Indeed since the passing of the Statute we have been receiving even harder kicks than before. While the six Dominions have all become sovereign States, India's aspirations for a similar position of "sovereign nationhood" within the British Commonwealth have been sought to be suppressed by the more than usually stern exercise of the powers of autocracy. If England is proud of it, ,we can only say we are sorry for England—England the home of liberty, the hope of India and other down-trodden nations, England that we of the older generation loved and adored, but from which our hearts are being gradually torn away by the thoughtless words and actions of its present rulers. Righteousness exalteth a nation and not what we, in our arrogance and ignorance, may call "success." Imperial-

Economic domination is sure to be more galling than political domination has been of late years. It will certainly do greater injury, especially to the masses, than political supremacy has done or can do.

Economically the greatest needs of the country may be placed in four categories; (1) The weaning of large numbers of the agricultural population (peasants and landless workers) from agricultural pursuits to industrial occupations.

(2) Establishment of cottage industries according to well considered schemes in each province to occupy the spare time of the agricultural population in slack seasons. (1) and (2) were among the most important recommendations of the Famine Commission of 1880. More than half a century has since elapsed but little or nothing has been done to give effect to these and other recommendations of the Commission.

(3) Encourging the cultivation of sugarcane, oil seeds, etc. There was a time within the memory of the present writer when India used to export considerable quantities of sugar. The whole sugar industry has died out during the past forty years or so. This is not the time to discuss the causes of it. A national government will not take long to revive this and other industries.

(4) Currency and tariff policies based primarily on the interests of India and only in the second place on those of England and not *vice versa.*

Every one knows how the whole country had been crying for the protection of Indian indus-

tries, but so long as Free Trade suited England, it was imposed on India also. The history of the 18d. ratio is too recent to require more than a bare mention of the fact that practicallly it was forced on India.

IX

It goes without saying that Imperial preference will form the very pivot of the new Economic Empire whose advent is to be announced at Ottawa in July next. For more than three decades, the British Colonies, which have of late years come to be called the British oversea dominions, have been anxious to initiate some sort of a scheme of preferential trade and commerce within the Empire. At the time of the Diamond Jubilee of Queen Victoria, Canada went to the length of reducing the custom duties on British imports by a substantial amount. The question of imperial preference was being mooted in other parts of the Empire also at this time. It was, however, not till 1902 that it definitely assumed the shape of a policy. At the colonial conference of that year, a resolution embodying the general principles of Imperial Preference was adopted. Joseph Chamberlain was an enthusiast in creating as many links as possible for binding together the various parts of the Empire. But the Government of Lord Curzon declared in 1903 that India had little to gain from a policy of imperial preference. It is not clear to us in what particular manner, the economic position of India has changed during the past 29 years so as to justify any one committing her to a scheme of reciprocal tariffs within the Empire.

If we look at the foreign trade of India from the year immediately preceding the war, and specially at our trade with Great Britain, we find that during this period the imports into India from Great Britain and exports from India to Great Britain have

both been continuously declining —the imports have been dwindling down with a rather alarming rapidity. Indeed, so far as imports into India are concerned, the position of Britain in relation to the rest of the world, has been completely reversed. While in 1913-14 Britain's share of the total foreign imports of India was 64.2% in 1930-31, it dwindled down to a bare 37.2% which is almost exactly what the rest of the world contributed to India's import trade immediately before the war. Herein lies the real significance of the dramatic change in the economic policy of Britain a few months back. The hundred year old Free Trade policy, associated with the names of Cobden and John Bright, not to speak of the Liberal leaders of later years, was knocked on the head without much ado or ceremony, because it no longer suited the changed economic conditions of England. In this connection the followig table of British imports into India, and India's exports to Britain is sufficiently eloquent. ,

	Imports.	Exports.
1913-14	64.2%	23.5%
1924-25	54.1%	25.5%
1926-27	47.8%	21.4%
1928-29	44.7%	21.2%
1929-30	42.8%	21.7%
1930-31	37.2%	23.5%
1931-32	35.4%	27.8%

Two brief observations may here be made as to the causes which have led to the amazing decline in British imports during the post-war period. In the first place, England has lost ground because of her inability to compete with her rivals in the Indian market. In the second place, and, we believe, this cause is at least as potent as the one we

have just mentioned, the political discontents of the last ten or twelve years have created a very strong prejudice in the minds of Indians against the use of British goods. One can easily see that any attempt on the part of England, or what is the same thing, the present irresponsible Government of India, to commit this country to a policy of imperial preference cannot but be deeply resented. While India is plunged in a veritable life and death struggle to liberate herself of British political domination, the British Government with the help of the other dominions is scheming to forge fresh fetters for India's economic bondage. There can be no reciprocity in matters of such vital importance to the millions of Indian masses between a subordinate and an independent nation. In the present case, what is proposed to be done at Ottawa is to bring India also within the orbit of preferential reciprocity not only between India and her political master (Britain), but between India, on the one hand, and Britain with six other sovereign States, on the other.

Put in as simple and plain language as possible, this means India is going to be treated as equal in the economic sphere with Britain and the Dominions though she will continue to be in a state of political subordination to Britain. There can be no equality in such cases, and India would much rather like to be left alone. What thoughtful Indians are alarmed at is the probable revival of something of the nature of the Meston-Curtis "conspiracy" on the part of the Dominions to dominate over India, in the economic sphere, as seventeen years ago the Round Table Conspiracy was designed

for the domination of the British Dominions overseas over India in the political sphere. If the Empire Economic Conference foists imperial preference with reciprocity on India, the lot of this country, and specially of the masses, will be much worse than it is today. It is a good thing, at a time of economic depression like this to foster Inter-Imperial trade, but, as we have explained, there can be no agreements or treaties or understandings between seven free nations and India which is anything but a free agent.

Let Britain satisfy the legitimate political aspirations—the Congress rightly calls them demands —of India, let her have Dominion status with all the rights and privileges of a Dominion, and then you will not find India lagging behind the other parts of the Empire in evolving a suitable policy of Imperial Preference and framing other similar economic schemes to encourage, promote and foster inter-imperial trade.

We cannot more fittingly close this article than with the following rather long extract from the minority Report of the Indian Fiscal Commission on the question of Imperial Preference:

"Imperial Preference is a means of strengthening the ties amongst a Commonwealth of Free Nations....Dominions conceded the principle of preference after they had attained full responsible Government "consistent with their own interest and not injurious to themselves"....The principle of Imperial Preference implies the uncontrolled power of initiating, granting, varying and withdrawing preference from time to time consistently with each country's interest and on lines

which are not injurious to itself. India must, therefore, possess the same supreme powers as are enjoyed by the Dominions before Imperial Preference can become for her a matter of practical politics. India has not yet reached Dominion Status. She is in a transitional stage; her Government is not responsible to her legislature but to the British Parliament. Any acceptance in practice of the principle of Imperial Preference would make her liable to measures of preference at a time when she is not entitled to determine them by the vote of a wholly elected legislature with her Government responsible to such legislature as is the case in all the Dominions."

X

India is faced with a great peril; it is difficult to appraise its magnitude, but that we are confronted with a most serious economic menace no one can gainsay. The weakness of our position, which increases our peril, arises from two sources; namely, our political subjection, on the one hand, and our economic disorganisation, on the other. Our political subordination is an oft told tale. Every Indian knows or rather *feels* what it means to him or to her. It makes cowards or hypocrites of practically the whole nation.

A few words may not be amiss here about our economic disorganisation. A country of 350 million souls which is tied to the apron strings of a small, but strong and well organised, nation 6,000 miles away—what economic future can it look forward to except such as the dominant nation assigns to her. Time there was when India was a great industrial nation—rich, prosperous and self-sufficient. She was as great industrially as she was in agriculture. But while half a century back, after the Great famine of 1876-77, the Famine Commission recommended the reindustrialisation of large sections of the population, in practice in every Government Report and official resolutions and speeches great emphasis was laid on agriculture as the *"greatest industry"* of India. What all this has meant to India, we all know only too well.

Let us take a single concrete instance which is typical of scores of similar cases known to every well informed Indian. Some years ago, an Indian chemist, a professor in the Lahore Government College, was sent to England

with a sholarship for learning the manufacture of *Alkalis*. He attended some ordinary lectures on the subject. He then approached the Secretary of State for India to help him in getting admission as an apprentice in some factory for practical training in the actual processes of manufacture. With great difficulty he was "admitted" to the works of a well known alkali manufacturer. But what did his practical training amount to? He was led by a works foreman halfway down the staircase and, while standing there, he was asked to have a look round from his position of vantage, while the foreman pointed out to him what was going on in different parts of the works below. This was done on four or five different days. That was all the practical training which the Indian professor was permitted to receive.

More than this, the alkali magnate, who had for years been enriching himself at the expense of India, and who still finds a good market here, made no secret of what he thought of the young adventurous chemist and of his ambition to start an alkali works in India in a humble way. He had also to say something about the Government of India which had dared to provide him with a scholarship in the expectation that he would receive the necessary training in a British factory and then return home fully equipped for the job. He made it quite plain to the young professor, frankly and even bluntly, that if ever it was necessary or praticable to start an alkali works in India it shall be done by .....and, by no one else. The tragedy of India's position is that our alkali magnate is by no

means an exceptional individual. He is only the representative of a big type which flourishes both in India and England.

How will our young Professor fare in free India? it may well be asked. By free India I mean a "Dominion" India—unless by the folly of England. India is counted a "Lost-Dominion" of the British Commonwealth to the immense injury of India and Britain alike.

Well, Free India will address the alkali magnate somewhat in this fashion: "Sir, we have made up our mind to manufacture the alkalis ourselves, Bountiful Nature has provided us with inexhaustible beds of rock-salt which are the second best in the world. In our rivers we have equally inexhaustible sources of water power which can supply us with cheap current. We mean to train a dozen young chemists year after year in foreign alkali works. Now, Sir, it is our wish and will—not a pious wish but a will which we mean to enforce—that you shall not send an ounce of the product of your works into Free India unless you undertake to train five of our young chemists thoroughly in your works so long as you find it of advantage to you to have the Indian market open to you".

That is what Japan did and what India will do and, under heaven, will do before long—a hundred Ottawa Conferences and Alkali magnates notwithstanding. At this time of day and in our present state of political subjection, we are, doubtless, weak, helpless and dependent on others. But there is a soul of goodness in all things, even things evil. And out of our weakness and

helplessness, we are evolving a strength that will make us strong, free and independent. We know that the Government can enact a never-ending series of Ordinances to put us down and dump our country with preferentially treated foreign goods. But by this time, the Government may be expected to have come to realize that, weak and helpless as we are, we can yet develop some strength from the deepest depths of our soul and have ready at our disposal a whole armoury of self-denying ordinances. The strong are not in the habit of listening to appeals from the weak and helpless, far less to warnings. Let it be so. Our appeals will go forth to our own people, especially to the awakened youth of the country. Other countries may think and talk of economic barriers of 20, 30 and 40 per cent tariff walls. Our self-denying ordinances will certainly prove more effective than differential tariffs, however high or low they might be. No one will, we are sure, be deceived by the flow of oratory at Ottawa, promising all sorts of advantages to us. We have had enough of such things and to spare. We are no longer carried off our feet by eloquence as we were at one time. What matters to us is freedom and not mere promises—howsoever solemnly worded or eloquently phrased. Mr. Ramsay MacDonald once said with a show of deep sympathy with us: "India is determind to be free with our help if possible, without our help if necessary." But on the last Empire Day, he was broadcasting the message of keeping fast the grip of India, as otherwise the Empire would fall to pieces and disaster would overtake the whole of Europe. You can

only keep your grip of India by love, justice and even generosity—and by no other means whatsoever. Ottawa Conferences and one-sided decisions will not avail to keep your hold of India long. The decisions that are likely to be taken are not the best means for binding India to the Empire. As we have said again and again in these articles, there can be no fair bargaining between seven well-organised free nation States and India which is three times bigger than all of them put together, but is still forced to live in the stables of King George V. This will not do.

We close with the considered opinion of the Indian Economic Society expressed quarter of a century back which, we presume to say, is also the considered opinion of every thoughtful Indian to-day; namely, that *"A scheme of Imperial Preference for India is economically detrimental, politically inexpedient and financially ruinous."* This is the last word on the subject to-day so far as India is concerned.

The "Tribune" Press, Lahore.

III

The "Curtis-Meston conspiracy" failed, as it deserved to fail. But this does not mean that the constitutional position of the Dominions, as also of India, did not undergo a marked change for the better. The four years' comradeship in arms for millions of citizens of the far flung Empire, followed by the inevitable post-War restlessness, could not leave things exactly where they were before. Everywhere new problems, based on common aspirations for wider liberties within the ambit of the Empire, had been created. Unfortunately, in India, Egypt and Ireland, the atmosphere soon became disturbed and a good deal of suspicion and mistrust clouded the minds of the people. The Dominions, on the other hand, were busy revising their constitutional position *vis a vis* the British Parliament and, under the impulse of a higher self-consciousness, evolving a new legal doctrine of the 'Crown.'

The peace negotiations at Paris, in the early part of 1919, were dominated by the spirit of war comradeship. As in the War Cabinet of 1917, so also at the Peace Conference, India was represented by the Secretary of State, assisted by Lord Sinha representing British India and His Highness the Maharaja of Bikaner representing the Indian States. The self-governing Dominions were, however, represented by delegations nominated by their respective Parliaments and were under the leadership of their own Premiers. The subordinate position of India was thus exhibited and emphasised before the world. It hurt the national and natural