

# THE Servant of India

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## TOPICS OF THE WEEK.

THE passive resistance movement commenced last week in Bombay. The committee appointed for the Bombay presidency to select laws for violation has directed that for the time being laws regarding proscribed literature and registration of newspapers may be disobeyed. The proscribed books which have been selected for distribution are four in number, three of them being written by Mr. Gandhi himself. The other law is to be violated by publishing from every centre of the movement a manuscript edition of a weekly newspaper edited by Mr. Gandhi. It will be seen that the passive resistance committee is walking warily and explains that until those who take part in the movement have become seasoned and disciplined, it is well to restrict the scope of the movement. An incidental object which the committee hopes to attain is to supply to the public a clean literature, which is at present banned by the Press Act. Though the committee has selected, as a first step, laws that have evoked popular disapproval, it has no objection to extend the movement under favourable circumstances by violating all the other laws except those which have no moral sanction. The unregistered newspaper entitled *Satyagraha* has been issued, and several copies of the prohibited books were publicly sold in Bombay last week.

NOW the Satyagrahis have thrown down the gage and are led by Mr. Gandhi who knows no going back from a pledge, what is the Government going to do? This was the question on the lips of everybody last week, before news arrived of the Defence of India Act having been enforced against Mr. Gandhi. The Satyagraha movement, limited as it has been now, need not lead to any very

serious results. The sale of the four proscribed books as well as the issue of an unregistered newspaper by Mr. Gandhi, though technically offences, are not offences of such a grave nature, that Government must set the punitive processes of law in motion against the offenders without weighing the countervailing considerations of expediency. Whatever may be the reasons which have led the Government to put an embargo upon the books which the Satyagraha Committee has now decided to distribute, we may confidently infer from the fact that Mr. Gandhi himself is the author of three of them and has selected the fourth because of its pure character, that the books, though not in favour with Government, are certainly not of a dangerous type, and no untoward consequences need be apprehended from their distribution. The *Satyagraha* newspaper too may be trusted to preach nothing that is not strictly constitutional. Under these circumstances, will the Government hold its hand till the activities of the Satyagrahis force it to take action against them, or will it, regardless of the consequences upon the public mind, punish those who defy laws, as legally it has every right to do? Everyone instinctively asked this question to himself, before the unfortunate developments took place, and wished that the Government, being in an immensely stronger position, would forbear till it became impossible.

THE Satyagrahi, for his part, will make no complaint if he is severely dealt with for a breach of the law; on the contrary, if he is true to his principles, he will welcome such punishment. His sole object in breaking a law is to invite punishment upon himself and thus by his sufferings to shame the all-powerful Government into a reasonable frame of mind on the matter on which he may have joined issue with it. He knows that the movement will be effective only through his sufferings and every true Satyagrahi will therefore only rejoice if the strong hand of the Government comes down upon him, as a sure sign of the fact that his resistance is making itself felt. The satisfaction which Mr. Gandhi expressed at his detention near Delhi was not due to the spirit of defiance, but to the lively recognition of the manner in which alone the movement of passive resistance can achieve success. While it is no doubt true that the Satyagrahi will only kiss the rod, is it the part of wisdom for Government to use the rod on the first opportunity they meet

with? Will it not be the better policy to refrain from the use of force so long as no disturbance of the peace is threatened or revolutionary ideas are not diffused?

NO one can promise of course that the movement will always retain the mild form which it has now assumed. It can be safely predicted, on the contrary, that Mr. Gandhi will, if need arise, carry the movement to its uttermost lengths and drive Government to take action against him and his associates. Any leniency, therefore, which may be urged upon Government, can only be temporary, for Mr. Gandhi will leave it no alternative between the cancellation of the Rowlatt legislation and the use of severe measures. Still, it is sound statesmanship to leave the movement alone so long as it may be possible to do so. While the Satyagrahis may feel chagrined at such a policy, the large body of the public outside their ranks will be convinced that the Government is inspired by no vindictive spirit, and that, if they do not defer to the public demand for the withdrawal of the Crimes Act, it will at least not apply it recklessly and without sufficient cause. That itself is a great gain, and the public was watching last week with the utmost intentness and concern what decision the Government would take on that question. Would the Government exercise patience even with the knowledge that it must have had that Mr. Gandhi would carry things to the bitter end, or would it strike down the Satyagrahis the first time they came within the reach of the law?

WHILE the people were in such anxious uncertainty, news came of the prohibition of Mr. Gandhi from entering Delhi or the Punjab and of his being required to reside in the Bombay presidency under the Defence of India Act. Now this action on the part of the Government was entirely unexpected; it is equally unjustifiable, and no sort of justification has yet been attempted. If the Government, regarding its laws with the same rigidity as Nature's laws, had visited the Satyagrahis who broke them with the instantaneous punishment allowed under the law, the Government would have been at least within its right, though it would have been bad policy to exercise the right. But in applying the Defence of India Act to Mr. Gandhi, the Government has certainly exceeded in a most flagrant manner the authority vested in it by that law, while politically this step is no less disastrous. Such a gross misuse of an act intended to be employed against those who had dealings with the enemy would only confirm the doubts cast upon the assurances given by the Government as to the limitation of the Anarchical and Revolutionary Crimes Act to offences connected with anarchy and revolution. The motive of such strange measures on the part of Government is not easy to understand, unless it be that it hopes in this way to restrict the passive resistance movement to the Bombay presidency. If this is really intended as a flank attack

on the passive resistance movement, we will only say that besides being gravely impolitic, it is a thoroughly unconstitutional procedure and not quite straightforward.

THE public was left in a cruel suspense as to Mr. Gandhi's destination for nearly two days after his detention, and it was not known what the Government's intentions were till he actually arrived in Bombay and told his friends that he was free to move about in the presidency. But in the meantime the agonising interval had done its work. Serious disturbances took place at Bombay and Lahore and riots broke out at Amritsar and Ahmedabad. In Bombay tramcars were held up and stones thrown on them. Passers-by were compelled to join the demonstration, but the ordinary police arrangements were found enough to disperse the crowd. This stands in marked contrast with what happened in Lahore where, as a crowd numbering some 200 people, was coming down, it was ordered to turn back and when it refused to disperse, so it is alleged, fire was opened on the mob. The same thing was repeated at a later stage. A mystery hangs over the whole affair, which needs to be cleared up by the authorities. If, as soon as public demonstrations assume in the eyes of the officials a threatening aspect, the mob is to be fired at, there will be no end to firing in these days of excitement. The fuss that the Lahore officials made in calling out the military and in sending English women and children to the Government House seems to be out of all proportion to the requirements of the situation, and would only excite a smile if grave issues were not involved in it. It is to be hoped that an explanation will be made of the conditions which rendered the use of harsh measures necessary.

THE situation in Amritsar and Ahmedabad was much more serious. In the former place feeling had already run high by the arrest and deportation of two political workers and fuel was added to the fire by the news of Mr. Gandhi's arrest. A large mob collected in the city and made for the railway station where a European guard was beaten to death. Much damage was also done in the civil station, where the Town Hall, Telegraph office and two bank buildings were wrecked, the agent and accountant of the banks, all Europeans, also being murdered. Railway communications were disturbed and telegraph lines cut. Order has now been restored. The riots in Ahmedabad were even more alarming. In spite of the earnest efforts of the local satyagrahis to prevent disorder and quiet the mob, the mill-hands of the place got absolutely out of hand and committed acts of murder and arson which have been deeply deplored throughout the country. After pulling down people from cars, the mob chased two Europeans burnt down a flour-mill where they had taken refuge. Various Government offices in the city and Bhadar were burnt down, telegraphic communica-

tions were cut, one European sergeant and one Indian constable were killed. At Viramgam the railway station and various Government buildings were set on fire. Quiet is now restored at both the places.

THERE is no tendency on the part of the leaders of the passive resistance movement to disown responsibility for any evil results that may follow from the movement. In fact, Mr. Gandhi assumes full personal responsibility for all such results and never had man a livelier sense of responsibility than Mr. Gandhi. Finding that the Satyagraha demonstrations in Bombay were attended with deeds of violence, he has warned his followers that any repetition of such deeds would necessitate an abandonment or at any rate a limitation of the movement, and if violence still continued he would have to practise passive resistance against Satyagrahis themselves. In a passage which is rarely excelled for pathos, Mr. Gandhi utters a solemn caution that if innocent persons suffer in life or limb or are subjected to coercion by the Satyagrahis he himself will have to fast and even die, if necessary. Does Government realise what an influential ally it has in Mr. Gandhi for peace and order? If it does, why did it prevent his entry into the disturbed areas? Nothing would have tended to restore calm at Lahore and Amritsar so much as the presence of Mr. Gandhi there, and to put an embargo upon such a man under the Defence of India Act as if there was danger lest he should stir up trouble is not only unjust and unwise, but also positively prejudicial to the preservation of peace, for which the Government is so solicitous. Again, it should be remembered that in the present instance the outbreak of disorder had no connection with the passive resistance movement. The Satyagrahis used all their influence on the side of peace and order.

BEFORE leaving for Delhi, Mr. Gandhi left a message behind, explaining to those who were desirous of taking the swadeshi vow the difference between swadeshi and boycott. While the former movement has for its object the encouragement of home industries and is based on personal sacrifice, boycott is aimed at Government as a retaliatory measure against the existing methods of administration. Mr. Gandhi's message runs thus: "He (Mr. Gandhi) is opposed to the boycott of British goods, since it involves a feeling of bitterness and punishment. They have no quarrel with bureaucrats, but according to the spirit of satyagraha they can have no ill-feeling towards the bureaucracy. He does not, therefore, accept the principle of boycott. Swadeshi means sacrifice both on the part of the consumer and dealer. He therefore urges both to show their patriotism by strictly observing honesty and sacrifice." It is well that Mr. Gandhi has thus made clear a difference in the underlying ideas of the two movements as to which a good deal of misconception prevails

in the public mind. Those who think it somewhat risky to avow their adhesion to boycott have made believe that the two movements are identical in intention and effect. Again, boycott was variously defined as 'boycott of foreign goods,' 'boycott of British goods,' and 'boycott of Government schools, offices, law-courts, etc.' as might suit the moment, and thus an amount of confusion was of purpose introduced into the idea. Mr. Gandhi's explanation will, we hope, dispel the misconceptions that are current.

MR. B. C. PAL, however, confounds boycott with passive resistance and, thinking that the former is only a milder form of the latter, plaintively cautions his countrymen against repeating a mistake which was perpetrated in Bengal. Boycott was adopted in Bengal as a political weapon designed to force the Government to change their policy, and he exhorts Indians not to embark upon the movement of passive resistance also as a political weapon but, if at all, only as a protest of the conscience against the Rowlatt legislation. Mr. Pal argues in last week's *Home Ruler* that in the latter form the movement must be confined to the disobedience of the Crimes Act and to such other acts as may be organically connected with the administration of the Crimes Act, e. g., the Oaths Act. One cannot extend it beyond these limits "without giving up the plea that it is a real conscience movement," and Mr. Pal disapproves of the satyagraha movement as a general political weapon, from his past experience.

IN this article Mr. Pal complains of the prevalent confusion of thought as to passive resistance, shown in a mixing up of its two different aspects. Whatever confusion there may be with regard to this subject, it is certainly not greater than Mr. Pal's confusion of boycott with passive resistance. And the curious thing is that Mr. Pal disapproves of Satyagraha on the very ground on which Mr. Gandhi disapproves of boycott—that it is a retaliatory movement! In pledging ourselves to the disobedience of all laws, says Mr. Pal,

"We really go beyond our conscientious plea, and propose to use this as a political weapon. The real motive here is not so much to follow our own conscience as to make the administration impossible. There cannot be any general movement of passive resistance against a number of laws and executive acts unless it aims at bringing about a fundamental change in the Government by making its primary work and duty more or less impossible. The passive resister here is moved, whether consciously or unconsciously, by a spirit of retaliation, and we cannot claim the authority of our conscience for justifying this spirit of retaliation."

Mr. Pal concludes his article with the following impressive warning: "And no one who has any idea of what passive resistance as a retaliatory political weapon means and what are the natural consequences of it, will deny that passive resistance as a retaliatory movement is the most difficult and the most dangerous to lead or control. We should beware of its evil possibilities."

## SATYAGRAHA.

THE fears of those who discountenanced the passive resistance movement at the very start have partly come true. The small corps of Satyagrahis has in every place attracted a crowd of loose adherents who cannot understand Satyagraha and whose blind worship of its teacher does not include a scrupulous regard for his teaching. The delusion is flattering but none the less disastrous that all the units that compose a throng of demonstrators are convinced of the rights and wrongs of the issues involved and are earnest for a just settlement. A large part of them are idle spectators and come out in quest of exciting fun, and the easy irresponsibility of a crowd is taken advantage of by a few mischief-makers whom private grudge or political passion incites to acts of violence. The passive resisters in South Africa were compact and had a lively and burning sense of their wrongs, and Mr. Gandhi's lieutenants too had gone through the same experiences as himself and shared those very hardships and humiliations which suggested passive resistance as the only possible remedy. In India Mr. Gandhi has several able and cultured co-workers, but none fully trained to conduct a campaign of soul force or commanding the confidence and homage of the masses of their country. Besides, the occasion is sentimental, dealing with the abstract right to a judicial trial as distinguished from executive action, which is powerful enough in its appeal to the educated classes but can only form a nebulous inspiration to a mob. Ethical and spiritual education is much slower and more liable to miscarriage than physical or intellectual education. The virtues of self-restraint, forgiveness and love of one's enemies evolve in man with the utmost difficulty, and it is wonderful how their opposites will suddenly erupt even in the best governed natures.

One of the generous fallacies on which Mr. Gandhi has constructed his Satyagraha plan is that if you take an unlettered man, convey to his intelligence a simple rule of morality and pledge him to it, you have straightway converted him into a valiant champion of righteousness. If you trust in his truthfulness, he will never betray you. If by chance he should betray you, you have only to fast a day or two to redeem him. If Mr. Gandhi were left on an isolated island with a people fresh from the hand of nature he might hope to achieve moral miracles. Perhaps he had a vague feeling at the time of starting this campaign that he had best begin his attempt with the educated classes, for the necessary sense of acute wrong could only be worked up among those to whom abstractions were familiar. The actual pledge has so far been taken only by a few who value freedom and realise the distinction between the judicial and the executive. To the many thousands and tens of thousands who fast on the appointed day and throng the thoroughfares the one

clear idea is that the Mahatma wishes it and he knows. Clear-headed and severely self-critical, Mr. Gandhi owns responsibility for the excesses and misdeeds of his non-Satyagrahi followers, as well as for the conduct of his regular disciples. Others, however, who defend him would either disown the responsibility or fix it upon the Government whose obstinacy drove Mr. Gandhi to take the field. Moral, as distinguished from legal, responsibility extends in endless progression, and it is not possible to define it exactly for the purpose of distributing blame. But the idea of the Satyagrahis has something to commend it that, while they are prepared to suffer for the direct effects of their acts, Government must be held answerable for those acts and their sufferings as well. In fact the *raison d'être* of their movement is that the greater their sufferings, the greater the indignation of the general public and the greater the remorse with which Government will be stricken in the end. The genuine Satyagrahi may heartily rejoice in the hardships that fall to his lot and the spurious Satyagrahi may do so in form. But the public are expected to bring their displeasure to bear upon the conduct of the powers that be. To this end it is necessary that the Satyagraha campaign should be absolutely clean and of good report. The happenings at Amritsar and Ahmedabad and in a less degree those of Calcutta and Delhi, have shocked and alarmed all sections of the population.

Mr. Gandhi, whose sense of honour is so fine-drawn as to seem even quixotic to the ordinary man, has perceived that it may become necessary, if the demonstrations cannot be restrained, to restrict or even to abandon the movement. For our part, we have no hesitation in counselling the more drastic course. It was a mistake to have begun passive resistance; it is worse to continue it. In previous issues of this paper, it has been pointed out as a fundamental flaw in the case for Satyagraha on this occasion, that passive resistance has to be organised against other laws besides the one which is the rock of offence. Even if the laws chosen for transgression be purely technical and non-moral, the general effect is to weaken the foundations of government. Be it observed in passing that this effect must appear to the ordinary citizens to be far more disastrous than to Mr. Gandhi who considers government as an encumbrance to human civilisation and therefore inherently evil. Moreover, the violation of certain provisions of the Press Law by a few people here and there may not result in such suffering to themselves or embarrassment to Government as to startle the general population or work them up to a fury of indignation. If the movement falls to futility in that way, the next step will probably be the refusal to pay some tax or a no-rent campaign. Even supposing that a sufficient number of Satyagrahis adopted this stiffer programme, the remoteness

and disproportion of the remedy to the evil will dry up the fountain of general sympathy which only flows in the channel of simple and natural feeling. Critics of the moderate school joined, it is true, in the uttermost denunciation of the principle and policy of the Rowlatt law and are prepared to support any reasonable measure to secure its repeal. But it is a far cry from this position to the state of mind which regards the repeal as the one thing to aim at in Indian politics and loses sight of the reform scheme, which is the culmination of a whole generation of patriotic effort. Robust commonsense of the country in general will withhold from the doings of Satyagrahis anything more serious than the commiseration which is evoked by far-fetched and well-meant endeavour foredoomed to failure.

This forecast assumes that the campaign of Satyagraha will not be joined in hereafter by any but a small number and that the police and the soldiery will exercise far greater forbearance under provocation than they seem to have displayed in Delhi, for example. The murder of Europeans in Amritsar and Ahmedabad is an act of wanton mob savagery which must make the most reckless leader pause before he plays with fire. Will the touching sentiment expressed by Mr. Gandhi on this aspect be sufficient to put an end to such monstrous crime? Mr. Gandhi is a professing Hindu. It is not small glory to Hinduism and its latest great interpreter that they should have produced the only modern fulfilment of Christ's teaching, 'Love thine enemies.' Great moral shocks are known to have produced inner conversion. Let us hope that the tragedy of Amritsar, Delhi and Ahmedabad, unredeemed as it appears, will teach Europeans and Indians alike to seek the grace of forgiveness and walk in the path of peace and goodwill towards all. We have a strong feeling and could justify it by examples if necessary, that just as judicial sentences in India are severe and the treatment of political offenders harsh beyond the standard of England, so in the handling of Indian crowds the last remedy of firing is too easily resorted to, custodians of order seldom exhibiting that degree of self-possession and fortitude which policemen and soldiers in England have never failed to exhibit in similar situations. In point of fact, an infuriated Indian mob is nothing half so dangerous or destructive as an infuriated London mob. If an impartial commission be appointed to enquire into the circumstances that preceded the order to fire during the recent incidents, it may do the great good of setting up a high standard of personal injury that magistrates and the police should have undergone before sacrificing the lives of citizens.

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### A LETTER FROM LONDON.

(FROM OUR OWN CORRESPONDENT.)

LONDON, MARCH 12.

#### INDIAN DEPUTATIONS TO ENGLAND.

JUDGING from the Indian papers to hand, your political parties are not very happy at the prospect of sending deputations to this country with varying mandates. It is very significant that a movement is afoot to get behind the obvious purpose of the Delhi resolutions. Frankly, I am glad to see it, not because of any desire to criticise those who, in my opinion, went too far in endeavouring to bind the Congress delegation hand and foot, but because it will enable closer co-operation among the representative men that will presently come here and find themselves face to face with the facts of the situation in this country. For them not to be in a position to modify a comma or a full stop is to render them impotent from the start. I know that Mr. Tilak's position is, theoretically, to declare for the utmost and then stand aside and say that anything less must be taken willingly and that the fight will then go on for what has not been conceded. But he is far too shrewd a politician not to get the very most he can when it comes to negotiations, so that "the rest" need not be too much. In other words, it is very unlikely that he will, even though working for the full Congress demands, regard himself as bound by a hard-and-fast mandate such as that imposed upon Congress delegates at Delhi. The fact is, of course, the resolution is bound, in practice, to be a dead letter. There will be so many changes and modifications before the Bill is introduced and certainly afterwards, that it is impossible at this stage to say exactly what attitude ought to be adopted towards it, and delegates, within certain well-recognised limits, should have a great degree of latitude when they come here, and should collaborate as closely as possible. If collaboration be, for well-understood reasons, impossible, at least nothing should be done overtly to play into the hands of the enemy.

#### THE PROPECTS OF REFORMS.

I believe, with the *Times*, that the sun is shining a little more brightly upon reform proposals than was recently the case. The spirit of the Paris Conference is wholly opposed to such pretensions as those of the I. C. S. to control Indian policy and administration for all eternity. The Conferences have had an extraordinarily difficult job to get their affairs out of the hands of the official "experts," and the statesmen know of old how dangerous it is to subordinate their activities to those of a bureaucracy, however efficient and clever. But the angles of vision of a bureaucrat and a statesman are vastly different from each other. That is why I think that when the reforms really do come forward in concrete shape in a Bill, the Government will not be altogether impervious to constructive criticism. But that is not to suggest, as Mr. Baptista has somewhat flippant-

ly done, that the people of this country are eager to grant Home Rule to India. In the first place, complete Home Rule is not asked for immediately, and it is improper to confuse the issue in this way. And in the second, the people of England will take their cue not from Mr. Baptista, but from the Government Bill. If Mr. Lloyd George's Government were to take their stand on a Bill, however limited in its scope, and refuse to enlarge it in the slightest degree, that Bill would pass into law, and I cannot see the British nation hurling the Government from office, because it had not gone far enough in the direction of democratising the Indian administration. Mr. Baptista is either unduly pessimistic at one moment or unduly optimistic at another, and it does not help either way. The fact is that there are powerful forces arrayed against Indian aspirations. They are going to make a strong fight before they succumb to the inevitable. It would be the utmost folly to ignore them, and that, in fact, was why the Maharaja of Bikanir, Lord Sinha and Mr. Montagu, last Friday night, went out of their way to expose them to the naked light of criticism. Mr. Aiyengar's estimate of the situation, though gloomy, was nearer correct than Mr. Baptista's, but I think that it was perhaps a shade too gloomy. At any rate, the atmosphere seems to be a bit clearer just now, and, for the time being, the forces of reaction are in retirement, licking their wounds.

#### GREAT SPEECHES ON INDIA.

For they were badly wounded, if not mortally so—as it may yet prove—in last Friday's encounter. The Maharaja was in splendid fighting form. One could see from the flash of his eye, hear from the timbre of his voice, that he was out for mortal combat, and his blows fell thick and heavy upon the devoted heads of that brave brotherhood of ex-bureaucrats and commercial exploiters led by Lord Sydenham, and camouflaged under the style and title of the Indo-British Association, Limited. Their numbers are statutorily limited, as theirs is a private company. But its resources for mischief-making are unlimited and the character of its propaganda is protean. Your readers have had many examples of its methods, and I need not recapitulate them now. But they were put to shame with energy and courage by the Maharaja in the stirring speech in which he proposed the health of the principal guest, Lord Sinha. Lord Sinha's speech was good. The Aga Khan was to the point. Mr. Montagu was in excellent form. But the palm was easily awarded to the Maharaja, who has undoubtedly, by this single speech, done more than any other living Indian to bring Indian India and British India into closer relations with each other, and made all men realise that, whether prince or peasant, soldier or lawyer, Indians of all creeds and castes are Indians first and everything else after. It was a splendid object lesson after Lord Sydenham's attempt to sow disunion in the House of Lords a few days earlier, when Lord Sinha had no difficulty in bringing him to book and

showing the country that in its Indian under Secretary it had secured a real man, a courteous gentleman, a keen debater, and a capable administrator. Lord Sinha is easily marked out for the first Indian Governorship after the Reform Bill is through, and he is deserving of all the praise and goodwill that have been bestowed upon him since his present appointment was announced.

We are still awaiting the publication of the Southborough Committee's reports. It is already hinted—one gathers it from Mr. Montagu's speech on Friday—that they recommend a wider application than was contemplated in the Montagu-Chelmsford report of the principle of communal representation. Mr. Montagu will not easily resign himself to this unless he feels that it is inevitably necessary in order to get his Bill through and to avoid acrimonious divisions in India. He naturally wants his measure to be speeded on its way with the maximum of good feeling. He is clearly of opinion—his very emphasis of praise indicates it—that the I. C. S. have still a few fangs left to bite with and claws unclipt. It is to be hoped that nothing will happen in India to give greater power to that already influential service.

#### AGITATION AGAINST THE ROWLATT BILLS.

The Rowlatt Bills are evidently a grave danger to the progress and acceptance of the Reforms. News came to hand last night of the commencement of a passive resistance movement against them under the leadership—the obvious leadership—of that great passive resister, Mr. Gandhi. The cause seems to be eminently suited to this method of protest, and Mr. Gandhi's leadership is a guarantee of success. It is sincerely to be hoped that, before it is yet too late, the Government will recognise its error and withdraw, or, at least, refrain from enforcing these reactionary measures. In a sense, they make the popular case stronger, for it cannot seriously be argued that the present position in India, after the country's devoted co-operation during the four and a half years of war, is worse than before the war. If so, there must obviously be something vitally wrong with the methods of administration to bring about so hateful a result. Conciliation and coercion seem to be the right and left hands of Governments, and they appear to be incapable of dealing with the difficulties of administration in any more imaginative or sympathetic manner.

#### AN ADDRESS BY MR. ROBERTS.

Last night Mr. Charles Roberts delivered an important address on Constitutional Reform for India before the Royal Colonial Institute, Lord Brassey presiding. He conveyed a very clear and serious warning against the grave danger of failing to pass a measure conceding at least the quantum of reforms proposed in the Montagu-Chelmsford report. Any attempt, he said, to go behind the declaration of Aug. 20, 1917, would be regarded by all parties in India as a gigantic breach of faith. An interesting discussion followed



in which Sir Harry Stephen, formerly judge of the Calcutta High Court, took up the position that the declaration by Mr. Montagu on behalf of the war Cabinet was in no way binding upon the country, a position that was severely attacked by Mr. Devadhar and the lecturer. Sir Harry Stephen seems to be one of the writers employed by the Indo-British Association to advance its peculiar propaganda.

The industrial situation is, for the moment, somewhat easier. The Coal Commission, under the presidency of Justice Sankey, is still sitting and hopes to report on the 20th. What its finding will be no-one can say at present. Whether its decisions will be unanimous is also uncertain.

The situation in Germany seems to have rapidly gone from bad to worse. There is no doubt now that famine and Bolshevism—its concomitant—are threatening the country unless the Allies are able to send during the next few weeks immense food-supplies and see to their proper distribution. That there is still food profiteering in Germany is generally known. But that does not alter the fact that the masses of the people are being driven closer and closer to the border-line of starvation and desperation. If Europe survives the next six months it will survive anything.

### SPECIAL ARTICLES.

#### THE REFORM SCHEME.—II.

It is time now to turn to the leading items of the scheme and discuss them *seriatim*.

With regard to the local bodies the scheme proposes that there should be complete popular control over these and they should be as independent of outside control as possible. This is as it should be. The lethargy of local bodies at present is due to their being circumscribed in their activities and being held in official leading strings. The members take very little interest, and if any one questions the judgment of the official president he becomes a marked man and ceases to be a *persona grata* with the Government machinery. In this way independence of judgment is discounted and a premium is put upon indifference and subserviency. Besides, on account of the small funds at the disposal of the smaller local boards, they do not feel any interest in the local administration. With complete autonomy more money can be raised by the boards themselves and thus a vivid interest in their activities would be created.

The report concedes the non-official majority in the local boards and the principle of the election of the presidents. The sanction of Government is regarded as necessary for appointing higher officers and for an increase of taxation beyond the maximum limit. With regard to these two items of control the extreme advocates of self-government demand complete freedom from outside control. But as, in case of gross mismanagement and default, the Government will be responsible for the debts of the defaulting body, some control we think is indispensable, provided that the controlling officers take to heart the advice given in the report: "But the accepted policy must be to allow the boards to profit by their own mistakes and to interfere only in cases of grave mismanagement."

*A propos* of this question it has to be remembered that scores of municipalities and boards have had to be warned in the past against extravagance or gross mismanagement. With regard to these cases Indian politicians have always felt inclined to blame the present system rather than throw the blame on the defaulting municipalities or boards. It is even thought that the suppression of a municipality, however mismanaged, is a blow to local self-government and adds one more instance to the list of acts of official intemperance and high-handedness. But, with all due deference to these politicians, we are constrained to admit that in many such cases the cup of iniquity was full before the Government laid a heavy hand on the local bodies and that repeated warnings and remonstrances have failed to rouse the bodies to a sense of duty and a prompt resolve to set their house in order.

With regard to the Panchayats, the scheme has decided to "make an effective beginning and hand over civil and criminal jurisdiction in petty cases and administrative powers to the Panchyats." This rehabilitation of the old institution will introduce the necessary solidarity in village communities. At present the inhabitants of a village are like separate atoms moving hither and thither by a chance concourse, having no common bond of sympathy, recognising no authority except their own private will. It will also lessen the tendency to litigation which has proved to be the bane of village life. It would increase the prestige of the village elders which so far has suffered by the chaos resulting from the development of individualism in social life. Lastly, it would train a body of men in political and administrative functions fitting them to take part gradually in the administration of local boards and district boards.

In leaving the formulation of the details of this scheme of local self-government to the several local Governments, however, the scheme is committing the same mistake which has been the fruitful source of disappointment in the past. In spite of the good intentions of successive Governors-General, the local Governments have in most cases thwarted the practical application of liberal schemes of local self-government. It is necessary, therefore, to issue a definite mandate to the local Governments and tie their hands down so as to leave no loophole for shelving the scheme or nullifying the spirit of the injunctions issued by the supreme Government. If discretion is left to provincial Governments in this matter it would be autonomy of the wrong sort. Even if "no general proposals can be equally applicable to all portions of India at one and the same time" it is not difficult to evolve the outline of a general scheme which will apply to the whole country and insist on this minimum being granted to all the provinces, irrespective of their stage of political development. No province is so backward that it cannot work out any scheme of local self-government based even on a partial decentralization. It is the tendency of all over-centralized Governments to make a bug-bear of all proposals tending towards decentralization. It is high time now to rid ourselves of the exaggerated fears.

It is refreshing to find that after the experience of successive Governments from the time of Lord Mayo onwards about the unseemly wrangling between the supreme and the provincial Governments for a share of the revenue, the new scheme has given a quietus to the divided heads and has unequivocally declared the complete separation of the two revenues to be an essential of a rational scheme of decentralization. No provincial Government

can feel a sense of dignity if for important schemes of social amelioration it has to depend upon doles from a far-off central Government conscious of its power of dispensation.

With regard to the removal of the restrictions on the spending powers of provincial Governments, the report is halting in its suggestions. It regards this as contingent upon the relaxation of the India Office control. But this is not a matter which should be left problematical. In fact, separation of revenues and complete autonomy for the provincial Governments will be a questionable boon if the powers of spending are restricted by inelastic codes or are left to be higgled about between those Governments and the India Office. Excepting a general power of vetoing a budget which is formed for meeting swollen expenditure and which consists of objectionable taxes, no restrictions should be imposed on the spending powers of the provincial Governments.

On the whole, this part of the report dealing with financial devolution breathes a spirit of complete trust and is eminently free from that shibboleth so dear to the heart of bureaucratic government, 'l'etat, c'est moi.' Even the necessity of restraining the central Government from administrative interference in the provinces is frankly discussed, although nothing definite is vouchsafed. When a Government accustomed to a century of autocracy gets rid of the idea that wisdom is its monopoly, surely it is a good augury.

The most striking feature of the provincial executive according to the report, is the division of functions of that body into the 'reserved' and the 'transferred' subjects. *Prima facie*, this division seems to contravene the basic principle of politics that an executive must be unitary and as such must have a compact character. If an executive is to govern it must have complete power and should be able to exert its strength as one body. Now, it is necessary to see whether the division of functions suggested by the report is likely to lead to a real weakening of the executive, thus emasculating it of its vital functioning. The concensus of opinion of the Radical Press seems to be that this division deprives the scheme of the character of responsible government even of a partial nature. The Congress-League scheme also asks for an executive which is completely responsible to the legislature. But without discussing the question whether "complete responsibility can be granted without inviting a breakdown"—it is a postulate with the framers of the report that it cannot be—it will be useful to imagine the behaviour of the composite executive under certain situations which are likely to arise. Supposing excise were a transferred subject, it is just possible that the minister might adopt, with the approval of the legislature such a system as might halve the revenue at a stroke. As this would affect the whole budget, an acute difference of opinion would arise between the two sections of the executive, in which case the deadlock can be removed only by the Governor whose will is to prevail in the case of a difference of opinion between the two sections. Nevertheless a curb would be administered to the ministers in the beginning which would not only wound their self-pride but would engender a feeling that they were there only on sufferance. Besides, the beauty of the transference of the 'transferred' head would disappear. Similar situations are sure to arise in the case of many heads, especially education. Those who have closely followed the discussions of the last few years know what radical divergence of views exists with regard to educational policy between the spokesmen of Government

and the spokesmen of the people. An elaborate scheme of primary education is sure to be the first bone of contention. Under the circumstances, the intention "that the Government thus composed shall discharge the functions as one Government" will be only realised in theory. Practically, there would be a weakening of the executive and the desire "to present a united front to the outside" would be an otiose wish.

This brings us to the crux of the situation with regard not only to this portion of the report, but to the whole of it. If there is give and take, if the ministers are conscious of their responsibility in not revolutionising the old methods and practices all at once, if the Governors are liberal and sympathetic, if the executive councillors have been accustomed to work in unison with the people and their spokesmen even if occasionally they find the latter a bit nasty, if there is urbanity and courtesy shown by every one and all; then the new machinery would work smoothly in spite of the unorthodox character of the composite government and the thousand and one makeshifts which are inevitable in a transitional arrangement. But many of these are big if's. One almost feels as if one is portraying the millennium. Still, whatever may be the difficulty in working in practice the complicated scheme, one has to face it. It is only by mutual forbearance and habit of charity that any constitution can be made to work at all. Even the most ideal constitution can be wrecked if people are bent upon wrecking it, while the worst constitution can be made to muddle through if those who work it have got the 'remedial sense,' to use an expression of Disraeli.

It is to be wished that in major provinces at least the transferred heads will be numerous and capable of giving a real training to the ministers. If the heads are few and unimportant it will be difficult to believe that the professions about the granting of responsible government are *bona fide*. It will simply be one more addition to the several pledges given and then lying in the musty records of a Secretariat. Nothing is more irritating to a nation, newly self-conscious of its dignity, than to be played with by means of vague phrases.

The greatest ridicule has been heaped upon this arrangement of a mixed executive by the Anglo-Indian papers as well as by individual Anglo-Indians. But one cannot help feeling that what they apprehend is not so much a weakened executive or a composite arrangement with a greater admixture of Indian element as a possible attack on their vested interests at the hands of ministers. It is humorous to find that the commercial Anglo-Indian who was perfectly indifferent to politics so far has all at once become keenly alive to the charms of politics and is trying to outbid the professor of politics in making subtle distinctions between several forms of Governments and assessing their worth. But at the bottom of all this is the desire to prevent the official machinery from passing into the hands of Indians. But we might assure the European commercial community that the apprehensions entertained by them are illusory, and what the Indians desire is not preferential treatment for themselves but the prevention of preferential treatment as against them.

V. N. GODBOLE.

## UNDER THE MICROSCOPE.

THE INDIAN YEAR BOOK.

STATESMANLIKE breadth of view, wide knowledge, sound judgment, deep sympathy and real vision are so conspicuously absent from contributions



of foreigners to the statement or solution of Indian problems that we most heartily congratulate Sir Stanley Reed, Editor of *The Times of India*, on his informing, suggestive, and stimulating *magnum opus*, entitled "The Indian Year Book," now in the sixth year of issue. We have examined it with severely critical eyes and have no hesitation in declaring it to be a standard work of reference, comprehensive in its scope, admirable in its arrangement and attractive in its get-up. Had the volume been made more illuminating by instructive parallels with other countries and been less honey-combed with extreme dogmatism of John Stuart Mill in its interpretations of economic conceptions and economic laws, Sir Stanley Reed would have accomplished a work of the greatest national importance inasmuch as the damaging comparisons revealing alarming backwardness of India in education, sanitation, and agriculture and the slough of despondency into which she has been hurled by the relentless energies of exploitation resulting in widespread distress and irreparable disaster to indigenous industries, would have shattered the self-complaisance of the Government of India at the thought of being outstripped by nations of yesterday, in the democratisation of institutions, and the individualisation of instruction. It is clever to point to India's growing import and export trade as a measure of her prosperity by the studied suppression of the inconvenient facts that the share of trade per head of population in India is a trifle less than one-thirtieth of the per capital share in the United Kingdom, that the bulk of trade is handled by European merchants, shippers, planters, miners, bankers, mill owners and a host of middlemen and not by the children of the soil and that the excess of exports over imports is more than consumed in the payment of interest, royalties, profits, dividends, etc., to foreign capitalists. Similarly, it is pleasant to lay flattering unction to one's soul by proposing to spend forty-four per cent. more on education, and forty-one per cent. more on sanitation, but the leeway ought long to have been made good in view of the sad fact that both primary and higher education in India received precious little while military expenditure and costly administration received lion's share of public revenues. The result is writ large in the far-flung illiteracy, incredible destitution, distress and disease that no amount of fine words can camouflage. Coming to agricultural progress, we are constrained to remark that the incidence of land revenue per head is far in excess of the farmer's capacity to pay or the soil's exhausted fertility to bear. Waiving for the nonce the patent absurdity of the State's claim to ownership of land, the amount earmarked for the improvement of growingly deteriorating land is next to nothing when viewed in conjunction with the rich returns from land, namely, £1,77,38,300 estimated for the year ending March 31, 1920.

We very greatly regret to have to lay these charges of neglected opportunities at the door of the Government of India which have conferred incalculable benefits on India. We imply no depreciation of the striking merits of Sir Stanley Reed's monumental work under notice when we urge our requirements upon his attention, for we know him sufficiently intimately to say that he has the courage of his convictions and is careful to accept the orthodox official view in the Pauline sense of "proving all things and holding fast only that which is good," according to his lights. Say what the critics will about his official bias, he is, for aught we know, not one of those half-baked

intelligences thus described by Joubert: "Les esprits intraitables s'exposent à être flattés. On cherche naturellement à désarmer ceux qu'on ne peut pas convaincre, et qu'on ne veut pas combattre." We would mention one case in point. Sir Stanley Reed has the heart of grace to separate himself from the crowd of European detractors who persistently belittled the war-efforts of the princes and peoples of India, and the pages of "The Indian Year Book" devoted to estimating India's contributions in men, money and material supplies and stores, have all the constellated glories of the Trade Supplement of *The Times*, although Sir Stanley missed the great opportunity of showing India's share to greater advantage by pointing out how India's gift to England amounted to Rs 2,17,50,00,000 over and above the *additional* military expenditure of £ 24,700,000 whereas Canada contributed £ 19,00,00,000; Australia £ 2,22,00,00,000 and New Zealand £ 2,80,00,000 plus £ 1,00,000 annually. Again, India contributed 1,215,338 combatants and non-combatants as against 4,00,000 of Canada, 4,26,000 of Australia and 93,000 of Australia. In appreciating India's contributions in money, one must never lose sight of the vital facts that India is the poorest country in the world, that she has contributed every ounce of silver she imported during the last twenty years, her imports of silver from 1895 to 1915 being Rs. 1,90,82,91,000, that she bears the crushing annual military expenditure, for instance, £ 4,11,95,000 estimated for 1919-20, from which the Colonies are fortunately free and that her colossal sacrifices for the British Empire will hamstring her industrial development.

Now we have done. As befits a candid reviewer, we have apportioned praise and blame, undeterred by the old adage which forbids us to look a gift horse in the mouth, in order to call Sir Stanley's attention to the needs of his Indian readers before exposing the next issue of "The Indian Year Book" to what Renan calls, "les jugements rogues qui font partie du droit qu'on acquiert sur un livre en l'achetant." Considerable new matter has already been added in the present issue, notably "Who's Who in India" and "Bibliography of India,"—in both of which Indians ought to find greater recognition next year,—but we almost hear Sir Stanley replying in the words of the author of the Book of Maccabees: "If I have done well, and as is fitting the story, it is that which I desired; but if slenderly and meanly, it is that which I could attain unto."

KESHAVLAL L. OZA.

## CORRESPONDENCE.

### AN INTERVIEW WITH MR. TILAK.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE SERVANT OF INDIA.

SIR,—A recent issue of the *Leader* reproduces a letter from a member of Mr. Tilak's party, dated London, January 16, and published in the *Mahratta* of February 9. I have not seen that issue of the *Mahratta* and do not know who the writer of the letter is. It says that the British Committee of the Indian National Congress "is not disposed to carry on any propaganda according to the special resolutions passed at Bombay and re-affirmed at Delhi. Mr. Polak interviewed Mr. Tilak on the subject. He is unwilling to do anything according to the Congress programme."

It is not my purpose to write on behalf of the British Committee, which can speak for itself. I desire, however, to remove any misapprehension that may have arisen in consequence of that letter regarding the interview therein re-

ferred to. It occurred on Jan. 7 at my request, because I wished to discuss with Mr. Tilak the bearing of certain hand-bills that he had caused to be widely circulated, containing incorrect statements of fact and calculated, in my opinion, to prejudice the cause of Constitutional Reform in India. I had at one time thought of drawing public attention to the nature of this literature; but upon further consideration I came to the conclusion that it might perhaps be more useful to confer personally with Mr. Tilak. I had met him with others several times previously; but had had no private interview with him, nor have I had any since. I discussed with him very frankly the character and bearing of these leaflets and Mr. Tilak gave me his reasons for issuing them, with which, as I told him, I entirely disagreed. We then went on to discuss the situation in India and to exchange views thereon. I found that in some respects we were in agreement and in others in disagreement. I clearly explained my point of view to Mr. Tilak for what it was worth, and told him that on the points where we were not in agreement, I nevertheless appreciated the arguments that he advanced. I told him also that he did not appear to me to have correctly estimated the political situation in this country. In discussing the resolutions passed at the Bombay Congress, I told him that in many respects they did not seem to me to differ intrinsically from those passed at the Moderates' Conference; but that I considered that the demand for a time-limit was impractical and would be ineffective; and that it was also opposed to what I understood to be constitutional practice in this country. I was, therefore, not disposed to advocate such a demand, which, I was sure, would be futile. But that regarding, as I did, the demand as an indication and a symbol of the deep distrust and suspicion entertained by Indians towards the bureaucracy, I should, on all suitable occasions, as in fact I had already done, warn my countrymen against any impediments being placed in the way of the grant of complete responsible government to India at the earliest date, and of the danger of attaching too much importance to the overcautious counsels of reactionaries here and in India. There was a great deal of other discussion between us at this interview; but Mr. Tilak expressly asked me at the time to let our conversation remain a private one.

Hitherto, I have observed the undertaking into which we both entered; but it would seem that Mr. Tilak has not only committed a breach of it, but that in retailing it to his friend, who wrote to the *Mahratta*, he put his own gloss upon it and thus conveyed a wholly false impression of my conversation with him. At the date of our interview, nothing whatever was known of the nature of the Delhi Congress resolutions, as no telegrams had up to that time been received in London. On the contrary, I told Mr. Tilak that I had had a cable stating that Mr. Sastri was attending the Delhi Congress with a view to securing a modification of the Bombay Congress resolutions so as to bring them more in accord with those passed at the Moderates' Conference. This was in reply to an inquiry from Mr. Tilak as to whether I had had any other news than had already appeared in the Press. He had several times previously sent his assistant to my office to make a similar inquiry. Up to then, nothing was known of the fact that the resolutions of the Delhi Congress had gone beyond those passed at Bombay.

So far as I am concerned, therefore, the statement contained in the letter to the *Mahratta* is inaccurate in most of its essentials. In the first place, the Delhi resolutions did much more than re-affirm those passed at Bombay. Secondly, at the date of the interview, their nature was not known here. Thirdly, I did not interview Mr. Tilak on the subject of these resolutions; but on quite a different matter, discussion on the resolutions arising only in the course of general conversation thereafter. Fourthly, I did not tell Mr. Tilak that I was unwilling to do anything according to the Congress programme. I very strongly protest against what I can only describe as breach of confidence on Mr. Tilak's part and a quite unjusti-

fied distortion of my conversation with him and a misrepresentation of my position. I may add, in conclusion, that I have informed him that I hold myself released from any obligation of privacy in regard to this interview, having regard to my treatment at his hands, and that I regret that in future it will be impossible for me to enter into any further relations of a confidential character with him or his friends.—Yours etc.,

HY. S. L. POLAK.

266, Stand, London,  
March, 13, 1919.

#### TOPICS OF THE WEEK.

A STATEMENT issued by the Labour Party on March 5 says that the summoning of a conference of Labour to discuss the draft covenant of the League of Nations will be considered. Among the subjects that will engage its attention is specially mentioned the following, that the mandatory system, combined with international supervision, be applied to colonial possessions and protectorates. The international conference on the subject of the League, held at Berne from March 6 to March 13, has adopted certain amendments in the draft, one of them being that the League headquarters should supervise the administration of non-autonomous colonies. It is thus clear that advanced opinion at any rate does not support the unilateral application of the mandatory principle, which has been proposed in the draft plan.

\* \* \*

PROF. TRENCH suggests in a communication to the *Times* that England should refer to the League of the Nations, as soon as it is set up, the outline of an Irish settlement. The great advantage this course would have, in his opinion, is that when the settlement thus outlined is completed it would come into force with all the moral sanction of a measure representing the mind of the civilised world. This he regards as a test question; for, he says, "The sincerity of the Great Powers is open to question now; there is a suspicion that the League of Nations may be designed to confer perpetuity upon the existing political order, rather than that measure of stability which is the condition of progress; and by this Irish policy England's sincerity would be placed beyond suspicion, and her international position would be improved, her action in the recognition of the Irish question as a world-question becoming a precedent for similar action respecting the relations between other sovereign peoples and subject peoples."

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