

APPENDIX.

SPERCH DELIVERED BY SIR HENRY COTTON
IN REPLY TO THE FAREWELL ADDRESS,
PRESENTED TO HIM ON BEHALF OF
THE PEOPLE OF BENGAL AT
THE TOWN HALL, CALCUTTA.
ON THE 6TH MAY 1902.

Maharaja Bahadur, Rajas and Gentlemen, I know not how to utter the thoughts which arise in my breast as I listen to the all too complimentary sentiments expressed in your address and gaze upon this vast and appreciative audience. I cannot and will not attempt to make any adequate reply. Bengal was my home for twenty-nine long and happy years before I went to Assam. It is nearly thirty-five years since I first set foot in this city, a young man full of vigour and enthusiasm and aspirations, with a set determination to consecrate my life not only to the devoted and loyal service of the Government, under which I am proud to have been able to rise to honourable and responsible office, but also directly to the service of the people. I think I may claim to have followed a consistent policy, and though I do not say that there have not been lapses from the high standard I placed before myself, I have never forgotten to aim at its realization, always remembering that as I have received freely, I must freely give and that the debt I owe to India is one I can never repay. I have tried to place the interests of the people before my own. *Fais as que dois adieu ne que pourra.* By this old knightly motto I have striven to be guided. I believe in the truth of the teaching—discredited though it appears to be—that the great problem of modern political life is the subordination of

politics to morals. I believe that devotion of the strong to the weak is a primary duty of those in power. I am not and never have been a very radical reformer. I entertain too high a regard and admiration for the illustrious memories of the mighty dead, whose influence has moulded the present and will direct the future. I know, that, if you are to destroy, you must replace, and I have never advocated any of the revolutionary and destructive suggestions for the reorganisation of Hindu society which from time to time I have seen in ascendance and which have already done so much harm. I believe in the religions as well as in the aristocratic basis of this society. It is true that the old order is changing, giving place to the new, but it devolves on the natural leaders of the Indian people to guide and control the period of transition, so that it may be traversed without disturbance. I have refrained from interference in such matters. But I have put myself forward in an humble way as the minister and interpreter of Government to the people, and in my official capacity have always borne in mind that by the force of personal example and good-will it would be possible for me in the positions I have held to do much to knit together the links which unite the rulers and the ruled. In whatever measure I may have succeeded in this ideal I have my reward. It will not I think, be deemed mere boasting if I venture to say at the close of my active career in my adopted land that I have been able by the exercise of kindness and sympathy to touch the hearts of a grateful people. I see this union of hearts before me now. The mere duties of administration in India are comparatively easy. It is an easy task to administer uprightly the affairs of a docile and subject people; it is easy to lead our victorious armies among imperfectly armed and semi-savage nationalities, to annex provinces and by despotic rule evolve order out of chaos. It is a sublimer function of Imperial dominion to weld the varying races under our sway, into one great Empire "broad-based upon the people's will," to fan the glowing embers of their national existence and to wait upon, foster and protect their instinctive tendencies. We need for our rulers the qualities of statesmanship rather than

of administrative ability. What is wanted is the pervading presence of a spirit of relativity in the Government, of a capacity to refrain from unnecessary action, and above all of a hearty sympathy with the wishes and interests of the governed. It is not for any conduct of mine as an administrator that you are assembled together this evening, but it is because you recognise that my life's work has been devoted to bridging the gulf which separates the English from the Indian races. It has been said that "East is East and West is West and never the twain shall meet." That is a false and jarring note inspired by a minor prophet. The East has met the West, and it is the highest duty of Occidental and Oriental alike, whose lot has cast them on the border line, to soften asperities and alleviate the friction of the contact. It is because I have done this or striven to do it that you have come here in my honour. I am now surrounded by troops of friends, of all classes and ranks of the community, Hindus, Mahomedans and my own fellow-countrymen, and what can be more grateful when I have put off my rusted armour and am passing into retirement, than to hear the cheering welcome and affectionate God-speed of my old companions. But alas! how many have faded away since I left this province. Week after week I have been pained by the chronicle of the death of one and then of another and lately by the loss of the nearest and dearest to me of all. There are those present now whom I have known for a generation, who have grown from adolescence into mature manhood with me and who have been associated with me in various stages of my career. I recall your co-operation in the service of the Calcutta Municipality; some of you were my colleagues on the Corporation in the past. I rejoice to see among you so many representative Zemindars of the Province. I have always recognised that the lower orders in India stand in urgent need of an aristocracy above them, that their ignorance and characteristic docility and want of firmness demand the guidance and protection of more powerful superiors. The basis of internal order in this country is to be found in a patrician aristocracy of indigenous growth and trained by past associations to control and lead: I

congratulate you in Bengal on the possession of permanent settlement, the Magna Charta of the Provinces. Especially glad am I to have received this address day from the hands of my venerated friend Mahr Bahadur Sir Jotendra Mohun Tagore, the leader of Hindu community in Calcutta, whose tried and distinguished fidelity to the British Government is equalled by his devotion to the interests of the people. When I regard his benevolent countenance, when crowd of associations surge up in my memory, when gaze upon this sea of friendly faces I can no longer command my utterance. I can only bid you farewell, not a final farewell, I trust, for I shall assuredly, if and health are spared me, come among you again. A sincere farewell with the amplest gratitude for all I have done for me and the renewed assurance, although none is needed, that my remaining energies shall continue to be consecrated to the service of the Indian people.
