

A COMMONWEALTH OF INDIAN STATES.

BY COLONEL L. J. H. GREY, C.S.I.

FORMER articles * discussed two measures of Lord Lytton for the use of Indian chiefs and for employment of the aristocracy of India. The first of these, for military service by the chiefs, had to be dropped at the time, but was subsequently adopted by Lord Dufferin in 1889. Of the second, for a Council of the Empire, Mr. Morley speaks as an "utter failure"; but why? Because, as stated by the editor of Lord Lytton's letters, "The Government at home had not sanctioned Lord Lytton's proposals to establish an Indian Privy Council and native peerage." On the 11th May, 1877, he wrote to Lord Salisbury, "I am convinced that the fundamental political mistake of able and experienced British officials, is a belief that we can hold India by what they call good government; that is to say, by improving the condition of the *ryot*, strictly administering justice, spending immense sums on irrigation works, etc. Politically speaking, the Indian peasantry is an inert mass. If it ever moves at all it will move in obedience, not to its British benefactors, but to its native chiefs and princes, however tyrannical they may be. The only political representatives of native opinion are the Babus, whom we have educated to write semi-seditious articles in the native Press, and who really represent nothing but the social anomaly of their own position. Look at the mistake which Austria made in the government of her Italian provinces. They were" (like the British districts in India) "the best governed portions of Italy; she studied and protected the interests of the native peasantry; but fearing the native *noblesse*, she snubbed and repressed it. When that *noblesse*, having nothing to gain or hope from the continuation of her rule, conspired against it, the peasantry either remained passive or else followed the lead of its natural superiors in attacking its alien benefactors. But the Indian chiefs and princes are not a mere *noblesse*. They are a powerful aristocracy. To secure completely and to utilise efficiently the Indian

* "Imperial Service by Indian Chiefs," UNITED SERVICE MAGAZINE, April, 1907.
"Mr. Morley's 'Some Paces Further' in India," UNITED SERVICE MAGAZINE, June, 1907.

aristocracy is, I am convinced, the most important problem now before us."

2. Lord Lytton said in this letter that he did not propose to increase the political power of the chiefs. They should remain, in the words of Sir John Malcolm quoted with approval by Lord Canning,* "Royal instruments," *Arkan-i-Dowlah*, supports of the throne. As such Lord Lytton desired to enhance their dignity and their usefulness, thinking that, as recently said by Mr. Morley, "we made a mistake in not attaching the weight we ought to attach to these powerful princes and standing forces in India. It is a question whether we do not persist in holding these powerful men too lightly." That has been when all went well, it is in time of trouble that their value appears.

The Maharaja of Babili wrote last June to the *Madras Mail*, that "Maharajas, Kajas, *Zamindars*" (great landholders), "and others of any *status* are quite loyal to the British. Sikhs and Muhammadans are likewise strongly attached to the Government. None of these will ever encourage the present agitators; on the contrary, they will use all their power and influence to defeat them." This we have seen in the prompt action taken by the Mysore, Kashmir, and other native Governments against the preaching of sedition; as in 1857, so now, the chiefs and aristocracy of India are on our side, and their weight is immense. As said thirty years ago, in a pamphlet approved by the wide political experience of Lord Lytton,† "Who that has passed through the great agony of 1857, can have any but the liveliest feeling of the importance of the Feudatories' rôle in the maintenance of our power? . . . Each chief gave the cue to millions of our subjects who were watching his every sign. . . . His adherence to our cause at once lowered the tone of the preachers of sedition, disconcerted innumerable combinations, and sent a shock of disheartenment through the ranks of the revolt; while at the same time raising the confidence of our adherents. On the other hand, if heading the movement, each ancient name would have been a tower of strength to the rebel cause."

3. Therefore, said Mr. Morley in his last Budget speech, "let us try to draw to our side those men who now influence the people." Against us, he pointed out, are the *litterati*, whom Lord Lytton said that we have educated to sedition; "they have little to lose and much to gain from revolutionary changes," and they have no patriotism to restrain them. The sentiment of patriotism, writes the Maharaja before quoted, "since the foundation of the caste

* See the last paragraph of this article.

† 'The Use of Indian Chiefs.' W. H. Allen & Co., 1875.

system has died out altogether. This system was originally introduced by priestcraft (Brahmans), for their own elevation amongst us. . . . It has always been the case with Brahmans to set themselves against their kings." As said in a former article,* this revolt against the Brahmans is everywhere in progress, and they, with the Kayasths, are the only Indian classes represented by the Babus—"a mere handful," said Mr. Morley, but one "which makes all the difference, is making, will make, all the difference," unless repressed by those who really lead and influence the various peoples of India.

‡ Should not these considerations be weighed by those who desire the autonomy of India on lines only attained in England by gradual progress in a thousand years since the Heptarchy? It was said recently, in a remarkable series of letters by an Indian,† that "the liberty which the British won after centuries of effort has been given to India from without in a day . . . it must not be abused. Nor can it be safely exercised with the like expansion in India as in England . . . the conditions of India are widely different in every particular circumstance." On this subject Mr. Morley refers to Mill: "if there is anybody who can be quoted as having been a champion of representative government, it is Mill," and he cites Mill's opinion that government by the dominant nation is legitimate, if it most facilitates the transition of the subject people to our state of civilisation. In this the aristocracy of India agree, but the Babus do not; as said recently in the *Times*, "the Indian extremists preach the extermination of the English, and they, and not the moderate party, really represent the educated classes." No doubt, as before quoted from a great nobleman of Madras, the aristocracy "will use all their power and influence to defeat them," but to that end the aristocracy must be supported. The "Voice of Reason" above referred to points out that "In India we have a foreign Government ruling over almost countless millions of excitable Orientals, the bulk of whom are easily influenced by agitators." It is only the aristocracy who can, and will, counteract this, if we do not further disgust them by putting the Babus over their heads.

5. Mr. Morley has said that the attitude of the Babus is no reason for departing from the path of reform; to do so would be taken "as a sign of nervousness, trepidation, and fear; and fear, which is always unworthy in any Government, is in Indian Government not only unworthy, but dangerous." Certainly we cannot go

* UNITED SERVICE MAGAZINE, June, 1907.

† "The Voice of Reason," letters to the *Civil and Military Gazette* of Lahore, by Punjabi.

back. "Self-government is the order of the day," wrote *A Muhammadan* to the *Civil and Military Gazette* of Lahore last June, "it is the coming event. The mass at home is out and out for self-government in India, and for the matter of that, no Englishman, of whatever political complexion, would pronounce himself as absolutely against self-government." Nevertheless, *A Muhammadan* fears that we may commit what His Highness the Aga Khan has described in the *National Review* as "a great ethical wrong, unworthy of a Christian and humane nation, to give over the real power of the Government to the people of India." *A Muhammadan* fears it because hitherto, to people at home in whose eyes intellectual ability is the criterion of political fitness, self-government in India has meant government by the Babus. "Any weakening of the British Government during the next two centuries," he writes, "would be fiercely resented by the Muhammadans"—and not by sixty millions of Muhammadans only, but by probably thrice as many Hindus.

6. Surely, however, we may attain internal self-government in India without that dreaded weakening of the British Government. His Highness the Aga Khan, like *A Muhammadan*, was considering the demand of the Congressmen; he referred to the disastrous consequences of a surrender of power to such as they. Is there no other course? Our object is that India should in time administer its own affairs as a component part of the British Empire. Why should we endeavour, by methods unnatural to India, to attain this object, when we have ready to our hand, in working order and fairly successful over one-third of India, the system under which Indians always have been governed and which suits them? "From the dawn of history," wrote the *Times* last year, "the people of India have been governed autocratically" by their own chiefs. No doubt, as Mr. R. H. Eliot wrote to the *Spectator* in June, Indians prefer British rule: "When Mysore, after fifty years of British rule, was given up to native rule, I had good reasons for knowing, and the new native Government knew it too, that the people generally disliked the change." Mr. Eliot at the time "was rather in favour of it than otherwise. In the end I had entirely to change my opinions, and to acknowledge that the natives of the country knew much better than I did." This feeling is universal; even in the British districts the masses do not like native administration, they prefer the Englishman if they can get him. Nevertheless, considerations of expediency lead to steady increase of employment of natives, not only in the subordinate, but in the superior grades. As said recently in the *Times*, "the common English policy by which everything of any importance

is entrusted to an Englishman, as the only competent and honest exponent of enlightened government, cannot go on for ever." We must, in the end, find a way out of our necessarily provisional position here. The question is whether that way shall be on the present European lines or on Indian lines. Shall we hand over to the Babus the working of the State machine, who, Mr. Morley says, "could not do it for a week," of whom Mr. Eliot states that they "are regarded with intense dislike by about ninety per cent. of the inhabitants of India, the rural classes"—shall we adopt this method, condemned by His Highness the Aga Khan as "a great ethical wrong"? Or, since the power must in the end be transferred, since we cannot exercise it indefinitely, and we are pledged to its transfer—shall we gradually transfer it to the natural leaders, to those who are capable of its exercise, who do now exercise it in one-third of India with fair success, and in a manner suited to the people whom they rule?

7. "If in India there were a supreme native ruler in the position of the Khedive, the troubles of the India Office would be greatly reduced." This remark, in Mr. Meakin's book, 'The Life of an Empire,' goes to the very root of our Indian difficulties. More than thirty years ago it was contended, in 'The Use of Indian Chiefs,' before quoted, that the system of administration of the Native States is more congenial to Indians than the British system; that even were this saying true, in Marshman's 'History of India,' "If our Government is the purgatory of the upper ten thousand it is still the paradise of the millions," nevertheless the millions will always follow the ten thousand. "Was it not so in Oudh, in 1857, when the people whom we had just relieved from the miseries of a disorganised rule and grinding oppression clung *en masse* to their oppressors?" "The people of India," said Lord Lytton's letter, before quoted, "will only move in obedience to its native chiefs and princes, however tyrannical they may be." Mr. Meakin speaks of a supreme native ruler, but such there never was over the whole congeries of various races and tongues called "India." There are, however, many native rulers with well-organised administrations covering one-third of India; why should not there be more?

8. In his 'Egypt of the Future,' Mr. Edward Dicey, C.B., has urged that we should follow the example of Russia in Central Asia, of France in Tunis, of Austria in Bosnia and the Herzegovina. He desires the policy "propounded by Lord Dufferin and advocated by Nubar Pasha, namely, that we should administer Egypt as we administer the Native States of India. . . . Supreme authority should be vested in the hands of the representative of the protecting power. Subject to this supreme authority, as little

change as possible should be made in the internal administration of the protected states." This reform is possible in Egypt; how far is it still possible in India? It is perhaps still possible here to some extent;—indeed, if ever withdrawal from India is demanded by British taxpayers impatient of the great naval and military burden imposed by its defence, then the gradual adoption of Mr. Dicey's method would be the necessary preliminary of such retirement. In the course of the two centuries demanded by *A Muhammadan*, in his letters before mentioned ("any weakening of the British Government during the next two centuries would be fiercely resented by the Muhammadans"), much might be done in the direction of autonomy. By degrees the Native States' boundaries might be enlarged; by degrees new states might be created—as Mysore and Kashmir were created during the nineteenth century; all taking up their shares of India's investments, the "productive" debt for railways and canals, and paying off their quotas of her "unproductive" debt, which is chiefly on account of wars, like that of "the Mutiny," which have assured the peace and prosperity of India. There would of course remain great tracts, the coast provinces, which could not be included under any native chieftain's rule, and which must, so long as we stay in India, abide under our direct administration; but still, by very gradual process, great advance could be made, even in the current century, towards the system which Lord Dufferin advocated. Our avowed object, whether in Egypt or in India, is internal autonomy, and only on Mr. Dicey's method can that be attained. Mr. Dicey cannot "understand how the absolute autocracy of the ruler can be the way to prepare the ruled for autonomy. The process seems analogous to that of the schoolmaster who undertook to teach his pupils the art of swimming, but would never allow them to go into the water till they had learned to swim." Now in the Native States of India they have learned to swim, and the nearest approach possible to an autonomous India would be a commonwealth of those states under the British Protectorate. No doubt it might fall to pieces were that Protectorate withdrawn; but the gradual establishment of such a Commonwealth would give India her best chance in preparation for that case. It would also be the indispensable preliminary of our withdrawal, for only so could the British Government dispose of its investments, and discharge the obligations incurred on behalf of India, before the necessarily ensuing collapse of India's credit ruined her creditors.

9. The question is of attaining, within some measurable period of time, that administration of India by Indians for Indians which is our declared object. Entire autonomy India, as a whole, has

never had ; even the more reasonable of the Babus do not desire it, much less the chiefs, nor is it conceivable ; as Mr. Dicey says of Egypt, "to talk of autonomy," *i.e.* independence of some protecting power, "as coming within the range of practical politics seems to me an absurdity." But self-government by Indians under a central authority is not only existent, but in different degrees successful, in the Native States. The proposal is simply this—to use and develop existing machinery ; to adopt the only form of *Swaraj* that India has ever known. The method of *Swaraj* hitherto favoured, on European lines, is foreign to Indian customs and traditions ; it is dreaded, not by the aristocracy alone, but by the masses ; in the words of His Highness the Aga Khan, its adoption would be "a great ethical wrong, unworthy of a Christian and humane nation." Such being the case, why not consider another method ?

10. That method is to extend by slow degrees the systems of native administration, which already cover one-third of India, over as much as may be possible of the remaining two-thirds of that country. The extension of territory of existing states, the conferring of ruling powers on titular chiefs, or the creation of new states in favour of territorial magnates representatives of ancient houses, should be primarily the reward of special desert in that Imperial Service by Indian chiefs advocated in the first of these articles.* On this service of the Native States depends the great increase of the Indian forces demanded by the military situation in Central Asia and our engagement to defend Afghanistan ; and it is by their share in the defence of India that the desert of the nobles should chiefly be measured. For instance, suppose the case of a chief who, from the commencement of the Imperial Service movement has taken up the burden in greater proportion to his revenues than others, even of the few who have hitherto come forward. It is decided to acknowledge his services by the grant of adjacent territory. A calculation would be made of the proportionate share of "unproductive" Indian debt ; that proportion, perhaps one and a half to two years of the assigned revenue, would be the *nazrana* (or "fine" in the feudal sense) payable for the assigned territory, plus the value of the plant transferred, buildings, roads, etc. The net revenue of the assigned territory, after deduction of cost of collection and of administration, would be for maintenance of a prescribed increase of the Imperial Service troops of the State. Or suppose one of the titular chiefs, a *Talukdar* of Oudh, or a Raja of Madras or Bengal, to come forward patriotically in the scheme of Imperial Service, and that as reward he is

* UNITED SERVICE MAGAZINE, April, 1907.

granted ruling powers in his *jagirs* and estates, then a share of the "unproductive" Indian debt proportionate to his revenues would be assessed as *nasrana*. Or suppose the creation, in favour of a representative of some ancient house, of an entirely new state, on the precedent of Mysore or Kashmir, then similarly a *nasrana* would be taken, of a share of the above debt proportionate to the revenue of the state created, and a quota of Imperial Service troops would be assessed on the new state. As the measure gradually progressed it would probably be further desirable for the Government to relieve itself also of "productive" debt, by transferring to the Native States the proportion of productive works, railway and irrigation, included in their territories, on payment of proportionate shares of the cost, according to the precedent of the shares of the Sirhind Canal held by some Punjab States.

11. In suggesting the gradual extension of the Native States' system it is not contended that this system is ideal, only that direct British administration of India cannot go on for ever, and that the rule of Indian chiefs is better than the rule of Babus—which latter indeed is impossible. Sir John Low's admission was true, some sixty years ago, that the great mass of the subjects of a Native State would be grateful for British government. Sir John Low, alone among the members of the Supreme Council, was then resisting Lord Dalhousie's annexation of Nagpur. He made the above admission while still contending for the maintenance of Native States. Some years later the *Benares Akhbar* said of the grants of territory to Indian chiefs, in reward of mutiny services, that "The people of the territory granted are never so happy as they were under British rule." This also was true, *then*, but matters have since greatly improved in the Native States. Moreover, though native rule unchecked and unsupervised may be bad, yet it suits the people. As said of Egypt by Mr. Dicey* : "Their ideas are not our ideas, their ways are not our ways. The Egyptians have been used to be ruled despotically for centuries without end, and their ideal of government is that of personal rule. . . . I should not be at all surprised to find that even amidst the classes which have benefited the most by our reforms there were often regrets for the bygone days." The Native States' system in India is no longer unchecked and without supervision as in Sir John Low's day ; it is the watchfulness of the Government which renders their administrations successful and satisfactory to their people, as they now for the most part are.

12. Nevertheless, "we confess that, uncompromisingly as our system rubs against every angle of the Oriental nature, the

* 'The Story of the Khedivate,' by Edward Dicey, C.B.

instances are yet few, if any, where the inhabitants of a tract that has been some time under British rule would consent to revert to native government." * This was true thirty years ago, but the great attraction of British administration is being gradually weakened in the substitution of Indian for British agency. It was also due largely to the lenity of our land revenue system: native rulers cannot forego, as we have, the major part of the State claim upon the produce of the land. The main objection to native rulers will, therefore, disappear if the exigencies of Imperial defence compel us to raise our revenue rates to something approaching the standard of the Native States. The question, moreover, is not between British rule and native rule, but between administration by the Babus, with the British power behind them, or administration by the Indian chiefs; on this, when *once understood*, there is no doubt as to the choice of the masses. For these dull masses, however, the question cannot for long be so posed and understood. Meanwhile, it is certain that the main objection to the extension of Native States' administration would come from the British Indian subjects affected. But would the people really be worse off; and if so would not the subjects of Native States be generally anxious for British rule? Sir John Low thought so sixty years ago, but it is doubtful now whether Native States' villagers are attracted by the happier condition of their British neighbours. The people on both sides of a border are generally of the same classes, often closely related. An observer will find no difference in their circumstances, all the indices of village comfort are the same—with this difference that the land of the Native States' subjects is their own, that of the British subjects is often mortgaged. Some years ago a pamphlet by a native official explained that our people pay three *jamas* (assessments), of which one goes to the lawyers. That *jama* is escaped by the Native States' subject, though the second, the "bribes" *jama*, is much the same for him and the British subject. The third, or revenue *jama* of the former, is on an average about double that of the British subject; *i.e.* the native administration secures a part of what the British subjects squander on litigation, but only a part, and the Native States' subject thus remains on the whole at least as well off as his British neighbour. Those familiar with both systems can see advantages in Native States' methods which should lead British *ryots* to accept transfer contentedly. Still the fact remains that, at first, they would not do so.

Nor would there be any reason for such a measure could the

* 'The Use of Indian Chiefs.' W. H. Allen & Co., 1875.

system of British India remain as it is. But it cannot. Self-government has to be introduced. At present we are striving for it on wrong lines, of which the result to the *ryot*, could he understand it, would more than reconcile him to the alternative, to the restoration of self-government to India on her ancient lines—the system of the Native States.

13. It has not hitherto been our practice to surrender to native administration tracts which have long enjoyed "the blessings of British rule." But this, and the objection of the British *ryots* discussed in the last paragraphs, do not really affect the present question. For, assuming that our avowed object is the internal autonomy of India, the question is only of the method of substituting native for British administration. But there are other objections to the present proposals, for instance that of a native Indian statesman of wide experience—"The first and the foremost duty of the Government at the present time is to extirpate the agitation and sedition spread by the Congress, and as long as this is not thoroughly suppressed any proposal of this sort would be inopportune." But the proposal is not for any new announcement of policy, only for a change of view on the method of carrying out an avowed policy. No sudden change is proposed, nothing to be *done* immediately or even proximately, only the principle to be accepted of a gradual process which shall be carried out in the current and next centuries. Another objection, by a very able Indian nobleman, is "Where are the chiefs?" Now it is true that the level of qualification in Indian chiefs, as a body, is not at present very high. It would be strange if it were so when we, in Mr. Morley's words, "persist in holding these powerful men too lightly." What room have the chiefs to exercise, what incitement to acquire, the qualities of statesmen? But when, as suggested in the pamphlet before quoted, "they find themselves honoured and useful in the court, the council and the field, and when the scions of the aristocracy are trained up in close official and social contact with ourselves," then the qualities of the born leaders of the Indian races will rise into view from the rust of disuse. A third objection is that chiefs might misapply increased revenues, as some now squander what they have. But the conditions of such increase of revenue have been stated in paragraph 10, and would be enforced by the Emperor's representatives. One main object of the measure depends on those conditions, namely, the necessary increase of the defensive power of the Empire by the military service of the chiefs. But the Imperial native army, and the subsidiary British forces, would remain as they are now, being maintained by the revenues of the coast provinces, by the opium revenue, and by the custom

duties. Thus Ambala, Lucknow, and other cantonments would remain as much Imperial garrisons, were the surrounding territories included in Native States, as are now Mhow, Secunderabad, Bangalore, etc., under the same conditions. Finally, there is the probable objection, by extremists in England, that the autocratic rule of Indian chiefs is not at all what they intend by self-government in India; that the only self-government is government by representatives of the people. This means government by the Babus,* but in India there is an aristocracy to be reckoned with, whom alone the people will follow. No doubt we might, for a time, force the Babus upon them, but neither the aristocracy nor the people in India will willingly accept, as in Europe, leaders and rulers on the sole qualifications of education, intellectual ability, and powers of oratory. In relying on such we have, as Lord Salisbury said of Turkey, "put our money on the wrong horse," and the present policy cannot lead to the self-government we desire. Shall we then go on drifting as at present, or rather consider some more practical method?

14. "The safety of our rule," wrote Lord Canning, in 1860,† "is increased, not diminished by the maintenance of native chiefs well affected to us. . . . Should the day come when India shall be threatened by an external enemy, or when the interests of England elsewhere may require that her Eastern Empire shall incur more than ordinary risk, one of our best mainstays will be found in these Native States. . . . It was long ago said by Sir John Malcolm that if we made all India into Zillahs" (British districts), "it was not in the nature of things that our Empire should last fifty years; but that if we could keep up a number of Native States, without political power but as royal instruments, we should exist in India as long as our naval superiority in Europe was maintained. Of the substantial truth of this opinion I have no doubt, and recent events have made it more deserving of our attention than ever." In forty-seven years since has it become less deserving of attention? In 1857-58 the native Governments, wrote Lord Canning, "served as breakwaters to the storm which would otherwise have swept over us in one great wave." So now do they defeat the attempts of the Babus to raise a similar wave. If further they serve to avert from India the "great wrong" feared by His Highness the Aga Khan, namely, "to give over the real power of the Government to the people of India" in the person of "the Babus," they will thus render to this country a no less signal service than they rendered in 1857-58.

L. J. H. GREY.

* The general Indian term for the lawyers, journalists, and other politicians of Calcutta, Bombay, and Madras who claim to represent all the various peoples of India.

† Despatch of the 30th April, 1860, published in the *Calcutta Gazette* of the 22nd December, 1860.

THE HUNDRED YEARS' WAR.

BY F. J. SNELL.

XII.

HENRY V. AND AGINCOURT.

THE thirty-five years that intervene between the death of Du Guesclin and the battle of Agincourt constitute by far the dullest period of the protracted struggle known as the Hundred Years' War. This period can in no sense be termed an era of peace. Truces were concluded in 1388, 1389, 1394, and 1396, on the last occasion for twenty-eight years, but the internal dissensions in both countries, while disabling them from the active prosecution of hostilities, rendered a durable peace the vainest of dreams. To aspirants for power no ruse was so obvious as to throw down the gauntlet to the national enemy when a rival declared for reconciliation and concord. This was, in effect, what happened. The war between England and France was only accessory to civil disturbances which were much more vital, and absorbed and overshadowed it.

The death of Edward III. occurred in 1377, and that of Charles V. three years later. These events produced parallel situations, which were of a nature pronounced by a sacred writer peculiarly ominous. The successors of those monarchs were boys, and therefore the administration of affairs had to be delegated to regents, who would naturally seize on the opportunity for the purpose of aggrandizing themselves. The almost certain effect of this state of things was to destroy, in a great measure, reverence for the hereditary principle, and to create and multiply factions, whose bloody contentions would lacerate the body politic, and render it a prey for foreign aggression. Agincourt and the conquest of France by Henry V. can be properly understood only in the light of the disintegrating influences which induced in the French nation complete forgetfulness of the lessons of the preceding century. In this respect, as also in many of the material circumstances, history repeated itself. Experience had confirmed what common sense ought surely to have suggested, that the primary conditions