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GIVE THE PEOPLE BACK THEIR OWN.

(An open letter to His Excellency the Viceroy and Governor General of India.)

BY

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GIVE THE PEOPLE BACK THEIR OWN:

(An open letter to His Excellency the Viceroy and Governor General of India.)

YOUR EXCELLENCY,

As an Indian, I am thankful to you for your clear, comprehensive and definite statement of the goal of British Rule in India and of the three roads leading to it*.

Legislative Councils and responsible employment of Indians under Government.

2. These roads have been mentioned by your Excellency in order of their importance. In practice, however, the order has hitherto been reversed, a great deal more attention having been paid to your third road which "lay in the domain of the Legislative Councils" than to the other two. This reminds me of a cart road I encountered in the Khasi Hills some sixteen years ago. It was to have accomplished a feat which had never been successful before, the connection of Shillong, the hill station of the Assam Government, with the plains of Sylhet, and a very large amount was spent upon it. A wide, goodly road it was, with well-designed, well-constructed and well-appointed bungalows at intervals.

*Opening address at the autumn Session of the Imperial Legislative Council (1917)

But at the hill-end there was a precipitous spur so difficult to negotiate that nothing better than a foot-path was found practicable, and at the plains-end the road was lost in a maze of narrow, meandering tracks over a vast, swampy expanse of tall, dense reed-jungle. The road was incomplete when I visited it, and, I believe, it is so still. Despite its spectacular merits, it has but little value, because it does not serve its purpose. Similarly, the path of Legislative Councils is practically useless because it is isolated, on the one hand, from the main paths of the British administration, and, on the other, from those of the teeming millions of old India. These formidable gaps are to be bridged by your Excellency's second and first roads. In regard to the former, which "lay in the domain of the more responsible employment of Indians under the Government", so much has been said and written about it ever since the establishment of British Rule, that I have nothing new to suggest. I am fully aware of the enormous difficulties which confront Government in filling up this gap. It would require considerable firmness and strength on their part to overcome them. But unless they can be surmounted any further advance on the path of Legislative Councils, as in the case of the Khasi Hills road I have mentioned, would, I beg leave to observe, make it partake more of the nature of a make-believe than it does at present.

Village Self-Government in pre-British times.

3. My object in approaching your Excellency is to say something about the first road which lay "in the domain of local self-government, village, rural, town or municipal", especially about the very last and, in my estimation, the most important

section of it, village self-government, which affects the mass of our people, and which has hitherto been most lamentably neglected.

From time immemorial, the village has been the Soul of India, and until the establishment of British Rule enjoyed a very large measure of self-government. The villages managed their own affairs relating to law, education, police, sanitation, public works, &c. in a way which was well suited to their social and material condition. Village self-government was the one vital thing in the country which not only kept society together but made it prosperous despite the divisions of caste and despite the misrule of tyrannically and viciously disposed despots, whether Hindu, Buddhist or Mahomedan. The Central Government might be dead and rotten to the core, but that did not seriously affect the village life. This is abundantly shown by the testimony of high English officials during the earlier years of British Rule.

"The Municipal and village institutions, of India," says Sir J. Malcolm, "are competent from the power given them by the common assent of all ranks in the country, to maintain order and peace within their respective circles.....

"As far as we can trace the history of Central India their rights and privileges have never been contested, even by the tyrants and oppressors who slighted them; while, on the other hand, all just princes have founded their chief reputation and claim to popularity on attention to them."

"But with all these defects," says Elphinstone, "the Mahratta country flourished, and the people seem to have been exempt from some of the evils which exist under our more perfect government. There must therefore have been some advantages in the system to counterbalance its obvious defects, and most

the Government although it did little to obtain justice for the people left them the means of procuring it for themsalves. The advantage of this was particularly felt among the lower orders who are most out of reach of their rulers, and most apt to be neglected under all governments. By means of the Panchayat they were enabled to effect a tolerable dispensation of justice among themselves."

Lieut. Col. Mark Wilks says, "Each Hindu township is, and indeed always was, a petty republic by itself. The whole of India is nothing more than a vast congeries of such republics." "The village communities," says Sir C. Metcalfe, "are little republics having nearly everything they can want within themselves and almost independent of any foreign nation. They seem to last when nothing else lasts. Dynasty after dynasty tumbles down ; revolution succeeds revolution ; Pathan, Mughal, Maratha, Sikh and English are all masters in turn ; but the village commmunites remain the same. In times of trouble they arm and fortify themselves, a hostile army passes through the country, the village communities collect their cattle within their walls and let the enemy pass unprovoked. If plunder and devastation be directed against themselves and the force employed be irresistible, they flee to friendly villages at a distance ; but when the storm is over they return and resume their occupations. A generation may pass away, but succeeding generation will return.

This union of the village communities each one forming a separate little state in itself, has, I conceive, contributed more than any other course to the preservation of the people of India through all the revolutions and changes which they have suffered, and is in high degree conducive to their happiness, and to the enjoyment of a great portion of freedom and independence."

Its extinction.

4. The saddest, the most tragic fact in the history of India is that of the annihilation of the village self-government. The killing of the village organism is the cruellest wrong which the British Government, consciously or unconsciously, has done to India. It is a grievance compared to which such grievances as the practical

Imperial Services, the union of the judicial and executive services, the Arms Act, the Press Act &c., dwindle into utter insignificance, are mere bagatelles, yet hardly any voice is ever raised about it. The leaders who speak in the name of the people of India do not appear to be aware of the greatest wrong which they have suffered under the British regime. The philanthropic patriots of new India generally profess to be inspired by the noble idea of effecting a blend between Indian and Western civilizations. But they appear to be so obsessed by Western prepossessions that what they fondly believe to be a blend is often characterised by the almost utter absence of the Indian element. The structure of self-goverment on the Western pattern which they aspire to, has no Indian basis whatever, no foundation in the experience, the traditions and the sentiments of the Indian people. No wonder it has been such a failure. And it will continue to be a failure until and unless it is based upon the indigenous system, traces of which are still to be met with in old India.

How it has been killed.

5 In justice to the Government it should be said, that there were large-hearted sympathetic administrators in the earlier years of British Rule, men like Munro, Elphinstone and Malcolm, who recognised the value of the self-governing rural institutions and tried to keep them up. But they failed. The failure was due to various causes—ignorance, want of confidence in the people, non-settlement of the land revenue with village communities where such communities existed, bias in favour of the English judicial

of the entire criminal jurisdiction of the country by Government was a "usurpation, but they could not avoid it.....they would have had clashing powers." The latest instance of the extinction of village self-government is furnished by Upper Burma, and I shall let an English official, an experienced member of the Civil Service, say how it has been effected.

"The English Government on taking over Upper Burma recognised the extreme value of this organisation. In lower Burma much of our difficulty arose from the fact that the organisation was wanting, and that between Government and the individual there was no one. So one of the first efforts of Government in Upper Burma was to endeavour to preserve and strengthen this local Self-Government. Unfortunately every effort it made resulted in destroying it rather than consolidating it. A wrong view was taken from the beginning.

The council was ignored. How this happened I do not know. I can only suppose that it arose from ignorance. The only man recognised by the Burma Government we replaced was the headman. They dealt directly with him and not with the council. They did not appoint the council or regulate it in any way. In law no council existed. Therefore, when we took over, the law was mistaken for the fact—a common mistake, due to seeking for knowledge in papers, and not in life,—and the council was ignored. The following seems to have been the argument :

Government appointed the headman, therefore he was an official. Government did not appoint or recognise any council, therefore there was no council. Any how, that was the decision arrived at and enforced.

There is on record a circular of the Local Government in which the headman of a village is described as a Government Official ; to be to his village what the District Officer is to his district. That is disastrous. A headman is not an official of the Government. His whole value and meaning is that he is a representative of the people before Government. He expresses the collective views of the villages and receives the orders of Government for them as a whole. He is their head, not a finger of Government. He corresponded

insulted if you called him a Government Official. Yet this mistaken view was taken of the village headman, and this error has vitiated all dealings of Government with the village organisation and its headman. He is appointed by Government instead of being appointed by the people and approved by Government. He is responsible to Government, not to his village,—as he ought to be—for the use or abuse of his powers. He is punished by Government for laxity. By the Village Regulation he can be fined by the District Officer.

There has grown up among Europeans in the East a custom of imposing fines. They fine their servants for breakages and innumerable other small matters, and then complain how scarce good servants are. The clerks in Government offices used to be subject to continual fines until Lord Curzon stopped it. Now headmen of villages can be fined by the District officer ; and they are fined ; the proviso is no dead letter. It is a mark of the "energetic" officer to use it. Can there be anything more destructive ? Imagine the headman, the mayor of a community of three or four thousand people, fined five shillings for the delay of a return, or set, like a school boy, to learn a code—with the clerks. I have seen this done often. What respect for Government, what from his own people, what selfrespect, can he retain after such treatment ?

Again by ignoring the council and making the headman an official, Government set up a number of petty tyrants in the villages, free from all control but its own ; consequently it has been forced to allow great latitude of appeal. This still further destroys his authority. He is under old custom, legalised by the village Regulation, empowered to punish his villagers who disobey him in certain matters. The punishments are, of course, trivial. When approved by the council, as in old days, they were final ; but now they can be appealed against—and are. A headman who endeavours to enforce his authority runs the risk of being complained against and forced to attend Headquarters, to waste days of valuable time and considerable sums of money to defend himself for having fined a villager a shilling for not mending his fence. One or two experiences of this sort and the headman lets things slide in future.

Thus interference with the village is constant and disastrous.

the name of efficiency. And Government wonders why the village system decays. A continual complaint of Government is that headmen are no longer the men they used to be, that they have lost authority. The best men will not take the appointment—and who can wonder? Here is a story in illustration :

There was a small village in my district, on a main road, and the headman died. It was necessary to appoint a new one. But no one would take the appointment. The elders were asked to nominate a man, but no one would take the nomination. I sent the Township Officer to try to arrange ; he failed.

Now a village can not get along without a headman. Government is at an end ; no taxes can be collected, for instance ; therefore it was necessary a headman be appointed at once. I went to the village myself and called the elders and gave them an order that they must nominate some one. So next morning, after stormy meetings in the village a man was brought to me and introduced as the headman-elect. He was dirty, ill-clad, and not at all the sort of man I should have cared to appoint, nor one whom it would be supposed the villagers would care to accept, yet he was the only nominee.

"What is your occupation ?" I asked.

He said he had none.

"What tax did you pay last year ?" I asked him this in order to discover his standing, for men are rated according to their means.

He told me that he had paid five shillings less than a third of the average.

"You are willing to be headman ?" I asked.

"No," he said frankly. "But no one would take the place, and the elders told me I must. They said they would prosecute me me under the 'bad livelihood' section if I didn't. I could take my choice between being headman or a term in prison."

This was, of course, an extreme case, but it illustrates the position. The headman is degraded and all administration suffers."*

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* "The Passing of Empire" by H. Fielding Hall, pp. 138—141.

6. This example of Upper Burma will show how notwithstanding the intention of Government to preserve village self-government it has been crushed within the memory of living men. Since the submission of the Decentralisation Commission Report, an attempt is being made by Government to re-establish village self-government in some parts of India. It is too early yet to judge of the result of the experiment. But I am afraid it will end in failure; and for the same reason as in the recent case of Upper Burma—official interference. The village Unions and Panchayats &c. which are being established in some parts of India are regarded only as the last links of the official chain and have not the amount of freedom, responsibility, and prestige which is indispensible for real self-government. They partake more or less of the nature of simulacra, and simulacra never do much good, if any. Permit me to say, that the fundamental fact which Government, however sympathetically disposed, lose sight of is that village self-government is not a new thing for India; that it is not a boon to be conferred but a right to be restored, not a generous gift but a just reparation of a grave injury, not a new structure but an old one to be rehabilitated. In the Resolution of the Government of India on Local Self-Goverment Policy (April, 1915) they say in regard to village organisations (Panchayats or other Committees, p. 35:)

Recent Governmental attempts to restore it likely to fail.

"The Government of Burma and the Chief Commissioner of the Central Provinces deprecate the introduction of a system which, in their judgment, is alien to the customs of the people and will not command public confidence."

This is a most astounding statement. Your Excellency must have seen from what has been said above (para 5) that village self-government was in full force in Upper Burma when it was taken possession of by the British Government. The description of self-government given by Malcolm applies strictly to Central India. But there is no reason to think that it does not also apply to the area immediately to the south of it. The truth is, village self-government is not only not alien to the customs of the people, but is the one institution which maintained their vitality in pre-British times. Even now, the way in which caste-Panchayats settle cases relating to caste, the efficiency with which I have seen the people manage their affairs in large tracts, especially in Native States, without the intervention and interference of any state official, and the orderly manner in which I have noticed villagers in the Central Provinces and various other parts of India (including Upper Burma) generally adopt measures under the command of their headmen for transport, supplies and safety of Government officials touring on duty, show that they have not altogether lost their aptitude for self-government.

How it may be restored.

7. No halfhearted, halting, overcautious measure of an unsubstantial character will do. Village self-government to be successful must be real, genuine. The villagers should be given entire control of all matters relating to their police, education, sanitation and public works, and their Councils should be entrusted with authority to decide petty civil and criminal cases. It would not be possible to formulate

nor am I competent to do so. But if the general principle I am contending for be admitted it would not be at all difficult to frame them. The chief defects of village self-government as it existed in pre-British times were the absence of a regular village organisation and of co-ordination with the central Government. These defects should be remedied now. The following are the barest outlines of a general scheme which I humbly beg leave to put forward for the consideration of the Government :

(1) Every large village, or a group of two or more villages when they are small should have its Council. The members of the council and its President are to be elected by the adult male villagers assembled in public meeting.

(2) Each subdivision is to be divided into a number of circles, and there should be a council at the headquarters of the circle consisting of representatives elected by the village-councils within it, who should meet periodically to discuss and adopt measures for the common wants of the entire circle.

(3) The Sub-divisional or Local Board would consist of representatives elected by the circle councils, and by the Municipalities, if any, within the Sub-division, and the District Board of representatives elected by the circle councils, the Municipalities and the Local Boards. The president of the Local as well as of the District Board is to be elected.

(4) Each District Board would have the right to send a representative to the Provincial Legislative Council.

(5) There should be no sectional representation—no electorates for the representation of the different sections of the community, on the village or higher councils, except in the case of the Provincial and Imperial Legislative Councils in regard to commercial and industrial interests.

(6) Education other than higher scientific education and technical education based upon it is to be placed under the control of the District, Local, Circle, and Village Councils.

(7) There should be Boards of Examiners appointed by Government who would institute and supervise competitive examinations for the recruitment of the various departments of the State.

(8) The proceedings of the different bodies from the District Board downward are to be conducted, and their records are to be kept in the vernaculars.

(9) The village Police is to be entirely under the orders and supervision of the village Council.

(10) In regard to petty civil and criminal cases resort to the village council should be compulsory and not voluntary.

(11) For some years appeals from the village courts may be permitted to the courts of the state judicial officers at the sub-divisions who are to dispose of them and also try original suits, civil or criminal, with the help of assessors.

(12) No lawyers of any description should be permitted to practise in the village or subdivi-

headquarters of districts and to the Presidency towns.

(13) There should be a State department of Local Self-Government analogous to the Co-operative Department in every province with an officer at its head one of whose chief qualifications should be his sympathy with the people. He is to supervise the working of the village and other councils, advise them when necessary, and have their accounts audited by auditors under him.

(14) A moiety of the cesses realized from villages should be given to the village councils, and a moiety to the district, local and circle councils. Besides, some such item of revenue realised from the district as excise or forest or both should be earmarked for the expenditure of the district and local boards.

(15) The chairman of a Municipality should, in every case, be elected by the Commissioners.

8. There would be objections to a scheme of this description which contemplates reforms of a somewhat far-reaching character from various quarters. The great majority of my Neo-Indian brethren of the legal profession would say : "What! go back from such a scientific judiciary as has been introduced by the British Government to the primitive one of pre-British days!"

Objections.
(1) From the legal profession.

It cannot be gainsaid, that the English machinery for the administration of justice is, as a machine, much more advanced and much more scientific than the one it has superseded. But advance from

complexity, is good only within limits to be determined by economic and ethical considerations. Even in a superlatively rich country like England the system of administering justice is strongly condemned as too costly, too technical, too dilatory, too complex and too aleatory by not a few of her thinkers.

How much more serious must the evils be in a country like India where in the case of the great majority of the people the margin between sufficiency and starvation is extremely narrow, and where, besides, it is an exotic. Nevertheless, its extension is welcomed with transports of joy by my brethren of new India. They generally profess to be highly patriotic and to have the good of India at heart, and I have many friends and relations among them, some of whom are most estimable men. Yet, it is strange that no attempt, worth the name, should be made to check the progress of a system which is daily causing such havoc, both moral and economic, round us! Perhaps the Neo-Indian gaze is too much absorbed and enraptured by the prospect of the enlarged avenues of employment opened up by the extension of the law courts to be directed to other directions. They are the mainstay of our middle class people, a large number of whom would, unfortunately, under present conditions, be ruined by their restriction, indirecty, as well as directly, for it would mean the crippling of educational institutions which act as feeders of law courts and afford subsistence to numerous Neo-Indians. In two decades, between 1891 and 1911, the number of candidates for the degree in law of the Indian Universities rose from 471 to 1852, and that of those who succeeded [illegible] from 225 to 877. During the decade

1901-1911, the number of Neo-Indians who subsist by the legal profession increased from 251, 608 to 294,486. The strength of the legal contingent of new India is expected to be considerably enhanced by the establishment of the Universities of Patna, Dacca and Rangoon.

As long ago as 1831, Raja Rammohun Roy observed :

"From a careful survey and observation of the people and inhabitants of various parts of the country, and in every condition of life, I am of opinion, that the peasants or villagers *who reside at a distance from large towns and head stations and courts of law* are as innocent, temperate and moral in their conduct as the people of any country whatsoever ; and the farther I proceed towards the North and West, the greater the honesty, simplicity, and independence of character I meet with."

The moral degeneration ascribable to the influence of large towns and law courts noticed by Rammohan Roy has been going on at an accelerated pace since his time. The economic mischief has been quite as grave as the moral. In four decades, between 1871 and 1911, the revenue from judicial stamps rose from Rs. 1,63,54,790 to Rs. 4,88,85,570, and that from non-judicial stamps from Rs. 83,16,690 to Rs. 2,22,91,600. The increase of population within the same period has not been more than fiftythree per cent, but that of stamp-revenue has been nearly two hundred and ninety per cent. I have travelled over large areas away from British law courts, Railways, Registration offices and Police stations where order is still fairly well maintained by the village communities, where one's word is recognised as his bond and where the authority of unregistered scrips of paper is undisputed. It will probably be urged that it is a greater sense of security

and registration offices. That is undoubtedly the case. But that is so, because of the influence of the law courts and lawyers which has led to the diminution of the value of one's word and of unstamped and unregistered deeds and to the disappearance of the type of elders whose inexpensive settlement of disputes was accepted as final. Thus the extension of law courts &c., to a large extent, creates the very diseases which in a well-regulated community it should be their function to cure. How very small is the gain and how heavy the loss which they entail!

The Courts as at present constituted do not profess to administer justice but law, and the judges are simply umpires of duels between lawyers.

The indigenous Panchayet system was certainly much more crude than the one by which it has been replaced, but it was much more efficient, and involved much less delay and much less trouble and expense. Sir Thomas Munro thus speaks of it:

"It appears that under the Hindu administration there were no courts of Justice excepting the cutchery of the *patails* and *amildars* and that all civil cases of importance were settled by Panchayets.....The native who has a good cause always applies for a Panchayet, while he who has a bad one seeks the decision of a collector or a judge because he knows it is much easier to deceive them. The natives cannot surely, with any foundation be said to be judged by their own laws, while the trial by Panchayet to which they have always been accustomed is done away.....I conscientiously believe that for the purpose of discriminating the motives of action and the chances of truth in the evidence of such a people the entire life of the most acute European judge devoted to that single object could not place him on a level with an intelligent Hindu Panchayet which is an admirable instrument of decision."

The condition of Central India during the

opportunity of judging how far Panchayets could be employed in the difficult system of British Government.

"The result of the experiment," says Malcolm, "was satisfactory. When any of the subjects of the princes and chiefs under British protection had disputes regarding land or property demanding our mediation, the aid of a Panjayet was invariably resorted to, and its opinion made the guide for a decision. The knowledge and discrimination which some of the members displayed on the trial, and the distinctness of the grounds on which the court made up its judgment were surprising. There was in no instance any cause to suspect these courts of partiality, much less of corruption.....Many complaints brought before the local officers were withdrawn, when submitted to a Panjayet. This happened when the complainant knew himself unable to substantiate the charges; and men who had advanced false claims or accusations, continually came forward, after the Panjayet had assembled, and sometimes when its proceedings were advanced, with a written acquittal [Razeenama] of those they had desired to injure, which, where the case was not criminal, was always deemed sufficient. The frequent occurrence of the latter instances was considered as a proof that Native Panjayet courts must, from their constitution, prevent litigation, as they offer, to him who is conscious of wrong, none of those hopes of escape which present themselves under a system where the forms are more unbending, where pleaders have more art, and the judges (however superior in principle and general ability) have a less minute knowledge of the cunning, the shifts and evasions of those brought before him."

"With no advocates, solicitors, or other blood-suckers now become necessary adjuncts of a court of justice in Europe", says Abbe Dubois, "the Hindus determined the greater part of their suits of law by the arbitration of friends or of the heads of caste, or in cases of the very highest importance, by reference to the chiefs of the whole castes of the district assembled to discuss the matter in controversy".

The enormous augmentation of the stamp revenue shown above represents only a fraction of the extent to which the people are increasingly exploited by the

expansion of the British judiciary. For, I believe a good deal more is spent upon Barristers, pleaders, *muktears*, attorneys and their creatures and satellites and upon the *amlas* of the various courts and state offices than upon stamps.

There were as stated above 294,486 members of the legal profession in 1911. The annual increase in their number during the decade 1901-1911 was at the rate of over four thousand. Assuming the same rate to have held during the past quinquennium—a very reasonable assumption—there would not be less than 314,000 limbs of the law at the present day. Their earnings are very unequal ranging from about two lakhs to about two hundred a year. Taking the annual average to be about five hundred rupees, the profession must absorb some fifteen crores annually. If to this be added the stamp revenue and the incidental expenses upon witnesses, *amlas* &c., the aggregate amount of the legal exploitation of the Indian people would probably not fall short of twenty-five crores a year. This is an exorbitant price to pay for such justice, or rather such law as is administered by the Law Courts. A part of it is no doubt paid by men who can well afford it. But the greater portion is wrung out of men in whose case it means so much subtraction from the narrow margin between sufficiency and want or starvation.

(2) Objections from Educationists.

The educationists would, I am afraid, be shocked by the suggestion of the reduction of the Mammoth-like Department of Education. They would urge, that illiteracy is the great obstacle in the way of the rural population being granted self-government, that it

Education Department, and that its restriction would be suicidal to all progress.

The objection on the score of illiteracy is based upon the assumption for which there is no warranty that illiteracy necessarily implies ignorance. The truth is new India has her full share of the superstitious veneration of the present age for printed matter. Reading and writing are accomplishments the importance of which is grossly exaggerated by the moderns. Book education is prized much more highly than education from nature, life, and tradition. The mass of our people, though illiterate, are not such numskulls as they are usually supposed to be.

"The ryots of India," says Sir H. J. S. Cotton, "possess an amount of knowledge and practical skill within their own humble sphere which no expert scientist can ever hope to acquire." "The Indian peasant," observes Sir T. W. Holderness, "though illiterate is not without knowledge. He has been carefully trained from boyhood in the ritual and the religious observances of his forefathers. He hears the ancient epics read in their pithy vernacular form. He is full of lore about crops and soils and birds and beasts."

Dr. Voelcker, a renowned agriculturist, who was, some years ago, engaged by the Government to report upon the possible directions in which our agriculture might be improved, says, after carefully inspecting nearly every part of India: "I unhesitatingly dispose of the ideas which have been erroneously entertained that the ryots' cultivation is primitive and backward, and say, that nearly all the attempts made in the past to teach him have failed because he understands far better than his would-be teachers, the particular circumstances under which he has to pursue his calling."

"The Indian peasant," says Sir H. Risley, "is no fool. He

the compass of his own village and its immediate surroundings, he is just as shrewd a person as one could wish to meet." Comparing him with the English rustic of the counties, he (Sir H. Risley) was much inclined to think that "the Indian was the sharper of the two."

Though the mass of our people are not so obtuse or perversely conservative as they are usually supposed to be, education of the right sort which would secure to them material and moral welfare, or both would certainly be desirable. But the activities of our Education Department have not only not done this, but, on the contrary, have, on the whole, proved prejudicial to the material and moral interests of the community.*

It is indubitable, that high education has led to the material prosperity of a small section of our community comprising a few thousands of well-to-do lawyers, doctors and State-servants. But their occupations being of a more or less unproductive or parasitic character, their well-being does not solve the problem of the impoverishment of India as a whole. On the contrary, as their taste for imported articles develops in proportion to their prosperity, they help to swell rather than to diminish the economic drain from the country which is one of the chief causes of the impoverishment.

A broad survey of the results of the system of of elementary education which has been spreading in India for over three generations, would force the conviction upon any unbiased observer that it has not, on the whole, furthered the well-being of the

*I have tried to show this in some detail in my "Illusions of New

multitude*. It has not enabled the cultivators to "grow two blades where one grew before." On the contrary, it has distinctly diminished their efficiency by inculcating in the literate proletariat, who constitute the cream of their class, and who if left to themselves might have developed agriculture and other industries, a strong distaste for simple rural life, for their hereditary mode of living and their hereditary callings, and an equally strong taste for urban life and for shoddy superfluities and brummagen fineries, and for occupations of a more or less parasitic, if not shady character. They have directly or indirectly, accelerated rather than retarded the decadence of indigenous industries, and have thus helped to aggravate their own economic difficulties and those of the entire community. What they want is more food and more nourishing food, and new India vies with the Government in giving them a system of so-called "education" which not only does not enable them to get it, or holds out any reasonable prospect of their ever being able to get it, but, on the contrary, fosters in them tastes and habits which make them despise indigenous products and render them fit subjects for the exploitation of scheming capitalists mostly foreign ; a system which instead of enlightening their intellect so that they may have a proper understanding of their own interests and those of the entire community, obfuscates it so as to make them oblivious of those interests and sacrifice substance to shadow

*The Registrar of Co-operative Societies in Bengal says in a recent report that the education which is imparted to the peasantry in the village schools "instead of developing character, stunts their moral sense and encourages a tendency to live more on wits than on manual labour, and easily converts men who

exchanging a good portion of what food they grow, which if kept in the country would make famine a rare occurrence, for imported inutilities, futilities, and superfluities; a system which instead of developing their faculties smothers them, instead of strengthening their moral fibre, weakens it, instead of inculcating in them self-reliance and the dignity of honest, productive labour, makes them averse to it and prone to unproductive work, not unoften of a degrading character, instead of fostering economy and self-control fosters self-indulgence and extravagance. A tree is to be judged by its fruit, and the fruit of the present Education Department is far from wholesome. Paradoxical as the statement may appear, real education suited to the people will not spread until the Department of Education is restricted in its activities, until general education, high and elementary, male and female, is nationalised, until it is based upon the Indian foundation of inherited thoughts, sentiments, and ideals.

It is perhaps not generally known that primary education managed entirely by the people was very widespread in old India. Even now some of the trading classes, like the Marwaris, adhere to it and set their face against the exotic system. The young men turned out by their *pathshalas* have generally a much better head for figures and make far more efficient business men than even the graduates turned out by the Universities.

Sir Thomas Munro had an investigation made into the state of indigenous education in the Madras Presidency. From the results of his inquiries it appears that, in that Presidency, about 1826, the number of schools amounted to 12,493, and the population to

the population, but as only a very few females are taught in schools, we may reckon one school to every 590 of the population.

"It is remarked by the Board of Revenue," says Sir Thomas Munro, "that of a population of twelve and a half millions there are only 188,000 or 1 in 67 receiving education. This is true of the whole population, but not as regards the male part of it, of which the proportion educated is much greater than is here estimated; for, if we take the whole population as stated in the report at 12,850,000, and deduct one-half for females, the remaining male population will be 6,425,000, and if we reckon the male population between the ages of 5 and 10 years, which is the period when boys in general remain at school, at one-ninth, it will give 713,000, which is the number of boys that would be at school if all the males above five years of age were educated: but the number actually attending the schools is only 184,110, or little more than one-fourth of that number.....I am however inclined to estimate the proportion of the whole population who receive school education to be nearer one-third than one-fourth of the whole because we have no returns of the number taught at home, In Madras, the number taught at home is 26,903, or about five times greater than that taught in the schools.

If this estimate is correct there would hardly appear to have been any increase in the number of pupils attending boy's primary schools in the Madras Presidency, the ratio of pupils to boys of school-going age in 1907 being 24·5 per cent.

The advantages of the indigenous system of education controlled entirely by the people would be :—

First.—Being naturally evolved it would be well-adapted to the social and economic conditions of the people and to their requirements.

Secondly.—Being maintained by the community it would encourage self-help and self-reliance.

Thirdly.—It would not promote luxurious tastes and extravagant habits.

Fourthly.—Being inexpensive it would be capable of very wide extension. A very large amount is now spent upon inspection,

for the expansion of education.*

(3) Objections on the score of dishonesty, caste-restrictions, religious differences &c.

It would be urged by some, "Where will you get villagers with sufficient honesty and public spirit to discharge the responsible duties which would be imposed upon them ?" The Government of India in the Resolution I have referred to above note among "the causes which cannot but impede the free and full development of local self-government," "the indifference still prevailing in many places towards all forms of public life, the continued unwillingness of many Indian gentlemen to submit to the troubles, expense, and inconveniences of election, the unfitness of some of those whom these obstacles do not deter, the prevalence of sectarian animosities."

In pre-British times our people had their full share of the virtues needed for local self-government. Idrisi in his geography (written in the 11th century A. D.) says: "The Indians are naturally inclined to justice and never depart from it in their action. Their good faith, honesty and fidelity to their engagements are well-known, and they are so famous for these qualities that people flock to their country from every side." Marco Polo (13th century) observed, "you must know that these Brahmins are the best merchants in the world and the most truthful, they would not tell a lie for anything on earth". Abul Fazl, the accomplished author of the *Ain-i-Akbari* (16th century) notes : "The Hindus are admirers of truth and unbounded fidelity in all dealings".

*The expenditure on inspection, furniture, and buildings is now, I believe, a third, if not more, of the total expenditure on education. Sometime ago there was a proposal from the Education Department before the Education Committee of the District Board of Ranchi for the construction and equipment of open-air primary schools in this district. I forget the exact estimate for each such school, but it was, I think, not less than two or three hundred rupees. I observed—my observation was taken as a jest, I am afraid—that in a district where nearly every village of any size had its tope of mango or other shady trees, I did not see the necessity

During the earlier years of British Rule Col. Sleeman assures us that "falsehood or lying between members of the same village is almost unknown." He adds, "I have had before me hundreds of cases in which a man's property, liberty and life has depended upon his telling a lie, and he has refused to tell it."

Warren Hastings spoke of the modern Hindus as "gentle, benevolent, more susceptible of gratitude for kindness shown them than prompted to vengeance for wrongs inflicted, and as exempt from the worst propensities of human passion as any people upon the face of the earth ; they are faithful, and affectionate in service and submissive to legal authority.....The precepts of their religion are wonderfully fitted to promote the best ends of society, its peace and good order."

Bishop Heber spoke of them as "decidedly by nature, a mild, pleasing, and intelligent race ; sober, parsimonious and, when an object is held out to them, most industrious and persevering," and as "constitutionally kind-hearted, industrious, sober, and peaceable."

"If a good system of agriculture," says Sir Thomas Munro, "unrivalled manufacturing skill, a capacity to produce whatever can contribute to either convenience or luxury, schools established in every village for teaching, reading, writing and arithmetic, the general practice of hospitality and charity amongst each other, and above all, a treatment of the female sex full of confidence, respect and delicacy are among the signs which denote a civilised people—then the Hindus are not inferior to the nations of Europe, and if civilisation is to become an article of trade between England and India, I am convinced that England will gain by the import cargo."

Unfortunately, various causes among which may be specially noted, the wide extension of law courts, the propagation of false ideas of right, equality, individuality progress and patriotism, the multiplication of wants under the influence of a civilisation which seeks happiness through the outer instead of the inner man.

them, and the consequent premature and inordinate enhancement of the stringency of the struggle for animal existence, have, for sometime past, been exerting a perverting and unwholesome influence upon the ethical condition of our people. They have been sapping the very foundation of Indian ethics—Good-will towards all beings.

The influence of the "religion of enmity" has been increasing, and that of the "religion of amity" has been decreasing. The perverse cult of "Canst thou kill me or can I kill thee" has been spreading through all sections of the community. The cleavage between the mass of the Hindus and the mass of the Mahomedans has certainly been growing wider. Sir James Meston observed in a recent address in the case of the North-Western Province and Oudh :

"From time immemorial Hindus and Mahomedans have lived together at Ajodhya and Fyzabad in peace and amity. As a symbol of this unity you see Mahomedans worshipping at Babar's mosque and Hindus paying adoration at the shrine of Ramchandra's birthplace within a few yards of each other and within the same enclosure wall. Cannot these brotherly relations be resumed and maintained ?"

Sir James Meston's observations hold good for other parts of India also as is testified by the recent increase of cowkilling riots of which one seldom heard before.

Even now, however, especially away from cities and towns, away from railways and Western civilization, our people have not altogether lost their characteristic virtues. The number of criminals, especially of female criminals, in proportion to the total population is still very much less than in the highly civilized countries of the West. I was touring in the

and was greatly struck by the patient resignation with which the people bore the dire calamity and the benevolent spirit in which they helped one another. There were no riots, no increase in crimes to speak of.

Sir John Hewett, late Lieutenant Governor of the United Provinces thus certifies to the character of our people in an interview which he gave to a press-representative :

"In another way the famine (1908, United Provinces) provided an encouraging experience by testifying to the sturdy honesty and self-reliance of the cultivating classes. The Government then advanced nearly a million and a half sterling to cultivators for temporary purposes, in addition to large loans for wells and other permanent additions to irrigation. Practically the whole of this large sum was repaid with the exception of a sum of rather more than £50,000 which had to be remitted owing to the famine being followed by bad seasons in a few small tracts. In one district four thousand individuals took advances for a particular purpose connected with irrigation, and only two were found to have devoted their money to a purpose other than that for which it was intended. The manner in which the people recovered from the disaster that had fallen on them and the punctuality with which the agricultural body repaid their advances seem to me to be the most hopeful augury for the future. I venture to doubt indeed whether *such an experience would be possible in any country but India.*"* (The italics are mine).

Sir Lepel H. Griffin says, "that judged by any truthful standard the people of India were on a far higher level of morality than Englishmen; that they were industrious, sober, chaste, and religious, that a drunken man was rare, and that a drunken woman was unknown".

Mr. Macaulay, Secretary to the Government of Bengal in the eighties was of opinion, that "the Bengali villager takes a keen interest in the affairs of his own village and its immediate neighbourhood. He it is who really possesses local knowledge and local interest within his own narrow sphere".

Service, who was Commissioner of the Presidency Division (Bengal) in the nineties says: "I believe that Union Committees would prove a more efficient agency for carrying out any measure of real local self-government than Sub-divisional Boards." "I do not, however, think it too late even now to organise village Union Committees and entrust them with local administration under existing Boards, and if this is done I feel confident local self-government will show a vitality which it has not shown yet".

It is quite true, as the Government of India observe, that many Indian gentlemen are unwilling "to submit to the troubles, expense, and inconveniences of election," but that is not because they are lacking in public spirit, but because such "troubles, expense, and inconveniences" do not accord with their sense of self-respect and of right and wrong. I know not a few—several in this very town—who undergo a considerable amount of "trouble, expense, and inconvenience" for the good of their community, but would on no account, stoop to the canvassing tricks and some times worse practices which are the usual accompaniments of the present method of election. The most self-sacrificing, the most public-spirited, and otherwise the best qualified man I know of in this town would have but little chance against a pettifogging huckster at a Municipal election. No wonder the Government of India deplore the "unfitness of some of those whom the obstacles do not deter." How to minimise these obstacles is a very important problem and should be earnestly considered by Government and my Neo-Indian brethren.

"Sectarian animosities" referred to by the Government of India as impeding "the free and full development of local self-government" there exist every where

and human nature is radically changed. But until quite recently, India had much less of the bitterness, brutalities and disabilities caused by such animosities than Europe. The most antagonistic creeds have existed in India from time immemorial without giving rise to anything like the volume and the intensity of persecution the Jews have suffered at the hands of the Christians, and the different sects of Christianity—Catholics, Covenanters, Puritans, Huguenots, Lutherans &c.—suffered at the hands of one another.

I have already cited the testimony of Sir James Meston that until lately Hindus and Mahomedans lived in perfect amity. I myself quite remember the time when there was considerable concord among them and among the "higher" and "lower" castes of the Hindus, when there was a well-recognised place for them all in social and religious festivities, and when the spirit of mutual social service pervaded them. Now there is discord and want of good feeling everywhere. This is due partly to the permeation of Indian society, under Western influence, by the gladiatorial view of life, to the increased selfishness attributable to the immensely enhanced struggle for animal existence, partly to the so-called "uplift" movement of new India which instead of elevating the "depressed" classes only serves to accentuate and disseminate sectional animosities, to set class against class, and to create schisms where there were none before; and, I am sorry to have to say, partly also to the paternal solicitude of the Government for those classes whom they consider "back-ward". Your Excellency will, I trust, excuse my observing,

purblind and retrograde character. It is injurious to the community, for it strikes at the root of the good will which should subsist between the different sections composing it, and creates jealousies and dissentions where there were none before, and in the long run, injurious also to Government, for it adds to the difficulties of good administration. It compares unfavourably with the policy generally pursued by the Hindu and Mahomedan rulers in pre-British times. There might have been parasitic, shallow-pated, hair-brained noodles hanging about their courts, but for responsible administration, they generally selected the best men available irrespective of caste or creed. It is extremely difficult to tell which of the sections of our community are "backward" and which "advanced". For instance, by far the greatest majority of the wealthier and more enterprising merchants all over the Indian Empire either belong to the "lower" castes, sometimes to the very "lowest," or are of the Mahomedan persuasion. What useful purpose does it serve the community, or, for the matter of that, the Government as well, to lure them on to the mills euphemistically yecleped Universities for the manufacture of those "advanced" products—clerks and lawyers ? Why should the transformation of strong, sturdy, simple, honest, albiet (according to the Western notion) seminude husbandmen into welldraped, effiminate, spruce "gentlemen" living on their wits, or by service or some profession of a more or less parasitic character be considered as "uplift" or "advancement ?" Who will say that the former are less useful, or even, in many cases, not more useful members of societv. than the latter ?

The various sects of the Hindus and Mahomedans were cemented into something like a homogeneous whole which might be called a nation by the amity which generally prevailed among them and by the self-governing rural institutions which compelled concerted action. The policy of the Government, I regret to have to note, is adding to the disintigrating influence of the modern environment which is breaking up the Indian nation into a number of warring entities. There is a notion abroad, that an Indian nation is being born. Alas! the reverse of it is true. The nation that was is being slowly dissolved into its component elements, is dying.

But the nation is not yet dead. It has still some vitality left. The immediacy and urgency of the problem of restoring it becomes all the greater. I have already shown that even now our people are not so dishonest as they are supposed by some to be. The success of the Co-operative Credit Societies movement, among other things, proves this as well as their capacity for co-operation despite their general illiteracy and despite the divisions of caste and creed. In two years between 1915 and 1917, the number of Co-operative Credit Societies in this district affiliated to the Ranchi Union has risen from 101 to 142. We have had hardly any cases of actual dishonesty, of embezzlement, or misappropriation of loans taken. The majority of the societies are mixed, being composed of such heterogeneous elements as Mundas, Oraons, various castes of Hindus, and Mahomedans, and the members are, as a rule, illiterate. Each member is individually responsible for the debts of the

supposed disruptive influences of caste and of creed do not deter the members from undertaking it. They submit to the will and acquiesce in the decision of the majority. I have often seen them unanimously elect an illiterate aboriginal as likely to command most respect as their President. The responsibility which self-government would impose upon them is not likely to be heavier than what they now voluntarily undertake in the case of the Co-operative Credit Societies.

General and concluding remark.

9. The obstacles in the way of the materialisation of a scheme of local self-government such as I have suggested are serious, but they are not half so serious, as those which stand in the way of Legislative Councils being endowed within reasonable time with sufficient control over the Provincial and Imperial Governments to make them cease to be mere advisory bodies, or an arena for exhibitions of verbal sword-play.

The British Government while admitting Self-Rule or Home-Rule to be their goal, claim to be the proper judges of the pace at which India is to move towards it, and that they claim rightly can hardly be disputed. Because they are responsible for the maintenance of peace and order, and because the sort of representative Government which new India aspires to is a Western institution. The Neo-Indian aspirants and advocates of autonomy themselves admit that they are in the position of pupils or apprentices under British tutelage. What they say in effect to the British Government is: "We have been receiving your education and imbibing your views and ideas of society and Government for three or four gene-

with your students for the Civil Service, we have proved our capabilities, whenever we have been given an opportunity, in the various branches of the administration, and in diverse professions, pre-eminently in the characteristically British profession of Law. Why should you not grant us at once the autonomy which you profess to be your goal?"

There are some Western thinkers who consider the present Western method of representative Government to be a failure. "It is pathetic, I think," declared Mr. Balfour recently, "to hear that so many of the most earnest men in modern Europe regard the representative system as almost played out—perhaps I am putting that too strongly—and as now fit only for Turkey or China." There are others who without committing themselves to any opinion about the success or failure of the Parliamentary system in the West consider it quite unsuitable for India. She has never had such a rare combination of culture, philosophy, experience and liberality in a Secretary of State as in Lord Morley. Yet he declared emphatically:

"If my existence, either officially or corporeally, were prolonged twenty times longer than either of them is likely to be, Parliamentary system in India is not the goal to which I, for one moment, would aspire."

The great majority of the British politicians, however, still have their faith in the Parliamentary system and have been proclaiming it to be the goal of British Rule in India for some time past. What they say, however, in reply to the earnest pleadings or eloquent objurgations of my Neo-Indian compatriots is in the words of Mr. Montagu:

"The policy of His Majesty's Government with which the Government of India are in complete accord is that of increasing the association of Indians in every branch of administration and the gradual development of self-governing institutions with a view to the progressive realisation of responsible Government in India as an integral part of the British Empire.....I would add that progress in this policy can only be achieved by successive stages. The British Government and the Government of India on whom the responsibility lies for the welfare and the advancement of the Indian peoples must be the judges of the time and the measure of each advance."

This is the language of a Radical Secretary of State who is well-known for his pro-Indian proclivities, and for his sympathetic attitude towards Neo-Indian aspirations; and there are, I think, not many Britons, official or non-official, liberal or conservative, who would not echo it, who while admitting the justness of the Neo-Indian claim for self-government would not, on some ground or other, put it off to a future day. Some who are under the impression—rightly or wrongly is a different matter—that India is advancing materially and that they are the main cause of that prosperity, would tell my Neo-Indian brethren: "Well, we have been toiling all these years, making railways for you, developing your material resources, and expanding your commerce with our capital; are we now to be placed under the domination of a body of lawyers, landlords and moneylenders who constitute by far the greatest majority of the Legislative councillors, and who are generally devoid of industrial and commercial enterprise, who know but little of the people of the country, less of its resources, and still less of the methods of developing them? Would not then the magni-

built up be ruined, and with it the prosperity of your people" ? Others would urge : "You advocate colonial self-government or Home Rule. Have you any idea of what colonial self-government means ? In the words of Lord Crew, is it conceivable that any time an Indian Empire could exist on the lines of Australia and New Zealand, with no British officials and troops, no tie of creed or of blood replacing those material bonds ?" So on, and so on.

If my Neo-Indian brethren had to wait for the attainment of the qualifications considered essential by these gentlemen, they would, I am afraid, have to wait till doomsday. They are, no doubt, able to hold their own in wordy warfare. They have Mill, Burke and a host of other eminent Western writers on their side. They often pulverise the arguments of their opponents to atoms. There is on both sides a deal of inkslinging, bandying of words and even calling of names ; but to no avail. The judgment of the British protagonists is generally biassed, often very much so. But the bias is there, the bias created by self-interest, by environment, education &c., and has to be taken into account in practical politics.

Village self-government, however, raises no question of the Indian domination of the kith and kin of the British Government, of the substitution of one oligarchy by another, of the suitability or unsuitability of the Western Parliamentary system, and of the attainment of the qualifications requisite for it, and I see no very serious objection to its being granted at once.

My Lord, the condition of the mass of our people despite some delusive signs of meretricious prosperity

is extremely unsatisfactory, and what is a matter of grave apprehension, has been going from bad to worse. Famines have been becoming more and more frequent, the indebtedness of the peasantry* has gradually assumed such colossal dimensions that there are experienced men who despair of that excellent movement for the establishment of Co-operative Credit Societies ever being able to cope with it; the number and virulence of various diseases, several of which were almost unknown before, have been increasing, and numerous localities once noted for their salubrity are being converted into hot-beds of fever or plague.

The fact is, the vitality of our people is diminishing.

"The increasing number of famines and the terrible mortality which results from them," says Sir H. J. S. Cotton, "in spite of all the exertions of the Government and the heroic effort of individual officers, are—if there were no other evidence—an overwhelming demonstration that the capacity of the people to maintain themselves is on the decline.....The reason why famines are more frequent than formerly, and more severe, is that the resources of the people are less able to resist them."

As I am writing this I have before me the Resolution of the Government of Bengal on the final report on the recent famine in Bankura. In regard to the economic condition of the people it says :

"The severity of the distress in the recent famine, resulting from the failure of one monsoon, raises the question of the present economic condition of the district. Relief became necessary in August 1915, and by the time of the harvest of the winter rice crop 1 per cent. of the population was in receipt of relief, while in

* Mr. S. S. Thorburn who made a special study of the condition of the peasantry in the Punjab, says that "there was no general indebtedness in any village before 1871". But about two decades later, of 474 villages examined by him he found only 138 slightly involved. Of the remainder he found 210 seriously and 126 hopelessly indebted.

May 1916, the percentage on relief of one kind or another rose to 4·2; in previous famines relief has not been found necessary until a later stage."

Even in regard to Eastern Bengal, one of the few parts of India where the peasantry is prosperous, the Honourable Mr. J. G. Cumming, one of the ablest and most sympathetic officers of the Government of Bengal, observes in his report on the Survey and Settlement of the Chakla-Rosanabad Estate (Comilla District):

"Intelligent native public opinion is, and I agree with it, that the standard of comfort has increased, but that the income of the raiyats has not increased in exact correspondence; or, in other words, that the raiyat inspite of increased income has a smaller margin of profit and saving than he formerly had."

The Government are, I believe, aware, at least partly, of this deplorable state, and, I have not the shadow of a doubt, are anxious to remedy it. But their remedy consists chiefly in multiplying or amplifying their departments. Administration has been gradually becoming more and more top-heavy. * In fact, the regulative and social structure of India has been gradually assuming the form of an inverted pyramid, with a very small but well-to-do class of State officials, lawyers, money-lenders &c at the top,

* This top-heaviness is noticeable everywhere. When I settled at this town (Ranchi) 9 years ago, there was only an overseer to manage the conservancy and public works of the Municipality. When it became the principal seat of the Bihar and Orissa Government an engineer on much higher pay than the overseer was added to the Municipal staff; and lately a Health officer has been appointed. I asked the Vice-Chairman of the Municipality what would this functionary do. He did not know. The town is not healthier now than it was when I came; if anything, it is less healthy. If half of the expenditure incurred on the health officer were devoted to the menial establishment for conservancy, the town would. I think. be healthier.

a discontented impecunious middle class lower down, and an impoverished peasantry at the base. Unless further progress of such a structure is arrested it would sooner or later topple over. Our cultivators cannot long continue to bear on their shoulders the yearly increasing burden of an expensive administration on the Western pattern and of the maintenance of an annually expanding unproductive upper class. *

I humbly beg to observe, that in the interests of the mass of our people what is wanted is not multiplication but reduction of State departments, not amplification but simplification of the State machinery. In fact, so far as they are concerned, there are various departments which could be considerably reduced and several practically abolished without injuring them in any way. I have often heard it said that the "British character" of the administration is to be maintained, but have nowhere seen any explanation of that vague and elusive phrase. In so far as "British character" means those traits which have made the British Government the strongest central Government India has ever had, it must be maintained. But so far as it means—and I fancy some such meaning is attached to the phrase—those features which are calculated to "civilize" the Indians, to make them march along the Western path of "progress" and to bring Indian society and Indian administration into line with the Western, I say, and say emphatically, that it should not be

*The responsibility of the increasing complication of the administrative machinery does not rest solely with the Government In their Resolution referred to in the text they refer justly to "the growing demand among the educated classes in towns for greater [illegible] involving more direct expert control, in matters affecting

maintained. The maintenance of peace and order should, I venture to think, be the sole function of British Rule in India, and that too should be done with a machinery suited to the material condition of the mass of the people—a machinery which answers well for a community the average income of whose members is not less than £42 per head, ill becomes one the average income of whose members is not more than £2 per head. All else, education, sanitation, Public Works, and justice (to a large extent) should be left in the hands of the people. "Progress" is a conspicuous example of the class of words in which language instead of being the servant of thought becomes its master. There is no word which is more commonly used, and there is none the real meaning of which is so little understood. However, whatever it may mean, to be lasting, the impulse for it must come from within.

The granting of self-government such as I have suggested would gradually result in considerable simplication of the administrative machinery. The people should get the benefit of any relief which would thus be afforded to Indian finance. My Lord, there are experienced administrators, Indian as well as English, who, in the language of Sir H. J. S. Cotton, are of the opinion, that "short settlement, an exacting demand, and an unbending severity in collecting rent have driven the simple husbandmen into the clutches of the money-lender, and are responsible for their share in intensifying the effects of famine." The stringency of the present Land Revenue system and the rigour of the laws relating

the people should be diminished at the earliest opportunity.

Besides lightening the load which presses on our peasantry, self-government would directly and indirectly benefit them and the Government as well in various ways. When the most intelligent and the most resourceful of our people find that villages afford sufficient scope for their ambition, a good many of them would cease to flock to towns to qualify for service or the profession of law and devote their talents, now more or less wasted in the drudgery of clerkdom and law courts, to the administration of the rural and district organisations and to the improvement of agriculture, manufacture and sanitation. The British Governemt has brought into play "civilising" forces which have proved prejudicial to a contented rural life, and which are mainly responsible for the disaffection and unrest which have of late been such a source of trouble and anxiety to Government and the community. Local self-government would counteract their influence, at least to a large extent. The Soul of India which still lies in the village and which they have been threatening to extinguish would be saved.

I have already referred to the Co-operative Credit Societies movement. It is pregnant with immense possibilities for the future of our people—economic, social and moral. The realisation of these possibilities, however, depends mainly upon non-official endeavour. We cannot, however, have a satisfactory development of such endeavour until the exodus of the well-to-do and more intelligent men from villages to towns is checked. The sort of self-government I