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WHITHER, BENGAL?

BEING A STUDY IN NATIONAL AWAKENING AND DECLINE

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WHITHER, BENGAL

Bengal is in the grip of pettiness. In one fell year she has been widowed of what was great in her—save in the spheres of literature and science. The voice of Surendra Nath Banerjea no less than of Chittaranjan Das is hushed in death. The persuasive thoughtfulness of Bhupendranath Basu has ceased to be in our ears. Ashutosh Chaudhuri is no more. The men who throve on the criticism of the departed great have had to put their pen down—for their occupation, too, is gone. Not one Bengalee has appeared to relieve the blankness of the view; not one act of high-souled patriotism to inspire us with the hope that we have not lost all.

The performances of the minor gentry on the political stage might at least have been amusing but for the unceasingly tragic reminder they keep pressing on us of "the change twixt now and then". Nothing great seems to be in the land. The race of giants appears extinct. Bepin Chandra Pal to whom we eagerly looked to keep us in touch with the memory of those who are gone before him is

bent with the weight of years, and bereft of inspiration, even as the great Arjuna was after the passing away of Shree Krishna. Lord Sinha, the one outstanding Bengalee, who could have rescued us from futility, has been away;* and Aurobindo Ghose, whom the province begged to step into the breach, is deep in meditation, and hears us no more. Never was there such an aching void in Bengalee life since the days of Raja Ram Mohon Roy.

An incredible bankruptcy of thought and aspiration stares daily at us out of the pages of the public prints. There is a note of querulous inanity in the utterances of the men with strange faces pitchforked by fate into the still familiar places. Not a thought has emanated from them to ennoble or vivify; no kinship does their babel of voices bear to the rousing oratory of a Surendranath who could bear his countrymen to the promised land on the wings of an aspiring eloquence; nor to the urgency and idealism of a Deshabandhu who would ignite the latent fires of our being. We are fallen into the trough of the mighty wave of upsurging greatness that is at last spent against the rock of time. Let

* He, too, alas! has been taken from us.

us pray with all the passion of our soul that the resurgent wave that shall bear Bengal up into the light may not be far behind !

We may, each of us, in the meantime, strive to keep afloat, rather than sink to the bottom. Let us prepare ourselves in the present before we are overtaken by the future. Surely, we are not going to give in, as our present supineness would make one all but believe. We must set our faces firmly against the prospect of floating as corpses on the wave that shall come rolling in, and set about so fitting ourselves from now as to be able to rule and ride it as live men who shall greet its regenerating ablution with deep-chested joyousness. The words written across the history of our motherland are "She refused to sink"; and it is the spirit of that grand refusal that shall buoy us up.

The present writer would offer his humble mite of contribution to the task ahead by inviting his countrymen, and all others interested, to a consideration of what Bengal has done and not done during the quarter of a century just over, in the hope that such a retrospect may help us—if ever so little—to see through the mist shrouding the prospect.

I

DARKNESS BEFORE DAWN

BENGAL'S RACE OF GIANTS

Hardly a son of Bengal but remembers the darkness that covered the land, like an evil night, in the closing years of the last century. The educated Bengalee had all but lost his soul—the spirit seemed to have died within him. He had become a sorry mimic, a hopeless and insufferable ape, of his British overlords. He would speak and write to his fellowmen in execrable English in deliberate preference to Bengalee which he was fast forgetting, and would have forgotten, but for his daily contact with mother, sister, and wife who would not give up the mother-tongue. He preferred a tawdry mimicry of the Englishman's clothes to his own national costume. A worship of the West had gripped him, not the spirit of a reasoned assimilation of Western culture—but just a blind and blinding impulse to copy the externalities of Western life.

He began even christening his children in the English way! He called his boy and girl "Tom

and Lily'', and felt himself being civilised. To be like an Englishman was his sole creed of life; to be thought well of by such a one was his nearest experience of heaven on earth. He was constantly under the overseeing eye of the Britisher in the various walks of life, and his whole existence meant a code of conformities to the wishes and behests of the overseer—his lord and master. Was his master angry with him? He plumbed an abyss of sadness. Was he approving of his conduct? His cup of bliss was filled to overflowing.

Who were the men of his blood up on the ladder of life? The Bengalees who were Judges, Magistrates, Barristers, Doctors, Professors—just those who had come into the nearest touch with the English, and whose lives were identified with the British method of living—the men who would have gone far and given much to be called Englishmen, had not their Indian complexion barred the way to the surrender and the merger of their nationality. These were the types that filled his horizon, and coloured the texture of his waking and dreaming hours. India's civilisation was a thing to make a mock of. Had India a civilisation? The Bengalee of those days would have answered

in the negative but for the awkward fact that *Europeans* like Max Muller and others said she had. But in any event, he said to himself, it was a thing of the dead past, to be put away like an outgrown superstition. The salvation of India lay, in his view, in its transformation into a suburb of English civilisation, even as Calcutta might be regarded a suburb of London. India, he laid down, must strive to be Anglo-India, Asia Furasia; and thus he planned his new earth and new heaven.

The nameless horror of a monstrous growth was creeping over the face of Bengal. A godless process of university education which taught the Bengalee to forget much concerning his own country, and put before him the mere husk of Europe's outlook on life was at the bottom of what was happening. Other allies were not wanting in the cause. A greedy commercialism that owed nought to beauty or religion was pouring its ugly and worthless wares into the Bengalee homes which once were so beautiful with their few things of simple beauty made by men who believed in God. Everything European came with such a hall-mark of the conquering continent stamped on

its face, and what could the Bengalee do but buy it in the process of civilising himself? So, even the trinkets with which he decked his seasonal gods and goddesses must needs be of foreign manufacture to ease his civilised conscience!

The same inspiration was in his politics, although in this particular sphere of her activities Bengal was giving India the services of her very best. The Bengalees who dominated the Congress platform of those days shared more or less the outlook of the thoroughly "anglicised" Indian, most of them living completely "anglicised" lives. But they were men cast in a generous mould, whose patriotism was as undoubted as their capacities were great. Let us one and all render the most willing homage to the memories of Monomohon Ghose, Womesh Chandra Banerjee, Ananda Mohon Bose, Taraknath Palit, Rash Behari Ghose, Kali Charan Banerjee, Lal Mohan Ghose, Romesh Chandra Dutt, Bhupendra Nath Bose, Motilal Ghose, Ausutosh Chaudhuri, Ambica Charan Mozumdar and last,—and may one add, greatest of them all,—Surendranath Banerjee.

In the mere telling of the names we realise what giants Bengal had bred and lost. But the

point of the present writer is that the activities of this marvellous band of Bengalees had their well-spring right in the heart of Great Britain, not of India. They spoke of India, not to India, but to England. They addressed Indian audiences, but with the eye of their mind fixedly on the little island that held their motherland in fee. So they spoke in English. They were the spiritual descendants of Burke, Bentham, Mill, saturated in the splendour of Milton and Shakespeare, aspiring worshippers in the temple wherein Bright and Gladstone burned their incense. Their political missions took them to England, not on a single occasion to the masses of their own land; they waited in deputation upon Governors and Viceroys, but never visited a shrine or a temple; they laid wreaths on the graves of departed English statesmen, but had hardly heard of the saint of *Dakshineswar*. The heritage of India was not for them; not for them to seek the promise of her future in the revelation of her past. They strove with the whole strength of their soul to reincarnate England in India.

Far be it from the writer to minimise the greatness of their work. The reason why the

glamour of the West so strongly magnetised them is writ large in the history of British India, and need cause no surprise, and would far less justify a sneer. They achieved the splendid consummation of bringing the whole of educated India together on a common platform, and forced Great Britain to act in consultation with them on the provincial and Imperial Councils. And above all, they set an example of inflexible straightforwardness in public life which the India of to-day has much need to remember and emulate. But they were the foster-children of England passionately devoted to the cause of India, early weaned away from a vitalising contact with all that was the essence of her, the perfume and the fragrance of her, breathing upon life, the upsoaring aspiration and fall from the heights—which is the story of India—her great achievement and greater tragedy.

II

WORSHIPPERS OF THE MOTHER

Not all the sons of Bengal had cut their hearts out to offer them as bleeding sacrifices to the goddess ruling the waves with her trident. For all the noise and confusion arising from the impinging of the West upon the East, there never ceased to be just a few Bengalees whose ears, more finely attuned, were filled with the cry of the Indian earth; whose souls flew out across the night of time to commune with those aristocrats of humanity who had preached the gospel of self-realisation, and formulated the code of perfected conduct, in the ages before Christ. It is these elect of her children who tended and kept the lamp of life alit in the inner shrine of Bengal.

Earliest, and the most striking amongst them, emerges the figure of Ram Mohon Roy. Debendra Nath Tagore follows next, with Keshab Chandra Sen in front; and when the Brahmo movement, cut adrift from its original inspiration towards the end of the nineteenth century, began covering itself

with the tinsel trappings of a soul-killing imitative-ness, up rose the voice of Ram Krishna Param-hansa from *Dakshineswar* bidding the Bengalee beware of losing his priceless heritage. The most remarkable personality of modern times—next only to the great Raja—was this Brahman saint of *Dakshineswar*. Utterly human, most accessible, and simple as the child, he recreated for the Bengalee that philosophy of the true, the good and the beautiful which was the breath of life in the India of the *Upanishads*.

Not the least touch of superstition stained his personality, nor the faintest spirit of hostility to Western culture; but the firm faith sustained him that India must grow up, out of her own self, purged of the putrescent accretions of her Dark Age, and be ready at all times to affirm and uphold her creed of life in the full light of the scrutiny of science. For India, he taught the Bengalee to dream and aspire, was destined to reveal to mankind the vision of God, even as Shree Krishna had revealed it unto Arjuna on the field of *Kurukshetra*. The influence of his personality has since penetrated and pervaded Bengalee homes, like a subtle but sustaining aroma, giving to the

Bengalee's life a distinctive quality, an inwardness, found nowhere else in India. One may refer in passing to the return of Bejoy Krishna Goswami, a staunch Brahmo of the old type, to Hinduism as an instance of how the spirit of Ram Krishna was seizing upon the Bengalee.

The most notable son of Bengal to hear the call of *Daḳhineshwar* was a young Non-Brahman soaked in the philosophy of the Occident, and drenched with the Brahmo spirit—the famous Vivekananda. The reconversion of this Bengalee youth by the high-priest of *Daḳhineshwar* set Hinduism free from its cramping limitations, and started it upon that career of self-expression in the hearing of the world at large which has now borne such fair flower in the missions of Tagore.

But let us remember it was Vivekananda, vibrant with the spirit of his Guru, who first bore the message of India across the seas to America where it fell like a seed with the potency of continuing growth. It was he too who held up the example before his fellowmen of how to refuse to forsake Hinduism, and yet make no terms with its malpractices. He poured vitriol on what he termed "Kitchen Hinduism", the species of

perverted religiosity that had reduced the Hindu's faith to questions of who were entitled to cook his food or enter his kitchen. Did God live and touch things outside the Hindu's kitchen or not? he asked of Bengal. He called on the Bengalee to come out of the kitchen, and behold his God in the sunshine outside, in the free spaces of His universe; and challenged the creatures of the kitchen to defend their creed of darkness in the light of Hindu philosophy or the Hindu scriptures. Orthodoxy felt its tongue cleaving to the roof of its mouth. It were easy enough to fling a jibe at the denationalised Brahmo (who refused to call himself a Hindu); but what had the champion of bigotry to say to one who clung to the Hindu faith, lived the difficult life of a Hindu *Yogi*, and made citations in his support from those very works whose infallibility is the starting point of the Hindu's creed of existence. And he was the chosen *Chela* of the saint of *Dakshineswar*.

It was also Vivekananda who gave Bengal *Nivedita* as a daughter and disciple. How one's memory rushes back to this gifted Irish woman who set up a new tingling in the blood of Bengal! All that was immortal in her—the arousing ardour

of her vivid personality, the magic of her transfiguring pen, the beauty of her utterances—is part and parcel of Bengalee life. The great 'Ram Krishna Mission with its homes and hospitals scattered across the breadth of India constitutes the visible embodiment of that passionate yearning to serve and save the motherland with which *Nivedita* the woman and Vivekananda the man indoctrinated and imbued Young Bengal. No Bengalee worth the name but will bare his head in remembrance of these twin spirits of undying fire. They made him take his first step from mimicry towards manhood.

In her world of letters, running with the wine of the West, too, Bengal gave birth to a man whose pen wrote and lips shaped the life-giving *mantra*, *Bande-Mataram*, in the latter part of the 19th century. In Bankim Chandra Chatterjee Bengal produced a poet and a seer, a creative genius, and a patriot to whom was revealed the vision of India, the Mother—of her who had been the incomparable queen of the East, high-priestess of the Orient, fallen, alas ! from her estate and heritage, the down-trodden, the despised and rejected of the world of to-day, yet with the fire burning within her of life unquenchable, of an immortal hope, an

inextinguishable faith in a future that was even to be grander than her past.

A writer of beautiful English prose, he wrote, of set purpose, in Bengalee which developed, under the plastic stress of his genius, a power of life, a responsiveness to needs of expression, hitherto undreamt-of in Bengal. The magic of his writing was irresistible, and the "English educated" Bengalee found himself compelled to read his Bengalee books, and soon caught himself asking whether Bengalee was not after all *the* language for him and his like, even as it was the daily vehicle of thought for the vast masses of his unlettered countrymen, and for his own mother and wife. (It remained for a Sadler to come all the way to India, and say "Yes" to that question in the twentieth century, and for a Senate under the Vice-Chancellorship of Sir Ewart Greaves to make it the compulsory medium of the Bengalee's instruction). But he was no scorner of England, no purveyor of cheap platitudes about the materialism of the West. Oh! no. On the contrary, the big soul of this Bengalee was full of the humanity of Comte, and the illumination of Mill.

But he looked to India for the salvation of India, whilst his contemporaries were looking to Great Britain. There vibrates through his writings a deep note of appreciation of the qualities lying at the back of England's greatness—the love of liberty and the sense of duty which were part of the Britisher's moral and spiritual organisation, the patriotism that made him court peril with outstretched arms. But what he told his countrymen without tiring was that the problem before them was one of assimilation, not of mimicry or blind imitation. They must really cease to cry out to Great Britain to confer greatness on India, and would employ their time much better studying the secret, and acquiring the ways, of how her sons had themselves attained to greatness. Should they only make the attempt, they would discover that the seeds of their future had been sown in their past, that the task in front of them was to link themselves to the point of Indian history at which life and light had gone out of her, and begin anew her broken tale of civilisation.

The one abiding conviction that grew upon the student of English history was the intense *nationalism* of the Englishman, his undying faith in

England, his belief that all growth is merely the unfolding of her inner self—a belief which explained her Constitution and her Empire. Would that his countrymen laid that simple fact to heart ! cried out Chatterjee; for only then would they grasp the reality with both hands that they could no more grow away from their past than they could out of their skin, that the tradition of untold centuries had resulted in a definite orientation of qualities in their blood,—aptitudes, tendencies and inhibitions,—which had the fixity of destiny, and constituted at once the law and the inspiration of their future growth.

And what a past of ineffable glory was theirs? Was it not worth their all to set out with straining eyes and unwearying feet towards that India of the future which might give the world, once again, a leader like Shree Krishna, a healer like Gautama Buddha? His day was not yet; but he had faith in the future, and the sureness of intuition that Bengal would react to his message in no distant time. And out of the very abundance of faith he created for the unborn generations three vivid pictures in his *Anandamath* of "Mother that was," "Mother that is" and "Mother that shall be"

which took the heart and soul of Young Bengal by storm in the present century. No Bengalee of to-day but has exulted and wept and hoped in the presence of that triune vision of the Mother. And just by way of consecrating and quickening into life the spirit of nationalism he was bequeathing to posterity, Chatterjee also composed the national anthem of the New India of his dreaming—the hymn of the Mother—*Bande Mataram*—which fills the modern Hindu with the madness of ecstasy, as nothing else does, plucking the very soul out of every fibre of his being, as its familiar strains strike on his ears.

Bengal was bringing forth a whole host of gifted sons in her world of letters,—poets, essayists, novelists and the like, who all followed in the wake of Chatterjee as a stylist. But one who soon towered amongst them heard the call of Chatterjee as of a spirit calling unto a spirit, and rose and responded to it with a reality of purpose and splendour of achievement which is now part of Bengal's history. Rabindra Nath Tagore on whom the message of Bankim had left its deepest print soon made it into the living inspiration of Bengalee homes; *Bande Mataram* began to be sung far and

wide, and invaded the congress in company with Tagore; the Bengalee began to believe in himself and his country under the urgency of his divine poetry and rousing prose. His countrymen, who are voracious readers, were poring over his writings in the last decade of the last century as they had done over Chatterjee's in the earlier ones; they were ravished by the music of his songs, their hearts beat with the rhythm of his poetry, and their spirits rose with the aspiring grandeur of the visions his creative spirit was summoning into being right in front of their rapt gaze—winged shapes incarnating the generous possibilities of a future India loved and served by her children. And a tenseness of expectancy filled the air, as the century wore on to its close, of a rebirth that was coming.

III

SWADESHI

TAGORE, ROY AND ORS. BEPIN CH. PAL

The new century dawned on India—and a new birth on Bengal which was christened *Swadeshi*. It burst on the land like a symphony of many notes every one of which rose out of the depth of an imperishable faith in India, anciently and for ever dedicated to God. Suddenly it descended, like rain on parched land, swiftly, inevitably, like one of those visitations of Divinity in man in the hour of his soul's flagging and failing, the light of which illuminates history. The new art soared up like a winged idea, out and beyond the limitations of life, towards the Throne of God. The new literature brought His light into life. Tagore wrote his greatest songs, putting into them the maddening ecstasy of the soul's vision of its lost self, of India's rediscovery of her mission amongst men.

Science caught the infection of faith. Jagadish Chandra Bose found in his discoveries the fulfilment of Vedic prophecies, and said so boldly to the

Western world. And the same illumination spread into politics. Bipin Chandra Pal, and later on, Aurobindo Ghose stood out as the principal exponents of a new doctrine of Indian independence. What shall it profit India, they cried out like prophets of old, to gain "Colonial self-government," if she loses her soul? It was the cultural conquest of the East by the West, of India by England, against which they took their stand.

No Gandhi-like cry was theirs, of course, of Europe's science being evil, and a snare of Satan. None of that. India, they said, welcomed science, the investigation of the truths of external and human nature, and the ascertainment of the laws thereof; for, is not life of God, and does not the discovery of the laws governing it mean a fragmentary glimpse of Him? But India was being taught to forget, they lamented, that life is no more than the merest fragment of Him, and that Europe's worshipping of it, by itself and for itself, was just as Pagan and insensate a thing as the kneeling of man before a chip of wood or a bit of stone. India could not live by science alone. Divorced from God she would perish utterly. She must bring Europe's science of life into creative contact with her science of God,

or be false to herself and cease henceforth to matter in history.

The British overlordship which had superimposed its alien culture on India almost in the spirit of making Indians eat beef to give them physical strength, was constantly tending to draw her towards the latter alternative, unthinkable as it was to every Indian who loved India, and that overlordship must therefore cease. India must win her political independence. It was only with the reins of self-determination in her own hands that she could start her children on a fresh pilgrimage towards the readjustment of life to God, of all the wealth and the wonder of science to a renewal of His adoration in the heart of man.

It was this aspiration after self-recovery, and the conviction that British rule was drawing India further and further away therefrom, that lay at the heart of *Swadeshi* with its manifold manifestations. One has still a vivid remembrance of how the first notes of its oncoming broke out in songs—of Tagore, Roy and minor singers—that rose from tens of thousands of lips all over Bengal. “Coursing through thy choked-up stream of life, the spring-tide has come, has come” rose somewhere in Bengal

from a number of Bengalees; "Bengal, golden Bengal, accept the worship of my heart" one heard going on the river; the houses of the rich and the hamlets of the poor were alike vocal with the music of new life; the refrain of Roy's song was on the lips of all Bengalee Hindus, young and old, man and woman :

Bengal, my mother, nurse, my motherland !

Oh ! how it breaks my heart to see thy pale face
and thy tumbled hair.

Some unseen hand with the power of renewal in its fingers was passing over Bengalee faces, like the light of dawn chasing away the darkness before one's very eyes. The Bengalee stepped out of his dead self—a miracle of resurrection. Gone the shallow cynicism, the disbelief in himself and his country, the base mimicry that had tarred and tarnished his personality into a black unsightliness in the preceding century. The attributes that lie on the Godward side of humanity reappeared in his character—hope, courage, faith, aspiration, defiance of death. The splendour of purpose shone in his eyes, and the flood of an unbidden patriotism was suffusing his soul.

Into the core of this renascent life Lord Curzon drove the point of a sword, probably in the belief that he was merely probing into the inertness and the deadened tissue of 19th century Bengalee life. His spirit must have known, although his words never revealed, the utterness of surprise at the reaction of the living energy into which he had blundered. The story of the partition and reunion of Bengal shall remain for a long time to come her first great epic of nationalism. It is beautifully told by Sir Surendranath Banerjea in a series of illuminating chapters in his book of reminiscences. One remembers the interesting circumstance of how this sturdy survivor of a bygone political era was swept by the rising tide of the new spirit into a movement that was the beginning of passive resistance in India. In his advocacy of the boycott of British goods England heard the first utterance of New India; and the bonfires that consumed the discarded fabrics were the first flaming forth of her new life.

But the waters bore him away no further from Great Britain. He stood with the new generation heading out to sea, but would not weigh the anchor of "British connexion". He believed in the power of constitutional agitation to secure the annulment of

the hated measure, and felt all but sure that the Liberal Party would undo it on coming into power. Deep must have been his disappointment when Lord Morley, the accredited prophet of Liberalism, pronounced his benediction on the Partition as a settled fact. But the faith that moves mountains was in him, the invincible optimism that never knew defeat; and although refusing firmly to swerve from the track of constitutionalism, he never stopped, nor slackened in his fight against the dismemberment of his province until victory crowned his efforts—a victory that reminded one of Cobden's classic struggle and triumph in the cause of Free Trade. Never had Surendranath's oratory developed a finer timbre than it did in the course of his ceaseless activities of this period, and his speech of thanksgiving from the Congress platform after the revocation of the Partition was a marvel of inspired utterance that shall long vibrate in Indian memory.

But the awakening wave, as Lord Minto termed it, was far from exhausting itself in a mere movement against the Partition. That was only a phase of it, with Surendranath Banerjea for its principal exponent. He and his followers presently came to

be known as *Moderates* in contrast with the *Nationalists* who sprang to life in the wake of a declaration by Sir Asutosh Chaudhuri in the year 1904 that a subject nation has no politics. Mr. Bepin Chandra Pal seized on the dictum as a text for the enunciation of a new political doctrine which soon ran like fire through the veins of his countrymen.

The soul of India, he cried out, was mirage-bound; it had created its own subjection, even as the human soul created its bondage, by identifying appearance with reality. The poor creature in the Vedantic illustration mistaking the snake for the rope was but the prototype of the collective mind of India prostrating itself at the feet of Great Britain under the spell of Avidya—the illusion that the fount of Indian freedom flowed from underneath them. The universe surrounding the individual cowed him down into subjection by the very bigness of its appearance, by the ruthless irresistibility of its processes. So did Great Britain hold the soul of India in awestruck submission by the very appearance of her far-flung and grandiose Empire, by the menace of the implacable might of her Army and Navy. But was not India the one country that had

given the human race its message of deliverance, and how much longer was she to present the sorry spectacle to the world of her own children continuing deaf to that message?

Back to the message of India, my countrymen, he cried. Hearken to the voice of the *Upanishads* bidding the soul of man be free of bondage by getting to know itself. Did not *Maya* disappear, did not her mystic meshes fall away like dissolving fetters from the soul that had attained to self-knowledge? What did we understand in India by the word freedom as applied to the individual? It signified, did it not, the freedom of his spirit, his deliverance from non-self, from the illusion that led him to identify what appears with what is, and a realisation of his soul's own strength, its uttermost freedom to know, feel and will. For the son and daughter of India, the freedom of India could mean no less. It implied firstly and lastly the autonomy of her soul, the freedom of the Indian nation to know, feel and will.

The malady of India was that she had lost that freedom, and wrapt in the *Maya* of Europe's purely intellectual civilisation, had even ceased to feel the loss. So she was grovelling at the feet of England,

and the most gifted of her children knew no better than to beg before her, year in, year out, for the gift of freedom in the shape of what they called colonial self-government. What could self-government mean to her but a laughter of the Fates in her face, and how could she possibly attain to it, as long as her soul was in chains and refused to be freed?

Was freedom, he asked again and again, a matter for argument, a thing to be won by eloquent speeches and carefully drafted resolutions, or was it a thing of the soul, an emanation of it, an assertion by it of its mastery over all hindrances to its spontaneous self-expression? Look to your own history for the answer, he exhorted. India was free in the age of the *Geeta*, in the age of the *Buddha*. How and why? Obviously because she had so organised her national life as to permit of a free flowering of her civilisation in the thought, speech and action of her children. How freely had that civilisation flowed like the Holy Ganges! Dare you call yourself an Indian if you cannot hear the music of its rush down the Vedic heights, and see the clear crystal of its magic waters mirroring the reflection of the Real on its bosom as it works its

way out of the woods of the *Upanishads*, to throw up from the plains a Shree Krishna who preaches a philosophy for all time, and later, a Prince Siddhartha who lays down a code of ethics for the whole of mankind? How wonderfully that civilisation grew out of the individual into the universal, how the stream of national life flooded its banks in its last rush forward to embrace the sea of universal humanity !

Did the people of India really mean to be free? Away! then with the *Maya* of Europe. 'Avert your faces from the seducing blaze of its material splendour; think nought of the appliances and artifices of its science which have not taken the human race one step further along the pathway of fulfilment which India had lighted up for the pilgrim soul of man in her age of freedom. She had called upon man to mount to heaven; Europe exhorted him to make fast on the earth, promising to cushion it for him with ease, comfort and all that her science could devise in the cause of hedonism. India had said "Look with the eye of your spirit and be free;" Europe's cry was "Look with the eye of your mind and see!" Europe's civilisation was begotton of *Maya*—the aspect of reality perceived

through the intellect which was *the* organ of consciousness that bound the percipient being to the world of relativity. The web of appearance surrounding man fascinated him by reason of its suffusion by the Beauty it hides yet intimates. Europe had lost itself in studying the texture of the web, getting in and out of its interminable intricacies, and crying out "Eureka" from time to time. It was pleasurable exercise for the health of body and mind. From the view-point of happy living, science was good enough. But for the spirit of India that had soared and seen over, it was not half enough. No, my brothers and sisters, cried out Pal passionately, take up your arms against *Maya* in the wake of those that had founded your civilisation. The civilisation of Europe was *Maya*, the British conquest of India and its aftermath was *Maya*. Break through and win back your lost souls, or you will soon be the mere helots of Europe, its floor-cleaners and boot-wipers, and shall be as utterly blotted out of history as the Indians of America or the Copts of Egypt.

How was India to win her soul's freedom? She might only do so by travelling along the ancient roadway her spirit had trodden, the luminous track

of the *Upanishads* that fell like a ribbon of light across the darkness of her modern history. Had not the *Upanishads* said "Not for the weak is this freedom of the soul"? Therein lay guidance for India. The way to freedom was the way of strength. She must shun like poison all invitations to proceed along paths that made her depend on the strength of England. The mendicant policy of the Congress therefore must be trampled underfoot. All supplications for help or succour must cease. Let India try the experiment of doing whatever little she could by her own strength. Let her but seek the strength that was within her—and all else should be granted unto her, like it was unto the individual soul in course of its steep ascent to storm the citadel of *Maya*. The quality of strength had a way, all its own, of begetting strength. Did it not arise from the floorless depth of that primal energy whose manifestation had been saluted by the Indian mystic as *Shakti*?

Some mystery of renewal had already been at work in the soul of the nation, he added. A greater day was dawning, whose glimmerings had fringed our skies. How else could one interpret Bengal's declaration of a boycott of British goods? It was

a political act that differed generically from all that the Indian National Congress had ever done or dared. It was an act of freedom, not of political mendicancy. It was India's first step on the pilgrimage of deliverance. Let her press on with firm tread, and she would grow stronger with the passing of every hour. The more she pushed forward, the further would recede the mirage of unbelief in herself. Boycott would soon be followed by newer manifestations of her inherent strength until she would be laughing at the glamour of Europe, glitter of British arms, and the girdle of the British Navy round the sea-bound world. Further on her awakened spirit would speed her, right up to the edge of the valley of the shadow of death and down into it and up across. Let no Indian imagine that Boycott was going to be a one-act drama. It was merely the prologue. Many would be the trials that would come in its train to test the new-born spirit. Bengal would soon be seeing the elect of her sons in durance or ~~exile~~ or in the arms of the Angel of Death who would be appearing before them in the robes of a sacramental expiation to win India back to immortality. Let none look ahead in the old

easeful way, for Boycott had murdered the sleep of political lotos-eaters—those who had so long gone on waving their badge of slavery overhead, and been saluting it as the banner of freedom.

Men, young and old, turned out in their thousands to listen to Bepin Chandra Pal. The present writer who came back from England towards the end of 1905 found himself swept into the movement of this new prophet, and was presently writing leading articles for his then famous weekly, *New India*. It was his privilege to be associated with Mr. Pal during this most marvellous period of the latter's political career, the very recollection of which spurs one like a call to arms. He daily addressed crowded meetings, the audience not infrequently numbering twenty thousand. And he spoke as one inspired, possessed by that very awakened spirit of India which was his one and only theme.

The Bengalee language which he chose as the vehicle of his thoughts became a living thing of vibrant power under the creative urge of his trumpet-tongue. English had hitherto been the language of oratory. Tagore's Bengalee speeches

had been instinct with beauty, but lacked the fire that tipped his pen. It had remained for Pal to heat up the language of his province into oratorical life. Bengalee became the most resonant instrument of speech from the very first day that he charged it with the explosive energy of his newborn nationalism. It yielded to him all its unsuspected riches which he flung with both hands at his astonished hearers. How his voice thundered, and sped forth winged words of lightning that struck home! The blood quickened in those who heard him, and he was soon being heard by all Bengal. The Bengalee began to look up, instead of continuing to look down, and saw a new earth and a new heaven swimming into his ken. Never had oratory been more fruitful or more potent. It was the noblest the writer of these lines has ever heard in India or in England.

His prophecies began to materialise. The Carlyle Circular enjoined students from picketting in connexion with the boycott. Numbers challenged the injunction and were struck off the rolls. The cry went up for a National University and National Education. No surer proof of how the spirit had been moving over the waters of Bengalee life could

have been forthcoming than in the immediate foundation at Calcutta of the National Council of Education with an assured annual income of Rs. 50,000. And National Schools sprang up in every district, and even in sub-divisions. In the meantime prosecutions started in Eastern Bengal over the forcible removal from shops of British-made goods by youthful fire-eaters who soon got a nodding acquaintance with the discipline of jail-life. All the while the cult of Boycott was spreading from village to village which began resounding with the hum of the looms that had fallen silent under the *civilising* influences of the preceding century. Swadeshi *Melas* made their appearance, providing meeting places for men of all shades of opinion; and the new Bengalee spirit travelled to Benares in December 1905 to invade the National Congress.

The party of Surendranath and those who were grouping themselves round Pal had held together till the end of 1905. Boycott had remained up to then the principal preoccupation of all. But a fissure was growing inevitable. Pal's poverty was counted a personal disqualification by the members of the Moderate party. His use of the Bengalee

tongue as the medium of his ideas was further considered a retrograde step; and his gospel of salvation through self-knowledge and self-acquired strength was *anathema marantha* to these gentry. Above all, his rising popularity filled them with a vague uneasiness.

But the definite separation came with Pal's promulgation of the doctrine in the *Bande-Mataram* (which he had started as the Nationalist Daily in the beginning of 1906) that India must achieve complete political independence, and be absolutely free from British control. The thin, and at times invisible, line of division between the two groups now widened and deepened into a visible and continuous fissure, and a polemical acrimony soon made its appearance in the Vernacular Press between the representatives of the two sides. The fact must be noted in this connection that the Leader of the Moderate party was never known in public or in private to utter a harsh word against the members of the new party, and even offered a justification for its growth in Bengal in his speech from the Congress platform of 1906.

IV

AUROBINDO GHOSE

The foundation of the National Council of Education was the occasion for the return of Aurobindo Ghose to Bengal, appropriately enough, as the Principal of that institution. There had been a predisposition amongst Bengalees in favour of this son of Bengal. He had topped the list of his year in Classical Tripos at Cambridge, been a fellow of his college—St. John's; had been disqualified for the Civil Service on a ground that his countrymen thought had been a pretext for keeping an Indian out; he had, further, filled the position of Principal of Gaekwar College at Baroda with much distinction, and in the meantime grounded himself in the classical culture of India; and was now coming to Bengal on an allowance of Rs. 150/- a month in place of the big salary the Gaekwar had been paying him.

A record like that would have won a man a place of distinction amongst his countrymen at any time. In 1906, in the electrified atmosphere of surcharged patriotism, he appeared before Ben-

galees as the very incarnate spirit of *Swadeshi*, the embodiment of that ideal of service and sacrifice on the basis of which Bengal was dreaming of building up her new life. And Aurobindo did not disappoint his countrymen. Full of a 'deep humility and simplicity, unpretentious to a degree; averse by nature (unlike most men of his province) to speaking ill of others, and in praise of himself, but penetrated by a burning faith (which was soon to light a fire in the country), possessed of a love for India welling out of the depths; zealous, upright, unbending on matters of principle, and as intensely religious as a Sanyasi, Aurobindo Ghose soon won his way to the heart of Bengal, and presently, of India. The poem of praise written by Tagore on Aurobindo within about six months of his advent into Bengal gave utterance to the reality of feeling that had rapidly grown up about him.

Aurobindo took up his work at the National Council as soon as he came to Bengal. Naturally enough, he cast about for ampler opportunities of reaching out with his mind to his countrymen at large. And Pal gave him the chance by handing over to him the editorship of the *Bande-Mataram*.

In the very act of taking over the Nationalist Daily, Aurobindo proclaimed himself a Nationalist of Pal's school, and immensely strengthened the latter's position in the country. And he soon converted the *Bande-Mataram* into a fit instrument of his purpose. It achieved a wide and all-India circulation in less than a month, and brought him into touch with the mind of the country as a whole.

He aspired to work out for the whole sub-continent that emancipation of the spirit which Pal had been accomplishing in Bengal, and God sped him. The aspiration of India was in his writing; a divining intuition of the spirit of liberty the beating of whose wings was being heard over Asia; an exultation, and an urgency; an imperative call on his countrymen to serve and save the motherland; an impassioned appeal to their manhood to reinstate her in the greatness that had been hers. Had she not once been the high-priestess of the world, had not her civilisation left its ripple-mark on the furthestmost limits of Asia? India still had a soul to save, which the parching drought of modern vulgarity threatened daily with death. She alone in a Pharisaical world where every one acclaimed God in speech and denied Him in fact

offered Him the worship of her heart ; she alone yet gave birth to the choice spirits who cast aside the highest of earth's gifts in their enraptured pursuit of the life of life. Show us the country, challenged Aurobindo, that could have produced the Saint of *Dakshineswar* in the nineteenth century. The saving wisdom was still in the land that taught man how to know and realise his God—the wisdom which had been gathered and garnered in their forest-homes by her priest-philosophers, the builders of the Vedas, the thinkers of the Upanishads, the greatest aristocrats of humanity that had ever been.

But how should the culture of the soul survive in the land where a stifling materialism was asserting itself under the aegis of British rule? Had not the fools and philistines, whose name was legion—the monstrous products of a soulless education nourished on the rind of European thought—already begun to laugh at their country's past, and dared to condemn the wisdom of their ancestors? Was India to deform herself from a temple of God into one vast inglorious suburb of European civilisation? Even Beauty, the vernal goddess, enshrined in her hymns and her poetry, was fleeing

the country, chased by a conscienceless commercialism pouring out its flood of unsightly things bearing no touch of the spirit on their faces. This doom that impended over the land must be averted. India must save herself by ending the alien domination which had not only impoverished her body, but was strangling her soul.

It was only in an independent India, with the reins of self-determination in her own hands, that the ideal could be re-enthroned in its integrity of high thinking and holy living that cast on every man and woman the obligation to cultivate throughout life the knowledge of *Atman*, and strive to realise in conduct the code of humanity enjoined by Gautama-Buddha. It was from the height of this vision of India to be that Aurobindo called upon his countrymen to prepare to be free, and not for the mere secularity of political autonomy and material wealth—the two pseudo-divinities on whose altar Europe had sacrificed her soul, and would some day end by immolating her very physical existence. India listened to him intently, for he was stirring up a tumult in the depths of her soul that had so long been as vacant chambers of

death, striking music out of chords long silent in her race-consciousness.

What, asked Aurobindo Ghose, was to be the objective of a Nationalist revival? Was India just to go back into her old way of life, to reinstal the *Brahman* in his spiritual, and the *Kshatriya* in his political, dictatorship, and live contentedly thereunder, as of old? No, he said. The old aristocratic scheme of life—whether of Greece or of India—had been weighed in the balance of history and been found wanting. The renascence of India's culture was to be with a difference. She must no more keep her philosophy of God-knowledge locked up in her *Brahman* breasts. Her culture was no longer to signify an aristocratic research after Reality exclusively appropriate to the *Brahman*, but must become a national Indian endeavour, as the expression of the genius of the whole Indian people. India must take up the great task now of carrying her ideal of Brahmanhood to its highest fruition by realising it in the commonalty of her children. Let her merge her *Brahman* in her *Non-Brahman*, even as Japan had done with her *Samurai*, to rear up a new Brahmanhood upon the basis of desert, and

not of descent. This was to be India's contribution to the problem of democracy.

How was the country to set about getting what it wanted? Aurobindo urged his countrymen to organise the work of educating the nation in strict dissociation from the Bureaucratic system, for it was in their own sanctuary of learning, he said, that they could keep the light burning of the philosophy of self-realisation and the doctrine of perfect conduct wherein lay the seeds of salvation. He further insisted upon the industrial development of the country, preparatory to the great work lying before it. A nation of starvelings, he pointed out, had little time and less inclination to think of the ideal of equal Brahmanhood for all. And lastly, the people, specially the Bengalees, must rebuild and resuscitate their broken-down physique. For the dream of an independent India, the *Bande-Mataram* warned, must remain furthest from fulfilment as long as her people continued in a state of physical unfitness.

Bengal, Aurobindo exhorted, was already under weigh. She had made a magnificent beginning in the sphere of national education by founding the National Council of Education with a sub-

tantial income; and the national schools that were rapidly multiplying under affiliation to the Council were indicative of the deep changes going on in the people's psychology; Boycott which was in full swing signified the people's adoption of a voluntary system of protection for fostering the growth of indigenous industries, and the resulting developments were of the brightest augury; and lastly, the country was fast getting dotted over with *Samitis* wherein Bengalee youths were putting forth real efforts to make themselves into strong men.

Let the whole of India press on with the different activities Bengal had taken up, being determined all the time to rely solely on her own strength, and in less than a decade she would be claiming her place in the sun with a strength of purpose and sureness of accent that would astonish the world, and perhaps herself. India must also practise passive resistance on as large a scale as possible with the same end in view, and her children must immediately eschew all Government titles and functions, all honorary association with the Bureaucracy in the shape of membership of Legislative Councils, District Boards and Municipalities, and every other kind or condition of employment

under them. But, there was one essential pre-condition to success. Indians must never break the law in course of their progress forward. Both Pal and Aurobindo insisted untiringly on their followers adhering to the law, the infraction of which, they admonished their countrymen, would give the enemies of Indian freedom the pretext and the handle to nip the Nationalist movement in the bud, and drive India back once again into the dark night of chaos out of which she had so painfully emerged.

The country thrilled to the message of Aurobindo. India has produced no more powerful writer, before or since. Addressing the whole continent, as he did, he necessarily did so in English. But the fact caused him no trouble; he had absolute mastery of that language which revealed under the magic touch of his pen its highest state of plasticity; it soared, sank, sang, wept, touched, pierced, reasoned or thundered, as its master would have it be doing. No one in India, Britisher or Indian, has written English more nobly than he, or more beautifully. Little wonder that the *Bande-Mataram* pierced through to the heart of the educated Hindu, highly sensitive by heredity and training to nobility of thought and beauty of expression. The waves

of Aurobindo's thought caused no little stir amongst the Britishers of the time, reaching as far as Printing House Square, whose great organ began quoting copiously from the Nationalist Daily, contrary to its then prevailing custom of boycotting Indian thought.

The first great son of India outside Bengal to declare himself a Nationalist was Bal Gangadhar Tilak who publicly identified himself and his party with the movement of Pal and Aurobindo, and journeyed across to Bengal in the early part of 1907 to join a Nationalist demonstration then taking place in Calcutta. Lajpat Rai was the next outstanding Indian to ally himself with the forces of Nationalism which began overspreading the length and breadth of the country with a sweeping swiftness. All was orderly, peaceful, and along the track of perfect legality. The rulers had little to complain of, and looked on with calmness; although just one of them happened to lose his head over the Barisal Conference, and paid for his error, under the Morley regime, with a premature dismissal from the famous Service that owned him. The Nationalist leaders of India looked hopefully forward to the ordered progress of their fellowmen towards a nobler manhood, and a development in them of those habits of

service and sacrifice in the cause of the motherland which alone could fit them in course of time to be free. So the Nationalist movement proceeded through the years 1906 and 1907.

V.

BARINDRAKUMAR GHOSE AND THE *JUGANTAR*

Alas ! for the best-laid schemes of mice and men. The doctrine of independence had in it the quality of intoxicating exhilaration which soon went to the head of Young Bengal. Barindra Kumar Ghose, Aurobindo's younger brother, who followed him to Calcutta, hoisted the red flag of revolution. He started a Bengalee Daily under the title of *Jugantar* which began preaching open rebellion against Great Britain as the only means left to India for realising political independence. Barindra secured a marvellous band of writers who (along with Barindra himself) impregnated the Bengalee language with a vitality, a dynamic vigour of expressiveness, and a passionate urgency, that made it give off a white heat, setting fire to Bengal.

The *Jugantar* laughed loudly and irreverently at the doctrine of constitutional agitation professed by the Moderate party, which, according to this apostle of revolution, was a shameless caricature of

the term, as it was understood in the free countries of the world. The Congress people used other terms, too, it averred, such as "rights" and "liberties" with equal thoughtlessness, and merely tended thereby to confirm the people in their bondage and degeneracy. Rights and liberties, the *Jugantar* lectured the Congress, had no meaning unless they were imperative and absolute obligations imposed upon the Government of a country by the will of its people to which that Government owed its life and continuance. This was the historical, and no less, the legal view; and the sooner the people of India realised the truth of the matter the better for them.

It was not Great Britain that could make them free, but it was they who must wrench themselves free of Great Britain. Either that, or let the people of India rot and rust in their age-old slavery. Did they find a single instance in history of a people realising its freedom by passing resolutions at its annual gatherings? The recorded story of mankind revealed no such miracle. And not only was the finding of history against the Congress, but also reason and common sense. Why was Great Britain in India? Obviously, not in fulfilment of the Sermon on the Mount, but in the face of it, just for

her own benefit and profit, first and foremost. Why should she leave India to Indians simply because India had produced a number of fine orators who desired it? No, no, my countrymen, cried the *Jugantar*, you must shun like poison this fatally easy doctrine of freedom. The Congress, according to Barindra, had done its work by bringing about a community of aspiration and understanding amongst the educated people of India, and must now step aside to make way for those who had determined on the task of achieving India's redemption with the price of their lives.

The *Jugantar* next turned its searchlight on the *Bande-Mataram*, which had the biting taunt flung in its face that whilst doing lip-service at the shrine of liberty, it tended like the organs of the Congress school to devitalise the people of India with its counsel of faint-heartedness. The *Bande-Mataram* which was promulgating the gospel of independence was at the same time advocating adherence to the very Bureaucratic laws that held India in shackles. Nobody outside a fool's paradise could believe for a moment that the Satrapy at Simla would just passively look on and allow the Indian people to found an independent system of national education,

build up industries all over the country, and acquire physical efficiency with the avowed aim of preparing for the final struggle to be free. The *Bande-Mataram*, the *Jugantar* charged, simply had not the courage of its conviction.

No, India had no need of slaves or sophists to poison the souls of her children with counsels of cowardice or faint-heartedness. She needed men, hundreds of thousands of them, who were ready to wipe off with their blood the stain of her age-long subjection. Had any people on the face of the earth ever done a thing worth recording whilst in the ownership of an alien race? Had not life and light gone out of our own motherland ever since the day of her conquest by the foreigner? It required all the strength of one's historic imagination to picture to one-self the reality that India was once the crowned Queen of Asia, the light of whose countenance had illumined the souls of million men. What had she done since the first battle of Panipat? The whole world cried down upon her "nothing."

An alien rule might only flourish on the degradation of the servient nation; upon the theory and practice of the superiority of the ruling race

over the ruled : upon the keeping raw and alive of this sense of the difference by, the exaction of the grossest servility from the members of the subject race. Take the British overlordship in India, said the *Jugantar*, as an instance in point. Granted the pretension of its appologists that it had given India the best of all Governments she had ever had : Did it or did it not thrive by putting the extinguisher on the self-respect of the Indian, by enforcing an embargo at all hours upon the freedom of his thought and aspiration, by compelling him to feel, day in, day out, lesser than the mere man God had made him? What was the type of man that British rule was consequently fostering into being in our country? We all knew him. He was the "safe man" of the Bureaucracy—the contemptible creature who had won the good things of life for himself (and perhaps also some alphabetical anachronisms in the shape of titles to be put at the tail of his name) by an ostentatious adulation of the British and a systematic dispraise of Indians, and a strict eschewance of matters having a political odour. The safe man, with the British overlords for his patrons, was scoring economic success in the

different walks of Indian life, and was inciting others by his example to follow in his steps. His tribe was increasing day by day, and, unless torn up by the roots, would soon convert India into a land of ideal slaves—that dreamland of the Bureaucrat to the materialisation of which he had vowed his life and pledged his soul.

And then? Good-bye for ever to the India of *Valmiki* and *Vyasa*, of the *Vedas* and *Vedanta*, from whose sacred soil had sprung the Lords Krishna and Buddha. Farewell! Priestess of Asia, Mistress of the Eastern Seas, Temple of *Nirvana* where pilgrims had journeyed to from Palestine and Cathay. Put away the vision of Vivekananda, cried out Barindra Ghosh in bitterness of soul, of a New India remembering and recovering her ancient greatness, and sending her missionaries once again out into the great world to promulgate her message of God-knowledge. Oh! Indians, brothers, he passionately pleaded, will you suffer this doom to swoop down on your historic motherland? Will you not rise from your sleep—you who have already hearkened to the Mother's call, and lit the lamp of her worship from the flames that

have consumed the manufactured ugliness of the West? You who have sought and ensued liberty by taking the vow of Boycott—will you now shrink from the sacrifice that is required of a people which has dared to invoke the blessing of the sun-robed goddess who smiles only on the free? Do not forget she is none other than the hungry goddess of the Rajput tale who is only propitiated by the blood-offering of the elect of her votaries. History, Destiny, time, the *Mahakala* of your scriptures calls upon you to make the offering in the hour of fulfilment that is come. Come, my brothers, chosen priests of liberty, perform the national sacrifice; pour out the river of blood that shall cleanse, and bear away like the holy *Ganges* the sins of the bygone generations—those that fruitlessly rose and sank on the mother's bosom, like rank vegetation, unconscious of her pain and her shame. Look! she is as beautiful to-day as in the days gone by; she endures in the setting of unfading beauty in which the Creator inlaid her: she still receives the first salutation of the sun; the flattery of the southern breeze has not ceased to stir in her tresses; the Indian Ocean bows to her as of old and laves her feet day after day.

Whilst nature bends to her in adoration, shall we eat and drink and sleep as if nothing has happened and nothing matters, whilst she, the Mother, the disrobed Queen of Asia, remains the despised and rejected of the human race, and her hot tears of shame keep flowing down the *Jumna* and the *Ganges*? Will numbness and paralysis bind our hands after God's call to arms has sounded in the victorious thunder of Japan? Let a million voices answer "No". Come then with the vow of death that you may renew life. Remember, the soil that your blood will manure shall bear the flowering of a new faith that shall redeem mankind, the fruitage of a new manhood that shall re-adjust the rights and wrongs of the world.

VI

THE *JUGANTAR* AND AFTER

Thus the *Jugantar* dreamed and dared, and preached and prophesied. The historian of the future will give the British Bureaucrats of those days a page of honour in the history of toleration. For they let the *Jugantar* be, without resorting to repressive legislation to curb or kill it. The cult of the *Jugantar* was spreading over the length and breadth of Bengal right before their eyes. The clerks of the Secretariat rushing out in the afternoon for as many copies as they could get, passengers shouting for them from the tram-cars, and the youth of the country poring over the printed sheet in the public parks and street corners of Calcutta,—all this was a familiar sight of daily occurrence in the metropolises in 1906 and 1907. The rulers just looked on. They may have expected the movement to burn itself out. Perhaps an instinctive hesitancy held their hands back from striking down the ideas for which their fathers had wrought and fought in the splendid epochs of British history. The fact that all this was in non-martial Bengal might have been a reason, too. In the

meantime Barindra Kumar Ghosh was having thousands of Bengalees subscribing to his revolutionary print from all over the moffusil. We now know his party were doing other things as well, unsuspected by the Bureaucracy and the majority of their countrymen, but these did not come to light before the year 1908.

The lawful programme of Aurobindo and Pal had all the time been going on. The one wrote and the other spoke for the Nationalist faith. Three industrial enterprises of considerable magnitude which took shape under the Nationalistic inspiration continue to this day, and are looking hopefully to a prosperous future. The principle of education on national lines was steadily making headway, and secured the recognition of its abiding value within the body of the Calcutta University itself. The National Council of Education which never faltered in its career of service, thanks to the devoted band of men who refused to forsake it for any consideration, has gone on with its splendid work up to date. Bengalee young men took to physical culture with a will, and soon grew out of their old-time helplessness and uselessness

*One of them, the Bengal National Bank, is gone.

into those amenities of associated life which every country expects of its youth. The long-lost spirit of chivalry re-appeared, and the women of Bengal found a welcome helper and server in the young Bengalee on their journeys of pilgrimage, and at *Melas* and shrines. He was fast developing character, and instances began to be cited of Bengalee youths clearing their villages of jungle, digging tanks, and even making roads at places, by their own labour. The sports too were now being adopted with the seriousness of conviction. Social ideas about caste and marriage began to be humanised. A cleansing air was just arising and beginning to blow about on the miasma and the rottenness that covered Bengalee life.

It would be seen that there were three parties in Bengal at the time: the party of Surendra Nath Banerjee with "annulment of the partition of Bengal" as its battle-cry, and Boycott as its principal method; that of Pal and Aurobindo with "independence" for its motto, and self-help and passive resistance for its programme of work; and, lastly, the party of Barindra with "revolution" for its creed.

After waiting for about a year, the Bengal Government prosecuted the *Jugantar* for sedition.

One of the party volunteered into court as its editor, refused to plead, or indeed recognise the jurisdiction of a British court, and went to jail to do hard labour. The second prosecution ended similarly, with the difference of a severer sentence, and so the procession of editors continued till six of them were in prison, whilst the average Bengalee rubbed his eyes hard to make sure that his vision of the new life obtruding itself in front of him was real. But the rulers recognised the distinction between the schools of thought respectively headed by the brothers Aurobindo and Barindra, although both were preaching political independence. They did not prosecute the *Bande-Mataram* except once in 1907 for publishing a translation of a *Jugantar* article. But the prosecution failed on account of Pal's splendid refusal to speak to Aurobindo's editorship of the paper from the witness-box. Called by the Crown to prove the fact, he said he refused to say anything, and earned thereby a sentence of six months' imprisonment; but not till C. R. Das had made a passionate speech in court challenging and condemning the law that could send Pal to jail, and moving his hearers to tears, including Hume, the Public Prosecutor.

[It might be stated here that Aurobindo was not the Editor of the *Bande-Mataram*, as would be ordinarily understood by the expression, but was "chief" of an editorial staff comprising besides himself, Mr. Shyam Sundar Chakravarty and the present writer, and for some time, also Mr. Hemendra Prosad Ghosh. Mr. Hirendra Nath Dutt, too, contributed a leading article on occasions.]

Pal's sorrows in jail must have been more than wiped out by the wonderful ovation he got on return from Buxar in 1908, the whole of Calcutta turning out to honour him, even the British—men and women—being caught by the infectious enthusiasm, forgetting their *prestige*, and waving as wildly to Pal as the rest, as he passed on in his carriage, upstanding and with folded hands. The memory of it must be with him as an abiding possession, for no one else in Bengal has received a public worship like that excepting Deshabondhu—in death.

Much had, however, happened in the meantime. Whilst the British rulers had with their usual penetration discriminated between the *Bande-Mataram* and the *Jugantar*, the extremely "respect-

able" section of the Moderate party in the Congress would not, and christened the followers of Pal and Aurobindo, as also of Barindro, as Extremists or Anarchists indiscriminately. And as the echoes of the *Bande-Mataram* and presently of the *Jugantar*, were reverberating throughout India, the ultra-Moderates (as they came to be styled) took serious alarm and forced the whole Moderate party into a secession from the Nationalist party at Surat in December 1907. A very fine account of the actual happenings on the occasion will be found in Nevinson's book on India. A number of Nationalists, including Tilak and Lajpat Rai, and a knot of Moderates with Krishna Kumar Mitra at their head, laboured strenuously two whole days and nights to bring about a re-union, under the deep conviction that the split was going to spell disaster. But the forces of separatism were in the ascendant in the Moderate camp, and they failed. The hope given voice to by a Moderate Leader of Madras, shortly after the separation, that Government would now make short work of the Extremists, was like the swan song of that slave mentality which India has now shaken off.

Revolution, stark and real, soon raised its head; and the first peal of its oncoming crashed out in the thunder of a detonating bomb hurled by Khudiram Bose. The authorities now took action, as they were bound to. The *Samitis* were abolished by a Viceregal Ukase; public meetings were prohibited; the national schools began going out under a suffocating Police surveillance; the joyousness of the new life was gone, and its manifold expressions wilted and withered. Activities were now mainly divided between the Police and the revolutionaries.

Further bombs burst, revolvers spat, taking their toll of lives from either side. The Manik-tolla Conspiracy was discovered, leading to the arrest of a large number of men, including Aurobindo who was not of it. The course of their trial was dramatically interrupted by the assassination of the Approver by Kanai Dutt and Satyen Bose who became the heroes of Young Bengal. Songs began to be sung about them in the high ways and by-ways of Calcutta, and the suburbs. The *Pioneer* penned a panegyric on the two youths, followed by the *Bande-Mataram* with another on Kanai, which cost the latter its life under

the operation of the Incitement to Murders Act. Bepin Chandra Pal went away to England, Lajpat Rai to America, and Tilak—India's political man of sorrow (as the present writer has elsewhere ventured to define him),—went to jail for six long years for attempting an historical and philosophical justification of the Bomb. Shyam Sundar Chakravarty, was deported along with Krishna Kumar Mitra (a most confirmed Moderate), Ashwini Kumar Dutt, Subodh Chandra Mallik, Satish Chandra Chatterjee and Sachindra P. Bose (an associate and follower of K. K. Mitra and a Moderate).

A hush brooded over the country like an evil thing. The Reformed Councils which became so many editions of the Congress without possessing the power of translating a single idea into practice merely added to the reigning bitterness, and were not in the least heeded. The entry of Indians into the Executive Councils—an event of real political importance—passed off unnoticed in a similar way. For what mattered, whispered Indians amongst themselves, if individual Indians—the safe men of the Bureaucracy—were exalted, whilst India at large wallowed in slavery? The ‘personal liberty’ of which the Congress had so long talked had all along

been after all a pretence, they argued,—a counterfeit of the reality enjoyed by free men ; for could Lord Morley—the one Englishman who had upheld the creed of personal liberty for a whole life-time—have otherwise consented to the incarceration of Indians without trial? After all was said and done, Barindra was the only Indian, said almost all his educated countrymen, who had made the correct analysis of British rule, and shown it up.

VII

AUROBINDO'S "LAST WILL AND TESTAMENT"

THE DOCTRINE OF PARTIAL SWARAJ

Whilst the Maniktola prisoners were counting their days of trial in the solitary cells of Alipur Jail, a bigger revolutionary movement was growing up all over Bengal. It began spreading, too, west and south, with the members of the Police service bravely facing it, and not infrequently giving their lives in the effort to head it off. The Alipur trial ended in the acquittal of Aurobindo and a few others, and the banishment of the rest from the country. C. R. Das won his laurels defending Aurobindo successfully, and all honour to the Judge who summoned the manhood to put down the pregnant sentence in his judgment: "No Englishman worth the name will grudge India the ideal of independence."

Aurobindo started a new organ of Nationalism under the title of *Karmayogin* in 1909 after his release. But it became well-nigh impossible for him to live in British India, with an ever-increasing swarm of spies circling him day and night, and

hampering all his movements, private or public. In fact no privacy was allowed him at all. Yet he held bravely on as long as he could, and only exiled himself at Pondicherry, in 1910, when he had to choose between voluntary exile and being a permanent under-trial prisoner in British India.

A student and a scholar by training, a mystic and a poet by temperament, given to things of the spirit which claimed the real part of him much more imperially than the fleeting panorama of history or politics, brooding for the greater part of his waking hours with outspread wings of thought over the misty arch that spans the seen and the unseen, Aurobindo was hardly ever free from that spiritual preoccupation that makes *Sanyasis* of men.

He had renounced, *Sanyasi*-like, wife, wealth and all other prizes of life. Yet the call of the West was not stilled within him. Greece and Rome, -and England-spoke to him with living voices, and the God of his inner vision never deserted him as he opened his eyes, but stood confronting him in the myriad forms of life, getting nearest him in the movements of his fellow-beings. The service of his kind was therefore to him a sacramental feasting of the spirit, a species of *Yogā*, the same that

Shree Krishna had inculcated on Arjuna, an essential preliminary to the soul's seeing of its greater self. Man's identification with man in service carried him nearer the vision of that which was in all men, gave him a living touch of it, rescuing him from the pettiness of merely self-regarding domestic happiness, on the one hand, and the selfish self-absorption of the Mediaeval monk or the Indian *Sanyasi*, on the other. It was this larger spirit of human service (as realised within the limits of national life) that lay at the heart of Europe's greatness, in spite of the godlessness of her imperialism, and the absence of it that accounted for India's helplessness inspite of the God-fearing temperament of her individual people.

To serve India was thus in Aurobindo's case the outer manifestation of a spiritual need, and he had accordingly given himself to her as a servant. He had told his countrymen through the *Bande-Mataram* how best they could serve her; and told them so with the fearlessness that is born of faith. But the Police were in fear of his very outspokenness. And although their prosecution of Aurobindo failed in every instance by reason of the firm refusal of the Judges to interdict the advocacy of freedom in

India, they would not be happy till they saw him in jail. Aurobindo felt he would be of no use to his country as a whole-time under-trial prisoner, and made up his mind to live outside British India.

[His premonition proved right. Within a day or two of his departure for Pondicherry, a warrant was issued against him and the Printer of the *Karmayogin* on a charge of sedition in respect of an article which had appeared therein some days back. It is an open secret now that Mr. Justice Richardson who was then the Legal Remembrancer had advised against prosecution, which, however, was launched on the further opinion of Mr. Kenrick, the then Advocate-General. The Printer was put on his trial before Mr. Swinhoe who convicted him by merely accepting the prosecution argument. But the conviction was set aside by Holmwood and Fletcher, J. J., before whom the present writer had the privilege of arguing the case in defence of the *Karmayogin*. It would not be an unreasonable surmise that, had he stayed on at Calcutta, Aurobindo would have been further prosecuted.]

The rulers had raised the cry at the time "Those who are not with us are against us." The burning question of the hour was cooperation or non-co-

operation with the British in India. And on the eve of leaving Bengal, Aurobindo felt the obligation to enunciate his views on the question. A mood of deep solemnity was on him. The fact was patent that there was none to stand, in his absence, between Government and the party of revolution, to demand freedom of the former with unwavering emphasis,, and to warn the latter at the same time of the impossibility of revolution winning India independence. So he wrote his famous article entitled "My Last Will and Testament," leaving words of guidance in it for both the parties concerned—words unheeded at the time, but destined in less than a decade to constitute the very text of the Reforms which the united genius of British statesmanship could devise for India.

Some years had elapsed since the formulation of the Nationalist programme of self-help and passive resistance, and it was feasible now to make a pronouncement, in the light of experience, on the constructive policy of the party, as apart from its propagandist work that had been going on. The method of political propaganda was transparently different from that of political construction. The propagandist must needs put the real in terms of

the ideal, the present in terms of the future, with a view to arousing feeling and producing a vividness of impression. He would call India the greatest country in the world before an audience of his countrymen, although in fact she was far from being so in her present condition; but by so putting her present before them in terms of the future which he would have India realise, he would help to intensify their faith in her destiny, and make her appear before them as the worthy object of their patriotic devotion. Speaking similarly at an industrial demonstration, one might well say that India was worth her weight in gold, in view of the potential wealth waiting to be dug out of her soil. But when the Nationalist leader was inviting his fellowmen to the task of construction, he would have to keep to the real and the present in the spirit and the manner of the man of science. Starting a *Swadeshi* Mill, for instance, he could not stultify himself by requesting the first meeting of share-holders to declare a dividend in anticipation of the profit the enterprise was expected to realise in future. And so in the sphere of politics, too, the greatest caution and the utmost forethought would be needed on his part in

formulating before his countrymen a scheme of political reconstruction to be worked in the present. There would be no alternative for him but to draw it up on the basis of the actual facts of life. The greatness of his scheme would undoubtedly consist in its avoidance of rigidity, and taking cognisance of the plasticity of life, and being therefore so ordered that it would keep pace with, and help forward, life's innate expansiveness. By so framing his political device he would ally himself with life, and provide against the mischance of being thwarted by the developments of the future. But he would be hardly constructing anything at all if he were to embody the ultimate term of his propaganda into a scheme to be worked from the morrow. If he were to insist on India having immediate *Swaraj* or nothing, would he not necessarily relegate her to nothing?

Aurobindo Ghose had for his equipment a deeper study of the East and the West—of India and England—than any living contemporary of his—British or Indian. He was certain that the prevailing unnatural relationship could not continue indefinitely between England and India, that the former would have to put the latter on the

road to freedom the moment she was confronted with the prospect of wholly alienating the moral sympathies of India's rising generation by persisting in the Bureaucratic method of Government. Therefore he wrote his "Last Will and Testament," conveying the warning to his countrymen therein not to accept the shadow for the substance of freedom in the shape of any illusory scheme of reforms that Great Britain might offer them, *but not to reject the substance at any cost when it was offered*. It was inconceivable that England would wave a wand over India one fine morning, and say to her "Be free;" but it was very likely that she would put India through a strenuous course of preparation for freedom after being compelled to recognise and promulgate India's right to it. And he laid down a test whereby his countrymen were to ascertain the reality or unreality of all prospective reforms. It was "No control, no cooperation." If one or more departments of Government were transferred to the control of one or more Indian Ministers responsible to an assembly of popular and elected representatives, Aurobindo would have India co-operate with Great Britain on the basis of such transference of control. For

doing so, she would be accepting partial *Swaraj* as a step and means towards complete *Swaraj*.

The following portion of the article possesses a living interest for every Indian who has not abdicated his right to think: "It is generally supposed that the Nationalist party is committed to the persistent and uncompromising refusal of cooperation until it gets the full concession of *Swaraj*. Nationalist publicists have not cared to combat this error explicitly, because they were more anxious to get their ideal accepted, and the spirit of passive resistance and complete self-help popularised, than to discuss a question which was not then a part of practical politics. But it is obvious that a party advancing such a proposition would be a party of doctrinaires and idealists, not of practical thinkers and workers. The Nationalist principle is the principle of "no control, no cooperation." Since all control has been refused, and so long as all control is refused, the Nationalist party preaches the refusal of cooperation as complete as we can make it.

"But it is evident that if, for instance, the power of imposing protective duties were given to a popular and elective body, no serious political

party would prefer persistence in commercial boycott to the use of the powers conceded. Or if education were similarly made free of official control, and entrusted to a popular body, as Lord Reay once thought of entrusting it, no sensible politician would ask any one to boycott that education. Or if the courts were manned by Indian Judges and made responsible not to the Executive, but to a Minister representing the people, arbitration would immediately take its place as a supplementary aid to the regular courts. So also the refusal to cooperate in an administration which excludes the people from an effective voice does not involve a refusal to cooperate in an administration of which the people are an effective part.

“The refusal of autocratic gifts does not involve a refusal to take up popular rights inalienably secured to the people. It is, on the contrary, with the object of compelling the concession of the various elements of *Swaraj* by peaceful moral pressure, and in the absence of such concessions, developing our own institutions to the gradual extrusion and final supplanting of Bureaucratic institutions, that the policy of self-help and passive resistance was started. The acceptance of popular rights does not

imply the abandonment of the ideal of complete autonomy or of the use of passive resistance in case of any future arbitrary interference with the rights of the people. It implies only the use of *partial Swaraj* as a step and means towards *complete Swaraj*."

The Nationalist party ceased to exist as an organised body after Aurobindo was gone. The present writer took to the legal profession; so did also Rajat Nath Ray, another Nationalist member of the Bar, now alas! no more. Mr. Hirendra Nath Dutt became a more diligent Attorney, and Mr. Shaym Sundar Chakravarty eventually became a co-adjutor of Sir (then Mr.) Surendranath Banerjea in the *Bengalee* Office, after his release from deportation. Messrs. Subodh Ch. Mallick and Hemendra P. Ghose tried their hands at the banking business. Nationalists in the *moffusil* retired similarly into private life.

VIII

THE ANNULMENT OF THE PARTITION AND AFTER

The Moderate party continued its particular line of activities under the leadership of Sir Surendranath who specially stuck with grim determination to one item on his programme—annulment of the Partition. But in the heart of the Hindu community at large there brewed an intense discontent which was next door to a feeling of sympathy with the doings of the revolutionary party. The dramatic revocation of the Partition by the Head of the British Empire towards the end of the year 1911 marked, however, a definite turn in the tide of Bengalee feeling towards Great Britain. It signified the recognition of the principle that no administrative measure was possessed of validity in the event of its going definitely against the wishes of the overwhelming majority of the people concerned. The people read into the Royal re-unification of Bengal an intimation from the British Democracy that the days of arbitrary rule were at last numbered in India; and the general impression gathered strength

from the publication of the famous Hardinge Despatch which held out to India in unequivocal language the promise of provincial autonomy.

The appointment of Sir Lawence Jenkins to the headship of the High Court also resulted, as time passed, in the further conciliation of Bengal. For he held the scales evenly, and with a firm hand, between the Crown and the people, refusing with considerable sternness to lend countenance to any Crown prosecution, whether with or without a political flavour, in the absence of strictly legal evidence justifying its accusation. The political bias, but too often betrayed by the *moffusil* Judiciary and Magistracy (with, of course, honourable exceptions), now received a wholesome set-back, and the people who loved their country lived less in fear of the law.

With the advent of Lord Carmichael as Governor, things took a further turn for the better, as he concealed from nobody his avowed sympathy with Indian aspirations after self-rule, and evinced a keen and real anxiety to further them. People breathed a freer air, and felt the honour of Bengal to be safe in its Governor's keeping. Lord Carmichael came nearer than any other ruler in

India to placing himself at the head of the national movement. [Would that the present and future rulers of India keep such an ideal steadily in view in fulfilment of their obligation to this ancient land astir with the pulsation of a new life!]

But Young Bengal was holding fast to its cult of the revolver and picric acid, with its face averted from Great Britain. It was declaring in letters of blood its intolerance of the fact that India was in fetters whilst the rest of the world was free. It called on Young India to make common cause with itself, and even sought to enlist the sympathy of the outside world. The trial and imprisonment of numbers of its constituents appeared only to intensify the activities of the revolutionary party, which soon became India-wide. The youth of India offered it recruiting ground, and the quick-beating hearts of the young leaped up to its call, as they have all the world over in like circumstances. Deportation and internments failed, all too manifestly, to put out this red flame issuing out of India's side. It was the purity, and one may add, the nobility, of their private lives that made the revolutionists magnetise the young. They lived most strictly continent lives; they had

pulled down all barriers of caste and creed within their ranks; they were deeply religious, but served Hindu and Mahomedan alike in times of stress and strain; they were forward of all in volunteering their services as nurses and medical helpers whenever any epidemic broke out in the countryside, or as distributors of relief wherever a flood or a storm had occasioned damage and shortage of food. And they bore the dead body of a Mahomedan or an untouchable Hindu on their shoulders in a spirit of brotherhood which constituted a poem of hope to a new chapter of possibilities in British Indian history. For the rise and growth of a party, such as this, signified at once the triumph and the failure of British Indian policy. It had triumphed in that it had interpenetrated these youths with the spirit of service and the ethical idealism which constitute the inner essence—the sanctity and the significance—of the British view of life; it had failed in so far as it had driven youths of such a type into the hostile camp against Great Britain.

Barindra Kumar Ghosh and some of his coadjutors were known to the present writer. Most of them were, however, either in the Andamans or in jail; but from the close of 1913 onwards he

came into touch with the newer members of the party under notice as Counsel for the defence in the various trials in which he was engaged in Bengal and the United Provinces. In his interviews with the young men he found considerable opportunities of arguing matters out, and was soon convinced that they had more or less come to realise the essentially unpractical character of their professed mission. They agreed with the dictum of Barindra Ghosh in his Alipur confession that neither bombs nor revolvers could bring India independence, and held, further, that the dacoities committed by the members of the party were hateful things which were inevitably estranging their countrymen from them.

But England, they said, paid no heed to constitutional agitation; and how was it, they argued, that the citadels of the Bureaucracy had hastily opened their gates to let in Sinha and K. G. Gupta only after a revolutionary movement had made its appearance in India? They *would* have it that the two circumstances stood in the relation of cause and effect, and contended further that there was no other method open to Indians than theirs for keeping the Englishman's conscience in a raw state of

sensitiveness about India. They were fully conscious of their inability to rid their country of British dominion by the means they had adopted: but they meant to discredit British Indian rule in the eyes of the world, and make it impossible for the British to keep up the make-believe that all was well in India.

Further discussion resulted in better mutual understanding, and presently, in a number of constructive suggestions which the present writer was authorised to place before Government with a view to pointing a way for restoring normal relationships between the two parties. This he had the privilege of doing by submitting a thesis on the subject to Lord Carmichael towards the end of 1914—thanks to the friendly offices of a big-hearted Britisher who was then in Bengal. Lord Ronaldshay has since published excerpts from it in *The Heart Of Aryavarta*, and the writer would content himself by quoting below the concluding words of the document in question:—"The obvious objection will be raised by some that the Indian Government cannot be reasonably expected to place arms in the hands of the very men who seek to compass its destruction. But there can be no motive left

for a rebellion after Great Britain has made it patent to all that she means to nationalise the Government of India by taking practical steps in that direction. The line of political emancipation that most appeals to the Indian Nationalist is one whereby the provinces will be handed over to their respective peoples to be governed by their representatives in association with the irreducible minimum of Britishers, and the Central Government shall continue in the hands of the latter in association with the irreducible minimum of Indians. The following steps may therefore be suggested for immediate adoption: the promulgation of an amnesty to all political offenders including those styled "political suspects"; the building up of a national Indian militia; and a real and convincing initiation of the line of political enfranchisement above indicated. Let England enter upon this new chapter in her Indian history, and the era will set in of a new civilisation which drawing its inspiration from the wisdom of the East and the science of the West, shall transfigure man into the real semblance of Him in Whose image he was made."

The present writer had the satisfaction of discovering the fact a little later that Lord Carmichael

and several other Englishmen in power accepted the principles underlying his suggestion. And the meed of praise is due to Lord Carmichael that he pressed forward with his programme of reclaiming Young Bengal without ever turning his back. It was chiefly through his exertions that the change of atmosphere was created in which it was possible to raise a regiment of Bengalee youths in disloyal Bengal. The *Bengalee Regiment* was the visible materialisation of an important item of the programme submitted to the Governor; for it freed the Bengalee for the first time in British Indian history from the galling restriction that had prevented him from being a citizen-soldier. It brought him his first chance of salvation from the futility that had pursued all his wordy warfare with the British; it brought him the opportunity, for the first time, of showing himself capable of the service and sacrifice which alone has provided the foundation, since history began, of a people's freedom. And it palpably cut away the recruiting ground from under the feet of the revolutionary party. The Governor's term of office came all too soon to an end, and the prayer of the Bengalee people for its extension was not granted. But Lord Carmichael

left Bengal in a far better mood than he had found it in at the inception of his Governorship, with the renascent hope planted into its heart by him that Great Britain was not going to repudiate her historic obligation to induct India into freedom.

IX

THE WAR AND AFTER

The War had broken out. To the people of Bengal it was as the flashing of the sword cleaving the darkness that had blinded the eyes of Europe—as the inexorable judgment upon a continent that had owed fealty to the Prince of Peace, and rendered allegiance to the Caesarism of Rome that had crucified Him. Europe had made a great Christian demonstration in the 19th century of exorcising the Devil, and turning him out by the front gate of national righteousness,—and then had quietly let him in by the back-door of imperialism. She was condemned to a hopeless duality of existence from that very moment, with one code of ethics for her own peoples, and quite another for the non-European peoples of the earth. What she expressly held to be wrong within her borders was sanctioned by her as right or justifiable or pardonable in the outer world. But this profession of national godliness and practice of imperialist godlessness was surely a thing that could not long go on in God's world. And it came to a

stop when Teuton imperialism fastened its teeth on Europe herself, goaded by a gluttonous earth-hunger which the world's unappropriated patches of land could not possibly slake or satisfy. So the Great War happened;—on an infinitely larger scale than, but on the same lines and for very much the same reasons as, the war that broke out in ancient India between the *Yadus* and *Kurus*.

Her age-old task confronted Great Britain—the same that had tried her strength on the birth of each new century, and left her cleaner, stronger, more vital, in the end. And disaster right at the beginning of the struggle drove her to closer self-questioning, and to consequential choosing between the essential and adventitious in herself, between that which was as her armour and shield, and that which was but the tinsel trappings with which her imperialism had covered and hidden her, between the doctrine of freedom for all men and that of dominion of man over man. She chose truly, and went into the fight with renewed zeal with the cry of "freedom in peril", which called into vibrant life the total energy of her world-wide Empire. She called upon India to fight for her and with her as a prospective partner in a federation of free states,

and as no longer a vassal. The *Land of Aryavarta* responded with a will which is now part of history.

Great Britain made good her word to India by her declaration of August 20, 1917. She set on it the seal of her highest authority, and lost little time in sending out a commission of enquiry to this country under the headship of her most pro-Indian public servant to study the question of the measure of political responsibility with which India might be invested at the very outset. The Montagu-Chelmsford scheme which resulted was embodied without delay into a statute by Parliament which next called upon Indians to take up the great task of progressive realisation of responsible government in their historic country.

As the present writer ventured to remind his countrymen at the time, it was an event without a parallel in the whole range of human history, if one left out the single instance of Rome's enfranchisement of her Empire in her hour of decline. Next to the formation of the League of Nations, it shall be set down by the future historian as the greatest spiritual enterprise of the 20th century. What it holds in store for the future of India none of us will live to realise; but visions

arise before the eye of faith which give a fresh zest to life, and fill one with a new will to live. For the Indian had not lived, but merely existed, through the long centuries that had rolled by. Was life worth living in modern India before August 20, 1927? The fact that stands out of the proclamation of that date, like the rock of coming ages, is that on and from that memorable day India ceased to be the bonds-woman of Britain. No more the mortal agony of soul, the pain and the shame and the misery consuming the Indian's spirit, burning his heart to cinders, as the thought had haunted him prior to that day that in the midst of a world of freedom, his was not the free land, he was not the free man. The taunt and the jeering of the free peoples had followed him as he had gone over the face of the earth, driving him mad, lighting devastating fires in the inner depths of his being. The joy of life, the vital expansiveness which is in the air of freedom had long left his motherland. He had found himself born to inferiority, and his opportunities of serving India hedged in with limitations. His country had been neither his to possess, nor his to protect. To be the outcast of the world, and an alien in his

home—could God have punished man any more? But as the world was destined to witness, the track of centuries was run by years, the moment made eternity, through the miracle of a war which brought humanity face to face with the elemental issue of salvation or damnation. India who took her part in the redemptive sacrifice of this *Yajna*, was through her last rite of expiation, and delivered into freedom.

Deliverance into freedom was the one outstanding result, the present writer would strenuously maintain (as he always has maintained), of the new charter embodied in the last Government of India Act. If those who dissent could only be persuaded to look into the Morley-Minto Act, and compare it with the later one! What did Lord Morley say in his inaugural speech about his Act? That for as long a time as his imagination could travel into the future, he could only see India under the personal rule of the Englishman. The present Act was based upon the fundamentally different assumption that India was fit to be free, and should achieve the completeness of self-rule as soon as practicable. None but lovers of quibble

could identify the two enactments in scope or intent.

Lord Morley would have us for ever amongst the crippled and the sickly and the disabled of mankind, with no greater purpose in life than to limp from birth to death upon crutches of British manufacture. It was given to the authors of the later enactment to look more deeply into the soul of the country that had produced the first flower of Aryan civilisation, to have a finer insight into the character of its people, and they therefore put their faith into a new dispensation that gave India the opportunity and the chance to work her way up to the height of complete responsible government within whatever time she might be able to do it.

To Nationalists of the old school, like the present writer, the Reform Act appealed with the force of a revelation. For it proceeded transparently upon Aurobindo Ghose's principle of partial *Swaraj* as a step and means to wards complete *Swaraj*. And more than that, it proposed to transfer into popular control just *the* departments of Government which ~~embraced~~ the whole range of Nationalist activities of Aurobindo's days.

The *Bande Mataram* had called upon the people to grow in health, wealth, and knowledge, in order to acquire the fitness to be free; but sanitation, industry and agriculture, and education were matters over which the Bureaucracy exercised absolute control; and the *Bande Mataram* had therefore advised Indians to reorganise these departments of their life with their own unaided efforts, apart from the Bureaucratic system. The people had responded splendidly to the call made on them; but the passing years had brought the realisation that it was impossible to organise those vital concerns of their well-being on a national scale merely on the basis of private charities, however generous. The truth had thus gradually forced itself into general recognition that the problem before the country was how to nationalise the constitution of the Government itself, instead of dissipating the people's energy in the vanity of an endeavour to build up a rival organisation thereto. The impossibility of getting together enough funds by private efforts for carrying out any perceptible portion of the work that Government got done for the people was a reality that refused to be ignored. And the resulting experience had reflected itself in

the thoughts that had found expression in the *Last Will and Testament*.

Now the Reform Act proposed the transfer of the identical departments to the control of Ministers who were to be responsible to popular and elective bodies; and it denuded the Bureaucracy at the same time of the right to interfere with the decisions of Ministers in respect of the matters entrusted to them. What the *Bande Mataram* would have had the people do, the Government of India Act now authorised the people to get done by their elected representatives. In other words, it transmuted the whole of the Nationalist programme of self-help into legal validity.

It was difficult to realise how the Nationalist could still cry *Non-cooperation*, in any event, with respect to the transferred departments. And the Act did not stop with the mere transference of the particular departments into Ministerial control, but provided, further, for the translation of more and more power to the transferred side of Government at intervals of every 10 years, until the Provincial and Central Governments reached the complete stage of responsibility in course of time, *pari passu* with the development of the necessary

governing capacity on the part of Indians. None but the wildest theorist could demand the departure of England from India within 24 hours of the passing of the Act. A beginning admittedly had to be made, and the one she did make was in accord with the tenets of Indian Nationalism as preached by its most gifted and authoritative exponent

Nor were proofs wanting in Bengal that Great Britain had made that beginning in all sincerity. No sooner were the Reforms made into law than Lord Ronaldshay had a letter written to the present writer by Sir Hugh Stephenson conveying his deep sense of sorrow therein over Aurobindo Ghose's long exile from Bengal, and his earnest desire that Aurobindo should now return to the country of his birth, coupled with the assurance that he would not be in any way interfered with by the Police. And there soon followed the Royal promulgation of an amnesty for those who "in their eagerness for political progress had broken the law."

The present writer had had the privilege of assuring Mr. Montagu at an interview granted him at Delhi that the revolutionary party would be sure

to cease its activities on the introduction of a real measure of responsible Government in India, and had been assured by the Secretary of State, in turn, of the certainty of an amnesty following upon some sure indication of the prospect which the present writer was holding out. Letters poured in to him, after the publication of the Montagu-Chelmsford Report, from the Andamans and the various deportation and internment centres, containing the message from the men he had defended as Counsel that their party had no further cause for quarrel with Great Britain in view of the promise she had made to India.

The present writer who was enabled to place all these communications before the Secretary of State through the kind offices of Mr. B. N. Basu could not but feel a glow of real happiness as the young men met him on their return with their simply spoken thanks. But what was remarkable, and, to his mind, absolutely set the seal of sincerity on the Reforms, was the request made of him by Mr. Gourlay (at the instance of Lord Chelmsford, as he came to learn later) to cooperate with the latter in the matter of providing a shelter for a sufficient length of time for the returned youths, most of

whom were bound to be stranded, and to be hounded by the Police wherever they went. An offer like that went straight to the heart, and could not but make one join hands with those who were introducing responsible government into India. Mr. Gourlay organised the shelter under the auspices of the Y. M. C. A., wherein the largest number of the youths under notice were housed and fed for six long months, without a single policeman being allowed within the vicinity of the place. The costs were borne by subscriptions, not the least share thereof being contributed by Mr. Gourlay and Mr. Justice Greaves. A full account of the matter is given by Sir Valentine Chirrol in his book.

The men who were thus befriended had planned and plotted against British rule in deadly earnest; and they could not but be convinced that the Reforms were much more than a mere make-believe, that they actually were what they purported to be, that is to say, a real step towards responsible government, as Government could not otherwise have let them out at all, and far less, allowed their representatives to care for them in the way they had done. It might also be

mentioned here that Government did all in their power to provide employment for as many of the released men as they could. Amongst other matters, the present writer distinctly recollects taking a letter of request from Sir Hugh Stephenson to the Legal Remembrancer desiring that a certain lawyer who had been released from internment might be given Government briefs whenever possible; and let the fact be recorded that the gentleman in question did receive such briefs within a short while of the request. Many another friendly act was done by members of Government whenever opportunities offered. Bengal, therefore, of all the provinces, had the best of reasons for accepting the Reforms.

But what should have been did not happen to be in fact. It never has yet been in human affairs. And things were not otherwise with the Reform 'Act. The veterans of the Congress accepted it as a matter of course, for they embodied much of what the Congress had been asking for in the past years. In fact they had welcomed the new political scheme from the very date of its embodiment in the Montagu-Chemsford Report. But, as we all remember, the publication of that report split

political India into two warring halves. And Bengal was the worst scene of political dissensions. The fact of Sir Surendranath Banerjea's acceptance of the recommendations of the Report drove the average Bengalee politician (that is to say, the average educated Bengalee) into a species of madness and hysteria. Appearances were all against Sir Surendranath. Had he not always been against the Government, and how could he now go over to the same Government, except under the promptings of some special wickedness which had overtaken him in his old age?

This was the one argument and the one question with which the opponents of the scheme lashed Bengal into the fury of an uproar. Every new political movement in Bengal had ushered itself into being with an attack on the Bengalee Tribune, and the one now launched against the Reforms was going to be no exception. There is a temperamental weakness in the Bengalee which is of evil portent. He most willingly cheers a fellow-man on along the way up; but no sooner has the struggling hero *arrived* than he finds in his erstwhile admirers a solid phalanx of oppositionists on tip-toe

for a chance to haul him down. The history of modern Bengal is far too full of instances in point. The writer would, however, take the opportunity of referring to the fact that Aurobindo Ghose, of all Bengalees, was wholly immune from this poverty of spirit, and strictly prohibited the leader-writers on the *Bande Mataram* from inditing a single attack on the Moderate Leaders of the time.

But to come back to the Montagu-Chemsford Report. It saw the light in an epoch when Bengalees had forgotten Aurobindo Ghose, and surrendered their conscience to a band of political neophytes who had sprung into the arena—unconsciously enough—for the dazzling prizes which political leadership offered for the first time in India. Needless to add, most of them were lawyers, with a few slavish co-adjutors among business men who had just begun developing a nascent political feeling in the new atmosphere begotten of the War. They were utterly unequipped for the work they had taken up. Immersed up to the moment in the absorbing task of money-getting, they had had little or no political training; they had no knowledge of political institutions, or of the manner of their evolution in

the different ages or parts of the world. They necessarily lacked historical perspective, and had never so much as heard of Aurobindo's famous doctrine of partial Swaraj as a step and means towards complete Swaraj. They had no appreciation of the fact that the proposed change in the Constitution aimed at translating the whole of the Nationalist programme of Bipin Chandra Pal, Aurobindo Ghose and Bal Gangadhar Tilak into legal effect.

Nor did it occur to them to ask themselves the reason why the new Constitutional proposals had provided for a decennial investigation of the question of how far India had got on with the powers transferred into her hands. Had they but taken the trouble to study the questions at issue, they would have understood why the old workers of the Congress were on the side of the Reforms; they would in that event have discovered the simple fact that it was not Surendranath Banerjea who had gone over to Government (as the saying went), but that it was the government of the departments concerned with the national well-being of India which was coming over into his hands, and of his colleagues. To have been sulking in the camp, while Great Britain was calling to them to

take up the management of industries, agriculture, education and sanitation on "national lines and under national control" would have been unforgivable infidelity to the Congress.

Alas ! for Bengal that her neo-Nationalists had no political past. They had stepped into politics as freshmen, forgetful of history in their burning but uninformed eagerness to make history. Tragedy had stalked such men in all ages, though, indeed, in the present instance, they could work no irretrievable ruin, as there was some power other than theirs in the land keeping unsleeping vigil over its length and breadth. Their sole contribution to the work ahead was the importation into politics of the methods of the lawyer, and the resulting confusion of truth with untruth, fact with fiction.

The warning cannot be too often uttered in our country against the handling of political problems in the spirit of the practising lawyer. For the law contemplates men in dissociation, citizen against citizen or the State; and the lawyer appearing for either party has the preordained task before him of demolishing the case of the other party by a method of syllogistic reasoning the major premises of which

are often of his own choosing. Artificial rules of evidence and procedure enable him to keep out facts prejudicial to his client, or likely to disturb the partiality of his presentment of the case. His art therefore not unoften takes the form of making the worse appear the better reason, and is, oftener than not, in no organic relation to the realities of life.

But, however appropriate his method might be in courts of law where each contending party is concerned with the main task of getting the better of the other, its introduction into politics could but lead to futility. For the patent fact stares us all in the face that politics have for their object men in association; and the problem of statesmanship is to stimulate them to collective endeavour with a view to their realisation of their highest common good. So far from selecting particular facts to suit preconceived purposes, the political worker must undertake a patient and passionless investigation of the totality of facts bearing on the problems of his country. He must discover his major premises in the findings of science and of history, so that the measures he devises may attain to fruition by conforming to the ascertained truths of external and human nature. His is the world of naked reality,

different in kind from the cramped one of fiction and artificiality wherein the lawyer lives and moves and has his being. He may only reap as he sows, and not all the lawyer's eloquence to the contrary will vary by a hair's breadth the inexorableness of that fact.

So the men under notice could do no better than attack the Montagu-Chelmsford Report, urged by the lawyers' instinct to make out a case against it. They did it upon premises rooted in stark unreality. They demanded *Swaraj*, and made the confident declaration that India was ready to take over her defence into her own hands on the morrow of England's immediate departure from India. By the time they met at their Special Congress at Bombay they had moderated down a little (was it owing to Mrs. Besant's presence?), but made the claim to dictate the time-limit within which India must have *Swaraj*! Why not? Did not judges give a time-limit within which money must be paid into Court by the judgment-debtor? And surely, one must plead for the whole 16-annas of one's client's claim if one was going to do him any good!

Over against all this puerility and ineptitude, stood the Report on Indian Constitutional Reforms. The aim of its authors was identical with that of the neo-Nationalist party,—*Swaraj for India*. But the spirit informing them was not of the law court, nor of the market-place. Hardly a page of the Report but brought one into contact with the minds of men penetrated by a missionary faith and an insurgent idealism,—but of men grounded in reality, and in living touch with the tides of happenings governing the world.

Applying the impersonal test of time, one cannot help the reflection how the Report on Constitutional Reforms has endured through the wear and tear of the troubled years as the most luminous and prescient treatise yet written on twentieth century India, whilst the wild projects and fanciful theories formulated in opposition to it alternated from one phase of untenability to another until they were given a decent burial in Deshabondhu's last utterance at Faridpur.

SIR SURENDRA NATH BANERJEA, AND THE REFORMS MINISTRY

The Reforms were made into law in spite of opposition, and most fortunately for those who believed in them, Mr. Gandhī succeeded in dissuading Congressmen from entering the Councils. It gave the Reformists their one chance. And Bengal was singularly fortunate in that she still counted Surendra Nath Banerjea amongst her living representatives. It would be difficult to look for a completer life, one of greater fruitfulness, than that of this gifted and tried servant of the country who had outlasted his generation, and survived into modern times. A Brahman by birth and temperament, most easily pleased and most difficult to displease or anger, possessed of a definite political faith which had endured through the passing decades, an iron will that none could bend, and a stock of exhaustless physical and intellectual energy which gave him no rest or respite until he could translate a mental resolve into a materialised actuality, Surendra Nath Banerjea had served and stood by his motherland for half a century. For fifty years he had fought to win India the status of

a Dominion within the Empire. He had fought with constitutional weapons because he believed in none other, and because he looked upon the British Empire as a human confederacy of the highest type history had evolved. But his dismissal from the Civil Service had first brought him up sharply against the fact that India was far from participating in the advantages of this federation. He had blessed himself being dismissed; because of it, the revelation had been vouchsafed him that his puny, private grievance was as nothing contrasted against the grievance of the whole nation. India, he had been made to see with eyes cleared of the cobwebs by adversity, was occupying a far lower status than her incorporation within the British Empire entitled her to, specially in the light of Queen Victoria's post-Mutiny Proclamation. And he discovered the underlying reason of it in the fact that his countrymen who had long acquiesced in political slavery were content to live under a type of Government which was the reverse of what Great Britain and her Colonies were living under. The tongues of men and angels began speaking within him, urging him to go forth to his fellow-men and bid them consent no longer to be treated as less

than the mere men God had made them. And so he did, and made the stagnant blood of his countrymen surge back through the arteries and veins, and tingle with a renewal of hope and aspiration.

The writer fights the temptation back to dwell at length on the political romance of Surendranath's life. His book gives us some glimpses of how a new political consciousness emerged into being along the track of his journeyings north, south, east, west. The Indian National Congress was the outer embodiment of the new vitality into which he succeeded in galvanising educated Indians. And the memory is with us still of how men poured from all parts of India into the Congress, year after year, just to listen to him,—just to be vitalised by his plangent voice beating in upon them, wave on wave, with the thunder of the sea dashing up against the battlements of a doomed citadel.

The Partition, as stated earlier, had tried his strength as the people's champion in the fight against the Bureaucracy. But a crueller, and more searching, test was laid upon him, with the publication of the Reform proposals. He believed

in them, and had indeed declared his acceptance of them in the previous year's discussions with Lionel Curtis who had made a skeleton draft of the identical proposals. But the new party that had captured the Congress were against them, and the choice now confronted him of being in it or out of it. To damn the Reforms and be in the Congress were the easiest of tasks; to go out of the institution he had helped to build up stone by stone, and be in the outer darkness, were to taste the bitterness, as of death.

Fewer moments of a greater agony, of a more awful self-searching, had been his than the momentous minute which culminated in the flooding of his soul with the strength that made him look away from Delhi. One remembers how he went to Bombay with a mere handful of loyal fellow-workers to preside over the Reforms Conference, in the hope of convincing Great Britain that the better mind of India, the conscience of those who had consecrated their whole lives to her service, was with the Reforms. It was, in the writer's humble estimate, the most creative act of his life, the greatness of which will become clearer to the public view with the lifting of the mist of political

obscurantism which still rides the country like a nightmare.

So the new Government of India Act was passed, and Sir Surendranath became Bengal's Minister along with two co-adjutors of a like political faith. The three years of office were soon enough gone, but not without enabling the Tribune of Bengal to demonstrate the reality of the Reforms. With his sure instinct he chose the departments of which he had intimate knowledge, and his management of them soon brought the reality home to Bengalees that Bengal had got under way with the scheme of partial *Swaraj* as a step and means towards complete *Swaraj*. Bengalees walked into the places so long closed against them in Bengal's Services; every one of the District Boards and Municipalities got a non-official Bengalee at its head; the Calcutta Corporation became the most 'democratic body in India; projects were taken in hand for the slitting open of the choked-up canals and rivers; two new Bills for the democratisation of the Moffusil Municipalities and District and Local Boards were taking shape, and one soon discovered the fact that the Ministry of Local Self-Government had become as completely

an Indian institution, as the *Bengalee* office had been in the past days. Bengal seemed to be walking out with him on a real quest of salvation from futility, shutting her ears against the din of words, words, words, proceeding from her intransigent children who were spending themselves in a lyrical cry after the unreal.

The results achieved by the Minister were too patent to be ignored, and afforded a painfully vivid contrast against the campaign of words carried on by the Congress of Mahatma Gandhi. It was clear to his Bengalee followers that a second Ministry under Sir Surendranath would be far too productive of solid achievements to give Nonco-operation much further chance in the province, and that to let him go to the Council a second time at the head of his party would be to invite political suicide. Mr. Gandhi dissented, but was overborne, and the subsequent happenings are matters of living memory over which the writer would willingly draw a veil. Sir Surendranath was ousted, and the hurting fact brought home to all that India would take time, as Lionel Curtis had warned, to develop responsible electorates. To put the matter in one sentence, he could not promise his

constituency immediate *Swaraj*, which the rival candidate did, and had consequently to make way for the latter. But even his defeat and exclusion from the Council served only to accentuate the reality of the Reforms. So does reality triumph in unthought-of ways over unreality!

The ready and spontaneous offer made by Lord Lytton to Deshabondhu that the latter should form the Ministry with two colleagues of his own choosing cut the ground away from under the feet of those underlings of his party who had gone about the country, expatiating on the impossibility of Swarajist Leaders being ever asked to be Ministers. It put all doubts to rest on the question of whether or not Great Britain really wished to introduce Parliamentary practice into the transferred side of Government. The pity of it lay in Deshabondhu's refusal of the offer so finely made. His refusal led nowhere and to nothing. It merely stopped the work that had begun under Sir Surendra Nath's auspices. And the question was, and is, how did the country gain by it? Things however soon happened to demonstrate the flagrant untenability of the Swarajist position. For with the presentation of the Budget, the alternatives stared the Swarajists

in the face of either voting the supplies for the transferred departments or starving the services connected therewith out of existence. With Desha-bondhu at their head, the Swarajist members had no other choice than to vote the supplies in the circumstances; but the rights of the matter in dispute ceased to be with them from that very moment. It was an impossible position for them to vote the supplies, and hold up their hands in horror at the same time on being asked to decide on the best method of utilising them. But this was precisely what the Swarajist refusal to form a Ministry amounted to. One understood Mr. Gandhi. He did not care for the Reforms, and so wished to leave them to be worked by those who did believe in them. But to come into the Council, to vote the supplies for the transferred departments, and then deliberately to refuse to devote them to the ends which were nearest their hearts,—this was an attitude on the part of our Swarajist saviours that merely doomed them to sterility, and like an ill wind, blew the country no good. Who were right and who were wrong in this particular instance? The Britishers who asked the Swarajists to vote the supplies and apply them as they thought right in

the interests of their motherland, or the Swarajists who voted the supplies, but thrust away their chance of seeing to their application from their own point of view? Every Indian who loves truth above shibboleths could answer that question but one way.

Nor did it lie with the Swarajists to cry out that they had refused to form a Ministry in that it had proved a barren and soulless adventure in the hands of a man like Surendra Nath Banerjea. For by their very conduct they had demonstrated to the contrary. They had flooded the District Boards and Municipalities with their representatives, with the idea of *working* and not *wrecking* them. It was an admission on their part that they could work these institutions consistently with their patriotic principles. And the hard fact confronted them that it was Sir Surendra Nath, the Minister, who had so reconstituted them as to make the entry of the Swarajists possible therein, and allow their leaders the chance of occupying the Chairmanship of these bodies. Obviously, then, his Ministry could not be said to have been a sterile one. And to crown all, they had finally disentitled themselves from belittling his work from the moment they had entered the Calcutta

Corporation whose constitution bore the finger-mark of the Grand Old Man's workmanship from top to bottom. Even the titles they took unto themselves were of his christening. The Deshabondhu himself was the Mayor of the institution with the elect of his followers as his subordinate functionaries. Could there have been a plainer promulgation by the Swarajist party of the fact that the Reforms were a reality, that they had vested the Minister with such reality of power as to have enabled him to convert an institution of the Bureaucracy into an institution of the people? And that institution happened to be the biggest corporate body in Bengal, barring Bengal Government. Swarajist intransigency ceased to possess any moral significance after the Swarajist advent on the Calcutta Corporation, and degenerated into a mere pose—mere posturing before the broken mirror of an Extremism that had lost the reason of its being. How could the Swarajist say to himself or his countrymen that it was patriotic to be Mayor, but unpatriotic to be Minister? Where was the difference in principle between the two positions? Deshabondhu was offered the Ministry according to constitutional practice, because he was at the head of the

Swarajist majority in the Council; he became the Mayor because he was at the head of the Swarajist majority on the Corporation. The offer of the Ministry to him was the result of the Reform Act which enjoined the vesting of the Ministry in persons commanding a majority of followers on the Council; his accession to the Mayoralty resulted from the new constitution conferred on the Corporation by a Reforms Minister, empowering the majority on that body to choose the Mayor. Both the offices were grounded in the Reforms, and one could understand the refusal of both on the identical ground; but to refuse the one and accept the other was an act of mystification which was incomprehensible from both the rational and moral points of view.

The fact thus stood out that the coming of the Swarajists on the Calcutta Corporation and on the District Boards and Municipalities was the finest tribute to the constructive genius of Sir Surendra Nath as a political builder, and constituted at once a justification of his Ministry, and of the Reforms which had brought it into being. No Swarajist got up on the platform to declare it, but no Swarajist could but have felt in his heart of hearts. And the

invisible scribe writes down both the spoken and the unspoken thought in his wonderful book.

So through the brief span that was yet spared him after he had ceased to be Minister, Sir Surendra Nath watched the sure fruition of his work in the acts of the very people who had opposed him at the polls. No surer guarantee could have been afforded him of the reality of what he had done. But the one fact that hurt him shrewdly was that the programme he had begun on was at a stand-still, that the measures of beneficence crying to be carried into effect were not advancing on the score of the Swarajist refusal to carry on. If only the spirit that had refused to age in him could replenish the frail frame it inhabited with anything like the old vigour of his manhood's days ! How he would have gone out amongst his fellow-men, and reclaimed them in his old imperial way to the cause of sanity and truth ! But no vain regrets were his. No sooner was he beaten at the hustings than he sat down with the Brahman's real detachment to write his book of reminiscences under the inspiration of the sustaining hope that the reading of it might have a healing effect on the afflicted mentality of his countrymen. And as soon as the book was printed,

he resumed the editorship of the *Bengalee* which became alive once more with the *Promethean spark*, if one might be allowed the liberty of using his favourite phrase. And in the midst of his pre-occupation with one of his leading articles, he was borne away by the Angel of Death, suddenly, swiftly, mercifully.

One who never turned his back, but marched breast
forward,

Never doubted clouds would break ;

Never dreamed though right were worsted, wrong
would triumph,

Held, we fall to rise, are baffled to fight better,
Sleep, to wake.

SUPPLEMENT

[*The following articles appeared in the Press
during the last Election.]*

I

It is interesting to see how history has repeated itself in the present Swarajist movement, and the refusal of its exponents to accept office under the reformed Governments. The identical question of cooperation or non-cooperation arose in 1910 on the enactment of the Minto-Morley Reforms. The rulers made the declaration "Those who are not with us are against us," which elicited from Aurobindo Ghose an enunciation of the Nationalist policy on the question. He laid down the principle, in the first place, that no Nationalist would offer to cooperate with the Government in the absence of any popular control over it, summarising the whole matter in the pithy formula "No control, no co-operation"; and then went on to explain that the people should never hesitate to offer cooperation whenever control was conceded. Even if popular control was established over a single department of Government, say, the department of Education, his countrymen should thereupon offer to cooperate to

the extent of the control granted; for doing so, added Aurobindo, Indians would be accepting partial Swaraj as a step and means towards complete Swaraj. The complete formulation and exposition of the doctrine set out above will be found in an article entitled "My last Will and Testament" which appeared in either the last issue or one of the last few issues of *Karmoyogin*. The mere statement of Aurobindo Ghose's doctrine puts one at once in mind of the fact that the Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms are based on an identical ideal, namely, that of partial Swaraj as a step and means towards complete Swaraj. And one cannot but be struck by the prescience of the man who anticipated the underlying principle of the Government of India Act by almost one decade. Aurobindo has now-where stated that the particular Act fulfils his conception of partial Swaraj; but the formula he enunciated transparently constitutes the very backbone of the Act under notice. It aimed to put Indian Ministers in control of some departments of provincial Governments for a period of ten years, and made the further provision that more departments were to be transferred to popular control at the termination of the said period, in the event of

the departments already transferred being found to have been well managed, and that this decennial inquiry and expansion of popular powers were to go on until India came to possess complete responsible government. What could this mean but the installation of India into partial Swaraj as a step towards her achieving complete Swaraj?

The great Swarajist party which arose under the leadership of Deshabondhu contested this proposition, and pronounced the Reforms to be as illusory as their predecessors. We all know what has happened since. But the point is, are the Swarajists entitled at the present moment, having regard to their own acts and conduct, to maintain their old point of view with reference to the Reform Act? Or rather have they not themselves demonstrated beyond dispute that, *as far as the transferred departments are concerned*, the said Act has vested Ministers with real control over them, and the members of the Legislative Council with real control over the Ministers? Surely, it is now patent to all that no Minister can exist unless the members of the Council are agreeable to voting their salaries, which is to say, that Ministers can only continue in office as long as they retain the

confidence of the majority of the House. In other words, a genuine Parliamentary procedure has been introduced in this respect into the transferred half of Government. Let us take the next great question, do the Reforms give Ministers control over the transferred departments? There is no other alternative before our Swarajist friends now than to answer "Yes". For they could not otherwise account for their flourishing presence on the Calcutta Corporation. Obviously they did not find themselves translated there by magic. They would further admit that they went on the Corporation not to wreck it, but to work it; that is to say, they found that body endowed with a constitution which appealed to their democratic sentiments, and allowed of their working thereon consistently with their Swarajist principles. Now the fact that cannot be ignored is that the Corporation was given that constitution by a Reforms Minister. He could have only done so by virtue of the powers conferred upon him by the new Act; and since those powers sufficed to enable him to convert a bureaucratic institution into a democratic one, where, pray, is the ground left for the assertion that the Reforms are moonshine, or that the

Ministers appointed thereunder are without control? Did Sir Surendranath not act in fulfilment of Aurobindo Ghose's very formula in cooperating with the British on the basis of the control vested in him as Minister? The only circumstance that could have prevented him from carrying his Act through would have been the opposition of the majority of Councillors—just what would prevent the passage of a measure through any popular assembly. Since the majority were with him, he got his Bill through, just as any member of the Cabinet would in England. In view of this clear, definite and undeniable fact, what right have our Swarajist friends to call one names if one says to them that the Reforms are proved to be real—proved by them, of all people; and that they sin against facts in continuing to repeat their exploded formulas against the Government of India Act and its supporters? Addressing the members of the Corporation, of an evening, could Mr. Sen Gupta be heard to say that the man who accepted the Ministry and was enabled thereby to give the Corporation its new constitution, and bring the Mayor, the Chief Executive Officer, and the Aldermen into being, was a traitor to the mother-

land? Here is just an ounce of fact worth all the ton of Swarajist theory!

But I hear my Swarajist critic crying out "Oh! but the Governor could have objected to the introduction of the Calcutta Municipal Bill, or vetoed it at the end." The prosaic fact, however, is he 'didn't, any more than, one supposes, the King would do it in England, although the British Constitution invested him with the right to do it. Sir Surendranath has left it on record in his book that Lord Ronaldshay, and Lord Lytton after him, throughout maintained the attitude of a Constitutional Sovereign towards the Ministers, *never at any time exceeding it*. The veto vested in the Governor thus at once appears in its true light as a constitutional safeguard, standing in a direct line of filiation to the veto inhering in the King, of whom the Governor is the representative in Bengal. Take the next fact almost hitting one in the face. The election of S^r. Subhas Bose to the office of Chief Executive Officer had to be sanctioned by Government. Is it even distantly conceivable that Government would have sanctioned it, as it did, if there were the slightest suspicion of reality in the Swarajist conception of the Reforms?

It is well-known that Sir Surendranath had two other measures on the legislative anvil, a new Bengal Self-Government Act, and a fresh Bengal Municipal Act, and he hoped to convert the Local Boards, District Boards, and the Moffusil Municipalities into truly popular bodies, on the lines of the new Calcutta Corporation, by getting those two Acts passed. The Swarajist hypothesis that the Governor would not have permitted the passing of the Acts is utterly put out of court by the fact that he *had* allowed the passage of the Calcutta Municipal Act through the Council. Will any Swarajist explain how his party subserved the interests of the country by keeping Sir Surendranath out of the Ministry, and thereby preventing the democratisation of these bodies? What has Sir Surendranath's successful rival candidate done in his place, or for that matter, what has the whole Swarajist party achieved, instead, by being on the Council during these three long years? Nothing, unless words be things.

Here is a study in patriotic achievement which ought to give our Swarajist friends furiously to think! I appeal to them to think first and foremost, and not give in at once to mere fury of resentment

because somebody is talking to them a bit candidly. There is reality of patriotism in numbers of them, much energy of self-denial, and fearless love of freedom. But with all this splendid equipment, they are all the same on the brink of failure just because they will not acknowledge the reality staring them in the face. Such an attitude might not lead to much harm in the sphere of religion—India's hitherto unceasing pre-occupation—, but it could only spell disaster in the world of politics in which there is but little mercy for those who ignore the actual and the real.

But no Swarajist can accept Ministry, it will be urged, while men like Subhas are in confinement. No Indian worth the name but will endorse the objection, and urge the grievance. But could not the Swarajist party make the clear pronouncement that its members would accept office on the basis of a release of all political prisoners? If one may judge from precedents, it is almost impossible to imagine Government refusing to enlarge the youths in question even after such a transformation of the Swarajist outlook.

II

One wonders why the members of the

Swarajist party are up in arms against those of their countrymen who believe in working the Reforms. They have been attacking the latter with much bitterness of spirit, and in language of explosive abuse. One almost suspects some little ruse underlying all this manifestation of wordy violence. Are our Swarajist friends quite sure they are not making a desperate effort to cover up their own tracks, just to screen from their countrymen the fundamental fact that their avowed policy of obstructing the reformed Councils has hopelessly failed, and that, on the other hand, they have gone a considerable way towards acknowledging the validity of the Reforms, and the futility of their opposition thereto?

It is either a masterly capacity to speak continuously with their tongues in their cheeks, or a sheer lack of the sense of humour, which has made it possible for them to face the public at all, without the curse ceasing on their lips against their countrymen who believe in the Reforms. Just look at the spectacle of the Leader of the Swarajya party, occupying the Mayoralty of the Calcutta Corporation, and calling a curse at the same time on the men who advocate that he should be a

Minister in the event of being returned to the Council at the head of a majority ! How can one be Mayor, and refuse to occupy the office of the Minister who created the Mayoralty ? Where, in the name of all that is true and candid, is the logic of it all ? Mr. J. M. Sen Gupta is patriotic in being the Mayor ; how pray, does he become unpatriotic the moment he becomes Minister ? How did he become Mayor ? Firstly, because a Minister who gave the Corporation a new constitution (which is approved by the Swarajists) created the office in question ; secondly, because the majority of the members on that body approve of his Mayorship. How can he become Minister, or rather let us ask, why did His Excellency offer Deshabondhu the office of Minister ? Was it not because of the fact that he was at the head of the majority of the members of the Legislative council ? In doing so, did not Lord Lytton follow exactly the same practice that the King does in sending for the leader of the majority in the House of Commons ? Should Mr. Sen Gupta succeed in entering the Council after the election with a majority at his back, and be offered the Ministry, as Deshabondhu was, by the Governor, on what basis would he say

to the country that he must refuse the offer, although he shall continue Mayor? Since both the institutions have their origin in the Reforms, on what ground could he hold to the one, and run away from the other? Which would be the more patriotic act—to accept the Ministry, carry on the work of Sir Surendranath, convert the local bodies in the moffusil into likenesses of the Calcutta Corporation, and take up his other projects for promoting the people's health and happiness; or to refuse to be Minister, retransfer the control of the transferred part of the provincial Government to the Civil Service, and just sit hugging the Mayoralty and do nothing more?

I forget. *Forward* came to the rescue of the Leader the other day with the argument that he could be Mayor because he was called to the position by his own countrymen, but could not be Minister because he would have to accept the position from the Governor. One cannot help the observation that not to know the Minister would be for the Mayor to argue himself unknown! There must surely have been a great power of good in the Minister, since he could by a stroke of the pen create the highly patriotic Swarajist Mayor!

But to come to the argument about the appointment of the Minister by the Governor. Who else is to do it? It only shows the length the pure theorist would go under the urgency of some fixed idea. Does *Forward* say it is wrong for the King to send for the Leader of the House, and ask him to form his Ministry? It might be wrong from the *Forwardian* standpoint, but it has answered very well in real life. 'And does the Swarajist organ demand that Lord Lytton who is the King's representative should follow some other practice, that it was all wrong that he sent for Deshabondhu as he did, and that it would be wrong of him to send for Mr. Sen Gupta for the same purpose in the event of the latter's successful entry into the Council at the head of a majority? What else should he do then? As long as India remains part of the British Empire,—and Deshabondhu has said in the clearest language that she *shall* remain part of that Empire—and Indians want parliamentary institutions on the model of the Mother of Parliaments, the only procedure that Lord Lytton could follow is the one he did follow.

Why must our Swarajist friends shut their eyes to the real significance of Lord Lytton's

action? It clearly signifies, does it not, that since the power of the purse has been given by the Government of India Act to the Legislative Council in respect of the transferred departments, the Governor has no other alternative than to call on the Leader of the majority in the House to form the Ministry. In the event of Mr. Sen Gupta coming in with a majority, and being called upon by the Governor thereafter to form his Ministry, he and his colleagues would in reality owe their Minister-ship to their command over that majority. [The circumstance of the Governor calling them to their offices would merely point the way provided by the Constitution for giving effect to their leadership of the majority. But the day they ceased to retain that leadership, and had a vote of censure recorded against them by a majority of the Councillors, out must they go, and no Governor could maintain them in office a minute longer. This has been clearly demonstrated by the Swarajists themselves hounding out Minister after Minister by recording adverse majority votes against them. It is thus transparently absurd to contend that one could be Mayor, but would lose caste by being Minister. Be neither, like Gandhi, or be both; but do not

'damn the reputation of the Bengalee people before the world by, putting forward untenable casuistries.

The Swarajists have gone further along the way towards validating the Reforms. They have sat on the Committees of the Council, and co-operated with the Bureaucracy by offering them help and guidance as members of those bodies. Wherein lies the difference in point of principle, may one inquire in all humility, between the position of a Minister, and that of a helper of the Bureaucracy on the Committee? They also passed the Rent Act—a flagrant act of cooperation! And on the top of all this the Swarajists have had to vote supplies for the transferred departments year after year. And is it possible that Swarajists do not realise that in the very act of finding themselves compelled to vote the supplies for the transferred departments, they confess in the most marked manner to the reality of the Reforms, to the fact that they constitute a real beginning of Parliamentary Government, so much so, that the Governor is powerless to restore by certification a single penny out of the supplies rejected by the Council? To fill the offices of the Corporation, to

sit as Commissioners thereon, to be on the Committees of the Legislative Council, to pass an occasional Act, to vote the supplies for the transferred departments, and then to hold up your hands in horror at the offer of Ministry—this really is far too Gilbertian a thing to continue more than three years !

III

It is an astonishing thing how the principal protagonists of the Swarajist party have kept absolutely quiet about Deshbandhu's Faridpur speech in which he enunciated his policy of the future. Being his last utterance, it was the most authoritative, and had Deshabondhu been spared to Bengal, we should have obviously heard a great deal more about it, and perhaps witnessed a sifting of the chaff from the wheat in the ranks of the party. One just heard a growl at Faridpur, just an anticipatory rumble of dissatisfaction with the Leader, because the crumbs of worldly comfort he had been throwing to the needy and the greedy, amongst his following were getting fewer by the time he was presiding over the Faridpur Conference ; and further because he was formulating a new doctrine from his Presidential chair of sanity and

good will which fell with a strange accent on the ears, and struck terror into the hearts, of those who had so long excelled in the game of fishing in troubled waters. What would happen to them if Deshabondhu was really going to settle down to the programme of India forming an integral part of a British federation of commonwealths, as he was actually laying down in his speech ! It would mean the ending of all the tall talk and extravagances of an earlier day, and the cessation of the occupation of those who had been giving such masterly expositions thereof. Little wonder the famous fraternity were amazed, alarmed, and at last actually angry with the President of the Conference, and made their last desperate effort to win him back to the cause of their future upkeep and maintenance by making a feint that they were going to dethrone him from the Presidential chair. Their tactics sufficed for an evanescent minute, and then crumbled to the dust, whilst Deshabondhu reseated himself as President, and finished the most pregnant utterance of his life.

“ Had he but lived ! ” is the cry that wrings itself out of the hearts of those who had had the

privilege of knowing him at his realest—who knew the power of good that was in him, his tender sensitiveness to all that was essential and lasting in life. It was the deeper reality in him that burst the bonds asunder, and claimed life and utterance in his Faridpur pronouncement which marks him out as the creator of the New Bengal slowly dawning into being. But by passing away just when he was most needed, he left the Swarajya party widowed of even a semblance of the greatness that was his; and so his successors have not been equal to the high achievement of proceeding along the new vista which he opened up to them. Rather did they put up a barrier across its very entrance; and then turn their backs on it, and resume their futile journey, through the arid land of abuse of everybody all round, to no destination. Thus alone were they able to keep together the men who growled and the men who were growled at at the Faridpur Conference. In order to keep its body together the Swarajya party has managed to lose its soul. The spectacle has been common enough of one or another Swarajist Leader unveiling Deshabondhu's portrait here, there and everywhere; but there is a singular conspiracy

of silence amongst them regarding the message he delivered at Faridpur.

They absolutely owe it to themselves to say, to the country now, whilst the elections are on, whether they adhere or demur to the Faridpur pronouncement. They should surely have the courage of their conviction on a question of such vital significance. They cannot go about shouting his name, and calling on the electors on the strength of it to exercise their franchise, in favour of the Swarajist candidates, without telling them clearly and unambiguously whether they mean to carry out the Faridpur programme of Deshabondhu; whether they have exacted a pledge to that effect from all the Swarajist candidates not excluding the title-holders and other gentry of similar antecedents who are now flaunting Swarajist favours; what the party has done hitherto to further that programme, and what it means to do in that behalf in the new Council. The principal points of Deshabondhu's speech are well worth remembering and recounting. The first and the most salient fact about the speech is Deshabondhu's acceptance of the Empire ideal. Following close thereon is his declaration in favour of a scheme of partial

Swaraj leading to complete Swaraj. The partial Swaraj which he would accept must be a reality and not merely a counterfeit thereof. He set down two other conditions : (i), a real change of heart on the part of the rulers which, according to him, would be demonstrated by the releasing of all political prisoners, (ii), Swaraj must be guaranteed to come automatically in the near future.

The question of supreme moment is, does the Swarajist party adopt the above as its election manifesto? In the event of an answer in the affirmative, a proper discussion could arise on the point of how far the present Constitution embodies the substance of Deshabondhu's demand, and in what respect it falls short of it. But, as I have said, the Swarajists appear to have buried the speech in oblivion, and are going their way merely claiming all the political virtues for themselves. I would invite their attention and that of the country to one or two matters. As I have previously shown, Sir Surendranath's Ministry brought the demonstration home that the Minister did possess real control over his own department, and that the powers vested in the Governor by way of safeguards were at no time exercised

by him except in the spirit and manner of a Constitutional Sovereign. The Swarajist contention that the Governor would have interfered with the controlling power of the Ministry had Deshabondhu formed one, remains in the merely embryonic stage of a theory. Having regard to the uniform policy of non-interference observed by the Governor during the first Ministry, and the unhesitating readiness with which Lord Lytton made the offer of Ministry to Deshabondhu on the basis of the latter's leadership of a definite majority party in the Council, the Swarajist has no manner of right to ask the country to take the eventuality of interference with a Swarajist Ministry for granted. Experience and probability point the other way, and our Swarajist friends cannot be accepted as political prophets possessing any greater certainty than weather prophets. The latter, in any event, have data behind them; all the data bearing on the particular question are against the Swarajist prophets. Let them accept the Ministry as the only way of enabling the country to find out whether they are right or wrong.

Regarding the question of automatic coming of Swaraj, one imagines Deshabondhu would have

revised his opinion thereanent. It is so difficult to have things automatically happening in the human world wherein passion and volition introduce an incalculable element. For example, had he lived into the present times, Deshabondhu would have found it impossible to predict an automatic cessation of the Hindu-Muhammadan differences. But responsible government, the equivalent of Swaraj, is promised to India in the preamble to the very Act. With respect to the remaining question of an amnesty for the political prisoners, it is almost impossible to conceive that Government should not grant it once they felt assured of Swarajist cooperation in the matter of working the Reforms. As I have already said, their previous action in respect of the same matter gives one immensely to hope for a favourable issue. I would appeal to my Swarajist countrymen seriously to consider whether they would not be acting in full accord with the spirit of Deshabondhu's final message if they declared their willingness to accept office and work the new Constitution on the sole condition of the release of political prisoners.

IV

Mr. Sen Gupta is touring the country, to

advance the election of his followers, and has succeeded in making a Rai Bahadur shed his titular appendage. My sincerest congratulations to him on the latter performance. But the question one would like to ask him is, what is all this for? What is the objective of the Swaraj party; what does it promise the country in return for the election of Swarajists to the Council? Deshabondhu frankly told the electors at the last election that he wished to try a particular experiment in obstruction on going to the Council at the head of a majority; he expressed his belief that obstructionist tactics would result in good to the country, and conjured his countrymen just to give him a chance. Three years, he reminded them, were after all very little time in a nation's history, and all that he was asking was that Bengal should place herself under his guidance only for this little bit of time. Bengalees gave him the chance willingly; for was he not one of the most gifted of Bengal's sons, and had he not fulfilled the great prophecy of Bankim in *Ananda-Math* that Bengal would discover her real servant in the son who could give *his all* in her service. He had given his all, and surely, the average Bengalee

said to himself, he owed it to the country and to himself to cast his vote in favour of Deshabondhu.

He went to the Council with a majority behind him, but did not succeed in his mission of obstruction. It took no one whit away from his greatness that he did not succeed; for the greatest of men had miscalculated in history, and success in one's endeavours would be but a poor test of the greatness that lay behind them. What underlay Deshabondhu's activities on the Council was his all-sacrificing devotion to the cause of the country; what came out of them was the realisation that a policy of consistent obstruction was not feasible: that the reformed Constitution *did* hold within itself the seeds of reality, in that the supplies for the transferred departments were altogether within the competency of the popular representatives to grant or reject, and no Ministers could hold office without being able to command a majority of votes on the Council: that a real Minister, that is to say a real man—and not a puny, pigeon-hearted creature hankering after a big salary—holding the office of Minister did possess the power of serving his country; that it was within his rights to transform

the institutions of the Bureaucracy into those of democracy in so far as they fell within the ambit of his particular portfolio. We have already seen how these experiences translated themselves into acts and acceptances which tended more and more to bring the Swaraj party into line with the Reforms. It is also the present writer's firm belief that, having regard to his Faridpur pronouncement, Deshabondhu, had he been spared to us, would have accepted Ministry after the present elections, provided Government had clearly assured him of the release of political prisoners as the necessary corollary of his acceptance of office.

Be that as it may. Let it be granted that I am totally wrong in my supposition of what Deshabondhu would have done. But what does Mr. Sen Gupta mean to do by repeating the last 3 years' cycle of futilities? How is the country to get any forwarder by sending the Swarajists to the Council just to enable them to do as they did—that is, do nothing? They have let the transferred departments be managed by the Civil Service these 3 years, exactly as they were managed in the pre-Reform era, and have at the same time treated us to the spectacle of voting the supplies

for the particular Civilians to dispose of in the way they, *and not the Swarajists*, thought best. How will the cause of Indian freedom be advanced, may we ask, by our Swarajist friends allowing the Civil Service to run the transferred departments for another three years with the aid of the funds that will have been voted by themselves? I beg the Leader of the Swaraj party to explain how the above procedure will help the country; and how the contrary one of Swarajist Ministers spending the funds of the transferred departments in the manner of their liking, and running the various departments in the way that Sir Surendra-nath did his, will harm Bengal.

It may be urged that another three years of non-acceptance of office will show up the hollowness of the Reforms. But how can the country adjudge the Reforms, futile, when *you* commit the futility of refusing to work them? How are the people to know whether they are good or bad unless and until you have tried to work them? The retort will not lie in the mouth of the Swarajist that the first three years of their working were enough to demonstrate their worthlessness, so long

as he remains in possession of the Calcutta Corporation as reconstituted by the first Reforms Minister.

The only other argument I have heard attempted is that England would be bound to enlarge the Reforms when she found the people were not accepting them. A reply like that reveals an immensity of faith in the angelic goodness of England that would out-Moderate the most confirmed of Moderates! Have the Swarajists ever seriously pondered the implication of their glib assertions? Do they sincerely believe that the Statutory Commission that must sit in 1929 will pronounce a panegyric on the Swaraj party, and recommend provincial autonomy on the ground that Bengal and the Central Provinces have refused to work the Reforms? Let them speak plainly. Two other minor arguments are now and then fetched forth by the younger sections of the party. One is that the way would be prepared by the refusal of Ministry to Civil Disobedience. In view of the distinct pronouncements of Mr. Gandhi and Pandit Motilal Nehru on the present-day impossibility and the very very distant possibility,

of Civil Disobedience, one need take no serious notice of this ridiculous plea. The other reply is that the repeated refusal of cooperation would frighten the British into submission. But fright about what? Not a revolution—for the Swarajist party is committed to *Ahimsa*. Furthermore, the party is wedded to the ideal of India within the Empire, as formulated by Deshabondhu lastly, and by Mr. Gandhi firstly. What has then Great Britain to fear from the Swarajist refusal of the transferred portfolios? Why should her representatives who did not fear to put Gandhi and Deshabondhu into jail fear the present Swaraj party at all? The only thing one need seriously apprehend is another tornado of words, words, words; but the British, in any event, appear to have inoculated themselves into immunity against any possibility of danger arising therefrom !
