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HISTORY
OF
THE INDIAN ASSOCIATION
1876—1951

BY
JOGESH CHANDRA BAGAL

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HARENDRA NATH MAZUMDER,
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FOREWORD

The Indian Association, due to serious riots in Calcutta in 1926, could not celebrate its Golden Jubilee, on the completion of its fiftieth year. In spite of their wishes the desire of its leaders in this respect was not realised. In 1950, however, the proposal of a Jubilee celebration was again mooted and it was decided to celebrate a jubilee on the completion of the seventy-fifth year of the Indian Association. It was also resolved to bring out a history of the Indian Association. Sri Jogesh Chandra Bagal, well-known for his researches regarding India's long struggle for national freedom, was entrusted with the work of compiling the volume. Old reports, records and papers in MSS. and print preserved in the Library of the Association were made available to him for this work. He has also consulted available contemporary records. The volume will be valuable as a record of the efforts and achievements of the pioneers of our freedom movement.

The Indian Association has a long record of service in the country's cause and has done much to shape the constitutional history of India during the British period. It has stood as a rock against all inroads upon the rights of the people and has fought long and valiantly against oppressive laws. It aimed at an all-round progress of the nation—political, social, moral and intellectual. In the early period of our history it is the Indian Association which took the lead in all nation-building activities, sometimes single-handed and often against great difficulties. It was instrumental in creating national consciousness throughout the length and breadth of India. As a result of this new awakening, the Indian National Congress came into being.

After the attainment of political independence a new responsibility has devolved upon every member of the community and the Indian Association has decided upon an orientation of its policy and programme for national service. While taking legitimate pride on the past services and achievements of its members, many of whom had during different periods of our national history taken leading parts in the forward march of our people in various spheres of struggle and progress. The present members are not

therefore inclined merely to live on the past and rest on their oars and they have chalked out active programmes for constructive national service.

The Indian Association must fit itself with its glorious past in order to be true to those ideals and professions that were envisaged by its illustrious founders. The Indian Association of to-day which has attracted so many useful men and women in its fold shall afford all opportunities to think, plan, and work out programmes of nation-building activities with a view to relieve the miseries of the common man, and to strive for an economic order of the society that shall make every man and woman happy and prosperous.

It is unfortunate that in India today in spite of past achievements, gifts and talents of an uncommon order in not a few men and women there is a sense of insecurity and frustration which is very unhelpful for maintaining the economic equilibrium in the country. The miseries of the common man must be ameliorated with the utmost determination.

The Council of the Indian Association has also set up a number of Committees for intensive study and active work in different fields including legislation, labour, land reforms, educational advancement, and socio-economic services. It is hoped a new enthusiasm will inspire the present generation not only to preserve the traditions of the past but also to create new traditions for the future.

With these words I present the volume to my countrymen.

The Indian Association,
62, Bowbazar Street,
Calcutta—12.
29th January, 1953.

HARENDRANATH MAZUMDER,

Hony. Secretary.

PREFACE

Rajnarain Bose, "Grand-Father" of Indian Nationalism, tells us that an institution, like an individual, should have a "biography" of its own, because in that case only it is possible for us to comprehend the true nature and extent of its contribution to the well-being of the society. From this standpoint the Indian Association deserves to have a biography, *i.e.*, a connected and authoritative account of its activities in its useful career of seventy-five years. This volume attempts to present before the reader such an account. The Indian Association has left indelible marks in the path of our onward march to constitutional progress, which has ultimately led to the attainment of our political salvation.

Throughout its long career the Association initiated movements which were of immense benefit to the country as a whole. It has always attempted to safeguard our national interests, as against outside intrusion or inside parochialism. In the last decades of the nineteenth century and the earlier ones of the twentieth when the Parliamentary system of Government was only partially introduced in the country, the Association acted like the responsible "Opposition" of the British Parliament and offered constructive criticism on each and every official measure affecting the nation. It was compelled to adopt the course of Boycott against the 'settled fact' of the Bengal Partition, when all avenues of constitutional approach to the redress of grievances were blocked. Later, it acted as a middle party in the Indian legislature. Only the salient features of the Association's long career of national activities have been narrated here in considerable detail. The story has been drawn up to 1951.

I should like to draw the attention of readers to the appendices at the back of the volume which give complete contemporary records of the administrative, agricultural labour and other problems. Of special importance are records leading to the partition of Bengal and the Muslim Memorandum to Lord Minto demanding separate electorates.

In the preparation of this History, it is needless to add that the main urge has come from the present Executive of the Indian Association. In this connection the earnestness of Sj. Harendra Nath Mazumder, the present Honorary Secretary, induced me to take up this arduous task. The enthusiasm of Sj. Mazumder and the ready assistance given by him whenever needed, require to be specially mentioned here.

I have received help from many other individuals. Sj. Prabhat Chandra Ganguli and Sj. Amal Home have been always helpful. Prabhat Babu placed the revised and enlarged Manuscript of his Bengali book, *Bharater Swadhinatar Itihaser Khasra*, at my disposal. Sj. Home has laid me under deep debt by allowing me to use his library whenever required. The authorities of Bangiya Sahitya Parishad, the National Library, the Sadharan Brahma Samaj Library also deserve

thanks for letting me use the books and files of newspapers preserved in their libraries. The Library of the Indian Association was always open to me for my work. Through Sj. Amal Mitra, I was able to consult some files of *Sanjibani* of Krishna Kumar Mitra. My heart-felt thanks are due to them.

I should also thank here Sj. Anath Bandhu Dutt, Sj. Manmatha Nath Sauyal, Sj. Labanya Kumar Sinha, Ananda Gopal Mukherjee, Sj. Nagendra Nath Chakrabarty, Sj. Pulin Behari Sen and Sj. Nani Gopal Chakravarty. Sj. Satya Kinkar Chattopadhyaya of the Prabasi Press has seen through the proofs. Last but not the least, I mention with gratitude the name of Sja. Lotika Ghose who has so kindly revised and corrected the MSS. and sometimes gone through the proofs.

Calcutta,
29th January, 1953

JOGESH CHANDRA BAGAL

The Bibliographical Notes

To write the history of an institution its annual reports are indispensable. Annual Reports of the Indian Association, Manuscript proceedings that are still extant, and various other papers have been freely used and largely drawn upon by me in the preparation of this volume.

These have been supplemented by the newspapers of the period. In this connection, some of the old files of *Amrita Bazar Patrika*, *Sadharani*, *The Hindoo Patriot*, *Grambashi*, *The Indian Daily News*, *The Bengalee*, *Sanjibani*, *Brahmo Public Opinion* and *The Indian Messenger* have been very helpful.

I have used many authoritative publications, old and new, in the course of this compilation. Some of them deserve special mention. In drawing up a connected history of our national movements leading up to freedom, they are also indispensable. These are mainly :

- (1) *New India*—H. J. S. Cotton, (2) *India under Ripon*—W. S. Blunt, (3) *Allan Octavian Hume*—Sir W. Wedderburn, (4) *Bengal under Lt.-Governors*, Vols. I & II—C. E. Buckland, (5) *How India Wrought for her Freedom*—Annie Besant, (6) *A Nation in Making*—Surendra Nath Banerjea, (7) *Memories of my Life and Times* (Vols. I & II)—Bepin Chandra Pal, (8) *A Life of Ananda Mohan Bose*—Hem Chandra Sarker, (9) *Memoirs of Motilal Ghose*—Paramananda Dutt, (10) *Addresses, Poems and other Writings*—S. H. Bilgrami, (11) *Krishna Kumar Mittreer Atmasharit*, (12) *Lanchhiter Samman*—Jogendra Nath Banerjea and such other later publications as (13) *India Through the Ages*—Jadunath Sarkar, (14) *Landmarks in Indian Constitutional and National Development*—Gurmukh Nihal Sing and (15) *Muktir Sandhane Bharat*—Jogesh Chandra Bagal.

CONTENTS

	Pages
Foreword	1
Preface	6
Bibliographical Notes	22

PART I

Chapter I—Earlier Movements	1
Chapter II—The New Phase: The Indian League	6
Chapter III—The Indian Association: The Story of its Founda- tion	12
Chapter IV—The Year of Promise	16
Chapter V—The Civil Service Question	22
Chapter VI—Reactionary Measures of the Government and the Public Protest	32
Chapter VII—Reorientation of the Association's Activities	40
Chapter VIII—The Era of Promise	48
Chapter IX—“Good Cometh Out of Evil”	58
Chapter X—Years of Hopes and Disappointments	67
Chapter XI—The National Conference: 1885	80
Chapter XII—Achievements of the Indian Association: A Retrospect	89

PART II

Chapter I—The New Role: National And Provincial (1886-90)	93
Chapter II—Further Activities Reviewed (1891-95)	111
Chapter III—Portents of Future Conflict (1896-1900)	121
Chapter IV—Lull Before the Storm, or The Period of Preparation (1901-1905)	140
Chapter V—The Storm Set in, or The Partition of Bengal Fina- lised	153
Chapter VI—The Anti-Partition Movement: Swadeshi and Boycott	164
Chapter VII—Aftermath of Partition—I (1906-8)	173
Chapter VIII—Aftermath of Partition—II (1909-11)	188

PART III

Chapter I—The People's Forum (1912-16)	201
Chapter II—The Parting of the Ways (1917-20)	213
Chapter III—A Liberal Organisation—I (1921-30)	222
Chapter IV—A Liberal Organisation—II (1931-40)	233
Chapter V—The Period of Transition (1941-47)	242
Chapter VI—The Latest Phase (1948-51)
 The Executive Committee: The Office-bearers (1876-1951)	 258

APPENDIX

	Pages
A. On the Rent (later, Bengal Tenancy) Bill	I
B. Question of Local Self-Government	XV
C. Separation of Judicial From Executive Functions	XXI
D. On the Out-Still System	XXV
E. Tea-Garden Labour in Assam	XXXIII
F. The Branch and Affiliated Associations of the Indian Association	XLVII
G. Partition of Bengal	L
H. A. M. Bose's Speech at the Federation Hall Meeting, October 16, 1905	LV
I. The Muslim Memorandum to Lord Minto	LIX

CHAPTER I

EARLIER MOVEMENTS

The Indian Association has played a very prominent part in India's freedom struggle for the last seventy-five years. The national resurgence in the seventies and early eighties of the nineteenth century was chiefly due to the activities of this Association. But our political movement dated much earlier. The battle of Plassey decided the destinies of India for at least a century and a half. The British strove hard to gain a strong foot-hold in the country and started their career of overlordship from the fertile soil of Bengal. In the early nineteenth century British rule brought in its wake a world of new ideas. Bengalis, highly impressionable and responsive, were quick to profit by the Western contact. With the spread of English education people imbibed Western ideas of liberty and equality. Raja Rammohun Roy, himself well-versed in Sanskrit, Arabic and Persian, stressed the necessity of learning English. He thought that with common ideas it would be easier for Indians and non-official Britons to unite and wrest power from the unwilling hands of the British autocrats.

But later the legislative measures in Great Britain and India tended gradually to alienate non-official Britons and Indians from each other, so that the official and non-official Britons combined to exploit and rule the country, at the cost of the Indians. This intolerable situation led to the formation of political societies and associations which would look after Indian interests exclusively. The first measure of the Government that led Indians to combine was the 'Resumption of Rent-free Lands,' pursued vigorously since 1828. To discuss and criticise the measure and lead an agitation against it, the elite of Calcutta met and formed a society called "Bangabhasa-Prakashika Sabha" in 1836. This was the nucleus of the Land-holders' Society formed two years later in 1838 under more influential auspices. Many noted Indians and Europeans sat in the Committee of the Society, because Britons had, by virtue of the Charter Act of 1833, been empowered to purchase lands like the children of the soil and allowed to live there permanently. In fact by 1838 the land-interests of the Britishers grew so much in volume that they did not hesitate to join the Indian land-holders to safeguard their own interests. But

HISTORY OF THE INDIAN ASSOCIATION

this did not long continue due to discriminatory legislation between Indians and Britishers.

II

By now there arose a band of youngmen, mostly educated in the Hindu College, who won the appellation of 'Young Bengal.' These included such stalwarts as Tarachand Chakravarty, Ramgopal Ghose, Dekshinaranjan Mukherjee, the Rev. Krishna Mohan Banerjea, Pyarichand Mitra and Ramtanu Lahiri. Many of them took up social, literary and cultural work, but their main interest lay in political work. Dwarkanath Tagore, better known as Prince Dwarkanath, and a principal promoter of the Land-holders' Society, was a keen appraiser of the beneficial activities of this younger school. While returning home from England late in 1842, he brought with him George Thompson, the great orator and humanitarian, who fought incessantly for the emancipation of slaves all over the world. Thompson was also a true lover of India. As a prominent member of the British India Society, founded in London in 1839, Thompson addressed many meetings in England and drew the attention of the British public to Indian affairs at the time. In bringing him to India it was Prince Dwarkanath's desire that a leader of men like Thompson should guide his young friends in India.

Prince Dwarkanath's hopes were fulfilled. Thompson's presence in the country not only filled Young Bengal with immense enthusiasm, but gave impetus to the land-holders to revive their society, too. The most important effect of his visit, however, was the foundation of the Bengal British India Society on the 20th April, 1843 by the 'Young Bengal' group under the leadership of Tarachand Chakravarty and Ramgopal Ghose. This was the first political association which aimed at and worked for the welfare of the inhabitants of all the British territories in India. It had a twofold object in view: (i) to criticise and agitate against and propose amendments to all the measures of the Government—administrative, legal, municipal, educational and social; (ii) to supply the British India Society, the parent body in England, with all the materials concerning Indian affairs.

The Tattwabodhini Sabha, founded by Devendra Nath Tagore, the eldest son of Prince Dwarkanath, though a religious and cultural body, did much to strengthen and help the political activities of the Bengal British India Society.

EARLIER MOVEMENTS

III

Activities of either the Land-holders' Society or the Bengal British India Society did not continue long, due to the apathy of the general mass of intelligentsia. But between the years 1849 and 1852 events happened that shook their apathy. The successful agitation of the Europeans against the just measures proposed to be enacted by John Elliot Drinkwater Bethune, the fourth member of the Government to remove the legal distinctions of the Indians and Europeans in living India, the enactment of the Lex Loci Law in the teeth of opposition by the Hindus as also the growth of a hostile attitude of the official and non-official Englishmen towards Indian aspirations, convinced our leaders of the necessity of a strong political organisation in the country. The Charter Act was to be renewed in 1853. This also would vitally affect Indian interests. All these considerations led the leaders of both the elder and the younger school to establish one common association on October 29, 1851, known as the British Indian Association. This Association was purely Indian in character and carried on political work on behalf of all classes and interests of our country for about twenty-five years since its start.

Soon after its inception events of great political significance took place. The so-called Sepoy Mutiny in Upper India shook the British empire to its very foundation. An enquiry into the indigo-disturbances of Bengal exposed the British tyranny and cruelty in naked colours. The Government had set itself to the task of strengthening their power. They made administrative changes, reorganised defence, amalgamated several courts of Justice, established legislative councils, both imperial and provincial, and introduced the same penal code all over India after the British model. During the early sixties all these changes were completed. The British Indian Association was doing yeoman's service, sometimes in criticising and sometimes by initiating amendments to the measures to be enacted.

IV

Meanwhile three Universities had already been established in Calcutta, Bombay and Madras. English education was systematised. As years rolled on, educated Indians swelled in number and naturally demanded a share in the State appointments. Young Bengalis even went to England to compete for the I.C.S. as well as to sit for the examinations in Law and Medicine. Their success in these examinations made English-

HISTORY OF THE INDIAN ASSOCIATION

men very unhappy. Men at the helm of the State found to their dismay that the spread of English education was the root of all evils and asked the Indian Government to slacken the pace. As a result certain measures were adopted in Bengal. The British Indian Association rose in protest against this ill-conceived move. They organised a representative meeting in the Town Hall on July 2, 1870. The leading men of Calcutta, such as Kristodas Pal, Dr. Mahendra Lal Sircar, Raja Rajendra Lala Mitra, Kishory Chand Mitra, Chandra Nath Basu and Joykissen Mookerjee, voiced their feelings in support of English education. All the speakers, including the President Raja Romanath Tagore, decried the Governmental move of stultifying English education as retrograde, nay vicious. This Town Hall meeting was so very successful and representative in character that it was called at the time the 'first Parliament of India'. In England as well as in India, several leading Indians utilised the Press and the Platform in demanding the Parliamentary form of Government for their motherland.

V

With the diffusion of Western thought, the democratic ideals of Government were easily imbibed by Indians. Political associations came into being in the mofussil to safeguard not only the local interests but also to oppose the vagaries of the local authorities. Every measure of the Government, such as income-tax, road cess, water cess, chowkidari tax, municipal improvement or the like, was discussed threadbare and resolutions were passed about them. In these as also in many other matters, promoters of the *Amrita Bazar Patrika*, then a bi-lingual weekly, had already taken the lead. Hemanta Kumar Ghose, the elder brother of Shishir Kumar Ghose, founder-editor of the *Patrika*, toured the country, visited mofussil towns and prominent villages and urged them to start political associations. But to be properly useful, these mofussil associations badly needed cohesion. A correspondent from Dacca suggested in the *Patrika* as early as in 1870 the necessity of the foundation of a central organisation in Calcutta, like the British Indian Association. Shishir Kumar Ghose, as editor of the *Patrika*, was also writing strongly on the subject in his paper. He appealed to the authorities of the British Indian Association to come forward and take the lead. But the British Indian Association had already turned into a Zeminders' Association and its original character was considerably changed. Shishir Kumar Ghose

EARLIER MOVEMENTS

pleaded through his *Patrika* that the Association should be broad-based democratically. To get the middle-class people enrolled as its members, either its annual subscription should be reduced from Rs. 50 to Rs. 10 or 5, or at least a second-class membership should be opened on a monthly charge of annas eight. The Committee of the Association could not comply with this request, and the proposal naturally fell through.

By this time the vagaries of the State had come to a head. It has been already hinted that the British authorities in England and in India did not like that Indians would share with them responsible Government posts, such as the I.C.S. The success of Satyendra Nath Tagore in the Civil Service could have been tolerated. But when Surendra Nath Banerjea, Romesh Chunder Dutt, Beharilal Gupta of Bengal and Sripad Babaji Thakur of Bombay successfully competed in the Civil Service in spite of the impediments and troubles thrown in their way, the authorities were simply non-plussed. The virtual dismissal of Surendra Nath Banerjea from the I.C.S. cadre in 1874 is a sharp pointer to this deplorable attitude. Surendra Nath went to England to seek redress but failed. He tried to enrol himself as a barrister, but that also was refused. Baffled but not disheartened, he at last reached his home town Calcutta a year after in June 1875. The generous-hearted Vidyasagar, friend of Surendra Nath's father Dr. Durgacharan Banerjea, at once offered him the post of the professor of English literature in his Metropolitan College. This event as well as the arrival of Ananda Mohan Bose, the first Indian Wrangler, during the previous year, gave a new impetus to starting a central organisation in Calcutta already mooted by Shishir Kumar Ghose.

CHAPTER II

THE NEW PHASE : THE INDIAN LEAGUE

Calcutta being the seat of the Central Government, educated Bengalis learnt to develop an all-India outlook and had striven hard to safeguard the national rather than merely provincial interests. The British Indian Association looked after the interests of the whole of India. The centre of its activities being Calcutta, it was but natural that matters concerning Bengal got precedence, but this did not bind it to all-India issues. The Bombay Presidency Association or the Madras Branch Association, though established shortly after the British Indian Association of Calcutta, could not, however, at first look beyond the interest of their respective provinces. It was the British Indian Association which induced them to act conjointly because the interests of the people of all the Indian provinces under British rule were the same.

The Hindu Mela of the late sixties harped on the same theme. Really speaking, it was not a political body. But its contribution towards spreading the idea of nationality amongst the people of the different provinces in India was immense. The Hindu Mela was aptly called 'National Gathering'. It gave birth to a movement which was truly national in character and brought home to our mind for the first time that Indians, in spite of their differences in caste, creed and places of residence, constituted a nation and could meet on the same platform for the preservation and improvement of their culture, language, literature, science, arts, industries, manners, customs, and so on. The principal originator of this movement, Nabagopal Mitra, applied the epithet 'National' to all the institutions started under the auspices of the Hindu Mela—National Society, National School and National Gymnasium. National Songs were composed to give vent to our National' aspirations. Even the public stage in Bengal won the appellation of the 'National Theatre'.

II

The idea of nationalism, as distinct from sectionalism or provincialism, was already in the air in Bengal. The educated section of the people not only in the metropolis but also in the mofussil was imbued with it. The Ghose brothers, Hemanta and Shishir Kumar, preached through their *Amrita Bazar Patrika* this cult of new nationalism and tried

THE NEW PHASE : THE INDIAN LEAGUE

to give it a definite shape by starting a central political organisation in Calcutta. In June 1875 Ananda Mohan Bose started a Students' Association with the students of the Presidency College, of which he had been an illustrious alumnus. Its main object was to infuse into the minds of the younger generation patriotism and love of service. Ananda Mohan, as president of the Students' Association, invited his friend Surendra Nath Banerjea, now a Professor in the Metropolitan College, to speak to the students on their duties to their motherland. His lectures on Garibaldi, Mazzini, Young Italy, Sri Chaitanya of Bengal, and the Sikhs of the Panjab, opened the eyes of the youth and made them not only compare their own servitude with the liberation movement in other lands but also roused their admiration for the glorious annals of their own history. Bipin Chandra Pal, who was a youngman then, tells us that they were led to take secret vows of service and devotion to their motherland in various forms.

It has already been pointed out that there was a constant demand from the mofussli associations for a central organisation in Calcutta. The new enthusiasm roused by the soul-stirring speeches of Surendra Nath in the student community also needed proper guidance. In view of this the leaders started consultation for the establishment of a central political organisation. Ananda Mohan Bose took a leading part in this respect. His friend Shishir Kumar Ghose lent him powerful support through his paper. Monomohun Ghose, Shiva Nath Sastri and Surendra Nath Banerjea were also leading spirits in this movement. The naming of the institution was a problem which had to be faced. At last, the epithet "Indian" was chosen. The term 'Indian' is significant. This term included British 'India' and 'Indian India'. Both *Indias* were suffering humiliation at the hands of their common British ruler. The Association, they were going to start, would look after the interests of both the Indias. The miserable fate of the Gaikwar of Baroda had startled them into a wider and more national outlook.

III

It was however Shishir Kumar Ghose who took the lead in respect of taking concrete steps to start the association and circulated a prospectus for the purpose. *Sadharani*, a reputed Bengali weekly edited by Akshoy Chandra Sarkar, published the objects of this organisation, five in number, in its issue of 17th August 1875, with the remark that the editor of the

HISTORY OF THE INDIAN ASSOCIATION

Amrita Bazar Patrika was making efforts for the establishment of an association. The objects as quoted by the paper were as follows :

- “1. To ascertain and propagate the views of our people as to how we can progress politically and in other respects.
2. To discuss and adopt those means which we should consider proper for the good of our countrymen and for the spread of political education amongst them.
3. To devise and adopt legitimate means for safeguarding the interests of different classes.
4. To stimulate the sense of nationalism amongst the people.
5. To adopt means for the development of the economic resources of the country.”

Ananda Mohan Bose was one of the prime movers in conceiving a political association of the nature of this Indian League. But when the League was started, though he must have seen the prospectus being at the time in Calcutta, he did not take an initiative in starting it. In fact, when the league was actually established on 25th September 1875, he was away in East Bengal. Some local newspapers blamed Shishir Kumar. *Sadharani*, while noticing the inauguration of the Indian League, wrote :

“We love Ananda Mohan, but is Ananda Mohan our only asset in this big city of Calcutta? That Ananda Mohan will be all in all of this association is a matter of pride, no doubt, for him; but this will certainly show how fallen and humiliated we the Bengalis are.” (*Translated from Bengali*)

Shishir Kumar Ghose, the principal founder of the Indian League, wrote very candidly about this hurried inauguration of the League in his *Patrika* of 30th September, 1875 as follows :

“The Indian League :—This is the name of the Association organised here last Saturday (25th September)...This is the first instance of a political body formed by public announcement and a call upon the nation to attend it and mould it to their liking...Resolutions were framed and submitted and movers chosen after the meeting had assembled. The organisation was formed by a *coup de etat* as that was the only possible way of carrying

THE NEW PHASE : THE INDIAN LEAGUE

it successfully.. . The value of the membership is only Rupees 5 per year, it is open, if not to all, but to all who can appreciate the advantages of such unions.

“Something like a coup was necessary to select the zealous...from the wavering members. Bigger folks are soon afraid of the British Indian Association, for they believe that the British nation is violently opposed to all such movements and that the Government itself is but a tool in the hands of that body. In short the general belief amongst the bigger folks is, that all Rajaships, Bahadoorships and so forth are in the keeping of that body. . .

“Those who believed that the British Indian Association is opposed to the movement, ought to know the facts which we shall relate to them. About 3 years ago, it was proposed to the leading members of the British Indian Association to reduce their annual subscription which is Rupees fifty per annum, to 10 or 5. In two private meetings the matter was discussed, and the members came to the conclusion that it was not safe for the very existence of the Association to reduce the subscription. Let these two Associations vie with each other in their effort to do good to the country.”

IV

Though the League was hurriedly formed without consulting Ananda Mohan, he joined the League along with his friends. A strong executive committee was formed with thirty-eight members. Shambhu Chandra Mukherjee, the renowned editor of the *Mukherjee's Magazine*, and later editor of the weekly *Reis and Rayyat*, became its President and Kalimohan Das, a famous Vakil of the Calcutta High Court, its Secretary. Shishir Kumar himself remained rather in the background, by accepting the post of an Assistant Secretary, though, practically speaking, he was the guiding spirit behind the League. But the high-handed way in which the President conducted the business of the League, did not appeal to the democratic instincts of some prominent members like Durgamohan Das, Bhairab Chandra Banerjea, Annadaprasad Ray, Surendra Nath Banerjea, Norendra Nath Sen, Monomohun Ghose, Ananda Mohan Bose, Nabagopal Mitra and Manomohan Bose, and they resigned. The seceders, however, did not sit idle. They began to seriously consider forming a separate political body. As a result the 'Indian Association' was started.

HISTORY OF THE INDIAN ASSOCIATION

The inauguration of the Indian League was according to *The Englishman* 'the first marked sign of the awakening of the people on this side of India to political life'. Shambhu Chandra Mukherjee, the provisional Chariman of the Indian League, resigned in January 1876, in favour of the Rev. Dr. Krishna Mohan Banerjea, an erudite scholar and a staunch nationalist. He was highly respected by all. Within a few months from its start the League was able to rouse the people to various activities for the benefit of the country. The *Amrita Bazar Patrika* of February 3, 1876, then a bi-lingual paper, has left us an account of its work in Bengali during this short period. The *Patrika* wrote to the effect that the Indian League, though started only four months previously, had achieved much during its short existence. It had already started a movement for the introduction of elective system in the Calcutta Municipality. The League made arrangements for the establishment of a technical institution, so very urgently needed in those days. Its influence was being felt in other directions also.

V

During the first year of its existence the Indian League had to face formidable opposition from different quarters. The British Indian Association was all along hostile to the League. But its hostility came to a head when the League was making strenuous efforts for the introduction of the elective system in the Calcutta Municipality. The new Calcutta Municipal Bill prepared on this elective basis was passed by the Bengal Legislative Council under the presidency of Sir Richard Temple, the Lieutenant Governor, on 31st March, 1876. A Technical institution was established by the League named the 'Albert Temple of Science', after the Prince-Consort Albert, to commemorate the visit in that year of the Prince of Wales. The government of Sir Richard Temple made a handsome grant of Rs. 8,000/- for this institution by an order in April 1876. But the greatest and most enduring of all its achievements was the fact that the League succeeded in generating an all-round political consciousness in the people. Even the British Indian Association was roused to unusual activity on the municipal question. The unceasing efforts of Dr. Mahendra Lal Sircar took definite shape in the form of the 'Indian Association for the Cultivation of Science.' It was started on 29th July 1876. The establishment of the Albert Temple of Science by the League undoubtedly supplied the stimulus for this new venture. But the Indian Association, founded by the seceders of the Indian League, took the wind out of the sail of the latter. The aims and objects of the League

THE NEW PHASE : THE INDIAN LEAGUE

and the Association were the same, and it was expected that any differences that existed would disappear and the two would be merged. So great was the political ferment that even the Eurasians were trying to form themselves into a union. There can be no denying that the League had thrilled to life the dead bones of the Calcutta public.

VI

The League continued its work vigorously for some time more. But with the Indian Association in the field, there was no need of the Indian League. Finally it gave place to the new organisation and disappeared for good. Most of the stalwarts of the Indian League joined the Indian Association. Both the Rev. K. M. Banerjea, President of the League since January, 1876, and the Rev. Kali Churn Banerjea, the famous orator and educationist, espoused the cause of the Indian Association. Kali Churn served the Association as its President later. Motilal Ghose, younger brother of Shishir Kumar Ghose, and for many years editor of the *Patrika*, turned an active supporter of the Indian Association and was one of its Vice-Presidents for some years. Many years later, Surendra Nath Banerjea wrote of the League in his *A Nation in Making* (pp. 41-2): "The Indian League did useful work. Babu Shishir Kumar Ghose of the *Amrita Bazar Patrika*, Dr. Sambhoo Chunder Mookerjee of the *Reis and Rayyat*, and Babu Motilal Ghose were its moving spirits. It has ceased to exist and some of its leading members have joined the Indian Association."

CHAPTER III

THE INDIAN ASSOCIATION : THE STORY OF ITS FOUNDATION

The Indian Association was started by some seceders from the Indian League who had been seriously thinking of starting a new association on democratic principles. These included Monomohun Ghose, Ananda Mohan Bose, Shiva Nath Sastri, Dwarkanath Ganguli and Surendra Nath Banerjea. They often met at the residence of Monomohun and spent hours in discussing the subject. These discussions finally took shape. A public meeting was convened for the purpose. The Indian Association was started. The starting of the Association in Calcutta, the metropolis of India, was an important event—a landmark in the annals of our freedom struggle and, as such, attracted the attention of the rulers and the ruled alike.

The meeting which led to the inauguration of the Indian Association was held at 5-30 P.M. in the lower rooms of the Albert Hall, College Square, Calcutta, on 26th July 1876, with Shyama Churn Sharma-Sarkar, the veteran author of *Byabasiha-darpan* and the reputed Tagore Law Lecturer, in the Chair. There were between seven and eight hundred gentlemen present in the meeting. Maharaja Narendrakrishna and Kristo Das Pal, prominent figures of the British Indian Association, also graced the meeting. Surendra Nath Banerjea, the principal organiser of the meeting, in spite of the death of his only son that morning, attended it. Some opposition was apprehended against this new move from the supporters of the Indian League. He, therefore, came prepared to meet it. Surendra Nath's friend and colleague Ananda Mohan Bose and his life-long associate Dwarkanath Ganguli were beside him to give support. The proceedings too were, in spite of a great amount of heat, concluded with the inauguration of the new Association.

II

There were altogether three resolutions, placed for consideration before the meeting. The first resolution described the aims and objects of the Association. It was moved by the famous literary figure, Chandra Nath Bose, M.A., B.L. In the course of his speech Chandra Nath referred to the existing associations, such as, the British Indian Association,

THE INDIAN ASSOCIATION: THE STORY OF ITS FOUNDATION

the Bengal Social Science Association and the Indian League, and said that they had all been instituted to serve a particular purpose. The Association, which they were about to inaugurate, would embrace everything that would conduce to the well-being of their country and countrymen as a whole. It would never hesitate to agitate for the redress of grievances and wrongs. It would not over-ride the activities of others, but would be doing its duty in close co-operation with them peacefully and sympathetically.

Two prominent supporters of the Indian League, the Rev. Kali Churn Banerjea and Hemanta Kumar Ghose of the *Amrita Bazar Patrika*, were present in the meeting. Kali Churn rose up when Chandra Nath Bose had finished his speech, and spoke with some animation against the establishment of a new association while there was the Indian League to work for the same purpose. This led to a rather unpleasant incident only cursorily noticed by Surendra Nath in his *A Nation in Making* (p. 41). Surendra Nath, while replying to Kali Churn, said that the object of the Association was twofold, firstly to represent the people to Government, and secondly to assist in the formation of public opinion among the educated classes by the diffusion of information and the delivery of public lectures and by discussions on public topics.

III

Unfortunately the actual wording of the Aims and Objects Resolution has not come down to us. But Surendra Nath summed up the four-fold objects of the Association in his *A Nation in Making* (p. 42), viz., (1) The creation of a strong body of public opinion in the country; (2) the unification of the Indian races and peoples upon the basis of common political interests and aspirations; (3) the promotion of friendly feeling between Hindus and Muhammadans and lastly, (4) the inclusion of the masses in the great public movements of the day. These ideas took time to shape clearly, but there is no doubt of their being in the minds of the promoters.

The resolution was duly seconded by Nagendra Nath Chatterjee, the reputed author, and, later on, one of the leaders of the Sadharan Brahma Samaj. He read out a letter from Bankim Chandra Chatterjee, the great Bengali novelist and Editor of *Bangadarshan*, in which he expressed sympathy with the objects of the meeting ending with the following words :

HISTORY OF THE INDIAN ASSOCIATION

“At last, I hope, an association is going to be established which will be able to speak and move sufficiently on behalf of the Indian public”. (*Translated from Bengali*)

Sreenath Dutta, an expert in agricultural science, moved the second resolution. It was to the effect that the name of the Association should be ‘Indian Association’. The resolution was duly seconded by Shyama Charan Banerjee. The significance of the epithet ‘Indian’ has been well defined by Surendra Nath, in his *A Nation in Making* (p. 41):

“For the idea that was working in our minds was that the Association was to be the centre of an all-India Movement. For even then, the conception of a united India, derived from the inspiration of Mazzini, or, at any rate, of bringing all India upon the same common political platform, had taken firm possession in the minds of the Indian leaders in Bengal. We accordingly resolved to call the new political body the Indian Association.”

The third resolution, moved by Nabogopal Mitra and supported by Umesh Chandra Dutta, then Secretary to the Indian Reform Association, later a prominent member of the Sadharan Brahmo Samaj and Principal, City College, was regarding the formation of a strong executive committee of the Association with these gentlemen: Surendra Nath Banerjea, Nagendra Nath Chatterjee, Gurudas Banerjea, Shiva Nath Sastri, Dwarkanath Ganguli, Rajkrishna Mukherjee, Bamacharan Banerjee, Rameshwar Malia, Kshetra Chandra Gupta, Chandra Nath Bose, Monomohun Ghose, Sarada Charan Mitra, Umesh Chandra Dutta, Kali Nath Dutta, Nobo Gopal Mitra, Nilkamal Mittra (Allahabad), Rajnarain Bose, Surya Kumar Sarbadhikary, Kedar Nath Chaudhury, Prosad Das Mallik, Krishna Mohan Mallik, Bholanath Chandra, Aghore Nath Kumar, Sreenath Dutta, Jaygovinda Som, Ananda Mohan Bose, Secretary and Akshay Chandra Sarkar and Jogendra Nath Bidyadhusan, Asst. Secretaries.

IV

The formation of the Indian Association was important enough to be commented on by the newspapers of the time. *The Hindu Patriot* writes:

“The list of the Committee contains the names of some of our well-educated young countrymen, and if they conduct their operations

THE INDIAN ASSOCIATION : THE STORY OF ITS FOUNDATION

with judgment and moderation, they may both deserve and command success. If they be less a petitioning body, and more an agency for the education of the rising generation in political matters, and for the direction of their political thoughts and aspirations through right channels, they may prove useful co-operators of the existing Associations. They cannot have a better model than the East Indian Association, which generally invites thoughtful men to discuss important questions, publishes the discussions for general information, and thus helps in the moulding and maturing of public opinion on those questions, and petitions to Parliament or Her Majesty's Govt. on exceptional occasions."

Surendra Nath also writes :

"The Indian Association supplied a real need. It soon focussed the public spirit of the middle class and became the centre of the leading representatives of the educated community of Bengal."
(*A Nation in Making*, p. 42)

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CHAPTER IV

THE YEAR OF PROMISE

The executive committee of the Indian Association has representatives of all sections of the people. The members included advocates of ryot's interests, zaminders, lawyers, litterateurs, journalists, medical men, and gentlemen belonging to the education department. Mr. Monomohun Ghose, Bar-at Law, was appointed Chairman of the Committee. In the list of members of the Committee, given in the Appendix of the first year's *Report*, some important additions are found in the persons of Raja Syama Sankar Roy Bahadur, the Hon'ble Nawab Mir Mohamed Ali, Shyama Churn Sircar, Gopal Lal Mitra, Pleader, High Court, and Krishna Behari Sen, Editor, *The Indian Mirror*. The Committee drew up a body of rules for the guidance of the Association. In Rule No. 2, the objects of the Association are stated as follows :

“The Association shall seek to represent the people to help in the formation of a healthy public opinion on all questions of importance and to promote by every legitimate means, the political, intellectual and material advancement of the people”.

It is crystal clear from these lines that the Indian Association aimed at all-round development of the country, and, as such, it was more national than ‘political’. The Association was meant to represent every class and section of the people, including artisans and agriculturists. Rule No. 4 tells us :

“Every member shall be required to pay a subscription of not less than five Rupees a year, provided that in the case of Artisans, Munduls and other heads of villages and bonafide tillers of the soil, the minimum rate of subscription be reduced to one Rupee a year.”

II

Almost from the start the Indian Association engaged itself in activities of far-reaching consequences. The first subject of public importance to which the Association directed its attention, was the removal of Railway passengers' grievances. It convened a public meeting at the Albert Hall on 16th September 1876 with Maharaja

THE YEAR OF PROMISE

Narendra Krishna in the chair. Besides the prominent members of the Committee, the meeting was attended by such influential persons as Kristo Das Pal, Keshub Chunder Sen, Protap Chunder Mazumdar, and Raja Harendra Krishna. The meeting was a great success. A permanent influential Committee was formed to deal with questions relating to the grievances of Railway passengers.

The Association also turned its attention to the Dramatic Performances Bill which had given rise to great excitement early in 1876. The Secretary writes in his *Report* : "It was felt that something should be done in the matter. We accordingly addressed a communication to the Viceregal Council praying that the passage of the Bill might be deferred for a week, so that the public might have an opportunity of expressing their views on the subject more emphatically than they had yet been able to do. But the Government pressed on the measure which soon became law. It is, however, a matter of satisfaction that the present Lieutenant Governor (Sir Ashley Eden) has decided not to take any hasty action, in enforcing the provisions of this law."

Sir Richard Temple, the then Lieutenant Governor of Bengal, proposed the introduction of some change in the Rent Law of the country in a minute dated 18th April, 1876. The principles laid down in the minute would deeply affect the interests of the agriculturists. The Association appointed a sub-committee to consider the minute carefully and thoroughly with Chandra Nath Bose as its Secretary. The sub-committee held several meetings and gave the subject the most careful consideration. A questionnaire was prepared on the subject and issued to the Branch and Affiliated Associations. Several replies were also received. Subsequently the measure was practically abandoned.

III

The most important event of the year was the reduction of the maximum limit of age for the open competitive Civil Service examination from 21 to 19 years by an order of the Secretary of State on 24th February, 1876. This would cut at the root of any chance of Indians to compete for the Indian Civil Service. The Indian Association at once took up this matter for consideration. In fact, the first year of its existence was mainly occupied with this question. On the 24th March 1877, the Association organised a public meeting at the Albert Hall under the presidency of Maharaja

HISTORY OF THE INDIAN ASSOCIATION

Narendra Krishna. It was a very memorable meeting not only in the annals of the Indian Association, but in the history of the national movement in India. Because for the first time a public protest was offered to a British Legislative Measure on an all-India basis. Leaders of different provinces sent letters and telegrams in support of the objects of the meeting organised by the Association. The meeting was attended by Keshub Chunder Sen, the great Brahma leader, Dr. Mahendra Lal Sircar, the Scientist, Dr. Rajendra Lala Mitra, the antiquarian and Kristo Das Pal, the renowned publicman, editor of *The Hindoo Patriot* and Secretary to the British Indian Association. It was resolved in the meeting to petition Parliament for raising the maximum limit of age to 22 years and holding the examination for Indian candidates simultaneously in some centre or centres in India. The resolutions passed in the meeting are given here *seriatim*:

1. That this meeting is of opinion that in order adequately to redeem the gracious pledge solemnly and deliberately given to the people of India by our beloved Sovereign, it is essential that some facilities for admission to the covenanted Civil Service of India should be practically afforded to Her Majesty's Indian subjects as are enjoyed by the natives of the United Kingdom; and that this meeting desires to record its firm but respectful protest against the assumption that differences of race and nationality call for the adoption of different tests of merit and qualification in the case of English and Indian candidates for the Civil Service of India.

2. That this meeting contemplates with deep regret the reduction of the maximum limit of age for candidates for the Indian Civil Service Competition from 21 to 19 years, inasmuch as this change in the limit of age is calculated to aggravate the existing evils of cramming to lead to the admission of men of inferior training and capacity, to lower the efficiency of the service and practically to exclude natives of India from the open competitive examination.

3. That while fully appreciating the object of Her Majesty's Government to secure men of good education and culture for the Civil Service, this meeting is of opinion that that object would be best accomplished by raising the maximum limit of age to 22 years as was recommended by Lord Northbrooke, the then Governor-

THE YEAR OF PROMISE

General of India, and other eminent authorities ; and this meeting desires to record its conviction that the higher limit of age should be adopted in the interests of the public service, no less than of Indian candidates for the covenanted appointment.

4. That this meeting is of opinion that in order to give effect to the gracious intentions of the Crown and Parliament, to satisfy the just aspirations and recognised claims of the people of India, and to facilitate their admission into the Civil Service of their own country, it is necessary that simultaneously with the open competition in London, similar examinations should be held in some centre or centres in India, where a certain definite proportion of appointment may be competed for, year after year.

5. That the following gentlemen be appointed to form a committee for the purpose of drawing up and forwarding a memorial to Parliament, embodying the substance of the resolutions adopted at this meeting :

1. The Hon'ble Maharaja Narendra Krishna Bahadur
2. Babu Rajendra Lala Mitra, LL.D.
3. The Hon'ble Kristo Das Pal
4. The Hon'ble Nawab Meer Mahammed Ali
5. Baboo Keshub Chunder Sen
6. Dr. Mahendra Lal Sircar, M.D.
7. M. Ghosh, Esq., Barrister-at-Law
8. Babu Chunder Nath Bose, M.A., B.L.
9. Babu Gurudas Banerjee, D.L.
10. A. M. Bose, Esq., Barrister-at-Law, Secretary"

The Association also resolved in this meeting to organise a national movement in connection with the Civil Service question. Surendra Nath Banerjea was appointed Special Delegate and deputed to carry on the work of agitation in Northern India. Surendra Nath was remarkably successful in his mission. He gave an illuminating account of this mission to the Secretary of the Association which has been incorporated in its first Report. He has also given a summary of this memorable tour in his *A Nation in Making* (pp. 44-50). As this mission was the first successful attempt of its kind at uniting India on a political basis, a

HISTORY OF THE INDIAN ASSOCIATION

separate chapter will be devoted to it. Let us only quote the general observations of the Secretary on the subject :

“The result of this first attempt, to unite in a common bond of sympathy and common action the different peoples of India, is full of hopeful augury for the future. Independently of the direct results which may be expected to follow from such a unanimous outburst of national sentiment on this question of vital interest to the people of India, it is impossible to exaggerate the importance of the indirect advantages of such a movement in evoking the sentiment of a common and united nationality.”

IV

The Association directed its attention to some other questions, the abolition of the Delhi College and the Madras Famine. The Delhi College was half a century old. By a governmental fiat, it was abolished and this created a profound sensation in Bengal. The Association consulted local leaders as to the possibility of establishing an independent college. It promised all necessary help if they came forward to supply the want created by the action of the Government.

The Madras famine had early engaged the attention of the Association. At a special meeting of its Committee, held on 29th August 1877, the following resolution was unanimously passed : “That the Committee of the Indian Association, while it does not deem it expedient under the present circumstances to hold a public meeting for the relief of the famine-stricken sufferers of Madras, nevertheless, thinks it necessary at the same time to make private efforts to collect subscriptions, in order to alleviate the distress which now so largely prevails in Madras.” This resolution was forwarded to the branch Associations. Should no better means of forwarding and distributing the subscription thus raised, present itself, it was proposed to send to Madras as the bearers of this help, some gentlemen who would be able personally to convey to the suffering millions of Southern India, Bengal’s deep and heart-felt sympathy with them in their distress.

The Association was not only doing good work but was getting organisationally strong. From the first annual report, we find that the Asso-

THE YEAR OF PROMISE

ciation which had started with a membership of 70, had now the membership of 200. Many of these members were gentlemen occupying high positions in various parts of India. In the very first year of its existence, the Indian Association affiliated a number of Associations in different parts of the country united to it in sympathy, and having a common scope of action. These Branch Associations were as follows :

1. The Indian Association of Lahore
2. The Agra Association
3. The Indian Association of Cawnpore
4. The Indian Association of Allahabad
5. The Bogra Association
6. The Mymensingh Association
7. The Indian Association of Meherpore
8. The Indian Association of Bhazanghata
9. The Contai Association
10. The Senhatty Association

It should be noted here that Nilcomal Mitra of Allahabad was taking much interest in the work of the Association. His proposal for raising funds for the purpose of sending young men to Europe, to train them in the arts and sciences of the West, was considered by the Committee which promised him every support in their power in furtherance of the scheme. A scheme of Representative Government was also mooted, but postponed owing to other considerations.

CHAPTER V

THE CIVIL SERVICE QUESTION

In the Town Hall meeting held under the auspices of the Indian Association, Surendra Nath Banerjea had been appointed Special Delegate in charge of organising a national movement throughout Northern India in connection with the Civil Service question. The sub-committee appointed at that meeting finished their labours within the course of about six weeks, and an exhaustive memorial was drawn up on the subject. Surendra Nath lost no time in setting out for a tour with the Civil Service memorial. This was the second all-India tour undertaken. Keshub Chunder Sen, the great Brahma leader, had undertaken on an all-India mission about a decade before, visiting both northern and southern India. Keshub had stressed the fundamental spiritual unity of India and his lectures had a profound impression creating a sense of fellowship. That India could unite in secular and political matters was proved by the effect created by Surendra Nath's tour. For the first time parochial and provincial agitation on a political question was replaced by an all-India agitation. One of Surendra Nath's tours in Northern India was characterised by Sir Henry Cotton, the eminent Civilian, and later President of the Indian National Congress, in his *New India* (p. as the 16) 'triumphal progress'. This was no exaggeration at all. Everywhere Surendra Nath went, he was received with kindness and sympathy. Nay, he was regarded as a messenger of new hope and courage. The mission infused a sense of unity and nationality in the minds of the people at large.

II

Surendra Nath started on his mission on the 26th of May 1877, accompanied by Nagendra Nath Chatterjee, a prominent member of the Committee of the Indian Association. He first went to Agra and stayed there for two or three days to get the Civil Service Memorial, extending over twelve pages, translated into Urdu. The Urdu translation of the memorial being ready, Surendra Nath started for Lahore. It had been arranged previously that the first meeting on the Civil Service question was to be held at Lahore and others at the important places in Northern India on his way down. Wherever Surendra Nath went, he followed the

THE CIVIL SERVICE QUESTION

usual procedure of previously meeting the distinguished persons of the place and explaining to them the importance of the Civil Service question. In everyone of the cities and towns he visited, he found enough sympathy, zeal and enthusiasm in the people over there. There was no dearth of it at Lahore also. Surendra Nath reached the place on 2nd June. He called on leading men of the city including Dewan Manphal, C.S.I., Raja Hurban Singh, Khan Bahadur Bakat Ali Khan, Mr. Surajbal, Bar-at-Law, and Babu Chandra Mohan Moitra. Of his activities at Lahore Surendra Nath writes as follows :

“Within four days of my being at Lahore, a large and influential meeting was held on the Civil Service question. I delivered a public address on Sunday, the 3rd of June, at the Siksa Sabha Hall and the Civil Service meeting was held at the same place, on the following day. There were upwards of 500 people present, including the elite of the native community of Lahore. The resolutions of the Town Hall meeting were in substance adopted, and a Committee was appointed to obtain signatures to the Civil Service Memorial. The utmost enthusiasm prevailed, and about 400 gentlemen put down their names to the memorial, on the spot. The Punjabis are a most hopeful people. There is in them an amount of zeal, enthusiasm and energy, which under proper guidance, may make them the most advanced of the Indian races. On the 6th of June, the day after the Civil Service meeting, another meeting was convened again at the Siksa Sabha Hall, with the view of establishing an Indian Association at Lahore. There were about 400 gentlemen present, including some of the leading members of the Anjuman-i-Punjab, who, it ought to be mentioned to their credit, assisted rather than discouraged the projectors, in their efforts to establish such an Association. The Association was established precisely on the same principles as the Calcutta Association; and it was declared that it was to act in concert with the Central Association. Mr. Surajbal and Pundit Ram Narain, two gentlemen who had taken very great interest in the establishment of the Association, were appointed Secretaries. On the following day, the 7th of June, the first Committee meeting of the new Association was held, in order to make rules and frame a constitution. Our rules were adopted with slight alterations and modifications.”

HISTORY OF THE INDIAN ASSOCIATION

From Lahore Surendra Nath started for Amritsar on the morning of the 8th June. There his distinguished friend, Sardar Dayal Singh Majhi-thia, the philanthropist and later founder of the *Tribune*, had already arranged with the leading Sirdars and gentlemen of the town to hold a public meeting in connection with the Civil Service matter. In the words of Surendra Nath :

“The meeting took place indeed on the very afternoon of the day, that I arrived at Amritsar. It was very largely and influentially attended. Almost all the Sirdars of Amritsar were present, and the Town Hall, where the meeting was held, was densely crowded. The resolutions of the Calcutta Meeting were adopted, and a committee was appointed to obtain signatures to the memorial. I cannot conclude my account of the proceedings at Amritsar, without expressing my warm acknowledgments to Sirdar Dayal Singh, who took the very greatest interest in the movement, and whose great influence and distinguished position among the Punjab Sirdars, made the meeting at Amritsar, so eminently successful.”

III

Surendra Nath felt indisposed and had to stay at Amritsar for a week. As soon as he was able, he set out for Meerut. In order to save time he had already sent Nagendra Nath Chatterjee to make necessary arrangements about holding a Civil Service meeting. Surendra Nath reached Meerut on the 15th June. The Civil Service meeting was held on the following morning. There was a good attendance. The Nawab of Sirdhana presided, and some good speeches were made in support of the cause which Surendra Nath represented.

From Meerut he started for Delhi the same evening and reached there within a few hours. The educated public of Delhi were very much upset for the abolition of the Delhi College. Surendra Nath found them very much dispirited and sad. His friend and host Mr. Madan Gopal, M.A., however, succeeded in arranging a public meeting with the help of the local leaders. The sympathy of the people over the subject of the Civil Service was spontaneous as can be seen from the following :

“The Civil Service meeting was held on Monday, the 18th of June, at the Delhi Institute. There was a good attendance, the

THE CIVIL SERVICE QUESTION

audience numbering about 300 people. The resolutions of the Calcutta Meeting were unanimously adopted. The proceedings were, of course, carried on in Urdu. A great many Urdu Memorials had been distributed beforehand. Those present were, therefore, in part at least, familiar with the objects and the scope of the meeting; and they seemed to take an intelligent interest in the proceedings. I ought to add that these Urdu Memorials were highly useful to me. Wherever I went I freely distributed them. The native public were thus made familiar with the history of the Civil Service, the changes that had been introduced, the scope of our petition, and the arguments by which that petition was supported. Public feeling and public sympathy were thus enlisted on behalf of our cause. The Vernacular Press of the North-Western Provinces greatly aided us, by publishing the petition or the substance of it, in their columns."

IV

Surendra Nath left Delhi on the 19th of June and reached Aligarh the same day. He called on the celebrated Sir Syed Ahmed Khan, the founder of the Aligarh Anglo-Mahomedan College. He received him very cordially. He had already read the Civil Service memorial in an Urdu paper. Surendra Nath and Syed Ahamed talked over the matter, and it was arranged that the meeting should be convened with as little delay as possible. Surendra Nath writes :

"The worthy Syed took up the matter with a zeal and enthusiasm, which were truly remarkable in a man of his age. I called on him on the following morning according to engagement, when he drafted out the resolutions to be moved, and sent round a notice convening a public meeting to take place on the following day, the 21st of June. The meeting was held at the Allygurh Institute, at the appointed time. Syed Ahmed Khan was in the chair. . . the meeting was certainly a success and the credit of it belongs to Syed Ahmed Khan Bahadur, whose patriotism is so conspicuous, and who is deservedly held in high estimation by the people of Allygurh. My thanks are also due to Babu Totaram and Babu Jogendra Nath Chatterjee for the help and assistance they rendered, in convening the meeting. Allygurh contains a large Mahomedan population, and the meeting, as might be expected, was largely attended by Mahomedan gentlemen."

HISTORY OF THE INDIAN ASSOCIATION

Agra was the next place where Surendra Nath went. Arrangements had already been made there for a Civil Service meeting. It came off on 23rd June. Surendra Nath says : "This was the largest meeting that had been held in Agra for some time, and it was attended by the elite of the Indian community. The usual resolutions were adopted. Great enthusiasm prevailed ; and those who were present, all seemed to feel that they had met together, on a solemn and important occasion." Surendra Nath's summing up of his impressions of his tour is significant :

"There is indeed life in Northern India. There is a hidden but deep under-current of political feeling, in the people of the Punjab and the North-Western Provinces. They may appear apathetic, with but little hope of having their grievances redressed, or of seeing any improvement in the administration of the country. But they are not insensible to the interests of their fatherland. They are not deaf to the calls of patriotism; and above all, they have loving and sympathetic hearts, and are ever willing to extend the hand of brotherhood to their countrymen of the other presidencies. Wherever I went, I was treated like a brother, and one entitled to sympathy. My relations with them were of the most cordial character ; and my intercourse with Hindustani gentlemen was but the interchange of ideas and feelings between countrymen, with kindred hopes, sentiments and aspirations I never noticed the faintest spark of jealousy, nor indeed any feeling of uneasiness, in our having taken the initiative, in this great national cause. For me and our cause there was nothing but sympathy ; and, perhaps there was even gratitude for the efforts of our Association. It is my most earnest hope and desire, that the intercourse between the people of Bengal and the people of the Punjab and the North-Western Provinces, and indeed the people of the other Presidencies in India, should go on increasing, and that we should know one another much more intimately, than is the case at present. The surest and the most stable hope of an Indian regeneration, must be founded upon this increasing intercourse, upon the augmented sympathy which is sure to follow, and the steadfast desire to make united efforts in all questions of national importance."

V

Surendra Nath arrived at Cawnpore on Sunday the 24th of June. As the Cawnpore meeting was arranged for Saturday following, he left for

THE CIVIL SERVICE QUESTION

Lucknow. There was the utmost sympathy for the cause. The meeting was to be held on the 29th of June. Raja Ameer Hossain Khan, Vice-President of the Talukdar's Association, and Monshi Newal Kissen, the Editor of *Oude Akbar* and one of the leaders of Lucknow, expressed heartfelt sympathy for the cause. Of his activities at Lucknow Surendra Nath writes :

“There was the utmost sympathy for our cause. On Thursday the 28th of June, I delivered an address at the Kaiser-Bag Baradwari. It was resolved at that meeting, on the motion of my friend, Pundit Sreekissen, to appoint a committee (consisting of certain gentlemen named) to amalgamate the Raza-i-am with the Jalsa Taji, and unite them under the name of the Indian Association of Lucknow. I learn from the information that has reached me, that steps are being taken to bring about this desirable result. The Civil Service meeting was held on the 29th of June, at the Kaiser-Bag Baradwari. The Hall was densely crowded, and the meeting was attended by all that represented the wealth, rank and intellect of native society at Lucknow. There were nawabs, talukdars, lawyers and professors of learning. Raja Ameer Hossain Khan Bahadur presided. In point of number the Lucknow meeting was probably the largest that was held in the North-Western Provinces and the Punjab.

“Contrary to my usual practice, I spoke at the Lucknow meeting because I felt more deeply perhaps than I ever did before, in connection with any other public meeting, that it was necessary to explain in clear and emphatic terms the scope and object of the Civil Service movement, and to rouse more thoroughly than had probably yet been done, the public feeling of the people of Lucknow, on this great and momentous question.

“It is scarcely necessary to add, that the resolutions of the Calcutta meeting were adopted ; and a most influential local Committee was appointed to obtain signatures to the Memorial.”

Surendra Nath went to Cawnpore on the 30th of June. The Civil Service meeting was held on the same day. It was due to the efforts of the Indian Association of Cawnpore, a branch of the Calcutta Association, that the meeting was so very successful. According to Surendra Nath,

HISTORY OF THE INDIAN ASSOCIATION

the Association was working in a creditable manner, and showed great energy and activity.

VI

The Special Delegate left for Allahabad on the 1st of July. During his stay there the Indian Association of Allahabad was formed as a branch of the Calcutta Association. About the Civil Service meeting there let us hear Surendra Nath :

“The Civil Service meeting was held, as appointed, on Friday, the 6th of July, at the Railway Theatre. The Railway Theatre is the largest hall they have at Allahabad; and the place was densely crowded. The chair was occupied by Moonshi Hanuman Pershad, the leader of the Allahabad Bar. The most interesting feature, connected with the Allahabad meeting, was the brilliant speeches in Urdu which it was pleasure to listen to, with admiration. Mr. Syed Mahmoud, Barrister-at-Law, and a son of the celebrated Syed Ahmed Khan, opened the proceedings by explaining the object of the meeting in a speech, remarkable for its temper, good sense and the clearness with which the arguments were arranged. Then came Pundit Ajodyanath, who moved the first resolution. The Pundit poured forth a torrent of eloquence, which carried the entire audience with him.”

“The only other speech, I propose noticing in this place, is that of Pundit Bishwambhar Nath, a most distinguished member of the Allahabad Bar. This gentleman pointed out, in an eloquent and humorous speech, the desirability of holding the Open Competitive Examination in India, for the benefit of Indian candidates. The Allahabad meeting was indeed a great success, whether we consider the large gathering that was assembled, the enthusiasm that prevailed, and the brilliant speeches that were made.”

Benares was the next city which Surendra Nath visited. He reached there on 7th July. As usual, he called on the local leaders, Aiswarya Narain Sinha and Babu Hurrish Chunder, the most public spirited and influential residents of Benares. Hurrish Chunder was the greatest Hindi author of the age and won the title of “Bharatendu” from his beloved countrymen. These two gentlemen proceeded in a most business-like manner in making arrangements of the meeting. The meeting took

THE CIVIL SERVICE QUESTION

place at the scheduled time, and it was a grand success due to the untiring exertions of Aiswarya Narain and Hurrish Chunder. An influential local Committee was appointed to obtain signatures to the Civil Service Memorial.

VII

Surendra Nath left Benares for Calcutta on the 11th of July. Though deferred for a time, the Civil Service meeting at Bankipore, Patna, was arranged to be held on 29th July under influential auspices. Surendra Nath went to Bankipore and was present in the meeting. The meeting took place on the appointed day, and a Committee was formed to circulate the memorial and obtain signatures. Surendra Nath left Bankipore on the 30th of July and reached Calcutta the next morning. Thus ended the memorable mission with which he was entrusted by the Indian Association. The undermentioned remarks of Surendra Nath show that the agitation over the Civil Service question was indeed the first claim put forward by Indians as to the right of Indians to govern themselves and it was the proud privilege of Bengal and the Indian Association to give the lead in the matter. In the words of Surendra Nath :

“The Civil Service question is indeed a national question. There is everywhere a strong feeling connected with it. Who does not wish that his own countrymen should rule over him? Who does not feel the exclusion of his race, of his kith and kin, from the most responsible offices under Government? What would be the feelings of Englishmen, if a handful of Prussians ruled over them, excluding them from the Cabinet, excluding them from Parliament, excluding them from the army and the navy, excluding them from the control of the departments under government. Human nature is everywhere the same. Centuries of oppression may have cowed down our spirits but what Indian is there who while holding silent communion with himself, does not condemn from the bottom of his heart, a system of administration which limits the ambition of his countrymen to the rank of Deputy Magistrates and Subordinate Judges? Not long ago, the cry was raised, that the people of this country would prefer to have their cases tried and their disputes settled by Englishmen, rather than by native Indians. I trust the unanimous response which has been made to our appeal, by the people of the North-Western Provinces and Punjab, has given the lie to a

HISTORY OF THE INDIAN ASSOCIATION

statement, so improbable in itself and so utterly unsupported by facts.”

Surendra Nath had already urged the leaders of the Indian Association to send some representative to England with the Civil Service Memorial to carry on agitation there. Because he thought, ‘If Englishmen in England know only half the facts connected with the Government of India, if English public opinion could be brought to bear upon the measures of our Government, I feel certain that a great change for the better would be effected in the administration of India.’ But where to get sufficient funds? The Association sent Asutosh Biswas, M.A., B.L., to Northern India in October 1877 for the purpose. As a representative of the Association, Dwarka Nath Ganguli toured Bhagalpur, Monghyr, Berhampore (Bengal) and some other places to popularise the ideals of the Association and collect funds.

VIII

The success of the Northern India mission emboldened Surendra Nath to propose to the Association that similar tours should be conducted in Southern India (Bombay and Madras). The Committee lost no time in giving their consent to the proposal. Surendra Nath started for Bombay in November 1877* on the same mission. His mission in Bombay and Madras was no less successful than that in Northern India. Let us quote the relevant portion about these tours from his *A Nation in Making* (pp. 49-50) :

“The Bombay leaders had already been informed of my mission and they received me with kindness and cordiality. Mr. Vishanarain Mandalik, Mr. Kashinath Tremback Telang, and Mr. (afterward Sir) Pherozshah Mehta were the leaders of Bombay public opinion. . . A public meeting was held in Bombay, and the Civil Service Resolution and Memorial were in substance adopted. I then proceeded to Surat, and Ahmedabad, the capital of Gujrat. Civil Service meetings were held and the Calcutta Resolutions were adopted in both the places. I then returned to Bombay and from Bombay I proceeded to Poona, where I was the guest of the late Mr. Ranade.. .

*Not in the winter of 1878, as given in *A Nation in Making*, in p. 49

THE CIVIL SERVICE QUESTION

“From Poona, where a meeting was held and our Resolutions were adopted, I proceeded to Madras, where I became the guest of Dr. Dhanaketu Raja. I called on the Madras leaders including Mr. Chensal Row, the Hon'ble Humayun Jat Bahadur and others and I urged them to hold a public meeting to discuss the Civil Service questions. For some reason or other a meeting could not be held, and we had a conference of leading men at Pacheappa's Hall at which our Memorial and resolutions were adopted.”

CHAPTER VI

REACTIONARY MEASURES OF THE GOVERNMENT AND THE PUBLIC PROTEST

Through the activities of Surendra Nath Banerjea and other members, the Indian Association was able to rouse the educated people of both Northern and Southern India to a sense of nationality. The Civil Service question was a common problem to all, and its solution in India's favour would benefit every Indian, irrespective of caste, creed or place of residence. Inspired with the idea of common fellowship, leaders of the Poona Sarvajanik Sabha paid a return visit to Calcutta in early January 1878. A public reception was given to them at a meeting held in the Town Hall on 9th January on behalf of the Indian Association. Sardar Dyal Singh Majhithia, the progressive Sikh leader of Amritsar and later, founder of *The Tribune*, paid a visit to Calcutta. The Association also organised a meeting in his honour in the Garden House of late Ramaprasad Roy on Feb. 16, 1878. It was due to the efforts of the Association that the Press Association was formed, and a conference of Indian Pressmen including the mofussil Press, took place on 17th January of this year. The conference discussed the problems that faced the newspapers under Indian management.

The Conference was held when the Government was threatening to muzzle the Vernacular Press. The leaders of the Indian Association had suspicions as to the governmental move, but they could not realise that the Government would strike so soon making a nefarious distinction between the English and the Vernacular Press. Frightened by the success of the Civil Service agitation, a full-fledged reactionary Government was in action. The Vernacular Press Act was the beginning of a series of reactionary laws, such as, the License Act, the Arms Act and so on, enacted during the year. These laws were both mischievous and discriminatory. The Arms Act aimed at the wholesale emasculation of the Indians. The real import of the Act has been very well described in these lines : "Like the Vernacular Press Act, the Arms Act was also a discriminating measure. Not only the British subjects in India but the subjects of every foreign State temporarily or permanently residing in India were exempted from the operation of this Act. The Hottentot and the Zulu could carry arms while walking along the streets of Calcutta or Bombay, but the native Indian subject of the British Government could not do so."*

* *Memories of my Life and Times*, Vol. I. By Bepin Chandra Pal, 1932. P. 294.

HISTORY OF THE INDIAN ASSOCIATION

II

The Indian Association carried on agitation against these Acts and organised public meetings to voice popular sentiments against them. But its activities were more pronounced and persistent so far as the Vernacular Press Act was concerned. This Act was directed solely against the Vernacular Newspapers in India in general and those in Bengal in particular. The local Government had tried actively from the time of Sir George Campbell, the Lieutenant-Governor of Bengal for 1870-74, to muzzle the Bengali Press. But the higher authorities intervened and their efforts proved abortive. The views expressed in the Bengali newspapers on Governmental measures and actions became more critical during the late seventies. The Government made one hundred and fifty extracts from various newspapers, such as *Sadharani*, *Somprakash*, *Amrita Bazar Patrika*, *Sahachar*, *Dacca Prakash*, *Hindu Hitaishini* (Dacca), *Bharat Mihir* (Mymensingh), to show that the Vernacular Press was 'disloyal'. Lieutenant-Governor Sir Ashley Eden's attempts behind the screen to control the Bengali Press, especially the *Amrita Bazar Patrika*, an Anglo-Bengali weekly, are too well known to be repeated here. But all efforts having proved futile, the Supreme Council of India under the presidency of the Viceroy and Governor-General Lord Lytton, passed in one sitting on 14th March, 1878, the Vernacular Press Act as an 'emergency measure'. The Act gave the executive the sole power of stifling the Press. Some of its sections were so drastic that any press publishing any newspaper, pamphlet or book, deemed to be seditious and to excite class-hatred, could be at once sealed or auctioned off. Newspapers were asked either to deposit a certain amount to the Government or to produce proofs of the printing matter in all cases to the censor before being published. If anything published was deemed seditious, the editor was liable to forfeit the deposit and to be punished with fine or six months' imprisonment or both. Thus the Act gave the executive all the powers of a witness, an advocate, a prosecutor and a judge !

Not only this, the officials tried to circulate here and abroad that the Indians were disaffected and disloyal. This served to deter some of the leading persons, societies and associations from joining the agitation against this Act. Maharaja Jotindra Mohan Tagore,

REACTIONARY MEASURES AND PUBLIC PROTEST

far from raising a voice of protest against the measure in the Supreme Council, lent his weighty support to it. Maharaja Jotindra Mohan was the most influential leader of the British Indian Association, and his support to the measure necessarily kept the Association aloof from the endeavours of the Indian Association. When the latter asked the Sheriff to convene a public meeting on behalf of the citizens of Calcutta to voice their protest against the Act, he refused. Even many friends of Surendra Nath Banerjea and Ananda Mohan Bose, as well as an influential section of the Calcutta Bar requested them to stop arranging any public protest in the face of such a stiff official attitude specially at a time when the relationship between England and Russia was so strained, verging on immediate hostility.

III

But the leaders of the Indian Association were underterred by threats and requests. They could not allow an occasion to pass which would enable them to rouse the people to a sense of nationality. The Committee of the Association met on 18th March 1878, just four days after the passage of the Vernacular Press Act, and resolved to draw up a petition to Parliament and get it approved at a public meeting to be held soon in Calcutta. They solicited support from the leading political associations and persons all over the country, which most of them gave readily. Armed with this countrywide support and also finding that even in Great Britain criticism of this 'unlawful and unwarranted measure' was gaining ground, the Indian Association convened a public meeting. The Rev. K. M. Banerjea, who had accepted the presidentship of the Association since January, 1878, presided over the public meeting held in the Town Hall, Calcutta, on 17th April 1878. Communications were received from far and near in support of its objects. Members of the British Indian Association as well as of the Calcutta Bar were conspicuous by their absence, but otherwise the meeting was representative of all sections of educated Indians and was attended by five thousand men which was extremely unusual in those days. The success of the meeting shows that the leadership of the people was rapidly passing from the hands of the upper ten to the educated middle-class represented by the Indian Association. The meeting passed the following resolutions unanimously :

• "Resolution—1. That of the manifold blessings which have been conferred by the English nation and the English Government on the

HISTORY OF THE INDIAN ASSOCIATION

people of this country, they have esteemed the freedom of the Press as one of the greatest, as it has been of immeasurable service in helping the cause of their intellectual, moral and political progress. This meeting therefore deeply deploras the withdrawal of this inestimable boon, so far as a most important section of the Press is concerned, by the passing of the Vernacular Press Act, and desires to place on record its deliberate opinion, that the Act is calculated to restrain the legitimate freedom of discussion which the Vernacular Press had up to this time enjoyed by shutting up the natural outlet of popular opinion and feeling, to produce the very evils of popular discontent and dissatisfaction which it is intended to prevent, to arrest the development of Oriental literature and to deal a serious blow to the cause of native progress and of good Government of India.

“Resolution—II. That having regard to the devoted loyalty and attachment of the people of India to the British Crown, to which willing and ungrudging testimony has from time to time been borne by many high and distinguished authorities both here and in England to the peace and contentment that reign throughout the country, this meeting desires to record its emphatic opinion that a repressive and retrograde measure like the Vernacular Press Act is unnecessary and uncalled for and is opposed to the interests of justice as it altogether dispenses with the usual safeguards of judicial investigation, and substitutes, in their place, the discretionary authority of executive officers.

“Resolution—III. That this meeting deeply regrets the undue and unnecessary haste with which the measure was carried through the Supreme Council, the Bill having been introduced and become law at one and the same sitting, the public having been thereby denied the opportunity of discussing provisions of a law, affecting so vitally the interests of the native populations in India.

“Resolution—IV. That the following gentlemen form themselves into a committee with power to add to their number, with a view to frame a memorial, based upon the resolutions which have just been adopted, for presentation to the House of Commons, to obtain signatures thereto, and to take such other steps as may be deemed necessary for transmitting it to Parliament, and also to publish in English, translation *in extenso* of those articles in the Vernacular papers

REACTIONARY MEASURES AND PUBLIC PROTEST

on which the Vernacular Press Act is supposed to be founded, and to take such other measures as may be thought advisable for the purpose of laying before the English public a correct representation of the State and character of the Vernacular Press :

Rev. K. M. Banerjea
T. Palit
Chunder Madhab Ghosh
Rev. K. S. MacDonald
Dwijendra Nath Tagore
Jogesh Chunder Dutt
Rash Behary Ghose
Bhairab Chunder Banerjea
Probodh Chunder Mullick
Nitya Lal Mullick
Jagannath Khanna
Dr. Gurudas Banerjee
Nobogopal Mitra
Kalinath Mitra
Ganesh Chunder Chunda
A. M. Bose, Secretary.

“Resolution—V. That this meeting feels deeply grateful to those Hon’ble Members of Parliament who, on behalf of the unrepresented millions of India, have already lent their powerful aid in the discussion of the policy and merits of the Vernacular Press Act in the House of Commons ; and that the Right Hon’ble W. E. Gladstone, whose earnest and eloquent advocacy of the cause of suffering humanity, of progressive civilization and freedom of speech, has made his name dear to all lovers of progress, be respectfully solicited to present the petition to Parliament.”

Brahmo Public Opinion of April 25, 1878, had a long editorial on the Town Hall meeting. While summarising the proceedings of the day, the paper condemned the non-participation of the members of the British Indian Association and the Calcutta Bar on an issue of such national importance, and congratulated the Indian Association on the success of the stand thus : “But from this meeting for some reason or other best known to themselves, the members of the British Indian Association have thought fit to keep themselves aloof. Whatever the reason may be,

HISTORY OF THE INDIAN ASSOCIATION

the leading members of the august body were not even present. This is to be regretted, for their co-operation in the matter would have lent additional force and weight to the proceedings of the day. But on the other hand, the fact that such an influential and crowded meeting could be called and rendered successful, without their co-operation and aid, is a matter of sincere congratulation to the people at large ; and in our humble opinion, marks an epoch in the social and political history of Bengal. It forbodes much good for the future, augurs well for the part the Indian Association is destined to play in the political history of Bengal, and we may indeed say, of all India. This meeting has furnished sufficient materials for coming to the conclusion that the Bengalis can be loyal to the backbone but at the same time they can defend the rights and privileges conferred upon them by a beneficent Government, in a firm but constitutional way. . . . However much we may regret the attitude of the Calcutta Bar and of the Leading members of the city as regards the Town Hall meeting, we must congratulate the Indian Association on the success they have been able to achieve and pray sincerely that their exertions in the cause of public good may be crowned with success."

IV

The memorial was prepared and sent to Mr. Gladstone. As the leader of the Opposition, he presented it before the House of Commons in early July 1878. Just after this the Secretary of State for India framed some rules for the execution of the Act. The Indian Association lost no time in forwarding their considered views on the matter to Mr. Gladstone. On the request of the Opposition, the Parliament fixed 23rd July (1878) for discussion of the measure on the basis of the memorial. Meanwhile the sword of Damocles had already fallen on some newspapers. *Somprakash* and *Sahaachar* had to stop publication. Though the former revived publication later *The Amrita Bazar Patrika* turned into an English weekly on and from 21st March, 1878 just a week after the passage of the Act, to escape falling a victim to it. Even publishers refused to publish books and pamphlets in Bengali in the face of such a dangerous and 'lawless law'. All these, no doubt, strengthened the hands of the Opposition in the House of Commons.

The Right Hon'ble W. E. Gladstone moved the resolution on the Vernacular Press Act in the House of Commons on the appointed day. It was for the first time that the Opposition found an opportunity to initiate

REACTIONARY MEASURES AND PUBLIC PROTEST

a proposal on an Indian subject. It was a triumph not only for the Opposition but also for the Indian Association of Calcutta, which had taken a definite and firm stand on this matter since the passage of the Act. And this they did, not for this or that province, but on behalf of all the provinces and territories in India. Speakers from the Opposition, headed by Mr. Gladstone, thrashed out the reactionary and retrograde nature of the Act with such cogent reasons that it was very difficult for the members of the Government to meet them. Not only that, even some supporters of the Government also went so far as to condemn severely some sections of the Act. The resolution, when put to the vote, was defeated by a narrow margin of 56 ; 152 having voted in its favour in a House of 360 members. This defeat may be considered a triumph in disguise for two reasons. Firstly because the discussion in Parliament focussed the attention of the British people on the British administration in India, and secondly because even the supporters of the Government, while voting against the resolution, could not deny the inadvisability of passing such an arbitrary piece of legislation.

The news reached Calcutta in no time. The Committee of the Indian Association issued circular letters to their branch associations in Bengal and Northern Indian up to Lahore, as well as to the Poona Sarvajanik Shabha, the Bombay Branch of the East India Association and the leading persons of Madras. Armed with their favourable replies, the Association convened a public meeting in the Town Hall of Calcutta on 6th September 1878 under the chairmanship of its President the Rev. K. M. Banerjea, to thank Mr. Gladstone and those members of Parliament who, either by voting with him or otherwise, had condemned the vernacular Press Act, and to take steps for the formation of a Standing Committee, in the interests of the Vernacular Press. This meeting retained as usual its all-India character. On behalf of this assembly, a letter was sent to Mr. Gladstone, in the form of an address, under the signature of its Chairman the Rev. K. M. Banerjea. Surendra Nath writes in his *A Nation in Making* (p. 62) that the draft of the letter was his, but it was revised by the Rev. K. M. Banerjea. This letter, while thanking Mr. Gladstone and his supporters, gave an account of the evil effects of the Act on the intellectual progress of the people. It embodied the national aspirations of the Indians and evinced their implicit faith in British democracy. As a result of agitation here and abroad, some sections of the Act were modi-

HISTORY OF THE INDIAN ASSOCIATION

fied, but those fell far below the national demand, *viz.*, the immediate withdrawal of the Act. The Association convened a second public meeting on 6th September 1878 to protest against the Act which remained reactionary in spite of the modification of some of its sections. A Standing Committee was formed in this meeting to look after the interests of the Vernacular Press. The Indian Association, besides the Civil Service question, was pre-eminently occupied with this subject almost throughout the year.

CHAPTER VII

REORIENTATION OF THE ASSOCIATION'S ACTIVITIES

During the first two years and a half the activities of the Indian Association were mainly directed towards (1) holding public meetings, and (2) touring the country for moulding public opinion. In 1879 the activities of the Association took a new turn when a special delegate was sent to England for carrying on propaganda in Great Britain and present personally the demands for the redress of grievances to the members of Parliament in particular and to the British people in general. In the annual meeting, held on the 24th of February 1879, Lal Mohan Ghose was appointed delegate of the Indian Association to England. The reactionary measures of the Government here and the sympathetic response received from the leaders in England headed by Gladstone, induced the Indian Association to adopt this course immediately. Funds were necessary for the purpose. The members of the Association in their tours had already collected a small sum. But to send a special delegate to England and bear all his expenses during his stay there required a much bigger amount. But undaunted Surendra Nath Banerjea accompanied by Dwarkanath Ganguly went to Berhampore with an introductory letter from Bankim Chandra Chatterjee, the great Bengali savant and novelist, and received a substantial sum from Maharani Swarnamoyi of Cossimbazar. With this amount Lal Mohan Ghose went to England.

Meanwhile further measures taken by the government detrimental to Indian interests engaged the attention of the Indian Association. The British Government had entered on a war with Afganisthan (21st November, 1878). For this, most unjustifiably in contravention of all principles they drew on the Indian Exchequer. Again the remission of import duties on a large class of cotton goods served to reduce the already depleted finances of the Government. The reduction of import duties on cotton goods detrimentally affected their interests and exposed the reactionary nature of the government even to the illiterate masses. This brought the people all over India closer together for the redress of the deliberate wrongs perpetrated by the Government. We find the Indian Association taking the lead in all matters affecting Indian interests throughout India and setting up the nucleus of an association on an all-India

REORIENTATION OF THE ASSOCIATION

basis. The Indian Association convened a public meeting at the Town Hall to discuss the Afghan War and the reduction of import duties on cotton goods on 27th March, 1879. It was attended by upwards of 3,000 persons. According to the *Report* of the year, "The meeting was the occasion of a great demonstration of national feeling, for from all parts of India letters and telegrams had been received, from Associations and representative men expressing deep sympathy with the objects of the meeting." Two important resolutions were passed unanimously, one on the financial implications on the Afghan War and the second on the reduction of import duties on cotton goods. These were as follows :—

"Resolution—1. That having regard to the imperial character of the war undertaken against Afganistan, to the intention of the 55th Clause of Government of India Act of 1858, and the declarations of the responsible ministers of the Crown in relation thereto, and having regard also to the present financial position of India, this meeting is of opinion that the whole cost of the Afghan War should not be charged to the Indian revenues.

"Resolution—II. That in view of the serious financial embarrassments of the country—with a deficit of nearly five millions inclusive of expenditure on productive public works, with a heavy yearly loss to the Indian revenues consequent on the depreciation of silver—and a war that is still being waged on the frontier and in view also of the comparative unsuitability of direct taxation as regards the people of this country and the difficulty of recouping any loss incurred by sacrificing any of the present sources of revenue and of the declaration of Parliament that the duties are to be abolished when the financial position of the country admits of it, this meeting begs to record its emphatic protest against the recent resolution of the Government of India, exempting a large class of cotton goods from import duty. And this meeting at the same time desires to express its deep sense of regret at the tone of the reply given by His Excellency the Viceroy on a recent occasion to a deputation which waited upon his Lordship with reference to this question, as calculated to prevent that free expression of opinion on the part of Her Majesty's Indian subjects on question of public importance, which is so essential to good government in a country situated as India is, without the blessings of representative institutions."

HISTORY OF THE INDIAN ASSOCIATION

These resolutions were embodied in a memorial which was presented by Mr. Gladstone to the House of Commons within a week of this meeting. Lal Mohan Ghose also sailed for England as the delegate of the Association. The Civil Service petitions, adopted and endorsed throughout the whole of India, were placed in charge of Mr. Ghose. According to the *Report*, 'This was however not the only matter which he was deputed to lay before the British public. The Association felt that advantage should be taken of this opportunity to lay before the British public and draw their attention to other matters of importance affecting the welfare and political progress of the people of India. The import duties had been condemned by all India. The Vernacular Press Act, notwithstanding that it caused widespread discontent, continued to be a portion of the substantive law of the country, and its penal provisions might at any time, as in the case of *Somprakas*, be enforced against the editors of Vernacular papers or the writers of books in any of the Oriental languages. The Licence Act, till late so unequal in its incidence, so oppressive to the poor, needed to be modified if not altogether repealed. The Afghan War had been undertaken for imperial purposes and in furtherance of the foreign policy of the English Government, and India had been called upon to defray the entire cost of the campaign.'

III

These and other questions of Indian interest the delegate of the Association was empowered to place before the English people. Lal Mohan Ghose reached England and lost on time in making acquaintance with the leading members of the House of Commons. He met Gladstone, John Bright and even the Earl of Beaconsfield, the Conservative Prime Minister. A meeting was arranged in Willis's Rooms, House of Commons, by the Committee of Arrangements on 23rd July, 1879. John Bright, the great orator and progressive leader, presided. The speech of Lal Mohan Ghose, the special delegate and the outspoken advocacy of the Indian cause by the President of the meeting, John Bright, had an instantaneous effect on the Government. "Within 24 hours of that meeting, there were laid upon the table of the House of Commons the rules relating to the admission of natives of India into the covenanted Civil Service.* However unsatisfac-

*Each local Government may nominate persons who are natives

REORIENTATION OF THE ASSOCIATION

tory these rules might be, their publication so soon after the meeting at Willis's Rooms, points to the profound influence of Mr. Bright's advocacy of Indian claims, on that occasion, upon public opinion in England." (*Report for 1878-79*).

of India within the meaning of the said Act, for employment in Her Majesty's covenanted Civil Service of India within the territories subordinate to such Government. Such nominations shall be made not later than the 1st day of October in each year. No person shall be nominated for employment in the said service after he has attained the age of 25 years, except on grounds of merit and ability proved in the service of Government, or in the practice of a profession.

2. Nomination under foregoing rule shall, if approved by the Governor-General in Council, be provisionally sanctioned by him. The total number of nominations so sanctioned in any year shall not exceed one-fifth of the total numbers of Civilians appointed by Her Majesty's Secretary of State to the service in such year; provided that the total number of such nominations sanctioned in each of the years 1879, 1880 and 1881 may exceed the said proportion by ten. On sanction being given by the Governor-General in Council, the nominee shall be admitted on Probation to employment in the said service; such admission may be confirmed by the Governor-General in Council, but shall not be so confirmed until the local Government shall have reported to the Governor-General in Council that the probationer has acquitted himself satisfactorily during a period of not less than two years from the date of his admission, and that he has unless especially exempted by the Governor-General in Council, passed such examinations by the local Government subject to the approval of the Governor-General in Council. In case of persons admitted under these rules after they have attained the age of 25 years, the Governor-General in Council may confirm their admission without requiring them to serve for any period of probation.

3. Persons admitted under these rules to employment in the said service shall ordinarily be appointed only to offices in the province wherein they were first admitted. But the Governor-General in Council may transfer from one province to another a person finally admitted to the employment in the said service.

Any person admitted under these rules may, with the previous sanction of the Governor-General in Council, be declared by the local Government to be disqualified for further employment in the said service.

HISTORY OF THE INDIAN ASSOCIATION

Lal Mohan stayed in England for more than six months. During his stay there he was able to address two other meetings, one at Lambeth held on the 13th of August, and the other at Birmingham before a meeting of the Chamber of Commerce of that city. The deputation of Lal Mohan Ghose 'served to awaken an altogether new and unlooked for interest in the minds of the Liberal leaders in England in relation to Indian affairs.' (*Ibid.*) Lal Mohan returned to India early in 1880. He was given a public reception in the Town Hall on the 4th of March, 1880, organised by the Indian Association.

IV

Though the admission of Indians into the Covenanted Services was assured, the Native Civil Service Scheme which was later popularly called the 'Statutory Civil Service' fell far short of Indian demands. The Committee of the Indian Association saw through the machination of the Conservatives who had while seemingly yielding, preserved invidious distinctions, and passed resolutions condemning this move. They then communicated with the Branch Associations all over Northern India and other Associations and *Sabhas* of the South. The latter agreed with the views of the Indian Association. The Association's next step was to organise another representative public meeting. This meeting was held on 3rd September 1879 at the Town Hall of Calcutta under the presidency of the Rev. Dr. K. M. Banerjea. Communications were received from Associations and leaders of both Northern and Southern India sympathising with the objects of the meeting. While thanking John Bright and the Committee of Arrangements, of which Sir David Wedderburn, M. P., was the Chairman, in the first resolution, the meeting passed two other important resolutions, one giving their considered opinion on the published Native Civil Service Scheme and the other empowering the Indian Association to raise funds for the establishment of a permanent deputation in England. The resolution on the Native Civil Service Scheme or rules reads as follows :

"That this meeting having considered the rules recently published by the Government of India with regard to the employment of natives of India in the covenanted Civil Service is of opinion that any scheme, having this object in view, and based upon a system of nomination is (except in the case of persons whose merit and ability have already been proved 'in the service of Government or in the practice of profession') open to grave objections and will not be conducive to the

REORIENTATION OF THE ASSOCIATION

interest of the public service or to the benefit of the country. This meeting is further of opinion that every reasonable facility should be afforded to natives of India to compete for the covenanted Civil Service, and upon equal terms with Her Majesty's British-born subjects."

The other resolution runs as follows :

"That with a view to keep up and sustain the agitation which has been commenced in England with reference to Indian questions and to place before the British public the views and sentiments of the people of this country, this meeting resolves to raise a fund for the establishment of a permanent deputation in England ; and this meeting further empowers the Committee of the Indian Association to take the necessary measures to give effect to this resolution."

V

The Association strove hard during the session to contact the people at large for various purposes including the collection of funds. Its agents visited different parts of the country with a view to establish branch and affiliated associations, to collect funds, and generally to create an interest in the public mind in regard to the objects of the Association. Dwarkanath Ganguli and Dwarka Nath Ghose visited Bogra, Jalpaiguri, Darjeeling and Rangpur in June 1879. A branch association was established in Jalpaiguri. Kali Sankar Sukul and Sitala Kanta Chatterjee of Dacca visited Mymensingh and other parts of Eastern Bengal. They succeeded in establishing two branches, one at Jamalpur and the other at Hossainpur in the interior of the Mymensingh district. Jogendra Chandra Bose visited Berhampore and Burdwan and helped in the establishment of the Burdwan Association. Nagendra Nath Chatterjee took a prominent part in organising the Indian Association at Midnapore. He repeated the visit and succeeded in raising funds for the above purpose with the help of Bepin Behari Dutt, the Government pleader of Midnapore. Surendra Nath Banerjea was deputed on different occasions as the delegate of the Association to Berhampore, Krishnagar and Dacca. His visit to these places was extremely successful, so far as collection of funds was concerned. At Dacca where he went in September a sum of about Rs. 4,000 was subscribed.

On the 12th December 1879 Surendra Nath proceeded again on a tour to the North-Western Provinces and the Punjab as the delegate of the

HISTORY OF THE INDIAN ASSOCIATION

Association, accompanied by Kali Sankar Sukul and Krishna Kumar Mitra. Krishna Kumar Mitra has given us a graphic description of this second tour of Surendra Nath in his Bengali autobiography. This time, too, Surendra Nath was received with utmost cordiality, and everywhere he went, there was manifested the deepest sympathy for the objects propounded by the Indian Association. Efforts were also made to raise funds. On the necessity of making contact with the people in different parts of the country, the *Report for 1878-79* made these important observations :

“The Committee regard the deputation of delegates to different parts of the country in connection with the objects of the Association, as one of the most important features in the programme of its work. It is not enough for the Indian Association to confine its efforts to Calcutta. Nor is it sufficient that it should content itself with sending memorials to Parliament. When the Association was established, it was its attention towards the formation of a healthy public opinion in India. It has never lost sight of this important object. The Association has steadily kept in view that in India it has to perform the important duty of influencing public opinion and partly of leading and guiding it, in reference to the most momentous questions affecting the interests of the people. To the Committee it has always seemed that one of the most important means by which this great object might be attained is by the periodical deputation of agents to different parts of the country who shall seek to give a healthy tone to public opinion in regard to important national problems.”

VI

The Committee regretted that they were not able to apply to this matter as much attention as was necessary but hoped to start work in a systematic way in near future. One of the main planks of mass contact was undoubtedly mass education. The Association took up this matter in right earnest during the year. A public meeting was held at the Albert Hall on 29th July to consider the efforts of the Association regarding the aforesaid matter. It was reported in the meeting by Kali Sankar Sukul, Asst. Secretary to the Association, that ten night schools had already been established at 13 Mirzapur Street, Calcutta, Bhowanipore, South Baraset, Kangraparah, Garbeta in Midnapore, Dacca and other places as also two or three day schools, under the Indian Association. Surendra Nath Banerjea congratulated the Indian Association on this movement and

REORIENTATION OF THE ASSOCIATION

thought the Association having hitherto only pursued destructive measures should now take to constructive work of which this was the most important.* The resolution on elementary education adopted on the meeting had far-reaching effect and deserves to be quoted in full. It runs thus :

“That the meeting convinced of the importance of elementary education for the masses of the people of this country—as the great means for the elevation of their character and improvement of their condition, and as the true basis of all national progress—hereby resolves to organise a movement which shall seek to diffuse elementary education among the masses by establishing schools for their use in Calcutta and elsewhere, and by other means calculated to promote the same end.”

An influential committee was formed with the Rev. K. M. Banerjea as President and K. S. Sukul as Secretary to carry the above resolution into effect. The Committee of the Indian Association resolved to take up the question of representative government for India, because they thought the country's future lay in the introduction of the system.

*Brahmo Public opinion for August 7, 1879.

CHAPTER VIII

THE ERA OF PROMISE

Since its inauguration, the Indian Association had to agitate against the arbitrary and retrograde Acts of the Indian Government. By these measures, the latter carried out the behests of the Conservative Government in England. The Conservative Government dissolved Parliament during the Easter recess of 1880. The General Election would follow and a new Parliament was to assemble the following May. The Indian Association lost no time in deputing Lal Mohan Ghose as their agent to England to appear before the British constituencies and represent the interests of the Indian people before them. Lal Mohan sailed from Bombay on the 13th March. To strengthen his hands, the committee of the Association prepared an address to the Electors of the United Kingdom on behalf of the Indian people, setting forth their grievances, and despatched it to Lal Mohan without delay. In the electioneering campaign of the Liberal Party headed by Gladstone and Bright, India figured very prominently. The narration of the conservative misrule of India by such eminent persons, was not a little responsible for the defeat of the Conservative Party.

The Liberal victory in the General Election was hailed with delight and enthusiasm by the Indian people. As their spokesman, the Indian Association organised a public meeting on 5th May, 1880 at the Town Hall of Calcutta and passed resolutions expressing their rejoicings as also adopting a memorial to Parliament for the repeal of the repressive measures enacted under the Government of Lord Lytton. Lord Lytton was recalled. The Liberal Government under the leadership of W. E. Gladstone appointed Lord Ripon as Governor-General and Viceroy of India and sent him to India immediately.

II

The Liberal victory in England heralded an era of promise for Indians. The Indian Association, which had already taken upon itself the task of saying and acting on behalf of the whole nation, made up its mind to take advantage of the Liberal victory for the betterment of India. The sure remedy for all ills as well as the sound basis of future prosperity was the introduction of the system of representative Government in India. At the annual meeting held on 15th May, 1880, the Indian Association appoint-

THE ERA OF PROMISE

ed a Committee to draft a scheme of Representative Government. The Committee applied itself to this important work with the greatest zeal. It consulted men of thought and eminence both in India and abroad. Pandit Laxmi Narain, a distinguished member of the Oudh Bar, anticipated, so early as seventy years back, the modern constitution of the Indian Union. He preferred the American constitution to others and proposed the establishment of two separate houses of representatives somewhat on the American model. The Committee made considerable progress in its work.

While this work was going on the Indian Association turned its attention to Local Self-Government, because it felt that "local self-government must precede National self-government." "This view has forced itself upon the attention of the Committee (of the Indian Association) with considerable force from the recent utterances of His Excellency the Viceroy when in reply to an address presented to him at Dehra Dun, Lord Ripon declared that he had it 'in charge from Her Majesty the Queen Empress to look into the Municipal administration of the country, for there the political education of the people begins.'" The Indian Association "therefore issued a circular letter to the district towns throughout Bengal, inviting them to petition the Lieutenant-Governor, under the provisions of the Section 16 of the Bengal Municipal Act, for the introduction of the elective system in the constitution of their Municipalities." (*Report* for 1880-81). Besides issuing the circular letter, the Association hoped soon to send representatives to the district headquarters and sub-divisional towns to educate and organise public opinion.

III

Another question that engaged the particular attention of the Association was the proposed Rent Law of the Bengal Government. The ryots had hitherto been practically unrepresented in most of the public functionaries. The Indian Association undertook the solemn duty of making known their wants and grievances. They welcomed the action of the Bengal Government and its efforts to place the question of the relation between landlords and tenants upon a sound and satisfactory footing. Soon after the publication of the *Report* of the Rent Commission a letter was received from the Bengal Government dated 19th July 1880 in which

HISTORY OF THE INDIAN ASSOCIATION

the Association 'was requested to express its views on the draft Bill submitted by the Rent Commission'. The Association at once set to work. A small Committee was formed to consider the Bill and draft a reply. The Branch Associations were posted with copies of the draft Bill and requested to send their views early. The Zeminders were agitating against the Bill. It was time that the ryots and the friends of the ryots also spoke.

The Committee of the Indian Association took up the cause of the ryots. They at first suffered from paucity of workers. They, however, found in Kali Sankar Sukul and Krishna Kumar Mitra, two such willing and devoted agents who could compensate for many. They two took part along with others in the great demonstration in favour of the ryots that occurred at Kissen-gunge in the Nadia district. This was the first of its kind that took place during this and the following session. Some gentlemen, unconnected with the Association, also did yeoman's service in furthering the cause of the ryots and holding meetings in their favour. Dwarka Nath Ghose, the Association's Agent at Midnapore, succeeded in rousing the interest of the people over there to the ryots' cause. The Association found also an earnest worker on behalf of the ryots in Rangalal Banerjea, the poet, who organised numerous attended ryots' meetings near the Shamnagar Station in Twenty-four Parganas as well as in the district of Birbhum. More of the activities of the Association in this direction will be told later on.

IV

The Association was persistent in its efforts to bring about the repeal of the objectionable measures enacted by Lord Lytton's Government. Soon after the arrival of Lord Ripon in this country, the Committee of the Association addressed a letter to His Lordship regarding the objectionable nature of the Arms Act, the Vernacular Press Act, and the Licence Act. The diffusion of political education amongst the rank and file continued with no less zeal. Surendra Nath Banerjea, Kali Sankar Sukul, Tara Kison Ray Choudhury, Krishna Kumar Mitra and Dwarka Nath Ghose visited the important centres of some districts, held meetings and explained to the people there the national aims and objects the Indian Association stood for. Branch Associations were established in the Jessore, Mymensingh and Midnapore districts and funds were collected in aid of the Association. Kali Sankar Sukul and Krishna Kumar Mitra

THE ERA OF PROMISE

visited Rajshahi and helped to inaugurate the movement for municipal self-government in the town.

Now the Association was also revising its constitution on more democratic lines. Rules were revised and the members of the Committee were for the first time elected by the majority of the votes of the members. At the same time the matter of representative government was gaining its attention more and more. While summarising the activities of the Association, its Secretary, A. M. Bose, wrote in his *Report* for 1880-81 : 'Above all there is the question of representative government to which the Association must soon direct its unremitting attention. It is the question of the hour and the question of the future.'

V

The next year witnessed unusual activity on the part of the Association in this direction. What was the immediate step to be taken? The Association determined to agitate for local self-government.

In fact the Association had already prepared the ground for this agitation by appealing through the circular letter already mentioned to put forward a demand to the public for an elective system in municipal government. When, therefore, the Government of India announced its Resolution on Local Self-Government early in 1881, the reaction of the public mind to the Resolution had already been given proper direction as mentioned here : "There were some features in the scheme, which would practically in a large measure neutralise the advantages which His Excellency might have in view to confer on the people of this country. The question was one of so vitally important a character that they thought they ought not to make any representation on the subject to the government without previously ascertaining the views of the country generally. With this object the Committee resolved to send delegates to the important mofussil towns of the provinces. Letters were also addressed to the leading public bodies of the land. Babu Surendra Nath Banerjea and Dwarkanath Ganguli visited Rajshahi, Bogra, Pabna (and some other places) where they held meetings which were all numerously attended by the people. Meetings were held in several other places, and written opinions obtained from some more on the subject of Local Self-Government" (*Report* of the Indian Association for 1881-82).

HISTORY OF THE INDIAN ASSOCIATION

Having in this manner ascertained the views of the people on the scheme, the Committee of the Indian Association drafted a memorial and convened a public meeting in the Town Hall on 18th February, 1881 for its adoption. It was a truly representative meeting inasmuch as representatives of all communities including ladies attended it. It was also all-India in character. Because support was accorded to the objects of the meeting through letters and telegrams from the associations and *sabhas* all over India. One Resolution thanked Lord Ripon's Government for the repeal of the Vernacular Press Act, which had been withdrawn earlier. Another protesting against the Arms Act 'as unnecessary, vexatious and oppressive, and as involving invidious distinctions of race or colour' was also passed. But the main Resolution was on Local Self-Government. It was moved by Surendra Nath Banerjea himself and ran as follows :

"That this meeting feels deeply grateful to His Excellency the Viceroy, for his recent Resolution which seeks to confer upon the people of this country the inestimable boon of Local Self-Government and ventures to express its earnest and confident hope that the measures adopted by His Excellency for the purpose will be of such a character as to secure a fair and satisfactory working of the scheme. And with this view this meeting would respectfully beg to make the following recommendations :

(1) That the constitution of the Local Boards and of the Municipalities should be based on the elective system,

(2) That their chairman should be an officer elected by them, and on no account be the Magistrate-collector of the District,

(3) That the functions and powers vested in the existing committees should be increased in view of their amalgamation in the proposed Local Boards."

The far-reaching consequences of this resolution have been pointed out by Surendra Nath in his *A Nation in Making* (pp. 65-6) thus :

"The meeting was held on February 18, 1881; the resolutions of the Government of India were issued in October, 1881, and May 1882. Here was a conspicuous instance of almost perfect accord between the official and the popular view, and be it noted that it was Lord Ripon who soon after, as Chancellor of the University of Calcutta, declared that the time was fast approaching when popular opinion

THE ERA OF PROMISE

even in India would become the irresistible and unresisted master of the Government."

VI

The Association took up the questions of an all-India character as usual. It also dealt with provincial matters, such as Panjab High Education, Arrest of Zenana Ladies and the Inland Emigration Bill. The Indian Association made representation on each one of these subjects. Its representation on the Inland Emigration Bill exposed, in true colours, the pathetic condition of the tea-garden labourers, termed as 'coolies.' Even Lord Ripon had to admit the fairness of the Association's representation during the discussion of the Bill. He said :

"I have before me a very fair and temperate representation which has been made by the Indian Association within the last two or three days. They have argued the subject very fairly, and they have put forward objections to certain parts of the Bill which are well entitled to the consideration. They press upon us in their memorial this point of the ignorance of the cooly and give a curious extract from a book published by a Missionary of the Brahmo Somaj [Ram Kumar Vidyaratna], to show how very ignorant a greater number of the coolies who engage to go to Assam are. I have no doubt that that is a perfectly fair statement of the knowledge of many of the coolies, but I do claim for the Bill that it makes the utmost possible care that the labourer should thoroughly understand the nature of the engagement he is about to enter into."

The question of the tea-garden labourer engaged the attention of the Association for a long time, even after the passage of the Bill.

VII

But the most important activities of the Indian Association which began during the previous year and covered the whole period under discussion, consisted in the organisation of ryots' meetings and Unions all over Lower Bengal. The Association's agents and sympathisers of the peasants' cause visited the interior of various districts and organised meetings, some of which were attended even by between ten and twenty-thousand people. In these meetings the ryots freely expressed their grievances and evinced considerable interest in the work of the Association.

HISTORY OF THE INDIAN ASSOCIATION

A mass meeting was held in Calcutta in the Wellington Square. Ryots from the adjacent villages, and some even from the remote parts of Nadia, participated in it. Top-ranking leaders of the Association, such as, Surendra Nath Banerjea, Ananda Mohan Bose and Dwarkanath Ganguli attended some of the mofussil assemblage of the peasants, notably at Meherpore, Nadia, and Tarakeswar (Hugli). Krishna Kumar Mitra has left us a brief account of this peasant movement initiated by the Indian Association in the mofussil districts. He writes to the effect that Dwarkanath took a very prominent part in this movement as Assistant Secretary of the Association. Under his leadership, Kali Prasanna Bhattacharyya, Kali Prasanna Datta, Kali Sankar Sukul, Devi Prasanna Roy Choudhuri, and the writer Krishna Kumar himself went to the interior of Nadia, Hugli and Howrah districts and organised peasants' meetings.* These activities led to the establishment of several Ryots' Unions in the mofussil and these were duly noticed in the Press. *Brahmo Public Opinion* wrote on January 12, 1882 :

"We are glad to hear that the Indian Association have been able to form some Rent-Unions in the mofussil. The importance of having such Unions all over the country is very great. These Unions, if properly formed and organised, will be a power in the land. . . . We congratulate the Indian Association on having taken up the subject in right earnest."

Brahmo Public Opinion again referred to these Unions and the scope of their work in the following lines :

"In our last issue we informed our readers that some Rent-Unions have been organised in the mofussil by the Indian Association. As to the actual scope of work of these Unions, we did not say anything. We have been creditably informed, however, that the object of those Unions is to ameliorate the intellectual and moral condition of the peasantry. Rent-questions will be discussed by these Unions no doubt, but no undue importance will be attached to them. In cases of oppression by the Zeminder, these Unions will try to check them by all legal and legitimate means. These Unions, inaugurated by the Indian Association, may therefore more appropriately be called Ryot's Unions.' (Vol. V, No. 33, p. 25).

*Vide Krishna Kumar Mitra's *Atmcharit* pp. 117-9

THE ERA OF PROMISE

VIII

The Association took much pains and also time to prepare a reply on the Government letter on the Rent question, dated 19th July 1880. The Government were waiting for the considered views of the Association for several months. And the delay being longer than expected, Alexander Mackenzie, a high official of the Government of India, went personally to the office of the Indian Association at night and enquired of the reply on the Rent-question. Krishna Kumar Mitra was then engaged in correcting the proofs of this very reply in the Association office. The importance the Government attached to the views of the Association can be seen from the fact that Mackenzie took away the soiled proofs for consultation. Krishna Kumar has referred to the incident in his Bengali autobiography (pp. 118-9) and told us that most of the opinions of the Association in the reply were accepted by the Government (p. 119). The reply of the Indian Association, despatched to the Government on 27th June, 1881, is a very valuable document so far as determination of the relation between the Zeminder and the tenant was concerned. The concluding remarks of the letter deserve to be quoted even today :

“In conclusion, the Association have to express their gratitude to the Government for its earnest effort to bring to satisfactory settlement of this important question which now for some time has greatly stirred the public mind of this province. It would scarcely be possible to conceive of a question more intimately connected with the agricultural prosperity of Bengal and the material welfare of her people. It would indeed be a matter of sincere congratulation, if the relation between landlords and tenants could once for all be placed on a satisfactory footing. Agriculture cannot prosper, wealth cannot advance, there can be no real improvement in the condition of the people, unless the two great sections of the country—landlords and tenants live in mutual amity, anxious to guard their own interests, but careful also about the interests of their neighbours. The Association look upon the proposed Rent Law as an honest effort on the part of the Government to settle the present unhappy relations between landlords and tenants, and on this account they feel deeply grateful to the Government.”

TORY OF THE INDIAN ASSOCIATION

The Indian Association had, by 1882, turned into a full-fledged mouth-piece of the illiterate peasants as well as the educated people. Its work amongst the peasants continued.

IX

Meanwhile, the agitation on the Local Self-Government question had gathered momentum. Both the Municipal Bill and the Local Self-Government Bill were placed on the legislative anvil. Though they promised substantial concessions, they were yet capable of much improvement. The agitation for the introduction of Local Self-Government throughout the country began in 1881 and continued throughout 1882. Now that it was about to bear fruit, the Association could not rest idle. It sent delegates to the mofussil towns and held meetings there to mould and educate public opinion. The Association had been greatly helped all along in this endeavour by the Bar Associations of the mofussil towns. The Bar Associations were then the mouth-piece of the educated section of people there. Kali Sankar Sukul took part in meetings held in these towns to discuss the question of Local Self-Government. Surendra Nath Banerjea attended public meetings in the following places : Burdwan, Kalna, Krishnagar, Kusteia, Areadaha, Barrackpore, Halisahar, Konnagar, Baidyabati, Gourifa, and Rishra. Throughout the country could be heard the demands put forward by the Association.

Another subject that the Association took up during the year was the much-talked-of Civil Service Question. Even Englishmen protested against the age-limit of nineteen years for Civil Service competitors, and the Government were considering whether the age-limit could be raised. The Indian Association, which had striven so hard for this purpose since its inception, lost no time in sending a memorial to the Government and putting forth its views on the age-limit of the candidates and on simultaneous examination of candidates in London and India. The question of reduction of the salaries of High Court Judges also received considerable attention by the Association.

During the year the Committee of the Indian Association considered for the first time, the feasibility of holding a national conference, where delegates from the different provinces of India would meet and discuss the problems of a national character. According to the *Report* (1882), 'such an experiment, if successful, would open a new chapter in the history of this country and would be the nucleus of new hopes and aspirations.'

THE ERA OF PROMISE

X

The Association, though only seven years, had had a brilliant record. To carry on its work efficiently and place it on a sound footing, a habitation of its own was urgently required. A sub-committee was formed this year to take steps to raise funds for the erection of a house for the Association. Maharani Swarnamoyi, always sympathetic to the cause of the Association, subscribed a sum of Rs. 2,000 in aid of its building fund. Old rules of the Association were revised and some new rules framed. The object of the Indian Association under the revised rules runs : 'The Indian Association shall seek to represent the people, to help in the formation of a healthy public opinion on all questions of importance, and to promote by every legitimate means the political, intellectual, and material advancement of the people.' The Committee of the Association met more regularly than formerly. The following sub-committees were formed during the year : (1) The Financial sub-Committee, (2) The Rule-revision sub-committee, (3) The sub-committee for making arrangement for carrying on the work of the Association in the mofussil, (4) The sub-committee for organising a national conference, (5) The sub-committee for taking up the grievances of Railway passengers, (6) The Law sub-committee, and (7) The Building-fund Sub-committee. Branch Associations of the Indian Association were established throughout Bengal and Northern India. They now rose to thirty.

The agents of the Association, as usual, visited different places in the mofussil and awakened an interest amongst the people in the work of the Association. Dwarkanath Ganguli visited Assam and raised money in aid of the building-fund. Dwarka Nath Ghose, assisted by Bhagwan Chandra Goswami, continued the work in Midnapore and Pabna. Kali Prasanna Bhattacharyya visited different parts of Faridpur. Surendra Nath Banerjea assisted in the establishment of a Branch Association at Santipur. But the Committee's work was much hampered for want of a band of selfless workers. The Secretary, A. M. Bose, appealed to the younger generation to take up the work in larger numbers with a spirit of self-sacrifice, for 'it is self-sacrifice that is needed, the complete subordination of personal ends to the cause of the country, and so long as the youth of this country do not rise, not to the merely intellectual but to the earnest and practical recognition of this great truth, the cause of the country, with which is identified the cause of the Indian Association, must suffer.'

CHAPTER IX

"GOOD COMETH OUT OF EVIL"

The Secretary of the Indian Association regretted the paucity of selfless workers for the country's cause. But the continued services it had rendered during the seven years of its existence, helped not a little to rouse national consciousness in the minds of the people. The Association had established branches not only in Bengal, but throughout Northern India, even up to Lahore, the capital city of the Panjab. With the popular associations and *Sabhas* of the South, that is, Bombay and Madras, the Association acted in complete accord and co-operation. The public meetings held under the Association's auspices and the memorials prepared by it and passed there on such questions as the Civil Service, the Vernacular Press Act, the Arms Act and the like, had an all-India, and therefore, national character. Everywhere, throughout the length and breadth of India, the seed of nationality had been sown. It had however to be carefully nurtured. In 1883, some unexpected events took place, which brought the people closer together and woke them up to a consciousness of unity unthought-of before.

II

One such event was the agitation against the famous (or infamous ?) Ilbert Bill. The agitation arose in this way. Distinction of colour and race was all along maintained not only in the administration of justice, but even amongst those who administered it. The Indian Civilians—even the Magistrates and the Sessions judges—could not try criminal cases in the mofussil in which the Europeans were involved. Behari Lal Gupta, the Chief Presidency Magistrate of Calcutta, submitted a note to the Government of Bengal, drawing their attention to this anomaly in the Criminal Procedure Code. Sir Ashley Eden, then Lieutenant-Governor of Bengal, took up the matter personally and asked the Government of India to amend the above code in such a way as to remove this anomaly. The liberal Government of Lord Ripon was convinced of the justness of the case, and its Law-member, Sir Courtney Ilbert, prepared a Bill to amend the Criminal Procedure Code and published it in the Government Gazette. Ilbert being the originator of this Bill, it came to be popularly known as the 'Ilbert Bill'.

The Bill released passions on both sides unimagined before. The European and the Anglo-Indian community rose as one man against his Bill and organised meetings in which their leaders and spokesmen

"GOOD COMETH OUT OF EVIL"

did not hesitate to vituperate the Indians in unmeasured language. Lal Mohan Ghose, a stalwart of the Indian Association, replied in equally strong language to the attacks of the Europeans and the Anglo-Indians. The latter formed a Defence Association, raised one lac and fifty thousand rupees and carried on the agitation throughout the year. Even the high officials, including Sir Rivers Augustus Thompson, the Lieutenant-Governor of Bengal, and some of the High Court Judges, took part openly in this agitation. At one stage the Europeans threatened to send Lord Ripon back to England forcibly and that with the knowledge and consent of these officials !

The Indian Association, however, lent its whole-hearted support to the Government since the very inception of the Bill. Its committee rightly gauged the urgency of the situation and sent a telegram to the London *Daily News*, at a cost of more than two hundred rupees, explaining the nature and scope of the Bill. A joint representation was also addressed by all the public bodies to the Viceroy in Council. The Secretary, Ananda Mohan Bose, signed the representation on behalf of the Association. The Association supported the Bill, as it originally stood, at every stage ; and the ire of the Defence Association grew in leaps and bounds. Meanwhile another incident happened that convulsed the whole Indian nation.

III

Surendra Nath Banerjea's incarceration by the High Court on the charge of contempt of Court during the year was an epoch-making event in the history of our freedom movement. Justice Norris of the Calcutta High Court, who had openly sided with the Europeans in the Ilbert Bill agitation, induced the parties of a case to present *Salgram Sila*, the Hindu idol, in his Court-room to facilitate the Court's decision. This conduct on the part of justice Norris was severely condemned by *Brahmo Public Opinion* in a leaderette. Surendra Nath reproduced it in his *Bengalee* of April 2, 1883, with some caustic remarks in which the following lines occurred :

"We have now, however, amongst as a judge, who, if he does not actually recall to mind the days of Jeffreys and Scroffs, has certainly done enough, within the short time that he has filled the High Court Bench, to show how unworthy he is of the high office, and how by nature he is unfitted to maintain those traditions of dignity which are inseparable from the office of the judge of the highest court in the land."

The High Court took exception to these remarks and a charge of contempt of court was brought against him by the High Court. A full

HISTORY OF THE INDIAN ASSOCIATION

Bench of the Judges decided the case, and though on the advice of his Barrister, W. C. Bonnerjea Surendra Nath apologised, and withdrew the above remarks, the judges were so vindictive as to imprison him for two months (from May 5 to July 4). It may be said to the credit of Justice Romesh Chandra Mitra that he gave a dissenting judgment, in which he recommended the discharge of Surendra Nath with a fine only.

The trial and conviction were too much for the people. Because Surendra Nath had by this time become a household word to the whole of India, nay he was the idol of the youth of the country. In the course of the trial the student community of Calcutta mustered strong near about the High Court under the leadership of Sir Ashutosh Mukherjee, then a student of the third year class, and gave vent to their feelings by pelting stones at the High Court and the Police, posted heavily for guarding it. At this unexpected bolt from the blue the people everywhere were very much excited.

The Committee of the Indian Association convened a meeting to give vent to this popular feeling, in Beadon Street, on 16th May 1883. According to the *Report* of the Association for 1883, "It was the largest meeting ever held in Calcutta. There were about twenty thousand people present representing different sections of the community; numerous telegrams and letters as well as the presence of delegates especially sent from the mofussil, on the occasion, testified to the all-pervading sympathy and interest of the country in the subject of the meeting." The subject discussed was to move the Viceroy to make a reference to the Privy Council with a view to have the important question of jurisdiction of the High Court to punish summarily in cases of contempt to be finally settled. The Secretary of the Association, A. M. Bose, observed in the said *Report* :

"That good cometh out of evil was never more fully illustrated than in this notable event. It has now been demonstrated by the universal outburst of grief and indignation which the event called forth, that the people of the different Indian provinces have learnt to feel for one another, and that a common bond of unity and fellow-feeling is rapidly being established among them. And Babu Surendra Nath Banerjea had at least one consolation that his misfortune awakened, in a most marked form, a manifestation of that sense of unity among the different Indian races, for the accomplishment of which he has so earnestly striven, and not in vain."

Surendra Nath's imprisonment on such a flimsy ground was considered

"GOOD COMETH OUT OF EVIL"

as a national calamity. Let me reproduce the reactions of Surendra Nath to this upheaval of national feeling :

"In the whole course of my public life, I have never witnessed except in connexion with the agitation for the modification of the Partition of Bengal, an upheaval of feeling so genuine and so widespread as that which swept through Bengal in 1883. Public meetings for sympathy for me, and of protest against the judgment of the High Court, were held in almost every considerable town. So strong was the feeling that in some cases even Government servants took part in them and suffered for it. But these demonstrations were not of the evanescent order. They left an enduring impress on the public life of this province." (*A Nation in Making*, p. 79)

IV

What Surendra Nath wrote in this connection was but too true. The imprisonment of Surendra Nath served as a signal for fresh national endeavours. The 'unseemly' and unjust but united agitation against the Ilbert Bill by the Europeans and the Anglo-Indians also opened the eyes of our leaders to the ways and means by the adoption of which they could unite, and conduct the political activities successfully. The Indian Association had already engaged to collect funds for some specific national purposes. Now they were determined to raise money for the establishment of a permanent fund. The idea was first mooted by *Brahmo Public Opinion*, which, in its issue of 21st June 1883, proposed editorially that such a fund for national purposes should be opened. Its actual words were : "Money is indispensably necessary for our success and a national fund should also be raised. The Committee in each province or presidency will receive the money in trust." On the lines of this proposal Tarapada Banerjea, the leader of Krishnagar, formulated a scheme on the subject and got it published on July 4, 1883 in *The Indian Mirror*. The Committee of the Indian Association in their meeting of 29th May resolved to take steps to raise such a fund. On 17th July 1883, a great meeting was held at Anath Nath Deb's Bazar, attended by upwards of ten thousand persons, in which the following resolutions were passed :

"1. That this meeting is of opinion that a national fund should be raised with a view to secure the political advancement of the country by means of constitutional agitation in India and England and by

HISTORY OF THE INDIAN ASSOCIATION

other legitimate means ; and that the other provinces be invited to join in the movement.

“2. That the Committee of the Indian Association be requested to take all necessary steps to give effect to the above resolution, the Committee submitting from time to time an account of their work at meetings of contributors to the Fund.”

V

The Committee of the Association appointed the following Trustees to receive the fund : The Rev. Dr. K. M. Banerjea, Norendra Nath Sen, Mahes Chandra Chaudhuri, Surendra Nath Banerjea, Ananda Mohan Bose, Kumar Indra Chandra Singh of Paikpara and Harbans Sahai of Behar. The Trustees issued the following appeal setting forth the objects o which the fund was to be applied :

“The time has come when, in the interests of the people of this country, it has become urgently necessary to create a fund for purposes of constitutional agitation both here and in England, with a view to secure the redress of our grievances, the maintenance of our rights and their further recognition in accordance with the declared policy of the Crown and the English people. The necessity has become all the greater, as the policy which has been recognised by all parties in the administration of this country and embodied in the Proclamation of our Gracious Sovereign, on Her assumption of the direct government of this country, has of late been severely assailed, and its application bitterly denounced, and feelings have unfortunately been aroused which make it desirable that we should be watchful of our interests. Numerous communications have been received from different quarters suggesting this course of action, and it is hoped the appeal now made will awake a sympathetic response throughout the country. An organisation, in no way, connected with the discussion of matters of sectional importance which divide class and securing sympathy of all, in furtherance of great national issues. It is a matter of supreme importance that instead of fitful spasmodic efforts being made for funds to meet and as it frequently happens inadequately and perhaps too late, the requirements of any particular contingency that may occur, a regular steady and sustained effort should be put forth to raise an amount which would be adequate for all contingency that might arise and which could further be devoted to the systematic prosecution of important national interests.

"GOOD COMETH OUT OF EVIL"

"It would, of course, be impossible to give an exhaustive list of the specific matters upon which the fund is to be spent, for it will be the duty of those entrusted by the subscribers with the control of the fund to take up all questions which may come up from time to time affecting national interests. But even at the present moment there are many important questions in regard to which the sense of the people of this country may be taken, to be followed, where necessary, by an appeal to the justice and generosity of our rulers, both in India and in England. Such questions as the wider employment of our countrymen in all departments of the state, whether covenanted or uncovenanted, in accordance with oft-repeated pledges; the perfecting of the system of Local Self-Government; the gradual introduction of representative institutions in the government of this country; the maintenance of a permanent delegatge in England, the better and more truthful representation of our views before the British public, through the agency of the Press and public meetings, the rendering of pecuniary help to committees already formed in England—one by our countrymen and the other by a number of generous English ladies and gentlemen for the furtherance of Indian interests in that country—may either at once or in such order as may be deemed best, be taken up by those who are entrusted with management of the fund. It need hardly be pointed out that the fund being national, will never be applied to the promotion of the interests of any particular class to the prejudice of those of another class."

VI

At the public meeting, referred to above, the Committee of the Indian Association were empowered to raise the fund. During the rest of the year they tried hard both individually and collectively to collect money for it. Not only the upper ten, but the generality of the people, such as, shopkeepers, labourers and peasants came forward to contribute their mite to the National Fund. Mr. Wilfred Scawan Blunt, M. P., and Mr. Seymour Keay, who happened to visit India at the time, subscribed in aid of the fund. Such was the political awakening among the people that about twenty thousand rupees was promised and a considerable amount collected in a few weeks' time. The Ilbert Bill was not yet placed on the legislative anvil, the rent-question was also hanging fire. The Association was anxiously waiting for the results.

The leaders of the Association could not allow the unusual awakening on a nation-wide scale, that followed the Ilbert Bill agitation and Surendra Nath's imprisonment, to slip by. They had hitherto organised

HISTORY OF THE INDIAN ASSOCIATION

mass meetings, passed resolutions, prepared memorials, and despatched them to the proper authorities for necessary action. But the time had arrived when, besides these, something concrete and permanent had to be done in order to guide this countrywide political consciousness into the right path. The International Exhibition was to be held in Calcutta in December, 1883, under official auspices. People from all over India would flock to the capital to participate in the amusement.

The Committee of the Indian Association resolved to take advantage of the presence of the people of various provinces in Calcutta and hold a national conference to discuss the problems that had affected them so much. They entered into communication with their Branch Associations all over Northern India as well as the leading Associations of Bombay and Madras. Ensured of their consent and support the Indian Association called the first National Conference in Calcutta on the 28th, 29th and 30th December, 1883. It should be mentioned here that the British Indian Association did not associate itself with the National Conference.

VII

This National Conference, or National Union, was the first of its kind in India and, really speaking, the predecessor of the Indian National Congress, to be started two years later in 1885. The Conference may be regarded as the greatest achievement of the Indian Association since its inception. National cohesion and solidarity for which the Association had striven ceaselessly for eight years seemed at last to have taken shape in this Conference. The delegates attending the conference came from all parts of India : Mahrattas, Punjabis, Madrasis, Hindusthanis, Biharis, Oriyas—both Hindus and Muslims. The places they represented were as follows : Siliguri, Midnapore, Khulna, Ballavpur, Kakina, Dacca, Mymensingh, Muzafferpore, Burdwan, Deoghur, Jessore, Jalpaiguri, Rangpore, Bankipore, Cuttack, Bombay, Faridpore, Darbhanga, Sherpore, Bogra, Jabbal-pore, Saugor, Chittagong, Munsigange, Lahore, Kalna, Nagpur, Bhagal-pore, Delhi, Rajshahi, Pabna, Comilla, Allahabad, Barisal, Senhati, Meerut, Sylhet, Ghatal, Tejpore, Boalia, Kuldaha, Darkrishnapore, Berhampore, Ahmedabad, Madras and Hossainpore.

According to schedule, the National Conference met in the Albert Hall, Calcutta, on the first day, 28th December, 1883, under the presidency of Ramtanu Lahiri, the veteran educationist with a true nationalistic

“GOOD COMETH OUT OF EVIL”

bias. Dhankoti Raja of Madras moved the resolution on ‘Industrial and Technical Education’. Sripad Babaji Thakur of Bombay seconded it. Both of them spoke feelingly on the subject. The resolution on the Covenanted and the Statutory Civil Service question was moved by Surendra Nath Banerjea in a most vigorous speech. But the day’s session concluded before the discussion on the resolution was finished.

The Conference assembled the following day with Kali Mohan Das, the renowned Vakil of the Calcutta High Court (the eldest uncle of Deshabandhu Chittaranjan Das). The Civil Service resolution was passed unanimously. The resolution on the Separation of the Judicial from the Executive functions was duly moved and seconded. One of the speakers on this resolution was Manomohun Ghose, Bar-at-Law, who had fought untiringly for the cause throughout his life. Surendra Nath Banerjea, in his speech on the resolution, proposed to prepare a ‘Blue-Book’ containing the illegal tortures and unjust convictions of the so-called criminals. Manomohun Ghose later compiled a brochure on the subject.

The Conference met for the third day, over which the veteran doctor and champion of women’s cause, Annada Charan Khastagir (the maternal grand-father of Deshpriya Jatindra Mohan Sengupta) presided. Resolutions on summary jurisdiction of High Court contempt cases, Representative Government, National Fund and Arms Act were passed. Two Englishmen, Blunt and Keay, were present in the National Conference. Blunt has left us an account of the proceedings of this Conference in his *India Under Ripon*. which runs as follows :

“Then at twelve, I went to the first meeting of the National Conference, a really important occasion, as there were delegates from most of the great towns—and, as [Ananda Mohan] Bose in his opening speech remarked it, was the first stage towards a National Parliament. The discussion began with a scheme for sending boys to France for industrial education but the real feature of the meeting was an attack on the Covenanted Civil Service by Surendra Nath Banerjea. His speech was quite as good a one as ever I heard in my life, and entirely fell in with my own views on the matter. The other speakers were less brilliant, though they showed fair ability, and one old fellow made a very amusing oration which was much applauded. I was asked to speak, but declined, as I don’t wish to make any public expression of opinion till my journey is over. But at Bombay I shall

HISTORY OF THE INDIAN ASSOCIATION

speaking my mind. I was the only European there, and am very glad to have been present at so important an event. The proceedings would have been more shipshape if a little more arrangement had been made beforehand as to the speakers. But on the whole, it went off very creditably. Both Banerjea and Bose are speakers of a high order. The meeting took place upstairs in the Albert Hall, and about one hundred persons were present. Before the speaking commenced, a national hymn was sung by a man with a strong voice, who played also on an instrument of the guitar type. (Pp. 114-5)

Thus the first National Conference ended, and with this also the eventful year 1883.

CHAPTER X

YEARS OF HOPES AND DISAPPOINTMENTS

The Indian Association reached 1884 with a sense of self-confidence no doubt, but hopes and disappointments also intermingled with one another on its onward march of progress. The Association all along aimed at two things : (1) to carry on agitation with a view to form public opinion on important national issues and (2) to address the Government about them. The European agitation against the Ilbert Bill in 1883 had opened the eyes of the educated people. The incarceration of Surendra Nath for defending a just cause had moved the hearts of both the educated and the uneducated, the conservative as well as the liberal section of the people. The Indian Association left no stone unturned to guide this national consciousness into a proper channel. It started a national fund for political work as well as a national conference to discuss problems concerning the national welfare. The Association also gave expression to the feelings of the people whenever required. In this way by 1884 it became a national organisation. The just and equitable provisions of the Ilbert Bill were abandoned in favour of a compromise with the European agitators. The reaction of the nation to this sort of 'unholy' compromise was expressed in the following resolution passed at a representative public meeting under the auspices of the Indian Association :

“(1) That this meeting regards the Charter Act of 1833, confirmed by the Proclamation of 1858 as declaring that all servants of the Crown, European or Native, shall exercise the Jurisdiction pertaining to their office, irrespective of considerations of race or colour, and this meeting therefore accords its firm support to the principle partially carried out in the Criminal Procedure Code Amendment Bill, in pursuance of which it is proposed to confer on Native District Magistrates and Sessions Judges criminal jurisdiction over European British subjects.

“(2) That this meeting regrets that the decision arrived at by the Executive Council of the Government of India with regard to the Criminal Procedure Code Amendment Bill to the already existing invidious distinctions, recognised by law in the status of accused persons, based upon considerations of race ; and that it is calculated to

HISTORY OF THE INDIAN ASSOCIATION

lead to administrative inconvenience and to failure of justice, by reason of the limited number of the Anglo-Indian community in the mofussil, and also in some cases by reason of the fact that the District Magistrate is the only covenanted Magisterial officer in the District. But at the same time this meeting feels it to be its duty to place on record its deep sense of gratitude to His Excellency the Viceroy for his noble vindication of the proclamation of the Queen, and for his earnest and sincere desire to govern India for the benefit of its people.

“(3) That this meeting is of opinion that the system of trial by Jury before the Sessions Courts should be extended to the people of this country ; and further that whenever an accused person, not a European British subject, is brought up before a Magistrate charged with an offence punishable with imprisonment for a term of more than six months, he may claim the right to be committed to the Court of Session.”

The lead given by the Indian Association in connection with the Ilbert Bill compromise was accepted even by the British Indian Association, which could not see eye to eye with the Indian Association on many a public question. Raja Rajendra Lala Mitra, President of the British Indian Association, spoke at its thirty-second annual meeting, on 7th May 1884, on the evil consequences of the compromise in the following lines :

“The power which was left to the Local Government to invest distinguished native officers with the Criminal Jurisdiction has been done away with. The power which existed for a long time in District Magistrates and Justices of the Peace to try British-born subjects has been taken away—virtually taken away though not nominally. They were able then to try European subjects under the ordinary law, but they cannot do so now. The native officers can only try those who do not take exception to their jurisdiction on the ground of race privilege, the clause of not taking exception has been in full force since 1872 so that nothing has been gained. . . . In the case of Sessions Judges you have only obtained one advantage and that is the Sessions Court Judge, whether European or Native, may try European subjects, but then these cases must always be tried with the aid of a jury. Formerly, European Judges in non-jury districts tried too such cases without a jury and so far there has been a deduction on that account

YEARS OF HOPES AND DISAPPOINTMENTS

and not a gain. Consequently the Bill has proved an absolute failure giving you nothing except abuse maintained for a whole year."

II

The liberal measures and Bills of the Government of Lord Ripon gave sufficient impetus to the Indian Association for educating the public. The Ilbert Bill agitation also served to help the Association to educate the public, though in a negative way. The Municipal Bill, the Local Self-Government Bill and the Rent Bill, all went to rouse the people to a sense of self-assertion and self-consciousness. The democratic principles were to be followed in the former two. The municipalities, local boards and district boards were the cradle of democracy. And it was recognised by the Government as well as the educated classes that our political education would be effective only through the medium of these self-governing institutions. By 1884 the Municipal Bill had been passed into an Act. Rules were framed. It was to take effect from the year following. The Indian Association was taking unusual interest in these measures. The Government of the day sought its advice and help whenever it thought necessary, and it was given ungrudgingly by the Association.

'Eternal vigilance is the price of liberty'. Even in small matters the truth of this saying is palpable. The Association was all along vigilant and when the rules for the application of the Municipal Act were framed, the Association discovered the undemocratic nature of some of them. According to the suggestion of the Association, it was settled that where the Chairman of a Municipality was to be elected by its members, the sub-divisional officer or any higher officer of the locality would not be allowed to sit on it. The Local Self-Government Bill was also on the Legislative anvil by 1885. The Association placed its suggestions before the Government. Some of its features appeared to the Association very objectionable. It urged the Government to remove or replace them to make the Bill really democratic.

III

The Association had carried on public education, with regard to these measures vigorously. But the Rent Bill had supplied a fresh field for its

HISTORY OF THE INDIAN ASSOCIATION

activities. The Association took upon itself the task of making direct contact with the illiterate peasantry who were and still are the backbone of the nation. The Rent Bill had now been about four years old. How the Indian Association took up the cause of the ryots and organised mass-meetings in the villages to bring home to them the beneficent aspects of the proposed Rent Bill, have already been narrated. The Rent Bill, now called the Bengal Tenancy Bill, had passed through several Committees, and the form it took by 1884, was not only unsatisfactory but was deemed prejudicial to the interests of the peasantry. The Association expressed its regret on the form the Rent Bill had taken in its *Report* for 1884 in the following words :

“It is with very great regret that the Committee notice the unexpected results which the labours of the Select Committee on the Rent Bill have produced. The Bill as revised by the Select Committee has deprived the raiyat of some of those rights which have been secured under the preceding Bills. The security of his holding is not now so assured, as it was under the preceding Bill, the transfer of the occupancy-right is no longer regulated by law but by custom ; the non-occupancy raiyat is no longer entitled to compensation upon unjust eviction ; the under-raiyat can never rise to the status of the occupancy-raiyat. While the position of the raiyat has thus been rendered far worse than what it was under the preceding Bills, very considerable facilities have been afforded to the Zaminder for enhancement of rent. Such being the material alterations made in the new Bill, the Committee felt themselves called upon to take action in the matter. They accordingly sent up a representation on the publication of the report of the Select Committee to the Government of India on the eve of the discussion of the Bill.”

The Bill was about to reach its final stages by 1885. The Indian Association again engaged itself in the task of organising mass-meetings in the mofussil to voice their sentiments over the Bill as it had finally emerged from the Select Committee. Several such meetings were held in Pabna, Faridpur and Nadia districts. According to the *Report* for 1885, “The Association claims the credit of having given a stimulus to the movement of which these mass meetings were the outcome, and of having popularised them. After Jhinkergacha, no less than six such meetings were held at

YEARS OF HOPES AND DISAPPOINTMENTS

different places—at Bhaduria, Seven Tanks, Tarakeswar, Uluberia, Singur and Bhadreswar. . . for the purpose of organising these meetings, the advice and co-operation of the Association were sought, and they were undrudgingly given. The Tarakeswar meeting was exclusively organised by the Association”.

The Government did not take kindly of this new awakening of the masses, and the mass meetings, the venue of its public expression, were believed to be looked upon with disfavour at that time. But the Association would not be daunted, for the utility of the mass meetings lay not only in organising public opinion over political, social and economic questions affecting the daily life of the people but they also served as a prelude to permanent village organisations which worked for the welfare of the village. These meetings should therefore be regarded as a sure mean of popular advancement. “If the Government,” says the Association, “desires to promote the education of the masses, here we have a most useful instrument of education. The meetings are but the prelude to the formation of an extensive organisation for the education of the masses. Each village, or a number of villages, taken together, form an organisation; meetings are regularly held; the newspapers are read; questions of local interests are discussed; the germs of a new-born public spirit are created and fostered; and altogether a healthier tone is imparted to the community which share the benefits of such an organisation. Such is the work which the mass-meetings aim to achieve; and instead of the disfavour of the authorities, a movement such as this. . . should enlist their most cordial sympathies. . .”

The Association submitted a representation to the Government in connection with the Rent Bill, as finally modified by the Select Committee, which, although an improvement on the existing law, inadequately fulfilled its main original purpose, that is, to conferring fixity of tenure upon the ryot. The actual state of things as also its reaction on the most advanced political body, the Indian Association, will be clear from the following extract taken from the latter’s representation :

“The Committee [of the Indian Association] have watched with keen interest the various changes, which the Rent Bill now known as the Bengal Tenancy Bill have undergone and have, from time to time, offered their opinion upon these changes. But they would be wanting

HISTORY OF THE INDIAN ASSOCIATION

in their duty, if they did not express the disappointment which they feel at the somewhat unexpected result to which the discussions of the Select Committee have led, and the very material alterations more or less prejudicial to the interests of the ryots which have been introduced, at the very last stage of the Bill. It is true, the Government cannot please all parties. But if ever there was a Bill which thoroughly displeased the parties most interested in it, it is the Tenancy Bill as revised by the Select Committee. But this is a small matter. What the Committee complain—and what the public have some right to complain—is that the Bill having been introduced with the special object of benefiting the ryots, has one by one been deprived of those provisions which gave it its distinctive character, and has now, with the latest alteration, appeared in a form which inadequately fulfils the purposes for which it was framed. This is all the more to be regretted, as the agitation which has now lasted for more than four years, has produced an unhappy tension of feeling between landlords and tenants, which may lead to deplorable results, unless the interests of the weaker party are safeguarded by the provisions of a wise and careful legislation. If the Bill have never been introduced—if the agitation in consequence of its introduction had never taken place—things might have been left to take their natural course. But the agitation has produced unfriendly relations between landlords and tenants and in the new situation the interests of the weaker party need much greater protection than they ever did before. It is to be feared that, for some years to come, the Zemindars will be only too eager to assert their rights against the helplessness of an unprotected peasantry and that all those rights which the ryots enjoy, and for which they can point to no higher authority than that of custom, will be warmly contested by the Zemindars. Thus if ever there was the need of protection as regards the interests of the ryots, the need is much greater now. It is, therefore, with a sense of disappointment and alarm, that the Committee of the Indian Association have observed the changes which have been made by the Select Committee. . . .”

The final form the so-called Bengal Tenancy Bill took was a cause of disappointment, but the political work of public education and propaganda undertaken by the Association continued as vigorously if not more so than before. Throughout the districts of Bengal, the activities of the

YEARS OF HOPES AND DISAPPOINTMENTS

Association's agents were carried on with the greatest energy. The people in general became interested in the object for which the Association stood. They also contributed their mite to the National Fund. Collections were also made by the branches established by it in Northern India in this direction. With the South, too, the Association worked in complete co-operation on all-India questions. Surendra Nath had already travelled twice in Northern India and once in the Southern and delivered the message of the Association for united action. The National Conference, convened under its auspices in 1883, was only the culmination of these efforts of the Association on an all-India basis.

IV

The Association persisted in these endeavours and sent its emissaries outside Bengal now and then for the purpose. In May 1884, it was able to induce Surendra Nath Banerjea to tour Northern India again. It was the third tour of Surendra Nath on this national mission. The Civil Service question that had brought the people all over the land close and closer, still remained unsettled. With it was added the propagation of the underlying principles of the newly started National Fund in Bengal. Accompanied by Govinda Chandra Das, a pleader of the Calcutta High Court, Surendra Nath proceeded to Upper India. 'They were eminently successful in their mission. Crowded enthusiastic meetings were held in all the towns of Northern India— at Lahore, Amritsar, Multan, Rawalpindi, Ambala, Delhi, Allygurh, Lucknow, Cawnpore, Allahabad, Benares and Bankipore. Memorials were addressed to the Secretary of State from all these places, praying that the maximum limit of age for the Indian Civil Service should be raised, subscriptions in aid of the National Fund were also promised' (*Report for 1884*).

The observations of Surendra Nath himself on the national importance of this and other all-India tours deserve to be quoted. Though these tours were started with the cry of Civil Service, still 'the central idea was the promotion of unification between the different Indian people and provinces, and of a feeling of friendliness between the people of Bengal and the martial races of the North. We counted for nothing in these days. It was constantly dinned into our ears that our political demands, whatever they were came from the people of the deltaic Ganges, who did not contribute a single soldier to the army, and who were separated from the sturdier races of the North by a wide gulf of isolation, if not of alienation. We wanted to dissipate this myth.

HISTORY OF THE INDIAN ASSOCIATION

To-day it stands exploded by the creation of the Congress and the long train of united and patriotic endeavours which have marked the solidarity of the life of modern India." (A Nation in Making, p. 87)

The national movement, started about a decade ago on the Civil Service question, had now taken a definite form. But the Civil Service question had remained unsolved as yet, though a slight and doubtful concession had been made by the creation of the Statutory Civil Service. The Memorials of the Indian Association and similar bodies passed at the above meetings in Northern India, were all sent to the Secretary of State for India. This time the Government of Lord Ripon, too, convinced of the justness of the cause, addressed a unanimous despatch to the Secretary of State urging the raising of the limit of age. A Public Service Commission was appointed in 1885. It goes without saying that the Indian Association at once set to correspond with the Commission. The Association played its part creditably in its evidences before the Commission and as the result of its recommendation the age for the Indian Civil Service was raised to the limit of 21 years.

V

It was mainly due to the unremitting and vigorous efforts of the Indian Association that a new national awakening was perceptible throughout the length and breadth of India. The liberal measures initiated by Lord Ripon's Government also contributed to this national resurgence. The people were now buoyed up with fresh hopes and aspirations. There were set-backs and disappointments even while Lord Ripon was in India, but this did not impede the tide of national consciousness which manifested itself at the time of Lord Ripon's departure. The Indians of Calcutta, forgetting their differences political or otherwise, mustered strong in the Belgachia Gardens to give Lord Ripon a suitable farewell. On his way to Bombay, at every station and in every town people assembled in thousands to give him a hearty send-off. These demonstrations, manifesting a hitherto unknown national consciousness and solidarity, were an eye-opener to the highly placed officials who lived isolated from the people. Let us hear Surendra Nath :

"The year 1884 witnessed the departure of Lord Ripon, and it was the occasion of popular demonstrations unparalleled in Indian

YEARS OF HOPES AND DISAPPOINTMENTS

annals. The Anglo-Indian official living in isolation and detachment from the people now began to realise the birth of a national movement, of which he had not the faintest conception. 'If it be real, what does it mean?' exclaimed Sir Auckland Colvin, the Indian Finance Minister, with passionate bewilderment, in a pamphlet of that name which at the time created quite a sensation and was largely read. The demonstrations were a revelation to the bureaucracy; and they extended from Calcutta to Bombay; and town after town through which the retiring Viceroy passed vied with the others in displaying its love and gratitude to their benefactor. 'The dry bones in the open vally' said Sir Auckland Colvin, 'had become instinct with life'. (*A Nation in Making*, p. 88.)

The Indian Association had initiated most of the national endeavours in the country for about a decade. The consciousness of which Sir Auckland said so much, was the result of the nationwide movement of the Association during this period. The Association was not only instrumental in giving rise to this awakening, but always tried to mould it and guide it into proper channels. The first manifestation of this was the National Conference of 1883, initiated, organised and convened by the leaders of the Indian Association. The unprecedented national upsurge which came to light at the time of Lord Ripon's departure from India, again required to be so guided as to be of permanent good to the people. This time, too, the leaders of the Indian Association came forward to take the lead by convening a second National Conference in Calcutta on the eve of the first session of the Indian National Congress in Bombay.

VI

Meanwhile, the Association was active in other directions. The Committee of the Association made representations to the Government on various questions. The Government were already looking with disfavour upon the mass-meetings held in Bengal in connection with the Rent Bill. During the Northern Indian tour of Surendra Nath in 1884 they came to a head and the Indian officials who attended the Civil Service meetings in which Surendra Nath spoke in the Panjab, were brought to book by the local Government and explanations were called from some of them for attending these meetings. The Committee of the Indian Association promptly made representation to the Indian Government, call-

HISTORY OF THE INDIAN ASSOCIATION

ing their attention to the fact that the European officials had never been taken to task for their joining the Ilbert Bill agitation in direct contravention of the Government policy. The Association urged the Panjab Government not to proceed further in the matter. In this connection the Committee also emphasised that the individual liberty of any person should not be curtailed, be he a Government servant or not.

The Association gave particular attention to the subject of the combination of executive and judicial functions in the same officer of the State and the consequent abuses in the discharge of proper justice. The Association had already taken initiative in this matter and in the National Conference of 1883, a resolution was passed for the remedy of the above defect. Some cases, especially the case at Krishnagar, brought home to the people in a very clear light the abuses of justice because of this combination of powers. The Committee of the Association waited upon the Viceroy with the following resolution and prayed for immediate remedy: "That the combination of Judicial and Executive functions in the same officer is detrimental to the fair and impartial administration of justice, and steps should at once be taken with a view to vest these powers in separate and independent functionaries."

VII

Another work of the Indian Association at the time consisted in the agitation throughout India for the introduction of the representative system of Government in the country. The Committee of the Indian Association included this subject in the programme of the National Conference. Since then they began to focus the public opinion over this important subject. There was then some sort of legislative councils, imperial and provincial, the latter again in Bengal, Bombay and Madras only— which were not at all popularly represented and where the Indians had little voice. These, they thought, could be so broad-based as to turn them into popular representative bodies. The Indian Association had welcomed Lord Ripon in 1880 and placed before him the national demands which at the time included the repeal of the Vernacular Press Act, the Arms Act, the abolition of the import duties on cotton goods, and the like. Since then it became a custom with the Association to approach the incoming Viceroys and the Lieutenant-Governors (later, Governors) with an address of welcome in which their attention had been drawn to the national as well as provincial questions and topics. Lord Dufferin succeeded Lord Ripon as Viceroy.

YEARS OF HOPES AND DISAPPOINTMENTS

On the latter's arrival, the Committee of the Indian Association waited upon him with an address of welcome. Among other things, the new Viceroy's attention was prominently called to the need of reconstituting and reforming at least the Provincial part of the Legislative Councils. The address, drafted by Surendra Nath Banerjea himself, was presented to Lord Dufferin on December 24, 1884. The passage in the address that refers to this subject is worth reproducing. After referring to the introduction of the Municipal Act, the Address went on to say :

“In this connection it would not be out of place to observe that the reconstitution of the Provincial Legislative Councils is one of those reforms which public opinion seems to demand with increasing urgency. This is not the time nor the place to enter upon the consideration of so vast a subject. But this may safely be asserted that Provincial Legislative Assemblies, as at present constituted, without the right of interpellation or any share in the financial management with their official majorities for the most part, and the non-official members owing their appointment entirely to nomination, admit of little room for the successful expression of popular opinion, and fail to command that degree of confidence which is so needful for their efficient working. Even in the neighbouring Crown-colony of Ceylon, the Legislative Council is based upon a more popular model.”

This was a vital problem, affecting the different provinces of India. The Indian Press, too, took up the matter with warm interest. They were almost unanimous in the demand for reconstitution of these Councils.

VIII

The Indian Association was also mindful of things affecting Bengal in particular. The local Government asked its opinion on various subjects, such as, the scheme of Local Self-Government, the Report of the Excise Committee, the Value Payable Scheme, etc. The Association submitted its considered views on each one of these subjects. The Committee of the Association set on foot in 1885 an agitation in connection with Choukidari Bill introduced in the Bengal Legislative Council. This Bill was considered retrograde and reactionary. The agitation grew in volume in the mofussil. The Association also made a representation to the Government. As a result of these the Bill was dropped, and a new Bill was introduced. It

HISTORY OF THE INDIAN ASSOCIATION

was subsequently enacted into a law, which, as a whole, was an improvement on the old law.

The Association had hitherto engaged mainly in political work. From 1884 it turned its attention to social service also. Famine was imminent in Birbhum in the latter half of the year. The Association deputed Dwarkanath Ganguli to make a preliminary survey of the famine area. He again visited the district, accompanied by Surendra Nath Banerjea. The Association opened centres in the famine-stricken area and administered relief to the affected people in conjunction with the Sadharan Brahmo Samaj. The leaders of the Association, mentioned above, again visited the area early in 1885 and supervised personally the arrangements for the relief of the people. The service the Association and the Brahmo Samaj rendered during the famine, elicited favourable comments from the Government. As this relief-work of the Association was the first of a series in which it used to take a prominent part, these comments on its first attempt would appear all the more felicitating :

“In the relief of distress in the Beerbhoom District the Government was ably and effectively seconded by the Indian Association and the Sadharan Brahmo Samaj, whose delegates were early in the field and who afforded the local officers valuable assistance, while also distributing in an effective yet economical manner the fund which private charity had placed at their disposal. It has already been the Lieutenant-Governor’s pleasurable duty to acknowledge and bring to the notice of the Government of India the praiseworthy action of these associations during the period of distress ; and in this final review of the relief administration, Sir Rivers Thompson desires to place on record his sense of the obligation under which these associations and their delegates have placed him by their charitable and patriotic exertions.”

IX

Mention has already been made of the mass-meetings in the mofussil organised by the agents of the Indian Association in connection with the Rent Bill. Many village unions were formed by the local people and got them affiliated to the Indian Association. Throughout 1884 and 1885 the Association sent delegates to the districts of Bengal to popularise the object of the National Fund movement as well as to help the people start Branch Associations in their respective localities. The name of Dwarka Nath

YEARS OF HOPES AND DISAPPOINTMENTS

Ghose, the most active agent of the Association, should be specially mentioned in this connection. At the end of 1885, the Indian Association had to its credit as many as eighty Branch Associations spreading all over Bengal and in Northern India up to Lahore. Beside one at Lahore, there were Branch Associations established at Pherozpore, Allahabad, Meerut, Muzafferpore, Bhagalpore, Chapra and Bankipore. Some of the village unions were formed a few years previously. Now that the Bengal Tenancy Bill was about to reach its final stage, we find at least thirteen village unions established in some of the Bengal districts as branch associations of the Indian Association. By 1885 the Indian Association had turned into a truly national organisation representing different sections of the people.

The Committee of the Indian Association underwent some changes during 1885. The Rev. K. M. Banerjea, the venerable president of the Association, died in May 1885. The erudite scholar that he was, he was an asset to the Association, and his active interest in the cause that it represented, extorted praise from the friend and the foe alike. Surendra Nath Banerjea had some very felicitating words about the first regular president of the Association in his *A Nation in Making* (p. 61.) In his place was elected Raja Rajendra Narayan Deb Bahadur as President of the Association. Ananda Mohan Bose who so ably conducted the affairs of the Association as its Secretary since its inception in 1876 retired in favour of Surendra Nath Banerjea in 1885. Ananda Mohan had served in many capacities for the good of his motherland during this period. The most important of these was his membership of the Hunter Commission, constituted in 1882 under the Chairmanship of Sir W. W. Hunter for enquiring into the state of mass education and devising ways and means for spreading it in the country. Now in 1885 he was appointed a member to the Bengal Legislative Council.

CHAPTER XI

THE NATIONAL CONFERENCE : 1885.

The Indian Association had already organised the National Conference in 1883. The idea was there. Since then leaders of the premier provinces met in their respective headquarters and tried to give the idea shape. One such attempt was at the Theosophist Convention, held at Adyar, Madras, in December, 1884. Annie Besant has referred to the importance of this convention in her *How India Wrought for Freedom*. (P. 112.) But actually though we do not find mention of it in her book, a National Conference was held at Calcutta one year prior to it and a National Conference was also held in Calcutta in December 1885 almost simultaneously with the Indian National Congress. Annie Besant has told us in her book of the efforts of A. O. Hume who, in March 1885, issued a circular to the leaders of different provinces as a result of which the first session of the Indian National Congress was convened at Bombay in December, 1885. Gurmukh Nihal Singh has referred to the National Conference in connection with foundation of the Congress only once and that in a foot-note in *Landmarks in Indian Constitutional and National Development* ! (P. 112.) In the official *History of the Indian National Congress* by B. Pattabhi Sitaramayya (p. 11) we find only a few lines on the first National Conference. This failure to give due importance to the National Conferences of 1883 and 1885 shows want of perspective in dealing with the history of our freedom movement.

The convention of the National Conference twice in three years' time was the greatest achievement of the Indian Association. How the idea of such a National Conference originated, and was given a shape has been told by Surendra Nath Banerjea very lucidly in the following extracts :

“The idea of a National Conference is as old as the year 1877. It originated on the occasion of the Delhi assemblage, when the princes and the rulers of the land met for the purposes of a great show, and it suggested itself to the minds of many that the representatives of the people might also meet, if not for the purpose of a show, at least for the consideration and discussion of questions of national importance. That idea, however, was not realised until 1883, when the Indian Association, taking advantage of the International Exhibition that was held that year, called a National Conference at the Albert

THE NATIONAL CONFERENCE: 1885

Hall, Calcutta. The idea had taken firm hold of the national mind, and conferences are now being held all over the Indian Continent—at Bombay, at Allahabad, at Madras, and at the remote station of Ajmir. Indeed, all India seemed at the present moment to have met in solemn conclave to think out the great problem of national advancement.”

The objects of the National Conference were not sectional nor regional but truly national. “We have met,” continued Surendra Nath, “to talk, to deliberate, to consult, and if possible to arrive at a common programme of political action. Too often our energies are frittered away in isolated and individual efforts. One Association for instance might be agitating for the Reform of the Civil Service, a second for the Reconstitution of the Legislative Councils, a third for Retrenchment of Expenditure. Our idea is to bring the national forces, so to speak, into a focus ; and if possible to concentrate them upon some common object calculated to advance the public good. Such I conceive to be the prevailing idea of the conference.” The National Conference of 1885 was more national than that held in 1883, because the landed aristocracy and the Muhammadans joined the conference. Though the Indian Association took initiative in organising the Conference, the British Indian Association representing the former and the Indian Union of which Maharja Jatindra Mohan Tagore was the Paesident, co-operated with the Indian Association to make the National Conference a success.

II

More than thirty political Associations all over Northern India sent their representatives to the National Conference. Behar was especially represented in the person of the President of the Behar Landholders' Association, His Highness the Maharaja of Darbhanga. Bombay was represented in the person of the Hon'ble V. N. Mandlik, the Member of the Imperial Legislative Council. The proceedings of the National Conference of 1885 record the attendance of the following persons :

“His Excellency the Ambassador of Nepal ; His Highness the Hon'ble the Maharaja Luchmeswar Singh Bahadur of Darbhanga ; Maharaja Narendra Krishna Bahadur ; H. J. S. Cotton, Esq., C. S. ; Raja Rajendra Narayan Deb Bahadur ; Raja Purna Chundra Singh Bahadur ; Raja Purnendu Deb Roy of Bansbaria ; Amir, Ali, Esq., Barrister-at-Law ; Babu Durga Charan Law, C.I.E. ; Babu Joy Kissen

HISTORY OF THE INDIAN ASSOCIATION

Mukherjee ; Dr. Mahendra Lal Sircar, M.D.; Pandit Sibnath Sastri ; Kumar Sarat Chandra Singh ; Kumar Debendra Mallik ; Kumar Binay Krishna ; Kumar Satyabadi Ghosal ; Babu Gurudas Banerjee D. L.; Babu Mahesh Chandra Chaudhuri ; Babu Kali Mahan Das ; Rai Buddree Das Bahadur ; Rai Kunja Lal Banerjea Bahadur ; Dr. Lal Madhab Mukherjee ; Dr. A. Kastigir ; Pandit Jwala Nath Sarma, B. L.; N. Ghosh, Esq. Barrister-at-Law; Dr. M. M . Bose; Dr. A. Mitra; Babu Jagarnath Khanna; Babu Isvar Chandra Mitra; Babu Surendra Nath Paul Chaudhury; Babu Chandi Charan Sen ; Babu Kisoril Lal Gossain ; Babu Girish Chandra Ghosh; Babu Uma Nath Gupta ; Babu Jogendra Chandra Ghosh, M.A, B.L.; Babu Bijay Kissen Mukherjee, Uttarpara; Babu Lok Nath Mallik; Babu Baikunta Nath Basu ; Babu Keshab Chandra Acharyee Choudhuri, Maimensingh; Babu Upendra Nath Mukherjee, B.L.; Babu Gobinda Chandra Das, M.A., B.L.; Babu Abhoy Chandra Guha; Rai Hyder, Esqr. ; S. J. Padshaw, Esq.; Babu Nalinakhya Bose, Burdwan; Babu Broja Kishore Bose, Berhampur ; Babu Kali Sankar Sukul, M.A.; The Hon'ble Peary Mohan Mukherjee, Secretary, British Indian Association ; Babu Surendra Nath Banerjea, Secretary, Indian Association ; Dr. Troylokya Nath Mitra, Secretary, Indian Union ; Babu Dwaraka Nath Chakrabarty, Assistant Secretary, British Indian Association ; Babu Dwaruka Nath Ganguli, Assistant Secretary, Indian Association; and Babu Ramani Mohan Chatterjee, M.A., Assistant Secretary, Indian Union.

One point should be particularly emphasised here, which is generally overlooked by the history-writers of the Congress. The movement of a National Conference could not but have been known to the organisers of the Indian National Congress. Because Surendra Nath Banerjea says in his *A Nation in Making* (p. 99) that "Mr. Kashinath Trembuk Telang wrote to me from Bombay requesting me to send him some notes about the first National Conference held in 1883". Mr. Telang was present at the Theosophist Convention held in December 1884 at Adyar, Madras. He was one of the principal organisers of the Bombay Congress in 1885. But though he sought for the notes from Surendra Nath, it is apparent the latter was not told of the imminent Congress Session to be held at Bombay. Surendra Nath again writes: "Mr. W. C. Bonnerjea, who presided over the Bombay Congress, invited me to attend it. I told him that it was too late

THE NATIONAL CONFERENCE : 1885

to suspend the Conference, and that as I had a large share in its organisation it would not be possible for me to leave Calcutta and attend the Bombay Congress.' Perhaps it may appear strange to us today that the conveners of the Conference and the Congress started the work of organisation without being aware of the efforts of each other till the eve of the sittings. In the words of Surendranath : "The movements were simultaneous ; the preliminary arrangements were made independently, neither party knowing what the other was doing until on the eve of the sittings of the Conference and of the Congress."

III

The National Conference met this time in the Rooms of the British Indian Association, Calcutta, on the 25th, 26th and the 27th December 1885. The procedure of the former conference was followed. Each day it was presided over by a different individual. The Hon'ble Durga Charan Law, C.I.E., took the chair on the first day, 25th December. In his opening remarks the President said :

"It has often been said that the India of today is not what it was 20 or 30 years ago, and I should say not even 10 years ago, and what suited us then, cannot suit the altered circumstances of the present day. As regards the truth of this remark there can be no two opinions, and we have to consider what measures or changes have become desirable and the best and most legitimate means to adopt to attain the desired end. An interchange of opinion in this way, when fairly and moderately expressed, cannot but be productive of the best results."

The President then asked Surendra Nath Banerjea to move the first resolution on the Reconstitution of the Legislative Councils. In a neat little speech Surendra Nath first explained the import of the resolution for the introduction of parliamentary system of Government in India. The Imperial as well as the Provincial Council should be reconstituted and reformed, so that popular opinion might be reflected in it. Thirteen delegates from different centres including Kali Mohan Das and Dr. Gurudas Banerjea of Calcutta, Ambika Charan Mazumdar of Faridpore and V. N. Mandlik of Bombay took part in the discussion. Everyone of them supported wholeheartedly the main intent of the proposition. H. J. S. Cotton, the famous

HISTORY OF THE INDIAN ASSOCIATION

author of *New India*, then a highly placed civilian officer of the Government and later, President of the Indian National Congress, took a lively interest in this Conference. He attended the first day's sitting and delivered a speech in which he offered some practical suggestions for the introduction of parliamentary system of Government in India. Surendra Nath then moved the resolution on this important subject :

“That in the opinion of this Conference the question of the reconstitution of the Legislative Councils is one of the utmost importance and the Conference resolved to appoint the following gentlemen, with power to add to their number, to consider what steps should be taken to bring about a satisfactory settlement of this question :

H. H. the Maharaja of Durbhanga.
Maharaja Sir Jotindra Mohan Tagore, K.C.S.I.
Maharaj Narendra Krishna.
Babu Durga Charan Law, C.I.E.
Dr. Rajendra Lala Mitra, LL.D., C.I.E.
Raja Purna Chandra Singh.
Hon'ble Peary Mohan Mookherjee.
Babu Jogendra Chandra Ghose.
Babu Mahesh Chandra Chaudhuri.
Dr. Gurudas Banerjee.
Dr. Trailokya Nath Mitra.
Hon'ble A. M. Bose.
Babu Dwaraka Nath Ganguli.
Babu Ashutosh Biswas.
Babu Kunja Lal Banerjee, Rai Bahadur.
Babu Heramba Chandra Maitra.
Babu Parbati Sankar Roy Choudhuri.
Rai Jatindra Nath Chaudhuri.
Surendra Nath Banerjee.”

The resolution was seconded by the Hon'ble Peary Mohan Mukherjee and carried *nem con*.

IV

Joy Kishen Mukherjee presided over the second day's proceedings. This day three propositions were presented for discussion, *viz.* the Arms Act,

Retrenchment of Expenditure and the Civil Service question. All the propositions were discussed threadbare, but only on the second item a resolution was formally moved and passed.

On the invitation of the Chair, Ashutosh Biswas opened discussion on the Arms Act. He at first dwelt on the historical aspect of the Act. He said that the Arms Act of 1878 was far worse than the Arms Acts of 1858 and 1860 inasmuch as the former rendered the mere possession or carrying of an arm criminal. The invidious distinction made by the Act of 1878 was also unknown in the previous Acts. The present Act disarmed the Indians, the real children of the soil, but allowed non-Indians to possess arms at their sweet will. Delegates from Meerut, Assam and from the interior parts of Bengal—all referred to the helplessness of their countrymen as a result of the stringent application of the Act. The people could no longer defend themselves against the attacks of robbers and decoits and ravages from wild boars, elephants and tigers. A universal emasculation stared them in the face. There was no escape from it until the Act was repealed.

Dr. Gurudas Banerjea's review of the question was quite novel. According to him, the Arms Act was a blot on the statute book. It was proclaiming to the world that Her Majesty's Indian subjects were disloyal and could not be trusted. If the Act could not be repealed at once, he suggested that the invidious distinction in the application of the Act should be immediately removed, and it should be so amended as to arrest the tide of emasculation set in by it. Surendra Nath Banerjea suggested the preparation of a Blue-Book. Facts and figures would be collected from the different parts of the country, regarding the loss of life, the damages of crops and other evils consequent on the Arms Act. The President in his speech summed up the discussion. He referred to the 'fighting Munsiff' of Allahabad who, a co-villager of his, could not have repelled the attacks of hundreds of the mutineers, had he not previously learnt the use of arms properly. Even during the Mutiny they had not felt so helpless as they did now. Within three miles from the town of Hugli, hundreds of bighas of land was lying fallow. Whenever he approached the people to cultivate this land they asked him to give them protection and save the crops from the ravages of wild beasts. They were unable to procure licences for arms from the Government. This was the actual state of things prevailing in the country. Thus if the Act was not either repealed

HISTORY OF THE INDIAN ASSOCIATION

or amended immediately, there would be universal emasculation and helplessness.

The President himself opened discussion on Retrenchment of Expenditure. The annual military expenditure, the proverbial 'home charges' and the enormous cost of the civil administration—were all enhausting their finances. He produced facts and figures to prove his contention and asked those present to ponder over the subject seriously. Surendra Nath Banerjea, Damodar Das of Kasi Sarbajanik Sabha of Benares and a few others joined the discussion. They referred to the unsatisfactory state of the finances and urged that means should be adopted to curtail the expenditure. The following resolution on the subject was unanimously accepted in the third day's sitting :

“That this Conference is of opinion that retrenchment of expenditure is desirable and feasible, and the Conference having learnt that the British Indian Association have already resolved to move the Government with a view to reduction of expenditure, entrust this important duty to that body.”

The next proposition that came up for discussion was the all-important Civil Service question. Kali Churn Banerjea opened the discussion. He traced in brief the history of the Civil Service up to the despatch of Lord Ripon. The latter included the following proposals in his despatch : (1) that Arabic and Sanskrit should be marked as high as Greek and Latin, (2) that the age should be altered from 19 to 21 and (3) that the question of holding examinations in India and at London simultaneously should be considered. The Secretary of State wanted, in a despatch to the Indian Government, to minimise the importance of these proposals. In the course of the speech Kali Churn Banerjea exposed the motive behind the Secretary of State's despatch and implored his countrymen to continue the agitation till the just proposals contained in Lord Ripon's despatch were accepted in full. And in this he was fully supported amongst others by the delegate from Meerut and Heramba Chandra Maitra of the Kanaipur Branch Indian Association.

V

The third day's proceedings opened with Maharaja Narendra Krishna in the Chair. The main item on this day's agenda was the proposition for

THE NATIONAL CONFERENCE: 1885

the separation of Judicial from Executive authority in the administration of criminal justice. Dwarkanath Chakravarti opened discussion. In a very able speech he brought home to the delegates the absurdity of and the evils arising from combining the function of the prosecutor and the judge in one and the same person. Delegates from Meerut, Assam and the Bengal districts narrated their sad experiences of the abuse of justice at the hands of the prosecutor-magistrates of their respective places. Surendra Nath disclosed the fact that Lord Ripon proposed to charge the Joint Magistrates with the power of judging the criminal cases instead of the prosecutor-magistrate, under the direct supervision and control of the Sessions Judge. But his proposal did not materialise. It was decided to continue to agitate until their object was attained. Some other delegates from Northern India as well as the mofussil spoke on the subject. A similar resolution was accepted in the National Conference of 1883. The resolution, moved and passed unanimously in this session, runs as follows :

“That in the opinion of this Conference it is necessary to separate judicial from executive authority in the interests of sound and efficient administration in matters relating to criminal justice.”

Kunja Lal Banerjea, ex-Judge, Small Causes Court, Calcutta, opened the discussion on the Police question. Highhandedness of police authorities was rampant everywhere all over India. The delegates from Allahabad Meerut, Benares, as well as those from the Bengal districts told the same tale. Everyone of the speakers insisted on the reconstitution of the Police at an early date. A loyal, trusted and serviceable board of Police officers was the need of the hour.

The Conference took note of the proposed Parliamentary Committee of Enquiry into Indian affairs. Since the acceptance of the Government of India by the British Crown, no parliamentary committee was instituted by the 'Home' Government to enquire into the administration of the country. And it was a long-standing grievance of the people. Now that a proposal was mooted in this direction, the Conference accepted a resolution welcoming the proposal. It was moved by the Hon'ble Peary Mohan Mukherjee and seconded by Surendra Nath Banerjea, both of whom made short speeches on the subject. The resolution is as follows :

“That this Conference welcomes the proposal to appoint a Parliamentary Committee of Enquiry into Indian affairs and trusts that a Sub-Committee will be deputed to this country to take the evidence of independent native witnesses.”

HISTORY OF THE INDIAN ASSOCIATION

It was felt that the National Conference should not be an occasional gathering but should become a permanent assemblage to be met annually in different centres of the country. Surendra Nath Banerjea moved : "That this meeting of delegates is of opinion that a Conference of delegates from different parts of the country should be held next year at a time and place to be determined hereafter."

In a short speech Surendra Nath emphasised the importance of these meetings of delegates from different parts of the country 'who represent the opinions of their constituents,' and he believed that 'these meetings of delegates contain in them the germ of our future Parliamentary institutions.'

The delegates from Allahabad and Meerut lent their support to the resolution. The delegate from Meerut thought that the venue of the Conference should be changed every year. It should meet in places like Bombay, Madras, Allahabad and other great capitals of India. The resolution was carried with acclamation.

Before the conference dispersed, a telegram was sent to following effect to the Conference about to be held at Bombay :

"The delegates in Conference assembled in Calcutta desire to express their deep sympathy with the approaching Conference in Bombay."

Thus the Second National Conference ended. In the *Report* of the Indian Association for 1885, we find that the committee appointed in the conference on the resolution of Legislative Council question, was merged in the Executive Committee of the Bengal National League.

CHAPTER XI

ACHIEVEMENTS OF THE INDIAN ASSOCIATION :

A RETROSPECT

On the 26th July 1886, the Indian Association completed its tenth year. During the period of its existence the Association worked strenuously for national purposes. Organisation of the people for the attainment of political ends was new in this country, and credit for this must be given to the Association. The National consciousness thus generated in the people by the work of the Association found outlet in various conferences and conventions, in different parts of India for national improvement and advancement in the part of national freedom. The Decennial Report of the Indian Association published in 1885 gives us a summary of the efforts and achievements of the Association during the ten years of its existence :

“The Indian Association was established on the 26th of July, 1876. The Association thus complete today the tenth year of its existence, and during the ten years, it has been in existence, it may claim with some degree of justice to have created a new force in the political history of the country, that organised system of agitation extending from one part of the country to the other, which now excites so much attention and which has become an accepted feature of the political life of the present generation, is the work of the Indian Association. The Association was scarcely a year old when Lord Salisbhury reduced the limit of age for the Open Competitive Examination of the Civil Service. Under the auspices of the Association a public meeting was held in the Town Hall, and an agitation was commenced, the first of its kind in India, which extended from Calcutta to Lahore and from Lahore to Madras. It was then clearly demonstrated, as had never before been demonstrated, that all India, in spite of differences of race and religion, was capable of being united for a common political purpose. Such an instance of united action had never before been witnessed ; and the lesson then learnt has since been utilised and with the same uniform result, on several very important occasions. When the Vernacular Press Law was enacted, an agitation was commenced here and in England, with the result that in two years’ time from the enactment of the law, it was repealed. The Association was the first to conceive the idea of deputing a native of India to England to be the spokesman of Indian grievances. Mr. Lal Mohan

HISTORY OF THE INDIAN ASSOCIATION

Ghosh was the delegate of the Indian Association in 1879, and again at the General Election of 1880. The idea has since then been acted upon, and with results far more striking than ever on the occasion of the general Election of 1885.

The idea of holding meetings of the ryots and of teaching them their rights and obligations also originated with the Indian Association. During the Rent Bill controversy, several meetings of the ryots were held under the auspices of the Association to discuss the provisions of the Rent Bill. A meeting was held at Meherpur, attended by upwards of 4,000 ryots, another meeting was held at Kissengunge and a third in Calcutta itself.

Again before Lord Ripon had announced his scheme of Local Self-Government, the Association had formulated the principle that Local Self-Government must precede National Self-Government, and it had already commenced agitation upon the very lines of the concession which it was the glory of Lord Ripon's Government to have conferred upon the people.

The National Conferences recently held in Bombay and in Calcutta have excited very considerable attention, but here again the idea originated with the Indian Association. The first National Conference was held at the Albert Hall under the auspices of the Indian Association in December 1883, and it was attended not only by delegates from Bombay, Madras and Northern India, but also by such English well-wishers of our country as Mr. Wilfrid Schawan Blunt and Mr. Seymour Keay. Mr. Seymour Keay delivered an address, and Mr. Blunt attended the Conference from day to day and has publicly recorded his views upon that event.

At present the Association is actively engaged in forming village organisations; for, to invest our political demonstration with the reality of power, they must be supported by the great body of the people. It is too often brought forward as a matter of reproach that our political agitation is confined to a few educated Babus. The Association is resolved to wipe off this reproach and a considerable measure of success has already attended its efforts in this direction as is apparent from the numerously attended mass meetings which have been held in different parts of the country and from the response which was recorded to the appeal of the Association to protest against the late Chowkidari Bill.

Such is a brief record of the work of the Association for the period during which it has been in existence.**

*Report for 1885: "The decennial Report of the Indian Association,

PART II

CHAPTER I

THE NEW ROLE : NATIONAL AND PROVINCIAL (1886-90)

Since 1886 the Association entered into a new life. Its activities became extensive and intensive. As in the case of the famous Civil Service meeting of 1877 or the protest meetings against the Vernacular Press Act of 1878, the Committee of the Association organised a representative public meeting at the Town Hall, Calcutta, on 14th July 1886 under the presidency of George Yule, President of the Indian National Congress in 1887, to protest against 'the location of Government of India and the various local administrations during the greater or a portion of the year in the Hills, and away from the recognised seats of Government'. This transfer of the seats of Government to the Hills was popularly known as 'the Exodus to the Hills'. This meeting was very largely attended, and the organisers received telegrams and letters of co-operation and sympathy from the remotest parts of India. A special feature of this meeting was that the non-official Europeans joined it and took an active part in its proceedings. The European Associations of several other provinces also sent letters of sympathy with the objects of the meeting. The movement against the Exodus to the Hills, initiated by the Indian Association, continued for more than half a century.

The achievements of the Indian Association during the first ten years of its existence were indeed remarkable. The Committee of the Association celebrated this occasion by holding a public meeting at the Town Hall, on 26th July 1886, in which the elite of Calcutta as well as representatives of the Branch Indian Associations, one hundred and ten in number in 1886-87, joined to make the celebration a success. After the meeting was over, a procession was formed, which marched in solemn gravity to the College Square and then dispersed. In the evening a political play, called *Navajuga*, especially composed for the occasion, was performed at the house of Kumar Nilkrishna and Kumar Binay Krishna of Shovabazar, Calcutta. Surendra Nath Banerjea, Secretary to the Association, observes in his *Report* for 1886-87 :

"It is no exaggeration to say that the work of the Association

HISTORY OF THE INDIAN ASSOCIATION

derived fresh impetus from this demonstration in which all joined so enthusiastically and which while it afforded such a cheering picture of the past opened up a hopeful prospect of the future."

II

The Indian Association had worked strenuously for ten years to bring about unity among the Indian people and awaken in their minds a sense of active nationalism. The successful convention of two National Conferences in Calcutta in 1883 and 1885 as well as the first session of the Indian National Congress held at Bombay in 1885 shewed that the national movements started by the leaders of the Indian Association had borne fruit. In fact, the Indian National Congress may in some ways be regarded as the direct fulfilment of the aspirations of the Indian Association. Thus when the authorities of the Congress decided to convene its second session in Calcutta in 1886, the leaders of the Indian Association wholeheartedly co-operated with the Indian National Congress. Mr. A. O. Hume, the founder-Secretary of the Congress, when he came to Calcutta by the middle of the year, found to his surprise that the Bengal leaders had already captured the imagination of the people by their untiring and intensive political activities on behalf of the nation and, therefore, with their help he was able to get the co-operation of the different political bodies which had previously co-operated in the National Conference. The leaders of the Indian Association took the initiative but remained in the background, making it possible for those of other political bodies to be in the fore-front. Raja Rajendra Lala Mitra, then President of the British Indian Association, was elected Chairman of the Reception Committee of the first Calcutta session of the Indian National Congress. Dadabhai Naoroji presided over this year's Congress which, though the second session of the Indian National Congress, for the first time really took a national character. The activities of the Association in connection with the first Calcutta session of the Congress have been couched in an unassuming manner in the following lines :

"The Committee of the Indian Association cordially co-operated with the Committee of the National Congress in organising that movement, and they bore the brunt of the work in securing the attendance of delegates from different parts of Bengal, for whose hospitable recep-

THE NEW ROLE : NATIONAL AND PROVINCIAL (1886-90)

tion, they were prepared to make arrangements and issued a circular to the Bengal Delegates to that effect. On the 27th of December the day preceding the first meeting of the Congress, the Committee called a preliminary meeting of the Bengal Delegates which was held at the premises of the Ripon College, in which the draft Resolutions were considered. At the sitting of the Congress, the Association was represented by the entire committee. After the sittings of the National Congress were over, a second meeting of the Bengal Delegates was held at the British Indian Association Rooms under the auspices of the British Indian Association, The Indian Association and the Indian Union. A Provincial Committee to give effect to the Resolutions of the National Congress was appointed. Two other Committees were also appointed on this occasion—one in connection with the question of coolie emigration in Assam and the other to draft an administration report for the Province from a non-official point of view."

Of the three Committees the first became the Bengal Standing Congress Committee. The Second Committee also set to work immediately. But the third Committee did not proceed any further. In the work of the former two, the leaders of the Indian Association took a very active part.

The Calcutta session of the Indian National Congress in December, 1886, struck a new line of work for the Indian Association. The Association had carried on movements and agitations on important public questions on an all-India basis. Since the inauguration of the Congress, this function of the Association was destined to be gradually taken up by the Indian National Congress. The Association had therefore to assume a provincial colour. Still due to the foresight of the Bengal leaders the Association retained much of its national character though it chiefly busied itself with provincial affairs. Hence in Bengal the Indian Association conducted the affairs of the Indian National Congress with the utmost zeal and earnestness. So that the terms—the Indian Association and the Congress became almost synonymous. During the five years which followed the Calcutta session of the Congress, the Indian Association played a double role.

National questions, such as the Civil Service, the reconstitution of Legislative Councils, the Arms Act, the separation of Judicial from Exe-

HISTORY OF THE INDIAN ASSOCIATION

cutive service, were still awaiting solution. The Indian Association had launched movements on each one of these questions and through country-wide agitation had been able to generate a sense of national consciousness in the people. The Indian National Congress after its formation also naturally took up these matters. But as far as Bengal was concerned the Indian Association was left to stimulate and direct the agitation on these questions. During the five years (1886-90) the Civil Service question was decided once for all, at least for another fifty years, and the subject of the reconstitution of the Legislative Councils reached a crucial stage.

III

The Public Service Commission had been appointed to enquire into the entire system of the covenanted and uncovenanted Civil Services and make necessary recommendations. The Commission started work in 1886. The Indian Association took an active interest in the proceedings of the Commission. On the latter's request the Committee of the Association selected the following gentlemen to appear from Bengal as witnesses before the Public Service Commission:

“The Hon'ble A. M. Bose, Barrister-at-Law
The Hon'ble Kali Nath Mitra, Attorney-at-Law
M. Ghose, Esq., Barrister-at-Law
Babu Mahes Chaudhury, Pleader, High Court
Babu Norendra Nath Sen, Editor, *Indian Mirror*
Babu Kali Charan Banerjee, Pleader, High Court
Babu Durga Mohan Das, Pleader, High Court
Babu Girija Bhusan Mukherjee, Pleader, High Court
Babu Surendra Nath Banerjee, Secretary, Indian Association and
Editor, *Bengalee*
Babu Asutosh Biswas, M.A., B.L., Pleader, Alipore*”

The Commission examined nearly all the gentlemen named by the Committee. Again, when a Sub-Committee of the Commission sat in Calcutta, the Committee of the Association addressed a communication to them suggesting the names of several other gentlemen who should be

*Report of the Indian Association for 1886-87, Appendix C. P. 24.

THE NEW ROLE : NATIONAL AND PROVINCIAL

examined with regard to the subjects referred to by them. The Sub-Committee accepted their suggestion and most of the gentlemen named were either examined or questions were sent to them for replies. The Commission finished their labours by 1888. Their report was published in the year following. The Commission recommended reorganisation of both the covenanted and uncovenanted Civil Services. The maximum age of the prospective officers of the Indian Civil Service cadre was fixed at twenty-three, and the minimum age at twenty-one. London was recommended to be the only venue of the examination of the candidates for the Indian Civil Service by the majority of the members of the Commission, which included Sir Syed Ahmed of Aligarh fame. The interested Britishers had by this time succeeded in alienating an influential section of the Muhammadans headed by Sir Syed. It was he who had wholeheartedly supported the Indian Association so far as the Civil Service question was concerned, a decade ago. This question included two points : (1) raising the minimum age of the Civil Service candidates to twenty-one and (11) holding simultaneous examinations in London as well as in the provincial capitals of India. It was mainly due to the opposition of the two Muhammedan members who joined hands with the British members of the Commission, that the second point could not materialise. The Government accepted the recommendations of the Commission. The countrywide movement conducted by the Indian Association and taken up later by the Congress thus met with partial success.

IV

The institution of a representative system of government in India was considered by the leaders of the Indian Association as the prime need of the hour. Since 1880, they had been agitating for this. They proposed the reconstitution of the Legislative Councils, both imperial and provincial, in meetings and conferences. The Congress took up this subject as the main plank of its agitation. The Golden jubilee of the reign of Queen-Empress Victoria was fast approaching. This time, too, the Committee of the Indian Association took the initiative and started a popular movement for the early introduction of representative government in India as the best way to celebrate the event. Meetings were held for the purpose under the auspices of the Main and Branch Indian Associations throughout Upper India, from Lahore to Chittagong, in more than forty towns and large

HISTORY OF THE INDIAN ASSOCIATION

villages during 1886 and in early 1887. In their addresses to Lord Dufferin, the Viceroy and Governor-General of India, Sir Stuart Colvin Balley, the Lieutenant-Governor of Bengal, as well as to the Queen-Empress, the Committee of the Indian Association emphasised the necessity of early reconstitution of the Legislative Councils on an elective basis. In the last of these addresses presented on 16th February, 1887, the day of the Jubilee Celebration, they even ventured to write :

“Through the wise initiation of the late Viceroy [Lord Ripon] a system of Local Self-Government has been established throughout the country ; and it has, on the whole, been attended with such a measure of success that a feeling has been universally expressed in favour of a further extension of the principles embodied in these local institutions ; and on this auspicious occasion of the Jubilee, we may be permitted to express the hope that it may be the privilege of the people of India to witness, under the auspices of your Majesty’s beneficent and glorious reign, the birth, though it may be only in partial form, of those representative institutions which have always followed in the train of English civilization and which have constituted the noblest monument of English rule”. (*Report of the Indian Association for 1886-87.*)

Replies to the addresses were sympathetic, though mostly non-committal. Lord Dufferin said :

“Glad and happy should I be, if during my sojourn among them (the people of India), circumstances permitted me to extend and place upon a wide and more local footing, the political status which was so wisely given, a generation ago, by that great statesman, Lord Halifax, to such Indian gentlemen as by their influence, their acquirements and the confidence they inspired in their fellow-countrymen, were marked out as usual adjuncts to our Legislative Councils”. (*A Nation in Making*, p. 92.)

Lord Dufferin consulted European and Indian leaders on the subject. Surendra Nath Banerjea was also invited to the Government House and had a long conversation with His Excellency. He (Surendra Nath) urged that the Councils should be reconstituted upon an elective basis, with the right of interpellation and of control over the budget. This was all in 1887.

THE NEW ROLE : NATIONAL AND PROVINCIAL

tsu the success of the Madras session of the Congress and the preceding and subsequent popular movements served as an eye-opener to the bureaucracy. Sir Auckland Colvin, then Lieutenant-Governor of the United Provinces, went out of his way to contribute articles to the newspapers condemning the activities of the Congress. Lord Dufferin, who encouraged the idea of the Indian National Congress and but for whose advice it might have taken a different course altogether, openly criticised and condemned the Congress in his address at the St. Andrews' Dinner at Calcutta on 30th November, 1888. Sir Syed Ahmad's "Patriotic Association", inaugurated in August this year, drew its inspiration from the British officialdom and hurled its strength against the Congress which was still in its infancy. But while openly condemning the Congress and using his official patronage in favour of the "Patriotic Association", the Viceroy sent a secret despatch of the Secretary of State for India supporting the recommendations of the Congress and the Indian Association for the reform of the Councils. Writes Surendra Nath :

"Strange are the ways of statesmanship. Nevertheless we can forget and forgive much in the case of a Viceroy who first recommended a scheme for the reconstitution of the Legislative Councils upon a popular basis. His confidential despatch, which I was the first to publish in the *Bengalee* in March, 1889, formed the basis of the Parliamentary statute of 1892." (*A Nation in Making*, pp. 92-3.)

The Indian Association continued its agitation till it bore fruit. Even after the publication of the despatch, the Committee of the Association went on sending delegates to rouse and mould public opinion on the question. Charles Bradlaugh, the famous Parliamentarian and friend of India, attended the Bombay session of the Congress in 1889 and acquainted himself with the true needs and demands of the Indian people. On his return home he prepared a scheme for the Indian Reforms and presented it to the Parliament. The Congress sent a deputation to England in March 1890 to educate public opinion there in favour of India's demands and strengthen the hands of Bradlaugh. Surendra Nath Banerjea, Secretary to the Indian Association, was a prominent member of the Congress deputation. In India, the Indian Association launched a vigorous campaign throughout the country. Public meetings were held in Calcutta and the mofussil in

HISTORY OF THE INDIAN ASSOCIATION

1890 and resolutions passed, demanding the early reconstitution of the Councils on a popular basis. The Indian Association sent a petition to the Parliament with forty thousand signatures of the people in Bengal in their own hand-writing. A similar petition with as many signatures was forwarded to the Secretary of State for India. Both petitions demanded early introduction of Representative Councils in India.

V

The Indian Association took up the provincial questions with the same zeal, as for instance the agitation against the introduction of out-stills in large and densely populated villages in the districts of Hugli and Howrah, in contravention of the policy laid down in the Report of the Excise Commission of 1883. The Indian Association all along supported the temperance movements in the country, and watched the excise policy of the Government with keen interest. The leaders of the Association, therefore, viewed with alarm and anxiety the introduction of the out-stills since the commencement of the official year 1886-87. The Committee took up the subject and circulated a number of questions with a view to obtain the requisite information. They also appealed to the Calcutta Missionary Conference for help to fight the new menace.

The public agitation against the out-stills grew in volume as the months rolled on. Surendra Nath Banerjea, Secretary to the Association and personally engaged in this fight, has given us a graphic description of the two-fold character of this popular movement. The Committee first approached the Lieutenant-Governor, Sir Stuart Colvin Balley, with a petition on 3rd May 1887 in which they pertinently referred to the introduction of the out-still system into the interior of the Hugli and Howrah districts. They also pointed out that it was in direct conflict with the express declaration of the Government of Bengal, that no considerations of revenue should be allowed to outweigh the paramount duty of Government, to prevent the spread of intemperance. Upon the answers received to the questionnaire and the personal enquiries made by the Committee it prepared a memorandum* and sent it to the Chief Secretary to the Government of Bengal on 15th November, 1887. This was an authentic docu-

* Please see Appendix D.

THE NEW ROLE : NATIONAL AND PROVINCIAL

ment full of details of the havoc done to the labouring and agricultural classes of the villages during the one year which had elapsed since the introduction of the out-stills. Only a few lines from this valuable document will bring home to us the gravity of the havoc :

“From almost everywhere the same tale is heard ; of persons lying dead drunk on the roads in the vicinity of the out-still ; of the attempted outrages on the passers-by, of quarrels and fights, and of the general increase of crime. It must indeed be so in the nature of things. The liquor has been cheapened by nearly three-fourths. A bottle of liquor which formerly cost a rupee may now be had for four annas.”

So according to the Association the out-stills were opened in these places contrary to the recommendations of the Excise Commission and the Association hoped, the Government would early reconsider the question.

The Association, however, laid greater emphasis on and gave precedence to its programme of popular appeal. The numerous Branch Indian Associations which had already been established in the districts of Howrah and Hugli took active part in this movement and the delegates sent by the Indian Association in co-operation with the local leaders organised mass meetings in the interior of these districts and exhorted the people to abstain from drink. Surendra Nath Banerjea, along with Krishna Kumar Mitra, Kali Sankar Sukul and Barada Prasanna Ray, the famous singer-orator of Barisal, attended most of these meetings and made speeches in Bengali. Surendra Nath tells us that his training here stood him in good stead in the days of Swadeshi agitation when he had to deliver speeches in Bengali on innumerable occasions. The story of this movement, especially of the miseries of the common folk, reached the British Parliament, where some members, themselves advocates of temperance, raised questions on the subject, quoting extracts from the Association's memorandum. Messrs. Sammuel Smith, M.P., and W. S. Caine, both ardent advocates of temperance, helped this movement as much as they could, by raising questions in the House of Commons as well as writing in the papers in support of the cause.

The Indian Association also received much help from the newspapers and periodicals of Bengal. In this connection the services of *Grumbashi*,

HISTORY OF THE INDIAN ASSOCIATION

a Bengali fortnightly published from Uluberiah, Howrah, deserves special mention. Since the introduction of the out-stills in 1886, it opened its columns for the publication of the miserable tales of the rural folk consequent on excessive drinking. The paper was a sworn enemy of the out-stills, and gave detailed publicity to the meetings organised in different places of the Howrah and Hugli districts under the auspices of the Indian Association. The accounts of the political and social activities of the Branch Indian Associations of these places also found a ready venue in the *Grambashi*. It rightly became the mouth-piece of the Indian Association so far as its work among the rural people the peasantry and the labouring classes was concerned. It should be noted here that the main Association of Calcutta issued pamphlets in easy Bengali on the evils of the out-stills and the propriety of removing them from the mofussil.

The Government of the day, too, could not ignore this intensive public opinion. They appointed Mr. Westmacott, Magistrate, Howrah, then officiating as Commissioner of the Burdwan Division, to make a thorough enquiry into the out-still system. The assistance of the leaders of the Indian Association was naturally sought. Mr. Westmacott held meetings and took evidence. The Secretary to the Indian Association, Surendra Nath, was present at some of them and helped in the investigation. As a result of the enquiry and the countrywide persistent agitation against the system, the out-stills were abolished throughout the 24-Parganas, Howrah and the Serampore Subdivision of Hugli on 1st April 1889. A year later they were abolished throughout the whole of Burdwan, Presidency, Dacca and Orissa Divisions. In this way the poorer classes in the mofussil were saved from the grip of a terrible scourge.

VI

Alive to the welfare of the peasantry and the labouring class, the Indian Association could not shut its eyes against the miseries of the tea-garden labourers in Assam. The pitiable condition of the tea-garden labourers of Assam (popularly called tea-garden 'coolies') had already attracted notice of the people by the publication of *Kuli-Kahini* by Pandit Ram Kumar Vidyaratna, a preacher of the Sadharan Brahmo Somaj. The Act of 1882, known as the Inland Emigration Act, was enacted for the pur

THE NEW ROLE : NATIONAL AND PROVINCIAL

pose of regulating the system of recruitment of labourers for the Assam tea-gardens as well as introducing official supervision over the condition of the labourers in the tea-gardens. This Act did not repeal the former Act XIII of 1859 in which breach of contract had been made a criminal offence. Kisto Das Pal had condemned the Act of 1882 as a "slave-act". The truth of the nomenclature was proved by the numerous cases of enticement, elopement, torture and even murder of the tea-garden labourers, both men and women which were being brought to light in the newspapers.

The Committee of the Indian Association sent their Assistant Secretary Dwarkanath Ganguli, in 1886, to enquire personally into the condition of the tea-garden labourers in Assam. It should be mentioned here that the proprietors of *Sanjibani*, the progressive Bengali weekly, as well as its editor Krishna Kumar Mitra, who were all connected with the Indian Association, took special interest in this 'coolie' question and opened the columns of their paper for the publication of the heart-rending stories of the Assam tea-garden labourer. As an emissary of the Indian Association, its Assistant Secretary Dwarkanath toured the tea districts of Assam, entered and stayed at tea-gardens incognito to see personally the condition of the labourers—men, women and children. He discovered dungeons in the gardens where recalcitrant men and women were kept as punishment. Physical torture of various kinds was the order of the day. The Brahmo Missionary Pandit Shiva Nath Sastri was also at the time on a religious tour in these districts. Dwarkanath accompanied him to Dhubri, Goalpara, Tejpur, Naogaon, Shibsagar, Dibrugarh and other places.

Shiva Nath Sastri has given us a graphic description of how selfless and heroic Dwarkanath faced all the difficulties in their way with utmost resignation and how even the religious meetings organised for him were attended by Government officials even of the rank of Deputy Commissioner to note down anything that might be said by Dwarkanath to the public. Dwarkanath wrote Bengali articles for *Sanjibani* and English articles for the *Bengalee*, narrating the slave condition of the Assam labourers and the harrowing tales of their life-long misery.

HISTORY OF THE INDIAN ASSOCIATION

The Committee of the Indian Association in 1886 in their address to the Viceroy had already drawn his attention to this question. No action was, however, taken in spite of persistent disclosures in the columns of the newspapers. These 'revealed a ghastly tale of horror and a condition of things which practically amounted to a species of slavery thriving under the protection of British laws and sanctioned by the British Government'. Now that their delegate and Assistant Secretary Dwarkanath Ganguli had placed before them all the facts and figures gathered from personal enquiry as well as the judgements of several cases against the recruiters, Government officials and tea-garden managers, the Committee were in a position to prepare a long and documented memorial on the subject of the tea-garden labourer and place it in the hands of the Government and the public on 5th May 1888. The memorial dealt with the entire 'coolie' question, and the conclusions of the Committee were supported by extracts from official documents. The memorial* was warmly supported by the Indian Press. According to the *Voice of India* :

"The misfortunes of the coolie labourers of Assam have excited the sympathy of writers on the Native Press and they say that the memorial addressed to the Government of India by the Indian Association of Calcutta anent the question ought to move it to some action so long as to give relief to the sufferers who submit to the tyranny of their would-be masters from sheer ignorance and helplessness."

The Association advanced a plea in the memorial for the institution of a Committee to investigate the condition of the tea-garden labourers which elicited the following reply from the Government of India dated 24th May 1888 :

"... the Government of India, in communication with the Chief Commissioner of Assam, is taking measures for a full enquiry into the practical working of the emigration system in Assam with a view to introducing such amendments as may be found necessary. The re-consideration of the existing rules and regulations in the light of the practical experience gained was fixed, some time ago, for January 1890, and meanwhile the points raised in the letter of the Indian Association will be carefully investigated."

* For the Complete memorial, please see Appendix E.

THE NEW ROLE : NATIONAL AND PROVINCIAL

In the meantime the question of the tea-garden labourer was raised in Parliament. Lord Cross, then Secretary of State for India, asked the Government of India for details. The Viceroy sent a despatch to the Secretary of State on the subject on 22nd January 1889. The proprietors of *Sanjibani*, we are told by *Grambashi* of 27th Sravan 1297 B.S., prepared a memorandum on the despatch and caused it to be distributed free among the members of both the Houses of Parliament.

VII

The agitation in favour of tea-garden labourers gave rise to another political organisation of far-reaching importance and in this, too, the Indian Association took the initiative. The Indian National Congress being the spokesman of the Indian Nation, the Bengal leaders naturally expected it to espouse the cause of the tea-garden 'coolies' of Assam. In the Congress session of Madras, 1887, this subject was mooted informally. But to their surprise the Bengal leaders were told that the subject was 'provincial' rather than 'national'. In the Allahabad session of 1888 similar attempts were made, but they were baffled this time also*. This attitude of the Congress authorities served as an impetus to the Indian Association to organise the Bengal Provincial Conference in 1888.

The Indian Association took the lead in this matter. The Association had established one hundred and twenty-four Branch Indian Associations, all over India, the majority of which naturally belonged to Bengal. The Association utilised this machinery for making the proposed Conference a success. The leaders who fought hard in the Congress to get the 'coolie' question included in the Congress programme, gathered in this Conference which was convened mainly for the discussion on the 'coolie' question. The Bengal Provincial Conference was held for the first time in Calcutta on 25th, 26th and 27th October, 1888, under the presidency of Dr. Mahendra Lal Sircar. One hundred delegates from twenty-four districts of the Bengal Presidency attended the Conference and participated in the discussions which were mainly on matters of domestic concern. Naturally enough the question of the tea-garden labourers of Assam, which had supplied the incentive for the organisation of such a confe-

*This has been described in some detail by Bipin Chandra Pal in his memories of my Life and Times. Vol. II, Pp. 52-5.

HISTORY OF THE INDIAN ASSOCIATION

rence, came to the forefront and was assigned the first place in agenda for discussion. The resolution on the 'coolie' question which was moved by Bipin Chandra Pal and seconded by Dwarkanath Ganguli with eloquent speeches, runs as follows :

"The Conference is of opinion that it has become essential alike in the interests of the coolies, and for the credit of the Government, to appoint an independent Commission to enquire into the condition of the coolies in the tea-gardens in Assam, and the general working of Act XIII of 1859 and Act I of 1882."

The other subjects discussed in the meeting on which suitable resolutions were moved included the out-stills, the general condition of the people, the Police Circular, Local Self-Government, and reorganisation of the Police. On the last day of the Conference President Dr. Sircar especially referred to the resolution on the tea-garden labourers of Assam in his concluding speech and said :

'I have to congratulate you that in your very first resolution you have advocated the cause of the labourers in the tea-gardens of Assam, and do not call them Coolies for I hate the name 'Coolie' being applied to human beings ; in passing this resolution you have given unmistakable indication of the sympathy, humanity and philanthropy which should be the guiding principle of all men, both as individuals and as forming communities.'

As the initiators of the Bengal Provincial Conference in 1888 the Committee of the Indian Association took upon itself the responsibility of holding this Conference annually. The next Conference was held on 17th, 18th and 19th October, 1889. This year Raja Peary Mohan Mukherjee of Uttarpara presided. Delegates from twenty-six districts attended the Conference. Discussion was restricted to provincial subjects, such as, the Excise policy of the Bengal Government, grant of loans to the District Boards, reform in the Administration of Justice, rural health and welfare and so on. The year 1890 was a year of great activity for Bengal, for the Indian National Congress was scheduled to be held in Calcutta. For convenience's sake, the Bengal Provincial Conference took place on 31st December just

THE NEW ROLE : NATIONAL AND PROVINCIAL

after the Congress session was over. Mr. Pringle Kennedy,* a brilliant scholar of the Calcutta University and a promising lawyer of the Muzuferpore Bar, presided over the Conference. The subjects discussed in this one-day session, were : (1) the Reform of the Police, (2) Floods and Embankments, (3) the Excise System and (4) the Assam Coolie Act. The Indian Association organised the Bengal Provincial Conference for many years after.

VIII

As a recognised political body, the Indian Association received communications from both the Government of India and the Government of Bengal for giving opinion and advice on important public questions. The Government of India appointed a Committee in early 1886 for the purpose of examining its expenditure and reporting what economies were practicable. On receipt of a communication from the Government on the matter the Committee of the Association prepared a memorandum and submitted it on 18th October, 1886.

The Government of India in its Education Department solicited the opinion of the Association on its Resolution, early in January 1888, on the subject of moral training and discipline in schools and colleges. The Resolution aimed at devising ways and means 'to render school education a fitter and fuller training for public duties'. The Committee of the Indian Association, while generally welcoming the Resolution, offered some valuable remarks and suggestions in its reply to the Government's letter, dated 16th July 1888. It may be said in passing that this and another Resolution of the Government of India supplied a stimulus to the Rev. Proptap Chunder Mazumdar and Dr. (later, Sir) Gurudas Banerjea for the inauguration of the 'Society for the Higher Training of Youngmen', later known as 'The Calcutta University Institute'.

During this period the Committee of the Association also entered into correspondence with the Government of Bengal on some questions vitally affecting the people of Bengal in general and those of Calcutta in particular. The Calcutta Municipal Bill of 1887 attracted considerable popular atten-

*It was an irony of fate that Mr. Kennedy's wife and daughter were killed on the 30th April 1908 owing to a tragic mistake when Khudiram Bose threw a bomb on their carriage mistaking it for the carriage of Kingsford then Sessions Judge of Muzuferpore.

HISTORY OF THE INDIAN ASSOCIATION

tion. According to the Committee, the Bill was distinctly retrograde in its scope and character. They sent two separate communications on the matter to the Government of Bengal, one on 15th December 1887 and the second on 26th January 1888. The Association also helped to organise the Rate-payers' meeting held at the Town Hall, Calcutta, in the April following.

The Committee of the Association raised a voice of protest against the confidential Police circular, issued on 30th December, 1887, in which the Indian newspapers of progressive political thought also joined. This circular asked the subordinate police officers to give information on subjects of ten categories beginning with '(a) All political movements, sects, leaders, publications and the like,' and ending with '(b) Recruiting for the Indian Army or for Native States.' The Committee's communication to the Government of Bengal elicited the following reply from its Chief Secretary on 20th June 1888 :

"The experience we have had of the Wahabi and Feraji movement, of the Kuka organisation in the Punjab, of the agitation among the Santhals, and many other similar movements all of which have been partly religious and partly political, exclusively illustrates the necessity that Government should receive full and accurate information regarding religious and political movements of the nature referred to in the circular."

The reply of the Government was not considered to be satisfactory. Through its agents, the Association raised questions in the House of Commons. The Secretary of State asked for a despatch from the Government of India. The agitation over the circular continued for some time more.

IX

The Association's activities during this period towards social work deserve special mention. Famine conditions appeared in Tippera in 1886-87 and in Diamond Harbour in 1889, the latter a bit more virulently. The Association's energetic efforts for the relief of the famine-stricken of the Birbhum District had generated confidence in the minds of the people. And when they took up the relief work in these places, people thought that something tangible would be done. The Committee of the Association sent delegates to collect information regarding the actual area of famine,

THE NEW ROLE : NATIONAL AND PROVINCIAL

caused money to be collected in Calcutta and the mofussil and distributed it through their agents to the persons affected. In times of flood and tornado, which also visited many places throughout Bengal in these years, the Association lent its helping hand to their suffering countrymen.

Political education of the masses was one of the chief aims of the Association. During 1886-90, so many public questions had cropped up, and so many movements had been conducted by the Association that its name became a household word in Bengal. The Association sent special delegates to the countryside, to organise meetings and explain to them about their real needs. Some of these delegates took the initiative to form village organisations and introduce a system of arbitration of disputes. The Association had an abiding faith in the intelligence and good sense of the peasantry. They might be illiterate, but they were wide-awake even in regard to what might remotely interest them. The Secretary's felicitating remarks on the result of the Association's work among the people deserve to be quoted here. It should be noted that the work was specially directed to bring about peace and harmony between the masses and the classes :

“It is a matter of great satisfaction to find how deep is the interest which the educated community have begun to feel in the welfare of the masses. The old enmity between Zemindars and raiyats is fast disappearing in the community of interests and feelings which these meetings cannot fail to promote. When Zemindars and raiyats meet together for the interchange of ideas and for the removal of common wants and grievances it will be seen that already the first step has been taken towards producing that harmony between the two communities upon which the welfare of the country so largely depends. Nor are these meetings without interest, looked at from another point of view. Whatever critics may say to the contrary they exercise a vast educational influence an instance solely for good upon the raiyats, and at least one instance known where a mass meeting having been held, the raiyats as a body abstained from visiting the out-still newly established in the corner of their village. It is some times urged that it is absurd to talk of representative government before an assembly of uneducated and illiterate peasants. Even if it were to admit (which the Committee are not prepared to do) that the subject was too abstract for them,

HISTORY OF THE INDIAN ASSOCIATION

is it not desirable that they should be educated so as to be able to understand a subject of such great importance to them? . . .”
Report of the Indian Association for 1886-87, pp. 3-4)

The Committee of the Association issued Bengali tracts on the burning topics of the day. They also published, conjointly with other political bodies—the British Indian Association of Calcutta, the Bombay Presidency Association, the Sarvajanic Sabha of Poona, the Mahajan Sabha of Madras, the Sind Sabha of Karachi and the Praji-hita-Vardhak Sabha of Surat, as many as fourteen small political pamphlets in English, called *India Pamphlets*. These pamphlets dealt with various aspects of British administration in India.

This period is memorable in the history of the Indian Association for another reason. The leaders of the Association had already started a building-fund for the erection of its own house at a suitable place. Since its inception the Association was quartered in a dilapidated house at 93, College Square. Some new social and religious movements also originated in this building. Many of the leaders of the Indian Association belonged to the progressive school of the Brahmo Samaj. The idea of the foundation of the Sadharan Brahmo Samaj sprang from the deliberations conducted under the roof of this house. A press was also situated in this building. The literatures of the Indian Association were all printed here. Indranath Banerjee, under the pseudonym of Panchananda, has immortalised this house in a famous Bengalee couplet.

The building-fund of the Association was greatly augmented in June 1888 by the munificent donation of His Highness the Maharaja of Vizianagram, amounting to fifteen thousand rupees. The receipt of this amount made it possible in the following November for Surendra Nath Banerjee, Secretary of the Association, to purchase on behalf of the Indian Association for Rs. 20,000 the premises No. 62, Bowbazar Street, Calcutta, formerly in the occupation of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul and the Catholic Club. The office of the Association was transferred to these premises after necessary repairs. A new building has since been constructed on this site. But that is a later story. The building at 93, College Square is no more in existence. The site was acquired by the Government and made over to the Calcutta Medical College. It has been converted into the play grounds of the College.

CHAPTER II

FURTHER ACTIVITIES REVIEWED (1891—95)

A serious controversy raged over the Age of Consent Bill introduced in the Supreme Council. The Indian Association, though mainly a political body, took particular interest in all the progressive movements of the day. The Committee of the Association adopted in January 1891 a resolution to the effect that the age of consent should be raised to thirteen, with the proviso that this should not interfere with any existing religious usage.

The Association continued its activities even more vigorously in 1891 on the question of the representative system of Government. Delegates and representatives were sent to the remotest part of the province to educate public opinion. They held mass meetings where both Hindus and Muslims joined and resolutions were passed to the effect that popular Councils should be introduced immediately. Charles Bradlaugh, who had piloted a Bill in the House of Commons on the immediate introduction of popular Government in India, unfortunately died in early 1891. Bradlaugh's Bill necessarily fell through.

II

There had been an official Bill introduced in the Parliament in opposition to that of Bradlaugh known as Lord Cross's Bill, after the name of Lord Cross, then Secretary of State for India. This Bill had a safe passage through both Houses of Parliament. It received the Royal assent in 1892 and came to be known as the Indian Legislative Councils Act of 1892. Bradlaugh's Bill sought to satisfy the demands of the Indians and was principally based on elective system. Lord Cross's Act fell far short of it. In it direct election was avoided, and a sort of indirect election introduced. This Act could not, therefore, satisfy the Indian aspirations. The important feature of the Act was, however, the increase of the additional members—in the case of the Supreme Council to not less than ten and not more than sixteen, and, in the case of the Bombay and Madras Councils to not less than eight and not more than twenty. The maximum for Bengal was fixed at twenty and for the N.W. P. and Oudh at fifteen. The Indian Association of Calcutta, along with the Indian National Congress, resolved to make the best use of it in furtherance of their object. The Parliament left with the Government of India the power to frame rules and regulations for the

HISTORY OF THE INDIAN ASSOCIATION

early introduction of the Reforms. Everything now depended on the nature of these rules. If these were liberally framed, the introduction of a representative system of government might not be deferred long. These rules, before being finally thrashed out, should be published for purposes of discussion. This was considered by the Indian Association as an imperative need. The Committee of the Association sent a letter to the Government of India on 14th January 1893 on this subject. They also quoted the following Resolution of the Indian National Congress, unanimously adopted at its Allahabad session in the previous December :

“Resolved that this Congress, while accepting in a loyal spirit the Indian Councils Act recently enacted by the Parliament of Great Britain, as explained by the present Prime Minister with the assent of the then Under-Secretary of State for India that it is intended by it to give the people of India a real living representation in the Legislative Councils, regrets that the Act itself does not in terms concede to the people the right of electing their own representatives to the Council, and hopes and expects that the rules now being prepared under the Act will be on the lines of Mr. Gladstone’s declaration in the House of Commons and will do adequate justice to the people of India, and prays that these rules like other proposed legislative measures may be published in the official Gazettes before being finally adopted.”

Under the Act the Legislative Councils, both Indian and provincial, were framed by the middle of 1893. The reformed Bengal Council was inaugurated on 22nd July. Its strength was twenty, seven of whom were elected by several public bodies, including Municipalities and District Boards. The Association’s struggle for this end did not go unrecognised. The Calcutta Corporation sent, as their representative, Surendra Nath Banerjea, Secretary to the Association, to the reformed Bengal Legislative Council in 1893. The Senate of the University of Calcutta elected on that body the Association’s Senior Vice-President, Ananda Mohan Bose in 1895. Surendra Nath emphasised the excellence of this Act over that of 1909 because of its non-communal character, though it had fallen far short of Indian aspirations.*

*Further discussion on the subject is to be found in Surendra Nath Banerjea’s *A Nation in Making*, pp. 123—6.

FURTHER ACTIVITIES REVIEWED

III

The Civil Service question was settled only partially. The Association agitated for long for holding simultaneous examinations of Civil Service in England and India. In spite of a majority of witnesses examined by the Public Service Commission being in its favour, its members recommended, by a majority, otherwise. On 2nd June 1893, the House of Commons adopted the following resolution by a majority of votes, favouring the Association's demand and the logical conclusion that should have been arrived at from the reasonable evidence of the majority of witnesses before the Public Service Commissions :

“That all open competitive examinations heretofore held in England alone for appointments to the Civil Services of India shall henceforth be held simultaneously both in India and England, such examinations in both countries being identical in their nature, and all who compete being finally classified in one list according to merit.”

This was considered a 'snatch' vote. The Secretary of State for India took a dilatory course to avoid giving effect to this resolution. The Committee of the Indian Association sent a memorial to him, expressing their deep disappointment at the course pursued. Surendra Nath Banerjea, the Association's Secretary, addressed a long letter to the Government of India, dated 17th August, 1893, in their behalf, but that was also to no purpose. In this letter Surendra Nath traced the history of the British policy which was traditionally against the Indians participating in the Civil Service examination.* The demand of holding simultaneous examinations in England and India, was never conceded.

*The following extracts are taken from the letter, which will prove interesting :

So far back as the year 1860 a Committee of the India Office, consisting of such distinguished officials as Sir Erskine Perry, Sir J. P. W. Willoughby, Mr. Mangles, Mr. Arbuthnot and Mr. Macnaughten hit upon the true explanation. They said in their report,—

“Practically however, they (the natives of India) are excluded. The law declares them eligible, but the difficulties opposed to a Native leaving India and residing in England for a time are so great, that as

HISTORY OF THE INDIAN ASSOCIATION

IV

The Association's interest in the improvement of the tea-garden labourers in Assam received momentum when a fresh Inland Emigration Bill was sought to be enacted in early 1893. The Bill was introduced into the Supreme Legislative Council on 12th January, 1893. The Chief object of the Bill, as laid down in the Statement of Objects and Reasons, were :

“First, to prevent and remedy abuses in the system of recruiting labourers and other emigrants for employment on estates in the labour-districts ; secondly, to strengthen the control of the local Administration over unhealthy estates, and to enable the local authorities more readily to enforce sanitary improvements on them ; and, thirdly, to restrict, as far as may be practicable, consistently with the interests of the tea industry and the present conditions of labour emigration, the operation of the penal contract system sanctioned by the Act.”

On the 19th January 1893 the Bill was circulated for the opinion of the Local Government. The 25th February was the time fixed when these opinions were to be due. But the Government were bent on rushing through the Bill. On the 16th February, a week before they were due the Bill was referred to the Select Committee for report. The Committee

a general rule, it is almost impossible for a Native successfully to compete at the periodical examination held in England. Were this inequality removed, we should no longer be exposed to the charge of keeping promise to the ear and breaking it to the hope.”

Substantially the same view was repeated by Lord Lytton (but with greater emphasis as he was writing confidentially) in a despatch to the Secretary of State. His Lordship observed,—

“The application to Natives of the competitive system as conducted in England, and the recent reduction in the age at which candidates can compete, are all so many deliberate and transparent subterfuges for stultifying the Act, and reducing it to a dead letter. Since I am writing confidentially, I do not hesitate to say that both the governments of England and of India appear to me, up to the present moment, unable to answer satisfactorily the charge of having taken every means in their power of breaking to the hope the word of promise they had uttered to the ear.” (*Report of the Indian Association from 1892-93 to 1895-96*, p. 28).

FURTHER ACTIVITIES REVIEWED

of the Indian Association prepared, as they had done previously, a well-documented memorandum and forwarded to the Government of India in the Legislative department on 10th March, 1893, for considerations of the Select Committee. But the Select Committee also hurried through the Bill and presented it on the 16th March. At the meeting of the Council held on the 23rd March, the Bill was passed.

The Committee of the Indian Association took exception to this rushing through of such an important Bill as would concern the life and prosperity of thousands of their countrymen. They immediately sent a petition to the Secretary of State for India to withhold his assent to the Bill. In this petition they put forward facts and figures and the opinions of the high officials on the working of the "Coolie" Acts of 1859 and 1882 in order to prove the miserable condition of the tea-garden labourers. At the end of the petition, the Committee wrote :

"Your Petitioners would, in conclusion, beg leave to observe that the opinions of several responsible officers of Government, leave no doubt as to the obnoxious character of the present Emigration Act (Act 1 of 1882) and the serious abuses by which it is attended in practice. The question needs thorough investigation, as much in the interests of the planters, as for the sake of the coolies. A mere official enquiry will not satisfy the demands of public opinion. It should be an enquiry, your Petitioners submit, conducted by a mixed Commission of officials and non-officials in which those who can speak on behalf of the coolies should be represented. Your Petitioners demand nothing on behalf of the coolies which is not consistent with justice, or which will be injurious to the interests of the planters ; for your Petitioners recognize the truth that the true interests of planters and coolies are identical and that whatever adds to the amelioration of the condition of the coolies will, in the long run, be beneficial to the planters. Your Petitioners therefore pray that a Commission, such as they have ventured to suggest, be appointed to enquire into the question, and that pending the Report of the Commission, for which a limited time may be specified, your Lordship will be pleased to withhold your assent to the present measure."

The Indian Association had a keen eye on the proceedings of the Government, and whenever the country's interest was at stake, it uttered

HISTORY OF THE INDIAN ASSOCIATION

its voice of protest against their actions. Owing to the fall of the rupee the Government passed a Resolution directing the paying of compensation to non-domiciled European employees of the Government. The Committee of the Indian Association sent a letter to the Government of India on 29th September, 1893, asking them to abstain from a course detrimental to the interests of the country. Again on the Tariff Bill the Committee of the Association offered valuable suggestions so that the country's interest might be safeguarded. Due to the manipulation of tariff, our national industries suffered heavily. The newly established cotton industry was also put at a disadvantage. The Committee of the Indian Association drew attention of the Government pertinently to this matter and hoped that "justice will be done to the financial interest of the country and that the interests of the people of India will not be sacrificed for the sake of Manchester, or to keep up an allowance to which servants of the Government are not yet legally entitled, and to which, having regard to the financial condition of the country, they are not entitled in equity and justice."

V

The Indian Association was always vigilant over the public question that affected the Bengal Presidency. The Bengal Municipal Act of 1884 gave powers to the Municipalities to manage their own affairs subject to the general supervision of the Divisional Commissioners. The Act worked well generally during the ten years following. But the authorities had discovered some defects in the Act and proposed to amend it by the introduction of a fresh Bill in 1892. But it did not proceed further at the time as the Indian Councils Act was about to be introduced shortly. Just after the inauguration of the Reformed Council, the Government of Bengal again introduced the Bill. The Indian Members of the Council gave a stiff fight, but it did not go a long way to improve it much. Surendra Nath has given in his *A Nation in Making* (pp. 128-29) the story of the diplomatic conversion of Sir Charles Elliot, the Lieutenant-Governor, to some of their views, and the provisions to which strong exception had been taken, were dropped. The Committee of the Association were not, however, satisfied with this and appealed to the Secretary of State to withhold his assent to the Act. But the attitude of the British Government had already been stiffened against the Indian aspirations. The Act received his assent in due course.

FURTHER ACTIVITIES REVIEWED

The Association also took note of some of the Bills and Acts that affected the people of Bengal in this period. The question of the Agricultural Loans Act, the Fire-Brigade Bill, the Calcutta Small Causes Court, Infliction of pain on living animals, Impressment of coolies in Cachar district, the Bill to amend the Code of Criminal Procedure, Hindoo Religious Endowments, the Fisheries Bill, Employment of Indians in the superior staff of the Police Service and similar other matters came up for discussion and decision during these years. The Indian Association in each one of these cases presented facts and sometimes figures to promote the interests of our countrymen—the educated middle class and the raiyats. The famine-conditions prevailing in some parts of Faridpur and the Government's indifference towards the relief of the sufferers became the subject of discussion in the Press and the Platform during 1894. Responsible persons and the Sadharan Brahma Samaj while engaged in relief work, brought to the public notice some cases of death from starvation. The Committee of the Indian Association submitted a letter to the Government of Bengal containing the information and their remarks on it, on 27th September, 1894. The Asansol outrage case engaged, in August 1895, a large measure of public attention. The Indian Association as usual addressed a communication to the Government on 19th September, 1895, making suggestions with a view to prevent the occurrence of outrages on women in future. One of the suggestions made was the employment of female ticket collectors. This suggestion was accepted by the Government.

VI

The Indian National Congress was an annual affair. It was the Indian Association which had established contact with the masses through its agents and the Branch Indian Associations spread throughout Bengal. There were Branch Indian Associations at Lahore, Ferozepore, Meerut, Allahabad, and Darbhanga. But as the Congress was recognised at the time as an All-India organisation, the Indian Association confined its activities mainly into the Bengal Presidency so far as its organisational part was concerned. In Bengal the Indian Association took upon itself the self-imposed task of popularising the ideals for which both the Association and the Congress stood since 1886. The Association formed the Standing Committee of the Congress in Bengal from amongst our leaders. Surendra Nath Banerjea, Secretary of the Association, was for long one of the two joint Secretaries of the Committee, the other being Janaki Nath Ghosal. The Association used to take a resume of the year's work in the

HISTORY OF THE INDIAN ASSOCIATION

Bengal Provincial Conference held annually in Calcutta. The delegates attended these Conferences from the mofussil districts in large number each year and took part in the discussion of the current problems, with special reference to those in Bengal.

The idea of the Bengal Provincial Conference had originated with the Indian Association. Three annual meetings of this Conference have been noticed in the previous chapter. At the instance of the Indian Association a Provincial Conference was held in Calcutta on 13th and 14th October, 1892. In March, 1894 another Conference was held in Calcutta. Both the Conferences were largely attended by delegates from the mofussil. But with a view to stimulate public opinion there it was decided that the meetings of the Provincial Conferences instead of being confined to Calcutta should, if possible, be annually held in one or other of the mofussil towns. The idea at first occurred to some of our leaders in December, 1894 while on their way to the Madras Congress on board the steamer to hold it in the mofussil. In the inimitable words of Surendra Nath. :

“Hitherto our Provincial Conferences used to be held in Calcutta. We decided upon a change and we came to the conclusion that it was desirable to alter the locale of the Provincial Conferences from year to year, and to hold them in different mofussil centres in different years. We resolved to invest the Conference with the peripatetic character that belonged to the Congress. Babu Baikuntha Nath Sen of Berhampore, who was one of the delegates present, agreed to invite the Conference to Berhampore in 1895. The change gave a new impetus to the movement ; and the Berhampore Conference of 1895 the first of its kind held in a mofussil town, was a great success.” (*A Nation in Making*, p. 134.)

The Bengal Provincial Conference was held at Berhampore in June, 1895. Ananda Mohun Bose, the senior Vice-President of the Association, presided over the meetings of this Conference. The people of Berhampore showed remarkable hospitality to the delegates who had come in large number from the districts to attend the Conference. The lead given by the President in the Conference supplied fresh impetus to carry on political work amongst the masses in the districts. The Provincial Conferences like the one held at Berhampore, in point of number and enthusiasm,

FURTHER ACTIVITIES REVIEWED

reflected the character of the great Congress gatherings. Resolutions passed in the Berhampore session covered different aspects of the Bengal administration, and a few matters of all-India character. These were mostly about the admission of Indians to the recruitment of Assistant Superintendents of Police, increase in the number of Munsiffs, relaxation of official control over municipalities and district boards, liberal interpretation of the residence clause of the qualifications of candidate for election to the Bengal Legislative Council, amendments in the Drainage Bill, appointment of a Commission to enquire into the causes of the high mortality in Bengal prisons, reform of the administration of civil justice in various parts, repeal of the Assam labour laws and a memorial to Parliament in support of simultaneous examinations in India and England for the Civil Service.

VII

The Indian Association not only carried on the Congress work in right earnest, but the members of its Committee every year attended the Congress as accredited delegates. The Branch Indian Associations and those affiliated with the main body in the districts sent local delegates to the Congress. The Congress authorities recognised the power, the Association wielded in moulding public opinion in Bengal. But it was not until 1895 that any of its leaders were elected President of the Congress. It was destined for the Secretary of the Indian Association, Surendra Nath Banerjea, to win this honour in 1895. The Congress held its sessions this year in Poona under the Presidency of Surendra Nath Banerjea, an honour not only to Surendra Nath or to the Indian Association, but to the most progressive school of political thought in Bengal.

The Indian Association was due to complete its twentieth year within a few months from 1895. It is, therefore, proper to make an estimate of its efforts so far as work amongst the masses was concerned. The Association was started in 1876 as a spokesman of the wishes and aspirations of the middle-class educated Bengalis. But it had soon turned into a people's organisation, though it retained partly its original character and never hesitated to memorialise Government on thousand and one subject. The Association had, by the end of 1895, to its credit not less than one hundred and twenty-one Branches and affiliated Institutions. Except four outside the Bengal Presidency, namely, the Lahore, Ferozepore, Meerut, and

HISTORY OF THE INDIAN ASSOCIATION

Allahabad Associations, these were spread all over the Bengal districts. The prominent villages had also established many branches of the Association. Amongst the districts Midnapore and Pabna topped the list, each having twenty-nine branches to their credit. That the Indian Association had already become a power in the land would be clear from the large number of its Branches and affiliated Associations. *

*Please see Appendix F.

CHAPTER III

PORTENTS OF FUTURE CONFLICT (1896-1900)

The Indian Association stepped into the twentyfirst year on 26th July, 1896. Raja Rajendra Narayan Deb, President of the Association, retired in favour of Ananda Mohan Bose, the senior Vice-President. Rajendra Narayan had held the post since the death of the Rev. K. M. Banerjea in May, 1885. Though an octogenarian, he was full of youthful enthusiasm and was progressive in outlook. He had given unstinted support to the agitation for the reconstitution of the Legislative Councils on an elective basis. Now Ananda Mohan took up the duties of this responsible office with the greatest earnestness.

A few weeks before he came into office, the Indian Association had organised the second Bengal Provincial Conference in the mofussil, at Krishnagar, district Nadia. The Conference was presided over by Guruprasad Sen, the nationalist leader of Patna. The zealous endeavours of Monomohun Ghose, the Vice-President of the Association, and a native of Krishnagar, were mainly responsible for the success of the Conference. In this Conference problems affecting Bengal were particularly discussed, though all-India questions, such as, the separation of the provincial from the Indian finances, also had their place in the agenda.*

II

The year 1896 had started with ominous portents. The conservative Government of Great Britain began to turn a deaf ear to the demands of the Indians. At the behest of the Home Government, the Cotton Bill was presented to the Supreme Legislative Council. The Indian members opposed the Act to a man. Sir Alexander Mackenzie, Lt.-Governor of Bengal, also condemned it. But nothing could stop the passage of the Bill. The stiffening of the conservative attitude was also apparent in the middle of the year when an examination was held in Calcutta for the recruitment

*A few months after the Conference Monomohun Ghose who had been such an ardent fighter in the national cause and who had so zealously associated himself with the movement for separation of judicial and executive functions in the administration of justice died suddenly at Krishnagar on 17th October 1896. The Indian Association was a great loser by his death.

HISTORY OF THE INDIAN ASSOCIATION

of Assistant Police Superintendents which was open to the Europeans only. The Indian Association led public opinion in protesting against these retrograde measures. Again a resolution of the Bengal Government in late 1895 sought the practical abolition of the jury system. This also gave rise to a country-wide agitation. The government of Sir Charles Elliot was forced to appoint a Jury Commission. A Bill was framed accepting the recommendations of the Commission in part. Agitation against the Bill grew in volume. The Committee of the Association presented a petition to the Government on 23rd June, 1896. The Bill was at last withdrawn as a result of this agitation, in which the Indian Association took a leading part.

Some other measures also aroused popular indignation during the first half of the year. The seeds of the Partition of Bengal were laid when Government proposed for the sake of convenience to tag the Chittagong Division to Assam. The people of the Chittagong Division—Hindus, Mahomedans and Europeans, all protested against this measure. A mass meeting was held at Tipperah with the son of the Maharaja of "Swadhin Tripura" in the Chair. The people sent a representation to the Government in which they dwelt on the evil consequences of the proposed measure, from the educational, political and ethnical point of view. The Committee of the Indian Association remonstrated with the Government on the ground that no advantage could be derived from administrative adjustments against the desire of the people. At this juncture fortunately for Bengal and Assam, H. J. S. Cotton, Chief Secretary to the Government of Bengal, was appointed Chief Commissioner of Assam in November 1896. It was through his instrumentality that the idea was dropped. He persuaded the higher authorities to remain satisfied with the Lushai Hills added to the Assam Province.

III

As we have seen the Committee of the Indian Association had asked the Government to appoint a Commission to enquire into the problems of tea-garden labourers of Assam. The Government of Bengal, in the Resolution of November 1895, proposed to appoint a Commission to enquire into the question of the supply of labourers not only to tea-industry, but also to the coal-mines of Bengal. The Commission commenced work in

PORTENTS OF FUTURE CONFLICT

the winter of 1896 under the Chairmanship of H. C. Williams. The Commission finished their labours and submitted report in the following June. The findings of the Commission were mainly in accord with the views of the Indian Association, so far as the question of supply of the tea garden labourers was concerned. While welcoming the report, the Committee of the Association submitted their observation to the Bengal Government in a letter dated 3rd December, 1896. They advanced a strong plea for the repeal of the 'Coolie' Act of 1882, as amended by that of 1893. They wrote at the end :

‘The Committee find their views in accord with the recommendations of the Labour Commission who condemn the system of free emigration which the Committee would beg leave to observe is altogether a misnomer. The Committee would appeal to Government to recommend the repeal of Act 1 of 1882 or at any rate, to restrict its operation to within as narrow territorial limits as possible. Sylhet and Cachar as recommended by the Commission and the whole of the Brahmaputra Valley where Mr. Buckingham’s organisation is being tried for the supply of coolie labour may be excluded from the operation of Act 1. But should the repeal or the restriction of the Act on any considerable scale be impracticable, the Committee would urge upon the Government the speedy abolition of the so-called system of free emigration, or at any rate the adoption of a system of initial registration in the head-quarters of the District or Sub-Division where the coolies are recruited. In making these latter recommendations, the Committee are glad to find that they are supported by the authority of the Labour Commission.’

The long continued agitation of the Indian Association with regard to the tea-garden labour and their petitions to the Governments here and abroad had brought the subject to the forefront. This question could no longer be discarded as ‘provincial’ by the Congress. By this time the leaders of other provinces became convinced of the seriousness of the problem. Hence in the Calcutta session of the Congress, 1896, the resolution of the “coolie” question had an easy passage. The Resolution was moved by Jogendra Chandra Ghose, and seconded by Bipin Chandra Pal, who were both champions of the cause. They laid stress on the slave-condition of the tea-garden labour. It was not a small credit for the Association, be-

HISTORY OF THE INDIAN ASSOCIATION

cause it had scored a victory in getting the subject raised to the all-India plane. The resolution ran as follows :

“That having regard to the facility of intercourse between all parts of India and Assam, this Congress is of opinion that the time has now arrived when the Inland Emigration Act of 1882, as amended by Act VII of 1893, should be repealed.” (*How India Wrought for Freedom*, p. 249)

As on previous occasions when the Congress Session was held in Calcutta, the Indian Association organised the Reception Committee. It was since this session that an industrial exhibition became an annexe of the Congress. The main credit for introducing this innovation must go to Jogesh Chandra Chaudhuri (better known as J. Chaudhuri), Barrister-at-Law, a junior but prominent member of the Association. The Swadeshi spirit was already in the air. Mr. Chaudhuri had opened a store of country-made goods in the heart of Calcutta. The agitation against the Cotton Act supplied a stimulus to the cause. At the end of the year import of foreign cotton-goods appreciably decreased.

IV

Famine and plague had already devastated the country during this year to which was added the terrible earthquake of 12th June, 1897. In the train of these natural calamities, came official displeasure with popular institutions. Sir Alexander Mackenzie, Lieutenant-Governor, delivered a highly caustic and critical speech on the occasion of the opening of the Palmer's Bridge Pumping Station in Entally on 26th November 1896. In this speech he criticised the Calcutta Corporation as the 'armoury of talks and the arsenal of delays.' He also gave a broad hint of the plan of government for officialising the Corporation. This led to a serious agitation for about three years.

Plague, famine and earthquake brought various problems to the fore. The Government method of handling the first two of these problems was pregnant with far-reaching consequences. Plague broke out in virulent form in the Bombay Presidency early in 1897. The Bombay Government appointed a Plague Committee with Mr. Rand as Chairman at Poona. Soldiers were engaged to enter Hindu houses and search out the plague cases. This led to gross abuses and excesses. Cases of outrage and kid-

PORTENTS OF FUTURE CONFLICT

napping of women were reported leading to serious discontent among the people. The Shivaji celebrations were held on 13th June, 1897. These celebrations were being held for some years calling forth the innate strength of the people to resist the evil. An account of the celebrations was published in *Keshari*, the Marathi weekly of Bal Gangadhar Tilak, on the 15th June. The Government never viewed the Shivaji celebrations with favour. When the murder of Mr. Rand and Lieutenant Hyerst took place on the 23rd June it was attributed mainly to the publication of the news of the Shivaji celebrations in *Keshari*. Tilak was arrested. The Natu Brothers, the most respectable persons of Poona, were deported under the obsolete Act XXV of 1827 and kept under detention without trial. Ruthless suppression followed and the Press was about to be gagged.

The Indian Association of Calcutta raised its voice of protest against the Government repression and expressed deep sympathy for their afflicted and oppressed brethren in Poona, though it condemned the ghastly murder of the two Englishmen. The Association sent the following telegram to the London *Daily News* in connection with the proposals of the Government to gag the Vernacular Press :

“Public indignation at the Poona tragedy but alarmed at the proposals of the Government to gag Vernacular Press specially at the present time of excitement when a free Press is most needful.” (*The Bengalee*, July 24, 1897.)

V

Specific instances of ill-treatment of women were not few, and confined not in Poona only. The Indian Association again sent the following telegram to the London *Daily News* :

“Two cases of gross attempted outrage of Hindu girls at Khana Plague inspection camp by two European plague officers who have been suspended by Government. Pandita Rama Bai writes to the newspapers of seduction of one of her girls at the Poona Plague-camp : Utterly demoralizing arrangements there. Great sensation all over country.” (*Ibid.*)

The Bengalee, the virtual organ of the Association, while publishing these telegrams in its issue of 24th July 1897, exhorted his countrymen, here in Bengal ‘to do what lies in their power to help the people of Poona in the crisis which has occurred there.’ The people of Bengal, under the

HISTORY OF THE INDIAN ASSOCIATION

leadership of the Indian Association, raised funds to alleviate the miserable state of their fellow countrymen at Poona. Great sympathy was felt for Tilak and the Natu Brothers. Tilak was prosecuted on 8th September 1897 and sentenced to eighteen months' imprisonment. Here also Bengal did her utmost. Advocates were sent from this Province with sufficient funds to help Tilak in his distress. A bond of unity between Maharashtra and Bengal was thus effected. The Congress session of Amraoti, Central Provinces, in 1897 took serious notice of the affairs at Poona and the Government attempts to gag the Press. Surendra Nath Banerjea, Secretary and leader of the Indian Association, moved the resolution condemning the Government's repressive and reactionary measures in the open Congress. In the course of his speech Surendra Nath feelingly referred to the incarceration of Tilak and its effect in the following terms :

“We regard the quartering of the Punitive Police at Poona as a mistake. We regard the imprisonment of Mr. Tilak and of the Poona Editors as a still greater mistake. For Mr. Tilak my heart is full of sympathy. My feelings go forth to him in sympathy. A Nation is in tears. . . . We are resolved, and this Congress will take pledge, I and you will enter into a solemn League and Covenant. Let it go forth from this hall, let it impregnate the public mind in India, we are resolved, by every constitutional means that may be available to us, to assert under the providence of God the rights as British subjects, not the least important of which is the inestimable right of personal liberty.” (*How India Wrought for Freedom*, p. 259.)

VI

Not satisfied with the policy of repression the Government of India determined to forge fresh fetters for the Press. Here, too, the Bengal Press was their main target. They framed a Sedition Bill and presented it before the Supreme Legislative Council. In this Bill they proposed to amend the Criminal Procedure Code. The leaders of the other provinces protested against the Bill. The Congress condemned it in a resolution in its Amraoti session in 1897. But this did not deter the Authorities from proceeding with this Bill. The Indian Association had organised a Press Association in Calcutta on the passage of the Vernacular Press Act of 1878. This was revived. Protests were lodged with the Government on its behalf against the Bill. The Indian Association joined in the protest. A huge public meeting was organised in the Town Hall on 17th February, 1898

PORTENTS OF FUTURE CONFLICT

with W. C. Bonnerjea, the first President of the Congress, in the Chair. Surendra Nath Banerjea, Secretary of the Association, Norendra Nath Sen and Kali Churn Banerjea severely condemned the Bill in their speeches. Poet Rabindra Nath Tagore addressed the meeting in Bengali. A memorial that was sent to the Viceroy for his personal intervention.

The Authorities had become so obsessed with their power that they did not hesitate to pass the Bill within the twenty-four hours of this meeting of public protest. The Congress passed a resolution as the subject in its Madras session in 1898, which was presided over by Ananda Mohan Bose, President of the Indian Association.

VII

Conditions of famine were perceptible in late 1896. Bengal and Behar were affected in early 1897. Famine broke out in other provinces also. Truly speaking, the years between 1896 and 1900 were years of scarcity. Government measures were sometimes seriously criticised. But it should be said to the credit of the Government that during these years the famous famine code was about to be prepared in a modified form to suit the changed conditions. The Indian Association as usual sent its delegates to the affected places, collected information as regards the area of distress and measures of relief and approached the Government for proper action. The Association sent its Assistant Secretary Dwarkanath Ganguli in early 1897 to report upon the famine relief operations in Sonthal Perganas. In a letter* to the Association, Dwarkanath expressed satisfaction at the work of the local officers and suggested some methods by which the relief might be more usefully administered. He also urged the Association to take up relief work at once.

The Bengal Earthquake of 12th June, 1897 was a natural calamity. Common distress brings people closer and closer and makes them conscious of a common brotherhood. This earthquake is memorable in our national history from another point of view. The Bengal Provincial Conference was holding its last sittings on 12th June, when at 5 P. M. a severe quake was felt. In this conference the use of our mother-tongue in national deliberations was for the first time recognised. Satyendra Nath Tagore

*Published in *The Bengalee*, April 3, 1897.

HISTORY OF THE INDIAN ASSOCIATION

presided over it and delivered his speech in English. Poet Rabindra Nath Tagore, the youngest brother of the President, gave the Bengali version of the address to the satisfaction of the audience. The Association took unusual interest in the relief of the distressed, due to the ravages of the earthquake.

VIII

Racial discrimination was rampant in India. A glaring instance of discrimination was in vogue in connection with the admission of the Indian students into the Thomason Engineering College at Roorkee. New rules prepared for 1897 debarred Indians from entering into its first class. The Committee of the Indian Association sent a strong representation to the Government of India on 29th October, 1897. They observed that "a racial discrimination of this kind not only serves to create irritation and dissatisfaction, but is in entire opposition to the traditional policy of the British Government which makes merit the sole test of qualification for high office."

Another glaring instance of racial discrimination was the Arms Act. It is a blot on the Indian Statute Book. The Indian Association was untiring in its efforts to snatch every opportunity for either its repeal or for neutralising its effect on Indians. Bengal suffered most, as the children of her soil were labelled as a non-martial race. As far back as 1885 the Committee of the Association represented to the Government the necessity of opening a volunteer corps in the Army, in which Bengalis might join in large number. Lord Dufferin was reminded of this representation in early 1887. He then said in reply 'that the difficulties and disadvantages attending the elaboration of any plan for the embodiment of a volunteer army altogether outnumbered and outweighed the military and the political advantages to be derived from the realisation of the scheme.' (*Report* for 1886-87.) No change was effected in the law. The Indians were helots in their own country. The Bengali, as 'a non-martial race', had to suffer most. In the streets, the play-ground and the railway trains, there were many instances of trouble and rowdism on the part of non-Indians, mostly Europeans. This miserable state of affairs drew the attention of the thinking section of our countrymen. The Bengali monthly *Bharati* of Sarala Debi gave vent to the popular feeling and also gave a lead, when it urged the people to face the foreigner bravely and return their onslaughts with equal vehemence. The journal also advocated the spirit of self-help. In *Sadhana*, another Bengali monthly, Poet

PORTENTS OF FUTURE CONFLICT

Rabindra Nath was asking his countrymen to cultivate the same spirit. The news of triumph of Swami Vivekananda in the West was filling the hearts of Indians with new hope and courage.

IX

But these could seldom be translated into action. For want of arms the Indian community of Calcutta suffered heavily in the riots in 1897 at Tallah and Shambazar. This intolerable state of things could no longer continue. The Committee of the Association approached the Viceroy, Lord Elgin, with a representation in which they urged him to open a Volunteer corps and train the Bengalis in the use of arms. This would also help them to resist the rowdy rioters. The main portion of the representation runs as such :

“That your memorialists crave permission to be enlisted as volunteers. They are loyal subjects of Her Majesty, and they consider it a serious grievance that they should be held disqualified to serve their country and their Queen as volunteers, when the privilege is extended to Europeans, Eurasians, Jews, Negroes, Mulattoes and other non-Indian residents of Calcutta, and when State encouragement is given to them to enrol as volunteers. Your petitioners regard their exclusion from the privilege of enrolment as volunteers as involving a slur upon their loyalty and as a denial to them of a discipline which is found highly useful for the development of some of the finest qualities of the citizen. Sensible as they are of the inestimable blessings of British rule, they are eager to bear their part in the toil and responsibilities of imperial defence. In making this application, they are however guided not merely by sentimental reasons, but also by a practical consideration of the exigencies of their situation in Calcutta. Within the last few years, Calcutta has been the scene of two serious riots—the Shambazar and the Tallah riots. By the operation of the Arms Act, the Indian citizens of Calcutta have been deprived of their arms, and during the continuance of the recent riots, there was a time when Calcutta was practically denuded of the available Police protection, when the *badmashes* were the masters of the situation, and the peaceful and law-abiding citizens of the metropolis were left at their mercy. That they were not robbed or massacred must be attributed to their good fortune. It is partly with a view to provide against a contingency of this kind in the future—to take part in the defence of

HISTORY OF THE INDIAN ASSOCIATION

their hearths and homes in any crisis which may threaten the peace of Calcutta— that your petitioners earnestly appeal to Your Excellency to permit their enrolment as volunteers.”

X

Both the Secretary and the President of the Indian Association went to England in 1897. Surendra Nath Banerjea stayed there during the earlier months and gave evidence before the Welby Commission presided over by Lord Welby. Thirteen members, beside the President, sat on it. Dadabhai Naoraji, W. S. Caine and Sir William Wedderburn were amongst the members of the Commission. Its terms of reference were : (1) to enquire into the administration and management of civil and military expenditure in India and (2) the apportionment of the cost of administration between British and Indian Governments. Beside Surendra Nath, G. K. Gokhale and D. E. Wacha of Bombay and G. Subramanya Ayyer of Madras were examined as witnesses before the Commission. Though a member of the Commission Dadabhai Naoraji also gave evidence before it. Surendra Nath has given a description of his work in this connection in his autobiography. All the Indian witnesses urged the total abolition or appreciable reduction of the Home Charges which included :

- I. Paying for stores and materials purchased in England.
- II. Payments to the Government in Britain on account of the army and the navy ;
- III. Interest on debt incurred in England ;
- IV. The salaries and pensions of officials residing in England.

The President Ananda Mohan Bose's sojourn in England for a year for reasons of health was materially helpful to the national cause. He left Calcutta on the 15th September, 1897 and came back home on 6th September, 1898. During these twelve months, he let slip no opportunity to enlighten the people of England on the conditions prevailing in India. He visited the industrial cities and academic centres and addressed meetings on Indian subjects. At Cambridge, his *Alma Mater*, a debate took place in the Cambridge Union Society on 9th November, 1897, where the following resolution was moved : “That the present policy of coercion in India is unwarranted and unwise.” Ananda Mohan, in his speech on the resolution, very feelingly referred to the deportation of the Natu Brothers,

PORTENTS OF FUTURE CONFLICT

imprisonment of Tilak and the gagging of the Press. He carried the day, and the resolution was passed with a thumping majority.

Ananda Mohan spoke before large audiences in Cambridge and other places describing the things that were happening in India. He drew pointed attention to the 'forward policy' of the British Government in the North-West Frontier of India. Money was being drained from the Indian exchequer, and other nation-building activities were being starved. In his speeches he often referred to the virtual ostracism of the Indians from the responsible and higher posts of the Government. The Legislative Council was constituted on the basis of nomination, instead of popular election. The people, therefore, had very little voice either in the shaping of the Government policy or in the administration of the State.*

XI

Ananda Mohan's services in England did not go unrecognised by his countrymen. On his return home he received warm ovations everywhere. The Congress honoured him by electing him President of its Madras session in December, 1898. Ananda Mohan's presidential address as also his concluding speech breathed a sense of patriotism rarely heard from the Congress platform in those days. He implored his countrymen to make their life's guiding principle only these two things—"Love and Service" and that will ensure the fatherland's onward march to Freedom.

1898 was a very critical year for Local Self-Government. Sir Alexander Mackenzie's plan was taking a concrete shape. A Bill on the Calcutta Corporation was presented to the Bengal Legislative Council in early 1898. It proposed these three constitutional changes : (1) the Chairman of the Corporation would be an official, independent of the Corporation, (2) a General Committee, a co-ordinate body, and (3) the Corporation. The Bill was committed to the Select Committee on 4th April, 1898. It sought to give a death-blow to the democratic constitution of the Calcutta Corporation. The citizens of Calcutta resented this encroachment on their rights. This move to strengthen beaucocratic control was being closely watched by the Indian Association. When it received a letter from the Government,

* An account of A. M. Bose's activities in England will be found in *A Life of Ananda Mohan Bose*, Hem Chandra Sarkar, pp. 123-66

HISTORY OF THE INDIAN ASSOCIATION

dated 25th March, in which its opinion on the Bill was invited, the leaders of the Association resolved to elicit the public opinion of the question in order that its reply would have the support of public opinion. A huge public meeting was organised at the Town Hall of Calcutta on 31st August, 1898, in which men of light and leading activity participated. The Rev. Protap Chandra Majumdar, Dr. Rash Behari Ghose, Pandit Shiva Nath Sastri, Satyendra Prasanna Singha (afterwards, "Lord"), C. E. Grey and Noor Mahamed Zachariah took prominent part in the meeting moving, seconding or supporting the resolutions. There were three resolutions two of which were as follows :

"1. That this meeting desires to record its respectful but firm protest against the Calcutta Municipal Bill as being retrograde in its character and subversive of the principle of Local Self-Government and as vesting large and important powers in the executive which as they must be delegated to subordinates and will be exercised without the wholesome check of the Corporation, cannot fail to be attended with grave oppression.

"2. That in the opinion of this meeting no case has been made out for the complete supersession of a municipal system which has now been in existence for nearly a quarter of a century, and which has contributed so largely to the financial solvency of the Corporation and to those sanitary improvements which have converted Calcutta from being in the words of Mr. (afterwards, Sir John) Strachey "a scandal and a disgrace to a civilized Government," and from a sanitary point of view, to one of the healthiest cities in these provinces. But should the Government think otherwise this meeting prays that a Commission be appointed to institute an enquiry into the Municipal administration of Calcutta since the introduction of the elective system and that no legislation be undertaken except upon the basis of their report."

The third Resolution referred to a memorial which had already been prepared. The memorial was adopted at the meeting for submission to Sir John Woodburn, now Lieutenant-Governor of Bengal. A second memorial was also sent to him. Both the memorials brought out the reactionary

PORTENTS OF FUTURE CONFLICT

nature of the Bill, in true colours. In their reply, dated 12th November, 1898, to the letter of the Government, the Committee of the Indian Association gave voice to public opinion in these lines :

“The constitutional part of the Bill is undoubtedly the most important, and one in which the most serious departure from the present law is observable. The fundamental changes which this part of the Bill introduces are sought to be justified on the ground that the Municipal Executive is weak. The distinguished men who from time to time have held the office of Chairman, men like Sir Henry Harrison, Mr. Cotton and Mr. Beverly, never complained of the weakness of their position. Nobody was more thoroughly conversant with the strength and the weakness of the municipal system than Sir Henry Harrison, and if he at all thought that his position as Chairman of the Corporation needed strengthening, nothing could have been easier for him than to have amended the law to that effect in 1888. He borrowed largely from the Bombay Municipal Act, but he kept intact the constitution of the Corporation as it had been framed by the law of 1876. It is true that in the course of the debate on Municipal Bill he described the Commissioners as representing the brake-power of the Corporation, but it is to be borne in mind that he made that observation in support of the present constitution of the Corporation and in opposition to a motion made by Babu Kalinath Mitter to raise the proportion of elected members from two-thirds to three-fourths. He then observed that Babu Kalinath Mitter’s amendment would clog the administrative machinery by adding to the brake-power, which he however thought was very necessary, by raising the proportion of elected members. If the Executive is weak, the Committee have no hesitation in saying that it is due much more to the personnel than to the system, and that nothing better than a weak executive is to be expected when the head of the executive is frequently changed, for since 1889 there have been no less than six Chairmen of the Corporation. Surely it is most unreasonable to condemn a system for the faults for which it is in no way responsible—the appointment of Chairman being made by the Government. If the Executive is weak to the verge of helplessness or to such an extent as seriously to interfere with the work of the Corporation, the Committee would beg respectfully to enquire how came it about that under the

HISTORY OF THE INDIAN ASSOCIATION

municipal system which it is now proposed to supersede, great and permanent works of sanitation have been constructed which have changed the face of Calcutta and have converted it from a malaria-stricken swamp—a scandal to a civilized administration in the words of Sir John Strachey—to one of the healthiest cities of the Province. The fact affords conclusive evidence that when the Executive is properly manned, it is fully equal to all the purposes of municipal government; and if the Executive is weak, the remedy is not by enlarging its powers and making it absolutely irresponsible, but by appointing suitable men who will have something like a permanent interest in the office.

“The Bill creates three co-ordinate authorities independent of each other and responsible to none for the proper performance of their duties, *viz.*, the Chairman, the General Committee, and the Corporation. Nothing shows the revolutionary character of this Bill in a more striking manner than the fact that the importance of these authorities under the Bill is in the inverse order of their importance under the existing law. Under the present law, the Corporation represents the supreme authority. Under the Bill, it is the least important of the three authorities. Under the present law, the authority of the Chairman is controlled by the General Committee in regard to all financial questions and is subject to the revisional jurisdiction of the Corporation in all cases. Under the Bill, the Chairman is the most important authority, independent of the Corporation and of the General Committee in by far the most important part of his functions, for the exercise of which indeed he is responsible to none. How an administrative machinery would work under these conditions remains to be seen. In the opinion of the Committee of the Indian Association, the Bill will be unworkable.”

Bombay was also faced with a similar contingency. The Indian National Congress, in its Madras session, took note of the reactionary policy passed in these two provinces. A resolution was adopted on this subject. The movement against the Bill was daily growing in intensity. The speech of Lord Curzon, the Viceroy-designate, whose arrival in India synchronised with the session of the Congress in 1898, roused some hopes in the minds

PORTENTS OF FUTURE CONFLICT

of our leaders, and they thought that the Bills for stifling Local Self-Government might be withdrawn. Unfortunately these hopes were falsified.

XII

The Committee of the Indian Association, as usual, approached Lord Curzon with an address of welcome in February, 1899. A small incident took place in this connection in the Government House. Two gentlemen of the deputation were not allowed to appear before the Viceroy in the Throne-room, because they had pump-shoes on ! They were asked either to put off shoes or to retire. They preferred the latter course. This painful incident seemed pointer to more painful things that were to come.

It was not long before the truth of these apprehensions were justified. The Calcutta Corporation Bill which had roused so much indignation in the minds of the people, passed through the Select Committee without any appreciable change. As a member of the Committee Surendra Nath Banerjea gave a strenuous fight but this also could not soften the attitude of the official members. Further Lord Curzon exercised the Viceroy's prerogative by adding a fresh clause to the Bill after it had come out of the Select Committee. In the words of Surendra Nath :

“The majority of the representatives of the rate-payers in the Corporation was still maintained ; but it was left for Lord Curzon after the Bill had passed the Select Committee stage, to issue the crowning mandate that was to officialize the Corporation, directing the reduction of the elective members, and placing them numerically on the same footing as the nominated element. This coupled with the fact that the president was an official, gave a standing majority to the official element. Thus was the officialization of the Corporation completed.” (*A Nation in Making*, p. 130).

The total strength of the members of the Calcutta Corporation was reduced from seventy-five to fifty, and half of them were scheduled to be nominated. The Act, as such, was passed in the Council in 1899 and was given effect to on 1st April, 1900. As a protest against this arbitrary action

HISTORY OF THE INDIAN ASSOCIATION

on the part of the Government, twenty-eight Commissioners,* headed by Surendra Nath Banerjea, tendered their resignation of their memberships of the Corporation. Surendra Nath as the spokesman of the Association—and the people at large, continued the fight till he democratised the Calcutta Corporation in the capacity of a popular Minister in 1923. But that is a later story. The Lucknow session of the Indian National Congress, presided over by Romesh Chunder Dutt, in 1899, adopted this Resolution couched in rather strong language :

“That this Congress expresses its disapproval of the reactionary policy, subversive of Local Self-Government, evidenced by the passing of the Calcutta Municipal Act, and by the introduction into the Legislative Council of Bombay of a similar measure, which will have the effect of seriously jeopardising the principle of Local Self-Government.”
(*How India Wrought for Freedom*, p. 305.)

The reactionary attitude of the Government made the Indian Association restive. The Committee also made representations against orders of the Government which sought to restrict the freedom of the teachers and students by putting a ban on them against joining political movements. Surendra Nath had always held the opinion that students should discuss politics. They might not actively participate in any political movement, but there should be no bar against their attending political meetings for education and edification. The Committee of the Indian Association, it goes without saying, also help this view, and felt indignant over the orders of the Government restricting this personal freedom. The subject was referred to in a resolution in the Congress of 1899.

XIII

The Public Service Commission had recommended in their report the large appointments of Indians in the minor Civil Service, so far back as in 1889. But these recommendations remained almost a dead letter even in 1899. The Committee of the Indian Association forwarded a representation to the Government of India on the subject on 16th December, 1899. The representation tells us how the Government of India and

* Bhupendra Nath Basu, Pasupati Nath Bose, N. N. Ghosh, Chandilal Sinha, Kalli Nath Mitter, Akshoy Chunder Bose, Nalin Bihari Sircar, Kumar Manmatha Nath Mitter, Lal Behari Bysack, Amarendra Nath Chatterjee, Radha Charan Pal, Sreenath Dutt, Norendra Nath Sen, Raj Chunder Chunder, Surendra Nath Das, Devaprosad Sarabadhikary, Mohini Mohan Chatterji, Benode Behary Banerji, Surendra Nath Banerjea, Moulvi Syed Shamsul Huda, J. Ghosal, Amirtalal Ghosh, Jyoti Prakash Ganguly, Kanti Chunder Banerjee, Jogendra Chunder Ghosh, Ramtaran Banerji, Surendra Nath Roy and Moni Lal Banerjee.

PORTENTS OF FUTURE CONFLICT

the Provincial Governments had failed to act according to the recommendations of the Commission, and how they had managed, with the approval of the Secretary of State, to neutralise the Resolution of the House of Commons with regard to holding simultaneous examinations of the Civil Service both in England and India. The Committee of the Association collected facts and figures to show that even in the minor Civil Services no attempt was made to admit the Indians. They inserted in the representation the following figures of the proportion of Indians in the higher appointments in the services in Bengal : Forest—24 high appointments, 2, of which were Indians ; Opium 77, Indians 8 ; Customs 33, Indians 2 ; Branch of Customs 157, Indians 0 ; in 100 apprentices to this, 1 Eurasian ; Survey—Indians 0 ; Superintendents of Jails Indians 0 ; Telegraph 29 ; Indians 4 ; Police 102, Indians 5 ; Calcutta Police 10 ; Indian 1. The subject was discussed threadbare in the Lahore session of the Congress in 1900. Surendra Nath moved the following resolution on Public Service :

“That the Congress regrets the practical exclusion of the natives of India from the higher appointments in the Police, Public Works, the State Railways, the Opium, the Customs, the Telegraph, the Survey and other Departments, and prays that full justice be done to the claims of the people of India in regard to these appointments.”
(*How India Wrought for Freedom*, p. 324.)

XIV

The question of the separation of judicial and executive functions was a subject which, like many others, required to be immediately solved. The National Conference in its two sessions in 1883 and 1885 and the Congress since its inception had been adopting resolution on the subject. The Indian Association had its champion in Monomohun Ghose who, as a criminal lawyer, had come across very many cases of injustice to the people due to the combination of these two functions in the same individual. Romesh Chunder Dutt, while a district Officer, formulated a scheme in 1894 for effecting a separation of these two functions, without any appreciable cost. The scheme was declared to be practicable by higher judicial as well as executive authorities. The Committee of the Indian Association brought this fact to the notice of Lord Elgin, the Viceroy and Governor-General, in their address of welcome that year. Monomohun Ghose

HISTORY OF THE INDIAN ASSOCIATION

moved the resolution on the subject in the Poona session of the Congress in 1895. In the speech that followed Monomohun Ghose quoted a high official as saying that the union of these functions in the same officer was "the mainstay of the British power in India." The Association carried on the agitation over the question from year to year. On 9th June, 1900, the Committee submitted a memorandum for presentation to the Government of India together with the scheme of Romesh Chunder Dutt. In this memorandum they cited many instances of abuse of power not only in Bengal but all over India. According to them :

"Not to go back to ancient history...instances of abuse of power, due to the combination of judicial and executive functions, have occurred under every Lieutenant-Governor since the time of Sir Rivers Thompson and every Lieutenant-Governor within that time has been called upon to record his disapproval of the conduct of the officers concerned. They need only refer to the Krishnagar Students' case, the Rungpur Deer Case, the case of Deputy Magistrate of Jamalpur in Sir Stewart Bayleys' time. Mr. Phillips's case in Sir Charles Elliot's time, the Chapra case and the Magaire case. Outside Bengal, the evils of this combination of judicial and executive functions were illustrated by the facts disclosed in the early stages of the Baladhan murder case.... The High Courts have repeatedly declared that it is not enough that the administration of criminal justice should be pure in itself but that there should be no reasonable grounds for any apprehension on the part of the accused person that the presiding officer may be influenced by extraneous consideration or that justice as between man and man may not be done. A system that combines the functions of the prosecutor, the judge and the jury in the same person, which, as experience has shown, has given rise to grave abuses in the past and which must always give rise to a feeling that true justice may not be obtained is one which stands in urgent need of reform."

The persistent agitation drew the attention of many Britishers in England. They, too, sympathised with this demand. The Congress of 1900 recognised this in a resolution and thanked them for their support. The resolution asked for the satisfaction of the demand without delay.

PORTENTS OF FUTURE CONFLICT

XV

The organisational aspect of the Indian Association suffered much by the death of its Assistant Secretary Dwarkanath Ganguli, on 27th June 1898. He had been intimately connected with the Association from the very beginning. A member of the executive Committee, Dwarkanath came forward to shoulder the onerous duties of the Assistant Secretary in 1882 and remained in the post till his death. The Indian Association, through its branches spread out all over Bengal, and with the help of its delegates sent to the mofussil from time to time, had retained its contact with the masses. The organisational character of the Association attracted notice of the leaders of other provinces. In a letter in 1899 the leaders of Lucknow expressed their desire to follow the programme of work, pursued by the Association. The national problems for the solution of which the Association came into existence, were being discussed every year in the National Congress. In this the leaders of the Association also joined. The Congress was gradually usurping the all-India character of the Association. Bipin Chandra Pal's remark that the Association was gradually being engulfed by the Congress, had much truth in it.

Still the Association zealously carried on political work in Bengal. The Bengal Provincial Conference used to be held every year in the headquarters of the districts. In 1898 the Conference was held at Dacca under the presidency of the Rev. Kali Churn Banerjea. Ambika Charan Majumdar conducted the deliberations of the Burdwan Conference in 1899, while in 1900 the Conference assembled at Bhagalpore with Raja Benoy Krishna Deb, one of the Vice-Presidents, in the Chair. The reactionary measures of the Government served to harden public opinion against the government and our national leaders used pen and platform, to instil courage into the hearts of the despondent and the helpless. The new century opened with intense reaction on one side and active resistance on the other. The new spirit had set in already.

CHAPTER IV

LULL BEFORE THE STORM

or

THE PERIOD OF PREPARATION (1901-1905)

The twentieth century dawned in India with fresh hope and faith. Western contact had acquainted Indians with democratic ideas of the West, and popular methods for their realisation. The example of Mazzini, Garibaldi and Cavour had inspired our young men. Now the rise of Japan in the East and China's successful boycott of American goods electrified them and taught them a method by which they could resist the whims and caprices of British Imperialism. The practical application of these methods came a few years later. But the younger generation were turning restive. They were seeking a new approach to our problems which was not strictly 'constitutional'. The visit of the Japanese Professor Okakura gave fresh impetus to our national cause. He preached the doctrine of complete independence to both our leaders and youngmen, to follow this path taking Japan as their example.

The Indian Association of Calcutta still retained its distinct character. It was chiefly the organisation of the educated Bengalis ; but it always kept in touch with the masses. The artisans and agriculturists, in a word—the village-folk, looked to this organisation for lead and guidance. The Indian Association, too, was always watchful of their interests. The Bengal Provincial Conference was the Association's creation and in its annual sessions, the needs and grievances of the whole people were discussed, and means for their fulfilment or redress were devised. The Government of the day had turned extremely reactionary and the interests of both the classes and the masses were jeopardised. The Government tried to pit one against the other, in order to serve their own ends. The Road Cess had been utilised for the construction and maintenance of roads, the sinking and improving of wells and tanks and other works of small irrigation whereby the rural people were mostly benefited. The Government were now out to utilise the amount accruing from Road Cess for purposes other than for what it was originally meant. The movement, started against this pernicious action of the Government, bore partial fruit, and the Government were forced to set apart a large portion of the Cess for the proper original purposes. In this movement the Indian Association took

LULL BEFORE THE STORM

particular interest, Motilal Ghose, Editor of the *Amrita Bazar Patrika* rendered immense service to the cause through his writings in the *Patrika*.

II

Police Reform was another subject for which the Indian Association was agitating for a long time. At its session in 1901 the Bengal Provincial Conference adopted a resolution* on the matter. The Committee of the Association prepared a memorial on the lines of this resolution and forwarded it to the Government of Bengal on the 11th June 1901 for immediate action. They appealed to the Government to recruit the majority of the members of the Police in its higher cadre from amongst Indians. That would ensure efficiency as well as saving of money. Said the memorial :

“The Committee of the Indian Association are keenly alive to the claims of their countrymen to wider employment in the more responsible offices of the State ; but in urging upon the authorities the paramount importance of raising the percentage of natives of India to be employed as Assistant and District Superintendents of Police, they

*That this Conference notes with gratitude that His Excellency the Viceroy has been pleased to include the question of Police reform among the twelve problems which will engage the attention of His Excellency. The Conference deplors the inefficiency of the Bengal Police and desires to submit the following recommendations for the consideration of Government :

“That there should be a sharp distinction between Head Constables and Constables on the one hand and Sub-Inspectors and Inspectors on the other, Sub-Inspectors being recruited not from the lower Police force, but from the educated classes by a competitive examination, similar to that held for recruitment of Deputy and Sub-Deputy Collectors, those standing high in the list being appointed Inspectors and those standing lower down being appointed Sub-Inspectors.

“That the pay of both Inspectors and Sub-Inspectors be raised so as to attract a suitable class of men to the Police Service and in this connection the Conference notes with regret that the recommendations of the Police Committee for raising the salary of Inspectors have not been given effect to.

“That there should be a much larger percentage of natives of India in the higher offices of the Police than one-sixth, the percentage which has been fixed by the Government, and that natives of India should be permitted to compete with Europeans at the competitive examinations held in India and in England for recruitment to the office of Assistant District Superintendent of Police from which examinations they are now excluded.”

HISTORY OF THE INDIAN ASSOCIATION

are largely guided by important considerations affecting the efficiency of the Police. The Police is the one department of the State which is constantly in touch with the people, and the attitude of the people in relation to the Government is largely determined by the character of the Police. Its efficiency, therefore, is a matter of supreme importance, and it can only be secured when it is manned chiefly, in its higher as well as in its lower offices, by officers who know the people with a thoroughness which only those who are born of the people can possess. It is an axiomatic principle that the Police should consist, as far as possible, of the indigenous element, possessed of course of the necessary qualifications. The Committee of the Indian Association have no hesitation in affirming that the Bengal Police will continue to be open to the reproach, of inefficiency, so long as the higher offices are principally filled by Europeans imperfectly acquainted with the language of the people. To fill them with men of the class from which the Indian Civil Service is recruited would involve expense which is prohibitive. So long as the pay of the District Superintendent continues to be what it now is, we must have the class of officers who now fill these appointments; and if there is no improvement in the efficiency of the higher officers, the Police will continue to be as inefficient as now."

Good sense prevailed. The Government of Bengal appointed a Commission in 1902 to enquire into and report on the condition of the Police in Bengal. The Commission presented their report to the Government at the end of the year. The report was, however, withheld from the public for two years more. It contained some salutary features but fell far short of public expectations. The Congress in its Benares session in 1905 was forced to regret that 'adequate measures have not been adopted to materially improve the efficiency and honesty of the Police service.'

III

The Indian Association took up another matter in hand in 1901, which agitated the public mind for some time. New Rules were adopted by the Bengal Government for the nomination of members to the Council. The mofussil municipalities had hitherto had the privilege of sending two members to the Council in each term of two years. The number was peremptorily

LULL BEFORE THE STORM

reduced to one in 1901, and the second member was given over to the Landholders of Bengal. The partial withdrawal of the privilege from the mofussil municipalities gave rise to discontent all over Bengal. Surendra Nath Banerjea, the ardent champion of Local Self-Government, issued a circular letter on 30th August 1901, to the members of the municipalities to rise as one man and send a united protest to the Viceroy at an early date. The Indian Association organised a Conference of the municipal delegates in December 1901. A memorial was sent to the Viceroy to restore the privilege.

The Indian National Congress held its seventeenth session in Calcutta in December 1901 under the Presidentship of Dinsha Edujli Wacha, the great Parsee nationalist leader of Bombay. The Committee of the Indian Association, as usual, worked hard for the success of the session. A remarkable feature of this session was the presence of Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi (later, Mahatma Gandhi), the great passive resister of South Africa. He was able to rouse such great sympathy amongst the leaders of the Congress that a resolution was adopted in this session, congratulating the Indians of South Africa for their struggles over there. The song 'Hindusthan' composed by Sarala Ghosal (later, Sarala Debi Chaudhurani) invoking the people of the different provinces of the country to join hands in the national struggle, heralded a new era, as it were, in our struggle for freedom.

IV

The reactionary character of the Government of Lord Curzon gradually manifested itself. The Calcutta Corporation had been, to all intents and purposes, officialised. The privileges of the mofussil municipalities were threatened. Lord Curzon now turned his attention to educational matters. It was thought that the Universities were the 'breeding-ground of agitators'. So the first stroke of axe fell upon the University education. Lord Curzon met the higher European Officers of the Educational Department in a secret conclave at Simla and decided to appoint a University Commission. The Commission was appointed in early 1902. The Commission at first was all-white, but public protest at last compelled the Government to include Dr. Gurudas Banerjea, then a Judge of the Calcutta High Court in the Commission. The Commission finished its labours within five months and submitted a report to the Government, with a strong dissent by Dr. Banerjea. The contents of the Majority Report roused strong

HISTORY OF THE INDIAN ASSOCIATION

indignation all over India particularly in Bengal. The Report of the Majority wanted to officialise the Universities, particularly the Calcutta University, and stultify the growth of higher education in the country. For the latter object it proposed (1) the abolition of the second-grade Colleges which formed the bulk of the colleges in Bengal, (2) the abolition of the law-classes in different colleges, and (3) the fixing of a minimum rate of college fees by the Syndicate, which really meant the raising of the fees. The Indian Association started a vigorous agitation against these proposals. It was joined by other bodies and societies. A Town Hall meeting was organised in August, 1902, under the chairmanship of Raja Peary Mohan Mukherjee, a stalwart of the British Indian Association. A memorial was drawn up and adopted in the meeting. It was a masterly document criticizing the retrograde policy of Government. Surendra Nath played a large part in drafting the memorial *which may be regarded as a landmark in the history of English education in India. Its concluding portion shows the seriousness, with which the matter was taken up by our leaders, and deserves to be partially quoted here :

“That your Memorialists have now submitted their representation in the firm confidence that it will meet with Your Excellency’s sympathetic and indulgent consideration. The interests of the community and of the Government are identical in this matter. Your Memorialists are anxious to co-operate with Your Excellency’s Government in its function of helping to diffuse among the people the great boon of high English education. Such co-operation has been eagerly sought in the past. It has been a feature of Your Excellency’s own policy. To quote Your Excellency’s own words you would substitute ‘Government aid for Government management and the encouragement of private initiative and effort’. But your Memorialists regret to have to say that the recommendations of the Commission, to which they have called attention, are in entire conflict with this wise and statesmanlike policy. They will replace private effort, and in the control of the University and of the educational system of the country substitute ‘Government management’ for ‘Government aid’. Your Memorialists desire to record their high appreciation of the motives by which the Commission were actuated and of the zeal and industry which they displayed ; but they have no hesitation in saying

**A Nation in Making*, p. 176.

LULL BEFORE THE STORM

that if the recommendations referred to in this Memorial are given effect to, the policy of the past will be reversed, the spread of high education will be retarded, the educational and the moral tone of the community will be lowered and a blow dealt at the interests of progress from which the country may never recover. Your Memorialists are in favour of cautious reform, and it is such reform which alone can enlist the sympathies of the community. It is therefore with the gravest apprehension that your Memorialists regard the very fundamental changes which have been advocated by the Commission, and which are in direct conflict with Your Excellency's own policy in educational matters; for speaking as Chancellor of the Calcutta University Your Excellency observed: 'I feel that cautious reform and not wholesale reconstruction should probably be the motto of our action.' Your Memorialists venture to affirm that no reform can be successful without the co-operation of the people concerned. The recommendations of the Commission, to which your Memorialists have taken exception to, are strongly disapproved of by the Native community throughout India as evidenced by the utterances of the Native Press. They have excited a feeling of alarm and anxiety. Your Memorialists appeal to Your Excellency to allay this feeling, to safeguard the interests of high education and to ensure its steady diffusion by the continuance of that educational policy which is associated with the names of some of your most illustrious predecessors and which more than any other boon conferred by the British Government, has deepened the loyalty and has evoked the gratitude of the Indian people."

The agitation was not without its results. Some of the recommendations especially that of the abolition of the second-grade Colleges, were dropped. The University Act of 1904, as also the New Regulations of the Calcutta University was the effect of the University Commission of 1902.

V

The Indian National Congress was held in December 1902 at Ahmedabad. This time again the leadership of the Indian Association was requisitioned. Surendra Nath Banerjea presided over the Congress this year

HISTORY OF THE INDIAN ASSOCIATION

for the second time. The Delhi Durbar was to be held in the first week of January. So it was held by the Congress authorities that the Congress should have such a personality as could attract people to Ahmedabad more in number than the Delhi Durbar. Surendra Nath's presidential address, besides dealing with the burning problems of the day, struck a new note. There arose in Bengal a political group which, in outlook and temperament, was different from the elderly politicians. P. Mitra, Bar-at-Law, who recognised Surendra Nath Banerjea as his leader, was at the head of this group. This group included Jatindra Nath Banerjee, (later, Swami Niralamba), Aurovindo Ghose (Sri Aurovindo), Sister Nivedita, Surendra Nath Tagore, C. R. Das (later, Deshbhandhu Chittaranjan Das), besides a host of others. Their method of approach to the solution of the country's prime need, national independence, was revolutionary, as distinct from the 'constitutional' methods followed by our leaders. Surendra Nath must have been apprised of the rise of this new school through his friend and follower P. Mitra. At the conclusion of his presidential address he hinted at the new ideas working in the minds of the younger generation. He besought his younger countrymen to take the vow of sustained and continuous service, which could alone ensure freedom for their common Motherland. He said :

"The triumphs of liberty are not won in a day. Liberty is a jealous goddess, exacting in her worship and claiming from them prolonged and assiduous devotion. Read history. Learn from it the inestimable lesson of patience and fortitude and the self-sacrificing devotion which a constitutional struggle for constitutional liberty involves. Need I impress these principles upon a people who have presented to the world the noblest of these virtues ? Every page of history is resplendent with the touch of self-abnegation."

Referring to the examples of China and Japan, especially Japan whom he called "our pupils", Surendra Nath said :

"Our pupils have out-distanced us ; and here are we, hesitating, doubting, calculating, counting up moral results to satisfy ourselves that our gains have been commensurate to our sacrifices. Such indeed has not been the royal road to political enfranchisement. The triumphs of liberty have not thus been won. Japan is an object-lesson

LULL BEFORE THE STORM

which thrusts itself upon this view. Read her history, note her wonderful self-sacrifice, her marvellous power of adaptation, her patience, her fortitude, her indomitable energy and persistency, and let the most ancient of Eastern nations derive inspiration and guidance from the youngest, which has solved the riddle of Asiatic life and has harmonised the conservatism of the East with the progressive forces of the West."

There was the new spirit. A class of publicists, headed by Bipin Chandra Pal, were explaining in their journals its import from various angles. The *New India* of Bepin Chandra, *Twentieth Century* of Nagendra Nath Gupta and Upadhyaya Brahmabandhab, *The Dawn* of Satis Chandra Mukherjee—organ of the Dawn Society, the Bengali *Bharati* of Sarala Ghosal, and *Bangadarshan* (Nava Paryaya) of Rabindra Nath Tagore heralded the advent of the new spirit in consummate articles and editorials. Our national art, literature and history were infused with the new spirit. The genius of our people found adequate expression through them. Surendra Nath, as a veteran politician, could not fail to notice it in his historic Presidential address. The period was opportune for the preparation of the coming struggle.

VI

Mainly a political body, the Indian Association welcomed new thoughts and ideas and fostered national arts and industries. So when the Government of India were making rules for regulating the nascent coal industry in 1903, the Committee of the Association raised their voice against those rules which they considered detrimental to it. Land-questions always engaged the Committee's attention. Their opinion on the subject was solicited by the Government whenever occasion arose. The Association was a zealous supporter of the cause of the agriculturists and, as such, advanced the following remarks, while giving opinion on the subject of the Chota Nagpur Landlord and Tenant Procedure Act on 4th July, 1903 :

"The state of things now prevailing in many parts of Manbhum (which, however, is not affected by the Bill) and Hazaribagh (where the Act will be in force) is not so backward as it used to be a decade ago. Great progress has been made within the last 10 or 12 years.

HISTORY OF THE INDIAN ASSOCIATION

Owing to the development of the mica mines in Hazaribagh and the coal mines in Jharia, a closer approximation towards the normal conditions in Bengal has been made, and it is hoped that before long one uniform Rent Law for the whole of Bengal will be found workable."

A grim struggle was ahead. This was more than felt by the publication of a letter, dated 3rd December 1903, on behalf of the Government of India, in which vivisection of Bengal was proposed for the third time. The reactionary policy of Lord Curzon's Government had goaded the people to re-assert themselves. The fresh proposal of partition threw the province into the vortex of a new agitation. Lal Mohan Ghose, the first delegate of the Indian Association in England, as well as a staunch supporter of the national cause, was elected President of this year's Congress which took place at Madras in December, 1903. From his presidential Chair, he denounced the Government proposal in unmistakable terms, and a resolution was also passed imploring the Government not to proceed with the proposal.

VII

1904 was very important. Because in this year Japan proved to the hilt that an Eastern nation could cope with the Westerners successfully, equipped with modern scientific weapons and appliances. Young Bengal, always receptive of the new, began to think seriously of the course they should pursue for the redress of their grievances. The Bengal Provincial Conference, held this year at Burdwan, under the Presidentship of Ashutosh Choudhury, Barrister-at-Law (later known as Sir A. Chaudhuri, Judge of the Calcutta High Court), laid the dictum that 'a subject people has no politics'. This Conference asked the people rather to depend on themselves for the improvement of the country than on others. A resolution was passed to the effect that the leaders should devote their time to organise the masses throughout the year. The Indian Association, the nerve-centre of political organisations and movements, resolved to carry out the mandate of the Conference. On behalf of the Association, Surendra Nath Banerjea, the veteran General Secretary, issued a circular letter to the leaders of the districts to appoint Committees in the districts, sub-divisional towns and prominent villages and organise regular meetings for the political education of the masses. He placed the Association-Rooms at the disposal of national

LULL BEFORE THE STORM

workers for this purpose. The Association, on its part, also appointed some sub-committees or sections to carry on work on the different branches of national improvement. The sub-committees, six in number, were placed under the charge of six sectional secretaries of repute, experts in their respective spheres. These were : (1) Industrial Section—J. Chaudhury, Secretary ; (2) Educational Section—Heramba Chandra Maitra, Secretary ; (3) Agricultural Section—Satyananda Bose, Secretary ; (4) Public Health Section—N. P. Sinha, Major, I.M.S. (Rtd.), Secretary ; (5) Provincial Section—Motilal Ghose, Secretary ; and (6) Political and Economic Section—Prithwis Chandra Ray, Secretary. Each one of the sectional secretaries outlined a brief scheme and forwarded it to the Association by February 1905 for necessary action.

The year 1904 was also important for us from another point of view. The constructive genius of Poet Rabindra Nath Tagore was engaged in guiding the new spirit and giving it a concrete shape through our social frame. He prepared a scheme of national reconstruction in his *Swadeshi Samaj** Without depending on the sweet will of a foreign Government the Indians could develop themselves organically. It was in our power to work for the spread of education and development of agriculture and industries. This might be done through the nucleus of a Society, called Swadeshi Samaj, whose director or guide would be a person of the stamp of the venerable Dr. Gurudas Banerjea. Co-operative societies and agricultural banks might be established for the development of our national resources. The Poet proposed, in the scheme of Swadeshi Samaj, a parallel Government which would adopt suitable means to give effect to the national programme. The scheme at once captured the imagination of the thinking section of our countrymen. They held meetings and discussed the feasibility of the scheme from various angles. The programme of mass-action formulated by the Indian Association and the scheme of Swadeshi Samaj propounded by Rabindra Nath, gave a lead to our national workers. The victory of Japan over the mighty arms of the Russians as well as the new spirit that had been abroad so long, generated a sense of self-respect and self-reliance in the minds of our people, especially of the educated and the younger section.

VIII

The Government were so very reactionary that they could scarcely take note of this new under-current. Lord Curzon's utterances had under-

*Published in *Bangadarshan* (Nava Paryyaya) for Bhadra, 1311 B. S.

HISTORY OF THE INDIAN ASSOCIATION

gone a change, as the years rolled on so much so that he did not hesitate to slander the character of the Indian people. One such utterance occurred in his Convocation address to the Calcutta University as Chancellor on 11th February, 1905. This roused indignation amongst his immediate audience and amongst those outside the Senate Hall. An apt retort was given to him in the *Amrita Bazar Patrika* of 13th February, when it quoted from his own book *Problems of the East* and in his own language, the falsehoods that he had resorted to while in Korea! The Indian Association organised a monster public meeting on 10th March, at the Town Hall of Calcutta, to give vent to the feeling of indignation at Lord Curzon's slander. Dr. Rash Behari Ghose presided over the meeting. The following resolution was passed and submitted to the Secretary of State for India under the signature of the chairman :

“That this meeting desires to place on record its emphatic protest against the aspersions cast upon the character of the people of India and upon their sacred literature by His Excellency the Viceroy in his address before the last Convocation of the Calcutta University and this meeting further desires to record its protest against the general policy of Lord Curzon's administration, especially as evidenced by the following measures : the restriction of the rights of Local Self-Government ; the Universities Act, which in the opinion of the people tends to circumscribe the area and officialise the system of Higher Education ; the Universities Validating Act, which has legalized executive orders, the validity of which had been called in question ; the Official Secrets Act, which was condemned as unnecessary and oppressive by the entire body of newspapers, English and Indian, and by representative public bodies throughout the land ; the proposed scheme of breaking up Bengal, which has been persisted in notwithstanding the universal and repeated protests of the people ; and the abolition of the Competitive Test, substituting official nomination for appointment according to merit.”

IX

On educational matters the Association took special interest. The Government of Bengal proposed to establish Rural Primary Schools throughout Bengal. For these schools, text-books in four dialects of the Bengali

LULL BEFORE THE STORM

language were also proposed to be written. The proposal struck at the root of our mother-tongue. And when asked for opinion, the Committee of the Association, in a letter dated the 14th April, 1905, condemned the latter portion of the proposal in strong language and advanced the following cogent reasons for such condemnation :

“If they are to be taught anything more than what they already know, if they are to be made to master the alphabet and elementary arithmetic, there can be no difficulty whatever in teaching them to understand the language of text-books carefully adapted to their requirements. The effort needed for such a purpose would not be at all severer than what would be needed for communicating the most elementary useful knowledge to them. Some ideas with which they are not already familiar must be presented to them, something must be added to their knowledge, and a certain amount to mental discipline, however small, they must undergo ; and a little additional exertion would be all that would be required to enable the rustic learner to understand the contents of books written in such simple Bengali as is understood all over the province, though it may not be the spoken language of the masses. Illiterate people migrating from one part of Bengal to another in quest of employment as menial servants have not to undergo a laborious training in order to qualify themselves for service, nor do the Jatrawallas and Kathaks of Western Bengal find it necessary to study the ‘local vernacular’ of Dacca or Barisal when going to those districts to entertain or instruct the villagers. There is no part of Bengal in which either teachers with the humblest pretensions to education or pupils have experienced any difficulty in using books like the *Varnaparichay* and the *Bodhoday* of Pandit Iswar Chandra Vidyasagar and the *Sisusiksha* of Pandit Madanmohan Tarkalankar. How readily books written in simple Bengali can be understood even by those whose education is of the most elementary character, is strikingly shown by the fact that the Mahabharata of Kasiram Das and the Ramayana of Kirtibas have enjoyed the widest popularity in every part of the province ; and it would, the Committee of the Indian Association venture to think, be a distinctly retrograde step to introduce a system of education for the masses which, while

HISTORY OF THE INDIAN ASSOCIATION

requiring a large expenditure of money on the part of the State, did not teach them to read books like those mentioned above, which are sources of amusement as well as of edification to the common people."

It should be noted that the Government gave up the project for good. Most of the Acts and measures of the Local as well as the Supreme Government during the Viceroyalty of Lord Curzon were, however, directed to the stultification of the growth of our nationalism. But the Resolution of the Government of India of 20th July 1905 surpassed everything else in its deep-laid sinister plan. It told the people of Bengal that their beloved province would be vivisected on the 16th October, 1905. This resolution finalised a movement on the part the Government that had started long before.

CHAPTER V

THE STORM SET IN, OR THE PARTITION OF BENGAL FINALISED

To trace the genesis of the partition move, we shall have to go back to the sixties of the last century. In 1860 the Indigo Commission had recommended redistribution of the Bengal districts for efficiency in administration. To check the oppression of the indigo planters and cater justice to the people of the remotest parts of the country, this was considered necessary both by the Government and the political organisations of the people. The Government acted upon the recommendation of the Commission. The Bengal districts, at least those in Central Bengal, were redistributed and readjusted. In this way proper administration of justice was sought to be assured even to the poorest peasants of the far-off villages. But though the process of redistribution and readjustment continued into the sixties, ethnological, linguistic, cultural and geographical homogeneity was not disturbed thereby.

But expediency and statecraft intervened. The plea of efficient administration was advanced. Assam was cut off from Bengal and made a Chief Commissioner's province in 1874. The Bengali-speaking districts of Sylhet, Cachar and Goalpara were tagged to the new province. The *Amrita Bazar Patrika*, even then, wrote a long editorial in Bengali on the evil consequences of the dismemberment of the then Bengali-speaking tracts. The Bengalis however were not then so organised as to offer resistance against the governmental fiat. The authorities, therefore, had a smooth sailing, but the people never forgot this arbitrary dismemberment. It wrangled in their breast. Till recently this action of the Government had been resented and opposed by the people.

II

Diplomatic reasons once more brought the matter of the redistribution of the districts of Bengal to the fore. In 1891 the Lieutenant-Governor of Bengal, the Chief Commissioners of Burma and Assam and a few military authorities sat to consider measures for the greater protection of the North-

HISTORY OF THE INDIAN ASSOCIATION

Eastern Frontier. It was then proposed to transfer the Lushai Hills to Assam, coupled with a recommendation that the Chittagong division should also be transferred. But no action was taken for the time being. Again in 1896, Sir William Ward, then Chief Commissioner of Assam, submitted an elaborate Scheme for the transfer of the Chittagong Division to Assam. He also suggested that the two districts of Dacca and Mymensingh should be given to Assam in the long run. The proposal gave rise to agitation amongst the people of the Chittagong Division. The Indian Association submitted a memorial to the Government for the withdrawal of the scheme. The foresight of the Association with regard to such questions was clearly manifest even at that time in the following lines :

“The Committee submit that in dealing with considerations of administrative convenience, public opinion is a factor which cannot be ignored. That which is violently opposed by the public cannot indeed be regarded as a convenience even from an administrative point of view. The opposition of public opinion is a grave source of administrative inconvenience. The Committee beg leave to observe that the proposed transfer of the Chittagong Division has called forth the unanimous protest of all sections of the community in the Division. It will not have escaped the notice of the Government that people who unhappily are not accustomed to act together in public matters have joined hands in making a common protest. European merchants and planters, Hindoo and Mahomedan Zemindars, are all agreed in making the common prayer that the Chittagong Division should continue to form a part of Bengal.” (*The Annual Report of the Indian Association from 1892-93 to 1895-1896*, p. 76.)

Sir H. J. S. Cotton succeeded Ward to the Commissionership of Assam, in November 1896. He had extensive and intimate knowledge of Bengal and the Bengali people. He gauged how deep was the popular feeling against the proposal. He, therefore, opposed the scheme of Ward. Cotton particularly condemned the idea of the transfer of any portion of Bengal to Assam. The result was that the Lushai Hills were made over to Assam, and the question of the transfer of the Chittagong division was entirely dropped. Then in December, 1903, appeared the famous letter of the

THE STORM SET IN

Government of India over the signature of Mr. (afterward, Sir) Herbert Risley, which led to the formulation of the scheme for the Partition of Bengal.

III

The letter of the Government of India followed the lines of recommendations of the Conference of 1891 and of Sir William Ward's suggestion of 1896. It contained the proposal for the transfer of the Chittagong Division and the two districts of Dacca and Mymensingh to Assam, making the channels of the Brahmaputra the natural boundary between Bengal and Assam. The former plea of administrative convenience was advanced in support of the proposal. In the opinion of the then authorities Bengal was considered to be too heavy a charge for one individual by reason of the development of the country and the growth of the population. It was true that the Bengal Presidency including Bengal, Behar and Orissa, was very unwieldy and required readjustment and even division. But this could have been done on a linguistic and ethnic basis. The Government of Lord Curzon however thought otherwise. The reactionary measures, such as, general repression, suppression of self-governing institutions, economic exploitation, the Government's educational policy were severely criticised all over India specially in Bengal. These criticisms and the political leadership of Bengal over all India were intolerable to Lord Curzon. He did not hesitate to brand the Indian National Congress as a political body representing the 'microscopic minority' in India.

The original proposal of Lord Curzon's Government included redistribution of some districts of Madras, the Central Provinces and the Bengal Presidency. The publication of the Government proposal was the signal for an outburst of opposition from the people everywhere. In less than two months from the publication of Mr. Risley's letter, about five hundred meetings were held in East Bengal alone. Such a demonstration of feeling, so genuine and widespread, could hardly be passed over by any rational Government. This question of vivisection was raised and discussed in the Madras Session of the Indian National Congress in December, 1903, and a resolution, indicating its reaction on the minds of the Congress leaders, was unanimously passed. Jogesh Chandra Chaudhuri, Bar-at-Law, the

HISTORY OF THE INDIAN ASSOCIATION

pioneer in the organisation of exhibitions of Swadeshi goods during the Congress Sessions and later president of the Indian Association, moved this important resolution in the Congress. It runs as follows :

“That this Congress views with deep concern the present policy of the Government of India in breaking up territorial divisions which have been of long standing and are closely united by ethnological, legislative, social and administrative relations and deprecated the separation from Bengal of Dacca, Mymensingh, Chittagong Division and portions of Chota Nagpur Division, and also the separation of the district of Ganjam and Vizagapattam districts from the Madras Presidency.” (*How India Wrought for Freedom*—Annie Basant, p. 390.)

IV

But Lord Curzon was not a man to be daunted by popular opinion or demonstration. He used the official machinery to combat it and convince the people of the utility of partition in the provinces concerned. Curzon abandoned the idea of separating the Madras districts. He, however, stuck to his main objective, that is, partitioning Bengal. He wanted, from the outset, to drive a wedge between the Hindus and the Moslems. But when he found that the Moslems, too, were opposed to the idea of partition in spite of the subtle government propaganda, he himself went out on a tour in Eastern Bengal in February, 1904. It was a propaganda tour *par excellence*. In a series of speeches, delivered in reply to public addresses at Chittagong, Dacca and Mymensingh, Lord Curzon not only tried to convince the people of the virtue of his original proposal, but ‘foreshadowed the willingness of the Government to consider a wide scheme involving the creation of a Lieutenant-Governorship with a Legislative Council and an independent authority and transfer of so much territory as would be required to justify the institution of such a highly organised and fully equipped administration’ (*Resolution of the Home Department of India on the Bengal Partition, 20th July, 1905*).

Lord Curzon’s speeches had their effect on those for whom they were mainly made. A large section of the Moslem leaders veered round him. They became convinced of the virtues of the Partition and Nawab Salimullah

THE STORM SET IN

of Dacca, who at first denounced the proposal of partition as a 'bastardly arrangement', was soon won over by Lord Curzon after giving him a loan of £1,00,000 from the public exchequer. After the completion of his Eastern Bengal tour, Lord Curzon and his Government maintained an impenetrable attitude of silence, which was ominous and produced suspicion in the mind of Indians. This suspicion found adequate expression in a resolution adopted at the Bombay Session of the Congress in 1904, presided over by Sir Henry J. S. Cotton. The resolution was moved by Ambika Charan Mazumdar, seconded by A. Chaudhuri and supported among others, by Baikuntha Nath Sen of Berhampore, Bengal. The resolution of this session on the Partition of Bengal reads thus :

"That this Congress records its emphatic protest against the proposals of the Government of India for the partition of Bengal in any manner whatsoever. That the proposals are viewed with great alarm by the people, as the division of the Bengali Nation into separate units will seriously interfere with its social, intellectual and material progress involving the loss of various constitutional and other rights and privileges which the Province has so long enjoyed and will burden the country with heavy expenditure which the Indian tax-payer cannot at all afford.

"This Congress is of opinion that no case has been made out for the Partition of Bengal, but if the present constitution of the Bengal Government is considered inadequate for the efficient administration of the Province, the remedy lies not in any redistribution of its territories, but in organic changes in the form of the Government, such as the conversion of the Lieutenant-Governorship of Bengal into a Governorship with an Executive Committee, like that of Bombay and Madras."

V

The Landholders' Association of Bengal was established in 1904. Sir Andrew Fraser, then Lieutenant-Governor of Bengal, frequently consulted its leaders, of whom Mr. A. Chaudhuri was a prominent member. But at a later stage, they too were kept in the dark as to how the governmental mind was worked in respect to partition. On the 11th January, 1905, the Indian Association convened a Conference of the

HISTORY OF THE INDIAN ASSOCIATION

district delegates, more than three hundred in number, on the question of the partition of Bengal with Sir Henry Cotton, President of the Congress, in the chair. Leaders of different sections and parties also attended the Conference. While giving a history of the Partition move, the President condemned the proposal and implored the Government to try other means for the administration of the province. Since the tour of Lord Curzon in early 1904, no authoritative information had reached the people, except reports of occasional conferences and consultations with a section of the landholders. No information could have been elicited on the question from the Government in the Bengal and the Supreme Legislative Council. The main resolution passed in the Conference also bears testimony to the popular ignorance of the Governmental move :

“That this Conference has learnt with a sense of relief that no decision has yet been arrived at by the Government on the question of the proposed partition of Bengal, and the Conference prays that if the scheme of Partition has undergone any modification or expansion as stated in some of the leading Anglo-Indian newspapers, the revised scheme be laid before the public for discussion before the Government of India arrives at a final decision on the subjects.”

Ambika Charan Majumdar of Faridpore moved and A. Chaudhuri seconded the resolution. Amongst those who supported it were Maharajah Suryakanta Acharyya of Mymensingh and Parbati Sankar Ray Chaudhuri of Teota, Dacca. The Government of Lord Curzon was secretly maturing the scheme of the partition of Bengal. The people as well as their leaders were stunned when the Resolution of 20th July 1905 on the Partition was published. It transpired afterwards that the Government of India had meanwhile secured the consent of Mr. Brodrick, then Secretary of State for India, on the final scheme of Partition which was embodied in *the infamous Resolution. This resolution is an important document, consisting of twelve long paragraphs. Its importance cannot be over-estimated in the history of our national resurgence. In its very first paragraph we find :

“In December 1903, the Government of India in letters to several of the Local Governments, which were published in the Official Gazette, announced their desire to consider the redistribution of

*Please see Appedix G.

THE STORM SET IN

certain of the territories to the Eastern and North-Eastern Provinces of India, notably of Bengal and Assam. Their attention had been called to the matter by the constantly accumulating evidence of the excessive and intolerable burden imposed upon the Bengal Government by a change too great for any administration, and of the constant deterioration in the standards of Government, notably in portions of Eastern Bengal. Simultaneously the importance of rendering Assam self-contained and independent administration with a service of its own, and to provide for its further commercial and industrial expansion, was impressed upon them. These considerations suggested a careful investigation of the circumstances, and surroundings of both provinces, and resulted in the formulation of certain proposals for the readjustment of their territorial boundaries."

VI

How the Congress Resolution on the Partition of Bengal had anticipated the preamble of the Resolution! We have already said that the idea of territorial redistribution of Madras was abandoned. Only five Hindi-speaking native states of Chota Nagpur were transferred to the Central Provinces, and five Oriya-speaking native states were transferred from the Central Provinces to the Bengal Presidency. But the scheme mainly centered round the Partition of Bengal. The Resolution also stresses the point thus :

"These proposals were, however, of minor importance compared with the principal changes to which the Secretary of State has given his sanction, and which involve the creation of a new administration of the first class out of certain divisions of Bengal, together with the territories at present administered by the Chief Commissioner of Assam."

Since the February (1904) tour of Lord Curzon in Eastern Bengal the scope of the partition scheme had been widened. The Resolution says :

"From that date the efforts of Government are principally directed to a discussion of the areas that could most advantageously be assigned to the new province, and to an examination of the safeguards that

HISTORY OF THE INDIAN ASSOCIATION

were required to secure the legitimate interests of their inhabitants. A scheme was submitted by the Lieutenant-Governor of Bengal for the amalgamation with Assam of the Chittagong and Dacca Divisions, and the districts of Pabna, Bogra and Rangpur. This proposal did not seem to the Government of India to be proportionate to the scope of the important administration which it was now contemplated to create, nor would it have given to Bengal, whose population would still have exceeded 59 millions, the permanent relief that ought to ensure from an adequate reduction of its existing area and responsibilities. Accordingly, it was proposed to increase the transferred area by the districts of Rajshahi, Dinajpur, Jalpaiguri, Malda, and the State of Cooch-Bihar. These additions were thought by the Government of India to be justified on the grounds that they would constitute a new province with a population of over 31 millions while leaving Bengal with a little more than 54 millions ; that they would provide a clearly defined western boundary corresponding with well-recognised characteristics, both geographical, ethnological, social and linguistic ; that they would concentrate in the single province the typical Mahommedan population of Bengal, for whom Dacca would furnish a natural capital ; that the whole of the tea industry (with the exception of Darjeeling gardens), and the greater part of the jute tracts would thus be brought under a single Government, and that long-established divisional areas would thereby remain undisturbed."

VII

This extract gives a complete picture of the partition scheme. The division of Bengal, according to the Independence Act of 1947, is almost on the same lines as that of the Partition of Bengal which took place in 1905, forty-two years back. The Resolution further continues :

"The enlarged scheme was cordially accepted by the Governments both of Bengal and Assam. The Lieutenant-Governor reported that he had discussed the proposal with the members of the Board of Revenue and with his most senior officers, and had found that with scarcely an exception there was complete unanimity in accepting it. The Chief Commissioner of Assam attached great value to the future association

THE STORM SET IN

under a single Government of the tea-growing areas supplied by free labour with those worked by indentured labour, and thought that the gradual substitution of natural for artificial methods of recruitment would be accelerated. He also proposed the creation of a new Commissionership out of the Surma Valley districts and Manipur, at present under his own direct control. This suggestion was accepted by the Government of India, and will raise the number of Commissionerships in the new province to five."

As regards the effect of the scheme, the Resolution says :

"A new province will be created, with the status of a Lieutenant-Governorship, consisting of the Chittagong, Dacca, and Rajshahi Division of Bengal, the district of Malda, the State of Hill Tipperah, and the present Chief Commissionership of Assam. Darjeeling will remain with Bengal. In order to maintain associations which are highly valued in both areas, the province will be entitled Eastern Bengal and Assam. Its capital will be at Dacca with subsidiary headquarters at Chittagong. It will comprise an area of 106,640 square miles and a population of 31 millions, of whom 18 millions are Muhammadans and 12 millions Hindus. It will possess a Legislative Council, and a Board of Revenue of two Members, and the jurisdiction of the High Court of Calcutta is left undisturbed. The existing province of Bengal, diminished by the surrender of these large territories on the east and of the five Hindu States of Chota Nagpur, but increased by the acquisition of Sambalpur and the five Uriya States before mentioned, will consist of 141,580 square miles with a population of 54 millions, of whom 42 millions are Hindus and 9 millions Muhammadans. In short, the territories now composing Bengal and Assam will be divided into two compact and self-contained provinces, by far the largest constituents of each of which will be homogeneous in character and which will possess clearly defined boundaries and be equipped with the complete resources of an advanced administration."

HISTORY OF THE INDIAN ASSOCIATION

VIII

In this way the Partition of Bengal became a *fait accompli*. But its effect on the Bengali-speaking people could not but be disastrous. A storm of protest arose throughout Bengal. According to the data collected by the Indian Association :

“From December 1903 to October 1905 more than 2000 public meetings attended by 500 to 50,000 people, both Hindus and Mussalmans, were held in different parts of East Bengal and West Bengal to protest against the partition. The Resolutions unanimously adopted at these meetings were regularly submitted to the Government of India as well as to the Secretary of State. The people of United Bengal, both Hindus and Mussalmans, Maharajas, Nawabs, Rajas, the educated community and the masses, met five times at the Calcutta Town Hall to give expression to their feeling and protest against this ill-advised measure. Memorials were submitted by the British Indian Association, the Bengal Landholders' Association, as well as from nearly all the important and recognised public bodies and associations in either part of the province, and in July 1905 when the public mind was in a state of feverish anxiety, a mammoth representation over the signature of about 70,000 people of all classes and communities was submitted to the Secretary of State from East Bengal. The Indian Press, both in Bengal as well as in other provinces, were unanimous in their condemnation of the proposed dismemberment of Bengal, and even a large section of the Anglo-Indian Press, some of which are recognised as semi-official organs, joined in the protest.”
(*Report for 1911*, pp. 21-22)

Immediately after the publication of the Government Resolution, the Indian Association, with which most of the progressive leaders of the province had been connected, convened a Conference at Maharaja Jotindra Mohan Tagore's palace at Pathuriaghata. This was attended by the Maharaja himself. Many men of light and leading, and editors of the *Statesman* the *Englishman* and several other Europeans took part in its

THE STORM SET IN

deliberations. In accordance with the decision of the Conference, the Maharaja sent a telegram to the Viceroy praying for a reconsideration of the orders passed, and urging that, if the partition were unavoidable, owing to administrative reasons, the Bengali-speaking population should form part and parcel of the same administration. This decision of the Conference gained additional strength when the Behari leaders (of whom Sachhidananda Sinha was one) supported the proposal and asked for a separate province, for Biharies in Behar. But this reasonable proposal also could not soften the unbending attitude of Lord Curzon.

CHAPTER VI

THE ANTI-PARTITION MOVEMENT

SWADESHI AND BOYCOTT

The Indian Association had all along protested against the autocratic and unjustifiable measures of Lord Curzon. But the parting kick given by him in the partition of Bengal surpassed all others and goaded the country to resort to an unprecedented agitation. This deep-rooted countrywide agitation marked the travail of the birth of a new nation. In the words of a writer in *Amrita Bazar Patrika*, "From dark clouds descend life-giving showers, and from parted furrows springs up the life-sustaining golden grain, that the bitter biting winter is the precursor of the glorious spring." The Indian Association accepted the challenge of Lord Curzon and started to organise a movement throughout the country. The spread of political education among the masses, a particular object of the Association, and the message of self-help inculcated by the leaders of the New Spirit—enabled the people to rise equal to the occasion and throw themselves heart and soul into the struggle ahead.

II

As a matter of fact, the Government Resolution of July 20, 1905, splitting the Bengali-speaking race into twain, was as a bomb-shell not only to the leaders but also to the masses who rose as one man against this mischievous measure. Public feeling not only found outlet in numerous public meetings but sought to express itself in some action so that such an irresponsible ukase might not blacken the State archives any more. At this crucial moment Krishna Kumar Mitra, a prominent member of the Association, proposed in his *Sanjibani*, the progressive Bengali weekly of Calcutta, that this universal upheaval should be best utilised by the boycott of British goods which used to be imported in large quantities but which could be easily produced in this country. In the list of the goods were to be included cotton goods, salt, sugar and many other necessities of our daily life. Krishna Kumar's practical common sense showed itself when he mentioned the names of indigenous articles that could easily replace these foreign goods before we could produce their finished prototypes in the country. The proposal of Krishna Kumar had a two-fold object in view : (1) to bring to the notice of the British public the grim injustice done to Bengal and (2) to stimulate the indigenous industries in a nation-

THE ANTI-PARTITION MOVEMENT

wide scale. This Boycott proposal came as a God-send to the Bengali race. The leaders of Calcutta and of the mofussil appreciated the feasibility of such a measure and at once resolved to carry them out. Meetings were held in the mofussil districts, such as, Dacca, Mymensingh, Faridpur, Barisal, Chittagong, Tipperah, Noakhali, Natore, Rajshahi, Rangpur, Dinajpur, Bogra, Maldah, Murshidabad, Nadia, Jessore, Khulna, 24-Parganas, Midnapore, Bankura, Birbhum and many other districts which passed resolutions in favour of the boycott move. Men were determined not to touch British goods even. The leaders of the Indian Association and those of the new school sat together for days to thrash out the best means of guiding this national determination and popular upheaval into proper channels. They organised a representative public meeting at the Town Hall of Calcutta on 7th August, 1905, under the presidentship of Raja Peary Mohan Mukherjee and gave vent to the popular feeling in this famous Resolution :

“That this meeting fully sympathises with the resolutions adopted at many meetings held in the mofussil to abstain from the purchase of British manufactures so long as the Partition Resolution was not withdrawn, as a protest against the indifference of the British public in regard to Indian affairs and the consequent disregard of Indian public opinion by the present Government.”

The Resolution was moved by Norendra Nath Sen, the Editor of *The Indian Mirror* and supported by Surendra Nath Banerjea. Beside the main meeting, two overflow meetings had to be held to satisfy the vast concourse of people that were present there. Surendra Nath spoke at all these meetings and at once captured the imagination of the people. Determined to boycott British goods and adopt *Swadeshi*, the people left the meeting place for their respective destinations. This was the signal for the boycott movement that followed in all its varied aspects. Surendra Nath writes :

“I have not witnessed a revolution in my time, nor by an effort of imagination can I conceive what it is like. But amid the upheaval of the *Swadeshi* movement, I could, I think, obtain some idea of the transformation of public feeling and of the wild excitement which must precede a revolutionary movement. A strange atmosphere is created. Young and old, rich and poor, literate and illiterate, all

HISTORY OF THE INDIAN ASSOCIATION

breathe it, and all are swayed and moved and even transported by the invisible influence that is felt. Reason halts ; judgment is held in suspense ; it is one mighty impulse that moves the heart of the community and carries everything before it."

And it was really so. The *Swadeshi* spirit was already there. Again to quote Surendra Nath :

"The *Swadeshi* movement did not come into birth with the agitation for the reversal of the Partition of Bengal. It was synchronous with the national awakening which the political movement in Bengal had created. The human mind is not divided into watertight compartments, but is a living organisation and is manifest throughout the entire sphere of human activities."

This was also actually true. The partition was but a temporary measure to be unsettled within a few years. But the wrench was felt by the entire Bengali people and in all spheres of life , economic, political and educational, suffered from the rift.

III

The Anti-Partition movement ran into three primary channels, *viz.*, (1) political, (2) economic and (3) educational, and in almost all these the leaders of the Indian Association took the initiative. The political aspect of the movement first absorbed much of their attention. The message of *Swadeshi* and boycott required to be broadcast throughout the land. We have it on the authority of Krishna Kumar Mitra that Surendra Nath Banerjea, Honorary Secretary to the Indian Association, collected money and they themselves selected preachers for the propagation of the movement. The student community responded spontaneously to the call of the Motherland. They attended *Swadeshi* meetings, picketed shops where foreign goods were sold, hawked *Swadeshi* articles from door to door and implored their countrymen to buy their own goods. The authorities scented sedition in all these patriotic activities and issued circulars to restrain them. One of these circulars came to be known as Carlyle's Circular. A similar circular was issued in Eastern Bengal and Assam under the popular name of Lyons' Circular. Even before the fateful day of Partition, the 16th October, arrived, the students, their guardians andt eachers were being

THE ANTI-PARTITION MOVEMENT

harassed by the Government. But these harassments only added fuel to the fire. In Calcutta was established the Anti-Circular Society with Krishna Kumar Mitra as President and Sachindra Prasad Basu as Secretary to help those students who had fallen a victim to the Circulars.

The organisation of boycott of British goods constituted the principal plank of the political aspect of the movement. But the matter did not stop at that. The fateful day of Partition was still at a distance. The leaders of the Association tried their utmost to prepare the minds of the people for the adequate observance of this mournful day. Surendra Nath in his *A Nation in Making* gives us a short description of the programme to be followed :

“The 16th October was to be the day on which the Partition of Bengal was to take effect. For Bengal it was the day of national mourning. We were resolved to observe it as such, and the country warmly responded to our call. The programme of mourning was fixed in consultation with the mofussil leaders, and was widely circulated. There was to be (1) *The Rakhi Bandhan* ceremony—the red band of brotherly union was to be tied round the wrist of all whom we welcomed as brothers. . . . (2) The 16th October was to be observed as a day of fasting. The domestic hearth was not to be lit, food was not to be cooked except for the sick and the invalid ; the shops were to be closed, business was to be suspended, people were to walk bare-footed, and bathe in the Ganges in the early morning hours for purposes of purification. It was a self-denying ordinance, but it was cheerfully accepted, and as the signal showed the heart and soul of the nation were in it.”

But this was not all. Surendra Nath proposed ‘the building of a Federation Hall, which, assuming that the Partition was not undone or modified, was to be the meeting-ground of the old province and its severed parts, the mark and symbol of their invisible union.’ The idea suggested itself to him from what he saw at the Hotel des Invalides in Paris, where round the tomb of the great Napoleon are lauelled statues, representative of the different provinces. Those of Alsace and Lorraine were at the time veiled and shrouded. According to Surendra Nath, ‘we should have a memorial of that sort, statues of all the districts in Bengal, those of the sundered districts being shrouded until the day of their reunion.’ The Hall would

HISTORY OF THE INDIAN ASSOCIATION

serve other purposes of a public nature. It would keep alive the remembrance of our severance, and thus be an ever-living stimulus to our efforts to secure our reunion.' Surendra Nath tells us that his proposal was carefully considered, and was warmly supported, amongst others by Sister Nivedita and Sir Tarak Nath Palit.

IV

At last the fateful day arrived. Bengal was partitioned on 16th October 1905. The country was mourning. The observances of the day were done according to programme. Thousands of men, women and children bathed in the Ganges early in the morning, attended meetings at the Beadon Square and the Central College on the Cornwallis Street, and bound the ties of *Rakhi*, the emblem of love and unity, round one another's wrists. Leaders headed by Surendra Nath addressed both these meetings of the morning. In the afternoon was held the inaugural meeting of the Federation Hall on the Upper Circular Road referred to above. Ananda Mohan Bose, President of the Indian Association, was brought in an invalid chair to preside over the meeting. In his peroration, Ananda Mohan hailed the national awakening which he had almost risen from the dead to witness before him. That day marked the birth of a new nation. Denouncing the partition he said :

"The 'official' separation has drawn us indeed far closer together and made us stronger in united brotherhood. Hindu, Mussalman and Christian, North, East and West, with the resounding sea beneath, all belong to one indivisible Bengal ; say again, my friends, from the depths of your hearts, to one indivisible Bengal, the common, the beloved, ever-cherished Motherland of us all. In spite of every other separation of creed, this creed of the common Motherland will bring us nearer, heart to heart and brother to brother. And this Federation Hall, the foundation-stone of which is being laid today, not only on this spot of land, but on our moistened and cheerful hearts, is the embodiment and visible symbol of this spirit of union, the memorial to future generations yet unborn of this unhappy day, and of the unhappy policy which has attempted to separate us into two parts."

There was no resolution passed. The foundation-stone was laid by the President. But just before the ceremony (Sir) Ashutosh Chaudhuri read the following Proclamation in English and Poet Rabindra Nath Tagore followed him with a translation in Bengali :

THE ANTI-PARTITION MOVEMENT

“Whereas the Government has thought fit to effectuate the Partition of Bengal in spite of the Universal protest of the Bengalee nation, we hereby pledge and proclaim that we as a people shall do everything in our power to counteract the evil effects of the dismemberment of our province, and to maintain the integrity of our race. So God help us.”—A. M. Bose.

After the meeting was over, the vast concourse of people moved northward towards Bagbazar where at Rai Pasupati Bose's spacious compound was to be held another public meeting. The object of this meeting was to raise a national fund for the stimulation of our principal national industries, such as, spinning and weaving. The object was more than fulfilled. A sum of seventy thousand rupees was collected on the spot. With this amount was founded the nucleus of a national fund for the above purpose. It should be noted that this fund was quite distinct from one of the same name, started so far back as in 1883 and preserved in the custody of the Indian Association. Be that as it may, the leaders of the Association, headed by Surendra Nath Bannerjea, were the prime initiators of raising this new national fund.

V

The Damocle's sword had already fallen on the student community in Bengal. Many students left their schools and colleges to devote themselves to the national cause. There were still others, who left the Government-controlled institutions and hankered for a sort of education suited to the needs of our nation. Ashutosh Chaudhuri also a prominent member of the Indian Association, took the lead in catering to the educational needs of our student community. On his invitation, a conference of Bengali leaders was convened on 16th November, 1905 to consider the question in all its bearings. After preliminary discussion, a provisional Committee was formed by the following resolution. It was moved by Surendra Nath Banerjea, seconded by Tarak Nath Palit and supported by Motilal Ghose :

HISTORY OF THE INDIAN ASSOCIATION

“That in the opinion of this Conference it is desirable and necessary that a National Council of Education should be at once established to organise a system of education—Literary, Scientific and Technical—on National lines and under National Control and that the following gentlemen* should be appointed as a Provisional Committee to take immediate steps to further this object and that the Committee be instructed to submit their report within three weeks.”

The Provisional Committee included the pick of our leaders in the political, academical and literary sphere. As the Committee headed a movement for the national regeneration of the Bengali people in the domain of arts and sciences the names of its members are gratefully remembered for each of their share in this laudable work.

VI

The anti-partition agitation grew so wide-spread and intense that our brethren of the other provinces also felt sympathetic and sought for avenues for rendering help. There was the Indian National Congress which had for years denounced the Governmental move of partition. But their cry

*Provisional Education Committee.—Dr. Rash Behari Ghose, M.A., D. L. C. I. E.; Sri Gooroodas Banerjee, Kt., M.A., D. L.; T. Palit, Esqr., Bar-at-Law; Rajah Peary Mohan Mukherjee, M.A., B.L., C.S.I.; N. Ghose, Esq., Bar-at-Law; Babu Norendra Nath Sen; Babu Moti Lal Ghose; Babu Surendra Nath Banerjee; Babu Rabindra Nath Tagore; Babu Subodh Chandra Mullick; Babu Kalinath Mitra; Babu Gones Chandra Chandra; Babu Khudiram Bose, B.A.; Babu Heramba Chandra Maitra, M.A.; Babu Brojendra Nath Seal, M.A.; Babu Girish Chandra Bose, M.A., M.R.A.S.; Babu Ramendra Sunder Trivedi, M.A.; Babu N. G. Dass, M.A.; Babu Mohit Chandra Sen, M.A.; B. Chakravarti, Esqr., M.A., Bar-at-Law; C. R. Das, Esqr., Bar-at-Law; P. Mitra, Esq., Bar-at-Law; A. K. Ghose, Esq., Bar-at-Law; A. Rasul, Esq., M.A., B.C.I., Bar-at-Law; Jages Chandra Chaudhuri, M.A., Bar-at-Law; Babu Hirendra Nath Dutt, M.A., B.L.; Ray Yatindra Nath Chowdhury, M.A., B.L.; Babu Satis Chandra Mookerjee, M.A., B.L.; Maulavi Syed Md. Karim Agha; Dr. R. C. Car, L.R.C.P.; Dr. Sasi Bhusan Mitra, M.B.B.S. (London), Dr. Amrita Lal Sircar, L.M.S.; Dr. Pran Krishna Acharjee, M.A., M.B.; Babu Deva Prasad Sarbadhicari, M.A., B.L.; Babu Mohinimohan Chatterji, M.A., B.L.; Babu Banwari Lal Chowdhuri, M.A., B.L.; Babu Manomohan Bhattacharjee, M.A.; Babu Jogendra Chandra Ghose, M.A., B.L.; Babu Bepin Chandra Pal; and Babu Bhupendra Nath Basu, M.A., B.L.

A. Chaudhuri and Nil Ratan Sircar, Secretaries.

THE ANTI-PARTITION MOVEMENT

was a cry in the wilderness. At this year's session of the Congress at Benares, held under the Presidentship of Gopal Krishna Gokhale, the Resolution against the Partition of Bengal was moved by Surendra Nath himself, supported by the leaders of other provinces who 'voiced in one indignant voice, the anger and determination of India.' Of Surendra Nath's speech Mrs. Annie Besant gives the following summary :

"With passionate eloquence he voiced the anger of his people and declared that agitation should never stop until the Partition was cancelled. He described the grief and excitement in Calcutta, shops were closed, the domestic hearth was not lit, food was not cooked. The Government was busy 'forging instruments of repression, laying the foundation for the inauguration of a reign of terror.' Meetings were prohibited, Sankirtan processions were stopped, the singing of 'Bande Matarm' punished, boys prosecuted and sent to gaol. They believed God was with them, and men fortified by such belief and working under such conviction are irresistible and invincible; there is no danger which they are not ready to brave, no difficulty which they are not prepared to surmount." (*How India Wrought for Freedom*, pp. 426-7.)

The Resolution against repressive measures adopted to crush the antagonism that Lord Curzon's tyranny had created, was moved by Pandit Madan Mohan Malviya and seconded by Lala Lajpat Rai, 'the Lion of the Panjab'. Lalaji congratulated Bengal on its splendid opportunity of heralding a new political era for the country. They must show that they were 'no longer beggars and that we are subjects of an Empire where people are struggling to achieve that position which is their right.' He exhorted other provinces to follow the example of Bengal and win. The Resolution in question runs as follows :

"Resolved that this Congress records its earnest and emphatic protest against the repressive measures which have been adopted by the authorities in Bengal after the people there had been compelled to resort to the boycott of foreign goods as a last protest and perhaps the only constitutional and effective means left to them of drawing the attention of the British public to the action of the Government of India in persisting in their determination to partition Bengal, in utter disregard of the universal prayers and protests of people."

HISTORY OF THE INDIAN ASSOCIATION

The whole-hearted participation of the Bengali litterateurs and journalists who rose as one man against the Partition of Bengal gave great force and wide publicity to the anti-partition movement. Through national songs and national dramas as well as powerful writings in the columns of the English and Bengali newspapers, the cult of *Swadeshi* became an all-conquering force. To the other Bengali journals was added *Sandhya*, a newspaper of immense importance to our national cause. The paper was started by Upadhyya Brahma Bandhab of hallowed memory. Thus ended the year 1905, leaving us for a grim struggle for five years more.

CHAPTER VII

AFTERMATH OF PARTITION—I

1906-8

The Swadeshi movement grew intense throughout Bengal under the guidance of the leaders of the Indian Association. Reports of harassment and oppression reached the Association from the interior of the districts early in 1906. Not only the students, teachers, and the guardians of the students, but also the common people had to suffer much for their active participation in the movement. Boycott of British goods being the main item of the programme, people resorted to it in large number. While picketting shops of foreign goods many were arrested, and after mockery of a trial some were even sent to prison. Kaliprassanna Kavyavisarad, Editor of *Hitabadi* and a prominent member of the Indian Association, took the initiative to organise a meeting to lend cordial support to these suffering patriots, under the auspices of the Association. The meeting was held on 14th February 1906 under the presidentship of Norendra Nath Sen, the veteran Editor of *The Indian Mirror*. Inspiring addresses were delivered by the President and Surendra Nath Banerjea. They asked the people to emulate the sufferings of our patriots of the mofussil districts. Medals were awarded to them by the President in recognition of their services. Two other meetings were held in support of the suffering patriots. The Albert Hall meeting was exclusively organised by the Muslims under the presidentship of Maulvi Liakat Hossain on 16th February. Two days later the Hindu and Moslem public of Bhowanipore held the third meeting with the same object in view.

II

Most of the students who had left the schools and colleges, joined the Anti-Circular Society. The Society commenced work in right earnest under the inspiring guidance of its president Krishna Kumar Mitra, a prominent member of the Indian Association. For convenience's sake the Society divided itself into several sections : (1) The 'Academic Section' was meant for those who wanted to pursue their studies. (2) The 'Music Section' gave lessons to the youngmen in popular national songs. (3) The 'Investigation Section' conducted inquiries as regards the boycott of British goods and the use of Swadeshi goods. (4) In the 'Sales Section', the members of the society used to hawk Swadeshi goods from door to door. (5) The 'Publicity and Propaganda Section' prepared some of the members for preaching

HISTORY OF THE INDIAN ASSOCIATION

the gospel of Swadeshi to the masses. There were also other societies instituted for the propagation of Swadeshi in Calcutta and the mofussil. But the Anti-Circular Society became prominent in the public eye even in early 1906 for its aggressive national activities with regard to boycott and Swadeshi. Even the Authorities were perturbed with the organised work of this Society.

Leaders of the Indian Association sought to guide this popular upheaval into the constructive channel. The sum of money raised for the National Fund was utilized in the opening of an industrial centre in 208, Cornwallis Street, Calcutta. The music of Charkha, extinct from Bengali home for a long time, was again heard. People, women not excepted, were engaged in spinning on the Charkha. The handloom was set, and weaving cloth commenced. Our leaders thus started a movement for spinning and weaving on a commercial scale to meet the demands of pure Swadeshi cloth. Krishna Kumar Mitra writes that this enterprise absorbed at least thirty thousand rupees of the National Fund raised in the meeting at Rai Pasupati Nath Basu's house, but it was to be regretted that the enterprise did not prove successful. They had to close it within a few months of its start. The people naturally looked to the Bombay Cotton Mills for the supply of countrymade goods. They raised the prices of cloth and reaped a rich harvest at the cost of the patriotic sentiments of the Bengalis. Some of our leaders floated a company as early as in 1906 and established the Banga Luxmi Cotton Mill to meet the demand of Swadeshi cloth. Imbued with the Swadeshi spirit our mothers and sisters also took to Charkha and worked hard at it for some time. It should be said here that the Swadeshi movement gave impetus for the establishment of many national enterprises, such as, insurance and banking. Several factories were started in Calcutta and the mofussil for the production of the daily necessities of our life, which had hitherto been imported from foreign countries. The Industrial and Scientific Association, formed a few years previously, sent our young men to Japan and other industrially advanced countries to learn the technique of modern machineries for the economic improvement of our country.

III

The leaders of the Swadeshi movement, most of whom were again the prominent members of the Association, toured both in the towns and villages of the districts and explained to the masses the political import of the Boycott and the national gains by adopting Swadeshi. The district leaders

AFTERMATH OF PARTITION—I

helped to percolate the movement to the rank and file. In some places, such as Barisal, British goods totally disappeared from the market. The district authorities from the Magistrate downward were hard put to it to procure a small piece of British cloth or an ounce of British salt from the markets. Sir Bamfylde Fuller, the Lieutenant-Governor of the newly created province of East Bengal and Assam, had already become famous by his arbitrary orders, actions and speeches. One of the main objects of this Curzonian fiat of the Bengal Partition was to drive a wedge between the Hindus and the Mussalmans. Curzon was no longer there but in Sir Bamfylde Fuller he left a real prototype of his to materialise his ideas. Sir Bamfylde compared the Hindu and the Mussalman to the proverbial two wives of a king, one of whom was *duo rani*, the humiliated queen, and the other was *suo rani*, the favourable consort. Like this proverbial king Sir Bamfylde called the Mussalman his "favourite wife" and engaged to do everything in his favour at the cost of the Hindu. This policy of favouritism pursued by the first Lieutenant-Governor of East Bengal and Assam, set the ball of communalism rolling. Both the executive and the judiciary of the province were vitiated by this communal virus. As the days passed, the matter became manifest in true colours. The slogan of *Bande Matoram* was an anathema with Sir Bamfylde. He directed the districts officially to ban this slogan and inflict exemplary punishment on those who cried it. How the leaders of Barisal, headed by Aswini Kumar Dutt, were forced by both Sir Bamfylde and his district adherents into accepting some humiliating terms as regards Boycott and the cry of *Bande Matoram*, has become common history. Under the shadow of this humiliation and insult, the Bengal Provincial Conference was going to be held at Barisal on 14th and 15th April, 1906.

It was due to the unceasing efforts of Surendra Nath Banerjea and other leaders of the Indian Association that the Swadeshi cause could receive such a momentum in so short a time. The Bengal Provincial Conference must meet in the scheduled time at Barisal. The leaders of the Indian Association would not only help the Conference to sit there, but were prepared to face any emergency. Leaders from Calcutta and the mofussil districts assembled at Barisal and heard the sorrowful tale of how the district authorities banned the cry of *Bande Matoram* in the streets. Their

HISTORY OF THE INDIAN ASSOCIATION

attitude towards the assemblage was not at all praiseworthy. Surendra Nath Banerjea arrived at Barisal from Dacca with a contingent of fellow-delegates. He had addressed innumerable public meetings both in Calcutta and the districts on the subject of Swadeshi and induced his countrymen to take the Swadeshi vow.* Long before in 1883-4 he had been the beau-ideal of the nation, now he became the uncrowned king of Bengal. At Barisal, with him in the forefront the procession of delegates and workers with President-elect, Mr. Abdul Rasul, started from the Raja Bahadur's Haveli to the pandal in calm solemnity but with the slogan of *Bande Mataram* on their lips. The police lathi-charged the delegates and workers in the rear under the direction of Mr. Kemp, the Superintendent of Police. Blood was for the first time peacefully shed for the sake of our motherland. Chittaranjan Guha-Thakurta, Brajendra Nath Ganguli and Phani Banerjea were severely beaten by the constables on duty. Surendra Nath Banerjea was arrested by Mr. Kemp and brought before the Magistrate Emerson at his bungalow, who summarily tried and fined Surendra Nath, and then discharged.

IV

The Conference was held in a disciplined manner. After the show of a trial was over Surendra Nath ran to the Pandal, accompanied by his friends, Aswini Kumar Dutt and others. The tale of the blood-bath was told feelingly by Manoranjan Guha-Thakurta, father of Chittaranjan. On the motion of Motilal Ghose, Editor of *The Amrita Bazar Patrika* and an influential member of the Association, the Conference adopted the following resolution of passive resistance :

“The free and unrestricted use of lathis by the police in broad day-light under the orders of the District and the Assistant District Superintendents of Police on the delegates assembled to welcome Mr. A.

According to Surendra Nath, the Bengali vow may be translated as follows : ‘Invoking God Almighty to be our witness, and standing in the presence of after-generations, we take this solemn vow that, so far as practicable, we shall use home-made articles and abstain from the use of foreign articles. So help us God.’ *A Nation in Making*, p. 128.

AFTERMATH OF PARTITION—1

Rasul, the President-elect and the arrest of Babu Surendra Nath Banerjea, one of the leaders, without any reason, have conclusively proved that lawful administration has ceased to exist in the district of Barisal. Further, in view of the repressive measures that are being applied against patriotic workers throughout Eastern Bengal and Assam, this Conference is of opinion that a proper and legal system of administration is no longer in existence in this part of the country. Therefore, no question the final settlement of which depends upon the workings of the present irresponsible Government will be discussed in this Conference and only those questions, the result of which can be obtained by the efforts of the people themselves will be discussed."

At its second day's sitting the Conference adopted resolutions, on the basis of this principal resolution, on annulment of Partition, Boycott of British goods, adoption of Swadeshi and the early establishment of a National University. Some contributions were made on the spot for the University. While the work of the Conference was on, Mr. Kemp, the Superintendent of Police, suddenly entered the pandal, went to the rostrum and read out an order of the Magistrate declaring the Conference as an unlawful assembly! This order came to the leaders and the audience as a bolt from the blue. The leaders hurriedly conferred amongst themselves and decided to withdraw. It should be said to the credit of Krishna Kumar Mitra that he stuck to his seat till the pandal was cleared. And it was after hard beseeching by Surendra Nath and other leaders that he could be persuaded to leave the pandal. The first Bengali literary Conference was to be held on 16th April under the Presidentship of Poet Rabindra Nath Tagore. He went there. But it was postponed as a protest against official high-handedness with regard to the Provincial Conference there.

V

The message of Swadeshi had reached the remotest corner of the province. But the news of the official high-handedness at Barisal and the treatment meted out to our leaders spread like wild fire. The wavering could no longer stand aside but joined the movement and resolved to make it a success. The revolutionary spirit had been working in the minds of Bengali youth for some time. The episode of Barisal goaded them to translate the spirit into action early. Calcutta was agog with the news.

HISTORY OF THE INDIAN ASSOCIATION

Meetings were held to give expression to their wounded and excited feelings. At one such meeting attended by thousands, President Norendra Nath Sen spoke out his mind as candidly as possible. He described the Barisal episode as having 'hardly any parallel in the history of British India. The press and platform are the safety-valves of popular discontent. Whenever they have been sought to be suppressed, anarchy has intervened.' It was but too true that since the Barisal incidents both the rank and file of politically conscious Bengal set to think seriously which political methods would take us to sure success. The Sivaji Festival, held in Calcutta in June 1906, and attended by Lokamanya Bal Gangadhar Tilak and others on invitation, pointed to the fact that the Bengal leaders of the Swadeshi movement were about to chalk out a new line of approach for the solution of political problems including the leaders of the Indian Association.

Meanwhile the Government of Eastern Bengal and Assam tried ruthlessly to stop the boycott movement by posting Gurkhas at different centres. Even women did not escape their atrocities. Sir Bamfylde Fuller thought rightly that the student community was the backbone of the movement. He directed his attention to correct this Swadeshi disease of theirs. Many schools were terrorised into submitting to his dictation. But he had enough difficulty with the Victoria High School of Serajgunge, Pabna. He recommended the disaffiliation of this school to the Calcutta University. Sir Ashutosh Mukherjee, that true friend of Indian education, approached Lord Minto, the Chancellor, as Vice-Chancellor of the University at Simla and apprised him of the disastrous consequences, if the instructions of Sir Bamfylde were to be followed. Convinced, Lord Minto asked Sir Bamfylde to withdraw his letter of recommendation. The latter, however, replied that if his advice was not followed he would resign, and his reply should be regarded as his letter of resignation. In concurrence with John Morley, Secretary of State for India, Lord Minto telegraphically informed Sir Bamfylde Fuller that his resignation letter had been accepted. Thus ended the Fuller regime in the newly created province of Eastern Bengal and Assam.

AFTERMATH OF PARTITION—I

VI

The policy of the British Government, however, remained all the same. John Morley agreed to the unsuitability of the partition measure, but pleaded his inability to do anything in the matter as the partition was then a settled fact ! This expression of his added insult to injury. The leaders of Bengal headed by Surendra Nath resolved afresh to unsettle this 'settled fact'. The campaign of Boycott grew more and more widespread. The popular determination found expression in a good number of ways. In a sense the August of 1906 was the most memorable from the point of view of our struggle for liberation. *Bande Mataram* made its appearance on 6th August 1906. The National Council of Education was formed and its college and school were formally opened on the 14th August 1906, at a huge public meeting held in the Town Hall with Dr. Rash Behari Ghose in the Chair. Sir Gurudas Banerjea explained the ideals and objectives of the newly constituted body as a national institution, free from outside control. He further added that it would in no way be antagonistic to the Calcutta University. Poet Rabindra Nath Tagore welcomed the institution as the fulfilment of the long-cherished desire of the nation. Sir Bamfylde Fuller had left the shores of India during this month. The first anniversary of Boycott was held in solemnity on 7th August under the presidentship of Norendra Nath Sen. It was for the first time in the history of our National struggle that a national flag was produced as an emblem of liberty. President Norendra Nath Sen had the honour of hoisting the flag before this national gathering. This month was also one of mourning for the Indian Association, because one of its principal founders and at that time its President Ananda Mohan Bose breathed his last on 20th August, 1906. His place was taken temporarily by the Rev. Kali Churn Banerjea.

VII

We should make an estimate of the different currents of political thought in the country in the back-ground of the Indian Association. A policy of repression and atrocities had been mercilessly pursued everywhere to quell the Swadeshi and Boycott. The climax was reached when the police assaulted the delegates and dispersed the Conference at Barisal. According to

HISTORY OF THE INDIAN ASSOCIATION

Surendra Nath, "The public feeling was one of wild excitement. In Bengal, recent events had shaken their faith in the constitutional methods and had driven them to the verge of despair... I have no hesitation in saying that the Partition of Bengal and the policy that followed it were the root causes of the (revolutionary) movement in our province, though no doubt they were strengthened by economic condition. It was the dispersal of the Barisal Conference with all the attendant circumstances of lawlessness and violence that brought it to a head". (*A Nation in Making*, p. 233).

Surendra Nath further tells us that an incident within his experience enabled him 'to fix the time of the genesis of what may be called the Revolutionary movement'. It was early in 1906 that the revolutionaries in Bengal joined hands with one another. Through their weekly, *Jugantar* they began to spread the cult of Revolution amongst their countrymen, specially the younger generation. They stood for independence, and they believed in the use of arms. This was, according to them, the only means for driving the foreign rulers successfully out of the country. Besides the Revolutionaries, there arose another school of politicians who held extreme views with regard to the solution of the problems of the day and pleaded for 'absolute autonomy for India, free from British control,' but did not subscribe to the cult of force or violence. *Bande Mataram*, at first edited by Bepin Chandra Pal, the renowned nationalist leader of Bengal, was the principal exponent of this view. Shortly afterwards Aurovinda Ghose (later, Sri Aurovinda), associated with the National College of the National Council of Education, Bengal, as Principal, became editor of *Bande Mataram*. *Bande Mataram* propounded the principle and method of passive resistance not only for the successful termination of the anti-partition agitation, but also as a means for gaining absolute autonomy. *Sandhya*, the Bengali daily of Upadhyaya Brahmabandhab, inculcated the same views in the easy language of our common-folk. This school, later on, came to be known as the 'Extremists'. The *Beugalee* of Surendra Nath Banerjea and *Sanjibani* of Krishna Kumar Mitra were the propagators of the views and methods of the elder politicians who predominated the Indian Association. This may be summed up in these few words : 'Co-operation if possible, opposition when necessary'. The

AFTERMATH OF PARTITION—I

school, represented by them, was labelled as 'Moderate'. *Amrita Bazar Patrika* sought to strike the mean, though it had its leanings towards the 'Extremist' party. But the Swadeshi movement served as a solder between the parties. Annulment of the Partition of Bengal was the immediate objective of every section of our leaders. The Indian Association stood as the common platform for all of them. It was from here that the sap was chiefly supplied to our agitation. The onus of holding the session of the Indian National Congress in Calcutta in 1906 also fell on the sturdy shoulders of the Association.

The British Government in India however did not rest satisfied with their policy of repression, because the agitation was growing more and more intense. They had sought to divide the Hindus and the Mussalmans permanently by Partition. Now under the instigation of diehard but farsighted imperialists, some of the Muslim leaders under the leadership of His Highness the Aga Khan waited in deputation on Lord Minto, the Viceroy, on 1st October 1906 with a petition in which they emphasised the importance of the Muslim community in the political setting in India and asked for a definite share in the administration as also separate representation in the Legislative Chambers, Municipalities, District Boards, Local Boards, as well as on the Senates and Syndicates of the Indian Universities. In any future reform of the constitution envisaged by the Government, they asked His Excellency to take these matters into serious consideration. Lord Minto not only gave them a patient hearing but promised to do as much as possible to satisfy their aspirations. This petition or Memorial was the first charter of the division of India on a two-nation theory.

VIII

The leaders of the Indian Association strove hard to make this year's session of the Congress a complete success. The 'Extremist' section of the Indian politicians wanted Lokamanya Balgangadhar Tilak to be the President. This was not liked by the elder politicians, most of whom were

*For the entire Memorial, please see the Appendix I.

HISTORY OF THE INDIAN ASSOCIATION

moderates. A rift between these two sections was imminent and it was mainly due to the tact and prudence of the leaders of the Association that such a rift was averted. They proposed the name of Dadabhai Naoroji, the Grand Old Man of eighty-two, and the true nationalist of the bygone days, to the Presidential Chair. This proposal was universally accepted. The session came off in the last week of December. The determination of the Bengalis to fight the menace of partition was acclaimed by the all-India leaders. Resolutions, passed in this session on Boycott, Swadeshi, National Education and Self-Government^t, had the approval of both the sections. Dadabhai Naoroji declared from his Presidential Chair that nothing would satisfy the Indians till *Swaraj* was attained for India. Though by *Swaraj* Dadabhai meant Self-Government on colonial lines, still the expression went a long way to capture the imagination of the people.

The Exhibition, held along with the Congress, surpassed the previous ones in respect of exhibits of national importance. Specimens of Bengal's art, painting, sculpture, coins, literature (books in print and manuscripts), relics of architecture, things of personal use, as well as hand-made cloth, muslin of Dacca, various articles of cottage industries were the chief attractions of this year's exhibition. So far as the cultural section of the Exhibition was concerned, the efforts of Ramendra Sunder Trivedi, the great litterateur and Honorary Secretary of Bangiya Sahitya Parishat, should be specially remembered. The organisational part of the whole Exhibition was in charge of Mr. J. Choudhuri, one of the prominent members of the Indian Association, who worked strenuously for months with a band of co-workers, as Honorary Secretary to the Exhibition. Bengali women also congregated in the spacious compound of the Bethune College under the presidentship of Lady Chimanbai, Maharani Gaekwar of Baroda. She bore ample testimony in her address to the prominent part the women of Bengal had played in the Swadeshi-Boycott movement.

IX

In all the movements of the year the Indian Association took a prominent and active part. According to its annual *Report* for 1906-7, "The year indeed was a most eventful one in the annals of the country. The repressive policy of the Government carried out in total disregard of public opinion was met by passive resistance on the part of the people and a deter-

AFTERMATH OF PARTITION—I

mination to work out their destinies through their national organisation. And in this struggle of the people with the bureaucracy the Indian Association took an active part. It took a prominent part in all the movements of the day started for the furtherance of the well-being of the country."

The years that followed were marked by a new phenomenon in the political horizon in India. Dissensions threatened to gain ground amongst the ranks of our leaders. Besides the Moderates and Extremists, there appeared a party who had secretly prepared a programme to bring about our political salvation by revolutionary or to be more precise, anarchical activities. Whatever differences there might have been in the objective and the methods, the partition of Bengal acted as a painful sore in everybody's heart and the programme of Swadeshi and Boycott was rigidly followed by all of them. The liberal Secretary John Morley still persisted in upholding the partition as a 'settled fact' and the Government of Lord Minto here was bent on repressing and suppressing the various means of peaceful agitation in Bengal. The movement was driven underground, and the Revolutionary party began to thrive. According to Surendra Nath, the first of the activities of this party was manifested in the throwing of a bomb at Sir Andrew Fraser, the Lieutenant-Governor's train at Narayangarh in Midnapore, and the attempt at the disruption of the District Political Conference in the Midnapore town on the following day. These attempts, as we learn, culminated in the fiasco of the Surat Congress in December, 1907.

Prosecution, repression and riots were the order of the day. Baffled at suppressing the movement by repressions the Government indulged in the prosecution of our national organs, particularly of the extremist school. The Damocle's Sword fell on *Sandhya*, *Jugantar*, *Bande Mataram* and *Navasakti* one after another. Editors, printers and publishers of these papers were severally prosecuted and convicted. Bhupendra Nath Dutt (now Dr.), Editor of *Jugantar*, was sentenced to one year's rigorous imprisonment. Upadhyaya Brahmabandhab left his mortal frame before the "Feringhee" could pass his judgement over him. Aurovindo Ghose, Editor of *Bande Mataram*, was however released for want of proper evidence though Bepin Chandra Pal was gaoled for six months on his refusal to give evidence in this case. Many impediments were placed in the way of these journals being published. Even mofussil papers had to suffer.

HISTORY OF THE INDIAN ASSOCIATION

X

Not satisfied with this kind of prosecution and harassment, the authorities in the metropolis and the mofussil devised other methods to stop the progress of the Swadeshi-Boycott movement. Riots broke out in 1907 in the northern part of Calcutta, in which the Government officials openly participated. Beating persons right and left, breaking open the doors of the shops, looting and plundering valuable materials—such were actions in which the Police took an active part. From their molestation even women did not escape. *Goenda-raj* prevailed for some days at the seat of both Provincial and supreme Governments.

Stories of riots in the districts of Tipperah and Mymensingh were even more heart-rending. The notorious *Red Pamphlets* were extensively distributed in these districts. These purported to say that the Muslims would be rulers of the land, they were allowed by the Government and the Nawab of Dacca to oppress the Hindus in all possible ways. The Hindus must be boycotted and harassed, their property looted, and the sanctity of their homes violated. The Mussalmans of the districts rose violently against the Hindus and committed riots fearless of the police and the military that were posted in those areas. In the trials that followed, instances of active co-operation of the officials with the Muslim hooligans came to light. Even the local judiciary was vitiated by partiality. In the trial of a riot case, the Judge of the Comilla Court divided the Hindu and Mussalman witnesses in two groups and took their evidence. He rejected the evidence of the Hindus as false, accepted that of the Musalmans as true and passed his judgement acquitting the Muslim culprits! The conduct of the Judge was severely criticised by the High Court on reference. But unhappily this was but one of many such instances.

In the face of such organised misrule the leaders of the Indian Association could not sit idle. They took the initiative in organising Commissions for the purpose of enquiry into the cause of the riots in Calcutta, at Mymensingh, and other localities. The Riots Enquiry Committee of Calcutta included such public men and legal luminaries as B. Chakravarty, and P. Mitra, (Raja) Subodh Mallick, Surendra Nath Banerjea, Krishna Kumar Mitra and Gurudas Banerjea. Everywhere the cause provoking the assaults was Swadeshi and *Bande Mataram* and the object of the assault was the Bengali Hindu. The Indian Association sent Bhupendra Nath

AFTERMATH OF PARTITION—I

Basu and Col. U. N. Mukherjee to Mymensingh to enquire into the cause of the riots there. They also told the same story almost. The Indian Association published these reports together with the evidence of the witnesses, to acquaint the people and the Government with the true state of things.

XI

The Association had a large share in conducting the affairs of the Berhampore Conference of 1907. It also sent delegates to the Surat Congress. This year's President-elect was Dr. Rash Behari Ghose, the senior Vice-President of the Association. The differences between the elder and younger leaders — the so-called Moderates and Extremists, had become acute by this time. The Surat Congress broke up before doing any business practically. The Convention held at Surat on the day following the break-up, formulated the creed of the Congress as the attainment of Self-Government on colonial lines.' Only those persons who would subscribe to this creed should be eligible for the membership of the Congress. Though on the all-India plan the Bengal leaders of both the wings held very divergent views, yet they acted concertedly with regard to the local problems. It should be said to the credit of the Association that its Executive Committee included the pick of both the parties. Their objective was still the same, the annulment or modification of the partition by promotion of Swadeshi and Boycott. The annual Bengal Provincial Conference was also their meeting-ground. Poet Rabindra Nath Tagore presided over its Pabna Session in 1908. In his presidential address, he implored his countrymen to work out the constructive programme laid down in his *Swadeshi Samaj*, leaving internecine quarrels and feuds for the few. A resolution was moved by Motilal Ghose, a prominent member of the Association, 'requesting the Congress Secretaries and the Members of the All-India Congress Committee appointed in Calcutta in 1906 to arrange the holding of the National Congress on the lines settled at the Calcutta Congress.'

In the midst of the difficulties of various degrees the 'work of the Association was carried on with zeal and vigour. The work was in fact rendered very difficult by the unfortunate situation in which the country was placed. The people in their despair had been drawn more and more to the policy of passive resistance relying on self-help and national organisation as the means of their salvation. In the midst of these difficulties, in-

HISTORY OF THE INDIAN ASSOCIATION

superable though they might appear to many, the Association had always worked in furtherance of the object with which it was started. The Association co-operated with the people of United Bengal in their firm resolve to carry on the agitation against the Partition of Bengal. It also did its best to assist in the extension and growth of the Swadeshi-Boycott movement.' Surendra Nath Banerjea, Honorary Secretary to the Association, prepared an exhaustive note on the situation and unrest in Bengal and sent it to several influential gentlemen in England and to the British Press to present the case for India before the Parliament and the British people. The Association also took an active part in all the movements started for the promotion of national well-being and incurred the financial responsibility for some of them.

XII

After the break-up of the Surat Congress the Government carried on the policy of repression more vigorously. They were on the look-out for some plea. And this was more than supplied by the incident at Muzaffarpore on 30th April 1908. Khudiram Bose and Prafulla Chaki wrongly threw bombs at Pringle Kennedy's car instead of that of Kingsford, the Judge, killing former's wife and daughter. This regrettable incident set the Government machinery violently on the move. The leaders of the revolutionary party as also Aurovindo Ghose were arrested. The Swadeshi meetings were banned, the newspapers and presses confiscated. Laws were hurriedly passed in the Supreme Legislative Council, such as, the Seditious Meetings Act and the Press Act. The *Sabhas* and *Samitis* of Calcutta and the mofussil were also outlawed. The anniversary of the Boycott movement, to be held on 7th August 1908 on the Federation Hall grounds, was prohibited by the Superintendent of Police. To crown all, nine popular leaders* of the Swadeshi movement were arrested from various places in Bengal between the 8th and 13th December and exiled under the obsolete Act III of 1818. Even Surendra Nath was listed. 'The order of deportation', says he, 'was ready, but that it was cancelled at the last moment.' Some of the leaders of Maharashtra and Madras were also convicted on charge sedition. Lokmanya Tilak was sentenced to six years' rigorous imprisonment in 1908. (*A Nation in Making*, p. 249).

*Aswini Kumar Dutt, Krishna Kumar Mitra, (Raja) Subodh Chandra Mallick, Manoranjan Guha, Thakurta, Shyam Sunder Chakravarty, Pulin Bahari Das, Satish Chandra Chatterjee, Bhupesh Chandra Nag and Sachindra Prasad Basu.

AFTERMATH OF PARTITION—I

XIII

Reference should be made here to some domestic matters of the Association. The Rev. Kali Churn Banerjea held the reins of the office of its President for five months only. Death took him away on 6th February, 1907. Norendra Nath Sen of *The Indian Mirror* stepped into his place and remained the President for a little more than a session. In 1908 Dr. Rash Behari Ghose was elected President. He remained in this post up till 1912. It was decided in February 1907 to start a political club with a well-equipped library containing books on Politics, Economics, and History, in connection with the Association. A beginning on a model scale was made at the end of the session with Dr. Rash Behari Ghose as President. The Association met Keir Hardie, M.P., on 5th October, Dr. Rutherford, M.P., and Mr. Nevinson of the *Manchester Guardian* on 21st December 1907 and Lala Lajpat Rai on 14th January 1908 and had political discussions with them.

CHAPTER VIII

AFTERMATH OF PARTITION—II

1909-11

Under the guidance of the Indian Association, nationalist Bengal worked for two things during these years. So far as Bengal was concerned the first and foremost question with them was the annulment or the modification of the Partition. But there was another question, which was of an All-India character, that is, *Swaraj* or Self-Government for India. On the form of *Swaraj*, opinions were divided. But everybody believed in his heart of hearts that the Parliamentary system of Government must be introduced in India, giving the power of administration to Indians wholly. After much consultation, a scheme of reforms was evolved by John Morley, the Secretary of State and Lord Minto, the Viceroy of India. The scheme underwent serious change at different stages of discussions at the hands of the designing Bureaucracy. The conduct of Lord Minto was not above-board. The prayer of the separatist Mussalmans was heard. The fears roused by the sympathetic reply of Lord Minto on the fateful 1st of October, 1906, were fulfilled to a large extent in the Reforms Scheme. The Bureaucracy were bent on fanning communalism during the heat of the Swadeshi-Boycott movement. They set the Mussalmans against the Hindus to satisfy their nefarious motives. The Reforms Scheme, as it finally emerged, embodied separate electorates for the Mussalmans and gave them undue privileges over the Hindus. The scheme was finally passed in Parliament as the India Councils Act of 1909 on 25th May, 1909.

II

At every stage the Indian Association gave its considered views on the subject. Before the final passage, the leaders of the Indian Association issued a statement on 22nd March 1909 regarding some modifications proposed in the scheme. Among the signatories we find the foremost Bengal leaders, such as, Baikuntha Nath Sen, (Berhampore, Bengal), Ananda Chandra Roy (Dacca), Motilal Ghose (Calcutta), Ambika Charan Mazumdar (Faridpur), Jatra Mohan Sen (Chittagong), Anathbandhu Guha (Mymensingh), A. Choudhuri (Pabna), Kishori Mohan Chaudhuri (Rajshahi), J. Chaudhuri (Calcutta), Nibaranchandra Das Gupta (Barisal), Rai Yatindra Nath Chaudhuri (24-Parganas), Bhupendra Nath Basu (Calcutta) and Surendra Nath Banerjea. The proposed modification of the Morley—Minto Scheme, according to the signatories,

AFTERMATH OF PARTITION—II

“Will tend to destroy the solidarity of feeling between the Hindus and Mahomedans by creating a dividing line between the two sections of the Indian people from the very base to the top—from the election to the village Unions to the election to the Supreme Legislative Council through all the intermediary stages. It will introduce division where there is none, and will emphasise and perpetuate distinctions based on differences of religion and creed, rendering the growth of a politically-United Indian people impossible even in the distant future. It will bring discord into our peaceful villages, where the Hindu and the Mahomedan live side by side in perfect amity and it will create and establish jealousies based on religious differences where none at present exist. It will weaken the impulses of national life, will render united action difficult, if not impossible, and will for ever destroy the growing feeling of sympathy and friendliness among the different communities in India.... A scheme of Reform which recognises differences in religion or creed in the organisation of a political institution and must accentuate them, is open to the gravest objections from the national as well as from the administrative standpoint, and is in entire conflict with the whole trend of the British policy in the past which has always been a potent factor in fusing sectarian differences and promoting national Union.”

These words proved too prophetic. The policy of the British Bureaucracy had already changed. They were determined to set free the ‘hare of communalism’, to borrow an expression from Morley, to take its own course. The territorial partition of Bengal had been attended with grievous consequences in the new province during the previous three years. A racial or credal partition, such as was contemplated, affecting not one province but the whole of India would be attended with results which no one would contemplate with equanimity. The signatories referred to the undue privileges proposed to be given to the Mussalmans in the Scheme, which would have the potentiality of grave danger. But they approached the subject from a higher standpoint : “We take our stand on a much higher ground, namely, that the Reform measure, as now proposed, will absolutely divide the people and destroy the hope of an Indian nationality as a political unit. The realisation of such a hope may be distant, but Indian reformers must start on this path and not begin their journey towards an entirely different

HISTORY OF THE INDIAN ASSOCIATION

goal." The Bureaucracy were determined to lead the people to this 'entirely different goal'.

With the Rules and Regulations framed by the vitiated Bureaucracy, the Reforms were inaugurated on 25th December, 1909, by Lord Minto. The modified nature of the Reforms Scheme and the Rules and Regulations for giving the Reforms effect, fell far short of the nationalist demand of representative Government in India. The Morley-Minto Reforms could not satisfy nationalist Bengal. Moreover, the latter felt very much distressed when they saw that nothing was done with regard to the 'settled fact' of Partition. The nationalist Bengal, irrespective of their political differences, boycotted the Morely-Minto Reforms, and in this the Indian Association took the lead. The leaders of the Association brought the matter before the Congress. In its annual session of 1909 at Lahore, presided over by Pandit Madan Mohan Malviya, Surendra Nath Banerjea moved the Resolution on the Reforms in which their communal character was brought out in clear relief. The Resolution* breathes the spirit in which the

*"That this Congress while gratefully appreciating the earnest and arduous endeavours of Lord Morley and Lord Minto in extending to the people of this country a fairly liberal measure of constitutional reforms, as now embodied in the India Councils Act of 1909, deems it its duty to place on record its strong sense of disapproval of the creation of separate electorates on the basis of religion and regrets that the Regulations framed under the Act have not been framed in the same liberal spirit in which Lord Morley's despatch of last year was conceived. In particular the Regulations have caused widespread dissatisfaction throughout the country by reason of :

- (a) the excessive and unfairly preponderant share of representation given to the followers of one particular religion ;
- (b) the unjust, invidious, and humiliating distinctions made between Muslims and non-Muslim subjects of His Majesty in the matter of the electorates, the franchise, and the qualifications of candidates ;
- (c) the wide, arbitrary and unreasonable disqualification and restrictions for candidates seeking election to the Councils ;
- (d) the general distrust of the educated classes that runs through the whole course of the Regulations ; and
- (e) the unsatisfactory composition of the non-official majorities in the Provincial Councils, rendering them ineffective and unreal for all practical purposes.

AFTERMATH OF PARTITION—II

Bengal leaders viewed them. While moving the Resolution Surendra Nath laid the blame at the door of the bureaucracy which, he asserted, wrecked the scheme. They converted the promising experiment into a dismal failure. The responsibilities rest solely upon their shoulder. He then asked "Is the Bureaucracy having the revenge upon us for the part we have played in securing these concessions?"

III

The Bureaucracy adopted various means for repressing the spirit of resistance. They implanted the communal virus on an All-India basis, though Bengal was their chief aim. The Congress, however, did not take the extreme step of boycott. But the Bengal leaders did so in view of the persistence of the Government in upholding the partition as a 'settled fact' and the policy of repression pursued by them in the province. Legislative measures were enacted, placing the temporary laws permanently on the Statute Book. The Swadeshi-Boycott movement was driven underground. Threats of the leaders of the Revolutionary party were interspersed with shootings and murders on both sides—the revolutionaries and the Government. Repression and retribution were the order of the day. It should be mentioned here that Asutosh Biswas, the Government pleader of Alipore, fell a victim to the shot of the revolutionaries. He was a close associate of Surendra Nath Banerjea and once a devoted worker of the Association. In the midst of these troubles the Swadeshi cause was still upheld by the womanhood of Bengal. Mrs. Margaret MacDonald who accompanied her husband Mr. Ramsay MacDonald to India in 1910 has written to say that she found the spirit of Swadeshi and love of freedom permeated even in the minds of unlettered womanfolk of Bengal. Under these circumstances, the Indian Association adhered to the programme of Swadeshi and Boycott. This Boycott was now not confined to British goods only, but was a boycott of the constitution imposed on them by the Act of 1909. On this account too, the Indian Association remained the common meeting ground both of the moderate and the extremist politicians of Bengal, though the latter had abstained from meddling in Congress politics.

And this Congress earnestly requests the Government so to revise the Regulations, as soon as the present elections are over, as to remove these objectionable features and bring them into harmony with the spirit of the Royal Message and the Secretary of State's despatch of last year.

HISTORY OF THE INDIAN ASSOCIATION

IV

The Indian Association left no stone unturned in exploring all the avenues for the success of the movement. As a representative of the Indian Press (as distinct from the Anglo-Indian) Surendra Nath Banerjea went to England in June, 1909 to attend the Empire Press Conference there. The Association charged him as its Honorary Secretary with the responsible work of organising British public opinion in favour of the anti-partition movement. After the business of the Conference was finished, Surendra Nath turned his attention to this work. He took it up in right earnest. Public meetings were organised, private dinners arranged and informal conferences held. At every place Surendra Nath explained the gross injustice done to the Bengali race by the Partition of Bengal. Along with him, A. O. Hume, Sir William Wedderburn, Sir Henry Cotton, Sir John Dilke and Ramsy MacDonald, the labour leader and future Prime Minister of England, also spoke on some of these occasions in favour of our case. W. T. Stead, Editor of the *Review of Reviews* and a true friend of India, invited Surendra Nath to an informal meeting where, amongst the audience, was present Bepin Chandra Pal. Surendra Nath spoke there very feelingly on Partition and India. Surendra Nath also interviewed John Morley for the purpose. Previously on 1st July 1909, the latter's private Secretary Sir Curzon-Wylie was shot dead by an Indian revolutionary, named Dhingra, This had perturbed the official circle, and John Morley appeared extremely reserved to Surendra Nath.

Surendra Nath returned to India in August 1909. Though nothing tangible could be expected immediately the path for the annulment of Partition was cleared. Our friends in England and those who visited India, including Mr. and Mrs. MacDonald, never failed to speak and write on the injustice of Partition. Some of them went so far as to say that no amount of repression would be able to curb the new spirit of nationalism born in Bengal. Sure proofs of unalloyed conciliation alone could ease the situation. The British Cabinet was shortly afterwards reshuffled, Lord Crewe being the Secretary of State for India. Lord Minto was recalled before time, in November 1910. As vigilant as ever, the leaders of the Indian Association noticed these changes and felt that something favourable might be coming soon. It was resolved at a meeting of the Association to depute Bhupendra Nath Basu as a delegate of the Indian Association to represent Indian interests before the British public. Needless to add, the Bengal Partition was the main item in his programme of work.

AFTERMATH OF PARTITION—II

V

This time the Indian Association gave up the practice of waiting upon the new Viceroy and instead announced a public meeting to be held in the Town Hall of Calcutta early in January with a view to place him in possession of all the facts and the attitude of the Indian public in regard to the Partition question. On the announcement of the date of the meeting His Excellency Lord Hardinge invited Surendra Nath for an interview. The interview came off. The Viceroy asked him to postpone the public meeting. Because he thought the purpose of the meeting would be better served if their views were embodied in a memorial and forwarded to him for his appraisal of the situation. The Association wanted to make the proposed memorial as representative as possible.

On behalf of the Association Surendra Nath drew up a memorial largely assisted by his esteemed friend, Ambika Charan Mazumdar, the Grand Old Man of Faridpur, and sent it to the districts for signature by influential and representative men. The memorial was kept absolutely confidential lest the other side under official inspiration might set up a counter-agitation. The Association submitted the memorial, signed by representative men in eighteen out of twenty-five districts of Bengal about the end of June, 1911. This time the Government machinery was unusually active. Surendra Nath writes : 'the Despatch of the Government of India, recommending the modification of the Partition of Bengal, was dated August 25, 1911, and some of the arguments that we urged in the memorial were accepted by the Government as valid reasons for modification of the Partition, and were emphasised in the Despatch.'

VI

The memorial suggested the reconstitution of the Bengali-speaking area of the Bengal Presidency into a Governor's province with an Executive Council on the lines of Bombay and Madras. King George V visited India with Lord Crewe, the new Secretary of State for India. In the Delhi Durbar held on 12th December, 1912, His Majesty announced the modification of the Partition and held out a hope for the reconstitution of Bengal as a Governor's Province. Some Bengali-speaking areas were however arbitrarily tagged newly to Behar and Orissa. This subject, too, was to be considered later. The capital of India was formally transferred on this day

HISTORY OF THE INDIAN ASSOCIATION

from Calcutta to Delhi. The Indian Association summarised its activities in this direction in the *Annual Report* for 1911 :

“The unsettlement of the ‘settled fact’ of the Partition of Bengal has been a triumph of constitutional agitation and has been regarded as a measure of immense benefit both to the people and the Government. Although considerable dissatisfaction was felt at the announcement of the transfer of the Capital from Calcutta to Delhi, the modification of the partition coupled with the hope of provincial autonomy for Bengal, reconciled the people to that measure. The year under review witnessed the success of some of the activities in which the Association had a most important share. It was the Indian Association which lent its steady and unflinching support to the people of Bengal in their persistent agitation against the Partition of Bengal in the face of the greatest difficulties.”

VII

During this period the Indian Association did its best to assist in the extension and growth of the Swadeshi movement. The Association was the sole custodian of the National fund started in 1883. The National Fund under its auspices created for the second time in 1905 was later transferred into National Fund Society and registered under Act XXI of 1860. The objects of the Society are stated to be as :

- (a) Generally to promote and develop Indian Industries and to impart or promote the imparting of industrial education to Indians ;
- (b) To establish weaving and dyeing institutions at convenient centres in the province of Bengal ;
- (c) To promote the manufacture of silk, woollen and cotton goods either through the existing weaving institutions in the country or through Institutions to be established for the purpose ;
- (d) To encourage the designs, inventions and improvements of weaving and other looms ;
- (e) To help the existing small industries and promote the establishment of new ones ;

AFTERMATH OF PARTITION—II

(f) To encourage deserving persons, by granting them scholarships and allowances from time to time, to prosecute their industrial education and training in the several industries hereinbefore mentioned;

(g) To invest the monies of the Society not immediately required upon such securities and in such manner as may from time to time be determined;

(h) To establish a Bureau of Intelligence whose duty will be to collect and supply useful information about agriculture and industries particularly small industries which may profitably be started in the country ;

(i) To help in the organisation of Credit and Capital in the country;

(j) To help students who receive education under the Society in finding suitable and useful occupations ;

(k) To raise funds and to accept gifts and endowments for the purposes mentioned above ;

(l) To do all or any of the above things either as principals, agents, trustees or otherwise and by or through trustees agents or otherwise and either alone or in conjunction with others ;

(m) To do all such other things as are incidental or conducive to or not inconsistent with the attainment of the above-named objects or any of them ;

(n) To help, incorporate, co-operate with or promote the establishment of any institution, society or association having objects wholly or in part similar to those of this Society.

The Committee of the Society was later formed with Surendra Nath Banerjea as President, Raja Peary Mohan Mukherjee as Vice-President, Dr. Pran Krishna Acharji, A.H. Ghaznavi, J. Chawdhuri and Satyananda Bose as Secretaries. Amongst the members of the Executive Committee were Motilal Ghose, Justice A. Chaudhri, Sir R. N. Mukherjee, Sir S. P. Sinha. The Society had sixty-four members, representing various sections.

HISTORY OF THE INDIAN ASSOCIATION

of the community. Contributions from this fund used to be made to Swadeshi enterprises and to those who worked for the improvement of cottage industries.

VIII

The land where the foundation-stone of the Federation Hall was laid by Ananda Mohan Bose, was not, however, purchased till June 1909. In this month, after payment of Rs. 35,800 as the full price of the land, the deed of conveyance was executed in the names of Lt.-Col. U. N. Mukherjee and Bhupendra Nath Basu acting on behalf of the Provisional Committee of the Federation Hall. The amount of purchase money and the necessary costs was met by a loan from the Bengal National Bank which was itself an offshoot of the Swadeshi movement. The Provisional Committee, it should be stated here, was transformed at a meeting of the Committee on 17th April 1916, into the Federation Hall Society of which Surendra Nath Banerjea was the President and Nibaran Chandra Roy and Dr. Pramatha Nath Banerjea were Secretaries. Amongst the members of the first Executive Committee we find such honoured names as Krishna Kumar Mitra, Dr. Nilratan Sircar, Bhupendra Nath Basu and Prithwis Chandra Ray. The land measured more than four bighas. Three bighas were sold to clear the debts. Surendra Nath Banerjea, Bhupendra Nath Basu and Dr. Nilratan Sircar were elected Trustees of the property and a Trust deed was executed in their favour.

The distinctive feature of the Federation Hall Society was that most of the district leaders enrolled themselves as its members. The objects of the Society were stated to be :

- (a) To construct and maintain buildings including a Hall on the land belonging to it ;
- (b) To promote the union of the Bengali-speaking people ;
- (c) To allow public meetings on political, social, moral, administrative, economic, sanitary and educational topics from time to time to be held in the buildings or in the Hall ;
- (d) To preserve statues, busts and portraits of celebrated men in or about the Hall ;

AFTERMATH OF PARTITION—II

(e) To establish and maintain in or about the hall a well-equipped library of books mainly on political, economic, historical, sociological and administrative subjects ;

(f) To invest the money of the Society not immediately required upon such securities as may from time to time be determined and to borrow money if necessary upon the security of the property of the society or otherwise ;

(g) To organise and maintain a club ;

(h) To lease out the land and buildings if necessary ;

(i) To do and to perform all other acts, matters, and things that may assist in, conduce to, or be necessary for the fulfilment of the above-mentioned objects and for the purposes of the society.

The Indian Association supervised the proceedings of these two societies as a part of their constructive programme. While dissension prevailed in the ranks of our leaders and the Congress turned into a party caucus, the Indian Association retained its national character. The Bengal leaders of both the parties met under its banner and worked for the solution of problems facing the Bangalis. The Indian Association organised the Bengal Provincial Conference every year. Though the Extremists remained aloof from the Congress, the Association as a body materially helped its Calcutta session in 1911. It should be noted that Mr. Ramsay MacDonald was to preside over this session of the Congress, but could not come to India owing to the death of his wife. Though the Partition of Bengal was modified, yet some of the Bengali-speaking districts were given to the new provinces of Behar and Orissa. In a resolution, the Congress urged the re-adjustment of the provincial boundaries so that the Bengali-speaking districts might be placed under one and the same administration. The Association also tried to bring about a compromise between the Moderates and Extremists on the 'Vexed' question of the Congress Constitution, but without any tangible result. The Association availed itself of every opportunity to acquaint the Government with the views of the people in regard to all matters of public importance. With the successful termination of the anti-partition movement the Indian Association turned its attention to constructive and nation-building work more than before. It also took to political work strictly on constitutional lines.

PART III

CHAPTER I

THE PEOPLE'S FORUM (1912-16)

Since taking a leading part in the anti-partition movement the Indian Association concerned itself increasingly with the problems of Bengal. That was why the Association was regarded in later times outside Bengal as only a local organisation. The events that happened since 1912 absorbed its time and attention fully, for it had become the common meeting-place of the Bengalis of all sections and communities and jointly discussed matters concerning Bengal.

The Partition of Bengal had now been modified. By a fresh Parliamentary Statute Bengal was turned into a Governor's province with an Executive Council on the lines of Bombay and Madras. But this step did not give satisfaction.

The Legislative Council was so hedged in by rules that it became almost useless as an instrument for the solution of our problems. The Partition was annulled, but the Bengali-speaking people were still divided, portions of them being placed in Assam and the newly-created province of Behar and Orissa.

Further the Government passed oppressive laws with the ostensible object of counteracting the revolutionary movement. But their real object was to strike at the root of the new-born desire for national autonomy. The people of all sections and schools veered round its banner and sought to give expression to their views with its authority. The Association had by now turned into the people's forum.

II

The leaders of the Association knew no respite. Years of agitation had resulted only in partial modification of the Partition. But as in all other matters, they proceeded in this case, too, constitutionally. The Association sent a representation to the Government of India on 23rd January 1912, regarding territorial redistribution on a linguistic basis. This may be regarded as the origin of the movement, later taken up by

HISTORY OF THE INDIAN ASSOCIATION

the Congress, of reconstituting provinces on the linguistic basis. The representation referred to the following tracts beyond the five Bengali-speaking divisions which should be included in the new Presidency of Bengal : (1) the districts of Sylhet and Goalpara, (2) the district of Manbhum, (3) the Sonthal Parganas, (4) the Perganna of Dhalbhum in the district of Singhbhum, and (5) the portion of the district of Purneah to the east of the Mahananda Division.

Besides dwelling on the social, ethnical and cultural connection of the people of most of these regions, the Association reproduced facts and figures to show that the neighbouring provinces would lose nothing thereby if these tracts were transferred to Bengal. According to the Association, "The transfer of these districts (from Behar and Orissa), covering an area of 11,000 sq. miles, to Bengal will tend towards an equalisation of area of the two provinces. Furthermore, it will provide the over-populated province of Bengal with a field for the growth and expansion of population. This arrangement, without causing any substantial loss to Behar, will be an immense gain to Bengal." The Association further noted that nearly one-third of the inhabitants of Purneah spoke the Bengali language.

Even some of the prominent Behar leaders wrote a letter under their signatures to the newspapers, at the time supporting the view put forward by the Association. In view of the importance attached to this question today, the letter should be quoted here *in extenso*.

"In accordance with the resolution of the last Congress (1911), the sound principle would be that enunciated therein that all the Bengali-speaking tracts should be brought under the Government of Bengal and all the Hindi-speaking tracts should be brought under the Lieutenant-Governor of Behar. According to this arrangement, the portion of Purneah and Malda to the east of the river Mahananda—which is the ethnic and linguistic boundary between Bengal and Behar—should go to Bengal and the western portion of these two districts come to Behar. Similarly such tracts in the Sonthal Pergannas where the prevailing language is Bengali, should go to Bengal and the Hindi-speaking tracts of the districts remain in Behar. As for Chota Nagpur, the whole district of Manbhum and Parganah Dhalbhum of Singhbhum district are Bengali-speaking and they should go to Bengal, the rest of the division which is Hindi-speaking remaining in Behar."

THE PEOPLE'S FORUM

The Association controverted the view that portions of Malda were Hindi-speaking. As it was predominantly Bengali-speaking, the Association held that in the case of any readjustment, the whole of Malda should be retained in Bengal. The outlook of the Bureaucracy had not however undergone any substantial change. They went back upon the Government of India Despatch of 25th August, 1911, and did not care to act up to the principle of redistribution laid down in it.

III

The other questions that drew the attention of the Association, were (1) the Public Service Commission and (2) the establishment of the Dacca University. The former was composed of eleven members with Lord Islington as President. Lord Ronaldshay and Mr. Ramsay MacDonald were members of this Commission. There were three Indians on it, namely, Mr. G. K. Gokhale, Mr. H. Chaubal and Mr. Justice (later, Sir) Abdur Rahim. The Commission was instituted as a result of continuous agitation by the Indians, and the Indian Association naturally took a keen interest in its proceedings. The scope of the Commission covered both the covenanted and the uncovenanted services of the State. The Association fought hard for the widening of the scope of the Indian Civil Service for decades. Its object was but partially attained. This time the Association fervently hoped that as a result of the recommendations of the Commission, simultaneous examination of the Civil Service would be held in England and India. The higher cadre of services might also be open to the meritorious and capable Indians.

The annulment of the Partition of Bengal came as a rude shock to the communally-minded Mussalmans of East Bengal. Their henchmen, the diehards of the Indian Government, also could not look at the measure with favour. They sought to please the Mussalmans by the proposal for the establishment of a separate University at Dacca. The Indian Association took serious exception to the motive behind the proposal, as that would give a premium to the communalist Moslems.

The year 1913 witnessed such a manifestation of partiality when the Government of Bengal proposed an amendment of the Calcutta Municipal Act. Separate representation was made a cardinal principle in the Morley-Minto Reforms of 1909. The Government now wanted to introduce it

THE PEOPLE'S FORUM

intending immigrants must possess 200 dollars each and travel by a continuous journey on through ticket from its mother country. Sardar Gurdit Singh determined to circumvent this Canadian measure by chartering a Japanese steamer. The events that followed, were heart-rending and still wrangle in the minds of the survivors.*

The Indian Association stood on the principle that Indians should be treated as citizens of the British Empire on equal terms in every dominion and colony. The treatment meted out to the Indians in Canada must not be tolerated. The Association adopted a resolution at its meeting on 10th July 1914 and invited the district leaders to convene public meetings for giving expression of the people's feeling to this insult on the nation. The principal part of the resolution was : "That this Association strongly insists upon the recognition of the equal rights of British Indians with other British subjects in all parts of the British Empire and upon the immediate concession of the right of pre-entry and residence on honourable terms in all parts of the British Empire."

At the annual meeting of the Indian Association held on 14th May, 1914, Ambika Charan Mazumdar, President of the Association, made a reference to the reactionary attitude of the Government to Indian aspirations. He regretted the recrudescence of unrest and anarchism. But he added that the attitude of the bureaucracy towards the public was still more deplorable. The District Administration Committee, which was appointed to discuss the advisability of the partition of a few districts went out of its way to discover the seeds of anarchism in Hinduism. But the President asked, what was the connection between terrorism and Hinduism? He had not the slightest intention of casting any reflection on any community; but he asked, were the murderers of Mr. Justice Norman and Lord Mayo Hindus? Nor was Indian anarchism a tropical disease whose therapeutics could be discovered in India alone. It had been studied in Europe and America, and the remedy was not unknown. The people were asked to co-operate, but what were the means and methods for such

* For an account of the *Komagata Maru* incidents, the reader is referred to *Landmarks in Indian Constitutional and National Development*, by Gurmukh Nihal Singh, Vol. I, pp. 266-68.

HISTORY OF THE INDIAN ASSOCIATION

co-operation? The President further observed, "Co-operation is a word easily uttered and easily repeated, but not as easily acted upon. Let both sides be frank and acknowledge that there is no sympathy and therefore no co-operation between the people and the Government. Co-operation can only come with trust and confidence, which unhappily were very much wanting." (*Report for 1914.*)

VI

Of the subjects that claimed the attention of the Association during 1915-16, mention should be made of the Hindu University Bill, the Famine Relief in Noakhali and Comilla and the Association Building. The Association protested against some measures and Acts of the Governments, both Supreme and Provincial including, the Defence of India Act 1915. The internment of Messrs. Mohammad Ali, Shaukat Ali, Abul Kalam Azad and others under this Act was also severely criticised by the Association.

The Association's endeavours with regard to famine and flood relief work deserves special mention. It took an active part in organising relief for the distressed people of Noakhali and Comilla during the months of July, August and September, 1915. The Association was one of the earliest to draw the attention of the public to the acuteness and the extent of the distress. It worked in that direction by collecting reliable information from the affected districts and placing such information before the country by public meetings, and in the columns of newspapers. The Association also started collections from door to door of fund for the relief of the distressed. The Association deputed one of the members to Bankura to get first-hand knowledge of the state of things in the district. A sum of a little over Rs. 1,000 was collected and placed at the disposal of the local relief organisations and also of the Ramkrishna Mission, the Sadharan Brahma Samaj and the Bengal Social Service League for relief operations. The Association co-operated with the British Indian Association, the Bengal Landholders' Association, the Bengal Chamber of Commerce and the Marwari Chamber of Commerce in starting the Eastern Bengal Famine Relief Fund and the Secretary of the Indian Association was one of the secretaries of the Fund. The surplus of this Fund was contributed towards relief work in Bankura.

THE PEOPLE'S FORUM

One of the most important events in the life of the Indian Association was the construction of its own Building with modern outfits during this session. On 31st December 1915, the Association entered into its occupation informally. A three-storied one, the building consists of towers on the third floor, nine rooms on the second floor and two big halls measuring sixty feet by forty feet on each of the ground and first floors together with a number of side-rooms. The entire cost of the building with electric and sanitary fittings was about Rs. 48,000. The formal opening was held on 8th April 1916, with ceremony. Leaders from the different provinces as well as the mofussil districts favoured the Association with their congratulatory letters. Aswini Kumar Dutt of Barisal wrote on April 7, 1916 : "I am sure the whole of Bengal rejoices on the occasion. God bless the dear old Association." Both the President Ambika Charan Mazumdar and the Honorary Secretary Surendra Nath Banerjea gave a resume of the services the Association had rendered to the nation even before the inception of the Congress, and how it had roused a countrywide national consciousness leading to the foundation of the Indian National Congress. The Association had devoted itself to the country's cause through several decades. New leaders came and served the Association with devotion and earnestness. After enumerating their selfless services, Surendra Nath very feelingly observed :

"To me who has watched this Association from its birth, has nursed it in its cradle and has helped it on to its maturity and manhood it is a matter of unspeakable pleasure to find that we are housed in this splendid mansion. Let our work be adapted to our external environments ; and let this day be remembered by us a day of peace and reconciliation, of solemn league and covenant entered into by all of us to continue the noble and patriotic work which has been bequeathed to us by our predecessors in the spirit of devotion and self-sacrifice by which they were inspired. Their spirits are present with us. I feel the breath of their God-like fragrance. May they guide us in the onward march and lead us to the promised land. May this hall be the symbol and the starting-point of a fresh era in the history of the Association of renewed activity and devoted work which shall recall, confirm and extend the best traditions of this Institution, associated with the honoured names of some of the most illustrious sons of Bengal."

HISTORY OF THE INDIAN ASSOCIATION

The President concluded his address with the following felicitating lines :

“ I will only say this that if the spirit of the political Messiah for the salvation of India manifested itself in the Indian National Congress, the spirit of John the Baptist which foreshadowed the advent of that spirit revealed itself in the Indian Association which anticipated the Congress by two years.”

VII

Housed in the new Building, the Indian Association could now accommodate a large number of audience for public meetings. In 1916 the Executive Committee drew up a programme for the year in order to widen the field of its activities amongst the enlightened section of the community. The programme had a three-fold object in view : (1) to form a Graduates' association, (2) to convene a conference to discuss urgent questions of sanitation, and (3) to arrange for papers to be read on public questions. The first two did not materialise. As regards the third a certain amount of progress was made.

Three papers were read during the course of the year under the auspices of the Association. Of these one was on “ Self-Government ” by Prithwis Chandra Ray ; another was on “ Local Self-government ” by Dr. Nares Chandra Sen Gupta, while a third was read by Sasanka Jiban Ray on “ An Outline of Autonomy for India ”. Many distinguished gentlemen including Sir Narayan Chandraverkar and Abbas Tyabji of Bombay took part in the proceedings of the first of three meetings. The papers on “ Self-Government ” and “ Local Self-Government ” were printed and distributed. Besides these papers, a pamphlet in Bengali on “ Self-Government ” (**स्वायम्-शासन**) was prepared for the Association by Krishna Kumar Mitra and was widely distributed. So was another pamphlet on “ Malaria ”.

The Defence of India Act was being enforced vigorously. Internments and deportations were the order of the day. The arrest of two Sindhubalas* in the Bankura district was strongly criticized in the Press. Only one of them was wanted. The treatment meted out to them was inhuman, to say the least. Bengal was seething with excitement. This and the other questions of internments and deportations and of the way in which the Defence of India Act was being administered exercised the attention of the

*For a connected account, please see *A Nation in Making*, pp. 297-98

THE PEOPLE'S FORUM

Association. A full and carefully drafted representation was forwarded to the Government. In December 1916, the representation was followed up by a deputation of fifteen members of the Association headed by Surendra Nath Banerjea and Motilal Ghose. They waited on His Excellency Lord Carmichael. There was a full and free discussion on the subject, in the course of which opportunity was taken to give expression to the people's view of the matter. The Association did its best to keep the subject as a living issue before the country. The agitation it kept up on the question, compelled the Government to explain its policy on more than one occasion.

VIII

The Indian Association had turned into the only representative organisation of United Bengal during this period. Both the Moderates and Extremists enrolled themselves as its members, constituted the Executive and took part in its deliberations with zeal and enthusiasm. The Association ran the Bengal Provincial Conference and the Bengal Branch of the Indian National Congress. Though the Extremists had abstained from attending the open sessions of the Congress up to 1915, they never hesitated to cooperate with the Association in conducting the political affairs so far as Bengal was concerned. As a matter of fact, the leaders of the Association fervently looked for the day when both the parties would join hands and be merged in the Congress. They worked untiringly for this end. This hope was realised when both parties mustered strong in the Lucknow Congress under the Presidency of Ambika Charan Mazumdar, also president of the Indian Association, in December 1916, irrespective of their party labels. The Association had had the honour of supplying two more Presidents to the Congress from its members during these troublous years, one in the person of Bhupendra Nath Basu (1914) and the other—Sir (later, Lord) Satyendra Prasanna Sinha (1915).

The Association took a leading part in organising the Bengal Provincial Conference in different district headquarters during these years. Chittagong, Dacca, Comilla, Krishnagar became the venues of the Conference. The most prominent of the Bengal leaders presided over them. The Dacca session had Aswini Kumar Dutt and the Krishnagar session Motilal Ghose—as their president. They both exhorted their countrymen to attend to the constructive and nation-building work more vigorously. Arbitration, sanitation, education, agriculture, industries,

HISTORY OF THE INDIAN ASSOCIATION

especially cottage industries were some of the subjects that demanded the people's active participation for making a headway. Preparation for *Swaraj* or Self-Government was the prime need of the hour, and our leaders inculcated this message of self-help in meetings and conferences, as had been done by Poet Rabindra Nath in 1908.

The outbreak of the first World War in August 1914 gave an opportunity for the Bengali youth to enrol themselves in the Army, a privilege denied from them by the Britishers. The leaders of the Association, such as Surendra Nath Banerjea and Motilal Ghose toured the districts of Bengal and roused the people to enter the force in large numbers. The motive underlying the action of our leaders in the matter of recruitment has been aptly pointed out by Surendra Nath in these lines :

“I addressed more than thirty meetings in different parts of the country. The keynote of my address was that Self-Government which was the goal of our political aspirations connoted self-defence and that, if we sought the privileges of Imperial citizenship, we must bear its burdens and responsibilities, and the foremost among them was to fight for the defence of the Empire.” (*A Nation in Making*, p. 300.)

CHAPTER II

THE PARTING OF THE WAYS

1917-20

The Indian Association had been in very truth a national organisation since its start. The Bengal problems were now mainly discussed and the leaders of different political views did not find it difficult to act unitedly for their solution. But the year 1917 proved to be ominous in the political history of Bengal. Divergence of opinion threatened cohesion and unity that prevailed amongst the Bengal nationalists. Good sense at last prevailed. And the Indian Association still remained the meeting-ground of nationalist Bengal.

As the spokesman of the people of Bengal the Indian Association went out of its way to wire to the Secretary of State protesting against the appointment of Lord Ronaldshay as Governor of Bengal. Because he had given public expression to certain definite views on Indian questions and on certain aspects of oriental character. But subsequent events proved that he had given up his old notions and invited popular representatives, such as, Surendra Nath Banerjea and Motilal Ghose to talk matters over.

Both the Indian National Congress and the Moslem League had adopted the scheme of Self-Government for India on the basis of a pact, now famous as the 'Lucknow Pact' of 1916. The Indian Association organised a public meeting at the Town Hall on 5th March 1917 to consider the question of Self-Government. The War had reached a crucial stage by now. The British Government needed India's help of men, money and materials to come out of the ordeal. Their attitude to Indian aspirations underwent some change. As has been noted previously, our leaders actively assisted the recruitment of Bengali youngmen for the Indian defence force. The Town Hall meeting also gave a lead to our countrymen in support of recruitment. The Committee of the Association took steps to help the recruitment in connection with the Bengali regiment and the Defence of India Force. The Secretary, Surendra Nath Banerjea, visited various mofussil towns—Dacca, Mymensingh, Hugly, Midnapore, Berhampore, Krish-

HISTORY OF THE INDIAN ASSOCIATION

nagar, Rangpur, Dinajpur, Malda, Chittagong, Comilla, Chandpur Serajganj, Suri, Rampurhat and delivered a series of addresses, thereby immensely increasing the flow of recruits.

The Home Rule Movement started by Mrs. Annie Besant under the auspices of the Home Rule League was not, however, viewed favourably by the Bureaucracy. Great impediments were thrown in the way of the Leaguers who wanted to visit different provinces for propagating the object of the League. The Committee of the Indian Association protested against the orders passed by the Governments of the Central Provinces, Bombay and other Provinces excluding Tilak, Bepin Chandra Pal, Mrs. Besant and her associates. The Government of Madras were very inimical to the League and arrested Mrs. Besant and two of her co-workers on 16th June 1917 with the ostensible object of preventing the Home Rule propaganda. There was great excitement in Bengal over these arrests. The Indian Association condemned the action of the Government of Madras, and some of its leaders invited a public meeting at the Town Hall of Calcutta under the presidentship of Sir Rash Behari Ghose. The Government felt nervous and the meeting was banned. The ban was at last withdrawn after a deputation of leaders with Surendra Nath as their spokesmen interviewed Lord Ronaldshay at Dacca. The Town Hall meeting was held amidst great enthusiasm with Surendra Nath in the Chair. He was the only speaker on the occasion.

Mrs. Besant was nominated by seven Provincial Congress Committees for the presidentship of the Calcutta Congress in 1917. The Bengal Provincial Congress Committee thought otherwise and nominated the Raja of Mamudabad instead by a majority of votes. This led to acrimonious debates and writings in the Press. The Reception Committee of the Congress revised the decision of the Provincial Congress Committee and elected Poet Rabindra Nath Tagore Chairman of the Reception Committee. To avoid a rupture between the Bengal politicians, negotiations were carried on. Meanwhile, Mrs. Besant was set at liberty. This eased the situation considerably. A compromise was effected. The President of the Indian Association, Rai Bahadur Baikuntha Nath Sen, became the Chairman of the Reception Committee and Mrs. Annie Besant the President

THE PARTING OF THE WAYS

“ But ”, according to the *Report* for 1917, “the event of the year which is destined to be memorable in the history of India, is the announcement made in Parliament by the Secretary of State on the 20th August 1917 that the goal of British rule in India is ‘ Responsible Government ’ and the progressive realisation thereof by ‘ successive stages ’. The Committee of the Association presented to H. E. the Viceroy Lord Chelmsford and the Rt. Hon’ble the Secretary of State Mr. E. S. Montagu during their visit to Calcutta an address on suggested reforms and constitutional changes in view of the above announcement, on the 4th December, 1917. Besides, a Committee consisting of five members of the Association were invited to discuss the proposals in the address with H. E. the Viceroy and the Rt. Hon’ble Montagu. Secretary, Mr. Surendra Nath Banerjea, was granted a private interview.”

II

The year 1918 was the most crucial year in the history of the Indian Association. The ‘ Extremist group ’ headed by C. R. Das (later, Deshbandhu Chittaranjan Das) wanted to capture the executive of the Association, but failed. Some of them severed their connection with the Association for good. Mr. Montagu remained in India for six months, toured different provinces with Lord Chelmsford the Viceroy and his associates from Britain, consulted leaders and Associations on the nature of the would-be Reforms and returned to Britain with enough material for digestion and report. The proposal of Dyarchy was already there. The parenthood of the proposal of Dyarchy is attributed to Sir Lionel Curtis of the Round Table Group who had come to India previously in 1916 and after discussion with the leaders formulated the scheme. Montagu came to India with a scheme of Dyarchy on the lines of that of Sir Lionel Curtis, prepared by Sir William Duke, who accompanied him to India. On the eve of the publication of the Montford proposal of Reforms, Surendra Nath Banerjea and a few of his way of thinking invited a Conference in Calcutta early in July 1918 to lend support to it to counteract the extremist move to wreck it. Thus was originated the Moderate Party, designated later as the National Liberal Federation. It should be noted here that the conservative die-hards of Great Britain headed

HISTORY OF THE INDIAN ASSOCIATION

by Lord Sydenham were determined to negative the proposal and nip it in the embryo.

The Montford Reforms proposal was published on 8th July 1918. As was expected, a storm of protest was raised by the extremist section of the Indian politicians, as they held, these fell far short of their demands. The Congress executive, now dominated by this section, convened a special session of the Congress at Bombay under the Presidentship of Syed Hasan Imam and passed a resolution criticising the proposal as unsatisfactory, inadequate and disappointing. The Moderate Party, led by Surendra Nath Banerjea abstained from attending the Congress, which was to him especially a painful wrench. Surendra Nath writes, in his (*A Nation in Making*, p. 302) "We could not but secede; for the difference between those who had captured the machinery of the Congress and ourselves was fundamental, and that upon a matter equally fundamental, namely, the question of Self-Government for India. The Congress, however, great an organisation, was after all a means to an end. That end was Self-Government. We decided to sacrifice the means for the end."

The dissentients, on the other hand, held a conference of the Moderate party in Bombay on November 1, 1918, and Surendra Nath was elected President. This was the first of its kind on an all-India basis.

Though the Indian Association had not identified itself with any party, still its committee resolved to co-operate in all matters in connection with the Reforms Scheme. The Reforms Committees on the question of franchise and the division of subjects, of which Lord Southborough was President, visited Calcutta at the end of December, 1918. Surendra Nath Banerjea was a member of the Franchise Committee and Pravas Chandra Mitter, a prominent member of the Association, was a co-opted member of the subjects or Functions Committee. At the request of the Government the Committee of the Association nominated Dr. Pramatha Nath Banerjea and Narendra K. Basu to give evidence on behalf of the Association respectively before the Franchise as well as the Functions Committee.

Besides these, the Committee also appointed J. N. Ray an witness to give evidence before the Rowlatt Committee. The Committee of the Association went out of its way to represent to the Government the desirability of allowing some of its members to help the Rowlatt Committee in

THE PARTING OF THE WAYS

considering the cases of individual detenus, but the offer was declined. Opinion of the Association was invited, as usual, in this session on some important questions. The Calcutta University Commission, later known as the Sadler Commission after the name of its President Sir Michael Sadler, Primary Education, the Village Self-Government Bill and above all the famous Reforms Scheme engaged the attention of the Committee. Under the auspices of the Association a public meeting was held at the Town Hall on 21st August 1918 under the presidency of Surendra Nath Banerjea to consider the question of cloth distress. The Association sent a memorial to the Government on the looting of *hats* and *bazars* in Bengal by poor people who were driven to it in consequence of the high prices of cloth, salt and food-stuffs and low price of jute. It also took up the question of the detenus and agitated for their release, or at least better treatment in jails. The Association co-operated with other bodies in the relief of the distress caused by flood and tornado throughout Eastern Bengal.

III

The Indian Association considered the Montford Reforms Scheme as a real and definite stage towards the 'progressive realisation of responsible Government in India'—an expression used by its authors. It co-operated with the committee appointed in connection with the Scheme. A Bill was framed on the basis of the Scheme and presented before the Houses of Parliament in 1919. A Select Committee of both the Houses was appointed to examine the Bill. The Indian Association took every care lest any harm might be done to it. Four prominent members of the Association, *viz.*, Surendra Nath Banerjea, Sir Krishna, Govinda Gupta, Sir Binode Mitter and Prithwis Chandra Ray joined the Moderate deputation to give evidence before the Joint Committee of Parliament on the Reforms Bill and to help its passage through Parliament in other ways. Surendra Nath has left us a detailed account of their activities in England in this connection. (*A Nation in Making*, pp. 320-32.) They had to fight hard against the Conservative die-hards led by Lord Sydenham. It was due to the insistence of Surendra Nath and his colleagues that subjects like education and sanitation were included into those to be transferred to Indian hands. Besides work in connection with Reforms Bill Surendra Nath visited the provincial cities and gained a personal knowledge of the workings of the

HISTORY OF THE INDIAN ASSOCIATION

Local Self-Government in England as a member of the Committee appointed by Mr. Montagu for enquiry into the system there.

In the meantime India found herself faced with a grim struggle with the Bureaucracy. In spite of the united non-official opposition the Rowlatt Bill had been passed into an Act. Mahatma Gandhi launched the *Satyagraha* agitation against this 'lawless law.' The Act still retained the power in the hands of the Bureaucracy to detain persons on suspicion for an unspecified period without trial. About the official attitude towards popular inspirations the less said the better. The Reforms proposals had been too much for them and they had almost lost their balance of mind. The Indians would no longer tolerate the bureaucratic onslaughts. The Rowlatt Act was a specific case against which resistance could be offered and they did so by adopting *Satyagraha* under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi. There were excesses. These were met by the officials firing and shooting on the unarmed people. The climax of which was the Jallianwallahbag massacre perpetrated under the orders of General Dyer and the promulgation of Martial law in the Punjab by the Lieutenant-Governor Sir Michael O'Dwyer. Repression, physical torture and exile of the prominent Punjabis blackened the administration of this period.

The country seethed with indignation and excitement. Protest meetings and representations were of no avail. Poet Rabindra Nath Tagore renounced his title of Knighthood in utter abhorrence of the official blood-thirst.

The Indian Association in Calcutta and its spokesmen in England tried their best to mitigate the miseries of their brethren of the Punjab. It should be recalled that almost the first Branch Association of the Indian Association was established at Lahore in the very first year of its start. Since then the Association had fostered a close relation with the place and its people. The committee of the Association did not rest satisfied with holding meetings and passing mere resolutions. They exerted themselves in various ways to help the cause of their unfortunate brethren there. They sent cables and telegrams to the proper authorities for the mitigation of the sufferings of the people. J. N. Ray and B. C. Chatterjee, two prominent members of the Association, offered to defend Kalinath Roy, Editor of the *Tribune* and some of the other accused in the Punjab. The Committee tried their

THE PARTING OF THE WAYS

utmost to induce the authorities of the Punjab to admit them to the martial law area, but without success. The Committee also demanded the appointment of an independent Royal Commission of Enquiry with the fullest measure of amnesty to the prisoners. Surendra Nath and other leaders of the Association who were then in England did their utmost in this connection. Writes Surendra Nath :

“The proceedings of the Punjab Government created an atmosphere not only in the Punjab, but throughout India surcharged with the spirit of bitterness and resentment; and the feelings reacted with more or less intensity upon the deputation now in England. A Public meeting was held at which some of the members of the Labour Party were present. Mr. Montagu was approached and the Moderate Party had more than one conference with him. It was we who urged an open enquiry and suggested the names of the Indian Commissioners.” (*A Nation in Making*, pp. 328.)

Amidst these deplorable circumstances, the Indian Reforms Act of 1919 was passed. The future was dark. But the Association was alive to the success even though partial of its age-long endeavours for constitutional progress. The Association welcomed the Royal Proclamation giving assent to the Reforms Act and granting the fullest measure of amnesty to political prisoners. According to its Committee, ‘the Act will rank as an Indian constitutional document of the first magnitude. The Indian Association may well feel proud that it played no insignificant part in the attainment of this goal.’ (*Report for 1919*)

IV

The situation in India and abroad turned critical with the advent of the year 1920. The Punjab disturbances and the Allied mishandling of the Khilafate were the rankling sores in the minds of the Hindus and the Mussalmans. No redress was forthcoming in these two matters. Moreover, the haughty utterances of the Britishers in time of debates in the House of Commons and specially the House of Lords added insult to the injury. The British Government were a party to the Allied policy of exterminating the sick man, Turkey, from the map of Europe. In reply to the arbitrary actions and measures of the British Government Mahatma Gandhi launch

HISTORY OF THE INDIAN ASSOCIATION

ed the Non-violent Non-co-operation movement with a definite programme, the principal items of which was the boycott of Reformed Legislative Councils. The Congress in its special session in Calcutta in September and plenary session at Nagpur in December 1920 accepted the programme of Mahatma Gandhi. A countrywide agitation started and the prospects of the new Reforms seemed to be very obscure.

The Indian Association while vehemently condemning the policy of the British Government with regard to the Punjab disturbances and the Khilaphate, stuck to its original intentions and determined to work the Reforms for what they were worth. Some of the prominent leaders of the Association fought the first general elections under the Reforms Act of 1919 and came out successful. It should be noted that they had fairly an easy pass-over in the elections, as most of the leaders belonging to the Extremist party, now designated as the 'Nationalist party', withdrew from the contest in obedience to the Congress mandate. We find it stated that some prominent members of the Association had been elected to various Councils—one to the Council of State, five to the Legislative Assembly and twenty to the Bengal Legislative Council. The *report* for the year 1920 says. "It is also a matter of no little pride that two out of three Ministers are also members of our Association, *viz.*, the Secretary, the Hon'ble Sir Surendra Nath Banerjea and the Hon'ble Mr. Pravas Chandra Mitter, a member of the Executive Committee. A member of the Association, Mr. Surendra Nath Roy, has also been elected the first Vice-President of the Reformed Bengal Legislative Council."

The public activities of the Association, other than those connected with the Reforms, continued with as much zeal as before. These concerned such important subjects as education and sanitation that vitally affected the people. A public meeting was held under its auspices in the Hall of the University Institute on 11th February 1920 under the presidency of Sir. P. C. Ray to consider the Resolution of the Government of India on the reconstruction of the Calcutta University and the re-organisation of Secondary Education in Bengal on the lines of the recommendations of the Sadler Commission. The resolutions adopted at the meeting emphasised the point that no action should be taken in this regard before the inauguration of the reformed legislature. The Association organised a Public Health Conference on 20th March 1920 with Dr. S. P. Sarbadhikari in the Chair. Re-

THE PARTING OF THE WAYS

solutions were passed at the Conference, (1) urging upon the attention of all sections of the people of Bengal the serious state of public health, specially with regard to the wide prevalence of Malaria and the imperative necessity of taking practical steps for a proper solution of the problem and (2) appealing to the public of Calcutta to further the objects of the Central Co-operative Anti-Malarial Society Ltd., by rendering it financial support.

The Association sent two representatives to give evidence before the Financial Relations Committee presided over by Lord Meston. To give evidence before the High Prices Enquiry Committee Khitish Chandra Neogy was deputed by the Association. His valuable and factual memorandum on the high prices of cloth and food-stuffs justified the right choice of the Association. The Indian Association also appointed a Sub-Committee with Surendra Nath Banerjea as President and B. C. Chatterjee as Secretary to raise a fund, called the Indian Association Amnesty Fund, for the relief of the released detenus in Bengal. The Sub-Committee was able to raise a sum of Rs. 9,000 during the year by public subscriptions and donations and devote to the object of assisting the released persons.

These years were very critical for the Association. Rai Bahadure Baikuntha Nath Sen guided it with tact and prudence as its President. The Association sent delegates to the Congress even in 1920. The Bengal Provincial Conference had the representatives of the Indian Association on its Committee also up to this year. It also elected delegates to the Session of the Bengal Provincial Conference. From this year the Association began to send delegates to the National Liberal Federation regularly. The Association passed the following resolution on 17th December 1920, and parted company with the Congress for good :

“That this meeting of the Indian Association deprecates the present campaign of Non-Co-operation movement as pregnant with mischief to the best interests of the country.”

CHAPTER III

A LIBERAL ORGANISATION—1

1921-30

From 1921 the Indian Association became a full-fledged Liberal organisation, and as a constituent of the National Liberal Federation of India served the cause of Indian Reforms according to its lights. Surendra Nath Banerjea, Honorary Secretary to the Association for thirty-six years, was elected its President this year. He remained in the post from 1921 till his death in 1925 and guided it through the stormy days of Non-Co-operation with ability. Krishna Kumar Mitra, the veteran leader and Editor of *Sanjibani*, served the Association as Honorary Secretary during this period.

During the years following (1921-23) the Indian Association tried its utmost to assist those who wanted to work the Reforms. The Association's work was two-fold, provincial and all-India. So far as the provincial part was concerned, the Association supported the constructive programme of the Ministers of the Transferred Departments, such as, Sanitation, Local Self-Government, Education and Agriculture. Conferences were held under the auspices of the Association for the promotion of these objects. Surendra Nath Banerjea necessarily took the lead in most of them. The Association offered cordial support to Surendra Nath's efforts at democratising the Calcutta Municipal Corporation. But it never deviated from its strictly national outlook, and whenever occasion arose, protested against means detrimental to the cause of Indian nationalism. The Association took exception to the introduction of the principle of communal electorates in the Calcutta Municipal Bill framed by Surendra Nath Banerjea as Minister of Local Self-Government and passed a resolution on 3rd March 1923, deploring it as 'detrimental to the best interests of the country' and urging that 'on no account should it be extended to other local bodies.' The Association was equally emphatic in its condemnation of the Hindu-Muslim pact effected by the Swaraj Party under the leadership of Deshbandhu Chittaranjan Das in December, 1923.

The Association tried to work in co-operation with other parties and organisations whenever needed. During the exodus of tea-garden labourers from Assam, the Association deputed its Secretary Krishna Kumar Mitra

A LIBERAL ORGANISATION—1

to organise and help the work of repatriation. The Assam-Bengal Railwaymen's strike also received its attention. The Committee constitutionally approached the authorities concerned to redress the grievances of the Railwaymen. The North Bengal Flood of 1922 exercised the attention of the Association so much so that both the President and the Secretary toured the affected areas and organised relief for the distressed. The Flood Relief Fund was opened under the joint auspices of the Indian Association and the National Liberal Federation—Bengal branch. A large sum was subscribed to the fund to 31st December, 1922 and a considerable portion was spent. They created a permanent Relief Fund with the balance in hand. The Indian Association organised a public meeting in Calcutta under the presidentship of Sir P. C. Ray and Heramba Chandra Maitra to focus public opinion on the cause of such devastating floods. A resolution was passed in the meeting drawing attention of the Railway authorities to the inadequate provision of culverts and bridges for the passage of flood-water under-railway embankments.

The Association now prepared a constructive programme which would help the amelioration of the masses so as far as their health, education, social status and economic condition were concerned. This would also supplement the constructive programme of the Congress to a large extent. The Committee of the Association adopted the programme on 7th November, 1922. They proposed to establish Branch Associations in a group of villages in every Sub-division of the twenty-six districts on the principle of self-help. Through the medium of these branches primary schools for boys and girls and night schools for adults, circulating libraries, dispensaries, sanitary boards, agricultural demonstration farms, small shops for cottage industries, rural banks, co-operative societies and arbitration courts were sought to be established. But the programme could not be successfully worked out owing to the temper of the people of that time.

The Association was invited and gave opinion on various subjects. It approached all questions from a standpoint extremely national as distinct from parochial or regional. Its memorandums on the Indian Press Act and the Incitement to Offences Act, the Repressive Laws, Separation of Judicial and Executive Functions, Removal of the Racial Distinctions in Criminal

HISTORY OF THE INDIAN ASSOCIATION

Trials, Retrenchment in Expenditure of the Government of India and the Kenya question, display a high sense of patriotism. In the conclusion of the memorandum on Repressive Laws, the Secretary Krishna Kumar Mitra says :

“As for the last of the measures referred to the Committee for consideration, namely, the Anarchical and Revolutionary Crimes Act of 1919, better known as the Rowlatt Act, my Committee agree with Mr. (Srinivas) Sastri in thinking that it is the unblest mother of a monstrous brood of evil. Its very enactment was an outrage on public opinion, and it should have been removed from the Statute Book long ago.”

On several other subjects, referred to above, the Association's views were equally emphatic. The military expenditure of the Government of India devoured the major portion of its income. Quoting the views of Sir Sivaswamy Aiyer, expert on military questions, the Secretary of the Association stated that ‘the British element, which is a third of the whole standing army in India, costs twice as much as the Indian element. The cost of a British battalion is 21½ lakhs per annum as compared with 5 lakhs in the case of an Indian battalion. My Committee consider that the only method by which it is possible to effect any substantial retrenchment is by a steady and gradual substitution of the Indian for the British element.

To combat the progress of the Non-Co-operation movement the Government utilised the Seditious Meetings Act of 1908 and the Association protested vehemently against this action of theirs. In a letter to the Government on 14th December 1921, the Secretary wrote :

“The situation which arose in Calcutta on the 17th November last did not certainly call for such drastic action as has been taken but might have been amply met by a judicious use of the power by Government under the ordinary criminal law. Judging by results it is indispensable that the measures adopted by Government have produced a regrettable revulsion of feeling, which is bound to react most unfavourably on the whole situation. It has given a fresh and unwanted impetus to the very movement which it was designed to check, it has fostered that very spirit of defiance of constituted

THE LIBERAL ORGANISATION—I

authority which it was intended to put down. It has further alienated the sympathies of a large and growing section of the peaceful and law-abiding citizens."

It should be said here that the Association also protested in clear language against the Non-Co-operation and its corollary the Civil Disobedience Movement. It appealed to all sections of the community irrespective of their political opinion to unite for the purpose of combating a movement so fraught with evil to the best interests of the country in a resolution on 11th February, 1922.

II

During the second general election under Dyarchy, the Liberal Party met with heavy defeats. In Bengal the most notable defeat was that of Surendra Nath Banerjea in his own constituency in the 24-Parganas at the hands of Dr. Bidhan Chandra Roy. The latter was largely assisted by the Swarajists. The Swaraj Party captured a large number of seats in most of the provinces, getting absolute majority in the Central Provinces only. In Bengal the Swaraj Party under the leadership of Deshbandhu Chittaranjan Das entered into a Pact with the Muslim Members of the newly elected Council and commanded majority of votes in the House. Ministers were appointed, but their salaries were refused. The Governor took upon himself the administration of the 'Transferred Subjects' temporarily. The Indian Association condemned the Pact in no uncertain terms, but at the same time protested against the action of the Governor. The revolutionary party raised its head again, and the Government promulgated Ordinance I of 1924 and arrested leaders including Subhas Chandra Bose and other persons on suspicion thereunder and under Regulation III of 1818. The Indian Association prepared a memorandum on this arbitrary action and submitted it to the Government.

The Lee Commission and the Reforms Committee engaged the attention of the Association during the year. The Association strongly criticised the recommendations of the Lee Commission. 'If the recommendations of the Commission', so observed the Association, 'are given effect to,

HISTORY OF THE INDIAN ASSOCIATION

officers recruited to the superior offices will have vested interests which may last for about 25 or 30 years after their first appointment'. The Association strongly objected to the creation of vested interests that would impede every step of the successive stages of reforms contemplated in the Act. As regards the Reforms, the Committee of the Association offered some harder and more pointed remarks. The attitude of the British Bureaucracy in India had not undergone any change and the Reforms were broken by them in spirit if not in form. They reasserted themselves and proved the hollowness of Dyarchy by their action. The Committee of the Association was constrained to remark in their "Memorandum on further Reforms" (13th August 1924) that Dyarchy was unworkable and had failed, and that it must be ended. They narrated the difficulties of 'popular' ministers. Voting with the Government in the Councils in all cases against the popular will had deprived them of the 'popular' support. Overriding the Ministers by the Civil Service in case of difference, and consulting the Governor over their heads to determine the policy of action had rendered the Reforms illusory. Such an opinion on the part of the Indian Association, a liberal organisation to boot, must have convinced the authorities here and in England of the hostile attitude of even the sober section of the Indian politicians on their working during the past three years.

The Report of the Reforms Committee was published. But Lord Birkenhead in a speech in the House of Lords in July said that the British Government would not take any steps in this direction before 1926. He threw a challenge that the Indian politicians in the meantime should sit together to frame a constitution for their country. The Indian Association, while criticizing Lord Birkenhead on his attitude towards further Reforms, appealed to all the political parties to meet at a joint conference at an early date for framing a constitution and give a suitable reply to the challenge of the arrogant Secretary of State. This was the genesis of the All-Parties Conference of 1928. The Indian Association, however, held that 'in the best interests of the country and with a view to the speedier realisation of responsible government the existing Reforms should be worked in the meantime unsatisfactory and inadequate as they are.'

The question of the position of Indians in South Africa again cropped up and the Indian minds were greatly agitated by it. The Indian Association had always stood for the equal rights of our compatriots abroad,

THE LIBERAL ORGANISATION-I

especially in the British Dominions and Colonies. The Secretary, Krishna Kumar Mitra, submitted a Memorial on the question to the Viceroy, Earl of Reading. The Segregation Bill and the Colour Bar Bill, says the Memorial, would take away from the Indian settlers there the fundamental rights of engaging in certain industries and the right of holding land or household property in certain townships and country districts. These Acts if passed would destroy the Gandhi-Smuts guarantee of 1914. The agitation in India on the question in which the Association took part zealously, produced salutary results. At Round Table Conference was held between the Indian and South African Representatives and a settlement was reached in 1927. In that year Mr. Srinivas Sastri was appointed the first Agent-General in South Africa to look after Indian interests there.

The year 1925 was very sad not only for the Indian Association but for the whole country. Because in this year we lost by death two of our noblest patriots. Deshbandhu Chittaranjan Das died on 16th June at Darjeeling and Surendra Nath Banerjea, President of the Association at the time, breathed his last on the 6th August following. The Indian Association condoled the death of Chittaranjan in the following words : "The Committee of the Indian Association places on record its profound sense of sorrow and loss at the sudden and untimely death of Deshbandhu Chittaranjan Das, who by his unique self-sacrifice, fervent patriotism, indomitable courage and sincerity of conviction has appealed to the love and affection of the people of India".

Surendra Nath Banerjea was the life and soul of the Association. It was mainly due to his efforts that from a small beginning it had grown into a powerful all-India organisation and roused national consciousness in the minds of the nation even before the birth of the Indian National Congress. The death of Surendra Nath was a personal bereavement to the Association and it was condoled in these words :

"Resolved that the Indian Association cannot find adequate words to give expression to their overpowering sense of loss at the demise of their President Sir Surendra Nath Banerjea. It is not for them to try

HISTORY OF THE INDIAN ASSOCIATION

and form an estimate of the achievements of their illustrious leader which are writ large in imperishable characters across the pages of his country's history. The members of the Association bow their heads to-day in grateful reverence to the memory of their departed chief who founded and nurtured the institution and served it with inspiring devotion to the last day of his life".

In grateful remembrance of its principal founder and promoter the Indian Association holds anniversary meetings on the day of his death. It has also contributed largely to the life-size statue of Surendra Nath placed at the south-east corner of the Curzon Park, Calcutta. A Bust and a portrait now adorn the Association Hall.

The year 1926 witnessed the completion of the 50th year of the Association but owing to serious Hindu-Muslim riots that broke out in Calcutta in April, May and July, no ceremony could be organised. Even the annual meeting had to be postponed. The Association instituted the Riots Enquiry Committee to enquire into the causes and to collect evidence regarding the disturbances.

The political work of the Association consisted mainly in giving opinions on several measures, such as, Penal Code Amendment Bill, Calcutta Rent Act, Bill to provide for the Registration of Domestic Servants in Calcutta and Presidency Area Emergency Bill. The Association took serious notice of the exclusion order on Pandit Madan Mohan Malviya and Dr. B. S. Monje from Calcutta. The Flood Relief Fund had been instituted in 1922 under the joint auspices of the Indian Association and the National Liberal Federation—Bengal Branch. Out of the surplus of that fund, a portion was given this year to Sir Pravas Chandra Mitter for being spent in connection with the education of the backward classes and the balance was handed over to the Indian Association to form a fund for relief work at its discretion. The Association gave relief to the sufferers in the Pabna riots and Midnapur floods from this fund.

In 1927 the Indian Association lost one of its stalwarts in the person of Prithwis Chandra Ray, intimately connected with the organisation for more than twenty-five years. As a close associate of Surendra Nath,

he fought the partition to the last and served as a gallant soldier in many another cause. The gift of his library of very valuable books in memory of G. K. Gokhale in 1919 is an important acquisition to the Library of the Association. It has since been designated as the Gokhale Library.

During the year a country wide agitation for the release of the detenus was afoot. The Committee of the Association submitted an address to the Governor in which they urged him to examine the cases of the detenus severally and set them free at an early date. The Government released a considerable number of them including Subhas Chandra Bose, whom the Association heartily congratulated. The Committee submitted their considered views on some important measures and non-official Bills, such as, K. G. Neogy's Bill on Inland Steam Navigation Company and Sarada's Hindu Child Marriage Bill. The Association condemned Miss Mayo's *Mother India* severely, which was called by Matma Gandhi as the 'drain inspector's report'!

But the most important step that the Association took this year was the boycott of the the Simon Commission in co-operation with all other political bodies. On 24th December 1927, the Indian Association passed the following resolution :

"The Indian Association cordially invites All-India Committee of the National Congress, Muslim League and National Liberal Federation to meet each other in Calcutta to discuss and settle upon the future constitution of India and decide upon the most suitable line of action to get that constitution adopted".

After the session of the Indian National Congress was over in the last week of December at Madras, the All-India Congress Committee invited all the political bodies to sit in a conference at Delhi and frame a constitution for India.

The question of revision of the system of communal representation in the Indian Legislatures engaged the public attention in 1927. The subject was mooted by an influential body of Mussalmans at Delhi. The Indian Association gave earnest and serious consideration to it. The Association held that if the proposal was given effect to, then for all practical

HISTORY OF THE INDIAN ASSOCIATION

purposes, Bengal would be controlled by the Muhammadan community. It therefore strongly opposed the proposal.

III

The period from 1928 to 1930 was the most important in the history of constitution-making in India. Almost all the prominent political bodies responded to the invitation of the All-India Congress Committee to meet in a conference at Delhi, in 1928, for the purpose of framing a constitution for India. The Conference later came to be known as the All-Parties Conference. The Indian Association, with whom the idea had originated, readily responded to the invitation and sent three of their prominent members, Kshitish Chandra Neogy, Jatindra Nath Basu and Nibaran Chandra Roy, to take part in its deliberations. At the Bombay session of the conference in May, a Committee was formed to frame the constitution with Pandit Motilal Nehru as Chairman. After months of discussion and deliberation a constitution was thrashed out on the lines of Dominion Status and embodied in its Report, popularly called the *Nehru Report*. In the Congress-week, December 1928; the All-Parties' Convention was held in Calcutta, and adopted the Report with minor modifications. The Indian Association was represented in this convention by the Rev. B. A. Nag, S. M. Bose, H. M. Bose and B. K. Choudhury. Needless to add, the Association wholeheartedly joined in the boycott of the Simon Commission which also visited the country during 1928, according to its previous resolution.

The *Nehru Report*, as adopted in the convention, required to be popularised, and the Association, since the beginning of 1929, took upon itself the task. Public meetings were held under its auspices for the purpose. The hope of some imminent constitutional change was being nursed by the people at large. The Congress demand was insistent. At this time, on the 1st of November 1929 came the momentous declaration of Lord Irwin. In this declaration the Viceroy laid down Dominion Status as the goal of British policy in India and offered to hold a Round Table Conference immediately after the publication of the Report of the Simon Commission. On the 4th November, the Association passed a resolution welcoming the Declaration. Pamphlets were published and circulated indicating its attitude on

A LIBERAL ORGANISATION—I

the question. But though the Congress leaders expressed their approval of the declaration and Conference immediately after the Viceregal pronouncement, the Congress at its sittings at Lahore in December, 1929, chose to adopt a policy which led to Civil Disobedience.

The country was again in the midst of a grim political struggle in 1930. The *Satyagraha*, that is, the Civil Disobedience Movement, was launched by Mahatma Gandhi. Its first item was the breaking of the Salt Law. The Government as usual issued ordinances to arrest its progress. This time the whole country responded to the call of the Congress and with utmost determination resorted to the various processes of the movement. The Indian Association approached all political questions from the constitutional angle. As in the days of Non-Co-operation, so at this time, the leaders of the Association asked their countrymen to take to constitutional methods for the attainment of political ends. The Association issued two memorandums, one on 2nd May, 1930 and the second on 12th September, on the political situation in the country. In both these pamphlets, the Association appealed to the Government and the people to bring about a peaceful atmosphere by abandonment by the one of the policy of repression and by the other of the policy of Civil Disobedience.

Meanwhile, the Simon Commission published its Report on Constitutional Reforms. The Government of India shortly afterwards sent a despatch thereon to the Secretary of State. Both the Report and the despatch were considered by the people to be unsatisfactory, and the Indian Association condemned them as such. The Association was strongly of opinion that any system which did not make the Government in the Provinces and in the Centre fully responsive to the needs and wishes of the people would be unacceptable to and resented by the whole country. According to the Viceroy's previous declaration, the British Government invited the representatives of various political parties and interests in India to sit in a Round Table Conference in London. As was expected, the Congress refused the invitation. The Conference opened on 12th November, 1930. Amongst the members from Bengal were Sir Pravas Chandra Mitter and Jatindra Nath Basu, Ex-President and President of the Indian

HISTORY OF THE INDIAN ASSOCIATION

Association. Both of them took an active part in its deliberations. They were selected again for the next session.

Some other activities of the Association during this period deserve mention. The Public Safety Bill was presented by the Indian Government before the Central Legislature to forge new shackles on Indians and for the suppression of our political movements. The Indian Association, in a wire to Pandit Nehru and Pandit Malviya on 12th February, 1929, opined that the Bill was 'unadvisable'. The Government were bent on enacting another 'restrictive law' for the purpose. The Association also welcomed the proposal of Dr. Moonje who brought a resolution in the Central Legislature regarding military training in schools and colleges and urged Government to accept and give effect to it.

Some internal affairs of the Association should be noted here. The Trust Deed of the Association was effected on 8th May, 1928 between Basanta Kumar Bose, Heramba Chandra Maitra and Jogesh Chandra Choudhuri of the one part and Sir Pravas Chandra Mitter and Jatindra Nath Basu of the other part. Sir Pravas Chandra Mitter was the President of the Association for 1927, and Jatindra Nath Basu succeeded him in 1928. Nibaran Chandra Roy was elected Secretary in 1927.

CHAPTER IV

A LIBERAL ORGANISATION—II

1931-40

The first Round Table Conference dispersed after preliminary discussions on the nature of the future constitution of India. But everybody felt the absence of the Congress which had by now turned into the real spokesman of the nation. On their return to India Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru and Dr. M. R. Jayakar successfully carried on negotiations between Mahatma Gandhi on one side and the Viceroy Lord Irwin on the other. An agreement was effected early in 1931 on behalf of the Congress and the Government, known as the 'Gandhi-Irwin Pact.' According to the pact, the Civil Disobedience prisoners were released and the Special Ordinances promulgated during the previous year withdrawn. The Congress on its part stopped the Civil Disobedience movement. A sense of peace and calmness prevailed in the country. Mahatma Gandhi went to England to join the Second Round Table Conference as the only accredited representative of the Congress.

In the meantime, following the recommendations of the Simon Commission the Government of India appointed a Committee under the presidency of Sir S. P. O'Donnell to determine the boundaries of the new Orissa in 1931. Some of the Oriyas claimed Singhbhum and certain thanas of Midnapur. A Committee under the presidency of the late Mr. J. Choudhuri was formed by the Indian Association to resist the claims of the Oriyas; and a well-reasoned memorandum was submitted before it over the signatures of Mr. J. Choudhuri and S. J. M. Datta. The late Birendra Nath Sasmal, though not a member of the Indian Association, used this memorandum in his oral evidence before the Committee and convinced them of the justice of Bengal's claims. Singhbhum was not included in Bengal as it was outside the scope of the reference to the Committee.

The Indian Association naturally welcomed the previous move. Jatindra Nath Basu had acquainted the members of the Association and the invited guests with the work done at the first Conference in a series of lectures on the 21st and 28th of February and the 7th and 18th of March, 1931. Sir Prabhas Chandra Mitter, another delegate to the Conference, addressed a similar meeting in the Association on 'some unsolved problems of the R. T. C. on the 3rd April. Dr. Radhakumud Mukherjee and Professor Debendra

HISTORY OF THE INDIAN ASSOCIATION

Nath Banerjea spoke respectively on "Rights of the Minorities" and "Federation in India." Jatindra Nath Basu and Sir Prabhas Ch. Mitter attended the second Round Table Conference held in the year. But the prospects of the second Round Table Conference were not very bright. The representatives of the vested interests joined hands with the reactionary Muslim delegates and prevented the solution of the Communal problem that had been very much magnified in this session. The overtures of Mahatma Gandhi and other national leaders were not accepted.

The Labour Cabinet had meanwhile given place to a coalition cabinet in which the reactionary conservatives predominated though Ramsay MacDonald still remained the Prime Minister. This had necessary repercussions in India. Gandhiji returned to India only to be imprisoned in 1932. The leaders and the workers of the Congress were also arrested, the explanation on the side of the Government being that they would brook no further recrudescence of the Civil Disobedience Movement. The Indian Association viewed with alarm such a turn of things. Jatindra Nath Basu and Prabhas Chandra Mitter addressed a meeting of the Association on 5th January, 1932 on the results and experiences of the Conference. Another public meeting was held under its auspices to consider the report of the Federal Structure Committee.

But the most notable event of the year was the announcement of the Communal Award in the middle of August and Mahatma Gandhi's epic fast in Yarovada Jail as a protest against the Award so far as its attitude towards the Depressed Classes regarding separate electorates was concerned. A formula was however reached abandoning the separate electorates for the Depressed Classes and providing for reservation of seats for them. By this Poona Pact the Depressed Classes of Bengal were given 30 seats in place of 10 in the Prime Minister's Award. The Communal Award raised a storm of protest in the country as it sought to divide the Hindus and the Muslims politically on a permanent basis. The Association had already sent a memorandum on the communal question to the Prime Minister but unfortunately it had very little effect in the preparation of his Award.

The Association's considered views on the Communal Award were expressed in the following lines :

"The Award has placed on a hard and inelastic footing the principle of separate electorates and separate representations through

A LIBERAL ORGANISATION—II

such electorates. No way has been let open for united work and those of the different Communities that in the midst of the conflict-desire to serve together have been left out in the cold.

“The entire Legislature numbering 250 members will, under the Award, consist of representatives separately representing different sects, races and classes and none of them will be in the Legislature as representing the general interests of the people. Sectional views and sympathies will predominate and are likely to direct the activities of the State to the detriment of the more vital interests of the people, which are common to all.

“The Indian Association desires to point out that instead of adjusting or attempting to obliterate differences, which, by admission of all, are undesirable, the Award has accentuated differences. The Association desires to point out that such differences can only weaken the State. The Award does not contain those progressive principles, which alone can stabilise the constitution. It leaves no way open for the working out of those principles of even-handed justice and fair-play for all, which alone can be the basis of mutual trust and goodwill amongst all classes and communities.”

In the third Round Table Conference Bengal was represented by Sir Nripendra Nath Sircar and Mr. A. H. Gaznavi both intimately connected with the Association. The Joint Select Committee of both Houses of Parliament was formed in early 1933 to take evidence on the nature of the proposed constitution. Jitendra Lal Banerjea and B. C. Chatterjee went to London and gave evidence before the Committee on behalf of the Association. They stressed in their evidence the inequity of the communal representation. The White Paper was issued containing the Reforms proposals. After careful consideration, the Executive Committee of the Association pointed out some of the objectionable features of the proposals and criticised strongly the omission of responsibility at the Centre. A Conference was held under the auspices of the Association on 20th August 1933 with J. N. Basu, President, in the Chair, to discuss the Communal Award and the economic position. The Conference passed several resolutions emphasising the disruptive nature of the proposals. The Association took serious notice of the list of the ‘Scheduled Castes’ published by the Government of Bengal. The forces let loose by the continuous policy of

HISTORY OF THE INDIAN ASSOCIATION

repression, told very heavily on the people's mind and led to revolutionary excesses. While condemning these excesses the Association never failed to draw attention of the authorities to remove the real causes of discontent.

II

In the next three years (1934-36) the country witnessed a lull in the political affairs. The Report of the Joint Select Committee was published. It did not allay the discontent. The Association prepared a memorandum on the Report in which it considered the various points discussed in it. Communal discrimination, provincial autonomy, communal division, federation and responsibility at the Centre were some of the principal points considered. From the standpoint of nationalism, these not only fell far short of our needs, but sought to develop disruptive forces amongst the Indian communities. The Report, therefore, could not satisfy the leaders of the Association.

The year 1935 was also not very hopeful. The political situation had not at all improved. The country was passing through acute economic distress. In spite of the unanimous opposition of the people of India the British Parliament thought fit to place the Government of India Act on the Statute Book. The passing of the Act could give satisfaction to nobody. All sections of the Indians declared in no uncertain terms their strong objections to the Act. Provincial autonomy was to be brought into operation on 1st April 1937, but the inauguration of the Federation must, according to the Statute, depend on the accession of the Indian States. There was uncertainty all round.

Certain important Bills were presented to the Bengal Legislative Council, such as, the Calcutta Municipal Amendment Bill, Bengal Municipal Amendment Bill and Bengal Relief of Indebtedness Bill. On each of these subjects the Association gave its opinion. The Resolution of the Bengal Government on the reorganisation of the system of Primary Education also engaged the attention of the Committee during the year.

The Association had been opposing communal electorates and advocating joint electorates. The constitutional changes sanctioned by the Parliament sought to perpetuate a system of Government in the country

A LIBERAL ORGANISATION-II

which would be highly disruptive. Since the passage of the Act the leaders of the Association were emphasizing this pernicious aspect of the Act. In 1936 they again submitted a memorial in this connection to the Secretary of State for India, but to no purpose. However, in view of the election to the new legislature, the Association issued a manifesto to the electors. It also prepared a memorandum on Bengal's case for a financial re-adjustment for the consideration of Sir Otto Niemeyer.

III

The ominous Act of 1935 became effective on 1st April 1937, according to schedule. In the general elections that preceded, Congress captured the majority of seats in the six Provinces. In the North-western Frontier Province it was the largest single party. The Congress did not form the Ministry at the outset, and a deadlock was inevitable. However, by July 1937, it was found possible for the Congress to accept the Ministry after some assurances were given by the Viceroy with regard to their independence in day-to-day administration. The part played by the Indian Association in solving the deadlock was not inconsiderable. The Committee of the Association had welcomed the announcement of the Viceroy made on 22nd June, 1937 which clarified the situation, and on the following day passed an important resolution soliciting the Congress to re-consider their position. Part of the Resolution runs as follows :

“Our people are so situated and they have so much to make up that it is doing them great disservice if they are deprived of the help that may be rendered to them by our leaders assuming charge of the administration.... It has been amply recognised that our people are animated by the spirit of freedom and that the desire in all quarters is that nothing may stand in our way for attaining our goal. The Indian Association is, as stated in its previous public declarations, of opinion that all legitimate endeavours should continue to be put forth for the removal of these defects. But at the same time it has been the policy of the Indian Association to utilise the present system so far as it is possible to utilise it for the uplift of our people.”

In a previous resolution, passed on 23rd March, 1937, just on the eve of the formation of the Bengal Ministry, the Committee of the Association

HISTORY OF THE INDIAN ASSOCIATION

had urged that the Ministry should be so formed as to command the regard of all communities. Because they felt that at the inauguration of the new Constitution in Bengal the men who would be entrusted with the conduct of the nation's affairs should be free from sectional bias.

The next question that claimed the attention of the Association was the continued detention of political prisoners, with or without trial, in various jails, detention camps as also in the Andamans. On the 21st July and the 29th August 1937 respectively the Committee of the Association passed the following resolutions on the matter :

“1. Resolved that the Indian Association is of opinion that the question of the continued detention of persons without trial should receive the immediate attention of the Government with a view to their early release”.

“2. Resolved that the Indian Association expresses its concern at the continued detention of prisoners from Bengal in the Andamans and requests the Government to take early steps to bring them back to this province.”

In this connection the untiring efforts of Mahtma Gandhi should be gratefully recalled.

Due to the communal electorates, the Mahomedans commanded the majority of votes in the Bengal Legislative Council. Some of their legislations were aimed directly against the minorities. The Majority party in the Legislature passed the Bengal Tenancy (Amendment) Act in 1938 in the teeth of the opposition of the Hindus, now reduced to the status of a permanent minority. This Act took away certain rights in land 'which those that hold land have enjoyed from before the advent of the British in Bengal.' The Committee of the Association made a representation to the Governor of Bengal in this connection. The Association, moreover, called the attention of the members and the public to the serious situation which such legislation of an expropriatory character would lead to. The Association which had supported the cause of the peasantry all through its career, was now constrained to call their attention to the true import and the effect of such a measure so that they might not be misled by the mere superficial or temporary aspects of the problems facing them.

A LIBERAL ORGANISATION—II

The question of the Salt industry in Bengal was rendered difficult by severe competition from imported salt. The Association made representation to the Financial Member of the Government of India when the additional duty on salt imported into Bengal was abolished.

Ever since the annulment of the Partition, the Association was trying for the re-adjustment of the boundaries of Bengal on linguistic basis. Now that new provinces had been created and provincial autonomy introduced into the provinces under the Act of 1935, the Association took the opportunity of urging the authorities concerned that the Bengali-speaking area of Chota Nagpur, Bihar and Assam should be included within the province of Bengal. It was, therefore, determined 'to agitate until what the great leaders of the Partition days, namely, Sir Surendra Nath Banerjea and his co-workers, aimed at, is realised'. The Association took up the question of the re-distribution of provinces in right earnest in 1938.

The Association was asked by the Local and the Central Government to give its opinion on a number of measures. Amongst them the following require mention : (1) Hindu Widows' Re-marriage (Amendment) Bill, Bengal Jute Bill, Bengal Local Self-Government (Amendment) Bill I, Bengal Municipal (Amendment) Bill, Primary Education (Amendment) Bill, and Hindu Women's Right to Property (further Amendment) Bill.

IV

The political atmosphere continued to be gloomy and uncertain in 1939. The state of world politics became grave and the most deadly war in history broke out at the beginning of September this year. Owing to serious differences with the British Government the Congress ministries in eight provinces resigned. The Governors of these provinces took over the control of administration. The Legislatures were not being called and the Governors ruled by Ordinances. In Bengal the provincial Government introduced a Bill by which the electorates and their representatives were sought to be separated on the basis of creeds and classes and some communities were to have a larger measure of representation. There were strong protests from the Hindus. But the Bill was passed into law. During the year the Government of Bengal took an important

HISTORY OF THE INDIAN ASSOCIATION

decision whereby in supersession of the previous rules certain percentages of appointments in the Public Services were reserved for Muslim and Backward classes.

The Committee of the Association took note of the serious situation in India and abroad. Nearer home, their apprehensions had proved only too true. The communal legislations and measures of 1939, especially the two referred to above, called forth strong protest from the Association. The Committee held that the last measure would surely lead to a deterioration in the Public services. It was a matter of great concern that the attitude of the Provincial Government was accentuating the communal differences more and more.

We have now reached 1940. The European War took a serious turn in the middle of the year. The political situation in India showed no improvement, but underwent considerable deterioration. In the seven Congress provinces the Governors continued to rule by Ordinances and executive orders. Mahatma Gandhi launched a modified form of Civil disobedience which led to the incarceration of thousands of Congressmen. Among them were leaders like Maulana Abdul Kalam Azad, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, Sardar Ballabhbhai Patel and ex-premiers of all the Congress provinces.

The situation in the country was worsened by the preposterous proposal of Mr. M. A. Jinnah, the President of the Muslim League, to divide the country into Hindu and Muslim India—Hindusthan and Pakisthan. The Association foresaw such a possibility long ago. According to it, 'the proposal of Mr. Jinnah was extremely anti-national and intensely communal in its outlook and, as such, is most detrimental to the interests of the country as a whole. The great ideal of our leaders—a strong, united and free India as a member of the British Commonwealth of Nations is thus jeopardised. It is the duty of every Indian—Hindu and Muslim—to eschew communalism and unite in furthering the cause of the Indian people.' The Indian Association stand for the ideal and is against all forms of communalism.

The Association continued its work of public education. Under its auspices a series of lectures was organised. Dr. Harendra Coomar

A LIBERAL ORGANISATION—II

Meckerjee, the present Rajyapal of Bengal and one of the senior Vice-Presidents of the Association, delivered several lectures on the following subjects :

“1. India’s Basic Industries and their development—on 3rd December, 1940.

“2. Indianisation of the Services—on the 16th March, 1940.

“3. Hindu India and Muslim India—on the 1st May, 1940.”

The Association printed these lectures, as also Mr. K. Iswar Dutt’s pamphlet on “Indian Liberals”, and distributed them among the members and others.

A Provincial War Committee was formed by the Governor of Bengal at a conference held on 17th June, 1940, at which the Association was represented by Mr. J. Chaudhuri, President, Nibaran Chandra Roy, Secretary, and Sir Nripendra Nath Sircar, J.N. Basu and some other members. The communal Ministry of Bengal introduced two contentious measures during this session, one on Secondary Education and the other on the Calcutta Municipal Act into the Bengal Legislative Assembly. This created a feeling of resentment and strong opposition amongst the Hindus of Bengal. The Association strongly opposed these Bills on account of their communal and retrograde nature.

CHAPTER V

THE PERIOD OF TRANSITION

1941-47

During this period India, especially Bengal, passed through severe strain and stress. The World War II, the August Revolution, Flood, Famine and Pestilence, the I. N. A. Trial and R. I. N. Revolt, the Cabinet Mission and last but not the least the Transfer of power to the Indian hands—all these exercised the patience and fortitude of the people strongly, threatening our very existence. Through these troubles and tribulations, unparalleled in recent history, we witnessed the birth of a new nation. The Indian Association was gradually regaining its former strength and vigour, and at times rose to its full stature, whenever the country's interests were found to be at stake.

Both the internal and international situation was growing critical and causing deep anxiety. Towards the end of 1941, hostilities broke out between Japan on the one hand and America and Britain on the other in the region of the Pacific. The East became a theatre of war. Nearer home the political atmosphere was becoming worse everyday. The Congress preferred to keep itself aloof from the war preparations. Many of its leaders were still rotting in jails. In Bengal the Muslim League Government were bent on spreading the communal virus in our body-politic. The consequence was the outbreak of grim and continuous riots. The disturbances at Dacca could not be brought under control for a long time with the result that in several parts of Bengal there was a lack of mutual goodwill between Hindu and Muslim communities. The exasperation of the people was reflected in the change of the Muslim Ministry, though only temporarily, late in the year. A new ministry was formed with Fazlul Haque as Chief Minister with strong Hindu and Muslim elements on it. The Indian Association noted these events and offered their mature advice and suggestions for the solution of them.

The Indian Association had given a stiff fight against the Secondary Education Bill of the previous year. It had also some hand in organising the Bengal Secondary Education Bill Protest Conference. The Bengal Education Council constituted at this Conference held its meetings at the Association Hall and accommodated its office in the Association Rooms.

THE PERIOD OF TRANSITION

The Indian Association contributed a considerable sum to the Bengal Education Council for propaganda work in the matter of the Secondary Education Bill. The Association organised two public meetings. One was held to condole the death of C. Y. Chintamani. At the other Mr. T. K. Swaminathan, Organising Secretary of the Indian Colonial Society, Madras, delivered a lecture on "War and the Colonial Issue".

II

In 1942 the war continued vigorously both in the East and the West. Japan was knocking at the gates of India. Japanese advance in the British possessions in the Far East—Malay and Burma, and air attacks on Ceylon, Vizagapatam, Eastern Assam and Calcutta, made the people of Eastern India very anxious. The condition of the Indian refugees from Burma caused great distress. Some other ominous events followed in quick succession. Taking into account the seriousness of the situation, the Indian Association organised a Conference of its leaders and members at its own Hall under the Chairmanship of Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru on 14th and 15th February 1942, and passed resolutions on War Efforts, Defence, Restoration of the Government by Ministries, Constitutional Advancement and Adjustment. As regards defence, the Association considered it 'imperative that the fighting services (Army, Navy and Air Force) should be immediately recruited on broadest possible basis in all the provinces without the distinction of caste, creed and colour and the defence of the country should be organised upon a national basis.' The following resolution deserves to be quoted in full :

"The Association feels that in order to ensure the full and willing co-operation of Indians in the cause of Allied powers and specially the defence of their motherland the Central Government should be so reconstituted as to constitute a real Government by Indians having full and complete control of all important branches of the administration, such as, Defence, Finance, etc., free from interference and control by the Secretary of State for India. The Association is strongly of opinion that the Executive Council in the Centre should consist entirely of non-official and responsible Indians, and that it should be given the

HISTORY OF THE INDIAN ASSOCIATION

freedom to deal with all questions of policy on the basis of collective responsibility without interference by the Secretary of State for India."

The Conference by a specific resolution also lent support to the scheme of constitutional advance framed by Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru and others, and proposed to convene as early as possible a Conference of representatives to consider it. With the Japanese advance in Burma and towards India, the War Cabinet of the British Government became restive and sent Sir Stafford Cripps to India with proposals for constitutional changes, so that India's co-operation with War-efforts might be obtained in full. But these were not acceptable to Indians and he had to go back without any tangible result. The grounds on which they were unacceptable to the largest sections of Indians, were very aptly couched in this resolution of the Indian Association, passed on 2nd April, 1942 :

"Resolved that the Indian Association has considered Sir Stafford Cripps' Proposals carefully and is of opinion that they are not acceptable in toto, *inter alia*, on the following grounds :

(a) Defence should be immediately entrusted to Indians just as in Australia, Canada or South Africa.

(b) The right of secession proposed to be granted to Provinces and States will result in the partition of India into separate compartments which is inimical to the growth of national solidarity".

The "Quit India" resolution of the All-India Congress Committee and the arrests of Congress leaders including Mahatma Gandhi resulted in an unprecedented uprising throughout India, later called the "August Revolution of 1942". This uprising unnerved the Government so much so that they lost their heads and their officers adopted the most severe measures to quell it. Midnapur was the scene of a severe tug-of-war between the Government and the people. The exasperation of the former with the affairs over there was so great that the widespread devastation caused by the cyclonic storm with tidal waves on 16th October 1942 could not move the stony and perverse hearts of the officials. Due to the want of proper information withheld by them the gravity of the situation could not be perceived for some time by the outside world. In many cases, therefore, the relief was inadequate and came late. The Indian Association did

THE PERIOD OF TRANSITION

its precious bit to mitigate the miseries of our brethren in Midnapur. During the year the Association suffered a serious loss by the death of its Secretary Nibaran Chandra Roy which melancholy event occurred on 24th August. He had held the reins of this onerous office during 1927-42.

III

The year 1943 was one of great adversity for India. The economic as well as political life of the country was seriously affected by the War. The financial obligations which India had to undertake, for assisting the War-efforts of the United Nations, proved to be an extremely heavy burden, while her trade and commerce were saddled with innumerable restrictions. With the production of consumers' goods curtailed and transport facilities reduced there was no real functioning of normal business. Inflation reached unprecedented proportions and the cost of living rose to an enormous extent. Although price-control was theoretically in operation, it was the black market that became potent. The accumulation of huge sterling balance of India in London had its baneful effect on the economic condition of this country and no effective means were adopted to safeguard these valuable assets.

During the latter half of the year the prices of food-grains rose enormously in Bengal, resulting in famine and pestilence almost unparalleled in the history of the province. The influx in Calcutta of rural people in search of food and the staggering mortality from starvation all over the province, were the most poignant incidents of the famine. Disease, destitution and devastation marked the whole countryside. The measures adopted by the Government were tardy and extremely inadequate. The relief efforts of the generous public and the charitable Associations were highly praiseworthy. The Indian Association also contributed its mite for the relief of the distressed.

The Committee of the Association felt very much concerned at the situation at home and abroad. They had fortunately two tried and eminent publicmen as President and Secretary during this troublous session, namely, Narendra K. Basu and Kshitish Chandra Neogy. Under their guidance the Association tried its utmost to draw pointed attention to seriousness of the food situation of all the people concerned. On the 31st July,

HISTORY OF THE INDIAN ASSOCIATION

1943 the Committee of the Association passed a comprehensive resolution on the subject. At a general meeting on the 1st September following, the Association reviewed the prevalent food situation and passed a further resolution. The Committee met on 21st September 1943, to consider the question. According to their direction, the President Narendra K. Basu interviewed the Governor of Bengal on 29th September, presented a short memorandum, and discussed the various aspects of the Bengal food situation with him. A further memorandum on the purchase of the Aus crop by Government was submitted to the Governor by the President at the request of the Executive Committee.

During this period this country was subjected to rule by Ordinance. Laws made by the Legislatures were in many cases superseded, and hasty measures not only affected the freedom of the people but greatly restricted the liberty of the Press. Our leaders and workers in the cause of India's freedom remained behind prison-bars. The attitude of the Government turned so very hostile that even the little independence shown by the Bengal Ministry was not brooked by them, and Mr. Fazlul Haque was made to resign his Chief Ministership by Sir John Herbert, the then Governor. The Ministry was dissolved and the Governor assumed the administration of the province under Sec. 93 of the Government of India Act. Soon afterwards a new ministry was formed with Kluwaja Sir Nazimuddin as the Chief Minister. Needless to add, this ministry was different in complexion to the previous one.

IV

War was still raging in Asia and Europe with virulence during the whole of 1944. The Azad Hind Fauz, or the I. N. A. as it is called, was formed in Singapore under the guidance and leadership of Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose. The political situation in India was as much deplorable as before. The news of the exploits of the I. N. A. percolated to India in spite of severe censorship and imbued some sections of the people with high hopes for the early attainment of independence. The spectre of the unprecedented famine still lingered in the province of Bengal. The vigour of the famine diminished gradually. But the suffering of the people still continued. For the epidemics like malaria and cholera followed in the wake of the famine. Medicine and medical treatment being hardly avail-

THE PERIOD OF TRANSITION

able, these epidemics took a further larger toll of human lives.

The Indian Famine Commission was instituted under the presidency of Sir John Woodhead (of the Palestine Commission fame). The Commission invited memorandum from the Indian Association. The Association sent a strong delegation consisting of S. Kshitish Chandra Neogy (afterwards, the Hon'ble Mr. K. C. Neogy), S. Jatindra Mohan Datta, the well-known statistician, and S. Chuni Lal Roy, Retired Commissioner of Excise, Bihar and Orissa, for oral evidence. The President of the Commission appreciated the stand taken by the delegation, and thanked them openly. He asked S. J. M. Datta to send a copy of his article on the Famine Deaths, published in the *Calcutta Municipal Gazette* for the information of its members. The Woodhead Commission calculated the total death-roll to about two millions, but the non-official estimate of death rate ranged between four and five millions. According to the Association :

“Whatever the exact number of deaths, it cannot be denied that the effects of this war-created famine were more disastrous to India than the actual war casualties to the United Nations. What is more significant is the fact that this famine was the act of man, not of God, and the main responsibility for it is rightly ascribed to the British Government and its subordinate agents, the Government of India and the Government of Bengal. The catastrophe will stand out for ever as the blackest chapter in the history of the rule of one country by another.” (*Report for 1944.*)

Before the end of the year the people of the country, particularly of Bengal, were faced with another serious trouble. The price of cloth went on soaring higher and higher until there was another actual cloth crisis which was almost as severe in its intensity as the food famine. No remedy was forthcoming. The country was governed under the Defence of India rules, and civil liberties were almost non-existent. A feeling of frustration manifested itself in certain quarters. Mr. C. Rajagopalchari put forward a formula for the appeasement of the Muslim League. Amongst the top-ranking Congressmen it was Rajagopalchari who first proposed the division of Bengal and the Punjab for the co-operation of the Mussalmans in the freedom-struggle. This move was vehemently opposed by the Indian Association along with other public bodies and leaders of thought in the country. Mahatma Gandhi's negotiations with Mr. M. A. Jinnah also

HISTORY OF THE INDIAN ASSOCIATION

failed to bring about a settlement. The country's demand for independence, however, remained as insistent as ever.

Among the other matters that exercised the Association's attention was the re-introduction of the Secondary Education Bill into the Bengal Legislative Council by the Nazimuddin Ministry with a distinctly communal bias. A crushing blow was thus sought to be dealt to education. The real object of this extremely reactionary Bill, according to the Association, was not to promote education but to foment and foster communalism. It called forth a persistent and relentless opposition from all parts of the province. The Indian Association took an active part in the organisation of the opposition over this pernicious measure. After a heated and protracted discussion in the Bengal Legislative Assembly, the further progress of the Bill was held up.

The Association had to direct its attention to various problems that required to be carefully handled. It resolved itself into ten sub-committees, the most prominent of which were : (1) food- Sub-Committee, (2) Education Sub-Committee, (3) Political and Constitutional Sub-Committee, (4) Economic Sub-Committee, (5) Civil Liberties Sub-Committee, (6) Health Sub-Committee, and Municipal Affairs Sub-Committee. There were certain changes in the executive of the Association. Dr. Pramatha Nath Banerjea, the late Minto-Professor of the Calcutta University and leader of the Nationalist Party in the Central Legislature, was elected President and Basanta Kumar Choudhuri, Advocate, Calcutta High Court, Secretary.

V

The year 1945 witnessed the end of the World War II. During this session the work of the Association was conducted with vigour and enthusiasm. It made its full contribution to the consideration of the various political and economic questions of the country. The Association organised conferences and meetings to discuss important subjects and urged on the Government the necessity of taking right measures to resolve the political deadlock. The President of the Association, Dr. Pramatha Nath Banerjea, attended the Leader's Conference convened by the Viceroy, Lord Wavell, at Simla, in his capacity as the leader of the Nationalist Party in the Central Legislative Assembly. The Conference proved unsuccessful, owing mainly to the intransigence of the Muslim League. The Labour Party won elections

THE PERIOD OF TRANSITION

this year in England. The Association took the opportunity of this change of Government in England and urged the Government to release all and detenus political prisoners.

The Association expressed its views on public questions, such as, Banking and Insurances. A Memorandum was submitted by the Association on the Hindu Code Bill. On its behalf oral evidence was given before the Rau Committee by Sati Nath Roy, then Vice-President of the Association, Jatindra Mohan Datta, B. K. Choudhury, Secretary, and some other members. Answers were given to the questionnaire of the Constitution Committee of Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru. This year the Committee of the Association set up a 'Forum' for the systematic and detailed study and discussion of current political and economic problems. Bye-laws were framed for conducting meetings of this body.

VI

The work of the Association was expanded in 1946. The Association convened a conference and held several meetings on the question of imminent food crisis. It devoted itself to the consideration of many social, political and economic problems of the day. The Association urged on the Government the necessity of taking right measures to resolve the political deadlock. The resolution passed by it welcoming the Cabinet Mission on 23rd March 1946, laid stress on these fundamental principles, namely, (1) Complete Independence for India, (2) No Division of India, (3) An All-India Federation with a large measure of Autonomy to the provinces and states with adequate safeguards for minorities and (4) A single Constituent Assembly large enough to be representative of all shades of political opinion and economic interests.

The deliberations of the Cabinet Mission engaged the serious attention of the Association. It took a patriotic stand on the constitutional issues and protested against the Mission's proposals. The demand of the Muslim League for the division of India in Hindusthan and Pakisthan was strongly opposed by the Association. Further, the Association carried on a relentless crusade against communalism and urged the solution of the political problem on the basis of pure nationalism with adequate safeguards for the interests of the minorities.

HISTORY OF THE INDIAN ASSOCIATION

The Association strongly condemned the Direct Action movement of the Muslim League on the eve of the inauguration of the Interim Government at the Centre by the two largest political parties—the Indian National Congress and the Muslim League. The ill-conceived movement of the League caused the 'Great Killing' at Calcutta of men, women and children between 16th and 19th August 1946, and in Noakhali and Tipperah in October. This virus spread to Bihar when the Muslim minority there had to suffer most. The Association contributed a sum of Rs. 2,500 towards the relief of the distressed in Noakhali and Tipperah and a sum of Rs. 2,500 towards the expenses incurred in connection with the Calcutta Disturbances Enquiry Commission. The Association took an active interest in the work of the Commission. It also urged the Government to release all political prisoners without delay. The Association conveyed its greetings to the Constituent Assembly convened by virtue of the Recommendation of the Cabinet Mission and warmly supported the declaration of the Objectives contained in Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru's Resolution.

VII

The year 1947 was the most remarkable in the history of the country. But it started in circumstances of intense strain and stress for the people. The communal situation was worse than before and communal riots occurred not only in Bengal but also in the other provinces. The Press was gagged and Public meetings were prohibited throughout Bengal. The Interim Central Government continued to function, though in a very unsatisfactory manner. The Muslim Leaguers refrained from joining the Constituent Assembly. The Muslim League members of the Interim Government adopted an attitude of non-co-operation with the Congress members. The Leaguers persisted in their agitation for the acceptance of the two-Nation theory and for the establishment of Pakistan under the leadership of Mr. Jinnah.

The Indian Association strongly objected to the division of India. The lead given by the Association for the unification of Bengal in the Swadeshi days was still fresh in our memory. But after a long and careful consideration of the complex situation in 1947, it came to the conclusion that, 'in view of the fact that the Muslim League Ministry in Bengal, by pursuing an intensely communal policy and improperly utilising Governmental machinery, was ruining the economic, political and cultural life of the minorities in the province, the creation of an autonomous province in West and North

THE PERIOD OF TRANSITION

Bengal was an urgent necessity'. (*Report* for 1947.) The Association prepared a Memorandum showing the corrupt, inefficient and oppressive methods adopted by the Muslim League during its tenure of office and submitted it to the Prime Minister, the Secretary of State for India and the Interim Central Government.

The Cabinet Mission had failed to bring about a political settlement. On the other hand, their recommendations contributed to the creation of a deadlock, difficult to be solved. But it was sought to be resolved by the British Government by the fresh declaration of 20th February 1947, which was to the effect that it was their "definite intention to take necessary step to effect the transfer of power to responsible Indian hands by a date not later than June, 1948." Lord Mountbatten now succeeded Lord Wavell as Governor-General. He was entrusted with this task of transfer. Lord Mountbatten vigorously pursued his business. After negotiations with the different political parties, he announced the plan of transfer on June 3, 1947, with the concurrence of the British Government. Thus a political division of India was practically and finally settled. The announcement met with general, though reluctant, acceptance in the country, some opposition to it being voiced in certain quarters.

An Act was passed by the British Parliament for the establishment of two independent dominions—India and Pakistan. The actual transfer of power from British to Indian hands took place on August 15, 1947, when the Independence day was celebrated throughout India. Circumstances compelled the Association to acquiesce in the division of India though it had once successfully generated a national consciousness for the political unification of India from Peshawar to Chittagong and from the Himalayas to the Cape Comorin in former days.

To cope with the problems, consequent on the attainment of the Independence, the Indian Association again set up a number of committees, the prominent among them being (1) the Constitutional and Political Committee, (2) the Economic Development Committee, (3) Bengali-speaking Areas Committee, (4) Rehabilitation Advisory Committee and (5) Boundaries Division Committee. The work of the Association was conducted through these committees for the solution of our problems.

CHAPTER VI

THE LATEST PHASE

1948-51

With the attainment of Independence, the country was to launch its nation-building activities. But the trails of events that had happened earlier left their indelible marks on the year 1948. The bitterness of the past year was not easily to be forgotten. Riots again broke out in the Punjab, with an unparalleled violence in Lahore, the capital city. Streams of Hindus—men, women and children started for Indian Union for a peaceful existence. The feelings of their brethren here ran high. Some of them grew so very fanatic that they made short the life of Mahatma Gandhi, the embodiment of Hindu-Muslim unity, on 30th January 1948. The Association noted with concern these untoward developments and implored those in authority to do the needful and arrange for the rehabilitation of the refugees.

The refugee question grew intense on this side of India, too. The Association collected accurate data relating to the situation in East Bengal and submitted a Memorandum to the authorities dealing with the causes of the exodus from there and suggesting measures for the rehabilitation of the refugees. Dr. Pramatha Nath Banerjea and S. J. Harendra Nath Mazumder, President and Secretary of the Association, had discussions with Sri Sriprakash, High Commissioner for India in Pakistan, and with the Hon'ble K. C. Neogy, Rehabilitation Minister of the Government of India. It should be noted that S. J. Mazumder joined the Association in 1948 as one of the Honorary Secretaries and took initiative in the reorientation of its policy.

Due to the reduction of the area of Bengal to about one third its previous size, the question of the rehabilitation of the refugees was considered more difficult for solution. The Association sent representations to the proper authorities for considering the question of redistribution of the provinces, which were to be formed on linguistic basis according to the Congress constitution. The addition of the Bengali-speaking areas of Manbhum, Dhalbhum, the Sonthal Perganas and Purnea to the truncated province of West Bengal might have solved the problem of rehabilitation of our brethren from Eastern Bengal. But no heed was paid to the Association's representation. When a three-member Commission was appointed by Dr. Rajendra Prasad, then President of the Congress and of the Constituent Assembly, to consider the claims of Andhra, Karnatak, Gujrat and Maharashtra, the Associa-

THE LATEST PHASE

tion protested against his action and urged that either the terms of reference to the Commission be so amended as to include West Bengal's claim to the Bengali-speaking areas in Bihar or that a separate Commission be appointed to consider this claim. A public meeting was held under the auspices of the Association, at which the grievances of the Bengali-speaking people resident in Bihar were discussed in considerable detail and a resolution was passed urging the immediate transfer of these areas to West Bengal. The President of the Association paid several visits to New Delhi in order to contact the authorities and influential persons there for the purpose of bringing about speedy solution of the problem.

The question of educational reconstruction received the utmost attention from the Association. In reply to a questionnaire issued by the Committee on Secondary and Higher Education appointed by the Government of West Bengal, the Association observed that the problem relating to Secondary and Higher education could not be considered apart from the problem relating to primary education. The chief aim of education, it was observed by the Association in its Memorandum, should be to foster the growth of the physical and intellectual faculties of boys and girls and to build up their character. It was urged that, while the pupils in the primary stage should be taught to use fully their eyes and hands there should not be any insistence on mechanical practices. It was suggested that the idea of primary education being made self-supporting should be abandoned altogether. Further, it was pointed out to be the duty of the State to provide adequate funds for making primary education free and compulsory, for spreading and improving secondary and higher education, and for making the educational institutions more efficient. In this Memorandum the suggestion was made that the age composition of the students should be (1) Primary—6 to 10 (five years); (ii) Secondary—11 to 15 (five years); (iii) Collegiate—16 to 20 (four years); and (iv) Post-Graduate—21 to 22 (two years). Amongst other important works, the Association prepared a Memorandum and forwarded it to the President of the Constituent Assembly. The Boundary delimitation, Hyderabad and Calcutta Corporation affairs engaged the Association's attention.

II

The Association's activities in 1949 may thus be summarised. The Association prepared several memorandums, as for instance, on

HISTORY OF THE INDIAN ASSOCIATION

the Radcliffe Award, on the name 'West Bengal', and submitted them to the respective quarters. The other questions that received the serious attention of the Association included "Devaluation of Rupee." This measure only manifested the helpless condition of India in the international sphere in respect of financial matters, although she was politically independent of foreign domination. The Association held the view that this measure would retard the industrial progress of India and put insurmountable handicaps to the economic advancement of the country.

The Association approved of the stand taken by the Prime Minister of India regarding Kashmir and conveyed its solid support to Nehru Government for all measures in her defence. The Association protested against the replacement of Bengali by Hindi in Bihar. The Government of Bihar made an attempt to replace Bengali as the medium of instruction by Hindi in the Primary and Secondary schools attended by Bengali pupils, which resulted in the abstention from attendance of about 5000 students in all schools in Purulia. The Association held that such a move was contrary to the decision of the Government of India and went directly against the fundamental rights of citizens as embodied in the Constitution of India.

The Activities of the Association extended in the following directions :

1. Cultural Section.

2. Extension of Activities in Rural Areas :

(a) Rural Development :—

(i) Health, (ii) Sanitation, (iii) Development of cottage industries, (iv) Co-operative Agricultural Farming, (v) Universal Primary Education, (vi) Model village planning and rehabilitation therein of displaced persons from East Bengal.

(b) To rouse civic sense in people residing in urban areas and of their rights and duties.

3. Opening Language Classes : On the achievement of Independence it was felt necessary to educate as many youths as possible to be

THE LATEST PHASE

fit for Consular services in foreign countries. With this object in view the Association proposes to open classes for different languages and arrangements are in progress with Consular offices of foreign countries in Calcutta for the purpose.

4. Improvement of Library.
5. "Forum."

III

The British Raj was out of the picture for two years and a half. It was felt by the leaders of the Association that its outlook must of necessity undergo corresponding change. In 1950 the Association resolved to serve the country as critical observer of the Government of the day in keeping with its tradition of nationalist leadership of the past, and offer constructive suggestions to the Government as and when necessary.

During the year the Association discussed the urgent problems of the day regarding food and cloth. Disturbances in Eastern Bengal in the early months of 1950 troubled seriously the minds of the people. The Association took up the question in right earnest, contacted with the Prime Minister and the Deputy Prime Minister and invited their attention to the inhuman happenings over there. The Association demanded strong action in regard to the situation, particularly to help evacuation of women and children.

On account of the seriousness of the situation in East Bengal, the Prime Ministers of India and Pakistan met at Delhi for mutual discussion and agreement to avert any future eventualities. An Indo-Pak Agreement was signed by the Prime Ministers. But this was very much contrary to the popular views. Dr. Syamaparasad Mookerjee and Sri K. C. Neogy, Cabinet Ministers from West Bengal, tendered their resignations as they differed from the policy of the Government. The Indian Association considered that this policy of the Government of India with regard to East Bengal 'was weak-kneed and marked by a lack of realism, irresolution, uncertainty and vacillation.'

As for constructive work, the Association was also in earnest. As a part of the scheme of public education the Association arranged a series of lectures on the New Constitution of India by prominent exponents. Dr. H.

HISTORY OF THE INDIAN ASSOCIATION

C. Mookerjee inaugurated the series which was followed on subsequent dates by Prof. D. N. Banerjea, Prof. N. C. Bhattacharya and Prof. Mihir Kumar Sen, each dealing with different aspects of the Constitution. The lecture delivered by Prof. D. N. Banerjea was subsequently published by the Association as a booklet under the title "Some Aspects of the New Constitution of India", which was highly appreciated by the Press and the public. The Association also arranged a lecture on the Census operations by Dr. P. K. Bose, Head of the Department of Statistics, Calcutta University, in view of the importance given to the matter under the changed conditions of the country. The Association also opened Hindi classes twice a week during this session.

IV

The Association offered some suggestions and criticisms to the Calcutta University Bill and the Calcutta Municipal Bill. It made a strong representation to the Government against the announcement of their decision to abolish the Lake Medical College and Hospital on grounds of financial stringency, as it thought that the plea was quite untenable.

The report of the Planning Commission also evoked sharp criticism from the Association. The grounds were stated in the following lines : "To our great disappointment the Commission gave an undue importance to the industry while agriculture was accorded only a minor importance. In a country like India where 80 per cent of the people live in the villages, it is quite fair that agriculture should have received its due share of consideration in the hands of the financial authorities."

Social work in the rural areas was included in the programme prepared tentatively two years back. In this session as a part of this, the work began for mass contact.

It is worthy of note that the present Indian Association is conscious of the new responsibility that has devolved upon every citizen of free India to build the nation and has decided upon a new orientation of their policy and programme for national service. The Institution works for the betterment of the condition of the

THE LATEST PHASE

common man and woman of India, so that the ideal of a prosperous and happy India may be achieved.

We have now reached the end of our story. All praise to the builders of the Indian Association. Self-sacrifice and devotion to the cause of the country were the only capital on which they banked, for placing the Association on a sound footing. The edifice on Bowbazar Street, Calcutta, stands as monument to the services the leaders and workers of the Association rendered to our common Motherland from time to time. We bow in gratitude to the Association, to its founders and also to its leaders and workers. With the hope that the record of their work will be a source of inspiration to our future generations in the Independent India and show them the true path of love and service—love of our fellow men and service to the land of our birth, we bring out this volume.

The Executive Committee : The Office-Bearers (1876-1951)

PRESIDENTS

1876-77	..	Mono Mohon Ghose, Bar-at-Law*
1878	..	Rev. Dr. K. M. Banerjea
1885	..	Rev. Dr. K. M. Banerjea (up to May) Raja Rajendra Narain Deb Bahadur
1886-1895	..	Raja Rajendra Narayan Deb Bahadur
1896	..	Raja Rajendra Narayan Deb Bahadur Ananda Mohan Bose, Bar-at-Law
1897-1905	..	Ananda Mohan Bose, Bar-at-Law
1906	..	Ananda Monan Bose, Bar-at-Law Rev. Kali Churn Banerjea
1907	..	Rev. Kali Churn Banerjea Norendra Nath Sen
1908	..	Norendra Nath Sen Dr. Rash Behari Ghose
1909-1912	..	Dr. Rash Behari Ghose
1913-1916	..	Ambika Charan Mazumder
1917-1920	..	Baikuntha Nath Sen
1921-1925	..	Surendra Nath Banerjea (up to 6th August)
1927	..	Provas Chunder Mitter
1928-1934	..	Jatindra Nath Basu
1934-1936	..	Surendra Nath Mullick
1937-1942	..	J. Chaudhuri
1943	..	N. K. Basu
1944-1949	..	Dr. P. N. Banerjea
1950—	..	Satinath Ray

* Designated as Chairman of the Executive Committee

VICE-PRESIDENTS

1887	..	Gurudas Banerjea
1887-88	..	Ananda Mohan Bose
1887-88	..	Mahes Chandra Chaudhuri
1896-97	..	Amrita Nath Mitter
1896-97	..	Norendra Nath Sen
1896-97, 1906-7, 1913, 1928-30	..	R. D. Mehta
1892-1900	..	Raja Binoy Krishna Deb Bahadur
1906-7	..	Dr. Rash Behari Ghose
1906-17	..	Rai Yatindra Nath Chaudhuri
1907-13	..	Debendra Chandra Ghose
1908-11, 1921-23		A. Chaudhuri
1908-13	..	Lt.-Col. U. N. Mukherjee
1912-13, 1915-18		Motilal Ghose
1914-16	..	Baikuntha Nath Sen
1914-15, 1917	..	Byomkesh Chakravarti
1914-17	..	Bhupendra Nath Basu
1916-17	..	A. Rasul
1918-27	..	Deba Prasad Sarbadhikari
1918-28	..	B. C. Mitter
1918-38	..	Heramba Chandra Maitra
1918-20, 1927-36		Krishna Kumar Mitra
1919-24	..	Dr. Nilratan Sircar
1924-26	..	Provas Chandra Mitter
1925-26	..	K. G. Gupta
1927-36, 1943-46		J. Chaudhuri
1930-33	..	Surendranath Mullick
1931-36	..	Rev. B. A. Nag
1934-46	..	Jatindranath Basu
1937-42	..	Dr. Haridhan Datta
1937-42	..	Dr. J. N. Ghosh
1937-42	..	Bijoy Prosad Singh Roy
1939-44	..	N. N. Sircar
1943-45, 1947-49		Satinath Ray

1943	..	Dr. P. N. Banerjea
1944-46	..	Lord Sinha of Raipur
1945-46	..	Abdul Halim Ghuznavi
1946-51	..	K. C. Neogy
1947	..	Hemendra Prasad Ghose
1947	..	P. N. Mukherjee
1947—	..	Dr. Nalinaksha Sanyal
1948-51	..	Pandit Lakshmi Kanta Maitra
1948	..	N. C. Chatterjee
1948-51	..	Dr. H. C. Mookerjee
1949	..	Nagendra Nath Raskhit
1950—	..	Hridoy Krishna Ghose
1950—	..	Basanta Kumar Chaudhuri

SECRETARIES

1876-84	..	Ananda Mohan Bose
1885-1920	..	Surendra Nath Banerjea
1921-26	..	Krishna Kumar Mitra
1927-42	..	Nibaran Chandra Roy
1943	..	Kshitish Chandra Neogy
1944-46	..	Basanta Kumar Chaudhuri
1947	..	{ Basanta Kumar Chaudhuri Benoyendra Nath Banerjea
1948-49	..	{ Basanta Kumar Chaudhuri Harendra Nath Mazumder
1950—	..	Harendra Nath Mazumder

ASSISTANT SECRETARIES

1876	..	Jogendra Nath Banerjee
1876	..	Akshoy Chandra Sarkar
1879—	..	Kali Sankar Sukul
1882-98	..	Dwarkanath Ganguli
1898-1905,		
1906-1913	..	Dr. P. N. Banerjea
1914-15	..	Dr. Naresh Chandra Sen Gupta
1914-15, 1918-33	..	Sachindra Prasad Basu

1915, 1917-26	..	Nibaran Chandra Ray
1916-17	..	Bejoy Krishna Basu
1916	..	Jitendra Lal Banerjee
1918-19	..	D. N. Basu
1918-23	..	D. C. Ghose
1919	..	Satis Chandra Chatterjee
1920-23	..	Satyendra Nath Basu
1920-23	..	Erfan Ali
1922-23	..	Basanta Kumar Chaudhuri
1924-42	..	Fanindra Lal De
1927-29	..	Santiram Chatterjee
1930	..	Birendra Binode Roy
1931-33	..	Sures Chandra Basu
1934-46	..	R. C. Ghose
1943-49	..	Anil Chandra Dutt
1943-44	..	Subodh Kumar Sen
1945	..	Patit Paban Chatterjee
1946-47	..	Nirmal Chandra Sen
1946	..	Subimal Pal
1947, 1952	..	Kamal Krishna Palit
1947-48	..	Gouri Prasanna Mukherjee
1947	..	Amiya Chandra Mukherjee
1947-51	..	Anath Bandhu Dutt
1948	..	Parimal Kumar Roy
1948	..	Fani Datta
1948—	..	Ramratan Basu
1949-51	..	Bijesh Chandra Sen
1949-50	..	Dhanapati Basu
1949	..	Bijoli Mohan Mukherjee
1949	..	Bhowani Sankar Choudhury
1950—	..	Birendra Nath Mukherjee
1951—	..	Radhika Prasad Banerjea

HONY. TREASURERS

1914-17	.. Basanta Kumar Bose
1918	.. Kumar Arun Chandra Sinha
1919-28	.. Jatindra Nath Basu
1929-36	.. Basanta Kumar Bose
1937-48	.. H. K. Ghosh
1949—	.. Sudhir Kumar Bose

LIBRARIAN

1945-46	.. Banerjea, Benoyendranath
1947-48	.. Rai, Chunilal
1949-50	.. Chakrabarty, Sudhansu Coomer
1951—	.. Bose, Hemranjan

N.B. The list of the Office-bearers is not exhaustive, as all the Annual Reports of the Indian Association are not now available.

APPENDIX

A— On the Rent (later, Bengal Tenancy) Bill

THE INDIAN ASSOCIATION OFFICE

93, College Street, Calcutta.

27th June 1881.

To

The Hon'ble A. Mackenzie,
Secretary to the Government of Bengal.

Sir,

I am requested by the Indian Association to submit the following observations in reply to the letter of Government dated the 19th July 1880.

2. Since the receipt of the Government letter, the Association have endeavoured to ascertain the views of the ryots and of those interested in their welfare. The public meetings of the ryots that have been held in different parts of the country—at Kissengunge, Poradaha, Gooshpara and Gopalpur, in the Nuddea district, at Lagusai in Beerbhoom, at Rahita in the 24-Pergunnahs, at Boidyabatti in Hooghly, at Burdwan, and in the town of Calcutta itself, have enabled the Association to form a tolerably correct idea of the views of the ryots themselves upon the many important provisions of the Rent Bill; and while the Association will not give their unqualified support to the views expressed by the ryots at their different meetings, they think it important that Government should know what the views of the ryots are, in connection with those questions in which they, more than any other section of the community, perhaps, feel deeply interested.

3. The Association cannot sufficiently express their obligations to the Government of Sir Ashley Eden for the warm interest it has felt in the welfare of the ryots. It is notorious that the relations between landlords and tenants are in a most unsatisfactory state and have been so for a number of years. The circumstances of the case urgently called for legislative interference. Sir Richard Temple, on the eve of his laying down the reins of office, was anxious to introduce a Bill which would place the relations between landlords and tenants on a more satisfactory footing; and among the questions which Sir Ashley Eden took up at once, on assuming the government, was this question relating to the settlement of the relations between landlords and tenants. That Government has every right to interfere for the benefit of the ryots by legislative enactment is what will not admit of a moment's doubt. Section VIII of Regulation I of 1793 expressly reserves this power to the Government. The Section says :—

“To prevent any misconstruction of the foregoing articles (fixing the Government revenue for ever) the Governor-General in Council thinks it necessary to make

II

the following declarations to the zemindars, independent talookdars, and other actual proprietors of land. First—It being the duty of the ruling power to protect all classes of people, and more particularly those who from their situation are most helpless, the Governor-General in Council will, whenever he may deem it proper, enact such regulations as he may think necessary for the protection and welfare of the dependent talookdars, ryots and other cultivators of the soil; and no zemindar, independent talookdar, or other actual proprietor of land shall be entitled on this account to make any objection to the discharge of the fixed assessment, which they have respectively agreed to pay.”

Then again the Court of Directors, in one of their despatches, previous to the conclusion of the Permanent Settlement, declared as follows ;—

“We, therefore, wish to have it distinctly understood that, while we confirm to the landlords the possession of the districts which they now hold, and subject only to the revenue now settled, and while we disclaim any interference with respect to the situation of the ryots, or the sums paid by them, with any view to an addition of revenue to ourselves, we expressly reserve the right which clearly belongs to us, as sovereigns, of interposing our authority in making from time to time all such regulations as may be necessary to prevent the ryots being improperly disturbed in their possession, or loaded with unwarrantable exactions. A power, exercised for the purpose we have mentioned, and which has no view to our own interests, except as they are connected with the general industry and prosperity of the country, can be no object of jealousy to the land-holders, and instead of diminishing, will ultimately enhance the value of their proprietary rights. Our interposition, where it is necessary, seems also to be clearly consistent with the practice of the Mogul Government, under which it appeared to be a general maxim, that the cultivator of the soil duly paying his rent, should not be dispossessed of the land he occupied.”

4. The power of the Government to enact laws from time to time for the benefit of the ryot being thus unquestioned, and the necessity for such interference in the present relations between landlords and tenants being equally clear, the Association venture to think, the Government very wisely resolved to appoint a Commission which would collect information, digest the materials, and finish their labours by the submission of a Bill. The *personnel* of the Commission was such as was calculated to assure the friends of the ryots that substantial justice would be done to them. Mr. Mackenzie, Mr. O' Kinealy, and Mr. Harrison were gentlemen who combined an intimate knowledge of the land system of the country with deep sympathy with the peasantry, and a living interest in their welfare; and with certain modifications, to which attention will presently be drawn, the Association are prepared to offer their support to the draft Bill. They certainly prefer the draft Bill of the Rent Commissioners to that prepared by the Hon'ble Mr. Reynolds. Mr. Reynolds' Bill does not traverse the entire ground covered by the Bill of the Rent Commissioners, and the Bill prepared by that gentleman, as it is, is open to serious objections, and is, the Association submit, highly detrimental to the interests of the ryots in many important respects.

5. The most important portions of the Bill, as drafted by the Commissioners, may be divided under the following heads :—

- (1) The provisions relating to occupancy-holdings.
- (2) The provisions connected with enhancement of rent and the law of distraint.
- (3) The law of procedure.

III

6. Now with reference to occupancy-holdings, the Association are of opinion that such tenures should be made transferable, and they have great pleasure therefore in giving their support to Clause B of Section 20 of the draft Bill of the Rent Commissioners. As a matter of fact, in many districts, local custom has already made occupancy-tenures transferable, and the tendency is indeed general for such holdings to become saleable. It is to be regretted that the zemindars have thought it fit to object to this incidence being attached to occupancy-tenures. They say, the incidence involves a direct infringement of the old Regulations. It might be asked—are the zemindars prepared to go back in every particular to the old Regulations connected with the Permanent Settlement? If they are, the ryots and their friends would want nothing more; for it cannot be forgotten that under the Regulations of the Permanent Settlement, the zemindars have no power to enhance rents beyond the Pergunnah-rate—the rate that prevailed in the Pergunnah at the time of the Permanent Settlement. It is to be feared the zemindars would object to the Pergunnah rate of rent being unalterably fixed, beyond which it would not be possible for them to raise the rate. But surely it is both opposed to reason and to all sense of fairness that zemindars should repudiate the portion of the Regulations which would be to the benefit of the ryot, but that they should be allowed to seek shelter behind that, which, if it is not an omission in the old Regulations, is certainly not opposed to their tenor, and for which authority has been reserved by the terms of those Regulations.

7. Nor is it possible to over-estimate the benefit which the bestowal of his right would confer on the peasantry as well as on the zemindars. The prosperity of the peasantry means the prosperity of the zemindar. A teeming population of impoverished ryots is what no prudent zemindar would like to have on his estate. If the ryots find it hard to maintain themselves, they will find it much harder to pay their rents. If, on the contrary, they are prosperous and well-to-do, they will pay the rents punctually, the zemindars will get their dues, there will be less of litigation, less of those bitter and angry feelings which now unhappily characterize the relations between landlords and tenants. Moreover, the draft Bill provides that the occupancy-holding is liable to sale, for the realization of arrears of rent. It is a decided advantage to the landlord to have another ready means placed at his disposal for the realization of arrears of rent. This will ensure the more punctual and regular realization of his dues. The benefit to the ryot, on the other hand, will be simply incalculable. Fixity of tenure on fair and equitable rents is the foundation of the agricultural prosperity of a country. Assure the ryot that so long as he pays his rents regularly, he will be left in the undisturbed enjoyment of his holding, and he is furnished with the strongest incentive to the improvement of the land. To cite a few instances out of many which might be quoted, the cultivators of the district of Chittagong enjoy a fair degree of security of tenure, and His Honour is aware what large sums they expend out of their own incomes to build embankments to keep out the sea-water and improve their land. In Backergunge also, where the cultivators enjoy a very fair degree of fixity of tenure, the expenses which they incur to improve their lands, and specially their homestead lands are not unknown to the authorities. On obtaining or buying a holding, the cultivator often plants it out with Mandar plants, if he intends to make it into a betel-nut garden. A few years pass, and the Mandar plants grow up, and then the cultivator plants young betel-nut trees in the shade of the Mandar. Years pass on before these young plants are able to bear fruit, and all this time the ryot has been paying rent *kist* after *kist* from his own pocket without a penny of return from the land. His reward, however, comes in the end, and an extensive forest of betel-nut trees smiles round

IV

his homestead in time, and ensures to him a source of income which he hopes to transmit to his sons and his son's sons. Visitors have been struck with the extensive and lucrative betel-nut gardens almost all over this district; but few have stopped to think that the secret of this phenomenon is the security of tenure of the Backergunge ryot, and the possession of a kind of property in the soil which induces and enables him to labor patiently year after year to enrich the land and the country. When these instances are compared with that of the ryots of Behar under the Ticcadari system,—ryots who spend no money on their lands, who have no idea to improve their lands, it will be at once manifest that in Bengal at least, improvement of land, and the consequent enrichment of the country, depend on protection and security bestowed on the cultivators. Withdraw that security, and the Bengal ryot who well understands his own interests will cease to spend any capital on his land, will decline to improve the soil which may pass to the zemindar the next day. Extend that security, and the strongest of human motives,—self-interest,—will induce the ryot to enrich his land and enrich his country. The absolute correctness of these facts are known to every impartial observer who has marked the progress of agriculture in Bengal, and must surely be known to so careful and accurate an observer at His Honor the Lieutenant-Governor of Bengal. And it is the knowledge of these facts that makes the Indian Association welcome the new provisions relating to the protection of all resident cultivators, provisions which will necessarily conduce to the prosperity and well-being of the country and the people.

8. The Association rejoice that both in the draft Bill and the Bill prepared by Mr. Reynolds, it is proposed to make occupancy-holdings saleable. But if the tenure is made saleable, the Association are of opinion that it should be also allowed to be mortgaged. They are glad to find that in the Bill, as amended by Mr. Reynolds, the clause which prohibited the mortgage of occupancy-holdings has been omitted. The privilege, however, has been rendered practically null by prohibiting the sale of the holding in execution of a decree upon the mortgage bond; for the draft Bill as well as Mr. Reynolds' Bill provide that an occupancy-holding shall not be saleable in execution of any other decree, save and except a decree "passed for arrears of rent." Now the effect of the restriction would be that it would be impossible for the ryot to obtain money upon the mortgage of his tenure, for no man would advance him money on the mortgage of property which could not be sold in execution of a decree obtained upon the mortgage bond. If it should be thought proper to allow the ryot to raise money upon the mortgage of his tenure, it does not appear very clear why the right of the mortgagee should be fettered to an extent which will practically deprive the ryot of the boon which is sought to be conferred upon him. The restriction, the Association would repeat, would practically amount to a withdrawal with the one hand of a boon which is sought to be conferred with the other. The Association do not share to alarm that is felt in some quarters at the ryots being allowed to mortgage their holdings. They do not apprehend that the result of such a concession would be a wholesale transfer of occupancy-holdings into the hands of money-lenders. It is altogether a mistake to suppose that the Bengal ryot, when he has the opportunity, will run into debt, in order that he may have the pleasure of depriving himself of any kind of property that he may possess. In Backergunge, Chittagong and other districts, the salutary effect of the possession of property upon the habits and character of the peasant is very evident. In these districts, as has already been seen, where the ryots enjoy a certain degree of fixity of tenure, and possess a certain kind of property, instead of wasting their property upon expensive marriages and expensive *shradhs*, they take every

care of their holdings, and no pains are spared to improve them and to make them a source of profit. The right to mortgage the occupancy-tenure will again enable ryot to borrow money at a comparatively lesser rate of interest than what is now paid. The greater the security the creditor has for the realization of his money, the less will be the rate of interest he will charge ; but if he does not possess the right to sell the property mortgaged to him, it is evident that he does not possess a ready means for the realization of his money, and must therefore charge a higher rate of interest. The greater the facilities created by the Legislature for the realization of money lent to the ryots, the less will be the difficulties capitalists will feel in helping them with loans ; and it is not perhaps unreasonable to expect that increased facilities in this direction may eventually lead to the establishment of Agricultural Banks in the Mofussil which, by lending the ryot money at a low rate of interest, will materially tend to improve the agricultural prospects of the country and the condition of the ryot himself. Altogether, therefore, the Association submit, there is no prospect whatever of the ryots ruining themselves by being allowed to mortgage their holdings. As the right has been conferred upon the ryot to mortgage his holding, by the withdrawal of the restriction provided in the draft Bill, and, which has been referred to above, the Association would respectfully urge upon the Government the propriety of allowing the ordinary law of the land to take effect in regard to mortgage-bonds relating to occupancy-tenures.

9. The Association will now proceed to consider the question as to what will constitute an occupancy-tenure. Section 19 of the draft Bill says that "subject to the provisions of Section 11, any ryot who, for a continuous period of 12 years, has, as a tenant, held or has, as a tenant, occupied and cultivated land, and paid rent for the same, has a right of occupancy in the land so held or occupied and cultivated by him, whether held or occupied under a lease or otherwise." Continuous possession for 12 years, and the payment of rent during that period entitle the ryot to the rights incidental to the occupancy-tenure. This has been the law since 1859. Mr. Reynolds' Bill, however, seeks to introduce an important change in the Bill, Section 18 of that Bill provides that "every settled ryot has a right of occupancy in the land which he holds or cultivates as a tenant, whether such land be held under a lease or otherwise."

Explanation 1.—A settled ryot is a ryot who has his fixed habitation in the village or estate in which he holds or cultivates land as a tenant ; or whose fixed habitation is within a distance of two miles from the lands which he holds or cultivates as a tenant."

10. By the old Regulations, the *khodkast* ryots are entitled to the privileges attached to the occupancy-tenure, and the Association are deeply grateful to His Honor for his declaration that the "Lieutenant-Governor desires to see occupancy-tenure made the rule and not the exception". Unquestionably "a substantial tenantry, free from debt and in a position to save and bear the pressure of occasional bad season, is what Bengal requires."

11. The Association appreciate the spirit of the Section just quoted from Mr. Reynolds' Bill. They feel that all resident cultivators should enjoy the occupancy-right, but they cannot accept the explanation given. The explanation given will deprive all *baekast* ryots of the occupancy-right which, ever since 1859, they have been able to acquire by continued possession, extending over a period of 12 years. If as His Honor the Lieutenant-Governor proposes, and the Association venture to think very properly, that the occupancy-tenure should be made the rule and not the exception, it would hardly be consistent with that declaration that the boon should be confined only to ryots who have a

VIII

impossible to say, has not some foundation in reason." If a man who pays Rs. 3 per bigha for years past, is suddenly called upon to pay Rs. 4 per bigha, he will feel the difference very much as his standard of living has risen in proportion to the profit he has got out of his land after paying rent. The Association would allow this enhancement, but they would fix it as the maximum. To ask that cultivator to pay Rs. 4 would indeed be a grievous injury to him, a little short of compelling him to leave his land. The Association approves the proposal of the old grounds of enhancement in the case of occupancy-ryots; but in the case of the third and fourth grounds, the Association agree with Mr. and O'Kinealy in thinking that two-thirds of the increment should be given to the ryots and one-third to zemindars.

15. The Association consider it only fair and equitable to allow the abatement of rent in cases in which his rent is excessive. It is proposed to do so on three grounds only, corresponding to the second, third and fourth grounds of enhancement, both in Mr. Reynolds' Bill and in the Bill drafted by the Association. In the opinion of the Commissioners, the first ground of enhancement is not fair. In the opinion of the Indian Association, however, there is a converse to the rule of enhancement. When the rate of rent paid by a ryot is above the prevailing rate by the same class of ryots for land of a similar description, such ryot should be allowed to sue for abatement. Justice requires that the grounds which are allowed for abatement should also be allowed to the ryot for enhancement; and it would be unfair and invidious to make any exception. The Association therefore propose that the same four grounds should be allowed both for enhancement and for abatement of rent.

16. Intimately connected with the question of enhancement of rent, is the question as to how long rents once raised should be considered as fixed. The ryots in their meetings have expressed a very decided opinion on the matter. They would like to have their rents fixed for a period of thirty years, the lifetime of a generation. They hold, and it is difficult to call in question the justice of their connection, that as there was a permanent settlement between the Government and the zemindars, there was a settlement of rents between the Government and the ryots, and that this settlement was binding and equally obligatory between zemindars and ryots, *viz.*, that the former should not increase the rate of rent beyond the Pergana *nirikh*. But the zemindars have not only violated this solemn contract, and, strange to say, under the authority of the Government; but laws have from time to time been enacted sanctioning enhancements of rent, and affording facilities to the zemindar for their realization. The ryots would like to see the Government go back to the old Pergana *nirikh*, but they would not ask that at least the rate of rent should be declared fixed during 30 years, the lifetime of a generation. It is impossible not to admit that there is considerable force in this proposal. The Association will at once admit that it is impossible to go back to the old Pergana rate; but it is the duty of the Government to do all that lies in its power to amend, so to speak, for the mistakes of former Governments in allowing the *nirikh* to be exceeded. If the Government should find it difficult to declare the rate of rent fixed for a period of 30 years, the Association hope that, following the example of the Irish Land Act, the rates shall be declared unalterable and fixed for a period of 30 years at least.

17. The Association will now proceed to consider the law relating to distraint. The Association regret to say that they cannot support the provisions of Mr. Reynolds' Bill in this respect, and which represent the views of His Honor the Lieutenant-Governor. It is worthy of note that the law of distraint has been altogether omitted from the Rent Bill, as drafted by the Rent Commissioners, as it was felt that the existence of such a law on the statute-book would be the source of endless oppression. The Rent Commissioners observe in Section 40 of the Report :

"The Bill does not reproduce the provisions of the existing law upon the subject of distraint, and we propose to abolish altogether this mode of proceeding for the recovery of rent. This off-set of English law was originally introduced into this country by Regulation XVII of 1793, which empowered certain specified landlords to distraint and sell the crops and products of the earth of every description ; the grain, cattle, and all other personal property (whether found in the house or on the premises of the defaulter, or of any other person) belonging to their tenants. This continued to be the law until 1859, when the power of distraint was limited to the produce of the land on account of which the rent is due. There can be little doubt that this change considerably impaired the coercive efficacy of this procedure as a means of recovering rent ; and we are afraid that the provisions of the present law are not always strictly attended to. There is evidence of positive abuse of these provisions in Behar ; and the experience of some of us is that they have not always been used in a regular manner in other parts of the country. We have had before us certain suggestions for shortening and improving this procedure, and have considered whether by their adoption it might not be made safely efficacious to a greater extent than it hitherto has been ; but a majority of us finally came to the conclusion that it might well be omitted from any consolidating and amending Act. It is to be observed that this conclusion is in accordance with the greater number of the votes of the Members of the Behar Rent Committee and of the Behar Indigo Planters' Association.

It is, however, now proposed by Mr. Reynolds to set aside the suggestions of the Rent Commission, and to retain on the statute-book those coercive provisions which, the Rent Commissioners complained, were in Behar, at least, attended with "positive abuse."

18. It is indeed true that these summary provisions are to be enforced, only as regards the realisation of current rents, and through the medium of the courts of law. But the whole procedure is to be *ex-parte*. It is the zemindar or his agent who is to make the application ; the ryot is not represented in court ; he is not heard ; and upon this one-sided and *ex-parte* statement, if the application is admitted, the Court shall depute an officer to distraint the crops. The property distrained is to be sold within seven days, from the date of distraint at the latest, unless in the meantime the unhappy ryot has been able to find means for depositing the amount claimed, together with cost of distraint. It is needless to add that if these provisions became law, a powerful instrument of oppression would be placed in the hands of unscrupulous zemindars. Far be it from the Association to assume that all zemindars are unscrupulous ; amongst them, indeed, there are men who are the ornaments of native Indian society ; but also amongst them, as indeed amongst all other sections of the community, there are men who are deterred from evil-doing by the terrors of the law alone. An unscrupulous zemindar, if he wants to ruin a refractory ryot, will have no difficulty whatever in proving before a court of law which has not the

opportunity of hearing the other side, a claim for money to which he is not fairly entitled. When the Rent Commission, consisting of men who were appointed to their work for their special knowledge, deliberately omitted the provisions relating to distraint, it must be assumed that they had the gravest reasons for making the change. The Association fail to see how, without these provisions, the zemindars would be put to any serious inconvenience. Chapter XVIII of the Rent Bill of the Commissioners affords them unusual facilities for the realization of arrears of rent. The Legislature, in the Chapter referred to, seems to be anxious, and justly so, that no unnecessary delay should take place in the disposal of rent suits. Section 173 of the Bill says :—

173. The summons shall be for the final disposal of the suit. It shall direct the Summons to be for final disposal of case, and to direct defendant to produce any document, the production of which is required by the plaintiff, or upon defendant to produce documents which such defendant may desire to rely in and witnesses. support of his defence. It shall further instruct the defendant to bring his witnesses on the day specified, if they are willing to attend without summons, or, if they are not so willing, to have summons served upon them in sufficient time to enable them to be present on such day.

Then again Section 194 says that, after the evidence has been taken, the Court shall pronounce judgment "usually at once." When such facilities have been provided for the realization of arrears of rent, the Association would submit that a sufficient case has not been made out to invest zemindars, under the provisions of the proposed law, with exceptional powers which are productive of a great deal of abuse. It is no argument to say that the zemindars enjoy such powers under the existing law. The question before the Government is—in what respects the existing law is capable of improvement? The Association are humbly of opinion that as regards the law of distraint, the present law should be modified, and the opinion of the Rent Commissioners should be given effect to.

19. Lastly, the Association would venture to draw the attention of Government to the subject of the procedure laid down in the Bill for affording facilities to zemindars to enhance rent. The Indian Association confess, they have grave misgivings as to the practical effect of the operation of the new procedure. The transference of enhancement suits from the Civil Courts to the hands of the Collectors, who have already a variety and multiplicity of work to do, will not, the Association feel, be conducive to strict and proper justice. The very little time which Magistrate-Collectors can spare from their executive work, make them unable, as a rule, to try criminal cases arising in their district, and will certainly render them unable to properly try enhancement suits, involving minute questions and careful enquiries for which Civil Court officers alone are by their training best fitted. The placing too of "the executive agency of Government at the disposal of the zemindar," for the purposes of enhancement of rent, is undoubtedly a great concession to the demands of the zemindar, but is scarcely fair to the ryot. Lastly, as zemindars would, under the new procedure, have to pay for the "executive agency of Government" they employ, including the pay of the Collector or Deputy Collector and Ministerial Officers, the concession would benefit only rich and powerful zemindars, that is, those who require no help; while it would scarcely benefit the smaller zemindars all over the country who perhaps really require some help. The Indian Association are aware that some rich zemindars, holding estate near the metropolis, have since some years past proposed and loudly demanded a measure of this sort; but this demand, the Association humbly submit, is not the demand of zemindars, as a class, all over the country and the concession will

not benefit the vast majority of them who hold only small estate with small income. Whether it is expedient to make to the demands of a few rich and powerful zemindars a concession which will not largely benefit landlords as a class, which will involve an entire change of the existing procedure, and which will certainly be obnoxious to cultivators the greatest degree, is a point which the Association humbly leave to His Honor the Lieutenant-Governor for decision.

20. The preliminary work of the Collector on the application of a zemindar for enhancement of rent will, under the new provisions, be to prepare a table of rates for the estate or tenure in question. He will have to classify lands under different heads, and determine after due enquiry the prevailing rate of rent for each class of land. This, the Association feel, will be an impossible task. Lands in the same vicinity are of such varying degrees of fertility and quality, that a table, in order to be correct, must necessarily be so elaborate and complex as to be useless for all practical purposes. The Collector, under these circumstances, must necessarily strike averages in order to fix the rate for each description of land; but the rate so fixed must be unfair to the holder of lands slightly inferior to the average land selected by the Collector. To take an example, *Sali Awal* land *i.e.*, first class *sali* land, will, on practical inspection, be found not to be paying a uniform rate of Rs. 4 a bigah, but to be paying say between Rs. 3 and Rs. 4 a bigah according to shades of difference in the quality and situation and fertility existing among different pieces of this description of land. What is the Collector then to do? If he strikes an average and fixes the rate for *Sali Awal* land at Rs. 3-8 per bigah it would be unfair to the zemindar in half the cases, and unfair to the ryot in the other half cases. If, on the other hand, the Collector conscientiously records the prevailing rate of this land to be between Rs. 3 and Rs. 4, then his table of rate will be useless, for the whole question will have to be gone into again in settling the rent of every piece of *Sali Awal* land. The case here referred to is not a remote and possible difficulty, but one which the Association consider as likely to arise in every instance in which a table of rates will have to be drawn up. They are not aware of any single estate or zemindari in which lands of the same description pay exactly the same rate, except in cases in which zemindars have introduced such uniformity after a vast amount of litigation and much harassment of their ryots.

21. For these reasons the Association think that any attempt to make a uniform table of rates of rent for any estate or tenure will cause serious disturbance and irritation, and will practically be found impossible, unless it is done in such a manner as to involve injustice either to the zemindar or to the ryot. The Association, however, have no objection to the Collector's classifying lands, and preparing a table shewing the average rate of each class of land.

22. But when the table of rates is prepared, the Collector's work is not half done yet. Unless the ryots forthwith consent to pay these rates, the zemindar will, under the new provisions, either have to go to the Civil Court for enforcing these rates against any or all of his ryots, or will have to ask the Collector to do this. Although the general rate may have been fixed by the Collector's table of rates, particular ryots may have various objections as to any particular rates applying to their lands, and all these will now have to be determined after patient and minute enquiries regarding every piece of land about which objection is raised. The Indian Association think that this certainly is a task which should be left to the Civil Court and not to the Collector. If the Government consider it possible to have general tables of rates prepared, that task may well be left to the Civil Court authorities. And when that general table is fixed, the task of hearing the objections of particular ryots, of making minute enquiries about particular pieces of land, may also be left to the Civil Court, and not to the executive. The Civil Court officers have always done this work; they are best qualified by the training they have

always received, to decide these minute points and carry on these minute enquiries, and from them alone people expect full justice in these matters. Indeed, the Association fail to see any valid reason why this work should be transferred from the Civil Court officers, who have never been found wanting in ability or hard work to the executive. On the other hand, it is needless to remark that justice requires that in cases where the Government itself is a party, as in rent-suits relating to *khas mehals*, they should be tried by an independent tribunal unconnected with the Collector. The Association are unwilling to allow ryots greater privilege than zemindars, and they therefore desire that abatement suits too may be tried by Civil Courts only.

23. The Association have the same objection to the Collector's making a "Settlement jumabandi," as have been urged in the preceding paragraphs to the Collector's making an "enhanced jumabandi." It is said that the difficulties of the purchaser of a zemindari from a hostile proprietor who withholds papers and information are such that Government should interfere in his favour, and settle with his ryots for him. This seems to the Association to be an innovation in principle. Purchasers of all classes are left to their own prudence and discretion, and never expect any help from Government, however great their difficulty, for the simple reason that Government never compelled them to purchase. The Association fail to see any reason why an exception should be made on the case of purchasers of estates. As a fact, the risk of such purchasers is not such as is often represented to be; the rates previously paid by cultivators can never be long concealed from the purchaser, although the former proprietor may do his worst. Purchasers know this, and therefore a valuable zemindari never sells at a low price, although the former proprietor may be hostile and be known to be such. Surely, if the risk and difficulties of a purchaser were as great as they are sometimes represented to be, they must have affected the price at the time of the sale. It must be remembered that newcomers not unoften try to cause a general rise in the rates, and then it is their interest, when there is a combination among ryots, to obtain the sympathy and the help of the authorities by representations not always accurate. From the very nature of things, the other side of the story seldom reaches the authorities.

24. For these reasons the Association think that when disputes as to rates occur the parties should be left, as hitherto, to settle their disputes in the Civil Court, and the new purchaser of an estate should not have "the executive agency of the Government" at his disposal to settle his differences with the ryots. If the former proprietor withholds papers the Collector may be empowered to obtain them for the benefit of the new purchaser but the obstinacy of the previous landlord should be no reason why the Collector should interfere between the purchaser and his ryots. The "executive agency of Government" has vast influence, power, and prestige in this country, and land-owners are naturally anxious to enlist and employ this prestige and influence in their service. The impartiality and perfect integrity of the executive are beyond a doubt; nevertheless, the very fact of the employment of that power at the cost and in the service of zemindars will have its natural effect with ignorant ryots, and the Association have grave fears there will often be failure of justice. It were far better if Government held aloof from these disputes as it has hitherto done, leaving its Courts open to all, those Courts in which the poor and rich can plead their causes with equal confidence. The procedure in these Courts may be simplified in enhancement suits, as has been done in rent suits by the present draft Bill, and then no party will have reason to complain. Government has taught the people of India to look to these Courts as the seats of justice in all matters of civil disputes; and even in disputes between Government itself and private parties, these Courts are the final arbiters. To have the rates of rent settled by the executive on the instance

of landlords without an appeal to these Courts would be, according to the ideas of the cultivators, a denial of justice and of right. It would be unwise to create such an impression, as it would be unwise to place the executive agency of Government at the disposal of any party to a dispute. Let the procedure of the Civil Courts be simplified, but let enhancement suits be still tried by those Courts, and justice will be done to all parties,—that justice in which, under the present arrangements, the ryots, has as implicit a confidence as the zemindar. The Association would suggest the appointment of Additional Moon-siff's, if need be, which would greatly facilitate the trial of rent-suits.

25. The Association feel obliged to take exception to the provisions of Sections 6 and 16 of Mr. Reynolds' draft Bill. The law, as it stands at present, presumes that where a ryot is able to shew that he has been holding land at a fixed rent for a period of twenty years previous to the institution of the suit, he has been holding the land at such a rate since the Permanent Settlement, and his rent is accordingly not liable to enhancement. The change now proposed is, that it will be necessary for the ryot to shew, if he prefers a claim for fixity of rent, that he has been holding his land at a fixed rent not for the last twenty years, but for the last forty years and more; and it is obvious that from year to year the ryot would find it more and more difficult to substantiate a claim for fixity of rent. If the Section were to come into force from next year, it would be necessary for the ryot to shew that for 43 years previous to the institution of the suit, he had been in possession of his holding at a fixed rent; the year after, it would be necessary to shew that for 44 years the holding had been in his possession at a fixed rent. Thus after the lapse of a few years, it will not longer be possible for any ryot or tanure-holder to substantiate such a claim. It is difficult to understand why the law in this respect should be changed. It is notorious that rent receipts in this country are given in loose sheets of paper of the worst kind, which it is very difficult to preserve and which are deposited by the ryots in very insecure places, and that it would be next to impossible, in a climate like that of this country, to preserve them for more than twenty years at the outside. But admitting that these receipts might be preserved if proper care were taken of them, it is hopeless to expect that ryots without any education, and who cannot take care of their own interests, would be found able, as a rule, to produce receipts extending over a period of nearly 40 years. The Association would therefore, under the circumstances, submit that the present law should remain uninterfered with, and that the existing presumption as regards fixity of rent should remain intact.

26. The Association would, in the next place, venture to draw His Honor's attention to the provisions of Sections 36 and 77 of the Bill as drafted by Mr. Reynolds, and of the alterations that have been made in them, very much to the prejudice of the ryots. Section 36 of the Rent Bill as drafted by the Commissioners provides that a ryot may, without the permission of the zemindar, erect upon land let for purposes of agriculture a, brick-built or other dwelling-house suitable for himself and his family. Section 31 of Mr. Reynolds' Bill, which corresponds to Section 36 of the old Rent Bill, omits all reference to a brick-built house, and under the section as drafted by Mr. Reynolds, it will not be possible for a ryot to build a *pucka* house without the previous consent of the zemindar having been obtained. The mention of the brick-built house is said to be unnecessary, because "it is believed that a ryot hardly ever builds a *pucka* house without first securing a permanent lease of the land." But a zemindar may not grant him a permanent lease of the land, and it is obviously to the advantage of the ryot and of the country that he should be encouraged to cultivate habits of thrift and to erect substantial buildings. The Association would accordingly submit that the right of building *pucka* houses with or without the consent of the zemindar as proposed to be conceded to the ryot by the provisions of Section 36 of the Rent Commissioners' Bill may be embodied into law.

27. Further, the Association would also crave leave to be allowed to the modification introduced by Mr. Reynolds in Section 77 of the Bill the Rent Commissioners. Clause (b) of Section 77 says that "a ryot is entitled to the contrary notwithstanding, to cut down and appropriate trees or plants planted by himself or by any ryot from whom such holding was derived by private sale, &c. This clause has been altogether omitted from the Bill, and" says Mr. Reynolds, "will be left to be governed by local custom and content." Local custom in the Mofussil, the Association regret to say, in most cases is the power of the strongest; and the helpless ryots will often find it hard to contend against the power and influence of the zemindars. They are of opinion that Clause (b) of Section 77 of the old Bill should be embodied in the new Bill.

28. In conclusion, the Association have to express their gratitude to the Government for its earnest effort to bring to a satisfactory settlement this important question which now for sometime has greatly stirred the public mind of this province. It is scarcely possible to conceive of a question more intimately connected with the material prosperity of Bengal and the material welfare of her people. It would be a matter of sincere congratulation, if the relation between landlords and tenants could once for all be placed on a satisfactory footing. Agriculture cannot prosper, and cannot advance, there can be no real improvement in the condition of the country if the two great sections of the community—landlords and tenants—live in mutual animosity, anxious to guard their own interests, but careful also about the interests of their neighbours. The Association look upon the proposed Rent Law as an honest effort of the Government to settle the present unhappy relations between landlords and tenants, and it is on this account they feel deeply grateful to the Government. They have to express their regret for the unavoidable delay that has taken place in the completion of this letter. The delay has taken place owing partly to the endeavour of the Association to obtain from different parts of the country the opinion of those who are known to take a deep interest in the Rent question and who have studied

I have the honor to be,

Sir,

Your most obedient Servant

(Sd.) A. M. Bose,

Honorary Secretary, Indian Association

B. Question of Local Self-Government

THE INDIAN ASSOCIATION ROOMS ;
13, Mirzapore Street, Calcutta,
Dated the 13th November 1882.

From

A. M. BOSE, Esq., M.A., Barrister-at-Law,
Honorary Secretary to the Indian Association.

To

COLMAN MACAULAY, Esq., M.A., C.S.,
Secretary to the Government of Bengal.

Sir,

I am requested by the Committee of the Indian Association to submit the following observations in connection with the recent circular letter of Government addressed to all Commissioners of Divisions on the question of Local Self-Government. The Committee crave leave to be allowed to convey their heartfelt gratitude to His Honor the Lieutenant-Governor for his earnest desire to confer upon the people of this province a real share in the management of their local affairs. The circular letter says that "Mr. Rivers Thompson is anxious to give the fullest effect to the policy of the Government of India" and there is enough in the letter to show that His Honor is truly solicitous of giving a fair trial to the proposals of the Government of India.

2. The Committee, however, are of opinion that in some respects the proposals of the Government of Bengal are open to exception, and they respectfully venture to submit their views in connection therewith. The circular letter may be divided into two parts *viz.*, that referring to Municipalities and that to the creation of the proposed Local Boards. With regard to the constitution of Municipalities, the circular letter says :

"The law requires that one-third of the rate-payers shall sign a petition, praying for the introduction of the elective system into a Municipality, before Government can take any action in this direction, and it may be that ignorance of this provision on the part of the people is the cause of their silence. In view, however, of the declared policy of Government, it is not desirable that its officers should maintain a passive attitude in this matter. It is entirely the wish of the Lieutenant-Governor that the partial failures of past limited experiments should "not be accepted by District Officers as a sufficient reason for declining to extend the trial to other Municipalities. They should cause the requirements of the law to be generally understood, and they should make it known that the Lieutenant-Governor will be prepared, as a rule, to extend the elective system to all first class Municipalities, and large second class Municipalities, in which the requirements of Section 16 of the General Municipal Act are fulfilled."

3. Referring to the appointment of non-official Chairmen to preside over the deliberations of Municipalities, the circular letter says :—

"The case of each Municipality must be carefully considered with due regard to all its circumstances. On the whole Mr. Rivers Thompson would be willing to adopt the same test of the popular wishes in this matter as in that of election, and, in the absence of very special objection, to appoint a non-official Chairman or to appoint a nominee of the Commissioners themselves, in the event of one-third of the rate-payers signing petition asking him to take this action. The existing law gives the Lieutenant-Governor authority to appoint any person to be Chairman of a Municipality."

4. It will thus be seen that whether as regards the appointment of non-official Chairmen or the introduction of the elective system into the constitution of Mofussil Municipalities, the concession is made to depend upon petitions to be signed by one-third of the rate-payers. Now it is obvious that in many places it will be a matter of no small difficulty to get up memorials which will fulfil the required condition. It would seem from the provisions of Section 12 of the Bengal Municipal Act that a first-class Municipality must contain at least 15,000 inhabitants. Many first-class Municipalities contain a much larger population, and it is obvious that if they are required to fulfil this condition in many cases the condition will not be fulfilled, and the boon will not be granted at all. Moreover many of the rate-payers are women and children; many remain away from their homes for service in other parts of the country. Practically therefore it will be necessary to obtain the signatures of two-thirds of the resident male rate-payers of any locality to such a petition. Nor is this all. There are difficulties of another nature which have to be taken into account. None can call in question the high motives of the Government of Bengal and the evident earnestness of purpose by which it is actuated in giving effect to the policy of the Government of India; but the Committee cannot conceal from themselves the fact that officers of Government are not wholly free from prejudice in this respect. The circular letter itself calls upon them "not to abuse the discretion allowed to them, but without reference to preconceived ideas to give the fullest effect to the wishes of the Supreme Government." The Committee are not altogether without apprehension lest official pressure should be brought to bear to prevent the rate-payers from signing petitions of this nature. In support of their statement they will refer to the following facts which appear in the last annual report of the Suburban Rate-payers' Association :—

"In accordance with the Committee's Resolution dated the 21st November 1881, agencies were employed to obtain signatures to the Committee's memorial to Government for the elective franchise. Within two months about 11,000 signatures were obtained, but in February 1882, one of our agents while employed in the discharge of his duties, was seized by the Police at the instance of the Municipal authorities, on the allegation that his manner of work was likely to lead to a breach of the peace? On the 21st February the Committee addressed a letter to the Deputy Commissioner of Police, requesting him to furnish them with particulars connected with the matter, but Mr. Wilkins's reply dated the 13th March, did not clear up the mystery. It simply stated "that on a letter received from the Magistrate of the 24-Pergunnahs, the Deputy Commissioner ordered an enquiry to be made. This enquiry was made by Superintendent Hill himself who did not arrest. Novin Chundra (our agent). However as the facts that came to notice, as well as the statement made by Novin were peculiar, Superintendent Hill asked the sircar if he would report before the Deputy Commissioner what he had already stated. The sircar

XVII

made no objection and accordingly he accompanied the Superintendent to the Police Office, and after seeing the Deputy Commissioner he went away. The sircar handed over a book to the Superintendent, but it was returned to him again after being shewn to the Magistrate of the 24-Pergunnahs. We will not make any comment upon this proceeding. We need only observe that it has seriously impeded the progress of the Committee's work by striking a sort of terror into the hearts of the rate-payers, who now hesitate to subscribe their names to the Committee's memorial. But for this hindrance, the memorial would have by this time been laid before the Government of Bengal."

There have been recently two more instances one at Bankipur and the other at Jessore where the officials interfered and threw difficulties in the way of the people obtaining signatures to memorials praying for the introduction of the Elective System into the constitution of their Municipalities. The Committee have no desire to refer to these cases at any length. They only refer to them to point out how difficult it would be at times for the rate-payers of mofussil Municipalities to submit petitions, fulfilling the conditions laid down by Government.

5. What has happened in the suburbs and in the other towns mentioned above may take place more frequently in the remote mofussil, where there is no strong public opinion to check the proceedings of the authorities. Altogether the Committee are of opinion that it would be desirable to extend the concessions promised in the Resolution of the Government of India to all district towns and to the most advanced sub-divisions in the province, without reference to any further petition from the people. If the Government is only anxious to be assured that there is a genuine demand for these concessions, the various public meetings held almost in every district town in Bengal, within the last few months, must show how keenly the people appreciate the great boon that is proposed to be conferred upon them by the Resolution of the Government of India.

6. With reference to the question of the constitution of the Local Boards, the Resolution of Government says :—

"There will therefore be, under the new law, (from which the districts of Singbhoom, Sonthal Pergunnahs, and Chittagong Hill Tracts will be excluded) three classes of districts : (1) Those which contain no sub-division in which a Local Board can be formed : these will remain under the charge of District Committees and will correspond with the "rural districts," under the English Act, which are not fit for incorporation in a "Local Government district." (2) Those which contain some sub-divisions in which a Local Board can be formed, and some in which this is not possible : the latter class of sub-division will be placed in charge of such a Committee, corresponding to a Branch Committee under the existing Cess Act, as can be formed, the Chairman being the Sub-divisional Officer. (3) Those which contain sub-divisions, in all of which Local Boards can be formed : these will correspond with "Local Government districts" in England. It will now be for you to report after detailed enquiry, under which of the three categories each district in your jurisdiction should be placed. It will of course be the desire of Government that as many sub-divisions as possible may gradually advance sufficiently to be created Local Government districts. In order that no obstacle may be thrown in the way, the Lieutenant-Governor proposes to insert a section in the law to enable a certain

XVIII

proportion of the persons of substance in a sub-division to petition Government to have a Local Board created, and to provide for full enquiry into such petitions."

It will be for the local officers of Government to decide in every case whether in a given Sub-division there is to be a Local Board or not, whether it should be based upon the elective system and should be allowed to elect its own Chairman or not? No doubt the local officers have been directed to ascertain popular opinion in submitting their report. But the Committee are humbly of opinion that public opinion in Bengal has already expressed itself, in the most emphatic language, in reference to the constitution of Local Boards and Municipalities. There never was greater unanimity of opinion manifest in reference to a great public question among the people of this province. All over Bengal, without the exception of a single town of note, and including many subdivisational towns, numerous-attended public meetings have been held, and everywhere the same prayer has been made, viz., that the Municipal and the Local Boards should be based upon the elective system and that these bodies should be allowed to elect their own Chairmen. With such a body of opinion thus unanimously and emphatically expressed, what the Government should do, the Committee submit, is to make a choice as to what places the proposed concessions contained in Lord Ripon's scheme are to be extended, and the Committee are deliberately of opinion that the Local Boards proposed to be established in the head-quarters sub-divisions and in the most advanced sub-divisions in the provinces should all be based upon the elective system and should be allowed to elect their Chairmen.

7. The Committee would next crave leave to be allowed to offer a few remarks upon the qualifications of voters and candidates which are referred to in paragraph 10 of the circular letter of Government. The qualifications proposed are thus stated :—

"Mr. Rivers Thompson would propose, as the qualification for members, the payment of Rs. 25 road cess, or Rs. 20 license-tax, or proof of income from other sources than land, amounting to not less than Rs. 1,000 per annum. Residence within the Local Government District represented, or within five miles of its boundary, would be an essential condition of membership. For voters the qualification might be placed at Rs. 10 road cess, Rs. 10 license-tax, or Rs. 500 other income. It would also appear desirable, as in the English Law, to increase the number of votes, to be given by one individual, up to 5 or 6, according to the extent of his property. It is only right that those who own a large amount of property within the jurisdiction of a Local Board should individually have a more substantial voice in its constitution than those who are only just qualified to vote. All this could be arranged by rules under the Act."

The Committee are humbly of opinion that the qualifications have been fixed far too high both for voters and candidates. In the mofussil there are many men who have an income of less than Rs. 500, but who may be expected to take an intelligent interest in their local concerns. A clerk on a salary of Rs. 20 a month is certainly a respectable man in his village and it would not be desirable to exclude such a man from the franchise. The Committee therefore would fix the qualification of voters at an annual income salaried or otherwise of Rs. 200, and they would make a corresponding reduction in the payment

of road-cess which they would fix at Rs. 2. With reference to candidates, the Committee are distinctly of opinion that their qualifications should be the same as those of voters. The circular letter makes no mention in intellectual qualifications and apparently ignores them altogether. It is however clear that if the great experiment, upon which His Honor's Government is bent, is at all to succeed, it must be by the public spirit and the self-denying labors of the educated community of this province. It is they who have earnestly sought for this boon, and it is they who appreciate it most. It is however notorious that the educated community in Bengal and elsewhere are not by any means the most wealthy section of the people. The Committee therefore are humbly of opinion that the educated community of this province, by right of their intellectual qualifications and by no other right, ought to be allowed to vote for the return of members to the Municipal and the Local Boards and also to stand as candidates for election. The Government of Bombay have recognized this principle and the Committee have much pleasure in quoting an extract from a recent resolution of that Government in support of their statement :—

“It is not however, essential that the franchise should be strictly limited to those persons who pay direct rates or taxes, Government or Municipal. The desire of Government is that as far as possible at persons of respectability, character and means should possess a voice in the election of representative Commissioners. The franchise might therefore be not only pecuniary, but also educational and professional, and the privilege of a vote might be granted as well to graduates of any university or medical college and to vakils and pleaders; as to persons contributing directly to Government or municipal revenues.”

Bengal is the most advanced of the Indian provinces in point of education and enlightenment, and it would be a matter of regret if in this respect it allowed itself to be outstripped by a sister province. The Committee therefore are humbly of opinion, that all graduates in Arts, Law, and Engineering, and Vakils of all grades should be allowed to vote and to stand as candidates for election.

8. The Committee would, in the next place, desire to call His Honor's attention to the proposal to empower the Local Boards to levy a local rate. It will not be for the Committee of the Indian Association to object to this power being vested in the Board. To impose a tax or to levy a rate is the outward token of the exercise of sovereign authority. But the Committee, with a view to render impracticable any possible abuse of this power, would suggest the fixing by law of the purposes for which the rate is to be levied and upon which it is to be spent. For instance, Section 26 of the Calcutta Municipal Act lays down specifically the objects upon which the proceeds of the rates and taxes levied by the Municipality are to be spent, and it is not in the power of the Calcutta Corporation to spend a single farthing upon any other purpose. Similarly the law may definitely state the objects upon which the proceeds of the rates to be levied by the Local Boards are to be spent and then perhaps there need be no cause for apprehension. At the same time, however, it will be incumbent upon the Government, in justice to the great experiment that is about to be tried, not to saddle municipal and local rates with provincial expenditure. It is to be feared that it has recently been the policy of Government to transfer charges from the provincial funds and to throw them upon the local bodies. The Committee are prepared to name one or two instances which have come to their knowledge, but many more are undoubtedly known to the Government itself. If provincial charges are thrown upon the Local Boards and they are expected to meet them from the proceeds of the proposed rates, the whole scheme cannot fail rapidly to become

XX

unpopular. The Committee hope that nothing will be done to interfere with the popularity of the Local Boards ; for upon the sympathy, they receive from the people, must depend in a large measure their success.

9. The Committee regret, that the Government proposes to dispense with the District Boards altogether. These District Boards would have supplied an arena for the usefulness of the more ambitious members of the Local Boards. Here they would have met to discuss questions affecting the welfare of the whole district, and often-times it will indeed be necessary for delegates from the different Local Boards to meet to discuss questions affecting different Sub-divisions in the same district. The question of making an important road or a canal, &c., passing through several Sub-divisions can only be settled in a conference of delegates from the different Local Boards. Nor is this all. If political education be the great object which the Government has in view in inaugurating the noble experiment of Local Self-Government, it can scarcely be attained with the narrow limits of the Local Boards. A wider sphere of duties and responsibilities would be needed. Altogether it would be disastrous and indeed the success of the experiment itself would be jeopardized, if Local Boards were to be substituted in place of District Boards, and the latter altogether dispensed with. In conclusion, they would venture to accord their cordial support to the proposal of His Honor the Lieutenant-Governor to create a central directing body consisting of specially selected representative members who will generally fulfil the functions of the chief controlling authority in reference to all matters connected with the Municipal and Local Boards. The suggestion is a wise and moderate one and must receive the cordial support of all interested in the success of this great experiment. They have however learnt with real regret that the Government of India has disallowed the proposals of the Government of Bengal in this respect. It is to be hoped however that the orders of the Supreme Government are not final.

I have the honour to be

Sir,

Your most obedient servant,

A. M. BOSE,

Honorary Secretary.

C. Separation of Judicial from Executive Functions.

To

THE RIGHT HON'BLE THE MARQUIS OF RIPON, K.G., P.C., G.M.S.I.,
G.M.I.E.

Viceroy and Governor-General of India in Council.

The Humble Petition of the Committee of the Indian Association.

Most respectfully sheweth,

That your Petitioners beg to approach your Excellency with the prayer, that Your Excellency in Council will be pleased to direct the separation of judicial from executive functions in the machinery for the administration of criminal justice which prevails in the interior. It is needless for the Committee of the Indian Association to point out that there is nothing which so truly secures the contentment of the people and which so greatly adds to the happiness of their lot, as the impartial administration of wise and beneficent laws. It has been the earnest aim of the British Government, ever since its establishment, to deal even-handed justice among all classes of that great population which acknowledges its authority. A reign of peace and order, and on the whole, of general contentment, has been established in an empire, which, little more than a hundred years ago, was the scene of dissensions and misrule. But while the people of India must always gratefully acknowledge their deliverance, under British auspices, from the anarchy of the last century, it must be admitted that judged by a higher standard and by the requirements of a progressive age, a great deal yet remains to be done to place the administration of justice upon a perfectly sound and satisfactory basis. And the Committee would venture to place prominently for the consideration of the Government, as one of the reforms that are urgently needed, the separation of judicial from executive authority in the administration of Criminal Justice in the interior. Your Excellency's Petitioners would not refer to the painful cases which have been brought to light from time to time of hardship, oppression, and even failure of justice, arising from the combination of judicial and executive authority in one and the same officer. They would rather proceed upon the broad ground of principle, and they would venture to urge that it is opposed to the elementary maxims of jurisprudence and indeed of common sense, that the authority which should be permitted to set in motion the machinery of the Criminal Courts should also be in a position to control it, and thus, unite to no small extent, the functions of prosecutor and judge.

2. That your Petitioners would be to quote in this place the opinion of the highest judicial authority in the province—the High Court of Calcutta—upon this important question. In their minute upon the Criminal Procedure Code Amendment Bill, the Judges observed :—

“It must be remembered that in India the powers of police investigation, magisterial enquiry, and judicial trial are closely connected and are frequently combined in the same official. Under the Code of Criminal Procedure, as it now stands, any District or Sub-divisional Magistrate as well as any other Magistrate specially empowered in this behalf (Section 191), may take cognizance of any offence, that is,

initiate criminal proceedings in respect of any offence (1) upon a complaint made, (2) upon a police report thereof, (3) upon information received from any person other than a police officer, or (4) upon his own knowledge or suspicion, that such offence has been committed.

"It is the duty of the District or Sub-divisional Magistrate to direct investigations by the police. He receives their daily reports and very often has to instruct them on points which he may think that they have over-looked or misapprehended. It sometimes even happens that the investigation is taken out of the hands of the police and conducted by the Magistrate himself (Section 159). The result of this is that a chief local Magistrate practically becomes the prosecutor and may become the Judge, notwithstanding that he may have formed a strong opinion on the case behind the back of the accused without having heard his explanation or defence. This is the system in force in India : and although it is probably, for administrative reasons, unavoidable, it is an extremely dangerous system."

Your Petitioners venture most fully and emphatically to endorse the remark of the Hon'ble High Court that the present system is "extremely dangerous"; and they believe that in doing this they are simply giving expression to the feelings of the whole country. They would beg in this connection to place before Your Excellency in Council the following resolution which was unanimously adopted at a Conference held at the invitation of the Indian Association in Calcutta, on the 28th, 29th and 30th of December last, and which was attended by delegates from places marginally* noted :—

"That the combination of Judicial and Executive functions in the same officer is detrimental to the fair and impartial administration of justice, and steps should at once be taken with a view to vest these powers in separate and independent functionaries."

3. That your Petitioners would point out that this important question was raised in the Supreme Council by the Hon'ble Amere Ali in connection with the debate upon the Criminal Procedure Code Amendment Bill. The Hon'ble member observed that "the satisfactory administration of Criminal Justice in the Presidency towns is a sufficient proof of the wisdom of the policy by which the two functions are kept apart." The Select Committee in their Report were pleased to observe :—

"We are fully sensible of the point raised and we think it well worthy of the consideration of the Government." Your Excellency in commenting upon this part of the Report of the Select Committee remarked :— "It is unnecessary for me to say that such observation, coming from such a source, will receive the careful consideration of the Government." Your Petitioners pray most earnestly that such consideration should be given, and they are assured that the deliberations of the Government will terminate in the complete separation of judicial from executive authority in the administration of criminal justice in the interior.

*Bombay, Madras, Allahabad, Lahore, Ahmedabad, Jubbulpur, Delhi, Meerut, Hosengabad, Arrangabad, Sagore, Nagpur, Bhagulpur, Durbhanga, Bankipur, Mozufferpur, Cuttack, Tezpur, Midnapur, Dacca, Mymensingh, Burdwan, Deoghur, Jessore, Rungpur, Rajshahi, Pubna, Bogra, Farridpur, Tiparah, Chittagong, Sylhet, Jalpaiguri, Berhampur, Krishnagur, Siliguri, Burisal Khulna, Culna, Munshigunge, Ghattal, enhatti, Bullubpur, Kakinia, Sherpur, Katdaha, Dore-Krishnagur, Hosseinpur.

XXIII

4 That your Excellency's Petitioners are not insensible to the financial aspects of the question. But they venture to submit that it is possible to introduce the reform in question without adding to the burdens of the state. The Joint-Magistrate practically does most of the criminal work that would otherwise fall to the share of the District Magistrate, while he also assists the District Officer in executive work, as the District Officer himself, from time to time, takes up criminal cases and hears appeals. The Committee would submit that the Joint-Magistrate (the designation of his office being changed if necessary) might be made altogether independent of the Magistrate of the District; and being relieved of all executive authority and the duties appertaining thereto, exercise the functions of a purely Judicial Officer, assisted by other officers so far as there may be need, also exercising purely judicial functions. The Magistrate of the District might be similarly made a purely Executive Officer with suitable subordinates under him who should also discharge purely executive duties, and having the Police, Excise, Land Revenue and other Administrative Departments under his control; but with no kind of authority in respect of criminal cases, except the authority to initiate proceedings through the Police. So far at any rate as the District Head-quarters are concerned, with their existing fairly large staff of Magistrates belonging to the Covenanted and Uncovenanted Service who discharge, more or less promiscuously, both Judicial and Executive functions, all that would be necessary to carry out the important and much-needed reform, to which your Petitioner have drawn Your Excellency's attention is a division of the staff into two distinct parts independent of each other in such proportion as the circumstances of each District may from time to time require, and a proper distribution of work amongst them. As a consequence of this change, judicial functions would be better discharged and the confidence of the people better secured with regard to them while executive duties which are naturally growing in pressure and extent with the progress of the community could be better performed by officers exclusively devoting their attention to them. The portion of the existing Magistracy to be employed in the discharge of judicial duties might be made directly subordinate to the District Judge, as is the case at present with officers employed in the administration of Civil Justice. In the case of Sub-Divisions there might be some little difficulty on financial grounds, though even here, as some compensation from a merely pecuniary point of view, a saving would be effected, in introducing the reform in the pay of sub-Deputy Magistrates and Collectors, whose services would no longer be required; and it may be observed that the necessity for the reform is even greater in a Sub-Division with, as is usually the case, its single Magistrate, than in a Sudder Station with its many Magisterial Officers. And Your Petitioners respectfully submit that even if some slight addition should have to be made to the cost of the service in separating judicial from executive authority, such an addition ought to be made in furtherance of such an important object as securing increased efficiency and confidence in the administration of justice and that part of the present savings of Government under the head of administration of justice cannot be better utilized than in removing the serious evils of a system which has been justly characterized by the Calcutta High Court, as "extremely dangerous."

5. That your Petitioners would also most respectfully beg to draw the attention of Your Excellency in Council to another question in connection with the administration of criminal justice, *viz.*, the question of the extension of the system of trial by jury in cases before the Sessions Court. Your Petitioners are aware that under the provisions of the existing law, the various Local Governments may, by executive order, extend this

XXIV

system to any District they may think fit for its reception. But having regard to the importance of the subject, they would venture to point out the slow progress or rather the absence of progress in reference to the exercise of the power thus conferred on the Local Governments. For instance, in the Province of Bengal, by various notifications published in the Calcutta Gazette in the year 1862 (dated respectively the 7th January, 27th May, and 13th October) or almost immediately after the Criminal Procedure Code of 1861 had come into operation, the Local Government was pleased to institute trial by jury in Sessions cases for certain classes of offences in the Districts of 24-Purgunnas, Hooghly, Burdwan, Moorshidabad, Nuddea, Patna, and Dacca. But though more than 20 years have elapsed since then—a period, marked, under the beneficent auspices of British administration—by an amount of progress in education, general enlightenment, and public spirit which is perhaps unequalled in the history of this country, and which has received its recognition at the hands of Government in various ways, no step has been taken to widen the area enjoying the benefit of jury trial. Your Petitioners do not suggest that the system could be immediately extended to every part of the country ; but they venture to observe that, speaking for Bengal, the time has fully come when its extension to almost all its Districts could be made not only without harm, but with every hope of thereby adding to the efficiency of the administration of criminal justice. The system of trial by jury, and that in all cases before the Sessions Court, has existed in the outlying Province of Assam ever since 1862, and no complaint has been heard as to its working. And it may be pointed out that the provisions of the law relating to jury trial in India are of such a character, differing in this respect materially from the law as it obtains in England, as to prevent the possibility of any abuse resulting from it. In this country a unanimous verdict of the jury is not required by the law, the presiding judge being at liberty to accept and act upon the verdict of a majority of the jurors ; and he has further the power, should he think it necessary in the interests of justice, to decline to accept altogether the verdict of the jury, even if it should be unanimous, and refer the whole case for the decision of the High Court on the facts. Your Petitioners under all these circumstances would venture to pray that Your Excellency in Council will be pleased to take such steps as will lead to a wide extension of the system of jury trial in cases before the Sessions Court, and thus improve the machinery for the administration of criminal justice.

And your Excellency's Petitioners as in duty bound shall ever pray.

D. On the Out-still System.

From

The SECRETARY TO THE INDIAN ASSOCIATION,

To

THE CHIEF SECRETARY TO THE GOVERNMENT OF BENGAL.

Dated, Calcutta, the 15th November 1887.

Sir,

I am directed by the Committee of the Indian Association to submit the following remarks for the consideration of His Honor the Lieutenant-Governor, in connection with the introduction of the outstill system into the Hugli and the Howrah districts.

The Committee have recently made enquiries into the working of the outstill system in some of the chief places in the above districts where outstills have been opened; and they confess that they view with alarm the rapid spread of intemperance among a class of the people, whose poverty is notorious, and whose material condition, whether in India or elsewhere, must always be a large factor in determining the prosperity of a country. Hitherto the agricultural and the labouring classes in the villages of Bengal have been distinguished for a measure of sobriety, which was as honourable to them as it was a source of unqualified happiness to their families, and of advantage to the community to which they belonged. In the midst of all their poverty, the Bengal labouring man and the Bengal peasant retained their sobriety and the qualities which sobriety can never fail to ensure. The Committee have received unquestionable evidence, which goes far to prove that the poorer classes in the places where outstills have been established, are fast losing that character; and that unless the evil is checked in season, it will be productive of consequences, in which the interests of ryots, the interests of zemindars, and of the Government itself will be involved; for it need hardly be stated in this place that with the increase of drunkenness there must be a consequent increase of poverty, and the people will be less able to pay their dues both to the Zemindar and the State. If, therefore, it is clearly ascertained that the establishment of outstills in the Hugli and Howrah districts has been attended with the increase of drunkenness in the places concerned, then the Committee venture to hold that it is alike a matter of duty and of policy to discontinue the system, at least in regard to these places. The Committee submit that the evidence on this point is clear. If what has appeared in the newspapers represents the truth even partially, there can be no doubt that the establishment of outstills has led to an increase of drunkenness. From almost everywhere the same tale is heard; of persons lying dead drunk on the roads in the vicinity of the outstill; of attempted outrages on the passers-by; of quarrels and fights, and of the general increase of crime. It must, indeed, be so in the nature of things. The liquor has been cheapened by nearly three fourths. A bottle of liquor which formerly cost a rupee may now be had for four annas. The Secretary of this Association made personal enquiries at the newly-founded outstill at Haripal, and he was told that the cheapest sort of liquor was being sold at four annas per bottle. A conversation which appeared in one of the newspapers, and which took place between

a member of this Association and some paliki-bearers coming from places where outstills have recently been opened, points to the same conclusion. One of the men, in reply to a question as to what he thought of the outstills, said :—"The Sircar has done us a great service. Formerly each bottle cost us a rupee or a rupee and four annas ; now we can have a bottle of country liquor for 12 or 14 pice. Great is the Sircar. The Sircar be blessed." The enquiries of the Agents of the Association, deputed on purpose to the moffasil, establish the same fact. The liquor has been so cheapened that the outstills are regarded as a great boon by the lowest class of the people, and inasmuch as the Maharani has conferred on them such a signal mark of her favour, they think it their duty, in return, to show their appreciation of it by taking full advantage of the outstills. This was the language which some of our Agents heard repeated in several places. The Indian Association, with a view to obtain the necessary information, circulated a number

†1. Give the population and area of your village, if possible, according to the Census Report.

2. State the situation of the outstill. How far is it from the patshala or school, from the temple or bathing ghat, if any?

3. Has the establishment of the outstill in the village been attended with increase of drunkenness and immorality? State specific facts which have come to your knowledge with such evidence bearing on them as is procurable, showing the increase of poverty or immorality consequent upon the increase of drunkenness.

4. Has crime increased in the village since the establishment of the outstill? If possible, give facts in support of your views.

5. What is the class most affected by the establishment of the outstill system? Is there any foundation for the belief, so far as you are aware, that the establishment of the outstill system has been attended with the spread of drunkenness among boys?

6. State any other facts in connection with the outstill system which you think would be important in the discussion of the question.

of questions quoted on the margin,† and the replies which have been received bear unequivocal testimony to the spread of drunkenness and the demoralization of the people in many of the places where outstills have been opened. The president of the Hari-sabha, Singhur, where an outstill has been established writes :—

"Drunkenness has vastly increased since the outstill has been established here. Several cases have come to my notice, where a dozen families have been reduced to actual poverty, or contracted enormous debts during the three months and a half the outstill has been in existence. Instances have transpired in which peaceful inhabitants have been disturbed at night by terrible knocks at their doors or the noise of drunken revelry. The number of prostitutes has nearly double by the support they now obtain, and which has induced several women of doubtful character to leave home altogether. Many persons known to possess sober habits do not now feel ashamed to associate with bad characters. Every item of this can be traced to cheap liquor. Crime has decidedly increased in the village. The following few criminal cases which have come to my notice may be cited as proof there of :—

Kutra Daolayi	vs.	Rakhal and others.
Hari Muchi	vs.	Bama Muchi.
Kiro	vs.	Sagar Chakravarti.
Khetra Kamar	vs.	Chunno Sekra.

All these cases have been caused by drunkenness. Besides the above, there are cases of fighting which, though not taken up before the magistrate, are in no degree less serious and are of daily occurrence. The agricultural and menial classes have been most affected by the outstill. Some members of the upper class have also begun to give way."

The Secretary of the Jangipara-Krishnanagar Indian Association thus writes :—

“The establishment of the outstill has increased both immorality and drunkenness in the village. On the occasion of the last car-festival, a certain Mahomedan was found abusing some women and using bad words to them, which were sufficient to wound their pride and modesty. On that very occasion four Bagdi boys, all under 15, took liquor in the outstill and went on their way. As they moved on, one of them fell down, but the rest taking no notice of him walked away. The boy that fell down lay there half-dead and sense-less, until some boys taking pity on him, came to the spot and applied water to his eyes and face. That day also found a middle-class man, not apparently very well-off in his circumstances, lying with his head on a bund, and the rest of his body all under the water of the field. When examined he was found not dead, but drunk. The 15th of Asvin presented a case of drunkenness on the part of a policeman. That day a man was coming home to Krishnanagar, attended by Bagdi woman of middle age. Some policemen, intoxicated with liquor, came furiously towards them and waylaid them. Fortunately, however, the man called aloud, and immediate assistance from the village rendered a worse scene impossible. Instances like these may be multiplied, but these will suffice. It is undeniable that the establishment of the outstill has been attended with the increase of drunkenness and crime in the village. The outstill has spread drunkenness even among the boys, and has made many a peaceful home full of disquiet, and many a happy mother wretched and broken-hearted.”

Another correspondent writes from the same place :—

“At about 4 or 5 p.m., on Friday, the 4th Ashar last, a great noise was heard from Dule-para (a basti inhabited by low caste people, all cultivators of the land and work-men). All ran to see what happened; and what a horrible scene did they see. The son-in-law of Sridhar Dule got drunk from the outstill and went to the house of a neighbour Kedar Bagdi, where he tried to violate the chastity of his wife. The loud cries of the poor helpless woman brought to the spot Abinas Ghosh, Panchkari Dule, Haridas Dule and others, who saved her from her danger, and administered a good beating to the man for his conduct. According to the usual custom a mela took place here on the occasion of the car-festival this year on the 10th Ashar. About three or four thousand persons came to the mela. I came to know from a reliable source that the outstill was overcrowded, and the outstill men sold over one hundred rupees liquor on that single day.”

From Amta, in the Howrah District, where an outstill has been established, comes the following information :—

“The establishment of the outstill has increased drunkenness and immorality to some extent. Poverty, the consequence of this drunkenness, has increased among the low class people. Theft has increased, rioting occurs now and then. The low class people have been most affected by the establishment of the outstill, and drunkenness has spread to some extent even among the boys of both classes.”

From Dihivat, in the Jehanabad Sub-division of the Hugli District, a correspondent writes :—

“The price of liquor having become much less than what it was, the number of drunkards has increased. For two pice people get a stomach full of liquor, or even they go to the outstill with rice and get liquor in return.”

XXVIII

A correspondent from Haripal, in the Hugli District, writes :—

“It cannot be gainsaid that there has been a considerable increase of drunkenness and immorality since the establishment of the outstill, especially amongst the poor and low classes of the people. The day-labourers, who are for the most part coolies, are frequently found to be going on the roads, or lying by the side of them, quite intoxicated. These things are exceedingly disgusting to the sight of every well-wisher of the people.”

From Sripur, in the Hugli District, the Committee have received replies to their questions, from which they make the following extract :—

“Yes, with the establishment of the outstill, drunkenness and immorality have awfully increased in the village. Instances have occurred in which a drunkard was seen interrupting the way of a beautiful young wife, threatening to outrage her modesty. Bands of drunkards are heard singing abusive and obscene songs as they reel along the ways and by-paths that lead into the creeks and corners of the village. Many are seen in a nude state along the bathing ghats of the river, so that quite a terror has been struck into the female minds. The lower classes of the people have been mostly affected by the outstill. Yes, among boys and men of these classes, drunkenness has spread widely. Let me here cite an instance. The other day I and two friends went to Jaliapara to enjoy an excursion on the river. No boatmen liked to take us, for they knew that the Zemindar Babus would pay nothing for the trouble. Almost despairing, we turned back and saw a band of little boys playing on the road. One of my friends, taking into his head to make a jest with the boys, called them and asked if any of them could procure a boat and two rudders, and promised to reward them with a bottle of liquor. Like a spell it acted. On came five or six boys all between 8 and 15 years. We were thunderstruck to see that they were all in earnest, and could not help cursing the system that has spoiled these innocent boys. The outstill having affected the lower classes, the increase of crime, such as stealing and house-breaking, will be proportionate to their poor circumstances.”

From Chanditala, near Jonai, in the Serampur Sub-division of the Hugli District, the Committee have received the following information :—

“That on the side of the old vernacular school-building at Chanditala there has been constructed an outstill which allows six gallons of country liquor to be prepared on payment of Rs. 14 per diem—a limitation which I believe is often exceeded, when the people from Chanditala and other villages, about twenty in number, the two-thirds of whose inhabitants are daily consumers of country spirits, often go to the outstill to drink. This income of Government, though undoubtedly a promising and liberal one, has resulted in the depravity of the morals of local inhabitants. Even the poorer classes who used to earn their livelihood on daily wages and to support themselves and their families, have not a farthing left with them since the establishment of the outstill system, as they often go in crowds to the outstillery and drink hard, thus leaving nothing for their families. Even the school-boys who receive a daily tiffin allowance from their guardians often fall victims to this pernicious habit of drinking. These men have become a nuisance even to the passers-by, for

XXIX

many are found lying on the public road singing obscene songs some found quarrelling amongst one another ; some throwing stones upon the passers-by."

From Jhapordha, a very large and important village in the Howrah District, the Committee have received a communication from which they make the following extract :—

"Jhapordha is a village whose area is about $2 \times 1\frac{1}{2}$ square miles. The number of families residing therein is about 832, and the population is nearly 5,000, of which 1,500 are Brahmans. The outstill stands in Jhapordha bazaar, on the outskirts of the village, and on the side of a public road passing through it. The school and patshala are situated about 100 bighas distant from it. There is no doubt that the establishment of the outstill has led to the increase of drunkenness and immorality to a lamentable extent, as will be seen from the following facts : The day-labourers, and the cultivators waste the little money they earn by the sweat of their brow, in purchasing liquor, and thereby produce starvation in their ill fated families. Many gentlemen, who come to bazaar to purchase their necessary things, get drunk with the little money, cause annoyance to the public, and generally lie insensible on the public road, and their guardians, friends or relatives have to carry them home. Many at night commit trespass in the houses of their neighbours for bad motives. The drivers of the hackney carriage that habitually ply between Howrah and Jhapordha, getting intoxicated at the outstill, drive sometimes rashly, and sometimes detain the passengers in consequence of quarrels among themselves. Since the establishment of the outstill, assault, quarrels, affray, trespass and petty thefts are almost every days occurrence. The establishment of the outstill has affected almost all classes, and the working classes mostly. There is some foundation for the belief that drunkenness has spread among boys too. Here, about a month or two ago, one patshala boy named Rakhal Chander Chatterjee, aged about 12, got drunk one day and lay quite insensible by the roadside, when his father came and took him home. There are boys at the local school, whom the people suspect of drinking. The outstill is doing its work of ruin among the working classes in villages. They generally get drunk at the small cost of 4-annas or 5 annas per bottle as the supply from the outstill is ever on the increase ; and the cheap price at which country-liquor is sold, creates fresh inducement among those that can afford to pay."

The Committee have received a letter regarding the outstill at Jagatballavpur, in the Howrah District, from which they make the following extract :—

"The population of Jagatballavpur is about 2,525 according to the Census Report, and its area is nearly a mile. The outstill has been opened at the extremity of the village. It is at the distance of a stone's throw from the local English school, Sub-Registry office, Post office and a Mahomedan mosque, and only a few steps from the public bathing-ghat. Drunkenness has increased, and it has affected chiefly the lower classes of the people, such as shoe-makers, village chowkidars, palanquin bearers, &c. Immorality is on the increase. At present school-boys are not affected by the outstill, but as the site of the outstill is near the public road, by and by the boys will take to drink. The abolition of the outstill is indispensably necessary. Otherwise all classes of men and even boys will soon take to this vice."

Such instances might be multiplied to show the increase of drunkenness and of the increase of immorality consequent upon it, but it is not necessary to do so. The fact

XXX

is universally admitted, and is incontestably proved ; and yet the declaration of the late Government of Bengal remains that "no consideration of revenue should be permitted to outweigh the paramount duty of the Government to prevent the spread of intemperance." The establishment of outstills in the Hugli and Howrah districts, so far from preventing has, on the contrary, directly fostered the spread of intemperance. The declarations of the Government and its policy, the Committee venture respectfully to submit, are in this respect in direct conflict with one another. The Committee will not presume to point out what the duties of a Christian Government should be in a matter of this kind. But it is sufficient for them to take their stand upon the avowed declaration of the Government itself. His Honor Sir Steuart Bayley, in reply to the address of this Association in April last, was pleased to say :—"Under the outstill there is a check on the out-turn by limiting the capacity of the still, and the price of liquor is raised as high as it can be by the self-acting check of selling the still to the highest bidder." The Committee venture respectfully to point out, and they appeal to the evidence which they have already quoted, that this result has not been realized, and that the price of liquor instead of being raised has been cheapened in every place without exception. If, therefore, one of the primary objects of the outstill system has not been secured ; if by cheapening liquor, it has fostered intemperance, it becomes a question whether the grounds upon which the system rests should not be reconsidered, at least in relation to those places where it has been attended with this unexpected result.

The Committee have been encouraged in the hope that this will be done, by what His Honor was pleased to say on the occasion to which, reference has already been made :—"There may be local reasons," observed His Honor, "for its working badly, or being found inapplicable in particular tracts, and these should, of course, be examined." And again, in his great speech at Bankipore, distinguished alike for its candour and elevation of tone, His Honor observed :—"The result in these districts (Behar) has been, I am led sincerely to believe, a diminution in drunkenness. I am not sure that elsewhere mistakes may not have been made, and that further experience may not lead to further reforms." The Committee venture to submit that it has been a mistake to have introduced the outstill system into the thickly-populated districts of Hugli and Howrah, and into some of the large villages, which are little short of towns in those districts. Hugli and Howrah are two of the most thickly-populated districts in Bengal. To have opened outstills in the villages of these thickly-populated districts, the Committee submit, is distinctly opposed to the recommendations of the Commission ; for the Commission say in page 112 of the Report :—

"If the evidence of the witnesses examined at Patna, Arrah, Monghyr, Bhaugulpore, Dacca, and similar towns are compared with the figures for those towns shown in the statement of towns and rural areas, it will be seen that the strongest denunciations of the evil effects of the outstill system come from places where the revenue from it has been declining or stationery, or very slowly progressive. But even if this had not been the case, the conclusion that the present system is unsuited to towns could not, in the opinion of the Commission, be avoided. Apart from the moral and social evils which are clearly indicated by the disproportion between revenue and known consumption, there are, in the opinion of the Commission, insurmountable objections on the score of health and public convenience to allowing the manufacture of country spirits, with the nuisances inseparable from it, to be carried on in the midst of crowded Indian towns or even large villages."

It would thus seem that the Commission are opposed to the opening of outstills in large villages. The Committee hold that in many cases outstills have been opened in large villages in the Hugli and the Howrah districts, contrary to the views of the Commission. What constitutes a large village is nowhere specified by the Commission, but there is very little room for difference of opinion upon such a subject; and the facts which the Committee will presently submit for the consideration of His Honor, will leave no doubt that the recommendation of the Excise Commission has not always been given effect to, in the prohibition which they impose to the opening of outstills in large villages. Thus, for instance, the following are large villages (the area and population being given as popularly estimated) and in every one outstills have been opened :—

<u>Name of the village.</u>	<u>Area.</u>	<u>Population.</u>
Jangipara-Krishnanagar, (Hugli District)	1 mile in length and 3 in breadth	4,000
Sripur, (Hugli District)	500 acres	4,000
Singur, Do.	3 miles in circumference, comprising ten bastis	3,000
Haripal, Do.	2 × 1 square mile	5,000
Ampta, (Howrah District)	3 square miles	5,000
Jhaporda, (Howrah District)	2 × 1½ square miles	5,000
(of which 1,500 are computed to be Brahmins.)		
Jagatballavpur, (Howrah District) ..	1 mile	2,525
(according to the Census Report.)		

The Committee are humbly of opinion that in regard to these and other large villages and indeed in regard to the districts of Howrah and Hugli in general, the question of the introduction of the outstill system should be reconsidered. The system has not raised, but on the contrary has cheapened the price of liquor, and has thus fostered drunkenness, and with it there are fast spreading, among the rural population of Bengal, the terrible evils which follow in the train of drunkenness. The sober habits of the lower classes of the people are rapidly disappearing; and poor as they are, the Committee contemplate with alarm the miseries which they are likely to bring upon themselves and their families by the intemperate habits which they are so readily embracing. Yet it is needless to say that the contentment and happiness of the community, and indeed the stability of social order, depends upon the well-being of the lowest orders of the people. A starving population, frantic with drink, is a danger to the social system, and the Committee cannot conceal from themselves that the continuance of the outstill system may bring such a calamity within a measurable distance of being realized. But this is perhaps an ulterior consequence, though, even as such, statesmanship should not ignore it. What the Committee hold is, that the system is inapplicable to the Hugli and Howrah districts, which are studded with thickly-populated villages; that, contrary to the recommendation of the Excise Commission, outstills have been opened in many large villages; that liquor has in consequence been cheapened, with the result that there has been a great increase of drunkenness and crime. The Committee would earnestly appeal to His Honor the Lieutenant-

XXXII

Governor, whose solicitude for the welfare of the people has won him their gratitude, to discontinue the outstill system in the Hugli and Howrah districts, at any rate in regard to its many large villages.

In this connection the Committee would earnestly press for His Honor's consideration the desirability of introducing a system of local option in regard to the establishment of outstills in any locality. The Committee would venture respectfully to recommend that the question as to whether, in any given locality, an outstill should be opened or not, should in every case be left to the decision of the Municipality or the Local Board concerned. The principle as such has been accepted by Parliament, and might with advantage be recognised in the practical working of the Abkari policy of the Government. The local bodies may be trusted to raise no unnecessary objections, and the publicity which would necessarily be given to their views would ensure their being based upon grounds that would stand the test of public scrutiny. The adoption of a system of local option would not injure the fiscal interests of the Government, except so far as may indeed be necessary for the well-being of the people. Any fiscal system, the Committee would respectfully beg leave to submit, is singularly weak and short-sighted which, for the sake of a temporary accession of revenue, sacrifices the permanent interests of the people, and, by helping to impoverish and demoralize them, tends to weaken and impoverish the Government itself. The Committee are afraid that such a principle has partly been embodied in the policy that has led to the establishment of the outstills in the Hugli and Howrah districts.

I have &c.,

Surendranath Banerjea,

Honorary Secretary.

E. Tea-Garden Labour In Assam.

No. 343.

From

THE SECRETARY TO THE INDIAN ASSOCIATION.

To

THE SECRETARY TO THE GOVERNMENT OF INDIA.

Dated, Calcutta, the 12th April 1888.

Date of issue, the 5th May 1888

Sir,

I am directed by the Committee of the Indian Association to submit the following remarks for the consideration of His Excellency the Viceroy in Council in connection with the condition of the coolies employed in the tea-gardens in Assam and the system by which they are recruited.

The position of coolie labourers in the Assam tea-gardens, and the system by which they were to be recruited were definitely fixed by the Inland Emigration Act of 1882, which however left unrepealed the previous enactment of 1859. The Act of 1882 was passed in the face of strong opposition on the part of the native community led by the late Kristo Das Pal who was then member of the Viceregal Council. Six years have elapsed since the enactment of this law, and the time has now come when its operation may be reviewed by the light of accomplished facts, and when a sufficiently trustworthy opinion may be formed as to whether it is not desirable in the interests of the coolies and perhaps also of their employers to allow the emigration of coolies into Assam to be regulated by the law of supply and demand without the aid of legislation. The complaints with regard to the system of recruiting and the treatment which the coolies received in the tea-gardens of Assam had been numerous; and the Association in 1886 deputed its Assistant Secretary to make personal enquiries, with the result, as the Committee hope to be able to demonstrate, that the gloomiest anticipations of those who opposed the Act of 1882 have been more than fully realized. It will be convenient to discuss separately each of the subjects to which the Committee desire to call attention. In the first place, they would respectfully invite the attention of the Government to the system of recruiting which is a fruitful source of oppression. In the representation which the Committee of this Association made to the Government of Lord Ripon when the Bill which subsequently became Act 1 of 1882 was under consideration, they pointed out that the system of recruiting was liable to grave abuses arising from the ignorance of the labourers and their utter helplessness and inability to protect their interests against the arts of unprincipled recruiters who deceived them by false hopes and delusive promises to enter into contracts, the real nature of which they did not often sufficiently understand. The facts which have subsequently been brought to light and which have from time to time been published in the newspapers confirm the gravest apprehensions that ever were entertained with regard to the working of this part of the law. The Committee will quote two cases from

the many that have appeared in newspapers in this connection. In the first place, the Committee would refer to the judgment of the Deputy Magistrate of Berhampur in a case where three recruiters were punished with imprisonment for having kidnapped a young girl for service in Assam :—

“Srisundori Bagdi, complainant,

Vs.

- | | | |
|--|---|----------|
| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Gopee Mohun Mitter. 2. Kaminy Peshker. 3. Saurobhy Dossy. | } | accused. |
|--|---|----------|

DECISION.

The case for prosecution is that the accused kidnapped Nishoda a girl of 14 years from the lawful guardianship of her mother the complainant. It appears that Kaminy (accused No. 2) took Nishoda to the house of accused No. 1. Accused No. 1 sent Nishoda with accused No. 3 to Calcutta for being transported to Assam to work in a tea-garden. Nishoda states that she was told that she will be employed in Calcutta, whereas accused No. 1 and 3 allege that she agreed to go to Assam; accused No. 2 states that the other two accused proposed to take Nishoda to Calcutta and she agreed to go, notwithstanding she (accused No. 2) prevented her. Though Nishoda's consent is of no consequence as she is a minor, yet it appears that deception was practised on her. No attempt has been made on behalf of the defence to prove complainant's consent or even that of her daughter. The Civil Surgeon in his deposition says that Nishoda is only 14; there is in fact no doubt that she is under 16. The taking is also proved and admitted; so there remains to be seen whether or not Nishoda was taken from the lawful guardianship of her mother and without her consent. Though Nishoda led an immoral life yet it is proved that she was under the guardianship of her mother; it is not inconsistent with any law for a prostitute who is a minor to have a guardian. Kaminy (accused No. 2) being a neighbour of Nishoda must have known that her mother was alive and in all probability she (Kaminy) communicated this to the other accused. Moreover from the statement of accused No. 3 (Shourabhi) it appears that she knew Nishoda before and accused No. 1 is paramour of accused No. 3. Again it has been held by the Bombay High Court in the case of Umshodaleoksh that a person who takes a minor without enquiring whether she has a guardian is punishable, if as a matter of fact she had a guardian though the accused did not know that she had. It is not even urged by the defence that Nishoda was taken with the consent of her mother, and no evidence is adduced on this point by the defence. Accused No. 1 and 3 are recruiters independently of the Emigration Act and accused No. 2 acted as an agent enticing the girl; all of them are therefore equally guilty. Of the three witnesses examined on behalf of the defence, Amulya Raton Dhur is quite unworthy of belief and he contradicts himself on a point which shows that he is a perjurer—the other two witnesses do not help the defence any way. The Court find all the accused guilty under Sec. 363 I.P. Code and directs that each of them be rigorously imprisoned for 3 months. The Court further directs that Gopi Mohun Mitter is to pay a fine of 50 Rs. Shourabhi 25 Rs. and Kaminy 10 Rs. In default of payment of the fine each is to suffer an additional imprisonment for a month.”

The sentence was appealed against. The Sessions Judge confirmed the conviction, and though he held that the offence was technical, he remarked that “the motyer's guardianship could not have been more grossly violated.” Here is another case where aman

in comparatively better circumstances was duped by the arts of the recruiter. The facts are these :—

“Kessur Sing Nepali was a peon attached to the Mungpoo Post office, in the district of Darjeeling, and used to get a salary of Rs. 10 per month. But the work of post-peon being of an arduous nature, Kessur Sing in an evil moment thought of resigning his post, if he could secure a better one. Thus, with a view to improve his condition, he took leave for a few days and came down to Silliguri. There he met with the brother of one Lutchman Sing jemadar. Lutchman was described by this man as a person of considerable influence in Assam, who could easily secure for Kessur Sing a suitable appointment on a salary of Rs. 15 or 20 per month if he would but go there. The offer was too tempting for Kessur Sing, and he had no reason to suspect that he was being decoyed by this recruiter; so he forthwith went back to Mungpoo, resigned his appointment there, and having secured from the post-master a certificate of good character and efficiency, he returned to Silliguri with his wife. From Silliguri the party came down to Julpiguri, where they met Lutchman Sing, who took from them Rs. 5 as their railway fare, and brought them to Dhubri, where they were lodged in the coolie depot. Kessur Sing on solemn affirmation stated before the Deputy Commissioner of Darrang, that, soon after they were lodged in the depot, “a Babu took down our names and gave us a blanket, two coortas (shirts) and two dhotis and a tin mug. I did not wish to accept these things, but the jemadar Lutchman Sing said they are given us as present by the Sirdar and returned me the Rs. 5 I had given as my railway fare. We get no other money and this was my own. I never saw any agreement and I never signed any agreement. I can sign my own name. No saheb asked me any question. A saheb came on horse back to the depot once, but left without saying anything. It was not till I got on board the steamer when the doctor said you must drink here and not there, that I found out I was an emigrant.” There was an exciting scene on board the steamer, where Kessur Sing refused to drink water drawn from the river by the Mahomedan crew. It was difficult to persuade Kessur Sing to give up his caste and the incident of his refusal created no small commotion. A gentleman, who was a passenger on board the steamer having been drawn to the scene of the tumult, and having acquainted himself with all the particulars of the case, felt interested in it. When the steamer reached Tezpur, Kessur and his wife were landed on shore. The gentleman followed them to the coolie depot, where they were lodged for the night. Having thus ascertained the place he went to a kind-hearted pleader of the town and gave him all the particulars of the case. The pleader was good enough to take up the cause of poor Kessur Sing and his wife. He went to the Deputy Commissioner’s house and instituted a suit for their release. The Deputy Commissioner made a reference to the Deputy Commissioner of Dhubri on the subject, and on the receipt of his reply passed on the 11th of August 1886 the following order on the petition of Kessur Sing and his wife :—

“No. 1005 :—Order of the Deputy Commissioner of Darrang. Passed on the petition of Kessur Sing Nepali and Mussamud Rupkanotce. Read letter 266E, dated 7th August from the Deputy Commissioner, Dhubri. From the statements contained in this letter it is quite clear Kessur Sing and his wife entered into agreements, and his petition to the effect that he was deceived,

XXXVI

cannot be entertained. He must therefore proceed to the garden for which he was recruited.

Dated 11-8-86.

(Sd.) A. E. CAMPBELL,
Deputy Commissioner,—Darrang.”

Even if it be admitted, that Kessur Sing and his wife had entered into any agreement, it is quite clear that they did so under misrepresentation and were according to law justly entitled to have their contracts cancelled. No man in his senses would have ever resigned a comparatively lucrative and respectable post for the purpose of being employed as a coolie in a tea-garden far away from his home on half his original pay, unless some kind of fraud had been practised upon him. Yet their application was dismissed.

The next case to which the Committee would refer is still more painful. The facts are these, as related by a correspondent :—

“A batch of emigrants arrived here (Dibrugarh) a few days ago. Like those coolies whose circumstances require them to be taken, on their arrival, before the District Magistrate for orders this particular batch was likewise, on landing at Dibrugarh, taken to the Cutcherry before the Deputy Commissioner. The batch was composed of three helpless women of the gentleman class ; their names are ahladi, Shashi, and Deologni. It was only from the first two that we could gather information as to how they became victims of the slavery act of the most highly-civilized British Government ; whereas the last woman, Deologni, having become insane during the voyage, could tell us nothing about her, and the little that could be gathered concerning this woman was only from her two associates. Ahladi, alias Khanto, the daughter of a Brahmin, and Shashi a Boistab woman of the Hugli District were bathing in the Ganges at the Jughernath Ghaut in Calcutta. In course of conversation, Ahladi told Shashi that she had a relative somewhere at Burra-Bazar whom she would like to see if she knew the place where he lived. Hearing this, some one near them volunteered to show them the place, and another woman corroborated what this man said. There upon the volunteer brought a hackney, took Ahladi and Shashi therein, and drove them off. This was at about 10 a.m., after driving from place to place, at last, at about 5 p.m., they were brought into a house where they were confined for some 5 or 6 hours, and afterwards again put into a coach and brought to the Sealdah Station, where, to their utter astonishment, they were locked up in the train, which then left for Goalundo and Dhubri. Breaking their journey now by train and then by steamer, they at last arrived, as they said, at a place (Dhubri) and taken to some houses where they were thrust into the company of innumerable ragged, half-clad, dirty men, women and children. The next day they were conducted to the river ghaut and filed before a Sahib, and then put on board a steamer which after five days arrived at this place (Dibrugarh). It was on board the steamer that Ahladi and Sashi got acquainted with Deologni, who told them that she was a Rajpoot, and had two children at her home ; one day, quarrelling with some one at home, she, in the heat of anger, came out to the road, where she was accosted by a man who, pretending to console her, put her into the train and conveyed to where God knows. Deologni was in her senses, but always crying for her children, till the second day after they were shipped, when suddenly she became mute and showed signs of insanity. For eleven days they did not eat anything ;

on board the steamer the doctor used to give them sweetmeats, which, however, they did not take; when disembarking at Bibrugarh, Deologni suddenly became a tigress, and belaboured the steamer-doctor with kicks and blows. The other day merciful death put an end to all her miseries, when it had been arranged to send her down to the Tezpore Lunatic Asylum. The tears of these poor women would move the heart of anybody; they would cling round the legs of any one who would kindly ask them their circumstances. Our kind-hearted Deputy Commissioner detained them for some two days till the receipt of their contracts, but when these showed nothing to authorise his interference, they were taken to their destination, the Khobong Garden, in this district."

The case has been reported in several news-papers. And although the facts were set forth with every circumstance of detail which might lead to the correction of any error, if in any respect such correction were possible, the statement of facts has not been contradicted and the Indian public have read with horror that by reason of the system of recruiting which affords ample facilities for the practice of fraud, three women were decoyed into Assam for service in the tea-gardens—all losing their caste, and one dying the miserable death of a manac. That it should be so is not at all remarkable, considering that little or no care is bestowed by the registering officer to explain to the coolies the nature of the contract into which they may enter. The law provides that an emigrant should "understand the contract as regards the locality, period and nature of the service the rate of wages and the price at which rice is to be supplied to him, that the terms thereof are in accordance with the law, that he has not been induced to agree to enter thereunto by any coercion, undue influence, fraud, misrepresentation and that he is willing to fulfil the same." Before a labourer is registered it is therefore necessary that the registering officer should satisfy himself that he understands the drift of his contract as regards the points referred to above. But the manner in which this part of the registering officer's duty is performed precludes the possibility of the terms of the contract being clearly explained to the coolie or being understood by him. Like regiments of soldiers, the coolies are made to stand in groups before the registering officer. When they thus stand in regular lines, one after another, the registering officer begins his examination, and they are examined *en masse*. The questions that are usually put and the answers that are usually given are appended below:—

Question of the registering officer.	Answers given by the coolies. (Men and women in one voice).
1. Where do you go ?	1. We go to Assam.
2. For how many years do you go ?	2. For five years.
3. What work will you do ?	3. Men—We will hoe. Women will pick up tea-leaves.
4. What will be the rate of your wages ?	4. Men—Five rupees for the first three years and six rupees for the last two years. Women—Four rupees for the first three years and five rupees for the last two years.
5. At what price will rice be supplied to you ?	5. At three rupees a maund.

6. If the price of rice be more than three rupees who will pay the difference ? 6. The Sirkar (meaning the employer) will pay.

The enquiry then comes to a close. It is obvious, the Committee submit, that an enquiry conducted in such a fashion and under such conditions must defeat the purpose which the law has in view, viz., to provide the necessary safe-guards for the protection of the coolie. The stereotyped answers given to stereotyped questions by a crowd of ignorant people do not imply that they have really all taken part in the replies that are given, or that even those who have taken part in them have understood their drift. It would be absurd to hold that unless the necessary explanations were forthcoming they would even understand where Assam was—whether it was a Province or a town, or how far distant it was from their homes, or the sort of work which they would have to undergo in the tea-gardens. If the account which they have received regarding the manner in which the contract is explained to the coolies is correct, the Committee have little hesitation in affirming that it is an empty form which is gone through, that while the letter of the law is preserved, its spirit is completely broken, and that the coolies are not much wiser after their being brought before the registering officer than they had been before that event. Indeed the Committee of the Indian Association have been informed that in many cases the coolies before they are brought before the registering officer are regularly taught by the officers attached to the depots to return the stereotyped answers to the stereotyped questions which have been quoted above, and that those who in any way prove refractory are either kept back in the depots and their shut up as prisoners till they consent to sign the agreement, or if they are brought before the registering officer they are pushed back towards the rear, so that from behind other people they may not have an opportunity of speaking to him. The Committee are aware that these are grave allegations to make; and they have ventured to put them forward upon the evidence which they have been able to collect by enquiries made in Assam and by their agents, and they hope that the Commission of enquiry which they will have prayed for in this letter will sift this and other matters connected with coolie emigration into Assam and suggest the remedy.

Such then are the circumstances connected with the system of recruiting which is now followed. But once arrived in the garden the lot of the coolie in too many cases is such as to deserve the earnest attention of the Government. The rate of mortality is a sufficiently good measure of the conditions of life in any given situation. When mortality is high in a given situation, it is obvious that there is more than ordinary neglect of the laws of health, that it proceeds from over-work or from insufficient or bad food or from exposure to all kinds of weather, or from all these causes combined. Be the causes what they may, the fact cannot be gain-said that in most of the gardens where coolies are employed and under contracts supervised by Government officers, the rate of mortality is very high. The Committee would quote in support of their views no less an authority than Dr. Eteson, Deputy Surgeon General and Sanitary Commissioner of Assam, who in his Report of 1884 observed :—

“The condition of the emigrant labourers alters greatly for the worse immediately he is landed from the river-steamers and discharged from Government sanitary protection. In many important respects he is thenceforward left to his own resources; in others he receives only modified and often injudicious care; in all the conditions of life he is less favourably placed than before. His food is no longer dietetic and carefully cooked; his clothing and bedding (beyond a blanket) is left to himself to provide; his lodging is often inadequate against the variations of climate; his work exposes him to all weathers, and often to dangerous disease-causes; he is unprotected against drinking to excess; nay, he is in many instances, almost tempted to it; even

if he falls ill, the hospital is a name only he may receive medicine either by daily attendance at a dispensary or given to him in his hut ; but the care of suitable food and adequate restoratives and nursing are, generally speaking, unknown. It is no wonder therefore that the rate of sickness and mortality among the tea-garden labourers as a class has been always very great ; that in many gardens it is above what is counted a frightful epidemic in civilised countries ; and the subject has been an unceasing anxiety to the Government of the province."

The Committee venture to point out that these are the observations of the highest medical authority in Assam, and they refer to permanent conditions in the life of the coolie in the Assam tea-gardens, irrespective of any particular year or particular locality. Indeed since the passing of the new Emigration Act in 1882, the mortality in the tea-gardens has largely and steadily increased. The death-rate which followed a downward course from 1878 to 1881 began to rise in 1882, when it was 37·8 per thousand. In 1883 there was a further rise to 41·3 ; and in 1884 it rose to 43·2, notwithstanding the assurance given to the Government of India in 1883 by Mr. Elliott, then Chief Commissioner of Assam, "that no exertions will be wanting on the part of the Civil and Medical staff of the Assam Commission to wipe out the blot on the administration of which this terrible mortality is the cause." As regards sickness and mortality among labourers in tea-gardens in 1885, the Sanitary Commissioner observes that "nothing has occurred during the year to modify the conclusion published in the closing paragraphs of appendix A of the sanitary report for 1884." While adult life is thus exposed to unusual risks and a heavy rate of mortality prevails among adult labourers, it may readily be assumed that child life which under ordinary circumstances requires tender care and nursing would be exposed to even greater risks. That such is the case will appear from the frightful tale of infant mortality which the records of sanitary officers disclose. We thus find that in 1884 the death-rate among children in tea-gardens had risen from 39·7 to 44 per thousand. While the death-rate increased the birth-rate gradually fell ; in 1882, it was 39·7 per thousand ; in 1883 it was 34·3, and in 1884 it further decreased to 32·7 per thousand. The Chief Commissioner of Assam thus explains this excessive mortality :—

"Neglect on the part of the women who are unable to do their daily task and at the same time look after the children and who cannot afford to do no work and stay at home accounts in a great measure for the high mortality among children."

It will thus be seen that the conditions of coolie life in the Assam tea-gardens are such— their lot is so hard—that both husband and wife are obliged to go on with their daily task-work, and the wife at a time when the duties of maternity render it imperatively necessary that she should attend rather to the nursing of her new-born off-spring than to her work. The Committee can hardly conceive of any condition of labouring life where the labourer is so badly provided for than even the duties of the mother have to be neglected to meet the demands of her employers. The remarks of the Chief Commissioner which the Committee have quoted afford unexpected but painful commentary upon the condition of coolie life in the Assam tea-gardens. In this connection the Committee would quote the observations of the Civil Surgeon of Debrugurh which strikingly bear out the view suggested by the remarks of the Chief Commissioner of Assam. The Civil Surgeon of Debrugurh says ;—"The conditions of child life in a tea-garden are altogether so unfavourable that the wonder is how so many children succeed in passing childhood's stage. A coolie woman gets a variable amount of leave for her confinement. After that if the infant is not strangled at birth, she must either take it out to her work, or leave it behind with no one to look after it. In the former case, tied to its mother's back or left in the nearest drain, it is exposed to the extreme of heat and cold, to wind and rain ; in the latter the child gets half-starved and so paves its way to a death from some bowel-disorder or succeeds in cutting short its career by a fall or a roll into the open fire. So alive

are coolie women to these facts that to avoid the trouble of bringing up their children under such circumstances, abortion is frequently resorted to, and *dais* who produce it, often find their business a very profitable one." In noticing the excessive mortality among children he again observes in his report of 1886;—"Turning to an actual analysis of the figures, two facts are noticeable, and one more than another. This is the large number of death among the children. Of fifteen reported deaths among the non-Act coolies, fourteen are of children. This is directly traceable to the first of the causes of sickness I have mentioned. Women are most needed during the plucking season, which is at the same time most sickly. It is not to be wondered at, therefore, that they are not allowed the time they need to look after their children, or that the latter are neglected." The Committee would beg to call the pointed attention of the Government to the remarks of the Civil Surgeon where he says that "so alive are coolie women to these facts that to avoid the trouble of bringing up their children under such circumstances, abortion is frequently resorted to and *dais* (midwives) who procure it often make their business a profitable one." A more revolting and at the same time a more painful admission, it is difficult to conceive. So hard is the lot of infantile life in the tea-gardens and so difficult it is to bring up children in these gardens that coolie-mothers, rather than face the difficulty of rearing up children, sacrifice the tenderest of human feelings, those of the mother. No state of recognized slavery could be worse; and the Committee of the Indian Association would earnestly pray for the appointment of a Commission with a view to the reconsideration of the law which makes such things possible.

It is not indeed a matter of wonder that there should be this high rate of mortality both among children and adults, considering the hard work imposed upon the coolies in the tea-gardens. Under Section 115 of the Emigration Act, the schedule of work is framed by the planters themselves, and though subject to revision by the Inspector, the visit of that officer are few and far between, and he can scarcely be expected to exercise any effectual check over the work which the planters in their interests may thing fit to allot. The Committee understand that the work has been considerably increased since the depression of tea-industry.

Cases of hard treatment of coolies by planters, to call them by no severer name, have been frequently reported in the newspapers, and facts have come to light which warrant the assumption that these unfortunate people do not meet with the measure of protection to which they may be said to be entitled. In cases between planters and coolies, the Committee regret to have to observe, that too often the interests of justice and the interests of the weaker party are not sufficiently cared for. From the Emigration Report of 1884, the Committee find that in the sudder sub-division of Cachar, "the only serious offence committed by coolies was a riotous attack on the Manager of the Bowalia tea-garden. The assault was a very serious one, the Manager being kept a prisoner for some hours in his house; but he had to a certain extent brought the attack on himself by defiantly caning a boy in the presence of the assembled coolies. About a dozen men were sentenced to various terms of imprisonment from three days to one year, and the Manager was fined Rs. 200. The Judge upheld the sentences on the coolies, but reduced the fine on the Manager to Rs. 50." The same report mentions another case in which the Assistant Manager of Chinkuri tea-garden was besieged in his bungalow. No assault however was committed and the trying Magistrate said that "he was unable to find any reason for the disturbance, save a dispute with the Baboo of the out-garden. A number of women, as well as men, were brought up before him, but he thought in this case a warning to the women and a month's imprisonment for the some of men was quite sufficient." The Committee venture to make a few remarks upon these cases. A tea-planter who had

defiantly flogged a boy in the presence of the assembled coolies was let off with a fine of two hundred rupees, which was again considered to be a little too heavy by the court of appeal and was reduced to Rs. 50 ; while on the other hand though the coolies made an attack upon the Manager under very strong provocation, they were punished with imprisonment, and the sentence in some cases was the maximum punishment provided by the law. In the second case, though no assault was committed, a number of coolies were sentenced to a month's imprisonment for besieging the Assistant Manager in his bungalow. When this is often the character of the administration of justice in Assam in cases between planters and coolies, it is natural that a coolie would not venture to institute a suit against his master and undergo the expenses incidental to it, even though he might manage to escape from the garden. There is another case to which the Committee would refer with a view to illustrate how justice is sometimes administered in these cases. On the 10th of October 1885 one Sheikh Sukari petitioned the Magistrate of Sibsagar for a discharge certificate under section 141 of Act 1 for the release of his son Sheikh Khodadin from the garden of one Mr. Hosack of Diron tea-estate. The Assistant Commissioner, Lieut. H. R. Browne, who was the trying Magistrate wrote a letter to Mr. Hosack giving him the substance of the application and calling upon him to make his defence. But Mr. Hosack without sending him a reply wrote to the Deputy Commissioner as follows :—

“I beg to enclose a letter received from the Extra Assistant Commissioner Sibsagar. I am not aware that he is acting within his powers, therefore put the matter before you ; at the same time I beg to bring to your notice that a coolie named his letter is not an Act I coolie but a domestic servant. The man denies having put in the application for release ; he was in the factory on the date the application is supposed to have been made. Should feel obliged by your looking into the case as it seems to me that it has been done simply to give me annoyance.”

The letter affords an illustration of the relations which too often exist between planters and the administrators of the law in Assam and which, it need hardly be said, is inconsistent with that firm and impartial administration of justice which alone can afford the necessary protection to the helpless coolies. On receipt of this letter, the application of the father was summarily dismissed on the 28th October without even calling for evidence. The worst part of the affair has yet to be told. It appears that after the dismissal of the case the father somehow communicated to the son the purport of Mr. Hosack's letter, and the latter having been managed to escape from the garden applied on the 2nd November to Lt. Browne to grant him a discharge certificate. The same day the following order was passed :—

“Mr. Hosack has already written to say that complainant has no contract; complainant is told that he can leave the employ if he wishes to.

(Sd.) H. R. BROWNE,
Assistant Commissioner.”

But on the next day, the 3rd of November, one Pator Gogoi on behalf of Mr. Hosack made an application under Section 175 to Lt. Browne for the arrest of Sheikh Khodadin on a charge of desertion. A warrant was immediately issued, and the man having been arrested was put on his trial the same day and was summarily convicted to undergo a sentence of seven days' rigorous imprisonment ; It appears from the judgment that if Mr. Hosack had not asked for the accused “to be lightly treated,” he would have been more severely punished. What could be stranger or more humiliating than this solemn farce enacted in the name of justice. The judge forgot that this sentence passed on the accused completely upset his order of the previous day. It was he who had told the accused “that he can leave the employ if he wishes to,” and the next day he upsets the

order on the strength of a document whose existence Mr. Hosack himself was not aware of |

In another case a coolie Bhola Kachari by name was convicted by Mr. Arbuthnot, the Assistant Commissioner of Jorhat, although the contract was not drawn up in conformity with the requirements of Section 9, Clause C of Act I of 1882 and its schedule and of Section 111 as to registration. The High Court in setting aside the conviction observed :— “It appears to the Judges that owing to Mr. Arbuthnot’s mistake the accused in this case has undergone several months’ imprisonment for which there were no legal grounds.” The learned Judges, Justices Conningham and Chandra Madhub Ghose, called for an explanation from Mr. Arbuthnot.

It is necessary to multiply these cases ; but the cane, it is to be feared, is too frequently employed in many of the tea-gardens in Assam. A high officer of the Assam Government while on an incognito visit to a garden saw that the manager having tied the hands of a coolie to a tree was caning him most unmercifully. In 1884 Mr. Francis Manager of the Dygoroon tea-garden, was tried on a charge of grievous hurt, for having struck a coolie woman with a cane which caused her death. Dr. Conceicao, the Civil Surgeon of Golaghat, who made a post-mortem examination said that “death was the result of congestion of the kidneys, which he was of opinion had been set up by violence applied to that part of the body where the kidneys are situated.” But Mr. Francis called a witness to show that he “did not strike the woman, but only lifted his cane and threatened to strike her.” Mr. Francis was eventually acquitted.

The next mode of punishment which is sometimes resorted to is the lock-up. The Committee have been given to understand that it is the fermenting-house which is generally used for the purpose. In 1884 two officers of the Dum-Duma tea-estate in the District of Dibrugurh named Babus Kedar Nath Ghosh and Sasadhar Barua were charged with the offence of keeping a man under illegal restraint, and in this case the existence of dungeon in many tea-gardens was proved by the witnesses for the defence. The Assistant Commissioner Mr. Greenshield who tried the case expressed in his judgment great surprise and strong disapproval of such conduct on part of the planters.

In December 1886, the following telegram appeared in the newspapers which goes to support the view which the Committee have here put forward :—

“Having been systematically maltreated, some 110 coolies, men and women came in a body on the 9th instant from the Rajabarie tea-garden, and made complaint before the Assistant Commissioner, Mr. McLeod, who immediately sent out Lieutenant Gardon to the garden, and asked him to report about the coolies’ complaints. Lieutenant Gardon has found some of the serious charges to be correct, namely, the existence of a dungeon, where absconders and other recalcitrant coolies are confined and tied down with ropes. The Manager, Mr. Eyre, admitted having the dungeon, and having cut a coolie with a cane.”

Helpless as the coolies are, miserable as is their lot, the Committee regret to find that some of the provisions of the law which have been framed for their special protection are systematically violated. Section 111

III. Notwithstanding any thing here- which is quoted on the margin is a very
before contained, any employer may enter important provision of the law ; but as

into a labour-contract with any native of India within a labour-district. When any employer has executed any such contract with any such native within a labour district, he shall, within one month from the date of the execution of such contract, forward it in duplicate to the Inspector within the local limits of whose jurisdiction such employer resides. On receipt of the contract so forwarded, the Inspector shall enter an abstract thereof in a register to be kept by him for the purpose, and shall then give one copy of the contract to the labourer and the other copy to his employer.

When, for the first time after the registration of any such contract with a labourer, the Inspector visits the estate on which such labourer is employed, the employer shall cause such labourer to appear before the Inspector, and such labourer may thereupon apply to the Inspector to cancel the contract; and, if he shows cause sufficient in the opinion of the Inspector to justify the cancellation, the Inspector may cancel the contract, and shall thereupon endorse on the labourer's copy of the contract, or, if such copy be not forthcoming, shall give the labourer, a certificate of such cancellation.

limitations that the court or officer who has the legal power to refuse the application may admit it for good cause shewn. So though you are legally justified in refusing registration you are not legally bound to adopt this course. You must use your discretion. If a year has elapsed I should certainly refuse. If under two months has elapsed and any reasonable explanation was offered, I should register."

It will thus be seen that a provision of the law which by ensuring prompt registration of contracts affords some sort of protection to the coolie is rendered nugatory by the manner of its application which again is contrary to law. Then with regard to that part of Section III which requires that contracts should be verified the Chief Commissioner observes in the Emigration Report for 1883, that "the number verified is extremely disproportionate to the number registered, and it seems that only in Cachar and Sibsagar have any strenuous efforts been made to perform this important duty." The duty of verification is not only not regularly but also not properly performed. The Chief Commissioner in the report for the year 1883 admits that "It is in itself a much more satisfactory thing that the terms of the engagement should be explained to the coolie before he signs it by an officer of Government. But this is not always possible."

a rule every safe-guard which it provides is set at nought. In the first place a duplicate copy of the contract is to be supplied to the Inspector within a month after its execution, and the Inspector is to furnish a copy to the labourer, and then when he comes to the garden in the course of his periodical inspections, he is to verify the contract. In all these respects the provisions of the law, generally speaking, are not given effect to, and in some respects it is remarkable that this is done with the full concurrence of the authorities in Assam. The Committee would call attention to a letter issued by the Commissioner of the Assam Valley District No. G, dated the 29th August 1884 to the address of the Deputy Commissioner of Sibsagar, by which the Deputy Commissioner is allowed discretion to permit the registration of contracts though they should be presented after the time specified by the law. Here is the letter:—

"On Section 111 of Act I, 1882 the penalty is that if not registered the contract is not a contract under the Act, it is a mere civil contract. And you are legally justified in refusing registration when a month has passed. But it is a general rule applying to all such

XLIV

Out of 25,457 local contracts executed in 1884, only 9,492 were verified during the year, and out of the number, 117 contracts were cancelled "as a punishment on managers for transgressing the rules." That the provisions of Section 111 of the Act operate to the injury of the coolie is a fact which is admitted by high official authority. Thus in 1883, Mr. Porteus, the sub-divisional officer of Karimgunge, wrote :—

"There is not the smallest security that the coolie, when he is brought up to go through the form of touching the pen, in company with some dozens of others at the garden, understands in the least what he is signing to. There is no provision that his agreement should be first explained to him, nor is it very likely that any objection he might make would be listened to. He is expected to sign with the rest. As shown above it is not uncommon for coolies to try to repudiate their agreements afterwards and it is very difficult to decide whether their objections afford sufficient ground for cancellation."

Mr. Stevens, the Deputy Commissioner of Shylhet, endorsed these remarks. He said :—

"In the above remarks of the Sub-divisional officer of Karimgunge on the liability to abuse of the Section III procedure I fully concur. In this matter the law appears entirely one-sided. Every thing is in favour of the employer. A labour contract, purporting to have been signed by the coolie, but either not executed by him or if executed, executed under a misapprehension is sent in for registration under Section III and is registered. It may not be verified for a year afterwards; and suppose it is then cancelled, what compensation does the unfortunate coolie receive? He has been, one may say, in wrongful confinement for a year, forced to labour for a year, forced to labour for a master who had no claim to his services and liable, if he tried to escape from his state of quasy slavery to be pursued, arrested, and sent up for trial like a common criminal, or worse, as these even cannot in all cases be arrested without a warrant."

Thus a high officer of Government, in the position of a Deputy Commissioner charge of the administration of a district, describes the position of the coolie as one of "quasi-slavery." The Chief Commissioner however does not take this view. He says :—

"These remarks are couched in stronger terms than the Chief Commissioner can endorse. It may be admitted that if the executive were weak and the tea-planters given to oppression, Section 111 would afford a dangerous facility for high-handed conduct, but neither of these conditions exist. A garden is always liable to inspection and opportunities for escape constantly offer themselves."

But the case of Gibbons throws a flood of light upon the practical working of Section 111, and how agreements which are alleged to be executed by the coolies and are produced, as such before the registering office are sometimes not executed at all. This was what Gibbons himself said in the course of the enquiry into his case :—

"Several coolies' agreements were written out on the first December last. They were written by Gopal Chandra. They were signed by me. They were not signed by the coolies on the first December. I did not bring up the coolies to my bungalow on the first December. They never executed the agreements now placed before me. I however sent them in to be registered." In reply to an exclamation of surprise

XLV

on the part of Mr. Lyon, the Inspecting officer, at this statement, Gibbons said that there was nothing extraordinary in this—that it was the custom and was always done. The High Court in reviewing this case observed :—

“It is difficult to conceive a grosser case. The helplessness and ignorance of the labourers and the superior intelligence and position of the accused aggravates the offence which but for the intervention of the Inspector would have entailed grievous injustice on the labourers.”

But imperfectly worked as are the provisions of Act I of 1882, Act XIII of 1859 which has not been repealed is still largely used by planters in executing local contracts. Referring to this Act, the Chief Commissioner in his Report considers to it be open to the gravest objection. “A contract,” says the Chief Commissioner, “may be enforced under this act, though it is not in writing, though it is not stamped, though it is not registered, though it has not been presented for verification before any official, though there is no proof (other than what evidence is produced on the trial) that the labourer understood the terms of the engagement, though the terms may be manifestly unfair. A labourer cannot free himself by redemption, nor can he plead any misconduct of his employer as an excuse for non-performance. In short, not one of the safe-guards which the Legislature in Act I of 1882 thought necessary for the protection of the tea-coolie are provided by Act XIII of 1859.” The Deputy Commissioner of Dibrughur says :—“So long as Act XIII of 1859 remains in force in the district I apprehend that the number of contracts under Section 111 will not increase.” Mr. Porteus, the sub-divisional officer of Karimganj says that any attempt to repeal “this obnoxious Act,” would “meet with very strong opposition.” The Deputy Commissioner of Sibsagar in his report for 1884 observes that several managers, when verification of local contracts was insisted on, “declared that they would resort to the ‘simple plan,’ of putting their coolies under the ‘good old rule’ of Act XIII. * * * Act XIII is, I venture to think, not an enactment which should rule contracts between tea-planters and their labourers. Where it applied to cases of job work, and the employer is allowed the opinion of deciding whether he shall have his job completed or his more or less equivalent advance returned him, the procedure of the Act is fair enough ; but here the coolie is never allowed to refund the so-called advance, the whole pound of flesh is rigorously exacted, and the coolie has to go back to the garden, even if he offers as I have known him offer to pay a large sum than the advance claimed, and the job claimed is an apprenticeship of a year’s duration in an unhealthy climate for which the so-called advance is a very imperfect consideration.”

The Committee of the Indian Association have now submitted their representation ; and they venture to hope that they have made it clear that the system by which coolie are recruited, their treatment in the tea-gardens, the imperfect nature of the protection afforded them by the Act are such as should engage the earnest attention of the Government. The coolies themselves are voiceless ; they have no organization to represent them. All the more, therefore, the Committee submit, is the duty incumbent upon the Government to look to their grievances and to redress them. The Committee would earnestly appeal to the Government for the appointment of an independent Commission to enquire into the facts which have been here urged and generally into the condition of the coolies in the Assam tea gardens. A thorough and exhaustive enquiry is all that the Committee seek for as the basis for any future action which the Government may think fit to take, and the Committee earnestly hope that the Government will have no difficulty in com-

XLVI

plying with this request. The Committee have learnt with satisfaction that His Honor the Lieutenant-Governor of Bengal has appointed a special officer to enquire into certain complaints of kidnapping and other criminal offences made by persons engaged in free recruiting outside the provisions of Act I of 1882. No enquiry, however, into the working of Act I of 1882 and Act XIII of 1159 has yet been ordered, and the necessity for it clearly exists in view of the evidence which has been set forth in this letter and indeed of the action of Government of Bengal itself.

I have &c.,

SURENDRANATH BANERJEA,

Honorary Secretary.

F. The Branch and affiliated Associations of the Indian Association.

1. Lahore Indian Association.
2. Ferozepore Branch Indian Association.
3. Meerut Association.
4. Allahabad Indian Association.
5. Durbhunga Branch Indian Association.
6. Burdwan Indian Association.
7. Kalna Indian Association, Kalna, Burdwan.
8. Purbasthali Hitakari Sava, Purbasthali, Burdwan.
9. Telenda Branch Indian Association, Telenda, Mejia, P.O. Bankura.
10. Bolpur Branch Indian Association, Bolpur, Birbhum.
11. Midnapore Indian Association.
12. Ghatal Indian Association, Ghatal, Midnapore.
13. Tamoluk Indian Association, Tamoluk, Midnapore.
14. Contai Association, Contai, Midnapore.
15. Chandrakona Indian Association, Chandrakona, Midnapore.
16. Mahishadal Indian Association, Mahishadal, Midnapore.
17. Dorkrishnanagar Indian Association, Dorkrishnanagar, Sutahata, P.O. Midnapore.
18. Ramjibanpur Branch Indian Association, Ramjibanpur, Midnapore.
19. Mugbaria Branch Indian Association, Mugbaria, Haria P.O. Midnapore.
20. Gaonkhali Branch Indian Association, Gaonkhali, Midnapore.
21. Natsal Village Union, Natsal, Gaonkhali, P.O. Midnapore.
22. Betkunda Village Union, Betkunda, Gaonkhali P.O., Midnapore.
23. Madhyahingli Village Union, Madhyahingli Mahishadal P.O. Midnapore.
24. Lakshya Association, Lakshya, Mahishadal P.O. Midnapore.
25. Kumar-arah, Village Union, Vumar-arah, Mahishadal P.O. Midnapore.
26. Marisdah Village Union, Marisdah, Contai P.O. Midnapore.
27. Kauaidighi Village Union, Kanadighi, Contai P.O. Midnapore.
28. Panchgachiya Village Union, Panchgachiya, Contai P.O. Midnapore.
29. Puruliya Village Union, Puruliya, Contai P.O. Midnapore.
30. Sardah Village Union, Sardah, Contai P.O. Midnapore.
31. Nijmajna Village Union, Nijmajna, Contai P.O. Midnapore.
32. Dahuki Village Union, Dahuki, Contai P.O. Midnapore.
33. Banamalichata Village Union, Banamalichata, Contai P.O. Midnapore.
34. Nandapur Association, Nandapur, Midnapore.
35. Chandibheti Village Union, Chadibheti, Midnapore.
36. Angrai Village Union, Angrai, Chandibheti P.O. Midnapore.

XLVIII

37. Beta Association, Beta, Basudebpur P.O. Midnapore.
38. Gar Basudebpur Association Basudebpur, Midnapore.
39. Sujamutha Association, Sujamutha, Kajlagarh P.O. Midnapore.
40. Chinsurah Well-washing Club, Chinsurah, Hugli.
41. Singur Indian Association, Singur, Hugli.
42. Harah Branch Indian Association, Harah, Bandipur P.O. Hugli.
43. Panishehala Branch Indian Association, Panishehala, Haripal P.O. Hugli.
44. Nayanagar Branch Indian Association, Nayanagar, Nandipur P.O. Hugli.
45. Mandra Branch Indian Association, Mandra, Makalpur P.O. Hugli.
46. Jangipara-Krishnanagar Branch Indian Association, Krishnanagar, Hugli.
47. Uluberia Indian Association, Uluberia, Howrah.
48. Guzurpur Branch Indian Association, Guzurpur, Syampur P.O. Howrah.
49. Jhikra Branch Indian Association, Jhikra, Howrah.
50. Rashpur Branch Indian Association, Rashpur, Howrah.
51. Taki-Branch Indian Association, Taki 24-Parganas.
52. Baranagore Local Committee of the Indian Association, Baranagore, 24-Parganas.
53. Rasapagala, Improvement Association, Rasapagala, Tollygunge, P.O. 24-Parganas.
54. Rahara Branch Indian Association, Rahara, Sodpur, P.O., 24-Parganas.
55. Teghariya Village Union, Teghariya, Sodpur P.O., 24-Parganas.
56. Badu Mahesvarpur Association, Badu, 24-Parganas.
57. Krishnagar Indian Association.
58. Ranaghat Branch Indian Association, Ranaghat, Nuddea.
59. Kushtiya Branch Indian Association, Kushtiya, Nuddea.
60. Meherpur Indian Association, Meherpur, Nuddea.
61. Katdah Association, Katdah, Nuddea.
62. Bhajanghata Indian Association, Bhajanghata, Nuddea.
63. Kumarkhali Association, Kumarkhali, Nuddea.
64. Jayrampur Branch Indian Association, Jayrampur, Nuddea.
65. Jessore Indian Association.
66. Magura Branch Indian Association, Magura, Jessore.
67. Narail Branch Indian Association, Narail, Jessore.
68. Mahespur Branch Indian Association, Mahespur, Jessore.
69. Khulna People's Association.
70. Bagerhat People's Association, Bagerhat, Khulna.
71. Senhati Association, Senhati, Khulna.
72. Maheswarpara Hitabadhini Sabha Maheswarpara, Daulatpur P.O. Khulna.
73. Jungypore Branch Indian Association, Jungypore, Murshidabad.
74. Nator People's Association, Nator, Rajshahi.
75. Nilfamari Sammilani Sava, Nilfamari, Rungpore.
76. Bagura Association.
77. Betkhar Branch Indian Association, Betkhari, Chandaikona P.O. Bogura.
78. Pabna Indian Association.
79. Sirajgunj Branch Indian Association, Sirajgunj, Pabna.
80. Baghati Association, Baghati, Pabna.
81. Berah-Banagram Indian Association, Berah, Pabna.

82. Jatrapur Branch Indian Association, Jatrapur, Khetupara, P.O. Pabna.
83. Bag Branch Indian Association, Bag. Sinduri P.O. Pabna.
84. Shahazadpur Branch Indian Association, Shahazadpur, Pabna.
85. Najirpur Branch Indian Association, Najirpur ? Himaitpur P.O. Pabna.
86. Rajapur Branch Indian Association, Rajapur, Pabna.
87. Pakoriya Branch Indian Association, Pakoriya, Pabna.
88. Dhobakola Branch Indian Association, Dhobakola, Mathura P.O. Pabna.
89. Jamirta Branch Indian Association, Jamirta, Pabna.
90. Baghulpur Village Union, Baghulpur, Dulai P.O. Pabna.
91. Jorpukhariya Village Union, Jorpukhariya, Dulai P.O. Pabna.
92. Natibpur Village Union, Natibpur, Ratanganja, P.O. Pabna.
93. Rudragati Village Union, Rudragati, Mohanpur P.O. Pabna.
94. Pangasi Village Union, Pangasi, Mohanpur P.O. Pabna.
95. Maisakola Village Union, Maisakola, Mohanpur P.O. Pabna.
96. Shakaripara Village Union, Shakaripara, Pabna.
97. Sripur Village Union, Sripur, Shakaripara P.O. Pabna.
98. Dobila Village Union, Dobila Tantiband P.O. Pabna.
99. Lakshikel Village Union, Lakshikel, Tantiband P.O. Pabna.
100. Purva-Deula Village Union, Purva-Deula, Ullapara P.O. Pabna.
101. Boyaliya Village Union, Boyaliya, Hatikamrul P.O. Pabna.
102. Patdhari Village Union, Patdhari Hatikamrul P.O. Pabna.
103. Chhatiyantali Village Union, Chhatiyantali, Saydabad P.O. Pabna.
104. Ullapara Village Union, Ullapara, Pabna.
105. Boyailmari Village Union, Boyailmari Atakola P.O. Pabna.
106. Naldha Village Union, Naldha, Malanchi P.O. Pabna.
107. Madaripur Branch Indian Association, Madaripur, Faridpur.
108. Goalundo Branch Indian Association, Goalundo, Faridpur.
109. Kanaipur Indian Association, Kanaipur, Faridpur.
110. Rajbari Samaj-Hitaisini Sava, Rajbari, Faridpur.
111. Pangsa-Madhabpur Branch Indian Association, Pangsa, Faridpur.
112. Bhandariya Village Union, Bhandariya, Kholabaria P.O. Faridpur.
113. Dayalbanda Village Union, Dayalbanda, Kholabaria P.O. Faridpur.
114. Sardanga Village Union, Sardanga, Kholabaria P.O. Faridpur.
115. Kritipasa People's Association, Kirtipasa, Bakarganj.
116. Maimensingh Association.
117. Tangail Indian Association, Tangail, Maimensingh.
118. Hussainpur Indian Association, Hussainpur, Maimensingh.
119. Sylhet National Assembly.
120. South-Sylhet National Association, Moulavibazar, Sylhet.
121. Nowgong, Ryots' Association, Nowgong, Assam.

G. Partition of Bengal

The following is the full text of the resolution of the Home Department of the Government of India on the Bengal Partition question :—

“In December, 1903, the Government of India in letters to several of the Local Governments, which were published in the Official Gazette, announced their desire to consider the redistribution of certain of the territories of the Eastern and North-Eastern Provinces of India, notably of Bengal and Assam. Their attention had been called to the matter by the constantly accumulating evidence of the excessive and intolerable burden imposed upon the Bengal Government by a charge too great for any one administration, and of the consequent deterioration in the standards of Government, notably in portions of Eastern Bengal. Simultaneously the importance of rendering Assam a self-contained and independent administration with a service of its own, and of providing for its future commercial and industrial expansion, was impressed upon them. These considerations suggested a careful investigation of the circumstances, and surroundings of both provinces, and resulted in the formulation of certain proposals for the readjustment of their territorial boundaries. The criticism which was invited, and which was freely and usefully bestowed upon these proposals, justified substantial alterations in the original plan, and led in the end to the abandonment of that portion of the scheme which contemplated the transfer of certain territories from Madras to Bengal, and of the greater part of Chutia Nagpur from Bengal to the Central Provinces. The Government of India were convinced by the arguments placed before them by the Local Governments concerned that in neither case would the transfer promote the end which they had in view. Reasons of administrative expediency, arising out of the peculiar linguistic and racial conditions and the geographical conformation of Ganjam and the Agency tracts of Vizagapatam, were opposed to the transfer of those areas from the Government of Madras. Commercial considerations were mainly responsible for the continued retention of the British districts of Chutia Nagpur under the Government of Bengal.”

2. Two changes only have been decided upon in the territories bordering upon Bengal and the Central Provinces. It was proposed by the Lieutenant-Governor and accepted by the Chief Commissioner, that the five Native States of Jashpur, Sarguja, Udaipur, Korea, and Chang Bhakhar, at present attached to the Division of Chutia Nagpur, and forming a solid block of territory with a Hindi-speaking population, on the west of the districts of Palāmau and Ranchi, should be handed over from Bengal to the Central Provinces, and this proposal has been accepted by the Governor-General in Council. Owing to their physical remoteness these States have not hitherto received as much attention as might be desired ; and it is hoped that their administration will be improved, while the status of the Chiefs will be raised by their being placed under the Political Agent of Raipur, who is already invested with similar a political charge in the Central Provinces.

3. Both the Local Governments similarly recommended, and the Government of India have agreed, that the Sambalpur District (with the exception of the Chandarpur-Padampur estates and the Phulijar zamindari) and the five Uriya-speaking States of Patna, Kalahandi or Karond, Sonpur, Bamra, and Rairakhol should be transferred from the Central Provinces to the Orrissa Division of Bengal. Linguistic considerations are the main reason for this transfer, which it is confidently believed will be beneficial to the interests of the people. It is in contemplation to protect the interests of the Chiefs affected by appointing a European Political Officer to take charge of the entire group of Uriya speaking States.

4. These proposals are, however, of minor importance compared with the principal changes to which the Secretary of State has given his sanction, and which involve, the creation of a new administration of the first class out of certain divisions of Bengal, together with the territories at present administered by the Chief Commissioner of Assam. In their original form these suggestions arose from a proposal which had already on a previous occasion been under the consideration of the Government of India and had then only been postponed by them, namely, to incorporate the Chittagong Division with Assam. It was proposed in the letters of December, 1903, to include the districts of Dacca and Mymensingh also, for reasons which were then stated, and which it is not necessary now to repeat. The discussion which was elicited by these suggestions indicated to the Government of India that, large as were their proposals, they were not large enough if satisfaction were to be given to the feelings of those who were alarmed at the possible deprivation of privileges which they had for long enjoyed and to which they attached a not unnatural value. These feelings attracted the earnest attention of the Government of India; and in February 1904, his Excellency the Viceroy, in a series of speeches delivered in reply to public addresses at Chittagong, Dacca, and Mymensingh, foreshadowed the willingness of Government to consider a wider scheme involving the creation of a Lieutenant-Governorship with a Legislative Council and an independent revenue authority and the transfer of so much territory as would be required to justify the institution of so highly organised and fully equipped an administration.

5. From that date the efforts of Government were principally directed to a discussion of the areas that could most advantageously be assigned to the new province, and to an examination of the safeguards that were required to secure the legitimate interests of their inhabitants. A scheme was submitted by the Lieutenant-Governor of Bengal for the amalgamation with Assam of the Chittagong and Dacca Divisions, and the districts of Pabna, Bogra, and Rangpur. This proposal did not seem to the Government of India to be proportionate to the scope of the important administration which it was now contemplated to create, nor would it have given to Bengal, whose population would still have exceeded 59 millions, the permanent relief that ought to ensue from an adequate reduction of its existing area and responsibilities. Accordingly it was proposed to increase the transferred area by the districts of Rajshahi, Dinajpur, Jalpaiguri, Malda, and the State of Cooch Behar. These additions were thought by the Government of India to be justified on the grounds that they would constitute a new province with a population of over 31 millions, while leaving Bengal with a little more than 54 millions; that they would provide a clearly defined western boundary corresponding with well recognised charac-

teristics, both geographical, ethnological, social, and linguistic; that they would concentrate in a single province the typical Muhammadan population of Bengal, for whom Dacca would furnish a natural capital; that the whole of the tea industry (with the exception of the Darjeeling gardens), and the greater part of the jute tracts would thus be brought under a single Government, and that long established divisional areas would thereby remain undisturbed.

6. The enlarged scheme was cordially accepted by the Governments both of Bengal and Assam. The Lieutenant-Governor reported that he had discussed the proposal with the members of the Board of Revenue and with his most senior officers, and had found that with scarcely an exception there was complete unanimity in accepting it. The Chief Commissioner of Assam attached great value to the future association under a single Government of the tea-growing areas supplied by free labour with those worked by indentured labour, and thought that the gradual substitution of natural for artificial methods of recruitment would be accelerated. He also proposed the creation of a new Commissionership out of the Surma Valley Districts and Manipur, at present under his own direct control. This suggestion was accepted by the Government of India, and will raise the number of Commissionerships in the new province to five.

7. The effect of the proposals thus agreed upon, and now about to be introduced, will be as follows:—A new province will be created, with the status of a Lieutenant-Governorship, consisting of the Chittagong, Dacca, and Rajshahi Divisions of Bengal, the district of Malda, the State of Hill Tipperah, and the present Chief Commissionership of Assam. Darjeeling will remain with Bengal. In order to maintain associations which are highly valued in both areas, the province will be entitled Eastern Bengal and Assam. Its capital will be at Dacca with subsidiary headquarters at Chittagong. It will comprise an area of 106,540 square miles and a population of 31 millions, of whom 18 millions are Muhammadans and 12 millions Hindus. It will possess a Legislative Council, and a Board of Revenue of two Members, and the jurisdiction of the High Court of Calcutta is left undisturbed. The existing province of Bengal, diminished by the surrender of these large territories on the east and of the five Hindi States of Chutia Nagpur, but increased by the acquisition of Sambalpur and the five Uriya States before mentioned, will consist of 141,580 square miles with a population of 54 millions, of whom 42 millions are Hindus and 9 millions Muhammadans. In short the territories now composing Bengal and Assam will be divided into two compact, and self-contained provinces, by far the largest constituents of each of which will be homogeneous in character, and which will possess clearly defined boundaries and be equipped with the complete resources of an advanced administration.

8. The Governor General in Council is fully aware of the opposition which these proposals have encountered, and has no desire to undervalue the sentiments upon which it has been based. Ties of mutual association grow up so quickly and become so closely interlaced, that territorial redistribution can rarely be accomplished except at the cost of a disruption which is often painful and generally unpopular. On the other hand, when old connections are severed new ones almost immediately take their place, growing with a rapidity that in a very short time is found to invest them with a sanctity scarcely inferior to that of the associations which they have superseded.

9. The Government of India are encouraged by previous experience to hope that such will be the case in the present instance. They will be greatly disappointed if there

are not found in the new province elements of cohesion which will speedily endow it with a stability and individuality of its own. In any case the Government that is called upon to decide such cases must regard them from a wider standpoint than that of purely local, and in all probability transient, considerations. They are bound to keep in view the interests of the Government and of the people as a whole. If they are convinced that owing to arrangements, devised for a different state of affairs and now obsolete, the administration suffers, if they see one Government weighed down with a burden which it cannot properly discharge, and another Government shut out from the development that ought naturally to await it, they cannot permanently remain indifferent to the situation thus produced. Either a remedy must be sought, or the responsibility for a conscious neglect of duty is incurred.

10. Upon two conditions, however, the community has a claim to insist. The first is that the solution ultimately approved shall not be arrived at in haste or until all available alternatives have been fully considered, and its superiority over them conclusively established. This procedure has been followed in the present case. It is now more than 18 months since the first proposals of the Government of India were officially published. In the interval they have been the subject of widespread and searching criticism at the hands of those who were directly or indirectly concerned. Representations from an immense number of public bodies or gatherings have reached the Government. These have in every case been attentively examined; many of them have not been without effect upon the course adopted; and the very last charge that could with justice be brought against the Government would be one of undue speed in arriving at a final decision. In the course of this prolonged study of the case, the various suggestions that have at different times been put forward for the relief of Bengal have been exhaustively examined. The idea of creating a new Commissionership or Chief Commissionership out of portions of the Province, the separation from Bengal of smaller areas than those ultimately selected, the transfer of sufficient territory to the Central Provinces to convert the latter administration into a Lieutenant-Governorship, the substitution of administration in Bengal by a Lieutenant-Governor and Council for administration by a Lieutenant Governor alone—all of these have been duly considered and have not been rejected until they were found to contain flaws or drawbacks which were inconsistent with the essential aim. On the other hand, the scheme which was preferred to them has received the practically unanimous approval of the leading officials of the three administrations whom it directly affects, as well as the final sanction of the Secretary of State.

11. The second condition above referred to is the as far as possible, an attempt should be made to remove every well-grounded case of complaint and to satisfy every reasonable demand on the part of those who will be personally affected by the new arrangement. The Government of India have endeavoured throughout to act in accordance with this principle and, to it the majority of the modifications in the original plan are due. The grant to the new province of a Legislative Council and a Board of Revenue, and the retention of the jurisdiction of the High Court are instances of this desire; and the Governor-General in Council can confidently state that there is no guarantee for the good government of the transferred populations which he has not been willing, if its merits were satisfactorily demonstrated, to adopt.

12. The result is the creation of a new province, founded upon that which is the secret of all good administration, namely, the close contact in so far as this is possible in areas of great size—of the governors with the governed. The welfare of the people will be more vigilantly safeguarded, and larger opportunities will open up before the educated classes, when they are the nucleus of a powerful and self contained administration exclusively devoted to their interests, than when they have been either the appendage of an overgrown and to overworked province or the constituents of a relatively backward and arrested organisation. The change may be expected to raise the administrative standards and to revive no small portion of the former prosperity of Eastern Bengal. It will communicate a much desired impetus to the hitherto retarded development of Assam.

13. The Governor-General in Council, in directing that the necessary measures shall now be taken to introduce the scheme, looks forward to the day, as not far distant when not merely will the new province of Eastern Bengal and Assam have amply vindicated its creation, as an administrative reform of the first importance, but when it will have acquired a character and influence not inferior to those of any of the older Indian provinces, and will have attracted to itself the spontaneous and devoted loyalty of its sons.

H. A. M. Bose's Speech at the Federation Hall Meeting, October 16, 1905.

My beloved friends, Mahommedan and Hindu fellow-citizens of one and indivisible Bengal!

A Rishi of old blessed the gods that he had lived to see the day when the divine sage of Kapilavastu was ushered into the world. I am not a Rishi, nor worthy to touch the feet of one, but yet I bless our Father in Heaven, who is the Common Father and Judge of the Englishman and the Indian alike, that I have lived to see this day, which marks, I think I may say, the birth of a Nation. I come amongst you as one almost risen from the dead to see this moment of a national upheaval and of national awakening. Drawn from my sick bed, where I have been secluded from the world by serious illness for nearly a year, allow me to express my grateful thanks to you, for the great and signal privilege you have conferred on me by associating me with yourselves on this great and historic occasion, which will live in the annals of Bengal and mark an epoch in its history. I see around me after a long time, the faces of many dear friends and comrades who have been in the front of the fight. I salute them, and I salute you all, on this day of solemn recollections and solemn resolves.

It is indeed a day of mourning to us, when the Province has been sundered by an official fiat, and the gladsome spirit of union and of community of interest which had been growing stronger day by day, runs the danger of being wrecked and destroyed, and many other evils into which this is not the occasion to enter are likely to follow in its wake. And yet, in the dispensation of Providence, not unoften out of evil cometh good; and the dark and threatening cloud before us is so fringed with beautiful gold and brightening beams, and so fraught with the prospect of a newer and a stronger national union, that we may look upon it almost as a day of rejoicing. Yes, as our glorious poet has sung in one of his many noble and inspiring utterances, মরা গাঙ্গে বান এসেছে "the dead, currentless and swampy river has felt the full force, and fury of the flood, and is swelling in its depth". Have we not all heard the booming of that national call, and its solemn summons in our hearts? Let our souls mount forth in gladness to the Throne of the most High, at this sacred national hour of the new and united Bengali nation; let us bear in mind, as a writer in the Patrika has said, that "from dark clouds descend life-giving showers, and from parted furrows springs up the life-sustaining golden grain. that the bitter biting winter is the precursor of the glorious spring."

I belong to the sundered province of East Bengal, and yet, my brethren, never did my heart cling more dearly to you or your hearts cherish us more lovingly than at the present moment, and for all the future that lies before us. The "official" separation has drawn us indeed far closer together, and made us stronger in united brotherhood. Hindu, Mussalman and Christian, North, East and West, with the resounding sea beneath, all belong to one indivisible Bengal; say again, my friends, from the depths of your hearts, to one indivisible Bengal; the common, the beloved, the ever-cherished Mother-land of us all. In spite of every other separation of creed, this creed of the Common Motherland will bring us nearer, heart to heart and brother to brother. And this Federation Hall,

the foundation-stone of which is being laid to-day, not only on this spot of land, but on our moistened and tearful hearts, is the embodiment and visible symbol of this spirit of union, the memorial to future generations yet unborn of this unhappy day, and of the unhappy policy which has attempted to separate us into two parts.

It will, I trust, be a place for all our national gatherings; in its rooms will be held social reunions and meetings for different purposes. There will be, probably, gymnasiums, room for a library of reference and of useful publications and for newspapers, as well as classes for the singing of national songs and for the recitation and cultivation of all that promotes a spirit of patriotism, of self-sacrifice and true culture; accommodation too, I hope, will in time be provided for visitors from other parts of Bengal, and, it may be, of India. Those of you who have been to Amritsar have seen how in the Golden Temple there is throughout day and night the scene of worship, of holy reading and holy associations. I hope in the same way, this Hall will be a place where all that moulds and forms a growing nation, all that uplifts and regenerates the national character, and trains it up to true manhood, and every noble impulse shall always find their place; and at its shrine shall come, as for worship, every member of the Bengali nation. It will be a temple raised in honour of our Common Motherland not only for national union, but also for national progress. Let me earnestly appeal to you all and through you to the millions of Bengal for funds to make this temple worthy of itself. The rich will, I have no doubt, from their abundance give thousands and tens of thousands, but I trust no Bengali, however poor will refrain from bringing his offering to this shrine, his prayer for its completion, and his efforts for its suitable maintenance. Let every brick of this building bear testimony to the devotion and patriotic ardour of our people. Let us remember that here shall be formed integrating factors—the factors that will make for our union—against the disrupting influences of a divided interest and divided Government.

I rejoice from my heart that this ceremony is presently to be followed by an inauguration for furthering and consolidating the industrial development of the country, on which depends the material salvation of millions in this land. And yet the two inaugurations are not separate but one, and, like the sacred Ganges and the holy Jumna, they will commingle their waters and unite their waves in one merry march to the azure sea. In this Hall, I believe lectures will be delivered and discussions held on all subjects bearing on the commercial and industrial progress of the country. Its rooms will contain economic museums and samples of commercial products of the land—even though for the present this may be on a small scale—and experiments will be held of a practical character. It will be the rendezvous of all interested in this great cause of industrial progress, and will, in various other ways, promote those interests. In fact, this Hall will, as it grows and expands, be the natural and the necessary home of the movement for the industrial advance of the country. And it is fitting that from this scene of the future Federation Hall, you shall march together in solemn procession, to the scene of the industrial ceremony at the house of our honoured friend Rai Pasupati Nath Bose.

Here, let me address a few words on the agitation which has convulsed this Province for the last two months in connection with the question of its Partition, and stirred to its innermost depths the heart of every section of the community, from the highest to the lowest, from the rich zemindar in the town to the poorest of the poor in his humble cottage. For they indeed fatally misapprehend this movement, who imagine that it is the student community or any other single section or two in the Province that has caused this upheaval. I thank you all for the ardour, devotion, and spirit of sacrifice, which have so far distin-

LVII

gished your efforts. I have heard of people and even of respectable journals, which speak glibly of the lawlessness and disobedience to authority of our student community. Let me bear testimony—and this I can do from personal knowledge as to what is thus described as lawlessness and disobedience, on the part of students of British Universities, whom our students would not even dream of approaching in this respect. But I will not pause to give examples, numerous and glaring as they are ; but I wonder whether our rulers and our critics, most of whom, I presume, have passed through the Universities of their country, have so completely forgotten the experiences of their own student days. Why, our students are absolutely spotless, in comparison with British youths, as indeed, I believe, they are practically spotless, not as a matter of comparison only, but by themselves. Let us, my friends, continue in the same career, regardless of our own personal interests and all individual and sectional jealousies, if such indeed there be. For if the true spirit of loving sacrifice, and nothing of a base admixture be ours, surely God will provide for you, my student friends, and grant us true happiness and the true blessing—how great only those who have tested it can say—of a self-consecrated existence. Let us all specially see to it, that no lawlessness characterise or even tinge our proceedings. Let us be the victims, if need be, never the perpetrators of wrong—the victims it may be of ignorant, misinformed or perverse authority, or of a too often unscrupulous Police. We have to learn the divine lesson of how to suffer. *No. Yajna* is complete without sacrifice ; and this is the teaching of all Scriptures. Let us be prepared, if such should be the short-sighted and suicidal policy of any of our rulers, to suffer persecution for the sake of our Motherland for from the thorns we shall tread will be formed a crown of glory for the country that gave us birth. The air is full of rumours of repressive action on the part of the authorities, specially against our students. I do not know whether to believe them or not ; for in spite of confidence in the present ruler of the Province, and I believe it is his desire to do justice, there are administrators and advisers behind him ; and the pages of history are filled with instances in which cruel repression, and not sympathy or kindness or attempt to change convictions, has been the last hope of a discredited bureaucracy, the last weapon of an irresponsible authority. How futile too and doomed to failure and much worse than failure such attempts have been is also amply shown in the self-same pages ; but lessons of wisdom and past experience are not unhappily always learnt or always profited by. But I pray of the Most High that, in this crisis, He may guide the counsels of our rulers unto the paths of righteousness and justice. Let them remember the golden rule and place themselves in our position ; let them act that they may answer on the Day of Judgment for exercise of the great powers with which they have been entrusted over their fellow creatures, and for what they have done to these, the least of their brethren. And I venture to appeal to all Englishmen not to shun us, but to side and sympathise with us, in this struggle for the simple assertion on our part of human rights, appeal to them that they may be true to their noblest ideals which have made their annals famous and immortal in history, and grant us a little of the liberty and freedom which they have themselves enjoyed in such abundant an bounteous measure.

One has heard of different Orders in this country for religious and philanthropic service, of vows of self-sacrificing devotion carried to life's last day. Enter you, my friends, into what I might call the Order of the Motherland or of Bangabhumi ; and with characters unstained, aims that are placed on high, and spirits that are pure and noble and absolutely self-forgetful, serve the land, and suffer for the land, that gave you birth. Hindus and Mussalmans, let us in the name of God all unite in this sacred crusade for the welfare and prosperity of our common Mother. We have come, most of us, bare-footed

LVIII

and in garbs of mourning, to this site of our future shrine. Silent are the busy marts of men and silent is the roar of trade. Throughout the town and its suburbs all the numerous shops,—Hindu Mussalman and Marwari—have closed as a sign of deep mourning, and in spite of the efforts by the Police to the contrary, all shops in fact except practically the very small fraction owned by Englishmen. We all, present in our tens of thousands here and millions throughout the Province, I believe, are fasting to-day and no fires shall be kindled in our heart. But let that fire burn instead in our hearts, purify us and kindle an enthusiasm in us, which shall be all the brighter and all the warmer for the quenched fire in our homes.

And now, farewell, my friends, with these, which may perchance, be, the last words which I shall utter to you on this side of Eternity. Farewell on this day of fraternal union when the bond of *Rakhi* is tied in our arms. Much that comes pouring into my heart must remain unsaid. Ours is not the land of the rising sun, for to Japan,—victorious self-sacrificing and magnanimous—belongs that title. But may I not say that ours is the land where the sun is rising again, where, after ages of darkness and gloom, with the help, let me gratefully acknowledge, of England and English culture, the glowing light is bursting once again over the face of the land, and the glorious dawn is heralding the approach of a bright and regenerated day! Let us all pray that the Grace of God may bless our course, direct our steps, and make captive our hearts. Let action and not words be our motto and inspiring guide. And then shall my dream be realised of a beautiful land blessed by nature, and filled by men true and manly, and heroic in every good cause—true children of the Motherland. Let us see in our heart of hearts the Heavens opening and the angels descending. In ancient books the gods are described as showering flowers and garlands on the scene of a notable battle. See we not, my friends, those flowers dropped to-day from self-same hands welcoming us to the new battle, not of blood, but of manly effort and stern resolve in the country's cause?

And Thou, Oh God! of this ancient land, the protector and saviour of Aryavarta and the Merciful Father of us all, by whatever name we call upon Thee, be with us on this day; and as a father gathers his children under his arms, do Thou gather us under Thy protecting and sanctifying care!

I. The Muslim Memorandum to Lord Minto

May It Please Your Excellency,

AVAILING ourselves of the permission graciously accorded to us, we the undersigned nobles, jagirdars, talukdars, merchants, and others, representing a large body of the Mohammedan subjects of His Majesty the King-Emperor in different parts of India, beg most respectfully to approach Your Excellency with the following memorial for your favourable consideration.

2. We have no need to be reminded of the incalculable benefits conferred by British rule on the teeming millions belonging to divers races, and professing divers religions, who form the population of the vast continent of India. Nor can we forget the chaos and misrule from which British arms extricated us when the country was a prey to an innumerable host of adventurers bent on rapine and plunder. We have good reason to be grateful for the peace, security, personal freedom, and liberty of worship that we now enjoy, and, from the wise and enlightened character of the Government, we have every reasonable ground for anticipating that these benefits will be progressive and that India will, in the future, occupy an increasingly important position in the comity of nations.

3. One of the most important characteristics of British policy in India is the increasing deference that has, so far as possible, been paid from the first to the views and wishes of the people of the country in matters affecting their interests, with due regard always to the diversity of race and religion which forms such an important feature of all Indian problems.

4. Beginning with the confidential and unobtrusive method of consulting influential members of important communities in different parts of the country, this principle was gradually extended by the recognition of the right of recognised political or commercial organisations to communicate to the authorities their criticisms and views on measures of public importance; and finally, by the nomination and election of direct representatives of the people in Municipalities, Local Boards, and—above all—in the Legislative Chambers of the country. This last element is, we understand, about to be dealt with by the Commission appointed by Your Excellency at the initiative of His Majesty's Secretary of State of India, with the view of giving further extension; and it is with reference mainly to our claim to a fair share in such extended representation that we have ventured to approach Your Excellency on the present occasion.

5. The Musalmans of India number, according to the census taken in the year 1901, over sixty-two millions, or more than one-fifth of the total population of His Majesty's Indian Dominions; while if the Native States and Burma were excluded from the computation and a reduction made for the uncivilized portions of the community enumerated under the heads of Animists and other minor religions the proportion of Musalmans to the whole population of British India would be found to be approximately one-fourth. In these circumstances, we desire to submit that, under any system of representation, extended or limited, a minority amounting to a quarter of the population—and in itself more numerous than the entire population of any first class European Power, except Russia—may justly lay claim to adequate recognition as an important factor in the State. We

venture, indeed, with Your Excellency's permission, to go a step further than this and urge that the position accorded to the Musalman community in any kind of representation, direct or indirect, and in all other ways affecting their status and influence, should be commensurate not merely with their numerical strength but also with their political importance; and that, in estimating the latter, due weight should be given to the position which they occupied in India a little more than a hundred years ago, and of which the traditions have naturally not faded from their minds.

6. The Musalmans of India have hitherto placed implicit reliance on the sense of justice and love of fair dealing that has always characterised their rulers and have in consequence abstained from pressing their claims by methods that might prove at all embarrassing; but earnestly as we desire that the Musalmans of India should not in the future depart from that excellent and time-honoured tradition, recent events have stirred up feelings, especially among the younger generation of Mohammedans, which might, in certain circumstances and under certain contingencies, easily pass beyond the control of temperate counsel and sober guidance.

7. We, therefore, pray that the representation we herewith venture to submit, after a careful consideration of the views and wishes of a large number of our co-religionists in all parts of India, may be favoured with Your Excellency's earnest attention.

8. *We hope Your Excellency will pardon our stating at the outset that representative institutions of the European type are, entirely opposed to the genius and traditions Eastern Nations, and many of the most thoughtful members of our community look upon them as totally unsuitable to the social, religious, and political conditions obtaining in India.* Since, however, our rulers have, in pursuance of their own immemorial instincts and traditions, found it expedient to give these institutions an increasingly important place in the Government of the country we Mohammedans cannot any longer, in justice to our own national interests, hold aloof from participating in the conditions to which their policy has given rise. We must therefore acknowledge with gratitude that such representation as the Musalmans of India have hitherto enjoyed has been due to a sense of justice and fairness on the part of Your Excellency and your illustrious predecessors in office, and the heads of Local Governments by whom the Mohammedan members of Legislative Chambers have with scarcely one exception been invariably nominated; but we venture to submit that the representation thus accorded to us has necessarily been inadequate to our requirements and has not always carried with it the approval of those whom the nominees were selected to represent. This state of things has, in existing circumstances, been unavoidable; for while, on the one hand, the number of nominations reserved to the Viceroy and Local Governments has necessarily been strictly limited, the selection, on the other hand, of really representative men has, in the absence of any reliable method of ascertaining the direction of popular choice, been far from easy. As for the results of selection, it is most unlikely that the name of any Mohammedan candidate will ever be submitted for the approval of Government by the electoral bodies as now constituted, unless he is prepared to forego the right of private judgment and undertake to vote with the majority in all matters of importance. We submit that a Mohammedan elected on these terms necessarily ceases to represent his own community and becomes a mere mandatory of the Hindu majority. Nor can we, in fairness, find fault with the desire of our Hindoo fellow-subjects to take full advantage of their strength and vote only for members of their own community, or for persons who, if not Hindoos, are pledged to vote for the interests of the Hindoo community. It is true that we have many and important interests in common with our Hindoo fellow-countrymen, and it will always be a matter of the utmost satisfaction to us to see these interests safeguarded by the presence

in our Legislative Chambers of able supporters of these interests, irrespective of their nationality. We Musalmans have, however, additional interests of our own which are not shared by other communities and these have hitherto suffered grievous loss from the fact that they have not been adequately represented. Even in the Provinces in which the Mohammedans constitute a distinct majority of the population, they have too often been treated as though they were inappreciably small political factors that might without unfairness be neglected. This has been the case, to some extent in the Punjab; but in a more marked degree in Sindh and in Eastern Bengal, where Mohammedan interests have suffered, owing partly to the backwardness of the community in education, for which they are not wholly to blame, but still more to their ignorance of the arts of self-assertion and political agitation.

9. Before formulating our views with regard to the election of representatives, we beg to observe that the political importance of a community to a considerable extent gains strength or suffers detriment according to the position that the members of that community occupy in the service of the State. If, as is unfortunately the case with the Mohammedans, they are not adequately represented in this manner, they lose in the prestige and influence which are justly their due. Our first prayer, therefore, is that Your Excellency will be graciously pleased to issue strict orders that, both in the Gazetted and the Subordinate and Ministerial services of all Indian Provinces, a due proportion of Mohammedans—to be locally determined—shall always find place. Orders of like import have, at times, been issued by Local Governments in some Provinces, but have never, unfortunately, been strictly enforced, on the ground that qualified Mohammedans were not forthcoming. This allegation, however true it may have been at one time, is no longer tenable now, and wherever the will to employ them is not wanting, the supply of qualified Mohammedans, we are happy to be able to assure Your Excellency, is greater than any possible demand.

10. As Municipal and District Boards have to deal with important local interests, affecting to a great extent the health and comfort of the inhabitants, we shall, we hope, be pardoned if we solicit, for a moment, Your Excellency's attention to the position of Musalmans thereon before passing on to higher concerns. These institutions form, as it were, the initial rungs in the ladder of Self-Government, and it is here that the principle of representation is brought home intimately to the intelligence of the people. Yet the position of Musalmans on these Boards is not at present regulated by any guiding principle capable of general application, and practice varies in different localities. The Aligarh Municipality for example, is divided into six wards, and each ward returns one Hindu and one Mohammedan Commissioner, and the same principle, we understand, is adopted in some other Municipalities, but in many localities the Musalman tax-payer are not adequately represented. We would, therefore, respectfully suggest that local authority should, in every case, be required to declare the number of Hindoos and Mohammedans entitled to seats on Municipal and Local Boards, such proportion to be determined in accordance with the numerical strength, social status, and local influence of either community—in consultation, if necessary, with their leading men.

11. We would also suggest that the Senates and Syndicates of Indian Universities might, so far as possible, be similarly dealt with; that there should, in other words, be an authoritative declaration of the proportion in which Mohammedans are entitled to be represented in either body, whether by selection or nomination or both.

LXVII

12. We now proceed to the consideration of our share in the Legislative Chambers of the country. Beginning with the Provincial Councils, we would suggest that, as in the case of Municipalities and Local Boards, the proportion of Mohammedan representatives entitled to a seat should be determined and declared with due regard to the important considerations which we have ventured to point out in paragraph 5 of this Memorial; and that the Mohammedan members of the District Boards and Municipalities, and the Registered Graduates of Universities, should be formed into Electoral Colleges, and be authorised, in accordance with such rules of procedure as Your Excellency's Government may be pleased to prescribe in that behalf, to return the number of members that may be declared to be eligible.

13. With regard to the Imperial Legislative Council, whereon the due representation of Mohammedan interests is a matter of the utmost importance, we would solicit :

(1) That in the cadre of the Council, atleast, one of every four should always be a Mohammedan.

(2) That, as far as possible, a appointment by election should be given preference over nomination ; and that in any case the majority of members should be appointed by election.

(3) That for purposes of choosing Mohammedan representatives, Mohammedan members of the Provincial Councils and Mohammedan Fellows of Universities should be invested with electoral powers to be exercised in accordance with such procedure as may be prescribed by Your Excellency's Government in that behalf.

14. The methods of election we have ventured to suggest are necessarily tentative : they may even be found, in certain respects, defective ; but they are the simplest and the least complicated of the two or three that have occurred to us in the very limited time at our command. But, provided the choice be left free and unhampered in the hands of respectable and educated Mohammedans, we shall have no hesitation in accepting any other method that may be considered more practicable.

15. We have reason to believe that the generality of Mohammedans in all parts of India feel it a grievance that Mohammedan Judges are not more frequently appointed on the High Courts and Chief Courts of Judicature. Since the creation of these Courts only three Mohammedan lawyers have held these honourable appointments, all three, whom have happily justified their elevation in a most signal manner. It is not, therefore, an extravagant request on their behalf that, whenever possible, a Mohammedan Judge should be given a seat on each of these Courts. Qualified lawyers, eligible for these posts, can always be found—if not in one Province, then in another, and seeing that a Bengalee Judge sits on the bench of the Punjab Chief Court, there should be no objection to a Mohammedan, provided he is qualified being transferred from one province to another.

16. There has lately been some talk, we understand of the possible appointment of one or more Indian members on the Executive Council of the Viceroy and the India Council in England. Should such appointments be contemplated, we beg that the claims of Mohammedans in that behalf may not be overlooked. More than one Mohammedan we venture to say, will be found in the ranks of the Covenanted and Uncovenanted Services fit to serve with distinction in either of these august Chambers. We have at this moment, a retired Judge of the High Court of Calcutta, domiciled in England, who, by

LXIII

his ability as a lawyer, his standing as a scholar, and his reputation as an experienced and versatile man of the world, cannot fail to be an ornament to the India Council : we mean Mr. Syed Amir Ali, in whom the Mohammedans of India repose the fullest confidence.

17. In conclusion, we beg to assure Your Excellency that in assisting the Musalman subjects of His Majesty at this crisis in the directions indicated in the present Memorial, Your Excellency will be strengthening the foundations of their unswerving loyalty to the Throne and laying the foundations of their political regeneration and national prosperity and Your Excellency's name will be remembered with gratitude by their posterity for generations to come.