

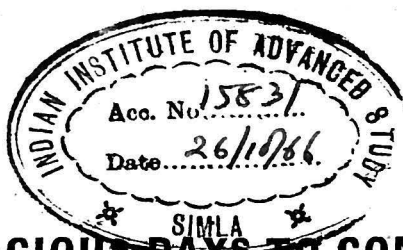
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## **THE SPACIOUS DAYS TO COME.**

*Address given by Sir Daniel Hamilton at the  
University Institute on 8th August 1918.*

GENTLEMEN,

First of all let me thank you for the invitation you so kindly gave me to say a few words here this afternoon, in connection with the opening of the students' co-operative store,—an invitation which I accepted gladly for various reasons, one being that it gives me another opportunity of emphasising the supreme importance to India, of the co-operative movement and its more rapid development, in view of the impending political changes. Another reason is that the inauguration of the store is an indication that the students of Bengal, like their brothers of Oxford, are desirous of acquiring a first-hand knowledge of the most progressive and productive movement of the time, and its bearing on the social and political structure. The student of to-day may be the M. P. or the voter of to-morrow, and the more interest he takes in problems affecting the welfare of the people, the better it will be for his country and himself. I hope, therefore, that the University will use its great influence to get students everywhere to take up the practical study of a movement with which the welfare of India is so bound up. And I want the students to look upon their store not as a business concern which will enable them to eat their way into wealth, by means of dividends derived from heavy meals, but as the branch of a new social order, destined in the evolution of the race, to replace the old antagonistic order which is fast passing away.

We have reached an interesting stage in the history of the world. The old age is passing, the new is dawning. The young man of India is the heir of both. It is for him that creation has groaned and travailed until now, and it is for him to prove worthy of his heritage by doing what he can to turn the groaning into laughter.

What is it then that India needs to make her smile? First and foremost she needs Unity, for out of unity comes brotherhood, and faith, and money, and all that money can buy. A house divided against itself cannot stand, and it is because India is such a house that the great masses of the people lie stagnant where they lay a thousand years ago.

As I left Baliaghata station for the Sunderbans the other day, our mutual friend, Babu Nirendranath Bose of the co-operative department, handed me a copy of the book which is to turn India's sorrows into joy. I mean the new Reform Scheme. On the way down the Mutla I opened it and began to read. The weather was hot and heavy, and I was about to fall asleep over the third page of the introduction when my eye lighted on these words:—

“Because the work already done has called forth in India a new life, we must found her Government on the co-operation of her people, and make such changes in the existing order as will meet the needs of the more spacious days to come.”

*We must found her Government on the co-operation of her people.* Here is India's Magna Charta. Many criticisms have been levelled against the proposed political superstructure, but I have seen none against the proposed foundations. Co-operation is the one thing

all desire ; it is the one thing Government can now push on with and have the whole country behind it ; it is the one thing without which the spacious days will never come.

I therefore call on Government to make good these words in the only way they can be made good, by pushing on more rapidly with the construction of the co-operative foundations of New India, and with that in view, to authorise the co-operative conference which meets shortly at Simla, to consider and suggest what steps should be taken to cover India with a co-operative banking system at an early date.

But while the proposed foundations are excellent, and must be well and truly laid with all speed I am not so sure that it is wise to pull down the old superstructure with the same haste, for as the reformers themselves tell us on page 88 of the report

“ the successful working of popular government rests not so much on statutes and written constitutions as on the gradual building up of conventions, customs and traditions. These are based on the experience and political thought of the people, but are understood and appreciated by both the governed and the Government. Nothing but time can adequately strengthen them to support the strain to which they are exposed. There are examples, ancient and contemporary alike, to point the moral of the disasters which, during a period of transition, follow from ignoring this fundamental truth.”

If the “ gradual building up ” of the new superstructure is the safe line to follow, why so hastily pull down the old ? If “ nothing but time ” can give the adequate strength, why not take it ?

Then as regards the constitution of the new

Parliament of Man, founded on the co-operation of the people, it would seem to be modelled on the lines of the parliament which is to meet shortly in Dublin (see page 99). Mr. Fuzl Huq must be safeguarded from the onslaughts of Mr. C. R. Das. The depressed representative must be safeguarded from being squashed by his exalted brethren. The ryatwari M. P. must be safeguarded till he is able to hit back like a Lloyd George. Mr. Ironside is warned "not to rely on artificial protection, but on his capacity to demonstrate to intelligent Indian opinion his real value in the economy of India"; and the Maharajah of Durbhanga wants a Parliament all to himself : then his narrow days will cease.

I see that the Indian ladies of Bombay are already demanding reserved seats in the new Parliament of Man, and Bengal cannot lag behind. The demand will, I suppose, be granted, and a charge made for admission to the fair.

But it is in the realm of finance that the scheme is weakest. Without money it will fail as a lever for lifting the people, and the reformers throw no light on where to find the money. Take the cost of education. An intelligent electorate implies a certain level of education, and all India is with the reformers in their recommendations for a general levelling up from the village to the university. Where is the money to come from? Bengal will want two or three hundred thousand primary schools if all children are to be given their chance in life. Rural education is to be made more practical with a view to turning out more practical farmers. You cannot offer any self-respecting teacher with the required qualifications, less than Rs. 25 a month

which means six or seven crores for Bengal, and a crore or two more will be wanted for the up-to-date secondary schools which the scheme foreshadows. Where are the crores to come from ? Under the proposed division of revenue Sir William Meyer takes 69 lakhs of Bengal's surplus, and leaves Mr. Donald ten lakhs to pay the salaries of the teachers and a dozen other things. I can now understand Mr. Hornell's remarks about teachers not getting their pay, and their cry for more spacious days. The principle on which the division of the surplus is made, is laid down thus in the report :—

“If many buckets are dipping into one well, and droughts cut short the supply of water, obviously the chief proprietor of the well must take it upon himself to regulate the drawings.”

This was the system of finance in vogue in Scotland in the days of Rob Roy—that

“They should take who have the power  
And they should keep who can.”

Mr. Donald is permitted to keep the ten lakhs, and the people are permitted to tax themselves for ten crores ; and the model people around Dacca are dying to begin, provided they are given a vote.

Well, gentlemen, I have spent the best part of the last eighteen months in rural India, and nowhere have I found money so plentiful as it is in Dacca. One begins to wonder where the Dacca people got it, or if the Dacca duckling has been laying golden eggs. Wherever I go I find that the man wants money, and his wife cloth, and the whole family quinine and castor oil. There is no demand for the vote. With money so plentiful around Dacca it is odd that the bank rate

should be anything from 25 to 150 per cent., or that Bengal should be passing more and more into the hands and under the rule of the *mahajan*, or that women should hang themselves for want of a few rupees to buy clothes. No, the Viceroy and Mr. Montagu speak truly when they say that "the immense masses of the people are poor, ignorant and helpless, far beyond the standards of Europe."

Of what use then is it, giving them power to tax themselves? What water can be drawn from a dry well? What power is there in a barren vote? If the vote brings money the people will jump at it; if it brings only an M. P. they will jump on him.

And what about the additional crores required to finance the big public works such as irrigation and drainage schemes, with which the provinces are to be saddled hereafter? Where is the money to come from? We are told that the total market is limited and home capital shy. Listen while Mr. Montagu speaks:—

"We think that in order to avoid harmful competition provincial governments must continue to do their borrowing through the Government of India. Also, it may often happen that the Government of India will not be able to raise sufficient money to meet all provincial requirements. In that case it may find it necessary to limit its total borrowings on behalf of provincial governments in particular years," but the provincial governments are permitted to scrape up what they can locally. Here we are, back again to the ancient financial system known as "the gamble in rain"; no regular programme of steady development; nothing but a hunger or a feast, with the feasts few and far between, and the spacious days still afar off.

When is this financial foolery to cease? Is it necessary to remind the eminent reformers that all the money raised, whether by taxation or by borrowing, must come, ultimately, from the people, and if the well is dry there is nothing for the bucket to lift. The Indian well is dry because the *mahajan* gets there first. Government retains a law court to help in lifting ten buckets for the *mahajan*, and a Collector to lift one bucket for itself, while the villager quenches his thirst with the spacious drinks to come.

“Clearly our first and immediate task is to make a living reality of local self-government” say the reformers, but without money the task is beyond their strength. A modern state cannot be built without a modern banking system. Clearly, therefore, the first and immediate task is to create one which will finance both the people and the Government. The Indian State consists, mainly, of myriads of small men who, in the language of the report, live in the silent depths through which the cry of the press or the platform never rings. So numerous are they that no banking system, however many its branches, can ever reach them separately. But the small men in the silent depths need finance for their industry still more than the great men who live in the sunshine. I have elsewhere remarked that the secret of successful industry is to buy your finance cheap and sell your produce dear, but in India it is the other way about. Because there is no banking system for the people, they have to buy their finance dear and sell their produce cheap to their financier, then go to live in the silent depths. If the people are too numerous and too small for any bank to reach, they must be gathered into groups

and the groups financed, for if this is not done, the great masses of India are doomed to perpetual poverty ; their spacious days will never come ; and the reform scheme will remain a dead monument of the reformers' folly, not the stately temple they set out to build. There is as much money power lying dormant in the reserves of the Government—only waiting for an outlet through an organised banking system—as will finance both the Government and the people, and set every able-bodied man and woman to work—students and all—to bring in the spacious days. And India's money must be used to finance India, not left in London to finance English bankers.

There is one more point I should like to touch on for a little, and that is the development of manufacturing industries. We must all be grateful to the Viceroy and Mr. Montagu and their colleagues, for the prominence they have given to industrial development and the promise that, in future, Government will shoulder its responsibilities in this connection. But what is to be the nature of India's industrial system ? Is it to be the old capitalist system which has well-nigh wrecked the Empire with its strikes and turmoil in war time, or is it to be shot through with the co-operative principle, and the lustré of brotherhood ? Is India to be divided still more than she is by a never ending warfare between capital and labour, or is she to rise from the silent depths a great nation, strong and united in peace and in war ? The old order is passing, and India wants the best of the new. She must have an industrial and political structure " founded on the co-operation of her people," otherwise she will

build on shifting sand. But the builders are few and the task gigantic. As Mr. Gokhale said :—

“There is work enough for the most enthusiastic lover of his country. On every side, whichever way we turn, only one sight meets the eye, that of work to be done; and only one cry is heard, that there are few faithful workers. The elevation of the depressed classes, who have to be brought up to the level of the rest of our people, universal elementary education, co-operation, improvement of the economic condition of the peasantry, higher education of women, spread of industrial and technical education, building up the industrial strength, promotion of closer relations between the different communities—these are some of the tasks which lie in front of us, and each of them needs a whole army of devoted missionaries.”

We want Gokhale's army, and we want it now, for unrest is growing, and India is drifting, no one quite knows where. Bengal wants a thousand more of the very best of her young men—faithful workers—to lay the co-operative foundations of the New India of the spacious days. Last week I watched some of these young men at work as they sat on a bundle of straw or on the mud floor of a village hut while they preached co-operation and organised the people into groups of trustworthy men; and I saw that it was from the village rather than from the hustings or the Council Chamber, that New India must be built. I realised also that empire building requires carefully trained builders, otherwise the structure may collapse. A thousand of these men are wanted and the money must be found to pay them, for the labourer is worthy of his hire. To say that the 45 million people of Great Britain can place five millions of men and 10,000 crores of money in the

fighting line, and that the Government of the 45 millions of Bengal cannot find a few lakhs to place a thousand good men in the fruitful fields of peace, would indeed be a scathing indictment of British rule, and I do not believe it. In the language of the report, Government must now shoulder its responsibilities for the development of the peoples' industries, and Finance is the master key to all. Up till now it has played, in a kindly way, with the people's finances; and while it plays, India drifts away from the spacious days which will come only from that unity and concord she now so sadly lacks. God is One: the Devil is Legion, and the many must be swept out with the co-operative broom, before the One can come in. Therefore,

Gather us in Thou Love that fillest all  
 Gather our rival faiths within Thy fold  
 Rend each man's temple's veil and bid it fall  
 That we may know that Thou hast been of old  
 Gather us in.

Gather us in : we worship only Thee  
 In varied names we stretch a common hand  
 In divers forms a common soul we see  
 In many ships we seek one spirit land.

Gather us in.

Each sees one colour of Thy rainbow-light  
 Each looks upon one tint and calls it heaven  
 Thou art the fulness of our partial sight  
 We are not perfect till we find the seven.

Gather us in.

May God give India peace and concord.

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