


her recovery have been overcome. Her fields for the production of raw silk and the mining districts of Kyushu are also unaffected, and although her national resources are not great, she still preserves the nucleus for future development.

The appointment has been announced of a Reconstruction Commission to include in its ranks Cabinet Ministers, privy councillors, members of the House of Peers and the House of Representatives, business men, scholars, and political leaders of all shades of opinion. The composition of this Commission is a sign that all classes in Japan are uniting in the work of reconstruction, and the spirit of the people was expressed by the Premier, Admiral Yamamoto, in the words of his announcement that Tokio was to be rebuilt :

“The reconstruction of a modern capital will be a real test of Japanese resourcefulness, and will demand the effort of the whole country to create something better and greater than the former city.”

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THE COMING ELECTIONS IN INDIA AND THE FUTURE

1923

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WITHIN the next few weeks the second General Election will take place in India. For more reasons than one it will be an event of exceptional interest. When the elections were held last, in 1920, one important section of Indian politicians, under the leadership of Mr. Gandhi, decided to boycott the Councils, and absolutely held aloof from the elections. This year, for reasons into which it is unnecessary to go at any length, a considerable section of the Non-Co-operators under the leadership of Mr. C. R. Das, has decided to contest seats at the General Elections. This has given rise to differences among the Non-Co-operators, for while the Das party has been urging that the Non-Co-operators should enter the Councils, another section of the Non-Co-operators has been dissenting from that view. The special session of the Congress at Delhi has, however, given its verdict in favour of Mr. Das. The result, therefore, will be that the elections will be ever so much more brisk than they were on the last occasion, and it may confidently be predicted that a considerably larger number of the electors will go to the polls than they did in 1920.

Who will contest the elections with the Das party is a very natural question to ask. The Moderates—or, as they are now called, the Liberals—will be the contesting party. Yet, again, there will be another class of persons who will seek election. It is difficult to describe them as a party, for the party organization among them is still nebulous. They are the landlords, or Zemindars, of India.

As to what the chances of the two parties mentioned above and the Zemindars will be, it is difficult to foretell with any degree of precision. Undoubtedly, the Non-

Co-operators are very much more numerous than the Moderates or the Liberals, and have by their ceaseless activity and by their organization acquired a greater hold on popular imagination than the Liberals. At the same time, it appears to me that the Liberals too have gained some ground in the country, and are now receiving a better hearing than they did, say, twelve months ago. The misfortune of the Liberals in India has been that many of their leaders were, by sheer force of circumstances existing in 1920, called upon to assume office. Their assumption of office, and their association with the Government during the last three years, have been used as strong weapons of offence against them by the Non-Co-operators. Their party organization has been weak, they have been slow to recognize the necessity and power of a party fund, and altogether it must be confessed that defective leadership and a want of cohesion have in no small measure led to the deterioration of their position. Their position has also been considerably affected by certain events in India and in England, not the least of which is the decision in regard to Kenya, which has provoked widespread dissatisfaction and resentment in India, and given rise to an extremely complicated situation there. During the last few months, however, the Liberals have been trying to set their house in order, and have achieved appreciable success, mainly due to the indefatigable energy and efforts of Mr. Chintamain, who was until May last a Minister in the United Provinces Government. It seems to me also that in rural areas in many provinces the Zemindars, who have got considerable local influence with the rural electors, are likely to be powerful opponents of both the Non-Co-operators and the Liberals. I do not wish to be dogmatic, but I shall not be surprised if the result shows that the Non-Co-operators are in a majority in the Assembly and the Provincial Councils. Given, therefore, an Assembly and Councils where we may assume that the Non-Co-operators will be in a majority, and that the Liberals and the Zemindars, or agricultural classes, will also have a fair share of representation, it may be asked

how these new political bodies will work in future. Mr. Das and his party have repeatedly been saying that they are going into the Councils to destroy them ; that they will ask for complete responsible government, and if they fail to get any satisfactory response from Government they will use all the means available to them to destroy these Councils. A good deal of this hyperbolic language must be discounted, and as one who has seen the working of the Constitution from inside the Government, I fail to see how they can, assuming they are quite serious, succeed in destroying the Councils. The field of operations left to them for the use of their destructive weapons is by no means large. They cannot touch many subjects, which are protected from the vote of the Assembly. They may, I admit, create considerable difficulties in the way of the Government in regard to those portions of the Budget which are subject to the vote of the Assembly, but these difficulties will not be in the nature of a surprise. They were foreseen by the framers of the Constitution, and they will have to be faced, whether they are raised by the Non-Co-operators or by the Liberals, or any other class of politicians inside the Councils. The Non-Co-operators say that they will compel the Government to carry on their administration and pass their measures, by the Viceroy's power of certification. It will be a most interesting situation to see how they are able to give effect to this threat. For my part, I do not think that things will reach that pass or be allowed by a resourceful Government to reach that pass. But should a situation arise in which it is clear that there are serious deadlocks which are embarrassing to the Government or which paralyze the administrative machinery the whole position is bound to be carefully re-examined. The central fact of the situation is that, so far as the achievement of dominion status is concerned, both the Liberals and the Non-Co-operators will exercise the utmost possible pressure on the Government, the material difference being in the character of that pressure. As for the Zemindars, I think that on the whole they will be more inclined to support the Liberals in the methods they may

pursue. It is therefore obvious to my mind that the question of further advance will be a burning topic in the new Assembly and the Councils, and matters may come to a head within the next two years.

I am aware that the English view is that nothing should be done to revise the Constitution until the expiry of ten years, for which provision has been made in the Government of India Act. A careful study of the section of the Government of India Act bearing on this question will show that it does not prevent the making of any enquiry before that period, but that it does impose an obligation on the Secretary of State to ask Parliament to appoint a Commission of Enquiry on the expiry of that period. Indeed, when the Reforms Bill was before Parliament, Mr. Montagu said that the law he was asking to be enacted was not like the law of the Persians and Medes, and if circumstances justified an earlier enquiry or revision, proper weight would be given to them. (I am writing this from recollection.) It is a question for statesmanship as to whether the revision of the Government of India Act is to be postponed till the very expiry of the last day of the prescribed ten years, or whether it will be taken in hand betimes. I am also aware of the arguments against an earlier revision. It is usual to refer to the want of education of the electorates, to the Hindu-Muhammadan dissensions, to the position of what are known as the depressed classes, and to the inertia and contentment of the masses with things as they are. I do not wish to deny that there is considerable room for the education of the electorates, and there will be need for their education, not only now, but probably for a very long time to come. But I refuse to believe that they will be so much better educated in 1929 than within the next two or three years, that that alone can justify any postponement of an enquiry or a revision of the Government of India Act.

It is true that the ultimate political justification for responsible government of the Dominion type must be found in the existence of an electorate not only sufficiently large in numbers, but capable of exercising control over

those who seek its suffrage and calling them to account for anything which goes wrong or which it is not prepared to endorse. It seems to me, however, that to wait for the creation of such an electorate as a condition precedent for the establishment of responsible government in India would be a counsel of perfection not free from some real dangers affecting the entire situation. The intelligensia is already there, and it will serve no useful purpose to deny that it is intensely national in its outlook. Nor can we dispose of that intelligensia by suggesting or insinuating that it is selfish or it is only anxious to secure "jobs" and "openings" for members of its class, and that it is devoid of all sense of disinterested patriotism. I am aware that it is held in certain quarters that all political development in the constitution of India must mean for a long time to come the substitution of an Indian oligarchy for the European oligarchy. This, I maintain, is taking a narrow view of the situation, and implies a certain confusion of thought. The transfer of power to this "oligarchy" cannot altogether be divorced from a simultaneous effort to expand the electorate which has already been created, and an obligation to educate that ever-growing electorate. In point of fact, the masses are not so unintelligent as they are assumed to be. For their lack of literary education they make up by the possession of a natural shrewdness and a capacity to understand their interest. They may not be able to understand questions of high policy, but, I think, they appreciate to a very large extent their local problems.

In several parts of the United Provinces and the Punjab the tenant is an upstanding, shrewd man of business, and, given a proper chance of exercising the power of vote, he will then, no doubt, make himself felt as a factor to be reckoned with by those who will seek his suffrage. Enfranchisement itself creates a new consciousness, and when this is accompanied by a conscious effort to educate the voter, the result to be hoped for cannot but be satisfactory. It is customary to make the sweeping statement that the Liberals who have been in the Councils have made no

effort to educate the electorates. Speaking with the knowledge of my own province, I can say that this accusation is much too sweeping. I know of several members of Council who have nearly always gone to their electorates and addressed them. I understand that this has been done by several members in Madras and Bombay, and in some other parts of the country as well. I admit that there was room for more work of that kind, but let us not deny the extent of the work already done. Besides, I would like to point out that it is nothing short of a delusion to suppose that the villager lives in a state of peace and contentment, which is never broken by any intruder from outside. That is no longer the case. It must be recognized that the politician—or call him the “agitator” if you like—is abroad, and one of the main problems of Indian administration during the last few years has been how to deal with this new situation. Those who imagine that our village population lives in perfectly secure Gardens of Eden have yet to realize the reality of the situation.

You may condemn the educated classes for their political activities; you may hold that their loyalty is questionable, and that they are the sources from which emanate all trouble and unrest. I do not quarrel with this sort of criticism, but I do maintain that those who hold that the educated classes have no influence with the masses live in a fool's paradise. The outstanding feature of the Indian situation is the enormous influence, for good or evil, which the educated classes have acquired with the masses during the last few years, and you have to reckon with that fact. They cannot be treated any longer on the footing of a microscopic minority. It is impossible that a microscopic minority would have given all the trouble that the Government of India has had to face during the last few years unless it had the backing of what are called the uneducated masses. The Punjab is an ample illustration of it. In Oudh, too, we had two years ago another illustration of their power. I could multiply many more instances, but I refrain.

As regards Hindu-Muhammadan dissensions, while I am

not prepared to deny their existence, I maintain that their extent is grossly exaggerated. In any case it seems to me that unless a serious attempt is made by the Hindus and the Muhammadans—and, let me add, by the Government also—to remove these differences by going to their root causes, those differences cannot be removed merely by the postponement of the question of advance. Whatever may have been the political position of the Muhammadans at one time, there is no doubt that there is a remarkable growth of political consciousness and feeling among them. It is not that they are opposed to self-government, but that they want their interests to be properly safeguarded, and it is for responsible statesmen to provide for the protection of those interests in any revision of the situation, just as much as it will be the duty of the framers of the future constitution to safeguard the interests of other minorities.

The situation, therefore, which will be created when the new Councils come into existence will be one which will call for the exercise of the highest statesmanship of a constructive character. The Indian problem cannot be solved by either condemning the educated classes or by the exploitation from day to day of Hindu-Muhammadan differences. The situation may deteriorate further if, as a result of an immobile policy, even that section of Indian politicians who have stood by the Government, and who, no doubt, in spite of the keen disappointment which the Kenya decision has produced, still honestly and genuinely believe in the British connection and responsible government within the Empire, find their faith shaken. I believe that the Government of India thoroughly appreciate the situation, and no one has a clearer insight into it than Lord Reading, and yet Lord Reading's name is a *bête noir* to some people in England; and the Government of India's task is growing increasingly difficult when England is prepared to receive its news from writers in the press who went to India thirty or forty years ago in a different atmosphere, and who cannot adjust themselves to the new situation and understand its meaning and significance.

