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Facts and Opinions

The Indiscretions of Sir Edward

The speech of Sir Edward Baker in the Bengal Council last week was one of those indiscretions which statesmen occasionally commit and invariably repent, but which live in their results long after the immediate occasion has been forgotten. The speech is a mass of indiscretions from beginning to end. Its first error was to rise to the bait of Mr. Madhusudan Das' grotesquely violent speech on the London murders and assume a political significance in the act of the young man Dhingra. The theory of a conspiracy behind this act is, we believe, generally rejected in England. It is not supported by a scrap of evidence and is repudiated by the London police, a much more skilful detective body than any we have in India and, needless to say, much more reliable in the matter of scrupulousness and integrity. It is the opinion of the London police that the act was dictated by personal resentment and not by political motives. It is not enough to urge in answer that the young man who committed this ruthless act himself alleges political motives. His family insist that he is a sort of neurotic maniac, and it is a matter of common knowledge that natures so disturbed often catch at tendencies in the air to give a fictitious dignity and sensational interest to actions really dictated by the exaggerated feelings common to

these nervous disorders. Madanlal Dhingra evidently considered that Sir William Curzon-Wyllie was his personal enemy trying to alienate his family and interfere with his personal freedom and dignity. To an ordinary man these ideas would not have occurred or, if they had occurred, would not have excited homicidal feelings. But in disturbed minds such exaggerated emotions and their resultant acts are only too common. Unless and until something fresh transpires, no one has a right to assume that the murder was a political assassination, much less the overt act of a political conspiracy. Anglo-Indian papers of the virulent type whose utterances are distorted by fear and hatred of Indian aspirations, may assume that of which there is no proof,— nothing better can be expected of them. But for the ruler of a province not only to make the assumption publicly but to base upon it a threat of an unprecedented character against a whole nation is an indiscretion which passes measure.

The Demand for Co-operation

The second crying indiscretion in Sir Edward's speech is the extraordinary demand for co-operation which he makes upon the people of this country. It is natural that a Government should desire co-operation on the part of the people and under normal circumstances it is not necessary to ask for it; it is spontaneously given. The circumstances in India are not normal. When a Government expects co-operation, it is because it either represents the nation or is in the habit of consulting its wishes. The Government in India does not represent the nation, and in Bengal at least it has distinctly set itself against its wishes. It has driven the Partition through against the most passionate and universal agitation the country has ever witnessed. It has set itself to baffle the Swadeshi-Boycott agitation. It has adopted against that movement all but the ultimate measures of repression. Nine deportations including in their scope several of the most respected and blameless leaders of the people stand to their debit account unredressed. Even in giving the new reforms, inconclusive and in some of their circumstances detrimental to

the best interests of the country, it has been anxious to let it be known that it is not yielding to the wishes of the people but acting on its own autocratic motion. Against such a system and principle of administration the people of this country have no remedy except the refusal of co-operation and even that has been done only within the smallest limits possible. Under such circumstances it is indeed a grotesque attitude for the ruler of Bengal to get up from his seat in the Council and not only request co-operation but demand it on pain of indiscriminate penalties such as only an autocratic government can inflict on the people under its control, and this with the full understanding that none of the grievances of the people are to be redressed. The meaning of co-operation is not passive obedience, it implies that the Government shall rule according to the wishes of the people and the people work in unison with the Government for the maintenance of their common interests. By advancing the demand in the way he has advanced it, Sir Edward Baker has made the position of his Government worse and not better.

What Co-operation?

The delusion under which the Government labours that the Terrorist activities have a great organisation at their back, is the source of its most fatal mistakes. Everyone who knows anything of this country is aware that this theory is a fabrication. If it were a fact, the conspiracy would by this time have been exposed and destroyed. The assassinations have in all instances, except the yet doubtful Maniktola conspiracy now under judicial consideration, been the act of isolated individuals, and even in the Maniktola instance, if we accept the finding of the Sessions Court, it has been shown by judicial investigation that the group of young men was small and so secret in their operations that only a few even of those who lived in their headquarters knew anything of the contemplated terrorism. Under such circumstances we fail to see either any justification for so passionate a call for co-operation or any possibility of an answer from the public. All that the public can do is to express disapprobation of

the methods used by these isolated youths. It cannot turn itself into a huge Criminal Investigation Department to ferret out the half-dozen men here and there who possibly contemplate assassination and leave its other occupations and duties after the pattern of the police who in many quarters are so busy with suppressing fancied Swadeshi outrages that real outrage and dacoity go unpunished. We do not suppose that Sir Edward Baker himself would make such a demand, but if he has any other co-operation in view it would be well if he would define it before he proceeds with his strenuous proposal to strike out right and left at the innocent and the guilty without discrimination. On the other hand the Anglo-Indian papers are at no loss for the definite method of co-operation which they demand from the country on peril of "stern and relentless repression". They demand that we shall cease to practise or to preach patriotism and patriotic self-sacrifice and submit unconditionally to the eternally unalterable absolutism which is the only system of government Lord Morley will tolerate in India. That demand has only to be mentioned to be scouted.

Sir Edward's Menace

The final indiscretion of Sir Edward Baker was also the worst. We do not think we have ever heard before of an official in Sir Edward's responsible position uttering such a menace as issued from the head of this province on an occasion and in a place where his responsibility should have been specially remembered. We have heard of autocrats threatening contumacious opponents with condign punishment, but even an autocrat of the fiercest and most absolute kind does not threaten the people with the punishment of the innocent. The thing is done habitually — in Russia; it has been done recently in Bengal; but it is always on the supposition that the man punished is guilty. Even in the deportations the Government has been eager to impress the world with the idea that although it is unable to face a court of justice with the "information, not evidence" which is its excuse, it had ample grounds for its belief in the

guilt of the deportees. Sir Edward Baker is the first ruler to declare with cynical openness that if he is not gratified in his demands, he will not care whether he strikes the innocent or the guilty. By doing so he has dealt an almost fatal blow at the prestige of the Government. If this novel principle of administration is applied, in what will the Government that terrorises from above be superior to the dynamiter who terrorises from below? Will not this be the negation of all law, justice and government? Does it not mean the reign of lawless force and that worst consummation of all, Anarchy from above struggling with Anarchy from below? The Government which denies the first principle of settled society, not only sanctions but introduces anarchy. It is thus that established authority creates violent revolutions. They abolish by persecution all the forces, leaders, advocates of peaceful and rapid progress and by their own will set themselves face to face with an enemy who cannot so be abolished. Terrorism thrives on administrative violence and injustice; that is the only atmosphere in which it can thrive and grow. It sometimes follows the example of indiscriminate violence from above; it sometimes, though very rarely, sets it from below. But the power above which follows the example from below is on the way to committing suicide. It has consented to the abrogation of the one principle which is the life-breath of settled governments.

The Personal Result

Sir Edward Baker came into office with the reputation of a liberal ruler anxious to appease unrest. Till now he has maintained it in spite of the ominous pronouncement he made, when introducing measures of repression, about the insufficiency of the weapons with which the Government was arming itself. But by his latest pronouncement, contradicting as it does the first principles not only of Liberalism but of all wise Conservatism all over the world, he has gone far to justify those who were doubtful of his genuine sympathy with the people. Probably he did not himself realise what a wound he was giving to his own reputation and

with it to his chances of carrying any portion of the people with him.

A One-sided Proposal

A writer in the *Indian World* has been holding out the olive branch to the advanced Nationalist party and inviting them into the fold of the body which now calls itself the Congress. The terms of this desirable conciliation seem to us a little peculiar. The Nationalists are to give up all their contentions and in return the Bombay coterie may graciously give up their personal dislike of working with the Nationalist leaders. This is gracious but a little unconvincing. The only difficulty the mediator sees in the way is the constitutional point raised by a section of the Moderates against the arbitrary action of the Committee of the Convention in passing a constitution and forcing it on the delegates without submission to freely elected delegates sitting in a session of the Congress itself. The mediator proposes to get round the objection by the Bombay coterie agreeing to pass the Constitution en bloc through the Congress provided an undertaking is given by the Nationalists that they will accept bodily the whole of the Constitution and make no opposition to any of its provisions! A very remarkable proviso! The writer assumes that the Nationalists have accepted the Constitution bodily and are willing to sign the creed. We think he is in error in his assumptions. The Nationalists are not likely to give any undertaking which will abrogate their constitutional right to make their own proposals about the Constitution at the beginning or to suggest amendments to it hereafter. They will sign no creed, as it is against their principles to make the Congress a sectional body and they refuse to bind themselves to regard colonial self-government as the ultimate goal of our national development. Whatever resolutions are passed by a properly constituted Congress they will accept as the temporary opinion of the majority while reserving the right, which all minorities reserve, of preaching their own convictions. They refuse to regard the Madras Convention or the contemplated Lahore Convention as a sitting of the Congress or

its resolutions as the will of the country. The position taken, that the Bombay coterie are in possession of the Congress and it is theirs to admit the Nationalists or not at their pleasure is one we cannot recognise. If there is to be a united Congress it must resume its life at the point where the Calcutta session broke off. All that has happened in between is a time of interregnum.

The Only Remedy

The attempt to reunite the parties on such lines is foredoomed to failure. Nor is it likely that even if the Nationalists were entirely accommodating there would be any chance of union. The attitude of Mr. Gokhale is conclusive on this point. Not only has he definitely separated himself and his school from the advocates of Swaraj and passive resistance but he has denounced them as enemies of the country and handed them over to the “stern and relentless repression” of the authorities. The *Tribune* calls on Bengal to give up the boycott on the ground that it is no longer sanctioned by the “Congress” as it chooses to call a body which even the whole of the Moderate party were unable to join. The only remedy for the situation is for those who desire unity to rebuild the National Assembly from the bottom on the basis of provincial unity and abstention from any mutilated body Moderate or Nationalist, however august the name under which it masks its unrepresentative character, so long as it professes to speak for the nation and yet refuses to admit freely its elected representatives.

The *Bengalee* and Ourselves

The *Bengalee* has answered our facts and opinions with its facts and comments. Unfortunately we find in our contemporary’s answer all comment and no fact. For the most part he is busy trying to prove that we were really inconsistent and contradictory, or, if he misunderstood us, it was due to our uninstructed use of language. In the first place we did not expressly say that we saw God in everything and only specially in special movements. Of

course we did not. As we pointed out we could not be always guarding ourselves against gratuitous misconceptions, and the omnipresence of God is such an obvious fact that it has not to be expressly stated. It is curious that our contemporary's powerful intelligence seems still unable to grasp the point about leadership. If the movement were the result of human calculation or guided by human calculation, or even if every constructive step were the result of mature deliberation, there would be no point in insisting that the movement was created and led (we beg pardon, we mean specially created and led,) by God and not by human wisdom. We pointed out that none of these statements could be advanced in the face of the facts, and our contemporary has not been able to meet our arguments; he has simply restated his previous unsupported assumption. Secondly, we were unfortunate enough to use in one place the word "His" where our contemporary thinks we should have used the word "that". With all submission we think our language was perfectly clear. We said His purpose and we meant His purpose, the purpose of raising up India. Then again we were unfortunate enough to indulge in an ironical repetition of our contemporary's phrase "mere" faith, within commas inverted and our contemporary with portentous seriousness insists on taking this as our own epithet and seriously meant. We have pointed out that in our idea of faith it includes the logical analysing reason, it includes experience and exceeds it. It exceeds logical reason because it uses the higher intuitive reason; it exceeds experience because experience often gives the balance of its support to one conclusion where faith using intuition inclines to the opposite conclusion.

God and Man

Our contemporary does not understand why we wrote of God and the universal force or why we insisted on the special manifestation of the Divine Force as opposed to its veiled workings through human egoism. We did so because we had to oppose the excess of that very egoism. We have not risen to the heights of Monism from which he scoffs benignly at our dualism. It

may be the final truth that there is nothing but God, but for the purposes of life we have to recognise that there is a dualism in the underlying unity. It profits nothing to say, for instance, "The Divine Force wrote two columns of Facts and Comments the other day in the *Bengalee*." God reveals Himself not only in the individual where He is veiled by ignorance and egoism, but in Himself. When the *Bengalee* sees no alternative to man's self-conscious action except unconscious action, it is under the influence of European materialism which sees only conscious creatures in an unconscious inanimate Nature. The Divine Force is not unconscious but conscious and intelligent and to see Him as a conscious power only in men is to deny Him altogether. When again our contemporary uses a misapplication of the truth of Adwaita to justify the deifying of his own reason, he is encouraging practical atheism while taking the divine name in vain. God manifests Himself in everything, He manifests Himself in our reason, therefore let us forget God and rely on our own human calculations. That is the train of argument. What is the use of relying on God? let us look to our own safety. What is the use of being brave in the hour of peril? If our leader goes, the movement stops. *Mam anusmara yudhya cha*, is the motto of the Karmayogin. God manifests Himself in the individual partially, but He stands behind the progress of the world wholly. We are bound to use our own intellects, we cannot help it if we would, but we must remember that it is a limited intellect and be prepared for the failure of our schemes and plans, for calamity, for defeat, without making these things an excuse for abandoning His work, laying our principles on the shelf or sending out a cry to discourage steadfastness and self-sacrifice. Our plans may fail, God's purpose cannot. That is why we laid so much stress on the fact that this has been a movement which, as the man in the street would say, has led itself, in which individuals have been instruments and not the real shapers and leaders. We have faith and we believe in the great rule of life in the Gita, "Remember me and fight." We believe in the mighty word of assurance to the bhakta, *Macchittah sarvadurgani matprasadat tarishyasi*, "If thou reposest thy heart and mind in Me by My grace thou shalt

pass safe through all difficulties and dangers.” We believe that the Yoga of the Gita will play a large part in the uplifting of the nation, and this attitude is the first condition of the Yoga of the Gita. When anybody tries to discourage our people in this attitude, we are bound to enter the lists against him. We recognise that to argue with those who have only opinions but no realisation is a hopeless task, since it is only by entering into communion with the Infinite and seeing the Divine Force in all that one can be intellectually sure of its conscious action. But at least we can try to remove the philosophical delusions and confusions which mislead men from the right path and veil European materialism under generalities drawn from Vedanta.

Ourselves

In our third issue we wrote, “On account of the inconvenience of the printing press there has been some irregularity in the publication of the second and the third issues of the paper. With a view to remove this difficulty we are making better arrangements for printing the paper. The next issue of *Karmayogin* will be published on Saturday the 17th instant instead of on Saturday the 10th.” The publication of the next issue was, consequently, delayed. We are glad to be in a position to inform our readers that better arrangements have been made, and henceforth the *Karmayogin* will be regularly published, and our readers will be able to detect an improvement in the get-up of the paper. The unusual and unexpected demand for the paper necessitates the reprinting of the back numbers. We shall be glad to know the issue or issues each subscriber would want. We would take this opportunity of saying that we have no connection with the Bengali *Karmayogin* to be published from Uttarpara. It is an independent paper with which we have no connection. The conductors of the paper have only our permission to publish Bengali translations of articles appearing in the *Karmayogin*.