THE FUTURE OF INDIA

IN a general picture of world bewilderment before problems which have grown beyond the grasp of responsible statesmen, the bewilderment of Britain concerning India is peculiarly tragic, peculiarly ludicrous. Picture an aged burglar who, many years ago, on entering a house by force and stealth, found it occupied solely by naughty children at continual blows, with no one to control or smack them; picture him reformed and, Smee-like, turned governess, guiding the young into more orderly ways; picture him finally debating his position with the elder children, fully grown, eager now to control their own prosperity, rebellious against his dominion; picture his anxieties; are they really old enough, are not these tantrums proof of youthful lack of balance, are there not other burglars abroad? What will happen when, as still occurs, the young ones start to pull each others' hair?

Dr. Zacharias' book[1] is a fairly detailed account of the growing up—socially and politically—of modern India—with special attention paid to the agitation of Congress against British domination. As a Jew by birth and a Catholic by belief Dr. Zacharias claims impartiality, but he makes no secret of his whole-hearted preference for Congress and is certainly not impartial in his account of events such as the Partition of Bengal or the Amritsar Massacre. In facts he is accurate, but not complete (drawing his material from Congress sources) and his attribution of motives is rash. For instance, concerning the Partition of Bengal, ' the whole purpose and effect of the measure was manifestly Machiavellian,' he says. 'All India understood these motives.' At least the owner of the motives, Lord Curzon, failed to see them in this light. As ever, it was a question for Lord Curzon of efficient administration. He

[1] *Renascent India*. By H. C. E. Zacharias, Ph.D. (Allen & Unwin ; 10/6.)

could understand no other motive. Bengal was unwieldy, it needed dividing. 'Bengal,' he wrote to Lord George Hamilton, 'is unquestionably too large a charge for any one man.' As with so many actions of the British in India which Indian nationalists have bitterly denounced, the Partition was not a crime, but a blunder.

This partiality of the author does not detract from the usefulness of the book as an account of the growth of Indian nationalism. The author draws a picture of Hindu, Moslem and Christian efforts at social development, medical, educational and religious, in his first eighty-one pages. Especially to a Catholic, the picture is fascinating, and it is a pity that the author has not made it a fuller one. He devotes the remaining two hundred and sixteen pages to the political scene—a depressing story of concessions ungraciously granted, of reaction and suppression, of broken co-operation and bitter resentment. Dr. Zacharias traces to the Mutiny the opening of the gulf which has so long separated Indians from Anglo-Indians. Before the Mutiny, the Civil Servant in India stayed long in the country; after, he had frequent leaves and left the country so soon as his pension became due: before, he lived on intimate terms with Indian subjects; after, a social gulf yawned between: before, he lived probably a bachelor life; after, the incalculable influence of permanent feminine society hardened resistance to the development of intimacy with Indians: from a friendly co-operator in the work of developing Indian civilization and wealth, of healing religious and social discords, the Briton became a member of a dominating and suspicious caste concerned in retaining that domination by the exclusion of Indians from a share in government, pursuing, not a positive policy of progress, but a negative one of impartial administration. We have driven Indians to resent, instead of allowing them to represent.

The effect on Anglo-Indian relations has been disastrous. The British, always prone to believe that 'Niggers begin at Calais,' have set up an attitude of social exclusiveness in India—though not always outside—towards Indians. As-

suming that a dark skin means inferiority, they have failed to recognise the brilliant achievements in science, organisation and culture of such men as Sir Jagadish Bose, Lord Sinha, or Rabindranath Tagore—the great political wisdom and forbearance of leaders like Motilal Nehru, the spiritual beauty of much in the character of Mahatma Gandhi. These and men like them have been forced to spend in apparently fruitless agitation lives which might have been used for the enrichment of a great nation, the benefit of the whole world. These are not parochial names. Their *scale* must be recognised. These are men who by their co-operation might have saved the British Empire, saved even England. If a white Viceroy, why not a brown Prime Minister? A Hindu of Lord Sinha's stamp would more likely be a Ripon than a Curzon.

This exclusiveness of British men (and British women) in India—the snobbery of clubs and garden parties and polo grounds—this assumption of superiority over a nation whose great cultured classes are far *more* cultured, spiritual and humane than their social equals in Britain—this is not the main grievance. The grievance is not bad manners but bad government. It is that the English rule has been carried on in the spirit of Lord Curzon's dictum: 'Efficiency of administration is, in my view, a synonym for the contentment of the governed.' Re-afforestation, famine relief, a punctual train service, irrigation, these are the real and practical benefits upon which the Englishman justifies his rule of millions whose hearts burn for more than bread. 'Look at our dams,' they cry. They feed and water them, they are efficient, and when youths blind with a semi-religious passion for freedom, bare their breasts, as at Peshawar in 1930, asking to be shot as a sign of their non-violence (and are shot), they use hard words and stand no nonsense. Indeed, here is the heart of the Indian problem —the passionate desire of the Indian to be recognised as, at least, the Englishman's equal, his partner. They want to share in the government of their own country, but to the exponent of efficiency and force—a Dam and Damn policy

—such a demand is inexplicable. ' Look at our telegraphs —they would not run them so well.' They do not remember that some people would sooner be responsible for their own starvation than fatten on servitude.

The fount of the present agitation is this; there are many highly educated Indians of great ability who desire responsibility for the government of their country—that is, that no one shall stop them doing harm as well as good in the administration of India (a demand incompatible with any emergency powers on the part of the Viceroy). Many of them would be willing to share that responsibility with Britain, but they must have the privilege of earning praise or blame in that high task, and have *at least* the same earning power as the British. Under Diarchy the Viceroy's power of certification—used as it has been—together with the reserved subjects, prevent Indians governing badly, according to Viceregal ideals. That is not responsibility. The burglar has abandoned the keys of the jam cupboard, but he still holds those of the wine-cellar.

Nothing is more tragic in modern history than the process, repeated in India, Ireland, Germany and Russia, of political domination steadily delaying concessions to growing forces which desire responsibility and are capable of wielding it—until liberal sentiment grows exasperated and expresses exasperation in violent action; whereupon this action is adduced as justification for yet more reaction or delay. Then comes Revolution (a title which Dr. Zacharias gives to all the Congress movement from Gandhi's breaking of the salt-laws at Dandi in 1930 until his agreement to join the Round-Table Conference)—Revolution, and the conservative powers retreat and give way to Gandhi instead of Gokhale, Jarwahaval instead of Motilal Nehru, De Valera for Redmond, Hitler for Stresemann, Lenin for Tolstoy. *There has been no exception to this rule.* Where a strong minority, persistent and able, desires independence or reform, if the ruling power does not grant, revolution will grasp.

The opponents of Indian autonomy constantly bring forward the argument that the alternative to British rule (in the final resort, even by the White Paper, autocratic) is rule by Indian representatives—democratic. They say that seventy-one per cent. of the Indian populace is illiterate and not politically-minded. One can make several comments on this contention: first, the illiteracy of the Indian is due, in part at least, to the, if not restrictive, retardative policy of the British Raj, a policy whose object has been, not to make, but brake, education; secondly, the fact that the Indian electorate might choose the wrong Indian to represent is no real justification for the retention of a *British* domination; thirdly, even if the majority of the population is not politically minded (though the Simon Report recognises the political sense of vast numbers of completely illiterate cultivators) the adult literate minority of males, seventeen per cent., amounts to a considerably greater body, and one far better fitted to judge of the needs of India, than the British electorate which chooses the Party, which chooses the Prime Minister, who chooses the Secretary of State for India, who controls the Viceroy, who despotically controls India—the house John Bull built.

It is certain that, provided no Revolution is successful, neither Indian co-operators nor British sympathisers will effect any rapid change from a British to an Indian basis of government. But this goal is unavoidable. It is binding on British honour not merely to be content to allow events to bring it about, but ardently to seek it. The Queen's Proclamation of 1858, all but sixty years previous to the Montague pronouncement on Dominion Status, promised equality of treatment to Indians in appointments, but no one pretends that this has been carried out. The demand for equality, the recognition of its justice, the promise to fulfil the demand, and the failure to fulfil the promise—that is the constantly recurring motif of the last fifty years, as Dr. Zacharias points out. The White Paper Constitution of this year grants an added measure of responsibility —at the somewhat sinister insistence of the Indian Princes

—to Indians, responsibility of the Central Executive to the Central Legislature, as already in Diarchy the Provincial Executives are responsible to their respective Legislatures. But still the Constitution reserves great, and greatly expansible, subjects—Defence and Foreign Policy—to the Viceroy, and the Executive retains full Emergency Powers. This might work. Diarchy worked moderately well until Lord Reading certified the Salt Taxes in 1923 at Sir Basil Blackett's insistence. Indeed, nothing is more striking in the long annals of Indian agitation than the constant readiness of Indians to co-operate with the British even under the shadow of humiliating precautions, provided that these precautions are kept in the background, provided that, to all intents and purposes, the British regard Indians as fellow-workers with them, desiring the same things. There have been happy periods when conditions seemed favourable to the development of this kind of co-operation—the Catholic Lord Ripon's Viceroyalty, the early days of Congress, the Crewe-Hardinge Administration, the first years of Diarchy, part of Lord Irwin's Viceroyalty. It is a very hopeful sign that where trust on the British side has been shown—a readiness for partnership—Indian co-operation has been immediate. Of equal importance, though equally spasmodic, has been the development of Hindu-Moslem co-operation, in both social and political life.

It would be unprofitable to discuss the White Paper Constitution in detail. It will work—if created—if it is meant to work—if Princes and Moslems are not encouraged to counterbalance or even control the aspirations of the enormous Hindu majority. The complexity of Indian customs, races, languages and religion present fantastic difficulties to the development of a uniform organ of government. That someone has presented a scheme is, in itself, good. The next task is to make British and Indian electorates understand each other's ideals—efficiency on one side, independence on the other.

The problems attendant upon a British policy of gradual abdication of India are obvious—could an all-Indian gov-

ernment defend India; could it prevent Hindu-Moslem rivalries from disrupting the internal life of the country; could it turn the great forces latent in the populace to construction? It seems at least likely that, shortly, an all-Indian government could accomplish these tasks at least as well as can the present régime: the present army numbers only 158,000 men, and could not protect the sub-continent from a great invasion; in the past Hindu-Moslem co-operation has been striking and may, under wise leadership, become intensely important again (Christianity may here play a vital part); and the success of such leaders as Gandhi in producing the Swaraj and Swadeshi movements, together with the philanthropic movements that Dr. Zacharias enumerates at the beginning of his book, promise well for the positive achievements of an Indian régime. The Briton's disbelief in Indian capacity to rule has several bases; he personally knows the excitability, the instability, of individual Indians; he has seen dishonest and inefficient administration on their part; their high-pitched, whining insistence in argument intensely irritates the British temper, as does their attibution of every British blunder to diabolic ingenuity. But these characteristics would not seem to such Britons as think our nation Heaven-born rulers, to justify our seizing and holding certain South American republics whose political capacity is no higher than that of India. It is the addition of colour that prejudices our judgment about our own great dependency. But, once more, it is useless to impose control upon a determined minority; it is more than undignified to delay promised concessions; the duty of the British Raj is ' the lifting of India from the level of a Dependency to the position which is bound one day to be hers, if it is not so already, namely, that of the greatest partner in the Empire.' Whose words are these? Not E. S. Montagu's, not Lord Irwin's but, a quarter of a century ago, Lord Curzon's. We should remember India's greatness; it is not the greatness of efficiency, the greatness of mechanical progress, but one of spiritual values, of an age-old culture based on religion and

the soil; we shall not quickly impose upon such a vast and old community alien virtues or eradicate ancient vices; Hinduism, the curse of the one and cause of the other, will only be cleansed from within; to ask Father Thames to cleanse Mother Ganges would be like trying to make a churchman from a Churchill.

There is no need to end this article pessimistically. Vast and acute as are its problems, India offers to the thinker great encouragement. The agitation against British rule has been, and is, violent; but there are great numbers of Indians who, like Dr. Zacharias, regard it as inevitable that the British connection, the inspiration of so much Indian reform and progress, should remain. ' Quis separabit? ' he concludes. Indeed, the co-operation of the two races might form an invaluable bridge between the cultures of East and West. Again, Mr. Gandhi's Khadi policy—to recover Indian economic self-sufficiency by restoring the use of the home spinning-wheel—is in many ways stupid, but does at least restore one of the bases of human life, manual labour and personal creation and does tend to the re-creation of Indian culture dislocated by the arrival of Western industrialism. To the Catholic especially the predominantly Hindu basis of Indian civilisation is tantalising; constantly he catches glimpses of the naturally Christian soul breaking through dead accretions, the soul longing unconsciously for its true home. The monasteries like the Gurukul founded by the Arya Samaj; the enormous devotion of the Hindu world and the strictly religious origin of the caste system; even the names of Hindus, as beautiful as their clothing (Animananda, or Bliss-in-Littleness, or the little girl called Harji, God, so that her parents, when calling her, always called upon the name of God)—all these are evidence of a soul which, were the life of Christ to be fully presented to it, might well embrace the whole Catholic system with gladness. What is more, the old fundamental scandal of Christianity for the Hindu, the sacrifice of the Cross, is disappearing before the influence of the heroic, if misdirected, example of Mahatma Gandhi, whom Christi-

anity has strongly influenced through Protestantism. His self-sacrifice constantly produces emulation, as in the picketing of liquor-shops by, and consequent arrest of, girls straight from Purdah, recorded in Dr. Zacharias' book on p. 264. There is a new spirit stirring in Hinduism, in India. The Catholic may well hope that there also God, who has so wonderfully created all things, will still more wonderfully restore.

P. D. FOSTER.

SONG

I will come to a green country
When the wild bees sing
In the drift of the damson orchard's blossoming:
    Home to a green country
    Where the wild bee fills
The valleys so full of his song
That it runs up the hills.

I will come to a green country
    When the April rain
Wakens the gnarled old thorns
    On the Clee again;
Home to a green country
    When April fills
The brooks with a silver that runs
    From the heart of the hills.

There is none on the gay green earth
    So glad as he
Who returns with the spring to the land
    Of Severn and Clee:
Home to a green country
    In a joy that fills
The valleys up to the brim,
And breaks in the heart of him,
    And runs over the hills.

H. F. LEEKE.