

THE DAILY PROVINCE

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THE EMPIRE OF INDIA

I. The Great Unrest

By FREDERIC J. HASKIN.

Calcutta, India, June 10.—The people of India are discontented. All over this vast empire there is a disturbed condition of affairs which has come to be known as “the unrest.” This unrest has found its expression in the serious and respectful protests of leading Indian statesmen, in the solemn resolutions of the Indian national congress, in the boycott of English-made goods, in the pistols of assassins and in the bombs and infernal machines of Indian anarchists. The British government has met the protests and demands of the sober-Indian public with important concessions looking toward self-government in what is known as Lord Morley’s reform scheme. It has met the violence of the extreme fanatics with stern measures of repression.

It is idle to deny the serious condition of affairs in India at the present moment. Hardly a week passes that does not record bomb outrages and attempted assassination. Every newspaper is filled with accounts of trials(?) of rioters and anarchists. Every day the police search the houses of suspected persons, finding and destroying all books, journals, newspapers, or what not that may have the slightest taint of sedition.

The railway trains that run from Calcutta to Barrackpore, a suburb where a great many prominent Englishmen have their homes are guarded night and day by lines of soldiers. Fifteen bombs have been exploded in trains along this line since the unrest began. Singularly enough, not one of the bombs founds its intentional(?)...(illegible word) although several natives were killed and many injured.

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Each outrage is followed by whole-sale arrests of suspected persons, but in the great majority of cases there is no evidence whatever against the prisoners and they are liberated at the preliminary examining trial. Others are taken before the higher courts, but it is very difficult to obtain proof against them, and the only convictions of importance have followed upon the heels of proud and defiant confessions.

It is sometimes said that the unrest is manifested only in the province of Bengal, of which Calcutta is the capital and metropolis. Yet it is true that within the last few weeks riots and bomb outrages have been reported from the very southernmost portion of the peninsula, searches and seizures have occupied the time of the police in every town in the Bombay presidency at the west, the disturbances on the Afghan frontier at the north have become so serious that the Khyber pass has been closed to commerce for an indefinite period. Bengal is the easternmost section of Indian proper, so it is evident that the unrest pervades India from coast to coast and from the mountains to the cape.

English education has reached a greater number of people in Bengal than in any other section of the country, and Bengal has a special grievance on account of the partition of the province by Lord Curzon in 1907(?). Therefore the Bengalese have been more prominent in the revolutionary movement, and the situation is most serious in their province. And this in spite of the fact that Bengal, alone of all the provinces of India, has no complaint to make of the onerous taxes imposed by the British government.

It is now a crime for a Bengalese to sing his national anthem. Bande-mat-aram or Motherland. To shout the name of the song on the street means swift and sure imprisonment. The native newspapers are so watched and hedged about that they hardly dare to express a positive opinion upon any political subject for fear of suppression and punishment for sedition. Public meetings and associations are strictly forbidden and any attempt to hold one would be frustrated by the vigilant police.

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But the police are not equal to the task of coping with a boycott that extends all over India. Clubs and unions in every community and in almost every village have been organized to support the swadeshi movement. That means that they will buy no goods except swadeshi goods—those manufactured in India by Indian labor, or farmers. Although a relatively small percentage of the 250,000,000 people of British India have joined the movement, it has grown to such an extent that English trade with India has suffered immensely. Thus the Indian patriots, for the first time, have the support in parliament of the cotton mills of Lancashire.

This boycott movement has not been confined strictly to the swadeshi clubs, but has led to the discrimination against British-made wares of kinds which India does not produce. German trade in India increased 100 percent, in volume in the 10 years immediately preceding the present era of unrest. In the last four or five years it has been doubled. With the feeling against Germany so strong in England now, this fact is of tremendous importance.

The swaraj movement is a general patriotic political agitation. Swaraj is best translated as the phrase, "India for the Indians." The avowed purpose of swaraj is the unification of the peoples of India, the cessations of the everlasting feud between Mohammedans and Hindus, and the use of every means short of force to compel England to grant a self-governing constitution to the Indian empire.

Both swaraj and swadeshi are manifestations of the great Asiatic renaissance which is now remoulding the whole social and political fabric of the mother continent. The cry of "India for the Indians" has been heard from the lips of a few scholars and officials ever since Queen Victoria promised the Indian people a share in their own government, in her epochal proclamation of 1858.

But it was not until after Japan, an Asiatic nation, had met and defeted one of the most powerful nations of Europe in the greatest war of modern history, that the cry Swaraj burst from the throats of the millions. One of the leading men of India, a Bengal Hindu who has held high office under the

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English and who has been a professor of Oriental history and languages in the universities of England, said: "the plucky stand made by the Japanese against the advance of the terror of Europe—against the bear that had already devoured the heart of Asia—called forth the deepest admiration of every Asiatic. And when that war resulted in victory for the Japanese, every man in Asia felt that a new and brighter day had dawned, and that the long centuries of bondage had come to an end. It gave every Asiatic a sense of pride and self-reliance which he had not possessed before."

Every Indian one meets unhesitatingly and voluntarily declares that the Japanese victory was one of the chief contributing causes of the independent movement in India. With equal unanimity, every Englishman one meets declares that the Russo-Japanese war had nothing whatever to do with the unrest. The native newspapers printed in English are full of the praises of Japan as the leader of the great movement which will make all Asia free. But the Englishmen, except the police inspector, do not read the native press. There are two prominent native daily papers in Calcutta printed in English. They were the first newspaper offices in India to install linotype machines. But the average Englishman doesn't know of their existence except from the comments in his own papers, and it is impossible to find a copy of either for sale in the European section of the city.

It is this English habit of declining to know anything about the natives that has contributed no little to the present unrest. The Englishman is but a bird of passage in India. He comes here to stay three years or five years or ten years. He is always going home is always thinking of home. He looks upon India only as a place from which money may be extracted. He lives with his own people, he knows nothing beyond his club and his sports. He declines to consult the wishes of the Indians either in governmental administration or in business. Therefore he must now face the problem of a great discontent in the political world, and the rapid rise of two great rivals for his trade.

The Germans and the Japanese are crafty merchants. They have gone to the Indians and have asked what the Indians wanted. They have made and sold goods according to the Indian notions and they have never made the

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British mistake of attempting to force English goods of English patterns upon a people who wanted something else. Take the instance of scissors. English scissors are made with the thumb and finger hole of the same size. Indian tailors demanded scissors with a larger aperture for the thumb. The English factory, even upon advice of their agent in India, declined to humor the foolish whim of the absurd barbarian. Whereupon India now buys its scissors from Germany. The British merchant will not change his ideas of business to suit Indian ideas, any more than he will change his woollen underwear and yarn socks to meet the difference between the climates of London and Madras.

The Indian patriots do not wish to secede from the British empire. They know that they would be at the mercy of other great maritime powers were England to withdraw. What they do wish and what they are demanding is autonomy, India aspires to be part of the British empire, not a dependency upon it; a self-governing nation federated with other such nations as Canada, Australia, and South Africa in the great British empire. Until that goal is reached, be it a decade or a century, there will be no cessation of the unrest in India. The Morley reform scheme is accepted as a first installment of the grant of self-government. It will have the effect of quieting the people for a time, but as soon as India believes an opportune moment has arrived to insist upon further concessions, the unrest will manifest itself again.

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