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India, Canada and the Empire

BY THE DIWAN BAHADUR SIR T. VIJAYARAGHAVACHARYA, K.B.E.*

PRESIDENT G. H. SEDGEWICK: Gentlemen, I am told that a distinguished Boston lady was asked how she pronounced Chicago and she said "We never pronounce it." If I don't use the name of our distinguished guest today you will understand that I have been relieved from that obligation—possibly I would not be able to do it. At any rate we are all interested in India and we know very little about it. Our contacts with it are mainly through British or Canadians who have visited there. We are fortunate in having as our guest today the Diwan, who is a native of that country and whose traditions and history are bound up in the history of India. He is to speak to us, not as an outsider, but as one who is familiar with its history, its traditions and aspirations. I am very glad to be able to introduce the Diwan.

THE DIWAN: Mr. President and gentlemen, I am obliged to you for the kind reception you have given me. Before I proceed to say anything about India I think perhaps I may anticipate your wishes if I say something about my impressions of Canada.

I have been through Canada from coast to coast and have had advantages which, perhaps, a casual visitor does not enjoy, by being amongst you during a general election. So that if I tell you about India today I shall have also something to say about Canada when I get back. Well, I have now seen Canada and what I have seen confirms the

*The Diwan, who had held high office in India, had acted as Commissioner for India at Wembley and had opened the Canadian National Exhibition in Toronto, Aug. 26.

impression I formed three weeks ago. It is a wonderful country, a great country, rich in immense possibilities, whose resources are being exploited by an energetic population, but not a fraction of them exhausted.

It is a great Canada in the present, but is going to be a greater Canada in the future. I have been through your great cities. I have been impressed with the old world charm of Quebec, which seems to have walked out of Normandy into a wrong country—I mean, it looks as if a town from Normandy had been planted in a new land. I have been to the west where the western men meet you with a breezy hospitality which reminds me of the frontier tracts of my own country. In ten minutes they size you up and sometimes tell you to your face what they think of you, which is sometimes embarrassing. I had the good luck to be told what they thought of me, but I was not very much embarrassed except, perhaps, by modesty.

I have been very much impressed by the way in which on the prairies the energy of man has turned what was practically a desert into a rose and I have been impressed in British Columbia with the wonderful varieties of possibilities in that one province. It seems to contain enough for a big country. When I looked at the cliffs and coast of Vancouver Island I wondered why it was necessary for Canadians to go at all to the Norwegian coast or the Riviera when there was all the beauty of the European Riviera and the Norwegian fiords in their own country. When you go to Europe you are paying Europe a compliment rather than doing yourselves a service.

More than all I am impressed with Toronto. I have been here just four weeks and it is just as if I had been all my life a citizen of Toronto and paying taxes like the working population. The minute I came to Toronto I felt I was in my own land and that impression has deepened every day. I have been thoroughly at home in Toronto. I believe I am doing no injustice to the other great cities when I say that Toronto is the intellectual capital of Canada, if Ottawa is its political capital. And for a British citizen I cannot conceive of any happier introduction to Canada than the City of Toronto. To sum up my impres-

sion: when I had finished my Canadian tour and returned to Toronto yesterday I felt proud of the fact that I was a British citizen and could claim just as much pride in Canada as any Canadian. I have been proud of my Canadian citizenship and now I have added a cubit to my stature. I am more than ever proud of being a British citizen, more than ever proud of the fact that Canada is one of the great countries of the empire.

Now to turn to India. Perhaps what I say may not be new to many people here, but I saw in the morning papers that Dean Inge has been writing a book and in that he says that the attitude of India in the future will be a great trouble and is extremely doubtful. Coming from India myself I feel that I am in a position to say that the attitude of India is as far from doubt as the attitude of Canada in the next great war.

Doubtless there are troubles; doubtless there are difficulties. Supposing I read, as I have done, in practically all the newspapers of Canada what both sides said during the general election, don't you think that if I just went upon that I should feel some doubt myself about Canada?

If I had gone before the general election finished and the passions aroused by it had cooled down—for they seem to have cooled down very quickly—could I not have imagined that Canada was split into two groups, with a small third part somewhere, and had within its borders two nations quarreling with each other and that whatever party got into power Canada was going to the dogs?

We all live and learn. I have lived now for twelve days after the general election and I see no signs of Canada going to the dogs and I know better than that. I know that newspaper statements and political speeches have got to be taken with a large grain of that useful commodity in my country—salt. I know it is the habit for newspaper writers and politicians, and I lay no blame for that because I myself am one of them, to dwell on the sensational side of things. You know if you buy a newspaper and it says that India is happy and that Canada is happy you are not interested. But when you get a statement like that of Dean

Inge, that is what the people want to read. Otherwise they think they are being cheated of two cents.

Supposing on my return I was asked what was the state of domestic happiness in Canada and I said what I saw in the Canadian newspapers and the reports of the divorce courts, would I be justified in saying that the country seemed to exist in a state of divorce? I know very well that for every six or ten divorces in the courts there are countless thousands of happy marriages in which the husband and wife get on very well and never come to the divorce court, but you never hear of them. Happy is the household with no history.

In the same way you hear of troubles in India, but what of the daily tasks of co-operation in the Legislatures, in the Executive Government, in the municipalities or the judicial bodies, working in harmony, as they have worked all these years? There are many political speeches, many of them made by my fellowcountrymen, from which it is possible that a man who is not familiar with the true inwardness of things, may get an altogether wrong impression. Politics, I suppose, are the same all the world over, whether the politicians are white-skinned, or black-skinned or yellow-skinned. He is apt to ask for twenty things when he really does not want more than four of them and the politician himself will be the most disappointed man if all the requests made on public platforms are granted. It is the same when my countrymen have a sense of grievance now and then and express it strongly and tell you that they are thoroughly dissatisfied and that the only way to end things is to end the present form of Government. But it would be a great mistake to take their words in a literal and serious import. I am reminded in this connection of an incident that happened. It was at the height of the non-co-operation movement. I was the guest of one of the leading non-co-operationists in one of the biggest provinces. Political differences do not interfere with social relationships in India any more than in Canada, and at breakfast, lunch and dinner he poured out his heart to me about his grievance against the Government. When he had finished I asked him. "What is the upshot of all this? Are you so dissatisfied that you

would rather get out of the Empire?" He said, "No. You will be making a big mistake if you think that. We are like children and we feel that the father does not recognize that we are growing up to man's estate. There are quarrels in the household which are apt to be noisy. But if the neighbor overheard things as neighbors are apt to do and if he thought that was a good time for him to break in he would find that father and sons were combined against him."

That is just where Dean Inge makes his mistake. He sees the quarrel with the children and thinks they are going to separate from the father, but he had better wait until the neighbor tries to break in and then he will see the rest of the proposition, with the father and the children combined against the stranger. It was that which happened before the war. Some nations misjudged India and thought it was a good country to rely on in the event of war, but when they went to war in thirty days India was sending an army to the battlefield. And precisely what happened in 1914 would happen again if another war occurred.

There is a large amount of co-operation in India of which outside countries do not hear. In the Central Government of India which is responsible for all the external policy of India and much of the internal government, there are six members, three natives of India and three from England. During all these years they have been co-operating in the most intimate way and there has never been any vital split. It is just the same in the Provinces of India. India is divided into about eleven provinces with provincial governments on the lines of those in Canada. In all the provincial governments the natives of India generally outnumber by two to one the Englishmen in the Government. These provincial governments get on and have got on quite well during all the non-co-operation movement. Then take our judicial system. In India we have what we call chartered high courts. Each province has a high court established under the charter from the King. On these you generally have about a dozen judges, six Indians and six Englishmen. These people work together and administer the law, familiar to you, the basis of which is the Anglo-Saxon jurisprudence.

And the Indian judges, if anything, are a little more British than the British themselves. You have never heard that these courts quarreled or ceased to function on account of non-co-operation. The fact is we hear of unusual occurrences and difficulties, but outside of India you don't know of the daily acts of co-operation without which the government of a country of 320,000,000 would be impossible. But the government of the country has gone on with English and Indians co-operating and I feel perfectly certain that in future it will function just as in the past.

You might ask: What is it that binds an alien population so distinct in its origin, traditions, customs and civilization from the British type, to be proud members of the British Empire? The answer is simply that India knows just as history knows that human wisdom has not yet devised a more democratic institution than the British Empire. Doubtless we don't proclaim, as other empires or countries do, the doctrines of equality and fraternity. We don't even say that under our laws the citizens are equal and that the King is bound to carry out what parliament wishes. We don't proclaim aloud the doctrine of equality—but we practise it. And India knows, every citizen knows, that under British laws as administered during the last two hundred years his rights and privileges so far as the individual are concerned are as safe as they are in England or Canada.

The Indian citizen knows that to him the Magna-Charta is as applicable and as important a constitutional document as to Englishmen living in London or Canada. When the barons at Runnymede extracted from an unwilling king the Magna Charta they probably thought they were ensuring the rights of a few millions of English people. They did not know that they were building very much farther and that the great document which came into being that day would be the birthright not only of the millions in England's vast possessions, but also of 320,000,000 Asiatics living in India.

India knows that whatever may be her difficulties with regard to her constitutional position—it may be, in fact, that there is a section in my own country who believe constitutional progress is not sufficiently rapid—her right and

title to complete dominion self-government is assured. That is the declared policy of the parliament of Great Britain—to give India dominion home rule. A partial form is already in operation and India knows very well that in a few years complete home rule is coming. It is waiting not because Great Britain is unwilling, but because in a big country like India you have to prepare a policy for the exercise of large political rights. India realizes that the British Empire is not an empire of the familiar type, with a master state ruling subject states, but an empire of equal nations and the Indian citizen who travels abroad feels a glow of pride, just as I have done, to travel fifteen thousand miles from India and still be in British territory.

I was in Victoria and the streets and little lanes reminded me of Surrey and it took me some time to realise that I was not in England and I felt proud of the fact that I was a British citizen. I cannot see in history any case, except that of the Roman citizen, where there was so much legitimate cause for pride and what is more important we have a pride which the Roman citizen had not. We feel that to us England is a mother country dear to us but that England is on the same level as we are and that we are not subjects. We are British subjects, subjects of the King, but the equal of the subjects living in England.

When I go back to India, therefore, I shall go back with my faith in the British Empire strengthened and deepened. I shall go back with the assured feeling that the future greatness of Canada, as that of India, is bound up with the future of the Empire. I feel that for all of us, however much we may burn with patriotic pride and however much we may want to see Canada, or India raised, the greatness of our countries is bound up with that of England. We feel that we are not little Canadians here, not little Indians, but subjects of a mighty Empire of which we are all proud to be subjects and which, God willing, everyone of us shall see is maintained and strengthened in the future as in the past.

I see Dean Inge speaks of a future dark for the British Empire and foresees the time when the British Empire will cease to be a dominant force as it is today. Well, as one coming from the East, several thousands of miles away,

I feel that no prophecy has been more misconceived. I feel that the resources of British statesmanship are not exhausted. I feel that England has had a glorious career in the past, but I believe we are entering the era of a still more glorious future. Dean Inge reiterates the great burden of Empire laid upon England and he feels that British statesmanship may not be equal to it. He forgets that at the council board of the Empire it is not a question of British statesmanship, but of Canadian statesmanship, of Australian statesmanship, of New Zealand statesmanship, of Indian statesmanship, and so long as we can hold together I think the British Empire is going to be as proud of the future as of the past.

The future of the British Empire does not rest, as Dean Inge says, on the statesmen of one country. It rests with everyone here; with all British subjects in Canada, in India, in Australia, in the Empire the world over; and it will not be Great Britain's fault alone, but your fault and my fault if the future of the Empire is not as glorious as the past.

I am glad I came to Canada because if I had not come and had read this prophecy of Dean Inge in India I might have felt some dismay, but having seen, in spite of superficial evidence there may be to the contrary, that the real heart of Canada beats with the British Empire, as that of India does; having seen the boundless resources of this country, I feel that there is no fear of the future of the Empire. I feel that Canada, Australia, New Zealand, India are all there round England. Doubtless there are troubles in the European world, but if the children will only stand true to the father and gather round in time of trouble there can be no reason why we should not emerge in the way we emerged from our troubles in 1914.

I see in my mind's eye a Canada with a population perhaps in the next twenty or fifty years of one hundred millions. I see the resources with which God has so lavishly endowed her being exploited by this population; and who can set the limits to her greatness? Have we any doubt as to the future of the Empire? Coming from the oldest civilization of the East I feel no doubt as to the future and I ask you, do you feel any doubt? I ask, Are we downhearted? I say, No. Shall we win? Rather!