

(December 15th, 1915.)

India and the War.

By MR. RUSTOM RUSTOMJEE.*

AT a meeting of the Club held on the 15th December, Mr. Rustomjee said:

Mr. President and Fellow Citizens of the British Empire. (Applause.)—"Breathes there a man"—or woman—"with soul so dead," who has not thrilled with enthusiasm at the spectacle of the unity and determination of the whole British Empire to once and for all wipe out of existence the terrible curse of militarism which has threatened the peace of Europe the last forty years, and to establish peace and the permanent existence of the small nations of the earth? (Applause.)

Gentlemen, never did I feel so proud of the British Empire as I feel now in these days of distress and disaster. A great American is reported to have cried out at the time of the American Revolution, "Give me liberty, or give me death!" It seems to me, gentlemen, that the whole British Empire with one voice and one heart has cried out, "Give me honor and liberty, or give me death!" (Hear, hear and applause.) For it is more glorious to die the death, righteous and faithful, fighting the battles of the weak against the strong, than to live a life of ignominy and shame, the life which shirks the duty of fulfilling promises once given and of honor once pledged.

The almost prophetic words which the late Professor Cramb uttered at Cambridge a few years ago are still ringing in my ears, "Faithful to her past, in conflict for this high cause, if Great Britain fall, she will fall as the hero of the Iliad fell, doing something memorable!" (Applause.) I am also proud of my country India, and the part she is playing in this crisis of World's history. India is doing her duty nobly; she is fighting the battles of the weak nations of the earth, as you have already been told, in Mesopotamia, in Egypt, in East Africa, in China, in France and in Flanders. But that isn't enough, behind the serried ranks of one of the finest armies of the world stands India to a man! (Applause.)

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And she will stand there till the enemies of civilization and liberty and progress are beaten to death!

Gentlemen, I don't think I am revealing any official secrets when I say that we have sent out from India more than three hundred thousand troops to all parts of the world. But we can send out millions of men and tons of gold (hear, hear and applause) if Great Britain can train and equip our men, utilize our means, and accept our sacrifice on the altar of duty and humanity! (Applause.)

Before I proceed further with my remarks about India and the War, let me just say a few words about the community, the Parsees of India, to which I have the honor to belong. About two years ago I had the privilege of talking with Colonel Roosevelt in New York. Mr. Roosevelt, or Col. Roosevelt, cracked us up to the seventh heaven and then he turned to me and said, "Rustomjee, I have failed to find any Parsees in the army; they are cowards, they don't fight!" I asked the ex-President of the United States of America, "Do you know the reason why not a single Parsee is returned as a soldier in the census reports of India?" He replied, "It must be for the foolish reason of their considering fire to be sacred." Gentlemen, that is not the true reason. Their reasons are that the Parsees are a commercial and industrial people. Even in self-defence they did not take up arms against their enemies since the Persian army was defeated at the battle of Nahavend in 670 A.D. But what has happened? The Parsees have organized a corps of Parsee volunteers; and now they are fighting side by side with Canadians, British, English, Scotch and Irish! (Applause.) For the last decade or more it was the widespread belief everywhere that India was seditious, that India was disloyal, that India was discontented. Teutonic statesmen and strategists relied upon a revolution in India as one of the diversions that would complicate the military situation of England should she be plunged into a huge war. There were not wanting prophets in America, and even in Canada, who prophesied things of evil concerning my country, so as soon as the war clouds began to gather upon the horizon of England one of the leading newspapers in Boston declared that India was an uncertain factor in the British Empire, that she was liable to revolt at any moment. Gentlemen, never for one moment did I fear such dire calamity, a calamity not so much to Great Britain as to India herself! (Applause.)

This misapprehension was due in some measure to articles written and speeches made by an American statesman who,

without having the most elementary knowledge of the history of India, both ancient and modern, condemned the British Government of my country. I will not mention his name but I hope to deal with that gentleman to-morrow night before the American Club of Toronto. (Applause.)

To enable you to understand the present attitude of the princes and people of India, let me very briefly describe to you the political position of the peoples of India before the storm burst in Europe. Being a continent with a variegated and tessellated humanity numbering more than three hundred and fifteen millions of people, with diverse forms of government, one cannot deal with India as a political unity. It is composed of several sets of people with different ideas, ideals, aspirations and ambitions.

First of all come the seven hundred Indian princes, who rule, some quite independently, some only nominally, more than sixty-five millions of people. Well, gentlemen, these princes of India have never swerved to the right or to the left from their devotion and loyalty to the British Crown ever since its power was consolidated in 1857. (Applause.)

The next important element in the Indian population is the seething mass of Indian agriculturists, numbering more than two hundred millions of people. Their loyalty has been proverbial; in fact, most of them are ignorant though intelligent, they don't know or care to know as to who governs them; and as long as their rulers are kind and sympathetic, they don't trouble their heads with what at best is a very complex problem.

The seventy-two million Mohammedans form the third important factor in the Indian populace. Through all the period of stress and storm through which India was passing a few years ago, when there were clouds sailing in the skies and the atmosphere was surcharged with the electricity of sedition and anarchy, not a single Mohammedan was found guilty of disaffection or disloyalty towards the British Government. (Applause.)

But I believe the most important constituent of the Indian population is the rapidly growing number of educated Indians. They are divided into two parties, the Constitutionalists or Moderates, and the Extremists or Nationalists. The former are strong and influential. The first article of their creed is that they believe in the permanence of British sovereignty in India, and their programme of work is the gradual improvement of the administration, and the greater employment of the sons of the soil in judicial and executive administration.

The Nationalists form a microscopic minority of educated Brahmins who were clamoring for Home Rule in India.

This, then, gentlemen, was the political position of the princes and people of India before the war broke out. But to be loyal to the British administration in India was one thing; to be enthusiastic in support of Great Britain's cause in Europe was quite another. How do I account for this magnificent enthusiasm, this response, this sacrifice of men and money which India has made willingly to uphold the honor, the integrity, and the dignity of the British Empire?

Here again different kinds of motives have actuated different sets of people. His Highness the Maharajah of Bikanir said to a representative of the *London Times*, that the peace, integrity and security of their State was secured to them by British pledges and the united determination of the Sovereign and the peoples of Britain and the Dominions to stand by their obligation to Belgium, no matter at what sacrifice, was yet a further guarantee of the maintenance of the integrity of their own State. (Applause.) The high standard of international morality accepted and enforced by the King and people of Great Britain and the Dominions is the motive that actuated the princes of India to make any and every sacrifice to maintain the honor and integrity of the British Empire. And verily great are the sacrifices the Princes of India are making in all the theatres of war.

The teeming masses of India know well, are convinced, that the downfall of the British Empire would bring about the restoration of chaos, anarchy, famine and disease which prevailed before British power was established in the country. Gentlemen, never should it be forgotten that before the Union Jack was unfurled in India, within a single generation one hundred dynasties grew up, flourished, and were forgotten; every year there were scores of conspiracies, threatened revolutions; meanwhile a rapid succession of foreign invaders passed over the land; a Persian invader penetrated to Delhi, and carried back the priceless treasures of the House of Akhan. The Afghans followed the same path. The Jats established themselves on the Jumnoe. The Sikhs devastated Lahore. Every part of India saw the people ground down by oppressors within and menaced by oppressors without. They were spoiled by the robbers, from whom the Nawabs were unable to protect them, and by the Nawabs themselves, who took whatever the robbers had left to them. All the evils of despotism and anarchy pressed upon that miserable race. They knew nothing of government but its

intolerable burdens. Desolation was in their cities, famine on the banks of the broad rivers,—that was the condition of India before 1857, what is it now? Gentlemen, if I were to describe fully the monument Great Britain has erected in India, the Canadian Club of Toronto would have to supply you with dinner and supper, and you would have to sing with me, "We won't go home till morning!" (Laughter and applause.)

You know the monument erected by Sir Christopher Wren in St. Paul's, where the inscription is placed, "Si monumentum requiris, circumspice!" "If you seek his monument, look around!" (Applause.) Great Britain, using the closing words of the American Constitution to describe her, has "established justice, insured domestic tranquility, provided for the common defence, promoted the general welfare, and secured the blessings of liberty to ourselves and our posterity," this Great Britain has done. But these are well known things, and are written in excellent books, where he who runs, and is not blinded by prejudice or poisoned by prepossessions, can read.

What are the civil rights of an Indian who is a subject of the British Crown? Though he hails from one of what is called, but falsely called, a dependency,—if he goes to Great Britain, he does not need to be naturalized; all he needs is to acquire the necessary qualifications imposed upon the citizens of that country. He can sit—he has sat—in the House of Commons; he can enter British Universities; he can compete in the Civil Service examinations; he can be made—he has been made—a member of the Council of the Secretary of State for India; he can become a member of the Judicial Board of the Privy Council of Great Britain. His rights in the Overseas Dominions are a different matter, upon which I shall not now touch. (Laughter.) I shall just say this that the large majority of educated Indians, the sober, thoughtful men, the leaders realize fully, gentlemen, the enormous difficulties that confront the British Colonial administrators all over the world (hear, hear); they appreciate the difficulties of assimilating socially, biologically, economically, any large number of Indians into the body politic of the Overseas Dominions. But, gentlemen, I am not in hopeless despair; I believe that after the war a solution will be found, can be found, and must be found! (Hear, hear and applause.) I believe in the wisdom, experience, justice, sympathy and fair play of the British administrators all over the world. And I can safely leave the destiny of India, and the future

of the emigrants from India to the different colonies, in their hands. (Applause.) In the meantime, I would beg of you, do not judge of India and the Indians, of India, the true India, the silent and much maligned India, the loyal India, the India of history, by a few who have sold their birthright for a mess of pottage, and who are trying to stir up bad blood between the citizens of British India and the Britons overseas! (Applause.)

The position of India in the British Empire is unique. I shall have an opportunity to show you what part India has played in the structure of the British Empire. What does India mean to the Empire, and what does the Empire mean to India? For I verily believe, gentlemen, that unless it can be brought into vital relation with the rest of the Empire, deriving strength from and communicating strength to it, its connection with the Empire will be only transitory and will not endure, and there cannot be any great permanency for the Empire. (Hear, hear.) In spite of the so-called Holy War proclaimed by the kaliph of Turkey, the Mohammedans of India have rallied around the flag of Great Britain. Gentlemen, the Mohammedans of India are but men, with hearts that feel, brains that think; they know that as long as the Union Jack floats over India they are free to enjoy the blessings of freedom; but as soon as it is hauled down, they are liable to be swamped by the teeming millions of the Hindus of India.

Let me say one word about the Turks. It seems, gentlemen, that Abdul Hamid, when he was Sultan, was a better statesman than the Young Turks. Abdul Hamid, always dangled the sword of Jehah over the Christian nations of Europe, but he never unsheathed it, knowing that it was bound to prove a very rusty weapon. The Young Turks unsheathed it, and the worst fears of the old Sultan were realized. The Jihad has turned out to be a miserable fiasco.

We educated Indians believe that this war is a conflict of two ideals, the ideal of autocracy and the ideal of freedom. The educated Indians are convinced that this struggle, which is commonly regarded as between oligarchic Germany and democratic England, is really a struggle between a self-constituted State and a God-made people, and all principles, all morals are weighed in the balance. But what constitutes a State?

"Men who their duties know,
But know their rights, and, knowing,
Dare maintain."

So sang the poet of England, so the educated people of India believe, but what says the guide of Germany? This: "States do not rise out of peoples' sovereignty. They are created against the will of the people. The State is the power of the stronger race which established itself."

Mr. Tilak, who was sentenced to prison twice for preaching sedition and was released, a few weeks before the war broke out, was head of the revolutionary party in India. At the outbreak of the war he made a speech which thrilled India from sea to sea.

Another great Nationalist said:—

"We may have our differences of government, and what people have not, but in the presence of a common enemy be it Germany or any other power, we sink our differences, forget our quarrels, close up our ranks, and offer all that we possess in the defence of the Empire to which we belong and with which the prosperity of this country is bound up."

Let me answer just one question, taking one or two minutes more. (Cries of "Go on!") What is to be the future of India? When I came to this country, one of the New York papers said: "A Parsee has come from India to teach his religion." The Boston ladies thought that I was a fortune teller. (Laughter.) At the Nova Scotia border I was held up as a spy, a Turkish spy! (Laughter.) The Mayor had to come to my rescue. But no one has ever called me a prophet; I never ventured to prophesy. And I will not venture to prophesy now. I believe:

"There is a Divinity that shapes our ends,
Rough hew them how we will."

When the fulness of time comes, there will be greater co-operation between the units, a closer bond without bondage. Then there will be Imperial Federation of a real sort, when Canadians will sit side by side with Sikhs—not the kind you think of, such as you see at Vancouver, but the real Sikhs (laughter)—Boers with Scotch, Irishmen with Englishmen, to manage the affairs of the British Empire. (Applause.) Gentlemen, I have a higher vision, a greater hope, for the British Empire: if the British Empire were to end to-morrow, I don't think it should be ashamed, for it has done its duty to India. (Applause.) But it is not going to end! (Applause.) It is not a moribund organism; it is not afflicted with fatty degeneration of the heart! I do not think that Great Britain's work is done, or drawing to a close. (Hear, hear.) On the contrary, as the years roll by, her work

will be more majestic, her goal more sublime. I believe the power of Great Britain in the world will be greater, the peoples of the Empire more united. Let no man admit craven fear of the decline of Great Britain; that is not my reading of history, it is not my forecast of the future. To me the message is carved in granite, and hewn in the rocks, that Great Britain's work is righteousness, and it will endure! (Applause.)

"The tumult and the shouting dies,
The captains and the kings depart:
Still stands Thine ancient sacrifice
A humble and a contrite heart.
Lord God of Hosts! Be with us yet!
Lest we forget! Lest we forget!"

Mr. Rustomjee's address was followed by long and hearty applause, and the audience broke out in three cheers and a tiger for the speaker, then bursting into the singing of the National Anthem, marking one of the most patriotic demonstrations at any meeting of the Canadian Club.
