

John Morley on Great Problems of India

An Illuminating Speech by the Great Scholar and Statesman—He Defines His Scheme of Reform—A Guarded Expansion of Recognized Principles—Repression Hatful But Necessary—The Opening of a New Chapter.

The House of Lords met on Dec. 18 to hear Lord Morley's statement on the Government of India. There was a large attendance of peers and the space allotted to members of the House of Commons was full. Viscount Morley, of Blackburn, was received with general cheers on rising to make a statement on the proposals of the Government of India and to present papers. He said: My lords, I feel that I owe a very sincere apology to the House for the disturbance of the business arrangements of the House of which I have been the cause, though the innocent cause. It has been said that by the delays in bringing forward this subject I have been anxious to bring discussion. That is not in the least true. (Cheers.) The reasons which have made it seem to me desirable that the discussion on this most important and far-reaching range of topics should be postponed were, I believe the House will agree with me, reasons of common sense. In the first place, discussion without any body having seen the papers to be discussed would evidently have been ineffective. In the second place, it would have been impossible to discuss those papers with good effect—the papers which I am going this afternoon to present to Parliament—until we knew, at all events in some degree, what their reception had been in the country most immediately concerned. And then, thirdly, I cannot but apprehend that discussion here—I mean in Parliament—would be calculated to prejudice the reception in India of the proposals which the Government of India and His Majesty's Government agree to make. I submit that those are three very sensible reasons why discussion, in my view, and I hope in the view of the House, should be postponed. (Hear, hear.) This afternoon your lordships will be presented with a very modest blue book, but I should like to promise, noble lords, that tomorrow morning there will be ready for the perusal of members on the same subject of a size so enormous that the most voracious or even carnivorous appetite for blue books will have ample opportunity for augmenting their joys of the Christmas holidays. (Laughter.)

THE OPENING OF A NEW CHAPTER.

The observations which I shall ask your lordships to allow me to make are the opening of a very important chapter in the history of the relations of Great Britain and India, and I shall ask the indulgence of the House to take a little time in not so much discussing the contents of the papers, which the House will be able to do for itself by and by, as in indicating the general spirit that animates my noble friend, the Viceroy, and myself, His Majesty's Government here, in making the proposals which I shall in a moment describe. I suppose, like other secretaries of state for India, I found my first idea was to have what they used to have in the old days—a Parliamentary committee to inquire into Indian government. I see that a predecessor of mine in the India office, Lord Randolph Churchill, who was there for too short a time in 1885, had very strongly conceived that idea. On the whole I think there is a great deal at the present day to be said against that idea, and therefore what I have done was, at the instigation of and in concert with the members of the House, first to open the chapter of constitutional reform, and next to appoint a royal commission to inquire into the internal relations between the Government of India and all its subordinate parts. This I have done, and I believe, in February or March next—February, I hope—and that again will involve both the Government of India and the India office in Whitehall and Parliament in pretty laborious and arduous inquiries. It ought not to be expected that an act passed as the great act of 1858 was passed, amidst great excitement and very disturbing circumstances, should have been in existence for half a century and its operation should be left for supervision. I spoke of delay in these observations, and unfortunately delay has not made the skies any brighter. But do not let us make the Indian sky cloudier than it really is. Do not let us consider the clouds to be darker than they are. Let us look—I invite your lordships to look—at the difficulties, considerable difficulties, even formidable difficulties which now confront us in India with a due sense of proportion. I could give no better example which I would wish members of this House or any other House to imitate than what I venture to call the intrepid coolness of Lord Minto. (Cheers.)

THE ANARCHIST OUTRAGE.

Now, what is the state of things as it appears to a person of authority and ample knowledge in India. One very important friend of mine in India says this: "The anarchists are few. On the other hand, they are apparently prepared to go any length and run any risk. It must also be borne in mind that the ordinary man or lad in India has not too much courage, and the loyal are terrorized by ruthless extremists." It is a curious incident that on the very day before the attempt to assassinate Sir Andrew Fraser Sir Andrew made an inspection of the college in which the would-be assassin was educated, and his reception was most enthusiastic and spontaneous. My only mention that to show the curiously unsettled atmosphere in which things now are in Calcutta. This is not the occasion for developing the matter, but I would add from the correspondent of mine:

the policy of reform, and I put two plain questions to your lordships. I am asked all the retrograde commonplaces about the weakness of Congress to violence and so on. But preserving in our plan of reform is not a concession of violence. The reforms that we have publicly announced, adopted and worked out for more than two years—its policy of non-violence is to persist in these reforms. It is simply standing to your guns. (Cheers.) A gentleman, of whom I wish to speak with all respect, addressed to me a very courteous letter to the House exhorting me to remember that Oriental countries inevitably and invariably interpret kindness as fear. The Founder of Christianity arose in an Oriental country, and when I am told that Orientals always mistake kindness for fear I can only say I don't believe it. Though I am not an Oriental I don't believe a word of it, any more than I believe the strange saying of Carlyle that "the Christian question between any two human beings is 'Can I kill thee or canst thou kill me?' (Laughter.) I don't believe that either the Oriental or Western society at any age in the world ever subsisted upon either of these principles. The question is always a mistake or that brutality is always the true test of the relations between human beings.

TWO ALTERNATIVE COURSES.

Now to my main questions. There are two alternative courses. We can either withdraw our reforms or we can persevere with them. Of these two courses which would be the most flagrant sign of weakness—to hold steadily on to your policy despite bombs, or to let yourself be openly forced by bombs and murder clubs to drop your policy? My noble friend is this. Who would be best pleased if I were to announce to your lordships tonight that the Government were determined to drop reform? I will tell you. It is notorious that the major part of the policy behind the law would be the extremists and the irreconcilables, and for the best reasons—because they know very well that for us to do anything to soften the ordinary power under the law to place in the hands of an executive government; but I said to myself, and I say now, that I decline to take out of the hands of the Government of India any weapon they have got in circumstances so uncommon, obscure, and impenetrable as are the circumstances that surround the British Government in India.

TWO PATHS OF FOLLY.

There are two paths of folly in these matters. One is to regard all Indian matters, procedure and policy as if they were in Great Britain or Ireland, and to insist that all the robes and apparel that suit Great Britain or Ireland must necessarily suit India. That is one path of folly. The other is to conceive that all you have got to do is to do what I have suggested, or my amazement, in print—to blow a certain number of men from the guns, and that then your business will be done. Each of these paths of folly leads to disaster, and much as the other I would like to say this about the summary jurisdiction bill. I have no illusions whatever. I do not ignore the frightful risks involved in transferring and altering what ought to be the ordinary power under the law to a power of arbitrary repression. I am alive, too, to the temptations under summary procedures of various kinds. I am alive to the danger of mistaking a headlong excess of force for a headlong excess of justice. I do not for an instant forget the tremendous price you pay for all operations of this sort in the reaction and excitement that it provokes. If there is a man who knows all these drawbacks I think I am one of them. But there are situations in which a responsible government is compelled to run these risks and to pay this possible price, however high it may appear to be. It is, like war, a hateful thing, from which, however, one of the most ardent lovers of peace and some of those rulers of the world the names of whom the most earnest lovers of peace most honor and reverence is one of the things from which the ordinary man shrinks, and the only question for us is whether there is such a situation in India today as to justify the passing of the act the other day, and to justify the resort to the regulation of 1818.

SUMMARY PROCEDURE JUSTIFIED.

I cannot imagine anybody reading the speeches and the list of crimes perpetrated and attempted to be perpetrated read out last Friday in Calcutta—I cannot conceive anybody reading that list and thinking what they stand for and doubting for a single moment that summary procedure of some kind was justified, justified and called for. I see abroad a tendency to criticize this legislation on grounds that strike me as extraordinary. After all, it is not our fault that we have had to bring in this measure. You must protect peaceful and harmless people, both Indian and European, from bloodshed and havoc of anarchy and conspiracy. I say, what everybody in the House would say, that I deplore this necessity, but we are bound to face the facts. I myself recognize this necessity with infinite regret and with something, perhaps, rather deeper than regret, but it is not the Government, either here or in India, who are the authors of this necessity, and I do not at all mind, if it is not impertinent and unbecoming for me to say so, standing up in another place and saying exactly what I have said here—that I approve of these proceedings and will do my best to support the Government of India. (Applause.)

REFORMS TO BE PERSISTED IN.

But now a very important question arises for which I will ask for a moment the close attention of your lordships, because I am sure that both here and elsewhere it will be argued that the necessity and the facts which cause the necessity of the bringing forward strong repressive machinery should arrest our policy of reform. That has been stated, and I dare say many people would agree. The Government of India and myself have from the very first beginning of this unsettled state of things been varied in our determination to persevere in

the plan or the contents of those papers in any kind of detail. I think you will find, a well-guarded expansion of principles, that were recognized in the year 1861, and still more directly and closely connected with us now by the Marquis of Lansdowne in 1892. That is what the noble Marquis said in 1892, and it is really as much the key to the papers as it was the policy of the noble Marquis and the Government of that day. He said: "We hope we have succeeded in giving to our proposals for legislative councils a satisfactory advance in the other day exhorting me to remember that Oriental countries inevitably and invariably interpret kindness as fear. The Founder of Christianity arose in an Oriental country, and when I am told that Orientals always mistake kindness for fear I can only say I don't believe it. Though I am not an Oriental I don't believe a word of it, any more than I believe the strange saying of Carlyle that "the Christian question between any two human beings is 'Can I kill thee or canst thou kill me?' (Laughter.) I don't believe that either the Oriental or Western society at any age in the world ever subsisted upon either of these principles. The question is always a mistake or that brutality is always the true test of the relations between human beings."

Now I pass to the plan contained in the dispatches, the dispatch from the governor-general and my reply. There will be in your lordships' hands very shortly. I don't think I need go

what you are beginning to consider today, is the opening of a great chapter in the history of British responsibility to India. (Cheers.)

REFORMING THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCILS.

There are only a small but distinguished handful of gentlemen in this House who understand the details of Indian administration, but I will explain them as shortly as I can. This is the list of the powers we shall have to acquire from Parliament when we bring in the bill. I may say that we do not propose to bring in the bill this session; it would be idle. But I propose to bring in a bill next year. This is the first power we shall take from Parliament. At present the maximum and minimum numbers of the legislative councils are fixed by statute. We shall come to Parliament to authorize an increase in the number of members, both the Viceroy's council and the provincial councils. Second: Members are now nominated by the head of the Government, either the viceroy or the lieutenant-governor. No election takes place. In and to pass recommendations or resolutions by the viceroy upon the recommendation by a majority of voters of certain public bodies. We do not propose to ask Parliament to abolish nomination. We do propose to ask Parliament to give a very definite way to introduce election working alongside of nomination with a view to the aim admitted in all previous schemes, including that of the noble Marquis of Lansdowne in 1892. We shall ask Parliament to repeal this prohibition. Fourth: We shall propose to invest legislative councils with power to discuss matters of public and general importance, and to pass recommendations or resolutions to the Government. The Government, of course, will deal with them as carefully or as carelessly as they think fit, as the Government do here. (Laughter.) Fifth: To appoint two Indian gentlemen to the council of India which sits at the India office. Many apprehensions reached me as to what might happen. So

INDIANS AND THE VICEROY'S COUNCIL.

One point more. The absence of an Indian member from the viceroy's executive council can no longer, I think, be defended. There is no legal obstacle or statutory exclusion. The secretary of state may, if there be a vacancy on the viceroy's council, recommend His Majesty to appoint an Indian member. All I want to say is that during my retention of office there should be a vacancy I should feel it my duty to tender to the King my advice that an Indian member should be appointed. If it were on my own authority only I might hesitate to take that step, because I am not very fond of innovations in dark and obscure ground, but here I have the absolute zealous approval and concurrence of Lord Minto. The Viceroy was at Lord Minto's special instigation that I began to seriously consider this matter. I think it is important and points in the right direction. Anyhow, this is how it stands. You have a secretary of state and a viceroy at this moment who both agree in a recommendation of the kind, and I suppose, if I may be allowed to give a personal turn to the matter, that Lord Minto and I have had a very different experience of life in the world, and we belong I dare say to different schools of national politics, because Lord Minto was appointed by the party opposite. It is rather a remarkable thing that two men different in this way should agree in this proposal, and Lord Minto absolutely agrees in it. We need not now discuss what particular portfolio should be assigned. That will be settled on the merits of the individual. This is a great object, and I believe everybody in the House will agree it is a sign that the merits of individuals are to be considered and decided irrespective and independent of race and color.

THE ADVANTAGE OF INDIAN ADVISERS.

I am not altogether without experience, because a year ago, or rather more, it was my fortune to be able to appoint two Indian gentlemen to the council of India which sits at the India office. Many apprehensions reached me as to what might happen. So

HUNTING TIGERS IN A HOWDAH.

MAGNIFICENT SPECTACLE WHEN THE INDIAN ROYAL PRINCES GO AFTER BIG GAME.

Tiger-hunting, as undertaken by any of the great Indian princes, or maharajahs, is a sight never to be forgotten in its magnificence. It is one of the favorite sports to which the distinguished visitor is invited. Weeks are spent in preparation, and many thousands of dollars in expense; 50 to 100 elephants are utilized in the hunt. A great camp is formed, and it looks for all the world like a small army about to take the field. Generally some 20 to 30 guests are invited, and they all bring their personal servants. Then commissariat arrangements have to be made for the elephants for weeks (each elephant eats 800 or 700 pounds of grass a day), their attendants and camp followers. Scores of horses and camels are gathered in, and bullocks for the hundred, and all this small army have to be fed, which will give some idea what an entertainment on this scale means.

All preparations have been made, and at daybreak everything is ready for the hunt. Rows of kneeling giant tusked elephants are ready with their backs, and their mahouts seated on their necks, waiting for the rifles to get in. The hunters come bustling out of the tents, the new hands, nervous and busy with their equipment, the veterans, good-natured, chaffing one another, the Indian dignitaries almost enthusiastic, and the women guests all a-flutter with excitement. Soon the sportsmen have all entered the howdahs, and the long line of elephants stretches away to the distant horizon. When the hunting ground is reached a long line, or beat, is formed, several miles in extent, with flanking elephants at each end to keep the tigers inside. Now royal sport, in Indian significance, is about to begin. The line, of elephants, reaches up to the elephants' backs in many places and it is here that the tiger is hidden; not only tiger, but deer, and sometimes rhinos are to be found. The long line at last moves forward with the pride of a regiment on parade, and the din is awful as the line goes crashing through the dense grass screen before it. Have you ever heard the roar of a prairie fire or a forest fire with a strong wind behind? It is like that. Nothing like a rash tiger will confront the moving wall of elephants, with their howdahs swaying on their backs like ships at sea.

Presently a shot is fired. A tiger has sprung on the head of one of the elephants, but to hit the brute even that close range is not so easy as it would seem, for as soon as the tiger sets its claws in the elephant's head, the poor brute tries in every way to shake its enemy off, and it is not easy to stay inside the rocking howdah much less aim your rifle with any degree of accuracy. The tiger is away as quickly as it appeared, with a bullock through its shoulder. Another shot is fired, and then another, the time is a huge rhinoceros, which has tried to break through the line, and now lies dead as the result of its temerity. The line moves forward. Bang! Bang! Bang! A regular fusillade, and the first tiger is bagged, but not before he has fastened his teeth into the shoulder of a mahout and dragged him down with him. And so the great hunt goes on until the sun begins to slant, when the long procession winds its way back to the tented encampment, bringing the trophies of the day's hunt on the back of the pad-elephants. From an article in Recreation.

far, at all events, those apprehensions have all been dissipated. (Cheers.) The concord between the two Indian members of the council and their colleagues has been unbroken; their work has been excellent, and you will readily believe me when I say that the advantage to me of being able to ask one of these two gentlemen to come and tell me something about an Indian question from an Indian point of view is enormous. (Cheers.) I find in it a chance of obtaining an Indian angle of vision, and I feel sometimes as if I was actually in the streets of Calcutta. I do not say there are not arguments on the other side, but this at all events surely is common sense to have, in the Government of a country at the side of the chief governor a man who knows the country well, who belongs to the country, and can give him the point of view of an Indian. Surely that is likely to be an enormous advantage. Everybody recognizes the enormous service it is to the judicial bench in India to have on it Indian members who, from their abundant learning, have complete knowledge of the conditions and life of the country. At a moment when the Government is obliged to pass a measure introducing very drastic machinery, that is quite true, and I for one have no fault to find with them for introducing this machinery, and taking that step. (Hear, hear.) On the contrary, I wholly approve, and I share, of course, to the very full the responsibility for it. I understand that I am faced with some obliquity, that I am charged with inconsistency. That is a matter on which I am well able to take great care of myself (laughter), and I should be ashamed to detain your lordships for a single minute in arguing that. Quite early after my coming to the India office pressure was put upon me, very honestly, to repeal the regulation under which men are now being summarily deported without trial and without charge, without the intention to try and charge. That of course is a tremendous power to place in the hands of an executive government; but I said to myself, and I say now, that I decline to take out of the hands of the Government of India any weapon they have got in circumstances so uncommon, obscure, and impenetrable as are the circumstances that surround the British Government in India.

CALUMNY AGAINST NATIVES.

I should like, if the House would let me, to read a few lines from a great speech which I made in 1898, a speech delivered by Mr. Bright in 1898, when the great Government of India bill was in another place. I would like myself to read this language, and hope your lordships will like it, too: "We have heard how the people of India, and therefore let us see if we know how to govern it. Let us abandon all that system of calumny against natives of India which have lately prevailed. Had that people not been doing this, the British Government of the world, how could you have maintained your power for 100 years? Are they not industrious; are they not intelligent? Are they not, upon the evidence of the most distinguished men the Indian experts, the products of a land with many qualities which make them respected by all Englishmen who mix with them? . . . I would not permit any man in my presence, without rebuff, to indulge in the calumnies against the natives of India. I have recently heard poured forth without measure upon the whole population of India. The people of India do not like us, but they scarcely know where to turn to get rid of them. They are sheep, generally with a large herd." However that may be, we at least at Westminster here have no choice and no option. As an illustrious member of this House wrote: "We have heard how the people of India, and therefore let us see if we know how to govern it. Let us abandon all that system of calumny against natives of India which have lately prevailed. Had that people not been doing this, the British Government of the world, how could you have maintained your power for 100 years? Are they not industrious; are they not intelligent? Are they not, upon the evidence of the most distinguished men the Indian experts, the products of a land with many qualities which make them respected by all Englishmen who mix with them? . . . 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