

without it, and cannot be averted by statutory laws; for otherwise there can be no doubt that freedom of public discussion, which is nothing more than the freedom of speaking aloud, is a right belonging to the people, which no government has a right to withhold.

It also rests with them to show that the communication of knowledge is a curse and not a benefit; and that the essence of good government is to cover the land with darkness; for otherwise it must be admitted to be one of the most imperative duties of a government to confer the incalculable blessings of knowledge on the people; and by what means can this be done more effectually than by the unrestrained liberty of publication, and by the stimulus which it gives to the powers of the mind?

If their argument be, that the spread of knowledge may eventually be fatal to our rule in India, I close with them on that point, and maintain that, whatever may be the consequence, it is our duty to communicate the benefits of knowledge. If India could only be preserved as a part of the British Empire by keeping its inhabitants in a state of ignorance, our domination would be a curse to the country, and ought to cease.

But I see more ground for just apprehension in ignorance itself. I look to the increase of knowledge, with a hope that it may strengthen our empire; that it may remove prejudices, soften asperities, and substitute a rational conviction of the benefits of our Government; that it may unite the people and their rulers in sympathy, and that the differences which separate them may be gradually lessened and ultimately annihilated. Whatever, however, be the will of Almighty Providence respecting the future Government of India, it is clearly our duty, as long as the charge be confided to our hands, to execute the trust to the best of our ability for the good of the people. The promotion of knowledge, of which the liberty of the press is one of the most efficient instruments, is manifestly an essential part of that duty. It cannot be that we are permitted by Divine authority to be here merely to collect the revenues of the country, pay the establishments necessary to keep possession, and get into debt to supply the deficiency. We are, doubtless, here for higher purposes, one of which is to pour the enlightened knowledge and civilization, the arts and sciences of Europe over the land, and thereby improve the condition of the people.