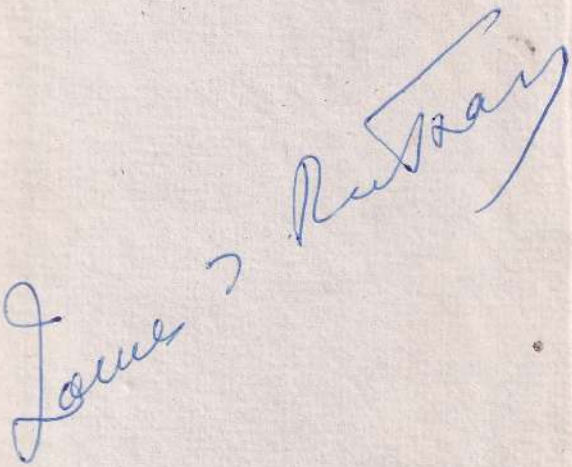
REPRESENTATIVE GOVERNMENT

BY A CEYLONESE

WILLIAM DIGBY.

1876.



REPRESENTATIVE GOVERNMENT,

ELECTIVE AND BROAD; NOT NOMINATED AND NARROW.

AN APPEAL

TO

THE PEOPLE OF CEYLON:

BY A CEYLONESE.

"*Speak ye to the people that they* GO FORWARD."

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MDCCCLXXVI.

"Many politicians of our time are in the habit of laying it down as a self-existent proposition that no people ought to be free till they are [completely] fit to use their freedom. The maxim is worthy the fool in the old story, who resolved not to go into the water till he had learnt to swim! If men are to wait for liberty till they become wise and good in slavery, they may indeed wait for ever."—*Lord Macaulay, in Essay on "John Milton."*

"We do not seek to establish a new order of things through violence. Any order of things established through violence, even though in itself superior to the old, is still a tyranny. What we have to do is to propose, for the approval of the nation, an order of things which we believe to be superior to that now existing, and to *educate* men by every possible means to develope it and act in accordance with it."—*Mazzini.*

"You are created for *Association.* Association multiplies your strength; it makes the thoughts of others, and the progress of others, your own, while it elevates and sanctifies your nature through the affections and the growing sentiment of the unity of the human family. In proportion as your association with your brother men is extended, in proportion as it is intimate and comprehensive, will you advance on the path of individual improvement. The law of life cannot be fulfilled in its entirety, save by the united labour of all. For every step taken in progress, for every new discovery of a portion of that law, history shows a corresponding extension of human association, a more extended contact and communication between people and peoples."—*Mazzini.*

"Disappointed hope filled them with a barren bitterness; and at every abandonment, at every desertion, they said to themselves—"*why struggle for beings so corrupt?*"—NOT SEEING THAT IT IS BECAUSE MEN ARE CORRUPT THAT WE SHOULD STRIVE TO CHANGE THEM."

AN APPEAL

TO

THE PEOPLE OF CEYLON.

BY A CEYLONESE.*

"*Awake*, thou that SLEEPEST."—*Isaiah.*

"IT is never too late to mend," says an English proverb, which for the present purpose may be paraphrased in this wise: "It is never too soon to begin to get into the right way, if we find ourselves in the wrong." As there is no particular case of glaring injustice occurring in Ceylon just now, thanks to the generally righteous rule over us, to attract the attention of all, and inflame the minds of every one, I am glad to find, in the proverb newly-coined and quoted above, some sort of excuse for this appeal. For certainly, if we are not groaning under great oppression which is unendurable, we are in a wrong way, and need to get into a right one. It is with the hope of inducing my fellow-citizens to awake to a sense of this fact, and further to put forth combined efforts to remove the stigma under which they rest in being denied self-governing facilities, that I am tempted to show them, so far as I can, how good a case we have with which to approach the responsible authorities in Great Britain, how noble a past we can draw inspiration from, and what a head-roll of worthies, we can adduce, as incentives to effort on our part, who have arisen during the generation and a quarter which has passed since a small measure of liberty was granted to Ceylon, when the Legislative Council, composed of certain officials and nominated non-officials, was established in 1833.

At this particular time Ceylon, speaking generally, is at a pitch of prosperity never before attained; now, when there are no race disputes or "burning questions" to attract attention, is surely the right period to "take stock" of our present position,

* It is, perhaps, meet that it should be stated that the writer is an Englishman resident in Ceylon, who, in one respect at least, is very wishful to identify himself with the people of the country wherein he is now a sojourner.

to see how many and how strong are the arguments which can be put forward in behalf of a Reformed Legislature as the prime and absolute pre-requisite to a host of social reforms.

And first, a few words in acknowledgment of the great services that the Council, as at present constituted, has rendered the Colony. Most people feel its miserable inadequacy to fairly represent the intelligence and broadening public life of Ceylon at the present time, though there is considerable difference of opinion as to the nature of the reform needed; but it would be worse than unwise to content ourselves with merely noting the present too straitened position of the Council, and take no account of the good service it has done in the past. The open Council and the unofficial element, has had this influence upon the community: it has led to the full and free discussion of all public measures. Discussion and sifting of opinions has not been confined to highly-placed Government officials only, but has been undertaken by men of all races and of all classes of society. Nothing of the kind is apparent in Indian communities; from whom have been withheld the very great boon of an open and (partly unofficial) Council, that is, a Council with privileges such as are possessed in Ceylon. The Legislative Councils of Indian Presidencies have unofficial members, but they only advise as to law-making; they have no control over the public purse, and are not able to catechise the Government and criticise its action, putting responsible officials on their defence. Particularly has this lack of "general" and widely-diffused interest in political affairs been shown in Calcutta, during the discussion, extending over six months in 1875 and 1876, which led to the elective municipal franchise being conferred upon the citizens of the chief city of Hindustan. A great wordy warfare was carried on, much public spirit and much aptitude for conducting municipal affairs were displayed, but very few below the dignity of a Rai Bahadur, or with less than the learning and status of a University-trained Babu, or an Anglo-Indian journalist or merchant, has had anything to say on the subject. The mass of the tax-payers was profoundly quiescent, showing no signs of interest. Vastly different is the position of affairs in

Colombo or Kandy. In either and both of these places, municipal matters most closely interest every rate-payer, an interest which is not to be measured merely by public meetings or the criticism which appears in the correspondence columns of our English newspapers; for questions of taxation and similar matters are as fiercely debated in the Tamil and Sinhalese tongues and journals, as in the English language by word and in print. We in Colombo have that close connection between representation and taxation, which acts as a stimulus upon the tax-payer, and makes him, even if he be naturally averse to such a course of action, an ardent politician, so far as economy in spending public money, of which he has contributed a portion, is concerned. For all this we have in a measure, and to an extent that we cannot stay in this place to fully trace in all its connections, to be thankful for our open and often independent Council, whence have come to us many privileges.

The Legislative Council of Ceylon has done great good for the Ceylonese, and if such a heightened and generally excellent public life and healthy political sentiment have grown from a bantling all the time swathed in swaddling clothes, what may not result from an enlarged Council and a fair scope for the exercise of those faculties of self-government which the Ceylonese possess in an eminent degree? That these qualities are possessed I hope to show to some extent before I close.

It is the one aim and object of this appeal to call upon the free-born British subjects in this island under the governance of the Queen of England (and Ceylon), to organize themselves into Societies and Associations, and to agitate in season and out of season, for such an extension of electoral privileges as shall, practically, give the intelligent, the educated, and the propertied amongst them the privileges, and entail a performance of the duties, of self-government. But, if we ask for this, we shall at once be told that we are not fit for the exercise of such privileges. It is right and proper that Englishmen should be free and have full political liberty, but it is neither right nor proper, many argue, that the Ceylonese should similarly be vested with the attributes

of true manhood. It may be said that as a conquered people, we have no right to claim from our masters such privileges as a share in the government of the land we live in. But we must not forget, we are not in the position of a conquered people. We are free-born citizens of the British Empire, and have a right to demand to be treated as such. We are not in one sense, and we are in the other, despotically ruled; we have the management of our affairs placed in our own hands, with very large controlling power exercised by those who administer the affairs of the British dominions at the centre of those dominions. There is no member of any race in Ceylon to whom we should submit, as necessarily one superior. When the Apostle Paul was taken a prisoner by the Roman soldiery, he mentioned the fact of his Roman citizenship as a reason why he should not be submitted to indignity. The Captain of the guard which held him prisoner said "With a great price obtained I that freedom." The imprisoned apostle triumphantly replied, "But I was free born." Similarly can every inhabitant of Ceylon, born since 1796, say, "I am free born, and I must be treated as a free man." We are not to use this proud boast arrogantly or defiantly, but we are to rest upon it as upon a firmly based rock, against which race-prejudice shall beat in vain.

This is not all. There are many other points in which, side by side with Englishmen in their own country, we have a right to ask for greater freedom. Have Englishmen deserved the privileges and power which they now possess by former deeds in civil and corporate life? So, also, have we! Have the inhabitants of Great Britain done nobly in the cause of individual liberty and social freedom? The Ceylonese, headed and directed by a few English residents in Ceylon,—men with bold hearts and wide sympathies,—have done well also. Partly because our history is not written as the English history of the past forty years has been written; partly also, because we have had no orators to go up and down our land and recite before us what we too have accomplished; and yet further, because no fairly reasonable history of Ceylon, during the past forty years, is in the hands of our boys

and girls at school, or at the convenience of our young men for evening study: because of the lack of these things, and for this, are our annals thought to be without incident, and the tablets of our years an unvarying blank. Assuredly they are not without incident, and that of a praiseworthy kind.

We have not been engaged in war, nor have we had the ever-present and dire individual distress which makes pauperism such a hideous feature in the social life of Great Britain. The land, which is the great heart of the British Empire, and the acknowledged home of civil and political freedom, has yet to reach *our* standard in these respects. But in the social movements of the past fifty years, we can show almost event for event with England; and in some cases, a solution of difficulties in matters where Parliamentary chiefs are still almost helplessly blundering. That equally splendid results have not followed in Ceylon is doubtless entirely owing to the nightmare of officialism, which has sat upon the healthy instincts of the people, and the bonds of red tape which have swathed the limbs of earnest endeavour, emasculating both body and mind, so that instead of legitimate fruit springing up from the good seed already sown, the people, who would have done everything for themselves by themselves, have been poisoned with fruit from the Upas Tree of "The Government," and lured to broad paths of inertness instead of being compelled to struggle by narrow, difficult ways to the bracing table-lands of individual freedom. To prove this let us go to "chapter and verse" relating to the achievements of the past half century in Ceylon, which are able to show that, compared with England, we have a past of which we need not be ashamed,—a history which is not despicable. The principal triumphs of social and political England since 1829 have been—

Catholic Emancipation;
Electoral Reform Bill, 1836;
Abolition of Slavery;
Abolition of the Corn Laws 1840-48;
The Chartist Agitation; the eight points of the Charter, 1849;

Disaffection and Partial Rebellion in Ireland; agitation against Continuance of Church and State connection;

The Railway Mania;

Educational Reform, 1836-75;

The Reform League, leading to the second Reform Bill and Household Suffrage;

Great Commercial Prosperity;

Dealing with the Liquor Laws, with a view to repression of Liquor Traffic; and

Increased Powers of Local Government.

Now, for Ceylon's "accomplished facts," which ought to be, woven into history, and be as "household words" in the mouth of every man with any claim to education at all :—

CEYLON :

Catholic Emancipation, 1809 ; 20 YEARS BEFORE ENGLAND WAS CONSIDERED RIPE FOR SUCH A MEASURE ;

Reform Proclamation of 1833, by which, as the result of a Commission of Enquiry, the Courts of Judicature were reformed, and the Legislative Council established ;

Voluntary Abolition of Slaves, at great pecuniary sacrifice, 1818-1840 ;

School Commission ; resulting in the giving of grants-in-aid for secular teaching exclusively, and thereby laying the ghost of the "religious difficulty" *which still* (1876) *vexes and troubles English Statesmen ;*

The Verandahs Question, 1846-47, a popular battle bravely fought ;

The Kandyan Rebellion of 1848 ; and *Disturbances near Colombo ;* the last flicker of the torch of disaffection amongst the people other than what can be, and have been, peaceably dealt with ;

Railway Agitation, and Improved Road Communication ;

The Ceylon League and the vexatious Military Impost ;

Freedom from State Interference in Religious matters, 1853-1876 ;

The Irrigation Ordinance and Registration of Titles Bill; The Founding of Village Municipalities and *Village Tribunals; Attempts to restrict the sale of Intoxicating Liquors; and Great Agricultural* and *Commercial Prosperity, and the undertaking of large Public Works.*

No Presidency town of India, no nation in that congeries of nations, Hindustan, can show a record anything like the foregoing. See how closely we have trodden on the heels of England in all she has done, how our feet have found safety in her footprints, nay in some cases have anticipated noble acts of toleration, which she has taken a longer time to render practicable. The limits of an appeal like the present, do not permit lingering long upon the doings of the past: we have to "act, act in the living present;" consequently, having recited some of the more prominent of the social movements of the days gone by, we must pass on to notice a few of the distinctive efforts that have been made in Ceylon to give the island-born inhabitant a share in the Government of the land. From what has been actually done, we have good grounds to take courage, and we should find in these events an earnest call to us to see to it, that we are not unworthy successors of those who dared bravely for human freedom in our land, and the upliftment of ourselves at varying periods during the past four-score years. Those whom we have most heartily to thank for seeing in us great possiblities for good, and who have striven with all their might to do us service, have been Englishmen. It was only natural and proper that if a new current were to be made to run into our national life, it must be directed and guided by those who were familiar with running water: a tank of stagnant water can do no good of itself, and those who know nothing but stagnation, cannot of themselves fittingly control that which is instinct with life. Even with regard to stagnant water, the liquid needs, first to be conserved, and next to be duly tutored—taught to run in channels prepared for it,—otherwise it is of no service for irrigation or other purposes. So has it been with Ceylon and its inhabitants. For no lengthened period has the Island been without some one Englishman of high station, or in a position of great usefulness,

to advocate the claims to a share in the national life of the people of the land. The present time only seems lacking in this respect, and no English leader appears to discipline us to a proper representation of our rights and claims and lead us on to victory. Perhaps this is not to be looked upon as matter for undue lament. "Necessity is the mother of invention," and in our present circumstances, she may be more, for she may give us a leader from among ourselves who shall dare to brave all for the sake of enfranchising his fellow-countrymen. But we have now to do with the Englishmen who have had confidence in the past, and with the movements which have been set on foot to give us electoral and other powers, such as the citizens of a free nation are wont to possess.

Sir Alexander Johnston stands first in point of time, and also with regard to breadth of views amongst the men whose memories we should cherish with a great love. He came to Ceylon in 1802 in a judicial capacity, and afterwards became Chief Justice. So strongly was he impressed with the law-abiding characteristics of the people and their capacity for self-government, that even then, "he sought to raise their social and political status. He would have all laws intended to affect them submitted to them for discussion in open Council," though no Council existed at that time nor for many years after. Whilst willing to give full rights and privileges to Englishmen settling in Ceylon, it is said, "he would render the natives eligible to occupy seats in the Legislature, and to every situation under Government for which they might be qualified. He would have no disfranchised class, and no persons deprived of social or political privileges save by their own misconduct." This was between 1802, and to 1818. Alas! in 1876 there are no political privileges of which anyone can be deprived, whatever misconduct they be guilty of. He was a great lover of the Eurasian race, and "his extensive patronage was largely used on behalf of the Burghers." Sir Alexander Johnston it was, who introduced the jury system into Asia, Ceylon in this case, as in so many others, being the threatre in which the experiment was made on behalf of the whole oriental world.

Entirely successful has this and other experiments been, so successful as to warrant Ceylon being made also the theatre wherein Representative Government in the East shall be attempted. So ardently did Sir Alexander Johnston believe in freedom to the fullest possible extent, that he advocated the establishment of a Free Press, and seeing that the people would not readily of themselves take to the familiar boldness of collecting the news of the day and criticising acts of the authorities, he proposed that Government should take the initiative in this very proper duty, by keeping an establishment of native reporters, and publishing newspapers in the native languages. This, it must again be remarked, was in the period, 1802-18. In 1876 Government practically ignores the existence of a native press, and does not seek to feel the pulse of the people by this stretched-out arm, as it might and ought to do. Sir Alexander, so strong was his influence over the people, succeeded in shattering the fabric of domestic slavery, destined to fall prone in 1844, by inducing the native slaveholders to follow the example of the Burghers, and decree all the children born of those in bondage, after a certain date in 1818, should be free. But in 1809 he had succeeded in emancipating the Roman Catholics from the disabilities which had been imposed upon them by the Dutch,—disabilities of a terribly onerous nature. Twenty years *after* this time England, the "birthplace of freedom," agreed to grant toleration to her subjects in Great Britain of the Romanist faith. In commercial matters Sir Alexander was equally enlightened, and forecasted schemes, which, if they had been carried out, would have made Ceylon much more the *entrepôt* of the commerce of the East than she is now. Had men of his stamp been frequent among the high officials or the rulers of Ceylon, it may be confidently asserted, that this island had been in possession of a Government similar to those in Australasia, quite as soon as New Zealand was granted a constitution, and she would have used her larger freedom as worthily. Truly Sir Alexander Johnston was an Englishman of a stamp which would do infinitely more for the influence of Great Britain among Oriental races, and give to her *prestige* a more noble significance, than will any demonstrations

of military or naval force, or spectacular displays on the plains of Delhi, while gaunt famine is in the land——or the far more deleterious influence of coddling, which weakens, and which has obtained the name for such a Government as that of Ceylon of "paternal," which being interpreted, means "grandmotherly." The policy of Sir Alexander Johnston developed men; "paternal" Government looks after children.

If opinions so decided, and action so progressive as have just been alluded to, marked the matured opinions of a resident of Ceylon, similar results were arrived at by visitors who were in a remarkable good position to judge of the people they expressed their opinions about. In 1829-32 Lieut.-Colonel Colebrooke and Mr. C. H. Cameron (the latter now a resident in the Island) came from England as a Commission of Enquiry into the affairs of Ceylon. If space were available it would be interesting and profitable to pause here, and sketch the position, prospects, and status of the people of Ceylon at the time this Commission was in the Island. For wide and general diffusion of knowledge, and a large percentage of able men, it would not bear any comparison with the country as it is now. One instance will prove this: when the Legislative Council was established in 1833, and native members were wanted, there was not a single native gentleman out of Government employ with a sufficient knowledge of English to take part in legislation; consequently one of the highly placed Mudaliyars was pensioned so that a vacant chair might be filled. I venture to state that from a hundred-and-fifty to two hundred worthy Ceylonese legislators could be selected to-day, and were not "naming names" invidious, I would record them here; yet no wider scope for Ceylonese talent exists in this direction at the present time than did in 1834, with the exception of the three Municipal Councils. Of the Ceylon of that period, *sans* a large out-island trade, *sans* an educated body politic, *sans* newpapers, *sans* general enlightenment, Mr. Cameron could write thus hopefully:—"The peculiar circumstances of Ceylon, both physical and moral, seem to point it out to the British Government as the fittest spot in our Eastern dominions in which to plant the germ of European civilization, whence we may not unreasonably hope that

it will hereafter spread over the whole of these vast territories." Lieut-Colonel Colebrooke expressed himself in equally favourable terms regarding the people of Ceylon. But of what service was their reporting thus favourably? Forty years after he had penned these remarks, Mr. Cameron becomes a resident in the Island, and whilst he sees cultivation and trade most widely extended and general prosperity marking every class, save in an official-ridden Municipality, he will find no trace of greater political power placed in the hands of the people of whom he anticipated such great things forty years ago, than they then possessed.

Perhaps the greatest effort that has been made for the political advancement of *the people*, was the movement initiated in 1843, when a Society called "The Friends of Ceylon," was established; of which Dr. Elliot seems to have been the moving and guiding spirit, though he did not take a very prominent public part in its proceedings. The minutes which are available of the meetings that were held, contain the names only of purely Ceylonese gentlemen. Of all the "strangers" who have lived in Ceylon, there is no one whose memory is cherished with greater love than is Dr. Elliott's and with good reason. Believing that the country was greatly in need of political advancement, he did not hesitate to throw himself with great energy into efforts having this end in view, doing all that he attempted with the ardour of a finely sympathetic nature; he thereby earned for the paper he conducted, the *Colombo Observer*, a name for political progress, that was borne witness to in such publications as the *Calcutta Review*, and others of the period, *viz.*, 1846-54. Dr. Elliott seems to have presided at a meeting of the "Friends of Ceylon" held in Colombo in April 1843. At that meeting a very long address to the people of Ceylon was adopted. It commences by reciting the position of the people of England, as regards representation and taxation, sketches the (then) state of Ceylon, shows the urgency for reform, the great advisability of the people becoming intimately acquainted with the way in which the revenue is raised and disbursed, shows that the elements of good government exist in representation, and can exist in no other form for any length

of time, as a good despot [or "paternal" Crown Colony Govern or] is at best an accident. The address also contains the following paragraphs which, if they were of any force when they were written, have a tenfold greater power now. The address says :—

"It may perhaps be urged that the people of Ceylon are not sufficiently advanced for using the means by which these evils are corrected elsewhere. But to this object now it is sufficient to reply that the people of Ceylon enjoy the elements of civilization and social improvement to a considerable extent; they possess the power of receiving and communicating thought by means of reading and writing, at least to as great an extent as do the mass of the people of England. Surely then, it cannot be denied that they are equally prepared to exercise the civil privileges of electing their own Representatives in the Legislature as those men who were lately slaves in the West Indies.

"The people of England have elected their Representatives from the early period when not even the rudiments of education extended beyond the clergy. Who then will deny that the Independent Sinhalese and Tamil Landed Proprietors, or the intelligent Moorish Traders, are not prepared to exercise and enjoy the Rights and Privileges of Freemen?"

Mr. (afterwards Sir) Richard Morgan, about this period, spoke with eloquence and force,—(which, in his subsequent career, bright and distinguished as it was, he never surpassed)—of the eminent fitness of Ceylon, for representative government, and of the good which would be confirmed upon the colony by its adoption. Various ways in which the object desired was to be attained were pointed out in the Address of "The Friends" to which allusion has been made. Contemporary records do not show that this Society exercised much or long continued power and influence. It may be that, being particularly the work of one man—and he probably, as Editor and Medical Practitioner, the busiest man in the community—and not being broad-based and striking roots in the sympathies of the people, it failed either to live long or perform very great deeds. However that may be, the "Friends of Ceylon" Society passed away, but not without having exerted some influence, and having become a link in the chain of evidence running on from 1802 which shows that the more enlightened minds of the English community discerned in this people, that is, practically in ourselves, a fitness for self-government—for we inherit the qualities of our fathers.

Succeeding years, as well as that particularly alluded to (1843), were so crowded with events of pressing importance,—the great Verandahs question, in which the Burghers nobly supported Dr. Elliott and a few other Englishmen who boldly defied the authorities, and gained a victory; the rising in the Kandyan Provinces and the refusal to pay unjust imposts by the people of the low country around Colombo, who assembled in force, armed with sticks, at Borella; the previous appointment of a Bishop, and similar things filled men's minds so that Electoral and Representative Reform fell into the background. But only for a time.

In 1854 a moving of the waters was manifest, but at most it was only what seamen call a "ground swell," a reflex motion; there was neither depth nor great power in connection with it. No public meeting even seems to have been held. All the *Chronicler* reports is the existence of a manifesto for a Reform Association for Ceylon, proposing that one should be started. The 1st and 2nd reasons for the necessity of such a political body are thus stated :—

1. "The popular exigencies are outgrowing the ability of the central Government to meet their legitimate wants without the effecient co-operation of the people."

2. "In order to ensure the prosperous development of the general interests of both the rulers and their subjects, those interests ought to be well understood, and such a right conception can only be expected from the combined efforts of the respective parties."

The main cause for the existence of the Association is thus given :—

"The principal object which the Association will be expected to assist in realizing, is to secure for Ceylon a definite constitution by the provisions in which should be regulated all future legislative and administrative functions. In the absence of such a constitution it is scarcely possible to obviate confusion and misgovernment, to which evils the population in Ceylon has been hitherto subject."

The final conclusion come to was to agitate for "measures calculated to ensure a constitutional and stable government to Ceylon. This . . . . . remains to be realised, and can only be effected by the concurrent suffrage of the people through the organ of a self-constituted body." No definite action

seems to have been taken on this suggestion, and the reason is not far to seek. Dr. Elliott soon after became Principal Civil Medical officer, Mr. Richard Morgan soon after was first Puisne Judge, and subsequently Queen's Advocate, and as servants of Government could not lead the people in agitation, whilst further increased duties engrossed the whole of their time. The Planters' Association, too, was started about this time, or shortly before; and the political energies of Englishmen, some of which *might* have been applied to help their Ceylonese fellow-citizens were engrossed in the working of this institution, and the securing of legislative measures to foster their calling, in which they were very successful. Then came the great railway ferment, the contract system and its exceptional failure, the arrival of an energetic, honest, hard-working Governor, who had no time himself to work out political wants, even if he could do so from *such* a stand-point as a ruler and such highly-placed officials necessarily occupy; he had immense arrears of work and administration left by inefficient predecessors to make up. Sir Henry Ward being in the era of public works, and the Island public content with seeing its representative men, Sir Richard Morgan, Charles Stewart, J. B. Dunniville, and others forge to the front—neither Sir Henry Ward nor the Island public found time or opportunity for political agitation. A decade of years, rich in many good material works, but singularly barren of moral and social triumphs, passes over the face of the land. That the *people* should have political power seems to have sunk altogether out of view. The small shrubs of promise which so gladdened Sir Alexander Johnston and made Mr. Cameron and his coadjutor very hopeful, had now grown into great trees, spreading far and wide; yet no man saw the uses to which they might be put, either for shade, or portions of them used as plants for a regenerative platform. Twelve years passed, and a great political storm arose. The Ceylon League was formed. It is not my purpose here to tell its history; but as I read the proposals it submitted to the Secretary of State for an enlarged Council, they do not seem to deserve being granted, and they were not. They were eminently self-seeking, and proceeded on the plan of sending a present of cocoanuts to

the possessor of a tope of trees. Of fifteen members in Council twelve were Englishmen, yet the proposition of the League agitators, was "put more Englishmen in the Chamber till unofficials are equal to officials." Had they besought the help of the people of England, and approached the Secretary of State with the proposal that "the people" of the land should have the increased power asked for, the League might not have been so resultless as it was; the only present influence it has on the Island being to give a turn of bitterness to the glowing periods of an eloquent speaker and able man at Planters' Association or Chamber of Commerce business or at after-dinner meetings. At least one section of the Ceylonese community, the Burghers, did nobly in that agitation, and bore their share of the burden and heat of the day. The echoes of the din raised by the League agitation have come down to this time; but the sounds are getting fainter and have almost ceased. The force then engendered has spent itself. Has not the time come when a new force should be evolved? A force that shall be called into action for nobler objects than mere sectional advancement or material gain, an object that shall put a new hope into every Ceylonese breast and shall be as a wave of mighty force that will lift a whole nation's life into a higher region, where pure breezes blow, and noble deeds are engendered! These things are the legitimate outcome of an extended suffrage properly granted and rightly appreciated. A consideration of the good which is enfolded in the suffrage given to a people worthy of it, should be enough to arouse every energy, and I might leave this influence alone, the one that appeals to the most vulnerable part of our nature, *viz.*, self-interest, to arouse those whom I address to a pitch of noble daring; but see, time, and the course of events also call to action!

The deeper study of Nature is showing that in everything there are pulsations, cycles of progress, action and reaction in everything. Even the sun waxes and wanes, presents a clear unspotted surface, or is dark with huge rents in its molten covering, during each course of eleven years. Similar periods of effort and pause mark almost everything. There is law in social

as well as in material things. This is true of reforms in English history, which have climbed by regular steps at stated periods: French history tells the same story; and how is it with ourselves, with our own Island record? Does it show such a regular sequence of events that should remind us we are, if we are true to the impulses from within and pressure from without, on the eve of the time of a fresh agitation? Let us see.

Sir Alexander Johnston's reforms as culminated in ...	1818
Colebrooke and Cameron laboured and brought forth reforms in	1829-32
"Friends of Ceylon" movement	1843-46
Reform Association Proposal	1854
Ceylon League Agitation (began)	1865

Is not 1877 specially indicated as the initial year for a new enterprise; one, which having the experience of five previous efforts to guide and help it, should result in nothing less than victory? Neglect this chance, and if there be anything in the sequence of events, the rise and fall of times for action, as I believe there is [and applied to English politics, this law makes me believe the Established Church in a short period of years will cease to exist as a State Establishment]; it will be 1887-88, before your time will come round for another effort. Then is the time when you should look forward for *another step in advance.* That advancement should be the rule of national life has recently been well expressed by the Lord Chief Justice of England who, speaking in the Guildhall, London, said:—"I am ready to do whatever is necessary for improvement and progress, for without progress you can have no improvement, and without improvement you cannot have perfection. The tendency of man and of all institutions ought ever to be not to rest and be thankful, but to progress and to improve. However, though I cast back, I confess, a lingering look to the names of the past, yet in substance the thing remains very much the same, and we must accept that which we have at present with the good that it brings us, and I readily admit that very considerable good has been achieved. But do not let us persuade ourselves, and do not let our rulers persuade themselves, that all is done that has to be done. There are still

imperfections—numerous indeed, and serious ones too—which have to be removed, and the greatest work of all has yet to be accomplished."

Another reason why a demand for a large measure of self-government should be urged *just now*, is to be found in two things as regards the fountain of all reform for us, the English nation. These are: (1.) The absence of any great subject of continuous interest (the Bulgarian wave of sympathy was necessarily short-lived; and, if war be avoided, the Eastern question will soon slumber again,) which like a frenzy takes hold of the minds of the people and renders them unable to calmly consider the cause of another people dispassionately; (2) the present temper of the British people towards their fellow subjects in the East. Personally I am aware, and if it should be necessary, can bring forward evidence in proof of my assertions, that amongst prominent members of Parliament, there are those who would be very glad to champion the cause of Ceylon. Even Earl Carnarvon, member of a Tory Cabinet, not many months since, said to a Radical member of the House of Commons that he would be very willing to look over a proposal, which had been mentioned to him, in which an endeavour was made to show the necessity for a House of Representatives for Ceylon, though for his own part, he did not think the Kandyans could yet be trusted with the franchise. No really good case (a case not anything like so good as can be made out on our behalf), has ever yet been presented to the people of England, fairly set before them by men in whom they have confidence, and failed to secure the object it had in view. We are now, thanks to the advantages of steam communication, so near to England that what was desiderated by the "Friends of Ceylon," *viz.*, a member for Ceylon in the House of Commons, is scarcely necessary. All we have to do to secure the attention of the people of England, and to obtain their hearty co-operation, is to make a brave struggle ourselves. No phrase is more dearly loved by the English people than that which runs thus:—"Who would be free *themselves* must strike the blow." The British people help those who help themselves, and if we make vigorous efforts on our own

part, we may rest assured that other help which is necessary—to save us from being driven back utterly defeated,—will not be withheld.

I forcibly feel the full responsibility of hazarding a venture in such a matter, but knowing full well the temper of the English people, looking at the circumstances of British politics, and the possible advent of a party to power, whose traditions should lead them to take up our cause with all their heart, *provided there were really downright, earnest, self-sacrificing effort in* CEYLON, a few short years would suffice to secure the object we have in view, and see it accomplished. *How* should we work for what we want? By quiet, peaceable, constitutional means, and these only. We may proceed to consider in detail what it is we should do.

II.

MODE OF PROCEDURE.

Man ought to know that in this great theatre of human life, it is only for God and the Angels to be spectators.—*Lord Bacon.*

Three things are necessary on our part, each and all of which will require much close and persistent effort to make them successful :—

(1).—*Societies, associations in town, out-station, and village must be formed ;*

(2).—*Public meetings, lectures, pamphlets, dialogues, in both English and the vernacular, showing the good likely to result to individuals from the establishment of a popular Government, must be heartily undertaken ;* and, when this has been done, a few years hence

(3).—*A petition to the Secretary of State or House of Commons should be prepared, bearing a very large number of signatures.*

First.—A meeting of friends of the movement should be called in Colombo, a plan of action decided upon, and branch societies formed, wherever a dozen or twenty persons, or even fewer, could be got together,—men who really felt an interest in the object in view. This should mean, practically, every one born in the Island, and not a few Europeans who will concede the justice of our claims, seeing that a lifting-up of us to their level would not degrade them, nor would their interests in any way suffer, but rather the reverse.

It may be asked, are the people sufficiently intelligent to form these societies? I answer, unhesitatingly, yes. Here is an illustration taken at random. I look at one of the local newspapers during the time the Criminal Session, is going on: there is a list of English-speaking jurymen, yet not one of the thirteen is an Englishman, and only six are Burghers. If men of the station in life to which these jurymen belong are

fit to administer the law, they are quite capable of associating together to further a reform of the kind which has been suggested in these pages, and afterwards to rightly use the franchise they shall have won for themselves. Besides, it is not English-speaking meetings only that should be convened, but assemblies also where the Tamil and Sinhalese languages alone would be used. Many Englishmen in Ceylon do not think so, but there is a peculiar fitness in the inhabitants of Ceylon for proceedings such as are here hinted at. The Tamils have their weekly *nakaram;* associating in public assemblies is familiar work to the Sinhalese, as they showed at Borella in 1849, and in recent days, by the meeting against the Gansabhawa Ordinance at Morutuwa, the "Watura epa" meeting in the precincts of the Town Hall of Colombo, the five thousand people recently assembled in the Negombo District, the thousands at various Gansabhawa initiations, &c. A people capable of these acts of citizenship may be safely trusted, once their eyes are opened, to make full, free, and proper use of their opportunities in this respect. Without societies everywhere, branches in every village and every centre of population, that effective display of a united people asking for more powers of self-government, which would tell with great force in the ultimate Court of Appeal, the British House of Commons, cannot be obtained. Undoubtedly the fitness for self-rule is possessed by the Ceylonese, as the details of the landscape are always in their place, but when a dense pall of darkness hangs over all, nothing can be seen till a bright flash of lightning, the gentle ray of the moon, or the coming dawn of day, brings out all the features. They are not created by the light; they are revealed by it. Similarly are the grand noble qualities of self-reliance and self-government in the Ceylonese character, and from these, great possibilities in the way of enterprice and intelligent effort may be educed, which, if rightly developed and guided, will be powerful for good.

It is unnecessary in this place to go into details regarding the constitution of these Societies : much care and forbearance will undoubtedly, be required on the part of those constituting them

hat race prejudices or personal or professional jealousy shall not be permitted to have sway, and to mar a work requiring as much yielding in some points on the part of its members, as it will of forceful effort in other directions. The CEYLONESE, so long as they can be called by that name, should care very little for the designation of Burgher, Tamil, and Sinhalese. And for my part I do not see why Englishmen resident in Ceylon should not, during their residence in that land, be similarly designated. They would still be British subjects, and more need not be desired. The tendency which is now observable amongst the foremost minds of the age towards internationalism in politics, will hasten forward the time when men will not care for distinctive national names, but count them of little worth. To be a member of the human family will be enough. But the realization of that desire is yet a long way off, and when realised, need not altogether absorb the idea expressed by the Shunamitish woman, who, when great honour was before her, simply said, "*I would dwell amongst mine own people.*"

What the inhabitants of Ceylon need infusing into their national life, is the habit of meeting together for social and political purposes, or rather, they merely need the qualities they already possess utilized in this way. Anything and everything is possible to a united people, and the blessings which would follow in remote hamlets, small outstations, or congeries of villages from a union of the Ceylon people, would be many in number and great and lasting in their effects. This, however, could not be achieved all at once, nor need it be looked for as easily attainable. All, moreover, that we need set ourselves to do at first, would be to start Societies where intelligent Ceylonese are congregated in greatest numbers, and there need be no fear that what they did would bring good results, and with great rapidity prove itself of wider influence than could be covered by the particular locality in which it met. A lecture might be heard by only a thousand, or may be, but a hundred people, but if printed and circulated it might be read by ten, twenty, or fifty thousand. And this brings me to speak of the second point mentioned under the heading of "Mode of Procedure."

Secondly,—A chief mode of action should be, by an extensive circulation of pamphlets and political dialogues of the most elementary character. England affords us many illustrations of this course of action. For instance, *(a)* at the period of the First Reform Bill, coinciding with the period of a gift of a nominated Legislature to Ceylon, the Society for the Diffusion of Knowledge, with an ex-Lord Chancellor at its head, and the Rev. Dr. Arnold, of Rugby, anxious to write for it and ultimately accomplishing his wish, did immense service in educating the people of Great Britain for the right use of increased political privileges; *(b)* the taxes on corn (we have such still in Ceylon, very burdensome, though not to such an oppressive extent as in England prior to 1846) were repealed mainly through the amount of interest excited by the number of pamphlets and leaflets scattered broadcast among the people of Great Britain, as well as by the stirring songs that were written to arouse the feelings of the distressed; *(c)* the same policy was adopted in regard to the later Reform Bill; it is so with everything that is carried on now-a-days with any real determination to succeed.

Nowhere in the wide world, is there more need for this kind of action than in Ceylon. The people, unfortunately, have had none of the happily-tumultuous experience of a free nation. From the severe despotism of a native monarch they passed to the milder despotism of British "paternal" rule. In one respect, and that a very important one, this was a worse despotism than the other. Why? Because the new despots were men of a foreign race, having little in common with the conquered, brought up in a civilization altogether different from that which the people of this land had hitherto known; the new rulers exhibited great military prowess; they had forces on land and sea which made them invincible, and there was no possibility of ever being rid of them by warlike means. They came amongst the people as superior beings, and necessarily looked upon their darker-skinned fellow-citizens as of a lower order, a people unfit to associate with themselves on a position of equality. Fortunately, however, the civilization brought by the British, and the warm kind-heartedness

of some members of the race, greatly aided by Christian and philanthropic effort, penetrated these lower strata, and the pulses underneath sun-tinted skins beat faster, endued with a higher and nobler life, because the onward progress of things and the brotherhood which can *not* be altogether restrained by caste prejudices or race barriers, was made to embrace them. Purest and noblest things were made possible to them. But, obtaining this knowledge of widened life from the outside, from an alien race, it not having been imbibed in early youth, growing with their growth, becoming strong with their manhood, there is tenfold more need why a series of political and social catechisms and pamphlets, showing the rights of British subjects in Ceylon, and the noble uses to which freedom may, and must, be put by a people worthy of it, should be widely scattered among the Sinhalese and Tamils. He who shall arise from among them, possessing a close and familiar acquaintance with the vernacular, that only one of the people can have, and prepare a manual for members of village councils and tribunals, which shall show the benefits and peace of mind to the nation by good personal conduct in its obscure and least-known regions, the noble dignity of earnest, true work done for one's own neighbours; who shall show that the law is supreme over all, that every man is on a political equality by virtue of his manhood, if unconvicted of crime, though social inequality must and will always exist; who indicates that the path to eminence and success is by strict adherence to the straight path of duty; and that right-doing only can bring real and lasting prosperity; he who, among the people (for no alien can accomplish it) shall do this, will have done for his countrymen such a work as will cause his name to be held in imperishable remembrance. No foreigner, I repeat, however deep his sympathy, can do for the true enlightenment of a people, anything but the roughest and most incomplete work compared with what a man of the people themselves can do. Never was there a soil better fitted for the reception of good seed of the kind indicated than is exhibited in the present state of the people of Ceylon. There are no warlike tendencies in the national mind to distract attention and call off

thought; there is peace in all our borders; there is a certain measure of prosperity. There are, undoubtedly, such as in the temple-slave villages of Sabaragamuwa, and the parangi-stricken districts of the North Central Province, large patches of backwardness, exhibiting much sloth and neglect. But to counter-balance these, there is elsewhere, marvellous intellectual and kindred activity which, properly aroused and directed, would not be confined in narrow bounds, but would go on to do missionary work among less favoured parts, once had been tasted the good of freedom. A vernacular literature for Ceylon has yet to be made: well would it be if, among its earliest contributions, should be from the Publication Committee of the Ceylonese Reform Association, a series of manuals showing the people how they ought to arise from their present slumber of indifference and gird themselves to the exercise of communal, municipal, and national duties. A NATION can only be made in Ceylon, or elsewhere, according as food is provided for the hunger that is felt, and no more patriotic or constitutional duty could be undertaken than to prepare manuals of the kind and nature alluded to. Thus duty, therefore, would be the backbone of such an association as the needs of Ceylon demand at the present time.

Third:—There is no need to teach the people of Ceylon that it is good to make use of the privilege of petition. The drawing-up of a memorial to some "Honoured Sir," or other, comes to an average Ceylonese as naturally as a child takes to its mother's milk. This department of the programme for the future would, doubtless, be very successful, but it rightly comes last in the order of our proceeding. In a movement of this kind we want no voices to shout that do not know what they are shouting for, nor any man's name unless that name represents a well-defined opinion. After some years of hard working, a vast roll of signatures might be obtained and sent to England in support of the object most needed by the people of Ceylon, *viz.* a Representative Assembly. By petition is the way in which the House of Commons could most fitly be addressed; it is the old, constitutional way of the subjects of the rulers of Great Britain of obtaining redress for

grievances. Far more powerful than armed violence, more potent than rioting, would be the moral effect of the petition of half-a-million of Her Majesty's subjects in Ceylon asking for such a boon as increased legislative privileges and power. But, to repeat, so that there may be no possibility of mistake, a petition of this kind is one of the last steps to be taken in the course before us. We don't want, we won't have, ignorant signatures. Bal Hami, or Podi Singho, Catheravoe Pulle, Omer Lebbe Marikar, or Jacob de Mel, must intelligently append his signature, in his own handwriting, to make the appeal effectual. Therefore, while working for an end, whilst keeping that end in view, the mistake must not be made of putting it in the forefront, so that it leads the career of the association to be like those pyrotechnics which "go up a rocket, come down a stick."

III.

The Nature of the Reform to be asked for.

A Representative Chamber that will permit of the THOROUGH *representation of the whole country, and the gradual self-rule of each town, township, and village, of and by itself, under, and responsible to, controlling, central and ultimate authority.*

Beyond this statement, nothing at this stage and in this place need be said, as any definite proposal would possibly be seized upon by opponents, and time might be occupied in considering minor details, whilst the principle would be altogether lost sight of. Suffice it to say, that it would not be an insuperable difficulty to put forward suggestions showing how all that is demanded in the foregoing italicized sentence, might be obtained in a way and manner which would serve to strengthen and improve the present peaceful and prosperous rule of the island, and in no way or manner endanger it. In the franchise alone is the redemption of character and the upliftment of social life to be found. The conferment of the franchise is the foundation of all Reform. This has been proved in Great Britain when the Reform Bill of 1833 threw wide the door to beneficial changes of all kinds, which have become so great in extent that the value and grandeur of the individual life now in England and its sister countries, is not to be compared with that in existence forty or fifty years ago, so vast a stride onward has been made. In the interest of the PEOPLE, a despotism is of all things that which is to be most feared; and history is full of illustrations showing that, as the suffrage is widened, greater prosperity and higher national renown are attained. There is nothing, in the circumstances of the case, to show that any other result would follow in Ceylon: rather the reverse.

IV.

FINALLY, A CONSIDERATION OF TWO QUESTIONS, SURE TO BE ASKED MANY TIMES OVER:

(a)—Have the Ceylonese qualifications which fit them to rightly use an electoral franchise?

(b)—What good will the possession of the franchise do to the people of Ceylon?

(a) Personal Fitness of the Ceylonese. In this connection, I think I cannot do better than repeat remarks which I have already penned on this subject, and which though they have been condemned have not been met by any attempt at argument or disproof. They certainly have some force in regard to the point now before us, and may not unfittingly be used in this connection.

The Sinhalese and Tamil races may be looked upon as certain to occupy a position in the Eastern world, so far as a leavening, free, self-governing influence is concerned, like unto that which England bears to European States. The first named people should occupy this position from its common race-origin with the British, both being alike Aryan; whilst so close and impartial an observer as Dr. Caldwell (Essay on "The Dravidian Physical Type") endorses the remark which has been made, that the Tamil family of the Dravidian section of humanity, shows a surprising and marvellous faculty of adaptation to European forms of procedure and social life. It is not much to the credit of the British that they should have been nearly a century in India before they discovered that, low down in the social strata, far away in the interior, as well as close at hand, there was a perfectly-developed system of "home rule," being exactly identical with the village life of Europe ten centuries since, from which in England has grown the borough municipal life which has made its citizens great hosts in themselves under diverse circumstances. So, too, in Ceylon in centuries gone by, village communities flourished apace, so far as despotism would let them. All students of English history know how slowly, often with seemingly complete defeats, town and village corporate life

succeeded in overthrowing the feudalism of England. Just where the English of Aryan extraction was at the time of the Norman Conquest, there was the Indian villager and the Sinhalese *goyiya*, at the time of the English occupation of India and "its utmost Isle." The fact that the branch in the West proceeded from good government to better, while that in the East, at least in Ceylon, stagnated and became overgrown till it was almost a dead inert mass, certainly with no progressive life, finds explanation in two things,—religion and climate. In the one case the faith grasped was uplifting and humanizing; in the other a rigid system of caste, superadded on a degrading worship, or a blank atheism, which gave promise neither for the life that now is, nor for that which is to come, had entire sway. As regards climate, in the one case, uncongenial soil and adverse atmospheric influences put the individual upon his mettle and called forth unlooked for qualities; in the other there was a too kindly land where the sun always shone, where keen and bitter, lasting distress was not felt; where, if distress came, as it did only too often, it was in the shape of sharp sudden famine, succeeded by years of plenty; under these combined influences a lack of energy was superinduced. But a compensation was provided, and if the intensely practical nature which marked both branches of the same family in earlier stages, and which has remained only with one, has passed away from the other, or lieth dormant, the spiritual and mental side of the same nature has not been stunted: it is a common remark of the Aryan, and to a quite equal extent of the Dravidian inhabitants of Hindustan, that it is mind, purely mind, which rules and dominates them. And certainly there is much truth in this. The remark is ventured, not upon experiment but upon observation, that there is as much brain-power among the average Sinhalese and Tamil men as there is among the ordinary agricultural labourers of Europe: that the brain of Bal Hami in the Wellaway district of Ceylon, for instance, would weigh as heavily in the balance as that of John Hodge of a secluded Dorsetshire village, and that the former upon the test being fairly put would show as much "bottom and ballast" as the other. There are the brains, if only somebody

will come and set them properly working. I think it was of Benjamin West, certainly of some great painter, that the story is told, how a stranger, admiring his works, asked him with what he mixed his paints. "With brains, sir," was the reply. So here, whoever will labour in this soil shall find "brains" to manipulate.

I know that the ordinary European looks upon the Ceylonese he has to do with as exceptionally stupid; but so also do I remember that Mr. John Henry Newman has remarked, in his own incomparable manner, that mankind generally has described the lion as a very pusillanimous beast, but that possibly the lion might say much that was derogatory of the courage of man if he were able to describe what it had seen of the bipeds; of the many who had trembled at his roar, and the hundreds who had escaped at utmost speed from his presence. The second day after I landed in Ceylon, now some years ago, the gentleman with whom I was staying, said of the Ceylonese generally, "If it is possible to do a thing wrongly they will do it. Now mark that cooly, you will find that he puts your box with its front to the wall," and sure enough so he did. If I had been a passing visitor to Ceylon as, for instance, Mr. Anthony Trollope was, I might have gone away with as erroneous a notion respecting the people as he did regarding the island generally. Even of the cooly class, when we consider how, unlike the similar class in England, once a cooly always a cooly: once a domestic servant, always a "slavey." I venture to assert they work as hard and as intelligently as the lowest class of mankind in more favored lands. I know that of the agricultural labourers in England, whose weekly wages are ten shillings a week, not above half as much more than a first-class cooly's; one at least out of a hundred, if a Dissenter, becomes a local preacher and a leader in spiritual matters amongst his fellows. There are in the island missionaries from Southern India, where so great and good a work has been done by the Church Missionary Society; can they not tell us of something similar of their converts, the average of whose wages I have seen stated at two pence a day?

Passing up from the lowest class in our social fabric, and seeing that there is soundness there, let us go a little higher, and enquire

whether we may not find something which will support my contention, that the Ceylonese have all the qualities, which rightly directed fit the possessor for self-governing privileges. It should ever be borne in mind that the strain of inherited tendency which has so much effect upon the daily doings of all men, in the case of the Ceylonese has been in the highest degree detrimental, and calculated to make puppets of the people. What treatment in the far and near past have they had, but despotic harshness from Malabar kings and contemptuous treatment from Europeans, in the case of the Portuguese and Dutch particularly? In the annals of their past what has there been to make them proud to paraphrase the Roman maxim which finds fitting adaptation to English lips, *Civis Romanus sum*? What martyrology or Puritan period?—what gallant deeds on sea and land?—what venturesome putting forth to explore unknown lands?—what great fight with a spiritual despotism, the gaining of which added an inch of dignity to every man in the land?—in brief what have they had, which we as Englishmen possess, which should make them men altogether equal to our ourselves? And, if we boast of being better than they, what wonder is there?

Again, the glory and grandeur of England is maintained, not by its aristocracy or squires of landed renown, but that living and ever increasing stream of men who forge their way from the lower ranks of society and by dint of great ability become leaders of men. Not one day stepping from obscurity to the never dark shadow of the throne, as an Eastern Maharajah will sometimes make his favourite barber his prime minister, but the English mode of progress is by gradually forging the way through all obstacles, and acquiring strength for the next difficulty to be encountered by the power called forth in overcoming the last. It may not be time wasted at this juncture to consider some of the aids which the thousands of lads and young men in England have, who are irresistibly impelled by the desire, in some humble sphere, to leave the world a little better than they found it. Leaving out of consideration that splendid past to which allusion has been made, though it is a large element in the result obtained, what advantages the English toiler has. He

labours amidst "a great cloud of witnesses": there are living men by hundreds who have done what he is striving to do, whom he daily sees or hears of, and who serve to keep up his courage to the persevering point. He is helped and aided by fellows of his own years and class, like-minded with himself. Institutions on every side bear him up and strengthen his resolve. The literature, which abounds at a cheap rate, and yet which he has to buy, thus causing self-sacrifice and thereby reaping a double benefit, is at hand; and how amazingly large and useful it has become since the time when Charles Knight published his Penny Cyclopœdia! In every portion of the mental, moral, and spiritual domain he finds assistance ready to his hand, and those who will help him, finding pleasure in observing his action. All this tells on the national life: to our mind it is the yeast that causes the rising of the nation which is not yet stayed, nor will ever be whilst the heart of the people keeps sound.

By the side of this state of things, look at what we have in Ceylon. Whether it be due to the forcing heat of the climate or other causes, the average Ceylonese, of whatever race, is remarkably sharp and very absorptive. With equal educational advantages as British lads have, Ceylonese students do not fail to hold their own. With wonderfully few exceptions, the lads who go to England for university training, show well in the honours' list. Some people complain that there is not that solidity and depth which may be seen in the English character. Granting that there is not, is it any wonder that this is wanting? As well complain that chena land does not give so rich a crop as expensively cattle-manured, carefully-weeded coffee soil, or peculiarly richly-irrigated paddy land. In self-control and general management of their affairs the natives of Ceylon have been enabled to escape a poor law which Governor Sir William Gregory, at a meeting of the Friend-in-Need Society, stigmatised in unmeasured terms as degrading to the last extent. Bad as the people are, low as some people may say they have become in the scale of civilization, one in eight is not a pauper, nor can it be shown that for three hundred years whole families have lived on State funds, much as the last Queen of Kandy and her parasite relatives are

existing in Tanjore at the present time. But the English poor law records, according to a writer in the *Contemporary Review* for September 1875, show that there are families in England which have been in continuous receipt of poor law relief from the time of Queen Elizabeth to the days of Queen Victoria, are still on the workhouse books, and are weekly frequenters at the pay-table of the relieving officer. The Eastern Aryans may not have performed the splendid achievements of those in the West, nor, be it borne in mind, have they suffered from peculiar social evils which are draining the life-blood from those others, though God, knows they they have had their own scenes and episodes of detestable cruelty.

Without the advantages of Englishmen, the inhabitants of Ceylon, long-separated brethren of the same family as that to which Europeans belong, have similar qualities at bottom, have precisely the same characteristics, and only need generous and liberal treatment to do the same deeds. Another side of the well-known remark, "scratch the Russian and you find the Tartar" might be given, and the remark made, "Fitly train and discipline the Ceylonese of mingled races and you have the English of the East." As a consequence of this, the more favoured brother should help the less favoured one to climb the heights where the breezes of freedom have full play and bring the flush of health and activity to all who feel their influence. It took the English nigh upon eight hundred years to rise from village community to full municipal and Parliamentary life. With all the experience of the past available, and with a soil most fit and workable, two years for each hundred would suffice to make this people of Ceylon quick and handy to rule themselves and their own affairs.

In a letter to the Strait's Government on the subject of Muhammadan laws, recently published, the late Sir Richard Morgan gives a forcible instance, in telling the story of the Kandyan Marriage Ordinance, of the evil results of legislating in advance of a people. It may be at once remarked, to the confusion of the present writer, that this applies exactly to the case of a representative constitution for Ceylon. Not so. The converse may be applied, *viz.*, that it is equally detrimental not to introduce reforms when

people are ripe for them. If a Representative House of forty members were established in Ceylon, it would not follow that everybody in the country would have a share in the making of that House: only those who had shown special fitness for this privilege, and who acquire status by first ruling themselves. And who are there that have done this, it will be asked?

Firstly, all the educated men of the large and secondary towns. And secondly, all those who support *gansabhawas*, or village councils for irrigation and communal arrangements. What, it will be asked, indignantly perhaps, shall those who have to do with the little peddling ways of a small town or village have a voice in national affairs? Why not? Precisely the same qualities that are necessary in the one case are exercised in the other, with the advantage often shown by the doings of the smaller body. A Government makes shipwreck of the educational question; a village council settles it by enacting compulsory education, pure and simple, even education for girls, and further debars the parent from village privileges, sends him "to Coventry" if he does not obey the rules, a share in the making of which he has had, or might have had. Similarly, a good infusion of English citizens being included, would municipalities have worked in towns had they been fearlessly put in action, freed from the burden of Government routine and indifference, which crushes and saddens all who wish that progress sure and stable, should be furthered to the extent which it might be. Life is short, and Government stepping out of its proper sphere, aggravates and makes existence a burden and partially useless. Individually, as well as collectively (and how splendidly the Sinhalese work in concert for needed improvements initiated by themselves, let the Hon. Sir C. P. Layard and Mr. E. Elliott be the witnesses, in their Administration Reports for 1874 and elsewhere), the Ceylonese is worthy and capable of exercising independent judgment. It is, too, a Tamil who is progressive enough to bring the Jaffna peninsula two days nearer the seat of Government than it is now, while English authorities stop the way, the Governor's explanation in Council on this point notwithstanding; for "where there's a will there's a way." Who are the sturdy sticklers for constitutional

rights, doing in our poor little council what John Hampden and others did in the English House of Commons? The Sinhalese, Tamil, and Burgher members respectively, with but one Englishman, out of a dozen present, to help them. I dare say it may be turned against me, that even the Sinhalese Member of Council has strongly expressed himself against his own people being trusted with an enlarged franchise. I sorrowfully admit that this was the case in 1875, and think that if there is any man capable of describing his countrymen *as they are*, the Hon'ble James Alwis is the man. But can he look at them in the light of British working institutions and tell of their fitness for privileges like to those enjoyed by British burgesses? It is with the British Constitution, admirable as it is, as with many other things, "distance lends enchantment to the view." Mr. Alwis complains that but little interest is manifested in elections here. He "never knew a sincere election." Every thing connected therewith turned upon the popularity of one man and his influence. So well-read a man as he is, must know that these words apply equally well to the elections in England before the basis of the Parliamentary franchise was "broadened down." Even now, those of us who are conversant with municipal elections especially,—and the writer claims to have some personal knowledge on this point,—know how true this is of Englishmen, when the November elections are held. Either the elections are as tame as was the meeting in the Galle Face school-room recently, when Mr. George Leechman was elected for the Slave Island ward; or a personal matter arises, men are put forward on anything but public grounds; the public houses are turned into Committee-rooms, drunkenness ensues, and for anything but the enlightened reason Mr. Alwis supposes, a ward contest is decided. In proof thereof let him read a letter in the *Pall Mall Budget* of July 1875, it is quoted by Mr. W. R. Grey in the August *Contemporary*,—and he will there find English gentlemen of enlightenment altering this state of things by doing precisely what Sinhalese and Tamil gentlemen could do were there free and (officially) unfettered municipal bodies in Ceylon. And, further, in parliamentary elections how shamefully has the screw been turned

by landlords—and tenants, by scores and hundreds, compelled to vote for their landlord's favorite candidate, while it is notorious that in Ireland to this day, the Romanist voters are dragooned by the priests and led to the ballot boxes, while directions to vote are given from the altar steps. Consequently, if the point insisted upon by Mr. Alwis is to be accepted, the British people are unfit for self-government. Rather do even they need teaching how properly to exercise the large powers vested in them. The same argument, too, applies to the reasoning of a correspondent in the *Examiner*.

What he says of the pre-arrangement of a *gansabhawa* election is equally true of all institutions at the commencement, and where his duty, and the duty of other educated Ceylonese lies, is in teaching the people to be as jealous and vigilant of their rights in the village assembly as the Hon'ble James Alwis is in the Legislative Council.

The Tamils have their system of self-government, and only need the faculty now exercised for the caste or race should be turned to the public use. Allusion has been made to this, but a further quotation may be of service. Sir (then Mr.) Coomara Swamy, in the debate on the *gansabhawa* ordinance in 1871, said :—

Amongst the Indian settlers in Colombo there is self-government in full vigour. The Chetties call the association by which such functions are exercised, the *Nakaram*. Every Sunday night it meets in one of the temples, and disposes of not simply such paltry suits as this bill deals with, but cases of importance, which would otherwise be dealt with by only our district courts * * * * * *

If either the plaintiff or defendant will not abide by the decree pronounced by the *Nakaram* their punishment is exclusion from their caste. And this means a great many annoyances. In India, the *dhoby* would refuse to wash for them, the barber decline to wait on them, whilst the dancing girl will refuse to make her *salaāms*. They dare not enter the social gatherings of their fellows. Till, therefore, the decree was complied with the recalcitrants were treated as outcasts."

Again, it may be said, " But ask the people, intelligent Burghers and others. They do not want this power." If one sees the capacity for better things in a people it is not always wise to take their "ignorant" and "stupid" prejudices as the guide of action. A boy

has promise of great abilities, but is disinclined to get knowledge; and men who act on a maxim which is greatly abused in the East, *viz., Festina lente*, would say "Learn? No, why should he if he does not care to do so?" Not in so many words, perhaps, is this said, but that is the logical out-come of his argument. Would such reasoners argue that slavery should continue because it is on record ("Social Statics," p. 431) that negro slaves were wont to jeer at freed-men, and taunted the latter because they had no white man to care for them! Shall, then, a great boon be withholden from the people who are, when reasoned with and guided, found to be capable of rightly using great privileges? Of course, unthinking Ceylonese say they do not want representative institutions because they do not know what they are saying, and because their "*ma-bap*" (their "father and mother,") as the Bengali says, has hitherto done everything for them. The point I insist upon, of the people being intelligent, was well illustrated recently. An advocate of the Supreme Court told me that he greatly preferred conducting a case with a Ceylonese jury than with a box-full of Englishmen. "They are more intelligent," he said. I demurred. "Well," he added, "they certainly take greater pains in unravelling the contradictions of the evidence, and seem more intelligently to grasp a case." To recapitulate: the native of Ceylon is altogether a different being to the negro inhabitant of Jamaica and other West Indian islands. The latter is a poor survival of barbarism, who never came into contact with civilization, till a white man made him a slave. On the other hand, the people we have as fellow-citizens here, are those whose forefathers were familiar with many of the advantages of civilization when the race which is but sparsely represented among the present inhabitants of Britain worshipped stones, were idolatrous Druids, wore skins and paddled about in wicker boats in the streams and on the sea-shores of England. The natives of Ceylon are men with brains, and the minds represented by the deeply-scored grey matter in their cranium might be turned to more advantage than they are. It is not too much to think that, with European guidance, and connected with Great Britain, as would be the case, what has happened in

South Australia, for instance, would eventually be our experience here. In a recent work on "South Australia: its History, Resources and Productions," it is stated (p. p. 22 and 23):—"On the whole our liberal institutions have worked well. Good government has been carried out, and the country has made progress. Indeed the marvel is, that our State machine has worked so smoothly and so successfully as it has. We have no professional legislators. The men who have been called to the Parliament are for the most part, plain men, who know but little of politics as a science, and as a rule are but moderately educated. They are, I suppose, much on a par with the men who first assumed the government of the United States, when they were separated from the mother country. Some of our members have shown singular aptitude for political work, and have educated themselves up to a high state of efficiency and usefulness. Not a few of them are able speakers—strong in debate and lucid in exposition." Would not much in the foregoing extract be equally applicable to Ceylon. Who, in the recent debate on ecclesiastical subsidies in the Legislative Council, commanded most admiration for their eloquence, their great grasp of the subject, their generally wise and statesmanlike views, but the trio of Ceylonese members? In no single respect were they equalled by the European speakers, whether official or unofficial. Yet such legislators as the Hons. Sir Coomara Swamy, James Alwis, James Van Langenberg, Charles Ferdinands, and others still living; and such as James Stewart, Charles Lorensz, and Sir Richard Morgan, among those "whose labours are ended and who are now at peace;" have been the product of a system stinted and confined, hedged round and bound in as is the present system of the nominated Legislature of Ceylon. It would be an insult to the community to say that there are not literally scores of men living, and who might be named worthy in character, as well as by acquired knowledge and tried ability, to administer the affairs of their country. When such great results have followed from the small means already used, there can be little doubt that the Ceylonese are eminently fitted to use wisely and well, not without some mistakes and occasional blunders, for "to err is human," an electoral franchise.

(b)—What good will the possession of the franchise do to the people of Ceylon ?

It would do pretty well everything that the most ardent person could desire. The franchise is the key to unlock social puzzles and to set right inequalities and iniquities, as the free democracy of the United States swept away human slavery. Perhaps I cannot illustrate this point better than by quoting, as peculiarly apposite, a passage from a communication to a recent number of the *Atlantic Monthly Magazine.* The owner of a large tract of land, in which was situated a rail-road station, wished to found a city in that locality, and on his own land. The directors of the railway, whose interests he had greatly served, in reply to an application which he had made that the nucleus of a town should be formed, promised to erect a large cattle-shed. A cattle-shed ! The projector was humiliated and in despair. Not so a warm-hearted enthusiastic friend, who said, " A cattle-shed ! Why that is just what is wanted." [This spot was a place where it was advisable to break long railway and road journeys of cattle.] " Wise, practical, rail-road men ! A cattle-shed means drivers and butchers, men from New York to Texas, with fat, greasy wallets. It means a hotel, a bank, a market, an exchange, a printing office, a newspaper, a church a Sunday school. It means paved streets, and side walks It suggests a mayor, aldermen, lawyers, doctors, speculators, politicians. It means a wharf and steam-boats, and timber rafts, and a light-house on Thor's Rock, shining of nights across the lake. It means that at last the nucleus is found, providing you only believe it as I do."

In the same strain it may be said to the people of Ceylon, "providing you only believe as we do" in regard to the franchise, and if you will permit us to help you to believe, a widened suffrage is just what is wanted in the present state of affairs. The franchise would mean giving the agriculturists a chance of protesting against the continuance of the monstrously evil renting system, and good, sound, constitutional agitation against rice, the staff of life, being the only product of the soil which is directly taxed. The enquiry which would result might lead us to understand how it is that, while Government claim an element of rent in this tax, it is yet imposed

or paddy grown on lands which are as clearly bought out-right as have been coffee lands, and for which as good titles are held. Given the franchise and frequent communication between the people and their member in the legislative body at the seat of Government, and something better than paternal rule would result. There was paternal rule in the Northern Province, under Mr. Dyke, yet the people had to clamour, speaking, however, as it were, into an exhausted air-receiver as they had no power at their back for forty-nine years, that certain "works of acknowledged public utility" should be undertaken, and only as the fiftieth year dawns, is the work being done. There is still paternal rule there, and the people are denied the privileges of village councils. Again, the people in the neighbourhood of Batticaloa would not have gone on paying their road tax in hard cash, "difficult to get, not easy to hold," for thirty years, and yet all the time painfully plod through soft, burning sand.

Nor would the people of the North Central Province, in this year of grace 1876, content themselves with complaining to a passing traveller, respecting the unfair manner in which this road tax is taken from them.

They would carry their poetical and pathetic lament, in which they quoted a pretty Sinhalese stanza, to the effect that the visit of the tax-gatherer should be like the visit of the bee to the flower in search of honey, taking what it wants and leaving the petals uninjured, instead of being, as it is, dreaded and feared exceedingly; they would carry their complaint to a place where it would be heard, telling it to a man who occupied a particular position on purpose to attend to such things, and their action could not fail to obtain remedy. The converse would also be true. Given this reform, not only would existence not stagnate for generations, but improvements would result, which in themselves would be the prolific parents of many others. The conferment of the franchise on the Ceylonese means that at last, has been found the lever for upliftment, and the causes that shall bring to this land something of the onward progress of Austral lands, which have made marvellous strides towards national manhood, whilst Ceylon is still coddled and controlled as a weakly child which has not learnt the use of its limbs.

To the persons to whom these pages are addressed, conscious as they are to some limited extent, of being able to think and reason fully and fairly upon the subjects which most interest the land to which they belong, it is unnecessary that I should multiply proofs and reasons to show how their interests would be served by the possession of the franchise. Nor is it necessary in this place to argue with those who think otherwise. When the time for that arrives objections may be met: we need not build a bridge for their more speedy coming. This is an appeal to men to be worthy of their manhood, and to labour that the good which their children shall inherit may be greater than that which has attended them throughout their life. Were this an elaborate *apologia*, the piling-up of facts might be necessary. In the present case there is not. "There is a time for all things," and the moment now availed of is to endeavour to arouse and to convince half-awakened and partially-willing minds, and not to consider all the possible objections which might be urged against what is proposed. With such a people as the Ceylonese, as with the English people, the conferment of the franchise would result and issue in such an amount of good to the people and to the country, as cannot be conceived and described.

Such being the case, I once more appeal to you, my fellow-citizens, and by all that has been done by the Ceylonese in the past, as well as by the hopes the best and most far-seeing among us cherish, ask, whether you will not set yourselves to the acquirement of those privileges which will, for you and for your children, be so fruitful, so good? No one has the remotest RIGHT to blame you for doing all that you are called upon to do in these pages; for, as British subjects, you also have rights, the right amongst others to constitutionally meet together to consider those things which most concern you, and to petition the House of Commons to give you that which can only be obtained from England. You must do this for yourselves. No one can properly do it for you. The present writer, in a letter from the editor of one of the leading Reviews of England, regarding the pressing of the claims of the Ceylonese to representative government, was asked, "*But are the people doing anything themselves.*" We Englishmen had to struggle hard for our privileges, and so must the Ceylonese. Further, if

they are as fit for the franchise, as you allege on their behalf, they will do this, and the victory being achieved by themselves will be so much the more valuable. You, my friends, have time, you have opportunity, you have ability. If you are wanting in this time of opportunity you shut the door of progress, not only against yourselves, but also, it may be, against many other peoples for an indefinite time. Had the English people in the seventeenth century been lukewarm in their opposition to Kingly tyranny, and not have struggled for their rights and liberties, the whole civilized world would, in these days, have presented a very different state of things to the blessed state of freedom and enlightenment which now rules in so many lands. To a very great extent the people of Ceylon are the depository of freedom in government and enlarged self-rule, for the many millions of the Indian continent, and the divers peoples of the Malayan peninsula; just as the English held the torch from which lights were obtained which have lightened almost every nation in the European continent as well as elsewhere. The people who are conscious of a destiny are the people who perform great and notable things; and it is only as we, who live in Ceylon, rise above race-hatreds and national peculiarities,—the contempt of the Englishmen, the sensitive pride of the Burgher, the caste exclusiveness of the Sinhalese, the independence of the Tamil, and the isolation of the Moor, that we can hope to become a people welded together to promote the good of so grand and glorious a land as that of Ceylon. Will the people to whom this appeal is made, work by peaceful and constitutional means alone, for these means are, now-a-days, more powerful than armed violence, to the accomplishment of the great ends which may, and should, here be wrought out?

"EDUCATION, MORAL, UNIFORM, and UNIVERSALLY DIFFUSED; . . . . . increase of production;" these are among the things we want here, as Mazzini, the patriot of the world, pointed out in years gone by, they were wanted for Italy. And as Italy is, slowly perhaps, but nevertheless surely, obtaining them, so is she growing in strength and might as a nation. To the Ceylonese, individually and collectively, the cry goes forth, "GO THOU AND DO LIKEWISE."