

the simplest rights of humanity and the priceless treasure of liberty." Empires are based not on right but on might. As Herbert Spencer points out : " Not the derivation of the word only but all its uses and associations imply the thought of predominance-imply a correlative subordination. Actual or potential coercion of individuals or communities is necessarily involved in the conception." How can intelligent Indians be called upon to gloat over the fact of their servility and make a new god not of India but of British Empire?

It is very necessary therefore to bring plain common sense into our political life. Moderate politics are really based on fear; they have not the boldness to call a spade a spade. Unless we shake off this fear of the foreign government, there can be no healthy politics in the country. " Our whole life from top to bottom smacks of fear, deadly fear of losing in the estimation of those whom in our heart of hearts we believe to be only usurpers; fear of losing the sunshine of the smile of those whom we believe to be day and night engaged in the exploitation of our country and the spoliation of our people, fear of offending the false gods that have by fraud or force taken possession of our bodies and souls, fear of being shut up in a dungeon or prison-house."

## II. FAILURE OF THE CONGRESS.

The Congress Movement in 1885 was essentially an English product. The idea was born first in Lord Dufferin's brain, who suggested it to Mr. Hume. Even the Governor of Bombay was suggested as the first president. This official inspiration condemns the Congress in the nationalist's eyes. " Who has ever heard of a political movement being initiated by a despotic government, which is foreign in its agency and foreign in its methods ? "

It may be further stated that the Congress was started at least partly to save British Empire from danger. Mr. Hume admitted that "a safety-valve for the escape of great and growing forces generated by British connection, was urgently needed and no more efficacious safety-valve than the Congress Movement could possibly be devised." He further said that "no choice was left to those who gave the primary impetus to the movement. The ferment, the creation of Western ideas, education, invention, and appliances, was at work with a rapidly increasing intensity, and it became of paramount importance to find for its products an overt and constitutional channel for discharge, instead of leaving them to fester as they had already commenced to do, under the surface." The most important point of view, says Hume, is the further maintenance of the integrity of the British Empire: and from this point of view the question is not whether the Congress is premature but whether the country will accept it.

If such were the original motives of the founders of the Congress, there is nothing surprising in the way in which the Congress developed. The Congress gave full expression to the prevailing discontent on specific problems and thus relieved the tension in the country to a considerable extent. In fact, the Government had no more powerful ally than the Indian National Congress. The devotion to the Empire became virtually the creed of Congress: and nationalism merely appeared as a product of imperialism, as a support to imperialism, as a subordinate phase of imperialism. The struggle for national expression never acquired a distinct and independent existence. The Moderates were as much frightened at this new phenomenon called Indian nationality trying to assert its independent status, as the British bureaucrats.

The Congress sprang up in an atmosphere dominated by the official tradition. It was thought that no movement

had any chance of even a temporary success unless it had official support behind it. Mr. Gokhale said that "no Indian could have started the Indian National Congress", that "if the founder of the Congress had not been a great Englishman and a distinguished ex-official, such was the official distrust of political agitation in those days that the authorities would have at once found some way or other to suppress the movement."

This may or may not be correct; but it certainly accurately reflects not only the mentality of the Congress when it was born, but also the mentality of the leaders right upto 1916. The initiative for freedom may not be an easy thing, and unless it comes from within, and unless it has the determination to fight all opposition, it is not likely to yield any result. Caution may enable us to usher in a movement like the Congress; caution may enable us to carry it on from year to year but as long as our dominant mentality is that of caution, circumspection, and fear, so long we cannot expect the Congress to be a real fighting force in the cause of freedom. The whole Congress literature is pervaded by this atmosphere of the fear of the authorities: and consequently we miss the really revolutionary tone there altogether. Laboriously compiled and even brilliantly expressed oratorical statements are there: but there are not many passages which can stir up the blood of the people and fire them with ambition to do great things for their country.

The leaders were more or less like professors constructing an academic explanation, or like lawyers, a legal vindication of their position. If they lacked courage, how could they inspire courage in the people? It may not be correct to say that Congress politics was nothing but a grab for the honours and emoluments of the office; but barring some distinguished cases like those of Dadabhai Naoroji and Gopal Krishna Gokhale, the Congress did

not produce any national heroes whose courage or self-sacrifice or martyrdom put a new life into the people. The leaders lacked that real faith in the cause for which they were fighting: and the people therefore remained on the whole unaffected by their rhetoric. They were men who talked: they were not men who could act.

Lajpat Rai thus summarises the causes of the Congress failure:—

(1) The Congress movement was started by an Englishman, at the suggestion of an English pro-consul. It was not inspired by the people nor devised or planned by them. It was not a movement from within. It was guided and controlled mostly by Indians who were candidates for Government favours. Some of them were actually in Government service; some were in professions allied to Government services. They would be associated with the movements as long as they could safely do so; but they would not risk their careers or make any sacrifices.

(2) The Congress movement was not a popular movement. The leaders did not care to enlist popular enthusiasm or interest. The movement was therefore confined deliberately to the intelligentsia only.

(3) There was no grandeur or elevation in their aims and ideals. "A national movement, demanding only a few concessions and not speaking of the liberties of the nation and of its ideals, is never an effective movement. It is at best an opportunist movement. It is mischievous in so far as it diverts attention from substantial nation-building and character-making. It brings fame without sacrifice. It opens opportunities for treacheries and hypocrisies. It enables some people to trade in the name of patriotism."