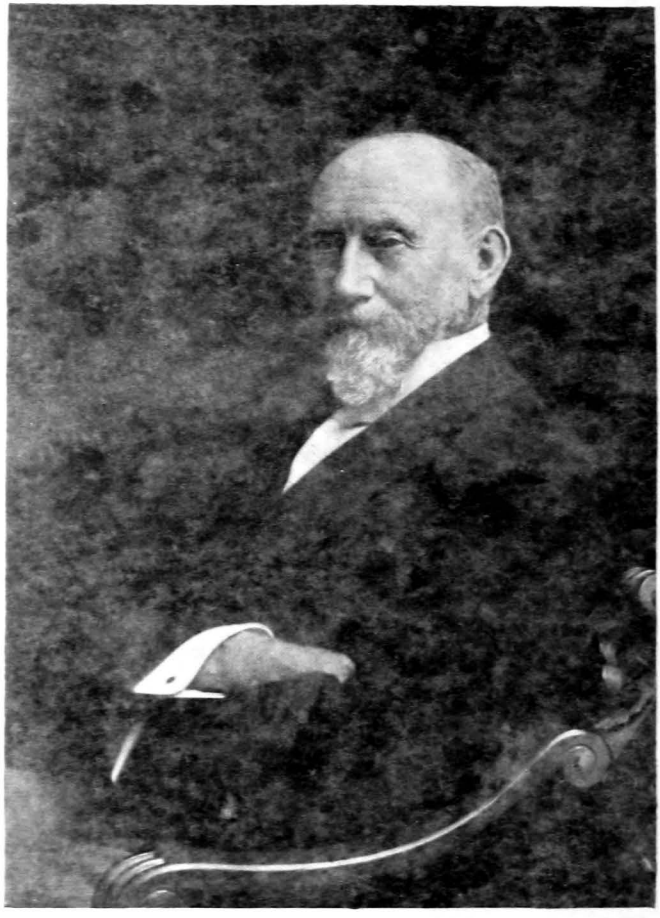
SIR WILLIAM WEDDERBURN



SIR WILLIAM WEDDERBURN, BART., 1910, ÆTAT. 72

SIR WILLIAM WEDDERBURN

AND THE INDIAN REFORM MOVEMENT

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PREFACE

ALL who knew Sir William Wedderburn will understand why a memoir of him must be essentially an impersonal record. His life was in his public work—first in his official service, and later in his unremitting labour on behalf of Indian Reform. This little book, accordingly, is almost entirely an account of the Indian Reform movement as initiated, encouraged, and for a long period of years guided, by Sir William Wedderburn and his associates in the Indian National Congress. Such an account is, manifestly, a necessary chapter in the history of modern India during the first stage of its momentous transition.

For the closest collaboration, especially in working over the personal records, Sir William's diaries and the documents relating to his service in India, I am indebted to my wife, without whose assistance the book, small though it is, could not have been written. My

friend Mr. H. E. A. Cotton, C.I.E., for more than ten years Editor of *India*, and now President of the Bengal Legislative Assembly, has been good enough to read the manuscript and to make a number of valuable suggestions; my thanks are also due to Mr. Douglas Hall, of the Indian Reforms Committee, for his kind assistance in reading the proofs.

S. K. R.

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December, 1922.

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CHAPTER I

FAMILY AND EARLY LIFE

THERE is one statement continually made about British dominion in India that is accepted by imperialists and anti-imperialists alike. It is that the system of British rule is the most remarkable phenomenon in the history of modern government. Many among us hold that the system is good in itself and almost wholly beneficent in its working; while others are convinced that it contains far more evil than good. But whatever our judgment of its nature, we see it as a unique thing, a highly characteristic product of the British genius. There is, however, a complementary fact that is rarely if ever brought out: namely, that the corrective movement of political and administrative reform in India is no less characteristic of our people; is, indeed, more essentially British than the governing machine itself. It began nearly a century and a half ago with Edmund Burke, and it developed in strength throughout the nineteenth century. After the

British power was completely established, it was from Englishmen, in India and in Parliament, that the first expression was given to principles which, slowly and cautiously adopted, could have but one constitutional end—the creation of a self-governing India. In that movement, for fully half a century, the character, the thought, and the work of Sir William Wedderburn counted in an incalculable degree. Without him, the influence that was embodied in the Indian National Congress, between 1885 and the Great War, could not have been what it was, and probably it could not have been at all.

Sir William Wedderburn, fourth baronet of Balindean, was the sixth child and youngest son of Sir John Wedderburn (the second baronet of this creation, 1789–1862), and of Henrietta Louisa, daughter of William Milburn of the East India Company's Service.

The Wedderburns of the Scottish Border are a family of great antiquity.[1] The earliest record of their name, like that of many old Scottish families, occurs in the *Ragman Roll* (1296), the document which contains the names of the barons who swore fealty to Edward the First of England. William Wedderburn, however, sprang, not directly

[1] See the brief history of the family given in chapter xi of this volume.

from the Border, but from a Forfarshire branch, namely, the Kingennie family, long prominent in and near Dundee.

One member of this branch accompanied James the Sixth to England in 1603, and the family's adherence to the Stuarts is the outstanding political fact of their history during the ensuing century and a half. Sir William's great-grandfather and grandfather both joined the standard of Prince Charles Edward and fought at Culloden, and in 1746 his great-grandfather, Sir John, was executed on Kennington Common for his share in the rebellion.

"The Indian Civil Service," said Sir William Wedderburn in a presidential address to the Indian National Congress (1889), "has been a sort of hereditary calling in our family since the beginning of the century." His father, Sir John, spent thirty years in the Bombay branch of the service, filling the offices of military, commercial, and revenue accountant, and rising to be Accountant-General. Retiring as from the year 1837, he sailed from India at the end of 1836, accompanied by his wife and infant son, David. They travelled by the new overland route in leisurely fashion, made a stay in Egypt, and did not reach Scotland until the first year of Victoria's reign was already some months old.

At Musselburgh they rejoined their four elder children, who had been left in the care of two devoted aunts, Maria and Susan Wedderburn; and on March 25 of the following year, 1838, at No. 2 Atholl Crescent, Edinburgh, William Wedderburn was born. He was baptized on May 9, at Inveresk Lodge, Musselburgh. The family was completed four years later with the birth of a seventh child, Louisa, for long the special pet of David and William.

When William Wedderburn was three years of age the family, now permanently united, removed from Musselburgh to Keith House, East Lothian; and from the childish diaries of William and his brother David we are able to learn something of the environment provided by a wise, affectionate, and somewhat remarkable father. Some instruction was given to the two little boys by the three much older sisters, who besides being accomplished in the arts then deemed suitable for young gentlewomen, possessed considerable literary, historical, and linguistic culture.

The always sedate young William writes of his father's calm disposition and of his benevolent contentment with the happy group around him. Long afterwards he records how the head of the house "occupied himself in directing our education, and in the quiet pursuits of an English country gentleman." (At a still later time a

Wedderburn would not have called his family English!) "My father," he continued, "rarely made use of direct precept. His character and imposing presence had a great influence over us. He seemed to us the embodiment of justice combined with power; and, until we realised how gentle his disposition really was, our affection was largely mingled with awe. He was singularly impartial and took no steps to create in us any party preference. . . . We knew that his approval would be secured when, in practical matters, however trifling, we showed a just and liberal sense of the rights of others." Of his mother he says that she was "remarkable for her quick and active mind."

The three years 1841–44, during which the children were running freely about the neighbourhood of Keith House, drinking in Scottish history at work and play, were the prelude to a prolonged Swiss-Italian tour, mainly by carriage, with winters in Florence, Naples, and Rome. This was the first of a noteworthy series of travel experiences which gave the two young Wedderburns a varied and stimulating introduction to the life of Europe—such an education, indeed, as very few members even of their favoured class were enabled to enjoy during the first half of the nineteenth century. William Wedderburn writes:

"It was an almost unconscious education in history and politics. For in those years Italy lay in the grasp of Austria, and the Bourbons, and the Pope; and though all seemed quiet on the surface, the people were preparing themselves for the national struggle under King Charles Albert. We studied Silvio Pellico's picture of Austrian dungeons, and heard from Signor Tolomei, our friend and teacher, personal narratives of similar wrongs and sufferings; and it is easy to understand how an imaginative boy would become filled with sympathy for the national aspirations, and with an abiding hatred of arbitrary power and foreign oppression."

This delightful spell of family life abroad came to an end in 1847, when William Wedderburn and his elder brother were left at Hofwyl, near Berne. The place chosen for them was a small school, with twenty or thirty pupils, belonging to von Fellenberg, then widely known as a leading disciple of Pestalozzi. At nine years of age the diary habit was fully formed in William Wedderburn. The father encouraged it; and every tour, and almost every other experience, is fully recorded by the two boys. Of the Hofwyl school there survives a diary of three weeks in August, 1847. The routine appears to have provided for light lessons, with plenty of time for carpentry, gymnastics, playground, gardening, swimming in summer, and skating and tobogganing in winter. The summer holiday month

was given up to *voyages en zigzag*. On one such excursion our nine-year-old walked 21 miles in one day. On the whole the life reads as though it were rather strenuous. David describes in his journal at least one day lasting from 5 a.m. to 9 p.m.

Owing to the disturbed times, the school in 1848 was forced to break up. On their way home, via the Rhine and Ostend, the brothers saw something of the fighting which in that year of revolution was going on in every quarter of Europe.

More than half a century later—in September, 1901—Wedderburn was at Geneva on his way back from a cure at Royat-les-Bains. He noted in his diary that he made a pilgrimage the special object of which was to see whether Le Petit Château Banquet, where the family lived in 1845–6, still survived. He found it, and saw the whole place, every corner of which had some childish reminiscence:

"Nothing was changed. There was the drawing-room with its folding doors where we had acted The Lady of the Lake and the Exile of Erin; the corridor where we had our games, the room where David and I had slept, the nurse's room where we were tubbed, and my dear mother's room where I had struggled with the multiplication table and long division."

Two days after this he sought out his first school, at Hofwyl: "As we drove up we passed

the ground devoted to the boys' gardens, and I could identify the little patch in which I had reared succulent Indian corn and cucumbers. . . . The school seems to be flourishing, with ten masters and 150 boys." And a day later: "I walked out to Steffisburg to try to identify the house in which we lived for a summer about 1844. I was not so successful as at Geneva and Hofwyl."

His second school, though English and not Pestalozzian, was conducted on the new continental principles. It was kept by a M. Heldemaier at Worksop whither David had but recently preceded him.

In 1851 the family went to London by sea for the Great Exhibition, and in the autumn of that year William Wedderburn was transferred to a school which already bore a famous name —Loretto House—although it had not yet entered on the development by virtue of which it came to rank with the first schools in the country. David had been there for a year or two, and had just left. The headmaster was Thomas Langhorne, son of the Dr. Langhorne who had stamped his character on the school during its formative years.

In the summer vacation of the following year, when he was only fourteen, William was allowed by his parents to join David in a tour of the Highlands. There was, as a matter of fact,

not the smallest risk involved, for a more mature and responsible pair of youths could nowhere have been found. Their joint journal is full of intelligent description. The brothers included Staffa and Iona in their round, and went as far north as Inverness.

The year 1854 is memorable in the Wedderburn history for the reason that, during a long tour in England and Wales, the family halted at Gloucester to see the property belonging to their mother upon which in later years Meredith was built. Hence the journal of David and William at this time is especially interesting.

It conveys throughout the impression of an unusual, but wholly unselfconscious family of leisure, untiring in the pursuit of the culture which travel affords. Once at a destination, not a moment is wasted, and yet every excursion is carried out without the smallest suggestion of haste or bustle. The collecting of botanical specimens is a task of every journey. The sisters invariably linger to sketch the interesting views; ruins are thoroughly investigated; no historical or antiquarian point seems ever to be missed: scenery is analysed, and compared with its Scottish or Italian counterparts; immense walks are undertaken by the two boys, and wet days are filled with drawing, reading, and the writing up of the diary. Every hour is enjoyed, not excepting

a Sunday at Oxford, which they divide between a Baptist service and New College Chapel.

At midsummer David notes in his journal that by the unanimous vote of the family Gloucestershire is the most beautiful county through which the tour has led them, and in a characteristic entry he describes a day spent at Tibberton and devoted to the detailed examination of Lady Wedderburn's property. They found a roomy and comfortable farmhouse, with barns and other outbuildings in a state of dilapidation, and a farm of nearly 100 acres, thoroughly satisfactory in its distribution of arable, pasture, and orchard land. Back at their Gloucester quarters in the evening, they wound up by tracing the plan of the Tump Farm on tissue-paper. "We then turned in, regularly dead beat by traversing, first in reality and then on paper, the Potmus's (pet name for their Mother) Gloucester estates!" In the autumn William entered the University of Edinburgh.

By 1856, when he was eighteen, he was hard at it preparing for the Indian Civil Service, having never, as a matter of fact, considered any other career. "I can say," he wrote long afterwards, "that I always regarded this hereditary profession, which was also the profession of my choice, as the noblest career open to youthful ambition." His eldest brother, John, towards whom a terrible fate was at that time hastening, had entered

the service from Haileybury. He served in Bengal and Behar, and in the Punjab where he was deputy-commissioner of Lahore.

An interesting and very neat diary, so relentlessly packed that hardly an extra word could be squeezed into any one of its marginless pages, begins: "Journal of William Wedderburn during six months when he was sent abroad by his dear Father to study modern languages, in order to compete for one of the H.E.I.C.'s civil appointments. Thurs. April 9, 1857." In pursuance of this plan he spent the summer on the Continent, but early in August news of the Indian Mutiny called him home. The diary shows him crossing France in April, travelling third class (he was always a most dutifully economical son), and remarking on the good manners and sociability of his travelling companions. In May he wins a prize for archery at Florence; and on the last day of June, on returning from an excursion to Vallombrosa, hears the first mention of the uprising. "It is wonderful," he notes, "how long the Indian Government had kept it secret," and, he adds, how flatly the first rumours had been contradicted by India House. He went at once in search of English newspapers, and compared the places and times of the disturbances with the latest tidings of his eldest brother, with his wife and child. They had,

as he found, passed through Delhi about ten days before the fatal 10th of May; it was not till the first Sunday of August, at Dresden, that William learned the details of the tragedy that had overtaken them in the Punjab. All three were killed. At the time of the outbreak John Wedderburn was magistrate and collector of Hissar. He had raised a troop of irregular cavalry, which treacherously turned upon him.

The following May William was again in Dresden, learning German; and after a holiday with the family in Germany and with David in Normandy, he settled down to study for a time in Paris. He was just too late for the old system of nomination to the Indian Civil Service by the Court of Directors, and therefore went in with a very early batch of "competition wallahs." At the examinations of his year (1859) there were 160 candidates for the forty appointments offered. The result for Wedderburn was extraordinary. He failed in his strong subject, mathematics, thus scoring no marks at all under that head, and got through on his English and languages alone. How excellent in these he must have been may be inferred from his place in the list. He was third. For another year he continued his training by legal and other study, and then left for Bombay. He was in his twenty-third year.

CHAPTER II

SERVICE IN INDIA, 1860–1887

In 1860, when Wedderburn arrived at Bombay, to enter upon the term of service that was to last for twenty-seven years, India was in the first stage of the transition from the rule of the East India Company which Macaulay had described as a vast anomaly. The new system created by the Government of India Act of 1858 was just beginning to take shape. The Mutiny was a very recent and an almost unbearable memory. Not many months earlier the last of the insurgent bands had been dispersed; hardly had the judicial proceedings which rounded off the retribution for Delhi and Cawnpore been brought to an end. The civil administration was passing into the hands of new men, who were unwelcome invaders of a land hitherto held sacred to a specialised and highly privileged order of public servants. These—the old Quaihais, for whom John Company soon became a cherished legend—looked upon the competition wallahs as an inferior breed, as men of the book rather than

men familiar with those two instruments of the older imperial rule, the horse and the rifle.

Every contemporary record of the sixties exhibits some aspect of an India just emerged from a terrible crisis. The young George Trevelyan, going his joyous way through the Upper Provinces shortly after Wedderburn began his work, brought out, in the best of all such narratives,[1] three features of the country that seemed to him most significant: the profound bitterness of the racial feeling; the sense among the Europeans of an incalculable peril below the surface, and, most characteristic of the British character, the astonishing completeness with which, in an interval reckoned only by months, the social life of the ruling people had been re-established. As a matter of fact, Sir George Trevelyan describes a scene—of station life and official mechanism, of racial exclusiveness and antagonism—which in all its essentials remained unaltered until, two generations later, the tempest of the world war shook the fabric to its base.

Of Wedderburn's experiences as a junior civilian we have almost no record. The diary habit with him was, in adult life, confined to holiday travel, and in any case could not be cultivated under the implacable pressure of official duty.

[1] *The Competition Wallah*, especially the last chapters.

One meagre calendar that survives contains little beyond social engagements during his first months in the country; but the calendar is at least enough to show that invitations were showered upon him to an extent which might easily have imperilled a less earnest young official. His evenings, evidently, were full. But Wedderburn was in no danger. He had gone to India under a religious sense of the significance of his work and the gravity of the Indian problem, and from the beginning he held to the lofty conception that was his guide to the end of life. He was a servant of the Indian people—called, alike by the covenant he had accepted and by the relation existing between England and India, to fulfil his task to the utmost of his power.

Beginning official duty at Dharwar as assistant-collector, he set to work learning Hindustani and Kanarese, and passed his first departmental examination in 1862, being then gazetted to act as assistant-judge of Dharwar. A rare personal jotting amongst records of engagements of this year reads, "2nd July at 7 p.m. my dearest father died."[1] A few months later he was appointed district judge and acting judicial assistant to the Commissioner in Sind, with headquarters at Karachi. The following year

[1] At Brighton.

he became judge of the Court of Small Causes. These successive appointments reveal an early bent towards the judicial side. The present sharp division between the two branches of the Civil Service did not then exist, and it may seem rather surprising that so large a portion of Wedderburn's service should have been given to the judicial side. He had an intense interest in administration; and it is clear that as a senior executive officer he would have enjoyed large and varied opportunities, not only of applying his knowledge of agrarian problems, but also of testing his conclusions in such vital matters as education and the first steps towards self-government. It may well be, however, that he believed it possible for him to accomplish more, and with less hostility, as a judicial officer, and along the lines of conciliation and arbitration courts, than would have been practicable had he been burdened with the manifold duties of district collector and divisional commissioner.

Experience in the presidency Secretariat came to him at a comparatively early stage. In 1868, and more than once within a few years, he acted as secretary to the Government of Bombay; and as officiating registrar he began a long and varied association with the Bombay High Court. In 1874 there began for him an interesting spell

of service as acting Judicial Commissioner in Sind and Judge of the Sadar Court, this being followed by an appointment at Ratnagiri, and then his longest single term of office, as District and Sessions Judge of Ahmednagar.

Following those busy and fruitful years came, in 1882, the district and sessions judgeship of Poona, an appointment which carried with it the agency to the Sirdars of the Deccan. His later years in India were given to a succession of offices that made a special appeal to his powers and sympathies. He was Secretary to Government, for a brief space a member of the Governor's Council and Judge of the Bombay High Court, and at the time of his retirement Chief Secretary to the Government of Bombay. He esteemed it a piece of exceptional good fortune that five of his later years were spent under the governorship of Lord Reay, with whom he was in closer intellectual and political sympathy than with any superior officer except the Marquis of Ripon.

Five groups of questions may be said to have absorbed his attention. These were: (1) Famine, and the poverty of the Indian peasantry; (2) agricultural indebtedness; (3) arbitration, and the revival of the village system; (4) education; (5) self-government. With the two last he was

actively concerned to the end of his life. The first three, continuously interwoven, filled the greater part of his service in India and his years in Parliament; and it is not a mistaken view which associates his name in a special sense with the overmastering problem of India—the economic condition of the labouring multitude.

One specimen of his work, comparatively a trifle, affords so striking an illustration of the Wedderburn spirit and method that the story may well be retold. It belongs to his earliest years, while he was still an assistant-collector, appearing in the archives of the Bombay Presidency as the affair of the Sircy Spice Gardens (1864).

The proprietors of the spice gardens in the Sircy *taluk* (subdivision) of the Canara district claimed the right of cutting and lopping from the government *bettas* (coppices); and the district officer, who had to supervise the conservation of the government jungles, instructed his assistant to inquire into the nature and extent of their claims before the coming of the Revenue Survey into the district. Wedderburn convened the principal proprietors, and found that their claims rested upon long usage and clear necessity, and that it was possible to recognise them without disadvantage to the Government. He estimated

the actual amount of foliage per acre needed for manure, and of firewood for agricultural and domestic purposes, noted the dissatisfaction and alarm aroused by the forest-conservancy regulations, and observed that highly respectable cultivators, though most unwilling to act unlawfully, had often to choose between letting their gardens go to waste and risking the information of some unfriendly neighbour which might involve them in a criminal charge. Further, he found that certain new restrictions were falling most heavily upon the poorer cultivators. On the other hand, officially he was aware that the practice of pollarding was injuring permanently an ever-increasing area of government forest, and that some protective legislation was imperative. He therefore suggested that to each cultivator should be allotted for all requirements a certain area of *betta* at a fixed assessment. The Government would then secure an immediate addition to the revenue; the *bettas* could be regularly kept up and so become more productive, while the Forest Department would be able to enforce its restrictions without misgiving. The official resolution at the foot of this excellent little document reads: "Government have read with much satisfaction Mr. Wedderburn's full and interesting report on the subject of the spice gardens. . . . His Excellency

the Governor in Council is pleased to confirm the arrangements introduced by the Collector with the qualifications proposed by the Acting Revenue Commissioner."

The Rayat.

From the early years of his service Wedderburn realised that the central problem of the Indian system was bound up with the fact of agricultural poverty—the destitution of the mass of rayats, those patient and industrious cultivators who make up four-fifths of the population. It was his accumulated personal observation and experience that made him their champion, and it was his unshakable belief that man is endowed with the power to remould society that led him to the patient elaboration of remedies. The Indian peasant, he said in a lecture before the London Institution, was "a poor half-starved human unit—one among 150 millions spread over a territory of 900,000 square miles, liable to famine on an average once every five years." Wedderburn reached the conclusion that the famines were famines of poverty, and not primarily of food: of poverty so extreme that the money and credit of the rayat were never enough to tide over one failure of the harvest. And this chronic poverty he came, with extreme

reluctance, to attribute mainly to the modern system of land revenue and assessment, perfected after India had passed under the dominion of the Crown: a system, moreover, which had introduced an alien system of taxation and unsuitable land courts. In the old days, he pointed out, by religious law and the sanction of immemorial custom, the land revenue had varied with the crop. Thus:

"In a bad year the rayat had to give but little; if he had no crop he gave nothing; but in a bumper year the Government shared in the general prosperity, the rayat giving gladly out of his abundance. Instead of developing and perfecting this natural and humane method, for the sake of official convenience a rigid cash assessment had been placed by the Government on each field, to be paid at fixed times, whatever the success of the season's crop."

Further, the modern system demanded not only a fixed assessment, and a fixed date for payment; but the date appointed came before harvest (in order, of course, that the crops of defaulters might be seized), and if the money were not paid the authorities had power to take from the peasant even "his house and his land, his plough and his oxen, his bedding and his cooking utensils." The older customs had, on

the whole, been sufficient to keep the money-lender in his place. He had been more or less a co-operator with the rayat, lending money at the borrower's own time—for improving his holding, for wells, for the purchase of seed-corn, and what not. But the existing system gave the worst opportunities to the sowcar.[1] On one and the same day all the peasants had to find cash for the Government, and it was easy to understand how the rates of usury mounted up. If the crops were failing, what bond would not the unhappy rayat sign in order to save his ancestral field? Again, if the crops were good, all the rayats would want to sell. The market would be glutted, and the sowcar could buy in at his own valuation. Crises were inevitable in such a situation; and the crisis which determined Wedderburn's view and his subsequent action befell in 1875 in the Deccan.

The village moneylenders, seeing no hope of repayment, refused to lend. The Government attached thousands of acres of land, sold them at auction, or, failing purchasers, bought in at merely nominal prices. The helpless rayats, dispossessed of their hereditary homesteads, turned upon the only enemies within reach, the great Sirkar itself (the Government) being inaccessible.

[1] Village moneylender.

They attacked the houses of the moneylenders, burned their accounts, and drove them from the villages. The Deccan agrarian riots, as they were called, had involved the Ahmednagar Collectorate, and in December, 1876, a commission of inquiry was appointed. Its report, filling five volumes, was described by Wedderburn as "the most trustworthy record in existence of the rayat's economic condition." The commissioners admitted that the rigid cash demand had driven the rayat to the moneylender, and that once in his hands, the government debt courts had completed his ruin.

This Commission, which Wedderburn always regarded as a pioneer example of modern investigation, helped to complete his knowledge of the agrarian problem. The evidence gathered during the inquiry so deepened his previous conviction that he felt it ought to have made a decisive impression upon the Government of India. It cannot indeed be doubted that had Lord Lytton, the Viceroy, been a man of different temper, the troubles of the Deccan at this critical time might have been made to yield permanent good. To Wedderburn they brought much direct education, and they fixed his position as an agrarian reformer. Thereafter, for the twelve years of service that remained to

him in India, he was unremitting in his efforts to convince the authorities at Simla and in London that there was one right way of turning to use the painful experience of the agrarian uprising. That was to make it the basis of a creative programme of reform.

Following on the Deccan report, legislative proposals were introduced (1879) into the Viceregal Council. But although during the debate the conclusions of the Commission were accepted, even to the extent of acknowledging a large share of the blame, Government contented itself with remitting the rayats' debts *to the moneylenders*, leaving untouched the revenue system which was the cause of the mischief.

Wedderburn, naturally, could feel no satisfaction in what had been done. He was convinced that some more adequate means of relief and appeasement must be sought. It happened that Sir James Caird, then regarded as an unrivalled agrarian expert, had been a member of Sir Richard Strachey's Famine Commission (1878–9), and had proposed that "experiments in levying the revenue in kind should be made in a few selected villages in various parts of India, the duty being entrusted to special officers known to be intelligent and painstaking." This recommendation furnished a clue the following of

which would, in Wedderburn's judgment, make every village prosperous. He was then District Judge, and he at once took steps to organise in the Ahmednagar district an experiment on the lines suggested.

The rayats of a chosen village were to be offered a permanent settlement in kind—say, one-sixteenth of the gross produce. To encourage improvements, a quit-rent was proposed which at any time the owner of each field might pay in cash, should he prefer to do so. Further, the government collection was to be assigned, by what was known as the earlier zemindari system, to men of good local standing, and on terms which made them interested in the improvement and prosperity of the land. Considerable help in this venture was obtained from American missionaries who were in daily touch with the villagers. When the project was mature it was approved by the Collector and by him forwarded to headquarters. Wedderburn wrote, in 1897:

"Those directly interested in the experiment and best able to judge were of opinion that the scheme would give contentment to the rayat, a field of useful enterprise to the capitalist who desired to occupy the honourable position of a landholder, and to the Government an increasing revenue up to

a possible amount (of) three times the existing demand. It might have been thought that a carefully prepared proposal giving reasonable hope of such benefits, without cost to Government, and with peace and harmony all round, would have been welcomed by the authorities. But this was not so. The Collector who sent up the scheme was sharply rebuked for seeking to interfere with the existing order of things; and the proposal which promised such interesting and profitable results was nipped in the bud. A subsequent attempt met with a similar fate."

The case is typical of Wedderburn's unvarying method. He would first with the utmost pains ascertain the facts. His remedies would as far as possible follow the lines of traditional custom, developing native methods to keep pace with the natural march of events; and always he would remember that the obligation of his Service was twofold—to India, and to the Government that controlled India.

The Deccan settlement was not by any means the only instance of what must be described in connection with Wedderburn as bureaucratic jealousy. It dogged all his efforts for raising the economic level of the peasantry, and it was even more glaringly displayed in the story of the Agricultural Banks, which is one of the most illuminating, and at the same time distressing, things in the modern annals of the Service.

The Deccan Agricultural Banks.

The provision of agricultural capital at moderate rates and on the co-operative principle was the constructive remedy for agrarian poverty in which Wedderburn came to believe with complete conviction. And here too his fine sense of the realities of social politics led him to see that the traditional agent must not be left out: he believed in finding a place for the sowcar.

During 1881, while still at Ahmednagar, he threw out the project of Agricultural Banks in the Bombay Press, where it was freely discussed. He had already made an exhaustive study of what had been done in the way of agricultural credit in Europe. He had found that the recognised method in practice was the co-operative bank; and that in Germany alone, even at that early date, some 2,000 of these were in existence, doing an annual business of something like 150 millions sterling, with immense benefit to the rural population. "Every other country in Europe," he wrote, "has followed the example of Germany. The autocrat of all the Russias started such banks with liberal support; and even the unspeakable Turk has made some movements in the same direction."

No sooner had Wedderburn set to work than

local meetings were held. Rayats, sowcars, and local capitalists were induced to co-operate. Old money debts were to be liquidated, and friendly relations set on foot between embarrassed peasants, extortionate usurers, and capitalists lately won over to altruism. The scheme was planned on European lines, but the details were carefully adapted to Indian conditions. The promoters kept in view the settlement of outstanding indebtedness, and the restoration of a friendly relation between the peasant and the money-lender upon whom for so many ages he had depended. At last it appeared that all the parties concerned were favourable, and it was decided that a public appeal should be launched. A meeting was held in Poona, presided over by the Collector; resolutions were passed to set on foot an experimental agricultural bank at Saswad in the Purandhar taluk of the Poona collectorate, and from the meeting an influential committee waited on the Governor of Bombay, Sir James Fergusson.

The Governor was most cordial, to scheme and deputation alike, and after due deliberation and the customary circulation of files, the proposals reached the Government of India and the Viceroy. Lord Ripon's Finance Minister was Sir Evelyn Baring, afterwards the Earl of Cromer, whose

personal knowledge of agricultural banks had predisposed him in their favour. His support led, with little delay, to the second stage of the affair. In December, 1882, an important dispatch from Simla to the Government of Bombay expressed general acceptance of the Poona scheme, outlined the government concessions that would be offered to the agricultural banks or loan societies, and asked the Bombay Government to undertake the carrying out of the measure. By April, 1883, that Government had agreed to do so. While negotiations were proceeding, Wedderburn went on furlough.

Before leaving for England, he had published a pamphlet on Revenue Enhancements, being a summary from the Indian point of view of a government blue-book (Appendix I of the Famine Commission Report), demonstrating that the Settlement departments had not limited their enhancements according to any recognised principle, and had disregarded the express affirmations of 1856 and 1864, thus bringing great distress upon the cultivator. Pursuing the cause during his stay in England, he allied himself with such good friends of India as John Bright and Sir James Caird. Bright took the chair at a meeting held in July, 1883, at Essex Hall under the auspices of the East India Association,

at which Wedderburn read his paper on "The Poona Rayat's Bank." This meeting occupies an historic position in the record of Indian reform movements. It made a quite remarkable stir. Leading articles on the scheme appeared in *The Times* and all the large London dailies—a curious point of contrast between the journalistic measure of importance forty years ago and that of to-day. In the following October Wedderburn introduced his proposals to the Manchester Chamber of Commerce, in a paper called "Government Concessions to Agricultural Banks in India," and in December he read his paper on "The Indian Rayat" before the London Institution. His peroration to the second of these efforts may be quoted:

"When we consider how much is done in other countries to support the credit of the peasant cultivator, and when we see that nothing whatever is done in India, the wonder is that the rayat continues at all to maintain his position. Atlas-like, he bears on his shoulders the whole great framework of the Empire. But he is faint and totters under the burden. I beseech you not to withhold from him the cup of refreshment which you hold in your own hand."

On Wedderburn's return to Poona, in the spring of 1884, negotiations continued, and by

May of that year a unanimous dispatch had gone from the Government of India to the Secretary of State, the Earl of Kimberley, asking for the necessary sanction from the India Office. The Viceroy in Council wrote:

"We are anxious to give effect to a scheme which we believe to be advocated on purely disinterested grounds, which can under the experimental conditions proposed be carefully watched, and which is likely if successful to be productive of much benefit to the country."

A tedious correspondence ensued. Lord Ripon left India; fantastic objections were raised; Secretaries of State rose and fell; Kimberley gave place to Randolph Churchill, and he again for a brief spell to Kimberley, who was succeeded by the steady old Tory Lord Cross. Three years and three months after the Government of India had commended the scheme without a single qualification to Whitehall, and actually after Wedderburn had retired from the Service—namely, in August, 1887—the Secretary of State gave in Parliament a pointblank refusal to accept or to recommend the scheme.

Nearly twenty years later, when Wedderburn was on a tour of South India after the Congress of 1904, the citizens of Madura read him an

address of welcome in which these words appear: "You had been, Sir, the pioneer and advocate of the cause of the rayat against the periodical settlement and their consequent impoverishment, and your statesmanlike suggestion to relieve the impoverished rayat by the opening of agricultural banks is in a fair way of becoming an accomplished fact." That was so. Commissions had inquired; individual students from India had gone again and again over the field which Wedderburn first explored in the early eighties; the records of Germany and Russia, of Denmark and Ireland, had been ransacked, and in the last stage of Lord Curzon's term the co-operative agricultural bank became part of the official economic policy in India. In the same year as the Madura address Gokhale was giving in the Legislative Council a qualified support to the bill dealing with the control of Co-operative Credit Societies, in charge of Sir Denzil Ibbetson, and was heard criticising it for certain defects against which the early Wedderburn proposals would have been an effectual safeguard. Things, however, were getting on, and in India to-day the co-operative credit society is an essential part of the machine of self-government, though still, it must be confessed, far less universal and efficient than it might have been if Wedder-

burn's knowledge and wisdom had been recognised a generation ago. A reference to the last issue of the Annual Statement Exhibiting the Moral and Material Progress of India, for the year 1920, shows that agricultural banks are now counted by the tens of thousands, over 27,000 being recorded in the seven major provinces. "And so," in the language of an Indian journalist (right in the fact though shaky in metaphor) during a discussion of this question some years ago, "the fossils of bureaucracy have been obliged by the whirligig of time to unbend!"

One other positive remedy for this same evil of agricultural poverty Wedderburn proposed and steadily advocated—an alternative system to the government debt courts.

When reporting on the Deccan riots he had suggested this as an urgently needed reform, along with the provision of credit for the cultivators and a law of insolvency for extreme cases. He believed that the rayat could not get on without the village moneylender, and that under the old native system the relations between the two classes were on the whole friendly and beneficial; also, that the introduction of debt courts on the European model had destroyed these natural relations, while the rayat had been made

the serf of the moneylender. Hence, he urged, relief should be sought through the revival and scientific development of the ancient system of conciliation and arbitration, by means of a re-constitution of the Panchayat, or village council —traditionally a body of five responsible elders.

The first of these contentions had been admitted in the Council during the debate on the Deccan Agricultural Relief Bill, in 1879; and as to the second, Wedderburn had, in 1878, taken the old Liberal position when he wrote that "we merely state a commonplace when we condemn government interference between Labour and Capital." This sounds like the pure doctrine of *laisser faire*, but the array of facts which he adduced showed beyond a doubt the disastrous effects of that particular kind of interference. He maintained that under the old system, not only was flexibility maintained, but local opinion was strong on the side of the debtor, and only in extreme cases could the creditor get a coercive decree from the judge. On the other hand, the debt courts instituted by the British Government were governed by the usual strict legal technique, and such definite facts as mortgage bonds, decrees, foreclosures, and sales constituted a very different state of affairs from that of the old régime.

The Deccan riots and the report of the Commission thereon showed the pitiable condition to which the rayat had been brought by the system of rigid assessment, continuous enhancements, and the debt courts. Why not, then, argued Wedderburn, try conciliation between the rayat and the sowcar?

The paper he read before the East India Association, in March, 1878, on "The Village Panchayat: A Remedy for Agrarian Disorders in India," is a complete statement of his case. The effort in this instance was advanced further than the pages of a propagandist pamphlet. For some years there had been a movement in various parts of the Bombay presidency towards the revival of the panchayat. For example, the Poona Arbitration Court began its work in 1876, and in two years it disposed privately of over 3,000 cases. Greatly impressed with the sound practical value of this piece of local self-government, Wedderburn consulted several experienced friends in order to discover whether the arbitration courts could be incorporated in the judicial system, and to this end a scheme was produced. On an old principle belonging to the Mahrattas, all suits were to come first before a *lawad* (arbitration) court, and the fee to be paid if the litigants had to call in the services

of a subordinate judge was to discourage any frivolous objections to the court's award. The draft of Wedderburn's scheme was adopted at a public meeting and forwarded to headquarters, where it met the customary fate. The wrecking of this effort at constructive village reform must be ascribed to Sir Richard Temple, then Governor of Bombay. He promptly increased the stamp duty on arbitration awards, and administered a separate reprimand to each of the nine subordinate judges who had taken part in the enterprise.

It would, however, be wrong to imply that the strength and persistence of his interest in the matters so far dealt with prevented Wedderburn from occupying himself with the many other concerns that make demands upon the civil officer in India. They certainly did not. True, there were many people, in England and in India, who identified him entirely with the particular causes for which, in his untiring advocacy, he managed to secure a large measure of publicity. But as a matter of fact he was an all-round public servant, awake to all the opportunities and responsibilities of Indian government. A few of the more important of these, in regard to which he was able to achieve results of value, may be briefly noted here.

One question, wherein he shared a special interest with Sir David Wedderburn, was the position of the Ruling Chiefs and the rights secured to them in relation to British India. For the display of his interest in this important but neglected subject, he had ample scope at various stages of his official career, and never so much as when, under Sir Seymour Fitzgerald and Lord Reay, he filled the important post of secretary to the Government of Bombay in the political department. To him the conception of authority in rule and in administration was always based upon goodwill. It was due to Wedderburn that during the minority of the ruler of Bhownagar, the experiment was tried of a joint Indian and European administration, his brother-in-law, E. H. Percival, being associated with an Indian prime minister in a period of control lasting six years, an experiment which proved a remarkable success. Wedderburn also took a leading part in the foundation at Rajkot of the Rajkumar College for the sons of Kathiawar Chiefs, a pioneer enterprise in the difficult business of providing modern education and wholesome surroundings for highly born Indian youths.

Early in the seventies it fell to him to assuage and settle the fierce and numerous disputes

going on between the turbulent Girassias (feudatories) and the exacting Chiefs. He devised the Rajasthanik Court of Kathiawar, with a trained judicial officer as president—a court which long ago completed its work and has become a grateful memory in the region where it operated.

As early as 1878 a memorandum from his pen suggested a review of the Indian university problem, and six years later he had the opportunity of developing his ideas before the Education Commission appointed by Lord Ripon.

In this same year he contributed to the *Bombay Gazette* (a journal which at many different times provided him with a pulpit) a criticism of the Secretary of State's Council. This admirable article, reprinted as a pamphlet under the title of "Edmund Burke and the Indian Bureaucracy," was the first of many arguments, continued to the end of his life, in favour of a complete transformation of the India Council which in its old form he knew to be the citadel of the bureaucratic power.

In 1878 also there came from him a pamphlet discussing the new Code of Civil Procedure then under revision by a select committee. It contained an outline of his scheme for the establishment of reformed panchayats and arbitrators, which in his mind was the inevitable comple-

ment of the system of agricultural credit and rural administration to which so many years of effort were devoted.

Wedderburn was still District Judge of Ahmednagar when Lytton gave place to Ripon, in 1880, and in every department of his work he felt an instant stimulus through the coming of the Governor-General who was to be his life-long friend. It happened, however, that for urgent private reasons Wedderburn was out of India on long leave in the middle of Ripon's term, so that he missed a good deal of the storm through which the Viceroy was called upon to pass in consequence of the Ilbert Bill.

To all men in the public service in the East the recurring periods of leave are necessarily of considerable importance. Circumstances made them at all times rather specially so to Wedderburn. So long as his brother Sir David was alive his furlough was as far as possible spent with him, and to no small extent planned according to the wishes of that indefatigable traveller. In 1864, for instance, the brothers enjoyed an extended tour together in India. In 1872 a term of long leave was largely given up to Germany and Algeria; and in 1877, following the first Imperial Durbar at Delhi, Wedderburn paid his only visit to the Far East, travelling with

David through Java and Japan. From that time onward his plans were governed by his own intimate family circumstances.

In the Scottish household there were many changes during Wedderburn's term of service. His younger sister, Louisa, had married a Bombay civilian, Mr. E. H. Percival, who was associated with Wedderburn in the notable administrative experiment in Bhownagar. His elder sister, Alicia, fifteen years his senior, married Colonel, afterwards General, Sir William Hope, who commanded the 71st Highland Light Infantry in Central India after the Mutiny. She survived her husband and, William alone excepted, all the younger members of the family. His other two sisters, Elizabeth and Margaret, to whom in the youthful diaries David and he refer with whimsical affection by a dozen absurd nicknames, died in early middle life.

On September 12, 1878, William Wedderburn married Mary Blanche, the daughter of Henry William Hoskyns, of North Perrott Manor, Crewkerne, the event being made an occasion of general rejoicing in the little Somersetshire village. The honeymoon was spent among the English and Scotch Lakes and in visiting relatives across the Border. Then, passing through Northern Italy, Wedderburn and his bride sailed from

Venice. They spent Christmas on board ship, landed at Bombay, and began life in India together at Ahmednagar. At Ahmednagar and at Poona (where their elder daughter, Dorothy, was born) Mrs. Wedderburn was able to make a home for her husband; but the climate was anything but kind to her, and during the greater part of the eight years of work in India that remained to Wedderburn after his marriage his wife had to resign herself to being in England. Deeply sympathetic as she was with his mind and work, and sharing to the full his love for India, it was an enduring grief to her that the demands of her own health and the care of the two daughters made it impossible for her to be continuously at his side. Their second daughter, Griselda, was born in London, August, 1884, and was taken to India as an infant the following winter.

Wedderburn retired from the Indian Civil Service in May, 1887. His departure was preceded by a series of remarkable demonstrations. At Poona, during a last visit to the city, he paid calls on the institutions which had been especially associated with his administrative and educational work. At each one of these there was a gathering of friends and admirers, who had arranged some distinctive form of farewell

ceremony. In Bombay there was a great meeting at the Town Hall, at which a fund for a public memorial to his services was launched, while a number of private entertainments were given by leading Indian citizens. It is a rule of the Indian Governments to put formally on record the official appreciation of a higher official on his leaving the Service. The resolution of the Governor of Bombay in Council, which recorded the retirement of Sir William Wedderburn, disclosed a somewhat warmer sense of values than is customary in such documents. It concluded with these words:

"His enthusiasm in the cause of education, and his anxiety to promote all measures which would, in his opinion, conduce to the moral and material progress of the natives of this country, have, as his Excellency in Council believes, won for Sir W. Wedderburn the confidence and the gratitude of those in whose cause he has laboured."

CHAPTER III

THE INDIAN NATIONAL CONGRESS

For more than twenty years after the transfer of the Indian Government to the Crown there was no organised political movement in India. To say this, however, is not by any means the same as to say that the country was free from political ferment. On the contrary, symptoms of unrest were widely prevalent; but before the time of Lord Ripon there was hardly a single public man who envisaged the rise of a reform movement destined to effect a progressive modification of the autocratic system. Lord Lytton, who had succeeded Lord Northbrook in 1876, was a rather extreme specimen of the flamboyant Tory administrator; but it is not too much to say that his vivacious letters to Disraeli and others of his friends, during the preparations for the Imperial Durbar of 1877, expressed in no small degree the governing mind of England at that time towards the Eastern Empire of Britain.

In India itself, among the educated community, such definite movement as could be discerned was mainly in the spheres of social reform and religious thought: as, for example, in the remarkable spell of activity in education and social experiment which followed the return to India of Keshub Chunder Sen, leader of the Brahmo Somaj, after his very successful visit to England (1870). Newspapers such as the *Indian Patriot* of Calcutta and the *Hindu* of Madras performed a valuable service as instruments of political education, and the early speaking tours of Surendranath Banerjea in Bengal were historically important as inaugurating an epoch of platform activity. But of systematic political discussion or association there was as yet practically none, although the need was yearly becoming more urgent. To men of experience such as Allan Hume and William Wedderburn the symptoms of disturbance under the surface bore a momentous significance. Looking over India during the Lytton period, with the help of information from his wide circle of acquaintance, Hume became convinced that concerted action by responsible friends of India was necessary in order to counteract the dangerous currents of opinion and to turn the gathering political consciousness of educated India into pacific and fruitful channels. When Lytton left

the country—after a term during which famine, frontier wars, and administrative vagaries had combined to produce a mass of ugly feeling—the outlook was, in the opinion of many Englishmen besides Hume, exceedingly disquieting. But the arrival of the Marquis of Ripon, the first modern Liberal to be entrusted with the government of India, had the immediate effect of relieving the tension. Lord Ripon's policy, and still more his spirit, exercised a strong influence—at once stimulating and restorative—on the country; and it soon became clear that his rule would mark an historic division between the old India and the new. Such measures as the Education Commission and the Act which laid the foundation of local self-government were highly valuable, more perhaps for their indirect results than for the actual changes they brought about. But the effect of everything that Ripon did or tried to do was overborne by the terrific tempest provoked by the Ilbert Bill. The measure was essentially a small affair, designed to make an inconsiderable alteration in judicial procedure. If introduced, as it easily might have been, by a Governor-General in harmony with the bureaucracy, it would have found its way to the statute book almost without notice, and certainly without disturbance. But the

Anglo-Indian community made the Ilbert Bill a test case against Ripon. A storm of unequalled fury was worked up. It would be true to say that the reverberations continued for a generation, and that in consequence the subsequent history of British India was profoundly modified.

We now know that the convulsion over the Ilbert Bill must be put into the category of political accidents following upon a trivial personal act or omission. In 1882 the Secretary of State for India was the Marquis of Hartington, who one day went away from a meeting of the India Council with a minute for the Government of India in his pocket. It embodied a criticism by Sir Henry Maine which, if duly dispatched, would have checked the policy of Lord Ripon and his Law Member. On reaching home, it appears, Lord Hartington changed his coat and forgot all about the document. It was never posted, and the Governor-General went on with the Bill. British India was torn by racial passion, and the power for good of the best of viceroys was destroyed.[1]

To a public servant of the spirit and aims of William Wedderburn the presence in India of Lord Ripon was, as we have seen, a providential

[1] See the remarkable narrative in the *Life of the Marquis of Ripon* by Lucien Wolf, chapter xx.

event, a crowning mercy. For a time the sky was lightened, the whole outlook transformed. He could not but believe that, so far as himself and those who agreed with him were concerned, the wilderness was passed. But the interval lasted only four years, and for a good part of that time Wedderburn was in England. His work, however, met with one notable piece of recognition. It was from Lord Ripon and his Finance Minister that he received the endorsement of his scheme of the rayat's credit bank—an approval which, not unnaturally, led him to conclude that the obstinate fight was already won.[1]

It has been said by several authorities on contemporary India that the conflict over the Ilbert Bill taught the educated classes of India the possibilities of political agitation. They could not fail to note the extraordinary force of a minority when organised and directed by a single aim, and they applied the inference to their own situation. It was in any case inevitable that there should arise the demand for a national organisation, by means of which it would be possible for the educated classes to give expression to a political creed and programme.

The first word was spoken and the first step taken by Allan Hume, then just retired from the

[1] See pp. 40–43.

Indian Civil Service. His manifesto was in the form of a public letter, dated March 1st, 1883, addressed to the graduates of Calcutta University. Like all of Hume's messages, it was a fine, candid, and moving appeal. In the natural course of things, he pointed out, the graduate body should be "the most important source of all mental, moral, and political progress in India." Vital progress must always spring from within, and to her more favoured sons India must look for the initiative. In vain did the alien, no matter how deep his love of India, give time and trouble, money and thought; the real work must be done by the people of the country. Every nation secured precisely as good a government as it deserved. Therefore, he added:

"If you, the picked men, the most highly educated of the nation, cannot, scorning personal ease and selfish objects, make a resolute struggle to secure greater freedom for yourselves and your country, a more impartial administration, a larger share in the management of your own affairs, then we your friends are wrong and our adversaries right: then, at present at any rate, all hopes of progress are at an end."

Hume went on to describe the framework of a proposed society, to be known as the Indian National Union. It came forthwith into being,

with a dozen local committees in the principal cities as the centres of the movement.

The initial steps being thus taken, Hume came to England for the purpose of consulting with friends and sympathisers in Parliament and outside. He talked with Lord Ripon, John Bright, Sir James Caird, and a number of prominent Liberal members of the House of Commons. He discussed with leading editors the project, eagerly supported by Wedderburn, but unfortunately never fulfilled, of an independent telegraphic agency for the supply of impartial Indian news. He gained many promises of support in England on behalf of the Ripon reform policy. And he returned to India in time for the inaugural meeting of the Indian National Congress, which opened in Bombay, on December 27, 1885—the first of the long series of annual gatherings held continuously for over thirty years. The president was the eminent Bengali reformer, W. C. Bonnerjee, of Calcutta.[1]

The Marquis of Dufferin was then Viceroy, and he so far gave his sanction to the new movement as to invite the delegates of the second Congress, held in Calcutta the following year, to a garden

[1] The history of the foundation of the Indian National Congress is fully told by Sir William Wedderburn in his memoir of Allan Octavian Hume (T. Fisher Unwin).

party at Government House. Dufferin's attitude at this time was interesting and revealing. Not only did he welcome the Congress, but it was he who, when Hume told him of his intention to begin the reform agitation on the social side of Indian life, advised him to widen its scope and aim definitely at political education. This counsel, together with the friendliness of provincial governors and other high officials (there was a serious suggestion that Lord Reay, the Governor of Bombay, should preside over the first Congress), shows how far the hierarchy was at that time from fearing the rise of a troublesome political force. But Lord Dufferin's approval was short-lived. Within a few months of the Calcutta gathering he had reversed his attitude and made the rule which forbade all government servants from taking part in the Congress, while it was understood that they should give no sort of countenance to any of its activities. Wedderburn naturally regarded this decision as a grave mistake, although, of course, he gave it, as a member of the I.C.S., his scrupulous adherence. He realised that the gulf between the rulers and the ruled was as wide as it could well be, that it was not being lessened, and in consequence that the Government drew such information as it possessed of the people and the state of public feeling from

agencies of the wrong kind—that is, from men who were ignorant, or corrupt, or malicious; from time-servers and employees of the Secret Service. The Indian people, he knew, were not in the habit of talking in the presence of Europeans, still less of officials. Hence by putting the Congress under the ban, the Executive was wilfully closing the door to the best possible means of knowing what was happening among the influential classes and of learning what was in their minds.

Wedderburn's term of service had two years to run when the Congress came into being. As the most prominent sympathiser in the official world on the Bombay side, he could not suppress his private opinions, and it was no secret that he was awaiting the moment of release to throw the weight of his influence into the Congress cause in England. Some years afterwards, in London, Sir William Hunter declared that Sir William Wedderburn and he were the only two members of the Indian Civil Service who had publicly associated themselves with the National Congress at its beginning. This statement was more picturesque than accurate. There were many officials who approved of the Congress and its work, but the historian's remark rightly suggests the difficulty of any civil servant's publicly expressing his sympathy with an independent

association standing for political and administrative reform.

The heart of the Congress programme, it is hardly necessary to say, was the advance towards responsible self-government, by way, first, of the reform of the legislative councils, which bodies, before 1892, were in no sense representative. The note was struck in the principal resolution adopted at the first Congress. This called for the expansion of the supreme and provincial councils, the grant to them of power over the budget, and the creation of a standing committee of the House of Commons to receive and consider any protest that might be recorded by the majorities of such councils against the Executive. As with all reform societies, the history of the Indian National Congress is summarised in the resolutions drafted for the annual sessions. As time passed, the emphasis on some of the proposals tended to change; but certain demands were reaffirmed year by year: in particular, those for the adoption of the representative principle, popular control of the public purse, the separation of judicial from executive functions, the reduction and strict limitation of military expenditure, and simultaneous examinations for the Indian Civil Service.

At the time of his retirement, in 1887, Wedderburn was by far the most experienced and influential

ex-member of the Indian Civil Service associated with the National Congress. It was recognised that in England he would be an invaluable ally of Allan Hume, who was to remain in India for several years longer, and his early election to the chair was anticipated as a matter of course. This befell in 1889, when Wedderburn presided over the fourth Congress, in Bombay. The event would in any case have been noteworthy, but it was made still more so by the presence of Charles Bradlaugh, who went to India with the combined prestige of his platform eloquence and his unique parliamentary record. The double event, moreover, ensured for the Congress a much larger measure of publicity than it had so far been able to command. The popular welcome in Bombay was accompanied by scenes such as had been witnessed only on the historic occasion of Lord Ripon's departure, and the interior of the Congress pavilion was far more impressive than in any previous year. Bradlaugh's "great and pure Anglo-Saxon voice, filling the *pandal* with resolute tones," was long remembered in Congress circles.

Wedderburn, then as always, set a wholesome example to his associates by giving to his presidential address a brief and scrupulously unrhetorical form, which in the volume of Congress discourses

makes a striking contrast to the many examples of redundant oratory. For him public speech was simply the means of expressing as clearly as possible his principles and his practical programme.

He began with a moving reference to his quarter-century of official service. From beginning to end, he said, he had not known what it was to suffer an unkindness from a native of India. And during that time, he added, in a phrase that spoke his innermost mind as to the official relationship, "I have been in the service of the people of India, and have eaten their salt; and I hope to devote to their service what still remains to me of active life." He went on to speak of Lord Ripon's wise and sympathetic policy, which had "fulfilled the aspirations of the national movement," while on their side "the people of India recognised that a government conducted in such a spirit could not be regarded as an alien rule." On these terms, indeed, the British system could be accepted as "the national government of the Indian people."

Launching on his proper theme, he assumed that what the delegates wanted to hear from him was the progress of Congress affairs in England, and especially the hopes he could hold out of overcoming the obstacles in the way. These obstacles he enumerated: the imperfection of the existing

parliamentary control; the power of the Secretary of State's Council, composed as it was, almost entirely, of retired members of the Services; the attitude of the London Press in general, and the strength of the group of service members in every House of Commons. As an illustration—the most telling he could cite from his personal experience—of the obstacles in England to constructive reform in India, Wedderburn gave in outline the story of his struggle with officialdom on behalf of the agricultural credit bank—the story that he was to tell many times over, in speech and writing, throughout his career. He then described the National Congress agencies in London, spoke of the general attitude of the British public towards Indian reform, deprecated the blindness of the Government in resenting the criticisms and suggestions of the Congress—"for the man who points out the rocks and shoals towards which the ship is moving is the friend of the captain, not the enemy"; and closed with a tribute to Bradlaugh, who was seated beside him on the platform. "I think," he said, "poor India is very fortunate in securing such a champion as Mr. Charles Bradlaugh, a very Charles Martel of these later days, whose sledgehammer blows have often shaken to their foundations the citadels of prejudice, ignorance, and oppression."

Fifteen years were to pass before Wedderburn next saw the Congress in session, but absence from India did not and could not lessen his devotion to the cause. For more than thirty years the Indian National Congress was the master concern of his public life. Its activities and aims were never out of his thoughts. He was personally acquainted with its leading members in every part of India, and with many of them he maintained continuous relations. He made himself responsible, not only for the discharge of its business in London, but also to a large extent for its financial credit. In the fullest possible sense he was its representative before the British people.

CHAPTER IV

SEVEN YEARS IN PARLIAMENT

THE strongest wish of Wedderburn's heart was to be in Parliament with his brother, when he retired from the service. But this hoped-for companionship was denied him. Sir David Wedderburn died in September, 1882. He was a remarkable product of his race and age.[1] Fortunate in his independence, he filled a strenuous life with travel and the study of public affairs. For twenty years after being called to the Scottish Bar he journeyed almost incessantly: in every European country, in North and South Africa and the Near East, through Australasia, the Pacific, and North America. He shared to the full the family interest in India, knew the country well, and was one of the best informed men of his time on all subjects relating to the Indian States. In

[1] See the *Life of Sir David Wedderburn*, by his sister, Mrs. E. H. Percival (Kegan Paul, Trench & Co., 1884).

1868 he entered Parliament for South Ayrshire, and from 1879 to his death he sat for the Haddington Burghs, valuing his seat in the House mainly because it gave him opportunities of "doing an occasional turn for the good of India." His personal standing was exceptionally high. Indeed it would be true to say that no member of the two great Gladstonian parliaments was more generally and cordially esteemed than David Wedderburn. His elaborate journals (he was a far more systematic diarist than his brother) furnished him with a mass of material on the countries of his travels which he turned to account in a large number of speeches and lectures, and in articles for the monthly reviews. He died in his forty-eighth year and unmarried. Hence the baronetcy passed to his brother William, the third brother in succession to inherit during the nineteenth century.

For Sir William Wedderburn the strong personal attraction to Westminster was now removed, but his purpose was unaltered. Five years later, when freedom from official ties had been gained, there was no difficulty in his finding a constituency. In November, 1887, he was adopted as Liberal candidate for North Ayrshire, and it was characteristic of him that he should at once set out to acquaint himself at first hand with the dominant

political question of the hour. It was the year after the introduction of the first Home Rule Bill, and Wedderburn resolved upon a journey of personal investigation. In December he crossed to Ireland, with Sir Wilfrid Lawson and Theodore Fry, the party being later joined by several other members of Parliament. Wedderburn adopted his invariable plan. He went everywhere in pursuit of typical incidents of the land war and the political conflict, questioned people of all sorts, with the patience and courtesy that never failed him; witnessed evictions, and addressed meetings. The diary of this tour, kept with extreme care, contains material for an exact picture of Ireland under the Parnell plan of campaign. And to the reader of our day it suggests an unmistakable parallel. The names are different, but the forces are the same as those of yesterday. Allowing for the changes of circumstance, the record might have been written at any time between the Dublin rising of 1916 and the treaty with the Sinn Fein leaders in 1921.

Immediately on the close of the Irish trip, Wedderburn began political work in North Ayrshire. There was an interval of four years before the general election, and as a rule he conducted two speaking campaigns a year. On the eve of the contest he told the electors that for their suffrages

he had served almost as long as Jacob served for Rachel, and he hoped they would take care that Leah was not his portion after all. He stood upon a downright radical programme, which included Home Rule for Ireland, the Eight-Hours Day for miners, and Local Option. On a poll of something over 10,000 the Conservative candidate, the Hon. Thomas Cochrane, had a majority of 448. The defeat was a surprise to everybody. It was attributed mainly to Liquor and the Church question. Wedderburn had no complaint to make against any political opponent, and there were no personalities to regret. The fight, as he said, did a great deal for his political education, and in view of his support of the Temperance party he now became a total abstainer. The North Ayrshire Liberals took leave of him in December, 1892, with a dinner at Kilmarnock and the presentation of an address in a silver casket.

Three months later Wedderburn accepted an invitation from the Liberals of Banffshire. There followed a brisk election, enlivened by church-defence meetings, a liquor fight, and energetic canvassing of the fishermen, whose rights were the permanent and always lively question of the division. The Conservative candidate was a local resident, James A. Grant, son of the African

explorer. The result, on a poll of 5,561, was a Liberal majority of 771.

It was the second year of the troubled short parliament from which Gladstone retired on the defeat by the Lords of his second Home Rule Bill. The Government was almost impotent, and the House distracted. Wedderburn's maiden speech was delivered on May 8. He was wise enough to make it, not on an Indian question, but on the Scotch Sea Fisheries Bill, dwelling particularly on the improvement of the harbours as a matter of life and death to the people of the northern coasts. Throughout the whole of his time in Parliament he was a most assiduous Scottish member. No constituent could ever complain that his preoccupation with India prevented him from giving full attention to local affairs. On the contrary, since he could never do anything carelessly, he devoted much time to all matters affecting the welfare of the Banffshire people, notably to the fisheries and harbours, and the right and wrong of admitting trawlers into the Moray Firth—all questions of vital moment to Banff. Nor did he confine his interest to the merely local aspects of such questions. On his journeys abroad he made it his business to learn what was being done for people similarly placed, and he made a trip to Scandinavia for the

purpose of following up some questions in which the Banff fishermen were particularly concerned.

His first Indian speech was made on Mr. Herbert Paul's motion in favour of the holding of simultaneous examinations, in India and England, for the Indian Civil Service. And towards the end of his first session a motion on an Indian grievance gave him the opening for the first of a long series of speeches on the condition of the Indian people and the disheartening experiences of those who, whether within or without the bounds of the Civil Service, had made attempts to break through the defences of the all-powerful official clique.

During this first summer also Wedderburn fired his first shot at an abuse which he was never tired of assailing. He joined in the sending of a memorial to the Prime Minister urging that the Indian Budget might be brought on not later than the middle of July and be allotted not less than two parliamentary days, instead of being scrambled through in the last hours of the session. Mr. Gladstone was sympathetic, but said that, on account of the paramount claims of the Home Rule Bill, it was impossible to make any change. Wedderburn's assiduity in the House may be inferred from the record of his attendances during the session of 1894. Out of a possible total of 226 divisions he voted in 221.

The general election of 1895, which inaugurated the decade of Conservative rule, fell upon Wedderburn in the midst of private grief, his dearly-loved sister, Mrs. Percival, having died in April. In this contest he defeated his former opponent by 510 votes, Mr. Grant putting on record his sense of the member's courtesy and perfect fairness.

The last Gladstonian parliament was remarkable for the activity of the Indian group and the success of their efforts at bringing Indian questions before the House. This was to be accounted for chiefly by the close alliance existing between Sir William Wedderburn and Dadabhai Naoroji, who in the election of 1892 had been returned for Central Finsbury. Both men were dominated by a passion for the Indian cause; both were prodigiously informed; both were endowed with a power of work and a persistency which nothing could daunt. They had been associated in the councils of the National Congress from the beginning, and they worked in full accord. They were supported by several Liberal Anglo-Indians, and by a number of members belonging to the advance wing of Liberalism. Many of these valued allies went down in the Liberal disaster of 1895; Dadabhai Naoroji being among the fallen. But so long as Wedderburn was in the House his

knowledge, skill, and persistence insured the keeping of India in the forefront.

Wedderburn's first task in Parliament was the organisation of the Indian Parliamentary Committee. The responsibility of Parliament for India was for him the essential fact of the imperial relation. He was convinced that India had suffered greatly by the cessation of the parliamentary reviews which, before the transfer of authority to the Crown, had preceded the periodic renewal of the Company's charter. But since 1858 nothing had taken the place of those invaluable inquisitions. The private member, seeking to call attention to conditions in India—unless he were endowed with the personality of a Bright, a Fawcett, or a Bradlaugh—was easily extinguished by the Secretary of State or some other minister, and he could expect very little backing from the Press. Combination in the House was therefore a necessity. In the eighties John Bright had brought together an informal group of members pledged to general sympathy with India; but it was not until Wedderburn entered the House that the work of forming a regular committee was undertaken. During the summer of 1893 W. S. Caine joined him in inviting a small number of independent members to dinner for a talk over the project. A resolution was carried affirming

the need of a committee "for the purpose of promoting combined and well-directed action among those interested in Indian affairs." The original members included most of those known as coming under this description: Jacob Bright, W. S. B. McLaren, Sir Wilfrid Lawson, John E. Ellis (later Under-Secretary for India), J. G. Swift MacNeill, Herbert Paul, R. T. Reid (Lord Loreburn), and Dadabhai Naoroji; with Wedderburn as chairman and Herbert Roberts (now Lord Clwyd) as secretary.

Active during the brief Liberal term, the committee was necessarily of comparatively little account during the ten years of Conservative power when the tide of aggressive Imperialism was running high. After the great Liberal triumph of 1906 it was reconstructed under the chairmanship of Sir Henry Cotton and again became active, particularly during the Morley régime. By that time Wedderburn was no longer in Parliament; but he remained in close touch with the new group of Anglo-Indian members and their Liberal and Labour allies.

The scope of the Indian Parliamentary Committee was wider than that of the British Committee of the Indian National Congress. No attempt was made to form in the House a definite group committed to the Congress programme. Wedderburn

was of opinion that the wisest course lay in enlisting as large a number of members as possible under a general promise of attention and sympathy: nothing more. India to him was in a pre-eminent sense a House of Commons concern. He counted it disgraceful, humiliating, that this unbounded responsibility, this extraordinary example of imperial duty and administration, should be outside the range of the elected representatives of the British people; capable only of arousing languid notice on one official day of the year or of provoking angry interest on the occasion of a frontier expedition, a scandal in an Indian State, or a religious riot in one of the cities of the plain. It may of course be questioned whether a parliamentary committee framed on this plan could ever have fulfilled the hopes of its founder, especially when he was no longer on the spot to apply the goad. And certainly it is true that in the years when the nominal membership included a large section of the House there was never any great muster on Indian budget day, or on those other occasions associated with the welfare of the Indian millions when, as was said long ago, Cicero replying to Hortensius would hardly draw a quorum. But none the less the committee was a valuable aid to the keeping alive of Indian questions in the House.

Wedderburn's parliamentary efforts on behalf of India during the busy years of his membership fall roughly under three heads: (1) Protests against the forward policy on the North-West Frontier, with the consequent expansion of military expenditure; (2) criticism of the Indian budget system, and pressure, continually renewed, for the purpose of securing an independent scientific inquiry into the condition of the rayat and the causes of famine; (3) the advocacy of the reform programme of the Indian National Congress.

When in 1895 the Liberals had given place to a Conservative Government backed by an immense majority, Wedderburn attacked the first of these questions. In February, 1896, he moved an amendment to the Address regretting that the Government had decided not to withdraw from Chitral, "thereby violating the pledge given by the Viceroy's proclamation, dangerously adding to government responsibilities beyond the north-west frontier, and leading to an increase in the already overgrown military expenditure." In July he is found protesting against the vote for the Indian troops at Suakin: this charging to India of the ordinary costs of an Indian contingent serving in another part of the Empire had been already denounced by Fawcett as "a masterpiece of melancholy meanness."

He then returned to the charge on Chitral, repeating several times before the end of the year his accusation as to the breaking of pledges to the tribesmen, and pressing the case in favour of returning to "the good, old, and humane policy," which, as he insisted, had, under Lawrence and Ripon, "given India a full treasury, friendly neighbours on the frontiers, and a contented people at home."

Such appeals made no sort of impression upon Government. But before the Liberals went out of office the Indian group obtained one important concession from Sir Henry Fowler. He agreed to the appointment of a commission on Indian expenditure. Wedderburn and Dadabhai Naoroji had concentrated upon the demand for a complete stocktaking. On August 14, 1894, they moved for "a full and independent parliamentary inquiry into the condition of the people of India, their ability to bear their present burdens, the possibilities of reduction of expenditure, and the financial relations between England and the United Kingdom generally." The Secretary of State promised that at the beginning of the next session he would propose a select committee to inquire into "the financial expenditure of the Indian revenues both in England and in India." This, though much less than

had been asked for, was accepted as the best that could be expected. On second thoughts, however, and doubtless under pressure from Simla, Fowler changed the plan. He proposed a Royal Commission, and in May, 1895, it was appointed. The terms of reference covered "the military and civil expenditure incurred under the Secretary of State for India in Council, and the apportionment in charge between the Governments of the United Kingdom and of India for purposes in which both are interested."

Lord Welby, the experienced Treasury official, was chairman, and the official element predominated. G. N. Curzon, Leonard Courtney, and T. R. Buchanan (afterwards Under-Secretary for India) were nominated as independent parliamentary members, while Wedderburn, Dadabhai Naoroji, and W. S. Caine represented the interests of India. The principal Indian witnesses called by the Commission were Naoroji, D. E. Wacha, Surendranath Banerjea, Subramania Iyer, and G. K. Gokhale, all except the first-named coming from India after being chosen by special resolution of the Indian National Congress. The final reports of the Commission did not appear till 1900. The Majority Report, signed by all except the three pro-Indian members, caused deep disappointment in India as falling grievously

short of reasonable expectations. The minority produced a report which was largely the work of Sir William Wedderburn himself. He always contended that between matters of high policy on the one hand and matters of mere book-keeping on the other, there was a large middle ground which parliamentary inquiry might safely and usefully traverse; and it was largely to this ground that his attention was directed. The main recommendations of the minority were as follows:

"An inquiry by a select committee of the House of Commons on a full array of material compiled under improved conditions;

Non-official members of the Viceroy's Legislative Council to be made more directly responsible to the Indian people; to have the right to move amendments to the budget and to divide the Council;

Indians to be nominated to the Secretary of State's Council, and at least one Indian to the Viceroy's Executive Council;

The salary of the Secretary of State to be placed upon the British estimates, and parliamentary inquiries into the Indian administration, every twenty years, to be revived by statute;

A return to the Lawrence-Ripon military and frontier policy; the frontier to be defined, and not altered without the assent of Parliament;

Trans-frontier wars to be paid for primarily out of the British exchequer, India contributing her

due share on the basis of protection and benefit to the frontier; for distant wars, India to pay nothing, except in the event of attack upon the Suez Canal;

Payment by Great Britain for all Indian work performed in the United Kingdom; India to pay for all Indians employed in India, and for all others in equal shares."

It will be remarked that several of these recommendations were afterwards embodied in the Morley and Montagu reforms, while others have never been acted upon. The Minority Report was issued in a separate volume by the British Committee of the Indian National Congress, and was used for many years as a means of public instruction in Indian finance and general administration. Wedderburn, who gave an immense amount of time to the sittings of the Commission and the preparation of the Report, regarded its educational value as high, and on the whole well repaying the labour and cost entailed upon the British Committee.

The long fight over budget procedure and the question of an independent survey of economic conditions began in Wedderburn's first session. It was from the outset a discouraging experience, and Wedderburn had not long been engaged in it before he was found confessing that he was "hopeless of any benefit arising from the budget

debate" in the circumstances feebly tolerated by the House of Commons. In August, 1894, he made his first speech in favour of the inquiry. Before the next year's budget the Conservative Government was in power, and Wedderburn was pitted against Lord George Hamilton, the Secretary of State whom for the remainder of his parliamentary term he laboured to convince or in some degree to impress.

No Secretary of State had any cause to complain of the substance or tone of Wedderburn's attacks. He recognised the special difficulty of this minister, surrounded, as he was, "by an India Council which is chiefly composed of those very officials who in Simla have carried out the policy" under attack. And, of course, a Liberal Secretary of State was in a position of the greatest difficulty. He suffered from the bad political atmosphere in which his work had to be done. But even so, as Wedderburn warned Sir Henry Fowler, he should realise that something was wrong when he found himself cheered regularly by the party in opposition.

In August, 1896, Lord George's budget statement contained a reference to "infinite benefits" and "infinitesimal drawbacks." Wedderburn, submitting his recital of grim facts in opposition to the official optimism, moved for the appointment

of a select committee to examine the East Indian accounts. He urged that a special report, based upon the debates in the Viceroy's Council, should be supplied to the Committee every year. In resisting the amendment Lord George Hamilton had the support of a vigorous speech from his predecessor, Fowler, whose control of the India Office during the Liberal administration had been in full harmony with the mind of the India Office. Shortly afterwards, in an article headed "The Indian Budget Farce" (*India*, June, 1896), Wedderburn restated his case:

"If an independent member seeks to make an opportunity on the Queen's Speech, or on a motion of adjournment, he is angrily told by both front benches that the time for discussing all such grievances is the Indian budget night."

But when that night came round, the minister responsible took refuge in the habitual means of escape. On this occasion, Wedderburn insisted, neither Lord George nor Fowler had any suggestion to make in reply to "the moderate and simple scheme" of the Indian National Congress.

When Parliament reassembled in February, 1897, India was moving fast into the stage of famine, plague, and unrest. Wedderburn moved an amendment to the Address for "a full and

independent inquiry into the condition of the masses of the Indian people." In a speech composed with great care he argued that the Government Famine Relief Fund could only come from fresh taxation: that is, "the dying would be fed at the expense of the hungry survivors." He then brought forward the specific proposal with which during the cycle of great famines at the turn of the century, his name was to be identified: namely, an intensive inquiry, practical and definite, into the condition of the villages within a selected and defined area. His contention was that no imperial commission was necessary; the cost would be negligible; the information invaluable.

It was the year of the Diamond Jubilee. Wedderburn hoped against hope that the great celebration would appeal to the Government as an occasion above all others for giving the suffering millions of India a substantial reason for rejoicing. This was the text of all his appeals to the British people at this time: appeals by speech and writing which he was compelled to base upon the gathering evidence that India was entering upon a time of exceptional trial.

The budget statement covered the events of a terrible year. During 1896 the country had suffered from an almost universal shortage of

rain; and in 1897 the famine had spread to an appalling extent. The numbers on relief at one time reached a total of 4,200,000. In Assam there had occurred the most destructive earthquake known in India for a generation. Plague had appeared in Western India, and in Bombay serious riots had been provoked by the government's protective policy. At Poona two British officers, Rand and Ayerst, had been murdered. The Mahratta leader, Bal Gangadhar Tilak, had been tried and sentenced, and an additional sensation had been caused by the deportation, without trial, of the two Natu brothers, suspected of complicity in the assassinations. Not since the Mutiny had the evidences of popular disturbance been so disquieting.

In making his budget statement Lord George Hamilton strove hard to maintain the customary tone of optimism. But it was impossible, especially in view of the plague, a menace with which British administrators had not hitherto been called upon to cope. The minister was impelled to say that the sanative measures adopted by the Government of Bombay were "repugnant to the instincts, customs, and usages of the great mass of the native population," and that they "interfered with the privacy of home life." It was, he admitted, impossible to exaggerate the alarm; but he held

that there was no serious difficulty except at Poona, where the Tilak party had been guilty of gross distortion of facts. The debate following Lord George's speech was of exceptional moment, notwithstanding that even this overwhelming statement of disaster had not materially increased the attendance of members.

Wedderburn expressed his conviction that the inquiries favoured by the Secretary of State were purely official and of a routine character. They did not and could not touch the causes of the suffering. Gradually and very reluctantly, he said, he himself had been forced to the conclusion that a great portion of the land-revenue system, though good in theory and well-intentioned, was not suited to the conditions of the Indian peasantry. He renewed his appeal for an independent and intensive inquiry, and once more urged the necessity of agricultural banks as the one practicable means of attacking the problem of rural indebtedness.

Meanwhile there had occurred a very unfortunate incident, which not only embarrassed Wedderburn and imperilled the career of the most promising member of the Indian reform party, but put a dangerous weapon into the hands of the enemy and for a time did much to nullify the work of the Congress Committee and its friends in Parliament.

In May, 1897, at the height of the plague agitation, a memorial, signed by some 2,000 Hindu and Moslem citizens of Poona, had been submitted to Government. In a letter to *The Times* Wedderburn had called attention to its gravity, particularly as regards the alleged conduct of certain troops engaged in enforcing the plague regulations. He pressed upon Lord George Hamilton the significance of the memorial, and particularly the appendix, which contained testimony as to ill-treatment and oppression given over the signatures of the parties aggrieved. Inquiry, Wedderburn contended, was imperative. If the complaints were substantiated, redress should have been afforded; if they proved to be false, those making the charges should have been punished. In no other way could the good name of British administration be upheld. Unfortunately, no such inquiry was instituted, nor did the Secretary of State make any reply to the memorial. Accordingly Wedderburn decided to bring the matter before the Indian Parliamentary Committee, which was addressed by G. K. Gokhale, who described to the meeting the miserable and distracted condition of the people of Poona, enduring the combined calamities of famine, plague, house-searching, and punitive police. He stated that the wildest rumours were abroad,

and that two of his correspondents, in whom he had entire confidence, had informed him of a report current in Poona that two Indian women had been outraged by British soldiers, and that one of them had committed suicide. This information was subsequently proved to be inaccurate. Wedderburn wrote to Lord George Hamilton expressing profound regret that the statement had ever been made; and to the *Banff Journal* he sent a long explanatory letter setting forth the course of events leading up to the meeting in the House of Commons. After reiterating his regret, he said:

"I am bound to express my belief that Mr. Gokhale, who was much moved by the sufferings of his friends in Poona, mentioned the existence of the rumour, not with evil intent, but in order to show the extreme necessity of that full inquiry to obtain which was the sole object of the meeting."

Gokhale, who until then had been enjoying the triumph of his appearance before the Welby Commission, was for the time crushed. Returning soon afterwards to India, he published, immediately on landing at Bombay, a complete apology and retractation, to which his extreme conscientiousness led him to give a form that was for many years bitterly resented by large numbers of his compatriots.

To Sir William Wedderburn the affair was a cause of the deepest grief. He had been led by his profound pity for the Indian people, then suffering from a multiple visitation, to make the accusations known in England, and if he placed too much reliance upon the advices from Bombay, it was because he had already formed the highest opinion of the sound judgment of the young Indian colleague who was to become his intimate friend. Better than anyone else he knew the difficulty of getting Parliament to display even a momentary interest in Indian affairs. And at a time of widespread calamity, when discussion unavoidably takes the form of attack upon the administration, the difficulty becomes almost insuperable. At this particular crisis, with the plague adding an unknown terror to the problem, the misfortune of the Gokhale episode was incalculable. It added greatly to the burden of Wedderburn's task in the budget debate of 1897, and for some time ahead to that of his efforts outside the House.

In view of the almost complete disappearance of India from the regular proceedings of Parliament in later times, it is astonishing to find that in several successive years the Indian group was able to make an opening for Indian questions during the debate on the Address. Whether moved by Wedderburn, or by one of his colleagues,

his hand was always discernible in the wording of the amendments; and on no occasion more than in the years of the great famines after 1897. Thus, in February, 1898, his amendment to the Address on behalf of the Indian people called for

"special forbearance towards them and careful inquiry, in order to restore confidence among the suffering masses and thus prepare the way for measures tending to bring back peace and prosperity."

In commending this motion to the House he pointed out that, as in previous years, the affairs of the frontier had been discussed at length; but what were those affairs in comparison with the vital condition of the people? What, in truth, was that "key of India" to which such constant references were made? It was to be found, not on the frontier, but in the contentment and well-being of the Indian people. And yet, he remarked, there were those who, in the face of famine, pestilence, and earthquake, could bring themselves to believe in the efficacy of the policy of repression upon which in its panic the Government had embarked.

No governor-general of modern times had gone out under happier personal auspices than those which attended Lord Curzon at the end of the year 1898. But the country was already in the

grasp of famine, and a few months later it had become clear that India was being called upon to pass through the most terrible experience of the century. The years 1899 and 1900 were indescribably dark. Wedderburn was untiring in his appeals, both inside and outside Parliament; but England was being carried into the South African War, and as a consequence the public temper was not favourable to a generous response, even when Lord Curzon sent from Simla a despairing cry for help. In the budget debate of 1899 Wedderburn reiterated for the last time on this annual occasion his lesson. Driving home the moral of the great famine, he said:

"The India Office theory is that the ryat is a fat and comfortable person, increasing every year in prosperity, pleasantly conscious of the blessings of British rule. On the other hand, all Indian opinion knows and asserts that he is a miserable starveling, hopelessly in debt to the money-lender; without store of food, money, or credit; living from hand to mouth, so that he readily dies from famine if there is a failure of one harvest. Here is a clear issue of fact; and again and again I have asked for a detailed village inquiry which would settle the point."

He made yet one more plea (April, 1900) for the intensive inquiry, and in July he moved in the House for an imperial grant in relief of famine.

The Indian debates of 1899 were all held in the shadow of war. The summer was taken up with the contest between Chamberlain and Kruger, and Parliament rose with the issue practically settled.

Wedderburn, needless to say, was utterly opposed to the war policy. By temperament, conviction, and training he was an Old Liberal. No movement in Parliament and no sweep of popular emotion could affect his position. He believed the war to be avoidable. He voted against the war credits. He was, indeed, one of the little band of Liberals and Radicals who refused on every occasion to modify the stand they had taken. His constituents disagreed. The majority of them were angry, and showed their feelings like the good Highlanders they were. Indignation meetings were held in all the Banffshire towns, and Wedderburn grew accustomed to votes of censure being passed in the division with something like unanimity. Entirely unmoved, he went on his way. The electors of Banff knew him; they could not have looked for any different behaviour; and it needed a short time only to bring them round, not to agreement with him but to entire respect. Nor did they, even at the worst time of war feeling, imagine that their member would make any move towards resignation on the South African issue.

None the less, Wedderburn's years in Parliament were now drawing to an end. During the preceding twelve months he had become increasingly convinced that his days of usefulness at Westminster were over. He was finding himself unequal to the double burden of, as he wrote, "direct work for India, together with the wear and tear of contested elections, care for the special interests of his constituents, and the multifarious duties of parliamentary life." And there was one determining circumstance connected with the spirit of England at the opening of the century. He deeply distrusted the temper of the country, and realised that for some time to come reformers of every kind would have to endure severe trial and discouragement. He saw, moreover, that the Balfour-Chamberlain Government intended to seize the tactical advantage and make an appeal to the electorate before the war fever subsided. Accordingly he reached a conclusion, and on June 20, 1900, he addressed a letter of resignation to Mr. A. R. Stuart, president of the Banffshire Liberal Association.

This was a thoroughly characteristic utterance. Wedderburn began by saying that his decision not to stand again had not arisen out of anything in his relations with his constituents. Had he wished to remain in Parliament he would not

for a moment have contemplated severance from a constituency where sound Liberal principles were so firmly rooted and where he personally had received so much kindness. But in the then temper of the British people he saw no chance within the next few years of forwarding the purposes for which he had desired a seat in the House of Commons. First, his hope had been to do some work, however humble, in support of peace, economy, and reform, which he regarded as the only solid basis of national welfare. Secondly, as regards the wide interests of Britain outside these islands, he had desired to support a policy of national righteousness. And, he continued:

"Especially I felt it a duty to the unhappy and unrepresented people of India to place at the disposal of my fellow countrymen the experience acquired during many years of official life in that country. Further, since I have had the honour to represent Banffshire, I have been anxiously desirous to remove the more prominent grievances of those engaged in the local industries of fishery and agriculture."

But the wave of militarism which had swept over the country seemed to ensure a fresh lease of power to the Government which engaged in mischievous and costly wars abroad, and at home

misapplied public funds in the shape of doles to political supporters. Under such circumstances it seemed useless for him to continue those personal sacrifices without which it was not possible for parliamentary duties to be performed.

As for the reiterated accusation that his attitude to the South African War displayed a lack of patriotism, Wedderburn continued, it affected him little. He knew it to be undeserved, and he believed that even his strongest opponents did not seriously doubt that he was acting from conscientious motives. Since he was convinced that the war was hurtful to the country's best interests, he would have been wanting in patriotism if he had not done his best to prevent it. "According to my view," he concluded, "we best show love of our country by striving after a high national ideal. It will not profit a nation, any more than it will profit a man, to gain the whole world and lose its own soul."

Throughout the county his resignation was received with the deepest regret. In the midst of the general lamentation it was difficult to believe that barely a half-year earlier Wedderburn's constituents had been passing resolutions of censure which challenged alike his liberalism, his patriotism, and his political character. But no retiring member ever had less cause to doubt the

admiration and goodwill of the community he had served in Parliament.

The newspapers of the time contain many descriptions of Sir William Wedderburn as parliamentarian. One example of these may suffice. The sketch-writer of the *Daily Mail* thus pictures him in the course of an Indian debate:

"A Scotch laird of some wealth; a man who could take the world easily—he brings to the consideration of the people of India a zeal that nothing can abate, a great industry, perfect singleness of purpose. . . . He is a crusader, but a crusader of the Scotch type—gentle, a little sad, suggesting melancholy over the sadness and sombreness of the human lot rather than power to relieve it."

That is not a bad picture. But those who knew Wedderburn knew that the melancholy was not in his nature. It was in the body of fact by which he was weighed down when describing the sadness of the human lot in India to those who, as he believed, possessed the power but not the will to relieve it.

It is regrettable that the story of these years, so heavily seared by calamity in India, should have to be told in a manner largely controversial. But that is unavoidable in view of the persistent attitude of the India Office. We should, however, naturally assume that a minister so experienced

and conscientious as Lord George Hamilton would be able to make an effective defence of his department against the Wedderburn indictment. But when he came, many years afterwards, to review his long tenure of the India Office,[1] Lord George wrote as one who deemed the authority of the Imperial Parliament to be an evil, and also as one who did not doubt the practical perfection of the governing system in India. Touching upon the subject-matter of the economic debates during the nineties, he says simply that Indian finance has been admirably managed, and that during the eight years of his term of office, "despite plague and famine, the progress of India in wealth and prosperity and trade was steady and continuous." To the repeated and well-documented appeals for a more fundamental treatment of famine than that comprised in the relief policy, Lord George Hamilton makes no reference. His single comment upon the activities of the Indian group in the House is the following:

"I was unfortunate enough to have a succession of famines to deal with, and although I am tolerably pachydermatous, the unjust criticism and abuse to which Lord Elgin and I were subjected in connection with famine administration arouses within me even

[1] See *Parliamentary Reminiscences and Reflections*, by Lord George Hamilton, vol. ii.

to this day a vibrant indignation. There was the less justification for this misrepresentation as, when the relief operations were concluded and reviewed, it was generally admitted that they had been exceptionally effective and successful."

It is, however, important to note that Lord George Hamilton concedes the greater part of Sir William Wedderburn's case in two incidental sentences of this very brief account of his stewardship. Famine, he says, is preventable, "in one sense"—which sense, strangely enough, he does not specify. And he adds this unqualified statement: "The so-called famines in India are not so much a food as a wage scarcity." That is precisely what Wedderburn maintained from beginning to end of his long contest with the bureaucracy. In other words, the root evil of India is the extreme poverty of the rayat under the system of revenue administration which, in the official reports, makes so great a display of efficiency and prosperity.

CHAPTER V

THE NATIONAL CONGRESS IN ENGLAND

So large a measure of the driving force in the Congress movement being English, it was natural that the founders should look upon the work in England as hardly second in importance to that in India. Hume indeed, after some years of exacting and often dispiriting labour in every part of India, was driven to believe that the ensuing stage would have to be accomplished through agitation in England, together with organised pressure upon Parliament and the India Office. Concessions could not be expected from the Government of India. It was idle to suppose that the great bureaucracy could ever reform itself. The officials, he wrote in 1889, denied altogether the justice of the Congress contentions:

"We cannot blame them for this: it is only natural—for the tendency of all the reforms we advocate is to curtail the virtually autocratic powers

now exercised by these officials, and unless they were more than human they must necessarily be antagonistic to our programme."

And yet the reforms demanded by the Congress were necessary, not only to the welfare of the Indian people, but "to the auspicious continuance of British rule." Wedderburn agreed entirely with Hume's view that the only hope lay in "awakening the British people to a consciousness of the unwisdom and injustice of the present administration." There was one means, and one only, to that end: the provision of funds for public meetings in England, for pamphlets, leaflets, and articles in the Press; "in a word, to carry on an agitation there on the lines and the scale of that in virtue of which the Anti-Corn-Law League triumphed." In the eighties of last century the memory of Cobden's methods and success was still recent. The repeal of the Corn Laws was regarded as the outstanding example of a cause being carried to victory by pacific agitation and untiring persuasion, and the leaders of the National Congress continually cited the League as their exemplar.

Many contemporary historians have observed that it was in 1887, the year of the Victorian jubilee, that the mass of home-keeping British people were brought for the first time to a partial

realisation of the Empire as a momentous fact—it would be too much to say, a great responsibility. In this year, appropriately, the first steps were taken towards the forming of an Indian reform organisation in England. Dadabhai Naoroji, then and for long afterwards resident in London, had offered to act as agent for the National Congress. He was, however, not supplied with funds, and it was not until the following year that any definite progress was made. Charles Bradlaugh—who, having fought through the extraordinary conflict over the parliamentary oath, now had an honourable place among the small company of great private members—was enlisted as an active supporter. As a natural consequence he became the parliamentary champion of the Congress. At the same time a paid agency was established, with an office in Craven Street, Strand, under the charge of that tireless advocate and controversialist, William Digby, afterwards to be known as the author of '*Prosperous*' *British India.* An energetic campaign of meetings and publications was opened. Bradlaugh entered upon the work which he continued till his death, of speaking on Indian affairs; and a wide distribution of the annual reports of the National Congress made some thousands of politically-minded people in England aware of the existence and aims of the new Indian organisation.

The experience of the first few months showed the need of adding to the London office an advisory body of public men, belonging to both the English and Indian sides of the movement. The British Committee of the Indian National Congress was the result. It was formed in July, 1889, with Sir William Wedderburn as Chairman. This position he retained to the end of his life. The original members of the British Committee were: Dadabhai Naoroji, W. S. Caine, and Walter S. B. McLaren, with William Digby as secretary. Shortly afterwards it was joined by John E. Ellis (later Under-Secretary for India in the Campbell-Bannerman Ministry), George Yule, head of a great firm of Calcutta merchants and President of the fourth Congress; W. C. Bonnerjee, Sir Charles Swann, Herbert Roberts (Lord Clwyd), and as time went on various men who in one way and another were active in Indian affairs. The constitution of the Committee was confirmed by a resolution of the 1889 Congress, and an annual sum was voted for its support. Three years later William Digby resigned the secretaryship. The office was removed to Palace Chambers, Westminster, a good strategic situation for the House of Commons, and these rooms remained the headquarters of the movement until they were annexed in war-time by the Ministry of Food.

During its thirty years of active work the personnel of the British Committee altered considerably, the unchanging features being the chairman and the devoted secretary and manager, W. Douglas Hall. The custom was to elect as temporary members any leading representatives of the Congress who might happen to be in England. Among such from time to time were Sir Pherozeshah Mehta, Sir Surendranath Banerjea, Sir Dinshaw E. Wacha, Subramania Iyer, Romesh Chunder Dutt, Bhupendranath Basu, and G. K. Gokhale.

To Sir William Wedderburn and his colleagues in the earlier years of the movement the Indian member of highest value was W. C. Bonnerjee, a wise counsellor and most assiduous worker. They esteemed him as the perfect Congressman. His influence among the educated classes in India was hardly surpassed by that of any contemporary, and his death in 1906 was a loss from which the London Committee never completely recovered.

Other sympathisers of the Congress in Parliament, notably Sir Charles Dilke and Samuel Smith, were not enrolled as members of the Committee, being of opinion that they could do more effective work in Parliament for the Indian cause if they remained unconnected with any outside organisation. Sir Henry Cotton, who retired in 1903 as Chief Commissioner of Assam,

joined the Committee immediately after his return to England, and thereafter was a most valuable member. He was one of a group of Anglo-Indian Liberals who had secured seats in Parliament at the general election of 1906, and who, along with Frederic Mackarness, Sir C. Dilke, Philip Morrell, and V. H. Rutherford, with Keir Hardie, James O'Grady, and Ramsay MacDonald on the Labour benches, kept Indian questions alive in the House during the first four years of the longlived Liberal Administration.

So long as his health held out Sir William Wedderburn was frequently in London for the meetings of the Committee, or for consultations in the House of Commons, and invariably he occupied the chair. During his lifetime there was no thought of any other chairman, since it was manifest that no one else had his unique qualifications, or possessed in a comparable degree the confidence of the Congress forces in India and of their sympathisers in England. In later years the journey from Gloucester necessarily grew to be a more serious undertaking, and as a consequence the meetings were less frequent and required special arrangement. But year after year, and without any slackening, Wedderburn remained the leader and counsellor, devoted without intermission to the Committee and the wide-

spreading influences of which it was the centre. One may well doubt whether, during a century of unparalleled public service, there has been any more remarkable example than this of a volunteer public servant carrying through with such complete devotion the severe and thankless labour of a reform committee. Whoever flagged, whoever made excuses, it was never the chairman. He thought no labour too arduous or prolonged in the preparation of memoranda, or of pamphlets, the writing of public letters, the supply of information to the Press or to public men, on all the subjects coming within the range of the Committee.

What has so far been said of the British Committee, its activities and burdens, might seem to imply that, for Sir William Wedderburn, these things meant nothing but continuous labour, an undue measure of anxiety, and pecuniary sacrifice spread over a long term of years. But there were relaxations and compensations not a few, which Wedderburn appreciated keenly. He had in India an immense circle of acquaintances and admirers, many of whom kept in touch with him. And if during these busy years the load of correspondence was at times difficult to carry, the sense of contact with many people of varied character and interests was a constant pleasure. He had formed close personal ties with a number

of the Indian leaders—notably, Sir Pherozeshah Mehta, Sir Dinshaw Wacha, Bhupendranath Basu, and above all G. K. Gokhale; and their visits to England, whether connected with public meetings or not, brought additional interest into his life.

The fulfilment of the Hume-Wedderburn plan of education in England could obviously not have been attempted without the aid of a newspaper organ. When Indian affairs were prominent, the Press in general could be relied upon to give a measure of attention to the reform case, however prejudiced their general position; but it was plainly necessary for a paper to be maintained for the purpose of giving a continuous summary of political events, and especially for the furnishing of an authoritative version of the facts in relation to the manifold Indian grievances, economic, administrative, and personal. There could be no serious appeal to the British electorate without such an organ. In its early stage, therefore (1890), the British Committee established the journal *India*, at first issued irregularly, with William Digby as editor. In 1892 it became a monthly, and in 1898 it was changed to a weekly, with Mr. Gordon Hewart[1] as editor, and passed in 1906 into the charge of Mr. H. E. A. Cotton.[2]

[1] Now Lord Hewart, Lord Chief Justice of England.
[2] Now (1922) President of the Bengal Legislative Council.

The expenses of production were of course considerable, and in later years the burden became increasingly heavy for Sir William Wedderburn. From beginning to end the work of the British Committee was carried on with inadequate funds and, worse still, under a strain caused by the knowledge that the younger men in India were becoming more and more sceptical of results obtainable in England. Wedderburn, although his means were always limited, carried a very large part of the burden, in money and responsibility, with faultless patience and forbearance and for many more years than he should have been allowed to carry it. But at intervals even he found it necessary to use words of grave protest against the slackness of the Congress authorities in India in the matter of money. In Bombay he received a certain measure of support from Sir P. M. Mehta and his friends, and over a period lasting several years Mr. Gokhale not only spent time in raising contributions and enrolling subscribers for the weekly journal, but also pressed into the service some members of his society, the Servants of India. The struggle, however, grew not less but more severe, and it brought to Sir William Wedderburn an amount of labour and anxiety that was extremely trying to a man of his years and high sense of responsibility. He

hated urging his own comfort or interests, and always put off the inevitable protest to the last moment. It is distressing to record that the closing weeks of his life were troubled by the thought of a charge that had become too heavy. During his last illness he addressed to his faithful old friend Wacha a long and earnest letter, in which he reviewed the financial history of the British Committee and its organ and stated the facts of the case as they affected his own position and pocket after more than three years of the war. The London organisation, which had been his special care, did not long survive him. Causes other than financial had for years been at work, and in the early days of 1921 the office was shut down and *India* discontinued.

Indian Liberals, sometime leaders of the Congress and representing the Hume-Wedderburn tradition, had already established the Indian Reforms Committee at 21, Westminster Palace Gardens with Lord Clwyd as chairman and H. E. A. Cotton and Douglas Hall as secretaries.

There was a social side, by no means unimportant, to the Indian reform work in London. During his time in Parliament and for long afterwards Wedderburn was a notable political host. On behalf of the British Committee, or in his private capacity, he made a practice year by year of

entertaining eminent Indian visitors, generally at the Westminster Palace Hotel; or, whenever important Indian legislation was afoot, of bringing together a company of politicians, journalists, and other active workers—at breakfast, luncheon, or dinner. He was almost the last of our public men to favour the political breakfast. Wedderburn had a large circle of political friends, and he was able to call together at these gatherings many men who, while not going all the way with him in opinion, held steadily to him in general sympathy. Some of these were specially valued by him because, belonging roughly to his own generation, they were links for him with the older Liberal movement and the early days of Indian reform. Among such especially he would have counted Lord Courtney, Sir Charles Dilke, Sir William Markby, Sir George Birdwood, Frederic Harrison, G. W. E. Russell, and C. P. Scott.

CHAPTER VI

THE INDIAN FAMINE UNION

THE period of Sir William Wedderburn's public work was marked by two great famine cycles—that of 1877–8 in which, according to the official estimate, between five and six millions of people perished, and the still more terrible series of 1896–1900, when in Western and Northern India the mortality surpassed all records since the Bengal famine of 1770. Wedderburn was absent on leave during the greater part of the famine in the seventies; but he understood intimately the causes of recurring scarcity and never ceased to urge upon the Government of India, the House of Commons, and the British public the need of scientific inquiry into their phenomena. During his seven years in Parliament he periodically brought forward a motion to this effect:

"That, looking to the grievous sufferings endured by the people of India, this House is of opinion that a detailed and searching village inquiry should

be instituted, in order to ascertain the causes which blight the industries of the cultivators and render them helpless to resist even the first attacks of famine and pestilence."

The motion was, regularly and consistently, opposed by Lord George Hamilton, the Conservative Secretary of State for India in the Salisbury and Balfour Cabinets, so that the most he was ever able to draw from the spokesman of the India Office was a statement that the Government of India was making its own inquiries and was satisfied as to their sufficiency.

The most accessible and complete statement of Wedderburn's case in respect of famine policy is to be found in a series of articles written in 1897. They were published in *India*, and reprinted in a pamphlet (Congress Green Book) entitled, with a provocative emphasis unusual with him, "The Skeleton at the (Jubilee) Feast." The main suggestions of this monograph are familiar to all who have followed his activities while in the Service; nor can anyone, with knowledge of the obstruction he encountered in India, be surprised at the obduracy and obscurantism he had to fight when his labours were transferred to England.

By 1900 conditions in India had once again passed the point of human endurance. Gokhale,

speaking on the financial statement in the Bombay Legislative Council (August 25) said:

"The last four years have been years of frightful sufferings for the greater portion of this presidency. Famine and plague, plague and famine, these have been our lot, almost without intermission. It is admitted, almost on all hands, that the last famine was absolutely unparalleled in its extent and intensity even in this famine-frequented land."

Two months before this, in a speech delivered in East London, Wedderburn said:

"There are about six millions of people receiving daily bread from the Government, and this number is daily increasing. The stress must go on until September, for not until then can the harvest be reaped. . . . The famine camps are swept by cholera and smallpox. Those who had taken refuge in the camps are flying from them in fear and are spreading infection everywhere; and, stricken in their flight, they are found dying in the fields, ditches, and along the roadside. The death-rate in the hospitals is 90 per cent."

The *Manchester Guardian* had sent out Mr. Vaughan Nash, a trained student of economics, as special correspondent. He spent eleven weeks in India, and his letters, when published in book

form (*The Great Famine and Its Causes*: Longmans), were reviewed by Sir William Wedderburn in the *Speaker* (February 2, 1901). Mr. Nash's broad conclusions coincided with his own: namely, that the recurring famines were due to the excessive poverty of the people, caused mainly by well-intentioned but fatal errors in our general system of administration; and that in this latest famine the awful mortality was due to insufficient liberality in the distribution of relief. The astonishing fact was that in India, taken altogether, there was, even in these terrible years, food enough and to spare. In Gujerat, for example, where the people were dying in thousands, the official reports showed that there were abundant supplies in the hands of the traders, "sufficient grain to last for a couple of years." It seemed to be proved that in these districts at all events every death from hunger was a death from poverty. He held further that the plight of the people was made worse by means of an unfortunate circular (December, 1899), issued by the Government of India with a view to limiting the expenditure on relief, and commenting on the "extreme readiness (of the famine stricken) to throw themselves on the charity of the State, and to avail themselves of every form of relief."

In April, 1901, Wedderburn addressed to *The*

Times an impressive communication in which he said:

"In recent years these famines have recurred at ever-shortening intervals and with ever-increasing severity. The famine of 1897 was at the time pronounced to be the severest on record—although in 1876–9 there was a decrease of the population of Southern India, due to famine, amounting to five millions. But in 1900 things were still worse; and the Viceroy, Lord Curzon, declared that the famine of that year was greater in intensity than any previously recorded visitation. . . . I point to one economic fact of the highest importance, which has not sufficiently occupied public attention. . . . Even in the worst months of the famine, and in the worst localities, there has never been a deficiency in the food supply. There has always been a sufficiency of grain on the spot, in the hands of the traders: the difficulty is that the cultivators have no means to purchase. They have no money, and being hopelessly in debt to the money-lender, have lost their credit."

This letter was followed by others to all the leading dailies, including those of Manchester and Glasgow. In 1900 Sir William Wedderburn had given up his seat in the House, being convinced, among other things, that with his recovered freedom he could do more effectual service for India. Not many months later the epoch-making report of the Famine Commission presided over by Sir

Antony (now Lord) MacDonnell was made public. It was a document of the highest moment, and was cordially welcomed by Wedderburn and his allies, especially for the recommendation of the commissioners that at all stages in famine-relief work greater use should be made of non-official agency.

Wedderburn realised that, with this report as ammunition, the time was peculiarly favourable for a new method of approaching the Government through the public. On June 7, 1901, a preliminary conference of men having special experience of Indian affairs met at the Westminster Palace Hotel, with Leonard Courtney (afterwards Lord Courtney of Penwith) in the chair. At this conference the Indian Famine Union was launched; as an association to promote inquiry into the causes of famine and possible remedies. The provisional committee included a remarkable number of prominent names: Leonard Courtney, Lord Hobhouse, Sir Raymond West, Sir George Birdwood, Sir John Jardine, Sir M. M. Bhownaggree, W. S. Caine, S. S. Thorburn, Romesh Dutt, Dadabhai Naoroji, G. Parameswaram Pillai, etc. It was agreed that a memorial be prepared for presentation to the Secretary of State. Wedderburn at once reported proceedings to *The Times*, his letter and his report being incorporated in No. 3

of the Indian Famine Leaflets. No 4 followed quickly, an able critical summary of the Mac-Donnell Famine Report. It was noted in this leaflet that three reforms long advocated by Wedderburn were at last being treated as practical politics: namely, increased elasticity of revenue collection, agricultural banks, and *takavi* loans. Wedderburn took the opportunity of urging afresh, not a "roving imperial commission," but a detailed inquiry into the economic condition of a few selected villages. As always, he comes back to the village community as "the unit and microcosm of all India"; or, as Lord Morley put it some years later, "the indestructible unit of Indian administration."

No. 5 of the Indian Famine Leaflets, "Drought-resisting Fodder Plants," was a further illustration of the special Wedderburn method which we have noticed in connection with the spice gardens of Sircy. He took the case of Gujerat, where nearly two million cattle had succumbed:

"In their efforts to save the cattle the Gujerat agriculturists expended all their savings, themselves enduring great privations; they sold their jewels, and even the doors and rafters of their houses . . . in order to purchase fodder. Their efforts failed, their cattle died, and with all their cattle their accumulated wealth disappeared, so that Gujerat became a stricken field."

He had investigated the conditions of the drought regions of Australia, of South Africa, and Russia, and, as always, his recommendations had a solid basis of fact and experience. The Agricultural Department of the Government of India is still, as we learn from the annual reports, engaged in demonstrating the advantages of new fodder crops.

The memorial, again, contained an unequalled body of signatures, and was indeed, in that respect, a unique document.

The Union urged investigation and preventive measures, and emphasised the value of previous commissions; it enumerated various suggested remedies, but considered that there was a pressing case for an economic and social survey of certain selected and typical villages—such as had been done by the Deccan Riots Commission, and by Thorburn's inquiry in the Western Punjab. The latter, although including the large number of 742 villages, was completed in six months, at an expense of only £300. The memorial differentiated between this suggested inquiry and those that had been undertaken in 1881 and 1887, and was careful to add that the memorialists were making their representation with an entire detachment from party politics.

The signatories numbered over 200. They

represented all parties and shades of opinion, including church and civic dignitaries, Anglo-Indian officials, politicians, educationists, publicists —men and women eminent in every department of English public and intellectual life.

It is with regret one records that Lord George Hamilton's attitude was in harmony with all of his previous conduct in relation to famine policy. He at first agreed to receive the deputation, which was to be headed by the Liberal ex-Viceroy, the Marquis of Ripon. Later, however, he withdrew, offering as a reason that, as W. S. Caine had given notice of an amendment to the Address on Indian affairs, he would be required to speak in the debate and would therefore reserve his statement on famine policy till that occasion. Lord George's final pronouncement was as follows: "I have read the memorial. . . . There is nothing new in their proposal, which has on more than one occasion been condemned by the House of Commons. . . . The signatories . . . have with few exceptions neither personal nor official knowledge of the matter they refer to." This was an extraordinary declaration, since the list contained the names of a number of the most eminent and experienced Indian administrators of the century. A meeting of protest against Lord George Hamilton's broken promise was held, again presided over by Courtney,

and the Indian Famine Union issued an effective leaflet in reply. In the meantime, a dispatch from Simla, although acknowledging no case for the inquiry, was much less hostile in tone, and the present chapter may fittingly close with a paragraph from this last word of the Government of India:

"Even were the suspicions of the Indian cultivator not excited in the manner we apprehend, or if they were successfully allayed, we think that a worse consequence might ensue in the expectations of change than would almost certainly be aroused in the minds of the people. . . . Did the result of the investigation in the selected villages indicate a low level of material prosperity, it would be impossible to raise that level by any novel act of government, either in the so-called famine areas or over the whole of India."

CHAPTER VII

FLORENCE NIGHTINGALE; EDUCATION; TEMPERANCE

THE Indian reform policy had no more fervent supporter in England than Florence Nightingale. Her concern for the health of the British Army in India had led her on to the problems of village sanitation, and thence to those of land revenue, which she mastered with the imperious thoroughness that had made her the terror of public departments ever since the Crimean War and the Indian Mutiny. The year of enforced leave which Wedderburn spent in the advocacy of land banks found her in active co-operation with him. Her paper on "The Rayat, the Zemindar, and the Government" was read to the East India Association a month before his on "The Poona Rayat's Bank"; and an article contributed by her to the *Nineteenth Century* (August, 1883) was actually more his than hers. When sending him the rough drafts she writes:

"The more you are so kind as to correct and alter, the better pleased I shall be. Please do not let me be impertinent to the India Office, nor to the departments. It is so very unbecoming of me to be governessing the Government. I feel inclined to sign myself 'Cat's Paw.'"

During the months before the article's appearance she bombards him with letters and telegrams asking for the return of the notes and the corrected manuscript, and then after publication she writes: "The article is an excellent one, if only it had been signed by you and not by me." In the January following, when he returns, alone, to duty she writes:

"May success attend your arrival in India. May Land Banks and all other goods for our native friends follow your footsteps, and may you above all continue enlightening us in England and show us the real meaning of Lord Ripon's policy. . . . Long may you live to show the working of liberal principles on that most stupendous stage of the world."

And when, the next year, he is appointed to the Bombay High Court, she writes: "May you proceed from strength to strength."

In the autumn of 1885 Miss Nightingale took a no less eager interest in the founding of the Indian National Congress and in the mission of the Indian speakers who had come for the purpose

of putting the case for Indian reform before English audiences during the general election. She discusses the political situation in long and vivacious letters to Sir William Wedderburn. The losses suffered by the Liberals in the boroughs distressed her, and all the more because they involved the defeat of nearly all the parliamentary friends of India—"excepting dear old Mr. Bright, who *is* India. But he will not work alone."

Readers of the *Life of Florence Nightingale* by Sir Edward Cook do not need to be reminded of the characteristics of her letters, with their vivid and unrestrained criticism of public men. In one very characteristic specimen of her manner, written at this time in the highest spirits, Wedderburn was given an account of her talks with Lalmohun Ghose, the Bengali orator, who had stood unsuccessfully as Liberal candidate for Deptford. She confides to Sir William her suspicion that he was not quite sound in his attitude to the zemindars; compares him with his brother, Manomohan, and speaks with pleasure of having met Mrs. Manomohan Ghose, who "might vie with a well-educated English lady." She enjoys a long talk with Mr. (afterwards Sir Narayan) Chandavarkar, the Bombay member of the group.[1] The meetings addressed by the

[1] Now (1922) President of the Bombay Legislative Council.

Indian delegates, she believes, had been successful in attracting attention throughout the country, although she is inclined to suspect that the organisation had sometimes fallen into hands not wholly disinterested. Then she turns to the preparations for the first meeting of the Indian National Congress, which arouse her highest enthusiasm. She writes:

"This National Liberal Union (one of the names suggested), if it keeps straight, seems altogether the matter of greatest interest that has happened in India, if it makes progress, for a hundred years. We are watching the birth of a new nationality in the oldest civilisation in the world. How critical will be its first meeting at Poona! I bid it God-speed with all my heart."

And she ends by expressing the hope that the new body will refrain from personal attacks, that it will seek to "lay down principles, and not try to throw down men."

This same letter contains a particular example of Florence Nightingale's practical sense of affairs. She refers to a subject that was at all times a matter of interest and concern to Sir William Wedderburn—namely, the chances of getting an independent service of press cablegrams from India. The long weekly message to *The Times* from Calcutta was in those years a powerful

influence in the shaping of British opinion, and to Miss Nightingale, as to her correspondent, it was anything but an influence to be commended. She points out that its effect had been greatly enhanced by the editorial rule of printing it in Monday's paper, where large numbers of people read it habitually because there was on that morning no parliamentary report to absorb the time. She urges Wedderburn to bear this fact in mind in his efforts to organise a new service. And, having thus made a point of unusual value, she remarks, as her way was, that on a matter of tactics such as this her opinion is worth nothing!

Again, there is India to be considered in regard to the new Liberal Ministry, destined to break up a few months later over Irish Home Rule. Unhappily, as she realises, there is no chance of getting Lord Ripon at the India Office:

"That would have been the best way to heal all our woes. But I trust in God and the Right—though I may not live to see it."

Meanwhile, in the dying Conservative Government "Lord Randolph, the 'Boy with the drum,' is doing untold harm—literally untold, because the India Office is a secret society"—by attacking Lord Ripon and Sir Evelyn Baring at the India Office Council.

From the early eighties onward to the last months of her life Wedderburn worked with Miss Nightingale in the cause of village sanitation. The year 1891, when the International Congress of Hygiene and Demography was sitting in London, furnished an opportunity of urging afresh the need of a systematic policy. Wedderburn's name was on her memorandum on the subject, which was circulated by the Viceroy, Lord Lansdowne, to the provincial governments, and produced a formidable dossier. Acknowledging this, in July, 1893, he writes:

"It seems clear that you have most effectively drawn attention to the subject. The official replies are what we might naturally expect; but reading between the lines I think they admit the justice of our contention, and have been impressed by your action."

On her death in 1910, Wedderburn received a legacy of £250 "for some Indian object." With his habitual generosity he added to it. Later, her cousin, Mrs. Vaughan Nash, passed on Rs. 1,000, her own legacy under the will, while Mr. Ratan J. Tata gave Rs. 500 per annum for five years, to what became the Florence Nightingale (Village Sanitation) Fund. A letter from Wedderburn to *India* (June 28, 1914) summarised the progress of the movement. At a meeting of the subscribers in Bombay (April, 1912) two typical villages were

selected for experiment. Mr. R. U. Kelkar was appointed Health Officer for Wadala near Bombay, and Dr. Abhyankar for Karla in the Poona district. The fund at that time stood at nearly Rs. 14,000, and the Bombay Legislative Council agreed to add a sum equal to the annual income. Experimental work was to continue for a year, the Health Officer being aided by voluntary workers. A certain measure of success was reported from both villages. Tanks were cleaned, gutters dug round houses, separate sheds set up for cattle, etc.; but hardly had Wedderburn's letter been printed when the war broke out. The work at Karla was closed down, that at Wadala being extended over a score of the neighbouring villages. Wedderburn had suggested some modification of the original plan; and in 1915, after the death of G. K. Gokhale, he recommended that, the work of the health visitors under existing conditions having been found so difficult, the Florence Nightingale fund should be employed as endowment of a Gokhale Scholarship for an Indian girl student, who should have sanitary science included in her training. This suggestion was a natural corollary to the appointment (in 1914) of an Indian to the portfolio of Education and Public Health in the Viceroy's Executive Council.

Sir William Wedderburn's active connection

with education was practically continuous throughout his residence in India. He was chairman of the Deccan Education Society, which founded the first independent college in the country under Indian management—the famous Fergusson College at Poona, where Gokhale taught for eighteen years, and of which Mr. R. P. Paranjpye was principal till he took office[1] under the Reform Act. It is the women of India, however, who have special reason for being grateful to his memory. The story of the Wedderburn Hindu Girls' School, Karachi, is worth being told in some detail.

Mary Carpenter, of Bristol, well known in her day for her generous interest in Indian education and liberal religious thought, during her fourth and last visit to India, in the cold season of 1875–6, noted with distress the wretched accommodation provided in Karachi for the city's one school for Indian girls. It had been started some three years before, and the 60 or 70 pupils were taught in one room of a small house by a single poorly-paid master, with the aid, for the needlework, of a Hindu widow. Wedderburn, then Judicial Commissioner in Sind, had provided an entertainment at his own house for Indian children, and Miss Carpenter was invited to meet such of the fathers who accompanied their children.

[1] Minister of Education for Bombay.

Her warmth on the subject of the poverty-stricken school aroused her audience. The local committee of the National Indian Association, of which she was the founder, was stirred to action, and she herself made a contribution to the building fund. Wedderburn's departure from the province some months later provided the occasion. The love and admiration of the people of Sind found expression in the form of a considerable fund, raised in the first place for giving him a farewell entertainment. Eventually a large portion of this was allotted to the erection of a school: Wedderburn himself gave Rs. 500; Miss Carpenter added to her original Rs. 500; the municipality grant was obtained, and the Government doubled the total amount thus raised. The Public Works Department built the school, which was named after Wedderburn and opened in June, 1880, by the then Commissioner, H. N. B. Erskine. It started work with nearly 100 pupils, and with an Indian policy—the language to be taught being the vernacular of the province, Hindi-Sindhi.

A second institution of the kind with which he was identified is the Poona High School for Indian Girls. Wedderburn was one of many witnesses before the Ripon Education Commission who attacked the existing system of instruction. While occupying the post of District and Sessions

Judge, he presided over a meeting in the Poona Town Hall, in 1884, and urged immediate action towards the starting of a high school in the city. In co-operation with the eminent jurist and reformer, M. G. Ranade, he carried the scheme to completion, himself contributing Rs. 1,000 for a scholarship in memory of his brother David, and obtaining liberal support from the Chiefs assembled at the annual birthday durbar.

Similarly he collaborated with the Parsee reformer Manockjee Cursetjee, who founded the Alexandra English Institution for Indian girls; and, further, in the Female Normal School at Poona the Lady Wedderburn Scholarship was established by his friends when he left Ahmednagar. It was natural, therefore, that in 1887 his last public visits should have been to the Pathsala (Sanskrit school), the Fergusson College, and the Girl's High School.

In his later years he devoted much time to the same cause, especially in connection with the Indian Women's Education Association. This body had its origin in a resolution on women's education proposed by Mrs. Sarojini Naidu at the Calcutta session of the All-India Social Conference in 1906. The work was taken up by Indians in London. A number of English women joined hands. The aim of the association was to form in India committees under whose auspices training

colleges might be established in the larger cities, and to train in England Indian women graduates for these colleges. The society languished; but in 1915 Wedderburn became actively associated with it; and shortly afterwards he and the other founders of the Gokhale Memorial Scholarship offered to the association the work of administering the scholarship fund with himself as treasurer. Later in the year he drafted a memorial to the Secretary of State on the Education of Girls and Women in India. The signatures made an influential list, and the memorial aroused considerable discussion and brought correspondence from women in England interested in India and in education. Early in 1916 appeared his letter-pamphlet, "Urgent Call to Indian Reformers." In September he aired in *Jus Suffragii* a new scheme for an Indian Women's University, for in the meantime the Everest bequest (1912) had been proved, and the Fergusson College was putting in its claim for a women's university in Poona. But no actual headway was being made.

In January, 1917, the first Gokhale scholar, and incidentally one of the last Indian guests at Meredith during its owner's lifetime, arrived in London and was entered at the London Day Training College. This was Mrs. Rajkumari Das, head of the Brahmo Girls' School in Calcutta.

The war and Wedderburn's failing health obstructed the movement; but in May he spoke at an at-home of the I.W.E. Association, sent a description to *The Times* (Educational Supplement, May 17), and continued his appeals. A pleasing addendum to this record of work in a cause that was very near his heart is to be found in the annual Statement on the Moral and Material Progress and Condition of India (1920), from which we learn that there were then "sixteen women's colleges and 118 training schools for women . . . a little over 1,200 women undergoing university education, and about 3,500 in training schools."

In this department as in many others Wedderburn was a pioneer. During his term of official service the number of those actively interested were few indeed, but in the field of general education they were already becoming numerous, and Wedderburn's co-operation was continually sought and freely given. Having been an enthusiastic supporter of Lord Ripon's educational policy, he was stirred to action twenty years later by the attack upon the institutions of higher education embodied in Lord Curzon's Universities Bill, which was strenuously fought in the Legislative Council by the Indian members under Gokhale's leadership.

The passage of the Morley Reforms (1909) and

the declaration by the King at the Delhi Durbar of 1911 opened the way to another stage of educational effort. Convinced that an India preparing for self-government would rapidly become conscious of the supreme need of an educated population, Gokhale introduced a Primary Education Bill, aiming to provide elementary schools for all, and containing provisions under which the provinces were empowered to adopt a system of compulsory school attendance. The Government of India invited opinions from the provincial administrations. These were unfavourable, and the Viceroy, Lord Hardinge, decided that nothing could be done. In the interval, however, Gokhale had been touring the country, addressing meetings and employing his unsurpassed powers in the mobilisation of opinion in support of his bill. Here was a cause after Wedderburn's own heart, and he threw his whole strength and influence into it. He circulated an explanatory memorandum by thousands in England, wrote articles and letters, and spoke wherever opportunity offered. In the years immediately preceding the war this advocacy of primary education for the whole of India absorbed the greater part of his time. But no concrete results could be attained. No legislation was practicable so long as the bureaucracy remained hostile and the influential men

in the various provinces believed that the educated classes were as a whole indifferent to the proposal. As usual, the event proved that the pioneers had read the signs aright; that, in fact, they were only a little way in advance of the demand. When Gokhale was dead, when the nationalist movement suffered change, and multitudes came under the spell of the prophet of Non-Cooperation, there can hardly have been an official in the country who did not regret that the rulers of India had lacked the wisdom to see that the foundations of mass education might have been laid.

Sir William Wedderburn's sense of responsibility towards India made him an earnest supporter of the temperance movement and especially an advocate of the reform of the Excise. Soon after his retirement from the Service he joined the executive of the Anglo-Indian Temperance Association, and he remained in connection with the society till the end: attending committees, speaking at the annual meeting, subscribing regularly, and at every available opportunity pressing the case against a system which he believed to be calamitous in its social results.

He was a member of more than one deputation to the Secretary of State, and in 1912 he not only drafted a memorial to Lord Crewe but bore the expense of distributing the document and collecting

subscriptions. This memorial, together with a leaflet on State Ownership of the Drink Traffic which he wrote in 1917, summarised his views on the licensing system of India. He held that the Government as purveyor of drink offended the moral sense, and that the system did not tend to restrict the consumption of alcohol, or contain any provision for meeting a local demand for restriction or prohibition; indeed, that the Indian people themselves demanded restriction and local control, while the only effectual opposition came from the revenue-collecting department. He reminded the Government and the public that the use of intoxicants was forbidden by both Hindu and Moslem law; that every year the Indian National Congress passed a resolution in favour of restriction and control; that, whereas in pre-British days the traffic was irregular and discreditable, the British government officials sold licences to the highest bidder, till the Excise Department had become one of the most lucrative of public departments. "Experience in India shows," he concluded, "that state ownership is no remedy for intemperance, and the Government cannot be trusted to deal with this great national evil in accordance with the higher aspirations of the people." In an earlier memorial he had suggested independent inquiry, and had

urged the following as immediate reform measures:

1. Steady reduction of licences and hours of sale;
2. Extension and democratisation of the excise committees;
3. Abolition of the auction of licences;
4. Transfer of licences from the Revenue Department to some independent, preferably local, committee.

In one of his last letters to the Anglo-Indian Association he wrote: "There is now a great world movement towards temperance, and we are anxious that India should have in it that share that is her just due." And that share, he believed, should be expressed in the power of India to deal with the question in accordance with Indian wishes.

It should not be necessary to add that his interest in temperance was not confined to the problem in India. He was, as befitted so close a parliamentary ally of Sir Wilfrid Lawson, an untiring supporter of licensing reform in England; and he was an invaluable friend to the Band of Hope in Gloucestershire.

CHAPTER VIII

THE MORLEY AND MONTAGU REFORMS

WEDDERBURN had retired from Parliament at a time of peculiar discouragement, and the obstruction he met with in his efforts on behalf of the Indian Famine Union certainly did not avail to change his outlook. In India the fresh spirit displayed by Lord Curzon during his first two years, and especially the vigour and humanity with which he had attacked the famine, had raised the hopes of the Congress leaders. But it soon became clear that Lord Curzon's single aim was a greater efficiency in the machine of government. He was outspoken in his antagonism to political change. The reform movement itself was suffering from lassitude. Indeed, as the century opened there was less activity in the progressive ranks than there had been for many years. It was Lord Curzon himself who introduced the new spirit and brought the latent nationalism of India into life. He rejoiced, as he

said, in "the *res gesta*, the thing done," and in the presence of such an administrator indifference could not continue. The situation was quickly changed by Lord Curzon's university policy and his scheme for the administrative division of Bengal. Thereupon India entered upon a stage of unprecedented activity.

The twentieth assembly of the National Congress (1904) was held in Bombay and presided over by Sir Henry Cotton, who had retired from the Chief Commissionership of Assam in the enjoyment of great popular esteem by reason of his efforts on behalf of the tea-garden coolies. Wedderburn, no longer pressed by urgent duties at home, went with him, accompanied by his younger daughter. He took only a modest part in the public proceedings, although throughout his visit he was closely engaged with Congress business and with callers. His particular task at the meeting was to move a resolution in favour of sending a Congress deputation to England. The early break-up of the Balfour Government was anticipated, and with it a return of the Liberals not only to office but to power. It was a favourable moment for the renewal of the educational movement in England, and the resolution bore fruit during the following year in the dispatch to Europe of Gokhale and Lajpat Rai.

As in 1889, the presence of two conspicuous public men from England made the Congress of 1904 an event of exceptional interest. The reception accorded to the leaders by the Bombay public was one of extraordinary fervour, which for Wedderburn was extended over a journey through Southern India in the new year. The main incident of this tour—an experience of great pleasure and refreshment to him—was a great meeting in the town hall of Madras and the presentation of an address from the citizens: an occasion which had its counterpart in each one of the famous cities—Madura, Tanjore, Trichinopoly, and the rest at which a halt was made.

India was now nearing the close of the difficult second part of Lord Curzon's viceroyalty. There were signs of a new and harder temper both in the administration and in the nationalist movement. The gulf between the Government and the people had never been wider, and at Government House everything connected with the National Congress was proscribed. Nor was the situation made easier by the conditions prevailing among the politically conscious classes. The Congress of 1904 was the culminating point of the movement as directed by the founders, and by those younger leaders who shared their political faith and were content with their methods. There-

after new and disturbing forces made themselves felt. The Curzon policy from 1902 had been in the highest degree provocative. In the sixty years between the Mutiny and the tragedy of Amritsar no administrative act had the importance of the partition of Bengal, which was projected in 1903 and consummated in October, 1905, in the last month of Lord Curzon's term and within a few weeks of the change of government in England. This blunder consolidated the Indian opposition, provoked a new and intense spirit of agitation, and in the Swadeshi-boycott (that is, the militant adoption of Indian home-made goods) anticipated by fifteen years the Gandhi non-cooperation crusade.

The new spirit was a direct challenge to the elders of the National Congress. With their rooted belief in constitutional procedure, they could not fail to be disturbed by the apostles of an aggressive nationalism and the popular success of the Swadeshi-boycott. But on the other hand they agreed entirely with Bengal in making the partition a test issue, and they were bound to rejoice over the swift and thorough awakening of the nation to the evils of a revived despotism. Wedderburn, for example, was accustomed to say that he greatly preferred the new unrest, with all its serious aspects, to the apathy of the preceding years.

The Conservative Government in the meanwhile came to an end. In November, 1905, Mr. Balfour gave place to Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman, and Mr. John Morley became Secretary of State for India. His appointment was hailed in India as an event of extraordinary significance. Mr. Morley, the most distinguished liberal intellectual of his time, was in himself a high promise to the Indian people. A month later, G. K. Gokhale, from the chair of the National Congress at Benares, said:

"Large numbers of educated men in this country feel towards Mr. Morley as towards a master, and the heart hopes, and yet trembles, as it has never hoped and trembled before."

It was not only the knowledge of Mr. Morley's difficulties and perils that made Gokhale apprehensive. He knew also that his plea for the reinforcement of constitutional effort, even with the altered omens in England, would encounter scepticism in the Congress and a nascent contempt among younger Indians everywhere. It would be increasingly difficult to hold the Congress to the constitutional position. The extremists were as yet in the minority; but it was clear enough that unless there was an immediate and decisive change in the direction of the government, their numbers and influence would rapidly multiply.

The new Secretary of State, however, had inherited a mass of difficulties, and he was not in a position to approach the political problems of his office for many months. He moved slowly and with extreme caution. After all, in no department of affairs was his discipleship of John Stuart Mill more thoroughgoing than in the department which had now come under his charge. Early in 1906 Mr. Morley committed himself to the opinion that the partition of Bengal was a settled fact; and pressure from the Anglo-Indian members effected only a reiteration of this statement. As a consequence, the division in the Congress ranks was widened and deepened. Gokhale, with the backing of his older friend in England, seemed to be fighting a losing battle. In the first year of the Liberal Government the elders of the Congress, led by Sir P. M. Mehta, made a desperate effort to avoid a split between moderates and extremists by calling to the chair the veteran Dadabhai Naoroji, who, in his eighty-second year, faced the adventure of a voyage from London and a journey across India in order to preside in Calcutta. The effort was so far successful that the Congress of 1906 passed without an open quarrel. This, however, was the last meeting of the undivided assembly. A year later, at Surat, despite the self-sacrificing endeavours of Gokhale

and his friends, the left wing of the nationalists under B. G. Tilak broke away, and the session ended in disorder.

The disaster of Surat was for Sir William Wedderburn the stormy close of a quarter-century's unremitting work and on the whole of harmonious progress. It was a bitter grief to him, for he could not disguise from himself that it might involve the ruin of a great part of his life's work. But despair was entirely alien from his nature. He had no doubt of the recovery of the National Congress, and his hope was not long in being fulfilled; for, as a matter of fact, the Surat disaster came only a few months before the active work associated with the shaping of the Morley reforms began to absorb Wedderburn's whole energies.

The preparations for the Indian Councils Bill were of necessity very slow, and in the midst of them (when the Cabinet was reconstructed by the new Prime Minister, Mr. Asquith) Mr. Morley decided to take refuge in the comparative tranquillity of the House of Lords.

The story of the reforms has been told with vivid strokes and in brilliant detail by Lord Morley in the second volume of his *Recollections*. From the side of the Indian reformers it is a record of much difficulty and harassment, and of a constant

struggle against disquieting forces. Wedderburn, the most cautious of men, was impressed by the unwisdom of slowness. Action on a large and generous scale was long overdue. He thought that the Liberal Government had everything to gain by the adoption of a courageous policy.

In March, 1907, fifteen months after the general-election triumph, he made a very careful statement of his views in a letter to Mr. Morley, taking advantage of the occasion to refer to his own situation and his desire to help the Government in some positive way.

He wrote, he said, as one who for close upon half a century had been fighting the battle of the Indian people on liberal principles. Now that the Liberal Party was for the first time in overwhelming strength (Labour and the Irish being on this point in active sympathy), he had expected to see those principles openly and freely applied to Indian affairs. But time was passing, and there was reason to fear that, unless some overt move were made, the best opportunity for action would be lost. He went on to explain the position in India. The popular feeling was that of hope deferred; the heart of the people was getting sick. The reformers had become divided. A struggle was going on between the old constitutional party, which kept to the lines upon which

the Congress was founded, and the Young India Party, which had been created by the reactionary policy of the past ten years. That party denounced constitutional agitation as mendicancy and preached the boycott and passive resistance. The older men, urging patience, said: "Wait, trust in Mr. Morley and the Liberal Party." But day by day their position was growing weaker, since they had nothing to point to in support of their assurances. The extremists, on the other hand, were gaining the enthusiastic support of the younger generation. "As the bitterness and boldness of these missionaries increase, excited officials will doubtless adopt measures of repression. Martyrs will be manufactured; secret societies formed; a policy of coercion forced on a Liberal Government; and the raw materials provided of an Irish or Russian anarchism." The determined attempt of the extremists to capture the Calcutta Congress had only been frustrated by the strenuous efforts of Mr. Gokhale and his friends. These men were entitled to some recognition and support, but they were now writing from India almost in despair.

Discussing the steps that should be taken to allay this dangerous unrest, Wedderburn urged, first, a sympathetic declaration from Mr. Morley himself in reference to the partition of Bengal,

which clearly was "the open sore from which the poison oozes"; secondly, some personal *rapprochement*—as, for example, by the appointment of an eminent Indian to the Secretary of State's Council, together with some recognition, in the evening of his day, of "the lifelong and selfless devotion" which the veteran Dadabhai Naoroji had given to India. Thirdly, Wedderburn suggested the appointment of a commission of inquiry, the recommendations of which might be the foundation of future action. He added that he himself was being pressed, both from India and by friends in the House, to come forward again for a Scotch constituency; but he felt that he could do more useful work outside. He concluded:

"My wish is to be engaged in constructive work for India, which is much more congenial to me than criticism, into which I have unwillingly been driven owing to the bureaucratic and anti-liberal spirit of the Indian administration. . . . The condition of the agricultural masses in India has been my specialty, and I do not think that my strongest opponents have ever alleged that I am not an authority on this question. My crime in their eyes is that I have sought to apply the principles of Liberalism to Indian affairs, and they have (as in the case of the 'Pro-Boers') invented a theory of unaccountable hostility to my own profession and my own countrymen. For years I have had to submit to

such aspersions, but feel that, with the present constitution of Parliament, and with yourself as head of the administration, I am entitled to be relieved from this outlawry and placed in a position to utilise my experience for the benefit of India."

The interval between this letter and the introduction of the Councils Bill was filled with serious events in India. The Government of Lord Minto, in grappling with the results of the Curzon régime, was driven to the adoption of measures such as had not been tried since the plague disturbances of ten years before. In May, during troubles in the Punjab clearly traceable to economic causes, the notorious regulation of the East India Company (No. 3 of 1818) was used for the purpose of removing Lajpat Rai. This arbitrary action, strikingly reminiscent of the Irish policy against which the John Morley of the eighties had set his face, was the beginning of a series of measures by which Lord Minto's Government sought to restrain the spread of aggressive nationalism. The spring of 1908 brought the definite beginning of political assassination, from which India suffered more or less continuously till the rise of M. K. Gandhi with his doctrine of non-violence. Sharper forms of summary justice were introduced. The Press was restricted, and public meetings proscribed. Tilak was condemned to six years' transportation.

At the end of the year the deportation ordinance was again invoked, this time against a number of Bengali leaders, at least one of whom, Krishna Kumar Mitter of Calcutta, was a prominent moderate and social worker.

Against these measures the leaders of the National Congress submitted a series of energetic protests. It was indeed an ironical circumstance that during the whole of the hopeful activities accompanying the passage of the Morley reforms Sir William Wedderburn and his friends, in and out of Parliament, were compelled to devote a very large amount of labour and time to fighting the policies of the Executive in India—policies of exacerbation which seemed to them to be militating against the entire purpose of the great scheme to which Lord Morley had set his hand.

Wedderburn was not at any time tempted to underestimate the difficulties. He realised that Lord Morley had to carry with him, not only the Conservative Party in England, but also the bureaucracy and commercial public in India. The fate of Ripon was before his eyes. The greatness of these obstacles was not fully understood by his Indian associates. Many even of the older leaders began to lose faith in the Liberal Secretary of State. Wedderburn himself never lost faith or heart. He performed a most valuable

task for the Government in steadily urging his colleagues to patience and in a continual effort of education, the purpose of which was to make the home public understand the essentials of Indian reform. Lord Morley was always appreciative of these efforts. If he was somewhat too anxious in public to imply that his personal relations with the Indian Congress party were of the most detached and formal kind, he was sufficiently frank and confidential in private. Wedderburn kept him constantly informed, and Lord Morley wrote to him with great frequency. These letters, though usually very brief, were full of character. He was quick in approval or dissent; and no less quick with a stab of satire, not seldom at the expense of some folly or stupidity on the reactionary side. Wedderburn on his part gave himself without stint to the work. In the shaping of a constitutional scheme he was in his element. And there is no need to say that with all the progressive clauses that were finally embodied in the Councils Act of 1909 Wedderburn was in complete accord.

There remained one further service for him to render in person to the Congress. In 1910, when he was in his seventy-third year, he yielded to the strong appeals of the older leaders and went out to India for the last time to preside over the twenty-fifth Congress held at Allahabad. The six

years since his previous visit had brought great changes in Indian public life. The Morley scheme was on the point of being put into effect; but this victory for the constitutional party had not tended to reduce the disagreements in the Congress. Those, indeed, were now greater than ever. Lord Minto's viceroyalty had been marked by a large increase of revolutionary crime, and by the emergence of several Indian leaders who, by virtue of great eloquence or other gifts, had carried the gospel of nationalism beyond the bounds of the educated classes. Executive repression had, as always, bred fresh trouble, and the moderate party was in a position of extreme difficulty between a government that had given way to panic and a wild faction whose methods it deeply disapproved. Racial bitterness was intense, and this was further complicated by a revived hostility between Hindus and Moslems, due largely to the system of communal representation which Lord Morley had felt compelled to embody in his bill.

In the midst of all this Wedderburn went out to carry an old man's message of hope and reconciliation. No outlook, however dark, could make him despair, and he opened his speech at Allahabad with the characteristic declaration:

"I cherish an enduring faith in the future destiny of India. India deserves to be happy. . . . And I feel confident that brighter days are not far off."

India could take hope, he maintained, from the Morley scheme, a conspicuous victory for the National Congress, and from the appointment of the new viceroy, Lord Hardinge. A stage had been reached in the evolution of the country, and the moral for Indian citizens was that there was an enormous amount of good, solid, useful work for the welfare of India to be done—in education and technical training, in industrial regeneration, and in the completion of the Congress programme. All this meant self-sacrificing effort and co-operation. He urged his hearers to accept and apply the principle of conciliation and unity in respect of their relations with officials, the Hindu-Moslem difficulty, and the two opposing wings of their own movement. He asked them to remember that the reforms, so tardily conceded, had followed Congress lines; and once again he pressed upon them his conviction as to the supreme importance of the educative work in England, carried on, as he knew only too well, often under disheartening conditions. There had been born in India, as he rejoiced to recognise, a new spirit of self-reliance; but that must not mislead them into the evil of race hostility. "Hand in hand with the British people India can most safely take her first steps on the new path of progress."

That was Sir William Wedderburn's last spoken

word to an assembly of the Indian National Congress.

The correspondence between himself and Mr. Morley in these years is full of interest. Wedderburn had a strong belief in Mr. Morley's spirit and aims, and he trusted greatly in his power of getting things done. In the early days of the new Government he wrote to Bhupendranath Basu: "A man like Morley does not come to guide the affairs of a country every day." The exchanges between Meredith and Flowermead were very frequent, and on Mr. Morley's part they were often of a lively character. In June, 1907, Wedderburn congratulates Mr. Morley on the success with which he has carried through his first important concessions, "without arousing the dangerous animosity of opponents: indeed, their journals are full of praises." When, however, he speaks of the first Indian nominations to the India Council, and his hope that they will be welcomed in India, Mr. Morley cannot agree. He writes, indeed, a letter which, for once, sounds a note of impatience with the Indian response to his efforts. A month later he has a word of cordial thanks for one of Wedderburn's many appeals for patience and generosity:

"I am much obliged to you for sending me the piece, and far more for writing it. It is the first

frank plea for giving me a chance that has yet come from the camp of Indian reformers, either there or here. I firmly believe that we shall be able to do something good, if people will follow your temper in these most risky days."

This was in September, 1907, after the agitated summer which had followed the deportation, without trial, of Lajpat Rai. Mr. Morley was attacked, fiercely and continuously, from the radical benches, which followed the untiring lead of Frederic Mackarness. Wedderburn was in full sympathy with the protests, although his own methods were the gentlest possible. He writes to Mr. Morley a few days after the deportation ordinance had been applied by Lord Minto:

"The result will be that the popular leadership will pass from a responsible person who at bottom was our friend to irresponsible persons who really hate us. When the authorities sent for Mr. Lajpat Rai the sensible thing would have been to say to him: 'State clearly what the people complain of. We are willing to make full inquiry. In the meantime you, as their leader, must be responsible for law and order.'"

Five years later, some time after Lord Morley had left the India Office, an article of Wedderburn's in the *Contemporary* evoked from him a few

words of hearty thanks: "It is very generous. You have never been otherwise towards me, in all the difficult days."

Not seldom he is as frank and off-hand as may be. In June, 1912, Wedderburn had sent on to him a sinister rumour as to an alleged political event impending. From Flowermead, Wimbledon, Lord Morley sends his sharp note of scepticism:

"I do not believe a word of it. The thing is impossible, even in a world where much is possible."

The succession of Lord Crewe to the India Office was welcomed by Wedderburn, since he was satisfied that the spirit introduced by Lord Morley into the administration would continue. He was further encouraged by several of the new appointments to India, especially those of Lord Pentland to the governorship of Madras and of Lord Carmichael to Bengal. Both men were personal friends of his, and they wrote freely to him on conditions as they found them in India. Their letters had a liberal note that was to Wedderburn most refreshing after the long succession of bureaucratic rulers to which he had been accustomed. He was pleased, moreover, with the appointment of Lord Hardinge to the viceroyalty in 1910, and he rejoiced over the administrative changes announced by the King at the Delhi Durbar of

1911 as the opening of a new and brighter chapter. To Wacha he wrote:

"I always told my Bengal friends that the partition could be rectified by a stroke of the pen at any time, but to have carried this out while the reforms were trembling in the parliamentary balance would probably have been fatal."

He approved the transfer of the capital to Delhi as tending to remove the Government of India from the special interests of Calcutta, and on the subject of the Delhi decisions generally he wrote to the Viceroy:

"In my opinion the announcements rank with the South African settlement in wise and courageous statesmanship, while exceeding it in far-reaching importance. I believe that its success will be the same."

His inner mind on the course of affairs in India during the war years was most fully expressed in his regular letters to D. E. Wacha and Bhupendranath Basu. During the autumn of 1914 he was writing in the natural exhilaration of what he hoped might prove to be a permanent change in the attitude of England, and especially of the governing classes, towards India. The whole world, he said, had been "impressed by the noble behaviour of India," and he rejoiced in "the

new spirit of brotherhood between East and West." Wacha, face to face with actualities in Bombay, was much less assured. Wedderburn, in October, writes that he does not share his Indian friend's gloomy view of the Congress outlook, and he adds: "We see the effects of its teaching in the wise determination of the Indian people to throw in their lot with the British Empire."

This hopeful mood, however, could not last beyond the early months of 1915. The formation of the first Coalition Government in June was unfortunate for India in that it caused the removal from office of Lord Crewe and Mr. Charles Roberts, the admirable under-secretary. This kind of thing, wrote Wedderburn, "has always been India's fate"; and towards the end of the year he wrote to Mr. Bhupendranath in a depressed tone unusual with him:

"I am afraid we need not expect much from the present régime. We are back again to the old days of Lord Curzon, and all our vision must be swept away. The Anglo-Indian in India is just the same as before. It is his fault as well as ours, and the Anglo-Indian Press is openly hostile. I do not expect much from England after the war, for though England may be willing, Anglo-India will block the way to a true *rapprochement* between the Indians and the British, and as we know to our cost Anglo-India will prevail."

It was as he feared. After the first delighted recognition of India's wonderful response to the call of the Allies, blindness and repression on the part of the Executive had chilled the educated classes and stimulated all the forms of extremism. As a consequence, the constitutionalists were being annihilated. The National Congress, as Wedderburn had known it, was finally disappearing. Mrs. Annie Besant, while vigorously supporting the war, had created the Home Rule for India League with its demand for full and immediate self-government. The League grew fast under the stimulus of Mrs. Besant's power of oratory and her gift for popular agitation. Many of the older Congress leaders, more than ever despairing of the cause in its constitutional form, were caught up by the new crusade. It was a grief to Wedderburn, who could see nothing in the adventure to approve. It seemed to him a wanton destruction of the movement which had proved its worth and had done all the spade work for a generation; and he was deeply hurt when Dadabhai Naoroji permitted his name to be associated with the League.

But if 1916 was for Wedderburn a depressing year, the following summer brought him an immense encouragement and hope. Mr. Austen Chamberlain was succeeded at the India Office

by Mr. E. S. Montagu, who had gained an unusually thorough knowledge of India as under-secretary in the Asquith Government. The appointment was followed immediately by an event of the highest import: the formal proclamation of August 20, 1917, to the effect that the goal of British policy in India was the progressive establishment of self-government by way of provincial autonomy.

The proclamation came to Wedderburn as one of the most momentous events arising out of the world-wide upheaval of war. It was a consummation of infinite meaning and promise. It seemed literally like the crown of his own life work. The idea and programme of the Indian National Congress, the purpose and dream of its founders and leaders, and in his own case the faith, the labour, and the self-sacrifice of forty years, had had no other goal than this—the recognition by the Imperial Power that the logical result of British rule in the greatest of dependencies was a completed fabric of self-government.

Wedderburn was now an old man. His race was almost run. And for him to hear thus, in the evening of his long day, a declaration of policy so simple, complete, and unqualified, was a greater happiness than, with the memories of recent troubles pressing upon him, he had felt himself

able to hope for. He was further delighted by the announcement that Mr. Montagu would visit India immediately, in company with his own trusted friend, Mr. Charles Roberts. Aged as he was, and in broken health, he would yet have been prepared to make the Indian voyage once again had that been possible. Since it was not possible, he used what yet remained to him of health and energy in furthering the plans of the Secretary of State and his colleague. On the eve of their sailing he expressed the hope that the younger generation in India "might gradually realise that the thirty years of work of the Old Guard of Congress Moderates is the force that has brought round British opinion."

One week after the historic announcement he wrote to Sir Krishna Gupta in Calcutta a letter which was in effect a farewell message on public policy to his friends and fellow workers for the cause to which his life had been devoted. Had India won a sweeping victory at the polls, he said, it could not have secured a more important political advantage than this. And he continued:

"We now seem to see before us the dawn of the most wonderful peaceful revolution that has ever occurred in the world's history: a revolution bringing contentment and prosperity to India, and a mighty accession of strength to the free and tolerant

spirit which, for want of a better term, we have been accustomed to call the British 'Empire.' As General Smuts has well pointed out, we do not desire an 'empire,' as denoting dominance, but a free and loving brotherhood of nations. Now Mr. Montagu has announced his intention of proceeding to India during the coming winter, for the purpose of friendly consultation with the British authorities and the representatives of Indian opinion, with a view to arrangements that will be beneficial to all interests concerned. The question is: what in the meantime should be the attitude and action of India, in order to strengthen the hands of her friends in this country, and facilitate a happy ending of existing troubles?

"1. India should resume her true and natural attitude of mind—calm, dignified, and reasonable—which has earned for her universal trust and respect. If, in recent times, there has been a display of excitement, impatience, and immature political demands, this has been the result of ill-judged official action; but India must not play into the hands of her opponents by a demeanour which will lower her in the eyes of plain people in this country. Calmly to await Mr. Montagu's developments is no abandonment of any Indian aspirations. 2. Realise that this is not a case of conflicting claims between races and nations, but a glorious opportunity of making the world safe for democracy."

CHAPTER IX

GLOUCESTER AND MEREDITH

THE thoroughness and constancy with which Sir William Wedderburn discharged his duties as a Scottish member of Parliament showed that devotion to India had made him not less but all the more a citizen of his own country. His life in Gloucestershire provided even more abundant proof of this.

On the death of his father, in 1862, the small property at Tibberton, five miles west of Gloucester, became his mother's permanent home. Part of every furlough from India was spent there with her, and Wedderburn found pleasure in laying out the grounds. She survived her husband nearly twenty years, dying not many months before her elder son, David, in 1882. Thereupon the estate passed, with the title, to Sir William; and at Meredith Lady Wedderburn and he, with their two daughters, went to live in the summer of 1887 upon his retirement from India. With the passage

of time Meredith became more and more the centre of his affection and care.

His personal life was the complete embodiment of his philosophy. He had an intense and practical belief in the community to which he belonged. Its institutions and needs made a continuous appeal to him; and hence, year after year, his fund of quiet energy found an outlet in every kind of local service, the various forms of public education holding perhaps the first place in his regard.

From 1891 till his death he was chairman of the Tibberton voluntary school management board, and its official correspondent. There was no village institution that was not encouraged and generously supported by him. Nor was he less active in the affairs of the county. He was J.P. and deputy-lieutenant of Gloucestershire. For nine years he represented Newent on the county council, and was disappointed when no place was found for him on its education committee. The combination of rural and urban conditions in the neighbourhood was especially interesting to him. One who had during his official life in India displayed a mastery of the problems of rural economy naturally found much in the country life of England to occupy his mind. On the county council he was the unwavering friend of the

working man, and especially of the country worker. He urged his claim to small holdings, his right to education, and (what few were ready to concede) his value as a magistrate. In connection with the last-named reform he brought forward a proposal for the reduction, to a nominal five shillings, of the qualification fee for justices of the peace, with the purpose of opening as widely as possible the way to the magistrate's bench. He agreed strongly with the view to which, among his contemporaries, Sir Horace Plunkett has given frequent expression, that in modern society and administration a right place and scope are not accorded to rural experience and the rural intelligence. In all such matters as these there never was a more faithful and watchful Liberal than Sir William Wedderburn. In every department of public life he believed in the application of his ruling principle.

A good Indian civilian always has a special interest in roads and in transport generally. It was owing to Wedderburn's exertions, in co-operation with his friend Canon Park, vicar of Highnam, that in 1908 a new road was opened between Barber's Bridge station and Hartpury. The road was named after Canon Park, while the little bridge built at the same time over the river Leadon was styled the Wedderburn Bridge. He

was the prime mover also in an approach to the Great Western Railway in regard to improved marketing facilities for the fruit-growers, the conjunction of better farming with better business being, as he urged upon his neighbours, an object of vital concern to the whole community. So was it also with every other public cause, in the city and county—as, for example, temperance education and licensing reform, the better care of the feeble-minded, provision for the aged, and the humaner treatment of cattle by means of public abattoirs.

From beginning to end of his residence in Gloucestershire he stood and worked, as a matter of course, for Liberalism in national politics. In the full and exact sense of the good old phrase, he was a Liberal stalwart; in respect of the Liberal faith and its application he stood like a rock. The fact that any Liberal measure or cause was unpopular at the time was merely an additional and compelling reason for his identifying himself with it without reserve. This was true of Irish Home Rule during the hard years of the first Gladstone fight. It was true of his opposition to the South African War, and his stand on the economic and racial questions which were fiercely debated after the peace; of the position of Indians in the British Dominions; of non-sectarian

education; of Free Trade, and the cause of the industrial worker during the period when a determined assault was made upon the rights he had won during a century of organised effort.

There happens, moreover, to be one very particular illustration of his strength and fidelity in the records of Gloucestershire Liberalism. It was very largely through Wedderburn's stedfastness that Sir Charles Dilke was enabled to recover his place in Parliament. It may well be doubted whether, without the immovable advocacy of his friend in the division, Dilke could have succeeded in gaining the suffrages of the Forest of Dean, with the electors of which division Wedderburn stood always in the very highest esteem. The two men were afterwards firm parliamentary allies, and both while he was in the House and afterwards Wedderburn was able to count upon Dilke for constant support by voice and vote in all his efforts on behalf of India.[1]

The later years at Meredith were filled with quiet occupations and spent in that serene enjoyment of which Wedderburn held the secret. Soon after coming into possession of the place he had extended and improved the gardens; and when

[1] The Dilke Memorial Hospital, begun in 1922 at Cinderford and probably to be opened during this summer, owed its initiation largely to Wedderburn's unceasing effort (1923).

he sold Inveresk Lodge, the old family home at Musselburgh which was retained till 1910, he added to the house a dining-hall which provided adequate space for the tapestries and ancestral portraits brought down from Scotland.

Sir William's elder daughter, Dorothy, married an old family friend, Hugh Fownes-Luttrell (second son of George Fownes-Luttrell of Dunster), who sat as Liberal member for Tavistock 1893–1900, and again 1906–10, and had for many years shared his political ideals. And soon after returning with her father from the Congress visit to India in 1905, the younger daughter, Griselda, married Lieutenant (afterwards Captain) Charles Fremantle, R.N., younger son of the Hon. Sir Charles Fremantle, K.C.B.

In the meantime the family were compelled to face the fact that the Indian climate had permanently injured the health of Lady Wedderburn, so that it was not possible for her at any time to share to the full in her husband's activities. For many years in succession a visit to Vichy or Llandrindod Wells was a necessity for her, and not infrequently one of the daughters would be Sir William's companion on the political and other journeys which were an important part of his life. After his seventieth year his own health became a matter of anxiety to the

family, particularly in regard to the bronchial weakness which made the English winter a trial. Accordingly the practice was adopted of spending the spring, until 1914, in the South of France or at Falmouth.

At Meredith, however, notwithstanding constantly recurring ill-health, Lady Wedderburn was able to fulfil the duties of hostess to an almost continuous stream of visitors. The Indians who came in numbers every year felt for her an especial appreciation, chiefly perhaps because she united a full understanding and support of her husband's public aims with that affectionate guardianship of his health which they regarded as essentially Eastern. The respect and admiration which his Indian friends felt for Lady Wedderburn was expressed in concrete form in 1912, when at a reception given by Lady Swann at her house in Kensington Mr. Gokhale, on their behalf, presented her with a necklace of Indian workmanship and a pendant in the form of a lotus set with jewels.

As old age approached Wedderburn was obliged to limit his railway travelling as much as possible. For some years before the outbreak of war he went up to London only when important public events or urgent business in connection with *India* or the National Congress made his presence essential.

The quiet routine of his life was therefore very little interrupted, save by the annual journey in pursuit of health and sunshine. In the country he was apt to wake early, and often to spend an hour or two before rising in drafting or revising an article, or speech, or public letter. He was a decidedly old-fashioned literary worker. There was nothing in his study associated with the modern contrivances of file-cabinet or card-index. He had his own methods of reference, which, whatever they may have looked like to others, enabled him to put his hand on fact or document as it was needed. He made drafts of his letters in rough notebooks, and transcribed them carefully in a handwriting which retained to the last its characteristic quality. His numerous public interests in England and Scotland brought him a great deal of work, while there was no man of his time who, over so long a period, kept in personal touch with a larger or more diverse group of correspondents in India. Most of these, happily for himself, were occasional only; others were both regular and profuse. Among the latter were three especially, without whose continuous flow of information and suggestion it would not have been possible for Wedderburn to maintain the intimate contact with men and events in India that was the basis of his continued

influence in the reform movement. These three were Sir Dinshaw Wacha, of Bombay; Bhupendranath Basu, of Calcutta, and later of the India Council in London; and G. K. Gokhale. Week after week, over a very long term of years, their letters were delivered at Meredith. Wacha wrote with astonishing copiousness, by every mail for more than a quarter of a century, covering the day-to-day history of the movement with the detail appropriate to one who was described by Henry Nevinson as the "most statistical of Parsees." Mr. Bhupendranath—who, as Wedderburn said, had kept his faith when all others were inclined to despair—wrote with peculiar care, in a beautifully neat hand, letters comprising the informed and competent memoranda of a master counsellor and organiser. Both correspondents were highly valued by Sir William, who never thought his week's work was complete unless he had dispatched in reply to them, as well as to Gokhale, his own report, less voluminous but equally careful, of happenings on this side, together with his comment upon the ever-changing scene in India.

These letters to India resembled those to which his friends and associates in England were accustomed. No communication from him was without its kindly personal touch, however brief

it might be; but, except to his closest intimates, he never wrote letters for amusement. The best way in which to describe his ordinary correspondence is to say that the bulk of it was simply committee work. It was the product of a man engaged in certain well-defined public tasks, to which his whole mind was given. It consisted of just those matters of fact, advice, and suggestion that committees exist to deal with; and it reflected the infinity of patience, care, and fairness which in combination made him an example of the rarest kind of public man.

His friendship with Gopal Krishna Gokhale was the closest and most fruitful personal association of Wedderburn's later life. The two men had become intimate during the sittings of the Welby Commission on Indian Expenditure while Sir William was still in Parliament, and their intimacy was uninterrupted till the death of the Indian member of the partnership in February, 1915. From 1906 onwards Gokhale made long visits to England, and at such times in London or at Meredith the friends were constantly together. Their minds were in complete accord. They shared every purpose and every plan. Wedderburn could not possibly have found a younger colleague more perfectly suited, by temperament and training, to co-operate with him—whether at his side in

England, or, in India, within the Legislative Council and in the Congress Movement. During a large part of the time when the Morley Reforms were in course of preparation they worked together day by day; and there was nothing that gave Wedderburn greater pleasure than to observe the unqualified success of his friend, as the spokesman of India, with every kind of group he met and every audience he had the opportunity of addressing. They corresponded with unbroken regularity, their letters covering every Indian political event of the period and every turn in the Congress situation. Gokhale's letters in particular constitute in the mass a candid and detailed history of the movement, with its continual difficulties and its frequently jarring personal forces. It was characteristic of both men that, notwithstanding the closeness of their relation, they retained to the end the formal mode of mutual address. When Gokhale died, worn out by his labours on the Public Service Commission and by the manifold anxieties created for him by the growth of the newer, and markedly anti-constitutional, influences in the National Congress, Wedderburn was conscious of a calamity far greater than the loss of a beloved friend and invaluable political associate. It was to him a matter of profound grief that the man whom he rightly regarded as the fine flower of

modern public life in India, its finest brain and purest character, should have been removed from the scene at the moment when the overturn of the European system, with its immense reactions throughout the British Empire, was sweeping India forward to her greatest opportunity and her most severe ordeal.

Wedderburn at Meredith lived the traditional life of a country gentleman of the quiet and cultivated sort. He conducted daily family worship, reading from the Book of Common Prayer and almost invariably choosing his Scripture portion from the New Testament. He usually divided the day between his study and the garden. He read thoroughly a certain number of English and Indian newspapers, keeping a large collection of press cuttings. He was practically never without some piece of writing on hand. His articles, pamphlets, and public letters involved much labour of drafting, rewriting, and revision, and he was accustomed to read them aloud for criticism. He never allowed a slipshod page or paragraph to go out. Every piece was constructed with care; the statement was as exact, as regular and complete, as he could make it. He worked always with the utmost deliberation, and liked best to alternate a turn in the garden with a spell of work indoors. Nothing in the garden

escaped his eye, and he was constantly occupied in it. On winter evenings he rarely missed his rubber. He was fond of all games, and even when advancing years caused him to relinquish lawn tennis he continued to play a very fair game of golf. He had the deep affection for animals that belongs to his type of the open-air Briton.

The failure of Wedderburn's health was manifest as he approached his eightieth year. He continued to take his annual cure at Llandrindod Wells, and in the summer of 1917 this seemed to be unusually successful. During his stay in Wales that year the long life of Dadabhai Naoroji came to an end, and Wedderburn found himself unable to resist the pressure of his Indian friends who could not endure the thought of any other chairman for the memorial meeting in Westminster. He went up to London, and, owing to a strike of taxi-cab drivers, was obliged to stand for some time in the rain. He caught a severe chill, which proved to be the beginning of the break-up. He could not shake off the effects, and although as autumn approached he was greatly exhilarated by the Montagu declaration of Indian policy (August 20), his strength waned steadily, and with the new year all hope rapidly disappeared. The end came at Meredith on January 25, 1918.

The winter of her bereavement held a bitter

succession of trials for Lady Wedderburn. Eleven days only before Sir William's passing, death had claimed the husband of her elder daughter, and on March 21 the younger daughter, Griselda Fremantle, was called away.

It would be almost impossible to exaggerate the fervour and universality of the tributes paid to his memory in India. The Indian people have long memories and a profound sense of gratitude, and, considering Wedderburn's unique relation to the Indian cause, it was natural that the public expressions of admiration and gratitude should be comparable only with those called forth by the death of Lord Ripon some years earlier. The India Press extolled his life and character in hundreds of articles, and large numbers of his friends contributed their personal testimony. "It was part of his nature," wrote Mr. G. A. Natesan, of Madras, "to treat the Indians with the considerateness due to equals and the tenderness due to those who felt that they were politically subordinate," and he went on to speak of "the perfect self-effacement, the sagelike forgivingness and serenity of spirit" exhibited in his whole life as virtues making an especial appeal to the Indian nature. The *Leader* (Allahabad) said: "He was an official, a member of the I.C.S. itself, but unlike so many others in his position he always conducted himself as an

affectionate and dutiful servant of the people and not as their race-proud master." These quotations are typical of innumerable eulogies uttered in the Press and on the platform throughout India. Memorial meetings were convened in all the principal cities; that held in the Excelsior Theatre, Bombay, on March 20, 1918, under the chairmanship of Sir Narayan Chandavarkar, being the most notable for the reason that it was attended by many prominent citizens who had known Wedderburn during his official service.

Tributes came also from a large number of distinguished English public men, more especially those who had been associated with Wedderburn through the years of arduous labour for Indian Reform in Parliament and outside. Two examples of these must suffice here. His old friend Frederic Harrison wrote: "For sixty years he gave the cause his whole strength—his time, his fortune, his wise intellect, his immense patience, sagacity, and courage." And G. P. Gooch, the historian, a valued associate of essentially like mind, wrote: "His long official experience, his immense knowledge, his deep sympathy with Indian ideals, his gentle nature, his old-world courtesy, his statesman-like moderation—here was a rare and precious combination of qualities for a pioneer. He and Gokhale made a noble pair."

On March 5 Sir Herbert Roberts (Lord Clwyd) presided over a memorial meeting in the Caxton Hall, Westminster. The occasion befell just as the final sombre chapter of the war was about to open, and it could not be other than a modest affair. But it brought together many of those, both men and women, who in working on behalf of India, and more generally towards the transformation of the British Empire into an organic commonwealth of free peoples, had found in Sir William Wedderburn not only an elder colleague and counsellor, but a tower of strength.

CHAPTER X

THE RELIGION OF PUBLIC SERVICE

For our sake he went into Parliament, for our sake he left Parliament, for our sake he made friends, for our sake he entered into hostilities, for our sake he undertook the most menial service that can be undertaken. Nothing was too small or too laborious for him to undertake, if only it was for the good of India.—G. K. GOKHALE at the 1910 Congress.

WHEN Sir William Wedderburn died it was said by one who had long worked with him that the cardinal fact of his life was that during a period of nearly sixty years he had not lived a day without performing some act of service for the cause of India. The statement is literally true; and it illustrates the characteristic upon which all who knew Wedderburn would wish to lay a special emphasis. He belonged to that company of men and women—the glory of the modern world, and perhaps the peculiar glory of our branch of the human family—for whom public service is far more than a vocation or a

career: for whom, in the strict and full sense of the word, it is a religion.

Just as there was never in his mind the thought of any other profession than the Indian Civil Service, so his character, and the tradition in which it was moulded, made it impossible for him to look upon his calling save in one way. The public service was simply the service of the public. The civil servant in India was the servant of the Indian people. He could not regard himself as the agent of a despotic system, although none knew better than he how despotic the Government of India was, how rigid its theory and methods had grown to be in the course of a century of development. When, therefore, he allied himself with men of Indian birth who were striving to transform the imperial system, he was not adjusting himself to a new conception of the public servant's duty. He was taking the line to which everything in his nature and training impelled him.

Of Sir William Wedderburn as administrator, and later as independent reformer, two things especially should be made clear. The first is that he believed profoundly in government as a science and a craft. He was a constitutionalist to the marrow. He stood as far from the revolutionary or the philosophical anarchist, on the one side,

as from the autocrat or bureaucrat on the other. He disagreed with the classic assertion as to the inconspicuous part which laws and rulers play in the framing of "all that human hearts endure." How, indeed, could any man who had laboured among an Eastern population fail to observe the immeasurable power of institutions and lawmakers in enhancing or diminishing the sum of human well-being? Wedderburn at all times was intensely concerned with the creation and improvement of institutions. Whenever a political or social problem was submitted to him, he at once set to work, not only to discover the lines of escape or settlement, but also to devise machinery for permanent administration. He could not be persuaded that the chief part of the necessary work had been done when a specific grievance seemed to have been removed. He saw at once the necessity of constructive effort. The parable of the house swept and garnished, with its irruption of seven devils, was for him an apologue of universal application. Moreover, as a complete Liberal he believed without reserve in the principle of self-government, and in its method of consultation, discussion, and mutual adjustment. He was entirely convinced that the way of peace, of contentment, of efficiency and fulfilment, lay through common effort

to secure the free contribution of all the units in the community. Freedom, in his view, was the completed work of co-operative discipline. The extraordinary position he attained in India, the unreserved affection and trust which the people of all ranks reposed in him, from beginning to end, without change or deviation, came to him as the result of the perfect balance of intelligence and conscience in his character.

The second important thing to note is this: never at any time did Wedderburn envisage, as a practical possibility, the severing of the tie between Britain and India. In this, undoubtedly, he was of the same mind as his Indian associates in the founding of the National Congress. They were content to describe the imperial connection as providential. And Wedderburn, with his profound realisation of the contribution which the British commonwealth of nations was capable of making for the benefit of the less advanced peoples within its borders, was certainly not tempted to use a milder word. Times and minds changed rapidly in India after the opening of the present century. The younger generation of Indians began to dream of an India free and independent, long before they had learned from M. K. Gandhi to repudiate an alien imperial rule as infamous. To Wedderburn all such ideas

were, as politics, unreal and remote. He recognised the enormous difficulties lying in the way of unity and common action in India. He knew the overpowering necessity of organisation in the modern world, and the immense interdependence of the peoples. He could see no tolerable future for the Indian people except in partnership with the British Commonwealth. And he believed that it was in the power of the Indian people so to transform the administration as to make it truly a national government. To this belief he held even in times when the imperfections, and the positive evils, of the bureaucratic system were pressing most severely upon his mind. He held to it with greater conviction than ever at the close of his life, amid the high hopes that had been created by the declaration of 1917. His faith, as we have seen, found practical expression in his programme of complete self-government, with every part of Indian public life organised and directed by Indian leaders. Such leaders, he felt, must come from the educated classes; and must be quickened and fortified by Western knowledge, thought, and experience, and continuously vitalised by contact with the masses of their own country.

So much for the conception of life and politics which underlay the whole of Wedderburn's pro-

longed effort on behalf of the Indian people. It was central with him, and all-pervasive; but, manifestly, it would have been of little worth but for the steadfastness of mind and solidity of character by which it was carried into everything he did. This gave him the simplicity and patience, the singular tranquillity, of which everyone who met him in any capacity became immediately aware.

From the moment of his taking his stand for Indian reform, in the days of Lord Ripon, to the last months of his life, Wedderburn was under fire. The man who touches a vast sacred edifice like the fabric of an imperial system need look for no mercy from his opponents; and this is particularly true of a fabric so exceptional as the administration of British India. In India the members of the old order condemned Wedderburn as a disloyal officer of the Raj. In the House of Commons the thick-and-thin defenders of the existing system denounced him as a Little Englander, a crank—with his continual tirades against the bureaucracy, his incessant pleading for the Indian rayat. Identified as he was with the Indian National Congress, he was steadily abused by the imperialist Press as a nuisance, an enemy, a man who must somewhere have a sinister motive for his hostility to the service

which he had entered. This part of his experience Wedderburn accepted as inevitable. If the men who said such things believed what they said, they could not know what it was they were saying. If they did not, it was the worse for them and for the system they were anxious to uphold. He had chosen his own part. It was his duty, as a servant of India, to urge the need and the rights of the poor and unrepresented masses of the Indian people. Knowing their case, he could do no other. Direct and continuous obedience to the inner vision was the one test of his religion.

Standing up thus to attack, he was at all times ready to reply. If his character or motives were called in question, he kept silence. If his facts were challenged, he verified, restated, and amplified them. If a counter-argument were submitted to him, he met it in full. He was never known to shirk an issue. The assault might be offensive, abominable. His answer, all the same, would be couched in the simplest and most courteous terms, without a trace of anger or impatience. I recall one occasion when a pertinacious Anglo-Indian member of Parliament had charged the British Committee of the National Congress with a particularly odious sort of propagandist activity. At the next meeting of the Committee

Wedderburn read the draft of his reply. It contained a calm recital of facts and an offer of ocular proof if the adversary wished it. "That letter is written," said the veteran Allan Hume, "on the assumption that he is a gentleman, which he is not." Wedderburn was incapable of acting on any other assumption. He would speak at times with grave reprobation, in subdued anger, or occasionally with the sting of sarcasm in his words. But I suppose there is no instance on record of his having lost his temper or uttered a word at which the most unreasoning opponent could take offence.

Nor were his political conflicts confined to the region of Indian controversy. After his return to England he fought through all the great domestic campaigns of his generation. He saw the old Liberal Party pass, and the Conservative Party change out of all recognition under leaders brought into the fold from outside. From the first Home Rule Bill, through the Boer War and Tariff Reform, to the tremendous struggle over the Lloyd George Budget and the House of Lords, he played the part of a valiant Liberal man-at-arms; and never for a moment was he betrayed into an unfair or unworthy stroke or retort. This is surely a marvellous and inspiring record, in an age when most people seem to have per-

suaded themselves that the pitch of politics is an inescapable defilement. I have been through masses of his letters and memoranda, without finding a single note or an exclamation inconsistent with his character and ordinary habit. Indeed, so unbroken is the uniformity of his expression in fairness and courtesy, that it is almost with a start one comes across a letter to an old friend in Scotland, written during the wild campaign of calumny which raged between the Boer War and the Liberal triumph of 1906, in which Wedderburn permits himself to suppose that "that rascal Joe" may be up to some of his old tricks again!

So also was it throughout the endless labour and the wearing anxiety of the Indian reform work, which filled some part of every day from the year of the Victorian Jubilee to the last year of the great war. There were always financial worries to be met. There were personal difficulties with dissentient groups or awkward individuals. And in the later years there was an unremitting struggle to prevent the clashing of factions in the movement. The burden of all this was borne by Wedderburn, and in reality by him alone. No other could so have carried it, for none possessed, as he possessed it, in a measure that was without limit, the trust and

reverence of all men and all parties. The explanation is the simplest possible. He had no selfish ambition, no personal ends to serve. His was the dedicated character, the dedicated life.

CHAPTER XI

THE HOUSE OF WEDDERBURN[1]

THE Border name of Wedderburn is of ancient origin. The earliest recorded mention of it, as of other old Scottish families, is in the famous *Ragman Roll*, in which Walter of Wedderburn is among the lesser barons of Scotland, swearing fealty to Edward I at Berwick-on-Tweed in 1296. Afterwards we find on the Border John of Wedderburn in 1364, bearing the family arms on his seal, and a William of Wedderburn in 1375, and again later from 1407 to 1452.

Of this Border family, according to tradition, came the Forfarshire house. The connection between the two has not been traced,[2] but the tradition is supported by the identity of the armorial bearings—at a time when arms were

[1] The writer has to thank Mr. Alexander Wedderburn, K.C., author of *The Wedderburn Book*, for the material of this chapter.

[2] The account attempted in the *Life of Sir David Wedderburn* (1885) is neither full nor always accurate.

not casually adopted—and of a territorial surname at a time when the only barony of Wedderburn was the Border one.[1] Further, as the name becomes prominent on the Tay, it ceases to be so on the Border.

By whom or when the Dundee family was founded is not known. No common ancestor has been found for it. Whoever he was, he must have gone north before the end of the thirteenth century, as by 1450 there were four distinct branches of the family flourishing in Dundee. To one of these belonged James, John, and Robert Wedderburn, early Scottish reformers, authors of satirical plays and of the *Gude and Godlie Ballatis* or Wedderburn Psalms. *The Complaynt of Scotland*, first printed at St. Andrews in 1548–49, exhorting Scots to unite in love and duty towards Scotland, is now accepted as the work of Robert. Of this branch, too, came James (d. 1639), tutor to the sons of Isaac Casaubon and later Bishop of Dunblane. James Wedderburn was a friend of Archbishop Laud, and when Scotland became no place for prelates he went to Canterbury, where he died and was buried in the cathedral. His elder brother, John, settled in Moravia, where he was *protomedicus*, and

[1] Later on the Forfarshire property was constituted barony of Wedderburn.

where descendants of his were living in 1816. There is a letter, written by him in 1647 to Alexander Wedderburn, third of Kingennie, in which he addresses Kingennie as "primm of our neam."

It is from the Kingennie family, long prominent in and near Dundee, that Sir William Wedderburn came. His forbears were, with the Scrymgeours, among the principal citizens. Their arms may still be seen on some of the houses, and in the Howff is the old family "lair" where many of them are buried. Alexander, first of Kingennie (1561–1626), who was, like his father before him, Clerk of Dundee, accompanied James VI to England and was one of the signatories to the treaty of Union in 1604. A ring presented to him by James is still preserved in the family. The line of his eldest son, Alexander (d. 1637), ended in an heiress who died in 1778, since when it has been represented by the chief of the Scrymgeour-Wedderburns of Wedderburn, Forfarshire. The second son of Kingennie, James, was father to Sir Alexander of Blackness, and to Sir Peter of Gosford, great-grandfather to Alexander Wedderburn, Lord Loughborough (and later Earl of Rosslyn), who, after a dramatic exit from the Court of Session, came to London, and was the first (but by no means the last) Scotsman to occupy the woolsack.

Sir Alexander of Blackness (1610–76) took constant part in the public life of his time. In 1638 he was already "one of the skilfullest of the burgh clerks," and in 1647 was elected by Parliament one of six Commissioners to treat with the English. He purchased the estate of Blackness, lying to the north-west of Dundee and now part of the city, and is said to have entertained Charles II there. His eldest son, John, who was an advocate and later a principal clerk to the bills, was created in 1704 a baronet of Nova Scotia with remainder to his heirs male, so that on the failure of his male line in 1723 the baronetcy fell to his nephew Alexander, who had already bought the estate.

This Sir Alexander had been Clerk of Dundee, but was among those who rode out to meet "King James the Third" when he came to Dundee in 1716, drank at the market cross to his success, and accepted James's appointment of him as governor of Broughty Ferry Castle. Fearful of such conduct, the Town Council with difficulty deposed him, and the long and continuous[1] tenure of the office by members of the family thus came to an end. He died in 1744.

His eldest son, Sir John, was destined to lose not office but life for his adherence to the Stuarts.

[1] Except for a brief period in Cromwell's time.

He and his two brothers as well as his eldest son were out in the '45 and were at Culloden. The son was grandfather to Sir William, who could thus claim to be a "link with the past." This was due to Sir William's father being the son of his father's second wife, and born when his father was sixty. Sir William's own father too was close on fifty when Sir William was born. It always interested him to think that his grandfather had been at Culloden.

Sir John was taken prisoner, brought up to London, tried, sentenced, and hanged on Kennington Common, November 28, 1746. His family may be proud of the calm fortitude with which he met his fate. It is said that when told that he was to die next day he was playing backgammon in Southwark gaol, and that he undisturbedly bade the messenger "stand out of the light until the game was over."

Letters that he wrote that night to his wife, to Prince Charles Edward, and others, all testify to his calmness. Efforts had been made for a reprieve, but (he writes to his wife) "I was among the number of the elect and not to be parted with." A brief postscript to his letter on the eve of execution says, "I have ordered James to send down my linnen."

His eldest son, John, succeeded in escaping

to Jamaica, where he was joined later by his brother and other members of the family, some of whom acquired much property in the island and were partners in the once well-known firm of West India merchants whose "Wedderburn rum" was much in demand. Sir John, for so (his father's name having been in no act of attainder) he continued, after a time, to call himself, returned to Scotland for good in 1768 and bought the estate of Balindean in Perthshire. He brought with him to Scotland as a personal servant a negro slave named Knight, who after some years of service and marriage suddenly left him. He was arrested at the instance of Sir John, but successfully contended in the Court of Session that the moment he had set foot on British soil he had *ipso facto* ceased to be a slave.

Sir John married (1) in 1765 Lady Margaret Ogilvy, who died in 1775, and (2) Alicia Dundas, daughter of James Dundas of Dundas. He died in 1803 and was buried in the Howff of Dundee, being almost the last of his name to be laid there.

There is an anecdote of Sir John in the autobiographical portion of the life of Lord Chancellor Campbell, who was in 1798 tutor to the son of one of Sir John's cousins. "I remember meeting there," (says Campbell) "Sir John Wedderburn, who with his father had been 'out' in '45. . . .

Being asked whether he was not of the family of Lord Loughborough, then Chancellor, he replied, 'The Chancellor is of mine.' And I believe (adds Campbell) Sir John was the true chief of the Wedderburns."

He was succeeded by his eldest son, Sir David, (1775–1858) at one time a partner in Wedderburn and Co., member of Parliament (and a Tory) for the Perth burghs, and for some years Postmaster-General of Scotland. He was given in 1803 a baronetcy of the United Kingdom.

Some attempt had been made, through the Chancellor, Lord Loughborough, to get the Nova Scotia baronetcy purged of attainder, but such a concession to a Jacobite family had not commended itself to the advisers of the Crown. Sir William had it at one time in mind to see if he could get the attainder annulled.

Of this 1803 creation the second baronet was the father of the subject of this memoir. Sir David had had two sons, but they both died young, and on his own death in 1858 he was succeeded by his half-brother Sir John.