

rule in India, in its severest form. The burden of the charge is familiar: India is a slave Empire, subjected, according to the belief of some, to a "worse than Russian despotism"; its inhabitants are taxed to death by an unrepresentative government; there is now neither freedom of the press nor the right of trial by jury; more than one hundred million dollars a year goes to England annually in the form of pensions, savings from salaries, profits from business enterprises, interest on English investments, and military expenditure. Crushing taxes, insufficient irrigation works, the discouragement of domestic industrial development, have made India a land of chronic famine. There were, in the first three-quarters of the nineteenth century, thirteen famines, with an estimated loss of 6,500,000 lives; there were in the last quarter of the century, eighteen famines, with an estimated loss ranging from 15,000,000 to 26,000,000 lives.

Whether India as it is to-day is Britain's glory or Britain's shame, is a matter, however, less capable of demonstration, and, on the whole, of less practical importance than the fact that India to-day is Britain's great responsibility. The picture evoked by the uncompromising critics of British rule, though it may be true in most of its sad essentials, is yet incomplete, because it leaves out of account the immensely difficult nature of the problem with which England has had to deal. On the other hand, England's great argument that she has given India peace and stability does not wear so well as it used to. Of what avail is the boasted Pax Britannica, if with peace cometh not contentment, or even the certainty of daily bread? Translated into political terms, the practical impossibility of England's withdrawing from India, or even bestowing full Parliamentary government, faces the other impossibility of refusing any longer to yield the people of India that proper share in the management of their own affairs which their own needs and qualifications and the spirit of the age demand. And fortunate it is that, after nearly a half-decade of great unrest, the necessary spirit of compromise appears to be establishing itself in India among rulers and subjects alike.

The open letter from which we have

quoted dismisses Lord Morley's plan of reforms contemptuously:

A few more Indian gentlemen would be made advisers of the Government, but they would have no power over taxation or expenditure or anything else.

Yet "a few more Indian gentlemen" is hardly a fair summary of the new provision that henceforth in the provincial legislative councils the non-official element shall constitute an absolute majority. An absolute majority with the right to bring forward "supplementary questions," or to interpellate the government as we should call it, ought not to leave the natives without influence, if the Hindu's shrewd genius for politics is what both the critics and supporters of the present system admit it to be. Moreover, the objection that it is not the legislative, but the executive councils that wield the real power in India, is specifically met by the provision, under the new plan, for the admission of natives to the executive councils. Note, too, the attitude of concession in the last Indian National Congress at Madras, where Lord Morley's plan was commended as granting the natives a fair share in the government of their own country, without "placing the ideal of absolute autonomy before undeveloped minds, 'those too young to be wise and too impulsive to be rational.'" When the representatives of the soberest native thought in India can speak in this fashion; when, on the other hand, the Tory London *Times* can admit that "the claim advanced by many sections of the Indian peoples to a larger share in their own affairs is now admitted by most competent authorities to be reasonable and just," the ground for a peaceful settlement seems more than clear.

The question of complete self-government for India under a Parliamentary system cannot become an immediate one. England may scarcely be blamed if she waits till the system for Asia has been tested in Persia, in Turkey, and even in China. At the same time every concession made now must lead in that direction. We need not hold with the members of the Society for the Advancement of India that that country is now able to rule itself, in order to dissent from Lord Morley's view that "a Parliamentary system in India is not the goal to which I, for one, would aspire." The general trend is toward the Parliamentary system, which seems bound to

come in time. The struggle for rights is a preparation for citizenship, and diverse ethnic and political elements may be hammered into a nationality by the very sense of a common wrong or need.

HUMOR AND STATESMEN.

Mr. Taft "had his little joke," we read now and then in the papers. And he takes with infinite good-nature the jests that are made, and the stories that are told, at his expense. He did this in the campaign, and he has done it since. Evidently, he is not a man whom the awful dignity of the Presidency will congeal. His hearty enjoyment of a good laugh raises, however, the question whether a strong sense of humor is a valuable asset for a public man, and what are the due limits of its display. Mr. Taft does not, for example, crack any jokes in his inaugural address. But why not? Why should we think it indiscreet or improper if he did?

Lincoln's instinct and Lincoln's example in this matter are safe guides. Privately, he was a man who "jested with all ease." His stories, his odd and homely sayings, were retailed about the country, giving offence to some, it must be remembered, but pleasure to most. They showed that we had an approachable, human President, and the people liked to know that. What they did not know at the time was that Lincoln's humor was often a safety-valve, preventing the pressure under which he quivered from becoming too terrible. But in his public addresses, in his communications to Congress and the people and the press, Lincoln was never jocose. He was aware that even a humorous democracy wished its public affairs to be discussed with high gravity. Public men who forget this, work their own undoing. A really able man, Proctor Knott, could not live down his unfortunate reputation as a humorous speaker. Depew's jokes palled, long before he himself became a joke. It is, as a rule, the grave and earnest and even ponderous men who go farthest in political life. The late Abram S. Hewitt intended to pay a high compliment to Grover Cleveland, when he said of him: "The greatest master of platitudes since George Washington." That was certainly not the only reason of Mr. Cleveland's success, but it is plainly impossible to think of his doing what he

did if he had been merely a jolly man.

The duty of not mixing up levity and statesmanship is illustrated afresh in the recently published *Life of George Canning*. He was a wit as well as a scholar, and his quips at table or in club or in the *Anti-Jacobin*, gave merriment to many. As Minister of the Crown, he could assume the stately manner with the best of them, though there was one occasion when, it has always been said, he let his humor get the better of his instinct for public business. This was the time when he sent his famous "rhyming dispatch" to the British Minister:

In matters of commerce the fault of the Dutch
Is offering too little and asking too much.

This was, it now appears, merely a practical joke on his old friend, the Minister, but Canning sent along on the same day an official dispatch in sober diplomatic form. The Minister wrote back to him privately:

I could have slain you! but I got some fun myself, for I afterwards put the fair de-cypher into Douglas's hands, who read it twice without moving a muscle or to this hour discovering that it was not prose, and returned it to me, declaring that it was "oddly worded, but he had always had a feeling that the despatch must relate to discriminating duties."

One law of parsimony, in regard to humor in English public men, has lately been brought to attention in connection with Mr. Lloyd-George: it is that a Chancellor of the Exchequer must never publicly jest about finance. But Mr. Lloyd-George has unhappily done this. When some one in the Commons asserted that a certain financial measure would deprive the Exchequer of its "nest egg," the Chancellor gayly replied that, in such an event, he would be obliged to "rob another hen-roost." The horror which this provoked at the time has deepened, if anything, since. To make a joke about taxes at all was bad enough, but to throw it into the form of a threat of confiscation was almost to undermine the throne. Mr. Lloyd-George's difficulties in framing a budget, great as they must be just now in any case, have undoubtedly been enhanced by what was regarded as his ill-timed levity. Englishmen may damn the North Pole, and speak lightly of the Equator, but they must ever be severe and solemn in the presence of Finance.

The conclusion of the whole matter is

very simple. We should pity a public man who had no capacity for fun-making—who could not take a humorous view of the political pageant, including his own part of it. The statesman who can privately relax, and warm himself by the fire of genial talk, is ordinarily better fitted for his work than the one who keeps himself perpetually tense. But humor overdone or misplaced is fatal to men in great office. Not to judges alone is Bacon's counsel applicable, that in their public appearances they should be "more learned than witty."

RECENT FRENCH FICTION.

PARIS, February 20.

In fiction the publishing season has so far given us no masterpiece. Three of the best written novels have appeared in a cheap series (Fayard) at 1.35 francs a volume—an attempt at breaking through the tradition of the 3.50 book. "Le Meilleur Ami" is by René Boylesve, who for mere prose has for a dozen years been all but the first of living French novelists. His stories are never puritanical, but this one is less cheery than usual. His hero, like *Cyrano* with *Roxane*, as best friend, has to listen to the love confidences of the heroine, whom in honor he can love only in silence. "An old story, yet always new, and he to whom it happens gets a broken heart from it," says the motto from Heine. This author has another short novel soon to appear, which is the deepest, lightest, most spectacular, and readable exhibition of that phenomenon in which French middle-class society centres—"La Jeune Fille bien élevée." "La Colère," a story of temper, by a new writer, Henri Pagat, is well spoken of. "Les Doigts de fée," by Marcel Boulenger, in spite of its popular exterior, gives astonishing pictures of that ultra-worldly Tout-Paris which is farthest removed from the people—that for which life is play-acting to fashion. The author is one of the younger writers who has done most to keep up the high standard of the French language in books of light literature. His hero is unsuited with a wife who goes in too much for fashionable painting and general modernism; her first sister is too sociological to relieve his lot; her second sister, coming up old-fashioned from the provinces, he loves; but the mission of her fairy fingers, which bring a semblance of happiness, is to patch up as best may be the too-modern match.

Paul Laccour, a new writer, pleases with "Sœurette" (Perrin)—the story of one who could be happy with any one of three charmers, each of whom is willing; but he decides which one

only when it is too late for any. "L'Otage" (Plon), by Henri Buteau, also a coming man, is serious, often tragic, in its study of the would-be emancipated woman held fast by the web of customs, manners, laws, opinions of the world into which she was born; the law gives the hostage, the child of free love, into the lawful husband's hands, and she finally follows it—a conservative position which the author evidently approves. The society lady who writes under the pseudonym of Claude Ferval, one of whose books was crowned by the French Academy, has a new novel, "Ciel rouge" (Fasquelle), agitating the same spectre of the community's control over unhappy matrimonies. The prosaic husband kills the poet lover of his wife in a duel; and, for the rest of their natural lives, the two must sit together at their haunted hearth, making a brave show to the world—to save the innocent daughter.

Francis de Miomandre received the 1908 prize of the Goncourt Academy for a novel with a title from Keats's "Écrit sur de l'eau"; he had secured a publisher for it only in Marseilles (H. Falque). It is the diary of a young *meridional*, who tries to "do literature" with all the young coteries of the day. He has abundant humor, pitiless for those of his own age, and his father is a Marseilles Micawber. The writing is free in style—and in ideas. The author has hastened to use his success in an equally free and easy novel on Parisians of to-day, "Le Vent et la poussière" (Calmann-Lévy). Claude Farrère, the pseudonym of a naval lieutenant who carried off the Goncourt prize in 1905, takes for his new novel "La Bataille," the popular form of publication (Fayard).

Among writers of old standing, Léon de Tinseau publishes "Sur les deux rives" (Calmann-Lévy), in which a ruined gentleman transplants his family from the Old to the New France, which is Canada. After his death his son, with the traditions of his race, returns to serve his country as an army officer; but he resigns with heartbreak when he finds the chief services demanded of him under the present régime are to combat striking workmen and expel nuns from the homes which they have built up with their own money, but which the state takes from them. The qualities which have so long made this author one of the best sellers among proper people will be aided by this touch of conservative actuality. Georges Ohnet is also sure of his usual sales in the Philistine world for his new novel, "Un Mariage américain" (Ollendorff). Jules Claretie, Académicien, administrator of the Comédie Française, and for nearly half a century writer of unnumbered books, attacks a youngish problem in his latest novel, "L'Obsession"