

THE DAILY PROVINCE

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THE PROVINCE

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SEDITION IN INDIA.

After several narrow escapes from the knife of the assassin the Earl of Minto will perhaps not be disinclined to leave the splendors of India for the quiet comfort of his British home. His term as viceroy having expired and his successor being appointed he will not likely be in any further danger from the native agitator and his tools.

The new viceroy goes to the office with a determination to rule with gentle firmness. He may abandon the idea of gentleness before he has been there very long. This would be indicated by the fact that the local authorities in India are retaining force decrees against sedition that were designed for a limited period only.

In 1907 it was deemed necessary by the Legislative Council to pass a bill for the prevention of seditious meetings in the interest of law and order, and the measure was made operative up to October this year. But the Council, now sitting at Simia, has resolved, in spite of the opposition of most of the native members, to extend its validity until March next.

The reasons for this drastic step are set forth in the terms of the continuing bill, and are based on knowledge of the facts. It is stated that in 1907 it was regarded as imperative to regulate by statutory provisions the holding of meetings in the Punjab, Eastern Bengal, and Assam. It was subsequently "necessary for the preservation of the peace and the protection of the law-abiding members of the community to incorporate in the general law a measure for the prevention of seditious meetings, and to take power to bring its provisions into operation in any part of India as occasion might require." In January last, such had been the progress of the seditious movement, it was decided to extend the operation of the powers thus vested in the government to Madras, Bombay, Bengal; the United Provinces, the

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Punjab and the Central Provinces; and on a number of occasions those powers were put into force.

The official statement is that such action "has been effective in stopping several meetings which it was feared if held, would have given rise to disturbances, and even where it was not been enforced its moral effect as a preventive measure has been invaluable." The unanimous advices of the local government have convinced the supreme authority "that the continuance of the act for the present is essential to the preservation of the peace," and in all British communities throughout the world there will be profound satisfaction that the act has been extended. The ramification of sedition in India are so widespread, and its effects so mischievous, that it is foolish to talk, as some leading natives and a few Englishmen do, of conciliation and co-operation being retarded by stringent supervision of the vernacular press and the prevention of seditious propagandism at public meeting. Harmonious co-operation can not(Sic) ensue until the populace have been prevailed upon or compelled to abandon the criminal methods of fomenting unrest which are now in active operation through a great part of the country.

It would not be fair, perhaps, to contend that the British Government erred in extending to the minority in India who were able to take advantage of it the freest access to the educational resources of the West; but the British people must face the consequences resolutely, with the determination to guide the new influences in a direction contributory to the permanence of that rule which has been incalculably beneficial to the races of India, morally, socially, and economically.

In so far as those who have acquired knowledge under British tutelage cast themselves into movements subversive of the general good the sternest measure alone will avail to counteract such a pernicious tendency. The native people have every reason to be grateful to Britain for the benefits they have reaped from her rule and those who foment sedition are the enemies of their race as well as of the most beneficent form of government India has ever known. Therefore, it is a matter for satisfaction that the British Executive in

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India are not disposed to palter with the manifestations of sedition, which are now so prevalent and menacing.