

THE ORIENTAL SIDE.

The question has again come to the front, in a manner unexpected, by the strongly pronounced views of His Excellency Sir Arthur Havelock, which in the language of the *Mail*, ‘have caused some commotion among educationists, and have mystified not a few;’ and a regular war of correspondence has ensued in newspapers and magazines, displaying much either of reason or of decency; and the innocent Pandit on the one side and the educated Indian on the other have also come to receive an amount of abuse which, under the circumstances, is altogether unmerited and unwarranted. The Pandit is not such an unprogressive creature, as he is supposed to be, believing in milky seas and juicy oceans, but on the other hand Pandits are much more intelligent and shrewder than the average educated man turned out by our University, and they possess as much of general knowledge on scientific subjects, as any student of our English schools. Our old school Pandit (nearly 2 decades back) could also lecture to us on Human Physiology and Anatomy. In fact we know more than a dozen Pandits of our acquaintance who know English. Many of these belong to the very old school, and half a dozen of them are actually living the life of recluses, bachelors for life, devoted only to the cause of truth, religion and learning. We wish we could feel the joy our Benares Pandit felt on receipt of a rare Sanskrit manuscript we sent him. And our educated friend scorns to live laborious days in the cultivation of the sciences and the arts, and he talks of these expensive days and his reduplicated wants. But it is not to be supposed that we blame him either. He is merely the creature of his environments though departing far from the simple ideals of his ancestors. Taking the matter however out of purely personal considerations, such as the merit or demerit of one party or the other, we will turn our attention solely to the higher and truer aspects of the question. These who have read our first contributions on the subject Vol. I, Nos. I and 2, may remember that the question at one time was (more than 50 years back) whether English or the Vernaculars should be the medium of communicating *the best knowledge*, and whether use should be made of the existing vernacular literature itself or not for effecting this purpose. It was tacitly admitted and it is not denied now that there was much in the arts and sciences and civilizations of the West which had to be imparted to the Indians to make them fit to take their place in the scale of civilized nations; and we have summarized all the arguments on the subject in our two previous articles, and not one of the several correspondents to the *Mail* seems to be aware of such, though the name of Macaulay is frequently dragged in to conjure with. We will request our readers to go over them again, and in the light of Mr. Hodgson’s views, the meaning of “The People’s Governor,” will not be far to seek. What His Excellency actually said was this. “In my humble opinion, education in the Madras Presidency has gone a little too fast, and has been a little too radical. I should personally have preferred, if I had the starting of an educational system in this country, to have built upon what already existed, rather than have destroyed and begun on a new foundation. I should have preferred to expand and improve Eastern ideas, and not to substitute for them in their entirety our own Western ideas.” This was at Ernaculam. At the Maharajah’s College for Girls at Trivandrum, His Excellency again observed that the aim of female education should be to implant upon existing social and family conditions the improvements and the enlightenment of the West and that there should be no attempt to destroy what already existed they should try to improve, brighten and perfect it. At

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page 43, we quoted from Mr. Hodgson to the same effect. “The best and purest means of effecting this *needed change* is not by ignoring their past life and past literature, which are inseparably intertwined and inter-reflected, *not by destroying the warp and woof of their national existence*, but by a process of preparation, conciliation and compromise by finding the means of closing that gulf which separates European and Indian affection and intellect – in the use of that literature, which I shall venture to say cannot be dispersed with, and that any other attempts to remove the woof and warp of Indian society would disorganize society and insure our own destruction.” This is the highest phase of the question. And Mr. Hodgson spoke of a necessity arising 50 years hence, in case his suggestions were not acted upon, to retrace our steps. No doubt, the calamities he foretold have not yet occurred, but the evils that have arisen are already serious enough to demand the attention of the rulers and the ruled; and we are glad that the matter is attracting their attention. We have observed then also that we do not wish to retrace our present discussion, but simply to reconsider and remedy the defects. And His Excellency has now observed that what has been done cannot be undone we must accept things as they are, and *make the best of them* – and after all they are not so bad. The next best thing was, what has been attempted till now, a combination of European and Indian languages and literature, instead of attempting a purely vernacular medium. But the result has not justified the expectations. Not that the system itself is bad, but the course of study has been too much one-sided. All the inducements and encouragements for learning have been in favor of English and dead against the vernaculars. The vernacular subject was only one out of many in the school and college curricula. It was very easy for the students to secure a pass by devoting all their attention to the English subjects and very little to the optional language. It won’t pay to learn the vernaculars at all. No honor was to be acquired by scholarship in the vernaculars. And need we wonder that the school boy who is very acute in these things has come to neglect his vernaculars to such an extent that to formed the subject of serious comment, even within the very walls of the Senate House? No less a person than the late Head of the Education Department of this Presidency, we mean the late lamented Mr. H. B. Grigg, in his Convocation address, delivered in 1892, in advising the assembled *alumni* to improve their vernaculars, observed. No one can feel more strongly that I do that, if the peoples of India with their numerous vernaculars, are ever to rise to a nobler life and greater wealth, the proportion of those who know English must be ten, nay twenty-fold of what it is, and be equally distributed among men and women; but no one more strongly believes that the great mass of people can never be regenerated until each vernacular is made a fitting vehicle for carrying on that knowledge.” The late learned Rao Bahadur Prof. P. Ranganatha Mudaliar than whom we never than whom we never possessed a better instance of an Indian, cultured in the lore of the East and the West equally so well, conveyed them the same advice in the following words: “You have to cultivate the study of your mother-tongue, and to improve it to such an extent as to make it a fitting medium for the communication of Western ideas in Science and Philosophy. And time after time, every University Orator, has dinned into their heads to educate the masses, “to carry joy and gladness into a million homes, and become a potent means in helping on the regeneration of the country,” “to carry that lamp of learning, of which we spoke, into the caves of superstition and ignorance, casting its beams into every cranny and crevice.” And how is all this possible, except by possessing the power of expressing oneself idiomatically and

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vigorously in one's own tongue and interpreting through it, one's new knowledge and new ideas. We are also glad to add to this the opinion of an Ex-Governor of Madras, whose soundness of learning could at any rate never be questioned. He questioned the assembled graduates "Are you satisfied with what you are doing for your own literature? How many of you are seeking to obtain a large and scholarly knowledge of the Vernaculars of South India?" and he remarked that this University will not have done anything like its fair share of work till South India too has many Actors; and after instancing one or two cases of encouragement of native science and native learning by Indian Princes and nobles, he regretted that 'the great names of the land have not yet begun to take the place they should do, either in the accumulation or in the encouragement of learning.' And today, the opinions of gentlemen like the Hon'ble Dr. Duncan, the Hon'ble Mr. Justice Subramania Aiyar, Dewan Bahadur Raghunatha Row, the late lamented Rao Bahadur Sadhu Seshaya have taken the same trend; and the question arising as to the best ways of effecting these needed reforms and improvements, the first two have proposed, what we consider the least that can be done at present and the least costly to boot. Further it is actually sheer necessity that has pinched the learned Director to propose this. The old class of Pandits are slowly disappearing and there are none coming to take up their places. The vernacular literature; if they are to be formed and made intelligible to future generations require the unremitted attention and uniting devotion of the few who make it their study. We are inclined to think with our Ex-Chancellor and Governor that all their learning is not trash and we are inclined to repeat the questions "Trash, what is Trash" Who has a right to say that till they (old books) have been examined?" and this when we find that most of those who have joined in the discussion, we beg their pardon if we are wrong, are persons who cannot claim to be any authority on the vernacular literature. We have discussed the subject with a large number of cultured men, both European and Indian both inside and outside the Educational Department, and they all commend Dr. Duncan's proposal, only they think it to be a very small measure. We do not wish to lengthen the subject further, and now that Dr. Duncan has returned from home, may we hope that the Committee of Senate appointed to consider the proposal will soon meet, deliberate and mature a scheme with the least possible delay?
