for the beautiful and the good in art, nature, and conduct, but he has a place for the evil and the ugly, behind all things there is the Eternal One. His religion does not admit into it the idea of an everlasting fight between God and Satan, nor his philosophy, the idea of a war between matter and spirit. If it required the gift of inspiration to write the Gospels and Epistles, no less does it require the same gift to understand the dark sayings in the Old Testament. Hegel, then, must have received that gift, for those strange words in Isaiah are philosophical truths to him : "I am the Lord, and there is none else. I form the light, and create darkness ; I make peace and create evil ; I, the Lord, do all those things."

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TICEHURST, SUSSEX.

INDIA—RELIGIOUS, POLITICAL, SOCIAL—OF 1895.

I.

The White City has disappeared. The show of industry and art has vanished from sight. The august gathering of the Parliament of Religions lasted for a few days and ultimately dissolved. But the practical results of these movements live and are felt by us in whatever direction we turn our attention. The year 1893 gave to America congresses on politics, religion, science, and what not, all of them within a short space of six months. India is slowly passing through a similar condition, and the year 1895 will live in the memory of her people as being full of memorable events, religious, political, and social.

The growth of a nation, in order to be healthy, must include all phases of its life. The abnormal growth in one direction brings on diseases which are difficult to cure. Undue attention paid in India for centuries to the formal side of religion brought on subjection, incapacity to cohere as a nation, and many social evils. Happily, under the British Government, the study of history and politics has brought a large portion of the educated people of India to their senses, and the result is that India, at the beginning of 1896, is totally different from the India of 1857.

The great religious event of the last year is the Dharma-Mahotsava—the Religious Assemblage—held at Ajmere, in Rajputana, on the 26th, 27th, and 28th of September. Religious gatherings have taken place in India in the past on different lines. The Council of Ashoka, held in the third century before Christ, was an assemblage of Buddhist priests only. Neither the Jains, nor the Brahmins, nor other sects prominent in those times were invited to attend. The religious gathering of Akbar, the enlightened Mohammedan emperor of the sixteenth century was more cosmopolitan, indeed, but the number of religions represented was a small one, and,

besides, the emperor's object was to found a new religion, in which, of course, he did not succeed. It was reserved for America, for the enlightened people of the United States, and for the liberal workers in all religions of the union to inaugurate a movement in which representatives of all the great ethnic religions of the world were invited to meet in brotherly friendship on a common platform to admire and to love all that was best in the different faiths and creeds. In the words of Prof. Max Müller, "I repeat once more, without fear of contradiction, that the "Parliament of Religions at Chicago stands unique, stands unprecedented in the "whole history of the world."

But long before the Columbian Exposition was held and the World's Congresses Auxiliary was planned, a noble son of India, the great Káyastha reformer, now an ascetic, Swami Shivgan Chandji, had conceived the idea of convening a gathering of the leading religionists of India and asking them to present before a suitable audience the tenets of different faiths in connexion with vital problems of life in a popular form. But India, while it is the most tolerant of all tolerant countries, and the most conservative of all conservative countries, a new idea takes time to meet with the approbation of the people. And so it was with this. It was only in the latter part of September, last year, that it was actually carried out.

The objects of this religious movement were :

1. To promote the true religious spirit among men of all faiths.
2. To afford a common platform for the advocates of different religions where each can show to the best advantage the vital principles of his faith without in the least entering into controversy with or hostility to any other faith.
3. To place within easy reach of enlightened and educated men trustworthy information about every form of religion and leave them to judge of the merits of the same.

The idea was met with responsive co-operation from all parts of the country, and soon a reception committee was formed in Ajmere to organise means for receiving and accommodating delegates of different faiths, with Pandit Saligram Shastri, Sanskrit professor of the Ajmere Government College, as president. The programme and other matters were settled in a short time. Provision for the accommodation of delegates was adequately made. The north and the south, the east and the west sent their representatives.

At half-past eleven on the morning of September 26, representatives of eighteen different faiths met in the gardens of the Maharaja of Kishengad, where a special pavilion, with a platform, was erected. To this pavilion they repaired in the form of a procession, Pandit Saligram leading. The place was filled with an appreciative audience. A large gathering of all classes of people ready and willing to hear representatives of different faiths expound their respective tenets in all earnestness proved that the first object of the assemblage—that of promoting a religious spirit among men of all faiths—was fulfilled by the speakers as well as the audience.

With solemn prayer and invocation, the proceedings of the conference were opened by Pandit Saligram, who, in his able address of welcome explaining the objects of the gathering, offered the most hearty reception to the delegates. Preliminary formalities being over, R. B. Shyám Sundar Lál, Prime minister of the Kishangharh State, was appointed the moderator to preside over the deliberations of the congress. His inaugural address was pervaded by a spirit of large-heartedness and tolerance. He referred to the fact that religious reform and tolerance were the prime factors of a nation's civilisation, and that, leaving out of consideration the mere formalities and externals of a religion, the fundamentals, the essential principles of all the religions the wide world over were the same; that peculiar circumstances, local to a particular country, add formalities which are inessential to a country with different circumstances; that gatherings like this were sure to promote the religious spirit among all classes of people and would create and continue feelings of tolerance and respect for the different religions and faiths.

For three successive days addresses were delivered by the representatives of eighteen different faiths, Mohammedanism and Christianity included. On the last two days, in the absence of Mr. Shyám Sundar Lál, Mr. Fateh Chand Khabia, a Jain barrister and judge in Ajmere, presided. Hindus and Mohammedans, Jains and Sikhs, Arya Samaj and Brahmo Somaj, Vedantins and Vaishnavas, orthodox and heterodox, were all heard with the most perfect cordiality and friendliest attention. The second object of the religious conference—that of affording a common platform for the advocates of different religions, where each can show to the best advantage the vital principles of his faith without in the least entering into controversy with or hostility to any other faith—was literally and satisfactorily fulfilled.

The questions dealt with in the Conference of Ajmere are, indeed, very important, and any light thrown on them is sure to be of great good to the religious interests of India—aye, of the whole world. The restrictions of time and distance are removed in this nineteenth century by the steam engine and the electric telegraph, and the questions that now relate to the religious interests of India are as important to her as to the rest of the world. It is not hinted that the discussion or consideration of those questions now would throw more light than was done when the philosophers of the Orient grappled with the most knotty problems of life on the banks of the Ganges thousands of years ago, whose profound penetration and deep insight made Max Müller say: "If I were asked under what sky the human mind 'has most fully developed some of its choicest gifts, has most deeply pondered on 'the greatest problems of life, and has found solutions of some of them which well 'deserve the attention even of those who have studied Plato and Kant, I should 'point to India.' But in an age in which the spiritual standard must be raised, the consideration of the mighty problems of life becomes an efficient means of leading us to the real or imaginary goal that is set before us by all the great religions of the world. The question of God, soul, transmigration, sin, bodily health, family

life, social life, revelation, mediator, saviour, incarnation, and salvation, are very momentous, and the discourses on these various subjects gave to the audience at Ajmere a unique opportunity of comparing the views of one faith with those of others. Comparisons made in private are generally tinted with prejudice unless the comparer is pre-eminently open to reason. But in a gathering like that in Ajmere points are urged on the minds of the audience which are generally ignored when one reads books simply to emphasise his preconceived views. Considerations which seemed trivial to him formerly are now placed before him in a new light and perhaps with a different interpretation. What formerly seemed essential may now appear formal and even unnecessary—nay, irrelevant. In this way the third object of the Mahotsava is fulfilled—that of placing within easy reach of enlightened and educated men trustworthy information about every form of religion, leaving them to judge of the merits of the same.

The closing addresses of the moderator and delegates were touching indeed. They met for a solemn purpose, for a holy purpose, for God's purpose, and it was in God's way, in a peaceful and loving way that they departed. They met to hear the words of wisdom from one another, and all addressed and were heard in a spirit of gentleness and tolerance. This was the universal worship, the tribute of our hearts that we made in spontaneous gratitude and devotion to the Infinite. Our worship in this sense had no voice, had no particular ceremony, no outward expression of the sense, but, it was the prostration of the soul before the supreme in adoration of that which is holy and pure, unchangeable and eternal. We testified to the fact that religion, not *a* religion, is the very life and soul of man, and, when rightly understood, is answerable for our destiny here and hereafter. In India this fact has been known from earliest times, which has justly given to her the name of the Mother of Religions. It has answered the wide world over, I should say, for our spiritual regeneration and moralities of life, and has evolved among all the nations of the earth devoted lives, spotless characters, tireless regenerators about whose names the white light of immortality ceaselessly shines. This was the grand lesson that we learned at the Dharma-Mahotsava in Ajmere as much as at the Parliament of Religions in Chicago.

But the people of India, say our opponents, are merely speculative, visionary, unpractical. If one tries to reach the ancient literature of India and dive deep into it, he shall know what the great sages in the past have said about politics, law, war, and polity in general. True it is, and the Hindu has to confess most lamentably that priestly innovation and exclusiveness put India into dire distress and subjection; selfishness kept the masses in ignorance and dried up the source of material advancement. This, added to foreign rule, disintegrated the Indian peoples and made them politically valueless. Happily, under the British rule, in spite of many shortcomings of Anglo-Indian officials, India has taken a step in the right direction, and her political advancement is as wonderful as the religious.

VIRCHAND R. GANDHI.