INTRODUCTION.

All earnest attempts at reform, whether religious, social, political, or of any other description, are based on faith in the ultimate triumph of truth and justice and humanity, which is synonymous with a belief in the moral government of the Universe. This is an essential element in religious belief. One would, therefore, expect to find Raja Rammohun Roy, the first all-round reformer in modern India, "above all and beareth all a religious personality. The many and far-reaching ramifications of his prolific energy were forth-puttings of one purpose. The root of his life was religion. He would never have been able to go so far or to move his countrymen so mightily as he did but for the driving power of an intense theistic passion." As in his life so in his writings, religion occupies the foremost place. His writings on religious subjects are the most important and most voluminous. But their very extent and variety are apt to puzzle those who may strive to find out the exact nature of his religious faith. The late Baba Rajnarain Bose had it from his father, a disciple of the Raja, that the latter before his departure to England had foretold that after his death various sects would claim him as belonging to their own particular ranks, but he declared that he did not belong to any particular sect. What the Raja foresaw has actually taken place. "It has been said that Rammohun Roy delighted to pass for a believer in the Vedanta with the Hindus, for a Christian among the adherents of that creed, and for a disciple of the Koran with the champions of Islam. The truth is that his eclecticism equalled his sincerity."† It would be out of place here to enter into a discussion of the question of his religious belief. Suffice it to say that he believed in pure theism, as his Tuhfat-ul-Munuhhidin on the one hand and the Trust-Deed of the Brahmo Samaj on the other, in addition to

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* His habit, in his religious controversies with various sects, of taking his stand not merely upon pure reason but mainly upon their scriptures led some people to think that he was all things to all men. This, of course, is a mistake. His controversial method was meant to convince the followers of different faiths that even their scriptures, which they professed implicitly to follow, enjoined the worship of the one true God.

† The Contemporary Evolution of Religious Thought, by Count Goblet d'Alviella, p. 233.

‡ For an exhaustive discussion of the subject see the Raja's biography in Bengali, by Babu Nagendranath Chatterji, which ought to be translated into English.
many of his other works, prove conclusively. He did not reject any truth to be found in any scriptures or in the teachings of any prophet or saint; he revered and accepted truth from all quarters; but at the same time he did not accept any book or teacher as infallible. It should not, however, be forgotten that though he was thus cosmopolitan in his acceptance of truth, there are reasons to think that he believed in what may be called national or racial manifestations or developments of universal theism. His partiality (in no narrow sense) for the ethical portion of Christ’s teachings is evident. But it would be wrong to suppose for that reason that he was exclusively or even principally a follower of Jesus. In making this statement we do not solely or chiefly rely on his prose writings in Sanskrit, Arabic, Persian, English or Bengali. His hymns in Bengali, too, in our opinion, afford a correct idea of the faith that lay enshrined in the deepest recesses of his heart. For, poetry springs from a deeper source in the soul than anything that is merely didactic, controversial, doctrinal or philosophical. And from the Raja’s Bengali devotional poetry, one cannot but take him to have been a Hindu Theist or a theistic Vedantist.

It is sometimes asked whether Rammohun Roy intended that the society for the worship of one God that he founded should have a social counterpart in a religious community separate from all existing ones, such as the Brahma Samaj has now become. The question is difficult to answer. But from the little study and thought that we have been able to devote to the subject, it seems to us that at the time when he established the Brahma Samaj, he meant it to be simply a meeting-ground for people of all sects who wished to unite for divine worship, “a place of public meeting of all sorts and descriptions of people without distinction as shall behave and conduct themselves in an orderly, sober, religious and devout manner for the worship and adoration of the Eternal, Unsearchable and Immutable Being who is the author and preserver of the Universe but not under or by any other name, designation or title peculiarly used for and applied to any particular Being or Beings by any man or set of men whatsoever.” Art and philosophy, though each is essentially one all the world over, have yet found various though fitting garb among different peoples according to racial, climatic and other causes. It seems to us, that similarly, the Raja may have thought that Theism, though at bottom one all over the world, has yet found various expression among different races; and though abstract truth is thinkable, yet as it finds actual manifestation in some concrete shape, it is the part of wisdom to allow the abstract universal theism in all countries and among all races to keep its native shape and colour, in which it is embodied, freed, of course, from all that is base and impure, with
a broad spirit of toleration for other shapes and colours: or in other
words, he may have believed that Theism is one, and Hindu Theism,
Semitic Theism, &c., are different forms of the same universal faith;
and that the future unity of the human race in religion is not to be
realised by all mankind following the creed of this or that sect,
but by each nation or race giving up all such erroneous and supersti-
tious beliefs and pernicious customs and lifeless rituals as clash with
pure Theism, but in every thing else keeping all that is racy of the
soil, all that distinctively belongs to the religious genius of that nation
or race, in a spirit of discriminating reverence for its own past and
of respect and toleration for others.

Professor Monier Williams speaks of him as the first really earnest
investigator in the science of comparative theology, which the world
has produced.

Social customs and practices have been and are in all countries
more or less connected with the religious beliefs of the people. It is,
therefore, only natural that Rammohun Roy's programme of religious
reform should lead on to and embrace social reform. In all countries,
and specially in India, social reform consists chiefly in doing away
with the disabilities or sufferings incident to difference of sex or the
accident of birth. Or, in other words, social reformers have chiefly
to fight with the spirit of caste and its evils and the subjection of
women to the selfish interests and pleasures or supposed interests of
the male sex. Rammohun Roy's chief claim to the gratitude of Hindu
womanhood is the courageous and devoted part that he played in the
movement for the abolition of suttee. He may or may not have been
the central figure in that movement, but it must be admitted by all
that but for his exertions that inhuman custom would not have been
put down by law so soon as it was.

But to prevent the murder of widows was only to create another
problem, namely, the amelioration of their condition. It is even now
a question as to how we can best better their lot. Many solutions of
the problem have been proposed and attempted; their re-marriage,
giving them such training as to enable them to lead honourable, use-
ful and independent lives, so changing the Hindu law of inheritance
as to make the means of living of Hindu widows less precarious, &c.
His "Brief remarks regarding modern encroachments on the ancient
rights of females, according to the Hindu Law of inheritance," was
intended to attain the last object. That the condition of helpless
widows deeply touched his heart appears also from No. VI. of the
Sambad Kaumudi, which contained "an appeal to the rich Hindus of
Calcutta to constitute a society for the relief of destitute widows,
upon the principles of the Civil and Military Widows' Fund, estab-
lished by order of Government." That he was earnestly in favour of
the education of women is quite clear from many passages in his writings, such, for instance, as the following:—

"As to their inferiority in point of understanding, when did you ever afford them a fair opportunity of exhibiting their natural capacity? How then can you accuse them of want of understanding? If, after instruction in knowledge and wisdom, a person cannot comprehend or retain what has been taught him, we may consider him as deficient; but as you keep women generally void of education and acquirements, you cannot, therefore, in justice pronounce on their inferiority. On the contrary, Lakhsmi, Bhavamati, the wife of the prince of Kurna, and that of Kalidas, are celebrated for their thorough knowledge of all the Sutras; moreover, in the Vrhadaranyak Upanishad of the Yajur Veda it is clearly stated, that Yajnavalkya imparted divine knowledge of the most difficult nature to his wife Manreya, who was able to follow and completely attain it!"

It is true that even with his unbounded enthusiasm in woman's cause and his indefatigable energy he could not take any steps for educating girls, widowed or unmarried; but it may be safely said that he lived to return home from England and work here for a few years more, his contact with the comparatively enlightened womanhood of the West would certainly have borne fruit in the establishment of educational institutions for Indian girls and women. That Miss Mary Carpenter came out to India to labour for the good of Indian women is due mainly to her contact with the Raja. Regarding the re-marriage of child-widows, it is believed by some that he published a book advocating its introduction but no such production has been discovered among his works. His biographer, Babu Nagendranath Chatterjee, says: "We have heard that Ramomohun Roy used to express a desire to his friends that the re-marriage of child-widows should become prevalent. When he went to England, a rumour spread everywhere that on coming back home he would introduce the custom of the re-marriage of widows."

It will appear from a study of his "Brief remarks regarding the ancient rights of women" that he was opposed to polygamy, kulinism and the practical selling of girls in marriage. He showed from the Shastras that second marriages were authorised only under certain circumstances, and observed:

"Had a Viceroy or other public officer been authorized by the rulers of the empire to receive applications for his sanction to a second marriage during the life of a first wife, and to grant his consent only on such occasions as the foregoing being substantiated, the above law might have been carried out and the distress of the female sex in Bengal and the number of orphans would have been necessarily very much reduced."

We have no indication in his works of his views on child-marriage. Perhaps in his days in Bengal, though such marriages must have been customary, their consummation was postponed to a maturer age, thus minimizing the evils to some extent, as is still the case in some provinces of India. But with regard to this item, too, of the social reform programme, we were so late as to what he would have
done had he lived to come back from England. For, a man, who had such innate chivalry in his nature that he would never take his seat if any woman of what rank so ever remained standing in his presence, could not have failed to observe the evil effects on women of such a custom, at any rate after coming in contact with the comparatively free and healthy womanhood of the West.

That Rammohun Roy had not failed to observe the evil effects of caste will appear from the extract from one of his letters printed on page 929 of this edition. No. VIII of his Sambad Kumudi, too, prints the plea of a philanthropist [probably himself], who observing the misery caused by prejudices of caste, urges the Hindus not to debar themselves thereby from mechanical pursuits, but to cultivate “such arts as would tend to their comfort, happiness and independence.” By crossing the ocean and in other ways, the Raja, to a great extent, broke through the unreasonable and injurious restrictions imposed by caste. Why he did not or could not do so entirely, is not known to a certainty. But from his conduct in other matters, we should hesitate to ascribe to him any motives of cowardice or self-interest. He published with a Bengali translation the first chapter of a Sanskrit work against caste, named Bajrasuchi, by Mrityunjayacharya.

In most things Raja Rammohun Roy was in advance of his age, and rose above the influence of his surroundings. He was the pioneer in many reform movements. But in the matter of total abstinence from intoxicating drinks, his views and practice differed from those of most reformers of the present day. He was a moderate drinker and even quoted some Shastras in favour of the practice. There is also another matter in which he was not in advance of his age. In his “Brief remarks regarding the ancient rights of females,” he says that of the three modes of conduct left to the widows of a polygamous man to pursue, the second is “to walk in the paths of unrighteousness for their maintenance and independence.” And this he, of course, condemns, and thereby shows himself to be, as we otherwise also know him to have been, an advocate of social purity. Yet it would appear that he found nothing objectionable in entertaining his guests with the nautch and music of dancing girls in his residence.

For we find in Fanny Parkes’ “Wanderings of a Pilgrim,” Vol. I, Chap. IV (Residence in Calcutta, May 1829), the following passage:

“The other evening we went to a party given by Rammohun Roy, a rich Bengali baboo: the grounds, which are extensive, were well illuminated, and excellent fire-works displayed. In various rooms of the house nautch girls were dancing and singing.”

It is well known that Rammohun Roy himself founded and helped others in founding schools. He took a prominent part in the great educational controversy between the “Orientalists” and the “Anglicists”
and sided with the latter. But for his opposition the clamour of the former for the exclusive pursuit of Oriental studies would most probably have prevailed. His Letter on English Education to Lord Amherst is a remarkably convincing production.*

"It was owing, perhaps, to this agitation," remarks Babu Jogendra Chunder Ghose on this letter, "that the foundation-stone of the building intended for the Sanskrit College was laid in the name of the Hindu College (February, 1824), and the Hindu College was located there together with the Sanskrit College." For the direct and indirect beneficial results of Western education we are indebted to Raja Rammohun Roy as much as to Lord Macaulay, Lord William Bentinck, David Hare, &c.

Rammohun Roy wrote text-books in Bengali on Grammar, Geography, Astronomy and Geometry. He is the father of modern Bengali.

* One passage in this letter possesses a special interest of its own. It runs thus:—

"Neither can much improvement arise from such speculations as the following which are the themes suggested by the Vedanta, in what manner is the soul absorbed in the Deity? What relations does it bear to the Divine Essence? Nor will youth be fitted to be better members of society by the Vedantic doctrines which teach them to believe, that all visible things have no real existence, that as father, brother, &c., have no actual entity, they consequently deserve no real affection, and therefore the sooner we escape from them and leave the world the better."

The missionaries, advanced in the Samudra Darpan, the last objection, which Rammohun assailed in his Brahmanical Magazine. He further established a Vedanta College. This seeming inconsistence is explained by Miss Collett as follows: "The teachings of the Vedanta lend themselves to a remarkable diversity of theological interpretation. They are appealed to equally by dualistic and non-dualistic schools of thought. They contain passages which breathe a lofty and ethical Theism; in other places, they seem to countenance a Pantheism that is simply acosmism—the denial of all finite existence. . . . According as the Vedanta is taught with or without a proper selective adjustment of its widely various contents, its value as a subject of instruction may be set high or low. In the ordinary Hindu schools it was taught in false perspective, with a discrimination exercised if at all in favour of what was trivial, incorrect, polytheistic. Rammohun therefore opposed with all his might the suggestion that the British Government should perpetuate or encourage this kind of Vedantic instruction. At the same time he saw in the Vedanta rightly handled and "rightly divided," a means for leading his countrymen out of their prevailing superstition and idolatry into a pure and elevated Theism. Their devotion to the Vedanta scriptures was the lever by which Rammohun hoped to lift them into a simpler and nobler faith. Therefore he founded the Vedanta College; and therefore also he controverted the missionaries' wholesale disparagement of the Vedanta. If the missionaries had succeeded in discrediting the Vedanta, they would in Rammohun's eyes have broken down the bridge which enabled men to pass from Hindu Polytheism to Hindu Theism. He thus combated both the conservative Christian who advocated indiscriminate rejection and the conservative Hindu who advocated the indiscriminate retention of Vedantic teaching; and he provided for a discriminating instruction in the ancient system which should have the approval of liberal Hindus and liberal Christians."
literary prose. He taught his people the use of marks of punctuation. There was in his nature a deep vein of genuine poetry, too; as his Bengali hymns show. He was the first to write theistic hymns in Bengali. Pandit Ramagati Nyayaratna, a well-known Hindu historian of the Bengali language and literature, truly observes that "they appear to possess the power of melting even stony hearts, of making the most irreligious devoted to God and of making hearts sunk in worldliness detached from the world." They are prized by theists and idolaters alike. A few of them are in Sanskrit. We believe an English translation of Rammohun's hymns by Babu Mohinimohan Chatterjee, M. A., has been published by the Adi Brahmo Samaj of Calcutta.

His Bengali journal, the *Sambad Kaumudi*, first appeared in 1821. He is the founder of native journalism in India. The *Sambad Kaumudi* was not exclusively or chiefly a political publication. It, as well as his Persian newspaper, *Mirvat-ul-Akbar* or *Mirror of Intelligence*, had an educational purpose, too. Besides politics, subjects of a historical, literary and scientific character were treated of therein.

Lawyers of eminence have declared that the legal writings of the Raja, such as his "Brief Remarks on Ancient Female Rights," "The Rights of Hindus over Ancestral Property according to the Law of Bengal," would do credit to jurists of the highest standing.

To the public Rammohun Roy is best known as a religious and social reformer. To many he is also known as a literateur and educationist. But he is not so well known as a political reformer and agitator. A brief account of his politics may not therefore be out of place here.

Mr. William Adam, a Baptist Missionary, whose association with Raja Rammohun Roy led him to adopt Unitarian opinions, bears the following testimony to his love of liberty:

"He would be free or not be at all... Love of freedom was perhaps the strongest passion of his soul,—freedom not of action merely, but of thought... This tenacity of personal independence, this sensitive jealousy of the slightest approach to an encroachment on his mental freedom, was accompanied with a very nice perception of the equal rights of others, even of those who differed most widely from him."

It was this love of liberty that was the source of all his political opinions and the mainspring of all his political activity. It made him take interest in and deeply sympathise with all political movements all over the world that had for their object the advancement of popular freedom. Some instances may here be given of Rammohun's cosmopolitan sympathies in the region of politics.

"When the intelligence reached India that the people of Naples after extorting a constitution from their despotic king were crushed back into servitude by the Austrian troops, in obedience to the joint mandate of the crowned heads of Russia, Prussia, Austria, Sardinia, and Naples, Rammohun felt it keenly."
In a letter to Mr. Buckingham, dated August 11, 1821, he wrote:—

"I am afraid I must be under the necessity of denying myself the pleasure of your society this evening; more especially as my mind is depressed by the late news from Europe. From the late unhappy news I am obliged to conclude that I shall not live to see liberty universally restored to the nations of Europe, and Asiatic nations, especially those that are European colonies, possessed of a greater degree of the same blessing than what they now enjoy.

"Under these circumstances I consider the cause of the Neapolitans as my own, and their enemies as ours. Enemies to liberty and friends of despotism have never been, and never will be, ultimately successful."

"These noble words," says Miss Collett, "reveal how profoundly Rammohun felt with the late Russel Lowell that "In the gain or loss of one race all the rest have equal claim"; and that

"Wherever wrong is done
To the humblest and the weakest, 'neath the all-beholding Sun,
That wrong is also done to us."

Rammohun’s Persian weekly Mirat-ul-Akhbar contained an article on “Ireland, the causes of its distress and discontent”. In this he dwelt on the evils of absenteeism and the injustice of maintaining Protestant clergymen out of revenues wrung from the Roman Catholic inhabitants of Ireland. He said:—

How admirable is the observation of Saadi (on whom be mercy!)

"Do not say that these rapacious ministers are the well-wishers of his Majesty:
For in proportion as they augment the revenue of the State, they diminish his popularity:
O statesman, apply the revenue of the king towards the comfort of the people; then during their lives they will be loyal to him."

When the news of the establishment of constitutional Government in Spain reached India, he gave a public dinner at the Town Hall. Some months before his departure for England, news reached Calcutta of the latest French Revolution, and, “so great was his enthusiasm that,” we are told, “he could think and talk of nothing else!” He viewed it as a triumph of liberty and rejoiced accordingly. On his voyage to England he landed at the Cape for only an hour or two. “Returning on board he met with a nasty accident. The gangway ladder had not been properly secured, and he got a serious fall, from which he was lame for eighteen months afterwards and indeed never finally recovered. But no bodily suffering could repress his mental ardour. Two French frigates, under the revolutionary flag, the glorious tri-colour, were lying in Table Bay; and lame as he was, he would insist on visiting them. The sight of these colours seemed to kindle his enthusiasm, and to render him insensible to pain.” During the days of the Reform Bill agitation in England, he
considered the struggle between the reformers and anti-reformers as a struggle between liberty and oppression throughout the world: between justice and injustice, and between right and wrong. He publicly avowed that in the event of the Reform Bill being defeated, he would renounce his connection with England. His Persian weekly, the Mirat, did not, however, favourably consider the national aspirations of Greece. Muhammadan sympathy with the Turks may have been to some extent responsible for this attitude to Greece.

We now pass on to the Raja's Indian political opinions. Our politics are sure to be tinged by our attitude towards British rule in India. It is therefore necessary to know what the Raja thought of British rule in India in his day. In his autobiography he writes:

"...I proceeded on my travels, and passed through different countries, chiefly within, but some beyond, the bounds of Hindoostan, with a feeling of great aversion to the establishment of the British Power in India. When I had reached the age of twenty, my father recalled me, and restored me to his favour; after which I first saw and began to associate with Europeans, and soon after made myself tolerably acquainted with their laws and form of government. Finding them generally more intelligent, more steady and moderate in their conduct, I gave up my prejudice against them, and became inclined in their favour, feeling persuaded that their rule, though a foreign yoke, would lead more speedily and surely to the amelioration of the native inhabitants;..."

He concluded his "Final Appeal to the Christian Public"

"by offering up thanks to the supreme Disposer of the events of this universe, for having unexpectedly delivered this country from the long-continued tyranny of its former Rulers, and placed it under the government of the English,—a nation who not only are blessed with the enjoyment of civil and political liberty, but also interest themselves in promoting liberty and social happiness, as well as free inquiry into literary and religious subjects, among those nations to which their influence extends."

But Rammohun gave to Muhammadan rule also its due meed of praise by mentioning in what respects it was superior to British rule. He wrote in his "Appeal to the King in Council" against the Press Regulation:

"Your Majesty is aware, that under their former Muhammadan Rulers, the natives of this country enjoyed every political privilege in common with Mussalmans, being eligible to the highest offices in the State, entrusted with the command of armies and the government of provinces and often chosen as advisers to their Prince, without disqualification or degrading distinction on account of their religion or the place of their birth. They used to receive free grants of land exempted from any payments of revenue, and besides the highest salaries allowed under the Government, they enjoyed free of charge large tracts of country attached to certain offices of trust and dignity, while natives of learning and talent were rewarded with numerous situations of honour and emolument. Although under the British Rule, the natives of India, have entirely lost this political consequence..., &c."
Some of the contents of the earlier numbers of the Samboit Kammudi may be given here:

No. I. - An appeal to the Government for the establishment of a school for the gratuitous instruction of the poor but respectable Hindus.

No. II. - Humble address to the Government soliciting the extension of trial by jury to Monsoo, Zilla and Provincial Courts of Judicature.

No. III. - An appeal to the Government to relieve the Hindu community from the inconvenience consequent upon there being only one Ghaut for the burning of dead bodies whereas an immense space of ground has been granted for the burial of Christians.

Appeal to Government for the prevention of the exportation of the greatest part of the produce of rice from Bengal to foreign ports.

Appeal to Government to enable the middle class of native subjects to avoid themselves of the treatment of European physicians.

Appeal to the Calcutta Magistrates to resort to rigorous measures for relieving the Hindu inhabitants of Calcutta from the serious grievance of Christian gentlemen thrashing their buggies amongst them and cutting and lashing them with whips without distinction of sex or age, while they quietly assembled in immense numbers to see the images of their deities pass in the Chitpore Road, when many of them fell down into drains, while others were trampled under foot by the crowd.

Raja Rammohun Roy believed that a free Press is one of the best safeguards of liberty. This conviction found expression in his petitions against the Press Regulation (1) to the Supreme Court, and (2) to the King in Council. The Press ordinance prescribed that thenceforth no one should publish a newspaper or other periodical without having obtained a license from the Governor-General in Council, signed by the Chief Secretary. The memorial submitted to the Supreme Court "may be regarded as the Apologia of Indian History. Alike in diction and in argument, it forms a noble landmark in the progress of English culture in the East."

This Memorial proving fruitless, Rammohun and his co-adjutors appealed to the King in council. Says Miss Collett:

"The appeal is one of the noblest pieces of English to which Rammohun put his name. The stately periods and not less stately thought recall the eloquence of the great sages of a century ago. In a language and style far more associated with the glorified tradition of liberty, it invokes against the arbitrary exercise of British power the centuries and traditions which are distinctive of British History."

This Memorial, too, proved unavailing. The Privy Council declined to comply with the petition.

A new Jury Act came into operation in the beginning of 1827. On August 18th, 1828, Rammohun wrote to Mr. J. Crawford and entrusted to him petitions against the Act for presentation to both Houses of
Parliament, signed by Hindus and Mohammedans. He thus concisely stated the grounds of grievance:

"In his famous Jury Bill, Mr. Wynn, the late President of the Board of Control, has by introducing religious distinctions into the judicial system of this country, not only afforded just grounds for dissatisfaction among the Natives in general, but has excited much alarm in the breast of every one conversant with political principles. Any Natives, either Hindu or Mohammedan, are rendered by this Bill subject to judicial trial by Christians, either European or Native, while Christians, including Native converts, are exempted from the degradation of being tried either by a Hindu or Mussulman juror, however high he may stand in the estimation of society. This Bill also denies both to Hindus and Mohammedans the honor of a seat in the Grand Jury even in the trial of fellow Hindus or Mussulmans. This is the sum total of Mr. Wynn’s late Jury Bill, of which we bitterly complain."

Rammohun went on to suggest a possibility "which is by no means so remote now as when he wrote":

"Supposing that 100 years hence the Native character becomes elevated from constant intercourse with Europeans and the acquirement of general and particular knowledge, as well as of modern arts and sciences, is it possible that they will not have the spirit as well as the inclination to resist effectively any unjust and oppressive measures tending to degrade them in the scale of society? It should not be lost sight of that the position of India is very different from that of Ireland, to any quarter of which an English fleet may suddenly convey a body of troops that may force its way in the requisite direction and succeed in suppressing every effort of a refractory spirit. Were India to share one-fourth of the knowledge and energy of that country, she would prove from her remote situation, her riches and her vast population, either useful and profitable as a willing province, an ally of the British empire, or troublesome and annoying as a determined enemy.

"In common with those who seem partial to the British rule from the expectation of future benefits arising out of the connection, I necessarily feel extremely grieved in often witnessing Acts and Regulations passed by Government without consulting or seeming to understand the feelings of its Indian subjects and without considering that this people have had for more than half a century the advantage of being ruled by and associated with an enlightened nation, advocates of liberty and promoters of knowledge."

The letter quoted above is remarkable for the far-sighted glance into the future which it reveals. Here in germ is to be found the national aspiration which is now breaking forth into demands for a greater measure of self-government than the people at present enjoy. Rammohun’s English biographer observes that "The prospect of an educated India, of an India approximating to European standards of culture, seems to have never been long absent from Rammohun’s mind; and he did, however vaguely, claim in advance for his compatriots the political rights which progress in civilization inevitably involves. Here again Rammohun stands forth as the tribune and prophet of New India."

The Select Committee of the House of Commons which was appointed in February, 1831, and reappointed in June to consider the renewal of the Company’s Charter invited him to appear before it.
Rammohun declined this request but tendered his evidence in the form of successive “Communications to the Board of Control.” The first of these dealt with Revenue. The Raja appears here as the champion of the rack-rented ryot. While the Zemindars or landlords had been greatly benefited by the Permanent Settlement of 1793, while their wealth and the wealth of the community had generally increased, the poor cultivator was no better off. The remedy he asked for was in the first place the prohibition of any further rise in rent, and secondly—rents being now so exorbitantly high as to leave the ryot in a state of extreme misery, —a reduction in the revenue demanded from the Zemindar so as to ensure a reduction in the ryot’s rent. The decrease in revenue he would meet by increasing taxes upon luxuries or by employing as Collectors low-salaried Indians instead of high-salaried Europeans. It may here be incidentally observed that nearly three-quarters of a century ago, when education was in a backward condition, Raja Rammohun Roy considered Indians fit for the duties of Collectors. He also considered them well qualified to discharge all judicial duties.

He approved of the settlement in India of a few model landlords from England, but was careful to stipulate that they should not be drawn from the lower classes. This is not the place to criticize the Raja’s views on this subject; but it seems open to grave doubt whether a European landed aristocracy for India would have been on the whole beneficial to the people of this country. He concluded with an earnest appeal “to any and every authority to devise some mode of alleviating the present miseries of the agricultural peasantry of India.”

It admits of no doubt that the condition of the proprietors of land has improved under the system of permanent assessment. But the Government seems at present to believe that that system has resulted in loss of revenue to the State. It is, therefore, important to quote the Raja’s opinion on this subject.

“The amount of assessment fixed on the lands of these provinces at the time of the Permanent Settlement (1793), was as high as had ever been assessed, and in many instances, higher than had ever before been realized by the exertions of any government. Mohamedan or British. Therefore the Government sacrificed nothing in concluding that settlement. If it had not been formed, the landholders (Zemindars) would always have taken care to prevent the revenue from increasing by not bringing the waste lands into cultivation, and by collusive arrangements to elude further demands; while the state of the cultivators would not have been at all better than it is now. However, if the Government had taken the whole estates of the country into its own hands, as in the ceded and conquered provinces and the Madras Presidency, then, by allowing the landholders only ten per cent. on the rents (Malikarnak), and securing all the rest to the Government, it might no doubt have increased the revenue for a short time. But the whole of the landlords in the country would then have been reduced to the same wretched condition
as they are at present in the ceded and conquered Provinces of the Bengal Presidency or rather annihilated, as in many parts of the Madras territory; and the whole population reduced to the same level of poverty. At the same time, the temporary increase of revenue to Government under its own immediate management would also have soon fallen off, through the misconduct and negligence of the revenue officers, as shown by innumerable instances in which the estates were kept khas, i.e., under the immediate management of Government.

"Besides, Government appropriates to itself an enormous duty on the transit and exportation of the produce of the soil, which has, since the period of the Perpetual Settlement, increased to a great amount from the exertions of the proprietors in extending and improving cultivation, under the assurance that no demand of an increase of revenue would be made upon them on account of the progressive productiveness of their estates."

The Raja contrasts the effects of the permanent and periodical systems of assessment in two statements.

"By a comparative view of the revenues of Bengal, Behar and Orissa, from the period of the Perpetual Settlement, it appears that, in the thirty-five years, from 1792-93 to 1827-28, there was a total increase on the whole amount of the Revenue of above 100 per cent. (101.71), and that this increase has been steady and progressive up to the present time: 

By a comparative view of the revenue of the old British territory in Madras, it appears that during the same period of thirty-five years (i.e., from 1793 to 1828) there was an increase of only about 40 per cent., (40:15) on the total amount of the whole revenue. That the increase during the first 17 years was 43 13/60 per cent.; that in the next 8 years the increase was only about 3½ per cent.; and that in the last 18 years there has been a decrease of 2 15 per cent."

In an appendix he urged the Imperial utility of the policy of fixing a maximum rent to be paid by each cultivator, "that their rents already raised to a ruinous extent, might not be subject to further increase." His advocacy of this policy is so statesmanlike that no apology is needed for quoting his views on the subject. To recognise the indefeasible rights of the ryots in the soil would make them loyal to the power that secured them and

"ready to rise in defence of it, as a militia or in any other shape that might be required; so as to secure the British rule in a foreign and remote empire, alike from internal intrigue and from external aggression, without the necessity of keeping on foot an immense standing army at an enormous cost. This consideration is of great importance in respect to the natives of the upper and western provinces, who are distinguished by their superior bravery, and form the greater part of the British Indian army. If this race of men, who are by no means deficient in feelings of personal honor and regard for family respectability, were assured that their rights in the soil were indefeasible so long as the British power should endure, they would from gratitude and self-interest at all time be ready to devote their lives and property in its defence.

"The saving that might be effected by this liberal and generous policy, through the substituting of a militia force for a great part of the present standing army, would be much greater than any gain that could be realized by any system of increasing land
revenue that human ingenuity could devise. How applicable to this case is the following line of the Persian sage (Saadi):

Ra rayat sulh kun Wa'z jang i khasm ai man nishin
Zanaki shahinshah i adii ra rayat lashkar est.

"Be on friendly terms with thy subjects, and rest easy about the warfare of thine enemies; for to an upright prince his people is an army."

While on the subject of Land Settlement we may say that in 1828, by Regulation III of that year, the revenue collector in each district was authorised to dispossess the holders of tax-free lands by his own authority, without reference to any judicial courts, if the collector should be of opinion, after such enquiry as might satisfy himself that the title of the proprietor was not valid. It was therein enacted that "such decision of the Collector shall have the force and effect of a decree"; also, that "it shall not be necessary for him to transmit his proceedings to the Board of Revenue," but "the party dispossessed might appeal," and by art. 3., whether an appeal be filed or not, "that it shall and may be lawful for the Collector immediately to carry into effect his decision by attaching and assessing the lands." This regulation produced great alarm and distrust amongst the natives of Bengal, Behar and Orissa, many of whom petitioned against the principle of one party, who lays claim to the land, dispossessing an actual possessor at his own discretion. This agitation was led, though unsuccessfully, by Rammohun Roy. Reg. III of 1828 is still in force.

Among the principal measures advocated in the Raja's Questions and Answers on the Judicial System of India were the substitution of English for Persian as the official language of the courts of law; the appointment of native assessors in the civil courts; trial by jury, of which the Panchayat system was the indigenous parallel; separation of the offices of judge and revenue commissioners; separation of the offices of judge and magistrate; codification of the criminal law and also of the law of India; and consultation with the local magnates before enacting laws. The last reform proposed contains the germ of representative legislative bodies.

Students of Indian economics are familiar with the fact that every year nearly 45 crores of rupees of India's capital is drained off to foreign parts without any hope of return. This drain of wealth did not escape the eyes of Raja Rammohun Roy. In his "Revenue System of India" he says that as a large sum of money is now annually drawn from India by Europeans retiring from it with the fortunes realized there, a system which would encourage Europeans of capital to become permanent settlers with their families, would necessarily greatly improve the resources of the country. He pre-
pared several tables to prove this drain. The following two paragraphs are appended to these tables:—

"By the evidence of Messrs. Lloyd and Melville (the former the Accountant-General, and the latter the Auditor-General of the East India Company), recorded in the Minutes of evidence taken before the Select Committee of the House of Lords, 23rd February, 1830, it appears that the proportion of the Indian revenues expended in England on the territorial account amounts, on an average, to £3,000,000 annually. It includes the expenses at the Board of Control and India House, pay, absentee allowances and pensions to Civil and Military offices in Europe for services in India, with interest of money realized there, &c., &c., besides £453,588 for territorial stores consigned to India.

"In a letter of the Court of Directors to the Government of Bengal, dated the 20th of June, 1810, and quoted in the work "On Colonial Policy as applicable to the Government of India," by a very able servant of the company, holding a responsible situation in Bengal, the Directors state that "it is no extravagant assertion to advance, that the annual remittances to London on account of individuals, have been at the rate of nearly £2,000,000 per annum for a series of years past." (p. 70.) From these and other authentic documents the author calculates the amount of capital, or "the aggregate tribute, public and private, so withdrawn from India from 1765 to 1820, at £100,000,000."

It has already been incidentally shown that Raja Rammohun Roy was in favour of the settlement in India of European capitalists under certain conditions. Among the advantages likely in his opinion to arise from such settlement was the improvement of the condition of the native inhabitants by European landlords showing them superior methods of cultivation. That this was not altogether a vain expectation appears from some observations in Mr. N. G. Mukerji’s Hand-book of Indian Agriculture. Says Mr. Mukerji:

indeed, Indian agriculture has been actually vastly improved by our contact with the West. European planters have been the means of introducing important innovations. In the most out-of-the-way places of India we find European planters carrying on agricultural experiments and improvements imperceptibly and noiselessly."

This naturally leads one to a consideration of the Raja’s Remarks on Settlement in India by Europeans. It is a paper of rare personal and national importance. But as it raises problems of great magnitude, we refrain from dealing with it here. Suffice it to say that this his final literary deliverance holds up to the people of India the prospect of India having English as its lingua franca, India socially and in other respects westernized to some extent, India possibly independent and India the Enlightener of Asia.

Progressive political views imply confidence in the capacity of a people for continuous improvement. Raja Rammohun Roy believed that the people of India "have the same capability of improvement as any other civilized people." He did not believe that Asians were naturally an inferior race. In the course of one of his numerous religious controversies “A Christian” having indulged in a tirade-
about persons being "degraded by Asiatic effeminacy," the Raja reminded him that almost all the ancient prophets and patriarchs venerated by Christians, nay, even Jesus Christ himself, were Asiatics.

On a perusal of the foregoing pages it will be found that with the exception of the agitation that has been going on for sometime past for the industrial regeneration of the country, Rammohun Roy laid the foundation of all the principal modern movements for the elevation of our people. Probably, as India is mainly an agricultural country and as in his days the pressure on land had not become abnormal owing to the indigenous industries not having disappeared then to the extent to which they have now declined, the industrial problem did not then press for solution with the same urgency as now. Nevertheless we find that the bearing of the system of caste on industrial prosperity did not escape the keen eyes of Rammohun: as No. VIII of his Sambad Kanumudi printed the "plea of a philanthropist, who observing the misery caused by prejudices of caste, urges the Hindus not to debar themselves thereby from mechanical pursuits, but to cultivate such arts as would tend to their comfort, happiness and independence."

We conclude this introduction with the following estimate of his personality by his biographer, the late Miss Sophia Dobson Collett, who, though an English woman and a trinitarian Christian, seems on the whole to have understood the meaning of his life pretty accurately:

"Rammohun stands in history as the living bridge over which India marches from her unmeasured past to her incalculable future. He was the arch which spanned the gulf that yawned between ancient caste and modern humanity, between superstition and science, between despotism and democracy, between immobile custom and a conservative progress, between a bewildering polytheism and a pure, if vague, Theism. He was the mediator of his people, harmonizing in his own person, often by means of his own solitary sufferings, the conflicting tendencies of immemorial tradition and of inevitable enlightenment."

"He embodies the new spirit which arises from the compulsory mixture of races and faiths and civilizations,—he embodies its freedom of enquiry, its thirst for science, its large human sympathy, its pure and sifted ethics, along with its reverent but non-critical regard for the past, and prudent, even timid, disinclination towards revolt. But in the life of Rammohun we see what we hope yet to have shown us in the progress of India, that the secret of the whole movement is religious. Amid all his wanderings Rammohun was saved by his faith. * * * He was a genuine outgrowth of the old Hindu stock; in a soil watered by new influences, and in an atmosphere charged with unwonted forcing power, but still a true scion of the old stock. The Rajah was no merely occidentalized oriental, no Hindu polished into the doubtful semblance of a European. Just as little was he, if we may use the term without offence, a spiritual Eurasian. If we follow the right line of his development we shall find that he leads the way from the orientalism of the past, not to, but through Western culture towards a civilization which is neither Western
nor Eastern, but something vastly larger and nobler than both. He preserves continuity throughout, by virtue of his religion, which again supplied the motive force of his progressive movement. The power that connected and restrained, as well as widened and impelled, was religion.

"Rammohun thus presents a most instructive and inspiring study for the New India of which he is the type and pioneer. He offers to the new democracy of the West a scarcely less valuable index of what our greatest Eastern dependency may yet become under the imperial sway of the British commonalty. There can be little doubt that whatever future the destinies may have in store for India, that future will be largely shaped by the life and work of Rammohun Roy. And not the future of India alone. We stand on the eve of an unprecedented intermingling of East and West. The European and Asiatic streams of human development, which have often tinged each other before, are now approaching a confluence which bids fair to form the one ocean-river of the collective progress of mankind. In the presence of that greater Eastern question,—with its infinite ramifications, industrial, political, moral and religious,—the international problems of the passing hour, even the gravest of them, seem dwarfed into parochial pettiness. The nearing dawn of these unmeasured possibilities only throws into clearer prominence the figure of the man whose life-story we have told. He was, if not the prophetic type, at least the prescriptive hint, of the change that is to come."