THE *Leader* OFFICE.
ALLAHABAD :
The 8th February, 1916.
3·30 p.m.

DEAR SIR,—

As promised in my letter of this morning I send herewith a copy of the speech delivered by Mr. M. K. Gandhi at Benares, on Sunday evening.

The favour of an acknowledgement is requested.

I am, dear Sir,
Yours faithfully,
C. Y. CHINTAMANI,
Editor, the Leader.

To—THE HON'BLE MR. R. BURN, Chief Secretary to Government,
United Provinces.

MR. M. K. GANDHI SAID :—

FRIENDS, I wish to tender you my humble apology for the long delay that took place before I was able to reach this place. And you will readily accept the apology when I tell you that I am not responsible for the delay, nor is any human agency responsible for it. (Laughter.) The fact is that I am like any animal which is wanted on show, and my keepers in their over-kindness always manage to neglect a necessary chapter in this life, and that is pure accident. In this case, they did not provide for the series of accidents that happened to us—to me, my keepers and my carriers. Hence this delay.

Friends, under the influence of the matchless eloquence of the lady who has just sat down pray do not believe that your university, my university, is a finished product and that all the young men who are to come to the university that has yet to rise and come into existence, that all these young men have also come and returned from the university finished citizens of a great empire. Do not go away with any such impression and if you, my friends, the student world to which my remarks are supposed to be addressed this evening, consider for one moment that the spiritual life for which this country is noted and for which this country has no rival, that the spiritual power can be transmitted through the lip, pray, believe me, that you are misled, that you are wrong. You will never be able to give the message that India, I hope, will one day deliver to this world. My friends, I myself have been fed up with speeches and lectures. I except the lectures that have been delivered here during the last two days from this category because they were necessary. But I do venture to suggest to you that we have now reached almost the end of our resources in speech-making and it is not enough that our ears are feasted, that our eyes are feasted, but it is necessary that our hearts have got to be touched, that our hands have got to be touched, that our feet have got to be feasted. And you have been told during these last two days how necessary it is, if you are to retain your hold upon the simplicity of Indian character, if you are to retain your hold upon your agricultural India, how necessary it is that your hands should move, your feet should move and your hearts should be touched and that these two, the hands and the feet, are moved in unison with your heart. But this is only by way of preface. I wanted to say it is a matter of deep humiliation and shame no less to you than it is to me that I am compelled this evening under the shadow of the great college, in this great sacred city, that I am compelled to address my countrymen in a language that is foreign to me. I know that if I was appointed an examiner to examine all those who have been attending during these two days this series of lectures, most of those who might be examined upon these lectures will fail. And why? Because they have not been touched. I was present at the sessions of the great Congress in the month of December. There was a much vaster auidence and will you believe me when I tell you that the only speeches that touched that huge auidence in Bombay were the speeches that were delivered in Hindustani. In Bombay, mind you, not in Benares where everybody speaks Hindi. But in Bombay where everybody speaks either Gujarathi or Marathi—and the majority of the audience were composed of Marathi-

speaking or Gujarathi-speaking people—there is no distinction, no such great dividing line as there is between English and the sister languages of India ; and therefore the Hindi, pure Hindi as it was, that was spoken to the audience touched it. I am hoping that this university will at least guard this thing—and remove the reproach that the youth who come to this university will not receive their instruction through the medium of their vernaculars. Your language is the reflection of yourselves and if you tell me that our languages are too poor to express the best thought, then I say that the sooner we are wiped out of existence the better for us. You, my friends, your Highnesses, do you for one moment imagine that by giving the best education possible in English you will be able ever to touch the heart of the millions of India through English ? Is there a man who dreams that English can ever become the national language of India ? (Cries of " Never "). That is why that English can never become the national language of India. Why this great handicap on the nation ? Why this great handicap upon the scholars who are turned out of your colleges by thousands ? Just consider for one moment what an unequal race you have to run with every English lad, with every German lad, with every European lad. I was sitting in close conversation with the professors in Poona. They are all self-sacrificing men. They are men with their heads on their shoulders and they are mathematicians and they told me this was their considered statement that every Indian youth because he received his knowledge through the English language lost at least six precious years of life. Multiply that by as many colleges as there are and find out for yourselves how many thousands of years have been wasted, have been given up. What happens. The charge against you, against me, is that we have no initiative. How can you have any initiative if you are to devote the precious years of your life in order to master a foreign tongue ? And then look at the farce. Was it possible for any speaker yesterday and to-day to impress his audience as was possible for Mr. Higginbottom ? Of course it was not possible. It was not the fault of the previous speakers if they could not engage the audience. They had more than matter enough for ourselves to last for many a day. Do you suppose that these addresses that were delivered on agriculture were worthless addresses ? Not by any means. They were precious addresses. But these addresses could not go home to us. They could not be delivered by the speakers themselves in the manner they would want to. They were labouring under a terrible load. They could not express themselves in English in the manner that they wanted to. It was impossible for them. How then you expect that you will have a regenerated India through a foreign tongue ? No, my friends, do not go away with the belief that it is a possibility. I have heard to my great pain and sorrow some of the speeches that were delivered in the Imperial Legislative Council, ' look at the magnificent results of these fifty years.' I think that Lord Macaulay made many blunders in his life, all unconsciously, but so far as India is concerned there was never a greater blunder made than when he penned that minute of his on education. I grant all the workers to-day that we have here, are workers who have been turned out by our universities, our colleges and high schools. Is that any matter for real, great congratulation ? How can all these years that were devoted by these men who are now working for their dear motherland be a perfect waste ? That was not the way in which you may examine this problem. I suggest to you a better one. It is this. Imagine if fifty years ago another Macaulay had penned a minute and he had said that it was necessary to give western instruction—may it be western instruction to give proper instruction in science and other departments of life through the vernaculars and that therefore there should be established committees after committees in order to translate into the great vernaculars the western thoughts and western cultures that were then thought necessary. What would you have to-day ? You will have to-day a free India, you will have your educated men not as if they were foreigners in their own land, not as if they were strangers to their own countrymen but they will be speaking to the heart of the nation, they will be working amongst the poorest of the poor and whatever they would have gained during the past fifty years would be a precious heritage. (Applause.) To-day your

wives are not the sharers in your best thoughts. See Professor Bose and professor Roy and their brilliant researches. No body can deny. But it is a shame that their researches are not commonly understood by the masses. Is there the slightest reason why all these researches could not have been made through the medium of the Bengali language. Was a knowledge of English necessary in order to make those delicate instruments? Or was it something in the brain that was necessary for equipping these instruments? Yes, knowledge was necessary: but knowledge could be gained through the vernaculars. So much for that.

But there is one thing. The Congress has passed a resolution about self-government and I have no doubt that the All-India Congress Committee and the Moslem League will do their duty and come forward with some tangible suggestions. But I for one must frankly confess that I am not so much interested in what they will be able to produce as I am interested in anything that the student world is going to produce or the common people are going to produce. No paper contribution will ever give you self-government. No amount of speeches will ever make us fit for self-government. It is only our conduct that will make us fit for self-government. (Applause.) And how are we trying to govern ourselves? I wanted to think audibly this evening. I do not want to make a speech and if you find me this evening speaking without reserve, pray consider that you are only sharing the thoughts of a man who allows himself to think audibly and therefore if you think that I seem to transgress the limits that courtesy imposes upon me pardon me for the liberty I may be taking I have the pleasure, I have the privilege of going through the Vishwanath temple last evening and as I was walking through those lanes these were the thoughts that touched me. If a stranger dropped from above on to this great temple and he had to consider what we as Hindus were, will he not be justified in considering us, in judging us after having seen the temple? Is not this great temple a reflection of our own character? What is it? To me who am no stranger, to me who claims to be a Hindu among Hindus what were the thoughts that possessed me? Is it right that the lanes of our sacred temple should be as dirty as they were? Is it right? In going through that temple is it not possible for us to go with the most perfect freedom? The temple, I do not know how ancient it is, but I was able to see the surroundings. They are by no means so ancient. But I saw the houses round about built anyhow. If we cannot build a straight road, if we cannot have room enough to extend in our own temple, if our own temple is not in a mode of perfect physical cleanliness at least, what are we, how shall we govern ourselves? Shall we reproduce this state of things in every street and in every corner? What are we going to do? My friends, do not for one moment consider that all these things will be added into us as soon as the English have retired from India either of their own pleasure or by compulsion, bag and baggage. Never, you and I will have to consider what our religion is. You and I will have to re-arrange our religion in the light of what is going to happen to-day. If Benares has to be walked to from Cape Comorin?

The Maharajas have come and even a dilapidated being like myself can be driven in a motor car. We have to re-arrange our lives. Municipal life is the beginning of the political life, the larger life throughout India. And what do we find? I entirely agree with the president of the Congress that before we can do anything whatsoever, before we can even claim to dream of self-government we shall have to do the plodding with might and main. What is it then we see? In every city there are two divisions. They are European division, of the educated class, and the other the city proper. But the city is really a stinking den. If you want I undertake to take you to any city. Take the South Africans whom I have fought. But there is one charge they bring against us. They say, 'Your ideas of cleanliness are strange.' And so they are. In many respects we are not. But we are a people not used to city life. But if we want city life we cannot reproduce hamlet life in cities, a life with any degree of comfort. You suppose that it is any comfort to anybody walking through the mahal and palces of Bombay, in the heart of Bombay, when people spit on you

from their great balconies. Why do not the municipal Commissioners of Bombay city do something in order to remedy the evil. I go in trains and do you suppose that I impose this third class travelling on myself for nothing? No my friends, I am one of the most selfish beings going on the face of the earth. I never do anything without knowing what I do it for. I travel third class in order to see the difficulties of my fellow passengers who are travelling third class. I do not blame the Railway Companies. By no means. But we do not learn the first lessons in cleanliness. We spit anywhere on the ground irrespective of the thought that there would be many passengers who would be coming there to sleep there. But I do not care. But what we find for our self-restraint There is room for 16 passengers, and 32 passengers come in there and they beg you to admit them. What can the Government or the Railway Company do? They beg you possibly until out of pity you admit those passengers. But what do they do? The passenger who is admitted says to others "Oh, hands off, you cannot come, there is no room" and then he forces his way, opens the door and in rushes the crowd of passengers. What is this? They are not all simpletons. They are not all come from the agricultural districts, men who have removed their hands from the plough. By no means. They are not the ancient people of whom Mrs. Besant has been telling you and me. But they are the modern passengers who flock to these railways and among them I have seen the student world also. They behave no better and in many respects they have said goodbye to the ordinary amenities of life. They can speak English and they have worn Norfolk jackets. Is this the way of gaining self-government? My friends, I have turned the searchlight all over, but as you have given me the time, as you have given me the privilege of speaking to you I am laying my heart bare. I went to that gorgeous ceremony of laying the foundation stone of this great University. His Highness the Maharaja who presided yesterday over our deliberations spoke about the poverty of India. Other speakers laid great stress upon the proverty of India. But what did I witness in that great pandal. Certainly a most gorgeous show, an exhibition of jewellery which is a splendid feast for the greatest jeweller who may choose to come from Paris. I want you also to become sharers of the thoughts that fill me. I find that the noblemen clan who in their own (?) considered they have regenerated the clan and if I cast my mental eyes upon these noblemen and my dear countrymen before whom I bow my head and then cast my eye on the poor, to these noblemen I say there is no Salvation for India unless you have stripped yourselves of this jewellery and held it in trust for your countrymen in India. (Hear, hear, and applause.) It is not the desire of the King-Emperor, it is not the desire of Lord Hardinge that in order to show the truest loyalty to our King-Emperor it is necessary for us to ransack our jewellery boxes and to appear jewelled from top to toe. I undertake at the peril of my life to bring to you a message from King George himself that he expects nothing of the kind. Sir, whenever I hear of a great palace rising in my great city of India, be it in British India or be it in India which is ruled by our great noblemen, Chiefs and Maharajas, I become jealous at once, and I say "Oh, it is the money that has come from the agriculturists." There can be no doubt about it. Over 75 per cent. of the population are agriculturists and Mr. Higginbottom told us last night in his own felicitous language, they were the men who, he told me ask if we would grow two blades in place of one. Do you suppose that we will be able to hold on to that additional blade? Do not make any mistake. We have others who will take away probably the whole of that blade. There may be some exaggeration but I think if you remove that exaggeration there is a great deal of truth. Bear in mind there can be no self-government, there can be none in the real sense of the term unless we rise superior to the present thought that rules us and that thought that we may become rich thereby. We shall show when India has received salvation. Neither the lawyers, not the doctors, not the rich landlords are going to bring salvation. The salvation is only going to come when the agriculturist, when the artisan of India is educated up to his sense of responsibility, when he finds that he has at least enough to feed himself on, to clothe himself. And you are not going to

learn all these things in the university and then go down to the masses. Let me give you a bit of life I have seen in Ahmedabad. I was sorroun ded on all sides by farmers. Will you believe me that they are not only growing (?) of the money-lender and the middleman but they also have to combat nature. There are monkeys all over these fields and they take their produce. You suppose that all our people do not know co-operation. I assure you they know. What are these poor peasants to do? The women who are not fit for any other work take empty tins and beat them and drive away the monkeys by means of the noise and thus they protect the fields. My friends, if you and I with better knowledge, better equipped probably with a little bit of capital are to go there and teach what lessons we might have learnt in the agricultural colleges, if they are colleges worth the name, then and then alone we may dream about self-government also.

Now, last but not the least it is my bounden duty to refer to this thing. I hope that reporters are not here to report me, if the thonghts reach them. I know I can control the spoken word, but I am not able myself to control my own word which may be written by reporters in India of whom I have had not a very happy experience. All of us had many anxious moments while the Viceroy was going through the streets of Benares and there were detectives placed in many places. We were horrified. I was horrified and said to myself, "Why this distrust? Is it not better that even Lord Hardinge should die than live a living death?" But a representative of a mighty sovereign may not. He might find it necessary even to live a living death. But why was it necessary to impose these detectives? We may foam, we may fret, we may resent, but let us not forget that India to-day in her impatience produced an army of anarchists. I myself am an anarchist but of another type. But there is another class of anarchists and to this class if I was able to reach them I would say these words: that anarchism has no room in India if India is to conquer the conqueror. Anarchism shows nothing but great fear. And my friends, living under the shadow of the mighty God and living in the shadow of this great sacred city I feel this; that if I trust and fear God I have to fear no one, not the Maharaja, not the Viceroy, not the detectives, not the police Investigation department, not even King George. I suggest to my students that that behaviour presupposes this fear. I honour him for the love of this country, I honour him for his bravery in willing to die for his country but I ask him—Is it honourable? Is that dagger of an assassin a fit precursor for an honourable death, even though it may be on the gallows? I deny, there is not one word in your scriptures for any such belief? I would certainly claim to speak out here although it may be that the cannon's mouth faces me: if I find it necessary that it is necessary for the salvation of India that the English should retire, that they should be driven out. I for one again declare that they will have to go away. Where there is honourable death your names and my name will go down to history, not as assassins but as men who died for their convictions, who died as religious men because they were fired with religious zeal and they died for their country. I say to the bomb thrower, he dies secretly plotting all sorts of things and what does he want to do? I have been told had we not done this, had some people not thrown bombs we should never have gained what we got with reference to the partition movement. (Mrs. Besant: please stop it). This was what I said in Bengal when Mr. Lyon presided at the meeting. I think it is necessary. I am not here to aim (an interruption). If I am told to stop I do with the greatest obedience. (Turning to the chairman. I await your orders. If you consider that I am not going on for the sake of the country and for the sake of the empire I shall certainly finish my address, but if you consider (cries of "go on" and "No".) The chairman—Please explain your object) I am explaining my object. I am simply (another interruption). My friends, then I suggest please do not resent this interruption and you may take it for granted that I have been exposed to these interruptions from friends and from those who have considered themselves opponents, not once but many a time and I have sat down when it has been necessary to sit down. If Mrs. Besant to-day, just now suggests that I should stop she does so because

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