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PRESIDENCY COLLEGE,
CALCUTTA.

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to their conscience and put to considerable trouble, others have suddenly been turned away

We have been confronted with a situation of extreme difficulty and I have certainly felt inclined to handle it with what some would regard as excessive caution. I can only say that it seems to me a situation in which an excessive caution is an effort on the right side.

The alternatives before us have been (1) to call in the police, (2) to use a display of counter force on our own part in some way or other and (3) to close the College. I append some comments on each of these possible courses.

(1) With regard to the police it has of course been extremely galling to see our own students turned away when they were merely trying to do what they had a perfect right to do, namely, to enter their own college and in any other country but Bengal, I suppose, the first and obvious thing to do would be to demand the assistance of the police ; but, in the first place, the prejudice against the use of the police and particularly in College affairs among the bhadralok class and in College Square/particular, seems extraordinarily strong. Moreover, there is this practical point that, as a matter of fact, a force of police would be placed in a position of extreme difficulty, unless the force were so large as to overawe the entire neighbourhood. Suppose we had a comparatively small force stationed at the college gates ; the picketers are no doubt able to call on large numbers of volunteers from outside, since the strike has been placed in the hands of the All Bengal Students' Association, stone-throwing would begin. After an hour or so the police would begin to get excited and we should find the usual thing and number of persons professing to be innocent passers by, complaining that they had been maltreated. In any case I am not aware of any instance in which the call-

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calling in of the police to settle a college disturbance has been a success. So for these reasons I have refrained during the past three days under extreme provocation from asking for police assistance.

(2) Next, there is the question of exercising force on our own part. This would really be the best solution if effectively done and I have been doing my best yesterday and today to urge on all students who propose to come to the College to organise themselves into bands and force their way through any obstruction. I hope they will do this tomorrow. To some slight extent it was done today. I considered most carefully the question of calling for volunteers to clear the gateway of the obstructors, but perhaps with that excessive caution, to which I have referred, I have not taken this step. In the first place, as I have said, there has been an appearance of non-violence when I have been on the spot and I stood myself in the gateway for two longish periods this morning. You will understand how readily in the circumstances a display of organised force on our part would be magnified and distorted beyond all points. But of all the practical consideration is this. As I have said, I presume the picketers have large resources at their disposal. Supposing that they-would-clear we clear the picketers out of the gateway, they would call for reinforcements and in a short time scatter our small bands and pursue them into the compound (hitherto they have kept outside the gates) I have felt afraid that in such an event matters would get beyond my control, some students would be more or less seriously hurt and I of course should be most severely blamed before not having summoned the police or having used force or for doing something or other.

(3) Closing the College.- I confess I thought yesterday afternoon when affairs seemed to ^{have} ~~be~~ got rather riotous that we should have to close the College. Today my impression is that things look a

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a little brighter. One point which makes me particularly anxious at least to carry on as long as possible is that some students/ have been told that if the strike lasts only for three days, the , the College would be closed and other demands granted. Although, therefore, the closing of the College would be an extreme relief to me personally, I am quite against closing it unless we are forced to do so, as it would unquestionably be regarded as a triumph for the picketers. If the college is to be closed later, it should be certainly till the Pujahs. It might perhaps be shortened at the other end. To close for a shorter period would merely be postponing trouble ~~for~~ a few days. Even if we close till the Pujahs, we should have no assurance that picketing will not begin again on the reopening day.

I want, therefore, to carry on as we are doing until any marked development, favourable or other, shows itself.

Yours sincerely,

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D. P. I. Bengal.

P. S. I enclose copies of a strike Bulletin which was distributed this morning and an Appeal to the students of Calcutta which was put into my hands at about 3 this afternoon. You will see that the Bulletin concludes by stating that the students of all the colleges have resolved upon one day strike but mentions no date. I took it to mean that the one day strike was to be held today. The Appeal, however, fixes all College strike and a procession for to-morrow. Possibly they found that they could not fix it for today. I have consulted some of the professors whose opinions I most value and feel sure that we ought to do our best to carry on to-

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tomorrow as usual. It is possible that this is a last attempt to keep the affair going and we should ruin the effect of all our efforts this week if we close the college for a day. Possibly the procession cannot be at all a success, for example, a severe downfal or rain would probably have a damping effect on the ardour of the processionists.