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INDIAN LIBERALISM

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INDIAN LIBERALISM

—A STUDY—

[SILVER JUBILEE VOLUME]

1918-43

by

V. N. NAIK, M.A.

WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY

Sir SIVASWAMY AIYER, K.C.S.I., C.I.E., LL.D.

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FOREWORD

At the meeting of the Council of the National Liberal Federation held immediately after the close of the last session of the Federation held in Bombay in December 1943, Mr. E. Vinayak Row made a suggestion that the Federation should celebrate its Silver Jubilee in 1945 and on that auspicious occasion, issue a Souvenir giving the origin and history of the Indian Liberal Party. The Council referred the matter to the Western India National Liberal Association, Bombay, for report. That Association after considering the matter and its financial implications, informed the Council that the scheme was a good one and that it was prepared to undertake the work of publishing the Jubilee Memorial Volume. This suggestion was agreed to and the Association then requested Prof. V. N. Naik, till lately Head of the English Department of the Ramnarain Ruia College, Bombay, and a member of the Indian Liberal Party from its inception, to write the book. The Volume is now ready and is placed before the Party and the public.

Bombay,
28th Feb. 1945.

CHIMANLAL H. SETALVAD.

INTRODUCTION

The political awakening of India may be said to date not later than the first Indian National Congress in 1885. In the course of its evolution there have been differences of aim and method which are natural and inevitable in the history of any political movement. When such differences continue for a long time, a separate organisation becomes justifiable. The conviction that there were such radical differences among the members of the Congress led to the formation of a separate organisation in 1918. The members of this organisation were first known as 'moderates,' and their designation was subsequently changed into 'National Liberals.' This party has lived and continued to function for over quarter of a century, and its history furnishes sufficient justification for the secession of 1918. The differences between the Congress and the National Liberal Federation are radical and cannot be bridged over. The Liberal Party is convinced that the policy it has followed is the only sound one that could have been followed in the circumstances of the case, and it believes that if this policy had been steadily pursued by all parties, the country could have made a much greater political advance.

The history of the Liberal Party is clearly set forth in this book, though it may perhaps be considered by many at too great length. The book now published gives a very readable history of the political life of the country since 1918. The leaders whose views are discussed form a galaxy of the most talented public men in this country whose names are so well known that it is unnecessary to add any words of commendation to induce the public to read the book.

I hope that the book will commend itself to a growing circle of the thoughtful public in India.

Mylapore, Madras,
15th May 1945.

P. S. SIVASWAMY AIYER.

CHAPTER I

THE LIBERAL TRADITION —A RETROSPECT

THE tradition of liberalism in India is much older than the formation of the Liberal Party as a separate body from the Indian National Congress in the year 1918. The tradition dates back to Raja Ram Mohan Roy who was the pioneer of all progressive movements in India including political progress as well. Himself a devout worshipper at the shrine of liberty, he realised even so far back as 1820 that liberty to be properly enjoyed must be regulated liberty, that freedom has its own restraints as much as order. In the field of social and religious reform no less than in journalism and politics, his one endeavour was to awaken his countrymen not only to their rights as free men, but also to their obligations to society. He strove in his day, and all by himself, to impress upon them one supreme lesson, namely, to understand their country's past aright, and to assimilate thoroughly to that past the light that had come from the West as the result of British connection with India. Raja Ram Mohan Roy's liberalism was before the dawn of liberalism in Europe, and before its rise in the mid-Victorian period of English history.

Another great liberal along the same line was Mahadeo Govind Ranade, endowed with the gifts of head and heart greater far than those of any of his contemporaries, or than of any other man after him.

Sir Pherozeshah Mehta described him, in a speech made from the Congress platform in 1904, as a robust optimist, and proudly owned himself as belonging to his school of thought and action. Ranade, speaking on Telang before the Hindu Union Club of Bombay, described that school as the Telang School of thought and action. In Telang, who along with Mehta and Tyabji formed the political triumvirate of Bombay in his day, two strains had combined to make him the leader of thought between the years 1879-1893. "wisdom, sobriety and right direction" was one of them. And the other was "the welcoming of all light, and especially the Western light". Gokhale, speaking from the platform of a Provincial Political Conference in the Presidency of Bombay, put these three great men together as the leading lights of India. And to point out "the distinction without difference" between them, he attributed to each one of them an outstanding quality peculiarly his own. Ranade he described as a man of historic imagination, Mehta as a man of courage, and Telang as a man of culture. In any political movement marked for success, it will be realised that these three attributes have together to come into play.

Victorian liberalism influenced Dadabhai Naoroji before Ranade, as it influenced Mehta and Gokhale after him. Mehta took his lessons in politics from Dadabhai Naoroji during the years that he was in England reading for the bar. Gokhale learnt them sitting at the feet of his political Guru, Ranade. And later on, he learnt them in close and reverent association with Mehta. All three of them looked up to Dadabhai Naoroji as their master. In a lecture on Dadabhai Naoroji in Bombay in September 1905, Gokhale spoke of him in the following words: "No,

gentlemen, whether Mr. Dadabhai uses mild or bitter words, our place is round his standard—by his side. Whoever repudiates Dadabhai, he is none of us. Whoever tries to lay rude and irreverent hands on him, strike him down." On an occasion of unveiling Dadabhai's portrait in the Framji Cowasji Institute in Bombay, Ranade called him the teacher of political India—"one in three hundred millions, one in a century." About Mehta, Gokhale often said that "he would rather be wrong *with* Mehta than right *without* him."

ANIMATED MODERATION

Such were the men who, on this side of India, had guided the Indian National Congress in its early and formative years. These leaders piloted the institution as a central body that had for its aim the focussing of all political thought in the country, and the shaping of public opinion by that thought, so that they might help the political evolution of India along right lines. A writer of earlier days has described their liberalism, in one aspect of it, as "animated moderation"—a phrase borrowed by him from Walter Bagehot's famous book "Physics and Politics". What is animated moderation? Bagehot explains it as follows: "It is a subtle quality or combination of qualities singularly useful in practical life. It is, in fact, a union of life with measure, of spirit with reasonableness." Then Bagehot proceeds to show how that quality works out in political action. "The man of animated moderation," he says, "has plenty of energy in him, and yet he does not go too far, and, therefore, he is a success. He has plenty of go in him; but he knows when to pull up." A mind instinct with this spirit is not an idiosyncratic mind violently disposed to extremes of opinion. He is not, on the other hand, "a bodiless thinker or an ineffectual scholar."

Animated moderation, in short, "is the union of spur and bridle, energy and moderation."

The early leaders of the Congress, though they were in their day reviled as

> "discontented place-seekers, men of straw, with no stake in the country, persons of considerable imitative powers, of total ignorance of the real problems of government, delegates from all the talking clubs—and as such might become a serious danger to public tranquility,"

by no less a journal than the *London Times*, had, every one of them, this quality in them—a quality described in other words as a fine blend of historic sense, culture and courage. Hence, they led public opinion rather than allow themselves to be driven by it.

The Liberal tradition is, in the first place, a tradition of reasonableness, " of reason fused with emotion, or of emotion tempered by reason ". Next, it is a tradition of toleration, which Gokhale clinched in a famous address in 1907 in the following words : " Whoever is not against us is with us ; let us not do our work in a narrow, exclusive, intolerant spirit which says, whoever is not with us is against us." This spirit of toleration insisting on agreement in essentials, and, for the rest, on charity, has been the guiding principle of liberal politics since its beginning with the Congress in 1885 down to this date. As Mr. Chintamani has pointed out in his lectures on Indian Politics,

> "the liberals had never desired to remain as a separate organisation, but the position was forced upon them by the fact that the Congress was shunted off its marked track by the policy and programme of non-co-operation which Mr. Gandhi had made it adopt, as its way to Swaraj, in 1920."

Mr. Gandhi himself said about the Congress in 1930 at the 2nd Round Table Conference :

"The Congress is, if I am not mistaken, the oldest political organisation we have in India. It has had nearly fifty years of life, during which period it has without exception held its sessions. It is what it means—national. It represents no particular community, no particular class, no particular interest. It claims to represent Indian interests. It is a matter of the greatest pleasure for me to state that it was first conceived in an English brain. Allan Octavius Hume we know as the father of the Congress. It was nursed by two great Parsees, Sir Pherozeshah Mehta and Dadabhai Naoroji whom all India delighted to recognise as its grand old man. From its very commencement the Congress had Mussalmans, Christians, Anglo-Indians—I might say all religious sects and communities represented on it. The late Budruddin Tyabji identified himself with the Congress. We have had Mussalmans and Parsees as its Presidents."

CO-OPERATION AND CRITICISM

The tradition established by the stalwarts of the Congress whom Mr. Gandhi has mentioned in the above extract, it departed from since 1918, and threw it completely overboard in 1920, at the instance of Mr. Gandhi himself, when it resolved to boycott the new Councils under the Montagu Reforms of 1919 and went into the wilderness of non-co-operation. The fundamental position of the Congress, till then, as one of its Presidents had put it, was "to co-operate where we can and criticise where we must". At the end of the Nagpur Session of the Congress in 1920, Mr. Gandhi wrote about the change brought about by him in the Congress as follows:

"The Congress changed entirely from this year, becoming a constructive instead of a petitioning body. The longest and the most important Congress ever held has come and gone. It was the biggest demonstration ever held against the present system of Government. The President uttered the whole truth when he said that it was a Congress in which instead of the President and the leaders driving the people, the people drove him and the latter."

What the Congress has won either in the way of Swaraj or in its constructive programme, is a matter of history on which we need not dwell here. But we may only note in passing what Mr. Gandhi himself said of the same Congress—a huge majority behind him—only two years after. These are his words :

"As it is, the Congress organisation is still imperfect, and its instructions are imperfectly carried out. The volunteers do not conform to all the conditions of the pledge. I am in the unhappy position of a surgeon proved skillless to deal with an admittedly dangerous case." And, again, later, "there is so much undercurrent of violence, both conscious and unconscious, that I was actually and literally praying for a disastrous defeat. I know that the only thing Government dread is this huge majority I seem to command. They little know that I dread it more than they. I have become literally sick of the adoration of the unthinking multitude."

The Congress was twitted in its early years as being "a microscopic minority". In Mr. Gandhi's hands it became a huge majority. Whether it reached the membership of one crore claimed for it in those days is more than one can say. But that the change in its method and creed had made it a megaphone of one voice, none can gainsay. And just a year before it declared for complete independence to be won by mass civil disobedience, this is what Mr. Gandhi said of it :

"Our Congress roll to-day is nothing but a bogus affair. Let us face facts. It is worth nothing. We want a living register of the Congress. In the present state of the country where we cannot trust our own brothers and sisters, our parents and party leaders or any body else; when we have no sense of honour, and when we cannot allow our words to remain unaltered for twenty-four hours, do not talk of independence."

Mr. Gandhi boasted in 1920 that he had changed the Congress from a petitioning body to a body

intent on constructive work. In June 1924 we knew what that constructive work had come to. Babu Rajendra Prasad writes about it in his introduction to the second volume of collected writings known as *Young India* (1924-26).

"The meeting ended in gloom and Mahatma Gandhi was pained beyond measure to see the disruption of the great movement brought about as much by those who had thrown out his programme during his absence as by the inactivity, disorganisation and demoralisation of those who yet professed to follow him."

The Congress between the years 1885-1905 was, perhaps, a petitioning body, was following, as some of the extremists in it said at the time, "a policy of mendicancy", though that charge was fully answered in the presidential speech of Dadabhai Naoroji at Calcutta in 1906. But it had never suffered the fate described above in the words of Babu Rajendra Prasad. On the other hand, it had gone from strength to strength, and its influence had to be recognised in 1906 by a writer and statesman like Lord Morley. In his first speech as the Secretary of State for India, Mr. Morley said:

"Then there is the Congress. I do not say I agree with all that the Congress desires but speaking broadly of what I conceive to be at the bottom of the Congress, I do not see why any one who takes a cool and steady view of Indian Government should be frightened. I will not at once conclude that, because a man is dissatisfied and discontented, he is disaffected. Why, our own reforms and changes have been achieved by dissatisfied men who were no more disaffected than you or I. If there be disaffection—and there may be some—I will not, so far as I have anything to do with the Government of India, play the game of disaffection by exaggerating the danger or by overreadiness to scent evil."

In spite of some flare up of turmoil and acute differences between the two wings of the Congress at

Surat in 1907, it did not suffer the *kind* of disruption and demoralisation, nor was there such a falling off in its membership as Mr. Gandhi himself mentioned at the end of 1924. In November 1924 Mr. Gandhi had to note : " There are but seven thousand men and women spinning voluntarily in India and the membership of the Congress is only 15,000 ",—a considerable drop, indeed, from the ten millions he had aspired after, in February 1922.

The liberal tradition, that we speak of before 1918, is well reflected in the speeches and writings of men like Dadabhai Naoroji, Mehta, Gokhale, Surendra Nath Banerji and other prominent leaders of the Congress movement in India, whose patriotism, to apply to them words which Mr. Gandhi has used about Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, was " *sans peur et sans reproche* ". They have given us by their conduct in public life, as well as by their spoken word, the fundamentals of Indian liberalism. And we cannot do better than quote typical passages from their speeches on each of the cardinal tenets of their faith.

We begin, naturally enough, with Dadabhai Naoroji, who may be considered the fount and origin of our political activity, first in India and then in England. It was not merely his age that had entitled him to be called " the grand old man of India ". From the time that he began his public life in the fifties of the last century down to 1906 when he gave his third presidential address to the Congress at Calcutta, he had served India " unhasting and unresting ", and was, on that account, regarded as the unquestioned leader of India—" the Master of those who knew ", as we realise from what Ranade and Gokhale thought of him. We swear, all of us, without distinction of party and creed, by his mantra of Swaraj ; we revere him as a Maharshi ;

we look up to him as the saint, sage and seer of Indian politics. He was the first to set the lesson in India of dedicated life. Born poor, he remained poor all his life in the service of his country and its people. He never spoke without books, without facts and figures to support the statements that he made, as one may know from his monumental work on "Poverty and un-British rule in India". Patience and perseverance were his watchwords. He had his "vision splendid" about the future of India. But his feet were firmly planted on the path he had to tread. A pure life, a simple life, a noble life, a dedicated, saintly life—that was Dadabhai Naoroji.

PURE POLITICS

In the Congress of 1886, this grand old man of India made the following important declaration, which all of us would do well to lay to heart. Thereby he made the Congress a purely political organisation, not concerned with the social and religious problems of the different communities in India. Said Dadabhai Naoroji :

"Certainly no member of this National Congress is more alive to the necessity of social reform than I am; but, gentlemen, for everything there are proper times, proper circumstances, and proper places; we are met together as a political body to represent to our rulers our political aspirations, not to discuss social reforms; and if you blame us for ignoring these, you should blame the House of Commons for not discussing the abstruse problems on mathematics and metaphysics. But, besides this, there are here Hindus of every caste, amongst whom, even in the same province, customs, and social arrangements differ widely,—there are Mohammedans, and Christians of various denominations, there are Parsees, Sikhs, Bramhos and what not—men, indeed, of each and all of those numerous classes which in the aggregate constitute the people of India. A National Congress must confine itself to ques-

tions in which the entire nation has a direct participation, and it must leave the adjustment of social reforms and other questions to class Congresses."

This fundamental consideration has been the sheet-anchor of the Liberal party since its separation from the Congress in 1918. The Congress changed all this since it closely bound itself up with the Khilafat question which was peculiar in India to no other community than the Mohammedans. It was a purely religious question with which British India had nothing to do. It was saddled on the Congress by Mr. Gandhi for the sake of Hindu-Muslim unity, thereby giving ground for the Muslims, later on, to say that the Congress represented and worked only for the Hindus in India. And the result of it all we know to-day by our tremendous set-back and by confusion in politics all round. The same may be said of questions like anti-untouchability, prohibition, charka and khaddar, which have no bearing on the winning of Swaraj, and should not have been self-imposed as conditions precedent to our moving forward on the road to Swaraj to be won within the period of one year. What the country needs to-day, as what it needed then was "to create unity and not fresh divisions". "It was. therefore, inadvisable to involve ourselves in activities", as Dadabhai Naoroji pointed out in 1886, that tended "to add to our difficulties and resulted in conflict".

BRITISH CONNECTION

The second basic fact which guided the Congressmen of those days was that the self-government that Indians should strive for and obtain for their country, necessarily implied its integration, as an equal partner, and not as "a trustee-dependent", with what was then known as British Empire. It was Sir Henry Cotton

who defined that goal for India in his Congress Presidential address in Bombay in 1904; Gokhale reiterated it at Benares in 1905 ; and Dadabhai set his seal upon it at Calcutta in 1906. Complete independence, that implied the severence of the British connection, was not their creed. For they knew then, as we do now, that India, as an isolated unit, would never be able to defend herself from foreign aggression. Her safety lay in her association, as an integral member, with the British Commonwealth of Nations. The conception of the British Empire has undergone during the interval a complete change, so that Dominion Status means to-day a higher and a freer status than what was then implied by the term "self-government on colonial lines". It gives the "dominions" all the rights and privileges of autonomy and self-government without the disadvantages and perils of an isolated existence. The famous speech of Mr. C. R. Das at the Faridpur Conference—his last political will and testament—has made the fact clear beyond all doubt and glossing over. We give here the following pertinent quotation from that speech made by him on May 2nd, 1925:

"The Empire idea gives us a vivid sense of many advantages. Dominion Status to-day is in no sense servitude. It is essentially an alliance, by consent of those who form part of the Empire, for material advantages in the real spirit of co-operation. It is realised that under modern conditions no nation can live in isolation, and Dominion Status, while it affords complete protection to each constituent composing the great Commonwealth of Nations called the British Empire, secures to each the rights to realise itself, develop itself, and fulfil itself, and, therefore, it expresses and implies all the elements of Swaraj I have mentioned."

The founders of the Congress, including men like Dadabhai, Mehta and Gokhale, were fully aware of the

facts of the Indian situation, and therefore, they carefully refrained from indulging in heroics which, they were convinced, could lead us nowhere. This attitude on their part was not an attitude of subservience, of slavish mentality, or of fulsome flattery towards the rulers. As one writer on the subject so aptly puts it "their patriotism was not the fruit of their loyalty, rather their loyalty was the fruit of their sturdy patriotism".

This feeling of loyalty marked a great leader of the Congress, no other than Sir Pherozeshah Mehta. At the beginning of the last war, at a public meeting held in Bombay, he expressed himself in these words :

"Never in the memory of the oldest man living has there been a drama of War and strife involving such momentous issues of honour, of duty, and of vital interest for the whole British Empire as has been unfolding itself before us since the last few days on a theatre of more than continental dimensions. At this juncture of supreme gravity, we have met together here to-day, in this public hall, men of different races and religion, of different creeds and communities, English, Hindu, Parsee and Mahomedan, to proclaim with one heart, one soul, and one mind that these differences distinguish but do not divide us, and that in the presence of the solemn situation we are merged in one general and universal denomination—the proud denomination of loyal and devoted subjects of the British Crown. Ladies and Gentlemen, often enough have we met in this historic hall to speak of our rights, our charters and our privileges. At this solemn moment we can only remember that we have sacred duties and obligations to that British Rule under whose auspices the lofty destinies of this great and magnificent land are being moulded for over a century, and under whose wise and provident, righteous statesmanship the welfare and prosperity of this country are being incessantly promoted."

This was the utterance of one who had never bended his knee to the bureaucrat, and whom a

bureaucrat, holding the highest office in the State in the regime of Lord Elgin, Sir James Westland, had described as the protagonist of the "New Spirit" in India. It was on the 13th of August 1914 that Mehta spoke these words, and we have no doubt what he would have said if he were in our midst to-day.

EQUAL PARTNERSHIP

In the speech from which we have quoted, Mehta has referred to "our rights, our charters, our privileges". And that was exactly the position of Dadabhai Naoroji in his fight for Swaraj as we know from his presidential address to the Congress in 1906. The highest aspiration which he cherished for Indians was their recognition as British citizens not only in name but in fact. He had no use for birth-right or an abstract right. He hated craft and credulity on the one hand as much as he hated refined policy and finessing on the other. He showed up the British statesman by his proclamations, promises and charters, which he had given to the ear only to break them to the heart. He had no mercy for the bureaucrat in India who was described by another great Indian in the Council Hall as one "who like the Bourbon never learnt and never forgot".

Turning to Dadabhai's last political utterance we find India's claim to full citizenship made out on the strength of past charters and promises. He quotes *seriatim* the solemn pledges given to India by England. While confessing frankly to the fact that "all our sufferings and evils in the past centuries" were due to the British—un-British—rule in India, he demanded reparation for them by appeal to "the revival in England of the old British instinct of liberty and self-government." And in that matter, again, he appealed

"to the conscience of the British people." He then outlined the policy and programme that would bring to Indians the full enjoyment of their rights as British citizens. Finally, he clinched the whole argument in that one memorable word "Swaraj" which he was careful to underline as "Swaraj like that of the United Kingdom or the Colonies". And last, he defined his own faith emphatically and unmistakably as follows:

"My disappointments have not been of the ordinary kind but far worse and keener. Ordinarily a person fights and if he fails he is disappointed. But I fought and won on several occasions, but the executive did not let us have the fruit of these victories,—disappointment quite enough to break one's heart. But I have not despaired. Not only that I have not despaired, but, at this moment, you may think it strange, I stand before you with hopefulness."

What matters most in this confession of faith is that that faith made him hold to the path of constitutional agitation which is another fundamental in the liberal tradition established by the Indian National Congress of old. We have tried since his day many a new method. We have appealed to President Wilson of the United States of America. We have tried the method of direct action, thrice over, and, for three times again, we had to revert to the beaten path of settlement by negotiation—what was described by Mr. Gandhi at the end of 1934 as "parliamentary mentality." We have announced our determination to have nothing short of "complete independence" and then climbed down to the "substance of independence." And last we have fallen upon "open rebellion" and find ourselves in a plight to-day that is a compound of "dissidence of dissent" and "confusion worse confounded."

RATIONAL COMPROMISE

The Liberals of those days, as the early Congress men can be rightly so called, knew the essentials of true

compromise. They did not " dream the impossible and neglect the attainable "—to use the words of that great statesman of Italy, Count Cavour. They did not allow mere enthusiasm and demonstration to do duty for reasoned scrutiny. They had their visions and ideals, but they were keen-eyed and level-headed enough to face hard facts. Hence, while desiring India to be free, they were convinced in their mind, that the freedom they cheirshed for their motherland could not be achieved by talking of " complete independence " and " direct action ".

The self-government within the Empire has come to mean now much more than what it connoted when they wrote and spoke. Even when Mr. C. R. Das wrote of Dominion Status in 1925, it had not the meaning and import which it had acquired since, as the result of the Balfour Declaration of 1926 and the Statute of Westminster after it. Sir Stafford Cripps, the latest emissary of peace from England to India, has made this position clear. In his book on " Subject India " written by a friend of India, Mr. Brailsford, this fact is stated in the plainest of terms. First, he mentions what Sir Stafford told the Indian Journalists about the status of the Indian Union in the Commonwealth of Nations. and, when they asked him if the Union was entitled to go out of it, the author tells us that Sir Stafford told them " Yes, the Dominion will be completely free either to remain within or go without the Commonwealth of Nations." To which the author further adds that "Mr. Amery also said in his speech in the House of Commons on April 20th 1942 that "India would have *de facto* power to secede from the Commonwealth ".

Continuance of the British connection was the faith not only of Dadabhai Naoroji and Ranade, but also of Gokhale. Mr. Gandhi's position in this matter is well

brought out, by the way, in George Slocombe's Memoirs entitled "The Tumult and Shouting". He was, as the world knows by now, the negotiator of peace in the stormy days of 1930. He saw Mr. Gandhi in prison and got from him a signed draft on the basis of which truce could be brought about between the Government and the Congress. He suggested to him the phrase "substance of independence" to save the face of the Congress, as a substitute for "complete independence", which could bring it into line with Dominion Status that had obtained sanction from the First Round Table Conference. Here are Mr. George Slocombe's words:

"I begged him (Gandhi) not to close the door in the face of settlement. A demand for outright independence, I said, was in the present state of Anglo-Indian relations, wildly impossible. If, as he seemed ready to admit, Dominion Status in the sense in which it was enjoyed by the British Dominions was regarded by him and the Indian Nationalists as the equivalent of independence, why would he not accept it? After an hour of fresh debate, during which he seemed obdurate in his dislike of the much compromised and ever equivocal term of Dominion Status, I had what proved to be a happy inspiration. I suggested that he should accept the formula 'the substance of independence,' and after some cogitation he acquiesced. The compromise subsequently made a good impression on the receptive mind of Indian politicians."

In relation to the question of India's destiny within the British Empire, Gokhale is even more explicit than Dadabhai Naoroji. Said he in 1907 at Allahabad with Pandit Motilal Nehru in the Chair :

"Let me say at the outset that I recognise no limits to my aspiration for our people. I want our people to be in their own country what other people are in theirs. I want our men and women, without distinction of caste of creed, to have opportunities to grow to the full height of their stature, unhampered by cramping and unnatural restrictions. I want India to take her proper place among the

great nations of the world, industrially and politically, in religion, in literature, in Science and in Arts. I want all this and feel, at the same time, that the whole of this aspiration can, in essence and reality, be realised within the Empire. The question was one not of dreams, of what was theoretically perfect, but of what was practically attainable. It was further a question also of muscle, and character, of capacity, organisation and sacrifice. The cases of the French in Canada, and of the Boers in South Africa showed that there was room enough in this Empire for a self-respecting India. Some of our friends appalled by the supreme difficulty of their task and under the difficulty that this goal can never be attained, had begun to talk of another goal ever more impossible of attainment. They were like persons who sought to fly from the evils they knew of to those they knew nothing about. The goal of self-government within the Empire involved a minimum of disturbance of existing ideas, and it meant proceeding along lines which we understand, however difficult the progress might be. It would be madness, it would be folly, to throw away in the struggle before us the enormous advantages —the genius of the British people as revealed in their history which made on the whole for political freedom, for constitutional liberty. I am glad to see that one of the leaders of the New Party, Mr. Tilak, had stated in a recent issue of his paper that self-government on colonial lines sufficed him as a thing to work for."

CONSTITUTIONAL AGITATION

Gokhale then proceeded to consider the means by which the goal was to be reached. And the answer he gave is another fundamental of the Liberal tradition. Gokhale first said that he could point out no royal road. But he added, "one thing was certain that the goal being what it was, their reliance must be on what was called constitutional agitation". The nature and scope of that agitation had been made clear before him by Dadabhai Naoroji in the ever memorable Congress address of 1906. Gokhale, in the lecture we are drawing upon, further dotted its i's and crossed its t's. He

for these were not only the duties of England to India but in the interest of both as partners in what was then known as British Empire. He concluded :

"It was idle to object that history did not record any such peaceful transfer of power from one country to another. The situation in India was without a parallel. My faith is not based on emotion, not on unreasoning sentiment, it rests on the records of what has already been achieved by the undying labours of far-sighted English statesmen and noble-hearted Indian patriots, both those who are still working for the cause and those whose labours are done and whose spirits hover over us to-day to guide and inspire us."

THEIR CRITERION

While the patriots of those days, to whom Lord Sinha has referred, maintained firmly that there was no short cut to the political salvation of India, they were careful not to subscribe to the opposite doctrine of infinite delay and continued postponement supported by the sophistical argument of the bureaucrat expressed in the phrase "deserve before you desire". Gokhale was not certainly "an impatient idealist crying for the Moon". He realised, as fully as Lord Morley, the tardy steps that led to the goal, and the struggle we had to pass through. But he did not subscribe on that account to the gospel of fitness before hand. Gokhale quoted Gladstone and laid down that "It was liberty alone that fitted men for liberty", and that "though this proposition, like every other proposition in politics had its bounds, it was far safer than the counter doctrine, 'wait till they are fit'."

One of the drawbacks—and the most outstanding drawback—of British rule in India was the fatal one of infinite delay. The word 'delay' was writ large on the pages of Indian history under that rule. And it was the unwillingness of government to do everything

in time that had spelt disaster all along the road. The plea of unfitness was but one excuse, out of many, not to do in time and gracefully what was needed to keep India happy and contented. One of the deeper causes of Indian unrest was an absolute lack of statesmanship and vision in those who really ruled India. The Liberals have not spared the bureaucrat and the man on the spot for breaking the promises given to India in several charters from 1833 to the advent of the Montagu-Reforms. Extremism in India was born of this persistent delay, indifference, neglect and hauteur on the part of the man on the spot, helped by his ally in that respect—the die-hard in England. And the Indian liberal from the day of Dadabhai Naoroji down to our own times had all along warned the rulers of the greatest blunder they had been committing in the administration of India, treating her as no better than a crown colony. It was Mr. Montagu who had realised fully the peril of the path the bureaucrat was following, and he had no hesitation in condemning the administration under him as a machine, and, on that account, wooden, antedeluvian, and useless even for the efficiency by which the bureaucrat swore so much. So that though, on the one hand, the liberal did not believe in any short cut to the goal, he did not, on the other hand, uphold the doctrine of unfitness as barring the road to progress. What he really meant was that. as Indians, it was neither right nor expedient for us to throw away what had come to us as the result of our own work in the past, simply because it did not take us at one bound into "the promised land." What we had won by our own labour and agitation, we must use to the full and press for more, profiting by the experience and strength it would give to our hand to fight for more. That was the standpoint not only

of the so-called moderates in India till 1920, but also of the double-distilled extremists, a man like Tilak, for instance, who never let go what would come in his way, though he would never give up his fight for more. "Caesar or None" was not the motto of the Liberals. And they did not subscribe to the equally foolish and spurious principle of the survival of the fittest. Rather they toiled on to make the many fit to survive.

Constitutional agitation had, according to them, this advantage over "open rebellion," or "terrorism cum revolution." The former built up the strength of the nation, albeit, gradually ; and did not, like the latter, involve such failures and disasters, as would, in the end, leave the country thoroughly helpless, divided, disunited and unable to do anything further. The liberals from whom we have quoted above were all of them believers and workers "for the one step that was enough for them." They did see the distant scene, but did not fail to make their footing firm on the road by which not they, perhaps, but their successors would enter the promised land. Sentiment had, for them, its own proper place in politics, but not to the extent that it should lead them into rash action and reckless policy.

NON-COMMUNAL OUTLOOK

We are passing through times when national politics is overwhelmed by, if not entirely, submerged in, communal politics. The liberal tradition, set by the founders of the Indian National Congress, was directly opposed to this kind of sectional or communal politics. It swore by the essential unity of India, and by India as a nation, and not a sub-continent—a heterogenous mass of warring communities. Indian aspiration for self-government, democracy and parliamentary insti-

tutions can never be realised, it held, till leaders and followers had realised, in every field of national life, that they were Indians first and everything else only afterwards. That was the firm stand of men like Sir Pherozeshah Mehta, who expressed his faith in the clearest of terms in a famous speech from the Congress platform. He said in 1890 as President of the Congress:

"To my mind a Parsi is a better and truer Parsi, as a Mahomedan or a Hindu is a better and truer Mahomedan or Hindu, the more he is attached to the land that gave him birth, the more he is bound in brotherly relations and affection to all the children of the soil, the more he recognises the fraternity of all the native communities in the country, and the immutable bond which binds them together in the pursuit of common aims and objects under a common Government. Is it possible to imagine that Dadabhai, for instance, true Parsi that he is, is anything but an Inlian, living and working all his life for India, with the true and tender loyalty of a son? Can any one doubt, if I may be allowed to take another illustration, that Sir Syed Ahmad Khan was greater and nobler when he was devoting the great energies and talents with which he was endowed—if for the benefit of Mahomedans in particular—for the benefit of all Indians in general than when, as of late, he was preaching a gospel of selfishness and isolation? The birthright, therefore, gentlemen, which the Parsis thus possess of so indefeasible and glorious a charter, they have refused and will always refuse to sell for any mess of pottage, however fragrant and tempting. More especially, therefore, as an Indian it is that I return to you my grateful thanks for the honour you have done to me."

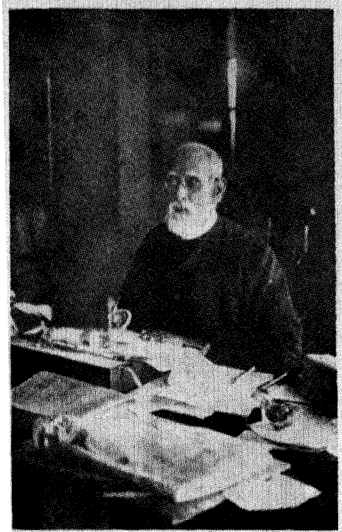
Sir Pherozeshah Mehta like all true Congress leaders—and the present-day liberals are heirs to that tradition—always stood by one nation theory in India, and refused to be divided on the ground of community, race and religion in India. He quotes in this address from a famous article contributed at the time to a

conservative review—*the National*—by a conservative writer to support his view-point. And the quotation is as apt to-day as it was in 1890. This is the passage he quoted:

"The supposed rivalry between Mussalmans and Hindus is a convenient decoy to distract atention and to defer the day of reform. I do not wish to affirm that there is no antagonism between the adherents of two faiths, but I do most positively assert that the antagonism has been grossly exaggerated. Every Municipal improvement and charitable work finds members of the two faiths working together and subscribing funds to carry it out. Every political paper finds supporters from believers in both creeds. Just the same is witnessed in the proceedings of the Congress. The members of the Congress meet together as men, on the common basis of nationality, being citizens of one country, subjects of one power, amenable to one code of laws, taxed by one authority, influenced for weal or woe by one system of administration, urged by like impulses to secure like rights, and to be relieved of like burdens. If these are not sufficient causes to weld people together into one common alliance of nationality, it is difficult to conceive what would be sufficient. It is for this reason that the organisation has been called the Indian National Congress; not because, it claims a non-existent unity of race, but because it deals with rights and interests which are national in character, and matters in which all inhabitants of the Indian penninsula are equally concerned."

Those who sought to divide India by an appeal to communal interests, were the enemies of India and not her friends. That was the attitude of men like Sir Pherozeshah Mehta in private and public life. The communal question had not become so grave and acute then as it has become now. Though in the early days of the Congress the Mohammedans were advised to keep aloof from the Congress, there was not then between them that sharp antagonism which we witness to-day.

Founders



Sir Surendra Nath Banerji
(President 1918)



Sir Dinshaw Wacha



Sir P. S. Sivaswamy Aiyer
(President 1919 & 1926)



Sir Yajneshwar Chintamani
(President 1920 & 1931)

Liberalism regarded it as national suicide to exploit social and religious differences for fomenting political differences. In more than one address and speech Ranade and Gokhale had pointed out how these differences could be softened and ultimately overcome by fastening attention on public work that brought equal good to all. The latter had started the Servants of India Society in 1905 to promote such work and wipe out differences of caste and creed. It was made a condition of membership in that Society that those who would dedicate themselves to the service of their country must rise above these narrow considerations and set aside all prejudices that divided man from man. No liberal worth the name will ever place his caste, community, Province and race above the nation that is his first interest in public life. He knows not parochial or communal politics such as the Muslim League to-day is found to champion vehemently and proclaim boldly.

The tradition set by the school of political thinkers known as liberals has no use also for propaganda like that of the Hindu Maha Sabha in favour of what it calls Hindudom and Hindu Raj. The stand may be justified, perhaps, as a counter-blast to the propaganda of the Muslim League in favour of separation and Pakistan. But in themselves both are exceedingly harmful and, therefore, unjustifiable looking forward to the Indian Union, or the United States of India, that all of us, as Indians, had envisaged as the promised land.

Sir Syed Ahmed had persuaded the Mussalmans to have nothing to do with the Congress, "preaching to them the gospel of selfishness and isolation." But even he had to admit that the Hindus and the Mussal-

mans were ihe two eyes of Mother India. Two eyes in the human body were given to look at an object in a common focus. If we saw by these eyes, two objects where there was one, the conclusion was that the sight was impaired. So also in the India of to-day, if the two communities, which were the two eyes of the common mother, saw two Indias instead of one. their vision was not normal and healthy but false and warped, vitiated as it was by a taint or a mole in the eyes.

From the very beginning of Indian politics as sponsored by the Congress, and till the ill-advised Partition of Bengal by Lord Curzon, the Indian atmosphere was entirely free from communalism in politics. It was Sir Bamfylde Fuller in Eastern Bengal who first designated the Muslims, as against the Hindus, as his favourite wife. Then came the Muslim League led by H. H. the Aga Khan who claimed for the Mussalmans a special and favoured treatment on account of their past political importance. Lord Minto gave to them a promise, in advance, of separate communal electorates in the reforms that were coming. This was a first-class blunder which not even Lord Morley, with all his radical past, could counteract as we may know from the chapter on Indian affairs in his book of "Recollections."

This vicious principle, which had since proved the bane of Indian politics, was strongly attacked at the time by a man like Sir Pherozeshah Mehta, who. as President of the Bombay Presidency Association. issued a statement in which, by anticipation as it were, he exposed all its evils, and made a reasoned case for joint electorates. The memorandum contains the following words:

"To single out 62 millions from a population of 300 millions for exclusive and exceptional treatment on account

of their religion would be an attempt impolitic enough to be perilous. If the Mahomedans under special and exceptional circumstances require their proper rights to be safeguarded by special measures, the same consideration and the same protection should be afforded to the Hindus under similar circumstances. To leave the Mahomedan majority where it exists unfettered, and to seek to provide checks against the Hindu majority alone, must to the latter appear an act of intolerance on the part of the Government which they are entitled to resent."

And again, that the great and important Mohomedan community should have adequate representation in the Legislative Council and in all public affairs is what the Council of the Presidency Association are prepared to advocate without reserve. They have every sympathy with Mohomedan aspirations and and they feel bound to point out that these aspirations have never been ignored but always have been promoted by the political activities of the Hindu and other communities. Every movement for securing greater rights for the population at large has benefited the Mohomedans no less than other communities, and if the Mahomedans have failed to avail of it at all to the extent that they desire, the result is due to their unfortunate backwardness in taking advantage of the educational facilities provided by Government and not to the selfishness and opposition of the other communities. The memorandum continues:

"There is no injustice in the fact that the Hindu representatives are found in a majority when on any and every secular test they prove themselves entitled to it. To encourage any idea of injustice on that account can serve no honest purpose. It is not honest or fair to the Hindus to attribute their advantage to anything unworthy when the legitimate and solid claims of number, property and education are demonstrably on their side. It is not honest and fair to the Mohomedans to encourage delusive hopes and keep them in darkness as to the true causes of back-

wardness of which they are becoming conscious and for which the remedy is largely in their own hands."

And, last, the statement warned the the Government of the evils that would flow from such a policy in the following words:

"These measures are bound to create in the public body feelings of race and religious animosities dangerous to peace and contentment; and in the legislature itself a spirit of faction which will mar the utility and lower in public esteem the character of the Legislative Councils."

These words were penned, as their embodied conclusion on communal electorates by the Council of the Bombay Presidency Association in 1908, under the presidentship of Sir Pherozshah Mehta, when, strange as it may seem now, Mr. Jinnah was a member of that Council and acknowledged in public life the leadership of that great statesman and patriot of India.

Mr. Montagu in his famous report on the reforms of 1919 has the following significant passage on this question:—

"Indian lovers of the country would be the first to admit that India generally has not yet acquired the citizen spirit and if we are really to lead her to self-government we must do all we can to call it forth in her people. Division by creeds and classes means the creation of political camps organised against each other, and teaches men to think as partisans and not as citizens, and it is difficult to see how the change from this system to national representation is ever to occur. The British Government is often accused of dividing them in order to rule them. But if it unnecessarily divides them at the very moment when it professes to start them on the road to self-government, it will find it difficult to meet the charge of being hypocritical or short-sighted."

Inspite of this deep insight into the conditions of the problem, and into the harm that this division was bound to perpetuate, Mr. Montague did not eradicate

this cancer from the body-politic of India when he could have easily done so at the time. On the other hand, he sheltered himself behind the plea that "the Mohomedans were given special representation with separate electorates in 1909. The Hindus' acquiescence is embodied in the present agreement between the political leaders of the two communities. The Mohomedans regard these as settled facts and any attempt to go back upon them will rouse a storm of bitter protest." Telang often used to say that "a tree was to be judged by its fruit, and results were the beacon-lights of wise men." Judging from 1919 to the end of 1935 and from that day till now, none can say that the tree planted in 1909, and rooted firm in the soil of India in 1919, had not spread its poisonous shade all over India. As a result, responsible government, citizenship, the spirit of give and take, have not only not come into India but are threatened with extinction by the fanaticism of communal spirit and its off-shoot of Pakistan.

The lesson of history on this matter was well learnt by the early leaders of the Congress. They knew and well understood, as few have understood after them, that

> "it was only when the territorial principle had vanquished the tribal principle, and blood and religion had ceased to assert a rival claim with the State to a citizen's allegiance, and when an effective sense of common interests had developed in a country, that beginning could be made of what was responsible government,"

and again that "representative government and self-government became a travesty where representation meant the interest of a community in preference to the country, and self-government meant the exaltation of the self at the expense of others."

Justice Telang had pointed out as early as 1889

the peril of such vicious electorates in the following words:—

"An elective system is only a machinery, and to derive good results from it, it must be worked by good men. An elective system does not create good electors or good representatives. On the contrary good representatives, good electors and a good system of election are three factors to a considerable extent dependent upon one another, which only in combination yield the best results. The forms which freedom requires will not of themselves produce the reality of freedom in the absence of an appropriate national character any more than the most perfect mechanism will do its work in the absence of a motive power."

It was because communalism in politics not only set up a vicious system of electorates to start with, but, what was worse still, it sapped the very foundation of national character, that liberal tradition did not and does not countenance it.

FREEDOM WITH ORDER

We have said in the opening part of this chapter that the liberal tradition is a tradition of freedom with order, or, as Frederick Harrison has put it, of order with progress. The British Government in India have, not often, made too much of law and order, and in the name of these two words attempted to put down frank and fearless criticism of their measures and policy in India. The liberal tradition has always set its face against such abuse of law. Apart from the generally accepted fact and canon that "force is no remedy" and "repression represses itself," it has made its protest *not* against the use of Law "to put down overt acts meant to subvert government" or "to put down terrorism which, in the end, does more harm to the country than to the powers that be," but against using the power that law gives to wrong ends.

The career in India of Lord Lytton and his measures to gag the Vernacular Press in India gave the Indian leaders the first occasion to express their clearest opinion on the question. Telang wrote at that time a series of articles in the *Indu Prakash* of Bombay pointing out the inequity and arbitariness of these measures. And later on he wrote in the Sarwajanik Sabha Journal of Poona a comprehensive survey of all the enactments of the time to prove how " the reign of law" in British India was being supplanted by what he called "personal rule," meaning by the last phrase enactments that vested excessive power in the executive to do what it liked with the liberties of the people. "This was a change detrimental to the fair reputation of the rulers and not, by any means, calculated to promote that contentment in India which the Proclamation of 1858 had declared to be the foundation of British rule in India."

Later on, as national life had shown itself in a more organised form, the leaders of the Congress clarified the matter still further and laid down the limits of law and order on the one hand, and of popular agitation on the other. The liberal tradition went so far as to agree with the Government that the executive had a right to arm itself with powers if there were in the country " a native and widespread movement of resistance to authority," and if there were "open breaches of the public peace." But it asserted, on the other hand, that no Government was justified in taking and using such powers beyond their clearly defined and restricted scope and aim, in the name of law and order, in the name of peace and good government. Such a policy on the part of the rulers, as one writer pointedly remarks "often converted prison-houses into seats of martyrdom." The Government may succeed

by such "strong action" in putting down "wild talk," but it should not forget, as the liberals had warned it, that this strong action would drive hundreds and thousands to acute discontent and a sense of injury.

They asked the Government what it meant by sedition. No less a patriot than Gokhale had put that question and answered it in the clearest of terms Speaking on the Seditious Meetings Act in 1907 in the Imperial Legislative Council, Gokhale remarked first, that "it was a difficult question to answer." And then he added, "There were those who thought that unless an Indian spoke to them 'with bated breath and whispering humbleness,' he was seditious. There were others who thought that any one who commented on the actions of the officials or criticised the administration or took part in political agitation, was seditious. But to those who took a large view of the situation the term sedition was confined "to attempts made to subvert the government." "Unless the authorities restricted themselves to the last interpretation of the term," Gokhale prophesied, 'they would indiscriminately drive all the critics of the Government into the camp of the seditionists."

"MODERATES AND EXTREMISTS"

Incidentally he used in the speech the terms "Moderates" and "Extremists," and he made the following significant comment upon them, which, *mutatis mutandis*, has its application even to-day. We therefore, make no excuse for quoting here the passage in full, leaving our readers to draw their own moral from it. Said he,

"As regards the Moderates denouncing the Extremists it is not such an easy matter. In the first place, I am not sure that there is not such an absence of disapproval or remonstrance as the Hon. Member imagines. But, secondly, such denunciation is largely a question of temperament.

All people do not always denounce what they do not approve. Moreover, with us there is an additional reason. We do not want to make confusion worse confounded. There are always enough divisions, in all conscience, in the country, and we do not want to have a fresh cause of contention if we can help it. But let me say this to the Hon. Member, whether the Moderates remain silent or denounce the Extremists, it will make little difference in the hold which the Extremists are acquiring on certain minds in India. There is only one way in which the wings of disaffection can be clipped, and that is by the Government pursuing a policy of steady and courageous conciliation."

He then referred in the same speech to the real cause of sedition in the country, and, by implication, told the authorities why it was that extremism had such a hold on certain minds in the country. He said appealing to Lord Minto who was then the Viceroy of India,

"I will take sedition in the sense in which it is used by the third class and I will say this, that if such sedition has come into existence it is comparatively a recent growth, a matter of the last three or four years only—and the responsibility for it rests, mainly if not entirely, on the Government or rather on the official class. My Lord, from 1885 that is, since the close of the beneficent Viceroyalty of Lord Ripon, the Congress has been endeavouring to secure much needed reform in the administration. The present form of administration is fifty years old. We have long outgrown that now, and the fact is admitted even by officials. But while they admit, in a general sort of way, that changes are necessary, they have some objection or other to urge against every change that is proposed. The result is there has been hardly any movement forward, inspite of all our efforts these years, and the patience of the more impatient among the country has at least begun to give way."

"In the earlier years of the Congress," Gokhale continued, "there used to be some room for a hope that the desired changes in the administration would come." After Lord Ripon came Lord Dufferin who

was not unfriendly to the Congress though he was somewhat suspicious, and he gave us the Public Services Commission. After him came Lord Lansdowne. He, too, was, on the whole, friendly, though he was overcautious, and he gave us the first instalment of the Legislative Councils. Then came Lord Elgin and from his time the fortunes of the Reform Party have been at a low ebb. Lord Elgin's term of office was darkened by plague, famine, and frontier wars, and towards its close came repressive legislation against the Press.

"Then came Lord Curzon. He was a consummate master of glowing speeches, and during the first two years of his regime, high hopes were raised in the country. These hopes, however, were soon dashed to the ground on account of a series of reactionary measures which he forced upon the people. This disappointment coupled with the sense of constant irritation which we felt during the last three years of his rule, proved too much for a section of the Congress Party, and they began to declare their old faith in England's mission in this country gone."

Then came the partition of Bengal as the proverbial last straw. The people of Bengal did all they could and all they knew to avert the partition. Protests and prayers poured upon the Government, and the people used every means in their power to prevail upon Lord Curzon to abandon his idea. But he simply treated the whole agitation with contempt and carried his measure through. Gokhale proceeded,

"The men who are called 'Moderates' pointed out, again and again, the unwisdom of its course. They warned that the measure, if forced upon the people, inspite of all the furious opposition that was offered to it, would put too great a strain upon their loyalty and that some of them, at any rate, would not be able to stand the strain, and events have happened as they had been foreseen. The Hon. Member complains that open disloyalty is now being preached in Bengal, but no heed was given to the words

of the "Moderates" while there was time. And now, when the mischief has been done, the Hon. Member turns round and wants to throw the responsibility of what has happened upon us."

This long passage gives us a correct insight into the bureaucratic mind, and into the cult of "efficiency run mad," as also it explains the dwindling influence of sane opinion in the country. It has been the eternal riddle of reactionary policy, put in the words used against it by Telang when he criticised the policy of Lord Lytton: "Men will not when they can, and cannot when they will." At the conclusion of his speech Gokhale gave the government a warning which deserves to be reproduced here. He told Lord Minto who had succeeded Lord Curzon,

"My Lord, if the present estrangement between the Government and the people of Bengal is allowed to continue, ten years hence there will not be one man in a thousand in that province who has a kindy feeling for an Englishman. The Government will have on their hand a tremendous problem, for there are thirty-three millions of Bengalees and the unwisdom and danger of driving discontent underground amidst such a population will then be obvious."

In the Budget speech of 1906 Gokhale again returned to the charge and concluded his observations in the following words:

"What the country needs at the present moment above everything else is a Government national in spirit, a government that will enable us to feel that **our** interests are the first consideration with it, and that **our** wishes and opinions are to it a matter of some account." In the Budget speech of 1907 he dealt with the same subject and told the new Viceroy plainly what were the obstacles in the way. "Thus we move round and round the fortress of official conservatism and bureaucratic reluctance to part with power without being able to effect a breach at any point. My Lord, this kind of thing has gone on for many years, with the result that the attitude of the public mind

towards the Government,—'opinion,' as Burke called it,—is of greater importance than laws or executive power in maintaining order."

"No doubt, the Government will put down—indeed, it must put down—all disorder with a firm hand. But what the situation requires is not the policeman's baton or the soldier's bayonet, but the statesman's insight, wisdom and courage. The people must be enabled to **feel** that **their** interests are, if not the only consideration, at any rate, the main consideration that weighs with the Government, and this can only be brought about by a radical change in the spirit of administration. Whatever reforms are taken in hand, let them be dealt with frankly and generously. And my Lord, let not the words "too late" be written on every one of them. For while the Government stands considering, hesitating, receding, debating within itself 'to grant or not to grant that is the question,' opportunities rush past it which can never be recalled. And the moving finger writes and having writ, moves on."

THE COUNTRY, ITS FIRST INTEREST

As we have seen in retrospect, the liberals of those days, though that name had not come into vogue then, were not slow to advise the Government on its duties as they were not remiss in warning the people against their reckless conduct. That shows that the liberal tradition in politics has been the solvent of old-world prejudice and the upholder of progress in every walk of public life. It will not put up with, but strive to shake off the thraldom of old—world ideas, not only in the social and religious sphere, but in the political sphere as well. The liberals, in later years, have co-operated with the Congress when such co-operation was possible, as in several unity Conferences, and as in the All Parties' Conference in 1928. It has opposed it when opposition was inevitable, and not for party triumph, but solely for the quicker success to the cause common to all, and in the best interests of all.

"The country is more than the Congress" was a

pharse used by Pandit Motilal Nehru who was in temperament and outlook a liberal. In 1907 he was certainly a "moderate and liberal" and not an extremist. But the liberals since 1918 and, before that date as their record shows, have always regarded the country greater than their party. The liberal tradition may have fallen on bad times at present, because if one may so put it, the anarch is abroad, and people are swayed by mere sentiment. So long as this state of things continues, that tradition will not regain its hold on the public mind. But so soon as the tide turns, as it is bound to turn at long last, the tradition will reassert itself, and the work of the liberals wil be found in retrospect to be full of vision, courage, practical insight and wisdom.

Bound up with a party stronger in number, better consolidated and better functioning, the liberal tradition will be applied with fruitfulness to every problem of reconstruction in self-governing India. That has been the lesson of history in the past, and that is the beacon-light of hope for the future. In the present it is content to work, as Mr. Gandhi put it about himself in 1924, "in the wilderness of minority." While the past is a burden, said one of the greatest philosophic historian of our age, "the proper knowledge of the past is an emancipation."

What India needs is not only freedom or emancipation from the thraldom of the past, but also saving itself from all nostrums and panaceas, whether old or new. And liberalism will teach her to be rid of both. While the East and the West are fusing in a furnace from which a new world will arise, the process must needs throw up sparks of fire. But that is, after all, a temporary phase, and when readjustment comes, and old party labels disappear, liberalism will penetrate the new, as it had shaped in the past "the

New India" which Sir Henry Cotton has described in his book of that name. Liberalism will then illumine the path along which India shall have to travel, so that the new order of things may bring peace, unity, equality, freedom and strength to the people of India.

Though Swaraj to-day is an end by itself, it will be tomorrow or the day after tomorrow, but a means to an end, the end being "fraternity for all and good of all," above the narrowing influences and the hampering restrictions of caste, creed, sect and race, when all will strive to give their motherland her due position, as "the chosen of God," in world-politics and in the comity of free nations. It is for realising this dream that the leaders of the people had worked and spent themselves in the past, and will work and spend themselves in the future. Liberalism and liberals will have their part to play in the future, as they had their share in the work of the past, all "co-operating to a common end."

To conclude with the words of a great write,

"One may then desire not to be counted a fool by wise men, nor a knave by good men, nor a fanatic by sober men. One may desire to show that the cause for which he has lived and laboured all the best years of his life is not so preposterous intellectually and morally, as of late it has been made to appear by its noisier and more aggresive representatives; that he has never been duped by the sophistries and puerilities of its approved controversialists, but has rested on worthier and graver reasons, however ill-defined and ill-expressed, that even if his defence of it should have failed, he has not failed in courage, candour or sincerity; nor has he ever willingly lent himself to the defence of folly and imposture."

CHAPTER II

RE-ORIENTATION

The first Session of any new party is always a function of great importance, in that it defines the policy of the party and outlines its method of work. The liberal party in India began with its first session in Bombay on November 1st and 2nd, 1918. Though, at the time, it was styled as "All India Conference of the Moderate Party," it proved to be the nucleus of the National Liberal Federation of India, by which it has come to be known in after years.

THE OCCASION

Considering the time in which it was held—there was the influenza epidemic raging throughout the country in that month—the session was a great success—success, in a sense, in point of numbers; but, more so, in the sense of its deliberations, and the weight behind them of persons who had shaped them. The times were critical, both in India and England, and the Conference had to steer, as regards the coming reforms, clear between rejectionists on the one hand, and reactionaries on the other. Extremes, they say, not seldom, meet and make strange bed-fellows. And had it not been for the combined efforts of the sane elements throughout the country, the Montagu Scheme would certainly have been shelved, if not sabotaged, by the activities of the diehards and reactionaries in England led by men of the type of Lord Sydenham, an ex-governor of Bombay with his Indo-

British Association to help him in that work, and with allies on his side in Parliament itself like the Marquis of Lansdowne and like Lord Curzon of the Partition of Bengal fame. Of these, Lord Curzon was in the Coalition Government of Lloyd George. He had already expressed his opinion that the British Cabinet was not committed to the Montagu Scheme. The Marquis of Lansdowne, said about it, "The announcement of August 20, 1917, was not binding on the House and the intimation that our goal was the earliest possible realisation of full responsible government seemed to him full of danger." Of Lord Sydenham and his Indo-British Association one need not say much. It was "an interested and factitious opposition" engineered in England and India to induce the British Parliament to whittle down, if not to destroy, the Scheme.

Our extremist friends in India were unwittingly playing into the hands of these reactionaries in England by proclaiming that they would have nothing to do with it. They described the Scheme in the following words:

> "The Scheme is unworthy to be offered by England or to be accepted by India. It is petty where it should have been large, banal where it should have been striking. There is about it no spacious or far-sighted statesmanship, no constructive genius, no vision for India of even future evolution into freedom."

This was written by Mrs. Besant, the president of the Indian National Congress in 1917, in her own paper "New India." It was written just on the day that the Montford Report was published in India—the 8th day of July 1918, and this writing set the key to the kind of reception of the Report by the special session of the Congress in August 1918. Suffice it to say, however, as Mr. C. Y. Chintamani has noted in his lectures on Indian Politics, that by the time that

the Government of India Bill, based on the Joint Report, had been introduced in British House of Commons in April 1919,

"Mrs. Besant had begun to take a more favourable view of the Montagu Scheme than she had done in the preceding year, and the Home Rule League deputation led by her and Mr. C. P. Ramaswami Aiyer worked in closer association with the Liberal Deputation in England, which co-operation on their part met with a huge amount of success, and helped to improve the Bill into an Act acceptable to Indian Nationalists to the farthest extent possible under the circumstances."

What were the circumstances that had helped to make the Government of India Bill of 1919 so disappointing? That had been told, by anticipation as it were, in the presidential speech of Surendra Nath Bannerjea. He said,

"the recommendations had to run the gauntlet of Parliamentary criticism and be acceptable to the great British Democracy. Say what you will, the English people are essentially conservative in their character and temperament. Behind the radicalism of the most radical, there is an underlying vein of caution which Imperial Responsibilities have imposed upon the national character."

Besides, the British cabinet, then, happened to be a coalition government consisting of statesmen belonging to different parties. Men like Lord Curzon in it were out-and-out opponents of any devolution of power to India. And there were in the country die-hards like Lord Sydenham who posed as protectors of the masses and of the backward classes as against the educated classes in India who were the natural leaders of the people. All these circumstances, added to the opposition in India led by the Indian National Congress, had their adverse effect on the recommendations in the Montagu Report, while they were in the stage of being sent up before the Commons in the shape of a Bill.

"The Congress was intended to educate all who took part in it in the practice of self-control, moderation and willingness to give and take, to educate them, in fact, into what has been described as a genuine parliamentary frame of mind. The cry of unreasoning negation it was not definitely the intention of the Congress to foster among its adherents."

That the Moderates' Conference was in continuation of the tradition of the Congress was brought out by Mr. C. Y. Chintamani in the following felicitous words. Said he,

"Those who may criticise and taunt us for having stayed away from the special session of the Congress that was held in this city sometime ago, may well be asked whether we are faithful or we are wanting in fidelity to the traditions and the policy of the Congress when we are here with a Senior Ex-President of the Congress as Chairman of the Reception Committee, when the proposition now before you, has been moved by another Ex-President, and supported by a third Ex-President, and that proposition is that the senior-most of all Ex-Presidents, and the one living Ex-President who twice presided over the Congress should be the President of this Conference. When, gentlemen, a couple of days hence, the resolutions that this Conference will have passed will be widely read and known in the country, I am confident that every thinking man will recognise in these resolutions a more faithful continuity of the well-known policy of the National Congress than in the pronouncement which has been recently made, it may be, at a larger, but I feel sure, not a wiser or more patriotic body."

The President of the Conference after quoting "the basic principle" imbedded in the Congress Constitution, and asking straight if the Montagu Scheme had not complied with the conditions laid down by the Congress itself, definitely told the audience,

"I am, therefore, justified in holding that if the illustrious men, now dead and gone, who made the Congress what it was, were now in our midst, if Dadabhai Naoroji, Gopal Krishna Gokhale, W. C. Bonnerjee, Sir Pherozeshah

Mehta, Sir William Wedderburn and others had been spared to us to lead and guide our counsels, they would have welcomed with alacrity the Reform Proposals as laid down by His Excellency the Viceroy and the Right Honourable the Secretary of State for India, subject, of course, to necessary improvements. They are in conformity with the principles laid down by the great Congressmen of the past whose memories we venerate and whose percepts are our guide."

"THE CENTRE GROUP"

The so-called Moderates separated themselves from the old Congress in vindication of its time-honoured policy and line of action. They did so as liberals because they thought honestly that the Congress had drifted into a position, when, as the President put it, "no useful purpose could be served by a patched—up truce." For the designation—Congressman—"had become emptied of all contents, and remained only an impressive nickname with no recognisable meaning in real things and political acts—a bottle with a bit of old label, but with no inspring liquor left." The Congress, in the hands of its latest masters, said Surendra Nath Banerjea, had ceased to be "representative of the sentiments and principles before which national rivalries disappear." The function of the Congress was not to raise the cry of negation in season and out of season. It was, indeed, to hold its own against "the reactionary right and the revolutionary left," to constitute itself as the guide of public opinion, as "centre group, the focus, the starting point of all national political activities, standing between the extreme views of reactionaries on the one hand, and of thoughtless and reckless reformers on the other, seeking to guide, control and regulate them, and to lead them on into useful and fructifying channels, in conformity with our environments and the high ends of national progress."

It was because the Congress had renounced that duty, had abdicated the function, that those who felt that it could not be renounced had to separate from it, and constitute themselves into a new party to continue the work. Here was not a revolt or an apostasy, but reassertion of right principles, in the conviction, to use the words of the President, that "the Congress was a means to an end, the attainment of self-government. We sacrificed the means for the end, the organisation of the Congress for the sake of self-government in India."

In 1909, two years after the fracas at Surat, Sir Pherozshah Mehta had given expression to the same view in the following words:

"For God's sake let us have done with all the insane and slobbery whine about unity when there is really none. Let each consistent body of views and principles have its own Congress in an honest and straight forward way and let God i.e., truth and wisdom judge between us all."

And Surendra Nath Bannerjea in 1918 endorsed the statement by saying "Let each party worship in its own temple according to its own lights and convictions." And he supported that position by what Mr. Gandhi himself had said then. These are the words that Mr. Gandhi had used

"I do not believe that we should at a critical moment like this be satisfied with a patched-up-peace between the so-called Extremists and the so-called Moderates, each giving up a little in favour of the other. I should like a clear enunciation of the policy of each group or party."

NO REJECTION

So much as regards the policy of the Conference. Now, what about its work? That is revealed in the manner in which it formulated its modifications to the Report in the light of the Declaration of August 1917. It was out of question for the Conference "to

reject the proposed reforms in toto." The deliberations of the Conference surveyed the scheme in all its details, first as regards the Provinces and then as regards the Central Government. It suggested that the principle of responsibility should be introduced in the Centre simultaneously with its introduction in provincial governments. If the method and the measure of that introduction was to be diarchy in the provinces it should operate *pari-passu* with diarchy in the Centre. And it showed what subjects could be transferred in the Centre with ministers in charge of them, without weakening the Centre, or divesting it of authority for proper control and regulated working of the reforms in the Provinces.

Years ago Sir Pherozshah Mehta in criticising the proposed Minto-Morley reforms had maintained that to invest the provinces with responsibility without a corresponding responsibility in the Centre, was to make the reforms ineffective, if not nugatory. And eight years after that statement, it was perceived by Mr. Montagu himself that a clear departure had to be made from the principle involved in the Minto-Morley Reforms if India was to be definitely started on the road to responsible self-government. Hence the declaration of 1917, and the Report framing the Scheme that was intended as the first step on that journey.

Diarchy was adopted by Mr. Montagu more as a matter of caution than as an indication of mistrust, as the reader might know for himself from a passage in his diary in which he maintained that "Indians were not to be treated as school boys to be promoted from form to form according as the Masters would decide upon their advance." This is a clear proof of Mr. Montagu's intention in the preamble to the Act of 1919, as regards both time and the terms put in it. It was misconstrued later by his suc-

cessors in office for reasons into which we need not enter here. The Conference suggested suitable changes in the Centre to accompany changes in the Provinces, in order to dispel the possible suspicion of mistrust completely, and to start the whole scheme, properly balanced in the provinces and the centre, in that atmosphere of perfect good-will, so that no future obstacle should arise in India's smooth and forward journey to full responsible self-government. The mere association of Indians with the entire administration, the mere Indianisation of the machinery of Government, was not enough. There must be within it the power to turn it into a real government of the people, for the people, and by the people. The suggested change in the Centre was not effected, and the Centre remained as autocratic and irresponsible, in the political sense, as it was under the Minto-Morley Reforms, except for elected majority in the lower and the upper houses.

NO BACK-SLIDERS

One of the points made against the Moderates at that time was that they had gone back on their former support of the Congress League Scheme in as much as they had come out with their full suport to the Montagu Scheme. To which an effective answer was given in the Conference by its Secretary, Mr. N. M. Samarth :

"Some of our critics have asked—why do you want to support the Montagu-Chelmsford Scheme, when you were yourselves parties to the framing and drafting of the Congress-League Scheme which was adopted at Lucknow in 1916? The answer to that question will be found in the "Memorandum on the Montagu-Chelmsford Scheme" which appeared over the signatures of our veteran leaders like the Hon. Sir Dinshaw Wacha and eight others, towards the end of July last. The reasons are given there in detail. A perusal of the document will show that while the



Rt. Hon. V. S. Srinivasa Sastri
(President 1922)



Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru
(President 1923 & 1927)



Sir Raghunath Paranjpye
(President 1924 & 1939)



Sir Chimanlal Setalvad
(President 1928 & 1937)

Montagu-Chelmsford Scheme has, in point of fact, embodied, wholly or substantially, 26 of the Congress demands, it has deviated from the Congress-League Scheme in two particulars only, with the result that while it has avoided the defects of that Scheme, it has formulated, in so far as provincial reconstruction and progress are concerned, proposals which are unquestionably superior in conception and design to the Congress-League framework. If that is the conclusion which any unprejudiced man—without any bias one way or the other—would arrive at, I ask what is his duty? Is it his duty to stick to the inferior Congress-League Scheme and give up or reject a superior Scheme?"

What the fundamental difference was between the Scheme sponsored by the Congress and the Muslim League and the Scheme presented in the Montagu Report, was well brought out in the presidential speech of Surendra Nath Bannerjea. He said that the Congress-League Scheme was framed before the announcement of 20th August 1917. It did not and could not deal with the new situation created by the message of the 20th August. There was mention in it of responsible government. The great message dealt wholly and solely with responsible government and provided for progressive stages. The Congress-League Scheme created, in the words of the *Manchester Guardian*, a directorate with an executive subordinate to the Legislature but not removable at its pleasure. It created opportunities for full, free criticism, but did not provide for responsibility.

"We take our stand on the basic pledge of the 20th August, and our suggestions for the modification and the expansion of the Scheme are in entire conformity with the spirit and essence of the great pledge, not seeking to tamper with it or to go beyond it, but to keep within its broad and beneficent lines. We recognise that no private bill has, in these days, any chance in Parliament. Here is our chance, our only chance, which has occurred after ceaseless and strenuous effort extending over the life-time of a generation by the illustrious of our men, and the

plainest considerations of patriotism and expediency demand that we should not, in the excuberance of our zeal, or in wantonness of our indiscretion, allow this chance to slip by. It may never occur again." Prophetic words these, whose significance is borne in upon us as we review the past from the position in which the nation finds itself to-day, as the result of the wantonness of our indiscretion combined with the exuberance of our zeal, which, together, threw overboard the policy of wise expediency dictated by the highest sense of patriotism.

THE WATCHWORD

It was this sense of discrimination which had guided the deliberations of the Conference on the Montagu-Reforms, and had determined its policy to work the reforms as embodied in the Act, rather than seek "to throttle or kill them by short-sighted, mistaken, suicidal opposition." The Moderates, in this important matter, not only warned their countrymen against wanton indiscretion, but were equally plain-spoken to the British Public which, after all, was the final court of appeal on the question. While moving the resolution for sending a deputation to England in connection with the Reforms, Mr. Samarth said,

"We must tell the British public, the British Press, the Cabinet and influential members of both Houses of Parliament and of whatever party, that if they allow the Reform Proposals to be endangered, or whittled down by the interested and factitious opposition that is being engineered in England and India against it, they will be committing a political blunder of the greatest magnitude in the history of the British Empire."

Rightly and fairly did Samarth claim for the liberals, in the name and under the auspices of their first Conference, that "the creed of the moderates may be summed up in the words:—Neither a sycophant nor a demagogue." And, speaking for himself, he further added,

"Whatever I consider to be right according to my lights and according to my reason, I will say freely, frankly and fearlessly to Government and the public. Whether it pleases them or not, is not my concern. What is good to them I will administer, however unpalatable the dose may be."

Throughout the years from 1920 to 1943, the liberal party has acted up to this principle. It has not flattered the Congress; it has not criticised it simply to spite it; it has not said aught in malice or for the sake of personal triumph. It has acted all along according to its lights and according to the dictates of reason and conscience. On the other hand, it has never failed to say the truth, however harsh it may be, to the Government, as time and occasion, and a clear sense of duty had demanded the telling of it, and only for the vindication of what had appealed to it as the wisest course to follow. There are liberals in the country who, for the time being, do not wear the label. And they have all along striven honestly and courageously, to keep their countrymen, as Lord Morley puts it, "on the path of wise politics." The party does not mind very much, if, occasionally, a vehement communalist leader chooses to dub the distinguished men of the party "as leaders without followers." In the very nature of their situation it was not for them "to arouse swelling waves of emotion in the masses or to evolve a technique of organisation full of colour, publicity and picturesqueness." But not even their worst political opponents—not enemies—can say of them that they had not said what they meant, or had not meant what they said.

The Liberal Conference of 1918 and its attitude to the Montagu Scheme of Reforms, had their desired effect on the country as a whole, not excluding the Congress itself. Mr. Tilak soon announced the policy

of responsive co-operation. The special session of the Congress held in Bombay in August 1918 had passed a resolution condemning the scheme as "inadequate, unsatisfactory and disappointing." The Liberal Conference in Bombay was held after it. In the Congress session at Amritsar in 1919, a resolution was adopted finally that "pending the introduction of responsible government, the people would so work the reforms as to secure its early establishment." Curious as it may seem now, it was Mr. C. R. Das who was, then, for total rejection, while it was Mr.Gandhi who moved an amendment to the resolution moved by Mr. Das, which was ultimately adopted by the Congress. The final resolution as passed by it also thanked Mr. Montagu for his labours in connection with the Reforms. The Congress also agreed to send a deputation to England to lead evidence before the Joint Select Committee of Parliament on the final work in connection with the coming reforms.

CHAPTER III

REFORMS AND PUNJAB DISTURBANCES

It was in the Second Session of the All-India Moderates' Conference held in Calcutta at the end of 1919, that the president, Sir Sivaswami Aiyer, whom Surendra Nath Bannerjea described as "the brain of the liberals in Madras," suggested that the name "National Liberals," instead of "Moderates" or "the Centre group" should be adopted by the new party and the Conference be called accordingly. The suggestion seems to have been taken up by the Conference, as the next session of th Conference was held at Madras as the Third Session of the National Liberal Federation of India.

The work done in England in connection with the coming reforms by the liberal deputation under the leadership of Surendra Nath Bannerjea, contributed, in no small measure, to improve the Reforms Bill introduced in the House of Commons by Mr. Montagu. The reactionaries in England and India had succeeded in making the Bill a travesty of the Report on which it was supposed to be based. If the Act was much better than the Bill, it was due to the evidence given by the deputation before the Joint Parliamentary Committee. Mr. Montagu and Lord Sinha were able to convince other members of the Committee on the strength of that evidence that the final shape of the Reforms must be different from that envisaged in the

Bill. Mr. Chintamani in his book on Indian Politics says about this:—"Thanks to Mr. Montagu's combined zeal and ability, the efforts of the Liberal delegation met with a large amount of success. I can testify from personal observation to the immense labour and the unequalled devotion of both Mr. Montagu and Lord Sinha, and to the enormous pains they took to make the Act acceptable to Indian nationalists to the farthest extent possible in the circumstances."

The crux of the change that the Montagu Reforms, as embodied in the Act, had brought about in the administration of the country lay in the fact that the Act had taken the Indians from the stage of consultation and association to the stage of participation. Mr. Shastri put it as follows, "I well remember the fateful December of 1908 when the Congress met in Madras, and it was left to Gokhale to explain and expound the Minto-Morley Reforms before they were actually put into operation. He stated at that time that while what we had there was merely association with Government, what we had upto that time was only consultation, and, thereafter, we should have association with Government; and he, then, added, if I remember correctly, that did not mean participation in the Government. That would come in time, he said. I wonder if he realised then that that participation would come so soon, but it has now come. Long kept out of the temple of self-government, we are now admitted into it by slow degrees, first into the outer court in 1908, and we are now admitted to the full privilege of worshipping in that temple. Self-government is now ours. Provincial Government, it is now my privilege to tell you, is now practicable."

A DECIDED ADVANCE

The presidential address of Sir Sivaswami Aiyer surveyed the whole field of the new Reforms and con-

cluded that they were a decided advance on the old order of things that had continued since 1909, which year saw the inauguration of the Minto-Morley Reforms. The right to the legislatures to elect their own presidents after the first term of the new elections, both at the Centre and in the Provinces, was a new and desirable departure. The House thereby would be enabled, maintained Sir Sivaswami Aiyer, to build up its own procedure for conducting business and for the expression of its own views, without let or hindrance, on any subject that it considered of vital importance to the country. In the Bombay Council under the Act of 1919, its first president, Sir Narayan Chandavarkar, guided its deliberations, and established procedure and conventions, following, in that respect, the model of the Speaker in the British House of Commons. Sir Fredrick White in the Central Assembly also worked in a similar spirit. In Madras Lord Willingdon sought, and very much succeeded in working diarchy on the plan of joint and collective responsibility. He minimised the difference between the reserved and the transferred departments, and between the executive Councillors and the ministers under him, in the administration of his Province, to the point of attenuation. Sir Narayan Chandavarkar started right tradition about the privileges of the House. He regulated procedure and introduced conventions based on his deep study of Sir Erskine May and of the pages of Hansard, which study, later on, as we have good reason to say so, was of immense help to the first elected president of the Central Assembly, Mr. Vithalbhai Patel, in shaping his own conduct in the Chair.

The next point in the address of Sir Sivaswami Aiyer was that fiscal autonomy was sure to arrive in India in the wake of the new Reforms Act. It would

result from the direction specifically given therein that when the Government and the Assembly had agreed on any question the Secretary of State should not interfere, or seek to upset the decision of the House. Here also we know from later history how India became her own master, practically, in point of tariff regulations and its own economic policy. The proposal of solving the difference between the Government and the Assembly by recourse to a Grand Committee, the original suggestion in the Montagu Report, was done away with in the Act, and the difficulty was to be overcome, as regards provision for reserved departments, "by empowering the Governor to act on his own responsibility without recourse to the farce of an official bloc."

The non-official majority at the Centre and in the Provincial Legislatures was a distinct step forward "which" as the president pointed out, "unity and co-operation, goodwill and proper understanding among its members, could turn to great advantage for furthering the progress of the country towards responsible self-government, on sound party lines. An era of constructive work had begun and autocracy was bound to disappear with receding steps even at the Centre, if members were chosen by the electorates with a proper sense of responsibility, and if the members themselves worked with a full realisation of their duty to the electorates that had chosen them, and to the country, above any temporary, short-sighted, selfish communal and party interests."

CRITICISM ANSWERED

After surveying the whole field of reform in this manner, Sir Sivaswami Aiyer turned to answer some rash and ill-considered criticism levelled against the new Act. Some specimens of that criticism may well

be given here. One Congress paper described the Act "as a colossal sham calculated to perpetuate our unmitigated probation under the British rule as hewers of wood and drawers of water. The reforms do not vouchsafe a particle of hope and they fail to transfer an iota of real responsibility to the people of India." "The leader of the Congress Deputation from Madras," says Sir Sivaswami Aiyer, "expressed the hope that the people of India would with one voice vote against the Reform Scheme at the next meeting of the Indian National Congress." This gentleman was no other than Mr. V. P. Madhavrao. Sir Sivaswami Aiyer quotes Mr. V. P. Madhavrao to say that "Indians required no training in the art of government, that the bill was no improvement on the existing state of things, and that if it did anything, it increased the powers of the autocracy." Another critic, quoted by the Conference President opined that "it would not be a national disaster, if by the mutation of party conflict in the House of Commons the present cabinet went down and with it the present Reform Bill." This criticism was dismissed by Sir Sivaswami Aiyer as a specimen of "intellectual obliquity."

As against this off-hand, hasty and irresponsible, if not mischeivous, set of opinions, he gives us in his address opinions of persons who were inspired by a sense of patriotism in no way inferior to that of the extremists in India, and whose power to judge was "beyond any question." They were men like Lord Sinha, Sir Shankaran Nair, Sir M. Visvesvaraya, Mr. Bhupendra Nath Basu and H. H. the Aga Khan among Indians, and men like Mr. Polak, Sir Michael Sadler, Sir Stanley Reed, Lord Crewe, Major Ormsby Gore, Mr. Ramsay Macdonald and Mr. Ben Spoor among the Britishers. They all styled the new Act "as the most epoch-making and remarkable advance

ever made at one bound in the history of British India." Sir Sivaswami Aiyer concluded that "if the present measure were properly appreciated and an honest endeavour made on our part to co-operate fully in the successful carrying out of the first instalment of responsible government, it would go a great way to bring us a fuller measure of reform in its wake to take us rapidly to the goal that all of us aspired to reach." "Let us consolidate our gains," he appealed to all, "so that our march to the final goal may be firm and sure and we may not lose the ground we occupy."

PUNJAB DISTURBANCES

Perhaps the most important part of the address was that in which he dealt with what he called "the Punjab disturbances." In any survey of the liberal party's work, the portion deserves mention. The excesses of the Martial Law Regime in the Punjab as the result of disturbances before it, had met with deserved condemnation on all hands. But the detailed record of these excesses is to be found, before the Hunter Committee's Report on them, only in the address of Sir Sivaswami Aiyer. We do not think that record should find place here, as the chapter of events had now closed. The Rowlatt Acts, Mr. Gandhi's Satyagraha against them, the riots that came in its wake all over the country,the martial law regime in the Punjab, the Amritsar tragedy, the findings of the Hunter Committee and the Congress Committee on it, the government action or inaction on them, the challenge of Mr. Gandhi to Government's indifference, and the result of it all in the first non-co-operation movement, is now a matter of "ancient" history. It cost the country heavily especially in the shape of the Council boycott. But we need not now rake up the old record. Let it rest where it lies. We permit

ourselves to quote here what Mr. Gandhi himself said about his Satyagraha at that time. He wrote "As all these things have happened in my name, I am ashamed of them and those who have been responsible for them have, thereby, not honoured me but disgraced me. A rapier run through my body could hardly have pained me more. I have said times without number that Satyagraha admits of no violence, no pillage, no incendiarism, and still in the name of Satyagraha we have burnt down buildings, forcibly captured weapons, extorted money, stopped trains, cut off telegraph wires, killed innocent people, and plundered shops and private houses. If deeds such as these could save me from the prison or the scaffold, I should not like to be saved. It seems that the deeds I have complained of, have been done in an organised manner. There seems to be a definite design and I am sure that there must be some educated and clever man or men behind them."

This was written by Mr. Gandhi to Mr. C. F. Andrews in 1919, and as we read the passage today, we cannot help rubbing our eyes in doubt if the deeds described in it were done in 1919, or in the year 1942, that is, after the resolution dated 8th August—now famous as 'Quit India" resolution. By the way, it was at this time that Mr. Gandhi first made use of the phrase—Himalayan miscalculation—,a phrase he has used so often since, typifying his misjudgment of men and things.

Sir Sivaswami Aiyer suggested some remedies to avoid repetition of such incidents. He proposed "that in dealing with internal outbreaks the civil authorities should only invoke the aid of military forces but should not allow the introduction of martial law. "This suggestion" he continued "raises a very large issue and in view of the incidents of Martial

Law in Ireland, Egypt, India and Ceylon may deserve consideration, but it seems to be doubtful whether it is likely to be entertained as a practical proposition. No enactment of any declaration of rights as suggested by our friends in the Congress can avert the possibility of the introduction of Martial law, for by the very nature of the case Martial law is a creature of necessity and transcends all law. But if, as it is only too likely, the abolition of martial law for the purposes of suppressing internal outbreaks is put aside as an impracticable suggestion, we are entitled to ask that constitutional limitations, to which its exercise and duration are subject according to the opinions of eminent English jurists, shall be authoritatively set forth either in a statute or a memorandum of instructions to be issued to the Governor-General. It should be made clear that Martial Law should not be introduced unless it is impossible for the civil courts to sit and exercise their functions. It is further necessary that the power of creating new offences for breach of regulations and providing penalties therefor should not be delegated to Military Officers and that if court-martial and civil courts are both sitting, any person not subject to the Naval Discipline Act or to Military Law, who is alleged to be guilty of the contraventions of any regulations, should be allowed to claim to be tried by a civil court instead of by a Court-Martial."

REPARATION

That was his suggestion for the future. But he did not stop there. He clearly demanded reparation for all serious hardship and suffering caused by these unwarranted acts of severity; he urged steps to be taken to bring to justice officials, high or low, civil or military, who may be found to have acted unreasonably and, in excess of their powers, authorised such acts; he asked for safeguards against the recurrence of

such things in the future, and finally, he pressed for the abolition of flogging in the Indian Army. The Hunter Committee published its report in due time, with a minority report by Indians on that Committee. There followed a debate on it in the House of Commons, General Dyer was asked to resign his office, but no steps were taken against officials and authorities of the kind suggested in the presidential address, steps which, as he put it, voiced the wishes of the people, and which were due to them in all fairness and justice, and for their appeasement. The House of Lords practically undid what little the Commons had done to bring to book General Dyer, and, as if to spite the people of India, the Lieutenant Governor of the Punjab, no other than Sir Michael O'Dwyer, was appointed the Chairman of the Army Committee appointed to investigate into the matter of reform and reorganisation of the Indian Army.

We draw the attention of the reader to certain observations made on this matter by Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru, in the same Conference. Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru condemned in unmistakable language the excesses of the mob all over the country in connection with the Satyagraha movement launched by Mr. Gandhi as a national protest against the Rowlatt Act. He said "None of us can have the least sympathy, in any shape or form, with outrages of that character, and they must be greatly mistaken who think that the freedom of any country can be achieved by murders and assassinations." But he continued that "he must condemn in equally strong terms what happened in the Punjab subsequent to the actions of the mob." The excesses of officials in the Punjab were committed, it has to be remembered, in the name of law and order. Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru remarked in this connection that "things were done at Amritsar, Kasur, Lahore

and Gujranwalla in the name of law and order by a sort of military regime which it would be difficult to justify even by the most ardent supporter of martial law in this country." He continued, "I think that the zeal, the perverted zeal of men who thought that they were saving the Empire by resorting to these unjustifiable, severe and, I may say, barbarous methods, can only evoke one feeling and that is a feeling of unmixed condemnation on our part."

The resolution, adopted by the Conference, it should be noted, embodied all the safeguards against possible recurrence of such a regime that were suggested in the president's speech. About these Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru remarked, "I hope you will agree with me when I say that now that we are on the road to self-government it is absolutely necessary that we should demand guarantees for the safety of the person just as there are guarantees in countries where there is self-government." In the Royal Proclamation issued along with the passing of the Reform Act, as well as in the message the King had sent afterwards with his uncle the Duke of Connought who had come in India to inagurate the Reforms, words "Swaraj" "cooperation and harmony," "goodwill," and "forget and forgive" were deliberately used both by the King and his uncle. It was, therefore, not out of place or unwise for the Conference of liberals at the end of 1919 to demand on behalf of the people of India "guarantees for the safety of the person just as there are guarantees in countries where there is self-government."

The Rowlatt Act, the Satyagraha declared in protest after it, and the Martial Law Regime and the aftermath thereof, constituted an unforgettable and mournful chapter in the political history of India. And the liberals were not behind any other pary in the country

in exposing the ill-advised nature of the first, the dangerus possibilities of the second, and the crowning horror of the third which no subsequent palliative could ever erase from the memory of the Indian people. The happenings were unfortunate for the reason that they synchronised with a large and liberal measure of radical reform in the government of the country, and lent support from the popular side to the non-co-operation movement that was hit upon to bring the Government down on its knees.

THE LIBERAL PARTY

About the liberal party and its attitude to the Congress at that time Sir Sivaswami said "our party, many of us feel, is in the minority in the country. At any rate the vocal strength of our party is in the minority. One thing, however, I feel sure of and that is that it is not possible for any nation to continue in a transport of excitement, or to continue to guide its conduct and policy by the dictates of passion, prejudice or by want of sobriety. Sobriety and judgment are bound in the long run to rule the world. It may be that we feel discouraged at times by the fact that we are not able to muster in thousands as the members of the other party claim, but let not that depress us in the least. I cannot help believing that responsibility and sober judgment must assert their influence in the affairs of the nation. If we go about our work with enthusiasm, and if our enthusiasm is reflected and others are fired with the same enthusiasm, we are bound to succeed."

Mr. C. Y. Chintamani spoke on the subject when he proposed a vote of thanks to Sir Sivaswami Aiyer. The point that he made was "that it was in no spirit of antagonism or rivalry to any other party in the country that the liberals had constituted themselves into a separate organisation. The good of the country

was the only motive that had led them to take that step. As such they never desired that any other party in the country should commit mistakes and they should profit by them. Its only aim and its single hope was to educate the people, or rather its accredited leaders, so that by their activities the country may not suffer."

This was said by Sir Sivaswami Aiyer and Mr. Chintamani at the end of 1919, when Mr. Gandhi was cogitating, in view of recent happenings in India, apart from the merits and demerits of the Reform Act of 1919, whether the time was not ripe for his launching the country on the path of non-co-operation. The liberals feared that it was not a wise step to take. And so they had warned in time.

CHAPTER IV

NON-COOPERATION

The year 1920 was a year that saw a swing in the public mind from the path of constitutional agitation to the path of non-co-operation. There was no particular reason why it should so happen except the fact that the oldest and the most widely loved of political organisations had come under the influence of Mr. Gandhi. Amritsar, Calcutta, Nagpur—the Sessions of the Congress held successively at these places had witnessed the rising power of Mr. Gandhi. They were characterised by a decreasing sense of sanity and moderation and an increasing power of what Burke has called 'dissidence of dissent." and "the extreme of extremism." By the end of the year, at Nagpur, and after the death of Mr. Tilak on August 1st 1920, no powerful opposition was left in the Congress to stay Mr. Gandhi's hand and to stave off non-co-operation. Even Mr. C. R. Das and Pandit Motilal Nehru had completely gone under.

What change the politics of the country had undergone as the result of this hysteria of sentiment has been made clear to us in a letter which Hon. Mr. Shastri wrote to his friends and colleagues at the end of the year to explain the whole situation and, if possible, to bring together those who thought differently from the Congress on the vital issue of non-co-operation and mass action.

THE PERIL

The Liberal Federation met at Madras at the end of that year, and the one subject that occupied its

attention was the resolution of Mr. Gandhi on non-co-operation, the programme by which he hoped to bring the Government down on its knees, and the definite promise he had given to the country to win Swaraj for India by that programme at the end of 1921. The exact date for winning it was the first of September 1921.

Mr. Shastri's open letter, dated the 10th of December, pointed out the perils of that course in plain terms. These are the words he used in that letter:

"You know that inspite of the dissuasion of many friends of our party, I have been attending the sessions of the Indian National Congress whenever I could. My experience, however, has been most disheartening. Every session since the special meeting in Bombay in 1918 has outdone its predecessor in the adoption of impracticable programmes, in unreasoning opposition to Government, and in the use of unrestrained language. The few of our ways of thinking who attended it, could obtain a hearing only with the greatest difficulty and their voice invariably went unheeded. So long as there was the slightest hope left, some of us felt it a duty to warn our reckless countrymen against the perils of the course along which they were drifting. That excuse is no longer there, after the non-co-operation movement began and even the nationalists who opposed it resolved, out of a mistaken sense of loyalty to the Congress to fall into line. I confess the idea of going to the Congress no longer appeals to me."

He then continues,

"We know, besides, that one of the cardinal doctrines is the absolute impossibility of ever co-operating with Government on any matter. They have quite made up their minds that on principles non-co-operation is justifiable at this juncture. Again, they are for immediate Swaraj, and will postpone everything to its attainment. It is also quite possible that they will consent to substantial modifications in the first article of the Congress constitution although not, perhaps, to all the drastic proposals of Mr. Gandhi's Committee. Moreover, their contemptuous attitude towards the Reform Act continues without the

slightest abatement, and certain principal leaders among them have declared a partiality for the policy of obstruction and deadlock hoping that the British Government would grant India full Swaraj, as the only means of getting over the impasse."

"As if these causes of division were not sufficient, a campaign had been started, for which the sanction of the Congress will be sought and in all probability will be given, to discredit and boycott those liberals and others who had been elected to the new legislatures by the first exercise of a wide and direct franchise. The sum total of these differences had made reconciliation and united work impossible. The wisest course in the circumstances was to maintain the purity of our principles and our complete freedom of action. If the members kept the generous flag of liberalism flying, a large and influential party will gather round it in no time."

This appeal shows clearly which way the wind was blowing in the country, and how it was impossible for any individual or party to check its fury, till the storm had broken and died down of itself, and people had realised the wreckage it had left behind. As the report of the Reception Committee of the Madras Conference noted it, the result of this appeal was amply evidenced in the success of the Session which was largely attended by leading liberals from different provinces besides a strong contingent of Madras delegates who, as might be expected, formed a considerable body of them. Mrs. Besant and her colleagues of the National Home Rule League joined the Reception Committee and participated in the proceedings of the Federation.

OUR GRIEVANCES

The Madras Session of the Federation was presided over by Mr. C. Y. Chintamani. The news had

flashed, as the Session was proceeding, that Mr. Surendra Nath Bannerjea was marked out as Minister in Bengal, and the president of the Session as Minister in the United Provinces under the constitution started on its work by the Reform Act of 1919. The best contribution to the discussion and elucidation of the whole political situation as it had emerged from Mr. Gandhi's activities in support of non-co-operation, was embodied in the presidential address. Mr. Chintamani said that the liberal opposition to non-co-operation was not due to "misplaced tenderness on their part to the authors of the wrongs." He maintained further that "the present political muddle was due to Government's policy all along the line." Then he reviewed the wrongs of Government one by one as follows:—(1) the sale by Government of the Reverse Councils which even a loyalist paper like the "Times of India" described as 'organised plunder'; (2) Military expenditure was run up with a reckless disregard of Indian interests; (3) The increases of emoluments of the so-called Imperial Services which had added further to the already heavy cost of the administration; (4) action was not taken by the Government of India to vindicate justice and honour of the Indian Nation in the matter of Martial law administration in the Punjab; (5) Heavy indemnities were levied from the whole cities and districts because some of these inhabitants committed crimes; (6) The House of Lords upheld General Dyer, and a hundred and more honourable M.P.'s memorialised the Premier to remove Mr. Montagu from office; (7) the recommendations of the Esher Committee on the Indian Army reform and of the Lovett Committee on the reform of the medical services "had not precisely the effect of a healing balm as they were anti-Indian in their nature," and their effect was "to exacerbate a situation none too easy

without these irritants," and naturally these made one ask what was the practical value of the Declaration of 1917 if the constitution of the army in India was to be what the Esher Committee had recommended, (8) the rules made under the Government of India Act were none too favourable to the advance of India to responsible government and about them no important suggestion made by any non-official body were deemed worthy of acceptance by Government. These rules had the effect of counteracting the principle and policy of the Act, as it was moulded by Mr. Montagu in the Committee stages of the Bill and accepted finally by Parliament; (9) no action had been taken to constitute a territorial force; (10); King's commissions granted to Indians were few and far between; (11) treatment of Indians in Kenya, Tanganyika and Fiji was not consistent with the declaration that the Indians are King's equal subjects with those in Africa and elsewhere."

This summary of the principal political happenings in 1920 was illustrative and not exhaustive. It showed that the action of the Government was far from conducive to the creation of opinion in its favour, and it was not calculated to foster belief that there was a genuine desire on the part of the Government to act in the spirit of the new reforms and of the Royal Proclamation that had heralded them. Nor was it in any way helpful to accelerate India's political progress and economic development. After narrating these facts Mr. Chintamani turned round upon the critics who had said that the liberals were lethargic, inasmuch as they could not control the extremism rampant in their midst. And he answered, "our critics forget that extremism is the direct product of the policy of the Government, and the unpopularity of the liberals is in reality the expression of the public distrust of

Government's motives and measures."

OPPOSITION AND ITS REASON

With all this severe indictment of Government's policy and action, which clearly showed that the liberals did nothing or said nothing merely to please any one, Mr. Chintamani still maintained that non-co-operation was not the proper remedy in that respect. "Our opposition to non-co-operation," he said, "springs from our conviction of its futility, the harm it would do to our cause and our country." He further proceeded to point out how "it was first put forward as a protest against the Punjab and the Khilafat wrongs, and how it had since developed into a political method to obtain Swaraj in twelve months of which nearly four had expired."

After reviewing the progress of the movement during the four months from the 1st August 1920, he added "it has all along been my conviction that the negative creed of non-co-operation is opposed to the nature of things; no raging, tearing propaganda, no whirlwind campaign, no shock tactics, no, not even social tyranny as was practised the other day at Delhi. can bring it success." The assertion has been fully borne out by what happened to the movement by the middle of 1922. As for Swaraj to be won by this method, it is interesting to know to-day what Mr. Chintamani had said in December 1920.

These are his emphatic words:

"Neither can Swaraj, immediate or remote, within or outside the Empire, be attained by such means. We can and shall reach our political goal of complete self-government such as the dominions enjoy, by constitutional action inside the councils and outside, and by building up the strength of the nation. Unceasing work in the various spheres of national life so as to make of Indians a more efficient as well as a more united nation, and organised and sustained efforts in the political field to secure much need-

ed reforms in the administration, military no less than civil, are the only means by which we can hope to achieve success. They may be commonplace and unheroic, there may be nothing about them to catch the fancy, they are certainly old-fashioned and not novel or sensational. But originality in politics is not always a merit and not everything that is new is good."

To those, however, who were impatient for immediate Swaraj, he added,

"I must frankly admit that our well-tried method offers no hope. Let there be no make-believe or self-deception : Let us call things by their proper names. Immediate Swaraj is an euphemism for revolution. And revolution cannot be accompanied by appeals to constituted authorities. But non-co-operation cannot achieve it either. I have a constitutional aversion for prophesying, which Mr. Balfour has described as the most superfluous form of error, while according to Sir Charles Dilke political prophecy is the most futile of all prophecies. But not even Macaulay's school boy runs any risk in venturing the prediction that non-co-operation will not bring about the wished for revolution. To those into whose soul the iron has entered and who have worked themselves into the conviction that any state of existence would be better than life under this government, the only path that is open is armed revolt. If they think they can, if they feel they must, let them go forward and risk it. I will deplore their folly but will respect their courage and straightforwardness. But to desist from such a course of action and, at the same time, to denounce constitutional agitation as another name for mendicancy, while you go on stirring up feeling and undermining respect for law and authority among the masses who have not developed an intelligent understanding, is, I confess, beyond my poor comprehension on any assumption that does not savour of uncharitableness. Whether such persons adopt Mr. Gandhi's programme or more modestly content themselves with the acceptance of 'the principle of non-co-operation,' the while releasing their surcharged feeling by the denunciation of us liberals, so dear to the heart of a species of extremist publicists, they equally mislead themselves and their hearers and followers, and only act as clogs in the

wheel of progress. In this view of the matter I deplore the attempt that is being made to alter the creed of the Congress."

This is rather a long passage that we have quoted, but the subsequent story of non-co-operation direct action, civil disobedience, no-tax campaign, and the last of it, the 'Quit India' slogan, endorses to the full the truth of the words used of the movement by Mr. Chintamani in 1920. They deserve, as nothing else so much, to be brought out from old files and put prominently in this volume which is a survey of the liberal party's valuable contribution to sane thinking and right action.

THE LIBERAL EFFORT

Throughout the year 1920 people who could think for themselves and realised their responsibility to the country, had spoken and written against non-co-operation. Mr. Chintamani in his paper, the 'Leader" of Allahabad, wrote strongly against it. Mrs. Besant did the same in her own papers in Madras. In Bombay, inspite of bitter opposition and misrepresentation, abuse and reviling, the liberals organised a committee to issue leaflets and distribute literature among the people to make them see rightly and act wisely in this respect. And lectures were given and papers were read, and discussions arranged on this momentous issue in the premises of the Servants of India Society, Bombay.

The writer remembers an occasion in connection with the Gokhale anniversary held in Bombay in that year, when speakers like Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru and Mr. Jinnah spoke on one side, and Mr. M. R. Jayakar spoke on the other, either side telling us in the name of Gokhale what he would have done in the crisis through which the country was passing as the result of the new movement of Mr. Gandhi.

It is, indeed, very interesting to note here that Mr. Jayakar and Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru who, at the time, seemed to be in the opposite camp, later on came together as allies, and that Mr. Jinnah who was then a thorough-going nationalist opposed to non-co-operation had, during the lapse of years, become a communalist leader of vehemence, short-sightedness and pugnacity which characterise Gandhi's attitude to any question of the moment. As the lamp of reason burns very dim in the case of Mr. Gandhi, so does it now with Mr. Jinnah, and both seem to have parted company, long ago, with what is called wise politics. But the mass mind and the leaders in the second rank of Congress politics were so much obsessed with Mr. Gandhi's satyagraha as a panacea for all evils, and he was so much looked up to as a worker of miracles, that no work that others could do to educate the country against his cult, had proved, since then, of any use.

That is one of the reasons why, even though the Congress had blundered from year to year, and through two decades and more, since Mr. Gandhi has been at the helm of its affairs, the people simply refuse to think and look the other way about. Communal politics and revolutionary politics between themselves have monopolised the political field in India, and all else has suffered on that account. The Government is neither weakened nor brought down. Bureaucracy has become all powerful and the country in its effort to grasp all, has lost all. They swear by the tremendous awakening among the people that the new movement has brought about. But what has been the fruit of it all? Whither has it led us? What rights have we won? How are we taught better to work for unity? Where is the result of the much vaunted constructive programme? And what about the reforms granted to

us and the work that should have been done in connection with them? Twenty years have seen us pass through many an experiment to win Swaraj and complete independence. But it has eluded our pursuit like "the good that flies" and we are no better for the experience. This has been told us by anticipation, not only in the speech of Mr. Chintamani, but also of Mrs. Annie Besant who spoke at the Conference on its resolution on Non-co-operation. To that speech we must turn now.

WHOSE RESPONSIBILITY?

Mrs. Besant pointed out how the Government while asking the liberals to work for co-operation were themselves doing nothing to smoothen co-operation. She said, "the Government has a large share in the responsibility for the movement, that it has done nothing to help us who have been working against non-co-operation and the Government is rather in some ways playing into the hands of those who look upon co-operation as useless." And further she mentioned how the leader of the movement had been shifting ground from time to time as regards its programme and objective. She said,

"When it began about last April in an indefinite form Mr. Gandhi published his four steps of progressive non-co-operation. Those steps were giving up titles; next, paid officers were to be resigned; the third was the inducing of the police and the soldiers to leave their duties; and the fourth was the non-payment of taxes. In his speech as President of the Khilafat Conference in Madras, Mr. Shaukat Ali had said definitely that the fifth stage was revolution. At that time Mr. Gandhi forbade his followers to add anything to the Khilafat grievance. In the meeting of the Conference held at Allahabad at the beginning of June or rather in the All India Congress Committee Meeting at Benares the day before, it was said that it would not be possible for the country as a whole to move merely on the Khilafat question, and it was suggested that the

Punjab tragedy should be part of the cause for non-co-operation. Also at that meeting the Reform Act was discussed and the Hunter Report was brought in, so that we went out then with three things against which non-co-operation was to be used as a weapon, namely, the Khilafat, the Punjab tragedy and the Hunter Report."

Then came what Mr. Gandhi called a War Council in Bombay, whose orders were to be implicitly obeyed. The boycott of Councils and Law Courts were added to the original programme as also the boycott of Schools and Colleges. About the carrying out of these items Mrs. Besant made the following pertinent observation. "No one, apparently, was prepared to obey the whole programme, unkind people outside said that every member wanted other people to sacrifice what they had, and encouraged them to do it, while he himself was not prepared to sacrifice anything. Lawyers took one view, people with posts took other views, and it was a scramble not to make sacrifices but to purify the nation by sacrifice of others." No one should go into the Councils, that was Mr. Gandhi's plan and that was carried. And yet the Councils had been filled and members were getting ready for their work. Mrs. Besant observed on it, "for the next three years that part of the programme cannot come again to the front. It has led to one bad result."

What was that bad result?:

"Some people who would have been very useful had been shut out. The liberal party had suffered from the absence of extremists, for with both in the Councils and working together, more reforms would have come in as the result of moral pressure, for then Government would have been compelled to yield to reasonable demands as against extremist opposition and the country would have benefitted."

What happened now? Had they succeeded by the boycott in paralysing the Government? Mr. Gandhi had definitely said, "Let us remember that the whole of

them—boycotts of all kinds—was provisionally intended to paralyse the Government." Mrs. Besant asked, "Is the programme that is being carried out in any way adequate for the paralysis of Government? Is there one point in it which has any effect on the Government except to make it stronger on the wrong side? And she concluded, "I submit that the whole of the programme, as put into detail at the Calcutta Congress, paralyses the people and does not paralyse the Government. On the contrary it helps the Government if it wants to do wrong."

The non-co-operation was, indeed, non-co-operation with a section of our own people, as it was amply proved in the sequel, and the Government was not in the least degree affected by it. The boycott of Schools and Colleges was the worst part of the programme. It encouraged indiscipline and rowdism among students without affording them a substitute for schools from which they were taken out. Mrs. Besant quoted in this connection the instances of the Aligarh and the Benares University,—institutions reared out of public funds, and yet students were advised to come out of them. She told how funds were promised for Aligarh University to turn into a national university which never materialised. It was the courage and statesmanship of Sir Ashutosh Mukerji which had saved the Calcutta University from turmoil and trouble. Mrs. Beasnt quoted about the Calcutta youths "who were asked to leave schools and swell the ranks of agitators," being told by the arch-pontif of the non-co-operation to stand on their own legs, and that if they found no work wherewith to make living, they must go and break stones in the street, do scavenging work and clean stables."

The national schools and colleges in substitute of Government or Government subsidised institutions

did not materialise, and the few that had materialised did not survive, and the student world suffered in education, suffered in status,and suffered in future careers and useful work for their country. This part of the programme was never taken up again in Mr. Gandhi's future experiments in Swaraj for India, fo he knew that it would never succeed, even as little, if at all, as other items seemed to have succeeded. Similar was the case with the item of the boycott of foreign cloth. The fact was as clear as day light, and one need not go into statistics of import and export to prove what was so patent.

THE SECRET OF ITS HOLD

What was then the explanation of the popularity of non-co-operation in the years 1920 and 1921? According to Mrs. Besant the explanation of the popularity of the movement of non-co-operation was that people felt helpless and desperate. They felt that they had been insulted, humiliated and wronged in their manhood, and injured in every sense of self-respect. The anger was a fair and righteous anger against the Government, against the British nation, and Mr. Gandhi had given a channel for that anger. That was why the movement seemed so strong. The movement said to the Government, to the English, 'I am disgusted with you. I hate you. I do not want to do anything with you, you get away from me.'

In that moment of despair, in that feeling of helplessness, with the sense of wrong which they could not redress, Non-co-operation came before the people and the people rushed through it because it was the expression of their anger, and the desire to defend their motherland against such wrongs in the future. Mrs. Besant concluded

"So this resolution blames the Government as we have a right to blame it, and we have a right to ask it to do

something in order to make our task more possible before the masses of the people, and we say to the Government: 'Do your share, we are doing ours. We are doing it at the risk of obloquy, of insult, and of injury of every kind. Will you help us and not hinder us by continuing the wrong.' "

This extract gives us the psychological explanation of the tide of popularity in favour of the first trial of non-co-operation. It is an apt illustration of the famous saying "it is not party that makes the fortune of events but events that make the fortune of a party." The movement went on with great noise and smoke but collapsed suddenly through the failure of non-violence; and it failed just when at Bardoli the leader had resolved to launch civil disobedience and no-tax campaign. He had suddenly to stop it. Swaraj did not come, not a single item of the eightfold programme effectively materialised, and when, after Mr. Gandhi's imprisonment, the Congress civil disobedience committee went into the whole matter it had to confess that "the whole thing was a woeful miscalculation and waste of effort," and "the boycott of councils was the greatest blunder of them all."

BITTER FRUIT

If only the new reforms had been taken in hand by the people and their leaders, and worked with perfect goodwill, understanding and co-operation among all parties, the political scene, at the end of the first three years of the New Act, would have been so different, so hopeful and so helpful towards speeding up the Reforms to the next step on the road to responsible Government. At least full provincial autonomy would have been an established fact before the advent of the Simon Commission or the Round Table Conference that followed it. When the Prince of Wales came to India in 1921, Mr. Gandhi was requested in high quarters not to advise the boycott of his visit to India,

he was promised in return full provincial autonomy. But he did not agree. In the event we know what happened in the Moplah territory of Malabar, in Bombay, and at Chauri Chaura. The Swaraj that was coming, whatever it meant, began to stink in the nostrils of the Mahatma. Government had not helped, Gandhi would not listen, and the communalist had risen to the top. In consequence politics in India has meant all along a series of deadlocks and *impasses*, to the great joy of the reactionary and the die-hard in England; and to the great sorrow of those who would go forward by following the golden mean.

CHAPTER V

CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE

The opening months of 1922 saw the beginning and the end of the civil disobedience movement. The years 1921 and 1922 were also the first two years of the working of the new Reform Act. Lord Reading's Viceroyalty of India began in April 1921. He had to deal, at the start, with three questions that were then agitating the mind of India—the Khilafat question. the Punjab wrongs, and, if we may so put it, the question of Swaraj.

The Government of India, under his guidance, had made a strong representation to the British Government on behalf of the Mohomedans and their susceptibilities on the Khilafat question. Beyond that it could not go, as it was a question of foreign policy quite outside its direct intervention. Mr. Montagu, as Secretary of State for India, was sympathetic, but the Government of Lloyd George did not take up the matter as forcefully on behalf of India as they ought to have done. In the meanwhile, the Angora Government of Kamal Pasha had practically put the lid upon the Khilafat agitation in India by settling the matter off-hand. And this settlement put an end to that question in India. The Muslims led by Mohamed Ali and Shaukat Ali, no doubt, did their best to revive interest in that business in Mohamedan countries outside India, but these showed them a cold shoulder, and the movement ended.

The Viceroy went personally into the cases of

those who had suffered in the tragedy at Amritsar, and gave them what redress he could, in the circumstances of the situation. But he could do no more as regards the punishment of the principal author of the tragedy at Jallianwalla Bagh, as the House of Lords had made a dead set against it, and, further, if the question of doing away with the pension of General Dyer, which was paid from the British Exchequer, were to be reopened in the House of Commons, that House would not pass it.

The third matter was that of Swaraj. There, Lord Reading was willing to come to terms, through a Round Table Conference, and to start the Provinces on full autonomy. But Mr. Gandhi had torpedoed the proposal, and had, later, decided at Ahmedabad on a campaign of civil disobedience to begin in the early months of 1922.

The Liberal Federation's Session at Allahabad at the end of 1921 discussed civil disobedience, the political situation prior to it, as also the question of self-government in the light of the resolution adopted on it by the Imperial Legislative Assembly. There was a little breeze at the Conference over its resolution on the political situation in the country; there was wisdom and judicious balance of mind in its exposition of a further step in responsible government; and there was measured yet firm criticism on the proposed campaign of mass civil disobedience. Round the question of political advance, the Session also discussed Government's policy about the Indianisation of the Services, of the Army, and of the equipment of Indians for the defence of their own country. In the Assembly itself Sir Sivaswami Aiyer had made the question his own as we know from the resolutions he had moved on Esher Committee's Report, and, later, by the work he had done on the sub-com-

mittee of the House to speed up the matter of military reform in favour of Indianisation and retrenchment of expenditure.

NO POLITICAL WEAPON

To deal first with civil disobedience that was to be launched at Bardoli in 1922, the Liberal Federation condemned it on the ground that it would do no good to India, but, on the other hand, do it infinite harm. The presidential address of Mr. Govind Raghavachariar elaborately dealt with the subject and showed that it was not a proper political weapon to fight India's battle for freedom and Swaraj. Experience of the past, from the first Satyagraha movement against the Rowlatt Acts down to the Bombay Riots in November 1921, had proved its infinite capacity for harm. Whether you call it Satyagraha, non-co-operation, civil disobedience or no-tax campaign, the direct action and mass movement accompanying it had always and inevitably issued in intimidation, terrorism and violence, and as the Moplah Rebellion in September 1921 had shown, in fierce fanaticism and bloodshed. What had happened in the past should be a warning for the future. It was from this point of view that the liberals assembled at Allahabad in their Annual Conference had spoken against the project of civil disobedience, which had commended itself to the Indian National Congress Session at Ahmedabad.

At the same time, the Federation told the Government, plainly, how unwise it was on their part to give the slightest excuse to the country to think that in the maintenance of law and order, they were using Acts intended for a different purpose, namely, against revolutionary crime, the cult of the bomb and the revolver, and the spread of that cult through the operations of secret societies. It was on this ground that Pandit Hirdayanath Kunzru objected strongly to

the policy of Sir Harcourt Butler in the United Provinces in putting down the Congress and the Khilafat organisations of volunteers by application to that Province of the provisions of the Criminal Law Amendment Act.

He maintained that the non-co-operation movement had almost petered out because the Government of India so far had ignored it. The wholesale ban on volunteers had given the leaders just the atmosphere they had needed to start the civil disobedience movement. The Government of Lord Reading had behaved till then with infinite patience and wisdom letting the ordinary law to have its own course against offenders. But the Bombay Riots had upset the balance, what was called "repression" had begun in full force, and, as a result, there were hartals at Allahabad and other places, on the arrival of the Prince of Wales in their midst. That was the contention of Pandit Hirdayanath Kunzru in his address at the Conference as Chairman of its Reception Committee. And the same argument he reiterated almost, in his speech on the political situation when he supported the resolution of the Conference on that subject.

THE OTHER SIDE OF IT

The President of the Conference used words on the occasion which deserve to be quoted here. He said,

"The course taken by the Government has this element of weakness in it that it offers a premium to persons anxious to be in the limelight. When some are arrested more come in. The gaol is considered the place of freedom. No heroic measures can be suggested on either side. The arrest of men of great respectability and of unimpeachable character like Lala Lajpatrai, Mr. C. R. Das, Pandit Motilal Nehru, and Babu Bhagwandas cannot be contemplated without feelings of the very deepest regret. The extension of the Seditious Meetings Act and the Criminal Law

Amendment Act, recommended to be repealed shortly, to several parts of the country has been protested against. The facts, so far known, do not negative the suggestion that reliance could have been placed on the ordinary law of the land, and the executive need not have called to its aid, in the wholesale manner it has done, the extraordinary powers it possesses under the special law."

Speaking of his own Province, the president added that His Excellency Lord Willingdon had acknowledged that the extension of the Criminal Law Amendment Act to the Presidency of Madras was as a precautionary measure. It was questionable whether a hearty welcome could be secured to his Royal Highness the Prince of Wales by the policy that was then being pursued when it had the effect of filling the jails with large number of persons, thus precipitating the very state of affairs that Mr. Gandhi and his followers had declared they wished to exist and were looking forward to. It must be distressing to His Royal Highness that on the occasion of his visit a number of persons should be thrown into jail. In the above circumstances, the best course to be adopted would appear to be to trust to the ordinary law of the land and not to invoke the extraordinary powers that may be taken under the law.

The resolution on political situation adopted at the Conference was, in substance, the reproduction of the above argument. And it was in the speeches made in support of that resolution that the breeze to which we have referred occurred. Delegates from Bengal seemed to be convinced that Lord Reading's Government had taken just the step that was needed at the time. Speakers like Mrs. Annie Besant defended the Government action supporting their view from what they had seen happening in Bombay and Benares, while Pandit Kunzru strongly objected to the step from his experience in the U.P. We have

alluded to this debate because it shows how a full and frank expression of individual opinion was not debarred in the discussion, and that there was not at the Conference the slightest indication of mere registration of a Decree fixed beforehand, or a fiat from a man however big, to be meekly accepted by the rest.

During this hot debate, Mr. Kamat of Poona struck a note of appeal to the Government as follows: "My own reading of the situation tells me that if they had not been in a state of panic, things in the Congress would not have been where they are to-day." Confident in his belief that intimidation left to itself would not have led to violence, Mr. Kamat continued. "If such a situation arises, certainly all law-abiding citizens, shall be the first to go to the Government of India and say 'Now the situation is out of hand; and we on behalf of the country urge the Government to adopt such measures as shall put down the movement." Now, this was certainly a counsel of perfection so easy to give but so hard to follow. The answer to it was Chauri-Chaura in the Gorakhpur District of the United Provinces. As Mr. Chintamani has poignantly noted, "In the Gorakhpur divisions no action had been taken under the Criminal Law Amendment Act, and the Commissioner took pride in the fact that he had been able to keep the peace in all his three districts without recourse to any special law, and he had advised the Government to withdraw the Notification under the Criminal Law Amendment Act from the whole of his division. What must have been his mortification to find but six or seven days later Chauri Chaura confounded him with a vengeance!—And who did it? The volunteers of the Congress pledged to non-violence?"

About the Round Table Conference proposed by Lord Reading and with which Mr. Gandhi would have

nothing to do then, Mr. Chintamani writes in his book on *Indian Politics*: "A way out of the impasse was sought when Lord Reading, the Viceroy, was persuaded—principally by the then law-member, Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru—to agree to a Round Table Conference at which spokesmen of the Government and the people might talk matters over. Not only Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru, but Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya on the side of the Congress actively exerted himself to see the suggested Conference materialise. Mr. C. R. Das was eager to seize the opportunity and Mr. C. Vijayaraghava Chariar was of the same opinion. So were several leaders of the Congress. But Mr. Gandhi put his veto. The situation grew from bad to worse." The President of the Liberal Federation in 1921 said about this, "It has to be remembered that the Round Table Conference proposal had met with the acceptance of all opinion save that of Mr. Gandhi. The nation is entitled to a consideration at his hands, especially in view of the admittedly great suffering which it is called upon to undergo. It is, therefore, most unfortunate that Mr. Gandhi should have made the resolve he did, with the result that the Conference had to be given up."

THE AFTERMATH

Sir Sivaswami Aiyer said of Civil Disobedience. "From the moment that the non-co-operation movement was put forward by Mr. Gandhi Civil Disobdience has always been at the back of his mind as a part and parcel of his programme to be resorted to as soon as, in his opinion, the people are ready to follow that part of his programme." That observation answered the contention of those who had said that civil disobedience was Mr. Gandhi's reply to Government's drastic action against the Congress and the Khilafat Volunteers organisations. However, to continue fur-

ther, Sir Sivaswami Aiyer said, "The Congress has now resolved to adopt the item as part of its programme. Mr. Gandhi has declared openly that Civil Disobedience is merely a substitute for armed rebellion."

"There was no question as to the object of this item in the programme," continued Sir Sivaswami :

"It is for the purbose of declaring war against Government, of rebelling against Government that civil disobedience has been proposed. As regards the methods they have been said to be peaceful. There can be no doubt that Civil Disobedience involves the breaking of the law and the defiance of authority. The necessary result of this policy will be to defy the Government and paralyse it. All that must necessarily result in great suffering and misery to the people. If you deliberately break the law, the Government cannot keep quiet if it is to deserve the name of Government. And if the Government is to maintain law and order, if it has to maintain its authority, it must necessarily punish those who have been guilty of the breaches of the law. The result will be that by inducing hundreds and thousands, if not more, to bring upon themselves that punishment which is the inevitable consequence of collision with law and authority, you will be producing a state of excitement in the country which will not possibly allow them to adhere to the policy of non-violence."

And then he referred to Muslim reaction to the movement. He said:

"Let me just refer to some of the utterances of the Mohommedan followers of Mr. Gandhi. From what we have read in the newspapers you will see that some of them are really fretting at the restraint imposed upon them by Mr. Gandhi regarding recourse to violence. Some of them have put it forward that recourse to violence has been enjoined by their religion and the dictates to their religion require them not to observe the pact of non-violence any longer, but to resort to every means for the purpose of attaining their object. Now again, take the utterance of Maulana Mohomed Ali made some months ago. He distinctly stated "I am prepared to observe non-

violence so long as I am associated with Mr. Gandhi." Note carefully the qualification which he put in. Remember also the qualification which has been introduced in the pledge undertaken by many of the volunteers. It says, "so long as the Congress adheres to the policy of non-violence." The result of violence will be that our Mahommedan countrymen will certainly have recourse to arms and revolution. I do not know whether I am doing them an injustice in supposing that the recollection of the days of Mahommedan ascendency and the hope of a revival of that ascendency may not be altogether absent from their minds. Look at the way in which they gloat over the treaty with the Amir and on his triumph over the British Government in India. Look at the way in which they gloat over a corridor being opened from Turkey to India. It is not an unnatural hypothesis that many among the Mohomedans, especially among the fanatical section of them, will be inspired by the vision of Pan-Islamism. Just recollect the dangers of all that. It is surely our duty to warn our countrymen against the dangers of this fanaticism and to do all that is in our power to induce them not to follow a course which is sure to lead to disorder and will retard our progress."

Subsequent years have shown how, when the movement had been withdrawn, there have been Hindu-Mahomedan riots, that Muslims had drifted away from the Congress, that all efforts at unity had failed and the gulf had widened between the two communities with political and economic consequences injurious to India, and contributing largely to the postponement of Swaraj. The chicken of disobedience had come home to roost. And the result had showed itself very clearly from 1926 onwards till the end of 1935; and subsequently through the Congress Raj from 1937 to 1939, and, much more after, to this day.

CHAPTER VI

THE MONTAGU ACT

From this unpleasant topic we now pass on to the Conference resolution on self-government on which again the best contribution to sane thinking and practical step, was made by Sir Sivaswami Aiyer. The Legislative Assembly had passed a resolution advocating a change to full provincial autonomy within five years of the completion of the Government of India Act of 1919, and a step towards responsible government in the centre to start at the same time as the change in the Provinces. The Conference resolution on the subject was divided under three heads. First, it demanded full autonomy in the Provinces; secondly, in the Central Government it demanded auto nomy except in the spheres of defence, foreign affairs, relations with the Indian States, and ecclesiastical affairs, with such safeguards as may be suitable and necessary for the protection of vested interests; and thirdly, it made the demand in response to public feeling in the country.

In answer to the objection that such a demand was preposterous, Sir Sivaswami Aiyer said, "In making that claim we do not now put forward something which was not put forward originally, but we are simply reiterating the demand originally made." To those who maintained that the experience of one year was too short, he answered, "it may be truly said that during this period it has not been proved that the working of the Reforms has been a failure." Another

valid reason for making the demand was, in the speaker's opinion, apart from compliments and tributes paid by men to the successful working of the New Legislatures, "a rapid growth of national consciousness and a strong demand among all sections of the people for a fuller control over their destinies." We may be permitted to remind the critic, in furtherance of this plea, of the fact that the Chartist movement in England had started almost on the heel of the Reform Act of 1832. But this reason was not enough, and, therefore, the mover of the resolution added that "in view of the experience gained in the working of the Act we were entitled to ask for a further concession," and that, "not merely on the ground of proved capacity, but on the ground of defects clearly revealed."

ADVANCE AT THE CENTRE

Sir Sivaswami Aiyer went on, "As regards the question of defects which have been revealed I would refer to those defects which are likely to best appeal to the Government itself." The one thing that was noticeable above all others was "the lack of co-ordination and want of organisation among the members of the Legislature, and the waste of time and energy and effort consequent on that state of things." He continued,

"The Government is now in a minority in the Legislature. The official members who are there, and the nominated members who are there, all put to together, do not give them any majority at all. The elected members are in a majority, and the Government do not know precisely where they stand and what amount of support they will get. Whenever they have to introduce a legislative measure or a fiscal measure, they have no idea as to what support they can command. Hence, it was not possible to regulate procedure, economise time, and to direct the energies of the legislature into the most fruitful channels, with the maximum of advantage to the community. That was

a solid argument in favour of introducing responsibility at the centre along with full autonomy in the Provinces."

Sir Sivaswami continued,

"I think the grant of responsible government may have the effect of precipitating the formation of parties which cannot but help the Government to determine its programme, to frame its policy, and to go forth to the Assembly confident in the expectation of support. I have no doubt that the introduction of responsible government and the principle of responsibility will have the effect of promoting better organisation."

To those who said, then, on the Government side that the Central Legislature was not a really representative one, he replied "I am afraid that in judging this matter Government is as impatient as the ardent spirits among ourselves." He reminded these opponents of the fact that they seemed to forget,

"that when responsible government was introduced in the United Kingdom the electorate bore but a small proportion to the population, and again, that in the initial stages only a small proportion of the electorates went to the polls and that they levelled their criticisms against us forgetting their own past history, and said we were not sufficiently advanced."

He concluded the argument thus, "I venture to claim that the legislatures are as representative as possible in the present position of affairs."

ADVANCE IN THE PROVINCES

As regards provincial Governments the resolution had asked for full provincial autonomy at the end of the first term. On this Sir Sivaswami Aiyer opined that he had all along felt that the Departments of Law and Justice might very well have been entrusted to popular control "for the reason that if these departments were not administered with a due sense of responsibility, it would recoil upon us far more than upon any other section of the community," and that

"nothing would better bring home to us a due sense of responsibility with regard to these departments than this," and that "Indians were as deeply interested in the maintenance of law and justice and the preservation of peace and order as the officials or as any other section of the community."

This fact was realised more clearly in the discussions preliminary to the Reform Act of 1935, when a similar fear was expressed by interested parties who had opposed the transfer. Full provincial autonomy at the end of 1923 would have overcome many an impediment and would have paved the way for India's peaceful progress towards Dominion Status and Federal Constitution, which, later, no end of R.T.C. deliberations had helped to materialise. If revolution postpones the process, official obstinancy and purblindness do it much worse. For they plunge the state into difficulties of their own creation and help to create a class of irreconciliables whom to win over becomes a task as difficult and impossible as that of Sisyphus of old.

The transfer of finance to popular control with essential safeguards for vested interests was a matter still more urgent, and in the best interests of Government itself. For that would help, as Sir Sivaswami Aiyer maintained, "harmony of effort and good understanding between what were two halves of the Government with the complaints in the transferred departments that they were being systematically starved by the other half." If unified control were to come into operation, there would be no ground for such complaints, and, again, the people would realise that "in this world they could not have anything for nothing, and that if they wanted to secure the blessings of civilised administration they must pay for them. And further, that, by some means or other, they were

bound to find the necessary monies for the expenditure."

Sir Sivaswami Aiyer clinched the whole argument in favour of the proposed advance in the following significant words:—"The reasons which I have urged for the introduction of responsbility in the Provincial Governments apply with as much force to the case of the Central Government. In fact, it is more of that Government that I have been speaking with anything like personal experience than of the local governments. So far as the Provincial governments are concerned, it has been claimed by some heads of the administration that, in accordance with the expectation of the Joint Select Committee, notwithstanding the theoretical division of Governments in two halves, the two halves of the Government have been working as a unitary Government; then, this resolution asked that the procedure should be continued and formally recognised and legalised. If, on the other hand, they were not working as a Unitary Government, then, they urged that the whole should work as a Unitary Government in theory and practice."

CHAPTER VII

LESSON LEARNT

Civil disobedience had come to an abrupt end at Bardoli in February 1922. Then followed the arrest and imprisonment of Mr. Gandhi. That brought about a change in the political outlook of leaders like Pandit Motilal Nehru, Mr. C. R. Das, Hakim Ajmal Khan and Mr. V. J. Patel. They realised that civil disobedience, "if not a mistake, had been certainly a mis-calculation." But they desired to convince their followers in the country, and they, therefore, instituted a Committee of Enquiry to go into the whole question and make a report of their findings. That was the Civil Disobedience Enquiry Committee. It toured the country, took evidence, and ultimately came to certain conclusions, the most important of which was "to cancel the boycott of Legislatures under the Reform Act of 1919." They resolved to contest the coming elections and, for that purpose, constituted themselves into the Congress Swarajist Party. They said to the people that they were going into the Legislatures to wreck the Reforms from within.

How far they succeeded in that matter does not concern us here. Their attitude divided the Congress into no-changers and pro-changers. The pro-changers had come round to the path of constitutional agitation, for they were convinced, that that alone was going to help them in their fight for Swaraj.

The Report of the Civil Disobedience Committee is an instructive document. It admitted the failure of

the boycott of schools and colleges, the paucity of national institutions, and their far from satisfactory nature; it admitted the equal failure of the boycott of law-courts, and of their supercession by the private courts of arbitration. As regards khaddar it said, "Indeed, it has now become impossible to say of any particular piece that it is *shuddha Khaddar* and that not many of the numerous *Khaddar bhandars* dotting the whole country deal exclusively with genuine stuff". About the picketing of liquor shops it said "the immediate effect was a marked decline in the consumption of liquor but after the removal of the pickets the pendulum swung back and the evil asserted itself in full force."

The boycott of Councils had played a prominent part in the Congress activities of the autumn of 1920. The Councils were then declared to be 'impure,' 'unclean,' 'unholy,' the very touch of which was pollution. Others had called them 'temples of Maya.' The Committee was divided in its opinion on that matter. Pandit Motilal Nehru, Hakim Ajmal Khan and Mr. V. J. Patel, who were in favour of Council Entry, wrote of it:—

"Times have now changed. Circumstances have altered. The period of the struggle is indefinitely prolonged. Measures affecting the daily life of the people are being enacted in the Legislature year after year. Fresh taxation and huge liabilities are being imposed with the help and in the name of the so-called representatives of the people, and *nolens volens* the people will have to submit to them. Under these circumstances it is a question for consideration how far the hold of the Congress over the masses can remain unaffected. Suppose the Congress persists in the boycott of the Councils in its present form, and it is found that a greater percentage of voters record their votes on the occasion, our claim would be discredited. We are inclined to believe that the policy of abstention has lost its charm and it is not at all unlikely that a

greater percentage of voters will poll at the ensuing elections. In that event the success gained at the last elections will be a thing of the past and the whole movement will be adversely affected."

That picture of "non-co-operation and after," should have been an eye-opener to all in India, and yet in 1930 the same method was pursued and precisely with the same result! It is interesting to note here the final judgment of the Committee on this important matter. It says:

"Before you are able to clothe a millionth part of the vast population in India in hand-spun and hand-woven khaddar; before you can supply an infinitesimal fraction of the demand for the national institutions; before any appreciable progress can be made in the removal of untouchability; before you can extricate yourself from the vicious circle which has effectively frustrated your efforts to restore communal unity; we warn you that you will have completely gone under, unless you open your eyes to the present need of the hour. Theories and dogmas are all very well in their own way, but they will not convey you far if you ride them to death. Knock these Councils on the head and you will accomplish what millions spent in foreign propaganda cannot achieve. Wreck the Reforms and you will smash at one blow the huge superstructure of world-wide deception which has cost millions to build up."

The last sentence in the above quotation was no more than a sop to Cerberus. They did not succeed in wrecking the Reforms of 1919 by entering the councils after 1922, as they did not succeed in wrecking the Reform Act of 1935—by accepting ministries under it. And "the huge superstructure of world-wide deception" was not smashed after 1923, as it did not fall to pieces in 1937 and after.

TRIBUTE TO MR. MONTAGU

This was the situation at the end of 1922 when the Federation's Session was held at Nagpur under the

presidentship of Rt. Hon'ble Shrinivas Shastri, and we have to see what the liberals thought of it, and what they laid down as their policy to cope with it. In 1922, unfortunately for India, Mr. Montagu was first displaced from office, and next unseated from Parliament. The Conference at Nagpur made reference to the fact and passed a resolution expressing its regret, at the same time that it paid its tribute to the great work Mr. Montagu had done for India. Dr. R. P. Paranjpye moving the resolution made one of the best speeches of the Conference. He pointed out how Mr. Montagu had proved the best friend of India and deserved to be placed in the rank of India's benefactors like John Bright, Henry Fawcett and Sir William Wedderburn. As a statesman he had shown himself the equal of Burke, Canning, Ripon and Morley. And even amongst these he came nearer to the heart of India by his deep understanding of her mind and by his bold action in granting her what she desired.

We have space here only to quote Mr. Shastri's words on Mr. Montagu from his address as the President of the Conference. He said, "In the long history of our British connection, no one has loved India more, no one has suffered more for her, no one has been more courageous or persistent in the application to her of the noble principles of liberalism, no one amongst front-bench politicians in England has had a more thorough or sympathetic knowledge and appreciation of her problems or her ambitions, no one has had a higher conception of her destiny under the British Commonwealth, and no one has put together a more substantial record of actual accomplishment in the pursuit of that destiny. We all regretted very much the sinister intrigue which deprived him of office, and we regret still more the cross-currents of Eng-

lish politics which have resulted in his exclusion from Parliament together. What a loss it is in these days, when there is a reasonable fear of reaction or stagnation in Indian affairs. India thinks of him with sorrow made poignant by gratitude, and sends him best wishes for a future career worthy of his great services to India, and to the British Commonwealth."

Exactly fifteen years after this, Mr. C. Y. Chintamani wrote of Mr. Montagu as follows: "As a result of all that I saw and knew and learnt of him I do not hesitate to give the first place to Mr. Montagu among all the Secretaries of State for India. Greater men had occupied that position, among them Lord Salisbury and Lord Morley. Some earlier and later Secretaries of State—Lord Morley among the former and Mr. Wedgewood Benn among the latter—were undoubted friends of India. But no one before or after Mr. Montagu came anywhere near him in love of India and service of the Indian people. I will repeat that he had nothing less than a passion for India. He died in 1924 a broken-hearted man at the early age of 45, and nothing so pained him as bitter criticism by Indians themselves, the very men in whose service he had spent himself and lost his career. His own countrymen resented what they thought to be his impudent and unsafe pro-Indianism, while the attitude of Indians only served to remind him that there was no gratitude in politics."

Montagu's passion for India and his devotion to her cause, are revealed to us in the pages of his Diary from which we have already quoted in an early chapter. In a letter writen to Mr. Shastri from the India Office in March 1922, Mr. Montagu writes, "In reflecting upon our conversations before you left London, I feel I did not fully convey to you any sense of ap-

preciation of your services to your country and the Empire. While you have been here, you have not only acquired for India a new reception in the Councils of the world, but I think you will carry back with you a true appreciation of the fact that I wish your countrymen would learn that hate begets bitterness, that the English want to serve India, that a real and dignified co-operation does not mean the abandonment or even the postponing, but rather the acceleration, of nationalist aspirations, and must meet—and does meet —with response from my fellow-countrymen. I have to thank you for much help, and feel grateful for much sympathy. I think you realise the difficulties of my task, and the assistance that you have given me has been much appreciated and will reinforce me in my work."

Mr. Montagu, of course, refers in this letter to Mr Shastri's work at the Imperial Conference of 1921, to his tour in the Dominions of Canada, Australia and New Zealand, and to his attendance at the Washington Conference. Everywhere he was given high praise for his 'gift of the golden tongue," joined to his wisdom, independence of judgement, and his firm advocacy of India as an equal partner in the British Commonwealth of Nations. If not in national, at least in international politics, India's status was raised by the work of men like Mr. Shastri and Sir Tej Bahadur Supru. Government nominees though they were, they did not do anything by act or speech which may be called disservice to India. In a letter which Mr. Montagu wrote to Mr. Shastri on the 5th of March 1923, he said, "I need hardly tell you with what satisfaction I received the generous resolution passed by the Liberal Federation, and I hope you will find some suitable method of conveying to the members of your organisation my grateful thanks for their message."

With the leaving of India Office by Mr. Montagu, a reaction had already set in, and the purpose of the reforms had begun to be systematically retarded by officials in India and the head of the India Office in England. Mr. Sastri, in his presidential address, prefaced his remarks with the following words:—"Doubtless some men in authority will resent candid speech and denounce it as a threat, but that is a risk that must be taken by those who would save communities from injury and statesmen from blunder." "It is in this spirit," he continued, "that I venture to survey broadly and briefly the present political situation." Then he referred, one by one, to the indications of reaction that had set in after Mr. Montagu had ceased to be the Secretary of State for India. He noted the extremely slow process of the Indianisation of the services, which, if this process continued at that rate, would take many many years to complete; and thus responsible Government dependent upon association of Indians in every branch of the administration would be indefinitely prolonged. He noted further the attempt to increase the salaries of the already highly paid Imperial Services, which would add to burden on the tax-payer in the shape of heavy charges on that account. He also pointed out the tendency developing among the I.C.S. Officers, who were under the Ministers, to go direct, over their heads, to the Governors, and the helplessness of the Ministers to bring them to book, so on and so forth. He then summed up the charges as follows:—"These are disquieting portents which may not be overlooked and they proceed from a quarter where, while Mr. Montagu was in office, Indian interests never failed to find a champion. One of the cardinal principles laid down by the Joint Select Committee was that, where the Legislature and the Exe-

cutive were in agreement on any matter not involving imperial interests, there should be no interference from higher authority. Fiscal autonomy, to the extent we now enjoy it, is regarded as the special application of that principle. During the discussion of 1919 it was regarded as of the utmost importance, and in the period of transition, public opinion in India must jealously safeguard it from violation by the Secretary of State in the case of the Government of India and in the case of the Local Government by the Government of India."

Mr. Sastri continued, "some months ago in another connection I had occasion to praise Mr. Montagu for the way in which he was willing to let the autonomy of India develop even at the cost of some self-suppression, and I have heard him say with humourous exaggeration, that his ambition was soon to abolish himself. Could it be said that the India Office respects this principle sufficiently? The other day I read a long string of matters of apparent agreement between the Government of India and the Indian Legislature either negatived or held up at White Hall—the recommendations as to the Military expenditure, proposals for Indianising the Army, proposals for diminishing recruitment in England to the All-India Services, proposals for appointing Indians to the Indian Medical Services, and recommendations of the Racial Distinctions Committee. Even if the Secretary of State has interfered in some of these matters it is a cause of public alarm in India, and it is necessary to consider how to resist these encroachments. At the time the principle was introduced, I remember to have pointed out that, if it was to be at all efficacious, the Government of India ought to be expressly freed from the necessity of previously consulting the Secretary of State before taking part in the discussions with the

Legislature. This unwholesome practice unduly limits the initiative of the Government of India and automatically narrows the limit of possible concurrence with the Legislature. It is no wonder if the tendency to reaction, wherever it exists in the official world, has received encouragement by knowledge of these circumstances, betokening as they do, a change in the atmosphere at White Hall. The Secretary of State has sent out orders forbidding Local Governments to refer to the Committees any question in any matter affecting any of the Imperial Services."

And, then, as an instance of this undesirable change, Mr. Sastri voiced in his address, while giving ample proof of the success of the Reforms during the first two years of their operation, the complaints of several Ministers about the handicap that diarchy becomes when it is not worked in the spirit it was meant to be worked. Mr. Sastri prefaced these complaints by an observation that "the best results have been obtained where Government have worked on the unitary principle treating their Ministers and Councillors as belonging to one Cabinet."

ESTIMATE OF DIARCHY

He concluded the discussion by the paradox "Diarchy has done best where it has been totally absent." Finance being in the hands of an Executive Councillor had placed Ministers at a disadvantage in obtaining money for their departments. Mr. Sastri quoted several instances of recalcitrance on the part of the members of the I.C.S. in their relation with the Ministers, since the reaction had set in. In some cases the Ministers could assert themselves only by threatening resignation. And then he quoted the following observation of a Minister in Madras which conveys its own moral, as it shows clearly how diarchy, in the best

worked of the Provinces had reached its utmost limit of usefulness. Said the Minister, "I am Minister of Development **minus** Forests, and you all know that Development depends a good deal on Forests. I am Minister of Industries without Factories which are a reserved subject, and industries without Factories are unimaginable. I am Minister of Agriculture minus Irrigation. You can understand what that means. How agriculture can be carried on extensively without irrigation in the hands of those who are responsible for it is rather hard to realise. I am also Minister of Industries without electricity which is a reserved subject. You all know the part which electricity plays in the development of Industries nowadays. The subjects of Labour and of Boilers are also reserved. But these after all are some of the defects of the Reform Scheme."

After giving this quotation Mr. Sastri emphasised that if friction could not be avoided in these matters by the very nature of diarchy, even under a sympathetic Governor of a Province and with Mr. Montagu at head, it could be imagined how under a reaction that had set in after his exit, diarchy was doomed to downright failure or to reversion to autocracy which would be even worse than that failure. He concluded, "A half and half system is naturally productive of friction and wears the nerves of those who have to work it. Members of the service are not the least loud in demanding that the system should be developed to the full. It seems now to serve no useful purpose." It has to be observed in passing that not by wreckage but by full use of the working the machine were these defects brought to light, not on the principle of boycot or avoidance, but on the principle of discriminating co-operation and experience that gave insight and widened the vision. It was only by wearing the

shoe that they knew where it had pinched them.

THE PREAMBLE

The ten years' limit, set in the preamble of the Act of 1919 to any change or revision in the Act, was not to be interpreted literally said Mr. Sastri. When the defects of the system had become so patent, and with all these defects the representatives of the people in the Councils and the Assembly had made a success of it, they had a right to demand that the system should be modified so that a quicker advance to the goal should be assured through the method of co-operation. On this point Mr. Sastri quoted two extracts from the debate on the Bill of Reforms in the House of Commons. He quoted Mr. Montagu as saying "If there is a remarkable and unforeseeable development in Indian conditions in the short space of ten years, it does not tie the hands of the Parliament in any way. There can always be a commission appointed in the interim." And he enforced the view by quoting from Mr. H. A. L. Fisher who was a cabinet member along with Mr. Montagu in the Ministry of Mr. Lloyd George. Said Mr. Fisher in the House of Commons on the same point: "May I point out that there is nothing in the bill which prevents revision taking place before ten years, but there must be a revision at the end of ten years."

"If we take these opinions along with what was specifically mentioned in the Montagu-Chelmsford Report, there remains no justification whatever for asserting that, at the end of five years, if not earlier, diarchy should yield place in the Provinces to full autonomy. If it be true that progress was made, and if it were obvious that a further expansion of reforms had become a vital political issue, then to insist on time limit set in the preamble, was nothing short of

a superstition and a fetish by which no wise man should swear." Surely, that was not an appreciation of the services rendered by moderates, liberals and others to make the Reforms a success. The country swayed by extremism had made their task extremely difficult—a thankless task almost—for the reason that they had been abused and reviled as not only lacking in patriotism and independence, but as toadies and traitors, as job-hunters and time-servers.

With all this misrepresentation and reviling in the press and on the platform they had gone on patiently, with an eye only to what they had felt as their duty by the country. It was these people who were recommending the change. It was they who had pointed out how diarchy had reached its limits of usefulness and a change over was inevitable. But the two Secretaries of State for India who had succeeded Mr. Montagu—both conservative, had remained obdurate, with the result that we know in all the happenings from 1924 to the end of 1929. Non-co-operation was not at an end, though as a programme it had failed, and was officially withdrawn. The Congress Swarajist Party went into the Councils and the Assembly with the resolve to non-co-operate from within. This helped considerably to postpone the revision of the Reforms leading smoothly to responsible government. Lord Reading in the closing years of his Viceroyalty and Lord Irwin till almost the end of his career, were unable to do anything that a move forward should be taken.

Under the incubus of the India Office presided over by Lord Peel and Lord Birkenhead, respectively, nothing was done and nothing could be done to conciliate even sane opinion in the country. The latter had pleaded that that opinion was not able to deliver the goods. But the fact of it was that he was radi-

cally opposed to the principle enunciated in the Declaration of August 1917, and the insistence on time limit was only a pretext of one who wanted to do nothing, and, if possible, to turn back. The coming into power of the Labour Party and its government in England about 1928-29, made it possible for Lord Irwin to persuade the British Cabinet to agree to a Round Table Conference with the definite promise to India of Dominion Status as the result of the joint deliberations in it of representative Indians with representatives of parties in England.

UNITY!

The years between 1923 and 1929 were years of comparative political peace in India, though the period witnessed Hindu-Mohomedan riots, on a scale and all over the country, as they had not been witnessed before. If the warnings of the liberals at the end of 1922 had been heeded and acted upon by authorities in England and India, the situation would not have gone worse as it did go worse from 1926 onwards. The extremists and non-co-operators had realised the unwisdom of intolerance, but they did nothing to improve the relations between themselves and other parties in the country, except for a brief space of time on the issue of the Simon Commission, and, later, when they had agreed to an All-Parties' Conference.

We cannot close this chapter better than by a quotation on the matter from the Civil Disobedience Committee's Report to which we have already alluded before. Said the Committee:—"A good deal has been said about fundamental differences of principles (among the various schools of thought in India), but those principles relate themselves only to methods and do not affect the essentials. Making every allowance for such differences, we think there will be left a

substantial residuum of good and solid work in which all parties can join without any sacrifice of principle. We are conscious that the irresistible logic of facts has compelled us to say some hard things about the general attitude of councillors and co-operators throughout the country, but we must not be understood to mean that all councillors and co-operators are alike. Many of them have undoubtedly tried their best to work, if on lines of co-operation, in the right spirit. We venture to think that while agreeing to differ where difference is unavoidable, it is possible to discover a common basis for joint action if both parties meet in the right spirit. A beginning, however small, once made, is bound to lead to desirable results. As it is the highest duty of a non-co-operator to co-operate with his own countrymen when possible, we trust that these indications will develop into definite proposals at no distant date."

A death-bed repentence this—as subsequent events and attitude of the Congress extremists had amply proved. As Mr. Chintamani observed, "It is to be regretted that this wise conception of public duty was completely forgotten by Congressmen in every election in which they took part. .. Every time they declared war upon non-Congressmen without reference to their character or antecedents. I cannot help thinking that Congressmen, individuals excepted, have come to regard themselves as super-men and developed a degree of contemptuous intolerance for those who do not swear by their very frequently changing dogmas and "Doxies," and they have not been able to resist the temptation of placing party above the country."

CHAPTER VIII

WORK IN THE LEGISLATURE

In this chapter we shall give in broad outline an account of the work done by the liberals in the Provincial Councils and the Central Legislatures during the first three years of the Government of India Act of 1919. The first elections for the Provincial Councils, the Legislative Assembly and the Council of State were held in November 1919. The Congress had declared complete boycott against them, and, yet, sufficient candidates had come forth to contest the elections and about one-third of six million voters had gone to the polls to cast their votes. Considering the general ignorance and illiteracy of the voters, and the location of constituencies far and wide in the country, this result was far from disappointing. The general voting, as one writer has remarked, was "only a little lower than in France."

Diarchy began in India under very unfortunate circumstances. The year 1920 was a year of slump in India. The Congress had begun its campaign of non-co-operation. The War had imposed a heavy burden of taxation on the country. The harvest in the following year had turned out very poor. The balance of trade had been entirely upset owing to fluctuation in exchange. The ratio of rupee to sterling pound showed sudden rise and fall, and receipts in Excise had fallen. Hence in the provinces and at the Centre the Governments were faced with heavy deficits in their budgets for three successive years, and these

could not be balanced by fresh taxation and by retrenchment in expenditure. To these difficulties was added the crop of inter-provincial controversies over the Meston Award. That Award had fixed a scale according to which the provinces were bound to contribute annually a certain sum towards the expenditure of the Central Government. And the Centre, in conditions outlined above, could not but insist upon its full share from the revenue of the Provinces as that was determined by the Meston Award. Hence the Provinces had not sufficient money in hand to spend on the nation—building departments in charge of the Ministries. If we bear these facts clearly in mind, we shall better appreciate the work of the Liberals during the first three years of the new reforms.

IN THE CENTRAL GOVERNMENT

First we turn to the Central Legislatures, in which the principle of responsibility was entirely absent and in which advance was marked only by the fact that there was non-official majority in the Legislative Assembly and in the Council of State. The spirit of the new reforms marked the work of these two legislatures, nevertheless. As Lord Chelmsford had observed in his speech to the two Houses, autocracy had yielded place to guidance in the relationship between the members of the Legislatures and the Government of India. This was specially so in the first two years of their work during which Mr. Montagu had been the Secretary of State for India. During this period certification was resorted to by the Governor-General only on two occasions—first, in connection with the Princes' Protection Bill, and secondly, in the enhancement of the Salt tax.

While the defects of diarchy were discovered by working it, one cannot say about the reforms as a

whole or of diarchy included in it, that they had been "a pitfall to the feet or a fetter to the limbs" of those who had come forth to work them. The attention of the Legislative assembly was particularly fixed on two subjects—Army and Finance. And the Assembly showed much good work in both these spheres.

ARMY

As regards the Army, the credit of that good work goes principally to Sir Siva Swami Aiyar, to whose resolutions on the Esher Committee's Report, and to whose work on the Army Committee appointed by the House we have already referred. Here we give the following extract from an authorised summary of that work, to show what remarkable contribution was made to that task by him:—"There were twenty resolutions, all private of which 17 were adopted and three negatived. Some of the results of these resolutions may be stated. The principle was emphasised that the Indian Army was to be free from the control of the War Office regarding policy and organisation, and its function was to defend India against foreign aggression. India's military obligation was to be no more than that of the Dominions. The assumption of the Esher Committee that the Indian Army might be regarded as part of the armed forces of the Empire was repudiated. So also was repudiated the assumption that India's military resources might be developed to suit Imperial necessities. Further, it was laid down that the Indian Army was to be employed only in India, but might be sent for garrison duty overseas with the consent of the Governor-General in Council, on condition that the expenditure was not borne by India. The functions of production and provision were to be placed in the hands of a surveyor-General of staff, who was to be a civilian member of the Army

Council. The Commander-in-Chief and the Chief of the General Staff were to be appointed by the British Cabinet on the nomination of the Secretary of State in consultation with the Government of India. The Commander-in-Chief's right of correspondence with the chief of the Imperial General Staff was to be restricted, so that the Government of India was not committed to any pecuniary responsibility or to any military policy not previously decided upon. Indians were to be freely admitted to all arms of the Military and Naval and Air Forces, the Auxiliary Services and the Auxiliary Forces, and no less than 25 per cent of the King's Commissions granted every year, were to be allotted to Indians. A school for training to enter Sandhurst was to be established at Dehra Dun. A Royal Military College at Dehra Dun, on lines similar to Sandhurst was sanctioned, but was not then established owing to financial stringency. The creation of territorial and Auxiliary Forces was recommended and action taken thereon. Several measures such as India's capacity to bear the present standard of Military Expenditure, the training of Indians in National Self-defence etc. were investigated by the Military Requirements Committee. Many resolutions which were adopted by the Assembly were communicated to the Secretary of State. In the course of a debate, in February 1923, on a resolution for the Indianisation of the higher ranks of the Army, an announcement was made that Eight units would be Indianised."

Out of the 20 resolutions brought before the House in connection with the reorganisation and Indianisation of the Army, 16 were moved by Sir Sivaswami Aiyer, out of which the House adopted fifteen and negatived one. And the Government was all along sympathetic to them, either taking action themselves or forwarding them for consideration to the Secretary

of State. Mr. N. M. Samarth was responsible for moving two others out of which the House adopted one and negatived the other.

FINANCE AND TAXATION

A matter of equal importance was Finance and taxation. In that respect also the Assembly exercised its power with admirable freedom and decision. In regard to Finance the following facts deserve notice. We have referred to the dispute about grants to be made by Provinces to the Central Government under the Meston Award. And yet Bengal was exempted from its share of contribution for three years as the result of the resolution moved to that effect in the Legislative Assembly on 30th September 1921. Another resolution moved by Dr. Gour in the Assembly in the following year (3-2-22) recommending to Government the appointment of a Retrenchment Committee of officials and non-officials to go into the cost of the Central Government, was passed in the House and accepted by Government. Permission to Bombay Government to raise a loan for Sukkur barrage was granted according to a resolution moved on the subject by a member from Sind. Madras, U.P. and the Punjab together would have secured an exemption from provincial grants to the tune of two crores if the resolution to that effect moved by Mr. Jamnadas Dwarkadas had not been negatived by the House itself by 38 to 48 votes.

If we turn to the Central Budgets for three years from 1921-22 to 1923-24, we find how non-official members—and a large number of them were liberals—had succeeded in shaping the policy of the Government in regard to Finance and taxation, the like of which was not found under the Minto-Morley Reforms. First, seven cuts were effected, the biggest of which was of Rs, 1.12 crores under posts and telegraphs. The lynx-

eyed Mr. N. M. Samarth pointed out the error in the budget figures, and it was rectified. The amendments proposed to the taxation proposals of Government were several in number. The chief one of them related to the retention of the price of the post-card to its old level of one pice. The loss to Government in the estimated revenue was Rs. 75 lakhs. The action of the Assembly in its disposal of the budget may be summarised thus:—it effected a reduction by Rs. 1.29 crores on expenditure side, and of Rs. 0.85 crore in taxation.

A ruling given by the Chair about these amendments, established a principle which deserves notice here. "The framers of the Act have given therein statutory expression to the English constitutional rule that demands for supply must come from the Crown, in other words, the Legislatures can reduce but cannot increase expenditure. If that is so, it seems to involve the necessary consequences that taxation to provide for such expenditure must also be initiated by the Crown. I think, I must, therefore, rule that an amendment by a non-official member speaking on behalf of the Government which has the effect of increasing taxation proposal by the Bill, is out of order. The point is this, that the Crown makes a demand, the Crown proposes taxation, the Council can reduce the demand for taxation, but it can neither increase the demand nor can it increase taxation." The ruling was given as a result of notice of two amendments proposed to be moved by the Maharajah of Cossimbazar for such increase in the budget of 1922-23.

The non-official members effected the following reduction in Government proposals for taxation. A reduction was made of the total amount of Rs. 9.56 crores with the result that the Government had to

face an uncovered deficit of Rs. 9.16 crores apart from any additional liability in Waziristan. And yet in introducing the Finance Bill in the Council of State the member in charge declared that the Governor-General had decided not to exercise his powers of certification. In the debate on Salt Duty in 1922-23, the member in charge explained the position thus:—"The position of the Government is, we deliberately sought the verdict of the Indian Legislature on this proposal, and we have received the verdict. However much we may deplore it, however much we may fear the consequences of that verdict, yet Government have decided to accept it."

In the budget for 1923-24, the last budget during the term of three years that the Legislative Assembly sat as the result of the elections held in November 1919, the chief feature was the Inchcape Committee's Report. In non-military matters the Committee had recommended reductions of Rs. 8·50 crores on the budget of 1922-23 of Rs. 103.90 crores. There was an initial cut of Rs. 2.60 crores in the civil estimates for 1923-24 which amounted to Rs. 103.30 crores, and, another, after the publication of the Report, of Rs. 4.07 crores. The balance of less than Rs. 2 crores was an allowance for the lag. In military expenditure the provision was for Rs. 62 crores. As a result, the budget had to face the deficit of Rs. 5.85 crores, which was sought to be covered, along with other means, by the Government proposal to double the duty on salt, that is, to raise it from Rs. 1-4 to Rs. 2-8 per maund. The action taken by the Assembly, with a full sense of its responsibility, was a cut of Rs. 5-10 lakhs under general administration, Rs. 1.64 lakhs on Railways, and Rs. 3 lakhs on miscellaneous items. Of these Rs. 114 lakhs under Railways for the transfer of annuities from Revenue to Capital Account were restored by the

Governor-General, as also Rs. 3 lakhs, which were the expense for Royal Commission.

The proposal to double the Salt duty, the Assembly negatived by 59 to 44 votes. The Government supported an amendment to raise it from Rs. 1-4 to Rs. 2, but it was defeated by 55 to 48. On account of the decision given by the Chair that non-official members had not the power to move amendments which would have the effect of enhancing taxation, a number of amendments to that effect were ruled out of order. The Finance Bill was introduced in the Council of State in a recommended form, with the Salt Duty doubled, and passed in that Chamber by 28 to 10. It was reintroduced in the Legislative Assembly and was again rejected by 58 to 47. It was, therefore, certified by the Governor-General under powers vested in him by the Act. Resolution to grant full fiscal autonomy to India was moved in the Council of State by Mr. Lalubhai Samaldas. Government accepted it with the amendment—subject to provisions in the Government of India Act—and it was subsequently given effect to in full. So much for finance and taxation.

LABOUR

All labour Legislation, according to the agreements arrived at at international conferences on this important subject, found its place on the Statute book during the first three years of the new reforms. The Indian Factories Act was amended to limit the hours of work in a Factory to 60 a week; the minimum age for employing children in factories was raised to 12; the maximum working hours of a day were to be no more than 12; an hour's rest for 6 hours work was imposed; one day's rest in a week was made compulsory by law; the term "factory" was interpreted to mean an institution employing twenty persons, with power

to local governments to extend it to the minimum limit of 10 persons. Another important Act was the Workmen's Compensation Act which introduced a healthy change in favour of labour as it protected and guaranteed the labourer against accidents to life, and provided security to his survivors, in case of death, in the shape of adequate compensation. A third measure was the Indian Mines Act. The Act provided for the inspection of mines, the constitution of a Mining Board with representation for labour. The Board was empowered to scrutinise rules and regulations and to act as an advisory body to the Chief Inspector of Mines and to local government. The Indian Emigration Act safeguarded the rights of emigrating labour, especially of the unskilled kind, by making emigration unlawful except to such countries and under such conditions as may be notified by the Government. The protection to labour afforded by these Acts may be rightly called a form of state socialism. Mr. N. M. Joshi, a liberal, was largely responsible for initiating this policy by his championing the rights of labour and his ventilating the grievances of labour in the Legislative Assembly. Though many of the resolutions he moved did not find their place on the statute book as he would have liked, still the bills introduced by Government clearly show the influence he had in changing Government's outlook on Labour questions.

REPEAL OF REPRESSIVE ACTS

Another fact to be noted was in the sphere of law and justice. The new legislatures succeeded largely in doing away with almost all special and repressive Acts. Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru, as law member in the Government of India, had a large share in effecting the change, though the initiative came from a member in the Council of State, no other than Rt. Hon'ble Mr.

Sastri. He brought up a resolution (14-2-21) proposing a Committee "to examine the Repressive laws and to recommend their repeal or modification." Government accepted the resolution with the amendment agreed to by the House, that an equal number of members from the Legislative Assembly and the Council of State was to constitute the Committee and to report before the Simla Sessions. The report of the Committee was given full effect to by the Government. Accordingly the Press Act of 1910 and the Newspaper Incitement Offence Act of 1908 were repealed in 1922. The bill for the repeal was introduced in the Lower House by the Home Member, Sir William Vincent. So also were repealed the Bengal State Offences Regulation of 1804 (used in the Punjab in 1919) by the Special Laws Repealing Act of 1922. The Indian Criminal Law Amendment Act of 1908 used in Bengal and Eastern Bengal to cope with terrorism, was repealed by an Act called the Indian Criminal Law Amendment Repealing Act of 1922. The year 1923 saw the passing of an Act known as the Criminal Law Amendment Act which removed a certain existing discrimination between European British subjects and Indians in criminal trials. It may be said in conclusion that the Acts that were modified and not repealed, continued on the Statute book as safeguards against unrest in the country due to non-co-operation and its last phase of Civil Disobedience.

IN THE PROVINCES

From the work of the Central Legislatures, we must now turn to the work in the provincial Councils. We cannot deal with the matter in full detail here. Suffice it to note some of its most salient features. These are judiciously summed up in the manifesto of the National Liberal Federation issued in August 1923.

The manifesto runs as follows:—"The separation of judicial and executive functions; extended educational facilities and a reform of educational policy; measures for the improvement of agricultural methods, more effective control by the Legislatures of land revenue policy so that Zamindars and Ryots may suffer no hardship or injustice; measures for the improvement of the position of tenants; the welfare of labour; the bringing of district administration into approximation with public opinion; a more enlightened and humane jail administration including the special treatment of political prisoners; temperance reform; a more economical administration of the public works department; extension and reform of local self-government in municipal and rural areas, including establishment of village punchayats; measures for the improvement of public health; more adequate medical relief including the encouragement of indigenous system of medicine; measures of social legislation; and generally a vigilant criticism of administrative acts, methods and omissions, so as to minimise abuses of authority and make the administration perform the better its true function of serving the public interests —to these ends have the activities of the Liberal Party inside and outside the Legislative Chambers been emphatically directed, with not complete success it is true, but with no small measure of success. The record of the public activities of members of the Liberal Party marks an unmistakable advance along the path of self-government."

The specification of this work in the Provinces is given by Right Hon'ble Mr. Sastri in the following words:—"Ministers in all the provinces have to their credit legislative measures which will redound to the country's advantage. I need instance only a few in order to show how successful they are in initiating policies in their respective departments. It is an un-

fortunate circumstance that Ministers were called to administer their departments when financial difficulties became very serious, and, therefore, naturally the first reforms to be effected were those which did not entail much outlay of money. For instance, municipalities and District Boards have in most provinces been placed on a popular footing. But ministers have not shrunk from undertaking large schemes involving heavy increases in expenditure and thus facing additional taxation. Some of the measures introduce bold new departures in policy which would have been almost inconceivable in the old regime. I would give the first place among these to Dr. Paranjpye's Compulsory Education Act which replaces the optional compulsion of the Act of 1918 by absolute compulsion, and seeks to universalise primary education in the whole of Presidency within ten years. Mr. Chintamani has introduced in the United Provinces, excise reforms calculated to effect a very drastic reduction in the consumption of alcohol etc. In the Bombay Presidency Mr. C. V. Mehta has already introduced a reform which, if small in itself, initiates a new policy substituting direct for indirect checks on consumption. In Madras, Ministers have adopted the policy of giving judicious state aid to new or nascent industries and have put in hand several other measures of no small benefit to the Province. Reform of old Universities and establishment of new ones are taken in hand in several Provinces. These and other measures of the kind are the first fruits of the popular control over transferred departments for which we, the constitutionalists, need not blush."

A FEW OPINIONS

We shall conclude this survey by quoting a few opinions of leading men who were directly concerned

in the working of diarchy in the provinces, either as Ministers in charge of the transferred departments, or as non-official members in the Provincial Councils. These are available to us in a symposium of opinions in answer to a questionaire issued with the authority of the National Conference in Madras held in 1923. The conveners of the Conference were Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru, Sir Sivaswami Aiyer, the Right Hon'ble Mr. Sastri, Dr. Gour and Sir Purshottamdas Thakurdas. Among these opinions the place of honour naturally goes to that of Mr. C. Y. Chintamani who worked for two years as Minister in the Government of the United Provinces. That opinion we shall quote last.

We shall begin with Bengal, go to Bombay, proceed to Madras, and end with the United Provinces. The opinion of Mr. Bose, M.L.C. Bengal was as follows: "The Reform Act has undoubtedly increased the power of the Legislature over the Executive Government, but in Bengal the Legislative Council is so weak and disorganised that the power which it possesses has not been, as a matter of fact, exercised to any considerable extent.... Public life in Bengal is almost dead. The country is hopelessly divided into petty factions. No public matter excites much enthusiasm or interest. Every activity for the attainment of Swaraj meets with scepticism and distrust. The attitude has been fostered by the intense economic distress prevalent among the middle classes and is largely due to the break-down of the non-co-operation movement. Public spirit was never at such a low ebb in Bengal. The province is practically without leaders."

From Bengal we pass on to Bombay. And we have opinion on its work from Mr. G. B. Trivedi, M.L.C., as follows:—"The Reform Act of 1919 has worked satisfactorily. It has greatly increased the power of the Legislature in relation to Ministers, while

with regard to the Executive Council, we have got increased opportunities of influence." As an instance of the latter Mr. Trivedi pointed out, "The most important measure on Reserved Subjects introduced by Councillors was a Taxation Bill on Entertainments in the first Sessions of 1922. It was rejected by the Legislature to force retrenchment on Government before taxation was voted. This had a good effect, and Government promised 60 lakhs of retrenchment which ultimately reached one crore. When the Entertainment Tax was again brought in, in the September and December Sessions, Government tried to levy only 25 per cent tax on Race Admission, but the legislature insisted on 50 per cent and it succeeded against strong Government opposition." Mr. Trivedi continued, "The Governor did not once exercise his veto on Bills of Ministers or Private members, nor has he certified any bills brought in by Councillors and rejected by the Council."

From Bombay we turn to Madras and note the following opinion:—"The Governor did not exercise his veto in regard to any measure. In the case of Elementary Education Act Amendment Bill it was the Ministers who voted against it. As regards Communal Representation in Judicial Services, all the four Councillors were against it and all the three Ministers remained neutral and the Motion was carried." If we recall that it was the Justice Party—the non-Brahmin Party—that was in power in Madras and gave Ministers to the Government, we can understand how and why in the two instances given above by Mr. Ranganathan, the Ministry showed itself so reactionary. The opinion continues:—"The Services keenly felt their loss of power owing to the Reforms, but it must be said that they are adjusting themselves to the new situation. The real reason for the absence of friction

lies in the fact that a great part of the Imperial Services is still employed in departments not under Ministerial control, and the few who work under Ministers are not under the control of Ministers. Also on the transferred side the work of the Ministers is made easier by the increasing employment of Provincial officers (who are largely Indians) in Imperial posts in some departments, and of Indians in the Imperial posts in others."

Last, we quote the opinion of Mr. C. Y. Chintamani. Said Mr. Chintamani, "the Act worked satisfactorily during nearly the whole of the first year. It has worked less satisfactorily since then. It has increased the power of the Legislature in relation to the Executive Government, as a whole. It is no exaggeration to say that the Reserved Government experienced anything but a feeling of comfort or a sense of excessive power during Budget debates. It has been such a contrast with the things as they were in the old Council." To the question how many times the Governor exercised his veto on Bills of Ministers the answer that Mr. Chintamani gives is, "Not once." So also in connection with Bills of private members passed by the Legislature, and with Bills brought in by Executive Councillors and rejected by the Legislature. Not once had the Governor used his power of certification. Mr. Chintamani continued, "the success of the Non-official members on Budget motions was very considerable. They took a determined stand against what they deemed to be extravagant and unnecessary expenditure, or an unacceptable policy in the General Administration, Land Revenues, Police and Forest Departments, and oftener than not, they succeeded either in bringing down the Executive Council to compromise or in defeating them." As regards Joint Deliberation and "acting as a Cabinet," Mr. Chintamani remarked, "there

was joint deliberation, and in the first year, as a rule, decisions were taken jointly. Subsequently, however, there was a fairly frequent recollection that the Government was a diarchy. Joint decisions became infrequent; joint deliberation became less frequent than in the first year. More recently, it has been nine-tenths of real diarchy and one-tenth of nominal joint deliberation, and never a whole Government "acting as a cabinet." The change from Sir Harcourt Butler as Governor of the United Provinces to Sir William Marris as his successor, we may remark, marked the change from liberalism to reaction.

CONCLUSION

We have quoted these opinions from four provinces to show what the experience of non-official members who worked in the Councils was about diarchy. In Madras the non-Brahmin party had swept the elections and the policy of its Ministers inclined too much on the side of communalism. In Bombay there was not much of sound party alignment and consolidation, and groups formed the feature of the Legislature, and non-Brahmin group was also in existence. What the state was in Bengal we have already learnt from the opinion of Mr. Bose quoted above. And yet diarchy showed, on the whole, good results. As Rt. Hon'ble Sastri pointed out "it did not prove a pitfall to the feet or a fetter to the limbs of those who had come forward to shoulder the burden and go forward."

From the end of 1922 onwards there was a distinct reaction. The beginning of the reaction was marked by recourse to certification, by defiance of the convention that the Secretary of State shall not interfere where the Legislature and the Government are fully agreed on any question, and, lastly, by the direction from the Secretary of State to local governments that

no committee shall be appointed on any matter that may be construed as imperial. Mr. Sastri mourned this change in the following words:—"Has this great chapter closed? Are we no longer a happy family? Have the authorities begun to weary of well-doing? Are they pulling themselves back? One would not like to believe so, but there are portents which may not be overlooked and they proceed from a quarter where, while Mr. Montagu was in office, Indian interests never failed to find a champion."

What was the state of things at the start? That also Mr. Sastri has told us:— "Officials were courteous and cordial, non-officials were willing to learn and were full of consideration for the need of the Executive. Both alike were keen on the success of the Reforms. In several provinces the Governors forgot diarchy and treated the two halves of Government as one undivided Cabinet. The new Legislatures, under the double blight of non-co-operation and financial bankruptcy, faced their task with courage and sagacity which promised well for the future of India."

CHAPTER IX

INDIANS OVERSEAS

The one question of supreme importance that absorbed the attention of the public from 1923 to 1926 was that of the status of Indians, as equal subjects under the British Crown, in its colonies across the seas like South Africa and Kenya. Of these South Africa was a self-governing dominion and Kenya was no better than a crown colony, because it was a mandated territory made over to Great Britain under the constitution of the League of Nations and did not enjoy the kind of self-government which the Union of South Africa enjoyed. In both these territories, however, the Indians who had gone there as labourers and had since been domiciled, were treated by the white settlers as inferior to themselves in political status. They were meted out a position which was inconsistent with their rights as equal subjects under the British Crown. Both South Africa and Kenya had benefited immensely by Indian Labour, and, yet the Indians, who had settled there and had become both wealthy and educated, were practically regarded as outcasts of society. With all that the Government of India could do, backed in this matter by public opinion in India, it had failed to improve the status of their fellow-subjects not only in South Africa but even in Kenya.

AN EFFORT TO MEND MATTERS

At the time to which we are referring, the Colonial Office in England was as averse from change in status for Indians as the South African Boer and British, and

the white settler in Kenya. Among the Indians who had done their best during the period to solve the question on strictly constitutional lines must be mentioned two leaders, namely, the Rt. Hon. Mr. Sastri and Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru. Both had attended the Imperial Conferences in England as nominees of the Government of India. Their work at the Conference was appreciated even by those who held opposite views on political approach and method. It was Mr. Sastri who, with the help of Mr. Montagu, has succeeded at the Imperial Conference of 1921 in making the Conference accept the resolution of equal status for all the subjects of the British Crown. It was on the strength of that resolution that Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru fought out the question of the rights of the Indian settlers in Kenya. He did not succeed with South Africa, and he could not, at the time, persuade the Colonial Secretary to set right the wrong which the Government's decision as embodied in its White Paper, had done by the Indians in Kenya. However, it must be granted by all impartial students of history that both of them had served India in that matter to the best of the power and the statesmanship that was in them.

The Liberal Federation's Sessions in 1923 and 1924 deal largely with this question. And in any survey of its work for the country, this service cannot go without mention. What service they were able to render, we are told in the address by Tej Bahadur Sapru as President of the Liberal Conference at the end of 1923. We give from that address just enough to know what had been done by them. Says Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru in the course of his address about the White Paper "I am afraid nothing has tended more to weaken the faith of our countrymen in the justice of His Majesty's Government than these unfortunate de-

cisions." And the fact becomes worse still when we remember that the decisions were taken and published when important negotiations were going on between the representatives of Indians in Kenya and the White Settlers there and the Colonial Office. The Indian case was put forward ably by a deputation led by Rt. Hon. Mr. Sastri, "whose knowledge of the subject," Sir Tej Bahadur observed, "was only surpassed by his enthusiasm for the cause." A diehard politician in England argued with Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru, presuming upon his ignorance, that Kenya was not a crown Colony and that though it had not responsible government it had an element of responsibility. The politician forgot what Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru pointed out to him, that "it was a dangerous suggestion to make, for, similarly India might claim that though it had not responsible government, it had a measure of responsibility in the Provinces."

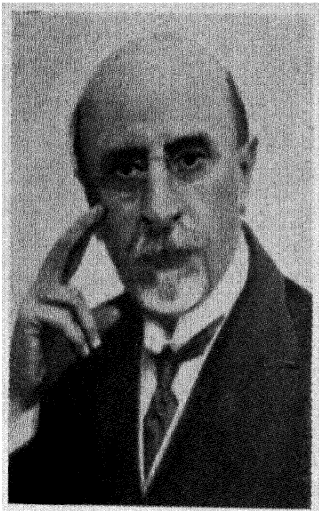
The fact of the matter was that His Majesty's Government found the white settlers too strong for them. To those who maintained that the White Paper had improved the position of Indians in Kenya Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru answered that "not even the Government of India, apart from the Indians themselves, thought so." And in support he quoted from the Viceroy's speech to the Legislative Assembly to the effect that "the news of the decisions regarding Kenya came to me (the Viceroy) no less than to you as a great and severe disappointment. As his Majesty's Government had stated, the decision conflicts on material points with the strongly expressed views of my Government as laid before the Cabinet by the Secretary of State for India."

AT THE IMPERIAL CONFERENCE

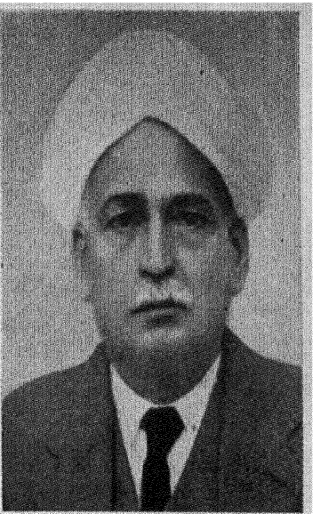
In the Imperial Conference of 1923 Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru succeeded in discovering a procedure to

tide over the difficult situation. It was the procedure of a Committee of representative Indians to visit the colonies and by personal discussion with the authorities there, and not by public agitation, to hit upon a *via-media* which would be acceptable to White settlers on the one hand, and to the Indians settled in the Colonies on the other. The Conference, as a whole, approved the Scheme, the Colonial Secretary gave it his blessing, though General Smuts representing South Africa stoutly opposed it and finally declared that he would have nothing to do with it. In accordance with that Scheme, efforts were made later on with the full support, in that respect, of the Government of India, but with no success. The dispute went on like that till 1926 when both South Africa and Kenya climbed down a bit. In 1926 negotiations were opened with South Africa and as a result Mr. Sastri, who had previously toured Canada and Australia, went to Cape Town as the first Agent General of India. With the best of will in the world the fruit of his labour and of that of his successor came to nothing better than "to prevent further emigration, to encourage repatriation, while maintaining the status of those who were fully domiciled." Kenya raised an equally acute difficulty. The Government of India, fully supporting the Indian view point as it did, could exert no pressure on the Kenya Government by merely restricting or preventing emigration. After a long controversy, a compromise was at last reached by which "the franchise was conceded, but on a communal basis, segregation was stopped in the towns, and immigration was not finally barred."

When people in India asked Sir Tej Bahadur of what use were the Committees and what they were to do after they had failed, he answered, "I should not like to anticipate events; but in all constitutional



Sir Phiroze Sethna
(President 1929)



Sir M. Ramchandra Rao
(President 1933)



Mr. Jitendra Nath Basu
(President 1933)



Pandit Hridaya Nath Kunzru
(President 1934)

fights, it seems to me, the failure of one step is only an incentive to another. Frankly speaking those who raise objections of this character should be prepared to suggest alternatives, and if they have alternatives of their own, why have they not acted on those alternatives and what has been there to prevent them from taking an independent action of their own? It is far better that we should work steadily and patiently, but with a full determination to get wrongs remedied than that we should indulge in threats which we do not mean to give effect to or which we know or ought to know cannot be given effect to."

How were the white settlers in South Africa and Kenya, not to speak of their brethern in Canada and Australia, able to defy the opinion of India supported by its Government, was the question which Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru asked himself and gave an answer exactly the same that Gokhale gave on a similar occasion in days prior to the Montagu Reforms. Sir Tej Bahadur said about it, "I do not think that if India were a self-governing country within the Empire, the wishes of her Government or her people could be ignored or a decision which was resented even by the Government or India could be given, as it was in July last, when on the main questions the opinion of the white settlers prevailed. It, therefore, seems to me that while on the one hand it is our duty to emphasise our claim regarding proper, just and equal treatment outside India, our duty is even more imperative, that we should lay still greater stress upon the achievement of responsible government in India itself."

As regards the status of Indians in the Colonies, there are striking words in the correspondence of Mr. Sastri recently published, from which we take the following to show what work the liberal party as a whole and the leaders of that party like Sastri and Sapru in

particular, had put in to raise the status and thus serve the ends of justice and fair play. Here are some extracts as follow: first, one from a letter dated 22nd May 1923 when negotiations on the Kenya question were about to begin in England: "I can't guess yet what shape the decision will take, but it would be a miracle if it was very much in our favour and we should be fortunate if we won partially. I am frequently shocked in my interviews at the amount of reactionary opinion that is to be found in high places. Our difficulties are very great." "The Indian deputation had agreed among themselves what line of action they were to take: First, to stand firm for India's rights of emigration to Kenya, no more restriction than there is at present. Secondly, no segregation; the highlands question to remain open, the franchise to be common, based on uniform qualifications; ten per cent of our community to get the vote, and the constituencies to be so arranged as to give us four out of the total of eleven elective seats. Mr. Sastri and others had agreed upon a strategy that Kenya Indians were to bid high on these last points, and that he was to accept compromise and the Indians were to acquiesce reluctantly."

As regards the position in which Mr. Sastri placed himself, he writes the following words: "you would regret, I am sure, that the part of the compromise has fallen to me. I regret it too. But I have nothing to lose by way of popularity and the press cannot abuse me worse. Somebody has to bear the odium, why not I?" A later experience of a similar nature confirms the truth as well as the magnanimity of these words. We know the fate of these negotiations. But how it had bred distrust of British promises and its profession of faith we know vividly from the following extract taken from a long letter Mr. Sastri wrote on the

subject to a member of Parliament in England. The letter is highly instructive in the sense that it places the entire question in its proper light and affords wise guidance to those who would follow it.

A LARGER QUESTION

"During my stay in England I had a vivid perception, such as I had not had before, of the strength of certain forces and modes of thought inconsistent with the higher ideals of the Britanic Empire and the continuance of India within the Britanic fold. Of course one feels their overpowering strength in India every day. But one had hopes that among the chastening influences of the war was a progressive dimunition of that strength in the Home of Parliamentary Institutions. That hope was rudely shaken out of me during the recent Kenya dispute in London."

Mr. Sastri writes in the same letter on the larger question as follows:

"Where India is concerned, British policy moves most on the lower, and not on the higher, plane. Public controversy is handicapped and to some extent vitiated by the assumption that Parliament and British Statesmen are invariably guided by the noble ideal; attempts to justify British action as fulfilling this high test must appear to the aggrieved Indian mind not only far-fetched but hypocritical. Believe me, thoughts of this kind have driven me, more than anything else, to the conclusion that it is necessary immediately to bring practice into conformity with theory and confer upon India and Indians real equality and partnership. King and Parliament are alike pledged to the new ideal. Delay, though desirable on some grounds, is prolific of mischief, breeds distrust, not, alas, without justification, and exacerbates feeling. Full preparedness, perfect fitness, ripe maturity, these are counsels of perfection. Nothing in this imperfect world comes exactly at the moment fixed for it by idealists. In the rough school of life people are often fitted for institutions by the practice of them. Good policy requires that the national demand made recently in the Assembly with the concurrence of the moderate as well as the advanced school of politics, be met in a spirit of sympathy and hearty response."

As regards the Indians overseas Mr. Sastri and his fellow workers won much more in 1926 than they had expected in 1923. But the larger question of Indian self-government was not brought nearer except by travail and conflict, by bitterness and tears, and, even then, we have not yet been admitted to the full rights of self-government. "The struggle and the travail, the tug of war and the conflict of wills—the combatants on the strain and then more on the strain."—that has been the miserable tale of later years from 1928 to 1937. And the chapter of accidents and incidents is not yet at an end.

CHAPTER X

NATIONAL DEMAND

The urgency of pressing the demand for responsible government was felt between 1921-26 by all political parties in the country. A resolution to that effect was first moved in the Assembly in 1921 and again in 1924. The Muddiman Committee reported in 1925 when Mr. Baldwin had taken office and Lord Birkenhead was Secretary of State. The Report was not unanimous. The Majority Report was signed by Sir Alexander Muddiman, the Chairman, and two other British and two Indian members. It took the view that "their terms of reference did not permit suggestions for any fundamental change in the system. So it confined itself to detailed recommendations for facilitating the working of diarchy." The Minority Report signed by four Indian members, who were Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru, Sir Sivaswami Aiyer, Mr. Jinnah and Dr. R. P. Paranjpye, held that diarchy was unworkable and that the various defects pointed out by provincial governments were inherent in the scheme. As such they wrote "To our mind, the proper question is not whether any alternative, transitional scheme can be devised, but whether the constitution should not be put on a permanent basis with provisions for automatic progress in the future so as to secure stability in the Government and the willing co-operation of the people." And they urged that a serious attempt should be made at an early date to solve the question. But the Committee's Report was simply

unnoticed by the Government in England. In 1925, in the Assembly and outside, all parties had protested against the majority report of the Muddiman Committee, and had pressed for immediate reform on the lines suggested in the Minority Report. If, therefore, there was unanimity of opinion in the country over this most important matter, it was up to a wise government to act up to it.

The liberals in their Conference at the end of 1925, gave their full support to the Assembly resolution with all the array of facts and arguments in its favour that both experience and history could suggest. Mr. Chintamani's speech on the subject in the Liberal Conference at the end of 1925, was the most vigorous, plain-spoken, and luminous exposition of the whole question, the like of which one seldom gets to read on resolutions moved in a Conference. The resolution of the Conference in 1925 was a comprehensive and self-containing one, and ran as follows:

The Federation affirms its firm conviction of the necessity of a reform of the constitution without delay on the lines indicated below:

(1) Provincial Governments should be responsible to the respective provincial legislative Councils which should be wholly elected.

(2) The Central Government should be responsible to the Legislative Assembly in the whole sphere of internal civil administration.

(3) The control of the foreign and political relations of the Government and of the military, naval and air defence of the country should remain vested in the Governor-General for a definite period, after the expiry of which the position should be reviewed by a Commission on which Indian opinion is adequately represented.

(4) During this period a fixed amount should be allotted for expenditure on the departments controlled by the Governor-General who should be free to spend up to that limit notwithstanding an adverse vote by the Assembly.

(5) When the Governor-General certifies that an emergency has arisen which requires additional expenditure for the safety of the country, he shall have authority to incur such expenditure, but he shall apprise the Legislative Assembly of such expenditure at its next sitting.

The resolution proposed the Indianisation of the army, military training of Indians, recruitment for higher services in India and by Government of India, and other matters that would expedite the establishment of self-government in India. It strongly advised that a Commission should be appointed forthwith with Indian representatives on it to report on these proposals.

SCHEME—NOT OUR PART

Mr. Chintamani said of it,

"I do not think that non-officials anywhere will be showing that they are astute politicians if they accept the invitation of the other side to commit themselves to details without being primed with actual details, without which a scheme cannot be produced. All that we are called upon to do is to state in clear and unambiguous language, in the form of a series of propositions, what are the lines on which we wish the Reforms to be undertaken. There our responsibility ends. Up to that point we have a duty to discharge. Speaking for the liberal party I say that that duty has been adequately and abundantly discharged by our party during the last three years. You have read the resolution that I have put to the House, and if you tell me you are not quite clear in your mind of what it is that we want, I can only say—I sympathise with you."

This was in answer to those who would put us on our trial to produce a cut-and-dried scheme just to trap us. And Mr. Chintamani supported his observation by quoting the reply which the famous historian, jurist and constitutionalist, Mr. James Bryce, himself a liberal, gave to Mr. Arthur James Balfour, the Premier, on a similar occasion, on the floor of the House of Commons. When the former was criticising Mr. Balfour's Education Bill, Mr. Balfour the Premier, invited the opposition to produce their own bill. To which Mr. Bryce gave the following curt reply:—'If you will vacate your place and make room for us, we will produce our scheme."

Mr. Chintamani's reply to the authorities in India and England along with the retort of Mr. Bryce to Mr. Balfour, sends one's memory back to a similar episode in English history, in connection with American taxation in the reign of George III. Burke criticised severely the then Ministry in power for its attitude to American Colonies and he was asked in return to produce his alternative, and he retorted: it was none of the business of the opposition to produce it for the simple reason that they were not in power and could not give effect to it. In the speech on American taxation, which Morley has praised as worthy "to muse by day and ponder by night," Burke also twitted the Government because it insisted too much on the preamble by asking of every counter-proposal to waive or change any item of taxation, "But is it so stated in the preamble, what of the preamble?" This is, however, by the way.

Mr. Chintamani was glad to note that the Liberal Federation's resolution on Constitutional Reform had met with the approval and support of all parties in the country. He says,

"Now that the Swarajists and Independents have in

the Legislative Assembly set their seal of approval upon the resolution of the Liberal Federation passed last year at Lucknow in all its vital parts and essentials, it may be said that the progressive political parties in India are all agreed on the lines upon which they want a constitutional reform to proceed. Placed by the side of that resolution, the Commonwealth of India Bill drawn up by a National Convention, I think even the authorities of that measure will without hesitation agree, is not a perfect piece of workmanship. Take the main provisions of the Bill and I have no hesitation, after having read our own resolution and the Bill, in stating that they proceed on parallel lines. You have, therefore, the Swaraj Party, the Independent Party, the National Convention and with it the National Home Rule League, and the Liberal Party—they are all agreed upon the Reforms which, in my judgment, the country requires, and they have all stated with sufficient clearness and precision and in sufficient detail what should be the main provisions of the present Government of India Act or the New Government of India Act, and if the Secretary of State or any other authority affects to believe that they are still in ignorance of what Indians want, you may take it that that affectation of ignorance is only a cloak for constitutional disinclination to introduce changes which are necessary no less in the interests of England than they are of India."

This was Mr. Chintamani's answer to Lord Birkenhead's first speech on India in the House of Lords, no less than to those in India and England who had brushed aside the Minority Report of the Muddiman Committee and, at the same time, while preferring to it the Majority Report, had not the grace to carry it out in full. This was merely tinkering with the problem as Mr. Ramsay Macdonald said at the time. Mr. Chintamani said of the Majority Report,

"I have read few documents known by the stately name of Reports of Commissions etc., which are more thin and less entitled to appreciation or admiration than the Report of the Majority of the Muddiman Committee, and in this opinion, substantially at any rate, I am upheld by our late Secretary of State, Lord Olivier whom even the

Anglo-Saxon papers cannot dismiss as an impossible theorist and radical, after the support he accorded to the Bengal ordinance."

SANCTION!

Mr. Chintamani's answer, to those who twitted the Liberal Party then, and as they, not unoften, do it now, with the question, "You say you want all these things. What is the sanction behind them? How are you going to enforce your demands?", was:—

"The sanction behind our proposals is the sanction of the national opinion of India. The sanction behind our proposals is the sanction of right." "How are you going to enforce this?

To this query Mr. Chintamani replies by putting the counter-question to the objectors as follows:—

"How are the Swarajists, the No-change Non-co-operators—how are they going to enforce their demands? By the spinning wheel? Let Pandit Motilal Nehru answer that contention. By the triple boycott? Not even in museums can we find a trace of that thing. By continuous uniform, consistent obstruction? Where is it? Where is it outside election manifestoes issued with a view to deceive the electorates so that votes may be cast against the Liberal candidates? Where is that indiscriminate obstruction? In Madras, in the U.P. in the Punjab, in Bihar, in Bombay? They have become dummies in Bombay. In Bengal? In the Central Provinces? Our President (Sir Moropant Joshi) has given full information upon that point yesterday. In the Legislative Assembly? Let the Steel Protection Bill answer. Let the reference of the Contempt of Court Bill to the Select Committee answer. Let the Honourable Mr. Patel answer. Let the Skeene Committee answer. Indiscriminate, continuous, consistent obstruction? There is no uniform obstruction; while as regards consistency the leader of the Swaraj Party has told us it is an asinine virtue. We have heard that by non-violent non-co-operation we shall achieve freedom. But the 31st December 1921 is left four years behind! Non-violence has degenerated into violence. Non-co-operation has become a hypocritical God for a species of co-operation. Obstruc-

tion which co-operates; non-violence which becomes violent; civil disobedience which does not obey and is not civil; passive resistance in which there is neither resistance nor passivity—are these the sanctions by which you will obtain Swaraj?"

The moral of the story he sums up in the following memorable passage:—

"Every species of extremism that has been employed during the last 30 years has only resulted—I have stated this many times and I will repeat it any number of times in future, because it is a historical truth—every species of extremism that has been attempted or practised by Indian politicians during the last 30 years has had for its net result merely a new repressive campaign and a new series of repressive laws in the Statute Book resulting in the curtailment of the liberties we enjoy. Whereas, if we are in the year 1925 a more politically advanced people than we were 50 years or 25 years or 10 years ago, if we have attained a position from which we can plead for Swaraj, we have attained that position wholly and entirely because of the pursuit of constitutional agitation as our political method. If any one tells me it is a bankrupt method, I should like to be a bankrupt of that description."

LIBERALISM

These stinging words remind us of the equally striking and blunt expression of a writer who has written eloquently and truly of the principles of liberalism and liberals in England when they had fallen upon bad times. And we are tempted to quote it here. Says the writer,

"Liberalism comes of a great tradition and can appeal to a splendid past. You can no more disassociate it, at any moment, from the stream of tendency which at this moment it represents, than you can dissociate some particular generation in the history of a Church or a Nation. Great political parties, embodying undying principles and set on realising them in action, have something of the life in them which is revealed amid transitory generations, with the power of evoking passionate devotion only comparable to that directed to a lover or to God. The Liberal

Party, said one clever journalist, can only mumble the memories of a dead past and raise the faded banner of Peace, Retrenchment and Reform. Faded banners! Tattered Flags! You may go to the Emporium round the corner and buy such pleasant, new-polished, bright-coloured standards to lead before your armies in battle. Only there is something lacking in them which no paint or polish can give. The faded banners are those for which men have not been ashamed to live; the tattered flags are those for which men have not been afraid to sacrifice their all."

To wit, in India, Dadabhai and Mehta, Gokhale and Surendra Nath Bannerjea, Ananda Mohan Bose and Ranade, and even Tilak about whom Krishna Kumar Mitra, Chairman of the Reception Committee in 1925 said, "this fundamental principle of the Liberal Party was accepted by the great Maratha leader Bal Gangadhar Tilak, who gave it a new name, and called it "Responsive Co-operation," as distinguished from the then rising cult of Non-co-operation."

To continue with our subject, Mr. Chintamani further added,

"If constitutional agitation fails, it is because of the misleading prescriptions which Swarajists, Non-co-operators, and others like them place before the people. It is because they mislead people, and because they weaken the strength of the constitutional party in India. It is not we who indulge in idle dreams of Swaraj but those who tell the people that they will quicken the advent of Swaraj and are doing the very utmost in their power to delay, to obstruct, to hamper progress."

Babu Krishna Kumar Mitra, about whose sacrifice for the country, and about whose sufferings in the Anti-Partition agitation of 1906-8 there can be no two opinions, said about the same matter as follows:—

"No, the people were not in a mood to deliberate and consider. It was enough that the medicine was prescribed by a prophet of politics. They had been suffering long from various maladies and had naturally lost faith in doctors. They were eagerly looking for some miracle to cure

the thousand ills they had been suffering from, and naturally they turned to magic and miracles instead of logic. But it did not take them long to be disillusioned. All this was like ploughing the sands, and did not lead the country anywhere except to a blind alley from which there was no exit."

JUXTAPOSITION IS NOT UNITY

One of the important issues at the time was that of unity among all parties. The party of non-co-operation had already begun talking of such unity in the country. A Unity Conference was held in Bombay in 1924 prior to the Congress Session at Belgaum. The Bombay Conference had led the parties nowhere, and we have seen how matters stood at the end of 1925. On this point Dr. Paranjpye as President of the Liberal Conference held at Lucknow in 1924 spoke very plainly. His words are worth quoting even today. For we are no better united to-day than in 1924. He said,

"We would like to see how the proposed formulae of reconciliation, even if they are accepted by the other side, will be followed in actual practice. A mere unity by physical juxtaposition is worse than useless; it may even be the unity of the wolf and the lamb—the lamb within the wolf."

He pointed out that "there were at the time various parties in India whose outlooks on political questions were widely different. The three political parties were No-changers, the Swarajists and the Liberals. Other parties were more or less on a communal basis though they were also keen on political advance on certain conditions. Taking first the three pure political parties he did not see that they could work harmoniously on the same platform. Broadly the No-Changers Party were a Party that looked backward. It was content to be under the command of a single dictator and was willing to follow all his notions reasonable or otherwise. The party was reconciled outwardly with

the Swarajist party to humour their titular leader who, they considered, had disgracefully capitulated without a fight to their opponents. The Swarajist Party was an off-shoot of the erstwhile extremist Party though the off-shoot was threatening to over-grow the parent tree. The main ideal of this party was to extirpate the present system regardless of what was put in its place. This party had for the moment attained the upper hand in the Congress organisation and was for the time being the political mouth-piece of the Congress. The Liberal party was the lineal successor of the old Congress party, and it had continued its traditions though the name had been usurped by others. It was impossible for the Liberal Party, with its ideals, to work in cordial co-operation with either of the other parties. If all the three parties agreed on any point, their agreement could carry all the greater weight as each looked at the problem from different angles of vision than they would, if one or other had, perforce, to remain always silent in order to create a semblance of unity."

This was spoken at the end of 1924. It is interesting to compare it with what Mr. Sastri wrote on the same topic, in a letter dated 30th April 1924, to Mrs. Sarojini Naidu. He was invited at the Sabarmati Ashram to confabulate. And he replied, refusing the invitation for following reasons:

"May I send you a short statement of view?" he asked Mrs. Naidu to start with, and then went on,

"As regards wearing khaddar I am among those who were taught to believe that a sartorial regulation based upon inadequate data and unproven assumptions does violence to the fundamental liberty of the individual. Many persons, a few for whom I entertain respect, are inclined to submit to this innocent fad of a great man! I confess, I am unable to take this view. It strikes me, even after these many months of thought, as an illegitimate im-

position in an organisation purporting to comprehend all progressive politicians."

He then raised an important issue thus:—

"Would the Liberals and Independents, who might now come in, be allowed to stand as candidates even against the Swarajists and Responsivists? Liberal candidates wherever they stand will be denounced as disloyal Congressmen. What would then be of the comprehensive unity which it is the sole object of the Sabarmati meeting to attain? Again acceptance of office is with us a door to the honourable service of the public. We do not accept the judgment recently pronounced by an influential leader that we value it only for the power or pelf it brings while others would value it on influential and patriotic grounds."

And further he pointed out the crucial difference between his own party and the men of the other side who will assemble at Sabarmati. He affirms,

"The question of Civil Disobedience is neither so easy or so simple as it appears to most speakers and writers on the problem. The country is not fit for any drastic measures of this kind and will not be fit for many years yet. I am desirous like any others of a common understanding among political parties and of a reunion under the wings of the Congress. But I wish that our reconciliation should be based on simple and intelligent agreements. And being a man of peace, I am not attracted to the ideal of re-entering the Congress as a disaffected minority with the prospect of conducting an internecine struggle of infinite duration for the purpose of becoming the majority."

These two opinions read together show clearly why and how there could be no unity among parties fundamentally divided in principle, outlook and methods of work. Later years had not helped to improve matters precisely because even the Swarajists by that time had been wiped out of existence by the Gandhian mandate of civil disobedience. All the same, liberals had never held back from co-operation when co-operation seemed possible, and fruitful of good to the country. The All Parties' Conference in 1928 was an

instance in point. In the many Conferences held to bring about unity between Hindus and Muslims they did not keep aloof from others.

Short of a reunion, the liberals have never held back from any party for an avowed common purpose and on a national question which, they considered, demanded a united effort to solve it. It is others who have treated them as negligibles, and, not unoften, with contempt, if not contumely, while careful, at the same time, to make use of such among them as would suit their purpose, and to quote them to justify their conduct before the world. It has been a wrong strategy all along, of those who are loudest in their avowal of patriotism and independence—a strategy that has postponed the day of real unity and consolidated practical work, and postponed the emancipation of the land they live in and love.

CHAPTER XI

QUEST FOR UNITY

In the last chapter we have referred to the efforts made, first in Bombay and then at Sabarmati, to unite all political parties under the wings of the Congress, and quoting from Dr. Paranjapye and the Rt. Hon. Mr. Sastri, have showed how and why they had failed. That was in 1924. We have a further report of a similar move and its result, on the eve of the elections to the Councils and the Legislative Assembly in 1926. Rao Bahadur Damle of Akola gives us a brief account of this fresh effort in his speech as Chairman of the Reception of the Liberal Conference in 1926.

NATIONAL PARTY

This is what he says of it,

"The Liberals and the Responsivists offered to coalesce into a new party which was formally established in Bombay in the first week of April 1926 at a meeting of the members of these parties in Chinabagh. The recognised leaders of the Responsive Co-operation Party, Messrs. Jayakar and Kelkar, expressed their personal agreement with the aims and policy of this Nationalist Party, but deferred final action until the members of their party were finally consulted and their consent to coalesce in this party was obtained. Seeing that a formidable combination of the prominent intelligent section of the political workers was being formed to oppose the activities of the Swarajists, Mr. Motilal Nehru tried through the personal influence of Mr. Gandhi to bring about an understanding between the Swarajists and the Responsivists. On the 21st of April last a compromise was effected

at Sabarmati but it was to be submitted to the All India Congress Committee for confirmation. Pandit Motilal Nehru found that the prominent Swarajists were not prepared to support the terms of the compromise known as the Sabarmati Pact, and sought to offer explanation of the difference in the understanding between the parties to the compromise. In the first week of May 1926, the compromise failed and Swarajists and Responsivists remained the two militant parties in the Congress."

The national party formed in Bombay with Mr. Jinnah as its president and with Mr. D. G. Dalvi, along with others, as its secretary, functioned vigorously during the two following years. Mr. Chintamani and Mr. Kunzru had helped to form the party and in the beginning Pandit Malaviya had offered to join it. But somehow he went back and the party found but little support from Calcutta friends. As such it was found to be of no use to continue it further. The elections in Bombay for 1926 were fought and won by Liberals and Responsivists together under the wing of this new party. Dr. Paranjpye won a thumping majority over his two rivals for the University seat in the Bombay Council, and Mr. Jayakar went to the Legislative Assembly as a result of this combination of forces. On the whole, the National Party, we are told on good authority, won six seats from Bombay under the new elections. A memorable and stormy meeting at the Marwadi Vidyalaya in Bombay presided over by Mr. Jinnah to recommend the candidature of Dr. Paranjpye to the Bombay Council, and the manner in which Mr. Jinnah handled the audience and the oppositionists at the meeting, will ever remain an unforgettable incident in the history of the new party. The fissiparous tendency in our politics, however, prevailed over this re-union and a return to old ways became inevitable.

Mr. Chintamani who had failed in the elections of

1924 succeeded over his rivals of the Swarajists Party in the United Provinces in the elections of 1926. So also had succeeded Pandit Hirdayanath Kunzru. It was only in Madras, unlike in the elections of 1924, that the Swarajists scored heavily against Justicites, and the reason for it was, that the latter had proved during their term of office too communal, and there were no rival nationalist candidates put forward in Madras to contest the seats against the Swarajists. Mr. Sastri's fears in 1924 and Dr. Paranjpye's opinion in 1925, were more than justified by the sequel of the compromise at Sabarmati in 1926 between the Swarajists and the Responsivists—between the two groups in the same camp. And the experience, later on, of the National party in Bombay, inspite of the hearty co-operation and strenuous backing of that effort by persons like Sir Chimanlal Setalwad and Mr. C. Y. Chintamani, pointed the same moral.

Sir Sivaswami Aiyer in his presidential address to the Liberal Conference at Akola in December 1926 said about the matter as follows:—

"With the robust good sense and grip of the actualities which is characteristic of the Maharashtrian Community, they have led a revolt against the fatuous policy of the Swarajist party and succeeded in forming the party of responsive co-operation. We welcome the formation of this party which has practically adopted our creed, though it has not joined us and seems to fight shy of the name 'Liberals.' In what respect the creed of this party differs from ours and what its distinguishing characteristics are, I have not succeeded in ascertaining. But I prefer to dwell on the large measure of agreement between their views and ours rather than upon our differences. All honour to the leaders of this revolt and I offer my felicitations to Mr. Kelkar, Mr. Jayakar, Mr. Aney and other leaders on the conspicuous success which has attended their efforts. The formation of the Responsive co-operation party is really a triumph of the principles for which the Liberal Party has all along stood."

Sir Sivaswami Aiyer, in the passage that we have quoted above, mentioned the "fatuous policy" of the Swaraj Party. Trenchantly enough he put it thus:—

"The leader of the Swarajist Party (Pandit Motilal Nehru) was obliged to confess during the last Delhi Session of the Assembly that the party had failed to achieve its object. He said that he had no further use for "show institutions" like the Assembly, and the least that he could do was to get out of them and go back to the country for work... It is perhaps not strange that show institutions have a great fascination for the Swarajists and that they have again decided to enter the show-halls. The Swarajist Party had not been returned in large numbers except in Madras. May we ask what new weapons the learned Pandit had forged and what sanctions for enforcing the demands of the people or of the Swarajist Party he had secured?.'

Eleven years after this, in 1937, Mr. C. Y. Chintamani gave the following description of these theatricalities of the Swarajist party in his lectures on Indian politics:—

"Having failed, as they were bound to fail, in their ambition to "smash" or "end" the Councils and "wreck the Reforms," Congress Legislators made a brave show of a staged walk-out from all Legislative bodies in March 1926. But from Council after Council were received appeals from Congress members for permission to walk in again. In order not to lose their hold over their members the Central Congress Executive went on giving permission wherever it was applied. Between March 1926 and the dissolution of the then Assembly and Councils, it was a regular scene, Congressmen walking in and walking out for reasons best known to themselves. They were characterised by one Finance Member in the United Provinces as 'peripatetic patriots' while Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru described their theatricalities as 'patriotism in locomotion.' "

COMMUNAL UNITY

But even more vital for the success of all our political endeavours than the union of political parties on a common platform, was the larger unity in the

country between the Hindus and the Muslims. Every one realises today more poignantly than ever in the past, how disunion, division and feuds, between these two great communities of India, had contributed largely to the stalemate in the country. The Hindu-Muslim Unity has become to-day the *sine qua non* of all progress. The absence of it has hampered our progress towards Swaraj as nothing else has done. To-day the quarrel is more political than religious, though the differences of race, religion and culture have been imported into the controversy to make our politics bitter, fanatical and perverse.

In the time of which we are writing, the Muslim League had not become such an enemy of the Congress as it is to-day. The entente between it and the Congress since 1915 had continued almost unbroken till the conclusion of the All Parties' Conference at the end of 1928. In fact, there was a division in the ranks of the Muslim Leaguers themselves. Punjab had its own League started by Sir Mahomed Shaffi as a rival to the older League led by Mr. Jinnah. The feud between the Muslims and the Hindus wore then a religious aspect, and was an off-shoot of the failure of the Khilafat movement in India. The bitter disappointment of the Khilafatist Party and its flying apart from the Congress, had led to the fomenting of dissensions between the Muslims and the Hindus over the two questions of music before the mosque and cow-slaughter. Of course, behind them was politics no doubt. The murder of Swami Shraddhanand at the end of 1926 by a fanatical Muslim, was the worst manifestation of these dissensions.

In July 1924 inter-communal feeling had become violent. The Hindu-Muslim tension was rising and it reached its climax at Kohat in the Frontier Province. A pamphlet written by a Hindu contained highly in-

sulting words, and, as a result, Mohomedans attacked the Hindus all over the place. A considerable loss of life and property was the consequence of the riot. The entire Hindu population fled from the place in terror as the majority in Kohat consisted of the Muslims. A Hindu-Mohomedan Conference was held at Delhi to compose the quarrel and to bring about unity. And Mr. Gandhi went on a twenty-one days' fast to expiate what had happened at Kohat. The Conference was not a success. It dispersed after having passed a number of pious resolutions but to no purpose. Babu Rajendra Prasad wrote of it later on, "Alas! the wave of recollection which the memorable fast had called was short-lived and India became once again the playground of conflicting gusts of communal passion which resulted in numerous riots all over the country. Today (August 27, 1926) one feels as if walking upon a powder magazine, and no place can be said to be safe from the risks of a communal upheaval. The worst passions have been roused by the preaching and propaganda of a class of unscrupulous men."

THE DIFFERENCES REALLY POLITICAL

Consistently from 1924 onwards, and with an intensified hatred in 1926 and 1927, this feud issued in riots throughout the country. And no end of exhortation and appeal served to lay the demon of suspicion and hatred between the two sister communities of India. Questions like cow-killing and processional music before mosque were capable, surely enough, of amicable settlement, but for the fact that among the Muslims, especially, there were persons interested in continuing the dispute, and wise men on either side could not control them. As Sir Chimanlal Setalvad, speaking on the subject in the Liberal Conference of 1926, remarked,

"To my mind the differences that divide the two communities and the reasons that have engendered distrust between them are more political than religious. Perfectly true that we get manifestations in religious tracks of this feeling of distrust. Both on the Muslim and the Hindu side, possibly these differences were not real. The Muslims believed that in any representative self-governing India, they, being in a numerical minority, may be swamped in the administration of the country. On the other hand, the Hindus felt that the Muslim population of India were not looking forward to a self-governing India but their eyes were turned towards Pan-Islamic developments in which they may have old glories of Mohomedan domination not only in India but in the world restored to them."

The Mahomedan fear of the Hindus, though unfounded, had resulted in later years, true to the forecast, in insistence on communal and separate electorates with weightage for the minority far in excess of the number of that minority. Playing upon that fear the leaders of that community had succeeded in winning for it "their fourteen points" at the close of the R.T.C. discussions. To conciliate that minority Mr. Gandhi had gone far enough to sign a blank cheque in their favour. But its obstinacy was not conquered and unity had receded into the distance. The two-nations theory and Pakistan were the off-shoots of the Pan-Islamism so overtly maintained in 1926. So the contention of Sir Chimanlal Setalvad in 1926 was neither unreasonable nor without facts to support it. To seek to compose the quarrel by offering an easy solution of lesser religious differences had proved but a superficial cure. Time has shown that the dispute over cow-killing and music before mosque had fallen behind, and riots had also become rare; and yet since 1935 the Hindu and the Muslim community had by no means come nearer each other. Therefore, it was politics more than religion that was dividing them.

In the successive sessions of 1926 and 1927 the

Liberal Conference applied its mind to this momentous issue and its happy solution. The liberal party has all along been a non-communal party without any sectional bias and wedded wholly to the good of India as a whole. Its tradition has been a tradition of healthy and honourable compromise that has never stooped to sacrifice principle to opportunism and mean expediency. Moving round the poles of truth and charity it marked out a path of reconciliation between opposite camps, but, alas, with no fruitful result.

RELIGIOUS DIFFERENCES

The presidential address of Sir Sivaswami Aiyer in 1926 and of Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru in 1927 deal with the whole question extensively. To begin with the address of Sir Sivaswami Aiyer, he said categorically,

"The two matters which give rise to these riots among the masses are processional music in front of the mosque and the slaughter of cows. In each the remedy is clear and it consists in the strict and impartial enforcement of the law. With regard to the slaughter of cows, so long as it is not conducted in public places or in places visible to the public, and so long as the animals destined for slaughter are not led through the public streets, in such an ostentatious manner as to attract attention and needlessly offend his susceptibilities, no Hindu has the right to object or interfere with the right of the Mohomedan. As regards the subject of processional music the strict and uniform exercise of the existing law is the only sure means of preserving order. The law protects only an Assembly and does not extend the protection to individuals engaged in worship in a public mosque; so that it is only at certain prescribed hours of congregational prayer and on a prescribed day that processional music ought to be stopped playing before a mosque, and not at any time or on any day according to the whim of any person or persons who think they are disturbed by it. The right of persons or any section to conduct religious processions with music to accompany them, through the public streets, had already been recognised by law, provided they do not interfere

with the ordinary use of such streets by the public and with necessary precautions against obstruction of the thoroughfare or breaches of public peace. Rules to this effect were in force in Mysore, Cochin, Travancore and Hyderabad and had largely prevented riots as are being witnessed in recent years throughout British India. Magistrates must exercise their powers in this respect with strict impartiality. Rather than protect the civil rights of the people, they had found it easier to issue orders of prohibition, with the result that the very orders of prohibition had induced the people to take the law in their own hands as in several cases in Northern India with disastrous effect for the country as a whole."

Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru's presidential address in 1927 dealt with the same question. In view of the theory rampant in our midst to-day that Hindus and Muslims can live peacefully in a self-governing India only by setting up two houses, two states or two nations, demarcated from each other, rather than by accommodating themselves into a common household and inspired by a common feeling of patriotism for the motherland,—in view of this narrower theory of division and partion,—the following words of Sir Tej Bahadur on Hindu-Muslim Unity uttered 17 years ago, deserve special mention in these pages. Quoting from the Canadian statesman, Mr. Borden, and from the eminent historian Lord Acton, he maintained that

"Human progress is not advanced by the segregation of races or by any influence to perpetuate racial antagonism, and that the true ideal lay in the union of different races in one state, to the services of which each brings its own peculiar qualities. We did not know whether, strictly speaking, it was accurate to speak of the Hindus and the Mohomedans as belonging to different races. The two communities had lived together in this country for centuries and they had a common political history for at least two centuries."

The Hindu-Mahomedan question, which had become an acute point of controversy and had led to

sharp differences and had reached a stage of bitterness and hatred, had to be approached by both sides with this background of fact and history clearly before their mind. The plague of communal passion and frenzy had spread, Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru observed,

"Only during the last three or four years particularly, and it cannot be right to assert with past history and social and economic interdependence before our eyes, as interested partizans are inclined to assert, that India has always been a cockpit of racial antagonism and that her history was only repeating itself once again. It was not true to say, again, as some are disposed to say, he continued, that while we offer lip-allegiance to democratic ideas and ideals, we have always been infested by class consciousness which, in the present circumstances, has become more pronounced and vehement, because impending changes are likely to affect the political equilibrium of the country."

Why are people inclined to draw this unwarranted inference from the present state of things in India? Sapru answered,

"It is not a problem peculiar to the political adjustment of India. The struggle between the majorities and the minorities has been the chronic feature of the several states even in advanced Europe, and specially in that part of it known as Eastern Europe. And it is not with them the problem of several years but of several centuries. And in post-war Europe that problem has been well tackled by the League of Nations. In Europe the struggle between the Majority and the Minority had never been flaunted, as our differences had been flaunted in India, in Parliament and outside. Least of all have they been allowed to be exploited there as arguments against their advance to political self-government as in India."

THE REMEDY

But the fact was there, and no wise man should ignore it, for it was no doubt going to be an impediment in our way, and, there, all who thought of India must needs apply their minds "to put their house in

order." No mere pacts can solve the question satisfactorily and finally, as the history of the past pacts had gone to prove. The famous Luknow pact was an instance in point. Another pact was the pact in Calcutta between the Hindus and the Mohomedans sponsored by Mr. C. R. Das. What then was the remedy to this internecine struggle? Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru ventured to say on the point, that

"The time has now come when the Hindus and the Muslims alike should recognise that it is no longer possible in any country aspiring to possess modern institutions for one community to impose its religious ideas or principles upon another. The freedom of the one can only be limited by the freedom of another, and unless this is boldly recognised, you cannot hope to be anywhere near the solution."

Does not this observation clearly imply that while the tyranny of the majority was intolerable, the tyranny of the minority was worse than intolerable? Again, does it not help us to derive from it the corollary, which Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru himself put forward later on, "that Maulanas and Moulvis as well as saints and mahants should have nothing to do with politics and the political readjustment of India?" If on the one hand, it was proper to say, as the editor of a famous monthly in England had boldly said, that "scoundrels must be hounded out of politics," then it was equally proper to say that, in communal and political disputes, saints and prophets were equally out of court. For they helped by their meddling with the matter, to do nothing better than "perpetuate the antiquated mummeries of a bygone age."

What else were the bickerings and bigotries over cow-slaughter and music before the mosque? What else were the 'doxies" which had made so much of the mystery of the spinning wheel and khaddar, and of many a similar crotchet in Mr. Gandhi's once adver-

tised tractate on Indian Home Rule, as means to Swaraj or as the quintessence of Ram Rajya? 'Cultivate Hindi, recite Tulsidas's Ramayana, and turn the Charka'—that was given as "mantram" to students turned out from schools and colleges in the years 1921 and 1922, as their contribution to the hastening of Swaraj! Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru concluded the argument against obscurantism and looking backward, in these pregnant words:—

"The progress of all states—and particularly those comprising peoples of different races and religions—has been towards the secularisation of the state, which does not mean the destruction of the spiritual life of these people. When this is recognised there will be no room left in our public life for leaders of a certain type—leaders who, by inflaming religious passions and letting loose the forces of bigotry and intolerance, are narrowing our sympathies and paralysing generous thought for co-operative action. It is with these beliefs and convictions that I would ask the Hindus and the Mohomedans to approach these questions. The Mahomedans may insist on separate electorates and the Hindus on Joint Electorates—but the insistence on the one or the other method of representation is not enough. There must be the accompanying will to co-operate, and, whether you adopt the one method or the other, you must not exclude the inter-play of moral influences which arise when different people begin to work together."

However, "no settlement can be looked for, so long as each party refused to recognise the other side of the question and so long as each party thought that a compromise would mean the surrender of its principles and the jeopardising of its position." The legal side of the dispute was to be met by the state, and in this respect Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru affirmed that it was not to be met by the imposition of any restrictions upon the liberty of each, but by the removal of all such restrictions. On this narrow and specific issue he endorsed fully all that Sir Sivaswami Aiyer had

said in his address in 1926 in support of the strict and impartial application of the existing law with due regard for the civil liberties of the people.

On the broader political issues Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru insisted on certain fundamentals, which he regarded as the *sine qua non* of any permanent settlement. These were:—(1) the need for adequate political representation of the minorities; (2) the need to realise that no protection of the minorities can go the length of converting them into the majority; (3) the need, again, to grasp clearly the fact that in any democratic constitution of a mixed population the minority should, subject to the limits prescribed for the protection of its special interests, be prepared to accept the decisions of the majority. And, by way of final appeal and exhortation, he said, "While I would appeal to my Hindu fellow countrymen who form the vast majority of the country not to be too punctilious about numerical proportions everywhere, I would similarly urge it on our Mahomedan fellow-countrymen not to make a fetish of separate electorates."

THE SEQUEL

It will not be out of place to state here, that Sir Tej Bahadur had given the same advice from the platform of the All-Parties' Conference at the end of 1928, and if his advice had been followed then, the Nehru Report would not have suffered the fate it had met with, and the Hindu-Muslim Entente would not have broken down. Mr. Jinnah, at that time, was athoroughgoing Nationalist, he was a member and leader of the Muslim League. He pleaded from the platform of the All Parties' Conference that the Muslims should be given 33 per cent representation in the Legislative Assembly, and then they would agree to the proposal in the Nehru Report "to substitute Joint Electorates

with reservation of seats for the minorities, for separate communal electorates."

Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru, speaking after Mr. Jinnah, advised the Hindus to give the Muslims that much concession, adding, without any sinister or wicked intention behind it, that "they were after all our naughty children." It was the spokesman of the Hindu Mahasabha, Mr. M. R. Jayakar, who spoke strongly against that concession. In the end, the Nehru Report was rejected by the extremists among the Muslims, and was given a decent burial by the extremists in the Congress camp.

Immediately after the session of the All Parties' Conference, a Moslem Conference was held at Delhi under the presidentship of H. H. the Aga Khan wherein the Khilafatists, making a common cause with the reactionaries, threw out the Nehru Report as unacceptable to Muslims, and that was the beginning of its end. Pandit Motilal Nehru and Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru had a large share in preparing the document in answer to the challenge of Lord Birkenhead. Those who called themselves Independents then, that is, the champions of complete independence as against Dominion Status, helped not a little to kill the Nehru Report. The words of warning that Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru had uttered in 1927 were, by a strange irony of fate, to prove an apt commentary on the action of the pugnacious element in both the camps, namely the independants in the Congress camp and the No-changers among the Hindu Mahasabhites. It was but a slight change in the percentage assigned in the Nehru Report that Mr. Jinnah had asked for. But the sticklers for "strict numerical proportion" refused to budge an inch. And men like Mohomed Ali who, from the start, had shouted down the Nehru Report as "abject surrender on the part of the Congress Swarajists to Moderates," had their revenge

in stabbing the report in the Muslim Conference, and killing it, at last, in the Congress itself.

An opportunity for Hindu-Muslim Unity, lost then, never returned. Mr. Jinnah with his fourteen points became thenceforward the thorough-going communalist that we know him to be to-day. The separate and communal electorates remained with more than their due weightage for the minorities to accompany them. The communal award embodied in the Government of India Act of 1935 was the heavy price the country had to pay for the blunder in 1928 to which we have referred above. And we have, into the bargain, to face Pakistan as the fruit of the working of that Act by the Congress Ministries from 1937-39. "The paramount necessity of a spirit of compromise" being absent from the discussion on the communal question in the All Parties' Conference, the Conference failed in that material point. The triumph of the extremists whom Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru had warned "not to be too punctilious about strict numerical proportion everywhere," and "not to make a fetish of separate electorates," was the ruin of the cause.

We turn now to the resolution of the Liberal Conference on the same subject in 1926 and 1927. The principal speakers were Sir Chimanlal Setalvad and Mr. C. Y. Chintamani. Mr. Chintamani dealt with its religious aspect and pointed out with facts and figures, how the bitterness had increased because the officials of the Government had not held the scales even between the rights of the two communities in the dispute in question. In conclusion he said,

"The facts I have placed before you justify in my opinion the criticism that either the Government and their officers or the officers of the Government inspite of the Government, do require the request, the warning from this public body, to see that the law is enforced, enforced prom-

ptly, enforced firmly, and enforced impartially so as to prevent and, wherever it is not possible to prevent, to minimise all risks of disturbance of the public peace. It is all very well for them to preach lay sermons to us that so long as Hindus and Mohomedans continue to break each other's heads, it is idle to talk of self-government or political power. After more than a century of their rule they have failed to improve Hindu-Muslim relations, just as they have failed to make the people a body of literate citizens. For them now to seek to cast upon us the responsibility for the consequences of their own failure is all very well for those who can speak as they choose because they enjoy might, but it is hardly consonant with the dictates of justice upon which they pride themselves."

These were words uttered by one who was a responsible publicist and no impatient extremist, who was once a Minister of the Crown, who knew how to weigh his words, and who never spoke without facts to support his statement.

From him we pass on to Sir Chimanlal Setalvad who spoke before him on the same resolution. We have already quoted from his speech to show how he considered the quarrel as more political than religious, though it had expressed itself, for the time being, in religious tracks. After pointing out the causes of distrust on both the sides, he deprecated all irresponsible language on the part of leaders of both sides. For he held that

"The masses are led, and rightly led, as in all other countries masses are led, by what the leaders think and what the leaders point out to them as the best way for them, and, therefore, it behoved the leaders to try and see how far the distrust of each other could be removed and how they could be brought together to work for the common good of the motherland in the manner they ought to do. The interests of the Mohomedans in India were primarily Indian and they had no interest in the affairs of any other country. They suffered under the same disabilities as the Hindus did, they had the same privileges and the same disabilities as all other communities in India

laboured under, and their interests as well as the interests of the Hindus and of all other communities—Parsees and Christians as well—were absolutely identical. Therefore, it behoved both communities to do all in their power to remove these feelings of distrust between the two communities."

NATIONAL PATRIOTISM

We now go to the year 1927. In the resolution on the question before the Conference the point was stressed that **national patriotism should be the foundation of representative institutions, and such patriotism can best be developed by a system of joint electorates qualified by a reservation of seats for important minorities, until such time as it may be possible with the goodwill of the community concerned to dispose with the reservation of seats.** Again, the Federation called upon all its members to promote and actively support every movement calculated to bring about a better understanding between the Hindus and the Muslims and to place the relations of the communities upon an honourable footing of toleration in religious matters, and on a basis of unity in political matters, by the just representation of the minorities in the Legislatures and with due regard to efficiency in the public services of the country.

Mr. Faiz B. Tyabji, son of Budruddin Tyabaji, one of the very few Mohomedans who swore by the Indian National Congress in its early years from 1886 to 1893, moved the resolution on inter-communal unity to which we have referred above. On inter-communal unity he said,

"It was most deplorable that religion, the object of which was the good of humanity, should have been made the means by which we were divided among ourselves and in the name of which we were causing loss, harm and disunion among ourselves. That deplorable circumstance was present in India in such a form that we cannot shut

our eyes to it and no one can meet in such a gathering without first expressing a fervant hope of being able to compose those differences."

As regards political unity the speaker said that one portion of the resolution had laid down that having as our objective political unity of the country, we could attain it only if we provided that the government of the country was representative in every sense, and that it was not representative unless the minorities also were justly and adequately represented. He continued, that they must admit that the methods employed in the past for such just and adequate representation had not the beneficient effect that it was hoped they would have. The separation of the electorates had been the means of bringing about further divergence of views. Experience has taught that they must correct that position of the constitution of India.

In regard to just representation of the minorities in the public services of India the speaker affirmed, that the services should be so manned that they became efficient, qualified, capable and desiring of serving every portion of the country, and, further, the services should be servants of India and not its masters." And then as a Mohomedan he maintained emphatically as follows:

"I entirely dissociate myself from all arguments based on the consideration that the services are something like loaves and fishes, and they have to be divided, and there is to be equality of division between the various communities. I entirely dissociate myself from such arguments and I ask you to dissociate yourselves from that consideration when considering the constitution of India. Remember, whether you are in a minority or a majority, you cannot advance until every portion of the country advances. You can no more expect the whole country to progress if you neglect the needs and wants of the minority or of the majority than you can expect your body to be strong if

you neglect one part or member of it—if you exercise only your right eye and neglect your left eye."

And when will the reservation of seats disappear from the constitution, the speaker asked himself and answered:—

"That will come about when every majority community and every member of each community recognises that in order that the whole country may have its needs served, we must have people in the legislatures and in the services who are able to appreciate and provide for the needs of every member of the community, when our electors are careful and wise and unselfish in the selection of representatives in the legislatures, and the Government equally careful and wise in the selection of officers for the public services, so that neither the electors nor the members of the Government forget in providing for their own needs, their own requirements and their own benefits, the larger interests of the country they serve. We look forward to the time of a general awakening to a sense of public interests, and the duty on the part of electors to look to the general welfare of the whole of the country, when every person thinks of every other person and the needs of all be served by each."

THE RESULT

The quest for unity had gone in vain. The differences between the two great communities of India had become, in the passage of time, sharper and more bitter than they were at the end of 1928. Neither the Congress, with all the best efforts of its latter-day leaders to win over the Muslims, nor any other party in the country had succeeded in healing the breach. Pious wishes of a Viceroy like Lord Irwin, or fasting and prayers of a Mahatma like Mr. Gandhi, had proved of no avail.

The granting of separate communal electorates to the Muslims with additional weightage in their favour even in provinces where they were in a majority had not improved matters. The leaders had failed, and the Government had not used their authority 'to

do the right because it was right in scorn of consequence,' and to redress what was unfair.

Communalism had queered the pitch all round. For a brief while, in 1916 and 1928, the leaders of the Congress and the Muslim League had seemed to come closer, and hopes of party and communal unity had grown brighter. The hopes had, alas!, proved dupes. Let us not adjudge praise or blame; but, nationally speaking, blunders had been committed, one after another, by the party in power, during the last twenty-five years, which had brought about the result. The good that the party followed after, had eluded its grasp. And the evil had survived.

India stands today helpless before the communal problem that faces her, and one knows not how it will be ultimately solved. The Congress had failed, the Government had been sitting on the fence, and other parties in the country had not the drive or power in them to combine, in order that they might compel the authorities in England and India to take action forthwith in the interests of the country as a whole.

CHAPTER XII

THE STATUTORY COMMISSION

The wisdom and foresight of the Liberal Party and its courage to stand up to its convictions, were never better evinced than in the attitude that it took up towards the purely Parliamentary Commission appointed by the Conservative Government of England in 1927. The Commission was to examine the working of the Government of India Act of 1919, and to report what further steps should be taken to fulfill the pledge given to India in the August Declaration of 1917. The pledge was of a two-fold character—(1) the association of Indians in all branches of the administration; and (2) the progressive realisation of responsible Government in India. The preamble to the Act of 1919, contained the provision that a Statutory Commission shall be appointed, at the latest, at the end of 10 years to revise the constitution, and, presumably, to take India one long step further on the road to responsible government. The condition of the advance lay in the proof of co-operation given, and nowhere was it suggested in the preamble that the Commission to be appoinnted for that purpose shall be a purely Parliamentary or a purely White Commission.

If the Conservative Cabinet of Mr. Baldwin was such a stickler for the set words in the preamble, it should not have appointed the proposed commission even a day earlier than the date stipulated for in the Act. But when it suited its purpose it neglected to abide by the time-limit, and excused itself for appoint-

ing the kind of commission it appointed by declaring "that what was not so specifically stated in the Act, was so obvious on the face of it." The real reason of it was, that the Conservative Government in England desired to forestall the coming elections and was determined not to give the Labour Government even a sporting chance in 1929, to appoint a commission which it apprehended would prove more favourable to India. It was "to dish the Labour Party," if we may use a political phrase, that the Tories had shown themselves in such indecent haste to appoint a Commission after their heart. But, strange to say, even the Labour members of the House of Commons fell in with their plan and defended it grandiloquently.

This chapter will recount why the Liberal Party—the party of co-operation,—the much abused party in the country from 1921 to 1924—had made up its mind to have nothing to do with the Statutory Commission. The Liberal Conference Session of 1927 held in Bombay under the presidentship of Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru was, perhaps, the most important session in the entire history of the Federation. For it succeeded in forging unity in the country, it fought courageously against a specific grievance, it wiped out the insult offered to the intelligence of the whole nation, and it, at last, won, in asmuch as it vindicated the self-respect and honour of India before the whole world.

Not that there were no doubting Thomases among them; but even these were convinced in the end of the right lead it had given to the country. It was a party that could not claim a large number of followers in the country; it was a party that was reviled as the party of job-hunters and of disloyal Congressmen; it was a party that was twitted by some as a party without any sanction behind it; and it was a party that 'could not deliver the goods.' All the same, it fought

for a principle that appealed practically to all right-minded leaders in the country and it achieved its object. It did not claim that triumph for itself, but for the country as a whole and for the principle by which it had stood all the time.

The boycott of the Commission by the liberal party was distinguished from the boycott of the visit of the Prince of Wales to India in 1921, as sponsored by the Congress. The Liberals simply said that "they shall have nothing to do with a Commission on which Indians were not appointd to work as equals. They will lead no evidence before such a commission, nor play to them any inferior role as the so-called committees of the Central and provincial Legislatures were later on discovered to play." They resented the position forced upon India by the exclusion of Indians as equal members of the Commission, which made it appear that she was on her trial before the White men who constituted it, and that "Indians were no better than school boys to be promoted from form to form on the periodical recommendation by their teachers and examiners." Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru in his presidential address to the Liberal Conference of 1927 fully dealt with the position, and it is to that address that we have to turn in order to understand to-day the history of the whole question.

But before we do so we must refer to some pertinent remarks on the question in the address of Sir Chimanlal Setalvad who was Chairman of the Reception Committee of that year's momentous conference. Said he about the opposition to the Simon Commission,

"The opposition to the Simon Commission was led not by fire-eaters and irreconciliables but by many distinguished Indians, who, undeterred by any popular clamour and at considerable personal sacrifice, had come forward to work the Reforms Act at a very critical period and had stead-

fastly pursued that policy, because they conscientiously believed it to be in the best interests of the country. If now these people were opposed to the Commission, those in authority must pause and think and think wisely, instead of dealing with it in the belief that the action was dictated by stupidity, or by unworthy motives which the apologists of Government were too ready to attribute to them."

Sir Chimanlal had no hesitation in saying that the Federation speaking for the Liberal Party must give as its answer a negative to the nature of association offered to India in the determination of her political future. He was glad, and it was an encouraging sign, that the determination to refuse to have anything to do with the commission at any stage and in any form, was receiving such universal acceptance from all parties and organisations and all sections of the country. He continued:—'If Government had any political wisdom, they ought to read correctly the great significance of the phenomenon that the last month had revealed." He concluded,

"To say that that the communal divisions in the country had made it impossible for the authorities in England to appoint Indian Members on the commission really representative of the people was a spurious argument. It was enough to say against it that H. H. the Aga Khan had observed about it that it was not difficult to name twenty Indians belonging to different creeds and political organisations who will command the confidence of the entire Indian community."

THE ANTECEDENTS

Lord Irwin, the Viceroy of India, made the declaration of the appointment of the Statutory Commission on the 8th of November 1927. Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru had scented the mischief as early as June of that year, and had written to the papers about it. During a brief stay in England he had sensed the atmosphere in that country; he had realised how Miss Mayo's

Mother India had poisoned it against India. The Conservative Government in England had chosen precisely that time to forestall the appointment of the Statutory Commission by two years. It had, besides, made it an exclusively parliamentary and all white commission, which was not clearly laid down in the preamble to that Act. The Anglo-Indian papers seemed to be in the know of the arrangement, though Indians were never consulted about it. Even names of members had been prematurely disclosed by some of them.

Taking all these facts into consideration Sir Tej Bahadur warned the authorities in advance, of the effect this step would have on the Indian mind in the following words:—

"I do not write as a party politician, but as one who feels that the task of endowing India with a permanent constitution worth her place in the Empire and commensurate with her legitimate aspirations, should not be approached in the narrow spirit of party politics or actuated by old time prejudices. It is for this reason that I have ventured to sound the warning against the view entertained in certain quarters that an exclusively parliamentary commission should be appointed." That was what Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru wrote in June 1927. He added:—"Such a commission if appointed might start on its work with the very handicap that it will not carry with it Indian confidence and support, and that there was nothing in the words of the Statute to show that Parliament cannot appoint Indians to such a commission or it is bound to appoint those who happen to be its members."

How did they dare flout the warning so expressed on behalf of India long before the Commission was announced and appointed by Parliament? It was, as Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru put it in his presidential address,

"In the belief and hope that the outburst of indignation and discontent in India would be a short-lived one; that the Swarajists were more interested in nursing grievances than in having them removed, and that, therefore,

they could be easily disposed of as irreconcilables in Indian politics; that the liberals would be amenable to *ipso facto* reasoning and persuasion that in any case they were not a serious factor in Indian politics; that the cleavage between the Hindus and the Mahomedans was so wide that even under the pressure of a common grievance they could not joint hands; and, lastly, there were the depressed classes who were bound to raise their piteous cry for protection against the evil design of the powerful upper classes, and that it was clearly the duty of Government to firmly refuse to listen to the demand for Indian representation and to do their duty by the weak and the oppresed."

THE REASON WHY

Why was the Commission anticipated in date? The Government communique pleaded for it the quiet atmosphere that had come after the withdrawal of non-co-operation and the return of the Swarajists from the path of obstruction to constitutional opposition. In Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru's opinion that real reason was not the demand of the Legislative Assembly for the appointment of the commission in 1927, for it was being made from 1921-1924 and by those who had heartily co-operated with the working of the Reforms; it was not made by the Swarajists who had succeeded them in the Assembly. It was not also due to the difference in method that was said to have come about, or due to peace that had distinguished 1927 from 1920. The present Commissioners would postpone the problem if they could, indefinitely; whereas the non-co-operators, including the Swarajists had desired to hasten the pace so as to bring it within the limit of a year.

The real reason for appointing the commission in 1927, was, as Colonel Wedgewood, quoted by Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru, had aptly put it, that "the Commission was appointed at a time when public opinion in England about India has been poisoned by the publi-

cation of *Mother India*, which was, to say the least of it, not playing the game." Miss Mayo's *Mother India*, as we all know, was written to show to the world that India's claim to self-government was not justified by conditions of the social and moral world in India. The controversy that had raged round the book at the time, with Lala Lajpat Rai's reply to it in another book describing similar or worse conditions in America, need not occupy us here. Suffice it to say that Mr. Gandhi finished Miss Mayo's book once for all by describing it as "a drainage inspector's report," and "as the drains of a city are not the city, so the things described in Miss Mayo's *Mother India* are not the whole of India or the real India."

As regards the communal argument against the appointment of Indians as members on the commission Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru met it effectively as follows:—

"If it be really the fact that the position is so hopeless as the Secretary of State in the House of Lords and Lord Winterton in the House of Commons have made it out to be, then in the name of common sense and fairness I ask what is the good of appointing a Commission? Why entertain talk of Reforms? Why not follow the advice of a distinguished member of the European Community in Calcutta who had the frankness and courage to say not many days ago that 'the time has now come for the Viceroy to sit down with his selected district officers who knew the real people of India and evolve a decent system of Government forgetting democracy and all such discredited systems.' "

And who, pray, were the members chosen to sit in judgment over the political destiny of India? None of the recognised front-bench leaders. But rapporteurs —to quote the "London Times"—men in the second rank with the single exception of Sir John Simon perhaps.

"That is the value," remarked Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru, "that England and her British statesmen attach to this great mission. These men are not men of ideals. They have no brilliance. They are safe men, capable of team work and prepared to be guided by their Chairman, Sir John Simon. And India is asked to believe that these six worthies in the second flight can take good care of the present interests and of the future of three hundred millions of this country."

THE QUESTION OF STATUS

The equality of status, it was claimed by the Government, was granted to Indians, by the creation of the Committee of the Central Legislature to work along with the Simon Commission and, later on, with the Joint Select Committee of Parliament. What more did the Indians want? Was it not better than to be included as members in the commission? That was what Lord Birkenhead had asked. That was what even Mr. Ramsay Macdonald had applauded. To which Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru replied,

"This was nothing better than an exuberance of language. And that there was not an atom of truth in the plea that the Committee of the Central Legislature shall have or is intended to have the same status as the Simon Commission either with Parliament or with the Commission itself. Its report would have no value better than the evidence of any ordinary witness, and Parliament could not entertain it independently and the Simon Commission might totally disregard it."

Events proved the truth of these words. As regards the constitutional position of equality of the committee *vis-a-vis* the Joint Select Committee of Parliament, Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru remarked "I ask how is it possible for any Indian delegation whether of the Committees of the Indian Legislatures or of any other class of persons to claim equality with the Select Committee of Parliament or to share responsibility with that Select committee." The experience of the

Indian delegation after the third R.T.C. face to face with the Joint Select committee, presided over by Lord Linlithgow, had borne out fully the truth of this observation by Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru made in 1927. It was sheer "bamboozling" to say what Lord Birkenhead and Ramsay Macdonald had said about the Committee of the Central Legislature, "enjoying the same status, constitutional or otherwise, either with the Simon Commission or with the Joint Select Committee of Parliament to follow it."

And here we may quote the words of Mr. Ramsay Macdonald as reported by Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru:—

"He talked about the Indian Legislative Assembly as the Parliament of India, and he observed that the Parliament of England was saying to the Parliament of India, 'we are going to regard you as the representative of the Indian opinion, we are going to recognise you as having an authority, sanction and position like unto our own in your own country, and when we want to know what is going to be the constitution of India in future, when we want to know what the political opinion of India is, we appoint a commission, you appoint a similar body, and the two commissions working together in harmonious co-operation with each other are going to report to the House of Commons what the lines of the new constitution should be."

In the same breath, in the same speech, and, at the end of it, the same speaker said, "they could not give the commission of the Indian Legislature any right to make a report to the House of Commons." Fatuity could go no further than this, and yet we were asked to take these words seriously! Fine words butter no parsnips.

"The raging, tearing, propaganda" against the Commission was being carried on, said Lord Winterton, the then Under-Secretary of State for India, in the House of Commons, "by certain persons who were always opposed to the Government of India." Sir Chi-

manlal Setalvad had already pointed out in words which we have already quoted how this statement was a travesty of truth. Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru gave names of those who had opposed the appointment of such a commission on grounds of principle and from no unworthy personal or public motive:—

"Who were the persons who had opposed this policy of the British Cabinet supported by Parliament? Sir Siva Swami Aiyer in Madras, Sir Chimanlal Setalvad in Bombay, Sir Syed Ali Imam and Mr. Sinha in Bihar, Sir Abdul Rahim in Bengal, The Maharaja of Mahamudabad, Sahebjada Aftab Ahmadkhan and Mr. Chintamani in the United Provinces,—all of whom had, at one time or another, held high office, had worked the Reforms and co-operated with the Government during some very difficult years of non-co-operation and boycott. Can it be said of these men, that they were always opposed to the Government of India? Can you call them agitators now, because it suited your purpose to do so? Can you attribute to them unworthy motives "as being actuated by disappointment, chagrin or pique," as their reason of opposing this commission?"

Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru continued, "then that charge shall have to be brought against a large and overwhelming number of Indian politicians, barring of course the faithful few who place caste, creed or class above the country, and he should not waste his time any more in refuting charges of that character." But men like Lord Winterton were not expected to say anything better or think better. Therefore Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru turned from him to the last man in the camp of the Conservatives, namely, Mr. Baldwin, the Prime Minister of England at the time.

AN INSULT AND A WRONG

After recounting all that India had suffered by way of reaction in the Indianisation of the services, of the administration generally, after narrating how in the Indianisation of the Army, in the liberalisation

measures and resolutions recommended by the Legislative Assembly and even reports of certain important Committees had been held up at White Hall since the exit of Mr. Montagu from the India Office and since the entrance there of Conservative Secretaries of State like Lord Peel and Lord Birkenhead down to 1927, Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru told Mr. Baldwin frankly that all his compliments to them as statesmen did not help them to forget the last straw which had been the appointment of the Statutory Commission. He said,

"I do not think a worse challenge has been thrown out ever before to Indian nationalism, and notwithstanding the profuse assurances in Mr. Baldwin's speech and yet more profuse assurances in Mr. Macdonald's speech, Indian nationalists of the Moderate School have been compelled to ask if the only way of recognising the spirit to co-operation is by telling Indians that their lot is to be none other than that of petitioners; that they cannot be trusted to participate in the responsibility of making recommendations to Parliament for the future of their own country; and that, all that they may aspire to is to put their proposals before the commission which may accept or reject them; and again, to repeat the same process of persuasion, argument, discussion before the Joint Committee of Parliament. Now, if this is what is meant by co-operation, if this is the new idea of the equality of status on which we are to be fed, if our patriotism is a prejudice and if the patriotism of the seven members of Parliament is to be treated as impartial justice, then we liberals feel justified in telling the Government here and in England, 'You may do anything you like in the assertion of your right as supreme power, but we are not going to acquiesce in the method of dealing with us.' Neither self-respect nor our sense of duty to the country can permit us to go near the Commission."

From this elucidation of the whole question it is clear, even as a matter of history, how Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru and the Liberal Party were perfectly justified in giving the lead that they had given in 1927 to the country that "it should have nothing to do with such

a commission at any stage and in any form." In concluding the topic Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru quoted from a letter which at that time Colonel Wedgewood wrote to Lala Lajpat Rai. Said Colonel Wedgewood in that letter:—

"I was always against non-co-operation as you know and I am so still. Take what share in governing you can; use every power and every opportunity afforded by the Government of India Act. That is not crawling but worthwhile fighting, and incidentally may help to wipe out some of those curses of Mother India. But this Commission does not require your help. There is no need to stand in the witness-box and be examined by persons of no great importance, who have not before shown any interest in your views and feelings. They can easily get the case up from the evidence and reports laid before the Muddiman Committee. Officials can supply all the facts and are likely to do so with more impartiality, not less , if the victims are dumb. Or if they like, they can read the newspapers. **Open (or empty) minds can easily get food and they can easily forget it."**

Nothing could be more to the point, better put, and be truer than this. And the fact that the letter was addressed not by a liberal to a liberal, but by a Labour member of Parliament to a member of the Tilak School of thought, and to an extremist like Lajpatrai in India, makes the moral of it more effective still.

A SOLEMN CHARGE

Finally Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru appealed to all concerned about their duty in that situation, in words which deserve to be quoted here:

"Too long, it seems to me have we, to the detriment of the country, indulged in the pastime of throwing mud on each other; too long has each party claimed to itself the monopoly of patriotism and wisdom; too long have we allowed party to usurp the place which should legitimately belong to the country in our hearts. We cannot and we should not allow our energies to be dissipated in barren and



Sir Cowasji Jehangir
(President 1936)



Sir Vithal Chandavarkar
(President 1940)



Sir B. P. Singh Roy
(President 1941)



Sir Maharaj Singh
(President 1943)

thankless tasks of party factions and squabbles; and I honestly think that the time has come when we should make an earnest and honest endeavour to open a new chapter in our history. I do not plead for the sudden merging of one party into another. But I do plead for common and joint work through chosen representatives of each party in the preparation of a scheme of self-government to be presented to the country and Parliament."

Mrs. Annie Besant's Commonwealth of India Bill was an attempt of the kind by the National Convention held at Madras in 1924. Fate did not prove propitious to that bill for the reason that a famous Congress Swarajist, on the eve of its introduction in Parliament, torpedoed it by a wire that his party did not accept it on behalf of India. Sir Tej Bahadur's appeal fructified later in the shape of an All Parties' Convention in which the Congress took the lead with Dr. Ansari as its spokesman. The result was the document known as the Nehru Report, so called because the sub-committee which prepared it had for its chairman Pandit Motilal Nehru. The Convention in eight sittings at Lucknow, and the All Parties' Conference at Calcutta after it, had approved the report in its fundamentals, and had accepted 'Dominion Status' as the united demand of India. But the communal part of it eventually proved its Achilles' heel, with the ultimate fate for it which we have narrated in a former chapter.

This study will not be complete without reference in it to salient points in the two speeches at the Conference, namely, of Sir Sivaswami Aiyer and Mr. C. Y. Chintamani. The former proposed the resolution of the Conference on the Statutory Commission, and the latter spoke last upon it.

As regards the dignified and unique status alleged to have been bestowed upon the Committee of the Indian Legislature, of which some persons in Parliament spoke so grandiloquently as being never confer-

red even upon white colonies like South Africa and Australia, Sir Sivaswami Aiyer quietly retorted.

"We have no objection to forego this unique opportunity if only they would place us in the less favourable position in which Australia and South Africa and other self-governing colonies are said to have been placed before they were granted self-government. We should be quite willing to meet in convention and frame a scheme for ourselves and submit it for Parliament, provided the results of the recommendations of our convention were treated with the same respect as the recommendations which emanated from those parts of the Empire."

THE CRUX OF THE MATTER

The closing speech on the subject by Mr. C. Y. Chintamani made some new points which deserve notice here. For instance, he stressed the need of Indian members sitting alongside of English members, and enjoying equal status with them on the commission for the following reason:—

"It has been stated that our further constitutional progress must depend upon the degree of co-operation which we extend, and the sense of responsibility which we display. Is it one of the functions of the Commission to inquire what is the degree of co-operation which the Governor-General in Council and the Governors-in-Council have extended even to moderate and responsible public opinion in the country? I charge the Governor-General in Council and every Governor-in-Council and the Secretary of State with a deliberate, persistent and contemptuous disregard of Indian public opinion and a systematic refusal to co-operate with the Indian public. If there were Indian members on the commission and if the British accused us of lacking in the spirit of co-operation, they would turn the tables on the British. The Commission is to inquire what is the sense of responsibility which Indian public men have shown themselves capable of, but I inquire what is the degree of responsibility which the British Government in India have shown themselves to be capable of. Notwithstanding the great national awakening, notwithstanding the plighted word of the British Parliament,

inspite of all the declarations that the Government in India is on the road to transformation into full responsible government, in the face of all these I charge the British Government that they have shown themselves, during the last 5½ years since Mr. Montagu was driven out of office so unceremoniously, incapable of any sense of responsibility to the people in dealing with the problems of Indian Government. **If there was an Indian on the Commission this question would be brought up and the Commission would not be allowed merely to consider the problem as though Indians were the accused and the British Government were to give judgment in favour of their own noble selves."**

Then, again, he quoted precisely, to point out the intention of Mr. Montagu in instituting the procedure of the Statutory Commission. Said Mr. Chintamani that Mr. Montagu in his speeches on the Government of India Bill in the House of Commons had made three important statements which it was very relevant that we should remind the British Government about, at that juncture:

"He asked the House of Commons **first**, to remember that the Government of India Bill of that year was only the first step on the road of self-government. **Secondly**, he asked the Government of India to remember, although the Governors-in-Council and the Governor-General-in-Council were not then made legally responsible to their respective Legislatures,—that they were the Government of a country which had been promised full responsible government, the first step in the direction of which had already been taken, and that, therefore, they should conduct themselves even in the reserved spheres as though they were already responsible to the Legislatures; in other words, that the spirit which should inform the Government of the country not merely in provincial transferred departments but throughout the whole sphere of administration must be the spirit of a government representative of and responsible to the people of the country. The **third** thing which he told the House of Commons was that they should be on their guard against employing arguments against

constitutional advance and concurrently following policies which would make constitutional advance impossible."

Mr. Chintamani illustrated this statement by citing the case of the defence of the country. Mr. Montagu warned his fellow-countrymen that it was no use for them to tell the people of India that they should not expect to have self-government for as long as they were not capable of defending their frontiers, and, at the same time, to follow steadfastly a policy which would forever make it impossible for them to defend themselves. These facts could, argued Mr. Chintamani, never be brought forth by the kind of Commission that was appointed to sit in judgment upon India's claim to self-government, while if Indians of the right kind were associated with it as equal members, they would not have allowed the case of India to go unheard and unproven.

To those who asked the Liberals, including Mr. Chintamani himself, why don't you try to prevent the mischief, presumably by appearing before the Commission as witnesses, instead of having nothing to do with the Commission at any stage and in any form?' he gave a straight and conclusive answer in the following terms:

"There is no use. We all went before the Muddiman Committee. What was the result? Nothing. We might as well have comfortably slept in our beds. On the other hand, there will be one serious harm done if any one of us appear before the Commission. They will say, 'We have considered the representations made to us by representatives of every political party all over India. We have given full weight to every fact, every opinion, every argument, advanced by every single politician who came before us and our conclusion is wholly against them and we confirm what Sir William Marris and others have stated! If, on the other hand, we wash our hands clean of the business, if we decline to go before them and keep up our agitation for Swaraj, notwithstanding all that the Commis-

sion may say or do, they will be deprived of the moral authority which we shall have only presented to them if we co-operated."

That, by the end of 1929, as the result of this policy on the part of India, the Simon Commission, with all its fanfaronnading, had lost its moral authority, had become clear to Lord Irwin in India and to the Labour Government in England, is evident from the fact that they tried to appease the country by the announcement of the Round Table Conference.

The high promises held forth about the Simon Commission, after all, came to nought. Exactly ten years after, Mr. Chintamani wrote of its work for India as follows:—

"The Commission's inquiries aroused but little interest in the country, and when its belated report was produced in 1930, it amazed Indians by some of its astounding proposals. India was not to have Dominion Status, she was not to have a responsible Central Government. The present Legislative Assembly (1937) must give place to a body indirectly elected which could be trusted to be more acquiescent in executing decrees. The Army of India was to be under the control of His Majesty's Government in England, India however paying for its cost. It is needless to say more upon this portentous document than that Sir Siva Swami Aiyer, of all people, dismissed it with the remark that it 'should be placed on the scrap-heap."

Thus had 'God's own Englishmen" solved, once for all, the political problem of India and had substituted peace and goodwill where, before, had reigned discontent, distrust, dissension and disunion, all round!

CHAPTER XIII

"DOMINION STATUS"

The advent of the Simon Commission in India and its touring the country to examine witnesses and take evidence under the shelter of police precaution, and under protest from the people at large, had led in certain places to excesses on both the sides which need no mention here. The framing of the Nehru Report, its adoption in basic principle in the All Parties' Convention at Lucknow, and in the All Parties' Conference at Calcutta; the short shrift given to it subsequently by the Muslim Conference at Delhi; and its fate in the Congress Sessions of 1928 and 1929, constitute landmarks in India's political history.

The Liberal Conferences that met in successive years at Allahabad, Madras and Bombay dealt with these happenings in their proper perspective, and with the single aim of giving the country a right lead. The year 1928 was a year of the Nehru Report and of the country's united demand of dominion status for India. The year 1929 at its end saw the announcement by Lord Irwin of R.T.C. The announcement practically threw overboard the Simon Commission and made nugatory its perambulations in India, as also its report published in July 1930. Unfortunately enough, it also saw the Congress refusal to participate in the first R.T.C., and its resolve to declare complete independence and implement the new goal by resort to civil disobedience. The year 1930 saw that resolve put into action and all that followed it. The end of it witness-

ed the first meeting of the R.T.C. in England. In 1931 the atmosphere had changed in India and Gandhi-Irwin Pact was the consequence thereof. The Congress had agreed at last to share in the deliberations of the Second Round Table Conference.

The Liberal Conference at Allahabad dealt mainly with the question of Dominion Status, and *inter alia* with the Nehru Report and communal unity. It had to deal fully with the question of Dominion Status in 1928, because certain high officials of Government had interpreted responsible government to mean something different from that Status in their evidence before the Simon Commission, as well as, long before that, in the Legislative Assembly. On the other hand, there was a young party in the Congress itself which denounced that Status and went in for complete independence. The Nehru Report had embodied Dominion Status as the greatest common measure of agreement among all parties as regards India's demand. Hence, the Liberal Party had to make its position clear to the country on this vital point at a crucial moment in her history. And that task it accomplished in its Conference at Allahabad in 1928.

The change of atmosphere brought about in the country by united opposition to the Simon Commission, and by united effort by all parties, including the Congress and the Liberal Party, to frame a draft scheme for the future constitution of India was referred to by Mr. C. P. Ramaswami Aiyer, speaking in the Liberal Conference in 1928, as follows:

"Those of us who have had pleasure to hear, and those who will read, Pandit Motilal Nehru's speech, will find in it, I submit, a vindication of the Liberal policy because, notwithstanding the enunciation of certain specific proposals, I still hold that Pandit Motilal Nehru's speech as President of the Congress, (1928) is, in effect and in essence, despite

certain embroideries and fringes, a reaffirmation of that for which the Liberal Federation stands."

THE GENESIS OF EXTREMISM

Inspite of this success of liberalism and inspite of the need felt by the party of extremism and its leaders to consult liberal leaders from time to time and as occasion and crisis have demanded such consultation, why is it that extremism is found to be ever so rampant in India and the Liberals seem to have so much fallen into disfavour? There are many obvious reasons for the fact but the root cause of it was, as Sir Chimanlal Setalvad put it in his presidential address to the Liberal Conference at Allahabad, the action and the attitude of the Government itself. Said Sir Chimanlal on that point:—

"Paradoxical as it may seem, it is Government who have by their blundering and hesitating policy, at every step, created extremism, and helped it at every stage to gather strength where it was about to lose ground. Their unwise action in putting the Rowlatt Act on the Statute Book in defiance of united Indian opinion throughout the country gave birth to civil disobedience. The Punjab Martial Law Administration and the horrors for which it was responsible, created the cult of non-violent non-co-operation and non-payment of taxes, and the obstructive and hostile attitude of the Swarajists in the Legislatures. The Simon Commission muddle of last year brought into existence the party advocating complete independence. Government have always failed to respond adequately and timely to legitimate Indian aspirations as voiced by sane and responsible sections, and by their hesitation and delay, they have lost opportunity after opportunity of catching the imagination of the people and securing their contentment. They are so much lost in admiration of what they have done for India and of the efficiency of their administration, that they wonder and resent that Indians should be dissatisfied with the present order of things and demand self-government!"

While praising in due measure and without any

mental reserve the unity in the country in support of the Nehru Report and especially in support of its basic principle of Dominion Status for India, Sir Chimanlal Setalvad did not mince words with those who said in 1928, that they could accept Dominion Status as well as, at the same time, work for complete independence. That was the stand of men in the Congress like Mr. Srinivasa Ayangar of Madras and Mr. Subashchandra Bose of Calcutta. Some of them had constituted themselves into a party in the Congress to work up the Congress to that aim. And they had their success at the end of 1929.

Referring to the new party in the Congress and outside, Sir Chimanlal Setalvad spoke as follows:—

"The Congress is asked as a compromise to accept the formula that, while re-affirming the Madras resolution of ocmplete independence, Dominion Status is acceptable as a common measure of agreement. In the alternative, the Congress is asked to subscribe at present to Dominion Status but with the ultimatum that if it is not given within a stated period, then independence would be declared and non-co-operation would be started. To my mind, while every effort should be made to secure unity in politically-minded India such unity should not be a camouflage. Nothing makes for sound action in politics as does clarity of thought and avoidance of self-deception. Speaking for myself, I do not see how those whose immediate or ultimate goal is complete independence can have anything in common with those who want Dominion Status within the British Empire. Any nation or country that wants complete independence takes measures first to achieve independence, and when it succeeds in securing independence, it drafts and creates its own constitution. It is out of place for those who want independence outside the Empire to join in drafting the constitution for Dominion Status and asking British Parliament to grant such Dominion Status. Those who want Dominion Status cannot countenance the ultimatum mentioned above. Those who affirm independence as their goal and threaten non-pay-

ment of taxes cannot be honest believers in Dominion Status."

COMMUNALISM

The Muslim Conference that had assembled at Delhi,—an entirely new organisation, and a counter-blast to Mr. Jinnah's Muslim League at that time—after the break-up of the All-Parties' Conference at Calcutta, threw out the Nehru Report as unacceptable to Muslims. It adopted, among other things, a resolution on separate, communal electorates for Muslims and a resolution against vesting residuary powers in the Central Government. As one writer says disparagingly of this Muslim attitude towards the Nehru Report, "the resolutions adopted by the Moslem Conference at Delhi under the presidentship of H. H. the Aga Khan were like rifle shots in the body of the Nehru Report and that was the beginning of its end."

The Nehru Report was in favour of United India and, therefore, it had decided to vest residuary powers in the Central Government under Dominion Status, and it had recommended joint electorates with reservation of seats for important minorities as against separate, communal electorates, for which change it had given the following reason:

"Every body knows that separate electorates are bad for the growth of a national spirit, but everybody does not perhaps realise that separate electorates are worse for a minority community. They make the majority wholly independent of the minority and its votes, and usually hostile to it. Under separate electorates, therefore, the chances are that the minority will always have to face a hostile majority which can by sheer force of numbers override the wishes of the minority. Extreme communalists flourish thereunder and the majority community, far from suffering, actually benefits by it."

Quoting this passage from the Nehru Report, Sir Chimanlal Setalvad said about the communal problem,

as president of the Liberal Conference in 1928, "that it had assumed in India a fictitious importance beyond its real merit. When the separatist principle was first accepted in 1909 and further confirmed in 1916, the agreement was entered into with the full expectation that separate electorates would last only for short time, and the principle should be confined only to the Legislatures. But what had happened? During 19 years the separatist idea had spread like wild weed (1928) and had extended itself to every field of public life—municipality, local bodies, public services and even seats of learning. And, as a result, so far as as the services were concerned, fitness and efficiency as criterions had yielded place to considerations of birth, race and religion. And that was bound to act detrimentally on our national character in the long run. If this evil, that had spread its dark and omnious shade all over our public life, must go, we must attack the evil at its very root. Hence, we must agree to do away with separate communal electorates."

"The correct ideal," said Sir Chimanlal, "therefore, would be a general register of voters not taking account of birth, race or religion. All that any community should have and is entitled to have is that the constitution should secure to it fullest religious liberty and cultural autonomy. Failing the acceptance of this correct ideal, general electorates, with reservation of seats for the minority and the backward communities, is the next best expedient only as a transitional device. The fact is that the present situation in which the Mohomedan community want to cling to separate electorates as a valued privilege essential for their safety, has been created by want of trust and confidence between majority and the minority communities, and the situation is exploited by those who can maintain their predominance only by perpetuating communalism. I strongly think it is up to the majority community to be generous and to agree to make concessions to the furthest limits consistent with national interests, in order to win back their erring brethren of the minority community."

The question of internal unity—both political and communal—was vital to India's rapid success in the attainment of Dominion Status, and hence, along with all streneuous efforts for that unity, there must go a clear understanding of what was meant by Dominion Status for India, and how it presupposed a united India with a strong Central Government to assure such India prosperity, power and peace, along with freedom, in the comity of nations. The speeches on Dominion Status at the Liberal Conference of 1928, especially of Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru and Sir C. P. Ramaswamy Aiyer, deal with the question thoroughly, and, therefore, we must, in this study, deal with them first. The demand for Dominion Status was not a new demand by the Liberal Party in India. Sir C. P. Ramaswamy Aiyer quoted a passage from the writings of Kristodas Pal to show that it went as for back as 1874. And why did they prefer Dominion Status to complete independence? To that question Sir C. P. Ramaswamy Aiyer gave the folowing answer:

"It was because they had realised that in this world absolute independence would no longer exist and there is no country in the world which was either fiscally or economically or otherwise independent of other countries. The British Commonwealth of Nations was a miniature League of Nations, of peoples banded together for common purposes, and banded together because each isolated unit could not easily develop and spontaneously evolve, as they would evolve, if joined together for common purpose."

The liberal party had not adopted that goal in 1928 as an answer to the Simon Commission, or because the Nehru Report had endorsed it. It was not by way of rejoinder to any party. Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru has the following remarks on the point in his speech at the Conference on the resolution of Dominion Status. He said,

"It was in 1905 when Mr. Gokhale, as President of the Congress at Benares, first put forward the idea in a concrete form. In 1906, when Dadabhai Naoroji presided over the National Congress, he gave us the rich inheritance of a word which has remained with us as an ideal to be achieved in our own time. I was referring to the word Swaraj. It was again emphasised in 1908 by the Convention Committee of the Congress at Allahabad. And from 1921 onwards it had been the consistent aim of the liberal party. In 1924 and 1925, the Swaraj Party in the Assembly adopted the resolutions of the Liberal Party as its national demand. And the Nehru Report, finally, which also the Congress and all parties at the time had adopted as their own, was drawn up as a united political demand of the country on the basis of Dominion Status for India. To sum up the history of the question, so far as the liberal party was concerned, so far as several other parties were concerned, it may be said without any fear of contradiction that the idea of Dominion Status was an accepted idea."

As against this agreement in the country, there was growing up a school of thought which was not prepared to accept that Status but was urging the idea of independence. But the liberals and all others in the country, including even the Mohomedans, apart from the latter's disagreement on the communal issue, used the phrase, "without any equivocation, without any ambiguity, without any mental reservation." "What they meant by Dominion Status", said Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru, "was nothing more and at the same time nothing less than Dominion Status, not as a means to any other end, but as the end in itself." The extremist who swore by complete independence was, according to Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru, the product of the Government policy so far, not to move forward.

WAS IT NOT REPRESENTATIVE?

The Government, he warned, might very well treat this opinion with indifference and contempt on

the plea "that the 20,000 or the 25,000 men who had assembled at Calcutta and the few hundred who had assembled at Allahabad represented only themselves, that they did not represent the 315 million men inside the country, and that the sentiments, feelings, aspirations of the 315 million men of India were represented by men like Sir Reginald Craddock, Sir Michael O' Dwyer, and Lord Meston. If they derived any solace from a view like that, they were quite welcome to entertain it. But against it, it was up to them to warn Government that delay and postponement was fraught with danger to the country and the Government and to the mutual relations of India and England. If such danger arose, Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru knew that England was in a position to deal with the situation by the force she possessed. But if they were wise they must remember that "they can do everything with their bayonets, but they could not sit on them." And then he appealed to the powers-that-be in the following words. He said,

"The key to the situation lies and, I say so very strongly, in the hands of the Viceroy. If the Viceroy is going to entrench himself behind the advice that he receives from men who are out of touch with the country, if he thinks he can carry on the administration of the country as his predecessors had been carrying on for an unlimited time, then I do say that he is living in a fool's paradise."

OTHER DOUBTERS

Having warned the Government in this way, Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru turned to the doubters in the popular camp, and answered their criticism of the liberal ideal. To those who said that 'Dominion Status was a very low idea,' and that 'it would keep us under the heels of England,' he said "That Dominion Status, far from being that, was a dynamic idea, that it had chang-

ed from generation to generation, that it had changed in every decade, that every Imperial Conference which had met in England had made a contribution to the growth and development of the idea of Dominion Status, until you found that the Imperial Conference of 1926 meeting in London and coming to some conclusions which had given the self-governing dominions even the liberty to separate themselves, if they liked, from England. He, then, significantly added that they could not have a larger and better idea than that.

"If the Dominions have not separated, if the dominions will not separate from England, it was because they felt that in their own homes they were absolute masters. They could shape their own policy, they could pass their own laws, and they could have their own tariffs. It was because they felt that they occupied a position of perfect equality with England, that they were in truth and fact equal members of the British Commonwealth, that they considered it necessary to remain members of the British Commonwealth. Dominion Status, therefore, implied perfect independence within and a sure protection from aggression without. To cut oneself off from the British Commonwealth, which meant isolation, was a situation fraught with danger for India."

To others who doubted that what was granted to the white colonies can never be given to India, Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru replied,

"It was simply an argument of despair; it implied and it meant that if these be the suspicions which were being harboured by English statesmen in England and India, then the talk of responsible government, and of dominion status was nothing but a sham and delusion, and that in as much as we cannot have a common history, common religion, common ties of blood, it followed that all the declarations that had been made by English statesmen on behalf of Dominion Status must be taken as paper declarations."

Speaking for himself Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru did not swear by that argument. And he added further,

"The true fact was this. You may not grant Dominion Status to India, but you cannot prevent men's minds running on dangerous lines. They are already running on dangerous lines. And to relieve the situation, the first thing needful was to be ready to shed off prestige. And that only a big gesture of statesmanship could save the situation, and not a mere gesture unfollowed by action. The time for half-measures was gone, that would not relieve the situation at all. Unless the blighting influence from White Hall was removed from India, unless the Government of India became an independent Government of India responsible to the Legislature, and unless the local legislatures acquired a similar amount af independence within their own sphere of action, no political party was going to be satisfied with half-measures whether they are intended to be introduced at the Centre or in the Provinces. The time had come when we ought to press for nothing less than complete Dominion Status for India."

There was a third class of critics and doubters whom Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru described "as our young friends from Calcutta and elsewhere," who kept on asking him as to what were the sanctions behind him and his party for enforcing the demand for Dominion Status. The answer to this question had been given several times before by him and other Liberals. The bomb and the revolver, terrorism and crime had not made India free. Non-violent non-co-operation had failed to do it either. Armed revolt was out of question. Events from 1905 to 1928 had proved the futility of these methods, not to think of the disaster and disintegration of public life that they had brought in their wake. We have given the answer in these pages from a speech of Mr. Chintamani speaking in 1920 on the eve of non-co-operation. At the end of 1928, Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru's reply to these young, enthusiastic men was as follows:—

"I believe in one sanction and in one sanction only, and that is the united will of the country. If once we can

remove the common misunderstandings, if once we can show to the minorities and show to them most unmistakably, that the minorities stand to gain everything and lose nothing under a system of responsible self-government, if we can adjust our social questions, if we can broaden our ideas of economic questions, if we can bring about a general amount of unanimity on vital national questions, I personally think you will not require any other sanction, because I feel absolutely persuaded on one point, and it is **that the Englishman is such a practical-minded, business-like sort of man, that when he once comes to know that India is indeed in earnest about dominion status and responsible government, he will not wait for other sanctions. He will come to you and say 'Now come to a settlement.'** Therefore, when my young friends talk of other sanctions, I always remind them that just the very first sanction that has got to be forged by us is the sanction of unity, the removal of those differences which have disfigured our public life, the removal of those differences which have rent our society into pieces, and if any effort is made in bringing about that harmony, in bringing about that co-operaton between one section of Indian Society and another section, I venture to say, not only on behalf of my humble self but on behalf of my party, that you will find the liberals standing shoulder to shoulder with every other party whatever may be its label in the country."

Following Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru, Sir C. P. Ramaswami Aiyer gave another reason why India demanded Dominion Status forthwith. He said that from their experience they had found that without an essential national bias and a national outlook they could not reconstruct their national wealth, and a bankrupt nation, a poor nation, a starving nation could not be a fit sister among the sisterhood of nations. It was that national wealth and prosperity that they were seeking to build up. That was why they were asking for Dominion Status.

OTHER OBJECTIONS

To those who trotted out the argument that the division of India into two warring communities had

made it impossible for India to have that status and for England to confer it upon her, Sir C. P. Ramaswami Aiyer answered by quoting the instance of Canada. He said,

"Those of us who have read Lord Durham's speech remember that exactly the same conditions prevailed between the French and the English in Canada as between the Hindus and the Mahomedans here. They would not go to the same house of worship. There were social boycotts, there were tribal jealousies and local antagonisms. Unlike others who are false prophets, Lord Durham said, 'It is because they have nothing better to do, it is because they have no greater tasks to perform, it is because they have no greater joint obligations to fulfill, that they are fighting for those little things.' Similarly I say, make the Hindus and the Mahomedans joint rulers of this kingdom. There may be little disturbances at the start. There is bound to be disequilibrium. No man is born into this world without the pangs of birth-throes, and a nation cannot be born without such pangs. But that moment over, everything will be all right and so it was in Canada. Why should history be completely disregarded and why should geography alone be insisted upon?"

As regards the objection that without a national army to defend herself India cannot claim Dominion Status, we have already quoted from Mr. Montagu himself to show that Britain cannot herself raise that objection because it was its own policy that had disarmed the nation, and had put off the Indianisation of the army even after the promise of responsible government to India in 1917. It did not lie in the mouth of British Statesmen to raise this objection. Sir C. P Ramaswami Aiyer answered the objection on an entirely different ground. He asked

"Was it found necessary before giving self-government to Australia? Suppose Australia is not safe from predatory intentions—let us say most hypothetically and most impossibly—either of Japan or of America, and assume for a moment that England stands aside. Can Australia de-

fend herself? The argument is that England should stand aside when India is being attacked by somebody from the North, East or West, and then we cannot with Satyagraha meet those people. You must have your army and your navy, and as you have not got it, you cannot have dominion status. Let the same argument be applied to Australia. How many minutes will it take for Australia to be overrun if England stands aside. If it is to-day when Australia has really built up her own navy, what was it when Australia was given Dominion Status? These arguments are merely pretexts to refuse our demand."

Sir C. P. Ramaswami Aiyer spoke in 1928, and the truth of it has been borne in upon us more deeply in the present war. Australia's isolation from the British Commonwealth of Nations would have made her an easy prey to the invasion of Japan. Her dominion status had given her by right the protection of the British Empire and England. With what earnestness and vehemence, as we know, did the Australian premier insist on help from Great Britain and from her ally America, against the menace of Japan? It is recorded that Australia was paying only £380,000 out of the 3 or 4 million necessary for her defence at the time and long after she was given Dominion Status. India's army may not be a national army, she may have no navy. But she foots a bill which is very heavy and she has maintained the army for a good long time, to have the right to claim Dominion Status and claim along with it the defence of her sea frontiers by the British Navy as an integral member of the Empire. The war today has entirely changed the outlook on the question. But prejudice dies hard and, therefore, history has to be recalled in order to induce reason to overcome it.

About sanctions, supporting Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru, Sir C. P. Ramaswami Aiyer said,

"When all is said and done, take it from me that sanctions, such as are constantly invoked, would do much less

to bring about the expected result that the union of which Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru spoke. It is easy to meet sanction by counter-sanction. It is easy to meet isolated acts of impatience by acts of repression, and easy to get into a backwater. But it is difficult, nay, it is impossible for anybody to resist our demand if only the Hindu and the Mahomedan, the Brahmin and the non-Brahmin, the Liberal and the Home Ruler and the Congressman should unite and say—let us have dominion status, we will take nothing less, we will give you no peace and rest until we get it. Government knows that and Government counts upon our not realising that."

CHAPTER XIV

THE 1929 DECLARATION

The protest of the Liberal Party in its own behalf, as also on behalf of those who were of its own way of thinking against the appointment of the Simon Commission, and its insistence upon Dominion Status for India as the only way out of the political impasse, had told. Its appeal to the Viceroy not to entrench himself behind official advice but to take proper note of public feeling in the country had gone home. And the outcome of it was the famous announcement by Lord Irwin as the Viceroy of India, on the 30th October 1929. It had conceded the Indian demand for Dominion Status and it had accepted its proposal for the Round Table Conference between the representatives of British government and the representatives of India to settle the future constitution of India by free discussion as equals, and without any previous commitment except as to the fundamental of responsible government which was nothing less and nothing more than Dominion Status.

The big gesture of statesmanship to be followed by action, which Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru had suggested as the only and the right means of conciliating India, had been made, and the credit for it must go to Lord Irwin alone, who, though with a conservative mind, had the genius and the sympathy to act towards England as the true interpreter of public opinion in India, and to urge a step that marked an entire break from the policy of stagnation that had characterised the re-

cent past. No doubt, the coming of Labour Government in power had helped him considerably in accomplishing the change. But it must not be forgotten that if the Viceroy had been averse from change, the Labour Government in England would not have agreed to it, much less so because that Government was in fact a minority Government in power.

How the liberals hailed the announcement and why they welcomed it, and how further they did their very best as a party to foster in the country the spirit of goodwill and co-operation, so that the opportunity that had come in its way to shape its destiny should be utilised to the full, will be the subject of this chapter.

The Liberal Federation welcomed the announcement as it had authoritatively confirmed the view that Dominion Status for India was what was intended by the Declaration of 1917, as it had definitely recognised that British India and the Indian States should together form a greater United India, and as it had conceded India's claim to confer on a footing of equality with the British Cabinet on the form of the future constitution for India. If only the Congress leaders had fallen into line with this view, India would not only have been spared the ordeal of civil disobedience in 1930, but the first sitting of the Round Table Conference would have yielded result much more satisfactory to the cause of India than what followed by its participation, under entirely different circumstances, in the deliberations of that Conference at the end of 1931. The Congress leaders who met the Viceroy at Delhi in December 1929, "demanded impossibilities as conditions precedent of their participation in the Conference, and after breaking with the Viceroy, they hastened to Lahore to meet in the Congress under the presidentship of Mr. Javaharlal Nehru, and there pass-

ed a resolution that India must have complete independence."

DIVIDED COUNSEL

It was in this atmosphere of divided counsel in the country that the Liberal Conference met at Madras at the end of 1929 under the presidentship of Sir Phiroz Sethna to do what it could to bring about in the country an attitude of mind that would enable those who went to the Conference to make its decisions as fruitful of good to the country, as their united efforts could help them to do so. The Liberals insisted that the sitting of the Conference should be held in London as early in 1930 as possible, at least it should not be delayed beyond 1930, and that its decisions should be arrived at while Lord Irwin continued to be the Viceroy of India, and that, if feasible, his term of office should be extended that he might complete the work he had so well begun. As it happened, the R.T.C. was not convened earlier than in November 1930, and its decisions proved to be far from final.

What contribution did the Liberal Conference make in its session of 1929, so far as it lay in its power, to clear thinking and proper patriotic action? Sir C.P. Ramaswami Aiyer as Chairman of the Reception Committee devoted his whole speech, first, to define clearly the position of his party *vis-a-vis* the recent announcement; and, secondly, to answer objections raised by certain diehards in England, in Parliament and outside, to the decision taken together by the Viceroy of India, and the new Secretary of State for India in England.

Sir C. P. Ramaswami Aiyer adduced argument in favour of the announcement by quoting Mr. Benn himself against his opponents. He said,

"Mr. Benn had said that Dominion Status of India had been partially in action from 1919, and, therefore, she

must be invested fully with that status, because so long as it was in *posse* the efficacy of the Status in practice was doubtful or varying quantity dependent on the degree of goodwill in White Hall and Delhi. An Indian delegation to the League of Nations may have a free hand but at the same time it may not. Sastri may be an accredited ambassador of India to-day, and may be exposed to bad treatment by a Minister of the Crown tomorrow. Hence arises the necessity for logical developments and clearcut definitions. Conventions can be built up only when all concerned were willing and anxious to build them up. What the Liberal party stands for is the vindication of India's right to grow into the larger life of the future in her own way and according to her own traditions and genius, and to have the opportunity to arrange her own political furniture in her own house of which she feels that she is the mistress, combining whole-heartedly with the sister dominions for common and beneficent purposes in the spirit of mutual equality and not of discrimination and patronage, and in allegiance and loyalty to a flexible but fully accepted central constitution of which the symbol and the spear-point is the constitutional sovereign."

It was because the Liberal Party saw in the coming Round Table Conference, coupled with the authoritative explanation by the Viceroy of the Declaration of August 1917, an opportunity for India to shape that destiny, that it exhorted all parties in the country to unite and work up towards that end. The Conference at the end issued a manifesto supported by men like the Hon'ble Mr. Sastri, calling upon all parties "to combine together for the purpose of securing a consituation based on Dominion Status subject to such safeguards and reservations as may be necessary for the period of transition." Mr. Sastri, supporting the appeal, referred to what had happened in the Congress at Lahore and added,

"I have no doubt that all have read about these happenings with great grief. There can be no doubt that we are confronted in the political history of India with a crisis

almost unparalleled Strong measures are necessary. We have to put forth all our effort to exercise the utmost wisdom and circumspection and then take the utmost possible care that no element or factor which can at all be called into alliance with us should be either neglected or forgotten."

THE APPEAL

The need for such united effort was all the greater because the Congress was holding aloof and had thus suddenly let down both Lord Irwin and Mr. Benn. That caused a situation to arise in which, said Mr. Sastri, they might well ask themselves, 'Are we justified in going forward with this policy? Which party in India are we going to satisfy? If the Congress party will have nothing to do with Dominion Status and will not come along to prepare a Dominion constitution, whom shall we expect to perform the task?" ' Are there in India,' they may well ask themselves, 'any people comparable at all with the Indian National Congress in numbers, in authority, in power to control the masses of India? Are there people whom hitherto we have recognised as representing the authentic voice of India?'

"But if our champions in England feel a doubt and hesistancy, as they well may," continued Mr. Sastri, "there are others who would urge them to drop the forward policy, to have nothing more to do with India and India's politicians, and to let things be where they are, causing, as we know, profound dissatisfaction and confusion, and threatening to throw the country into a stage which may be scarcely distinguished from turmoil of a very bad complexion indeed." "Now, ladies and gentlemen," he concluded "just think, is it not necessary for somebody, for some organisation, in India, to stand forward in this crisis and to say to these British friends of ours:—'For Heaven's sake, go ahead with your policy; if the Congress has failed you,

there are others in the country, equally patriotic, trust them, and you will not be deceived?' "

Somebody had to take up that firm, that determined, and that promising position. Why should not the Liberal Party take up that position? If the Liberals were unequal to the task, there were others with whom they could make head against this crisis; and it was that combination which the resolution and the appeal had in view. It was with that object in view that the Liberal Party at the end of 1929, had issued a statement in which it appealed to other parties and organisations in the country wedded to the ideal of Dominion Status, to come and take their places along side of it. Mr. Sastri supported the statement and the appeal issued at his instance by the Liberal Party, in the following words:—

"Respectfully we ask them to co-operate with us in this common task, and we hope, indeed, that the Hindu Mahasabha, the Muslim League, the Justice Party of this Province, and every other party in the country, which is not the Indian National Congress or under its influence, will join us in taking the country out of the mire into which it is plunged."

This appeal had its effect on the country in as much as all other parties agreed to go to the Round Table Conference and do such work there as they could accomplish, in the absence of the support of the Indian National Congress to their work at the proposed Conference. The appeal had its desired effect on the Government as well. For, as the Viceroy told the Legislature in January 1930, it had determined to go on with the Round Table Conference and abide by the decision taken in support of the Conference, and in furtherance of the object to be achieved through the Conference. He said,

"The fact that some decline to take any part in deliberations so closely affecting their country's future only

throws greater responsibility upon, and, I would add, gives wider opportunity, to those who are prepared to face and solve difficulties in a constructive spirit. It is certainly no reason why His Majesty's Government should be deflected from their declared intention to call representatives of India to their Counsels."

Earlier he had expressed his regret over the Congress decision as follows:—

"I had greatly hoped that leaders of Indian opinion would have been unanimous in accepting the hand of friendship proferred by His Majesty's Government and so taken advantage of an opportunity unprecedented in India's history. **All history is the tale of opportunities seized or lost, and it is one of its chief functions to teach us with what fatal frequency men have allowed opportunities to pass them by, because it may be that the opportunity presented itself in a form different from that which they expected and desired. And history, it seems, is in danger of repeating itself to-day in certain quarters of India."**

Sir C. P. Ramaswami Aiyer speaking on the same topic in the Liberal Conference of 1929 had said: "one cannot but regard the break-down of the Conference between the Viceroy and Gandhiji and others as one more instance of wasted opportunities."

In July of the year 1930 the Viceroy reverted to the topic and spoke to the Combined Legislatures,

"So far from desiring to secure so-called victory over a nationalist movement constitutionally pursued, I desire nothing more than to be able to help India so far as I can to translate her aspirations into a reality. I would ask what fairer method could be devised for this than the one by which all the various points of view can be sifted in discussion and when, not by majority voting but by the influence of mind upon mind in daily personal contact, a sustained attempt can be made to discover, once for all, the more excellent way in which Great Britain and India can walk together."

The Viceroy then announced the date of the Assembly

of the Conference and defined its functions more precisely. He said,

"The Conference will enjoy the unfettered right of examining the whole problem in all its bearings, with the knowledge that its labours are of no academic kind, and any agreement at which the Conference is able to arrive will form the basis of the proposals which His Majesty's Government will later on submit to Parliament. His Majesty's Government still hope that Indians of all schools of thought will be ready to share in this constructive work. From frank discussion on all sides, a scheme may emerge, for submission to Parliament, which would confound the pessimism of those who would tell us that it is impossible for Great Britain and India, or for the various interest in India, to reach agreement."

He concluded on a personal note as follows:—

"I have only a short time left of my official term of office, and I would anticipate its end by concluding what I have sought to say rather as a friend than as a Viceroy or Governor-General. I believe, as I have said often, that the right and the best solution of the riddle of India will be found only by Great Britain and India joining together in the search. But this demands faith, which we are at times tempted to think only a miracle could now give in the measure dictated by our necessities; and many would have us believe that the age of miracles is past. Yet in India, more than elsewhere, there is the capacity to apprehend the spiritual power by which things apparently impossible are brought to pass. Could we but recapture the spirit of mutual trust between our two countries, we should in doing so liberate invincible forces of faith to remove those mountains which have hemmed us down. Two roads to-day lie open before us; one leading, as I think, to turmoil, disunity, disappointment and shattered hopes; the other guiding those who follow it to the India of our dreams, a proud partner in a free commonwealth of Nations, lending and gaining strength by such honourable association. India to-day has to make her choice. I pray God she may be moved to choose the right one."

Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru, like other Liberals in the country, had insisted on an earlier date for the

meeting of the Conference, and was against putting it off to the end of 1930 or to 1931, precisely for the reason that the later the date, the greater was the possibility of the Conference being overwhelmed by Tory influence. Events had proved the correctness of that forecast. The Conference in 1931 was of a different complexion than that in 1930. And that of 1932 which finally gave us the Act of 1935, was literally overwhelmed by "reactionary and Tory influence,"—the personification of which was no other than Sir Samuel Hoare himself.

AS A MATTER OF DUTY

It was with this message to the country that the Liberal Party had decided to participate in the Round Table Conference. Not that it was unaware of the handicap it was labouring under as the result of Congress abstention from the Conference. But any appeal to them to come and join in the common task was, at the time, useless. And, therefore, they had to do 'their best for their country and according to their lights, even without the Congress to help them in that work.' That feeling was put before the Liberal Conference by Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru in the following words:

"I should have been very glad if our friends of the Congress had decided to go to the Round Table Conference. We should have been very willihg, indeed, to co-operate with them in the common achievement of the common idea before us. We would have shouldered the burden with them, we should have found them a source of strength, and if I can say so, they could have depended upon our support. But they have taken their own line, and our responsibility on this occasion is all the greater to see that the other progressive elements in the country are preponderantly represented." And Sir Chimanlal Setalvad supporting him added, "if this offer of the Round Table Conference had been made in 1928 instead of the wretched creation of the Simon Commission and the manner in

which it was created, I am sure the present Congress mentality would never have arisen. Therefore, our task is a difficult one, I put it."

Thus was the stage set for the meeting of the first R.T.C. in London in November 1930. Sir Pheroz Sethna, in his presidential speech at the Liberal Conference of 1929, exhorted those who would decide to participate in the deliberations of the R.T.C. to remember well, that,

"The Conference was not for the purpose of advancing or pressing communal or sectarian claims and interests, but for the purpose of building up a political fabric in which national interests would be supreme and paramount. Such being the case, it was absolutely necessary for the success of the Conference that it should consist of representatives of the right stamp and spirit. The first condition of our success is that we set our own house in order. If we are not united on the main issue touching the constitutional problem, if we speak with many and discordant voices, then, the Britisher, perforce, will be the final arbiter of our destiny."

The many voices and the discord against which Sir Phiroz Sethna had warned, proved ultimately more powerful than the unity that was evident in the session of the R.T.C. at the end of 1930. The communal question loomed larger in the second R.T.C. And in the third it was used to the full by "the arbiter of our destiny," to give India an Act which was a travesty of what was promised to India in the announcement of 1929 by Lord Irwin, the Viceroy of India, together with Mr. Wedgewood Benn, the Secretary of State for India. And today we are much worse for the imposition of that Act on India by the reactionary Secretary of State for India, Sir Samuel Hoare.

CHAPTER XV

THE INDIAN ROUND TABLE CONFERENCE

The Indian Round Table Conference met in London for the first time on November 12, 1930. It carried on business in plenary sessions and through committee-work for nine weeks. And it concluded its work on the 19th of January 1931 with a final speech by the Prime Minister, Mr. Ramsay Macdonald. There were nine sub-committees appointed by the Conference of which, perhaps, the most important was the Federal Structure Committee with Lord Sankay as its Chairman, and, of which the least successful was the minorities Committee presided over by the Prime Minister. Much spade work was done and views recorded at these sub-committees, but nothing final was done by them or in them. Except for the general agreement on an All-India Federation, responsibility at the Centre, provincial autonomy, and safeguards—and these in broad general outline—nothing definite was undertaken or pledged as binding upon the British Government on the one hand, and on the Indian delegates on the other.

The seventy representatives from India included more than ten for the Indian states, and the rest spoke for British India. The delegates from British India were either party politicians, or politicians whose one interest lay in securing as much as they could for the minorities as the price to be paid for their consent to Dominion Status for India. As it proved since, in

the meeting of the Second Indian Round Table Conference and onwards, the question of the minorities was the rock on which all hopes of getting the best for British India were shattered, and the Reforms Act of 1935 with all its other defects, had to join it, the notorious communal award that had vitiated it completely.

THE INITIAL DRAWBACKS

The Conference method suffered from the start on the Indian side from three drawbacks which were, perhaps, inevitable in the situation. First, there was the sense of futility, throughout, as the result of Congress abstention, and of what was happening in India while the Conference had met in London. Secondly, though characterised by individual brilliance and high talent of some of its prominent members, the Indian delegation; if it be so called, proved, in effect, collectively ineffectual. Minus the Muslim side of it, it betrayed complete lack of teamwork and united action. And, thirdly, though the Princes had agreed to an All-India Federation with their insistence on responsible Central Government, they showed but little willingness to part with power except on their own terms, or to concede anything to their own subjects by way of principle, in order that the Indian Federation—to—be should prove a real United States of India making for unity and progress on the foundation of democracy. Worst of it all, the Hindus and the Muslims could never agree to a formula that was an honest and rational compromise between extremes on either side—a formula that would preserve for the minority community all that it cherished deeply as its due, without reducing the majority to a condition which was the negation of democracy and self-government.

The Second Round Table Conference revealed

these drawbacks glaringly though Mr. Gandhi attended it on behalf of the Congress and as its sole representative. At its conclusion the helplessness of the Indian delegation face to face with the minority problem, became evident to the whole world. Soon after, the Congress went into wilderness once more, and the Third R.T.C. became a close preserve for Tory and reactionary element in England, and for the communalists in India, so that the Reform Act, its offspring, though it had embodied provincial autonomy, proved to be a caricature of what was expected of the announcement of October 1929.

The Act promised to bring in an All-India Federation far different in spirit and substance from what was visualised at the end of 1930. What made matters still worse, was that even that Federation was not to be an instant step but a remote possibility. Federation thus became a bone of contention in India from 1937 onwards. The Mahomedans would not have it, the Princes paced reluctantly towards it, and the Congress was out to wreck it, though it had agreed to take upon itself the task of working autonomy in the provinces which really meant responsibility in the provinces coupled with autocracy at the Centre.

As it happened ultimately the Government dilly-dallied with it, the Princes looked askance at it, and the Muslims vetoed it. The materialisation of provincial autonomy without responsibility at the Centre led to division, disunion, controversy and dissension throughout the country. The high-handedness at the Centre had its counter-part in high-handedness in the provinces, so that autocracy and rank communalism had an easy march in the country over sane constitutionalism and democracy—that is government with the consent of the people, and with the co-operation of all parties concerned. This state of things conti-

nued with an increasing tempo till the outbreak of the Second Great War in September 1939, when Federation practically melted away and none knew what was going to take place and when.

With this background of political fortune or misfortune, clearly in our mind, we now proceed to assess impartially the work that the liberals were able to do, and the fight they put in, at the First Round Table Conference with the single aim of serving Indian interests as a whole, and without the least thought of any personal or party triumph, either political, communal or racial.

Looking up the report of the first Round Table Conference, we find the following liberals among the members of the British Indian delegation to that Conference. They were Sir C. P. Ramaswami Aiyer, Mr. J. N. Basu, Mr. C. Y. Chintamani, Sir Cowasji Jehangir, Mr. N. M. Joshi, Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru, The Right Honourable Mr. Sastri, Sir Chimanlal Setalwad, Sir Phiroz Sethna and Mr. M. R. Jayakar. Mr. M. R. Jayakar was not a liberal by label. Still his association with Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru and his membership of the Responsive Co-operation Party, as Sir Sivaswami Aiyer once described, made him a liberal for all practical purpose. We may note here in passing that while there was a strong contingent of Liberal Party at the first Round Table Conference, it grew less in number at the Second, and was almost conspicuous by its absence at the third. Except Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru and Mr. M. R. Jayakar, Mr. N. M. Joshi and Sir Cowasji Jehangir, no liberal was invited or nominated by the Government to represent the liberals at the Third Round Table Conference. Of these Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru had ceased to be a liberal by that time and proudly owned hmself as belonging to no party. Mr. Joshi went there primarily on behalf of labour,

and Sir Cowasji Jehangir was selected to represent his community and business.

The best work that the liberals did was done by them, and to some purpose at least, at the First Round Table Conference.

THE MOOT-QUESTION

The Conference opened with a message from the King Emperor, and subsequently the Prime Minister was elected the President of the Conference. Then was formed the Business Committee of the Conference which was given full freedom to determine every arrangement that concerned its business. The first item which it took up for discussion was whether the future constitution of India was to be unitary or federal. As Mr. Chintamani put it in his presidential address at the Liberal Conference held in Bombay in July 1931, "this first decision affected and influenced all subsequent proceedings," and not to India's advantage. The liberals were not slow to perceive how it meant diversion from what they had expected as the result of the Conference.

Mr. Chintamani put it, as follows:—

> "There were some of us who thought, among them Sir Chimanalal Setalvad, that the Conference should rather get to grips at once with the matter that was uppermost in the Indian mind and for which we went to England braving the wrath of large numbers of our countrymen viz: Dominion Status with a Responsible Central Government for British India. In my humble opinion there is cause for regret that the advocates of this opinion failed and the Business Committee's decision prevailed."

The Liberals did their utmost to bring about unity between the Hindus and the Muslims, so that the disagreement among them may not be a bar to constitutional progress. Regarding these efforts Mr. Chintamani says,

"Attempts made during the year, first in India and then in England, both before and during the Conference, to reach a settlement by consent of the communal question, were unfortunately not attended with the success they deserved and the best interests of India required, to the regret, I am sure, of all of us, but not equally to the surprise of some of us."

Here we may refer, particularly, to the effort in that direction by Sir Chimanlal Setalvad about whose work Mr. Chintamani said that in his conciliatory statements on the communal tangle, Sir Chimanlal Setalvad, to whose 'magnificent spirit' the Prime Minister had borne testimony in the Minorities Sub-Committee, had rightly said that the greatest difficulty was presented by Bengal and the Punjab and that the speaker himself shared his anxiety that a solution must be found there. He added

"No liberal was a good liberal who had a communal mind. Of necessity every liberal was of one or another community, but it was his duty to appreciate all points of view and try to meet them. I am glad and happy to be able to report to the Federation that every liberal without exception had acted conscientiously in this spirit in the discussions in London, and some Liberals had laboured strenuously to promote a settlement which would err on the side of generosity to the Muslims. It was not their fault that they had failed."

One more point must be mentioned in vindication of the position of the liberals as a party in London. And it is this: they suffered in their championship of the Indian case from the fact that they were being criticised in the so-called nationalist press in India, "as a collection of hand-picked Government men, whose voice was not the voice of India." Another thing that went against them was that "there was among the Muslims a solidarity produced by the simple device of restricting membership of the Conference to men of one way of thinking." On the other hand, there was

no such solidarity among its non-Muslim delegates.

Was the Conference, then, a success? In Mr. Chintamani's words, "it was neither a success nor a failure," and for the following reasons:—

"It was not a success because it stood adjourned before it could record a decision on a solitary question. Disbelieve and disregard every statement to the contrary. The Conference in its last plenary session had but one resolution laid before it, and it definitely affirmed only this, that the work on which it had been engaged should be continued without interruption. It acknowledged the value of the reports of the sub-committees, but recorded no decision on the merits of a single subject of which these reports treated. But the Conference was not a failure either. Its deliberations in sub-committees and committee and in plenary sessions were enlightening and useful and it promoted a good understanding between the statesmen of England and the public men of India. Above all, it created an atmosphere of goodwill such had not existed, I was assured, at any previous time after the never-to-be-forgotten Mr. Montagu was forced out of the India Office, and not often before. Immediate disappointments may be many and serious, but on a long view of things it is my conviction that the Conference has on the whole done good service, and even if success may not crown its effort it will have paved the way to easier and surer success at a later date than if it had not been convoked. If the last session of the Conference had been nothing but a failure from India's standpoint, would Mahatma Gandhi have thought that there was a *prima facie* case for a reconsideration of the Congess position, and courted the Viceroy to invite him, if he will forgive me to quote his own words, for those memorable talks which resulted in the Irwin-Gandhi settlement?"

AN ALL-INDIA FEDERATION

The King in opening the Conference had given the following message:—"Each of you will, with me, be profoundly conscious how much depends for the whole of the British Commonwealth on the issue of your consultations." The British side of the delega-

tion did admit India's claim to Dominion Status. But they seemed to demur to the proposition that the process should be completed at once. Provincial autonomy with safeguards they were willing to concede at once, for was not that the recommendation of the Simon Commission? Beyond that, if they could help it, they would not go, so far as British India was concerned. The Conference would have broken on this vital difference between the British representatives and the Indian delegation, if the princes had not come forward in the nick of time to stand by their fellow countrymen in British India.

That turned the whole aspect of the Conference and started it on its smooth working till the middle of January 1931. The start for this change was given by Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru who in his speech in the first plenary session of the Conference emphatically maintained that

"India wants and is determined to achieve a status of equality—equality with the other free members of the British Commonwealth, an equality which will give it a government not merely responsive but responsible to the popular voice." He added that, "for the period of transition, if it was inevitable, provide as many safeguards as you like, so long as these safeguards do not destroy the vital principle, and then go ahead with courage and with faith."

When he found that the British side was not inclined to support the proposition in favour of British India, he declared himself at once and decisively for an All-India Federation and Federal constitution, and he invited the Princes to agree forthwith to the creation of such a Federation. He agreed to such a Federation on two grounds:—First, that it would stabilise the constitution; and secondly, that it would lead to the unification of India. On behalf of the Princes the Maharaja of Bikaneer heartily responded to the call.

He identified himself and his order with the aspirations of British India—

"that passion for an equal status in the eyes of the world, expressed in the desire for Dominion Status which is the dominant force amongst all thinking men to-day. India must be united on a federal basis. The constitution must be federal and while the princes could not in any way be coerced, they would come into an all-India Federation of their own free will, provided their rights are guaranteed."

The Princes went even further. They were willing to consider an immediate Federation on two conditions. As the Nawab of Bhopal put it, "we can only federate with a self-governing and federal British India. The Central Government must cease, they asserted, to be a purely official government, and must become responsible to the Central Legislature."

This concord between the Princes and the Indian representatives in the Conference "created a common united India front" in favour of the immediate grant of Dominion Status. And the British representatives could no longer either prevaricate or sit on the fence. Lord Reading on their behalf accepted the proposal of an all-India Federation with responsibility at the Centre. And that started the constructive work of the first R.T.C. under nine sub-committees. It is no use to-day going into the details of that work, for India has, in political thinking and outlook, gone much beyond what these committees did and yet had failed to implement their proposals in the Act that had followed them. We only select from the general discussion at the First R.T.C. such aspects of that work as may help to bring out clearly the share that the Liberals had in shaping it.

While we are on the initial part of the work we should not omit to mention the fact that the Muslim minority, at this stage, sounded no discordant note on

the proposition put forward by Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru and supported by the Maharajah of Bikaneer. Sir Mohomed Shaffi for one wing of the Muslim Community and Mr. Jinnah for the other, were both in full agreement with Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru. Both asked for Dominion Status and for responsible government at the Centre which it implied. Both welcomed an all-India Federation, a fact which must be particularly noted here in the light of subsequent developments. Mr. Jayakar who followed Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru exhorted the British representatives not to shrink from conceding Dominion Status to India for, as he added, "if you give India Dominion Status to-day, the cry of independence will die of itself." Again, it was agreed at the Conference that the form of the Government was not to be, as Lord Peel had pressed before the Conference, "after the Swiss or the American models," but after the pattern of the Parliamentary system in England. As one writer has pointedly put it, "Lord Peel's was a solitary expression of opinion. No one echoed it. The British system held the field."

CAUTION

Now we turn to the plenary session of the Conference and quote from the speeches in it of liberal leaders to show how they helped the clarification of their view-point on certain important matters raised in the discussion. To turn first to what Rt. Hon. Mr. Sastri said on the proposal of an all-India Federation on which was to depend the granting to India of responsible government at the Centre. As regards coupling these two together he uttered a word of caution which deserves to be noted here. He said,

"It only remains for me to say one word of caution. Great ideas thrown together into the arena of politics sometimes work together and co-operate with each other upto a certain stage, but may tend, when pushed each to

its consummation, to collide and even to weaken each other. I do hope that in the deliberations of the Committees, to which we shall consign these topics, nothing will be done on the side of those who care for federation more than for dominion status to weaken the latter, just as nothing should be done on the side of those who care for Dominion Status more than for Federation to weaken federation."

These words were spoken in 1930 and we are in 1944 and we have neither Dominion Status for British India nor Federation for United India. A warning note this, highly prophetic, which today must be taken to heart also by the apostles of complete independence who, to win it, are out to unite themselves in wedlock with the Pakisthanists of Muslim or any other variety! Misery doth make strange bed-fellows we know; but history should warn all of us before we prefer to part company with reason and commonsense.

SAFE-GUARDS

We may next refer to Sir Phiroz Sethna, a business man and liberal, a Parsi and no communalist, who gave an effective answer to Lord Peel on the question of the safeguards, one of the crucial points raised at the Conference. "Stiffen the safeguards"—that was the watchword of the British Conservatives at the Conference, which, later on, Sir Samuel Hoare glossed over "as mere hedges and not a wall in the way of progress." Commercial safeguards in favour of British trade in India were too much insisted upon at an early stage of the discussion. Currency and Exchange were to be the special charge of the Governor-General so that India's credit may be maintained in the British market. So also with regard to finance, as if responsible Indians in charge of these high matters would not care for it. Indians if left to themselves would monopolise all business and drive away British trade from India. Hence the need for commercial safeguards. Indian incompetence and Indian

nationalism—those were the two bugbears held out by the Conservatives represented by Lord Peel to scare away people who would concede responsible government to India. And they said, "if that was inevitable, then, at least, hedge it round with safeguards."

To this argument Sir Phiroz Sethna gave the following effective answer. He said,

"Sir, it is the keeping back of Indians which has helped the European Community, who, if they have not been given monopolies, have been shown preference, which preference has resulted in monopolies, as I will try to explain. Dr. Moonje and Sir C. P. Ramaswami Aiyer quoted instances of monopolies going back more than a century. I will give you instances of monopolies before our very eyes."

And then he quoted instance after instance to show how the Government favoured Europeans in the matter of facilities for trade, business, contract and transport,—"instances which were familiar to all students of recent history." Lord Peel defended the position of Europeans in India as vested interests created by skill, enterprise and organisation of business plus capital. To which Sir Phiroz Sethna retorted that, "given the same opportunities, Indians in their own country will not be behind the Europeans in skill, enterprise, organisation, ability and capital."

The War to-day has shown how much can be done by Indians themselves in these matters. We quote here his summing up of the whole position. Sir Phiroz Sethna said,

"when India is entrusted with her own finances and when she knows that she will have to borrow money from outside countries she will so manage her finances that her credit will be greatly enhanced. We are always prepared to admit that Englishmen out in India have certainly given of their best. At the same time they will admit that India has rewarded their services on a scale in which no other country pays either its Civil Servants or

its other services. Again, it must not be forgotten that India pays to the tune of £4,000,000 annually in the way of pensions both civil and military, to Europeans."

He concluded on the question of safeguards and monopolies as follows:—

"What do we ask for? As Mr. Jinnah pointed out we want to be masters in our own house. We do not want to rob our European friends of their vested interests, but I would ask this Conference to remember that the vested interests were created by them, when the Indians had not the ghost of a chance to come in. Are we asking you to do anything more than you are doing in your own country? Because you discovered that the British Cinema film industry was not getting along as well as it ought to be doing, you imposed a quota. Then there was another case of the electrical company in regard to which you laid down by law that the percentage of shares held by the Britishers must be no less than 51 per cent, so that its control may vest with you. I sincerely trust that when we go back with a constitution which will help us politically and economically, we Indian and European merchants will stand together side by side for the advancement of India and England and, consequently of the Empire."

PROGRESS BY STAGES!

Sir Chimanlal Setalvad, speaking after Sir Phiroz Sethna, referred to the stock argument of progress by stages, which, by the way, was the recommendation of the Simon Commission and which, at the Conference, some British members did seek to introduce by the side door. Sir Chimanlal dismissed that argument by quoting the ejaculation of Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru—"Bogus"—when it was uttered at the Conference Table. And then he developed his own case as follows. One of the suggestions even about full provincial autonomy was that there should be official ministers. Setalvad answered, "if you call that provincial autonomy you may, but I do not call it genuine or real provincial autonomy at all." And then he went on,

"Those who say 'go slowly, do not quicken the pace'

are like parents who will never realise that the ward is no longer a ward but has now become a self-determining adult. Those parents and those politicians who take that view are sadly mistaken. Mr. Prime Minister, we are perfectly conscious that we may commit mistakes and that for sometime our administration may be comparatively inefficient, but we are determined to go through that stage for we want to come into our own. We may not manage things as efficiently as you are doing now, but it is our affair, and we want to be allowed to manage it ourselves."

It was asked then of those who had attended the Conference—what was the use of granting them a full grown constitution, if, when they took it to India, it was not they but others who will wrest it from them and work or wreck it as they liked? To which Sir Chimanlal gave an effective answer as follows:—

"You can satisfy Indian aspirations and give power to India in her own affairs, and then, as sure as fate, those people whom you call irresponsible men at present, who are now creating all the trouble in India, will be the first to come and work the constitution in an ordered manner."

A prophecy that was more than realised between 1937 and 1939 even with such a piece of parliamentary legislation as the Reforms Act of 1935. It need not be told then, what contentment, unity and co-operation would have been heralded in India if, at the end of the first R.T.C., everything had been settled as was visualised in, and hoped for, from Lord Irwin's announcement of 1929.

The Rt. Hon. Mr. Sastri spoke at the Conference, about this apprehension on the part of the Britishers, words full of patriotic feeling and prescience. Appealing to the Prime Minister, Mr. Ramsay Macdonald, Mr. Sastri said,

"Who are these people from whom we fear disturbance? No doubt they have caused trouble so far. Are our measures here not designed to conciliate them? Are these not pacificatory steps that we are taking? Are they not calculated to win over once more their hearts to the ways

of loyalty and ordered progress? Believe me, they are not hereditary criminals; they are not savage barbarian hordes; they are not the sworn enemies of Great Britain or of British Institutions. They are men of culture, men of honour, most of them; men who have made their mark in the professions; they are our kinsmen both in spirit and by blood. It is a sense of political grievance that has placed them in this position, which we view with so much distrust and so much disapprobation. Remove the discontent and you will find them alongside of you, working the new constitution that we shall frame to its highest issues, and drawing from these new institutions that we frame all the benefits of which they are capable."

He concluded, that the declaration of India as a Dominion will serve a double purpose; it will satisfy the natural desire, nay, the intense craving of Indians to be reckoned as equal partners in the British Commonwealth of Nations. It will be a sure earnest of the fulfilment of the promise that England desired India to be, in fulness of time, a full-pledged dominion; he was not without hope that the Indians and English will then labour whole-heartedly together for the happiness and prosperity of India. The happiness and prosperity of India meant greater happiness and prosrity for England."

And if England failed in this high mission what will happen? That also was plainly told to the Conference by an Indian liberal, Sir Chimanlal Setalvad. He warned them—the die-hards among the delegates—

"If you do not grant now what India wants, the position will be this; you will have to enter into a long-drawn struggle, increasing every day. You may put down disorder; you are bound to put it down, and you will do so; but at every stage, sooner or later, it will again break forth with increased vigour, and you cannot rule 320 million people continuously by force and by military power. I trust you will make a wise choice. You can make India discontented which will mean ruination for her and may mean ruination for England, or you can make now a contented India which will be the brightest jewel

in the British Empire and its greatest glory, and which will enhance the reputation of the Empire, which, with all its faults, has excited not only the admiration, but even the envy of the rest of the world."

PLAY THE GAME

In the first plenary session of the Conference the last of the liberals to speak was Mr. C. Y. Chintamani. He thanked the Princes for the great part they had played in opening the deliberations of the Conference and he hoped that, in the federated India to be, they will play their part equally well. Then he turned to Lord Peel and reminded him of his great ancestor—the repealer of the Corn laws though he was once a partisan of protection. Similarly his great-grandson should have no hesitation in realising that to obstruct the political progress of India was to stand by a lost cause and he would be wise in his day to help that progress forward. Then he turned to Lord Reading and beseeched him, liberal that he was, to emulate Mr. Gladstone rather than Sir John Simon. And he quoted a passage from Gladstone about India which, he added, all British liberals would do well to lay to heart.

Said Gladstone, "I hold that the capital agent in determining finally the question whether our power in India is or is not to continue, will be the will of the 240 millions of people who inhabit India. The question who shall have supreme rule in India is, by the laws of right, an Indian question and these laws of right are from day to day growing into laws of fact. Our title to be there depends on a first condition, that our going there is profitable to the Indian nation, and on a second condition, that we can make them see and understand it to be profitable."

Then Mr. Chintamani turned to Mr. Ramsay Macdonald himself and reminded him of all that he had written about British Rule in India, and of his promise to India as leader of the labour party, reminding him of a speech before he had come into power in which he

had asserted that before long there would be a new "dominion" in the British Commonwealth of Nations enjoying an equal status with other dominions, and that would be no other than India.

Finally he reminded the Conference that though they were not writing on a clean slate, efficiency was not the only word that should be written on it. Prosperity, contentment, happiness, conciliation of the people were words more important than efficiency, without which efficiency itself had no meaning and no reality. "What was the charcteristic of the bureaucratic system of Government in India?" Mr. Chintamani asked them. And he answered the question;

"It was a despotism of despatch boxes tempered by the occasional loss of keys, wherein Red tape was King and sealing wax Minister. If the Conference did not lead to the fruition of India's most legitimate hopes, then he shuddered to think of the future. The present system of government stood discredited. There was definitely an end of peace on the basis of the present system in India, and statesmanship, which was the foresight of commensense, must recognise the wisdom of avoiding a crisis and solving the problem in a friendly spirit."

The Prime Minister who spoke last at the first plenary session of the Conference stressed the value of the speeches made under three heads. First, they had led to the recognition of a status. As he put it, "It is impossible to go back, to pass a pen through the last four or five days and to declare in any man's vanity that it never existed." Secondly, the speeches made have not stated problems for the purposes of debate, "We have gone past that. We are not here for debate; we are here for action. We have to face practical requirements, in the spirit of a man who says "Yes there is a difficulty, come on, let us go over it." And he alluded in that light to what he called 'reserved.' He said,

"The problem of the reserved subjects is a problem of how things are to be fitted into the conditions which exist to-day; but not to stabilise and ossify these conditions; it is not reserving, it is not withholding, it is this: it is an honest study, as between responsible men and responsible men, of the facts relating to conditions in India and the facts relating to public opinion here for the time being." And then the Session broke up to start work in sub-committees appointed to think out the details of the main outline agreed upon in the session.

SNAGS

Thus ended the first plenary session of the Conference. Later on came the discussion on the report submitted by the Federal Structure Committee and other sub-committees appointed by the Conference. The Conservative view point was stressed in a joint declaration by Sir Samuel Hoare and Lord Peel as follows:—

"They were unconvinced that the kind of executive envisaged in the Report can be successfully adapted to the special conditions of an all-India Federation. They were not satisfied that the safeguards recommended for securing Imperial obligations would prove effective, and, in particular, they feared that the financial proposals will disturb the confidence of the commercial classes and impair the stability of Indian credit."

As against this view the Indian opinion on the question of Finance was almost unanimous that the safeguards set out in the Report went too far, especially those giving powers to the Governor-General. Again, there was the vexed question—Hindu-Muslim question which resolved itself ultimately into this, that there could be no self-governing all-India constitution until that question was settled to the satisfaction of the minority concerned. Further, while the Indian States agreed that they would not vote upon purely British Indian questions, they insisted, at the same time, that the question of paramountcy shall not

be allowed to come at any time within the purview of the Federal Government. These were the three snags in the way of India which, in the end, proved not hedges along two sides of the road leading to Dominion Status. They did prove, inspite of Sir Samuel Hoare's assurances to the contrary, walls across that had blocked the advance to self-government. It was on these three points mainly that discussion went on in the detailed consideration of the report.

SOME PARTICULARS

Mr. Chintamani regretted at the start one feature that ran through the whole report, namely, that the most important matters had been left as open questions. Again, reservations at the Centre as regards Finance, Currency and Exchange were calculated to "satisfy none who called himself an Indian and who desired for Dominion Status." He said,

"If there was one matter on which Indian opinion was most keen, it was that India should be in a financial sense mistress of her own household. This report did not promise that to India; and to that extent I anticipate that nationalist opinion, not only the Congress opinion but nationalist opinion of a more moderate variety—will dissent from some conclusions come to here. Secondly, if, as was proposed by the Committee, the Executive could be removed from office only by two-thirds majority of the two houses together, then practically it means no responsible government for India but a rule by an irremovable executive on almost all occasions."

He answered Colonel Haskar and Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru, both of whom seemed to approve of the arrangement, and described those who objected to it as constitutional purists, as follows:—

"I realise only too well that all these are matters dealt with by imperfect men in this imperfect manner. But, Sir, if the imperfections so overshadow the good points and to obscure them, then I think we shall not be guilty of purism if we express our dissatisfactions. On this point, Mr.

Prime Minister, I am bound to confess that I am dissatisfied with the report of the Federal Structure Committee and I do not contemplate that any section of Indian opinion will acquiesce in this."

Then came Sir Cowasji Jehangir, who desired clarification on the question of franchise so that it will be conferred on those who will exercise it with a due sense of responsibility. He also objected to the reservation in the hands of the Governor-General in the matter of finance. Lord Reading's explanation, later on, seemed to have satisfied him, though it did not satisfy Mr. Mody, Mr. Chintamani and Sir Phiroz Sethna. Then spoke Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru, whose whole speech seemed, as a maker of this constitution as it were, an *apologia pro vita sua.* He defended the safeguards, he defended powers in the hands of the Governor-General about Finance, Currency and Exchange, and added

"speaking for myself—and I speak only for myself, I do not wish to commit any party, as I belong to no party, I do say that none of these recommendations in regard to finance is of such a character that we need sacrifice, or that we are called upon to sacrifice for it, the broad principle of responsibility for the sake of those safeguards."

We know where we are in 1944 as regards an all-India Federation, responsibility at the Centre, and the safeguards; and we know what Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru has been able to achieve in the field of politics as a man belonging to no party. The Liberal party has certainly been the poorer for his defection; but he is not the stronger for standing all by himself. We are here reminded of the words used by Edmund Burke about Pitt the Elder. And we quote them here. "Let those who have betrayed him by their adulation, insult him by their malevolence. But what we do not presume to censure, we may have leave to lament."

Mr. Jayakar speaking on Defence and External

Relations, enquired if parts of them could not be immediately transferred to responsible ministers at the Centre without impairing the safety and the tranquility of the country. Mr. Basu took up the matter where Mr. Jayakar had left it and suggested the appointment of trade commissioners along with pro-consuls and representatives as forming part of Foreign relations. At this point Mr. Chintamani interposed to say that the period of transition from reservation to complete control as regards Defence and Foreign Relations should be specified. It should not last too long. Of course, it cannot be too brief. That was said at the end of 1930. We are now in 1944, responsible government at the Centre has not yet materialised, whether it will be partial or complete is still in the lap of the Gods, although the present War has changed the whole aspect of things about the Indianisation of the Army and the military defence of India. Still the warning given then by Mr. Chintamani, especially the first part of it, is not out of time, even to-day.

Then Mr. Jayakar, supported by Mr. Jinnah and Dr. Moonje, made it clear that the Ministers chosen by the Viceroy, even for reserved portfolios like those of Defence and Foreign Relations, and responsible to him alone during the transition period, should be non-official, elected members of the Central Legislature. Again, the special powers to be vested in the Governor-General, said Mr. Jayakar, Mr. Jinnah and Dr. Moonje, and to which liberals agreed, should be exercised by him "only in the case of grave emergency which was likely to endanger the peace and tranquility of the country." He should have no power to legislate by ordinances. Mr. Jinnah said emphatically, "I agree to no other power in the Governor-General." As regards Currency and Exchange all Indians were of opinion that "the only safeguard was the Reserve

Bank and that it should be started at once and without any political bias." In Finance there should be perfect freedom and complete transfer. That was, in brief, Mr. Jayakar's contention.

Mr. Mody—now Sir H. P. Mody—who did not wear the liberal party's label and yet belonged to the school of Sir Pherozshah Mehta in politics, was explicit in his criticism of the safeguards. He said,

"I cannot support these recommendations. If there is one thing more than another on which Indian opinion is absolutely united, it is on demand for fiscal and financial autonomy. I am sorry to say that the recommendations are characterised by a spirit of hesitation and lack of confidence that go ill with the large-hearted and statesmanlike way in which the rest of the recommendations have been framed."

Sir Phiroz Sethna approved of the proposal to have a Reserve Bank in India to control currency and exchange. But he added that the question of questions was who will control it. If the Governor-General were given the power to interfere with it, it would be a serious matter.

"The Government had, in the past, blundered seriously over the rate of exchange. From 1898 to 1920 and from that time to this day, the blunder had involved to the ryot a loss of 12½ per cent which ran into millions every year. And if the Reserve Bank were of opinion that it should be changed in the interests of India I trust the Governor-General should have no power to veto it."

As regards the safeguards, which were introduced according to him, "to please the British delegates," it was necessary to put a time-limit, say of five to seven years, after which, as the Report said, "there would be no doubt as to the ability of India to maintain her financial stability and credit both at home and abroad and these safeguards should be finally and completely removed."

All the delegates to the Conference agreed to two

Chambers in the Central Government, though the liberals as a body would not have bi-cameral system introduced in the provinces. The members in the Upper House were to be from 100 to 150 and in the Lower House from 300 to 350. As the question of the minorities had remained yea unsolved and as adult suffrage was out of question, the proportion of members could not be then fixed for important and the so-called minority communities. The States had insisted that they would nominate their own members. In that respect a liberal like Mr. Ramachandra Rao insisted that even if that concession was made, it should not be made for all time. So also if separate electorates were inevitable for the Muslims, in the circumstances of the situation, they should not also be accepted as a permanent feature of the Indian constitution.

Joint Electorates with reservation of seats for minorities during the transition period without undue weightage—that should be the ideal solution of the communal tangle and in the best and the ultimate interest not only of the majority but of the minority community as well. Again, those who chose to offer themselves for election, inspite of separate electorates, through the joint general electorates should be allowed to do so, so that, in course of time, people could discover for themselves the merits and advantages of the latter over the former. That was the view-point pressed at the Conference by the Liberal Party generally and in the sub-committee for minorities by Sir Chimanlal Setalvad especially. But there was no agreement on the question at the end of the first R.T.C. Matters became still worse at the end of the Second R.T.C. So this percentage as well as the method of election were left to be decided, in the end, by the Government in England. And we know what shape it had ultimately taken in the Act of 1935.

As provincial autonomy had been in operation from 1937 to the end of 1939, under the Congress government in seven out of the eleven provinces, and as it continues to operate in four other provinces today, the many defects in connection with it, which were the subject of discussion at the first R.T.C. need no elaboration here.

The transference or otherwise of the port-folio of law and order to an Indian minister in a regime of full provincial autonomy; the appointment of an official as Minister under provincial autonomy—a suggestion of Lord Zetland—; the discretionary power of the Governor, the power to him to make what were called governor's Acts; the safeguards constitutional and otherwise; the institution of a second chamber in the provinces; the reservation or otherwise of the Police and C.I.D. in the hands of the Governor—all these and other matters came in for constructive criticism or total rejection at the Conference by Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru, Mr. C. Y. Chintamani, Mr. N. M. Joshi, Sir Chimanlal Setalvad, Sir C. P. Ramaswamy Aiyer, Sir Cowasji Jehangir and Mr. J. N. Basu.

They won in turning down the proposal, embodied in the report of the sub-committee on provincial autonomy, of the appointment of an official as a Minister. They succeeded in transferring law and order to the Indian Minister of a provincial cabinet. They did not succeed in reducing the special powers bestowed upon a Governor in the proposed provincial constitution. While agreeing that in every provincial cabinet there should be a minister or ministers to represent the minorities, they successfully resisted the proposal that this arrangement should be embodied in the Act as a statutory obligation. They failed in turning down the proposal for a Second Chamber in the Provinces.

We know by experience how law and order were administered during the Congress regime from 1937 to 1939, and how the Congress ministries systematically opposed the separation of judicial and executive functions. On the other hand, they monopolised executive power and interfered with the judiciary from time to time, in a manner that no bureaucrat would have dared to follow. They refused to give due consideration to the representation of minorities in their cabinets—especially in the U.P. and the Bihar Provinces. Whatever the safeguards, they were seldom utilised by the Governors to obstruct the ministers. Prohibition, expropriation of lands—as in the famous Bardoli case with which the names of Sirdar Garda on the one hand, the ryot on the other—and Mr. Ramchandra Bhatt between them—will ever be associated, the imposing of the property tax to make up the deficit in provincial finance, and the banning of all criticism against it in the press and on the platform—these are all now matters of past history.

If the Federation and provincial autonomy had been started on their work simultaneously, the defects of both would have been overcome, and unity and self-government would have been by now an accomplished fact. It is fruitless, however, to explore this chapter of might-have-beens, when, today, the country is faced with a situation and a dead-lock much worse than what it was at the end of 1930.

RESUME

The first R.T.C. was the most important of all three. During the two years that followed, owing to changed political circumstances first in England and then in India, the experience of the two later Conferences was not unlike what an eminent publicist and leader of India of the past had said about such discus-

sions, that "they were at a banquet where there was plenty of table-cloth and other decoration but scanty meat." As days rolled on, and the third R.T.C. had met and dispersed, the lesson was brought home still more deeply to India that she was to get in fact nothing beyond provincial autonomy to start with. The more the speeches, the less the return; the law of diminishing returns had begun to operate, and the result was the Reforms Act of 1935 with the preamble of the Act of 1919 still in it. The safeguards had been stiffend. Not only Defence and Foreign Relations but all other Central subjects remained untransferred, because the Central Government still continued to be irresponsible to India, and under the control of the Secretary of State for India. Certain services were exclusively manned by him alone. Military Expenditure had remained as high as ever and Indianisation had not been expedited. Official block and nominated members still held the field, and the communal electorates prevented the fusion and realignment of parties, in the Legislatures and outside, on strictly political and economic issues.

The first Conference had left everything fluid, the Second had crystallised nothing, and the third ended with crystallisation in the shape of a White Paper which was anything but responsible government or Dominion Status for British India. The Joint Parliamentary Committee did not improve matters. The Memorandum of the Indian Delegates to the Third Round Table Conference was simply brushed aside. And we had, as the fruit of it all, the Government of India Act of 1935. The suspicion expressed by the Rt. Hon. Mr. Sastri in his speech at the end of the Second Round Table Conference in which he had clearly emphasised his apprehension that, as Sir Patro had hinted, India would get nothing more than provincial

autonomy as the end of it all, had proved to be too true. And in 1937 India started with full autonomy in the Provinces, with Second Chambers in almost all of them, with ample safeguards to hedge it, and with no responsibility, not an element of it, in the Central Government.

CHAPTER XVI

"THE WHITE PAPER"

The last chapter dealt mainly with the R.T.C. that met in London for nine weeks at the end of 1930. The two other sittings of the Conference were held in London in 1931 and 1932. These conference sittings were held under entirely changed political circumstances in India and England. The third sitting was dominated entirely by conservative outlook on the Indian question, and Sir Samuel Hoare, the Secretary of State for India at the time, represented the conservative mind in its quintessence. The economic crash in England at the end of 1931 had driven the Labour Government from Office to be succeeded by a National Government in which the Conservatives predominated. That accounts for the change of office from Mr. Wedgewood Benn to Sir Samuel Hoare in the governance of India.

Inspite of the fine and mutually complimentary and assuring speeches at the end of the second R.T.C., the fate of India, so far as Dominion Status was concerned, seemed to have been sealed once for all. We have no space here for anything from those speeches and promises at the close of the Conference except for a passage from Mr. Sastri's speech and a few sentences from Mr. Gandhi's vote of thanks to Prime Minister Macdonald. Mr. Gandhi throughout the Conference came off second best. On every question of deep moment to India he simply harangued to the Conference showing no grasp of details and no tactful handling of the many issues involved. On the settlement of the

minority question, inspite of long sittings held and concessions made, he had to confess at the end of them, that he was helpless.

However, to turn to Mr. Sastri's speech, he first expressed a suspicion in his mind that at the end of it all, India would get nothing from the Conferences beyond provincial autonomy, and that even, coupled with such safeguards as would make it, at the best, a truncated thing. He feared that at the Centre there was going to be no change at all till the States had come in and till the minority question had been settled. He appealed to the Prime Minister, with this fear in his mind, not to go back upon the promise definitely given at the end of 1930. And then he turned to Mr. Gandhi and addressed him as follows:—

"The thing is in our hands. The Imperial Parliament, dominated as it may be by a Conservative majority, the Imperial Parliament, in its debate tomorrow and the day after, will set its **imprimatur** on the declaration that the Prime Minister makes tomorrow—a few hours from now. Yes, and when that work is done, believe me, Mahatma, that, in your hand more than in those of any other single Indian lies our future progress. Remember the days when some of us here ran between Raisina and Daryagunj, bringing Lord Irwin and you together in mutual understanding and mutual co-operation. Yes, it seems to me that you cannot but have seen during these several weeks, that you have worked with us, that **there is some knowledge, some wisdom, some patriotism even outside the ranks of the Congress which you so much worship.. Take us in hand. Do not dismiss us as people whose ideas are still evolving and may be long in reaching the heights of Congress wisdom.** For the work of a great country like India, a growing nation like our people, lies in many directions. There is not one road to the salvation of our people, and patriotism takes many shapes and works in diverse ways as circumstances may require. The circumstances to-day require that you should change your plans, dismiss civil disobedience from your mind, and take up this work in a spirit of complete trust in us."

Even this appeal of Mr. Sastri seemed to have left the Mahatma cold. For, in his vote of thanks to the Prime Minster, he definitely said, "We have come to the parting of ways. Our ways take different directions; it does not matter to us. Even so you are entitled to a hearty vote of thanks."

The no-rent campaign had already begun in parts of India along with terrorism in Bengal. And the Government policy of repression had followed suit. And bureaucracy in India and the irreconciliables in the Congress camp had together made the task of Lord Willingdon and Mr. Gandhi extremely difficulty in India. The Viceroy had expressed the hope, so soon as he had come to office, that before long it would be his pride and honour to rule India as a constitutional Governor-General, and that he would go back to England, after his career of office was over, deeply satisfied that the great task had been accomplished. Mr. Gandhi was not willing himself to go back to civil disobedience, but the extremists in his party had precipitated the crisis during his absence in England and he had to shoulder the burden, though on his return to India he tried his best to improve matters by negotiation and compromise. So Mr. Sastri was doomed to bitter disappointment either way.

The third R.T.C. met in London in 1932 with civil disobedience and repression in full force in India and with Conservatives in full power in England. Nothing happened in that Conference beyond what we have already told in the last chapter. The result was the White Paper presented by Sir Samuel Hoare to Parliament to be followed by the Joint Parliamentary Committee to examine and report on it, and the Act of 1935 that Parliament passed at the end of that examination. Even leaders like Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru and Mr. M. R. Jayakar who had held on to the Conference and to the

Joint Parliamentary Committee's sittings and presented a Memorandum to it on the minimum of changes in the White Paper to make the Reforms acceptable to India, came back thoroughly disillusioned and bitterly disappointed. At the end of his speech in the plenary session of the third R.T.C., Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru used these words:—

"Whether the Conference will agree to our proposals or whether they will reject them I cannot say. If they do not agree, that will be their responsibility. We shall have done our duty and you will have dohe yours, and I, therefore, ask you whether you can afford to go on with this constitution without taking the largest possible measure of opinion with you in the country."

Sapru referred, at the moment, to the Congress leaders who were then in jail. But it has its bearing also on what happened later—in the issue of the White Paper, its discussion in the joint Parliamentary Committee, and the Reform Act that came at the end of it. Sir Samuel Hoare had ejaculated, "let the dogs bark, the caravan moves on." So was the Act shaped in entire defiance of the moderate opinion in India and with the single aim of placating the die-hards in the British House of Commons. The liberals by that time had been nowhere either with the Government or with the Congress. And yet they had to do their duty by the country, which they did in Conferences that met in 1933, 34 and 35. And it is with their work as critics of the White Paper, of the Report of the Joint Parliamentary Committee, and of the Reforms Act, that had emerged out of them, that we are concerned in this study.

PROTEST

The Liberal Conference held at Calcutta was presided over by Dewan Bahadur Ramachandra Rao. It had been specially convened to voice the protest of the Liberal Party against the conclusions embodied

in the White Paper issued to Parliament by the Cabinet in England in fulfilment of the announcement of 1929, and as the result of the deliberations in the Indian Round Table Conference. The Liberal Party in India had never been numerically strong or vehement in denunciation. Surely enough, it was not as clamorous as some minorities in India of whom so much had been made in the second and the third sessions of the Indian Round Table Conference. Nor was it ever as influential or as popular as the Congress led by Mr. Gandhi. Realising this position fully and bearing it well in mind, Mr. Sastri, in proposing Dewan Bahadur Ramachandra Rao to the Chair, made the following observation which deserves to be stressed even to-day.

He said,

"the liberals are characterised by two virtues above all others, namely, patience and reason. Our proceedings are not going to be less important because the streets where we meet are not crowded; merely because the police go about their business without their pulses beating faster; merely bacause our own speeches are going to be made in scenes of comparative peace and moderation."

And in the same speech at the close he gives another reason why they must speak out their minds.

"We cannot stop the political machine at our bidding from moving. A great deal of momentum has been gathered. Not we are in charge of the machine, not one party or one community:—Britishers, Hindus, Mohomedans, interests of all kinds; ahd this country has been called a country of minorities and interests. It is these that have got hold of the machinery and it is bound to operate. Our business is to take a hand in it if possible, and if we cannot improve, we should at least see that we do not go back. I therefore asy that they are wrong who would say: 'Let us leave things to themselves.'"

The criticism made on the White Paper in the Liberal Conference by its President as well as by those

who spoke on the special resolution on the subject, was offered with a full sense of this fact of the situation in their mind. The resolution was moved by Mr. Sastri and supported, among others, by Mr. C. Y. Chintamani. The White Paper was even worse in its defects than the forecast made of them in the presidential speech of Mr. Chintamani at the Liberal Conference of 1931, wherein he had reviewed critically what he felt was the outcome of the R.T.C. at the end of 1930. He had his fears about the safeguards; he had his fears about an All-India Federation, that might help to put off the demand of British India for Dominion Status; and he had his fears about the retention of control by the Secretary of State over the Government of India, not only so far as Defence and Foreign relations were concerned, but as regards the services and the commercial safeguards. We find these apprehensions expressed in his presidential address without fear or favour. And they were more than confirmed in the White Paper sponsored by Sir Samuel Hoare in 1932. And they all felt while speaking on the subject, "what was the use of it all?". And the reason for their outspoken criticism was put pointedly by Mr. Sastri in the passage we have quoted above.

CLOGS IN THE WHEEL

The White Paper was more than anything else, a long array of safeguards and checks, clogs in the wheel of progress rather than brakes on reckless action. It was far from being a whole-hearted attempt to meet the Indian demand for responsible government and Dominion Status. As the president of the Liberal Conference in 1933 showed in his address, there was no mention in it of the word "Dominion Status"; there was no responsibility in the Centre; there was no transfer of real control over finance

to the Minister; there was no clear indication of federal policy and when it would be a fact at the latest. The Viceroy was to be set up under it as Agent of the Crown to deal with the Indian States over the head of the Government of India. The method of representation proposed in it for the subjects of Native States was extremely defective, if not entirely reactionary. There were obstacles all along the way to the growth of full responsibility in the Federal Centre. The safeguards introduced in the constitution, for one reason or another, were calculated to take away much from the responsibility already conferred. There were, to use the president's nomenclature, "military safeguards, financial safeguards, commercial safeguards, safeguards for the services, provisions against administrative discrimination, safeguards in the interests of minorities, beyond and above what may be called proper and constitutional safeguards." To equip Indian people for the defence of their own country by hastening the pace of Indianisation and proposing a time limit for its completion—this was nowhere to be found in the White Paper.

The White Paper issued for the benefit of India by the Conservative Cabinet in England was a document unworthy of the famous announcement by Lord Irwin at the end of 1929. It had broken the promise held forth in that announcement, and it had proposed a constitution for India which had defeated the purpose of the Indian Round Table Conference. As Dewan Bahadur Ramachandra Rao put it,

Sir Samuel Hoare stated at the third session of the Conference that the problem of India was the problem of reconciling the claims of three partners who had for many generations been united in an undertaking of far reaching ramifications. Great Britain on the one hand, British India on the other, and Indian India on the third. Sir Samuel Hoare had further assured the British public that

in putting forward the present proposals, British interests, and British Imperial interests had not been sacrificed in any way. This was the bare truth of the matter. The proposals had been so designed as to perpetuate the domination of Great Britain indefinitely over the affairs of this country.'"

The comprehensive resolution on the White Paper framed in the Liberal Conference simply dotted the is and crossed the t's of the categorical statement made by its president.

We give here the gist of the protest embodied in that resolution and, for that purpose, we draw upon the speeches made in support of that resolution. We begin with the speech of Mr. Sastri. The first objection that Mr. Sastri had for the White Paper lay in the fact that the word Dominion Status was scrupulously expunged from all the proposals it embodied, and worse than that, the scope of the safeguards was widened to include British interests which in Mr. Sastri's opinion was an "illegitimate" change. Lord Irwin and later on Mr. Macdonald himself speaking at the end of the 1st R.T.C., had distinctly told them that the safeguards proposed were to be in India's interests alone. But the Conservative Government that came on later had changed all that, and assured Parliament, through the White Paper, that they were to be not in the interests of India alone but in the common interests of India and the United Kingdom. The people of England were to be no longer trustees for India but, as Sir Samuel Hoare had emphatically maintained, were partners with the people of India. And "the safeguards, as we see them," continued Mr. Sastri, "were exclusively in the interests of England which was a predominant partner and would continue to be so, if it could, indefinitely. And some of the safeguards, besides, were demonstrably against the interests of India."

Then Mr. Sastri reviewed the whole British attitude from 1930 onwards. First, they were not for any responsibility at the Centre. They would not go beyond what the Simon Report had recommended, and would not invest India with anything beyond provincial autonomy. Suddenly they changed because the Princes had sided with British India and along with the federation they showed their willingness to contemplate responsible government at the Centre. But now, Federation and provincial autonomy were not coming together, in which the die-hards found a convenient handle to put off India's claim only with the grant of provincial autonomy, "which position no Indian was willing to accept." Further, Mr. Sastri pointed out how, even granting that Dominion Status had not been openly disavowed in the blessed White Paper, "in every paragraph of it exceptions are made, reservations are enunciated, the cumulative effect of which is the cancelment of Dominion Status."

He, then, asked point-blank,

"Did you ever hear of a responsible government in this wide world, even in the British Empire which is supposed to be a varied and wonderful assortment of all sorts of things that co-existed,—Have you ever heard of a great Government of 350 millions of people not being able to appoint their own servants? This is, it seems to me, the very depth of absurdity. Whoever heard of a constitution intended to give responsible government to a great machinery such as the Indian Government, containing a qualification of this kind along with hundred others of a similar nature? It says, 'you shall not find your servants. We from this country will find servants for you, we will fix their qualifications and the conditions of their service, we will be responsible to them for their pensions and for their family pensions, and so forth,' and also mind you, 'we will have a power of appeal in our hands, so that as often as one of these people feels aggrieved he can come to us for redress.' And this great Federal Government, Princes included, shall be told that in treating a certain member of

the Indian Police Service they erred and their order will be set aside and they will be made to pay Rs. 50,000/-as a compensation. It seems to me, therefore, that this is an intolerable position. If this Paper was otherwise satisfactory in every respect but contained that provision, I would throw it out. It seems to me that India, whatever she does, ought not to submit to such an indignity."

Mr. Sastri appealed to persons like Sir Samuel Hoare "to pursue the path of wisdom and not use their power merely to crush their opponents. For that might bring peace which will not last long, and the movement for Swaraj was bound to reappear again, and when it reappeared it would carry all before it. And, lastly, anything less than what was given to Canada and South Africa, however camouflaged, will fail to satisfy India and will keep it ever discontended."

A TRAVESTY OF AGREEMENT

From that speech we go to the speech of Mr. Chintamani of whom Mr. Sastri said, that he was a just critic and a fair-minded person. Mr. Chintamani first contested the claim of the British Government that the White Paper embodied proposals based upon the maximum of agreement at the R.T.C. The R.T.C., he asserted to the contrary, had never been given an opportunity of recording its considered judgment on the reports of the various sub-committees, all of which, in the words of the Prime Minister himself, were simply "noted" and "never decided upon." Even Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru had complained in the language of bitterness on the report of the sub-committee on services, that not a word was allowed to be spoken on it, in the sessions of the R.T.C. Again the Indian delegates to the Conference were nominees of the Government, and especially at its third meeting, care was taken to exclude from it men of sober and independent judgment like Mr. Sastri, and it was packed, on the other hand, with nominees whose only interest lay in furthering their

own interests at the expense of India. As Chintamani put it,

"Care was taken to keep out men who were in the evil habit of standing up for the rights of their country, however feebly, however moderately. Therefore, it was a fiction to say that the proposals of the White Paper were the outcome of agreements reached between the Indian Members of the R.T.C. and the British."

The very fact that even such a moderate document as the Memorandum submitted by all the Indian delegates together, and with the approval of persons like H. H. the Aga Khan, Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru and Mr. M. R. Jayakar, was not considered worthy of any attention by the Joint Parliamentary Committee which sat to scrutinise the White Paper and report on it, proved, beyond all doubt, the hollowness of the Government claim. What was then the White Paper so much belauded by the British Government? Mr. Chintamani described it as follows:—

"Negatively I will say without fear of contradiction that the White Paper is not a white sheet of innocence, that anything intended in it for us is all in black print, and the white paper opens out nothing but a black outlook before us. The proposals embodied in the White Paper have been met by the country with a chorus of condemnation almost unique in the history of the reception of reform documents."

He then went on to show, quoting from the debate on that Paper in the House of Commons and the House of Lords, how the document was framed with the set purpose of placating the British die-hards and to perpetuate British overlordship on India. He did not enter into the detailed discussion of these proposals, point by point, because the resolution itself had comprehensively dealt with them and because previous speakers like Mr. Sastri and Pandit Kunzru had amply dealt with the matter. But he had no hesitation in concluding that the constitution that the White

Paper seemed to introduce was a mongrel constitution:—

"It was not what it pretended to be, and it pretended to be what it was not; and history would reserve for it the judgment; the only verdict that was possible—the verdict that was reserved for all forms of political imposture."

What had the three sittings of the R.T.C. revealed? They revealed that the difference between our friends in England and our avowed opponents was merely this:—"Our friends—not of the Lansbury type but others—the liberals and more moderate conservatives say that the White Paper Scheme must be carried out, otherwise there would be great political danger in India. Our avowed opponents like Churchill and Lord Lloyd say that even this amounts to abdication and nothing should be done." But to every nationalist in India, the White Paper was a most profound disappointment, said Mr. Chintamani. And he concluded his analysis of the White Paper in the following words,

"We are not going to have genuine provincial autonomy. We are not going to have anything worthy of being called responsible government at the Centre. It is uncertain whether we shall have any federation at all. It is equally certain that such federation, as we may have, will not satisfy any one of the tests of a sound federal constitution which students of politics are aware of. And even when the Federation is introduced the British will continue to be the masters. The English will still remain our masters. We are sermonised at every step by every English man to put trust in them and not to be hypercritical, not to solve all doubt on the darker side; but at every single step, in every important matter, the British tell us, "we do not trust you, we do not trust your common sense, we do not trust your good-faith, we do not trust your responsibility, we do not believe you will be able to administer your country. At every step we must be your fathers and mothers rolled into one."

Mr. Chintamani wound up the whole discussion on the subject by giving it as his clear and emphatic opinion on the White Paper, that

"they did not want the showy forms and costly trappings of a constitutional government when the constitution will be in every essence unconstitutional. They did not want the pseudo-reforms that would keep them impotent as they were then; they wanted a constitution which would give them the power to reform themselves."

PLEDGES BROKEN

The Liberals assembled in Conference again at Madras at the end of 1933. It was their regular annual session. And they again criticised the White Paper in the light of the evidence given in its favour by Sir Samuel Hoare before the Joint Parliamentary Committee presided over by Lord Linlithgow. The resolution expressed in the first instance, "the Liberal Federation's profound sense of disappointment over the proposals in the White Paper and recorded its emphatic opinion that the elucidation of that Paper by Sir Samuel Hoare before the Joint Select Committee had strengthened among the people of India the conviction that the proposals were not calculated to establish any real responsible government in India either in the Provinces or in the Centre." Moreover, the Secretary of State's declaration in the House of Commons "that Dominion Status was neither the next stage nor the next but one," violated the spirit of solemn pledges given with the sanction of the British Cabinet, and had shaken their faith in the intentions of the British Parliament and people. Following this general protest the resolution embodied nineteen headings under which it sought to put forward India's demand in full detail, and showed "that the proposals in the White Paper had to be changed radically, and some of them dropped altogether, to satisfy even the most moderate minded people in the country."

The president of the Conference was Mr. J. N. Basu, and the principal speakers on the main resolution were Sir P. S. Sivaswami Iyer, Mr. Chintamani, Mr. Venkatram Sastri and Pandit Hridaynath Kunzru. The Rt. Hon. Sastri who was Chairman of the Reception Committee was suddenly taken ill, and his task of welcoming the delegates was done by the Vice-Chairman, Sir P. S. Sivaswami Aiyer. We begin with the address of the President and will then give from other speeches such observations on the White Paper proposals as strike us to be no repetition of what has gone before.

The occasion was an important one as the deliberations of the Round Table Conference and the Joint Parliamentary Committee had concluded and the Reform Bill was being prepared for introduction in the House of Commons in the following year. It was, therefore, imperative to take a final survey of the whole procedure and show up the White Paper in its true light. So had the Conference met for a second time in the same year so that judgment might not go by default against India. It was no matter whether the criticism upon it proved useful or otherwise, but it was up to those who felt that injustice was being done to India to speak out what they thought about the matter, as a sheer duty which they owed to their motherland.

The President of the Conference was one who had declined invitation to attend the Third Round Table Conference for he had felt that nothing good was going to come out of it for India. And it was in the fitness of things that a public man like him—"accurate in his facts, temperate in expression and just in his conclusions," should preside over a Conference in which the principal subject of discussion was the White Paper once over again. How did he characterise the

White Paper. He condemned it,

"as a strange combination of centralised authority and responsibility, weighted with brakes of various descriptions. The system was without a precedent and without the experience of the past to guide it. It was certainly not anywhere near Dominion Status. The White Paper did not lay down the lines for a real constitutional government, but merely attempted to tone down some of the aggresive features of an autocratic State. While admittedly the bounds of the constitution were to be narrow, no provision was made for automatic expansion through the legislatures of India."

The president them dealth *seriatim* with the drawbacks in the White Paper which had already been exposed in the last session of the Liberal Conference. His observation on the communal award deserves to be quoted here. He said about it as follows:—

"The artificial divisions set up by the White Paper tend to create for the time being an antagonism between classes and communities. The division of the electorates into separate water-tight compartments, for representation and election to the legislatures according to creeds, and not on the basis of political views and programmes, amounts to the introduction by Great Britain of a new element of untouchability in India, namely, untouchability in politics. The party to which we belong has strenuously opposed the throwing into our midst of such apples of discord. The accentuation of non-political differences and the importation of them in the constitution of the State is a reversal of the normal process of building up a people. Why such a reversal is proposed to be effected has not been explained, but will probably be explained in future at the bar of History."

What the verdict of history over it would be was a foregone conclusion. But we know to our cost today whither it has led us—not certainly towards fusion and unity, solidarity and strength, but to division, disunion and dissensions throughout the country to the postponement of Swaraj for India as the result of this reversal. One more quotation from the presi-

dent's speech we take here as pointing to future work. He said,

"The remarks I have addressed to you to-day show in which respects according to us the contemplated changes in the constitution either lead to no advance or are reactionary. But if a system is sought to be imposed upon us which we do not consider to be in the best interests of our people, we must press our views with all the emphasis at our command, and if our voice is not listened to, we do not take the system as a settled fact, but go on agitating and organising public opinion. We have had examples in the past of settled facts being unsettled by persistent political agitation. But the agitation must be conducted in an open and straight-forward manner. And the one condition of success was unity—not unity achieved by surrender to communalism but by triumphing over it. Political caste systems that are sought to be thrust upon us must be overthrown. The forces working for disruption must be overcome; and all must join hands and render united service to our common motherland. If our difficulties and disappointments burn this lesson into our hearts, then no facts will remain settled which we wish to see unsettled."

Now we turn to speeches on the resolution itself, to note some points in them which were not touched before. And we begin for that purpose with the speech of Sir P. S. Sivaswami Aiyer. The resolution put before the Conference was practically the same that was considered by the Federation at its last session in Calcutta. A few changes made in it were in answer to a few further developments and a few further enunciations of policies by Sir Samuel Hoare, the Secretary of State for India. The first point to be noticed in these new developments was the repudiation of the promise of Dominion Status to India by the Secretary of State himself. Nor was there in the White Paper, as it had emerged from the discussion before the Joint Committee, any indication of the date when the federal scheme would be inaugurated, and the transition

period marked by the safeguards would definitely come to an end.

Inspite of the fact that the safeguards imposed had been already too many for the responsible government to survive from them, Sir Samuel Hoare had all along shown the disposition to yield to further suggestions to add to them, while he would not yield to any suggestion to reduce them in response to public opinion in India. Everytime that the constitution needed a change for the better, India had to apply to Parliament and submit herself to further enquiry and the control of the Secretary of State for India along with that of India Office would go on for ever, without any chance of being automatically withdrawn. The most serious defect in the whole scheme was that Defence of the country could never be in charge of the Indians themselves. There was no provision in the scheme for its transfer however gradual, and as such India would take too long to come into her own as a self-governing nation, even if Federation became an accomplished fact much earlier than was expected. Too much had been made of our informal differences and they attached no importance whatever to united popular opinion expressed without difference in favour of the grant of Dominion Constitution to India. On this point Sir Sivaswami Aiyer made particular mention of the Memorandum submitted to the Joint Select Committee by H. H. the Aga Khan and eleven other Indian delegates who had attended the meeting of the Committee. The Indian delegates who had submitted the Memorandum on behalf of India represented all communities and spoke for all sections of political opinion in the country. There were five Mohomedans, two or three Hindus, a Parsi, a Christian and an Eurasian who had all agreed to the demand and put their signatures to the Memorandum submitted

to the Parliament. It was up to Parliament to consider the Memorandum as it deserved to be considered, and to remove the serious defects in the Scheme put forward in the White Paper, if it really meant to satisfy Indian opinion on the question. That was the gist of the speech of Sir Sivaswami Aiyer.

Mr. Chintamani who spoke after Sir Sivaswami Aiyer first pointed out the fact that the resolution before them was but a continuation of all the arguments advanced in anticipation against the coming reforms, in the Liberal Conference held in Bombay at the end of 1931, and that nothing had happened in the interval between that date and 1933 to improve matters. On the other hand, they had become worse and the objections made then applied with greater force to the scheme before them. In fact, the White Paper had proved so reactionary that no criticism made against it would be considered too harsh by any one in India.

A PRODUCT OF ORGANISED HYPOCRISY

With this preliminary observation Mr. Chintamani summed up in his speech all that he had said against it in his speech at the Conference held in Calcutta. And he concluded with the emphatic opinion that he would prefer to work under the existing constitution rather than accept the new one which was the product, as he put it in the words of Disraeli of 'organised hypocrisy. He added,

"I would feel we are nearer the day of Swaraj if the White Paper Scheme is dead than if it is proceeded with without material improvements. That is my individual opinion and it is also my deliberate and unalterable conviction. He realised then what Mr. Sastri had said in his speech in the previous session of the Conference that "they were dashing their heads against a stone-wall in appealing to conservatives like Sir Samuel Hoare and liberals like Lord Reading to see light and follow the path of wise statesmanship." I have only to say in conclusion

that it is a matter of great regret that, as Mr. Burke has remarked, 'Argument has been exhausted. Reasoh is fatigued, experience has given judgment but obstinacy has not been conquered!' I will add to 'obstinacy,' British arrogance and British selfishness have not been conquered."

Was even provincial autonomy plan devised in the White Paper worth having? The answer to it was given by Mr. Chintamani in the words of Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru. He described it as bogus provincial autonomy.

THE COMMUNAL CANKER IN THE SCHEME

The speech of the Mohomedan delegate to the Liberal Conference, Maulvi Abdul Samad, dealt with the obnoxious nature of the White Paper in regard to communal and separate electorates, which it had upheld as being advantageous to Muslim Community. The speaker gave as his reason of non-agreement between the Hindus and the Muslims at the R.T.C. "the care that Governmtnt had taken to choose only such Muslim nominees as had subscribed before hand, under the leadership of H.H. the Aga Khan, to Mr. Jinnah's 14 points."

"These Muslims," the speaker then told, "had almost agreed to the Hindu proposal of Joint Electorates with reservation of seats, when came out the decision of the Government that the Muslims were entitled to get 46 per cent in Bengal and 49 per cent in the Punjab with separate electorate to spoil it. So the agreement that they had almost arrived at with the Hindus had broken down, not on its own merits or demerits but because the Government had manoeuvered that it should not come about. The Government had given to the Muslims, by one stroke of the pen, and that before the Communal Award, what even the notorious Simon Commission would not concede to them. For the Commission had laid down that if they desired separate electorates these could be conceded to them only on the basis of the Lucknow Pact, and if they gave up separate electorates they would get representation

only on the basis of population. Sapru and other Indian Liberal leaders were willing to concede to the 51 per cent of the seats in Bengal and the Punjab with Joint Electorates and they had agreed. But the agreement had broken down, as was shown above, because of the intervention of the Government itself. Why then blame the Indian delegates for their failure to come to terms on the vexed minority problem?"

The speaker then gave the history of the whole question subsequent to that date, and showed by quoting chapter and verse, how every time that there was a chance of unity, it was the Government itself that had obstructed by offering to the Muslims more than they would get from other Indians. He also exposed in his speech the story of the so-called Minority Pact. He went further and showed how the Muslims could never benefit by separate electorates. He maintained that the Muslims had the benefit of this arrangement for the last 14 years. And how had they benefitted in amity and friendship with fellow Indians? The enemity and tension had, on the other hand, gone on increasing.

"The communal riots, be it noted, have been the special features of India since the inauguration of the Reforms, inspite of separate and communal elctorates given to Muslims for the sake of peace and unity in India. Will these communities ever unite and live in peace and cooperation if you divide them still further by these means? Will self government for the whole of India ever materialise by the perpetuation of these differences in a constitution that was meant to take us to the goal? Or will there be demands by other communities than the Mohomedan for a favoured treatment at the hands of bureaucracy and the Government? Will Muslims be more political minded and more national if you separate them from the Hindus in this way?"

In support of this speech by Mr. Abdul Samad we quote the following from a letter written by Lord Birkenhead as Secretary of State for India to Lord

Irwin in the days of the Simon Commission's tour in India. Said Lord Birkenhead in that letter:—

"The whole policy is now obvious. It is to terrify the Hindu population, by the apprehension that the Commission is being got hold of by the Muslims and may present a report altogether destructive of the Hindu position, thereby securing solid Muslim support and leaving Jinnah high and dry."

The letter is quoted in K. B. Krishna's "The Problem of the Minorities" on page 308. Mr. Abdul Samad has already told us of Sir Samuel Hoare's intervention, accurately timed, to prevent unity between Hindus and Muslims, when an agreement had already been arrived at. Further comment is superflous.

The resolution of the Liberal Conference on the proposals in the White Paper taken along with their elucidation by Sir Samuel Hoare in his evidence before the Joint Select Committee, as it was passed at Madras at the end of 1933, we give below, so that the reader may know for himself that the Liberals were not slow to criticise and speak fearlessly on any policy or measure when they were convinced in their mind that it was harmful to the cause of India.

The preliminary portion of that resolution we have already given. The gist of the remaining part was as follows:—"The Federation desires to make it clear again that no scheme of reforms can meet India's requirements or satisfy Indian National aspirations or allay political discontent which does not confer the full power and status of a dominion on India within a short period fixed by a statute."

"The Federation takes strong exception to the continued maintenance of the India Office, of the India Council under a different name and of the separate office of the Secretary of State for India, and to the continued control of the Government of India by His Ma-

jesty's Government in England as proposed in the White Paper."

"In the opinion of the Federation such control should be strictly limited to subjects not transferred to the control of the Indian Legislatures during the period of transition and should be exercised by the Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs."

"In no event can the Federation reconcile itself to the continuance of the India Council in any form or shape."

"The Constitution Act should vest in the Federal Legislature of India the right to amend its provisions, subject to reasonable and necessary safeguards."

"While subscribing to the scheme of an All-India Federation, the Federation notes with regret that the proposals made in the White Paper and elaborated recently by the Secretary of State, as conditions precedent to the inauguration of the Federation, not only make for undue delay but are neither necessary nor justified."

"In the opinion of the Federation it is unnecessary and inexpedient to create a separate statutory authority called the "Viceroy": and in any case the rights of paramountacy of the Crown, whatever they may be, should be exercised by the Government of India and not by the Viceroy, as proposed in the White Paper."

"The Federation is emphatically of opinion that none of its constituent units should have the right of secession."

"The Federation is strongly of opinion that a declaration of the fundamental rights of citizenship applicable to all component members of the All-India Federation, should be a part of the Constitution Act."

"If for any reason the inauguration of All-India Federation should not materialise or be unduly delay-

ed, there should be a responsible Central Government for British India concurrently with "provincial autonomy" without prejudice to the effectuation of All-India Federation at the earliest possible date thereafter."

Then follow details which need not be given here —details about Defence, Financial safeguards, commercial discrimination, communal electorates, etcetera. We only permit ourselves at the end to quote the following about Central Government's transitory powers:

"The Federation considers the proposals of the White Paper relating to the constitution of the Central Government in the interval between the introduction of "provincial autonomy," and of a responsible federal government to be wholly reactionary and unacceptable as the position created thereby will be worse even than at present, highly unsatisfactory as is the latter."

"The White Paper proposals as they stand cannot possibly satisfy even the most moderate section of progressive opinion and will, far from appeasing unrest and allaying discontent, further aggravate the present unhappy conditions, alienate Indian opinion, and greatly intensify the present acute and wide-spread discontent."

Rightly did Mr. C. Y. Chintamani say, in his lectures on Indian Politics delivered in 1937 that "if there is any Indian who can enthuse over this scheme of Reforms, I confess I am not he, and if I should find him, I will not envy him."

CHAPTER XVII

"THE BLOW HAD FALLEN" —WHAT NEXT?

The liberals at the end of 1935 were no where in India either with the Government or with Congress leaders. Being non-communal, the Muslims treated them with scant courtesy, if not with haughty indifference. Their role henceforward, unlike in 1921, was that of critics, a party in opposition who warned both the Government and the Congress how by their action they were taking the country backwards, and were creating a situation for themselves much worse than they had to face from 1921 to 1935.

There were three sections in the Congress which had expressed themselves as to how they were going to face the new reforms. One section of the Congress was out to wreck the reforms deliberately, "by going into the Councils, taking ministerial offices and making the reforms unworkable so that the Government might be compelled to scrap them and to allow the Indian nation to put forth an agreed scheme." The other section did not believe in these wrecking tactics as they knew how they had proved infructuous when used by the Congress Swarajists between 1924 and 1927. This section wanted "to enter the Councils, take ministerial offices, and try by constructive methods to secure a larger share of material benefits in the provincial sphere." In doing its work this section did not deliberately look forward to bring about a clash, but if the Governor's veto came in the way of

read advancement, "It was determined to proceed in a constitutional manner by dissolving Provincial Assemblies and forcing fresh elections." There was a third section which did not believe in Council work at all, but this time it was not to come in the way of those who believed in it and, while keeping out, would do nothing to create trouble in the country over it as in 1920 and 1921. So the boycott of Councils had become with the Congress a thing of the past, and the Congress as an institution had decided to work the new Reforms, while it had declared complete boycott of the Montagu Reforms that had preceded them. The Reform Act of 1935 had conceded nothing to India, that was definitely promised in the announcement of 1929, and in the parliamentary declarations after it in 1930 and 1931.

The liberals advised the country to work the reforms for what they were worth, for they were convinced in their minds that "if they did not work the reforms, the Reforms were sure to work them," and that, in order to extract the utmost good out of them and to press forward, they must combine to fight the elections and send the best men in the country into the new Legislatures. Non-co-operation had never been their general policy. Nor was complete independence their creed. The Congress was pledged to complete independence, and the Act of 1935 had not brought them even the shadow of the substance of independence. Yet Congressmen would go into the Councils and work them and, at the same time, would not co-operate with their brethern in the country when they pleaded for combined action.

The Liberal Conference held in Poona at the end of 1934, dealt with this matter comprehensively. The president of that Conference was Pandit Hridayanath Kunzru and the Chairman of its Reception Committee

was Rao Bahadur R. R. Kale of Satara. In the addresses of both of them we find the Joint Select Committee's Report criticised in full detail, as we found the White Paper fully dealt with in the conference sessions of 1933 held at Calcutta and Madras. The Report they showed to be much more reactionary than the White Paper. It did not care to make any changes for the better in the White Paper itself but had changed it for the worse. The resolution framed and adopted in the Conference at Poona was moved by the Right Honourable Mr. Sastri, and the speech he made in putting the resolution to the Conference contained remarks which we quote here to show the position of the Liberal Party at that time in India *vis-a-vis* the Government on the one hand and the Congress on the other. He said:—

THE RIGHT TO EXIST

"There are two observations of a somewhat general nature which I should beg your permission to make. They concern the roots of our policy and of our position in this country. Our party has many critics, rather too many I should say, and a good few from among ourselves. Well, they are all welcome. Inside critics, outside critics, sympathetic critics, hostile critics, all are welcome. We are not many, we do not pretend to wield a great influence in directing the course of events. There are many defects to which we plead guilty. Our house badly needs to be put in order. All this is granted and granted without reserve. But what follows? Have you observed one curious feature of the situation? We are always spoken of with contempt. And those who write in journals, young men with fluent pens, seem to dip their pen in the ink of ridicule. Let them. But there are occasions when they think otherwise of us and remembering our existence enquire earnestly, **'where are these gentlemen? What are they doing? Why don't they come to our help? What does this man think? His words would be opportune now. He has friends in England, his voice carries weight. Why is he dumb?** Well, we have amongst us those whose voices are sought in times of difficulties and are capable of giving safe direc-

tion. If this party exists only for the purpose of guiding the political movement, of giving warning now and then, of showing the lines of promising developments, if it merely keeps the political movement on its properly laid rails, I contend that it will be still worth the while of the public to keep us alive, functioning with such efficiency as we are capable of. It surely would be desirable to become a political power in a deeper sense. **There are many who think, that a party which does not put forward candidates at an election, which does not carry many seats, which does not annex municipality, and district board, and village committees, and which does not swoop upon school committees and temple committees, and industrial managements, and turn them from their legitimate functions into a means of its own aggrandisement, that a political party of this kind has no right to exist.** I may be a heretic, but I do maintain that it is no disgrace to a party not to win success at elections. On the contrary, I contend that no political phenomenon is more worthy of attention, more full of lessons to students of contemporary affairs than the defeat of a good, honest, patriotic man at the polls merely because he has not pleased the people. I do not think it at all discreditable to a man that he has gone down in an honourable fight. What if we do not get places in the Assembly? We still are elders knowing life somewhat deeper than other people, knowing the shoals and the rocks that have to be avoided in guiding our ship to safety. Such men have a value and I am content that we should continue to perform our most necessary, though often neglected task."

Mr. Sastri's remarks in 1934, have proved truer in times following that date. The liberals are being despised to-day as they were then. They are being sought after in a crisis today as they were sought after in 1930 and in 1932. They lost elections in 1937 when Congress chose to fight them, as they had lost them at the end of 1923. They have all along striven to guide people aright in difficulties, and though their counsel was being poohpoohed at the time, the wisdom of it was recognised in the end. They have never sought to monopolise all power, or to dictate. Their

appeal has always been to reason and discrimination. It may not win in times of storm and strain. But when calmer times return they may come into their own.

Mr. Sastri did not speak in these plain terms only to his own countrymen. He was equally blunt to those in England who blamed his party as a party of weak men. This was what he said in answer to Sir Austen Chamberlain:

"One remark that Chamberlain made in the interesting debate in the House of Commons, I must pass on to you. Did he feel, I wonder, that he and his party might be accused of having weakened us as a party? Was it in self-defence that he cast the blame for our failure upon our own heads? He said we were guilty of cowardice, we were faint-hearted, we did not make sacrifices, and go forth courageously to fight for this constitution which we knew in our hearts was for our good. He believes that we must spring forward with enthusiasm to embrace it and hold it up to our countrymen as that for which they were struggling for the last fifty years. Now, we decline decidedly and emphatically to hold up Sir Austen Chamberlain's baby and invite our countrymen and countrywomen to kiss it."

WHAT NEXT?

After the Act was an accomplished fact Mr. Sastri marked the event in the Liberal Conference held at Nagpur in 1935, in words that form the heading of this chapter—the blow had fallen. How was India to stand up to the fact which it could not avoid? The liberals in 1935 advised all concerned "to join forces and select representatives by mutual agreement so that unnecessary conflict might be avoided and the best men in the country be sent to the new legislatures, who, by co-operation and the shaping of a common constructive policy, might help the advance of the country along right lines." This would also have helped to organise public opinion in the country and to get sup-

port for legislative action of men of all parties who knew how to work on right lines. But Congress chose otherwise. The liberals did not succeed in the elections as, on individual merit and past record of work, they should have done. As such they went out of the picture for the rest of the time so far as legislatures and the working of the reforms were concerned.

Speaking of the New Constitution the Liberal Conference resolved that "in its considered opinion it was a constitution imposed upon India by the British Parliament in utter disregard of almost unanimous Indian opinion, inasmuch as it not only did not accept a single suggestion for improvement from India's point of view, but had added on to it further objectionable features." The resolution, however, in the peculiar circumstances of India, considered anything like a boycott of the New Constitution futile and impossible. There were seven speakers on that resolution, the principal among whom were Mr. Sastri, Sir Chimanlal Setalvad, Sir Cowasji Jehangir and Mr. C. Y. Chintamani. From the presidential address of Mr. Venkatram Sastri and from the speeches on the resolution we shall draw such material as would enable the reader to know what the Liberal Party thought of the political situation in India as created by the New Act.

Sir Moropant Joshi, Chairman of the Reception Committee, said about the Act, "the time for its criticism is now past. We are faced, like other political parties in the country, with a situation the like of which has not been witnessed in this country." What was the situation?

"First, that 'the new constitution had placed the electors in more than a dozen categories for a franchise and while this crystalises the fissiparous tendencies in the country, the resultant is a clear indication against India being likely to be welded into a homogeneous nation." Secondly, "there appeared no chance whatever of bringing

any further pressure on British Government to make the constitution more acceptable or elastic and responsive to future progress." Thirdly "if the progressive groups in the country did not see to it that the best men in the country were sent into the Councils and did not co-operate in shaping the nation's destiny towards the desired goal, the Councils were likely to be filled by meh who would work the reform for their own communal advantage rather than that of the nation."

That was the verdict of Sir Moropant Joshi on the situation forced on the country by the New Constitution. He was of opinion "that if the Congress decided once again to overthrow the Reforms by its old method of Satyagraha and non-co-operation, that method was bound to fail as it had failed to achieve the end during the last fourteen years. Had not Mr. Gandhi himself declared that he was the only person in the country capable of the kind of Satyagraha he insists on?"

The Congress after it had resigned power at the end of 1939, and some Congressmen even before that time, swearing by self-determination, had spoken of a Constituent Assembly to frame an agreed constitution for the whole country which later the British Government had to simply endorse in its own Parliament. That right, as we know to-day, has been conceded to India by the Cripps proposals. It may be India's right to frame its own constitution. But as Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru had put it, "it was chimerical to talk of such a step till complete independence had been won." However that may be, some men there were then and are even now, who think that this right may mean only throwing an apple of discord between us. And that fear was expressed by Sir Moropant Joshi at the end of 1935 in the following words:

"At the Round Table Conference the cleavages between community and community were so big that it was found

impossible to secure unanimity. The reasons for this discomfiture then existing, are still there, and what may be worse, several communities have, in the meanwhile, negotiated with government and got for themselves rights and privileges which, in any democratic constitution, they could never hope to get. Having actually got privileged positions are these communities likely to surrender their position of advantage? It is thus obvious that the chance of securing unanimity at a Constituent Assembly is not within the bounds of probability or even possibility."

BRETHERN IN SERVICE

From the speech of Sir Moropant Joshi we pass on to the speech of Mr. Venkatram Sastri, the President of the Conference. The first thing to be noted in his address is the sentiment he expressed for the Congress on the completion of the fiftieth year of its life. Mr. Chintamani, while proposing Mr. Venkatram Sastri to the presidential chair, had expressed himself heartily in favour of co-operation between all progressive parties and had maintained that the Liberal Party's record in that respect was stainless. But he asked what was the record of the Congress in that matter. And he answered the question himself thus. "But, then, the policy of the Congress has been co-operation with the Liberals in the interval between one election and another, and a war to the knife against them during every election." Bearing this in mind and inspite of it, Mr. Venkatram Sastri spoke of the Congress in the following terms:—

"Since we separated and began to pursue our own methods, differing from those of the latter-day Congress but in our judgment truly and faithfully conformable to the old tradition, the two organisations have no doubt diverged widely. But behind these differences, is there not a unity of aspiration and a deep affinity of aim? They and we are alike pledged to the winning of India's right to shape her own destiny and to her establishment as a free and self-respecting nation among free and self-respecting nations. We are colleagues in effort and brethren

in service and we gladly extend to them our hearty felicitations and good wishes in the full trust that, moving along different paths where we must, and treading the same path where we may, we shall one day achieve the freedom and the glory of our common motherland."

That is the spirit which has marked the Liberals since they had separated themselves from the parent institution on a question of principle in 1918 and if it had been reciprocated by Congressmen, the political history of India would have been different from what it is to-day. As. Mr. Chintamani put it in 1934,

"the record of the liberal party is stainless. I was its General Secretary for more than eight years and have always been a more or less active member of the party and I can say without fear of contradiction from any quarter whatever, namely, there was no effort which we did not make in order to make possible joint action by the Congress and ourselves on every important matter; there was no single occasion when we did not actively respond to every invitation addressed to us by the Congress to co-operate with them."

And, then, he used words about the policy of the Congress which we have already quoted a little earlier in this chapter. And he concluded, "For that we are not to blame. Success we cannot command. If we honestly feel that we have deserved success, that is about as much as what any man can hope for, and I am convinced that we shall continue to deserve success, whether we shall achieve it or not, for so long as we remain true to ourselves and we place at the head of the organisation men of the character and patriotism of our President-elect, Mr. Venkatram Sastri."

These words were uttered by Mr. Chintamani in supporting the election of Mr. Venkatram Sastri to the presidential chair of the Liberal Conference at the end of 1934. In his presidential address Mr. Venkatram Sastri first gave the history of the Act; then he pointed out how Dominion Status was excluded from it,

even to the extent of mentioning the name; how inspite of the promise of Mr. Ramsay Macdonald to the contrary, safeguards were put in the New Constitution that would effectively throttle self-government; how the Act had nothing in it to make it a self-developing Act; how the Federal constitution outlined in the Act was sure to perpetuate British Domination of India if the federation were ever to materialise; how there was no representation in it to the subjects of the Native States and consequently federal citizenship to them; how the Princes alone were to nominate the representatives; how the question of paramountcy, as handled in the constitution, would help to continue the military domination of India by the British Army; how defence of India by Indians and the Indianisation of the Army was effectively delayed by it; and how commercial safeguards and administrative discrimination had made the Act worse than its notorious predecessor, the White Paper.

What was the net result of it all? asked Mr. Venkatram Sastri and answered:

"we feel that power is not relinquished. The old instruments of control are there still. Power remains drawn up into the hands of the Secretary of State, through the Governor-General and the Governor acting at their discretion and in the exercise of their individual judgment subject to his control and direction and through services protected with special care and empowered to do what may thwart the action of the Ministers. Not content with these instruments of power, vested interests are entrenched in the centre and in the second Chambers of the Provinces as a first line of defence against democratic advance."

And he added, "we are advised by good friends in England to accept the Act in a spirit of political realism." What then must we do? That was what the President asked next. And after discussing the possibility of boycotting the Act completely and also

other proposals more or less in a similar vein, he came to the following conclusion. He said:

"The work within the Council will quicken the work in the country. In power, you will be able to do a great deal more than in opposition. One gets more support in power, than in opposition, from the official hierarchy right up to the top. Contact and association tell more than the merit of any question. For your beneficent measures you may be sure of support from the Governor. Wrecking as a programme is of questionable wisdom, and refusal to accept office and responsibility in any circumstances is refusal to make these contacts and associations that make smooth the path of work and achievement."

At the end of his address he stressed the conclusion in words that fit in with the policy and method of the Liberal Party all along the line. He said.

"My remarks are addressed not only to Liberals but to all nationalists in the country of whatever shade of political opinion. We know that as liberals we are a handful in a vast country—we who have courage and are not ashamed to own ourselves to be liberals. There are far more liberals in the country than own themselves to be such. I am for converts to our ranks, if we can get them. If we do not get many, no matter. We shall be content with the liberal principles permeating the lives of people. To my mind, those who have decided, if only for the moment, to give up non-co-operation, and work along lines favoured of the ancient Congressmen and their modern representatives the Liberals are also Liberals in spirit and conviction even if not in name. I do not say they are liberals either to taunt them or to vex them, but only to satisfy my own mind that our mode of doing political work is, at least, one of the authentic and approved modes of doing work, and I need not desert it for any other unless occasion should call for it in no uncertain or in irresistible voice."

THE REASON WHY?

The Conference resolution on the New Constitution, was moved by Rt. Hon. Srinivas Sastri, and supported by Sir Chimanlal Setalvad, Sir Cowasji Jehan-

gir, Mr. C. Y. Chintamani, Sir Moropant Joshi and Mr. J. N. Basu. At the opening of his speech Mr. Sastri said, "In my earlier speeches on the subject I was speaking of a blow that was being levelled at India's liberties. I have today to mourn the actual fall of the blow." He went on to consider why it was that the Britishers who had given us the Constitution thought that it was a conspicuous mark of their friendliness and goodwill to India, when the Indians regarded it as fetters on their liberties. "They think," said Mr. Sastri, "that they have done well by this country in giving her this constitution, in binding her hand and foot, in preventing the growth of that constitution, in endowing every tiny Prince of India with a final veto on all progress, in tying up her resources, in disabling her from protecting her own industries and manufacturers. They think they have done the right thing. They really believe this—that it is only because we are curious people with a curious psychology, that we bite the hands that feed us."

Mr. Sastri then turned the searchlight inwards in order to find out what was wrong with ourselves that we should behave in such a curious manner towards the Britisher and call him names. What was the greatest drawback of India that others could exploit so adroitly to their own advantage, and yet say santimoniously to the whole world that what they had done, they had done in the best interests of India and that they understood what was good for us better than we did it ourselves? Said Sastri on the point,

"We know that in this Act every advantage is taken, and in the fullest measure, of any discord amongst our people. Are there religious differences? Yes, they are all used here. Are there sectarian differences? You will find every one of them having effect in this Act. Are there provincial diffrences? Oh yes, they are used very well too. Are there rural and urban difference? Yes, you will find

them figuring largely in the sections of this Act, and yet when this Act is there, not only recognising and reproducing these differences, but making them operate to our utmost possible harm, throttling the development of a national feeling, preventing our admission to coherent dominion-hood one day, by all the artifices that legal subtlety and political ingenuity can put together—that is the framework of the Act—what do the Makers of this Act say in England? They say, "these poor people are terribly divided one from another, how we wish them to come to their fullest stature. Why should they not become one? Can't we do something to keep them on one platform?" So they say in England, the very authors of this Act. And then the Governors and the Viceroy and other people—what are they saying? They say that because we are divided into so many groups and sub-groups, we never have a common policy, we never have a common Ministry on which they can lean, everytime the poor harried Governor has to interfere and so on. They all bemoan and bewail this terrible infirmity of our race." And then, Mr. Sastri hits the nail on the head and tells his hearers, "Now this infirmity of ours which has coloured all our history in the past and which I am afraid is going to colour our future growth for many years—that is our greatest enemy. It is that weakness we must attack. How can we? We must develop our psychology in a new way altogether. Can you and I do so? I ask—you and I—who, after speaking here in the same language, disperse tomorrow and vote in separate groups and become answerable for our deeds to separate little communities of our own : Are we the proper instruments for the development of this new mentality? We are not. If we were wise we should have discovered this long ago. But we are not wise, and it takes a lohg time for us to learn this simple lesson."

What, then, is our business in the face of the situation? he asks, and answers himself. He says "Who talks of refusing office? I call it madness. **What you can do in ten years by wielding office you cannot do in hundred years if you remain out of office.. Take office then, however, much the Gods may seem to frown, work your own fate as you would, and then the Governor may refuse your request once, if he is Lord**

Lloyd, refuse it twice, but I do not know of any man, even if he were sent out by Tory malevolence—I do not know of any man who will resist the combined pressure of ministers for a third time. Our Ministers should be men of clear vision, of iron will, of a determination to take office with honour, but of an equal determination to drop office if it means any dishonour or any betrayal of the final interests of India. And thus it is in our hands to make even of this evil instrument, good use, for our own purposes. But we have to remember that imbedded in this constitution was an enemy of a most subtle nature, the poison of anti-national spirit. And, therefore, it is only the united strength of the wise that can combat it."

Sir Chimanlal Setalvad who followed Mr. Sastri, elucidated the point still further. The want of unity among Indians was the main cause of our discomfiture. That the British Government had exploited our differences, that they had banked upon our communal cleavage, was true enough in all conscience. But the greater was the blame upon those who allowed themselves to be so exploited. We should have taken care not to play into the hands of our enemies as we had done so far. We must, therefore, resolve to unite, to make all our differences disappear, argued Sir Chimanlal, and so foil those who want to exploit those differences. Our rulers are certainly to blame. But it cannot be gainsaid that we have aided them in their attempts to foist this constitution upon us by our own shortcomings. Therefore, all efforts should be directed in future to eradicate these communal, provincial and racial differences. Sir Chimanlal supported Mr. Sastri in his insistence that we should work the constitution by sending our best men in the Legislatures, and let those only be Ministers who would do their work with the one aim of serving the national interests of India.

No powers in the hands of a Governor would then avail to obstruct that work. No Governor could afford to quarrel with his cabinet every day, if it presented a united front. That was the gist of Sir Chimanlal's speech.

Sir Cowasji Jehangir who followed him elaborated in his speech upon the poison of communalism that had gone to our hearts, and which was to a large extent, the cause why "the wretched" constitution was full of safeguards. Let them endeavour to eradicate this evil and no constitution can bind down Indians as this had done. Mr. Chintamani showed, as if in reply to Sir Cowesji Jehangir, how the communalism rampant in India was a creation of the Government itself. He went into the history of the communal question from the days of Lord Minto in India and showed how those who had endeavoured to bring about intercommunal unity were foiled at every step by bureaucracy in India and the British Government itself. He revealed the inner story of the R.T.C. in connection with these attempts. He referred to the famous Benthall circular and to the genesis of the Minority Pact, and to the work of Sir Samuel Hoare, especially, in dividing Muslims from the Hindus. And he concluded his argument with the following observation:

"It is true that the communal differences in this country are responsible for a great deal of our misfortunes, but that very misfortune of communal difference is due to the still greater misfortune of a foreign rule, with all power in non-Indian hands, with no responsibility to any Indian Legislature and utterly irresponsive to any Indian opinion. Therefore, I say that the Government of India Act of 1935 is a great national misfortune ; it has been forced upon us, I once more say that I am not responsible as an Indian for that misfortune, and I repeat that apart from the misfortune that it is in a political sense, it is a still greater misfortune from this point of view that under the dispensation of this new Government of India Act not only will it

not be possible for communities, not only is it not likely that communities can make up their differences more easily than they have done in the past, but that the differences will increase, and that communal disharmony, communal discord, communal strife, will be the children which this Government of India Act will breed in this country."

BIG PROMISES

In 1936 Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru happened to be the president of the Congress. He had extreme views in Congress politics. He was an out-and-out socialist and, though he favoured council-entry, he was dead against acceptance of office by the Congress members elected in the Legislatures. He had drafted the Congress election manifesto. And he had asserted that the Congress had decided for election and council-entry not to take up office and form ministries but to wreck the constitution, win complete independence, and frame its constitution through a Constituent Assembly convened on the basis of adult suffrage. In the manifesto big promises were made to the electorates, which were revolutionary in character. He had asserted, at the same time, that the votes cast by the electorates in favour of the Congress candidates were votes for the Congress, and hence if ever ministries were formed in Congress provinces they were responsible for all their actions to the Congress High Command namely, the Congress Parliamentary Sub-Committee and the Congress Working Committee—and not to the electorates that had sent them to the Councils. The essential principle of democracy and Parliamentary method of Government was thus superceded, from the very start of their work, by a totalitarian principle. Some provincial ministers did not submit to this control and tried to defy the orders of the High Command when these affected the details of their administration.

The wrecking policy of Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, implied in his insistence on non-acceptance of office, was strongly opposed by Mr. Satyamurthi of Madras who maintained that Ministers could do much good to the country in the shape of social legislation which could not wait till independence was achieved. Ultimately Satyamurthi won against Nehru and Congress resolved that office should be accepted and ministries formed in provinces where it commanded clear majorities in the Legislatures. Congress had swept the poll in six out of eleven provinces, and in the end a seventh province also came under its full control. It is with the programme and policy of the Congress just before it had chosen to take office that Liberal Conferences of 1936 and 1937 dealt. And our chapter will deal, in its concluding part, only with this new orientation to Congress policy and how the Liberals viewed it.

The introduction to the Liberal Conference Report of 1936 published at the end of 1937, contains the following significant words about the change in the Congress policy *vis-a-vis* the new reforms. Says the report,

"After years of wandering in the wilderness of whirlwind agitation the popular body has at last come to believe in parliamentary action and is today in office in seven out of eleven provinces of the country. What actually the Congress ministries will achieve will not be known for sometime to come. Prophecy is futile, and nowhere more than in the sphere of politics. But if a reasoned anticipation of probabilities is permissible, it may be doubted whether the ministries will find the effectuation of their large and reckless promises to the electorates to be at all practicable. Everyone will hope in the interests of the nation that for once fears instead of hopes may prove to be dupes, and that everything may turn out well in the end. That will be the greatest vindication of the principles and policy for which the Liberal Party has faithfully and continuously stood in the face of persistent calumny

and misrepresentation. The triumph of Liberalism, which is what this will be in effect, will be gratefully acclaimed by Liberals even if the Liberal Party as such may perish. It will be the modern illustration, if on a small scale, of captive Greece triumphing over victorious Rome."

These words were penned by Mr. C. Y. Chintamani who, as Sir Chimanlal Setalvad told the delegates to the Liberal Conference of 1937, was responsible for the introduction.

Why did Mr. Chintamani declare the electoral manifesto of the Congress Party as full of large and reckless promises? We give here the summary of the electoral manifesto which was used as a common platform for all the provinces. "While doing their best to destroy the Act," it declared, "and to resist British imperialism in its attempts to strengthen its hold on India, Congressmen would work for the uplift of the masses—for the reform of the system of land tenure, the reduction of agriculturist's rent and the relief of his indebtedness, for the improvement of the industrial conditions in towns, insurance against old age, sickness and unemployment, the maintenance of trade-unions and the right to strike—and for the removal of sex disabilities and of untouchability and the social and economic advancement of the backward classes. In the political field, the first objective was the repeal of all repressive laws and regulations." A special section of the manifesto was devoted to the Communal Award. "The Congress," it declared, "was not indifferent or neutral in this matter. It condemned the Award as inconsistent with democratic principles and disruptive of Indian unity." The following words in the manifesto deserve to be quoted in full in the light of later developments. The words are:

"But a satisfactory solution of the communal question can come only through the goodwill and co-operation of the principal communities concerned. The attempt by

one group to get some communal favour from the British Government at the expense of another group results in an increase of communal tension and the exploitation of both groups by Government. Such a struggle is hardly in keeping with the dignity of Indian nationalism. The Congress, therefore, holds that the right way to deal with the situation created by the Communal Award is to intensify our struggle for independence and at the same time to seek a common basis for an agreed solution which will strengthen the unity of India."

The Congress organisation fought the elections vigorously and effectively, in the name of Mr. Gandhi, whom Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru had designated in his autobiography as "permanent super-president" of the Congress. The slogan was 'vote for Mr. Gandhi and the yellow-box," and all was carried before it. The result of the campaign we give in the following extract from Professor Coupland's Report on the subject. He says "The result was a series of Congress victories on a far wider scale than any one, including Congressmen, had anticipated. Over 54 per cent of the total electorate went to the poll, and out of the total of 1585 seats in the Provincial Lower Houses the Congress won no less than 711. In five Provinces—Madras, the United Provinces, the Central Provinces, Bihar and Orissa—it obtained majorities. In Bombay it won nearly half the seats and could count on the support of two or three pro-Congress groups to give it a majority. In Assam it was the strongest party securing 35 of of 108 seats. In the N.W. Provinces it won 10 seats out of 50, a commanding position since the Muslim Party with its 23 seats was known to be divided. In Bengal it did better than it had expected, winning 60 seats out of 250. In the Punjab it won only 18 seats out of 175 and in Sind 8 out of 60. Of all these results the most striking was in Madras where the Justice (or Non-Brahmin) Party, which had remained

in power in the teeth of the Congress opposition ever since 1922, obtained only 21 seats against the 159 won by the Congress. As against these victories of the Congress it must be noted that the Muslim League won no less than 424 seats through separate and communal electorates. The results in Sind and the Punjab showed clearly how in future the Congress was bound to realise that it had to reckon with the League in all Indian political aspirations."

As regards the result of the elections the introduction says,

"The last session of the Federation (1937) was held in an atmosphere that was not particularly exhilarating. The liberal party had been wiped out in the first general elections held at the beginning of the year under the Government of India Act of 1935. And in six provinces out of 11 Congress Ministries were functioning with the support of the large majorities. In a seventh too, the Congress had got into office after defeating the first Ministry. But to those who recall the policy proclaimed by the Congress at the time of the election of 1920 and followed in the election of 1930, there would have been no difficulty in sharing Sir Chimanlal Setalwad's opinion that the change of Congress policy, indicated, first, by participation in election, and next, by acceptance of office, is a triumph of Liberal opinion. In the work of Congress Ministries in the seven provinces one finds that, largely, it is liberal policy which is being followed. Where it is departed from, the reason is to be found in the reckless promises made to the electors to get their votes, and the subsequent necessity of at least partial fulfilment of these promises to retain their confidence.

More may be claimed for Liberal policy. Where Congress Ministries have not been doing well, in fact getting into trouble, is just where they follow their own nostrums for the reason stated above; whereas they are on firm ground in the pursuit of policies common to them and the liberals." Then the introduction adds, in regard to some points in the speech of Sir Chimanlal Setalvad as President of the Session of the Conference held at Calcutta in 1937: **"On one or two points, for example, the Congress Muslim**

Mass Contact programme and the selection of Muslim Members of Congress cabinets there is no unanimous Liberal agreement with Sir Chimanlal Setalvad. But on almost all other points what he said is a faithful reflection of the thought and feeling of every Liberal in the country."

What Sir Chimanlal Setalvad said about these two matters, on which it was pointed out that there was some difference of opinion between him and the Liberals, will be dealt with in the next chapter, where the work of the Congress, between the years 1937 and 1939, will come for review. It may be pointed out, however, that when the introduction, in which this difference is stressed, was written, the effect of the Congress policy in these two particulars was not being so clearly felt as it was felt at the end of 1939.

BLOWING HOT AND COLD

The Congress had decided to contest the elections first and to leave the question of acceptance or non-acceptance of office to be settled afterwards. That was because the most influential person in the Congress camp next to Mr. Gandhi and its president for the Congres year (March 1936—March 1937) Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, was vehemently against acceptance of office and formation of provincial Ministries by the Congress. He gave his reason for this opinion as follows:—

"To accept office and ministry under the conditions of this Act is to negative our rejection of it. Imperialism sometimes talks of co-operation but the kind of co-operation it wants is usually known as surrender. First issues will fall into the background, independence itself will fade away and the narrowest provincialism will raise its ugly head. One policy must be uniform for the whole of India, and it must place first things first, and independence is the first thing of all."

In his Congress address at Lucknow Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru had spoken frankly on what he felt about the situation. He had said, that he was a social-

ist, because only by socialism involving 'vast and revolutionary changes,' could India's problem he solved.

"The first objective was independence, for which all Congressmen must stand united, and the only way of attaining it was the Congress way. 'Independence cannot be given.' It could not be got through the Act,—a 'new charter of slavery.' It must come by a democratic Constituent Assembly. And the opportunity for it to obtain whatever it should decde would arise as soon as Britain was involved in the gathering storm in Europe. The time may come when we might be put to the test. Let us get ready for that test. Every war waged by Imperialistic powers will be an Imperialistic war whatever the excuse put forward. Therefore, we must keep out of it."

It was to this trend of thought, with possible action in the near future, that Sir Cowasji Jehangir referred in his presidential address at the end of 1936. As regards entering the Councils and yet refusing offices as Ministers where the party was in a majority, Sir Cowasji Jehangir said,

"They have decided to capture the Legislatures at the next elections but they hesitate to commit themselves on the principle of taking office. There can be no doubt about the serious differences of opinion that exist among themselves. Although this may be no business of ours, it affects us very vitally, being just before the general election. All candidates other than Congressmen are for taking office, while Congress candidates are not committed one way or the other. This is most unfair to the electorate. Such a state of affairs would not be tolerated in any country where the electorate was trained to a sense of responsibility. It is felt that, taking advantage of a first election on a much wider franchise, the most important political party in the country, confident of its popularity, treats the electorate with contempt. Unable to come to a decision on a vital issue, due to differences among themselves, they postponed decision until after the elections. Thus those of the electorates who are definitely against the acceptance of office can vote for the Congress candidate, hoping that the party will decide for non-acceptance, while Congressmen in favour of acceptance, can also vote

for the same candidate, hoping that their point of view will finally prevail. This is surely a unique form of democracy!"

In short they stated: "Vote for us, as the most important political party in the country; but we will decide what we shall do—it is no business of yours!" Then Sir Cowasji Jehangir pointed out the mutually contradictory statements in the Congress election manifesto. He said, "it was stated that the purpose of sending Congressmen to the Legislatures under the New Act, was not to co-operate in any way with the Act, but to combat it and end it. But most illogically, the manifesto then had gone on to explain the programme for their members of the legislatures. It repeated its declaration made at Karachi that the Congress stood for the reform of the land tenure etc. etc." "Now, may I ask" retorted Sir Cowasji "how is it possible to seek to end the Act, and, at the same time, enjoin upon its representatives the urgent necessity of adopting measures through the instrumentality of legislatures, for the true lasting benefit of the country?"

Mr. Venkatram Sastri, speaking on the resolution of the New Constitution in the same Conference, made some apt remarks on the same question. About wrecking the Act he made the following categorical statement. He said,

"The formula that you must use your power to wreck the Act, is a formula which you will find always in the pronouncements of Congressmen. But except for that one formula which they think it necessary to repeat every time, I do not think there is any real difference in public opinion on the question of council-entry or acceptance of office. I do not quarrel with words or criticisms, but I am sure of this. If they aspire to achieve the wrecking of the reforms, the immediate result, I am sure, will be none. Nothing that they can do can really have the result of wrecking the reforms. The working of the reforms will go on merrily. Either it may be that certain sections of the members of

the Legislatures will take it up to the exclusion of those who think of wrecking the reforms, or, if they succeed more effectively than even they hope for, the result will be to throw it upon the hands of the Governor of the Province. The Government will go on and there will be no difficulty. They propose to go into the country, rouse the masses, and build up an organisation for the purpose of adding strength to their cause. If they succeed in it I am sure it will take a generation before they can rouse the opinion in the country to the pitch that is necessary for the purpose of achieving what they desire to achieve. It seems to me that looking at it as a problem at the present election, we are entitled to say this."

What Mr. Venkatram Sastri said in 1936, had come true, every word of it, in later years. As for "achieving what they desired to achieve," by going into the country, rousing the masses, and building up an organisation for the purpose of adding strength to the cause, we know in 1944 where we are, and where those who said so are. From 1920 to 1937, we wasted seventeen years in that pursuit, and from 1937 to 1944 we have added seven more years "to achieve what they desire to achieve". The Act is not wrecked; independence 'when Britain found itself in the gathering storm of Europe,' is not achieved; and the Government of the country goes on merrily as ever. Surely "we were put to the test" and the test has gone against us. "To what length, then O Catiline, are you resolved to go?"

CHAPTER XVIII

LIBERALS AND CONGRESS MINISTRIES

The years 1937, 38 and 39 were, in a sense, momentous years in the political history of India, for they were years during which Congress, the most important political party in the country, was experimenting with provincial autonomy under the Government of India Act of 1935, which, according to Mr. Jinnah's estimate of it, was 98 per cent safeguards and 2 per cent responsibility.

During the twenty-seven months that the Congress ministries were in office in seven out of eleven provinces in the country, from July 1937 to October 1939, they could have set an example to the world, of government and administration conducted in the spirit of 'wisdom, sobriety and right direction,' with due respect for opposition, by hastening slowly with social and other reforms, and, with foresight to win over the most important minority in the country to their side. They did win golden opinions from the Governors, and they complimented the Governors in return, for not putting into force the safeguards. But they did not show similar responsibility and level-headedness in their behaviour with the electorates that had sent them to power. If the Congresss had exhibited a due spirit of co-operation with other parties in the country; if it had shed off the high-handedness and intolerance which, perhaps, were justifiable when it was a militant party opposed to Government and bent upon

having its own at any cost; if it had shown the spirit of give-and-take which ought to mark all constructive work in responsible position, it would have certainly been in a stronger position than it proved to be when it asked its ministries to resign office at the end of 1939.

"Office discovers a man" is a familiar saying, and office also discovers a party. In that balance was Congress being weighed when it decided to accept office and work the Act. We shall know how it had acquitted itself as we proceed in our narrative, and then we can judge how far it had kept its many promises given to the people in its election manifesto. The Congress had in its early years derided the foreign bureaucracy for its slogan of "everything for the people but not by them." But in 1937, when the apostles of the Congress had come in power, it behaved with hauteur and indifference that cast into shade the attitude of the bureaucrat towards the people. The fiats of the Congress Working Committee and the Parliamentary Sub-Committee were all in all to the Ministries in power, and they had no scruples to ride rough-shod over opinions and proposals of the opposition in the Legislatures.

With these fiats to guide them, they believed, perhaps, that now that they were in power, with the Governors and the Services behind them, nothing else mattered. It was this spirit that was the undoing of the Congress with those who did not blindly swear by it. Those who had insisted, when out of power, that Government should seek to conciliate them, did not care, when they themselves became the Government, to be magnanimous in their behaviour with other parties in the country. And when Congress committed the greatest political blunder of its life in calling upon its Ministries to resign office, the storm that was

brewing against it burst out in the country with full fury and proved once again the folly of extremism, and showed how it defeats the very end it seeks to accomplish.

The loudest condemnation of its policy and administration came, of course, from the Muslim League. But it should not be forgotten, at the same time, that other parties in the country had not received a square deal from the Congress during its twenty-seven months' regime in the country. The Liberal estimate of that policy will be the subject of this chapter. With the end of the Congress administration in India had closed one phase and that the most useful phase of its political career. The war had opened another phase the end of which is not yet in sight. The Liberal Conferences of 1937, 38 and 39, deal with the political situation as it had developed out of the first phase. First it is necessary to deal with the impasse the Congress had created after its success in the general elections, and prior to its accepting office in July 1937.

INTERRGNUM

As we know, the Congress had secured a distinct majority in the Lower House in six out of the eleven provinces, and in two other provinces it was the biggest single party with the prospect of winning a majority in combination with minor groups which generally agreed with it. How was it going to utilise these majorities? At the start it had maintained that it would use them to combat and end the Act. After the elections the All-India Congress Committee passed a resolution, which, in substance, declared that it would permit acceptance of office in provinces where Congress commanded a majority in the Legislatures,

"provided the leader of the Congress party in the Legislature was satisfied and was able to declare publicly that the Governor will not use his special powers of inter-

ference, or set aside the advice of the Ministers in regard to their constitutional activities."

The controversy between the Governor and the leader of the Congress Party began over this specific point at issue, in Madras and Bihar, and the reply given by the Governors to the Congress demand was that

"under their instrument of instructions it was impossible for them to divest themselves of the responsibilities and duties which were placed upon their shoulders by Parliament, and as such it was not in their power to give any such guarantee, though they assured, that the leaders would receive all possible help, sympathy and co-operation from them in the event of their forming the Ministries."

Lord Erskine in Madras assured Mr. C. Rajagopalachariar, that as representative of the King Emperor he was above party-politics altogether and, therefore, would extend his utmost help, sympathy and support to any ministry from whatever section of political opinion it might be drawn. To this Mr. Rajagopalachariar gave a long reply the gist of which may be stated in his own words:

"I regret to say that beyond a general offer of goodwill and co-operation, His Excellency has refused to assist us with any assurance of non-interference formal or informal. He wanted from the Governor 'a gentleman's agreement' that his own discretionary powers of interference as a Provincial Governor should not be put in motion."

On this initial impasse Mr. Gandhi wrote on 31st March 1937 to the effect that "as the sole author of the office acceptance clause his desire was not to lay down any impossible conditions. There was no intention whatever to lay down conditions whose acceptance would mean the slightest abrogation of the Constitution." And he added a comment on the Government Communique in his usual, characteristic vein as follows:—

"By flouting a majority obtained through the machinery of their creation they, in plain language, ended autonomy, which they claim the constitution had given to the provinces. The rule, therefore, will now be a rule of the sword, not of the pen nor of the indisputable majority."

When interim ministries had been formed, and began to function in the so-called Congress Provinces, the first to shout out in triumph was no other than Mr. K. M. Munshi who afterwards became Home Member responsible for Law and Order, in the Government of Bombay. He declared jubiliantly that "at the first touch of the popular will, without firing a shot, the constitution had fallen."

We are not concerned here with the war of words that went on between the two sides for three months when at last the Congress decided in favour of office-acceptance as it felt soothed by the words of the Viceroy, which, strictly speaking, did not go beyond what Lord Erskine had told Mr. Rajagopalachariar in the beginning of the controversy. However, on the 7th of July 1937, after protracted discussions, the Congress Working Committee resolved as follows:—

"The Working Committee has carefully considered these declarations and is of opinion that though they exhibit a desire to make an approach to the Congress demand, they fall short of the assurance demanded in terms of the All-India Congress Committee resolution as interpreted by the Working Committee resolution of 28th April 1937. The Committee feels, however, that the situation created as a result of the circumstances and events that have since occurred warrants the belief that it will not be easy for the Governors to use their special powers. The Committee has therefore come to the conclusion and resolves that Congressmen be permitted to accept office where they may be invited thereto."

One is inclined to think, without being unfair to the Congress dictator, that he had adopted a certain stiff attitude at the start to placate the Congress So-

cialists and radicals, but when he had realised how the wind was blowing he used strong language only to climb down in the end and fall in with the views of Mr. C. Rajagopalachariar who was the prime mover in the Congress Party in favour of office acceptance. The speeches of Lord Zetland, Lord Erskine, and Lord Linlithgow were only used as a cover to conveniently retract from the position forced upon the Congress junta by "enemies in the camp." No guarantee was given of the kind demanded by the Congress and no guarantee could be given under the Act as framed by British Parliament. This point was made clear at the very start of the controversy by Sir Chimanlal Setalvad in Bombay and by Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru at Allahabad, with whose words, we end this part of the subject.

The Council of the Western India Liberal Association in its meeting of the 31st March 1937, with Sir Chimanlal Setalvad in the chair, made its position clear on the main issue in the controversy. It deplored the refusal of the Congress to take office. It reiterated its dislike of many of the safeguards in the New Constitution which it characterised as its ugliest features. And it then resolved as follows:—

"When the Act requires the Governor to act with regard to certain functions in his discretion it does not mean that it is open to him to refrain from exercising these functions. These functions and responsibilities are imposed upon him by the Act. He cannot divest himself of those functions which are obligatory. Mr. Rajagopala chariar is, therefore, asking for what he himself disowns, namely, the amendment of the Statute. It is not, therefore, constitutionally or legally correct for the Congress Party to ask for the assurance in the form in which they made it or for the Governor to give such an assurance. The condition in the form in which it was put was unfortunately drafted, for, on the face of it, it means and involves what Mr. Gandhi says he never intended."

Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru wrote on the matter on April 2, 1937, endorsing the opinion expressed by the Council of the Western India Liberal Association in Bombay two days earlier. He said,

"On the legal side I have no doubt whatsoever that the interpretation of the Act by the Governors is right and they could not, as long as the Act stands on the Statute Book, contract themselves out of their statutory obligations and responsibilities. He would not, if he agreed to such a proposal, be establishing a convention, he would be legislating." Later on Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru deplored that "there is a strange fatality in our affairs and generally it takes the shape of formulae which lead to unexpected results."

All the same the deadlock had ended as a result of the Viceroy's statement which, as we have pointed out, gave no assurance demanded by the Congress but added that they might count upon him in the face of even bitter disappointment, to strive untiringly towards the full and final establishment in India of the principles of parliamentary government. The views of Congress members in the Legislatures and of Congressmen generally were in favour of office-acceptance. Both the statement and the views of Congressmen except the leftists in the camp weighed with the Committee in its final decision, though in the resolution on that matter it asserted "that office is to be accepted and utilised for the purpose of working in accordance with the lines laid down in the Congress election manifesto, and to further in every possible way the Congress policy of combating the new Act on the one hand and prosecuting a constructive programme on the other."

How the two objects, mutually conflicting, cannot be pursued at the same time was well pointed out in the presidential address of Sir Cowasji Jehangir from which we have already quoted in the last chapter. We now turn to the Liberal Party's appreciation of Con-

gress work in the provinces from 1937 to the end of 1939. It must be said, at the outset, that the Liberals did not condemn that work wholesale or look upon the day when the Congress Ministries resigned their office at the bidding of the 'high command,' as 'a deliverance day' for the whole of India. On the other hand, they did not belaud it to the skies as some provincial Governors had done it.

A WARNING NOTE

The Liberal view-point has never been denigration on the one hand or fulsome flattery on the other. And we notice the attitude in the very first sitting of the Liberal Conference after the Congress had assumed office in July 1937. We refer to the session of the Federation at the end of 1937 held at Calcutta. Mr. Basu, as Chairman of its Reception Committee, expressed satisfaction on the acceptance-of-office resolution of the Congress Working Committee as follows·

"We are glad that the Congress Party, which is the most powerful political organisation in India and has won majorities in the legislatures in seven out of the eleven provinces of India, has accepted the resposibility of administration in those seven provinces. It is a good augury for our future that the idealism which has characterised the Congress movement and its great leaders during the past 18 years is now being deliberately weighted with the ballast of realism. Faced with the realities of the day-to-day working of the State in all its departments, a fund of experience will be accumulated which will help the people in achieving further advance."

On the duty of the Congress Ministries, now in power, Mr. Basu spoke as follows:

"The responsibilities of provincial Ministers are great. The desire to please some factions may sometimes predominate. Real and lasting progress can be achieved expeditiously if the way is so laid out as to enable all to participate in the endeavour instead of confining the work to any particular faction."

What was still more important, he warned those in office not to forget small minorities like the Parsis, the Christians and others. Nothing should be done to trample their rights or harm their interests. While proposing Sir Chimanlal Setalvad to the Chair Mr. Chintamani summed up, in anticipation, the policy of the Congress in power as of those

"who in the moment of triumph seek to tread the path of despots, while muttering the accents of democracy; and may have, perhaps, to regret the excesses committed by them in the fullness of pride and in the moment of success."

The treatment meted out by the Congress High Command to Messrs. Nariman, Khare and Bose are instances in point, as also the planting of the Congress flag on Houses of Legislature and the singing of the Bande Mataram in the Legislatures themselves, and forbidding one of the Speakers from proceeding to England to see and study for himself—incidents which may very well have been avoided, and the avoidance of which would not have cost the Congress, indeed, in prestige and power, and would have saved it considerably the acerbation of feeling roused in the country by this display of self-assertion and arrogance.

Sir Chimanlal Setalvad in the early part of his presidental address used the following words regarding the Congress victory in the general elections. "I claim that the Liberal Party won a signal victory not at the poll—but in the acceptance of liberal principles and constitutional methods by the Congress." And he quoted in support of his claim the comment of a leading Congressman, now a minister, that the Working Committee's resolution on the acceptance of office was "simply a resolution of the Lucknow Session of the Liberal Federation re-written in Congress language." Sir Chimanlal further observed that by this resolve "the prospective wreckers had become ardent work-

ers." And five months' experience of office had made one Congress Minister say, "Whatever may be the defects of the Government of India Act, it has enabled us to wield power for the good of the masses." He, then, remarked that so far the Congress had done well. But the Ministers will do better if they do not allow themselves to be pushed by their clamorous following into undesirable steps and do not attempt too many things at the same time. "One hears incessantly of overhauling this and overhauling that, but any hasty action in changing systems and methods without mature consideration must lead to disaster."

In that spirit Sir Chimanlal Setalvad reviewed some of the measures which the Ministries were thinking of adopting not because the Electorates wanted them but because the Congress High Command had laid down the law in their favour. Two of such schemes were those of Prohibition and Basic Education which had commended themselves to the Mahatma at Wardha. The Scheme to make education self-supporting and to turn the State Universities into mere examining bodies came in for the following trenchant criticism from him. He said,

"It is no use in modern times sighing for old old days when people could sit carefree under trees in philosophic contemplation. Those days are gone, never to return. The impact of the modern materialistic world would not let India alone, and if she is to hold her position she must compete in the world with modern methods and implements. I cannot conceive any more retrograde measure than turning the Universities into mere examining machines, and it would be an irony of fate, if such course is adopted by Ministers who are most of them products of the Universities." As regards Basic education, he said, "The idea to give our elementary education a vocational bias is good but, to attempt to make it self-supporting by the sale of articles manufactured by the pupils appears to be inadvisable and impracticable. The proposal to devote only a little more than one hour to general education and

nearly four times as much for some particular craft is quite disproportionate. And where are you going to get teachers versed in all crafts? Further if 30 millions of school going children are to turn out really marketable articles what would be the effect on cottage industries producing the same or similar articles? All this shows the danger of paper schemes evolved theoretically. Cultural education is necessary for training the mind and vocational education should not be imposed till after a certain age."

Sir Chimanlal Setalvad characterised these proposals as fads and warned those concerned to guide themselves in these high matters by sound thinking and a sane, practical outlook on life. In a similar spirit, both critical and sympathetic, he examined the Congress projects about rural indebtedness and raising the wages of labour.

Then he came to the Congress demand for a Constituent Assembly for framing a constitution for India. The words, in the present context, are worth noting,

"A constituent Assembly is known in history when existing Government has been overthrown and sovereign people want to establish a new constitution. An appeal to a foreign government to call such an Assembly is indeed a novel idea. And what is to happen if and when such an Assembly is called? How are matters to be decided if the Moslems and other minorities do not agree with Congress proposals? If some agreement is arrived at, is the British Parliament to be requested to give effect to the resolutions of the Constituent Assembly? And if the British Parliament decline to give effect to the proposals, what then? To talk of a Constituent Assembly under present circumstances is to ignore realities."

THE HANDICAP

The Congress Ministries seeking to do their best for the provinces in their charge were labouring under a serious handicap. It was not the special powers of the Governors but the Congress High Command's undue dictation to, and interference with, them in their day to day administration. About this travesty of de-

mocracy both Sir Chimanlal Setalvad and Rt. Hon. Mr. Sastri spoke at the Conference in very severe terms. Sir Chimanlal said,

"It is a grievous mistake for the working committee to claim to examine and pronounce upon the individual acts of Ministers in the various provinces. The Committee should only confine itself to laying down broad general principles of the party and leave the Ministers free in their administrative acts. Unfortunately a wrong constitutional principle appears to have been laid down by the present President of the Congress. He asserts that the Ministers are not directly responsible to the electorate but their responsibility is to the Congress and only indirectly through it to the electorate. If this proposition is accepted, there is grave danger of fascism developing in the Congress organisation. Not only would the Ministers but all the members of the Congress will lose their independence of judgment."

The Rt. Hon. Mr. Sastri, in a recent pronouncement, has referred, in his inimitable language, to this danger. He deprecated party politics which would do away with independence of judgment and compel people to speak, act and vote at someone else's bidding. He pointed out that the High Command of the Congress was developing into a dictatorial body resenting criticism not only from outsiders but from their own rank and file. "This inculcation of her mentality among even the intelligentsia of the country was regrettable." The Nariman-Khare-Bose episodes in Congress history had vividly brought home to the world this dictatorial and fascist policy of the Congress High Command. Strange as it may sound, Mr. Bose was sacked as also Mr. Khare, on the initiative and insistence of Mr. Gandhi himself. The non-violent dictator of the Congress, it struck outsiders, brooked no rival near the throne. He tolerated Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru simply because he knew that however much Jawaharlal might roar like a lion on the platform, he surrendered

like a gentle lamb to the stroking hand of the Mahatma.

Sir Chimanlal Setalvad then touched the question of unity and in that connection referred to the Congress Muslim mass contact programme and the selection of Muslims members of Congress Cabinets. Here are his words upon the topic in question.

"It was at Lucknow in 1916 that a complete understanding and agreement was arrived at between the Congress and the League. It is an irony of fate that it was at Lucknow again in 1937 that a complete breach took place between these two bodies and the Muslim League has declared open war against the Congress. Charging the Hindus with the desire to crush Moslems and trample upon their rights, of retaliation against Hindus by Moslems in power in some provinces, talking of Muslim India and Hindu India on the one hand, and belittling the Muslim League and the attempt to ignore the national leaders of the Moslem community by so-called Muslim mass contact on the other, will not only do no good but worsen the situation."

In this statement Sir Chimanlal found fault with Jinnah for his charge against the Congress, and with Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru for his vehement attack on the Muslim League, and with his declaration as Congress President, that he would never recognise the League but over its head establish contact with the Muslim masses and overbear it. We know today how the attitude of Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru gave Mr. Jinnah a convenient handle to strike the Congress with, and to organise and strengthen the Muslim League as a rival in power to the great national institution.

THE RESULT OF HIGH HANDEDNESS

Sir Chimanlal Setalvad saw the danger ahead and, therefore, warned both Mr. Jinnah and the Congress not to behave so recklessly. He definitely said about the Congress in 1937,

"I do not think the Congress wants to harm the Muslims, but even assuming that the Congress is not well disposed towards the Muslims, why accuse the whole Hindu community of hostility to the Moslems? Surely the Congress does not comprise the whole Hindu community and there are non-communal parties and organisations outside the Congress. I was surprised to see it reported that my friend Mr. Jinnah had said that the Hindus wanted to do away with the separate electorates in order to crush the Moslems. All the many years that I have known Mr. Jinnah as a personal friend and a political leader of large vision and deep patriotism, he has always been in favour of joint electorates and I am unable to understand this sudden change in his views on the matter."

And then in his reading of the situation at the end of 1937, he accounted for the change as follows:

"I am afraid the Congress has given great provocation by trying to ignore the Muslim League and to go over the heads of the Moslem leaders to the Moslem masses. Such an attempt can only lead to further disruption among the Muslims and render more difficult an honourable understanding between the two communities. In provinces where the Congress are in a majority in the Legislatures they have not given a fair deal to the Moslems in choosing the Moslem members of the cabinet. The very essence and test of inclusion of a Moslem member in the Cabinet as representative of that community is, that such person should command the confidence of the majority of the Moslem members in the Legislature. It is not carrying out the spirit of the provision for representation of minorities in the cabinet to take a Moslem member who is ready, on the eve of the formation of a Cabinet and with the prospect of being included in it, to sign the Congress creed although he may not possess the confidence of the majority of the Moslem members of the Legislature. It should be considered enough if the most suitable person commanding the confidence of his Moslem colleagues in the legislature, is prepared with the concurrence of his associates to agree to the programme of the Congress Cabinet. If the majority of the Moslem Legislators do not agree to his adopting the Cabinet's programme then certainly the Prime Minister is at liberty to choose any Moslem he likes."

If the Congress Ministries had started their work with the formation of coalition cabinets on the plan suggested as strictly constitutional by Sir Chimanlal Setalvad, much of the trouble that followed would certainly have been avoided. Mr. Jinnah's bitter complaint against the Congress in 1935 and 1936 had been that it refused to recognise the Muslim League as representing the bulk of Muslim Community. And he was further incensed when he found that in the choice of a Muslim to be included in the Congress Cabinet, the Congress authorities had deliberately flouted the opinion of the Muslim League. The Congress felt then, flushed with victory as it was, that "it can make and unmake kings." Why care then for the Muslim League? It found to its cost later on that it had reckoned without its host. That was the danger against which Sir Chimanlal Setalvad warned the Congress High Command at the end of 1937. He concluded his criticism with the following observation which deserves to be noted here,

"The trouble in this matter is that the Congress flushed with victory at the polls in various provinces, ignores and refuses to recognise any other party or view opposed to their own. In this direction lies great danger not only to the Congress party but to the proper development of National Democratic Government. I entirely agree with what Mr. Jayakar said in his Convocation address at Lucknow about this feature of the Congress mentality. He said that he hoped that in their desire to erase all opposition and establish themselves in the seat of Power the new Government does not become what one may briefly call on authoritarian state using every 'instrument at its command for the inculcation of its own political views and the suppression of those which are regarded as unfavourable to its strength and permanence.'"

We have to make room here for the observations of Rt. Hon. Mr. Sastri on the same topic for without them the Liberal mind on the whole subject will not

be completely represeented. In moving the Conference Resolution on the New Act, Mr. Sastri dealt first with the Federation to be, then with the attitude of the Princes to it, and last on Congress Ministries and the High Command that dictated the policy. Before he came to the Congress Government in the Provinces, Mr. Sastri said that he was sorry to think that the relations between Hindus and Muslims had in recent days been assuming worse and worse forms; that Sir Chimanlal was one of those at the R.T.C., when everything had seemed dark and depressing, who still held out hopes and never ceased to urge both on Hindus and Muslims that their best interests lay in being fully reconciled on whatever terms might be acceptable; that his hopes were never abandoned till the last extremity; that they had been dashed to the ground, and that Muslim League was running full tilt at the Hindu Maha Sabha and at the Indian National Congress and openly avowing sentiments of hostility towards these bodies. He then asserted that the Communal Award had created these troubles in the country by perpetuating separate electorates and thus separating interests into several groups that were likely to stand in the way of our achieving unity amongst our people. He affirmed, that he had no doubt that the award was calculated to bring about that disaster, and, perhaps, some of their friends were correct in saying that it was meant also towards that end,

"The greater, therefore, was the responsibility of the party in power to do nothing by speech and action to lend countenance to the opinion, even in the slightest degree, that they were out to crush others and throttle their independence. The Congress High Command and the President of the Congress year spoke as if they were out to fight the Princes, fight the Muslims, fight the British Government, wreck the Act and win complete independence. The President emphasised that the question of the minorities must wait till complete independence had been achieved. He

refused to rcognise the Muslim League and claimed that the Congress by launching the campaign of Muslim Mass Contact would prove before long that the claim of the League to represent the Muslims was a hollow claim. This attitude along with the insistence that the High Command's word was the last word not only in the policy but in the administration of the provinces, and that the Congress majorities implied exclusively Congress Ministries had really raised the Muslim League to power and made its president the sole dictator of its policy. The totalitarian attitude of the Congress had begotten the totalitarian attitude of the Muslim League."

This danger and disaster, men like Sastri and Setalvad had sensed from a distance, and hence they warned the Congress Ministries and the caucus that dictated to them against the policy they were tempted to adopt in their hour of victory. Said Mr. Sastri,

"I am not one of those who are disposed to be unduly critical of the work of the Indian National Congress during the four or five months that they have held office. On the whole I think they have done well, and in their endeavours to carry out their election promises they are entitled, so far as we can consistently do so, to our co-operation and support. I am a member of the Legislature in Madras and in that capacity I am a discriminating supporter of Congress policy and Congress measures."

After having said so much to assure the outside world that Liberal criticism of Congress measures was not criticism inspired by hostility or by opposition for the sake of opposition, Mr. Sastri deprecated the attitude of the High Command as being the very reverse of democracy. He said,

"Every where there seems to be a caucus which wants to regulate the activities of all members, and unfortunately even the members themselves are quite willing to surrender their freedom and act more or less as automatons in the work of legislation and administration. I view these developments with some alarm. He told the Conference that a prominent member of Government in Madras expressed in the legislature that 'as Congress members of

the Legislature have been elected by the suffrages of the people they were entitled to proceed just as they liked."

Yes, put down anti-Hindi agitation by the use of force; throttle freedom of speech by driving out a Congress Socialist from the Province on the plea that the freedom he was claiming was not civil freedom but 'criminal freedom'; refuse the separation of the judicial and executive functions in the province on the plea that the people were now in power and not the bureaucracy; pursue a sort of repression for which they had blamed the Government that had preceeded them; put down labour strike by recourse to firing and lathi charge—in fact do in the name of law and order, all they had blamed the Government for doing when they were not in office. Mr. Sastri characterised this attitude as undemocratic—"an idea more undemocratic I cannot conceive of." He said

"the Congress governments will not be doing their duty fully unless they re-ascertain in a definite form the views of the electorates on the various provisions, and furthermore make concessions to the strong wishes of non-Congress parties of the Legislature, thus guaranteeing that any measure that was finally enacted was representative not only of the Congress programme but of the wishes and sentiments of all sections of the population. That is a lesson of the classical nature of democracy which I think will not be without profit for Congress Governments now functioning."

They did not follow the lesson in enforcing prohibition in the country; they did not profit by it in adopting the Wardha Scheme of education; they did not think of it in imposing additional taxation—property-tax in Bombay—and in sacrificing revenue in order that prohibition might be started on its beneficent career. They brushed it aside in suppressing honest criticism on their proposal, and in subsidising party newspapers to boom it. In Bombay the decision of the High Court alone pulled them up. Was that a

policy any way different from that of autocracy? They did not mind it in constituting their ministries; and they ignored it altogether when they set about tackling the Hindu-Mahomedan question.

THE CONGRESS POLICY

The twenty-first session of the National Liberal Federation of India was held at Allahabad in December 1939 under the presidentship of Dr. R. P. Paranjpye and in his address he reviewed the work of the Congress Ministries in India which was brought to a sudden end in October 1939, because the Congress Working Committee had so willed it.

"It is now time to take stock of the situation and examine the prospects of democracy in India. In the first place the fears entertained by the British die-hards about the transfer of law and order to popularly elected ministries have on the whole proved unfounded. One can say in general that responsible government in the provinces had proved moderately successful. The Ministers have worked hard and done their best to carry out their programme, though signs of inordinate hurry, want of previous experience, and excessive anxiety to consolidate their own party rather than advance the interests of the country as a whole and conciliate minorities, have been but too evident. Policies have been followed and legislation has been enacted which have not produced all the effects desired. Occasionally there has been a tendency to ride-rough-shod over classes in which their opponents have predominance. Inspite of high sounding phrases on their lips most of the ministries have not shown themselves better than the previous bureaucratic Governments in the distribution of patronage or to be above manipulating rules and regulations to get their own supporters out of tight corners."

This criticism has given praise where praise was due, it has adjudged blame where blame was unavoidable. The mistakes that the Congress Ministries committed were due, more or less, to the fact that they were not their own masters, and were responsible to

those in whom there was no responsibility. As Dr. Paranjpye put it,

"they were the bond-slaves of a small junta called the Parliamentary Committee and of the Mahatma who really controls all organisations of the Congress and whose word is law. The electors are only expected to vote once in five years for the candidates representing the Congress and take part in periodical demonstrations for the greater glory of the Mahatma or any of his henchmen of greater or less importance. As for the Congress members of the Legislatures, **'theirs is not to question why, theirs is but to vote and lie' often to their own convictions.. All this goes under the name of discipline which is said to be necessary in a time of war, even of a non-violent character. I can appreciate a sense of discipline in any organised body of individuals, but it should be so exercised as not to kill all sense of self-respect or independent judgment. I can understand the Congress laying down general lines of policy and comparing notes at intervals.. But when it comes to one member of the Parliamentary Committee interfering in the choice of the personnel of the Cabinet, or in the details of administration or legislative measures or even, if rumour is not a lying jade, in matters of appointments great and small, in three or four provinces, we are no longer within the domain of legitimate discipline but are dreadfully close to Fascism or Nazism.**

ITS REACTION ON MUSLIMS

Dr. Paranjpye then regretted that Mussulmans and the Muslim League were following the same method of politics as the Congress, and that Mr. Jinnah was claiming to be the Muslim Mahatma whose word was law and who could take any decisions he liked without the considered judgment of his members of the Muslim League. Such a decision was the proclamation of the deliverance day—a day of thanksgiving at the resignation of Congress ministries that was observed all over India. Dr. Paranjpye observed, "Mr. Jinnah had not yet learnt all the tricks of Mahatma ship, but appeared to be getting on."

Who can say to-day that he has not gone one better than the Congress Mahatma and was beating the Congress dictator at his own game? The Muslim League was not an organisation worth anything in 1935, it became firmly knit up in 1937 and went on from strength to strength till it had become a formidable oppnent of the Congress at the end of 1939. About the tension during this period between the Congress and the League, Dr. Paranjpye had some wise words to say. The League had prepared a charge sheet against the Congress ministries based on three reports which came out after the Congress had resigned office. But the charges were answered by the authorities as being in the main baseless and without any support in facts. Yet Mr. Jinnah kept on shouting from platform to platform and indicted the Hindu community, as a whole, as out to kill Muslim culture and keep Muslims in perpetual bondage. All these accusations were simply the outbursts of a fanatic. Dr. Paranjpye himself thought that the alleged charges were not serious and could not be sustained, but if the differences were to be composed and the strain was to be relieved then leaders on both sides must speak and act sensibly. He said:—

"if any body is bent on finding causes for grousing he can always find them. But sensible leaders should take care not to attach an exaggerated importance to trifling matters and should try to smooth out such matters. On the side of the majority party there is too great an insistence on non-essentials, which are being represented as matters of vital national concern. Thus the stress laid upon the Congress flag and the attempts to force it down upon all as a national flag leads to the Muslim League insisting upon its own flag. After all a flag is a mere symbol and it should be a symbol of unity rather than of discord. The same is the case with the Bande Mataram song, the charka, the Khaddar and the Gandhi cap. All these may be very good in their own way but the attempts to

force them down the throats of others even though they may be in a numerical minority, only help to accentuate the tension. Where the large and more vital questions have been satisfactorily settled, and there is a general feeling of friendliness everywhere, it would not be difficult to devise a national flag or to have a national anthem acceptable to all. I am not particularly attracted by a special party uniform as it seems to be an imitation of the black or brown shirts of the Fascists and Nazis; still I consider that a generally accepted national dress will add to the solidarity of the country though this should evolve of itself rather than be specially invented and forced upon everybody. Similar remarks can be made about the Vidya Mandir Scheme and other alleged causes of difference. The leaders should try to keep such matters in the background rather than bring them prominently forward. But unfortunately this is exactly what is often not being done."

But the root cause of this strained relation was something else. It was, as Dr. Paranjpye put it, "the amour-propre of both sides. The Congress claimed that it alone represented the whole nation, including the Musulmans. The Muslim League desired to be recognised as the only body representing the Muslims. The Congress was undoubtedly the biggest and the best organised political body in the country. But it cannot be regarded on that account as the sole representative of all sections in the country. A large body of Muslims, the Depressed classes and other interests in the body-politic, do not admit that claim and further think that their best interests are not safe in its hands. The Kissan movement and the labour movement have been critical of its aims and methods. The progressive Hindu opinion is also not the sole monopoly of the Congress as we know if only we recall the names of Savarkar, Moonje and Bhai Parmanand. The Indian States, since its fulminations against them, look at it with an eye askance. No doubt it commands huge majorities in many a British Province but that was ex-

plained "by the general existence of single membered constituencies which tend to leave minorities unrepresented, and more than that even, by the glamour attaching to Mr. Gandhi's name and personality."

What can we say of the Muslim League? Here also Dr. Paranjpye's analysis is correct and impartial. He admits that so far as Muslims are concerned it is at present the most important and best organised political body in the country. The intense background of religion had given it a solidarity in which the voice of dissidence had no room to express itself. It may be yet said, because of other sections in Islam that may not be vocal and that yet are there, like Shias, Momins and others, that in general terms the claim of the Muslim League is as well or ill-founded as that of the Congress. But the worst of the situation was, as Dr. Paranjpye put it, that

"both these bodies are making these claims a matter of prestige, and when in any dispute prestige comes in, common sense and sanity are sure to go out." He traced the tension to its root-cause by pointing out **"that the large majorities which the Congress had in seven provinces appeared to have turned its head, and its want of consideration to its opponents had made all minorities feel disgruntled and sullen.. If no victory in constitutional ways or argument can avail, people's minds naturally turn to extra-constitutional ways of action. The Congress party in the Legislatures should learn the lesson of the saying 'It is good to have a giant's strength, but it is cruel to use it like a gaint'."**

We may add the rider to it, it is not only cruel, but it recoils like a boomrang and, not unoften, proves the ruin of the cause for which it is being exerted and spent. The story of the hostility and fight between the Congress and the Muslim League from 1937 to this day is an instance in point, with its sequel of Pakistan and all that will be added on to it.

To sum up, we quote the following from a considered statement on the subject issued by the Council of the Western Indian National Liberal Association at the end of 1939. The President of the Council is Sir Chimanlal Setalvad, and the statement reviewed the work of the Congress ministry in Bombay, though the observations made in it are *mutatis mutandis* true of Congress governments in seven provinces of India during twenty-seven months of its regime from July 1937 to October 1939. *Inter alia* the statement says:—

"It may be truly said that at the end of twenty-seven months, the confidence of the public in the government of the Congress Party has been very much shaken. In their over-zeal to produce a new heaven and a new earth in the shortest time possible and driven by the pressure of the High Command, the Bombay Cabinet rushed through the legislature one enactment after another in such a hurry that they themselves did not realise the full implications of what they were doing and the public had hardly any breathing time to digest and make their comments on such legislative proposals. In some cases, bills were introduced and immediately referred to a Select Committee with instructions to report within a few days and the Bills became enactments before anybody had time to realise what had happened. During the last 27 months, they put on the Statute Book 56 enactments. They carried their financial measures without due thought and investigation. In the case of the Sales-Tax, though a long time has elapsed, they have not been able to devise any machinery for its collection. They appointed no less than 26 Committees to deal with a variety of problems. This wild craze of reforming and overhauling everything soon developed the mentality in the Ministers and the Congress Bloc in the Assembly of resenting all opposition and treating it with scorn and contempt. Persons honestly opposing their views were practically regarded as enemies and treated as such. Their expropriatory measures like the Bombay Tenancy Act and the Money Lenders' Bill, without proper and sufficient enquiry, have dislocated the credit structure on which the agriculturists and small traders depended for their finance.

While they have enacted legislation in such indecent haste they have deliberately avoided carrying out the reform of the separation of the Executive and Judicial functions which had been advocated from Congress platforms for over half a century and which is urgently needed. The obvious inference was that the Congress Government desired to continue to retain, like the previous bureaucratic Government, control over the Judiciary in the province.

The civil liberties of the people were encroached upon and section 144 of the Criminal Procedure Code, and the Criminal Law Amendment Act, and the Press Emergency Act, which the Congress had condemned and had pledged to abrogate when they came into power, were freely used by the Bombay Cabinet. A notable instance of encroachment of the liberty of the Press was that of the order under Section 144 Cr. P.C. on some newspapers in Bombay which was set aside by the Bombay High Court. They further undermined the independence of the Press by giving substantial subsidies to certain newspapers for the purpose of securing artificial support to their prohibition policy.

Their policy of hasty introduction of complete prohibition in the city of Bombay and the Suburbs has met with severe public condemnation. This policy was both hasty and ill-considered. It meant the indiscriminate loss of excise revenue that did not bring in its train encouraging consequences as were expected from that policy."

The Council was constrained to observe that, unfortunately, the Congress Cabinets intoxicated by power, carried away by their over zeal and whipped to action by the High Command, forgot the essentials of democratic government—spirit of adjustment, accommodation, compromise, and toleration. Hence failure was writ large on the performance of these cabinets from the very start of their career in office.

CHAPTER XIX

THE WAR

With the outbreak of the World War II in Europe in September 1939, our narrative brings us to events in the political history of India which are familiar to all. The War had one bad effect immediately, and that was the resignation of Congress Ministries in seven out of eleven provinces of India, which meant the passing of these provinces under the control of Governors with their advisers, under Section 93 of the Government of India Act of 1935. The Muslim League hailed the change as 'deliverance'. But it forgot that the change had put a yoke on the provinces and brought back the rule of bureaucracy as it had obtained prior to 1892. The Legislatures had ceased to function, and questions of the deepest moment to the country were disposed of without reference to public opinion by the fiat and the ordinance of the Governors and the Governor-General. The Mohamedans suffered under such a rule as much as the Hindus, in that neither had any voice whatsoever in the administration of these provinces.

INDIFFERENCE TO POPULAR WILL

War had made the Government of India more autocratic and irresponsible than it was under the Montagu Act of 1919. The Central Legislative Assembly had no doubt continued to function along with the Council of State in the Central Government, but Government practically ruled by ordinances of one kind or another, without regard to what the two legislatures thought of them. The days of war are always days of

autocratic rule for any country in the world. But in India this autocracy had reached its height of indifference to popular will without parallel anywhere else, except in countries that were avowedly authoritarian in law and fact.

It was this feeling in the country that had made the bulk of its people opposed to Government, as they were opposed to Muslim recalcitrance on the one hand and Congress non-co-operation on the other. Since the outbreak of the War, the Muslim League, presuming to speak for all the Mohamedans of India, had become a great stumbling block in the country's advance to self-government. On the other hand Congress thought of nothing else since then but civil disobedience, complete independence and abstension from all war effort. The War, again, had brought into sharp relief the problem of self-defence, of the Indianisation of the army, of the industrialisation of the country, and of taking the people of India into greater confidence by the Government in power. It had brought about a stalemate in the country as between Great Britain and the Congress on the one hand, and as between the Muslim League and the Congress on the other. In politics it had made the work of all other parties in the country ineffectual, for it had divided Hindus from Mahomedans, and made the purposes of unity, and of provisional national Government at the Centre and coalition ministries in the provinces inoperative. The Government would not listen to any via-media proposed by any non-party or party conference as a way out of the impasse.

The Government, though willing to make up, on its own terms, with the Congress, had not made any offer, before the Cripps proposals in 1942, that was calculated to satisfy and win over even the most moderate political opinion in India. Its ringing changes on

the new notorious declaration of 1940 had satisfied none. It had put out the Congress, it had failed to appease the Muslim League, it had not won the support of even such non-party leaders as Sapru and Jayakar. Mr. Amery's attitude all these years had been one of obstinate reiteration, and the Viceroy was no better than his Master at home.

INADEQUATE AND DISAPPOINTING

The proposal of a Consultative Committee, then of an expanded and Indianised Executive Council at the Centre, with Finance still in the hands of a civilian and European Member, had cut no ice. Even their promises of Dominion Status to India on terms of perfect equality with England and its other colonies, after the conclusion of the War, had failed to conciliate India. For India remembered to her cost the lavish promises made to her at the first Round Table Conference, and immediately before it, and Mr. Churchill's occasional references to India, had made matters still worse. The Cripps proposals failed, among other reasons, because of this essential suspicion and distrust; the "Quit India" resolution—without forgetting the tremendous harm it had done to India,—was bred of this suspicion, and the deadlock today had been the bitter fruit of obstinacy on both the sides with the added pugnacity of the Muslims on the question of Pakistan. To make dominion status wait upon unity when it should have been used as a solvent of all discord in the country, as was done in Canada and South Africa, was the height of impertinence on the part of British rulers of India, when they themselves had sown the seed of disunion by introducing separate and communal electorates for Muslims in 1909. It was an insult to the intelligence of India, as if it could not see through the game.

While granting that the Congress and the Muslim League were much to blame for the muddle that we

witness in our midst today, British Government at home and the Government in India cannot be exonerated from the charge of contributing as much, if not more, to that muddle as these two parties in the country They were all the more to blame in this business because they were the rulers in India and were unwilling to part with any power, whatever might happen. At least, that was their mood till the arrival of Sir Stafford Cripps in India on what may be called his mission of Peace and Conciliation.

It was this state of things in India compounded of prestige and pugnacity, that had made any immediate settlement an idle wish, and might make it, in future, a remote possibility. The war—the dealock—Congress disobedience—Government prestige—Cripps proposals and the "Quit India" Resolution, these form the topics of our survey of Liberal politics during the years 1939 and 1944.

THE CLOUDS OF WAR

We are dealing in this chapter with events in India from 1940 onwards; yet we must go back a while to the end of 1938 and refer to the presidential address of Hon. Mr. Prakash Narayan Sapru in the Liberal Federation's Session held in Bombay in that year. For then War-clouds were gathering in Europe and they had their lesson for India as a part of the British Empire. He dealt in the opening part of his address with the international situation and visualised how a world war was going to be its inevitable outcome, and then addressed his audience in the following words. He said:

"In a world full of menace to the democratic status, we have in the British Commonwealth of Nations an organisation which can provide the base for a system of collective security. In a world full of menace to the Asiatic and African races, it would give to India a sense of security which an entirely independent existence cannot."

And the fact was proved by our experience in 1942 and onwards, when it was the sure shield of England and her Allies—of the Commonwealth of Nations and of the United States of America—which had saved us from the aggression of Japan.

While giving his countrymen this advice Mr. Sapru told the rulers that the only way to win Indians to their side in the War that was coming, was not to dangle before their eyes the promises of Dominion Status but to do something immediately and in a substantial manner that would convince them that the promise was not a mere will o' the wisp—'a hope that may prove to be a dupe.' And he outlined in the later portion of his address what could at once be undertaken by the Government in that direction in the field of Defence, industrialisation and constitutional progress. The War came in 1939 without India being in any way prepared in mind to support the Allies' effort to win it. The Congress had resigned office in October 1939, and, during the following year till the beginning of August, the Viceroy and the Secretary of State for India had made no declaration of their policy towards India in view of the War situation in Europe. Hitler had overrun the whole of Europe and had conquered France. In June 1940 Britain was left alone to oppose and fight Hitler. Russia was still the ally of Germany. America had not yet come into the War on the side of Britain. Italy had gone over to Germany soon after the fall of France.

RIGHTS AND DUTIES

In the Liberal Conference of 1940 held at Calcutta under the presidentship of Mr. V. N. Chandavarkar, the War and the attitude of India to it came in for clear exposition in a resolution moved by Sir Chimanlal Setalvad, and in the speech he made on it. Said Sir Chimanlal Setalvad in the course of that speech,

"We should ask the country to give its whole-hearted support to Britain in the prosecution of the war. **In doing that we are not asking the country to do so for obliging Britain, but to oblige ourselves, for the safety of our hearths and homes; because it is very obvious to any thinking person that our fortunes are bound up, for the moment, with the fortunes of England.. If England goes down in this war, there is no question that India will lose her independence, the present liberty even that she enjoys, and all her dreams of democratic self-government will certainly come to an end.** Therefore, sheer self-interest demands that India should put her best efforts in order to support England to carry this war to a successful conclusion."

Sir Chimanlal told his countrymen this truth with the full knowledge of Britain's sins of commission or omission towards India. He said that the charge-sheet that India could legitimately frame against England was a long and grave one; that England had failed to equip India, during her rule of India for the last 150 years, for her defence in the manner she should have done. The process of Indianisation of the army had been so slow that under the Scheme put forward, it would take India 150 years before the Indian Army was Indianised. Let England, however, in this hour of her crisis, he added, create such psychological conditions in India as would enable India to go in whole-heartedly with Britain in the War that she was fighting for democracy and freedom all over the world. And in that connection, while not failing to hold Britain responsible for the conditions that obtained in India at the moment, he told Indians about the attitude of the Congress in this vital concern. He said about it,

"Our friends of the Congress have again gone in the wilderness of civil disobedience. Now just examine for a moment the attitude of the Congress in this matter. **They first started by saying, we will give England support, if she declares independence for India. That to my mind is perfectly intelligible.. I can understand that. Then they said**

'Let us have national government at the Centre.' That is also intelligible. I can understand their taking that stand namely give us national government at the Centre, otherwise we will fight you. But what have they done now? They have abandoned that position. They say: 'Give us freedom of speech to preach against the War. If you don't, we will start Civil Disobedience. They put it now on the high Gandhian moral plane that they are against all war and violence, and not against this or that war, and they want freedom to preach their doctrine. Just consider what will happen if they are really honest in their profession of non-violence. The Congress claims to speak for the whole of India. It must be granted that they have a large mass of following, they represent a big part of India. They demanded that a transfer of power must be made to India, and since they speak for India, it must be made to them. Grant that. Supposing there is to-day complete transfer of power by Britain to the Congress, if they are honest in their profession of non-violence they must hand it over to Hitler or any other power who invades India. They cannot by non-violence defend India." That this was not a false or perverted picture of the Congress attitude in 1940 can be substantiated from the mouth of the Congress Dictator himself. But we need not labour the point here.

If that was the attitude of the Congress at the time, what was the attitude of the Muslim League? That was explained at the Conference by Dr. R. P. Paranjpye who moved its third resolution which was on separate electorates—a hardy annual—coupled that year with the Muslim demand for Pakistan or the vivisection of India. The part of the resolution dealing with Pakistan was as follows:—

"The Federation was emphatically opposed to the suggested division of India into Pakistan and Hindustan as being against the best interests of the country which in its opinion should be one single unit of Government for purposes of administration and defence though it will have necessarily to be a federal character."

While moving this resolution for acceptance by the

conference, Dr. Paranjpye made a speech in which he brought out fully the attitude of the Muslim League towards the Congress and towards Indian freedom and democracy as a whole. After tracing the history of communal electorates from the foundation of the Muslim League in 1906, through the Minto-Morley reforms and the Lucknow Pact of 1916, down to the Government of India Act of 1919, Dr. Paranjpye pointed out how the evil was perpetuated and intensified by the Communal Award incorporated in the Reform Act of 1935. Since that time onwards the Muslims had been led on by the League, that presumed to speak on their behalf, to think that there could be no one Government in India common to all, and India must be partitioned into Muslim and Hindu India in order that the most important minority of India should have peace and full enjoyment of all its birth rights!

The two nations theory was first adumbrated from the League platform by Sir Mohomed Iqbal, though he seemed to recant it later on by adding that he had put it forward because he was then speaking from the platform of the Muslim League. We have evidence for this statement in Edward Thompson's "Enlist India for Freedom"— a book which he wrote and published in 1940. Here is what Mr. Thompson writes about it on page 58 of that book:

"For some years there has been an agitation to split off from the rest of India a Moslem State—Pakistan ("the land of the pure" i.e., in religion and also by its name suggesting the first three letters of three component parts of the State—Punjab, Afghanistan and Kashmir). This would at first consist of Kashmir, the Punjab, Sind, Baluchistan, and the Western Districts of the United Provinces, including the Delhi enclave. There is some dispute as to who started the notion. It is often said to have been Sir Muhamad Iqbal, the poet. In the **Observer**, I once said that he supported the Pakistan plan. Iqbal was a friend, and he set my misconception right. After speaking of his

own despondency at the chaos he saw coming on his vast undisciplined and starving land, he went on to say that he thought that **the Pakistan plan would be disastrous to the British Government, disastrous to the Hindu community, disastrous to the Moslem community.. 'But I am the President of the Muslim League and therefore it is my duty to support it.'"**

The author adds, as his positive conviction, that there was no surer way of plunging India into eternal civil war than this plan of Pakistan (page 59 of the book) and he says further, **"I was astonished last autumn to find that certain official circles were keen on the Pakistan idea; and still more astonished to find that some of our own British 'left' were beginning to be persuaded to it."** As another proof of this assertion we quote the following from a book on India written by Mr. Coatman in 1932. Says Mr. Coatman in his "Years of Destiny—India 1926-32." "The creation of a strong united India is, day by day, being made impossible, and in its place it seems there might be brought into being a powerful Mohomedan state in the North and North-West, with its eye definitely turned away from India." This was a hint dropped for the future by one who was intimately connected with official life in India for several years. Earlier in the book at page 52, Mr. Thompson quotes from a conversation he had on the subject, as he puts it, "in last October":—"Two nations, Mr. Jinnah! confronting each other in every provice? every town? every village?"

"Two Nations Confronting each other in every province. Every town, Every village. That is the only solution". "That is a very terrible solution Mr. Jinnah!"

"It *is* a terrible solution. But it is the only one."

The author, like the Liberals in India, is of opinion that the seed of all this evil was sown in India by communal electorates, and the Muslim League's insistence on Pakistan from 1937 onwards was the result of the

blunder of the Congress to refuse, when it came into power, to form coalition Governments including in them represetatives in the Legislatures of the Muslim League.

It is in this light that we must read and understand the speech of Dr. Paranjpye on the resolution to which we have already referred. The gist of it we give in the following words:

"Services, language, script, all these things are made vital problems of our political life. Politics should deal with the larger problems of economics, education and welfare of the people. But we are all forgetting these things and are quarrelling about minor things. I hold that once for all, we must put our foot down that we shall not parley with this evil. **If Pakistan becomes the main feature of Indian politics, then good-bye to all Indian progress. A separate Hindu and a separate Muslim India will mean the downfall of both. Defence of the country cannot be separated for Hindus and Muslims. Both have to live together, for we cannot transplant millions and crores of people from one place to another.. Therefore you will always have this minority problem, whatever you may do. Therefore you must adopt a reasonable attitude."**

The Federation referred to the Viceroy's declaration of August 1940, and protested against the veto it had given to the minorities in India on constitutional progress. It objected very strongly to the distinction that Mr. Amery sought to draw, in regard to India, between what he chose to call the Status and the functions of a Dominion, thereby raising in the minds of Indians a reasonable fear that in the name of British and other obligations, India's functioning as a Dominion and her achieving the fredom of a Dominion were going to be indefinitely postponed. The Federation strongly dissented from the statement of the Viceroy that the British Government could do nothing more than they had already done to enable India to enjoy Dominion Status. It urged that they should immediately announce to the people of India that India

would be accorded the full status and functions of a Dominion within a period not exceeding two years after the conclusion of the War.

Hon'ble Mr. Prakash Narain Sapru who moved the resolution said:

"After all, if truth has to be told, there is this political deadlock in the country now because—and I say with a full sense of responsibility—England is not clear in her mind as to what she intends to do with India after the war. That is the feeling that Britain has created in the country. That feeling will not be dispelled by equivocal declarations, with mental reservations, declarations of the kind Mr. Amery and the Viceroy made in recent months."

Answering Mr. Amery on the distinction he drew between the status and functions of a Dominion, Mr. Sapru retorted sharply, "I would like to say I do not care for status. Status follows function. I care for power. I care for freedom. If I get reality of political power first, status follows next. It is no use their telling us 'Oh, we will treat you as a Dominion. But so far as the higher functions of Government are concerned, they must always remain with us."

Practically that was what was meant by the limitation of British obligations in the matter. India was no longer going to be satisfied "with a shadow of responsibility and no reality of power". As to Mr. Amery's offer to India to frame its own constitution, Mr. Sapru saw in it many snags. He pointed to the attitude of the Muslims who swore by the partition of India. He asked bluntly "How can we negotiate in a reasonable atmosphere with people who want to divide the country, with people who talk not of Indian nationalism, but of two nations?". For this initial difficulty responsibility mainly rested with the British Government. "They always say—'Oh, you Indians have not been able to settle your domestic problems.

When they introduced separate electorates in India, the problem was created by them."

"I think, Sir," continued Sapru, "One of the wisest things you have said in your Presidential speech was that the pact of 1916 was a great mistake. What is happening to-day is that we are getting self-government in doses and instalments, which method keeps the communal ferment alive. You make one concession to-day when there is a revision of a constitution. Three or four or five years hence, there is another revision and the minorities come forward with something more. To-day the minorities are saying we want one-fourth of India to be reserved for us. If you agree to this reservation you will not get reality of political power. Tomorrow the minorities will demand half of India, and thereafter they will ask for three-fourths of India and finally they will say—we want whole of India."

How can Indians frame a constitution in these difficult conditions? They must first agree among themselves as to the body that will frame the constitution and again solve the tremendous difficulty created by the communal electorate. Hence the right of self-determination conceded to Indians, added Mr. Sapru, was, indeed, no right but a fresh hurdle put in our way, for which we cannot thank Mr. Amery. Then he turned to the problem of interim government. He maintained that a national Government could really be formed within the framework of the present constitution if Mr. Amery and the Viceroy sincerely desired to do so. But the fear was, as Mr. Sapru put it,

"there was no serious desire to associate India with the formulation and execution of war policy. The Congress and the Muslim League exhaust, in the opinion of Government, the entire country. No doubt the Congress represents a major and powerful section of Indian opinion. So far as non-Congress opinion is concerned it has been ignored, and since the Congress and the Muslim League would not join the Executive Council, it would not be expanded."

That was the effect of the Declaration of August

1940 on the most moderate minded people and leaders of public opinion in the country, leave alone the extremists and the communalists like the Congress and the Muslim League. The latter hailed it only because it had imposed indirectly the condition of previous agreement with the Muslims for any change in the status quo in India. At that time Mr. Jinnah had stressed this point in the declaration, and, taking Mr. Amery at his word, had bound him down that there could be no change in the political fortunes of India without the previous consent of the Muslim League to that change.

The President of the National Liberal Federation's Session at Calcutta in 1940, Mr. V. N. Chandavarkar, in his lucid and luminous address, surveyed the political as well as the war situation in all its aspects. Referring to Mr. Amery's slogan of 'India first,' Chandavarkar maintained that that was precisely the stand of a leader like Sir Pherozeshah Mehta and, therefore, they could not countenance communal electorates as their leader had not countenanced them on the eve of the Minto-Morley Reforms. Quoting at length from the Memorandum submitted by the Presidency Association of Bombay against communal and separate electorates for Muslims, Mr. Chandavarkar pointed out how the evils foretold in that Memorandum had come true during the 35 years that had passed since then. He then referred to the Lucknow Pact of 1916. He said about the Pact "the pact was no luck then; and it is less luck now." The pact was being blazened forth then as a charter of separate nationality and of Muslim Kingdom in India. That brought him to the question of Pakistan. He said on the question,

"Hindus and Mohomedans have lived long enough—for centuries by now—in this country, not to regard themselves as separate political entities. Nationality and Na-

tionalism are terms that can never mean either Hindu Nationality and Nationalism or Muslim Nationality and Nationalism. They can only mean Indian Nationalism and Indian Nationality. In public life, there can be only Indian nationality and Indian Nationalism. If this has not been so in India even to-day, the reason is not far to seek. It is to be found in the introduction of communal electorates in Indian body politic by way of the Minto-Morley Reforms."

NEGATION OF LIBERALISM

Then he came to the political situation as it had discovered itself at the end of 1940. He aptly characterised it as the negation of liberalism. The spirit of wise compromise was not there, first between Government and the parties that confronted it; and next, between the parties themselves that should work together for common good. And he put the position tersely in the following apt words:—

"'I am the State' says the Government. 'I am the State to be and the people combined,' says the Congress. 'I am going to be the State, not even within the larger state, but separate and distinct from the whole,—and yet I demand that the greater will move as I direct, or shall not move at all' says the rival, Muslim League, threatening war if it is not heard. All this has come about because there is the absence of larger vision and the denial of rational compromise as the only key to the solution of any political question. The Government will not compromise, the Congress will not compromise, and the Muslim League will not compromise. The Government will do nothing without the Congress and the Muslim League. It will listen to none else, for, as the slogan goes, none else can deliver the goods. They seem to forget, all of them, that this has never been and never will be the successful method of political reform and advancement."

Referring to Pakistan Mr. V. N. Chandavarkar said,

"The solution of the Irish question by dividing Ireland into two separate kingdoms, one of them styled the Irish Free State, has, as we know it today, proved a path fraught with danger from external enemy both to England and

Ireland. And it has brought no end to the feud between the North and the South of Ireland as the framers of the constitution had expected. On the other hand, the grant of Dominion Status to South Africa and the welding together there of two races, who only five years before that were at war with each other, into the union of South Africa, had proved not only a pillar of strength to England during the last war, but had proved so all the more to-day in England's fight with Italy along the African continent. The South African constitution was framed by a Liberal British Cabinet presided over by an honest and high minded Liberal British Statesman in the person of Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman. In it you see the correct as well as the most generous application of the principles of liberalism to the solution of a political dispute between two countries and of the dispute between the two races that formed the population of one of them. The lesson of it all is clear to those who are open to know and assimilate it."

The Government of India and the Government in England were warned by him not to toy with the promises of Dominion Status to India, as they had done so far. In that respect he said of a recent speech in England by Mr. Amery as follows:—

"In this connection I must frankly say that I am far from satisfied with the recent observation of the Secretary of State for India, Mr. Amery, on the subject of constitution making for India. We do not want any experiment either on the American or any other model. Our historical and political evolution under the British rule has set us definitely on the path of what is clearly envisaged by Dominion Status and democratic, parliamentary form of self-government. We have passed through four successive stages of reform from 1892 to 1935. And we demand the fulfilment of responsible self-government for India in the manner outlined in the concluding paragraphs of the Montagu-Chelmsford Report on the Reforms of 1919. That responsible self-government has been put in a clearer form still by the Balfour Declaration of 1926. And the Westminister Statute gives us under it full and complete freedom of initiative and action. This is to what the British Government is now definitely pledged. And we shall accept

nothing that takes us in a line and direction different from the path clearly marked out for us in that promise."

As for immediate change in the Central Government he was equally explicit. He did not want an expanded and Indianised Executive Council that would be in the nature of an eye-wash. He wanted that Council to be made up of the best and the wisest men drawn from all parties, and though they were to be technically responsible to the Viceroy, the convention should be established that normally their advice shall operate without let or hindrance from any quarter. Defence and Finance must be in charge of non-official Indian members. And the responsibility of these members must be a joint-responsibility, and not only for the particular department which may be in the member's charge. And if not responsible they must be responsive to public opinion in the country. He concluded,

"that without this material change of outlook and policy in the immediate governance of India none will be convinced to-day, that the country is **not** meant **only to supply men, materials and money, as if it were a conquered country,' and that 'a sincere and whole hearted attempt is being made to win the goodwill of the Indian people on the side of war,' a fact of such immense importance in the difficult days that lie before us all."**

And, last, we must note an outstanding suggestion that he made in order that England should be fully apprised of what was happening in India. He suggested that "a mission of peace, so to say, should be sent to India composed of front-rank politicians who had to tour India and see things for themselves and decide upon a policy calculated to win India over to England's side." It took England one year more to hit upon a plan very similar to this, when it sent Sir Stafford Cripps to India, who had visited India before and seen things for himself. As it was said by an eminent liberal, "If what was done in 1942 had been done in 1938,

things would have been far different in India from what they became after the Cripps mission, and at the end of 1942."

CHANGE IN THE WAR SITUATION

June 1941 saw Germany at war with Russia and December saw Japan joining the War on the side of Germany. The Pearl Harbour tragedy, the fall of Singapore, the conquest of Malaya by Japan, the falling of French Indo-China and the Dutch East Indies into the hands of Japan, her overrunning Burma, and, therefore, the danger of invasion to India,—these were events that happened in rapid succession one after another, during the first half of 1942. The one redeeming feature of it was that America joined the War on the side of England and Russia became the ally of England and America. At the end of 1941 the future was darkest for all the three countries who had allied themselves to fight and overcome the Red Axis of Berlin, Rome and Tokio. Again, Russia, though now the enemy of Germany, was on terms of peace with Japan. The threat to India from Japan across Burma and through the Indian Ocean was no longer a remote possibility. People in Calcutta, Madras and even Bombay had become panic-stricken. This was the situation in India when the Liberal Conference was held in December 1941 at Madras under the presidentship of Sir Bijoy Prasad Singh Roy.

Sir Sivaswami Aiyer, in his speech as Chairman of the Reception Committee, dealt with the war situation as it had developed at the end of 1941 and stressed the need, between all parties in the country, and between them and the Government, of a perfect unity of interests, so that the war-effort, that was necessary to combat the enemy at the door, may not be a half-hearted affair. The appeal was, in the first instance, to the Congress, and then to the Muslim League, "to

think less of complete independence and of Pakistan respectively, and to think first of the preservation of India from the inroads of the enemy so that they may not be baulked of their ambitions for India, the motherland of them all." He added that to let the country down in such a dire condition was the worse of all crimes. Their quarrels might be reserved for times of peace. And he said in support of this attitude.

"The fact that England has not acceeded to our demands for freedom, and has so often used her power over India for promoting her own interests, and followed policies which have stunted the development of the people or has encouraged the growth of communal cleavage, has filled the minds of many in India with resentment and distrust. They believe that India can never attain the full status of nationhood under the aegis of, and in alliance with, Britain. But the policy of severance of British connection is a counsel of despair and can only lead us from the frying pan into the fire."

While, however, he exhorted his friends of the Congress and the Muslim League not to fight for the impossible, he did not mince words in telling the Government what they ought to do in such a crisis. Mr. Amery had kept on repeating that India's reaching Dominion Status depended upon unity and perfect agreement between the minority and the majority community in India. Mr. Churchill had categorically stated that the Atlantic charter did not apply to India. The temporary device of an expanded Executive Council with inclusion in it of a number of Indian Members, had brought no peace in India, for the simple reason that the key-positions in that Council still remained in official hands. On this situation Sir Sivaswami Aiyer said "Still the Government had nothing better to offer than the August Declaration of 1940. And how was it behaving with those, who, inspite of all this resentment and distrust, were persuad-

ing the people to join the army, subscribe money and help England to fight the enemy?" And he pointed to Mr. Savarkar's arrest at Bhagalpur and the ban on the Hindu Mahasabha's session in that place by the Bihar Government. Mr. Savarkar and other members of the Hindu Mahasabha had done their best to accommodate themselves to the wishes of that Government. Even the Muslims in whose favour the Government had acted in imposing the ban, had declared themselves against the order. "What then was the proof to convince the people that the Government of India were doing their very best that people might spontaneously come forth to help them in their War effort?" Sir Sivaswami's conclusion on this matter was

"The least that they could do at the present moment to convince the people of the sincerity of their promises was to accept and carry out the recommendations of the non-party Conference held under the wise guidance of our illustrious countryman, the Rt. Hon. Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru and our distinguished elder statesmen like Sir Jagdish Prasad, Sir N. N. Sircar, and the Rt. Hon. Mr. M. R. Jayakar, and to restore responsible Government in the provinces where it had been suspended,"

The Conference adopted a resolution censuring government action against Mr. Savarkar and the Hindu Mahasabha, not on communal grounds but because the step was an encroachment upon civil liberty duly exercised. The Rt. Hon. Mr. Sastri and Dr. R. P. Paranjpye supported the resolution in vindication of the right of free speech.

CONSTITUTIONALISM

The address of the President was a learned disquisition, in the first part of it, on the theories of government; on revolution and constitutionalism; on power politics, dictatorship and democracy. The latter part of it was full of pertinent observations on the questions of the hour like Pakistan, United Front, Govern-

ment's policy towards the people, and the method of resistance adopted against it by certain leaders in the country. The president brought home to his audience the conviction that the proper solution of the tangle was possible by application to it of the principles of liberalism.

He said,

"I believe with Laski that it is the duty of the citizen to exhaust the means at his disposal by the constitution of the state before resorting to revolution. I believe that the gains which are inherent in the technique of constitutionalism are profounder, even though they are more slow, than those which are implicit in the revolutionary alternative. I feel that our political streggle, to be effective and fruitful must move round the orbit of constitutionalism. It must sieze every vantage of power for further conquest of the state-machinery. It is not a counsel of despair; it is not a philosophy of inaction; it is not the programme of a timid and hesitant people. Ceaseless search for the acquisition of the state-power through constitutional machinery and accommodation of the state-power for the social welfare of the people in general, require services of the highest kind and sacrifices of infinite magnitude. It is only bold heart that strives for action; it is only selfless spirit that shines in service; it is only dynamic mind that builds the citadel of progress. Those who shrink are obstacles in the way; those who hesitate and bide time invite inaction which paralyses the nation. Should I be told that the sunken eyes, exhausted bodies and drooping souls of our countrymen could be restored to full vigour and health by our patriotic citizens breaking laws, and fomenting strikes and courting imprisonment? **Those, who run away from the ideal of serving the people through the State, invite wastages; those, who willingly forego the instruments of the State for the service of the citizens, release the forces of disintegration."**

Speaking against Pakistan, and emphasising the essential unity of India, the president expressed himself on Hindu-Muslim alliance in the following words:

"If Hindus and Muslims meet in mutual understanding and trust on the common field of co-operation we shall

find the barriers broken up and friendship consolidated on important essentials. It is true that Muslims conquerors came to India from outside, but then currents of knowledge and feeling brought freshet after freshet to swell the Indian ocean of civilisation. In our music, our architecture, our picture-art, our literature, the Muslim culture has made precious contributions. The restoration of touch with the outerworld gave a filip to Indian navy and sea-borne trade. There was internal peace over a large part of India; there was administrative unity with a common 'lingua franca' and the rise of vernacular literature was encouraged. The great religious movements in the time of Moslem rule mingled with the currents of Indian life and broadened the basis of religious democracy. If, at this stage of our history we fall victim to unmeaning separatist tendencies, we shall find great opportunities crippled by the difference of communal accent and idiom. We should therefore pool all our honest efforts for the consolidation of the Hindu-Mohomedan alliance. It is not to be forgotten that 'truth consists not in facts but in harmony of facts.' "

THE ROOT OF ALL EVIL

He then pointed out how the Communal Award had made for disunion and dissension:

"We are under the Award not so many citizens owing allegiance to the mother country to be returned to the legislatures by our countrymen, but we shall have to remain confined in the compartment of religion for electoral and legislative purposes. Legislators are responsible not to the public in general but to their communities. This method of election taints the whole political system. **If the present constitution has satisfied none, added fuel to communal bickerings, bred a spirit of provincial exclusiveness, and cut adrift political parties from democratic moorings, there is no element of surprise therein. The constitution started on the wrong track, and naturally it has led to deadlocks in some provinces and unstable coalitions in others.. The sense of nationalism is injured; the spirit of accommodation is submerged in the ravening for power; the lessons of citizenship are forgotten in the wild search for sectional and communal leadership.** The failure of the present constitution is evident from the release of the

forces of retrogression. The country is, therefore, impatient for new, effective, political reforms."

PAKISTAN

And now we turn to one more speaker, Mr. Vinayakrao from Madras, who spoke in the Conference in the Federation's resolution on Pakistan. That speech exposed the hollowness of the cry for Pakistan, proved the impractical nature of the demand, and showed how financially, economically and politically, the scheme was not only unsound, but, if it was conceded by the British Government, it would spell disaster not only to India, but to the Muslims in India also, and more so to them than to the rest of India.

That the demand had grown by what it had fed upon, the speaker showed by tracing its history back to the Minto-Morley Reforms. Concession after concession was made to the Muslims from that date onwards, and Sir Samuel Hoare had fed them too full at the expense of India. But the hunger was not satisfied. Mr. Vinayakrao showed the process in one remarkable passage which we must quote here in full. He said referring to the last phase of it,

"I do not want to go into all the details except to point out to you that at every stage of the constitutional reform the Muslim demands were put higher and higher. What were three points became ten points, what were ten points became fourteen points; and ultimately people thought that by making small concessions, the constitutional reforms which they were anxious to have will be theirs. The Government, instead of pointing out that these concessions were increasing and that it would be against national interests to permit their continued increase, encouraged these communal claims being put forward in an increasing measure at every stage. If the North-West Frontier Province should be separated and made into a Governor's Province—conceded. If Sind should be separated, though a deficit Province and the Central Government had to give a subsidy of a crore of rupees every year,—conceded.

If, in the services, in every grade of it, including railway employees I suppose, the Muslims wanted a particular percentage-conceded. If weightage should be given and separate electorates should be retained—conceded. And, after all these points that were asked for at the Round Table Conference were conceded,—practically all of them, Mr. Jinnah and the Muslim League have now added the latest demand of Pakistan."

Then the speaker told his hearers the whole history of the demand from 1930 when the word was first uttered on the platform of the Muslim League Conference by Sir Mahomed Iqbal down to its adoption in a specific resolution of the Muslim League at the end of 1940. He examined the resolution in all its details and proved by facts how "it was not only an absurd and outrageous proposal, but a proposal that was economically and financially unsound, politically reactionary, historically untenable, and finally most harmful to those in whose interest it was sought to be imposed upon India." The whole speech of Mr. Vinayakrao deserves careful perusal by every nationalist and communalist in India even today. He concluded,

"So Sir, from a national point of view, it will be a national danger if this movement of Pakistan is encouraged to gather strength. **And in the interests of the Mussalmans themselves they should be weaned away from this alluring thing which has been taking hold of them. And we shall be helping every citizen in this country by making it clear that the Pakistan ideal is a mirage that should not be pursued any longer."**

This was said at the end of 1941. And we know where we are in this matter in November 1944. Though Gandhi-Jinnah talks on this momentous issue have failed, and the rest of the country has protested, we are not yet out of the woods.

CHAPTER XX

AND TWO YEARS AFTER

At the end of 1941, the War had become a serious menace to peace in India. The entry of Japan had turned that war into a world-war. Japan had declared war on America and as an ally of Germany. America joined Britain and Russia in War against Germany and Japan. So that the Asiatic continent, including the sub-continent of India, was open to invasion by Japan.

How this change in the War situation had affected India has been made clear in a recent work by Professor Coupland. He says, "Since the Battle of Britain the idea that India might be invaded had fallen into the background . . . there seemed no immediate danger of a German break-through by way of the Caucasus or Turkey, and so overland to India's frontier." But the spectacular advance of Japan in the winter of 1941 and in the early months of 1942, had changed the scene. The Pearl Harbour tragedy in December 1941, the fall of Singapore in February 1942, that of Rangoon in March, and the irresistible tide of Japanese advance in Malaya and Burma made people in India think that the British Command of the Sea was lost, or at least, it could not protect India from the invasion by Japan through the Bay of Bengal. Bengal and Madras were the provinces of India directly exposed to that peril, while it was felt that Japan could easily harass the rest of India by invasion from air.

That was the situation in India in the first quarter of 1942, and nothing was being done to remove the dead-

lock and align all political parties on the side of Britain for an all-out and united war-effort to face and overwhelm the enemy that was very near its door.

British policy, it was felt throughout India, was of deliberate insult to Indian Nationalism. Even moderate political opinion in the country had been flouted. Nothing but "the August offer of 1940" held the field, an offer that had satisfied none in the country and had been out-and-out rejected by the Congress and the Muslim League.

There were some in the country who felt that the British Empire was collapsing and, therefore, India should do nothing to antagonise Japan. The Congressmen who had gone to jail as a result of individual civil disobedience, were released by Government at the end of 1941. The credit of this conciliatory gesture was given to Indian members of the Viceroy's Executive Council, but the gesture was not regarded as justifying any change in the Congress policy towards the War.

A FRESH START

It was at this juncture that, on January 3, 1942, Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru sent a lengthy cable to Mr. Churchill signed by fifteen non-party leaders, as they called themselves, which insisted that "the heart of India must be touched to rouse her on a nation-wide scale to the call for service", and urged the acceptance of the liberal programme, namely, "a national all-Indian Government responsible to the Crown, and a higher national status for India in international and inter-imperial relations."

Mr. Churchill received Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru's cable during his visit to the United States of America. And on January 23, soon after his return to London, he stated that "he would make a considered and public reply soon after". As Prof. Coupland puts it, "this

seemed to portend something akin to a new declaration of policy, and, as the weeks went by, overshadowed by steady and apparently irresistible approach of the Japanese towards the Indian frontier, the suspense became acute. It was broken at last when on March 11, four days after the fall of Rangoon, Mr. Churchill announced that

"The war Cabinet had gone to an unanimous decision on Indian policy and that, in order to explain it and 'to satisfy himself upon the spot, by personal consultation, that the conclusions, upon which we are all agreed and which we believe represent a just and final solution, will achieve their purpose, Sir Stafford Cripps, who had recently joined the Government as Lord Privy Seal and become a member of the War Cabinet and leader of the House of Commons, would proceed as soon as possible to India."

The purpose of the new policy was made clear by Mr. Churchill himself in the very first sentence of his announcement:—**The crisis in the affairs of India arising out of the Japanese advance has made Britain wish to rally all the forces of Indian life to guard their land from the menace of the invader.**" The Draft Declaration that Sir Stafford Cripps had brought to India became famous later on as the Cripps proposals, and his negotiations, mainly with the Congress and its leaders, as the Cripps mission.

We take down here from that Declaration only its main and most salient clauses. They were as follows:

"(a) Immediately upon the cessation of hostilities steps shall be taken to set up in India an elected body charged with the task of framing a new constitution for India.

(b) Provision will be made for the participation of the States in the constitution-making body.

(c) His Majesty's Government undertake to accept and implement forthwith the constitution so framed subject only to:—

(i) **The right of any Province in British India that is not prepared to accept the new Constitu-**

tion to retain its present constitutional position, provision being made for its subsequent accession if it so decides.

With such non-acceding provinces, should they so desire, His Majesty's Government will be prepared to agree upon a new constitution, giving them the same full status as the Indian Union, and arrived at by a procedure analogous to that here laid down."'

Then came a provision for treaty between the British Government and the Indian Union, "which was to cover all matters arising out of the complete transfer of power and responsibility from British to Indian hands. **This treaty was not to impose any restriction on the power of "the Indian Union" to decide in the future its relation to the other Member States of the British Commonwealth."**

The object of the Declaration, it was specifically stated, was "the creation of a new 'Indian Union' which shall constitute a Dominion, associated with the United Kingdom and the other Dominions by a common allegiance to the Crown, **but equal to them in every respect, in no way subordinate in any aspect of its domestic and external affairs."**

So much for post-war reconstruction of India. During the continuance of the War, the Declaration had planned the following provisional arrangements:—

"During the critical period which now faces India and until the new constitution can be framed, His Majesty's Government must inevitably bear the responsibility for and retains control and direction of the defence of India as part of their world war-effort, but the task of organising to the full the military, moral and material resources of India must be the responsibility of the Government of India with the co-operation of the peoples of India. His Majesty's Government desire and invite the immediate and effective participation of the leaders of the principal sections of the Indian people in the counsels of their country, of the Commonwealth and of the United Nations. Thus they will be enabled to give their active and constructive help in the discharge of a task which is vital and essential for the future of India."

NEGOTIATIONS

Sir Stafford Cripps arrived at Delhi on March 23.

And he began to interview party leaders from March 25 onwards. On March 29 he published the document he had brought from England at one of the Press Conferences which he held every two or three days. The negotiations began on March 25 and ended on April 10. During these negotiations he interviewed Mr. Gandhi who represented only himself. He interviewed Maulana Abul Kalam Azad and Pandit Nehru on behalf of the Congress. Mr. Jinnah represented the Muslim League. The Hindu Mahasabha was represented in these interviews, and discussions were carried on separately with each group and section, by Mr. Savarkar and four other delegates. The Depressed classes were represented by Dr. Ambedkar and Mr. Rajah. Other leaders, like Sir Sikandar Hyat Khan and Mr. Fazlul Huq, were seen in their individual capacity. Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru and Dr. M. R. Jayakar were interviewed together. So also the Liberal Party deputation, represented by Sir Bijoy Singh Roy, Sir Chimanlal Setalvad and Mr. Nausir Bharucha. These met Sir Stafford Cripps on the 2nd of April and communicated to him the opinion of the Federation Council on the Draft Declaration in a Memorandum drawn up for the purpose.

Interviews were also given to representatives of the Sikh Community, the Indian Christians, of the Anglo-Indian Community, the Europeans, the Radical Democratic Party, the Justice Party of Madras and various local interests. But those who loomed large in the discussions were the Congress and the Muslim League, inspite of the fact that the declaration had made it clear that

"His Majesty's Government desired the co-operation of the people of India **as a whole** in forming what may be called war-time government in India, and that they had invited the immediate and effective participation of the leaders of the principal sections of the Indian people in the Counsels of their Country."

In these circumstances, to concentrate one's attention entirely and exclusively on the Congress, and, next to it, on the Muslim League, and to treat the rest as practically not worth it, was a blunder on the part of Sir Stafford Cripps.

The result of this mission was considerably affected by the war situation itself. Professor Coupland describes it as follows:—

"Throughout those anxious days at Delhi the news from the front grew steadily worse. The report of the Japanese occupation of the Andaman islands—an outpost of British India—was published on the day that the negotiations began. The British evacuation of Toongoo was known of, on April 1, of Prome on April 3. On April 5 came the Japanese air-raids on Colombo. Next day the first Japanese bombs fell on Indian soil, at Vizagapatam and Coconada, sea-board towns of Madras. As the menace of invasion drew steadily nearer, 'Burma is lost,' said the defeatist; can India hope to hold off these irresistible Japanese?'. And even in less faint-hearted circles it was argued that Sir Stafford Cripps' appeal—and in all his public utterances he insisted that the primary purpose of his mission was to rally the whole country to its defence—had come too late. In this sombre atmosphere and in view of the previous course of Indian politics—especially Congress politics—it is not surprising that the mission failed as that it came so near to success. The negotiations broke down but the pledge was reaffirmed."

THE NON-ACCESSION CLAUSE

The Memorandum submitted by the Council of the National Liberal Federation of India criticised adversely the clause in the Declaration that provided for secession from the Indian Union of province or provinces that did not approve of the New Constitution for the Indian Union. The clause is since described as giving to each province in British India the right of self-determination. The gist of the Memorandum was as follows:—

It welcomed the declaration in its post-war scheme

for India, viz. to make India a self-governing dominion with the status and function enjoyed by Great Britain and other dominions in the British Commonwealth of Nations. As regards the clause in the Declaration regarding the right of non-accession to the Indian Union, conceded to a province that chose to do so, the Council observed,

> It feels that the provision giving liberty to any province not to accede to the Indian Union is fraught with serious difficulties and dangers. The creation of more than one Federal Union in India, having their own separate armies, may result, in certain conceivable circumstances, in a conflict beween them. It would almost immediately lead to custom barriers, and to complicated quest about ports, railways, existing public debts etc. Moreover, the weakness of the military organisation of the one or other of the different Unions will seriously impair the safety and defence of India as a whole. The Council further feels that communal feelings would be further exacerbated in the course of a decision about accession or non-accession."

This objection was vital and could not be dismissed, as Sir Stafford Cripps sought to dismiss it in his interview to the Press, when he said, 'If you want to persuade a number of people, who are inclined to be antagonistic to enter the same room, it is unwise to tell them that, once they go in, there is no way out". This was a specious plea for it ignored the root cause of the antagonism, and it did not enquire into the history of the question as a whole. Rather than eradicate the poison from the system it sought to perpetuate it. The communal electorates introduced into the system was the poison, and this kind of self-determination only helped to intensify the disease it had bred. As Sir Stafford Cripps and his apologists tried to make out at the time, it may or may not be sound psychology, but it was a vicious principle with which to start work on a constitution which was intended to turn India into a Union and Dominion like that of Canada and South

Africa. You promise such a Union to India, you hope it will materialise, and, at the same time, you hold out a bait that those who choose may not accede to such a Union! That was a policy, with all its plausibility of self-determination, not unlike that of "hunting with the hares and running with the hounds". Neither the Federation of Australia nor that of the United States of America was built on such a principle. And in the latter case it was enforced by an appeal to arms—as we know from the War between the North and the South in 1866. Abraham Lincoln made *that* the first issue, and even the abolition of slavery in the South, subordinate to it.

How can one say in the light of that clause that the British Government did not, at that time, at least, favour the idea of Pakistan? It was not the Liberal Federation alone that had objected to that clause. Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru and Dr. M. R. Jayakar in their memorandum to Sir Stafford Cripps wrote,

"The creation of more than one Union, however consistent in theory with the principle of self-determination, will be disastrous to the best interests of the country and to its integrity and security."

The leaders of the Hindu Mahasabha and of the Sikh Community in the Punjab protested strongly against the clause for the same reason. And wonderful as it may seem, the president of the Muslim League resisted it on the ground that it did not go far enough. The Working Committee of the Muslim League said at the end of it all that

"though Pakistan is recognised by implication in the Draft Declaration, its primary object is to create one Indian Union, the creation of more than one Union being relegated only to the realm of remote possibility."

What was the alternative to this clause which had been put in to win over the minorities, or rather, to soothe one of them which eventually claimed that it

was no minority at all, in the accepted sense of that term, but an independent nation? The alternative and the only rational alternative was, as the Liberal Federation put it, "that the interest of different communities should be adequately safeguarded within the constitution itself and all should have a proper voice in the governance of the country."

The question of accession or non-accession, it was premised by the Council, would be determined by a plebiscite. In that case, without withdrawing its radical objection to the clause itself, the Council maintained,

"If at all it is proved inevitable, the decision of such a momentous question should not be concluded by a bare majority but that some minimum percentage—say sixty per cent of the Lower House of the Legislature—should be prescribed." Messrs Sapru and Jayakar, for all practical purposes liberals though they preferred then to style themselves as non-party leaders, went in this respect one step further than the Federation. They laid down that an effort should be made to obtain, before the end of the war, an inter-communal unity for the maintenance of Indian unity on a federal basis." "If this failed," they continued, "and provinces should manifest overwhelming wishes for separation, then the proposal should be tried, provided that no decision for non-adherence should be valid without a sixty-five per cent majority in the Provincial Legislature concerned."

The Council of the National Liberal Federation of India then dealt with the part of the Draft Declaration which provided for change in the Central Government during the period of the War. On it, the Council concluded that "the representation of India on the War Cabinet and the Pacific War Council was satisfactory so far as it went". But coming to Defence it emphatically maintained that "this should not stand in the way of the appointment of an Indian as a Defence Member. Such an appointment will have a tremendous effect in producing the necessary psychological

reaction which will bring the Indian people wholeheartedly in the war-effort. A total war cannot be won unless the Indian nation, as a united political entity, throws itself into this war heart and soul." As regards the reconstruction of the Viceroy's Executive Council the Federation suggested that "the Governor-General's Council should be nationalised, so that, by conventions in the near future, the Governor-General may assume the position of the constitutional head of his Government."

FAILURE

Sr Stafford Cripps, though he interviewed the leaders of all parties, seemed really to care for none except the Congress and the Muslim League. As such all this advice was wasted on him. As Dr. N. B. Khare had lately put it, "if the British Cabinet and the Government of India had seen the light to by-pass the Congress and the Muslim League" and had improvised a national government at the Centre which was, in fact, one like that suggested by the Federation's Council—a composite Cabinet with or without the Congress and the Muslim League, the situation in 1942-1943 would have been different from what it had proved to be. In 1942 the War situation was both critical and adverse. All the greater reason there was, therefore, at the time to conciliate the country as a whole, and not rest content with wooing only two of its most vocal organisations. The Cripps proposals failed precisely because Sir Stafford Cripps failed to realise that India was higher and bigger than the Congress and the Muslim League. When the Congress did not agree, the Muslim League followed suit in the same totalitarian fashion, and Sir Stafford Cripps had to go back from India empty-handed. He depended too much, if not exclusively, on these two bodies "to convey the goods to him." And ultimately he had to go home

bitterly disappointed.

At this distance of time from 1942, it is not necessary to dwell at great length on the pros and cons of the failure of the Cripps mission in India. In the wake of that failure, after a few months, came what is known as the "Quit India" resolution of the Congress passed by the A.I.C.C. meeting in Bombay on the 8th of August 1942. In the meeting of the Congress Working Committee in July, there was a sharp difference of opinion in the Committee on the advisability of the step. Ultimately, however, Mr. Gandhi prevailed as usual. It was left open to Mr. Gandhi to negotiate with the Viceroy before the resolution was put into operation by resort to mass civil disobedience. Looking back to the past, none can think that the pour-parlers between Mr. Gandhi and the Viceroy would have changed the mind of either party to the talks. As it happened, the passing of the resolution led to the instant arrest and imprisonment of all Congress leaders. The morning of the 9th August witnessed this scene in Bombay, and, as a result, the country was plunged into violent disturbances, with repression to accompany them till the end of the year.

THE SEQUEL

The year 1943 saw the political stalemate continuing as before and a turn in the tide of war in the West and the East. The result of this stalemate and the various issues arising out of it are described for us in careful analysis and cogent argument in a recent contribution to the Press (October 12, 1944) by Sir Chimanlal Setalvad, President of the Western India Liberal Association. Writing on Pakistan, Sir Chimanlal sums up the situation for the whole of India as a result of the "Quit India" resolution, in the following words.

"one longs for the return of days when the Congress was led by wise and practical patriots like Dadabhai Nao-

roji, Pherozeshah Mehta, Gokhale and Tilak, and Congressmen thought and acted for themselves instead of, as in present days, following blindly a leader who has achieved a marvellous transformation of the minds of the Indian people by rousing their consciousness, but who by his impractical idealism has, time and again, led the country into a barren wilderness. The incalculable harm done by the rejection of the Cripps offer and the passing of the "Quit India" resolution of 1942 is beyond repair."

The Liberal Federation's Council Meeting was held at Poona on the 5th of July 1942, in which the Council passed resolutions reviewing the political situation as it had developed since the failure of negotiations between Sir Stafford Cripps and the Congress in India. By that time Burma and Malaya had been conquered by Japan and the threat to India of invasion by Japan was greater than ever. The Council of the National Liberal Federation of India, therefore, suggested, that the only way to bring about a radical change in the mind of the people was the establishment of a National Government in India on the lines laid down by the Federation in its earlier statement. Inspite of the failure of the Cripps mission it was up to the British Government to take immediate steps

"to renew negotiations with Indian leaders in order to establish such a government. The Council felt sure that if a right approach were made, in the present critical situation of the country the major political parties will take a more accommodating view of their mutual relations."

Those hopes, as events were to show soon, proved dupes. The Congress would not budge an inch; the Muslim League offered to help only on condition that its demand for Pakistan was conceded first, and the British government acted all along without sympathy, vision and statesmanship towards the people over which it ruled. It was enough for them that they got money, man-power and other resources in the country

to conduct the War. They cared not, it seemed, for "moral reinforcement of the war by India," which they seemed to have in mind when they sent Sir Stafford Cripps to India.

The Congress circles began to think, at this time, in terms of mass-civil disobedience. On reports current about this proposed move the Council expressed the view "if such a movement was started it would be prejudicial to the best interests of the country in respect of defence and other matters." This was said on the 5th of July 1942 and in the following month the A.I.C.C. Meeting in Bombay passed its resolution asking the Britishers to quit India forthwith. The Council of the Federation met at Delhi on the 26th of September and it adopted a resolution in which it condemned the disturbances that had taken place in the country, "particularly when the enemy was knocking at the doors of India." It declared,

"that while strong action was inevitable on the part of the Government in order to suppress organised lawlessness and distruction of the means of communication, that cannot by itself solve the difficult problem facing the Government and the country. It continued that a favourable atmosphere would be created only if the Government knew their own responsibility for unprecedented situation that existed in the country and would win the confidence of the people by taking whole-hearted steps to make them feel that this war was a people's war in which the freedom of India and of the oppressed peoples in other countries was at stake. In order to help the establishment of national government at the centre the Council finally suggested that negotiations should be begun between the principal political parties, and for that purpose it was necessary that the mass movement started by the Congress should be called off and the leaders released."

THE DEADLOCK CONTINUES

The year 1943 saw a tremendous change in the War situation in favour of the United Nations. What

that change was is best described in a speech at the Liberal Conference held in Bombay at the end of 1943, made by Mr. Vinayakrao of Madras. From that speech we quote the following:

"Victories have been won on a grand scale, both in the West, and on this side, in the East Pacific, grand victories have been won. The German navy such as it was and the sub-marine campaign of the Germans have been brought to a stand-still. The progress of Japan on the Seas has been brought to a stop. On land they are still somewhat strong. But very soon the armies of the United Nations will begin the offensive and our victorious armies will march into Burma and open the road to China"'

Though the War situation had thus changed for the better, the political deadlock in India was allowed to continue as before. On this point the Conference passed a resolution the gist of which may be given as follows :

"It asked the Government to release the Congress leaders, it pleaded with the Congress leaders so released to treat the "Quit India" resolution as a dead letter. It invited all leaders in the country to convene a Conference, and to co-operate in forming national composite government at the Centre and in the provinces on the same footing as the Governments in the Dominions. This was to be a provisional arrangement without prejudice to the future constitution of India, all controversial matter involved therein being postponed for decision after the War. The Conference had no hesitation in condemning the August Resolution as wrong and ill-conceived. It condemned in no mistakable terms the sabotage and violence in the country that followed it."

If the Liberal Conference deplored and disapproved the resolution and condemned the diturbances that had followed it, why, then, did it ask Government to release the Congress leaders and the Congress leaders to treat the resolution as a dead letter? The answer to that question was given in the speech of the Rt. Hon'ble Mr. Sastri who moved the resolution. He said,

"As far as we see, the opinion of the country taken as a whole is not in favour of the resolution or what has followed in it by way of disturbance in the country. These disturbances were not on a scale which would justify the inference that as a whole the people of the country sympathised with it. **Then we know in point of fact that great bodies of Indians stood aloof from the resolution and all that it implied. The war effort has not been seriously impeded.. The Government has not suffered anything but a slight embarassment in the administration of the country or in the prosecution of the war. That leads to the clear inference that as a whole the population of India did not endorse the resolution of August 1942 and did not wish that it should stand even on paper to obstruct in anyway the further progress of the country."** Hence, continued Mr. Sastri, "the resolution recommended that the Government should release the Congress leaders unconditionally and, then, the released leaders, following the wishes of millions in the country, should agree to treat the August resolution as a dead letter."

Why should the Government take the initiative in that respect? To that we find an answer in the presidential address of Raja Sir Maharaj Singh. He said,

"Knowing Mr. Gandhi's consistently strong views on non-violence, we cannot expect him or other members of the Congress Committee to admit responsibility for the deplorable and wicked acts of sabotage which took place in August and subsequent months last year or even to cancel the resolution of August 1942. Self-respecting and patriotic men, who have sacrificed so much, cannot reasonably be expected to denounce their past. All that is necessary is to treat that resolution as a dead letter. I believe that this will be done. For this purpose I am of opinion that the Congress leaders should be released unconditionally." Further, now that the movement had died out, it was unjustifiable "to detain men and women in jail without trial and without their being supplied even with the reasons of their detention." He affirmed that he did not believe for a moment that the Congress leaders would ever advocate peace with Imperialistic Japan or renounce their anti-Fascist attitude."

About the deadlock and the way to solve it, especially about Government's primary duty in that connection, Mr. Sastri used words which deserve quotation, in these pages. He said, that their greatest complaint was that the deadlock, political and otherwise, seemed not to be resolvable for the reason that Government put responsibility for the initiative on the people of the land. The Secretary of State for India, followed dutifully by the Viceroy and other spokesmen, continually repeated what was a very convenient thing for them that the deadlock was the result of the unwisdom and discord of the leaders of the country divided into warring parties and, therefore, the Government could do nothing until those leaders had changed their ways and had become friends with each other and co-operated in the establishment of conditions favourable to the establishment of a common government.

"I do not know, Gentlemen, how a Government ruling over 400 millions of people armed to the teeth to-day with all the weapons of force and violence that could be imagined, a Government which has taken to itself all the powers possible and conceivable and rules with an absolute sway, knows no check whatever to its authority—how a Government established in that supreme and unassailable position can tell the world and hope to be believed by the world that it is not their function at all to interfere, that their duty is to watch benevolently, perhaps complacently, perhaps gleefully, while the leaders are not able to come to an understanding and that things should go on on the present unsatisfactory and disastrous footing."

Mr. Sastri charged the Government with unpardonable non-challance. And he concluded,

"A Government of that kind repeating the absurd proposition day after day seems to me to be condemning itself out of its own lips and I should pity the world if the

world believed it. I know the sensible part of the world either in India or outside, does not believe it. We throw the onus on the Government. We say to them the responsibility for the impasse is not ours only. Yod are responsible. By you I mean the Government. Being responsible for it, it is your business more than the business of any other single party in the country to bring the people together, to put yourselves in their confidence, and so to arrange everything without any long delay that a united constitution is possible not only for the purpose of the War but in the days subsequent to the war."

The addresses of the Chairman of the Reception Committee, Sir Cowasji Jehangir, and of the President of the Conference, Raja Sir Maharaj Singh, reviewed the political and the war situation in India during the years 1942 and 1943, and pointed the way out of the deadlock to the Government as well as to the Congress. The food-famine in Bengal, the condition of Indians overseas, the dearness of living, the hoarding and racketting on the part of a certain class of dealers, and the Government policy or want of policy in these matters—all these difficulties were fully dealt with in the two speeches, and resolved upon in the Conference.

The address of the president was full of practical suggestions to overcome the dealock and was replete with wisdom and sober direction for all who desired that India should come into her own by pursuing the path of united action. While being a comprehensive survey of the Indian scene as a whole, it had not the slightest tinge in it of bitterness, offensive criticism, or self-complacency. Nor did it maintain that "whatever is, is for the best." The key-note of the address was: "let bygones be by-gones; let us indulge in no recrimination; the present and not the past is our concern, if only we serve it wisely, the future was bound to be bright. Let us then serve in the present with a united will, with the spirit of give-and-take, so that

our motherland may benefit by our striving, and the future may have no reason to censure us."

The best of Indian leaders, the wisest and the most level-headed among them, had in their time to rest content, as Mr. Gokhale had put it, in a memorable address, "with serving the country by their failures, leaving it to succeeding generations to serve her by their successes." "Lead kindly light amid the encircling gloom. Lead thou me on." That was what the greatest of Indian liberals, Sir Pherozshah Mehta, had declared as his faith in a remarkable Congress address, long, long before Mr. Gandhi had popularised the prayer in this country. And he also swore by another verse from that poem of Cardinal Newman—"one step enough for me, I do not ask to see the distant scene." Was that not enough for all honest liberals to serve the cause they cherish so near their heart—the triumph of liberty, the making of national unity, and the success of co-operation in a country that was torn today "by divided counsel and by turmoil that follows such counsel?"

CHAPTER XXI

THE LAMP THAT STILL BURNS

Time and again in these pages, we have drawn upon extracts from speeches of eminent liberal leaders to elucidate their creed and to illustrate the work of the liberal party in India during the period covered in this volume.

This review and study of Indian liberalism cannot be complete without a final word on the future of liberalism and Liberals in this country.

Among the presidents of the Conferences held under the auspices of the National Liberal Federation of India from 1918 to 1943 have been men of outstanding character, of distinguished ability, and of independent judgment—men in the front-rank of public life. Beginning with Surendra Nath Bannerji in 1918 and ending with Raja Sir Maharaj Singh in 1943, the Conferences of the National Liberal Federation of India have had as their presidents "eminent men in Indian politics," like Sir Sivaswami Aiyer, Sir Chimanlal Setalvad, Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru, the Rt. Hon. Srinivasa Sastri, Sir C. Y. Chintamani, Sir Phiroze Sethna, Sir Cowasji Jehangir, Mr. Venkatram Sastri, Dewan Bahadur Govinda Raghava Aiyer, Sir Moropant Joshi, Mr. J. N. Basu, Pandit Hridayanath Kunzru, Hon Mr. Prakash Narain Sapru, Sir R. P. Paranjpye, Sir Bijoy Roy Singh, and, last but not the least, Sir Vithal Chandavarkar, as staunch a Liberal as his distinguished father before him.

A PEN-PORTRAIT

The Rt. Hon. Mr. Sastri, in a moment of happy inspiration, has drawn for us a pen-picture of some of this distinguished company, who happened to be present in the session of National Liberal Federation of India held at Calcutta at the end of 1937. And we reproduce that pen-portrait here as it hits off finely the traits of character that mark them off as personalities to reckon with. Here is what Mr. Sastri says of them:—

"As we look round the table we find a curious assortment of old veterans in politics. I am prepared to claim that we, round this table, represent in some ways the high watermark of Indian statesmanship and Indian patriotism. Still let us see for a while. Take, for instance, Sir Cowasji Jehangir. Sir Cowasji is a very fortunate gentleman. He has wealth, he has fluency of speech, he has handsome features. He has held high office. He is an expert businessman. What does he not possess which will mark him out as a man out for command? He may not be commanded. My friend Pandit Hriday Nath Kunzru,—who sits next to him, to rare knowledge of public questions almost unsurpassed in our day, he adds a reputation as a keen and ready controversialist not easily to be put down, alert and imperturbable, with a strong individual note of his own. My left hand neighbour Dr. Paranjpye,—not much need be said of him. When he first came to Poona after his successful career in England, he took charge of the Fergusson College, and without losing a day, started a first class controversy with the prince of controversialists, Bal Gangadhar Tilak. I am not sure that he had the worst of it in the end, and I have heard this in confidence, ladies and gentlemen, my own Master Mr. Gokhale occassionally wished that Dr. Paranjpye did not walk so stiffly and in so erect and unbending posture. For myself, I am supposed to be very gentle and accommodating and I yield always at the first pressure unfortunately. I remember being the despair of Sir Dinshaw Wacha for many long years, and if, perhaps, the President's heart were to be examined as to what he thinks of me, I shall have no reason for self-congratulation. As to

himself, the President,—Sir Chimanlal Setalvad—well, he may have been willing to subordinate his views once to Sir Pherozeshah Mehta, but after his death, tell me, Sir, whether you have ever bent the knee to any other God. He is not accustomed to wait for other people's judgment to form his own. He is quick, he is decisive, and he has always known his own mind. Mr. Basu, in a difficult province, has kept his head free of all distractions, and remaining true to the principles of liberalism has given a clear proof that he is to be trusted always to depend upon himself and not blindly follow others. Dr. C. Y. Chintamani whom I have reserved to the last—I hardly know how to describe him, ladies and gentlemen. He is the individuality most strongly marked amongst us all. I may almost call him the Pope of Indian Journalism. Accustomed to thunder his opinons, daily, mastering all subjects with a thoroughness that we are accustomed to associate with him, and having no doubts at all upon any topic, Dr. Chintamani takes his views from none at all. He is, if anything, an exemplar of independence of judgment, and I do not know of any single person whom he will consent to obey, even though that person may be a Maha-Mahatma."

Mr. Sastri, after drawing this pen-picture, referred to critics and friends who asked them to commit "harakiri." "Wind up your concern" say they "what good are you doing?" And the answer he gave to these critics and well-wishers in 1937, when the Liberals had lost the elections against Congressmen who were returned to the new legislatures in overwhelming numbers, was as follows:

ITS JUSTIFICATION

"May be, the days of our power are gone. But the days of our influence are by no means gone. Few though we are, we are not without the power of warning against danger, of advising in difficulty, of pointing out the way of safety and sanity. These things we can do always, and now that we are totally free of all temptation to consult the polling booth, now that we can look facts in the face, we can afford more than any other persons in the political life of India to speak the truth just as we see it, to

serve India whom we love so much without fear or favour. It is not a small role to play, and so long as we still can do it, we will not be found wanting. No, Sir, if this liberal Federation is to terminate its existence, it will not be by an act of **felo de se**; it must be under an inexorable decree of Nature to which in the long run all organisations, even stronger and more efficient than ours. must succumb."

But there is another and adequate answer to the poor following that liberalism and the Liberal Party have, at present, in this country. And that answer was given by Mr. Chintamani in the Conference itself at the end of 1935. He asked himself the pertinent question: Why the liberal policy now made not a rousing popular appeal, even though it was an ascertained and unchallengeable fact during the last decade and a half in the history of the Congress that what the Liberals think to-day the Congress will think, not tomorrow but fifteen years later?

The answer that he gave then was,

"We never had any delusion that in a country under foreign rule—foreign rule which always must be unpopular, and foreign rule which, in this concrete case, has wilfully made itself very unpopular by an obstinate adherence to a selfish and arrogant policy—a political party which is comparatively moderate, a political party which does not go before the man in the street and tell him; **You can drive out the hated foreigner and from tomorrow you will never be required to pay taxes whatsoever, nor will you be under the control of a foreign authority'—we never thought that such a party would be the more popular political party.. Let us do the best we can to get a larger support from the country, but do what we may, I am of the conviction that as long as the British Government of India remains what it is, a moderate political party, which believes in an appeal to reason more than in impassioned appeals to popular prejudices cannot be a very popular or the dominant political party in the country.** But to be unpopular was far better than to do something unconscientious. After all, can it be said that the Liberal Party is not led by men of upright character, dis-

interested purpose, unselfish motive and enlightened patriotism. I am quite certain that no man will answer this question in the negative."

LIBERALISM

Raja Sir Maharaj Singh in his presidential address in 1943 said about the poverty of numbers in the liberal ranks, "We are told that our numbers are insignificant and our future without hope. Now it is true that we cannot claim to influence the masses of our country men in the same way as the Congress and the Muslim League. For this the reasons are fairly clear.

"But we may claim with reason that though there are many thinking persons in India who are not formally and visibly members of our party, there are thousands upon thousands who in their heart of hearts profess our creed. **Every politically minded Indian, who is not a full and active member of the present Congress, Muslim League or Mahasabha, is a Liberal however much he may wish to disown this appellation. In this connection I make bold to say that the majority of Indian Christians**—the president himself was an Indian Christian and one of their leading men,—**'who now number between seven or eight millions, hold substantially the views of the Liberal Party. So I imagine, do large numbers among the scheduled classes, Sikhs and Parsis."**

Sir Maharaj Singh concluded "Liberals may diminish in numbers and our party may disappear in a future self-governing India, but liberalism represents something which is of lasting value. It is a habit of mind or outlook in life. It is progresive and constructive, not revolutionary or destructive. It insists that all should have equal opportunities for full life though all may not have the same gifts and opportunities. It is opposed to the dictatorship of wealth, of the privileged classes and vested interests, and it advocates the widest possible diffusion of property and power, but at the same time it disapproves totalitarian tyranny." He quoted in support the words of a

staunch leader of the Liberal Party in England when the fortunes of that party were at their lowest ebb. And those words may very well be the guiding light of Indian Liberalism as well.

Mr. Asquith spoke of Liberals and Liberalism in his famous Paisley speech in October 1926 as follows:

"The fortunes of the Liberal Party may fluctuate but there is only one way in which Liberalism can ever be killed and that is by suicide. Because both on its constructive and defensive side it means two things, the preservation and extension of liberty in every sphere of national life, and subordination of class interests to the interests of the community. These two ideals were and are the life-breath of the liberal faith."

CONCLUSION

India has passed through the darkest days of her political existence during the period—from 1918 to 1943—covered by these pages. We had one great world war preceding the period from 1914 to 1918. And we are passing through another world-war, certainly of vaster dimensions and fraught with more terrible issues still to the survivors. It caught India at the the end of 1939, and has been a black catastrophe for her during this age; but the fact is hardly "a proved and shining victory over the principles and policies of the age before it."

Some are prone to say of the 'new principle' that has been in ascendence during this period, that the principle is its own reward. But that has not saved the country from the disasters that followed as a result of "plenty of wrong turns taken at the cross roads, time misused and wasted, gold taken for dross and dross for gold, manful effort misdirected, facts misread, and men misrepresented."

What Indian liberalism and the party that swears by its principles have done through these dark days is, "not to allow the lamp of loyalty to Reason to grow

dim and not to dishearten earnest, persistent zeal for wise politics." For these the party has lived and striven, through good report and evil report, and without fear or favour. It has aspired to no fame and popularity other than what comes, in good time, to those who remain loyal to truth as they see it. As Lord Morley puts it, "Winds shift, tides ebb and flow, the boat swings. Only let the anchor hold." As for the future of Indian Liberalism and of the Liberal Party, that question future alone can answer, and, as the saying goes, "he who lives will see". Enough for the day is the day's work well done.

The story that is narrated in these pages and the study of Indian liberalism that has been made through it, reveal one fact more clearly than another. And it is this—that we have forgotten to realise that politics, after all, is a conflict of wills and is one long second best. It is futile to blame politicians, provided they be honest and patriotic, for all our disasters. It is equally foolish to call them all crooks for the reason that a country gets the politicians it deserves. The truth is they are no more corrupt than the people who elect them. Let us quit blaming them and face the responsibility of full citizenship., so that the future of our country may be better than the past that we are swiftly leaving behind. There is no room for optimism or pessimism. There is room only for hard, day-to-day work conducted with firmness, courage and principles by which we swear. The rest is 'in the lap of the Gods,' as Gokhale put it on a memorable occasion in the struggle for India's coming into her own.

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37	13th	will	wil
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50	second	exuberance	exculerance
54	14th	Sastri (wherever it occurs)	Shastri
65	20th	Rt. Hon. Sastri	Hon. Shastri
76	17th	Rowdyism	Rowdism
80	20th	Kemal Pasha	Kamal Pasha
82	9th	Govindaraghava Iyer	Govindaraghavachariar
87	8th	purpose	purbose
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97	first	Srinivasa Sastri	Shrinivas Shastri
121	9th	Rs. 60 lakhs	60 lakhs
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