

A BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH.

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OF

DEWAN BAHADUR

V. NĀGAM AIYA, B.A., F. R. HIST. S.

*Retired Senior Dewan Peishcar and Acting Dewan,
Travancore*

BY

A WEST-COAST FRIEND AND BROTHER-ALUMNUS.

MADRAS:

PRINTED AT THE LAW PRINTING HOUSE, MOUNT ROAD.

1913.

“It would be a species of savageness to reject indifferently all sorts of praise; one ought to be alive to that which comes from men of honor and sense, who praise from the heart things which are worthy of praise.”

LA BRUYERE.

“Your respect for him would probably be increased, as you found it was agreed upon by those who should know that he could do something well. Honors, you see, not only reward merit, but also declare its existence.”

SIR ARTHUR HELPS.

“The true test of a man, and the true test of a class, and the true test of a people, is power. It is a small thing as long as he has not power, as long as temptation is kept out of his way—that he should be tolerably just in his judgment, but it is when power has come into his hands that his trial comes.”

GLADSTONE.

“It is not titles that reflect honor on men, but men that reflect honor on titles.”

MACHIAVELLI.

PREFATORY NOTE.

The subject of the following sketch is a rare instance of officialdom in Native States bringing out to a wider public view some of the best men among them. Dewan Bahadur Nagam Aiya, though he was an official in Travancore, has been as well known outside—not merely as an official, but also as a man of culture and literary accomplishments, of liberal sympathies and an interest in the wider affairs of the world. It is rarely that Native States produce such men who are capable of interesting themselves in public questions outside their own sphere. There is no necessity here to speak of his excep-

tional merits and talents as they are fully evidenced by the appreciative references and testimonials printed in the following pages, but it may be remarked here that for a man who as an official was long accustomed to exercise autocratic power, it is a creditable feature that he should have been so full of sympathy with popular aspirations in British India. He has served for over forty years in Travancore, yet he retains the energy of youth and immense capacity for sustained work as his numerous contributions to the Public Press will show. He has the same interest in and enthusiasm for the people's welfare, and in spite of his long official life is still jealous of the subject's right of independent judgment and opinion. Though he has been an autocrat for years, there is nothing of the autocrat in him, and he has always been known to be suave and courteous in his relations not only with his Royal masters, but with the

public at large. He enjoys in Travancore a measure of popularity which cannot be said to belong to any other official, and his generosity, his warmth of heart, and his readiness to be helpful to others are the secrets of his great personal influence and popularity. He has many more years of active life before him, and let us hope it may still be possible for him to obtain work which is not only congenial to his training and temperament, but also calculated to promote the public weal in every way.

C. K.

Madras September 1913.