

REVIVED MEMORIES

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BY

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FOREWORD.

Mr. Subba Rao's book, which I heartily commend to the public, is a good specimen of its class. In easy fluent style, drawing no attention to itself and well fitted for narrative composition, it recalls events of the last two generations, some remembered vividly, some just fading out of the memory, but none wholly forgotten. A happy instinct has led the author to make his chronicle revolve round persons rather than episodes. The stage is capacious and holds distinguished company, but the interest is never uncomfortably poignant and one never gets unduly excited. Mr. Subba Rao is not concerned to applaud, condemn or defend, he nowhere seeks to stir the reader's emotions. Yet his experience as teacher, journalist, official and private secretary to a Dewan might have enabled him, if he were a malicious gossip or grievance-monger, to make ugly disclosures, destroy reputations, and stir up family feuds. Reminiscence can be a dangerous occupation, and I beg leave to congratulate the writer on the way he has resisted temptations and avoided pitfalls. He evidently has two of the gifts necessary for writing about oneself, the power of selecting the essential, and the charity which forgets evil.

Mr. Subba Rao has a quiet genial humour which pleases without startling, as where he describes his

failure to realise his ambition to make a world-tour. This, he says, "I have, by force of circumstances, been compelled to postpone to the next birth". It is a keen eye for witty and dramatic situations which records two incidents in the life of that most remarkable and attractive personage, Rajah Sir T. Madhava Rao. An Anglo-Indian paper wrote of him: "The mantle of eloquence has fallen on the shoulders of Rajah Sir T. Madhava Rao, and the Viceroy himself lags behind him in the race." The Viceroy then was the famous Lord Lytton. Many years later we find him presiding at a great demonstration against the Age of Consent Bill. In confuting his famous cousin Dewan Bahadur Raghunatha Rao he used the polysyllabic invective "the antediluvian nebulosities of the Vedas". This phrase was the occasion of unprecedented rowdyism. The poor Rajah had to be carried out by friends and "that was his last exit from all public meetings". Many anecdotes of this kind enliven these pages and will reward the reader.

The pictures here given of the eminent men whom the author met in his life prove his insight into character, his wide sympathies, and his kindness of disposition. The most vivid is that of Mr. G. Subrahmanya Aiyar, a somewhat rugged and pugnacious character, but full of earnestness, pluck and command. Sir K. Seshadri Aiyar receives full treatment and his varied abilities find in our writer a warm admirer and eager exponent. The great Mahadev Govind Ranade figures prominently in the book. Mr. Subba Rao is naturally

proud of his friendship and records his own account of three ambitions, two of which were not fulfilled and the third is involved in the mystic and mysterious future. At the end is an appreciation of the present Maharajah of Mysore, eloquent and enthusiastic, but not too eloquent and enthusiastic for that high-minded and virtuous Prince. I shall conclude by quoting a memorable remark of Mr. Chentsal Rao which our author describes as the difference between autocracy and democracy. He compares his method of doing things with that of Sir K. Seshadri Aiyar.

“Our methods are different. He would carry out his schemes against all opposition and if necessary would at times even throw sand in the eyes of his opponents, whereas my method is always to carry the public with me, to argue with them, to convince them and to progress inch by inch. It is this difference in our methods, though our aim is the same, that accounts for his unpopularity and my popularity.”

V. S. SRINIVASA SASTRI.

MADRAS,
9th May, 1933.