

OF  
DR. (SIR) S. SUBRAMANIA IYER

WITH BIOGRAPHICAL INTRODUCTION

BY

D. V. GUNDAPPA

Editor, The KARNATAKA, Author of the "Problems of  
Indian Native States," etc.

S. R. MURTHY & CO.,  
TRIPPLICANE, MADRAS, S. E.

**SPEECHES AND WRITINGS**

**OF**

**DR. (SIR) S. SUBRAMANIA IYER.**

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' I. POLITICAL & EDUCATIONAL

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**SUCCESS** in your profession is not the only end of education. It has a higher object, that is, to prepare you to lead a worthy life in this world. Whether you shall live such a life depends, to a large extent, upon yourselves. If you ask me what are the most indispensable requisites for such a life I should certainly say "a good conscience" and "a high character":—*Consecration Address (1896) of the Madras University.*

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## PUBLISHERS' NOTE.

The Publishers have great pleasure in offering this Volume of DR. SIR\* S. SUBRAMANIA AIYER'S Speeches and Writings, to the public. Theirs being the first attempt to bring together in a handy Volume the important contributions which the great patriot has made to the literature on our national problems, they crave the reader's indulgence for any short comings that may be noticed. They have every hope that this Volume would meet with a cordial reception, and they further hope that they may soon be enabled to bring out another Volume containing his Speeches and Writings on Social, Religious, Philosophical and other Subjects.

The Publishers beg to say by way of an apology that they found it necessary to create an Appendix at the end of this

\* This title has been renounced—*Vide* page 423.



Volume for the recent Speeches and Writings, (on Politics) i. Letter to Dr. Wilson ii. "Special Congress and Reform Scheme" iii. The Reply to Unjust Attack. & iv. Passive Resistance, as the pages 323-387 preceding it on Education had gone through print.

In conclusion, they are confident that the reader will not be behind to join them in expressing their heartfelt gratitude to the Author of the Biographical Introduction to this Volume. They also offer their sincere thanks to the Printers for the prompt and neat execution of this work.

# Sir SUBRAMANIA IYER

K. C. I. E., L. L. D.

76th Birthday—Monday, 1st October 1917



श्रीमा नसौ विभाल्यद्य भासयन् यशसा दिशः ।  
ध्रोगोदान्त स्तथा शान्तो धर्माधर्मविचक्षणः ॥  
वृद्ध स्तथा न वयसा विद्यया दयया यथा ।  
प्रजाहिते हितं पश्यन् नृपतेः श्रीपतेरपि ॥  
सुब्रह्मण्यो वरेण्योयं भारतेयजनाग्रणीः ।  
जीयाद्धिताय जगतां प्रसादाज्जगतीपतेः ॥

## BIOGRAPHICAL INTRODUCTION.

### I

THE illustrious patriot, a selection from whose speeches and writings is herewith presented to the public, furnishes a conspicuous example of the truth that character is more than opinion. The influence of an idea upon the popular mind depends not merely upon its own ethical or utilitarian soundness, but also—and in no less a measure,—upon the moral and practical worth of its promulgator. Emerson has defined character as “a reserved force which acts directly by presence, and without means.” “What others effect by talent or by eloquence, the man of character accomplishes by some magnetism. He conquers, because his arrival alters the face of affairs.” So has it been with Sir S. Subramania Iyer. There are to-day thousands—nay, millions of men in this country who firmly believe that the cause of Home Rule is a righteous cause, worthy of all the devotion they are capable of; but if, in the momentous month of June, 1917, a leader so universally revered as Sir S. Subramania Aiyer had not come forward to be the standard-bearer of *Swraj*, it is hard to say

that the cause would have been to-day the all-inspiring and all-moving national force that it undoubtedly is. The idea had, no doubt, found clear and emphatic utterance long before the internment of Mrs. Annie Besant; and there were, no doubt, several staunch Home Rulers in the country to help in saving the flame kindled by her from extinction during her exile. But it was the venerable personality of the Honorary President of the Home Rule League—his high moral prestige, his unrivalled eminence as the upholder of all that is good and godly—which saved the nation from that demoralization which naturally must set in when leaders are snatched away by a terrorizing Government. Not only did he so save it; he further gave it the inspiration that it needed to continue the fight with redoubled courage and energy; so that—whether the ultimate material victory be far or near—the immediate moral victory was soon won beyond any possibility of doubt. The visit of the Rt Hon. E. S. Montagu to this country, the Parliamentary declaration that preceded it, and the release of the interned that came with it, constitute the triumph of the high-souled leadership of Sir S. Subramania Iyer; and if we look at his past from this position of his leadership, his whole career would appear but as a careful and fitting preparation for it. It looks as if the high gods in their benigance presided watchfully over the life of this great son of

India and guided it along lines that have eventually brought it to its present high destiny.

## II

Sir S. Subramania Iyer was a lad of 15 when India made the first startling sign of the persistence in her of the instinct of self-preservation. The Indian Mutiny was in truth not a mere rising of the Sepoys, nor a frantic onslaught of native ignorance upon foreign enlightenment; it was the self-assertion—however rude and untimely—of the nation as against the self-aggrandizement of the alien Power. The years 1857 and 1917—covering between themselves one full Hindu cycle—mark two notable stages in the history of but one principle, the principle of national self-consciousness. The interests, ideas, passions, and hopes that have electrified the air we breathe to-day, had—no doubt in a nebulous and unrefined form—begun to agitate the atmosphere in which Sir Subramania Iyer had to spend the impressionable years of youth. Born (1st October, 1842) and brought up amid the enlivening and chastening circumstances of a Brahmana family that had been spared both the degradation of poverty and the demoralization of wealth, he had access to education in English very early in life, so that his mind was open in its formative period to the energizing influences that the West had introduced. His father Subbaiyer was the

trusted Vakil or agent of the Zemindar of Ramnad (Madura District); and he was, as his popular appellation *Syravally* (whirlpool) indicates, a person of marked energy and aptitude for affairs. These qualities were the only fortune that he,—since he died in 1844,—was able to confer on his third son Subramaniam. The child of two years grew under the care of his mother who lived to see him on the pinnacle of prosperity, and who, in the early years of her widowhood, had the support of her devoted first son Ramaswamy Aiyer, who rose to the position of Huzur Sheristadar of the Madura District. Having gone through the elementary course first in a school maintained by a tailor, then in one run by a Christian Mission, and lastly in one opened by a certain Krishnaswami Chettiar, young Subramaniam joined the Zilla High School in 1856. The head of that institution, Mr. William Williams was a cultured Englishman of broad sympathies, and he was quick to discern the latent worth of his new pupil. Subramaniam was soon awarded a monthly stipend of Rs. 5; and winning prize after prize, he successfully passed the highest examination in that school in 1859. His name appeared in the official *Gazette* and caught the eye of the Collector of the District who, on enquiry, learnt that his bearer was a brother of his own head clerk; and very soon the successful young man was able to start his career in Government

service as a clerk on Rs. 20 a month—by no means a negligible position in those days. These various facts serve to show that Subramania Iyer's character was moulded in no dull or languorous environment. Access to new mental avenues, a generous incentive for self-exertion and an intimate contact with the general life of the country—these were the advantages that he had in the most plastic period of life.

### III

The year 1857 saw the establishment of the University of Madras, and it opened out yet another opportunity for the enterprising. Subramania Iyer had, while as a clerk, passed the Pleadership examination, topping the list of successful candidates; but the cross-grained District Judge of Madura,—who had been incensed by an old legal practitioner of the place against likely intruders into his preserve,—would not grant a *sanad* (or permission to practice) to Subramania Iyer. However, when the Criminal Procedure Code came into force in 1862, Subramania Iyer's legal qualifications found recognition: he was appointed Public Prosecutor. But the same old cross-grained District Judge continued to hold sway; and he greeted Subramania Iyer's debut in his court as Prosecutor with the elegant exhortation: "Don't chatter like a monkey." Naturally vexed at all this, Subramania Iyer was

on the look-out for a smoother road to an opportunity of making the best of himself; and the prospects held out by the B. L. degree of the new University inspired him with fresh hope. He became a student once again, and passed the matriculation examination in 1865, F. A. in 1866, and B. L. in 1868—all by private study. This academical success secured him promotion to the office of Tahsildar; but the charms of Government service could no longer keep down the impulse that turned his heart towards an independent calling of many-sided public usefulness. Resigning the Tahsildarship, he joined Mr. J. C. Mills, an English Barrister who was also the Official Reporter, as apprentice; and within a few months he was able to start his career as a Vakil at Madura. The strong purposefulness thus shown, the forcefulness of character, the winning intelligence and the innate love of independence could not have gone unnoticed by the public of Madura, and the prizes of the race were naturally within his easy reach when once the road became clear.

It was precisely to a man of these qualities that the new spirit of the times, already alluded to, made its special appeal. By the time Subramania Iyer set up as a lawyer, the great pre-Congress patriots of Madras—Gazulu Lakshminarasimhulu Chetty and C. Poorooshottum Modaliyar—had come to the end of their noble and high-spirited labours; but



the popular grievances which they strove to redress still remained to cry for attention, and the potent ideas which they—especially the latter—meant to sow were still floating about in quest of suitable soil. The stir which began with those pioneers of political agitation continued to reverberate in the public mind, and the movements with which they were identified—the establishment of schools for boys and girls, of reading rooms and literary clubs, the holding of public meetings to protest against the outrages of Christian Missionaries, and, above all, the forwarding of monster petitions to the British Parliament, like the lengthy and portentous documents sent up by the short-lived but intrepid Madras Native Association,—these various activities had chalked out the path to be pursued by a true-hearted servant of the country. Besides all these, there was the living voice of Mr. John Bruce Norton, eloquent and influential and breathing the very spirit of international sympathy and fairness. His splendid gifts of pen and tongue were dedicated to the service of the land of his adoption; and for 17 years—1853 to 1870—he was the patron of the famous Patchiappa's Institution, delivering an annual oration there, lofty alike in sentiment and expression. In 1858—on the morrow of the Mutiny—he had uttered the following pregnant words:—

“ It is true that in England the cry which seems chiefly to have been struck, out of the late

crisis is "India for England," but I do but reiterate the words of one of the noblest Englishmen that ever set foot on these shores—Lord William Bentinck—when I say that the only principle to guide us for the future must be "India for India." There is a second proposition which is now generally admitted, that India must be governed *in* India; and to these I will add a third, the force of which is even now being silently felt, that ultimately India must be governed in the main *by* India."

All these manifestations of the New Spirit were surely not to go wasted upon one of Subramania Iyer's alertness of mind and sensitiveness of soul. We have his own words\* as to what he owes to John Bruce Norton:

"The *Indian Statesman* (*Madras Athenæum*?) was a weekly that appeared in the fifties (under the editorship of Mr. J. B. Norton). I used to read articles occasionally borrowing the journal and used to be fascinated with them. When he went to England and he was absent there, he wrote—with the initials of J. B. N.—racy letters, sometimes referring to the Tanjore Ranee's case in which he was counsel for the ladies.....(With reference to Mr. Norton's speeches at the Patchiappa's College

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\* Quoted from a private letter.

anniversaries) the impression they made upon me when I read them in the newspapers was profound."

## IV

Sir Subramania Aiyar's patriotic ardour has thus grown in him as a natural counterpart, so to say, of the vital warmth of his heart. It shone forth with the very dawn of his mental life and flamed up with the rise of his outward fortune—rebuffs and disappointments serving only to fan it. Whatever else be the failing which detractors might discern in him, they will not find it possible to say that love of country is a new-born enthusiasm of his old age. The unseen hand that took care to provide for his material good was not less careful to feed the moral glow of his inward being. As a young man of 28, blossoming into a leader of the bar, he was afforded (1870) an opportunity to be of service to his townsmen, and for ten years he took a useful part in the municipal administration of Madura. He was likewise a member of the Madura District Board.

In 1873 the committee of the Madura Temple was found to be unable to account for Rs. 40,000 of its funds; and it was Subramania Aiyer's fearless public spirit that took the matter to law courts and secured the amount for the temple,—whereupon he was elected a member of its committee

Two years later, when H. M. the late King-Emperor Edward visited Madura as Prince of Wales, Subramania Aiyer was chosen to be the spokesman of the town in presenting its loyal address of welcome. And it is instructive to recall that a sum of Rs. 14 000 which remained unspent out of funds then collected from the public for the reception of the royal visitor, was utilized for the construction of a bridge across the Vaigai.

In 1877, recognition of his public work came to Subramania Aiyer in the form of a Certificate of Merit awarded by Lord Lytton. Not less important is the fact that he was called upon to appear as a witness before the Famine Commission which visited Madura in the same year; and one of the chief points in his evidence was that the peasantry stood in need of protection against the arbitrary orderings of landlords.

He relinquished (1880) his seat in the Municipal Council of Madura for a reason which is of some special interest to us at the present moment: he was suspected of having instigated the bazar-men to go on a strike because an additional tax had been imposed on them. But his proved civic zeal and popularity were such that, after two years, he was again invited to join the Council; and for two years and a half afterwards, his voice there was supreme. A public park—for the cost of which his own family is believed to have contributed so much as Rs. 4000,—

a temple-garden and a water-supply project were among the notable achievements of Subramania Aiyer in the service of his town.

His renown had now travelled beyond the limits of his District. The Government had come to recognize him as a public man whose support was worth having. In 1882, to make recommendations as to how best the policy enunciated in Lord Ripon's historic resolution on local self-government could be carried out in the Madras Presidency, a committee was appointed by the Local Government, and Subramania Aiyer was asked to join it. Among his colleagues were Mr. (afterwards Sir) A. Seshayya Sastri and Mr. P. Chentsal Rao C. S. I., both of whom rose to high positions later on. But he could agree with none of them in their disbelief in the people's fitness for local autonomy. The minute of dissent he then submitted (printed on page 6 of this volume) is a remarkable testimony to the steadfastness of his devotion to the cause of popular liberty. It exposes the hollowness of the bureaucratic boast about efficiency; it vindicates the people's natural interest in their civic and social institutions; and it pleads for the purity of non-official public life. When it was written, Mrs. Besant had not even come to India, and Subramania Aiyer had not yet joined the Theosophical Society.

It was in 1884 that he joined the Theosophical Society. He had just then lost his partner in life and felt the need to seek such comfort as may be found in the companionship of earnest seekers of the Truth. It was an important year for two other reasons as well: he was nominated to be a non-official member of the Madras Legislative Council by H.E. Sir M.E. Grant Duff who had seen Subramania Aiyer as the energetic Vice-President of the Madura Municipal Council; and at the end of the year he participated in the deliberations of the meeting that was held in Madras to evolve the scheme of a national assembly for India. In the following year (1885) the Indian National Congress held its first formal session at Bombay; and the Hon. Mr. Subramania Aiyer was there to throw some instructive light on the working of the Legislative Councils, out of his own experiences (page 12). This, again, is an instance of Sir Subramania Aiyer's deliberate advocacy of the cause of popular government,—long before Mrs. Besant's advent (1893) on the Indian soil.

In 1885, he found it necessary to settle down in Madras. Migration to the metropolis was naturally followed by a widening of the sphere of activity. He was appointed a Fellow of the University; and he found much to do for the *Hindu*

and the Mahajana Sabha, both started by his worthy namesake than whom South India has known no more honourable publicist. Of the Hon. Mr. S. Subramania Aiyer's work in the Legislative Council, what every one felt was thus recorded in the *Hindu* :

"There is not another Hindu gentleman in this Presidency in whom the community has greater confidence, or who has more endeared himself to it—not merely by his attainments, but also by valuable services rendered. He is perhaps the only instance known for many years of a Hindu gentleman who has won the confidence of the Government as well as of the public... ..He made himself so useful to the Government in its legislative business that for the first time the Government learnt that an Indian gentleman could be more than a figure-head in the Council, and that by associating an Indian gentleman with itself in this important and onerous work, it conferred no particular obligation on anybody, but was seeking valuable and indispensable help in the discharge of its own duty."

The Government gave expression to their appreciation of his work first (1888) by appointing him to the office of Government Pleader—an office till then reserved for Europeans, and then (1895) by raising him to the bench of the Madras High Court in

s accession to that most celebrated of Indian judges and jurists, Sir T. Muthusami Iyer.

## VI

For 12 years Sir. S. Subramania Iyer continued to be an honoured figure on the bench of the High Court, thrice being raised to be its Chief. The second Indian to be given a place on the highest judicial tribunal in the land, that he was so often asked to be at its head, and that he, in fact, had to decline the unique privilege on the last occasion owing to his failing bodily health, are an unmistakable testimony to the uncommon worth of his judicial qualities. The Privy Council recognized him as "a Hindu lawyer of great distinction" and showed deference to his views. The Vakil-world admired him as a judge of an incorruptible conscience and a kindly, painstaking disposition. The general public idolized him as one who never forgot to temper justice with mercy. He never quibbled and never lost the true spirit of justice amid the mazes of legal jargon. His special point was not ingenuity in the soulless technic of law, but the spacious humanity that is the vital breath of all law worth the name. The zealous social reformer who was the editor of the *Hindu* had expressed the hope "that it may be, Mr. Subramania Aiyer's good fortune to be instrumental in furthering, so far as



it lies in the sphere of a High Court Judge, the cause of Hindu social advancement." The hope came true in as full a measure as opportunities permitted. In interpreting the ancient Hindu Law of Property, Mr. Justice Subramania Iyer recognized woman's inherent right to be placed on a footing of equality with man. He took care to uphold the widow's claim to be enabled to live honourably, exercising the rights vested in her by her husband. He was equally careful to safeguard the interests of morality, and laid down that a courtesan has no right to adopt a minor girl into her family for professional purposes. He it was who declared that among Hindus, though the husband is the legal guardian of his wife, he becomes entitled to have actual custody of her only after she attains maturity. In the decision of every case that came up before him, the paramount factor was "justice, equity and good conscience." These stood above all other authorities and considerations.

Every one in our day is familiar with the dictum that "liberty" and "justice" denote but two aspects of the same principle. What is known as democracy in politics is known as equity in jurisprudence. It would therefore be strange if he who, as politician, is to-day leading the movement for popular ascendancy, had forgotten, as judge, to raise his voice on behalf of the neglected womanhood and the depressed commonalty of the

land. What he was able to accomplish for the peasantry of Southern India may be read on page 252 of this volume.

The reformer who would do so much to undermine the vested interests of the bureaucracy and of the aristocracy was not the judge that would pay homage to vested interests in houses of worship and of charity. We have already noticed his services to the famous temple of Madura. It was given to him, about the time when he was Government Pleader, to set the law in motion against the Mahant or manager of Tirupati, and pave the way for its present reformed system of administration. The flag-staff of the great shrine had then been newly erected; and the Mahant, who had to deposit a quantity of gold underneath it in accordance with some ecclesiastical rule, deposited copper in its stead, and proclaimed to the world that it was gold to the value of two lakhs of rupees that had been laid at the bottom of the new flag-staff. His sense of security arose out of the hope that no daring iconoclast would be forthcoming to pull down the sacred pillar and look in for a corroboration of his statement. Mr. Subramania Iyer, than whom Hindu religious and social institutions have never had a more zealous or more faithful supporter, was however not found to be wanting in courage to rise superior to popular superstition and gullibility; and he insisted that the Mahant's

assurances were not to be taken unverified. "The maxim of law is that justice should be done though the heavens should fall: *fiat justitia ruat cælum*. Surely, your Lordships cannot be deterred from doing justice here because the mere trifle of a thing, a flag-staff, is to fall." The reasonableness of this exhortation was seen by the judges, and on examination, the flagstaff was found to be standing supported by the baser metal. The zeal and courage thus shown for purifying temple management and securing the interests of worshippers could not fail to come into full play while opportunities occurred to them when Sir Subramania Aiyer was on the bench.

Owing to a persistent eye-trouble—rather, owing to a conscience that was too sensitive to leave him untroubled if he undertook to do a duty for which he could not spare the requisite energy, even if that be only energy of the optic nerves—he asked for permission to retire from the service, which he did on 13th November, 1907, though he could easily have managed to pull on somehow for another eight months and earn an annual pension of £1200 instead of the present £ 880. The Governor in Council, in a *Gazette Extraordinary*, placed on record his appreciation of the "eminent services" rendered by Sir S. Subramania Aiyar, K.C.I.E., during his long term of office as a judge of the High Court. It was further said:

“The high judicial qualities, the independence of character and the profound learning which he has at all times displayed throughout his long and honourable career have earned for him a name which will long be held in reverence and esteem by the Government and the public.”

In 1896 he had been made a Dewan Bahadur; some time later a C.I.E.; and in 1900 a K.C.I.E. He had in 1896 delivered an inspiring address (page 323) to the graduates of the year at the Convocation of the Madras University in whose welfare he always took a keen personal interest. He pleaded for the lightening of the student's burden, for the minimizing of the evils of examination, for the diffusion of liberal culture and the extension of higher education. These services to the University found hearty appreciation, and he was honoured with the office of Vice-Chancellor—an honour not extended to an Indian till then. In 1908 the *Alma Mater* conferred the highest honour in her gift—the degree of Doctor of Laws—on “the Nestor of her graduates (as the Sir Subramania Aiyer Lecturer to the University in 1914 put it) in honouring whom, every one, from the highest in the land, may feel that he is only honouring himself.”

## VII

In the earlier years of retirement, the impulse that sought to fulfil itself was the sovereign impulse

of the soul. Indeed, his passion for the things of the spirit may be said to be at the bottom of all the other high-soaring passions of his life. Devoted as he always had been to the study of the ancient scriptures of his religion and to the unravelling of their mysteries, he could give more time to the contemplation of their truths and the cultivation of their asceticisms now that the robe of office had been finally thrown out. But the spell of *Yogi-ism* could not, in the very nature of things, last for any great length of time. To no deep-seeing soul has religion ever meant the abandoning of all concern for the ills of fellow-beings. On the contrary it has seemed to every such soul that religion would be an utterly barren and worthless thing—a mere sop to silence the conscience—if it were not to result in an energetic pursuit of the task of human betterment. It is Sir Subramania Aiyer's religious zeal that has given permanence to his interest in the reform of the system of administration of religious and charitable endowments (p. 187), and has led him to organize and direct the *Dharma Rakshana Sabha*—a registered and recognized body to examine the accounts and report upon the condition of temples and charitable institutions. It is the same zeal that has inspired his moving appeals for the liberalizing of Hindu social institutions, and prompted him to organize conferences of Pandits—like those held at Conjeevaram and Tiruvadi,—for modernizing their

outlook upon life. It is the same zeal that breathes in his messages to the youth of the country; see his addresses to the Students' Convention (p. 340) and to the students of the Law College (p. 362). It is, again, the same zeal that is sustaining his faith in the potent value of Indian nationalism as a force for the good of the race. It is the same zeal that has secured his allegiance to the cause of democracy which—as pointed out elsewhere—is to him nothing else than the practical working out of the sacred principle of brotherhood. And it is, naturally, the same religious zeal that impelled him to go forward to take the place which he—and he alone—could have taken among the forces of Home Rule with the utmost possible consequence.

He who had assisted at the birth of the Congress in 1884, and had, seven years later, to decline the invitation to be its President, returned to its service in 1914 as chairman of the Reception Committee at Madras (p. 21). But the highest call for which, in the dispensations of the Unseen Ruler of nations, his life was so solicitously tended, amid circumstances of such varied significance and with so many marks of inward excellence and external good fortune, was yet to come. It came at length when his friend and comrade who had so successfully begun the work of restoring sensitiveness to the nation's mind was taken away by a too self-confident bureaucracy. It was then—in May,

1917—that the angel of freedom called upon the nation to prove its mettle; and on how it would come out of that ordeal depended the entire hope of its future. At that fateful hour of trial, the leader who alone could give unity and direction to the nation's energies emerged in the aged and fragile figure of Sir S. Subramania Iyer. Every one at once knew what it meant: it meant that a grave crisis had arisen in the country, that the self-respect of the nation was at stake, and that it was no longer right to leave the cause of emancipation to a small and limited group of public workers—the larger public remaining indifferent. One that had won the confidence of the Sovereign in the highest degree, had held one of the highest offices of State, and could have had no manner of personal grudge against the Government, and one, too, who had been steadfast and unostentatious in the country's service, whose mind and morals had been refined and perfected by manifold experience, whose fine character and practical good sense had elicited universal admiration,—such a man, at a stage of life when political controversy and tumult would be the last thing agreeable, came out of his seclusion and declared that the early establishment of Home Rule is vital to the welfare of the country and that he was prepared to face any penalties that might follow his decision to work for that ideal—which, he believed, was the ideal prescribed by God (p. 5). This struck

the popular imagination as nothing else could have. It was the triumph of Sir Subramania Aiyer's personality. Unquestioningly, instinctively, the nation rallied around the veteran and paid the homage that is due to purity and loftiness of character. Truly, as Emerson has said, men of character "do not need to inquire of their constituents what they should say, but are themselves the country which they represent; nowhere are its emotions or opinions so instant and true as in them; nowhere so pure from a selfish infusion."

Of those to whom it was ever given to help forward their fellow-men a step or two in the direction of light and liberty, history discloses two types: the prophet and the statesman (using these terms in a very general sense). The former, coming to preach a new idea or an unfamiliar principle to an unsympathetic world, triumphs only in his failures. To move the public so prepared, the statesman appears on the scene at the opportune hour and fulfils the purpose for which the martyr's life was laid. What the prophet initiates, the statesman consummates: martyrdom and opportunism (in the best sense) are complimentary processes in the progress of reform. To Sir S. Subramania Aiyer belongs the distinction of being among those whom destiny appoints

"To know the seasons when to take  
Occasion by the hand and make  
The bounds of freedom wider yet"

With a mind capable of broadening with age—  
undoubtedly one of the true *insignia* of greatness—



a mind which has ever been open to new forms of truth and ever ready to re-adapt its conclusions in the light of fresh experience, with unrivalled prestige won as a favoured servant of the Crown, and as a devoted servant of the Motherland, he was made by nature and history alike to be the leader of the popular upheaval of our day.

## VIII

It would seem superfluous to recount here the multifarious items of public work that have received from the crowning years of Sir Subramania Aiyer all the energy and enthusiasm of youth. Scarcely has a week passed without his presiding over some public function or joining in the settlement of some public controversy. The publishers of the present volume must have been bewildered indeed at the extent and range of the speeches and contributions to the press out of which they had to make their selection. Not politics alone,—education, literature, industries and social reform are all having their due. He is as ready to assist at the starting of a *Swadeshi* enterprise, or the founding of a national college, or the opening of a public choultry, or the celebration of some patriot's or poet's anniversary, as he is to speak a fearless word against some arbitrary act of the Government. Once he wrote to one whom he has honoured with epistolary privileges :

“ My compliments to our chemist friend whose acquaintance I had the pleasure of making.....

It is men like him that the Motherland wants for her industrial uplift. Please excuse my asking you to remind him—I want a catalogue of his preparations.”

Another time, he wrote in introducing a clever lock-smith who was in search of an employer :

“He has a genius for his work, and possibly he might find scope for it in the only place where there is genuine encouragement for industrial improvement. As I know how you sympathise with everything that will conduce to the progress of the Motherland, I venture to give you this trouble.”

These privately expressed sentiments show the man. The Motherland is his chief interest. Politics is only one of the means.

Generally, the whole life of a great man is found to be dominated or pervaded by one towering quality of the head or of the heart. It may be will-power, it may be intellectual daring, it may be search for an unknown ideal, it may be philanthropy, it may even be the desire for popularity or for fame. In Sir Subramania Aiyer's case, it is magnanimity. It is his nature—not design or effort—to be magnanimous; and even his seeming failings are to be ascribed to that natural and unchanging nobleness of soul. As householder, as member of a profession, as citizen, as public man, the keyword to his conduct has been:

“large-heartedness.” He has helped large numbers of young men to educate themselves; and in fact, no student in difficulties ever went to him without obtaining the needed means of relief. The Ranganatha Mudaliyar Memorial Hostel, now called the Victoria Hostel, owes its existence to his initiative, which of course was backed up by a handsome subscription. While he led the bar, his juniors had an ample share in his prosperity; and it was his hand that lifted the late Mr. P.R. Sundara Iyer and the late Mr. V. Krishnaswami Iyer from comparative obscurity to the eminence that they at length occupied. The late Swami Vivekananda, when his object (in the course of his Madras speech) was anything but to praise Theosophists, felt it necessary to speak of

“Mr. Justice Subramania Aiyer to whom my deepest gratitude is due. He has the insight of genius, and is one of the staunchest friends I have in this life, a true friend indeed, a true child of India.”

The active interest he is showing in the movement to perpetuate the memory of his late friend Mr. G. Subrahmanya Aiyer is another instance of his genuine graciousness of nature. During the days of Mrs. Besant's internment, he must have received hundreds of letters containing all manner of enquiry and suggestion from all parts of the country—from leading public men, obscure followers, enthusiastic

youngsters, humble day-labourers, those who would pray and those who would fast, those who would collect money and those who would offer a picture or a song. None of these could complain that he or she was not vouchsafed a reply—and that in the most courteous and touching terms. Accessible to every one, hearty with every one, he is setting an example of that spirit of brotherliness without which neither religion nor democracy can be true and beneficent.

A nature that is so artless, so sincere and so ardent in its devotion must necessarily be as quick to be moved to indignation. Since all speech proceeds in such a case out of the fulness of the heart, the expression of disapproval must be as full-mouthed as the expression of sympathy or appreciation. Hence the occasional note of vehemence in Sir Subramania Aiyer's speech when it concerns those who seem to him to stand between the country and what he considers to be her rightful destiny. It is perhaps inevitable that impulsiveness should sometimes lead to judgments that may in calmer moments appear to be unduly severe; and it is just possible that a seeming and unintentional "lapse from his rule of magnanimity" may have occurred once or twice. But he who would read such pronouncements of a passing mood as careful statements of attitude or as unalterable records of opinion reads them wrongly, —reads them without understanding their author.

A word may be said here about Sir Subramania Aiyer's letter to President Woodrow Wilson of the United States of America (p. 389). The letter was written during Mrs. Besant's internment,—when the whole country was seething with excitement,—as the result of an idea that suddenly cropped up in the course of a conversation between Sir S. Subramania Iyer and Mr. and Mrs. Hotchner who were American journalists of distinction and Theosophists possessing pro-Indian sympathies, then sojourning at Adyar. They offered to rouse public interest in America for India's cause, and undertook to convey any representation that the Honorary President of the Home Rule League might have to make to the head of the United States Government. With regard to the propriety of Sir Subramania Aiyer making any such representation, it is enough to note that the august addressee,—who is, to be sure, a friend of England and also a professor well versed in international law and ethics,—saw nothing objectionable in it and thought it worth his while to take action thereon; and he had with him the whole of the American public. Great Britain has not resented Dr. Wilson's intervention on behalf of Ireland; why then should she resent his being appealed to by India? In the next place, it is necessary to note that it is no complaint against British supremacy in India that Sir S. Subramania Aiyer has addressed; it is simply a protest against

British indifference. He is full of reverence for the British Crown, full of faith in British democracy, and intolerant only of the methods of government pursued by the officialdom in India. He seeks the good offices of the President of the U. S. A., not for the impossible and unthinkable purpose of overthrowing the British Power, but only for the purpose of still further consolidating that Power,—the peculiar title of Dr. Wilson to be honoured with such an appeal being his declared position as a friend of international liberty and of democratic progress. As for the language of the memorial, it must be remembered that it is the peculiar privilege of the propagandist and the agitator (using these terms in the best sense), to speak out in a direct and pointed style, leaving the graces of convention to formal assemblies and ceremonial occasions. Long, rolling sentences, abounding in conditional clauses and parenthetical reservations, might be all very proper in a legislative chamber. But if the speech or the writing is to tell immediately, it should hit off the whole situation in a few bold and vivid phrases; and that is what every great reformer, from Jesus Christ downwards, has done—and done with some success. Of cautious men saying goody-goody things in a namby-pamby style, the world has always had a plenty; and the reformer who comes to enliven the soul and quicken the understanding must necessarily employ spirited and

arresting language. The style shows the man,—it is said; and the saying is proved by the fact that Sir S. Subramania Aiyer is a man conspicuous always for his sincerity. His is not a feeble and colourless personality so that he could be careful to express himself in an innocuous, milk-and-water style. He is nothing if not a strong and courageous man,—strong in love and strong in hate, strong in loyalty to truth and right, and strong in denouncing anything that is not of good report. Quite recently, the Hon. Mr. Srinivasa Sastriar, whom Sir S. Subramania Aiyer has not spared, remarked publicly that “no one ever appealed in vain to Sir Subramaniam’s sense of justice and generosity whether while he was on the bench or when he was outside.” If such a man, the very “soul of honour” as Lord Ampthill described him, if he should be tempted to use strong language, it only means that there is something grave to be looked into. The late Mr. Gokhale once said:

“Every one knows that Mr. Dadabhai Naoroji is one of the gentlest men to be found anywhere in the world. When such a man is driven to the use of bitter language, there must be something in the situation to make him so bitter; and the responsibility for his bitterness must, therefore, lie not on him, but on those who make the situation what it is.”

will learn a little of his modesty, his earnestness to learn and prepare, his love of general culture and his lucidity and definiteness in expression.

Above all, his are speeches that have played a part in the making of history. The historian of the future, when writing about India's struggle for freedom, will surely not find it possible to ignore the name and work of Sir Subramania Aiyer. It would be no more than a sober statement of fact to say that the beloved name of "Mani Iyer" was a household word throughout the Madras Presidency long, long ago. To-day, he is the first to be counted among the patriarchs of his nation, the Nestor of our public life, the worthy successor to the throne vacated by the great Dadabhai Naoroji. May he long continue to reign in that position, to guide and inspire his countrymen in their high-souled pilgrimage.

BANGALORE CITY, }  
7th June, 1918. }

D. V. GUNDAPPA.

#### NOTE.

For information regarding some facts of Sir Subramania Aiyer's early life, the writer is indebted to the biography issued years ago from the "Wednesday Review" office, and also to the sketch appearing in the volume of Messrs. Ganesh & Co. The writer knows how ill-qualified he is for his task; but the Publishers' invitation was too pressing; the privilege it offered, too tempting. He is particularly glad that two articles on the question of the Native States have been included in this collection. The one entitled "The Spirit of Brotherhood,"—originally published under the title of "The Shrine on the Sea-shore" for an hour at the Beach House,—might have more appropriately appeared as an appendix. It may be read also as a sequel to the above character-sketch.



## POSTSCRIPT.

Subsequent to the printing of the biographical sketch, a dramatic event has happened in the life of DR. SIR S. SUBRAMANIA AIYER—to name him in the old style for only once. With reference to his historic letter to President Wilson of America, Mr. Montagu, Secretary of State for India, chose to make an altogether unparliamentary remark in the Parliament on the 3rd of June 1918; and that naturally drew forth at once a characteristically dignified and manly reply from the misjudged knight. The nation—in all parts of the country—has risen to condemn the ill-natured ebullition of the Secretary of State, and has reaffirmed its confidence in its own venerated leader—who has lost no time to follow up his reply to his accuser with suitable action. He has renounced the titles of Dewan Bahadur and K.C.I.E., so long and so well held by him, because his conduct has seemed to be “disgraceful” to the accredited spokesman of those who have conferred those titles. One cannot be at once a knight of the realm and a malcontent declared to be unchivalrous by a minister of the realm. Either Dr. Subramania Aiyer is guilty of a grave wrong and therefore no longer deserves the once-deserved honour; or Mr. Montagu’s judgment of him is a grave wrong and therefore until he is compelled to eat his anathema, the insulted cannot reconcile his sense of self-respect with the holding of a gift made by the insulter’s approving masters. This is the plain issue; and Dr. Subramania Aiyer has, in acting as he has done, not only stood by the primary right of citizenship—namely,

to criticize the Government and appeal if necessary, to the enlightened conscience of the whole world,—but has also illustrated the Indian's characteristic readiness to throw away all the vanities of the world when they stand in the way of the higher truth and right. Mr. Montagu and the Editor of the *Madras Mail* were evidently not aware of the stuff of which Dr. Subramania Aiyer is made when they, hoping to coerce him into silence, made threatening references to his position and his titles. They thought that he would hug his K.C.I.E., and shed a sea of penitential tears over his supposed crime. But those who have known him know full well that he is not the man who would give occasion to his followers for lamenting ;

“ Just for a handful of silver he left us,  
 Just for a riband to stick in his coat ;  
 Found the one gift of which fortune bereft us,  
 Lost all the others she lets us devote.”

D. V. G.

## APPENDIX

### LETTER TO DR. WILSON

*Maāras, Indāia, 24th June, 1917.*

To His Excellency, PRESIDENT WILSON.

HONOURED SIR,

I address this letter to you as Honorary President of the Home Rule League in India, an organisation voicing the aspirations of a United India as expressed through the Indian National Congress and the All-India Muslim League. These are the only two bodies in India to-day which truly represent the political ideals of that Nation of more than three hundred million people, because the only bodies created by the people themselves.

Over five thousand delegates of these two popular assemblies met at their annual convention in Lucknow last December, and they unanimously and co-jointly agreed upon identical Resolutions, asking His Majesty, the King of Great Britain, to issue a proclamation announcing that it is the aim and intention of British policy to confer Self-Government on India at an early date, to grant democratising reforms, and to lift India from the position of a Dependency to that of an equal

partner in the Empire with the Self-Governing Dominions.

While these Resolutions, Honoured Sir, voiced India's aspirations, they also expressed her loyalty to the Crown. But, though many months have elapsed, Great Britain has not yet made any official promise to grant our country's plea. Perhaps this is because the Government is too fully occupied with the heavy responsibility of the War.

But it is the very relationship of the Indian Nationalist Movement to the War that urges the necessity for an immediate promise of Home Rule—Autonomy for India, as it would result in an offer from India of at least five million men in three months for service at the front, and of five million more in another three months.

India can do this because she has a population of three hundred and fifteen millions—three times that of the United States, and almost equal to the combined population of all the Allies. The people of India will do this, because then they would be free men and not slaves.

At present we are a subject Nation, held in chains, forbidden by our alien rulers to express publicly our desire for the ideals presented in your famous War Message: “. . . the liberation of peoples, the rights of nations, great and small, and the privilege of men everywhere to choose their ways

of life and of obedience. The world must be made safe for democracy. Its peace must be planted upon the tested foundations of political liberty."

Even as conditions are, India has more than proved her loyalty to the allies. She has contributed freely and generously both blood and treasure in France, in Gallipoli, in Mesopotamia, and elsewhere. Mr. Austen Chamberlain, British Secretary of State for India, said: "There are Indian troops in France to this day; their gallantry, endurance, patience and perseverance, were shown under conditions new and strange to them." Field-Marshal Lord French said: "I have been much impressed by the initiative and resources displayed by the Indian troops." The *London Times* said concerning the fall of Baghdad: "It should always be remembered that a very large proportion of the force which General Maude has guided to victory are Indian regiments. The cavalry which hung on the flanks and demoralized the Turkish army and chased it to the confines of Baghdad, must have been almost exclusively Indian cavalry. The infantry which bore months of privation and proved in the end masters of the Turks, included Indian units, which had already fought heroically in France, Gallipoli and Egypt."

If Indian soldiers have achieved such splendid results for the Allies while slaves, how much greater would be their power if inspired by the

sentiments which can arise only in the souls of free men—men who are fighting not only for their own liberties but for the liberties of mankind! The truth is that they are now sacrificing their lives to maintain the supremacy of an alien Nation which uses that supremacy to dominate and rule them against their will.

Under these conditions, it is not surprising that the official Government in India utterly failed to get a response to its recent appeal to Indians to volunteer for military service. Only five hundred men came forward out of a possible thirty million.

It is our earnest hope that you may so completely convert England to your ideals of world liberation that together you will make it possible for India's millions to lend assistance in this war.

Permit me to add that you and the other leaders have been kept in ignorance of the full measure of misrule and oppression in India. Officials of an alien nation, speaking a foreign tongue, force their will upon us; they grant themselves exorbitant salaries and large allowances; they refuse us education; they sap us of our wealth; they impose crushing taxes without our consent; they cast thousands of our people into prisons for uttering patriotic sentiments—prisons so filthy that often the inmates die from loathsome diseases.

A recent instance of misrule is the imprisonment of Mrs. Annie Besant, that noble Irish woman who

has done so much for India. As set forth in the accompanying statement signed by eminent legislators, editors, educators and pleaders, she had done nothing except carry on a law-abiding and constitutional propaganda of reforms; the climax being her internment, without charges and without trial, shortly after printing and circulating your War Message.

I believe His Majesty, the King, and the English Parliament are unaware of these conditions, and that, if they can be informed, they will order Mrs. Besant's immediate release.

A mass of documentary evidence, entirely reliable corroborative and explanatory of the statements in this letter, is in the hands of Mr. and Mrs. Henry Hotchner, who would esteem it a privilege to place it at your disposal. I have entrusted this letter to them because it would never have been permitted to reach you by mail. They are loyal Americans, editors, authors, and lecturers on educational and humanitarian subjects, who have been deeply interested in the welfare of India. They have sojourned here off and on during the last ten years, and so have been eye-witnesses to many of the conditions herein described. They have graciously consented to leave their home in India in order to convey this letter to you personally in Washington.

Honoured Sir, the aching heart of India cries out to you, whom we believe to be an instrument of God in the reconstruction of the world.

I have the honor to be,

Sir,

Your most obedient servant,

(Sd.) SUBRAMANIAM.

*Knight Commander Indian Empire, Doctor of Laws ;*

*Honorary President of the Home Rule League in India ;*

*Co-Founder of the National Congress of India in 1885 ;*

*Retired Judge and frequently Acting Chief Justice of the High Court of Madras.*



## II

### THE "SPECIAL CONGRESS AND REFORM SCHEME."

*Sir S. Subramania Aiyar writes, on this vital topic, as follows to The Hindu of the 1st June, 1918.*

The All-India Congress Committee has decided that there should be a Special Session of the Congress after the announcement of the proposals regarding the Indian Constitutional Reforms and that it should be held at Allahabad or Lucknow. Whether a Special Session should be held or not must depend upon the time of the announcement, as there must be a sufficient interval between the announcement and the sitting of the Congress in relation to it to enable the country fully to consider the proposals and to formulate its decision in the matter. If the announcement should be delayed, so as to precede the December Session, leaving only the necessary interval for the preliminary discussion by the country, there can be no need for a Special Session. If, on the other hand, the announcement should take place as is expected, say by the end of this month, then of course a special sitting must be held and that at either of the places already fixed by the All-India Congress Committee. There are amongst us some who believe that an attempt is made to prevent the holding of the Congress in pursuance of the Resolution of the All-India Congress Committee at either of the places and

cause it to be held at some other city outside the United Provinces. The object of this move appears to be, in the opinion of those who entertain the said belief, to prevent the Session being presided over by the one man who will be able to voice the true conviction and attitude of the country as a whole unflinchingly and fearlessly as regards the Reform proposals that may be made, whatever their intrinsic worth—I need scarcely say that that man is no other than Mr. Tilak. The foundation for this fear is in the existence of a clique pledged to secure a seeming approval of our people to the proposals referred to, however short they may fall of the country's demand as contained in the Congress-League Scheme. The existence of this party and their unceasing activity, however silently carried on, no careful observer of current events can fail to note, at all events from just prior and subsequent to the internment of 16th June down to the present moment. And to this party it is needless to add Mr. Tilak has been the most obnoxious of political opponents and consequently the last man who should be suffered to guide the deliberations of so momentous a Session as that in which the Congress will express the verdict of the country on what is so vital to its future and this, lest their pledge should prove futile! It may be taken as a practical certainty that the choice will fall upon Mr. Tilak, if the Session sits either at Allahabad or at

Lucknow. In order to avert such a result the simple expedient of this party is to bring about a change of venue by persuading the Congress Committee of the U. P. to plead inability to hold the special Session within the province and get Bombay to consent to do it so that Mr. Tilak's election may become impossible under the Congress rules. In such circumstances, I trust I may be permitted to presume to act as I did with reference to the election of the President of the last Congress held at Calcutta and invite attention to the impending danger so that we may be prepared for what is apparently taking place underground. Our first course should be to get the U. P. not to forego the honor and shirk the responsibility of holding so unique a Session of the National Assembly under their own auspices in accordance with the considered selection of the All-India Congress Committee. I cannot for a moment believe that the U. P. Committee will lend itself to a course of action which will be to the utter discredit of any part of India. However this may be, we have also to admit most reluctantly that the unexpected sometimes happens and we should be forewarned and prepared even for such a contingency. For the very reason which will make it discreditable for the U. P. to refuse to hold the Congress Session within its limit, Bombay should refuse to hold the Session within its area, as otherwise it would prevent its

most devoted leader to serve the country at this critical juncture, and surely one may rest assured that the Bombay Committee will never be a party to such intrigues. The part of India that should save the situation is Central Provinces which will unquestionably welcome the holding of a Session under the presidency of one who is so dear to her people. Though some may be disposed to think that I have taken pains to raise an issue that may never rise, I have felt it my duty to draw attention to this matter as it is one in regard to which no risk can be taken by any well-wisher of the country and my apology is my sincere belief that it is not altogether a case to be put aside as an instance of smoke without fire.

It may not be out of place to add a word or two regarding another subject which is now agitating the public mind. I mean the attitude which we should observe with regard to the expected proposals of reform. Until they are actually announced no one has a right to definitely mark out what the country at large should do, with reference to the acceptance, wholly or partially, of the proposals or the contrary. Until the proposals are authentically known, no one can have a right to bind the country as to the extent of the country's acceptance thereof. The best course further, for all of us will be to withhold one's own opinion on the matter, however strong it may be, till the right moment for the

expression of opinion arrives. Any other course would necessarily handicap us and lead to differences and discussions which can only strengthen the hands of the party so assiduously working to our detriment. It ought to be plain that an abstention for the time being in this regard can do no harm whatever to our interests having regard to the fact that our leaders have times without number asserted that nothing short of the Congress-League Scheme can be acceptable to the country, however much the clique referred to may try to make out that even an anna's share would be welcome to the people. I refrain therefore from entering into the controversy as to what should be done by us if unfortunately the Congress-League Scheme might fail to find acceptance with Parliament. It is impossible to lay down beforehand what individuals must do when that contingency arises to secure what is withheld from us. One thing, however, is certain that no undertaking to cease agitation now or hereafter should be given by any one interested in the well-being of the motherland and no hearty co-operation expected from us save compliance with His Majesty's Command as to our duty against the German aggression and the protection of the country as a part of the Empire. None should flinch from asserting such a position whatever be the pressure brought to bear upon him and whatever may be

the quarter from which it comes. This is simple obligation resting upon all of us, notwithstanding differences of opinion upon minor issues which one must always expect to arise in such circumstances as we find ourselves now in.

The one outstanding question which at the present moment calls for a widespread uncompromising and strenuous agitation in all parts of the country is the turning back of Dr. Nair, as his presence in England, when the reform proposals are to come up for discussion there, would be most deleterious now that all our representatives have been peremptorily ordered back thus leaving no one on our side to place the truth before the British public and counteract the insidious work of this emissary of the Sydenham party. Every city throughout India should bestir itself with reference to this matter and loudly call for redress at the hands of the War Cabinet, who, I am sure, can hardly have the face to deny it, and thus save the credit of British justice to this extent at least. I do not hesitate to say that the failure of the Cabinet to do so will be a stain that can never be wiped out. It only remains for me to add that the insincerity of the authorities, in expecting co-operation by cessation of agitation on our part must be patent to the whole world from this latest and most invidious exercise of their power, so contemptuously ignoring all principles of fair play.

### III

#### THE REPLY TO UNJUST ATTACK

[To questions put to him in the House of Commons with regard to the letter of Sir Subramania Iyer to President Wilson (vide p. 389), Mr. Montagu answered: "The impropriety of this disgraceful letter is all the more inexcusable owing to the position of the writer. The assertions in the letter are too wild and baseless to require or receive notice from any responsible authority. No action has as yet been taken regarding the matter and I am communicating with the Viceroy." Sir J. D. Rees asked: "Is Mr. Montagu aware that the author of the letter is seventy-seven and that this was a senile production"? This evoked much criticism and especially "THE MADRAS MAIL" threatens that Sir S. Subramania Iyer should be deprived of his K. C. I. E. In the above connection Sir S. Subramania Iyer wrote as an answer the following letter to the Press on 15-6-18 :—]

Feeling that I should not allow any lapse of time to take place, I proceed at once to offer such explanation as is in my power in the present circumstances with reference to the proceedings in the House

of Commons on the 3rd instant. The matter may seem personal at first sight, but is in reality one of supreme public importance. Of course I refer to the Secretary of State's answer to the question by Mr. Hicks regarding my letter to President Wilson. Though there has been a great deal of discussion on the subject in the Press all over India, particularly in the Anglo-Indian journals, I have thought it my duty to refrain from saying anything myself about the said letter. Even had I adopted a different course, I could have added nothing worth the attention of my countrymen, having regard especially to the complete light thrown on the subject by what appeared in *New India* some weeks ago and which has since been made easily accessible to the public in the shape of a pamphlet under the title "An Abominable Plot". But the silence which I had imposed on myself must now cease, and the strange utterance of the Secretary of State on the 3rd instant in reply to Mr. Hicks' question makes it obligatory on me to take notice of it. In doing so, it is only necessary just to advert as briefly and accurately as I can to what took place in December last during the visit of H. E. the Viceroy and the Secretary of State to this city and to a communication received by me from the Chief Secretary to the Madras Government bearing the date 8-2-18



THE INTERVIEW WITH MR. MONTAGU AND THE  
VICEROY.

Most are aware that I was among those that sought and obtained an interview with the Viceroy and the Secretary of State. At the time appointed I presented myself at the Government House, and, on taking my seat, the interview was begun by His Excellency the Viceroy in a spirit and warmth which absolutely startled me. In referring to what was said by the august personages and my humble self in connection with the letter in question at the interview, it is scarcely necessary to say I am not violating any confidence. The interview was neither expressly nor by implication understood to involve any secrecy, and even had it been otherwise, the Chief Secretary's letter to me, alluded to above, removes any seal of privacy that may by any stretch of imagination be taken as attaching to what transpired at the interview.

To return to what fell from His Excellency on the special point dealt with here. The very first words, addressed to me in a tone which I most respectfully venture to describe as plainly exhibiting much temper, were in regard to the letter. I felt I was being treated harshly and not fairly, for I was there to discuss political reforms and not to answer to a charge of misconduct in addressing the President of the United States, and

I felt that I should not have been taken so unawares and made to defend myself without the least previous consideration and reflection. I did not, however, think it right to protest against the course adopted by His Excellency, but unreservedly placed before him that explanation which it was in my power, on the spur of the moment, to offer on the subject. In short, I told His Excellency that I found myself in a very peculiar position at the time the letter was written, and in addressing it I acted entirely *bona fide*, and in the hope of securing through the influence of the President of the great nation that was in perfect amity with His Majesty the King-Emperor, nay more, in utter sympathy with the aims and objects of the Allies' cause, that relief which we Home Rulers then stood imperatively in need of. I told His Excellency our position was this: Of the four chief officials of the Home Rule League, three of them, namely, Mrs. Besant, the President, Messrs. Arundale and Wadia, the Secretary and Treasurer, had been interned in the course of that very week, and the fourth official, myself, as Honorary President, every moment expected to be dealt with by the Local Government in a similar fashion; that it was widely believed that the action of the Government in the matter had the sanction of His Excellency, and possibly of the then Secretary of State. I urged, with all deference, that it was hardly otherwise than natural and fair and just.

that I should avail myself of the opportunity afforded by the visit just then intended to be made by Mr. and Mrs. Hotchner to America, where I knew they had influential friends who would and could interest themselves in the welfare of India and her people, and in particular, exert themselves towards the release of Mrs. Besant, well-known throughout that Continent and held in high estimation by many thousands among the citizens of that free American nation. I added that if it were necessary I could substantiate every important allegation in the letter as regards the defects of the rule in this country by unimpeachable evidence, and offered to submit to His Excellency, if permitted, copies of certain letters then in my possession as regards the inhuman treatment to which the interned in Bengal were systematically subjected, as a proof in support of one of the points urged in the letter with special reference to which His Excellency expressed his strong condemnation.

#### MADRAS CHIEF SECRETARY'S LETTER.

It is unnecessary to enter into further details. Suffice it to say that His Excellency conveyed his displeasure at my conduct in the most unmistakable manner in the presence of, and with the express approval of, the Secretary of State, and acting, if I may say so, on behalf of the latter also

for the moment. Of what took place subsequently between the Indian Government and the Madras Government in relation to my letter I am unaware, save the intimation which I received from the Chief Secretary in a letter which runs as follows :

FORT ST. GEORGE,  
MADRAS, 8-2-1918.

D. O.

DEAR SIR,—His Excellency the Governor-in-Council has recently been placed in possession of printed copies of a letter purporting to have been sent by you to the address of the President of the United States. The letter is dated the 24th June, 1917, and contains the statement that it was transmitted through the agency of Mr. and Mrs. Henry Hotchner (who are known to have left India within a few days of the date), on the ground that it would never have reached the addressee "if sent by Mail". It has been intimated to His Excellency-in-Council that His Excellency the Viceroy and the Secretary of State personally questioned and rebuked you for your conduct in this matter. In these circumstances, His Excellency-in-Council has decided to take no further action.

Yours faithfully

(Sd.) LIONEL DAVIDSON,  
*Acting Chief Secretary.*

MR. MONTAGU "A TOOL IN THE HANDS"  
OF OTHERS.

One would think that this letter put an end to the matter. Unfortunately, however, things are shaping themselves in a way hopelessly injurious to the interests of the Empire in special reference to India under the unwise guidance of the War Cabinet, and obviously, the Secretary of State, who, whatever his original impulses, very shortly after his arrival in this country, became a pitiable prey to the machinations of the bureaucracy, Anglo-Indians and Sydenhamites, found himself incapable of acting with that dignity and responsibility befitting a Minister of the Crown at this critical juncture, and is apparently a tool in the hands of those who are exerting so baneful an influence upon him since his return to his place in the Cabinet. Such is the inevitable conclusion which the events of the 3rd of June point to.

"I WAIVE ALL OPPOSITION TO FUTURE ACTION".

Now it was admitted by His Excellency in the course of my interview with him that my letter to the President had been forwarded by the Cabinet to him some time previously. The Secretary of State could not therefore have been ignorant of the fact at the time of such transmission. Assuming that he was ignorant of it at

first, he subsequently was a party to the rebuke administered to me, in the language of the Chief Secretary's letter, by His Excellency and the Secretary of State also. Surely it is impossible to believe that the Chief Secretary's letter expressing the final decision of the authorities on the subject could have emanated without the full consent and sanction of the Viceroy, and the Secretary of State likewise. Be this as it may, it is only right that I should add that I do not for a moment intend to claim any exemption on the score of that letter from any action which may be taken in furtherance of the Secretary of State's answer on the 3rd instant. I waive all opposition to such future action if any. I go further and say that I court it with that eagerness and sincerity which my duty to the Motherland demands of me. It is superfluous to say that the case involves nothing personal, and that my cause is the cause of the whole country. In furtherance of that cause, all that is mine—my name, my liberty and everything else—must be sacrificed and willingly sacrificed. Internment or externment, deportation and the like, have no terror for me: and, at this time of my life, with no earthly expectations to realise, I feel I can have no more glorious fate to meet in pursuance of gaining Home Rule for India, than to become an object of official tyranny.

## MY VIEW OF THE SITUATION.

The view I take of the situation is this: The internments of June last year were a step designed by those unseen spiritual Powers who are seeking to uplift India and save the British Empire from certain destruction by the unwise rule of the bureaucracy here and elsewhere. That step had the intended effect to a certain extent. It roused the country as nothing else could have done to a sense of its duty. It is evident, however, that we were lapsing into a stupor inimical to all our best interests, and a further rousing is necessary. In all humility I take it I am the fortunate person, autocratic action against whom would afford the necessary stimulus now needed again.

I most earnestly hope that this view of the situation will commend itself to the minds of my countrymen throughout the length and breadth of the land, and make them once more rally round the standard of liberty for India as an integral part of the Empire, and persist in that ceaseless agitation on constitutional lines, and only on those lines, until the goal is won or lost, which latter contingency can come about only with the disruption of the British Empire, and solely through the inconceivable folly of those who are guiding its destinies at this hour of peril.

It only remains to add that I would be descending to a level that decency would prohibit were I to bandy words with the Secretary of State with reference to the ungracious and ungraceful language, which he thought fit to employ in replying to Mr. Hicks' question—language which I am afraid was prompted altogether by petty party tactics. Surely he could have fully and adequately discharged his duty and with candour had he told the House what had been done when he was in this country by way of censuring me.

I must, however, not flinch from protesting against the view that there was anything in my position, past or present, that in the slightest degree rendered it discreditable to me to submit my representation to President Wilson.

"MOST HAPPY TO RENOUNCE THE  
KNIGHTHOOD".

The telegraphic summary which alone is before me throws no light on what the Secretary of State had in mind in referring to my position in the course of his remarks. If it was my membership as a Knight Companion of the Indian Order that he was thinking of, all I can say is none can agree with him in supposing that the possession of this title debars me from criticising misrule in this country. It is worthy of remark that titles like these are conferred on His Majesty's



Indian subjects without their consent, and, however unwilling one may be to become the recipient of these official favours, etiquette, as understood in this country, precludes him from refusing to accept them. For my own part I shall be most happy to renounce this Knight Companionship and return at once the insignia thereof which on my death my heirs have to return, or remit the value thereof, if the retention of the title and the insignia should in any way hinder the exercise of my right of citizenship to complain of wrongs and seek redress against the consequences of mal-administration.

#### THE HISTORY OF MY KNIGHTHOOD.

I doubt whether even half a dozen among my friends or enemies now know the history of my Knight-hood. Needless to say it was not a reward for any liberal use of wealth which is the royal road to such distinctions, for the simple reason that I have never had money enough to make such use or show of it. Nor was it the reward for any special service, public or private, but due to a mere accident, if I may put it so. Having acted as Chief Justice for a month and a half about August, 1899, on the retirement of Sir Arthur Collins, the announcement of the honour in my case followed on the 1st of January next as a simple matter of official routine, it being the practice to make every Indian High Court Judge that officiates as a Chief Justice for however short a time, a

Knight, as compensation, I take it, for the disability of such Judges to be permanent Chief Justices. How I came into possession of the insignia of the Order is also worth chronicling. Later on, when I was on leave and was staying in my cottage on the Palni Hills, I was called upon to state when and how I wished to receive the insignia. I replied to the effect that it would be most convenient to me to get it through the post. This was apparently unacceptable to the official that had to dispose of the matter, and one morning the acting Collector of the District came in with his peon and unostentatiously handed me the little casket that contained them. I was thus saved undergoing the ordeal which now awaits most of the members of my order. Such are the facts of my Knighthood, which it will so gladden the heart of the Editor of the "Mail" to see me deprived of, and disgraced.

I would respectfully suggest to him to devote the next article on the subject that he should therein formulate the process by which my dis-knighting should be carried out. A Durbar, of course, would be indispensable as well as a Mourning costume to be worn on such an occasion. The rest I humbly leave to the ingenious brain of the Editor, among whose many noble qualities refinement and courtesy, non-vindictiveness and Christian charity, are not the least prominent.

## THE TRUTH ABOUT TITLES.

I believe the truth about these titles was never more tellingly expressed than in an incident described in a book on Sweden which I read long ago. When titles were first introduced in that country, two friends who had just received them met and exchanged congratulations. Then one of them put to the other the questions "Brother, is your shadow longer now?" The thoughtful silence which ensued furnishes the necessary answer.

One cannot help observing that, among Western inventions, none operates more seductively and to the detriment of public interests than these titles. They will verily be a delusion and a snare to be sedulously avoided by every honest man, if by accepting them he is to be debarred from the legitimate exercise of his civic rights.

## MY PENSION.

Next, if what the Secretary of State had in mind with reference to my position, the receipt of a pension by me, my answer is equally strong and clear. In the first place, the payment is made to me out of the revenues of the land of my birth and not from any foreign sources. In the next place, neither the original grant of it nor its continuance depended or depends on the goodwill and pleasure of any individual or any executive body. The right to the pension accrued under the authority of a statute of

the Imperial Parliament, and none can deprive me of it save by legislation of that same Parliament.

It may not be out of place to add that in retiring on the partial pension which I receive now, I acted with a sense of duty that should protect me against taunts like those made in the columns of certain Anglo-Indian journals with special reference to my being a pensioner. For, had I only thought of my own personal interest and continued to serve but eight months more, two of which would have been vacation time, I should be drawing the substantial sum of Rs. 5,000 per annum more than I do now. But I preferred to act otherwise, lest the discharge of my duties as Judge, even during that short period, should be in any way inefficient, and sent in my resignation notwithstanding the despatch of the then Secretary of State which entitled me to put in that additional service as a special case.

Lastly, I say that I would more readily lose my pension than deprive myself, by reason of my continuing to draw it, of any right of my citizenship. And I say to writers in the Anglo-Indian journals who throw taunts at me with reference to my pension, that I do not mind in the least if they could succeed, in depriving me of the wages which I am enjoying as the fruit of the most laborious and conscientious discharge of my duties as a Judge in the highest Court in the land, and leaving me to

find my own food and raiment. Let them know that these I shall get from that association of Sannyasins with whom I stand related, which entitle me to their care and protection, and therefore no pretended humane sentiments need deter my detractors from depriving me of my life-provision by the State. Let me add that that association is not the Theosophical Society, the present President whereof has been atrociously libelled as receiving vile German gold.

SIR J. D. REES.

Just a line by way of a postscript in reference to Sir John Rees' observation that my letter was a senile effusion. He reminds me of a felicitous remark of Sir Fitz James Stephen: "Artful liars tell probable falsehoods". Undeniably the Honourable Member's suggestion as to my alleged senility is an absolute falsehood, thought to be probable only because of my age. I venture to say that my intellect was never more acute or clear, and in the suggestion to the contrary, there is as little truth as in the suggestion that the Hon. Member's career in the House of Commons, from its commencement down to this day was ever marked by sanity and good sense.—(*New India.*)

## IV

### PASSIVE RESISTANCE.

[A public meeting was held on 16-6-18, in the Gokhale Hall, Madras, to celebrate the Home Rule Day, Sir S. Subramania Iyer presiding. The following are extracts from his speech as reported in the HINDU. The last paragraph is the concluding portion in bringing the proceedings to a close:—]

The Chairman who rose amidst loud and vociferous cheers first informed the audience that he had not had sufficient time to write out his speech so that the same might be read by Mr. Wadia with his stentorian voice and requested them to be very indulgent to him if his voice did not reach them all. He was sure that they, in their true spirit of devotion and friendliness to him, would understand what was passing in his mind. On the question of the suitability of the 16th June for that meeting he said that although 3rd September was the birthday of the Home Rule League, that day would certainly have been extinguished but for the 16th June last year and the internments that took place. Whether Home Rule was a subject on which people could lawfully discuss and whether it was a claim which they as citizens of the British Empire could put

forward as a right was the very question at issue. It was Lord Pentland's speech which led to all the events that took place. It was the internment and the agitation that followed which established people's rights to claim Home Rule. The 16th June was the true birthday of the Home Rule League; it was not true that the three interned wanted to make the matter a personal one by selfishly claiming the 16th June as the birthday of Home Rule League. He knew full well that personality was extinct in the three interned.

The next point is one on which I have anticipated what I wanted to address you in a way in my letter which has already appeared in the newspapers. What is uppermost in my mind is that every one of you should reflect meditate and realise the greatness and the importance of the occasion and the seriousness of the time we are entering upon. If the 16th of June last year was very important this 16th of June and what follows the period we are going through is even of greater significance. Because last year it was repression that was going to be on the ascendant but it was put an end to for the time and now it seems to me that the policy of repression is putting its head forward and it is trying to reappear and it is going to reappear with much greater venom and greater capacity for injury than it did last year. After the experience of the difficulties in their way Government are prepared

and are trying to do their work more effectually if possible. No authority has distinctly pronounced upon anything in terms which will support my view. But none of you can fail to see that this is so. Take for instance the article in the "Madras Mail" regarding my letter to the President of the United States. The purport of the article is not to attack me or any one else. The writer is availing himself of the suggestion as to my senility, grants that I am a man who has lost his power of correct thinking, but asks why should people who follow me claim that kind of immunity from incapacity to right thinking and judging. He therefore says that it is absolutely necessary to exterminate this movement for Home Rule. It is that which he sounds a note through that article. You may rest assured that he would not have put forward any such idea without knowing what great support he has in official quarters.

The next point is what is it you wish us to do. I put forward only my own personal view. Many of you may say agitation and my friend the Hon'ble Mr. Ramanujachariar has referred to unceasing agitation. No doubt that is all right. But agitation by itself, any amount of newspaper writing is of very little use and is not sufficient. What is wanted is conduct which shows our resolutions to stand by our claims. I am absolutely in earnest when I say that our work must be thoroughly constitutional.



You say that agitation is the only thing which you can make constitutionally in order to enforce your claim. There is something more and that is passive resistance. (Hear, Hear and Loud Cheers). The reason why I lay stress upon this is this. I am among those who hold that shedding blood even to a drop would absolutely destroy our cause. We are dealing not with people whom we see, as my letter must have shown and as my repeated addresses must have shown, but we are among those spiritual unseen powers guiding us. Shedding of blood or violence is a thing which they hate. Even in pursuance of our demand for Home Rule if we do any thing which would partake of violence their support will be lost and we shall perish. If therefore violence is to be avoided and if newspaper discussion, or verbal discussion alone will not do what is it that will help us. It is passive resistance. As regards this there seems to be much misconception. Some people have gone to the length of suggesting "suppose Mr. Montagu's scheme has come. It permits some of us to get into the legislature and we do not get the Congress demand. What is the meaning of passive resistance? Is it our duty to stay away?" This is an absurd thing. When a subject of His Majesty is restrained by show of authority from doing a perfectly lawful and just thing, then passive resistance comes into existence. When we are trying to do a thing perfectly lawful and when that

thing is tried to be put an end to by autocratic oppression and tyranny, we are prepared to suffer any punishment and jails have no terror for us. That is true passive resistance. If you can find in India 2000 men who can follow the example of Mr. Gandhi and of those ignorant but manly ryots of Kaira, India's Home Rule would be won that very day. What is wanted is young men and even old men ready to adopt this passive resistance under guidance of really trust-worthy leaders. The moment that this view as to our conduct takes the serious hold of our country that moment Home Rule is granted. It seems to me that judging from the state of affairs everywhere in the world our goal is not going to be won easily. There seems to be something in the mind of 90 per cent of the humanity which may be said to be partaking of the very highest form of hypocrisy. You find every public man in Europe saying "we are for the liberty of small nations and for their self-determination in their administration." Practically judging from the conduct which follows the declaration seems to me meaningless. They do not attempt to prove one actual fact which may be said to be reasonable evidence of their willingness to accept self-determination as the rule of conduct. All that is vain talk, pretension. Therefore it is I say you are going to have a very difficult task. When they talk of self-determination you will find India

especially systematically, and advisedly put out as it were not a part of the world. Here lies the best proof, if you want to allow self-determination in reality, give us proof of that in India. We do not demand very much even now. We do not want to turn out all the administrative authorities and put an end to the existing system of Government. We say "give us a statutory declaration, promising us Home Rule at a definite period and then take the steps which you intend to take gradually before you give the genuine Home Rule."

I think I may offer a few remarks considering that the hour is not late. I cannot but feel most grateful to those who have been so good as to refer to me in such complimentary words. I hope that you will not allow the idea of an address to me to take shape. Nothing is more distasteful to me than to become an object of a formal complimentary demonstration. It is quite sufficient that you have given expression to your friendly feelings and sentiments. As the matter is not one really personal as I have already said in my letter and as it is one connected with the nation as a whole I ask you not to do anything of the kind suggested however kindly your intentions towards me may be. But then you may ask me "we are so desirous of honouring you. What can we do in connection with it and what is it that you want." I will tell you what it is that will most please me. In doing so I may refer to an in-

cident which took place in the early days of my practice when one of our greatest advocates Mr. Mayne was arguing a great case (the Ramnad adoption suit) before Mr. Justice Holloway, one of the most learned and erudite of our judges. Mr. Mayne was drawing certain distinctions in the course of his argument which the learned judge was criticising and finally observed that Mr. Mayne's distinctions were so fine as to justify the "lines in the partitions do they bound divide." Mr. Mayne rejoined with that readiness which was quite characteristic of him and said: "My Lord it may be so but the line is the their red line of Balaclava." What I want you to do is this. I would very much like to minimise the difficulty which the leaders are supposed to be labouring under in connection with their following. That following cannot be the same always; it may either increase or decrease. But there must be some body of men who would go to the bitter end along with their leaders and fight to a finish as did the handful brave Balaclava wallas. I would like to form a sub-league in the Home Rule League (*i. e.*) the league of the red line wallas. We have examples before us of gentlemen who will go to make up that body. Mr. Ramanujachari whose letter you have just heard is one such and he was one of the three who signed the memorable pledge in June last to stand by Mrs. Besant in those trying days. There are other such men who are great

examples—I mean those who walked out of the Bombay War Conference when H. E. Lord Willingdon tried to shut their mouths. If we have a handful of men in every province who would follow their leaders to the bitter end then our success will be taken as ensured. You must try and gather such a handful and if you will only do that and form a reliable body of men or leaders to work with that alone would satisfy me. That will give me the utmost satisfaction. I now declare the meeting closed.

#### TITLES RENOUNCED.

[*Sir S. Subramania Aiyar wrote also to the Press on 20-6-18:—*]

I have this day addressed to the Chief Secretary to the Government of Madras the following letter:—

From S. Subramania Aiyar, Beach House, Mylapore, Madras, June 20, 1918.

To the Hon'ble Mr. Lionel Davidson, Chief Secretary to the Government of Madras, Fort St. George.

Sir,

I beg to forward by insured post to-day the insignia received by me on my being made K. C. I.E., and the Dewan Bahadur medal, and request you will be pleased to acknowledge the same.

I do so, as under present circumstances I feel it impossible to continue to avail myself of the honour of being the holder of such a title, or of that of Dewan Bahadur.

I have the honour to be

Sir,

Your most obedient Servant.

(Sd.) S. SUBRAMANIAM

The renunciation of the two titles I hold, is rendered necessary by my belief that the language employed by the Secretary of State on the 3rd instant in reply to the question by Mr. Joyson Hicks, was partly due to my being the holder of the title of Knight Companion of the Indian Empire. After the contemptuous terms which so responsible a minister of the Crown thought fit to use towards me from his place in the House of Commons, it is impossible for me with any self-respect, to continue to avail myself of the honour of being a title-holder.

I therefore feel compelled to renounce my titles of K. C. I. E. and Dewan Bahadur.

I have accordingly resolved not to receive any communications addressed to me in future, with the prefix Sir and the affix K. C. I. E. or Dewan Bahadur. and hereby intimate such resolution to my correspondents.