'he Rt. Hon. Mr. E. S. MONTAGU ON INDIAN AFFAIRS

WITH FOREWORD

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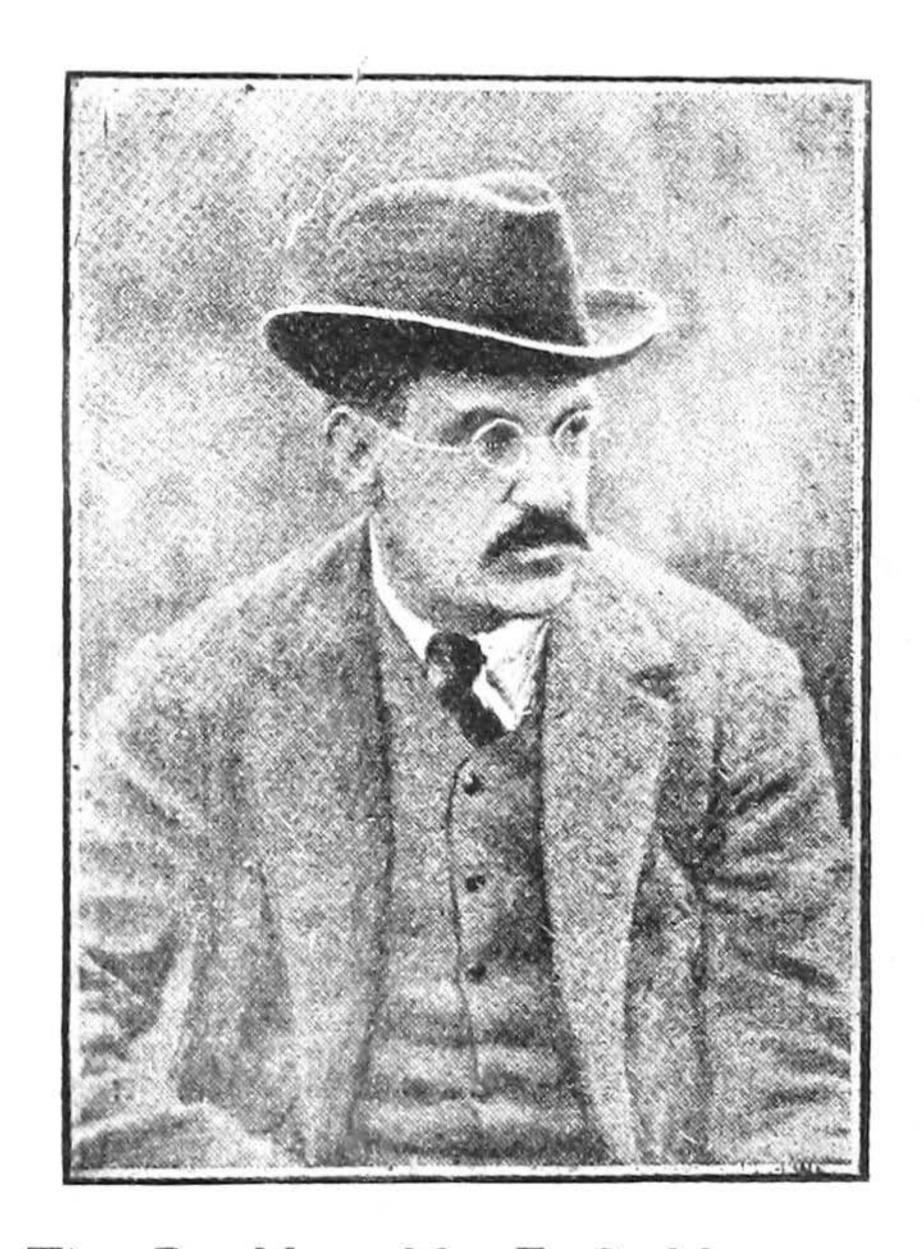
DR. SIR S. SUBRAMANYA AIYAR, K.C.I.E., LL.D.

GANESH & Co., MADRAS.

At the risk of incurring the anger of my critics, I would express once again my belief that there is a growing spirit of nationality in India, the direct product and construction of British rule:—Budget Speech—1912.

The Rt. Hon. Mr. E. S. MONTAGU
ON INDIAN AFFAIRS

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The Rt. Hon. Mr. E. S. Montagu.

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Dr. Sir S. Subramania Aiyar.

FOREWORD.

On no Secretary of State for India has fallen till now so critical a responsibility or so fascinating a task as has at the present hour devolved upon Mr. E. S. Montagu. He is still on this side of forty, having been born in 1879. Of a virile stock. he represents the robust and self-reliant side of British character, which knows its mind, is conscious of what is expected in the highest interests of the nation and is prepared to face the real issues that call for a decisive attitude. Within a remarkably brief period of 11 years. Mr. Montagu has as a matter of course taken his place in the front rank of ` British Parliamentarians. Representing one of the most intellectual parts of the United Kingdom in the House of Commons, he has been, if I may say so, a wide-awake student of world's affairs, retaining a quickness of grasp and an instinctive liberalism of mind which we generally associate with purely intellectual pursuits. There is not much of romance in him as in the case of Mr. Churchill who is five years older than Mr. Montagu but is likely to continue for some years vet the favoured youth of Great Britain. Mr. Montagu is a man of facts, of details, of

routine even. One might say he would have succeeded as a watchmaker quite as well as a politician and yet he is one of those who never forget the mainsprings of human motive and action in handling statistical details and attending to the requirements of official technique. It is this readiness to enter into details without withdrawing himself from an incessant regard to the principles underlying them that must have constituted the secret of his Parliamentary success and made him so valuable a lieutenant to one of the greatest of Parliamentary chiefs, Mr. Asquith.

He entered Parliament as one of the representatives of Cambridgeshire when he was twenty-seven and at a time when the Liberalism of Great Britain, bursting open the Conservative embankment which was losing its cementing principles, filled the country with a great wave of democratic victory. It was just then also that Mr. John Morley, in his 68th year, staked his high reputation in accepting the untying of the tangled skein which Lord Curzon had made of Indian affairs during a Viceregal term of about 7 years of unhampered autocracy, barring the single incident with Lord Kitchener. Mr. Montagu as Parliamentary Secretary to Mr. Asquith awaited his opportunities of greater individual responsibility, as he was witnessing the rush of Liberal Parliamentary programme on the one hand, and the efforts Mr. Morley was

making in defending an amazing negation of the very rudimentary principles of Liberalism on the other. From 1906 to 1908, until he sought the immunity of the House of Lords, the saint of radicalism had to play the part of the apologist of executive despotism, without any convincing reason for his attitude, taking shelter in a Papal spirit of finality. He started in 1906 with the late Rt. Hon. John Ellis as his Under Secretary with a cloudless sky over him, the anti-partition agitation still hoping for immediate redress at his hands, and a phalanx of stalwart Liberals of unimpeachable Indian experience standing behind him in support of a policy of rescission. Mr. Ellis, only three years younger in age to Mr. Morley, belonged to the old generation of upright politicians of the Society of Friends and could not understand the strange feat of looking upon admitted blunders as settled facts. He was too old to be yoked to such a policy even in conjunction with an older man and that of the classic reputation of Mr. Morley. Had they pulled together from 1906 to the closing days of Mr. Ellis, the fate of India would have been cast in a differrent mould from the one that took form and shape between 1906 and 1911. However, the place resigned by Mr. Ellis had to be occupied by two other members of the House of Commons during the next two years Mr. Morley continued in the Commons, So long as Mr. Morley was in the Lower House,

as he was making himself answerable in the House of Commons to the direction of his chief.

From February 1910 to February 1914, until his appointment as Financial Secretary to the Treasury, he got into intimate touch with the affairs of India with a growing sense of confidence in regard to what India required in internal reforms and a purified system of political and administrative control in England. In reading his Parliamentary speeches between these years the critical Indian reader will have to hear in mind that from 1910 to the end of 1911 he had to stand by the declared policy of Lord Morley and that he had yet to acquire a close acquaintance with India as will justify the assumption of any individual responsibility in regard to the critical topics of the period. With the Royal visit to India during the closing fortnight of 1911 and the beginning of 1912, commenced a new era throwing into the oblivion of the past the egregious blunders of distrust and division which the amateur statecraft of Lord Curzon had produced in copious abundance. Mr. Montagu not satisfied with a knowledge of Indian questions from blue books and the wardens of the bureaucratic system in the India Office made up his mind to visit India on that historic occasion and to complete his equipment by a personal study on the spot of the main features of Indian Government. The task of Lord Crewe and Mr.

Montagu became easier from 1912 onward. In 1914 he found he could leave the Under Secretaryship without any disadvantage to India if his services were required elsewhere. In February he left it and in August broke out the War.

Lord Crewe had ample experience and insight, and as Lord Hardinge was in India, there was no need for anxiety of any kind and no need either to think of Mr. Montagu in connection with India. But the progress of the War necessitated the formation of a United Cabinet, representing a United Party without Parliamentary Opposition. The offices had to be redistributed in a way that the Cabinet might contain representatives of the Leading Parties. Earl Crewe and Mr. Roberts had to give place to Mr. Austen Chamberlain and Lord Islington respectively. Although it was a Coalition Cabinet, in the distribution of places India had to be allotted to a Conservative politician, rather, an office of the first rank had to be allotted to a leading member of the Conservative Party, and Mr. Austen Chamberlain Secretary for India, Mr. Chamberlain's succession to the India Office was not a matter that could have made a vital difference from May 1914 to April 1916. because of Lord Hardinge's presence in India as Viceroy. The Master Charmer of the loyalty of Indians, England owes to Lord Hardinge what it owes only to three other of her greatest of Empire-

builders, Lord Clive, the Marquess of Wellesley, .. and Lord Canning. His departure from India little over an year ago threw Indian affairs into comparatively inexperienced hands and the control that should have belonged to them passed into the hands of the permanent Bureaucracy. The inevitable results of a policy of repression followed at a time of unprecedented political and national upheavals in Modern History. It is hard to say what would have been the fate of India if the Mesopotamian Failure had not come as a timely saviour of the situation to pass the control of India from Mr. Chamberlain who knew little of India, knew less of its budget of troubles in the immediate past, and knew least of all of the character and traditions and of the tenacious love of vested interests. of the Indian Bureaucracy. But if that controlhad to pass from Mr. Chamberlain to somebody else as a matter of party consideration and not of personal fitnesss at a critical moment the changewould have been of no use. Mr. Lloyd Georgedeserves the gratitude of the Empire for passing it on into the hands of Mr. Montagu. Young as hemay be considered to be, he has his feet on no slippery ground, having been equipped for his task by study, personal knowledge and the spirit of Lord' Morley's "individual responsibility" which hehas imbibed fully to the benefit of the vast millions of this country. The bombastic pretensions.

of ex-pro Consuls which when pricked will disclose what sorry bubbles of misapprehension ignorance they are will not intimidate him. Nor could the threats of a press, which has been habitually the pampered child of Indian authorities and the members of which are decorated at their recommendation, but none of whom have been brought under the operation of the punitive provisions of the common laws of the country in spite of gross slander in which some of them have indulged against the fountain head of governmental authority in India, ever thwart him from pursuing a policy of straight service to his fellowsubjects of the Crown in a country but for whose inclusion under the British flag, British Empire will be a healthy shrub, but not the magnificent banyan tree which can shelter all the component divisions of an army marching to victory. He cannot be diverted from his duty to such a land by a handful of frantic, ill-balanced and opprobrious critics.

Few can ever have the opportunity of national and imperial service that has fallen to him now. He has shewn by his mettle that he will not lag behind it. The speeches contained in this volume bear ample evidence of that mettle. Differences of view will arise as one goes through them. But they are differences that in no way detract from the estimate of the man as we have formed here. His latest

speech, delivered just before he put on the harness of the India Office, shews that the man has come with the hour. That speech is bound to take its place among those delivered on momentous occasions without expectation of what was to come but with a presentiment of the national duty that awaits an individual. Hardly had the echo of his words ceased to be heard, they almost seem to have recoiled on him to put him to a positive test.

Burke himself could not have impeached with greater directness or warmer conviction England's neglect of Indian Government. Burke's was a labour of love for an India that knew him not; his was a task for generations of Indians to whom his name was to become an invaluable heritage and a monument of British sense of justice. Had he not been animated by a sub-conscious responsibility for an India that was yet to come to know him he would have considered his gigantic task an ephemeral undertaking.

To-day, on the other hand, Mr. Montagu's responsibility to India is one of which not only he but his fellow-citizens in India as well are equally and fully conscious. To-day India repeats word for word Mr. Montagu's speech on the Mesopotamian muddle. To-day Indians know what Burke's contemporaries in India never, knew—how courageous British sincerity can brush aside the

meshes woven by sectional self-interest. Mr. Montagu has now become the hope of India, as Burke would have become, if Indians could then have followed his labours on their behalf.

Equally great and talented friends of India with Mr. Montagu England has produced. But they had no mission, such as Burke took upon himself or has now fallen to Mr. Montagu. In Mr. Montagu's case, unlike as in the case of Burke, it is coupled with power to accomplish it. Mr. Montagu would almost seem to have in fact a commission to effect what he unfolded in the course of that illuminating and masterly speech.

If even he should fail India after all, there can be no greater misfortune we can think of to England and India. So pessimistic a supposition we refuse to entertain after the magnificent proof he has given of his courage in handling the question of internments—for which there seems to be no godfather now as in the case of the Partition when it had to be annulled and Lord Curzon himself had to admit that conditions had changed. Mr. Montagu has now to make, if not the reputation of his lifetime, a great and memorable part of it. Aliens to him in race and religion, but one with him in devotion to British Sovereignty and to Imperial Solidarity, the educated classes of India, who after all is said and done are more to and in this country

than people who look upon it as a field for earning pay, profit and annuity, regard his coming to India as a part of the fulfilment of Providence for the good of the Empire. So sincere and spontaneous a faith, so solemn and sanctified an expectation will not go in vain if Mr. Montagu will prove true to his convictions as expressed in his own words. faith this volume of speeches so timely brought out by a leading and patriotic firm of publishers, is placed in the hands of the public with a Foreword the main object of which has been to present to the reader a very brief, fair and true though humble sketch of the gifted author's public career almost from its commencement as Parliamentary Secretary to Mr. Asquith. I should be wanting in duty if I did not add that this Foreword would have been impossible but for the hearty and able co-operation of my friend K. Vyasa Rao with his clear and up-to-date knowledge of Indian politics acquired not only by a diligent study here in India. but also in England during his stay there and through actual contact with British political life. His forthcoming work, The Future Government of India, to be published by Messrs. Macmillon & Co. will furnish an independent contribution to the solution of the great problems which will have to be grappled with in the immediate future by Mr. Montagu among others. There can be no doubt that Mr. Montagu has understood India aright; the supreme question now is whether after cogent and courageous consideration he is not to act in the light of that understanding.

BEACH HOUSE, MYLAPORE, MADARS. 27th Sept. 1917.

S. SUBRAMANIEM.

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