



AMBIKA CHARAN MAZUMDAR

Babu Ambika Charan Mazumdar was a lawyer who steadily worked his way up to the Presidentship of the Congress at Lucknow in 1916. His flights of eloquence were of a rare order. We have already quoted from his speech in 1911, at the Calcutta Congress. He was the author of a fine and famous book on the Congress entitled 'Indian National Evolution'.

BHUPENDRA NATH BASU

Not less eloquent was Babu Bhupendra Nath Basu who was called upon to preside over the Congress in 1914 in Madras. Dealing with the *raison d'être* of Indians' demand for Self-Government, Mr. Basu said:

"The days of the lotus-eaters are gone. The world is swinging onward on the uplifting ropes of time, and in Europe, the War of Nations, now in progress, will knock off the last weights of medieval domination of one man over many, of one race over another. It is not possible to roll back the tide of wider life which is flowing like the warm gulf-stream through the gateways of the West into the still waters of the East. You may bend the Indian Universities to your will, if you like, fetter their feet with obstructive statutes, but you cannot bar the imponderable influences of an expanding world. If English rule in India meant the canonization of a bureaucracy, if it meant perpetual domination and perpetual tutelage, an increasing deadweight on the soul of India, it would be a curse to civilization and a blot on humanity."

Bhupen Babu was a successful solicitor in Calcutta with a large practice who gave his time to politics gladly and his oratory was undoubtedly of a highly cultured type. He was able almost to act his part and display considerable emotion, so much so that one big leader humorously described him as the man with a melodramatic countenance and chemical tears in his eyes. We would say the tears were physiological as well as psychological. He took up the position that the Congress should act as His Majesty's Opposition.

MAULVI MAZAR-UL-HAQ

Maulvi Mazar-ul-Haq is one of those stalwarts in intellect as well as in physique who gave the warmest support to the Indian National Congress from Bihar and who was a Nationalist every inch. Communalism was abhorrent to him and when at the 25th Congress in 1910 which met at Allahabad, Mr. Jinnah moved a resolution condemning communal representation, Maulvi Mazar-ul-Haq seconded it in an able speech in which he exhorted Hindus and Muslims to join hands. It will be remembered that the Minto-Morley Reforms had just come into operation and had embodied for the first time a scheme of communal representation in the Legislative Councils. It required the utmost sincerity of purpose and courage of conviction to be able to say, as Mazar-ul-Haq did. To the Mus-



lims who were just then elated with their achievements, that their success was really injurious to the common interests of the two great communities, and that what the country wanted was that they should join hands and not remain apart in watertight compartments.

When in 1914, a deputation was sent to England by the Congress, Maulvi Mazar-ul-Haq was elected to serve on it along with Messrs. Bhupendra Nath Basu, M. A. Jinnah, N. M. Samarth, S. Sinha, B. N. Sarma and Lala Lajpat Rai. Thereafter he did not take active interest in Congress affairs but remained a staunch Nationalist to the end. The purity of his Nationalism was only excelled by the saintliness of his character which attracted public attention and endeared him to the people of India in general and to the people of Bihar in particular, and the latter days of his life he spent not only in retirement but in renunciation as a true *Faqir*.

MAHADEV GOVIND RANADE

Mahadev Govind Ranade, popularly known as Justice Ranade, was a towering personality in the Congress. Within the strict meaning of the term, he could not be termed a Congressman, for he was a high officer in the Judicial Department of the Bombay Government, but he was for years together the power behind the throne. He furnished the inspiration for the Congress movement. His tall stature, the statuesque cut of his face and his Maharashtra turban, with his flowing robes of ancient Hindu style, marked him out at the various sessions of the Congress from the rest. His attainments as a scholar and savant, which have made him memorable both as an economist and a historian, have left the Nation a rich legacy in the *Rise of the Maratha Power* and in his *Essays in Indian Economics*. Social Reform was his forte, and for years the Social Conference, which had formed an adjunct of the Congress, was his pet child. When differences arose in the year 1895 at the Poona Session as to whether the Congress could concern itself with questions of Social Reform and with the Social Conferences, it was the "tolerant and wise action of Mr. Justice Ranade," as pointed out by Babu Surendra Nath Banerjee, that put an end to them and smoothed matters. Justice Ranade's services to the Nation during the outbreak of plague were inestimable and it is not time yet to describe them all to posterity. After fifteen years of indefatigable labours in the field of Social Reform and in the cause of the Congress, Ranade passed away in the year 1901 leaving memories which serve to help us hold his name in high veneration.

PANDIT BISHAN NARAYAN DHAR

Pandit Bishan Narayan Dhar is another of the earlier day politicians who made a mark on Congress history by his devotion to the National Congress.

In 1903 he moved the resolution on the Official Secrets Bill and said: "Lord Curzon is astonished that this should be described as Russifying the administration. I am astonished that any one should be so imperfectly informed regarding the Russian Government as to think that it



has got anything in its purely civil laws so arbitrary and so disastrous to the Civil Liberties of the people as Lord Curzon's Bill, if passed, would be in this country."

He was called upon to preside over the Calcutta Congress in 1911 over which it was hoped Mr. Ramsay MacDonald would preside, but the death of Mrs. MacDonald had called him away from India and Bishan Narayan Dhar was unexpectedly asked to take his place. He presided over the Congress just at a moment when the worst blow was dealt to the bureaucracy by the annulment of the Partition of Bengal. But long anterior to his attainment of the highest National honour, he gave proofs of his capacity and eloquence which really he shared with most of the earlier day stalwarts. Pandit Bishan Narayan Dhar had indeed figured prominently from the earliest Congress. He made a noble appeal at the 3rd Congress (Madras, 1887) saying: "England has moved us from our ancient anchorage. She has cast us adrift, against our will, upon the wide waters of a seething proletariat; and we turn back to England and ask her to grant us that compass of representative institutions by which, amidst a thousand storms, she has steered her prosperous course to the safe haven of regulated political freedom."

Bishan Narayan Dhar's description of the bureaucracy is alike picturesque and pungent and we make no apology for quoting it at length here:

"The root-cause of most of our misfortunes which, if not corrected, forebodes serious disasters in the future, is the growth of an unsympathetic and illiberal spirit in the bureaucracy towards the new-born hopes and ideals of the Indian people. While a New India has gradually been rising up, that spirit too has been growing, and so a critical situation has arisen. On the one hand, the educated classes filled with new knowledge and conscious of new political rights, but hampered by the bars and fetters of a system perhaps good enough for other days but now obsolete; on the other, the bureaucracy with its vested interests, its domineering habits, its old traditions of absolute and unquestioned authority, suspicious of knowledge and adverse to innovation, like every close corporation, cut off from the people by its racial exclusiveness and wedded to a paternal system of Government under which it has so long enjoyed power and pelf but which is discordant with the moral, liberal ideals of the present day."

RAMESH CHANDRA DUTT

Another outstanding character in the Congress politics towards the end of the last century was Ramesh Chandra Dutt. He was not a mere political agitator even in the sense of the *London Times* which descriptively described Congressmen (1886) as men with little or no stake in the country, men of straw who were place-seekers. He had closed a career that had risen to the position of Commissionership. He cast in his lot with the Congress and brought to bear his rich experience and over a long course of years spent as an I.C.S. officer.

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tions of the day. He held that the causes of famine were the heavy assessments on land and the destruction of the village industries by free competition with English machinery. He regretted that a country which had organised Village Self-Government 3,000 years ago was being virtually ruled through the Police, "the hated link between the district officers and the people." He was a great authority on Land Revenue affairs, Economic questions and Famines. He presided over the Congress at Lucknow, 1890. He has made himself memorable by the statement that "there is no better way of creating sedition than by suppressing free discussion in newspapers and meetings."

N. SUBBA RAU PANTULU

Another of these venerable patriarchs of the Congress is Mr. N. Subba Rau Pantulu who is an active public man to-day at the age of four score and who, though he has not been quite a whole-hogger in respect of recent Congress programmes, continues to be an ardent Nationalist. His connection with the Congress began almost from its birth, for he was present and spoke at the 4th Congress (Allahabad, 1888) and ever since figured on the Congress platform moving, seconding or supporting resolutions relating to Salt Tax, the Judicial and the Executive, the admission of Indians into the Executive Councils, Trial by Jury and the position of Legal practitioners. As a member of the Imperial Legislative Council, he moved a resolution urging the appointment of a Public Services Commission which was accepted, and in the Congress of 1912 at Bankipore he moved the resolution of thanks for the appointment of a Royal Commission on Public Services.

He has not cared to accept a title or seek a job at the hands of Government, when his contemporaries were being rewarded with the one or the other. On the other hand, his Province chose him as the Chairman of the Reception Committee in 1898 and the Congress itself elected him as the General Secretary in 1914, '15, '16 and '17. But in 1917 he declined the honour with thanks when he saw that Mrs. Besant took a third Secretary in Mr. C. P. Ramaswami Aiyar as the real Working Secretary. He set the example, during his term, of touring India at his own expense and enthusing the people on Congress matters throughout the country.

LALA MURLIDHAR

We may not forget to record the name of Lala Murlidhar of Punjab who went to the second session of the Congress in Calcutta (1886) straight from prison released on bail, convicted without evidence "because I am considered a political agitator, because I have my own opinion, I speak what I think without fear." Lala Malik Bhagwan Das and small Khan was the first to speak in Urdu at this very session. In 1886 the speaker of the Congress was Mrs. Kadambini Ganguli who gave the address of vote of thanks to the President of the sixteenth Congress (Calcutta).



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MR. S. SINHA

Mr. Sachehidananda Sinha first made his appearance at the 15th session of the Congress, at Lucknow (1899), and spoke on the separation of the Executive and the Judicial functions, "a subject worn threadbare but necessarily brought up for the 15th time," as Mrs. Besant says. He reverted to the same subject at the next session, (Lahore, 1900) and gave a foretaste of his abilities and concluded by saying that "the Government must rest upon the affection of the people, and that could only be secured by conferring upon them the boon of justice, not the justice which we enjoy to-day, half milk and half water, adulterated justice, but real and righteous British justice." At the seventeenth session, an allied subject, namely, Police Reform, was handled by him. The next year too, Mr. Sinha was chosen to speak on the same subject and then he referred to the inadequacy of the representation of experienced Indians on the Police Commission which was appointed during Lord Curzon's time. There was a peculiar appropriateness in his remark that, of the two non-officials on the Commission, "One was a C. I. E. always speaking to please Englishmen and the other a Maharaja, as yet untried." The appropriateness lies in the fact that though Mr. Sinha became later a Member of the Executive Council of Bihar he remains without a title. At the twentieth session he supported a resolution that a deputation should be sent to England on the eve of the General Election of 1905. At the same session he had the honour of moving the resolution urging the election to Parliament of Mr. Dadabhai Naoroji, Sir Henry Cotton and Mr. John Jardine. At the twenty-first Congress (Kashi, 1905) "Police Reforms were entrusted to the old champion," Mr. Sinha, and he pointed out how bitterly the Police Commission had disappointed them, constituting a special Police Service from which Indians were to be excluded. Mr. Sinha was present as an active member at the 1st Moderate Congress of 1908. By the year 1910, in which the Congress met at Allahabad, the outlook of the Indian politicians was widened by the appointment of an Indian to the Law Membership of the Viceroy's Executive Council but the range of choice was limited to the members of the English Bar, and the Hon. S. Sinha pointed out the unwisdom of the restriction and urged that the advocates and vakils should also be eligible. Next year when the Congress met in Calcutta Mr. Sinha pleaded for an Executive Council and a Governor for the U. P. He was again present in Madras in 1914 and received the thanks of the Congress for the good work that he had done as a member of the deputation to London composed of, besides himself, Messrs. Bhupendranath Basu, M. A. Jinnah, Samarth, Mazar-ul-Haq, the Hon. B. N. Sarma and Lala Lajpat Rai.

There are scores of public workers—many of them dead and a few still alive—who have made notable contributions to the National cause by their sincerity of purpose, services and sacrifices, to whom posterity owes a deep debt. To enumerate them would only lead to invidious distinctions, however unmeant they be, and we shall be content to recall their memory with a feeling of sincere gratitude.



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(1915 to 1919)

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PART II

CHAPTER I

TOWARDS RE-UNION (1915)

The year 1915 really is a landmark in the political history of India. Mrs. Besant's publication entitled *How India Wrought For Freedom* has covered the period intervening between 1885, the year of the birth of the Congress, and 1914, the year of the outbreak of the Great War. It may be remembered that the Japanese victory in the Russo-Japanese War had filled the Asiatic Nations with a sense of renewed confidence in their own capacities and prowess at the beginning of this century. Likewise did the marvellous feats of endurance and bravery displayed by the Indian troops in the winter of 1914 in France and Flanders, and their successful stand against the onslaughts of German invasion in the Great European War create a new atmosphere alike in Europe and Asia and raise the Indians miles higher in the estimation of the Western Nations than ever before. Such an appreciation of the services of the Indian troops in the War who were taken abroad in anticipation of Parliamentary sanction, naturally had its repercussion on the minds of Indians. It kindled a sense of reward in the minds of some, such as Surendra Nath Banerjea, and a sense of rights in the minds of others, such as Mrs. Besant. Mrs. Besant had been working in the cause of the poor, the whole of her lifetime, and of India ever since the days of Mr. Bradlaugh. But it was in 1914 that she joined the Congress and speaking on the question of 'Reciprocity' said, "there had been talk of a reward due to India's loyalty; but India does not chaffer with the blood of her sons and the proud tears of her daughters in exchange for so much liberty, so much right. India claims the right, as a Nation, to justice among the peoples of the Empire. India asked for this before the War. India asks for it during the War. India will ask for it after the War; but not as a reward, but as a right does she ask for it. On that there must be no mistake." When Mrs. Besant jumped from Theosophy and the High Court where she had to face a litigation relating to Jiddu Krishnamurti and his brother, to the Congress and the spacious atmosphere of the Beach, she brought new ideas, new talents, new resources, and altogether a new method of organisation and a new outlook into the field of the Congress. She was already a great world character and had millions of followers in the East and the West, in the New Hemisphere as well as the Old. No wonder then that, with this mighty following and with her inexhaustible energy, she gave a new life to Indian politics.

What was the position of affairs in 1915? Gokhale had passed away on the 19th February 1915. Sir Pherozeshah Mehta had already gone out of view, having declined the Presidentship of the Congress in 1909, six days before he was due to take the chair, and followed Gokhale to the grave in November 1915. Infirmities of advancing years were creeping

upon Mr. Wacha who stated at the Bombay Congress of 1915 that old age had its own penalties, for his vision was fast failing. Moreover he was all along only a great scholar and a good Secretary, never a General leading his forces from victory to victory. Sir Narayan Chandavarkar had retired as a judge and was a spent force in politics. Heramba Chandra Maitra, Mudholkar and Subba Rau Pantulu were excellent Lieutenants, Captains or Colonels in the army of the Congress, and nothing more. Surendra Nath Banerjee, eminent as he was, was not quite in tune with the new thought.

There was no Field-Marshal, no Generalissimo to lead the army. Lokamanya Tilak was released in June 1914 from Mandalay after nearly completing his full term. Mr. Srinivasa Sastri no doubt stepped into the shoes of Gokhale as the President of that great and noble order—the Servants of India Society, but by his inherent temperament as well as by the eternal conflict raging in his breast between his Extremist inclinations and Moderate 'conviction,' between principle and expediency, between the ultimate and the immediate, he was always content to remain a back-bencher, though he loved to praise the cross-bench mind. At any rate he never occupied the Front Bench nor cared for the limelight. Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya was not in a position to lead the Congress on the Moderate lines, nor had he the grit to force his way forward. Gandhi himself had just arrived in India and, if we may say so, did not as yet start his public life on defined lines. He was under the advice of his political Guru—Gokhale, silently studying the conditions of the country which he had long ago left and to which he had paid two or three short visits at intervals. Lala Lajpat Rai was disgusted with the state of affairs in this country and notably in his Province, and during the War was virtually an exile in America. Satyendra Prasanna (later Lord) Sinha, who presided over the Congress of 1915 in Bombay, was altogether out of tune with the new spirit and ceased to interest himself in Congress politics after the Bombay Session. Leadership was almost passing from the Nation to the bureaucracy. Power had gone out of the Moderates. The Nationalists had not as yet come into their own. Attempts made by Mrs. Besant to bring the two wings of the Congress together failed in 1914 and 1915, and the story of the failure may briefly be studied.

In 1915 Lokamanya Tilak should have been the uncrowned king not only of Maharashtra, but of the whole of India, except for an unfortunate combination of forces to keep him out of what should legitimately have been his. He was released in June 1914 and ever since strenuous efforts were made by him to start a big Home Rule agitation, and by well-meaning friends to bring the two wings of the Congress together. Lokamanya Tilak himself wanted sedulously to avoid offending the susceptibilities of the Moderates but they did not respond to his approaches. Tilak's three-fold programme was, (1) the Congress Compromise, (2) the re-organisation of the Nationalist Party, and (3) the setting on foot of a strong agitation for Home Rule. On the first of these items, Lokamanya Tilak and the Nationalists wanted the avenues to the election of Congress delegates to be widened. As things stood, the Articles of the Constitution restricted the right of election to certain organizations—"provided that



no such political association or public body shall be recognized unless the said Association or Body, by a resolution of a general meeting of its members, expressed its acceptance of the principle embodied in Article I of this Constitution and makes the acceptance of the same condition precedent to new membership." The Article contemplated a Moderate creed with Colonial Self-Government as the goal. The election of Congress delegates was thus placed exclusively in the hands of the Moderate Associations and it was not to be expected that the Nationalists should seek admission, through the goodwill of their opponents, to the Congress. Article XX had therefore to be widened and to this end Mrs. Besant and Mr. N. Subba Rau Pantulu, the General Secretary of the Congress, went to Poona in the first week of December, 1914 and conferred with Messrs. Tilak, Gokhale and others. An amendment was agreed upon. Then Mr. Subba Rau went to consult Sir Pherozeshah in Bombay and returned disappointed. Then he met Mr. Tilak and Mr. Gokhale. Mr. Gokhale was convinced that Mr. Tilak's re-entry into the Congress camp would only be a signal for a renewal of the old struggle. He therefore withdrew his support to the amendment proposed, in an oral message to Mrs. Besant. In reply to a letter from the President-elect of the 19th Congress of 1914, he wrote a confidential letter explaining the reasons of his change of view. The letter became public in no time. It was stated in it that Mr. Tilak had openly avowed his intention of adopting the 'Boycott of Government' and the obstructionist methods of the Irish if he entered the Congress. When Lokamanya Tilak repudiated it, on an enquiry by Mrs. Besant, an apology was no doubt offered to him, but the reconciliation was postponed. Mr. Subba Rau Pantulu published in *New India* (8-2-1915) a statement in which he said that the Bombay Conventionalist leaders were dead opposed to Mrs. Besant's amendment.

The story of Mrs. Besant's unsuccessful attempts to bring the Moderates and the Nationalists together in the Congress has just been told. Early in the year, India sustained a great loss in the premature death of Gokhale who passed away on the 19th February. Tilak had a great regard for his political opponent, and when Gokhale passed away, delivered the funeral oration which was intensely passionate:—

"This is not a time for cheers. This is a time for shedding tears. This diamond of India, this jewel of Maharashtra, this prince of workers is laid to eternal rest on the funeral ground. Look at him and try to emulate him. Every one of you should place his life as a model to be imitated and should try to fill up the gap caused by his death, and if you will do your level best to emulate him in this way, he will feel glad even in the next world."

In the Provincial Conference (May 4, 1915), in moving the resolution of condolence to Mr. Gokhale's family, Tilak described how he was partially responsible for introducing Gokhale into the field of public life.

During the year 1915, and the year 1916 too, Tilak worked assiduously to organize his party. He held that "a strong party needs (1) a magnetic leadership, (2) a rallying point, and (3) a war-cry. In Mr. Joseph Baptista, Tilak found an able co-adjutor and under Mr. Baptista's

Presidentship a thousand Nationalists met at Poona, and this Conference stood in marked contrast with the Moderate Conference which met shortly after with a poor attendance, but was graced by the presence of Lord Willingdon at it. The Poona Conference supplied the war-cry of Home Rule and Tilak's sole pre-occupation was how to advance India's cause to this goal. It was his intention to get a Bill introduced in Parliament through the good offices of Labour leaders and then concentrate his activities on a vast propaganda. (Account taken from Mr. Athalye's 'Life of Lokamanya Tilak'.)

The Congress of 1915 was to meet in Bombay, and as all proposals for a compromise had failed, it was to be essentially a Moderate Congress. On the eve of the Congress, Sir Pherozeshah Mehta passed away in the month of November. The President chosen for the year was Sir Satyendra Prasanna Sinha,—whose position and learning were of an unchallengeable character. His touch with the Congress movement was indeed little, but he brought to the Bombay Session all the prestige that clings round the name of an ex-Law Member of the Government of India, who had not cared to stick to his high office even for half his term. But he was new to his new duties and was largely influenced by the elderly Congressmen by whom he was surrounded.

Sir S. P. Sinha made, from the Nationalist point of view, a most reactionary speech, in which he described India as a patient whose fractured limbs were in splints. According to his conception the need was "a reasoned ideal of India's future such as will satisfy the aspirations and ambitions of the rising generation of India and at the same time will meet with the approval of those to whom India's destinies are committed." In this view he demanded an announcement of policy. He was essentially an ultra-Conservative.

At the Bombay Congress of 1915, however, the first signs of that great revival in public interest in the Congress after the Surat imbroglio became visible, which made its influence felt from, and after, the next following Congress at Lucknow. No less than 2,259 delegates attended the Bombay Session and the resolutions that were passed covered a large variety of subjects. The first four recorded the Nation's grief at the passing away of three ex-Presidents of the Congress, *viz.*, Gopal Krishna Gokhale, Pherozeshah Mehta, Sir Henry Cotton, and of a friend, Kier Hardie, who "in and outside the House of Commons rendered valuable services to this country which will be gratefully cherished by the people of India." The fifth recorded the loyalty of the people. The sixth resolution recorded the abiding sense of the Congress in the righteousness of the cause espoused by Great Britain and her Allies and expressed gratification at the splendid achievements of the British Navy. The seventh resolution asked for an extension of term of office for Lord Hardinge as Viceroy. The eighth resolution re-affirmed the numerous previous resolutions of the Congress regarding the justice and expediency of admitting Indians to commissions in the Army and Navy, their training in existing Military and Naval schools and colleges and opening fresh ones in India. It also emphasised the necessity of re-organizing the system of volunteer-



ing with due regard to the rights of the people of this country to enlist themselves as Citizen soldiers without distinction of race, class or creed. The ninth resented the unmerited slur cast upon the people by the Arms Act (XI of 1878) and the tenth regretted the existing laws affecting Indians in South Africa and Canada. The eleventh resolution thanked the Viceroy for lending his statesmanlike support to the resolution for Imperial Legislative Council demanding representation for India on the Imperial Conference and requested the Government to allow at least two members deputed to take part in the Conference to be elected by the elected members of the Imperial Council. The twelfth resolution reiterated the demand for an Executive Council for the United Provinces. The thirteenth asked for the abolition of indentured labour and the fourteenth repeated the oft-repeated demand for the separation of Executive and Judicial functions. The fifteenth asked for the establishment of High Courts in the Punjab, Burma and the Central Provinces with the status and powers of Chartered High Courts. The sixteenth supported the Swadeshi movement and the seventeenth protested against the continuation of the Press Act. The eighteenth resolution opined that in the best interests of the people of India it was necessary that complete fiscal freedom with special reference to import, export and excise duties should be conceded to the Government of India. The nineteenth resolution was important and demanded substantial measures of reform towards Self-Government so as to secure to the people an effective control over the Government by introduction of Provincial Autonomy, expansion and reform of Legislative Councils where they existed and their establishment in Provinces where they did not exist, the reconstruction of various existing Executive Councils and their establishment in Provinces where they did not exist, the reform or abolition of the India Council, and a liberal measure of Local Self-Government. The resolution further asked the All-India Congress Committee to frame a scheme of reform and a programme of continuous work, educative and propagandist, and it authorised the Committee to confer with the Committee of the All-India Muslim League for the same purpose and to take such further measures as may be necessary.

The twentieth resolution opined that a reasonable and definite limit should be put to the demand of the State on land and that the Permanent Settlement should be introduced in all areas, *Ryotwari* or *Zamindari*, creating fixity of tenure for occupants, and failing Permanent Settlement, a settlement for a period of not less than sixty years. The twenty-first resolution insisted on steps for industrial development of the country by making greater provision for industrial and technical education, grant of fiscal autonomy to India in regard to import and export duties, by the removal of unjust and artificial barriers like excise duties on cotton goods and differential rates for Railway consignment which favoured the foreign manufacturer at the expense of the indigenous manufacturer. The twenty-second resolution disapproved of the Indian Students' Department in England and expressed the growing discontent caused by the increasing tendency on the part of educational institutions in the United Kingdom to restrict the admission of Indian students and to accord differential and unfair treatment to them after admission. The other four

resolutions were of a formal character, appointing the General Secretaries, appreciating the services of Sir William Wedderburn and other members of the British Committee and desiring the maintenance of *India*, amending the Constitution of the Congress and fixing the next Congress to be held at Lucknow.

We thus see that the Congress resolutions of 1915 are an epitome of the resolutions which had been passed from time to time by all the Congresses held ever since its birth in 1885.

In regard to the question of Self-Government, however, as we have seen, the Congress session held in Bombay in 1915 gave the lead by its resolution XIX instructing the All-India Congress Committee to confer with the Executive of the Muslim League and frame a scheme of Self-Government. That was the culmination indeed of the goodwill that had its origin at the Karachi Session in 1913.

An interesting feature of the Congress of 1915 was that Gandhi could not be elected to the Subjects Committee, and therefore he was nominated to the Committee by the President under the powers vested in him under the Constitution.

One achievement of the Bombay Session was that the Constitution of the Congress was suitably altered so as to throw the doors of entry practically open to the ingress of Nationalist delegates who were allowed to be elected by "public meetings convened under the auspices of any association which is of not less than two years' standing on 31st December, 1915, and which has for one of its objects the attainment of Self-Government within the British Empire by constitutional means" and this was followed by a hearty response from Tilak who forthwith publicly announced the willingness of his party to re-enter the Congress through the partially opened door.



CHAPTER II

A UNITED CONGRESS (1916)

The year opened under more auspicious circumstances for the healthy development of Congress activities than the previous year. But the country was the poorer for the loss of two great men—Gokhale and Mehta—both of whom had passed away in 1915. Tilak had as yet no place in the Congress, for under the compromise reached at the Bombay Session he had to wait a full year before he could influence the National organ to work on his lines. He, therefore, fell back upon his idea of a Home Rule League, and well was he qualified to take up leadership at this juncture by his culture and talents, by his services and sacrifices. He tried his best to induce the Congress to send a deputation to England, but that was not to be. He then started his Home Rule League first in India on 23rd April, 1916, some six months before Mrs. Besant started hers.

But the bureaucracy was his sworn enemy. While Tilak was pleading for students joining the Defence Force, he was served with an order from the Punjab Government prohibiting him from entering Delhi or the Punjab.

He accepted the Creed of the Congress for his Home Rule League and this, it seems, pleased Sastriar much. In 1916 he completed his *Shashti-purti* or 60 years of age, and a purse of one lac of rupees was presented to him which he dedicated to National work. The more Government repressed him, the more he was bounding up, and as a last resort "in order to silence him rather than imprison him" he was asked to be bound over for good behaviour for one year in a sum of Rs. 20,000 in his own recognizance and in two securities of Rs. 10,000 each. The Magistrate directed him after trial to enter into a bond accordingly, but the High Court reversed it, on the 9th November, 1916. This only served to increase his popularity. Tilak met with honours, received ovations and purses wherever he went, but physically he was frail—a circumstance which stood in the way of his undertaking energetic propaganda throughout India, moving on the wings of time and electrifying the people by an appeal to their emotions. This was left to be done by one older than himself in age, frail in sex, but enjoying a better start in life, not being under a cloud in the scene of her operations, better known to the world, and endowed with that dynamic energy which knows no fatigue and seeks no rest.

Here was India then in 1916, a Nation whose cause went unheeded, and whose leader remained yet to be found.

It was at such a juncture that Mrs. Besant stepped into the trench. She jumped from religion to politics, from Theosophy to Home Rule. She started a daily, *New India*, and later a weekly, *The Commonweal*. She

was the first to popularise the cry of 'Home Rule' and she carried on a raging, tearing propaganda. The formation of a 'Home Rule for India League' was discussed in 1915 but was put off to see if the Congress of the year would take up work directly for Self-Government.

The Conference between the representatives of the Congress and the Muslim League enjoined by the Bombay Congress was duly held and the outcome was a complete agreement between the leaders of the two great communities. A Joint Committee was appointed to frame a scheme and make all the arrangements necessary to promote the cause of Indian Self-Government within the Empire. The draft prepared by the Joint Committee was to be approved at Lucknow in 1916 by both the Congress and the Muslim League. Discussions were held at the All-India Congress Committee meeting at Allahabad on the 22nd, 23rd and 24th April, 1916 at the residence of Pandit Motilal Nehru, a member of the Committee, who at Surat had seconded the resolution proposing Dr. Rash Behari Ghose to the chair, but had not been heard of again till 1915. The proposals tentatively arrived at by the A.I.C.C. were considered at a joint meeting of the A.I.C.C. and the Council of the Muslim League in October 1916 in Calcutta and the Hindu-Muslim Concordat was almost fully hammered out, the quotas of Punjab and Bengal alone being left to be finally agreed upon at Lucknow during the sittings of the year's Congress. The scheme as finally agreed to by the Joint Committee in Calcutta, was approved by Congress. The inner circle of politicians were also aware by the time of Congress that what later came to be widely known as the 'Nineteen Memorandum' (see Appendix I) had been sent up to the Viceroy in November 1916 and that it embodied the principles of a scheme of Self-Government for India, the nineteen signatories being all members of the Supreme Council. All the elected members of the Supreme Legislative Council except the two Anglo-Indians, the three who were away from headquarters and two Muslims and one Sikh, signed the Memorandum. It is believed that it was the result of information which the signatories had that the Government of India had sent up certain proposals on the subject which were reactionary.

Apparently Mrs. Besant was not satisfied with the tardy way in which Congress affairs were progressing. The British Committee of the Indian National Congress was no doubt attending to Congress work in England, but it was only holding 'a watching brief' to use its own phraseology. Mrs. Besant wanted a more dynamic body and organized an Auxiliary Home Rule League in London on 12th June, 1916, under the Self-Government Resolution of the Madras Congress of 1914. In India her Home Rule League was definitely founded in Madras in the Gokhale Hall on 1st September, 1916 and worked well without a hitch throughout 1917 on the simple lines suggested by Mrs. Besant, who was its President elected for three years by the founding branches. The first Home Rule League in India had really been formed, as already pointed out, by Lokamanya Tilak in Maharashtra with headquarters at Poona on the 23rd April, 1916, and to distinguish hers from it, Mrs. Besant christened the former the All-India Home Rule League in 1917.



Tilak joined, in accordance with his announcement in January of the year, the Congress of 1916 at Lucknow. He succeeded in securing a vast majority of his party, the Nationalists, as the delegates from the Bombay Presidency to the Lucknow session. The Constitution of the time provided that the Subjects Committee should include the members of the A.I.C.C. from each Province, and an equal number, Province by Province, elected by the delegates of the Province assembled at the session. An interesting story is told of Gandhi's being found a place in the Subjects Committee of the Congress in 1916. It will be remembered that it was in that year that Tilak rejoined the Congress after the Surat Split. A proposal that Tilak had made to the Moderates in regard to the personnel of the elected members of the Subjects Committee having failed, Tilak decided to get the delegates of Bombay who were all Nationalists to elect only those of their own party. The names were put to the House in pairs, one a Nationalist and the other a Moderate. In every case it was the former that was elected. Likewise when a Nationalist name was pitted against Gandhi, the latter was voted down, but Tilak declared that Gandhi was elected.

The Lucknow session was presided over by Babu Ambika Charan Mazumdar, a tried servant of the Nation whose services to the National cause were fittingly rewarded by the honour conferred upon him at Lucknow. His Presidential Address was of a piece with the eloquent outpourings which the Congress had been accustomed to hear with real gusto for many years, and examples of which have been quoted in these pages. The great achievement of Lucknow was the completion of the Congress-League Scheme of Reforms (see Appendix II) with a full formation of the Hindu-Muslim Concordat.

It will be remembered that the preliminaries of this concordat were gone through at Joint Conferences of the League and the Congress Executives at Allahabad in April 1916, and in Calcutta in the following November. In working out the details of this agreement, the quotas of the Punjab and Bengal in respect of Muslim representation in the Legislatures remained to be settled, and settled they were at Lucknow. A full account of this concordat is given in the section dealing with Communal Representation in Part I, Chapter II. The essentials of the Congress-League Scheme itself were the subordination of the Executive to the Legislature, but it must be noted that the Legislature itself was still to consist of a 1/5 nominated element. The Secretary of State's Council was to be abolished. Altogether it was, judging from the rapid strides since taken by the Congress, a poor show. Yet, the Government fought shy of it and pitted against it a scheme of their own, as we shall see from the developments of the year 1917.

The Lucknow session of the Congress was altogether a unique one, for the fraternization of the Hindus and Muslims as well as for the formulation of a scheme of Self-Government. Not less important was the re-union of the two wings of the Congress which had been separated since 1907. It was truly an enlivening spectacle to see Tilak and Khaparde sitting side by side with Dr. Rash Behari Ghose and Surendra Nath

Banerjea. Mrs. Besant was there with her two co-adjutors—Arundale and Wadia—and the banner of Home Rule in their hands. Amongst the Muslims were men like the Rajah of Muhamudabad, Mazar-ul-Haq, A. Rasul and Jinnah. Gandhi and Polak were there too. The Congress-League Scheme which was passed by the Congress was, immediately after, approved by the Muslim League.

The Lucknow Congress, like the Congress at Bombay, was largely attended. There were no less than 2,301 delegates, besides a large number of visitors who filled the spacious Pandal to its utmost capacity. The Congress sat for four days and the resolutions dealt with the same variety of subjects, namely, India's loyalty, the Arms Act, Volunteering and Commissions in the Army, the Press Act, Indentured Labour, Indians in the Colonies, Executive Council for U.P., India and the Imperial Conference, High Courts for the Punjab and other Provinces, the Swadeshi movement, and Trial by Jury—subjects which had been dealt with year after year at successive sessions of the Congress. The Congress recorded its sense of loss at the death of Pandit Bishan Narayan Dhar who had presided at the Calcutta Session in 1911, Mr. G. Subrahmaniam Aiyar, and Mr. D. A. Khare who had worked as its General Secretary for several years. The Congress passed two resolutions about Bihar—one dealing with the relation between the Indian ryot and the European planters in North Bihar, and urging the desirability of a mixed Committee of officials and non-officials to enquire into the causes of the agrarian troubles; and the other with the up-to-date Patna University Bill which was then pending before the Imperial Council.

The resolution regarding the ryots and planters in North Bihar was of great importance. Mahatma Gandhi in the following year visited Bihar for investigation into the causes of discontent among the ryots, which will be referred to later.

The resolution dealing with Self-Government for India declared that "(a) having regard to the ancient civilization of India, the progress made in education and the public spirit shown, His Majesty the King-Emperor should be pleased 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; (b) that as a definite step in that direction the Congress-League Scheme should be granted; and (c) that in the reconstruction of the Empire, India should be lifted from the position of a dependency to that of an equal partner in the Empire with the Self-Governing Dominions."

It should also be noticed that the Lucknow Congress, in a resolution, viewed with alarm the extensive use made of the Defence of India Act and the Bengal Regulation III of 1818, and urged that in the application of the Defence of India Act, which was an emergency measure, the same principle should be followed as under the Defence of the Realm Act of the United Kingdom and the same procedure adopted in dealing with persons sought to be proceeded against under the Act, namely, that a statement in writing of the charge should be handed over to an arrested



person, and an explanation obtained from him placed before a lawyer-Judge of the High Court, a non-official practising lawyer, and a judge belonging to the Indian Civil Service, and no internment ordered before the same had been considered and the arrested persons afforded proper facilities for legal assistance. The same procedure was to be followed as far as practicable in regard to persons detained under Bengal Regulation III of 1818 and similar Regulations in other Provinces. The movers and supporters of this resolution pointed out how extensive use had been made of the drastic provisions of the emergency measures and how the belief was honestly held that many innocent young men with bright prospects in life had been ruined by the application of the Act. It was said that in Bengal above 479 persons had been interned and more than sixty persons detained under Regulation III of 1818. The rigorous enforcement of the Defence of India Act and the old Regulations had thus begun to be deeply resented by the people.

The practice of holding the sessions of the Congress and the League in the same city had been inaugurated the previous year in Bombay and was continued at Lucknow. When the scheme of Self-Government was passed at Lucknow, the Congress followed it up by a resolution calling upon the various Congress Committees and other organized bodies and associations to start a propagandist and educative campaign throughout the country. The response to this call was marvellous. One Province vied with another in carrying on propaganda, and Madras, under the immediate guidance of Mrs. Besant, created a record for itself. The Lucknow session of the Congress had no easy time. Untold difficulties had been created in Lucknow when the 15th session of the Congress was to meet at the place in 1899. But these were put an end to by the wisdom of the Lieut. Governor, Sir Antony MacDonnell, at the time. A similar incident repeated itself in 1916. The Secretariat of the U. P. Government issued a warning to the Reception Committee against any spirit of sedition in the Congress speeches, and a copy of the letter was served upon the President-elect as well, through the Government of Bengal. The Reception Committee gave a fitting reply to this gratuitous insult while the President treated it with the contempt it deserved. Mrs. Besant just then was under orders of externment from Berar and Bombay, and not unnaturally some developments were apprehended at the Lucknow session. But once again the wisdom of Sir James Meston, the Lieut. Governor, averted all complications. Sir James and Lady Meston, with staff, attended the Congress session and to the welcome extended to them by the President, Sir James gave a suitable reply.



CHAPTER III

TOWARDS RESPONSIBLE GOVERNMENT (1917)

One great obstacle to the development of Indian polity has all along been the communal differences in India. These were inaugurated virtually during the time of Lord Minto, and when a scheme of Self-Government was about to be formulated in 1917, it was fortunate that the adjustments between the two great communities of India—Hindus and Muslims—were made not by force of authority from above, but by voluntary agreement between the two parties. This augured well for the coming political struggle, and political agitation was set on foot in 1917 with clear minds and clear hearts. The year 1917 witnessed a quickening of National consciousness throughout India and a widely popular agitation in favour of Home Rule, and this was followed by an ever increasing severity of Police repression.

The cry of Home Rule spread to the remotest corners of the land and Home Rule Leagues were established all over the country. In Mrs. Besant's hands, the Press became powerful in spite of repression under the Press Law, and Lord Pentland's Government promulgated G. O. No. 559 restraining students from taking part in political agitation. He had sent for Mr. Kasturi Ranga Iyengar, Editor of *The Hindu*, who had half an hour's plain talk with the Government on the situation, and told them frankly what he thought of the political situation.

But Mrs. Besant who had a daily, *New India*, and a weekly, *The Commonweal*, was called upon to furnish security for her press and papers, and altogether she deposited and forfeited a sum of Rs. 20,000.

In the meantime the Home Rule idea was spreading like wild fire. "The strength of the Home Rule movement was rendered ten-fold greater," as Mrs. Besant herself pointed out in her Presidential Address in Calcutta (1917), "by the adhesion to it of a large number of women who brought to its helping the uncalculating heroism, the endurance, the self-sacrifice, of the feminine nature. Our League's best recruits and recruiters are amongst the women of India; and the women of Madras boast that they marched in procession when the men were stopped and that their prayers in the temples set the internal captive free. Home Rule has become so intertwined with Religion, by the prayers offered up in the great Southern Temples,—sacred places of pilgrimage—and spreading from them to village temples, and also by its being preached up and down the country by Sadhus and Sanyasins." Another factor that largely contributed to the great success of the movement was that from its inception it recognised the integrity of language areas, and in organising the country, adopted the linguistic principle as determining the provincial delimitations. In this respect it went ahead of the Congress and was its forerunner in reality.



On June 15th, 1917, Mrs. Besant, Mr. G. S. Arundale and Mr. B. P. Wadia were served with a notice to choose one of six places mentioned where they should live in internment. Coimbatore and Ootacamund were the places chosen. With the internment of the three leaders, the Home Rule Leagues became more popular, Mr. Jinnah having joined the League immediately after. It is an open secret that Mrs. Besant, despite governmental orders and surveillance, was freely writing to her paper *New India*. A new weekly called *The Commonwealth* was also started. Mr. P. K. Telang went over to Madras to take up the Editorship of *New India*. Mr. A. Rangaswami Iyengar, who later became the Editor of *The Hindu*, was assisting in the conduct of the daily. Mr. C. P. Ramaswami Aiyar was devoting his time and talents to the work of Home Rule organisation as well as to journalism. Every month that the internees were kept under detention, agitation was growing in the country in geometrical progression. The situation in India became tense, but the authorities in England would not relent. Mr. Montagu in his *Diary* narrates a story and draws a lesson. "I particularly liked that Shiva who cut his wife into 52 pieces," says Montagu, "only to discover that he had 52 wives," and Montagu adds: "This is really what happened to the Government of India when it interned Mrs. Besant."

While a political storm was thus developing in India, an Imperial War Conference met in London in co-operation with delegates from the Dominions, and the Maharaja of Bikaner and Sir S. P. Sinha were sent over there as India's representatives. They made such a profound impression everywhere by the dignity of their bearing and the polish of their pronouncements that they were given public receptions, civic honours, and excellent Press, so much so that the British Committee which had earlier suggested a deputation from India, to deal with the question of Indian Reforms, revised their ideas and countermanded a fighting campaign in England just at that juncture. As a matter of fact, a meeting of the A.I.C.C. had been convened on 7-4-1917 to arrange a deputation to England and a session of the Congress in London. The following were asked to form the deputation: Surendra Nath Banerjea, Dr. Rash Behari Ghose, Bhupendra Nath Basu, Madan Mohan Malaviya, Sir K. G. Gupta, Raja of Muhamamadabad, Tej Bahadur Sapru, V. S. Sastri, and C. P. Ramaswami Aiyar. The British Committee tried hard to get Mr. Austen Chamberlain, the Secretary of State, to make a pronouncement of policy and grant commissions to Indians in the Army, but he would not do either. A small Conference was held in London on 8-5-1917, when Sir S. P. Sinha was present, and it was the deliberations of this body that led to the countermanding of an accredited deputation from India.

India was, however, planning a campaign of Passive Resistance in order to secure the release of the Home Rule internees. A joint meeting of the All-India Congress Committee and of the Council of the Muslim League was convened in July 1917, and when it met on the 28th, the very first resolution it had to pass was one bemoaning the death of India's Grand Old Man—Dadabhai Naoroji. A small deputation consisting of Messrs. Jinnah, Sastri (alternatively C. P. Ramaswami Aiyar), Sapru and Wazir Hassan was appointed to proceed to England, contingent on Sir

W. Wedderburn's advice, in the middle of September to explain the general political situation in India and to promote the Scheme of Reforms adopted. On the question of adopting Passive Resistance, both as regards its principle and working, in carrying on political work, it was resolved to request the Provincial Congress Committees and the Council of the Muslim League to consider its advisability and to send their opinion to the General Secretaries within six weeks. The joint sitting also recorded its strong protest against the high-handed action of the Government of Bengal in prohibiting the public meeting which was to be held in Calcutta under the Presidentship of Dr. Rash Behari Ghose, to protest against the internments of Mrs. Besant and Messrs. Arundale and Wadia and trusted "that the people of Bengal will use every lawful means to vindicate their rights." A reasoned statement regarding the situation was prepared and it makes interesting reading to-day. It pointed out how here in India Lord Chelmsford, referring to the recommendations of the 'Nineteen Memorandum' deprecated them as 'catastrophic changes,' and how there in England Lord Sydenham was speaking of the Danger in India' and condemned the 'Nineteen Memorandum' as embodying 'revolutionary proposals' and recommended repressive measures on the ground that "German intrigue was at work." Soon afterwards, the Government of India sent round a circular regarding the policy to be adopted *vis à vis* the popular agitation for Self-Government. The master's voice was echoed in the pronouncements of distant satraps like Sir Michael O'Dwyer of the Punjab and Lord Pentland of Madras, which warned the people against extravagant expectations and threatened repressive measures. The former declared that the changes proposed by the party of Reform would be as revolutionary and subversive as those of the Ghadr emissaries. What irritated Government was that while Delhi and Simla were sending secret despatches regarding Reforms, the Congress and the League and certain members of the Supreme Legislative Council should have overreached there, the last sending up a Memorandum publicly and the first two formulating a whole scheme of Self-Government. These Provincial Governors did not see the impolicy of openly telling the public that the Reforms would be of a minor character, but if they were inpolitic, they were at least honest. Then the statement protested against the internments and asked, as remedial measures, for (1) an authoritative pronouncement pledging the Imperial Government in unequivocal terms to the policy of making India a Self-Governing member of the British Empire, (2) for immediate steps to sanction the Scheme of Reforms conjointly framed, (3) for the publication of official proposals, and (4) for the reversal of the repressive policy.

The main portions of the lengthy statement were cabled to the Secretary of State, the Prime-Minister and Sir William Wedderburn on the 30th July, and Sir William in reply cabled: "Had interview with Secretary of State; I feel justified in urging you earnestly to exercise patience. Will telegraph further when situation becomes clearer."

Let us turn our eyes once again towards India. The proposal for adopting Passive Resistance was seriously considered by the various Provincial Congress Committees in the months of August and September,



1917, and while Berar considered it advisable, and Bombay, Burma and the Punjab advised postponement in view of Mr. Montagu's expected visit to India, U. P. considered it inadvisable "in the existing situation." Bihar thought that "a date must be fixed within which the release of the Home Rule Internees as well as of the Ali Brothers and Moulana Abul Kalam Azad should be demanded; Bihar would herself intensify the demand by repeating it from different platforms, and redress, failing the public men of the Province shall betake themselves to actively preaching Passive Resistance to the people and be prepared to suffer all sacrifices and privations that it may involve." The Madras Provincial Congress Committee approved of the idea on the 14th August, 1917 in a resolution which we quote below:—

"Resolved that, in the opinion of the Madras Provincial Congress Committee, it is advisable to adopt the policy of Passive Resistance in so far as it involves opposition to all unjust and unconstitutional orders against the carrying on of constitutional agitation, and also against the prohibition of public meetings peacefully and constitutionally conducted to protest against the unjust and unconstitutional orders of internment and against the Repressive Policy of Government."

It was further resolved that "a sub-committee be appointed to formulate and report within a fortnight on the practical steps by which effect may be given to the resolution of Passive Resistance adopted this day." In the City of Madras a pledge was drafted and Sir S. Subrahmaniam Aiyar, retired Judge of the Madras High Court, and Honorary President of the All-India Home Rule League and an old Congressman, was the first to sign the pledge. He had renounced his knighthood as a protest against the internment of Mrs. Besant and her co-workers, and addressed a letter to President Wilson, which he sent by Mr. and Mrs. Hotchner. The next to sign the pledge was Mr. S. Kasturi Ranga Iyengar, Editor of *The Hindu*, a most unostentatious worker in public life, who had been devoting his talents, energies and resources to the great daily he had taken up, only to make it the greater by his assiduous work and undiluted Nationalism. A few young men then signed the pledge. Mr. C. P. Ramaswami Aiyar had not made up his mind in Madras, but signed the pledge in Bombay. While matters were thus progressing, the situation in India changed by the announcement of Mr. Montagu, and the Madras Provincial Congress Committee passed on the 28th September, 1917, a resolution running as follows:—

"That having regard to the altered circumstances in the political situation, the consideration of the question of Passive Resistance be deferred and that the All-India Congress Committee be communicated with accordingly, and the report of the sub-Committee be recorded."

What was this altered situation to which repeated references are being made? In the conduct of the Great War, the Mesopotamian Campaign was mismanaged and a debate of first class importance took place

in the House of Commons in which Mr. Austen Chamberlain, the Secretary of State, was mercilessly criticised by Mr. Montagu for the Mesopotamian muddle which had resulted from an inadequate supply of men and materials from India. It was in the course of this debate that Mr. Montagu characterized the Indian Government as "far too wooden, far too iron, far too inelastic and far too ante-diluvian to subserve its purposes in modern times." The result was Mr. Chamberlain's resignation and Mr. Montagu's appointment as the Secretary of State. Mr. Montagu was quite a young man then, not being older than 36, yet he had been Under-Secretary for India for four budgets in succession already, and toured India extensively in 1912. His famous Guildhall speech at Cambridge on 'Prestige' on the 28th February was a remarkable utterance. Here is an extract from it:—

"And as for prestige, Oh! India, how much happier would have been your history if that word had been left out of the English vocabulary. But there you have Conservative Imperialism at its worst; we are not there, mark you, to repair evil, to amend injustice, to profit by experience. We must abide by our mistakes, continue to outrage popular opinion for the sake of being to say 'I have said what I have said'. I have in other places and at other times expressed freely my opinion on Prestige (The reference was to his budget speech of 1911 in the House of Commons). We do not hold India by invoking this well-mouthed word, we must hold it by just institutions, and more and more as time goes on, by the consent of the governed."

This speech was delivered in reply to Mr. Bonar Law's criticism of the transfer of Capital to Delhi and the annulment of the Partition of Bengal, on the ground of expense and loss of prestige. This was considered a first class victory for India, for Mr. Montagu was believed to be a statesman possessing goodwill, ability, courage and first-hand knowledge. True to public expectations, shortly after assuming office, Mr. Montagu on behalf of the Cabinet made the following authoritative pronouncement on the 20th August regarding Responsible Government as the goal of British Policy:—

"The policy of His Majesty's Government, with which the Government of India are in complete accord, is that of the increasing association of Indians in every branch of administration, and the gradual development of self-governing institutions with a view to the progressive realisation of Responsible Government in India as an integral part of the British Empire. They have decided that substantial steps should be taken in this direction as soon as possible."

"I would add," proceeded Mr. Montagu's announcement, "that progress in this policy can only be achieved by successive stages. The British Government and the Government of India on whom the responsibility lies for the welfare and the advancement of the Indian peoples, must be the judges of the time and the measure of each advance and they must be guided by the co-operation received from those on whom new opportu-

nities of service will thus be conferred, and by the extent to which it is found that confidence can be reposed in their sense of responsibility. Ample opportunity will be afforded for public discussion of the proposals which will be submitted in due course to Parliament." And as a practical token of trust in the people, he removed the racial bar which excluded Indians from the King's Commissions in the Army. Further he announced his intention to proceed to India in order to consult with the Viceroy and to give a hearing to all the interests concerned in India's advance towards Self-Government.

We have here recounted how agitation in India was growing apace and special Provincial Conferences were asked to be held throughout the country giving expression to the feeling in the country, how the various Congress Committees and the Council of the Muslim League were asked to canvass the question of Passive Resistance and send their opinions within six weeks from the 29th July, on which day the A. I. C. C. and League Council had met in Bombay. We have also noted the opinions of the Provincial Congress Committees. During the six weeks, however, much water flowed under the bridge in the Thames as well as the Jumna, the announcement of the 20th August was made, and in pursuance of the new policy, Mrs. Besant and her associates were released on the 16th of September.

There was again a joint session of the All-India Congress Committee and the Council of the Muslim League on the 6th October at Allahabad, at which there was a general consensus of opinion that the question of Passive Resistance should be dropped. Mrs. Besant herself was against the idea of Passive Resistance and the younger men were greatly disappointed at this unexpected termination of an effective programme. The joint meeting instead of pursuing Passive Resistance decided upon sending an All-India Deputation to the Viceroy and the Secretary of State with a reasoned representation in support of the Congress-League Scheme. To this end a Committee of twelve was appointed with Mr. C. Y. Chintamani as Secretary to prepare an address and the Memorandum. The deputation waited on Lord Chelmsford and Mr. Montagu in November 1917 with the Memorandum, extracts from which may be quoted here:—

"Grateful as the people of India are for the authoritative announcement that has been made in the name of His Majesty's Government of India, they feel that it would be more satisfactory to them if action is taken such as is suggested here.

"At all times and in all circumstances the position of a mere Dependency is wounding to the self-respect of a people who, in the language of the Congress resolution, are the inheritors of ancient civilisation and have shown great capacity for government and administration. While this is so, there has arisen during the last two years a consideration of urgency which necessitates their insistence upon the elevation of their country to a status of equality with the Dominions in all inter-Imperial matters. It has become clear that the latter will

in future have a potent voice in the settlement of Imperial problems. They are no longer to be in the position of daughter-States; they are referred to as sister-States, forming with Britain the five free Nations of the Commonwealth. If, as some writers suggest, a Parliament and (or) a Council of the Empire should be established with representation therein of the United Kingdom and the Dominions, and if all affairs of the Empire are to be disposed of by them (it), the present House of Commons and House of Lords concerning themselves exclusively with the affairs of Britain, it is obvious that there will result the Governance of India by the Dominions in conjunction with Britain. To any such development of Imperial polity, Indians cannot but offer a most resolute resistance. For even if the attitude of the Dominions towards India and Indians were unexceptionable, no assent can be given to the widening of the area of subjection which the change will involve. The indispensable condition, from the Indian standpoint, of such a 're-fashioning of the fabric of the Empire is that India should be represented in an Imperial Council and (or) an Imperial Parliament by elected members, the extent of such representation being determined by the same criteria as will be applied to the Dominions.

"If no such Council or Parliament should be created, if all that will be done be to hold annual meetings of the Imperial Conference and to invite its members to special sitting of the British Cabinet, again it will be necessary to secure India's representation therein by means of elected members. Indians gladly acknowledge the step in advance that was taken early this year when His Highness the Maharaja of Bikaner, His Honour Sir James Meston and the Hon. Sir Satyendra Prasanna Sinha were deputed to the Imperial War Conference and the Imperial War Cabinet to represent the Government of India, nor are they insensible of the value of the resolution that was passed by the former in favour of India's representation at future Conferences. Their submission, however, is that for as long as the Government of India is a subordinate Government, not representative of, nor responsible to the people of India, the analogy with the Governments of the Dominions does not hold and Indians will derive what at best must be a very qualified satisfaction from the recognition that is accorded to their Government, as distinguished from themselves. There need be no doubt that whoever may be chosen by Government to attend the Imperial Conference on their behalf, will do their very best to do their duty honestly by this country, but they will labour under the initial disadvantage of owing no responsibility to the people, which will be a great drawback indeed.

"By common consent, the Maharaja of Bikaner, Sir James Meston and Sir S. P. Sinha acquitted themselves very creditably at the last Conference, but the Memorandum on Emigration which they laid before it did very partial justice to the claim and the view-point of Indians. An elected representative who made himself responsible for that document would have found it difficult to justify himself before his constituents.



"It is not demanded that the election should be made directly by the people or even by any very large electorate. It will suffice if the elected members of the Indian Provincial Legislative Councils are given the right to elect the representative or representatives. This it is hoped, will find acceptance."

In the meantime the rank and file of the Congress were not idle. They were obtaining signatures to the Congress-League Scheme, as has already been stated. Mrs. Besant sought interviews several times with the Viceroy soon after her release, but she was turned away. On the other hand Mr. Montagu's *Diary* shows that Lord Chelmsford wanted to book Mrs. Besant once again, for he complained that she had 'a sharp tongue'. Mr. Montagu wrote in reply to Lord Chelmsford that he would not tender any advice in the matter, but that he would support him in whatever steps he might feel impelled to take to curb Mrs. Besant and her activities. A mystery surrounded the attitude and activities of Mrs. Besant soon after her release.

Mrs. Besant was shunned by Lord Chelmsford while Mr. Montagu showed no great regard for her leadership. Soon after her release she repudiated Passive Resistance. Was there anything behind, which justified such an attitude on the part of the Viceroy? Mr. Montagu has an interesting note in his *Diary* on page 137 which runs as follows:—

"Chelmsford tells me that he thinks he will have to take action about Mrs. Besant's speeches and promised to tell me what he is going to do. Perhaps it is well that I should not know. I had thought of writing, regretting the strength of her language, but I fear it will be no good. There will of course be an outburst of anger at her release, and jeers that my visit has not produced a calm atmosphere, and that she has violated her pledges."

What these pledges may be, when they were given, and to whom, we do not know!

In the closing months of the year 1917, the political atmosphere was charged with the Montford current of electricity. Mr. Montagu and Lord Chelmsford had been touring the whole country receiving deputations and granting interviews everywhere. Mrs. Besant said to certain friends towards the end of 1917, after her interview with Mr. Montagu, "We must support Mr. Montagu." The Moderates everywhere repeated the statement and added that Mr. Montagu could do nothing if he was disowned by the Extremists in India as well as the die-hards in England. Apparently Montagu's mission was to consult the conflicting interests in India and to formulate draft schemes for the consideration of Parliament in England. But the former was done by the Hindu-Muslim Concordat of Lucknow (1916) which he bodily accepted. In regard to the latter, it may be news to many that the whole of the Montagu-Chelmsford Scheme, so-called, was worked out in every detail by March, 1916. The fact was that Lord Chelmsford was a Major in the Army in the Territorial Force in India, when the order reached him of his appointment as Viceroy.

When he went to England in March, 1916, he was shown the full-blown scheme ready-made,—a fact which we learnt only in 1934,—which was to be associated with his name. No doubt Mr. Montagu gave a hearing even to persons like Mrs. Besant, Tilak and Gandhi. He must doubtless have heard of the classical statement made by Mrs. Besant on the publication of the Montford Report, that the Reform Scheme was unworthy of Britain to offer and of India to accept.

But what Mr. Montagu did in his Indian tour was to pitch upon his future Ministers, Executive Councillors and Advocates-General. He wanted to be sure of the men that would work his scheme. This was behind the chorus of remarks we met with everywhere in the early part of 1918,—namely, “we must support Mr. Montagu.” The saddest event, however, associated with Mr. Montagu’s visit to India was the somewhat unceremonious treatment he gave to Mrs. Besant, in spite of her readiness to co-operate soon after her release.

During this period, in 1917, when Mrs. Besant’s Home Rule movement was at its height, Gandhi, with a band of select workers—including Rajendra Babu, Brij Kishore Babu, Gorak Babu, Anugraha Babu, from Bihar, Prof. Kripalani, and Dr. H. S. Dev of the Servants of India Society—was engaged in investigating the grievances of the tenants of Champaran against the indigo planters. He kept himself and his co-workers strictly aloof from the movement for a whole period of six months, till he had finished the enquiry and given proof of the remarkable potency of Satyagraha which was destined to inaugurate a new epoch in the later history of India.

Champaran is a district in the north-western corner of Bihar. Early in the nineteenth century, indigo began to be grown in the district by European planters who in course of time secured, on temporary and permanent leases, large tracts of land from the Zamindars of the districts, particularly the Maharajah of Bettiah who became involved in heavy debts. The planters, with the influence and status thus acquired, coupled with the influence which they possessed as being members of the ruling race, were soon able to get indigo grown by the tenants of the villages on portions of their holdings varying between $\frac{3}{20}$ th and $\frac{5}{20}$ th and later on they regarded this compulsory cultivation as a matter of right which they got recognised in the Bengal Tenancy Act. This system of growing indigo came to be known as *tinkathia* or the system of three *cottahs*, i.e., $\frac{3}{20}$ th of a bigha. It was the grievance of the tenants that growing of indigo was not at all profitable for them and that they were forced to do it to the detriment of other cultivation and that the wages that they got for labour were nominal. Their grievances came to a head several times and their risings were suppressed with a heavy hand, but resulted now and then in some increase in the price paid for the indigo by the planter to the cultivator. Early in the twentieth century, on account of the introduction of synthetic dyes, growing of indigo even under conditions which prevailed in Champaran became unprofitable to planters, and they began to close their factories. But instead of taking the losses on themselves, as they ought to have fallen in due course, they devised means to



transfer them to the shoulders of the poor tenants. They adopted two methods. In the villages which they held under permanent lease and in which any increase in the rent paid by the tenants would accrue to their benefit as permanent lessees as against the superior landlord, the lessor, they took agreements from the tenants agreeing to enhancement of rent, agreeing on their (planter's) part to release the tenants from the so-called obligation of growing indigo for the benefit of the planters.

Thousands upon thousands of such agreements were taken, as was alleged by the tenants, forcibly, from them. The enhancements would be ordinarily illegal but were saved by a provision in the Tenancy Act which had been inserted at the instance of the planters. The Government, in spite of popular protests inside and outside the Legislature, helped the planters in completing such agreements by appointing special registrars for registering them. In villages where the planters had only temporary leases, and where consequently an increase in the rent roll would accrue to the benefit of the superior landlord after the term of the lease was over, the planters adopted the device of taking, or, as the tenants alleged, extorting cash payment or its equivalent from the tenants, and agreeing to release them from the so-called obligation of growing indigo which, even under the special provisions of the Tenancy Act, did not exist in such villages. In this way they realised something like 12 lakhs from the tenants. As the whole district had come under the planters, they had divided it into various portions or spheres of action, each indigo concern holding sway over a particular portion of the district. Their influence with the Government and officials was so great that tenants dared not approach either the Judicial or the Executive Officials without serious risks to their person and property. Beating and shutting up of Hindus of high caste in *murgikhanas*, impounding cattle, and harassments in a thousand and one ways, including looting of their houses, stoppage of services by barbers, washermen, *chamars*, and even the ingress into and egress from their houses, and collecting untouchables to sit at their doors, were an ordinary everyday affair. The planters used also to extort a large number of unauthorised and illegal perquisites in the form of taxes which were counted during the inquiry to be more than fifty in number. A few illustrations may be given. There was a tax on marriage, a tax on every hearth, a tax on *kolhu* or oil-mill. If the Sahib was ill and needed a visit to the hills, the tenants had to pay a special tax called *paparhi*. If he needed a horse or an elephant or a motor car, the tenants must bear the cost and pay special taxes known as 'ghorahi' 'hathiahi' or 'hawahi'. Besides those taxes heavy fines used to be imposed and realised for anything which offended the planter or for offences against others, thus replacing civil authority and Courts in the district.

All efforts on the part of the public men of the Province to secure redress had failed. The Local Government were aware of these grievances, admitted them and sympathised with the tenants, but found themselves helpless or unwilling to do anything substantial.

It was in this condition of things that Mahatma Gandhi was approached by some representative tenants and Bihar Delegates at the time

of the Lucknow Congress. He promised to visit Champaran and study the situation.

In April 1917 he reached Motihari, the headquarters of the district, and was going to see a village when he was served with a notice under Sec. 144, Cr. P. C., calling upon him to leave the district forthwith. He disobeyed this order, returned the Kaiser-i-Hind gold medal which had been granted to him by Government for humanitarian work and stood for his trial before the Magistrate. He pleaded guilty in one of those remarkable statements in Court with which the country has since become familiar, but which at the time struck an altogether new and unfamiliar note. The Government ultimately withdrew the prosecution and allowed him to continue his enquiry in the course of which, with the aid of friends, he got the statements of some 20,000 tenants and formulated their demand on the basis of those statements. The Government ultimately appointed a Commission consisting of representatives of landlords, planters, and the Government, and Mahatma Gandhi himself as representing the tenants. The Commission after an inquiry submitted a unanimous report practically accepting the complaints of the tenants as valid, and embodying a compromise reducing the enhancements of rent and refunding part of the money which the planters had taken from the tenants. The recommendations of the Committee were embodied in an act by which, among other things, growing of indigo or *tinkathia* was abolished. Within a few years after this, most of the planters sold their factories and lands and left the district. To-day one can see only the remains of what were once the palaces of the planters, and those that are still continuing are not subsisting on indigo at all but on other crops like other cultivators, shorn of all their illegal gains and most of the prestige which made them possible.

The grievances which failed to secure redress at the hands of both the popular leaders of the day and the Government for a hundred years were thus in a few months removed; and no wonder Champaran is ever so faithful to whatever Gandhi says or does.

Equal in importance to the Champaran Satyagraha, from the point of view of the principles involved, though not of the results achieved, was the Satyagraha in Kaira in 1918. The Indian peasants had never known, before the entry of Gandhi in the public life of India, to question the Government's right to demand assessment from them, even in years of acute famine. Their representatives made petitions and memorials and moved resolutions in the local Council, but there their protests ended. In 1918 Gandhi inaugurated a new era. A condition approaching famine had risen in the Kaira district in the Bombay Presidency, owing to a widespread failure of crops, and the peasants felt that the situation entitled them to a suspension of the assessment. The usual remedies had been tried, and had failed. The peasants claimed that the crops did not exceed four annas in the rupee but were less; the Government officials said they exceeded four annas and that the peasants had no right to suspension under the Land Revenue Code. All petitioning and prayer had failed and Gandhiji had no alternative but to advise the peasants to resort to Satyagraha. He also appealed to the public for help by contributing



volunteer workers for educating the peasants. The response was prompt and spontaneous; and prominent among those who offered their voluntary services was Sirdar Vallabhbhai Patel who suspended a splendid and growing practice at the Bar and cast in his lot with Gandhi. The Kaira Satyagraha was the occasion which brought the two great men together. It was the beginning of Sirdar Vallabhbhai's public life. He burnt his boats and gave Gandhi a co-operation and allegiance which have grown with the years. The peasants signed a pledge to the effect that they would rather let their lands be forfeited than allow their case to be considered false or their self-respect to be compromised by their coerced into paying the assessment; also that the well-to-do amongst them would pay if the poor were granted suspension.

Now began a unique education of the peasants,—an education into principles that they had never before heard of. They were to understand that it was their right to question Government's authority to tax them, that the officials were not their masters but their servants, that therefore they should shed all fear of officials and stand erect in defiance of coercion, intimidation and worse. They had also to learn the primary lesson of civility without which even the highest courage would be vitiated. From day to day Gandhi and Vallabhbhai Patel and other co-workers went about from village to village inculcating these principles, and asking them to stand firm in spite of attachments of cattle and other moveables and penalty notices and threats of confiscation of land. No money was needed for the campaign, but the Bombay merchants lavished more contribution than the organisers of the campaign could make use of.

The Satyagraha also afforded an occasion for the first instance of Civil Disobedience in Gujarat. With a view to steeling the hearts of the peasants Gandhi advised the people, under the leadership of the late Sjt. Mohanlal Pandya, to remove the crops from a field which had been wrongly attached. This was a good opportunity for the people to learn the lesson of courting fines or imprisonment which was the necessary consequence of Civil Disobedience. Sjt. Mohanlal Pandya removed the crop of onion from the field and a few peasants also joined him. They were arrested and convicted and sentenced to brief terms of imprisonment. This was a unique experience for the people who hailed it with delight and lionised their leaders and took them in procession after their release.

The campaign came to an expected end. The authorities accepted the people's contention by the grant of suspensions to poor peasants, but they did this without making a public announcement or letting the people feel that they had done anything by way of a settlement. Very few got the benefit of the belated, unacknowledged and grudging settlement, and the triumph of Satyagraha, though it was one in principle, lacked the essentials of a complete triumph. But the indirect results were great. The campaign laid the foundation of an awakening among the peasants of Gujarat and of a true political education. "The lesson," says Gandhi in his Autobiography, "was indelibly imprinted on the public mind that the salvation of the people depends upon themselves, upon their capacity

for suffering and sacrifice. Through the Kaira campaign Satyagraha took firm root in the soil of Gujarat."

We may next usefully add a note of the part played by Congressmen in the organisation of Labour in Ahmedabad, and the great lesson in Satyagraha taught us by Gandhi and his fellow-workers.

The story of the organisation of the textile workmen in Ahmedabad by Gandhi, who had not then assumed the leadership of the Congress, is a romance which would adorn the history of freedom of any Nation. For the very first time in history methods based on truth and non-violence were employed for the solution of industrial disputes, and with such sound and far-reaching results that the labour organisation in Ahmedabad has successfully stood the test of many an industrial storm and has been the wonder and admiration of Western visitors. Even a brief resume of the story would occupy a number of pages in this history. One should content oneself with indicating the part played by Gandhi and with mentioning the salient features of the organisation which distinguish it from similar organisations in India and the world.

Shrimati Anasuyaben Sarabhai had been since 1916 conducting educational work in labour areas, which brought her into contact with the workers' difficulties in the mills. The first section to benefit by her guidance were the warpers, but she soon saw that if all the workmen were to be organised and given effective help, she must seek the guidance of some one who commanded her confidence. A dispute between the weavers and the millowners in 1918 led her to seek Gandhi's advice, who instead of trying to force the hands of millowners got them to accept the principle of arbitration,—an event of the greatest importance to the labour movement. He and Sirdar Vallabhbhai Patel consented to be two of the arbitrators on behalf of labour, but the arbitration fell through, as some of the workmen in a few mills went on strike. Gandhi expressed his regret and got the workmen to make amends. The breaches of understanding were on both sides, but the millowners refused to listen. Before advising the workmen to take any definite step, Gandhi went into the matter of dispute at very great length, examined the state of trade, the profits made by the mills, the rise in the cost of living on the one hand and the extent to which the cost of production of the industry had increased on the other. A careful examination of these factors led him to arrive at the conclusion that the minimum the workmen had a right to claim was a 35 per cent increase in their wages. The labourers who were pitching their demands much higher were persuaded to accept this, and were educated into the healthy tradition, which has since been faithfully followed, of always limiting the demands to the barest minimum which can be legitimately claimed.

The demand thus formulated was communicated to the millowners who in their turn said that they were not prepared to go beyond 20 per cent, and declared a lock-out on 22nd February, 1918. Thereupon Gandhi called a meeting of all the workmen and administered to them a pledge—under a tree, which is still held sacred,—not to resume work until they



had secured their demand and not to do anything in breach of the peace during the lock-out. This was followed by an intensive educative propaganda and house to house visits by Shrimati Anasuyaben, and Srijuts Shankerlal Banker and Chhaganlal Gandhi and leaflets issued and huge mass meetings addressed every day. These leaflets were drafted by Gandhi who explained to the workmen in a simple homely style that the struggle in which they were engaged was not a mere industrial dispute but a moral and spiritual struggle calculated to educate and uplift and ennoble them, besides enabling them to win an increase in their wage. The struggle went on for a fortnight, but the workmen unaccustomed to a loss of wage for any length of time showed signs of exhaustion, and the unreasoning element among them even began to grumble that it may be all right for Gandhi to exhort them to keep the pledge but no easy thing for them to do so, whilst they and their children were on the brink of starvation. That, to Gandhi, was the warning voice of God and he declared at the next evening's meeting that he would have no food and would use no conveyance until the workmen had been enabled to carry out their pledge. The news spread like wild fire throughout the length and breadth of India. It was a fast unto death, though the language used was different, but he staked his life for the great moral purpose of helping a mass of covenanters to adhere to their pledge. Critics and cavillers said that it was wrongful coercion of the mill-owners. Gandhi confessed that the fast was tainted to the extent that the millowners might be compelled to yield against their will, but that, he said, would be the indirect and not the direct result of the fact, which was aimed at helping a community of men to adhere to a pledge solemnly taken. Nothing moves Gandhi so deeply as the sanctity and faithful observance of a pledge, however small, and nothing pains him more than the violation of a pledge. The workmen pleaded with him in vain; his decision was irrevocable. But he now appealed to them not to while away their time, but to earn an honest penny by taking up any work that could be found for them. Gandhi could easily have made a successful appeal for funds in order to sustain the workmen with doles, but he would not brook the suggestion. The workmen's suffering would lose all its value if it was backed up by doles. Work was found for hundreds of workmen on the grounds of the Satyagraha Ashram, Sabarmati, where buildings were under construction, and they worked merrily with the members of the Ashram, who joined them with Anasuyaben at their head, in carrying loads of earth and bricks and mortar. The moral effect of this was tremendous. It strengthened the workmen in their resolve, and it also moved the hearts of the millowners. Appeals were made to them by leaders from various parts of the country, the most prominent among them being the late Dr. Besant who sent them an urgent wire to "yield for India's sake and save Gandhiji's life." Shrimati Sarajadevi, the cultured wife of Seth Ambalal Sarabhai, was moved as much by the suffering of the workmen as by the impending danger to one whom she revered, and she played no little part in persuading the millowners to find out a solution. On the fourth day of the fast, a solution was found enabling the workmen to keep the pledge and the millowners to concede to them justice consistently with honour. Both agreed to submit to arbitration for the ultimate

settlement of the wage increase, and the arbitrator's Award gave the workmen a 35 per cent. increase as originally demanded.

This peaceful settlement of the dispute laid the foundation of an indissoluble union between Congress leaders and workmen, and of a permanent organisation called the Textile Labour Association, which has grown during these fifteen years under the fostering care of Shrinati Anasuyaben and Shankerlal Banker, both prominent members of the Congress. It has helped the workmen to tide over several crises and saved the city of Ahmedabad from industrial troubles of a serious nature. The workmen are so well organized, and the education imparted to them by the permanent staff of the Union, with Sjt. Gulzarilal Nanda at their head, is of such a solid character that the workmen have frequently rendered public service of a far-reaching character. Under Gandhi's advice the Labour Association engaged itself in the relief of distress caused by heavy rain and floods in 1927. During the Civil Disobedience campaign of 1930 the workmen conducted an intensive temperance campaign, and nearly 200 volunteers from amongst them responded to the call of the Congress by working as pickets and 162 of them were sentenced to various terms of imprisonment. There have since been disputes between them and the millowners of a rather serious character, but thanks to their wonderful discipline, they kept peace during arbitration proceedings extending over a period of 16 months and carried on by Gandhi who worked throughout the period as their permanent arbitrator. The Labour Association, Ahmedabad, is perhaps the only one in the world with a constitution which pledges it to the observance of truth and non-violence and which has as its ultimate goal the nationalization of the textile industry. The Association has at present nearly 30,000 paying members, it handled nearly 4,000 complaints in 1934 of which nearly 80 per cent. were successful, and dealt with 39 strikes of which 23 ended in favour of the workers. The Association secured maternity benefit for 1185 women, amounting to Rs. 29,000 and Rs. 18,074 as accident compensation, and Rs. 9,856 as victimization benefit to 164 operatives. Its special uplift work includes medical aid, education, physical culture and recreation, municipal facilities, temperance and social reform.

Gandhi, who had given proofs of his magical powers in Champaran, liberated the simple but effective proposal that the Congress-League Scheme should be translated into the Indian languages, explained to the people and their signatures taken in support of the Reforms outlined therein, and it was welcomed throughout the country and up to the end of 1917 over a million persons subscribed to the scheme. This was almost the first Nation-wide organization that had been attempted by the Congress, but reference may here be made to an earlier attempt to organize the country for Self-Government and, to that end, gather funds for continuous work in England and India. At the Bombay Session of the Congress in 1915 presided over by Sir S. P. Sinha, the A.I.C.C. had resolved to raise a permanent fund for the Congress on the 30th December, 1915, and appointed a sub-committee consisting of Surendra Nath Banerjee, Bhupendra Nath Basu, S. Srinivasa Iyengar, Samarth, Wacha and Malaviya to devise the best means of raising a Permanent Fund for the sup-



port of the British Congress Committee in England and its organ *India*, and for Congress work in India. It was widely talked about that Sinha himself offered to give a lac of rupees to the Fund. The Committee met in Calcutta on the 17th November, 1916, and recommended that a sum of three lacs and a half be raised and the same be invested as a Permanent Fund. A Board of Trustees with Dr. Rash Behari Ghose as Chairman was appointed at Lucknow on the 30th December, 1916 to receive and administer the same. The Board met subsequently in Calcutta in April, 1917 and appointed the Hon. V. S. Srinivasa Sastri as the Secretary and postponed the question of allocating the Fund to the Provinces. Nothing was, however, done in the direction.

In this connection we may recall a similar attempt made in the early years of the Congress. So early as 1889 it was proposed to establish a permanent Congress Fund and a sum of Rs. 50,000 was voted to form the nucleus of such a fund. Out of this a small sum of Rs. 5,000 only was realised and deposited with the Oriental Bank which was then considered as the strongest Exchange Bank in India. In the Bombay crisis of 1890, the Bank, however, went into liquidation and the small sum thus credited to the Fund was lost.

Before dealing with the Congress session of the year 1917, we have to make reference to one important matter. The Congress of the year was to take place in Calcutta, and in that city opinions were keenly divided between the old Moderates for whom it was a stronghold, and the new Home Rulers and Nationalists who made Calcutta their 'stronger hold.' The old guard was represented by Rai Baikunta Nath Sen, Ambika Charan Mazumdar, Surendra Nath Banerjee and Bhupendra Nath Basu. Mr. C. R. Das began to interest himself in Congress work and cast in his lot with the younger folks—B. K. Lahiri, I. B. Sen and Jitendralal Banerjee.

Although the majority of the Provincial Congress Committees had recommended Mrs. Besant as the President of the ensuing Congress, there was a keen division in the Reception Committee which, in those days, had to accept the majority recommendation. But the meeting of the Reception Committee held on the 30th of August, 1917 became the scene of acute controversy. The Joint Honorary Secretaries—Fazl-ul-Haq, Lahiri and Jitendralal Banerjee, claimed that the majority recommendation was accepted by an overwhelming majority of the members of the Reception Committee at the meeting. Rai Bahadur Baikunta Nath Sen and 30 others left the meeting at an early stage owing to some unpleasantness. A statement was submitted to the A.I.C.C. by the Secretaries in which it was claimed that Mrs. Besant was elected. On the contrary the Rai Bahadur sent a telegram that the Reception Committee "failed to elect President within month of August. As Chairman of Reception Committee refer the matter to the A.I.C.C." To make a long story short, Mrs. Besant was elected by the A.I.C.C. easily, by circulation while yet she was under the heavy ban of Government displeasure. The record of the Congress of 1917 may shortly be stated.

Mrs. Besant's Presidential Address is an elaborate thesis of India's Self-Government. Her summary of the Military and Mercantile problems is comprehensive as well as detailed, and constitutes a splendid course of reference to students in quest of knowledge. In effect she demanded, "A Bill during 1918 establishing Self-Government in India on lines resembling those of the Commonwealth on a date to be laid down therein, preferably 1923, the latest 1928, the intermediate five or ten years being occupied with the transference of the Government from British to Indian hands, maintaining the British tie as in the Dominions." At the end of the address, she gave copious extracts from Bernard Houghton's 'Bureaucratic Government' and a detailed Bill regarding Village Government. With Mrs. Besant, the Presidentship of the Congress was not a passing show or a three-day festivity. It was a day-to-day responsibility, and in that view Mrs. Besant was the first to claim Presidentship of the Congress throughout the succeeding year. The claim was not new but its enforcement was not known in the previous history of the Congress. The Calcutta Session was attended by 4,967 delegates and about 5,000 visitors.

The resolutions of the Calcutta Session of the Congress of 1917 were, with some exceptions, again of the same stereotyped sort and after recording the grief of the Congress at the deaths of the Grand Old Man Dadabhai Naoroji and Mr. A. Rasul of Calcutta, and India's loyalty to the Throne and welcome to Mr. Montagu, proceeded to ask for the release of Messrs. Mahomed Ali and Shaukat Ali who had remained incarcerated since October, 1914. The Congress again urged as usual the necessity and justice of adequate provision for giving Military training to Indians and while expressing satisfaction at the removal of the racial bar against admission of Indians to the Commissioned ranks of the Army and the appointment of nine Indians to such ranks, expressed the hope for a larger proportion of Commissioned posts to Indians and urged improvement in the pay, prospects and equipment of Indian soldiers. The Congress reiterated its protest against (a) the wide and arbitrary powers conferred by the Press Act of 1910 upon the Executive, (b) the Arms Act, (c) the treatment and disabilities of Indians in the Colonies. The Congress asked for complete abolition of the system of indentured labour and a Parliamentary Commission to inquire into the working of the special coercive legislation restricting freedom of speech, writing, association and meetings and the use of the Defence of India Act for similar purposes. The Government had, on the 10th December, announced the appointment of the Rowlatt Committee and the Congress condemned it "inasmuch as the avowed object of the appointment is not to give relief but to introduce fresh legislation arming the Executive with additional powers to deal with alleged revolutionary conspiracy in Bengal." By the same resolution the Congress expressed alarm at the extensive use made of the Defence of India Act and Regulation III of 1918, and in view of the widespread discontent on account of the indiscriminate operations of the Act asked for a general amnesty to all political prisoners.

The Congress by a resolution asked for intervention of the Government of India to save the life of Lala Arjunlal Sethi who was in danger



of death by starvation in Vellore Jail on account of his religious principles, and, by another, recommended the formation of Boy Scouts' Associations in every Province, under Indian control. The main resolution was that dealing with the question of Self-Government and ran as follows:—

"This Congress expresses its grateful satisfaction over the pronouncement made by His Majesty's Secretary of State for India on behalf of the Imperial Government that its object is the establishment of responsible Government in India.

"This Congress strongly urges the necessity for the immediate enactment of a Parliamentary Statute providing for the establishment of responsible government in India, the full measure to be attained within a time-limit to be fixed in the statute itself at an early date.

"This Congress is emphatically of opinion that the Congress-League Scheme of Reforms ought to be immediately introduced by statute as the first step in the progress."

A new resolution accepted by the Calcutta Congress was the one relating to Andhra being recognized as a separate Congress circle, and in this connection we may make a reference to a National or sub-national movement which was inaugurated in the Andhradesa in 1913 and which travelled on to the Congress of 1915. The movement related to the question of redistributing the Indian Provinces on linguistic lines. It had its origin really in the efforts made by Mahesh Narayan of Bihar in 1894 to get his Province separated from Bengal. The Congress created Bihar into a separate Province in 1908, and the principle was approved in the scheme of Provincial Autonomy set forth in the Government of India's Despatch of August 25th, 1911, and Bihar separated from Bengal as the result of that despatch. Wide and strong was the belief that for Provincial Autonomy to be successful, the medium of instruction as well as administration must be the provincial languages, and that the failure of the British administration, notably in the domain of Local Self-Government, is undoubtedly due to the pell-mell admixture of populations in British Provinces which are carved out on no logical or ethnological, but on a chronological basis. In 1915 the Congress was not prepared to deal with the question but it was pressed to the fore in 1916 by the Andhra Conference, and to anticipate events, we may say that on the 8th of April, 1917, the All-India Congress Committee to which it was referred by the Lucknow Congress, 1916, accepted the principle after duly consulting the Provincial Congress Committees of Madras and Bombay, and resolved that the "Telugu speaking districts of the Madras Presidency be constituted into a separate Congress Province." Sindh followed suit and Karnataka came later. The subject was hotly contested in the Subjects Committee of the Calcutta Congress (1917). Even Gandhi thought that the question might await the implementing of the Reforms, but Lokamanya Tilak saw the point, namely, that Linguistic Provinces were an essential condition pre-requisite to real Provincial Autonomy. Mrs. Besant presided over the Calcutta Congress (1917), and the idea was opposed

vehemently by her as well as by some Tamil friends from the South. The subject held the field for over two hours in Calcutta, and was ultimately accepted late at night at 10-15 p.m. Sindh was recognised as a separate Congress circle by the A.I.C.C. on 6th October, 1917. The principle which was then accepted became the guiding principle for a redistribution immediately after the Nagpur Congress, and we have now twenty-one Congress circles as against the nine British Provinces.

In Calcutta Mrs. Besant was anxious to appoint Mr. C. P. Ramaswami Aiyar as Secretary and therefore asked for three Secretaries at the point of having to amend the constitution. It was agreed to, and Mr. Subba Rau Pantulu, though re-elected, forthwith resigned his secretaryship. The Presidentship of Mrs. Besant over the Calcutta Session brought nearer together the Congress and the Home Rule League and the constitution of the League was made so rigid in Calcutta that it brought about a complete paralysis of the organization. The Calcutta session was memorable for the question of the National flag being formally raised. Indeed the Home Rule League had already adopted and popularized the Tricolour flag, and a committee was appointed to recommend a design including on its personnel Abanindra Nath Tagore. But the committee never met and the old Home Rule flag virtually became the Congress flag, with the Charkha added on it later on, until the Flag Committee of 1931 substituted the saffron colour for the red.



CHAPTER IV

THE MONTAGU-CHELMSFORD PROPOSALS (1918)

Mrs. Besant, it has already been noted, took the view that the President of the year's session of the Congress was President for the whole year. This was not a new idea by any means, but she was the first to act upon it.

At the very first meeting of the All-India Congress Committee held immediately after the Congress on 30th December, 1917, the question of raising a permanent fund for the Congress was considered, and further, Provincial Committees were called upon to appoint a Working Committee for carrying on educative and propagandist work in India and in England. The months that followed were months of incessant activity, especially in Madras where lacs of leaflets explaining the Congress-League Scheme were circulated, and more than 9 lacs signatures obtained in its support and presented to Mr. Montagu when he visited Madras.

The All-India Congress Committee met again on 23rd February, 1918 at Delhi, and after recording its sense of sorrow at the death of Sir William Wedderburn, appointed a Deputation to urge on the Viceroy the cancellation of the order excluding Lokamanya Tilak and Babu Bepin Chandra Pal from the Punjab and Delhi Provinces.

The Deputation waited on the Viceroy but without any result. Lord Chelmsford and Mr. Montagu were expected to issue their Report on Constitutional Reforms, and the A.I.C.C. resolved to have a special session of the Congress at Allahabad or Lucknow soon after the publication of the Report and to send a Deputation to England after the special session.

A third meeting of the A.I.C.C. held on 3rd May, 1918, protested against the action of the Government in turning back the deputations of the two Home Rule Leagues on their way to England, from Gibraltar and Ceylon. The Committee insisted that nothing short of an authoritative pronouncement that India should have Responsible Government as the issue of the War would inspire the youth of the country to flock to the colours in sufficient numbers to ensure success.

The first five months of 1918 were a period of restless activity for Mrs. Besant. An idea of her continuous tours is given in the pamphlet on 'Home Rule Leagues' (See Appendix III). Mrs. Margaret E. Cousins and Mrs. Dorothy Jinarajadasa addressed letters to her respecting the grant of franchise to women under the Congress-League Scheme. Mr. John Seur wrote to her from England suggesting that the Congress should invite the Labour Conference in June 1918 to send a fraternal delegate to the Indian National Congress of 1918, and the A.I.C.C. did so. This

idea and this language were fast becoming familiar and were peculiarly fitting the democratic organisations of the day. "The Home Rule Leagues had just then appointed Mr. Baptista as their fraternal delegate to the annual Labour Conference next month," said Mrs. Besant in her Presidential Address, "and Major Graham Pole comes to us from them." She was a great believer in the Indo-British connection. Indeed her vision had not travelled beyond the conception of Home Rule, as understood in those days; even a Dominion of those times was, in status, far behind the Dominions of 1926, and certainly could not be compared to the Dominions of the present day with the Statute of Westminster behind them. In any case, Mrs. Besant was soon feeling out of tune both with Government and with the people. The former deprecated her forwardness, the latter, her backwardness. While she had a good following and abundant influence at the Special Congress of Bombay (Sept. 1918), it was seen that she became a back number at the Delhi Congress (December 1918). Between the two she was rapidly losing ground.

The Defence of India Act was vigorously at work everywhere. Even in 1917, orders of externment had been passed against Bal Gangadhar Tilak and Bepin Chandra Pal from the Punjab and Delhi. But popular agitation was not cowed down by these repressive measures. When the Governor of Bombay held a War meeting of leaders, Tilak raised the question of Self-Government, but was not allowed to speak for more than two minutes. When the Viceroy held a meeting in Delhi, Gandhi was present though he had at first declined the invitation, not merely on the ground that Tilak and Mrs. Besant were not invited but on the higher ground that there were secret treaties which Britain had entered into regarding the Cession of Constantinople to Russia and other matters. He had an interview with Lord Chelmsford who bore it in upon him that the news emanated from interested quarters (Russia) which had by that time emerged out of the War, a fact which, by the way, made the question no longer a live issue, that he himself could not believe that the Cabinet would enter into such a treaty, and finally, that, in any case, such a question could not possibly be raised or discussed in the midst of the War. Therefore Gandhi agreed to join the War Conference and he wired to the Lokamanya to go to Delhi, although there was no invitation to the latter; but Delhi being an area from which he had been externed, he declined to go unless the orders against him were expressly cancelled. Government were too proud to do that.

In August 1918, Tilak was served with an order prohibiting him from lecturing without the previous permission of the District Magistrate. Only a week before, we are told he was engaged in a recruiting campaign and "as guarantee of good faith he had sent to Mahatma Gandhi a cheque for Rs. 50,000, the amount to be forfeited as penalty if certain conditions were not fulfilled by him." This was in the nature of a wager. The wager was that Tilak undertook to recruit 5,000 persons from Maharashtra if Gandhi could secure a promise from Government beforehand that Indians would get Commissioned ranks in the Army. "Gandhi's position was that the help should not be in the nature of a bargain and therefore returned the cheque to Tilak." In 1917-1918, the Congress



was suspicious of Tilak. The Bureaucracy was positively persecuting him. Mrs. Besant alone was in alliance with him.

The Montagu-Chelmsford Report was published in June 1918. It was a masterpiece of literature and, like other political documents produced by British Statesmen, it contained a dispassionate statement of India's case for Self-Government. Only, the obstacles to Reform are described with equal lucidity, and in the end the latter triumph. In the case of the Report in question, there was an additional circumstance. The Congress Scheme prepared by the two great bodies representing India had provided for fixed Executives responsible to the Legislature. Here was a more fascinating scheme of Responsible Government with replaceable Cabinets, possessing corporate responsibility and subject to the vote of the Legislatures, the very reproduction of the British type of Self-Government. What else should the people of India want? Their Legislatures would no longer be the arena for the training of Indian politicians, but the forum in which ministers should justify their conduct to their constituencies and stand or fall upon the vote of their colleagues in Parliament. Many in India were taken in by such a scheme and a chorus of praise was to be heard from them. The centre of gravity shifted from the Congress-League Scheme to the Montford Scheme. We have it on the authority of Mr. Montagu's *Diary* that Mrs. Besant promised to accept anything that Sir Sankaran Nair accepted, and Sir Sankaran Nair accepted this scheme. "Extremists who do not mean well to Government must be separated from those who do." About Mr. C. P. Ramaswami Aiyar, Montagu says, "I asked him point-blank what he would accept. He accepted Sastri's four criteria, and I am afraid he would never accept periodic inquiries. What he wants is a time-limit, and there is much more in this time-limit than people really believe. He pathetically said that their confidence in me was everything and he begged me not to be persuaded to desert them." (P. 129). Then comes Mr. S. Srinivasa Iyengar: "After I had finished with Lord Pentland the Advocate-General of the Presidency, Srinivasa Iyengar, came to see me. He assured me that nobody really expected the whole of the Congress-League Scheme and if they are certain that it will develop they will not much mind. He thinks the Curtis scheme is the best. He tells me that there is great bitterness against the Government but he had nothing very much to say." In justice to Mr. S. S. Iyengar, it must be said that he was not a Congressman at the time. After these statements we need hardly be told by Mr. Montagu that "Setalvad, Chandavarkar and Rahimtoola approved of the Reservation scheme." Montagu's strategy has already been described. Government was to form a Department to help the Moderates to organise themselves. "There was a proposal,—27th proposal," says Montagu, "in favour of a new organisation of Indians, assisted in every way by Government, for propaganda on behalf of our proposals and to send a Delegation to England and to assist us." "Proposals No. 30 and 31 contemplated," adds Mr. Montagu, "that Sir S. P. Sinha should succeed Mr. Montagu,—Montagu to be Under-Secretary." Mr. Montagu's observations on this are interesting: "It will teach the L.C.S. that a British statesman who, however undeservedly, has reached

Cabinet rank, finds nothing derogatory in assisting, rather than controlling India. It will fire the imagination of India." On the other hand, the Nationalists left no doubt whatever in Mr. Montagu's mind as to what they wanted. "Motilal Nehru would be satisfied if he could get Responsible Government in 20 years." (P. 62) "C. R. Das anticipated the failure of Dyarchy and wanted real Responsible Government in 5 years hence, and promise of it now." (Page 91). Mr. Montagu had secured the support of Surendra Nath Banerjea. "Then Basu (Bhupendra Nath Basu) said that he thought the Congress would pass a resolution accepting it, leaving all my amendments to subsequent negotiation so as not to provide their enemies with a handle for saying that they had been captious."

The general belief about the Report was that it was largely drafted by Sir James (later Lord) Meston and Mr. (later Sir Wm.) Marris, while Mr. Lionel Curtis greatly assisted in the task. Mr. Curtis belonged to a group of Round Tablers who had a scholarly bent of mind and who were touring various countries in order to "serve the Empire." A letter that he had drafted on Indian Reforms miscarried and fell into the hands of Indian publicists and *The Bombay Chronicle* and *The Leader* published it. This act of audacity exposed the bureaucratic intrigues and roused the ire of officialdom against Nationalist India.

The fact was that, in a private letter to Mr. Philip Kerr, then Secretary of the Round Table, Mr. Lionel Curtis discussed the possibility of India being made subordinate, in her external and internal affairs, to an Imperial Council on which the Self-Governing Dominions would be represented, but she would not be represented. He added that this would perhaps lead to bloodshed, but if it were the right thing to do, that would have to be faced. The writer stated in his letter that his views expressed in it were generally approved by "Meston, Marris and Chirol." Copies of this letter, for circulation among the Round Table Confederates, were actually printed in the Government Press at Allahabad, and when one fell into Indian hands it was promptly published on the eve of the Lucknow Session of the Congress in 1916. Mr. Curtis later addressed "A letter to the People of India" explaining his position. He was originally an official in South Africa, and, soon after the Boer War, when the British Government borrowed the services of Sir James Meston and Mr. Marris to organise the Civil Service in South Africa, he made their acquaintance for the first time. Ever since they studied the problems of the Commonwealth of British Nations in South Africa, Canada, and India, and Sir James Meston invited Mr. Curtis to go to India in 1916 to study the Indian problems of the Empire and publish in a quarterly, *The Round Table*, their studies from time to time. The letter in question was one such study, meant for publication and for being sent to England, which unfortunately miscarried. It was alleged that Mr. Curtis was engaged in a conspiracy with Indian officialdom to place India, in a scheme of post-War reconstruction, not only under England but under the Dominions as well. "The root of the present trouble is," says Mr. Curtis in his "Letter to the People of India," "that this insistence of mine on the doctrine that you cannot at present divide the control of



India, and the control of foreign affairs, has led to a false impression here that the Dominions want to control Indian affairs: There is nothing they less desire." He finally explained from documents of earlier origin how he held "that it is the duty of those who govern the whole British Commonwealth to do everything in their power to enable Indians to govern themselves as soon as possible, and that Indians must also come to share in the Government of the British Commonwealth as a whole." The fact was that Mr. Montagu gathered around him the pick of the I.C.S. men in India besides the six colleagues that accompanied him from England. Amongst the former were Sir Malcolm Hailey, Sir James Meston and Mr. Marris, the last of whom was Inspector-General of Police in U.P. at the time.

It is therefore not surprising that soon after the publication of the Report, markedly different opinions regarding the attitude to be adopted towards it began to be expressed all over the country by various leaders, and it became apparent that the Special Session of the Congress, which the A.I.C.C. had already decided to convene, should be held. It was found that Lucknow and Allahabad would not be suitable places and the venue was changed to Bombay which made elaborate arrangements for the Congress in a short time. The differences among Congressmen had become acute. While no party was fully satisfied with the scheme as it stood, there were naturally differences in the tone of the criticism, and it seemed as if one party which was more radical in its views would press at the Special Congress for its total rejection, and the other only for amendments to improve it. Just a few days before the Congress, an attempt was made to reconcile all the differences at a Conference, but the attempt failed and the Congress met on the 29th August, 1918 under the Presidentship of Mr. Hasan Imam. It was very largely attended and there were no less than 3,845 delegates present, Mr. Vitthalbhai Patel acting as the Chairman of the Reception Committee. Veteran leaders like Dinshaw Wacha, Surendra Nath Banerjee, Bhupendra Nath Basu, Ambika Charan Mazumdar were absent from the Congress. After four days' discussion the Congress re-affirmed the principles of Reform contained in the Congress-League Scheme and declared that nothing less than Self-Government within the Empire would satisfy the legitimate aspirations of the Indian people. It dealt with the Montagu proposals at great length. It declared that the people of India were fit for Responsible Government and repudiated the assumption to the contrary contained in the Report. It asked for simultaneous advance in the Provinces and the Government of India and disagreed with the formula that the Provinces are the domain in which the earlier steps should be taken towards the progressive realisation of Responsible Government, leaving the authority of the Government of India in essential matters indisputable, pending experience in the Provinces. It conceded, however, that subject to a Declaration of Rights of the people of India,—(a) guaranteeing to them liberty of person, property, association, free speech and writing, except under sentence of an ordinary court of justice as a result of lawful and open trial, (b) entitling Indians to bear arms, subject to the purchase of a licence as in Great Britain, (c) guaranteeing freedom of