

CHAPTER LIV.

Krishnaraja Wodeyar IV.

The Simon Commission.

The dyarchic form of government established by the Parliamentary Act of 1919 did not tend to allay the political discontent that prevailed at the time in India ; on the other hand, the demand for a unified form of responsible government grew in volume from year to year. Section 84 A of the Parliamentary Act provided for the appointment of a Commission within a period of 10 years after the passing of the Act for the purpose of investigating how far further it was desirable to extend the degree of responsible government and to what extent there was growth of education and the development of responsible institutions in British India. Towards the close of 1927 the Government in England appointed a Commission the head of which was Sir John Simon. This Commission paid two visits to India, the first lasting from 3rd February 1928 to 31st March of the same year and the second from 11th October 1928 to 13th April 1929.

As this Statutory Commission approached the final stages of its work, it felt that without taking account of the Indian States into consideration, no satisfactory solution of the problem of the Indian constitution was possible. Sir John Simon, the chairman of the Commission, pointed out in a letter dated 16th October 1929 to the Prime Minister in England, Mr. Ramsay Macdonald, that whatever might be the scheme which Parliament would ultimately approve for the future constitution and governance of British India, it was essential that the methods by which the future relationship between these two constituent parts of Greater India might be adjusted should be fully examined. Sir John Simon further said that it was clear that the Commission could not ignore the reactions of the presence of the States on the problem it was studying in British India, or the possible repercussions on the former of any recommendations it might make regarding the latter, and suggested that a conference of the representatives of both British India as

well as of Native States might be called to consider them before the final proposals of His Majesty's Government were submitted to Parliament. The Prime Minister on behalf of the British Government accepted this suggestion and indicated that after the Simon Report was received and considered in consultation with the Government of India, His Majesty's Government would hold a conference in London to which representatives of British India and of the Indian States would be invited to discuss with them all the problems relating to the future reforms.

Long before the appointment of the Simon Commission, Sir M. Visvesvaraya had urged, as we have seen, the claim of the Indian States for a voice in the Councils of the Central Government regarding the common concerns of India as a whole. In 1926 Sir Mirza Ismail when he met the Representative Assembly for the first time as Dewan at its Birthday Session was equally explicit. The question of the position of the Indian States formed, with other matters of common interest, the subject of discussion at an informal conference held at Bikaner in August 1926 at which the Dewan of Mysore also was present. At the Dasara Session of the Representative Assembly in the same year Sir Mirza Ismail made a very clear pronouncement on this subject which may be quoted:—"With the gradual development of self-government in India, the problem of the position of the Indian States enters upon a new phase and India's prosperity and progress depend in a large measure upon a right solution of this problem. In Mysore, we desire no voice in the internal affairs of British India and seek for ourselves complete autonomy in such affairs, subject to the suzerainty of the British Crown. Details of relationship will change with the changing times. Economically, however, no Indian State can stand in isolation. Economic union is becoming a world policy making for the mutual understanding of nations and their co-operation in all things. In this world-wide movement India is destined to play an important part and one of increasing responsibility and power. She cannot but develop the same policy within her borders, gradually breaking down both barriers and distinctions in economic matters. I believe that such

an effort will work more strongly towards political unity than the immediate planning of any political federation. For it will bring a living unity of purpose and action, out of which political unity will naturally and fitly arise." Again at the Birthday Session of the Assembly in June 1929, the Dewan acknowledged that the spirit of the times and the inexorable logic of events were tending inevitably to bring the two parts of India together both economically and politically. There was no doubt, he said, that the trend of events was towards a political federation, but that such a federation could only endure if it was based on the sure foundation of common ideals and mutual interests. While Mysore was quite prepared, he further said, to join any well-devised scheme of Federation which would ensure her share in the settlement of common questions, she could however well afford to wait upon events.

The Statutory Commission completed their report and presented it to His Majesty's Government in May 1930. Their recommendation mainly was that in the British Provinces the dyarchic system should be discarded and the work of government entrusted entirely to ministers, making however certain reservations in respect of law and order and suggesting certain safeguards also. As regards the federation of British India and the Indian States, the Commission agreed that the ultimate constitution of India must be federal. For it was only in a federal constitution that units differing so widely in constitution as the British Provinces and the States could be brought together while retaining their internal autonomy. A number of considerations weighed with the Commission in arriving at this conclusion. In the first place, there was, according to the Commission, an essential geographical unity in diversity in the Indian peninsula regarded as a whole. Next, there was a political unity also as policies entered upon in one sphere had their repercussions on the other. The political boundaries that separated the Indian States from British India were only imaginary lines and that popular movements on one side of these lines could not be prevented from spreading into the other. Thirdly, the economic forces were such that the States and British India must stand or fall together, as there was a serious possibility that unless provision

could be made for the reconciliation of divergent interests the number of tariff walls would be perpetuated in an area where fiscal unity was most desirable. Fourthly, there were the common needs for consideration of both the spheres, as there were few subjects which formed the field of activity of a Central Government in India which did not interest also the Indian States; for example, the Defence of India. Lastly, there was the increasing growth of a sense of unity among the people of India as a whole leading to an acuter sense of common nationhood. But the Commission regarded Federation as a distant goal and contented themselves by merely observing that the new constitution should provide an open door whereby when it seemed good to them, the Princes might enter on just and reasonable terms.

There was widespread criticism of the report in British India for its denial of responsibility in the Central Government. There was equal dissatisfaction in the States that no satisfactory solution had been found to remedy the disadvantages under which they were placed. While the Government of India made some effort to disarm the criticism in British India of irresponsibility in the Centre by an amplification in their despatch to the Secretary of State dated 20th September 1930 the plan contained in the Simon Report, they at the same time fully accepted the opinion of the Commission regarding an All-India Federation as only a distant ideal. The time had not yet come, they said, when the general body of Indian States would be prepared to take a step so far-reaching in its character as to enter into any formal federal relations with British India.