

CHAPTER LV.

Krishnaraja Wodeyar IV.

Conference at Bangalore preliminary to the Round Table Conference.

The visit of the Simon Commission, as has been already said, did not rouse much enthusiasm in India on account of the absence of any Indian representatives on that body. There was considerable distrust and suspicion regarding the objects of this Commission also. To revive confidence and as far as possible to dispel suspicion, Lord Irwin the Viceroy within a few days of his return to India after a visit to England on leave made a statement with the authority of the Government in England on the 31st October 1929 and the essential points of this statement were :—(1) the recognition that the natural goal of Indian political aspirations was the attainment of Dominion Status; (2) a promise that, after the Statutory Commission had reported, Indian political opinion would be consulted before any new Government of India Bill was placed before Parliament. On the 9th July 1930 the Viceroy addressed members of both Houses of the Indian Legislature and referring to the Round Table Conference proposed to be held in London stated that the conference would be free, irrespective of the Simon Report or of any other document, to approach its task in order to reach a solution that both England and India and all parties and interests in them could honourably accept, and any such agreement at which the conference was able to arrive would form the basis of the proposals which His Majesty's Government would later submit to Parliament.

It was arranged that the first Round Table Conference should meet in London on 12th November 1930. The conference was to consist of 16 British delegates representing all political parties in Parliament, 15 delegates from the Indian States and 51 from British India. Among the delegates from the Indian States were 10 Ruling Princes—the Maharajas of Alwar, Baroda, Bikaner, Jammu and Kashmir, Nawangar, Patiala and Rewa, Rana of

Dholpur, Nawab of Bhopal, the Chief of Sangli and six ministers from Native States among whom was Sir Mirza Ismail, Dewan of Mysore. Among the 57 British Indian delegates from all parts of the country there were two ladies, namely, Mrs. Subbaroyan from Madras and Begum Shah Nawaz from the Punjab. Sir Mirza Ismail represented not only the State of Mysore but also the States of Travancore, Cochin and Pudukota.

On the invitations from the Viceroy reaching the delegates who were to represent India, Sir Mirza Ismail issued invitations to a number of important persons to meet at Bangalore to consider the subjects which were likely to be discussed in London. The conference met at the new Legislative Council Chamber in the public offices and lasted for two days on the 19th and 20th August 1930. There were present at the conference H. H. the young Maharaja of Travancore, the Raja of Sandur, Dewan Bahadur Sir T. Raghavaiya (Pudukota), Mr. A. C. Dutt, I.C.S., Dewan of Travancore and Mr. T. S. Narayana Iyer, Dewan of Cochin, from outside the State and a large number of representative persons from inside the State which included members of the Representative Assembly and members of the Legislative Council, publicists of note, Sir K. P. Puttanna Chetty, Sir Charles Todhunter, Private Secretary to the Maharaja of Mysore, and Dewan Bahadur P. Raghavendra Rao, ex-Member of the State Council. Sir Mirza Ismail who presided at the meeting explained that they had assembled for the purpose of taking counsel together regarding the attitude to be adopted and the proposals to be made at the Round Table Conference by the Indian States in general and the South Indian States in particular. Referring to the Simon Report which had been received with mistrust in India, Sir Mirza said that though there were many things in it with which he did not agree, yet it had to be admitted that it was a weighty production which it would be unwise to discuss in a hasty spirit of prejudice, nor was it fair and reasonable on the part of the Indians to expect the British Government to ignore a report which had been prepared by seven distinguished members of Parliament representing all parties and which was regarded by their countrymen as a great essay in

constitution-making worthy of the closest study and destined to rank as a State document of historic importance. Sir Mirza next referred to the three major problems which, in his opinion, India had to solve before she could hope to attain complete self-government—the problem of the British community, the Hindu-Muslim question and the problem of the States. Referring to the Indian States, he expressed that they were the custodians of the ancient learning and culture of India and that they were developing towards a form of constitutional monarchy, though it had to be acknowledged that some States were still far in the rear in constitutional progress. Referring to the proposal of the Simon Commission regarding the federation of India, Sir Mirza said that he differed from the Commission when they opined that the vision of a federal India was a distant ambition. On the other hand, it was quite possible, he said, that the march of events could be made more rapid by the immediate reorganisation of the Council of State on an All-India basis by enlarging it and including representatives from the Indian States. He was further in favour of the immediate establishment of a Supreme Court as the States had a special interest in the institution of a tribunal that should have powers to decide justiciable matters at issue between themselves and the Government of India and the Provinces, or even between the different States themselves. Another matter of importance to which Sir Mirza referred was the equitable adjustment of financial relations between the States and British India and the just appraisal of their claims.

When the informal conference concluded on the 20th August 1930 after eliciting the opinions of those present, Sir Mirza in winding up the proceedings said that there was general agreement as regards the necessity for a closer association of the States with British India for common purposes by entering an All-India legislature in the shape of the Council of State. There was also agreement that the States should have the fullest possible measure of autonomy in their internal affairs, though in practice the degree of autonomy depended largely on the system of administration in a State, and it was clear that the more constitutionally a State was

governed the less justification or likelihood there would be for intervention on the part of the Paramount Power in its domestic concerns. Another matter on which also there was general agreement was that so far as British India was concerned, it was desirable that an element of responsibility should be introduced at the Centre if the constitution was to work satisfactorily and to enjoy an adequate measure of confidence and support from the people. A constitution which provided full autonomy in the Provinces, responsibility at the Centre (subject to such transitional safeguards as might be unavoidable), and a closer association between British India and the States in matters of common concern would, Sir Mirza hoped, be the result of the Round Table Conference. As far as the delegates from the Indian States were concerned, he gave the assurance that they would appear before the British people, not so much only as representatives of the States, still less as representing any particular State, but as Indians desiring for their common Motherland a position of honour among the nations constituting the British Commonwealth, all united in allegiance to the Crown.

Sir Mirza Ismail sailed for London from Bombay on the 6th September 1930, Mr. M. N. Krishna Rao (afterwards Sir), First Member of the State Council, taking his place for the time being.