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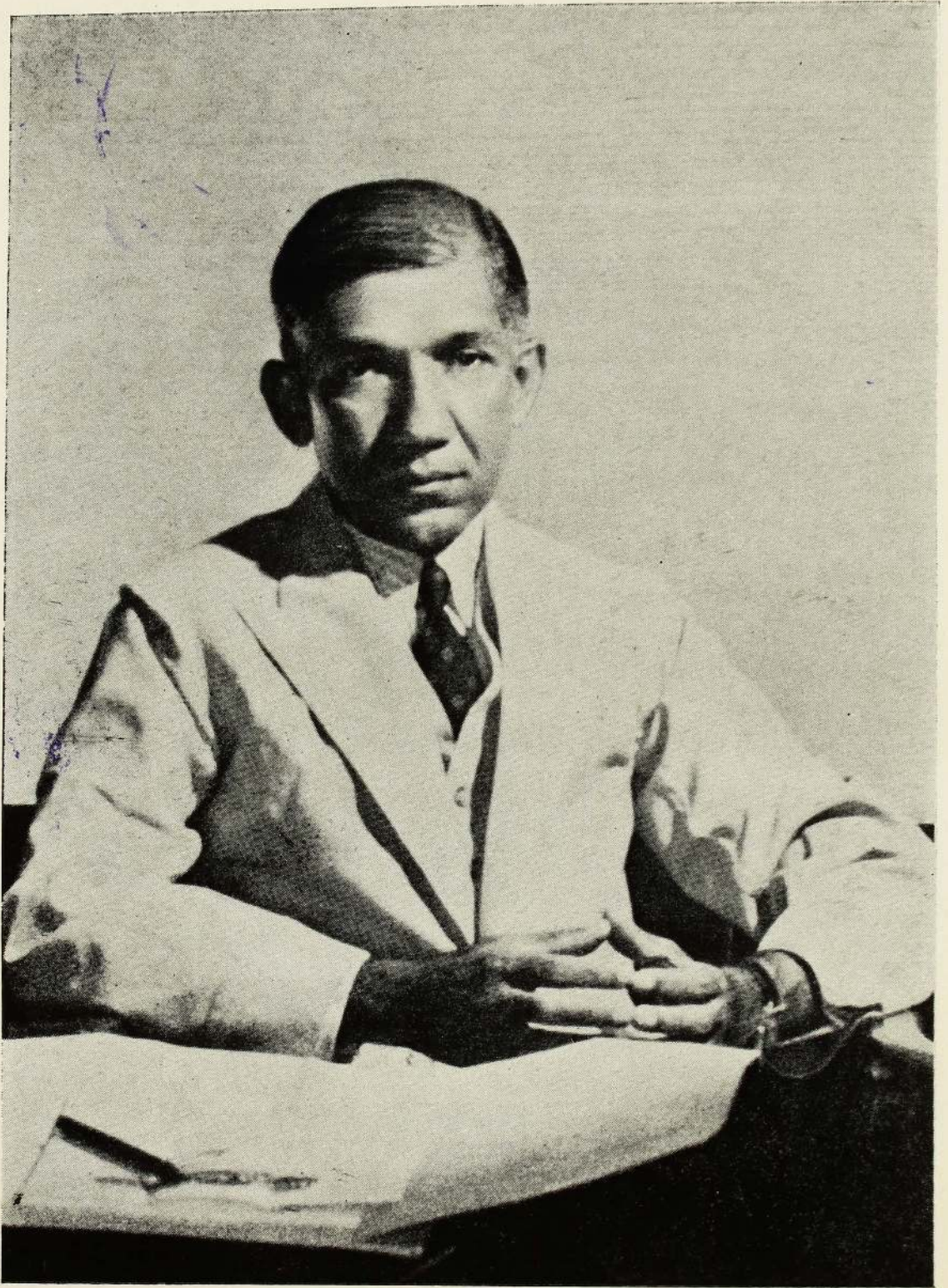
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THE LIFE AND TIMES
OF D. R. WIJEWARDENE

தஞ்சை நூலகப் பிரிவு
மாடிகா நூலக சென்னை
சூன் 1955



D. R. WIJEWARDENE

THE LIFE AND TIMES
OF D. R. WIJEWARDENE

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By

H. A. J. HULUGALLE



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தேசிய நூலகப் பரிந்துரை
மாநில நூலக சேவை
சென்னை

Vincit amor patriae . . .

INTRODUCTION

DON Richard Wijewardene was the first Ceylonese to create a prosperous newspaper business. When he launched the *Daily News* in 1918, Ceylon was a Crown Colony ruled from London. When he died thirty-two years later, she had become an independent nation.

His contribution towards the attainment of this result was such as to entitle him to a worthy place in the public memory. It is probably correct to say that no Ceylonese during the present century exercised a more pervasive influence on his countrymen than he did.

As a young man recently returned from England he started on the career of a newspaper proprietor because he had a burning desire to play his part in the struggle for political freedom. As he had no experience of either journalism or business management, he ran a massive risk. Failure would have spelt financial ruin to one who, though well off, was by no means a very rich man. As it turned out, he succeeded, and when he died left a considerable fortune.

He put back a great part of his profits into his business so that it grew bigger and his newspapers

became more powerful as the years passed. The ownership of several newspapers concentrated power in his hands which he used for the good of his country, according to his lights.

Powerful newspaper proprietors are not, in general, popular personages. The fact that they have the means to make or break reputations seems to be resented subconsciously by their fellow beings. They sometimes gain popular esteem, but rarely public affection. They make enemies even when they are doing no more than their duty. Newspapers are supposed to expose scandal and inefficiency in public life, without respect for persons; the victims rarely forgive. When a Press magnate dies, he is generally forgotten as easily as yesterday's newspaper.

But there are some newspaper proprietors, even if their number is small, who, while they enjoy the wealth and power which their skill and foresight bring them, cherish a high ideal of public service and dedicate themselves to its fulfilment. When such devotion to duty is accompanied by personal modesty, as it was with Don Richard Wijewardene, no one grudges them their due place in the story of their country.

After graduating from Cambridge University and being called to the Bar at the Inner Temple in London, Wijewardene returned to Ceylon in 1912 and embarked on a legal career. It was, however, obvious to all who knew him that the effort would not last. He had determination and industry in a rare degree. But he valued both his time and what he thought were his special talents, and decided that he was not going to waste them on a profession for which he was not

specially qualified by temperament or natural gifts. There were other things to do than wait for briefs in the Colombo Law Library. The family had ample means and it was not necessary for him to earn his living as a lawyer.

It was fortunate for all concerned that he bought a bankrupt newspaper and, by degrees, established a group of journals, in the English, Sinhalese and Tamil languages, which were among the best of their kind. Financially and politically independent, his papers were able to serve the public without fear or favour. The country needed, as never before, a strong and well-informed public opinion, and Wijewardene deemed it his mission to provide the right conditions and means for its development.

There was no element of drama in his life, and his career did not strike the popular imagination. But any impartial observer must conclude that he helped to bring about a quiet revolution in his country. The story of that change, read together with the main events of his life, explains much that happened in Ceylon during the first half of the present century, and cannot but be a source of inspiration to future generations.

By any reckoning Wijewardene was among the leading newspaper proprietors in the Commonwealth, yet his name was not known outside a small circle of newspaper men. The public knew next to nothing of the Press magnate. His photograph did not appear in his own newspapers or in other journals. He was a man of few words and unassuming ways. Yet his influence on the events of his time in Ceylon was greater than that of most politicians, as the ensuing pages will

show. He was a type of man new to Ceylon or, for that matter, to Asia: a rich man's son who, after an English education, starts a newspaper, not as the mouth-piece of any political party but primarily as a medium of information and vehicle of progressive views.

When I was asked by the Board of Directors of the Associated Newspapers of Ceylon to write Wijewardene's biography I was in Rome as the island's diplomatic representative. I accepted the assignment not without some qualms, especially as I was many thousands of miles from the sources to which I could have turned to verify my own recollection of facts and also away from the very few survivors of Wijewardene's own generation. As a qualification for the task I can claim to have worked with him for thirty years in a relationship close enough to discourage hero worship and yet not so close as to prevent an evaluation of his disciplined character and unique services to Ceylon.

In writing this book I have been greatly assisted by a sketch prepared by W. T. Keble and impressions set down by the late Percival Deutrom who was for some years Manager of the *Daily News*. Wijewardene's eldest daughter, Nalini Wickremasinghe, has furnished me with valuable information about the family which would not otherwise have been available to me. My closest collaborator in the present task has been E. E. C. Abayasekara, a long time associate of Wijewardene in the development of his business. Without Abayasekara's constant encouragement and unflinching response to my requests, I could hardly have carried out my commission.

Wijewardene himself did not leave a wealth of documented material which could be of help to anyone trying to write his biography. He hardly wrote anything himself other than short business letters although he inspired a great deal of writing by other people. He is known to have made two or three short speeches in a comparatively long and busy life. An instinctive shyness inhibited him from offering to the public judgment and criticism what he could not do as well as others around him. Probably the most interesting 'find' among Wijewardene's personal papers was the correspondence between Sir Geoffrey Butler and himself on the Donoughmore reforms.

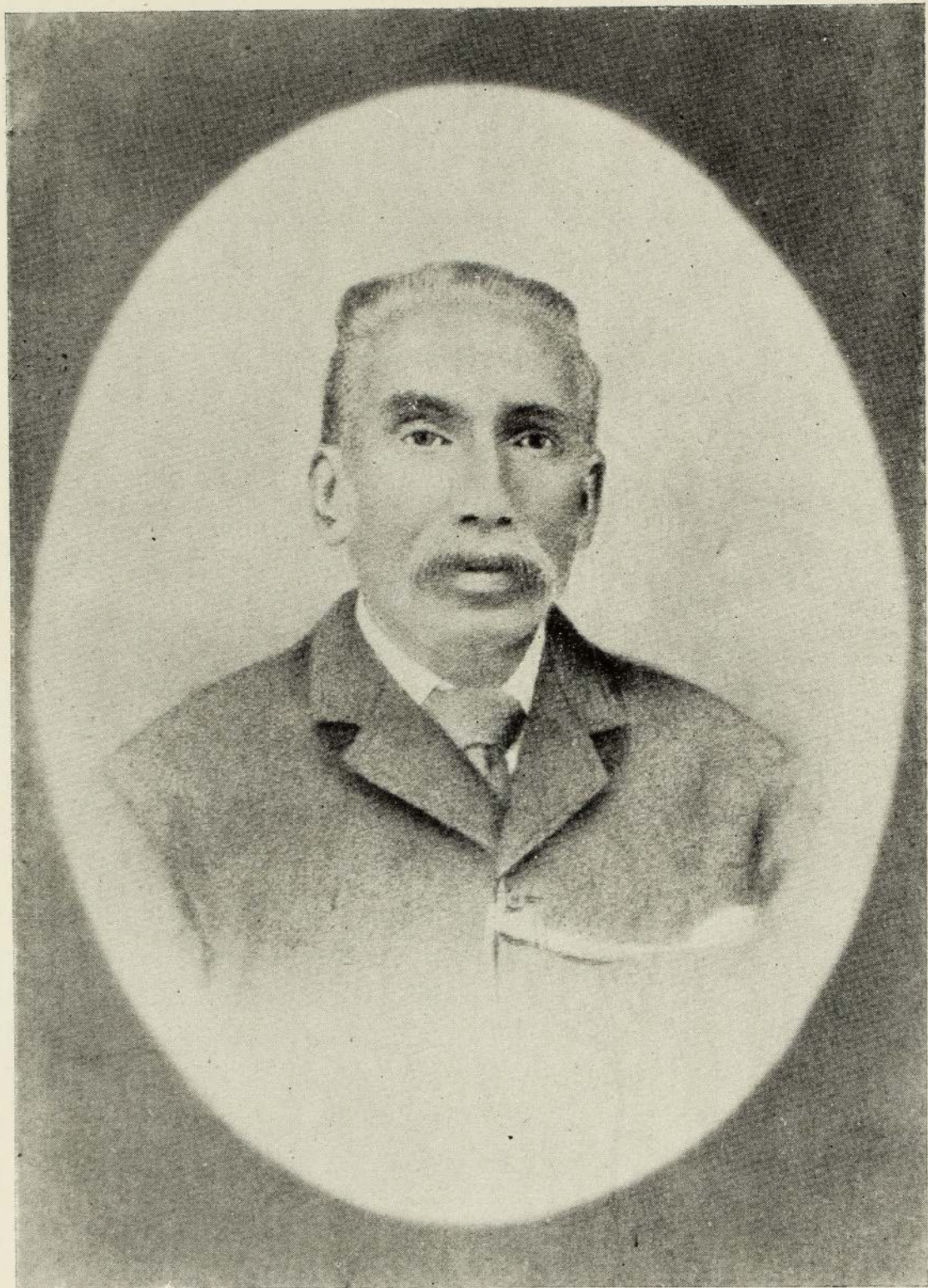
In this introduction an effort has been made, even at the risk of subsequent repetition, to offer to the reader a glimpse of the qualities of the man whose life is the main theme of the book. The journalism and politics of his day can be studied with interest and profit by following the thread of his life as he came in contact with them. The present work is thus not only a biography of D. R. Wijewardene but a running commentary on the times in which he lived; and it is offered to the reader as such. The opinions expressed are those of the author except when they are specifically credited to others.

A LARGE FAMILY

DON Richard Wijewardene, who was born in 1886, was the third in order of the seven sons of Tudugalage Don Philip Wijewardene of Sedawatte, a suburban hamlet on the Kelani river.* The father, even as a young man, was an enterprising and hard working timber merchant and had married the daughter of Mr. Dep Weerasinghe, a well known business man of his day. Their relations said afterwards that the marriage was the turning point in the young man's worldly fortunes. Since that lucky event all his investments were successful and the business flourished as never before. Helena Wijewardene was not only fair and favoured with good looks but was practical and fitted to be the mother of a growing family and the wife of a rising business man.

Don Philip Wijewardene's home was on the river bank. He bought logs of wood in the jungles and had them floated down the river to his saw mill at Sedawatte. There was a building boom in Colombo at the end of the

* According to J. H. O. Paulusz, former Government Archivist, the Tudugala name and branch of the family was founded by Tudugala Madduma Rala, Dissava of Uva, in 1656. "The family group headed by the brothers Tudugala and Tennekoon in the seventeenth century administered provinces and departments of State, commanded armies in the field and led victorious campaigns; indeed, their careers can be regarded as forming part of the main stream of Ceylon history".



MUHANDIRAM D. P. WIJEWARDENE

last century and Wijewardene made a fortune selling timber, bricks and sand from the river for some of the largest structures which were going up—Government offices, hotels, banks and shops—and for the new arm of the breakwater in the port of Colombo. He was also a shrewd investor. While many of his contemporaries spent money on clearing new land and establishing plantations, he bought property in the city of Colombo, usually at the big junctions where shops might be expected to spring up and land values to rise.

His eldest son, also called Don Philip but with the additional name of Alexander, joined him in the business while still in his teens. It was fortunate that he did so, because Helena Wijewardene was left a widow at the age of thirty eight with a young family to bring up. Don Philip the younger, who in later years became in his own right one of the leading business men in Colombo, helped with the care of his brothers and sisters and in conserving and adding to the family fortunes. In partnership with the brother next to him in age, Don Lewis, he established mills for the manufacture of coconut oil and desiccated coconut, of which products the Wijewardene brothers were among the largest exporters.

Another brother, Don Charles, was Richard's earliest associate in the newspaper business, for he had a half share in the *Dinamina*, the Sinhalese daily newspaper which they had bought from a journalist called H. S. Perera. Charles developed other interests and parted company. His widow was the first Ceylonese woman to become a Minister of the Government. The fourth brother, Don Edmund, was at Cambridge with Richard

and became a doctor but was later his close associate in directing his group of newspapers. Another brother, Don Albert, was a director of the same group for some years, while Don Walter devoted his time to the affairs of the well known Buddhist temple, the Raja Maha Vihare at Kelaniya. The restoration of the shrine, towards the cost of which Helena Wijewardene contributed liberally, and the organisation of its ceremonies were his special care. The older of Richard's two sisters married E. W. Jayawardene who later became a King's Counsel and a Judge of the Supreme Court. Their son "J.R." was Ceylon's first Minister of Finance. The younger sister married Dr. Arthur Senewiratne, the much-loved Visiting Surgeon of the Victoria Memorial Eye Hospital.

Richard Wijewardene cherished firm family ties and was devoted to his mother, a woman of strong character, loved and respected as the effective head of the household. As Richard made his way in the world the family looked up to him and enjoyed his successes, while, for his part, he was solicitous of the wellbeing of his brothers and sisters and their children, notwithstanding the inevitable differences of opinion which arise when a rich patrimony has to be shared among many persons. He had a specially warm consideration for his younger sister Harriet, whose husband became an invalid in the prime of his career as an eye specialist.

The Wijewardenes were a typical upper middle class Buddhist family. At the end of the last century it was still possible for a young man to make a fortune by enterprise and hard work. Many of the Sinhalese families which gave to the public life of the country its



HELENA WIJEWARDENE

leaders came up with the rise of Colombo as a great commercial port following the first tea and rubber booms. Among the elder Don Philip Wijewardene's contemporaries in the business world were Don Spater Senanayake, the father of Ceylon's first Prime Minister, C. H. de Soysa, Don Carolis Hewavitarne, A. E. de Silva, N.D.P. Silva, Jacob de Mel, Samson Rajapakse, J. P. Obeyesekera, N. S. Wijeyesekera, Mudaliyar Sri Chandrasekera, Mudaliyar Attygalle and H. J. Peiris. Anyone interested may read about these families and see their photographs in that massive and profusely illustrated publication called *Twentieth Century Impressions of Ceylon*. These founders of fortunes were a sturdy type of men, who planted coconuts and rubber and mined plumbago, risking money even when interest rates were very high, living frugally, travelling in uncomfortable carts and shivering with malaria in the jungles which they cleared to establish their estates.

Few of them had the benefits of higher education but nearly all of them sent their sons to the best schools in Ceylon and thereafter to Cambridge, with the result that the pioneering spirit deserted the new generation. There were, however, exceptions to the rule and Don Richard Wijewardene was one of these.

Each of the seven Wijewardene boys went to St. Thomas' College, Mutwal. When Richard was at the school, its head was Warden Read, who was assisted as Sub-warden by the Rev. G. A. H. Arndt. The boys travelled to school in the family buggy and took their midday meal at the house of Mr. and Mrs. Gabriel de Silva whose sons remained Richard's friends in later life.

F. R. and D. S. Senanayake, with whom he collaborated in the political field when they entered public life, were boarders, coming as they did from Botale, near Mirigama. Richard Wijewardene was not conspicuous either in scholarship or sports, as he confessed when he recalled his school days many years later: "I cannot say that my school education in the village school or at St. Thomas' had any influence in turning my mind towards an interest in public life and in journalism in particular", he said. "At the Seda-watte school, one's efforts were directed towards learning the three 'R's' and at St. Thomas' I merely concentrated on my studies. There were no influences in school life which, as far as I can remember, tended to direct one's interest into the broader life of the communtiy. For example, Ceylon history was not taught. In a sense, however, the education being of the public school type may be called a broad one in that it fitted one for public life."

CAMBRIDGE AND AFTER

IT is perhaps curious that a large number of the leaders of the nationalist movement in Ceylon should have gone to Cambridge for their university education. Two well-known examples were Sir Ponnambalam Arunachalam, who became the first President of the Ceylon National Congress after he had retired from the Civil Service, and Sir James Peiris, who succeeded him in that office. Sir James was the first Asian to be President of the Cambridge Union Society and had taken first classes in Moral Philosophy and Law. Indeed, during the first half of the century, there was hardly a learned profession or branch of the Government administration in Ceylon which did not have its Cambridge graduates.

It was natural that others should have wanted to follow the footsteps of these pioneers. Ceylon has had a fair share of Cambridge Wranglers, classical scholars and boxing and cricket "blues". It was not only the scholars sent by the Ceylon Government who selected this University in preference to others. The sons of rich families went there to get the kind of education which was supposed to fit the sons of English gentlemen for their future responsibilities.

The same thing was happening in India. Jawaharlal Nehru went to Cambridge as did many other Indians who rose to high positions, especially in the public services of the Indian sub-continent. Nehru was at Trinity College, Cambridge, when Wijewardene was at Peterhouse but they did not meet until, many years later, Nehru paid his first visit to Ceylon. As Nehru went up to the University from Harrow and moved in his own circle of public school boys, he does not seem to have had many opportunities to mix freely with the young men who went up from schools in India and Ceylon. Nor could Wijewardene foresee that he was living within a hundred yards of the future Prime Minister of India.

When the twenty-fifth anniversary of the *Ceylon Daily News* was celebrated, Wijewardene allowed certain reminiscences of his student life to be published. He wrote : “My interest in politics began during my undergraduate days at Cambridge. There were kindred spirits from India, Ceylon and other parts of the East. There was a wave of unrest in India, as the result of Lord Curzon’s action in partitioning Bengal, and prominent Indian leaders came over to England and addressed meetings to enlighten the British public on the situation in that country. Among them was Lala Lajpat Rai, a great nationalist and scholar, Bepin Chandra Pal and Surendranath Banerji, generally known as the silver-tongued orator of Bengal.

“There came to England also Gopal Krishna Gokhale, a member of the Imperial Legislative Council, a man who had made great sacrifices in the service of his country. His was a towering intellect and he was as



GOPAL KRISHNA GOKHALE



respected by the rulers as he was loved by his countrymen. He impressed upon me that every educated young man, Indian or Ceylonese, had a part to play in the public life of his country and must be prepared to make sacrifices for his country's welfare.

“I met Gokhale often at the National Liberal Club and had many long and interesting talks with him on political questions of the day. He asked me to accompany him on his great mission to South Africa as one of his secretaries. To my great regret I was not able to accept his invitation”.

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At this time M. K. Gandhi, who was practising as a lawyer in South Africa, was engaged in a struggle to secure civic rights for Indians settled in that country. Wijewardene was perhaps too much imbued with the spirit of Victorian Liberalism to feel at home in such a milieu, but for thirty years his newspapers published more news and articles about Gandhi and his campaigns for the liberation of India than about any other man.

Wijewardene's political interests were stimulated by F. H. M. Corbet, an Englishman who was born in Ceylon and practised as a barrister in England in cases which came up before the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council. To quote again his own words :

“One of the best friends Ceylon and Indian students had in London in those days was F. H. M. Corbet, to whom I owe a great debt of gratitude for many kindnesses. He had many influential friends in and outside Parliament. Incidentally, it was in his Chambers that I first met E. W. Perera who was even then a keen politician and displayed many of the

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qualities which gave him a leading position in the legislature many years later.

“Every mail from Ceylon brought news of popular discontent with the reactionary administration of Sir Henry McCallum, the Governor. Mr. Corbet showed me the ropes in the delicate task of interesting Members of Parliament in the domestic affairs of a Crown Colony. Among those whom I was able to interest were Sir Henry Cotton, who put the first question in the House of Commons on the desirability of extending the principle of representative government in Ceylon, Sir John Jardine, Sir Herbert Roberts, afterwards Lord Clwyd, the leader of the Welsh Liberals, and Mr. A. McCallum Scott, all of them stout champions of subject peoples”.

It was also Corbet who impressed on Wijewardene “the importance of a well-informed public opinion for which a free and independent press was a *sine qua non*”. Corbet went so far as to cable, on behalf of Wijewardene, to Sir Hector Van Cuylenberg, the proprietor of the *Ceylon Independent*, inquiring whether he would sell his paper. Sir Hector, who represented the Burgher community in the Ceylon Legislative Council at the time, was not prepared to sell, but many years later, when the *Ceylon Independent* was in the market, Wijewardene bought it. To run it successfully would have meant creating a rival to his own newspaper, the *Ceylon Daily News*, so he allowed it to die before many people knew that he had bought it.

Among Wijewardene’s Ceylonese contemporaries at Cambridge were A. E. (afterwards Sir Ernest) de Silva, first Chairman of the Bank of Ceylon, A. E.



A group of Ceylonese students at Cambridge University, including M. V. Pillai, J. W. R. Rockwood, Marcus Rockwood, S. T. Carthigesan, A. E. de Silva, D. R. Wijewardene (standing, at right), A. E. Keuneman and D. A. Kekulawala.

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Keuneman, who became a Judge of the Supreme Court, C. H. Z. Fernando, who later sat in the Legislative Council and the Colombo Municipal Council, and T. Carthigesan, an engineering student who joined the Public Works Department when he returned to Ceylon. A year after his return, Carthigesan was drowned attempting to rescue some people during a flood at Ratnapura.

There is every reason to think that Wijewardene was happy at Cambridge although he did not take an active part in university politics or sport or win special distinction in scholarship. He went to Cooper's riding school, being fond of horses. Soon after his return to Ceylon he owned a couple of race horses in partnership with Stanley Obeyesekera, then a young Crown Counsel and well-known "gentleman rider", but his interest in racing did not last long.

Politics were Wijewardene's principal interest and hobby, from his University days until his death. Like many other young men who went from the Colonies to England for their education, he looked forward to the day when subject peoples were no longer second class citizens in their own country. The freer political atmosphere of England helped to give a sharper edge to this yearning.

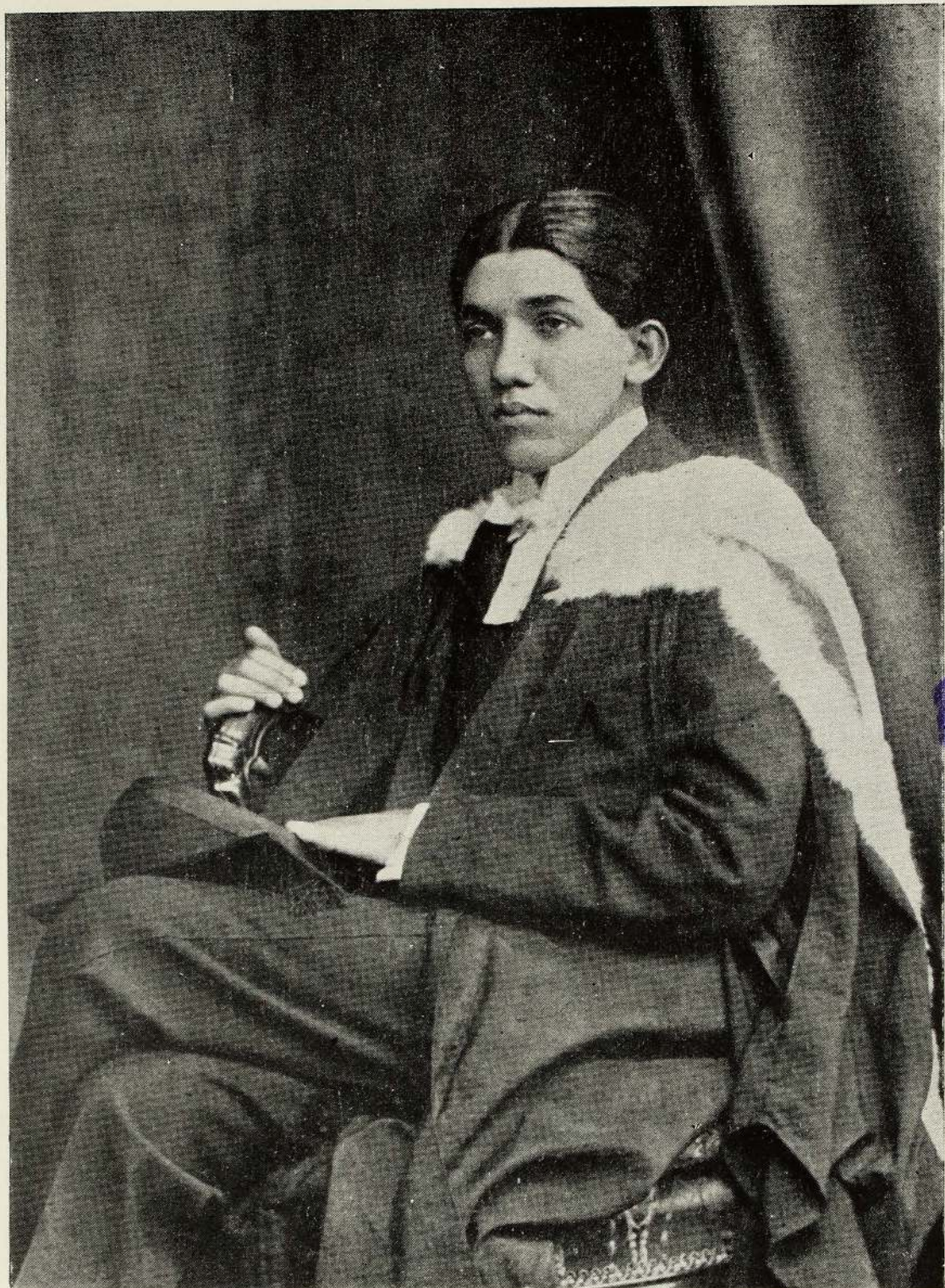
Thirty-three years earlier, James Peiris, writing from his rooms at St. John's College, Cambridge, to his friend and cousin Jeremias Coorey, said: "You cannot at all imagine the manner in which the greatest men treat us here. It is so totally different from what we get from Englishmen in Ceylon. Here the greatest

man shakes hands with you, offers you a seat as high as his own, and talks with you most familiarly, as if you were his friend”.

Wijewardene was only too well aware that any progress on Ceylon's political front had to be effected through pressure on the Liberal Government then in power. Sir Ivor Jennings wrote nearly forty years later: “As a Buddhist he (Wijewardene) could not advocate or allow his newspapers to advocate methods of violence. As a Cambridge graduate well read in British politics, he regarded Press, Parliament and Platform as the instruments of political action”.

In 1908, the time was indeed ripe for political action. During a visit to London towards the end of that year, James Peiris, who was now one of the up and coming leaders of the reform movement in Ceylon, met and discussed with the Under Secretary of State for the Colonies the political needs of the island. Peiris submitted a short, but characteristically moderate and well-argued memorandum, whose main theme was that the fundamental principles of the Constitution of 1833 had remained unaltered although the condition of the Colony had undergone a complete change in the seventy five years since it was brought into force. “Its material, moral and intellectual progress has been phenomenal”, wrote Mr. Peiris.

The Earl of Crewe, the Secretary of State, sent Mr. Peiris's memorandum to the Governor, Sir Henry McCallum. The demand for constitutional reform was meanwhile gathering strength in Ceylon and a number of memorials were sent to the Secretary of



D. R. WIJEWARDENE
(at the time he was called to the Bar)

State from such bodies as the Ceylon National Association, the Jaffna Association, the Chilaw Association and the Low Country Products Association. A petition was also sent by "760 leading inhabitants of the Colony" headed by Mr. H. J. C. Pereira who was then at the peak of his career as an advocate.

Wijewardene from London was in touch with these activities. Under the guidance of Corbet, whose father R. J. Corbet had been a member of the Ceylon Legislative Council, he was learning the art of lobbying Members of Parliament and bringing pressure on the Colonial Office. He organised a deputation to the Secretary of State with Mr. H. J. C. Pereira, who was then on one of his periodical holidays in England, as spokesman. In the absence of Lord Crewe, the deputation was received by Colonel J. E. B. Seely, the Under Secretary. Besides Mr. Pereira the deputation consisted of Corbet, E. W. Perera, J. W. de Silva, Dr. S. G. Kirkby Gomes, and Dr. David Rockwood, and was introduced by Lord Courtney of Penwith.

One of the results of the agitation was the amendment of the Constitution to grant, among other concessions, the so-called Educated Ceylonese Seat in the Legislative Council, the only one for which the general public, albeit under a restricted franchise, was able to vote. The elective principle was also extended to the seats earmarked for the European and Burgher communities. The first occupant of the Educated Ceylonese Seat was Mr. (afterwards Sir) Ponnambalam Ramanathan who had retired from the post of Solicitor-General. His unsuccessful rival was Dr. (later Sir) Marcus Fernando.

Two years after, Wijewardene organised a second deputation to the Secretary of State. This time it was to meet Mr. Lewis Harcourt, who had succeeded Lord Crewe in that office. The purpose of the deputation was to protest against the multiplication of taverns for the sale of toddy which was then as now a Government monopoly. While there was some justification for the official claim that it was necessary to have more taverns for the sale of toddy in order to check illicit sales, the prospect of securing more revenue from the drink traffic must have had its attractions for the authorities concerned.

Wijewardene's last years in England were a period of preparation for his future work in Ceylon. He had decided that if he ever owned a newspaper he would call it the *Ceylon Daily News*, after the London Liberal newspaper, the *Daily News*, brilliantly edited by A. G. Gardiner. He was a collector of old books and prints and Dutch and Portuguese maps of Ceylon. He was not a voracious reader of books, being primarily a man of affairs even then ; his need for information was met by a wide selection of newspapers and periodicals.

He did not take the opportunity offered by his stay in England to travel in Europe or even extensively in the British Isles. He was not fond of travel even when he could afford to do it in style. He was quite content to use his time to serve strictly practical ends. He showed little interest in the arts or the study of languages but he loved order and had good taste. He selected his furniture and pictures carefully ; when he could not rely on his own judgment he was willing to consult the best expert he could find.

He dressed well but not ostentatiously. He had solid qualities, and above all reliability, which commended themselves to Englishmen with whom he had any business relations. While he admired the British character and way of life, the years he spent in England did not impair his respect for national traditions. When he had a family and home of his own, he insisted on the proper observance of Sinhalese New Year customs. The first ceremony held in the palatial new Lake House was the age-old and simple one of boiling milk, which was performed by his mother with only the family and a few friends present.

Wijewardene insisted on his children gaining proficiency in Sinhalese at a time when its study was not fashionable. Their entreaties to give it up for French or Latin were met with the introduction of a private tutor, or *gurunanse*, to teach more Sinhalese at home. No doubt they are now thankful that he persisted in this attitude. He was not narrow in his nationalism, but did not forget that a nation must have roots and can never be an imitation of an alien society, however enlightened.

Wijewardene was well qualified on his return to Ceylon to organise and co-ordinate the forces in the country which were working for self-government. He did not aspire to be a leader but found himself in a position in which he was almost indispensable to the leaders. He was politically-minded and, during the years he spent in England, had learned the ways of constitutional agitation. He thought much about the problems of the country and had sound judgment.



His wealth gave him the leisure to choose his work, his industry was prodigious, and no one could question his integrity.

Wijewardene found the opening he was looking for when he was elected Secretary of the Ceylon National Association in October 1913. The National Association was started on the initiative of Charles de Soysa, a leading business man and philanthropist of his day, as the Ceylon Agricultural Association, and it had rendered useful service. Among its achievements were the successful campaign for the abolition of the paddy tax, the modification of the Waste Lands legislation and the securing of the franchise for certain seats in the Legislative Council in 1909. But it had its ups and downs, depending on the time and energy which the President and the Secretary were prepared to devote to its activities. Sometimes the Association was almost moribund.

When Governor Sir Henry McCallum forwarded a memorial from the National Association to the Secretary of State in 1909, he dismissed the Association contemptuously as a debating society. His despatch on that occasion, it was commonly believed, was written by his Colonial Secretary, Sir Hugh Clifford, and it said : “I am aware of nothing in its organisation or membership which gives it any claim to the title it assumes”. However, it was the instrument used by Wijewardene and his colleagues to stir the Colonial Office to action.

The general satisfaction over Wijewardene's entry into politics was reflected in the report published by



SIR HENRY MC CALLUM

the *Ceylonese* newspaper of the meeting of the National Association held on the 23rd October 1913, at which he was elected its Secretary. It said :

“That the decision to resuscitate the Ceylon National Association has been wise was clearly shown at yesterday’s meeting. As the President remarked in the course of his address, the last few years have seen the growth of a strong public opinion in our midst, and it was inevitable that it should be centralised in a truly representative body. Whatever may have been the inactivity of the past, there is no doubt—considering the enthusiastic gathering at yesterday’s meeting—that this association will take its rightful place as the most powerful and respected of the local societies. If the sober and businesslike way in which the work at yesterday’s meeting was conducted may be taken as an index of its future activities, there is no danger of its developing into a purely declamatory body. Nor is it possible to conceive of such a plight, considering the exceptionally able hands into which its destinies are entrusted. In Mr. Arthur Alvis, the Association will find a strong and independent leader, always ready to further its interests fearlessly and regardless of consequences. . . .

“The pleasantest surprise to us in connection with this meeting is the election of Mr. D. R. Wijewardene to the post of Honorary Secretary. Possessing all the qualities attributed to young men by Mr. Alvis, the new Secretary combines with them an inordinate capacity for work. Buoyant, enthusiastic and painstaking, but withal modest and unobtrusive, Mr.

Wijewardene is undoubtedly capable of galvanizing the association into new life and new vigour. It is sincerely to be hoped that with the renewed activities the association will enter on a new era of usefulness to the country.

“There are a number of complex problems looming largely in our public life. The press is doing what little good it can to keep these questions well before the public mind. But the need for a representative body has always been felt, but never so strongly as at the present juncture. With such an enthusiastic beginning, under the guidance of such well-known public men, and with a hardworking and capable Secretary, there is no doubt that the Ceylon National Association will fulfil the highest expectations formed of it, and that it will become the strong repository of the growing public opinion in our midst.”

We have noted earlier that Corbet had told Wijewardene that a free and independent press was necessary before a country could enjoy the fruits of self-government. It was unlikely that Wijewardene had the faintest idea of what he was letting himself in for when he bought a bankrupt newspaper and started his own venture in journalism. Towards the end of his life he said to his friend Canon Boteju that if he had to start life all over again he would never think of owning a newspaper. He had paid too great a price in health and leisure to compensate for the excitement and the benefits of wealth and power he derived from newspaper proprietorship.

Though it was through his newspapers that Wijewardene made his most important contribution

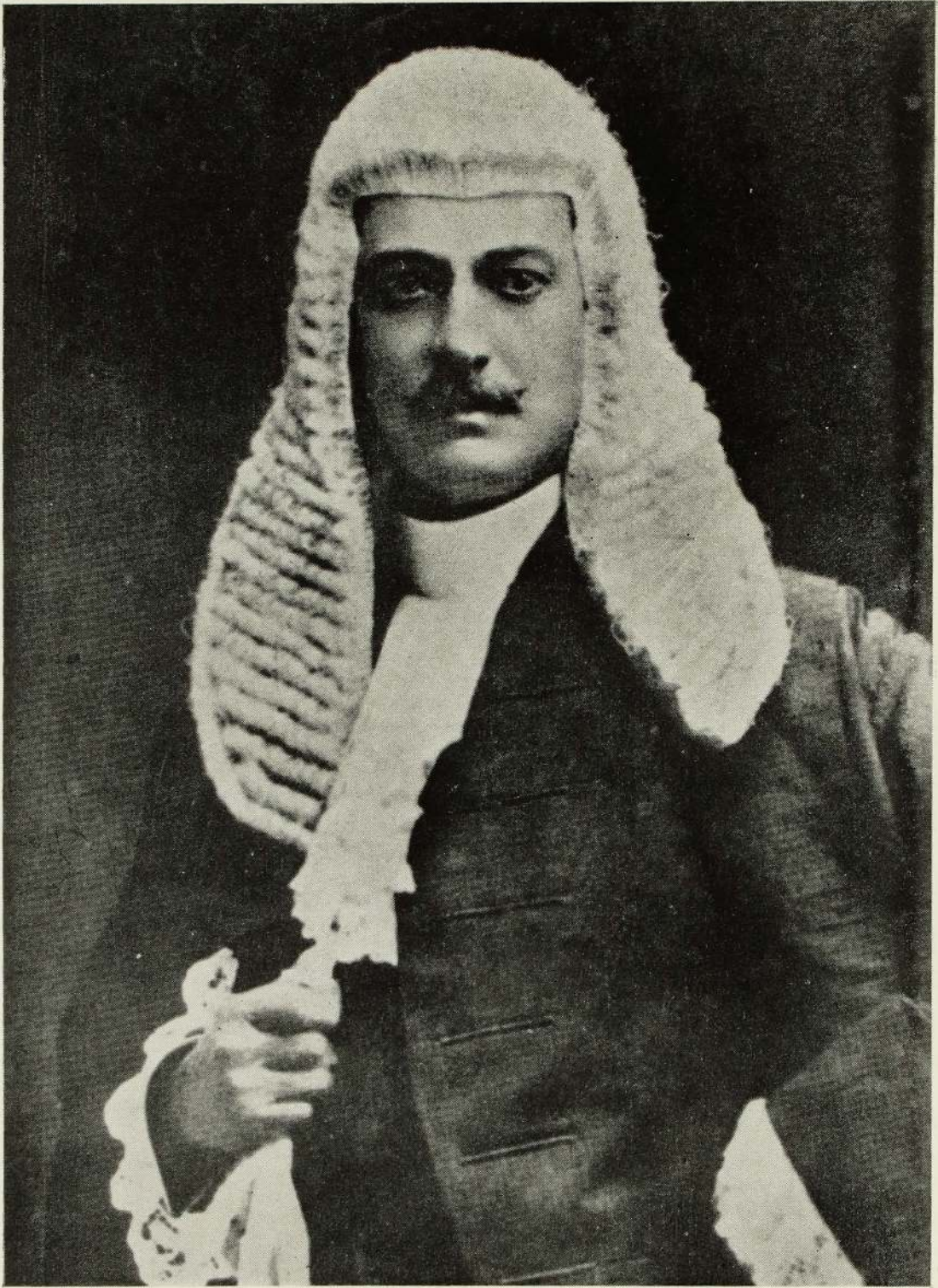
to the welfare of the island, it was not business success or the acquisition of power which held him fast to the career into which he had drifted. He devoted his time and energies to his newspapers because he had an unflagging desire to see Ceylon take her place among the free and independent nations of the world.

GOLDEN AGE OF LAWYERS

LIKE many others who went up to Cambridge from Ceylon in the early years of the century, Wijewardene took his degree in law and was called to the Bar at the Inns of Court in London. He had decided to interest himself in politics, following Gokhale's advice. There is no reason to think that he harboured ambitions of forensic success. He was not a ready speaker, being shy and self conscious.

Nevertheless, there were advantages to be gained by moving among the great advocates of the day in Colombo. The good-looking, wealthy and serious-minded young barrister, who was the friend of Corbet and the man who had organised deputations to the Secretary of State for the Colonies, created a good impression in the Law Library. It was in the Law Library that the advocates met and were instructed by the proctors, consulted law reports, gossiped and ate their lunch between appearances in court. The Law Library was also the nerve centre of Ceylon politics.

Lawyers were always in the forefront of the battle for a greater share in the government of their country for the Ceylonese. They were better trained and had



B. W. BAWA, K.C.

more opportunities to dabble in politics than other professional men. Towards the end of the nineteenth century there were a number of well-known advocates, such as Richard Morgan and C. A. Lorenz, most of them from the Burgher community—descendants of Europeans employed by the Dutch East India Company—to lead the movement for reform. Later there were Tamils and Sinhalese from the educated classes who followed their example, men like Sir Muttu Coomaraswamy, the friend of Disraeli, James D'Alwis, a well known oriental scholar, and Sir Ponnambalam Ramanathan, K.C. When Wijewardene joined the legal profession nearly all the Unofficial members of the Legislative Council were lawyers, nominated to that body by the Governor more for a capacity to hold their tongues than to make eloquent speeches.

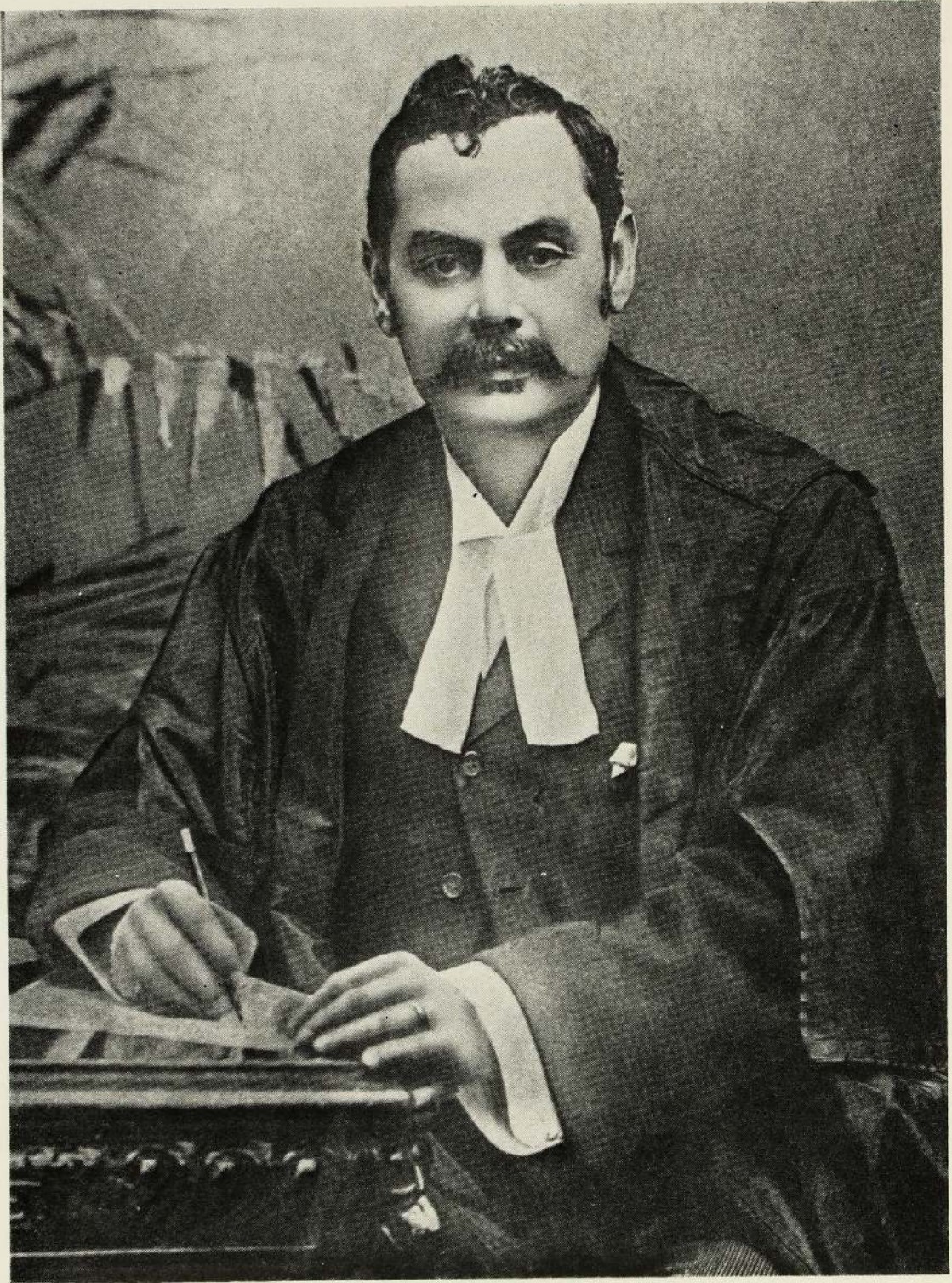
The legal machinery in Ceylon was transplanted from Great Britain. While it maintained the highest levels in impartiality, dignity and scholarship, it did much to impoverish the peasantry driven to costly litigation by a complicated system of land laws. Men of great distinction had adorned the Supreme Court Bench of the island. Sir Alexander Johnstone, the second Chief Justice of the British period, was a scholar and reformer far in advance of his times. In England, he helped to found the Royal Asiatic Society and to set up the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council. The fame of such men as Sir John Budd Phear, Sir John Winfield Bonser and Sir Alexander Wood Renton spread beyond the Colonial Legal Service to which they belonged. It may or may not be true that the Governor Sir William Gregory promoted Sir Harry

Dias, the first Sinhalese to be appointed to the Supreme Court Bench, because he had a good seat as he rode his horse in the Galle Face green, but there can be no doubt that Sir Richard Morgan, a Ceylonese lawyer, was the most powerful man in the country, next to the Governor himself, when he was appointed to the Bench from the office of Queen's Advocate.

The prestige of the Bench and the Bar had never stood higher than at the time young Wijewardene first entered the Colombo Law Library. The names of the stars of the profession may mean nothing to the younger generation of today but they deserve to be mentioned here. The reader who comes across names of forgotten men in these pages should remember that, in a country where so few books are published, even an irrelevant piece of information or the name of an obscure person may give an important clue to the future historian.

The Judges of the Supreme Court lived remote lives and were hardly ever seen, outside their scarlet and ermine, by the man in the street. The Chief Justice drove to Hultsdorf in a carriage drawn by a pair of well-groomed horses. The number of King's Counsel was small and the honour was much coveted. Senior counsel wore wigs when they pleaded. Fees of the fashionable advocates were small, compared with the impressive figures of today, but there was no income tax then and the cost of living was low.

In 1911, Sir Alfred Lascelles, a member of the Harewood family, had just become Chief Justice. The senior Puisne was Alexander Wood Renton, one of the most learned lawyers in the British Empire at



FREDERICK DORNHORST, K.C.

the time. Among other things, he had edited the Encyclopaedia of English Law and was an authority on Napoleon Bonaparte. He had a keen mind and an incisive style. J. P. Middleton was another Puisne judge at the time. There were two Ceylonese judges on the Supreme Court Bench, Joseph Grenier and Walter Pereira. Grenier wrote a book of reminiscences entitled "Leaves from My Life" after his retirement. Walter Pereira, who had been Solicitor-General, was an indefatigable student of the law and wrote a book on the "Laws of Ceylon" which was used as a reference book by many generations of law students.

The Attorney-General of the day was Anton Bertram, a classical scholar and an orator much in demand at school prize-givings. The Attorney-General performed many functions. He was a member of the Executive and Legislative Councils. He was the leader of the Bar and appeared in court for the Crown in all important cases. He was also chief parliamentary draftsman, head of the Legal Department and the principal legal adviser of the Government. James Van Langenberg succeeded Walter Pereira as Solicitor-General when the latter was promoted to the Supreme Court Bench.

Frederick Dornhorst, K.C. was the most famous advocate of the day, but he had retired from practice before his powers began to wane and lived to a ripe age, spending much of his time in England. The Burgher community, whose mother tongue was English, provided many of the leading lawyers in Colombo as well as in the provincial towns. The common law of the country being the Roman-Dutch Law, a knowledge

of Latin was always a useful asset to a student of the source books.

At the very top of the unofficial Bar were a number of senior practitioners who might any day have been called upon by the Government to fill a vacancy on the Bench. Among them was Mr. (afterwards Sir) Thomas de Sampayo. Born to a humble family, he won the Government University Scholarship from Royal College, Colombo, and went to Clare College, Cambridge. He had a leading practice in the civil courts and made a very good judge. Benjamin Bawa, son of a Muslim proctor of Kandy and a European mother, was the most elegant and persuasive advocate of the day. He was an accomplished pleader and sound lawyer and to hear him argue a complicated case was a treat. There were some families which contributed several members to the front rank of the profession. H. J. C. Pereira, a forceful and brilliant advocate, was the brother of Walter Pereira, the Supreme Court judge. They had two other brothers in the legal profession, namely J. E. R. Pereira and F. R. A. Pereira. R. L. Pereira and Merrill Pereira, both of whom reached the top of their respective branches of the profession, were sons of J. E. R. Pereira who was the leader of the Colombo Police Court Bar. There was also the Jayawardene family. A. St V. Jayawardene, who in his time had the largest practice in the Appeal Court, became a judge later on. So did his brother, "E. W". Yet another brother, Hector, was a rising politician and writer on legal subjects as well as being a successful practitioner. He died in his forties. There were two other brothers, Quintus and Sextus, to complete the constellation.



WALTER PEREIRA, K.C.

Among the other leading lawyers of the day were E.J. Samerawickreme, G.S.Schneider, Allan Drieberg, Brooke Elliot, Francis de Zoysa and H. A. P. Sandarasagara while the more promising among the juniors included E.A.L. Wijewardene, F.H.B. Koch, H. H. Bartholomeusz, R. L. Pereira, W. H. Perera, E. W. Perera, K. Balasingham, James Joseph, A. R. H. Canekeratne, A. E. Keuneman and E. G. P. Jayetileke. The majority of them in due course became King's Counsel and judges of the Supreme or District Courts. The District Judge of Colombo was Herman Loos and the District Judge of Kandy, Felix R. Dias.

The Crown Counsel's Department had a strong team consisting of T. F. Garvin, M. T. Akbar, Stanley Obeyesekera, V. M. Fernando, W. S. de Saram and V. E. Barber. In due course all of them became judges. Garvin and Akbar served as Official members of the Legislative Council while they held the post of Solicitor-General.

Although he gave up forensic ambitions, if he had any, to become a newspaper proprietor, Wijewardene was constantly in touch with the legal profession. Most of his friends were lawyers. Those who wrote for his newspapers from outside the office were mainly lawyers. One of the most readable of these was S. R. Wijemanne, who wrote an astringent weekly "Letter from Hultsdorf" for many years. The public opinion which Wijewardene valued most was that which came by way of the Law Library. For it was a time when the Ceylon bar was strong, respected and public-spirited—a golden age of lawyers.

RIOTS OF 1915

WHEN the first world war broke out in August 1914, there were 'national' movements in many parts of the British Empire directed against Colonial rule. Ireland was on the verge of civil war and there was a widespread wave of unrest in India. His Majesty's Government felt obliged to postpone all plans for satisfying the aspirations of subject peoples until the enemy was defeated on the field of battle. Subversion was put down with a strong hand, "rebels" were imprisoned or exiled, and the "men on the spot" were given full powers to deal with civil disturbances of all kinds.

Such disturbances, often arising from religious disputes, were not uncommon in India, and the public authorities there had devised ways and means of dealing with them promptly and efficiently, at little cost to human life and property. In Ceylon, on the other hand, communal disturbances were almost unknown. The Police had not been called upon to settle this kind of dispute and were unprepared to deal with them if they arose.

In May 1915, the unexpected happened, and both the Government and the Police panicked. It all arose

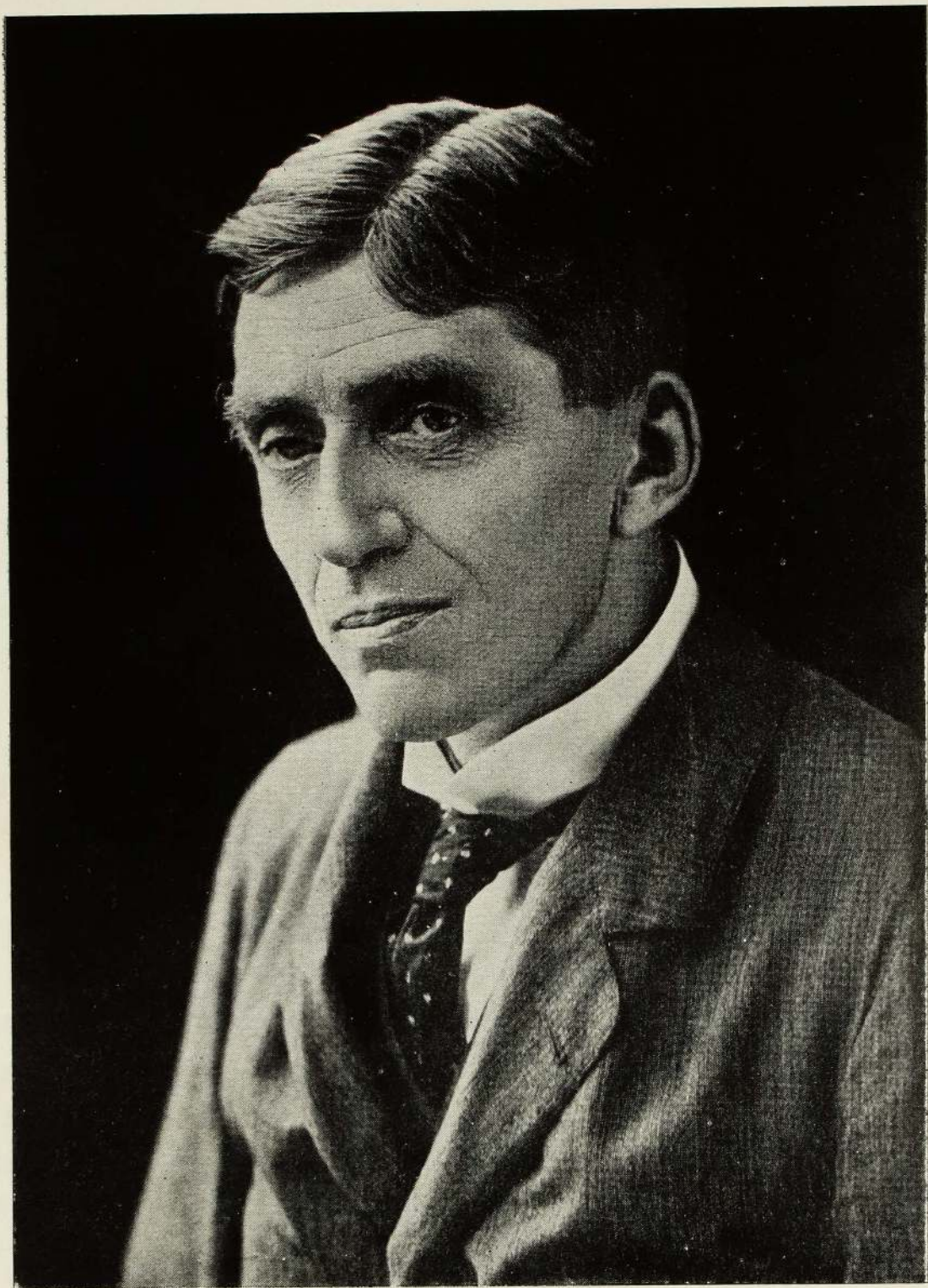
out of a petty incident in Kandy town. Muslim traders there were determined not to permit any processions to disturb worship at their mosque in Castle Street, by the noise of the traditional flutes and drums. The Buddhists, for their part, were equally determined that the procession on Wesak day, the anniversary of the birth of the Lord Buddha, should follow its accustomed route.

Feeling ran high on both sides. When the procession approached the mosque, part of it was diverted by the Police and what remained pressed through. Pandemonium broke out with stone-throwing, shouting and jeering. Damage was done to the mosque. There were rumours and counter-rumours of attacks on temples and mosques, and violence spread into many parts of the island where Muslim traders carried on business. The death roll was not heavy but considerable damage was done to property. Hooligans seized the opportunity to loot shops and generally help themselves to what they could lay their hands on.

The Government took action when the havoc had been done, and, in doing so, went to extremes not justified by the circumstances. The country was placed under Martial Law and leading citizens against whom there was no evidence of complicity were thrown into prison and their houses ransacked. Terror was caused in the villages by troops brought from abroad who did not know the languages of the country. Innocent men and women suffered for the crimes of hooligans who make their presence felt when law and order break down.

The Governor, Sir Robert (afterwards Lord) Chalmers was a well known Pali scholar and financial expert but a poor administrator. The Colonial Secretary, Edward Stubbs, who had at an early age left a desk at the Colonial Office to be the Governor's second in command, had neither the experience nor the sound judgment to deal with the situation. They were stampeded by Brigadier-General Malcolm, the Officer Commanding the Troops, who thought he was called upon to deal with a full-blown revolution. The Inspector-General, H. L. Dowbiggin, thought that the quickest way of dealing with the situation was to restrict the movements of the Buddhist leaders. Sir Alexander Wood Renton, the Chief Justice, and Mr. (afterwards Sir) Anton Bertram, the Attorney-General, did their best to give a veneer of legality to the excesses of the military and the bureaucracy. The only Judge of the Supreme Court who had the courage to dissent, Mr. G. F. M. Ennis, was denied promotion and the knighthood which was traditionally awarded to the Senior Puisne Justice.

When public opinion in Ceylon and in England compelled His Majesty's Government to intervene, Robert Chalmers was recalled and replaced by Sir John Anderson who, after a thorough-going inquiry, reversed many of the actions of his predecessor. In a report to the Secretary of State he described the conduct of the military forces and volunteers in very strong language. Some of the higher officials took a morbid revenge by boycotting the funeral of the Governor who died in Nuwara Eliya before his term of office was completed.



SIR ANTON BERTRAM

A number of Buddhist leaders who had taken an active part in a temperance campaign a few years earlier were taken into custody and some were tried for fomenting civil disturbances on trumped up charges. Among those detained were D. B. Jayatilaka, W. A. de Silva, D. S. Senanayake and C. Batuvantudawe, all four of whom became Ministers when a new Constitution was introduced in 1931 giving Ceylon a large measure of self-government for the first time. Wijewardene's eldest brother, Don Philip Alexander, though never a politician, was similarly detained along with a number of other well known Buddhist business men. The 1915 disturbances were not a race riot. They were sparked by religious fanaticism on the part of a few ignorant people. There may have been an element of trade rivalry motivating some of the attacks on shops owned by Muslims in the smaller towns.

The remedy applied by the authorities was almost worse than the disease. The Government of the day was no doubt led to take extreme measures by the fact that the riots occurred in the midst of a world war when the Empire was fighting for its existence. The episode might be forgotten at this distance of time but for its repercussions on the movement for self-rule. The Sinhalese leaders were now determined that the country should never again be subjected to the humiliation and repressions which were described in a stinging letter written to Mr. Bonar Law by Mr. Eardley Norton, one of the most successful English advocates in India. He had appeared before the tribunals set up in Ceylon to defend the accused, and wrote :

“To the tragedy of a complete surrender of jurisdiction uncontrolled by any form of appeal, and the consequent degradation of a Governor’s high office, must be added the comedy of His Excellency praising before the Legislative Council the cool sagacity and prompt action of the General. It would take more than one Governor to undo the good due to the British administration of many patient years, but one Governor has it in his power, and the present Governor has exercised it—to bring the British Administration into horror and contempt. . . .

“A very long experience of India has taught me the uselessness of looking to local authority for redress against injuries caused by local powers. They are rich in words but poor in deeds. Their own prestige is the object nearest their hearts. Judging the Governor by what he has done in the past, I should expect little from his prescience or his courage. Both were put to the test by the recent riots, and both have broken down. I do not wish to base my views upon any but the five cases in which I have been personally concerned. Judged by these, His Excellency and his advisers have been suffering from so acute an attack of treasonitis that nothing short of complete change of venue from Ceylon to England, where there is, at any rate, still some trifling show of independence and courage, can in any measure atone for misdeeds which it shames me, as an Englishman, to recall.

“As I heard the witnesses’ statements and reviewed the circumstances under which the laws have been superseded, and I was being called upon to plead for men who without judicial control might be shot or

hanged, I realised the profound responsibility of my situation as I had never realised it before, and I reverently thanked the Almighty that I lived in India.

“I have laboured for thirty-six years through periods of grave political anxiety and suspense. I have appeared in numberless cases where many men’s lives have been lost. I have seen the civil magistracy under pardonable stress call out the armed forces in Bengal, Madras and Bombay, to send out crowds with short shrift to their last account.

“I have had to perform the melancholy duty of prosecuting misguided Indian youths for attempts to subvert British administration throughout the country. I have known senior officers of the Civil Service shot dead. I have noted that a Viceroy was assailed almost to the point of death with a bomb. Yet Indian authority, to its eternal credit, has never abased itself by suppressing the established Civil Court in favour of military intervention.

“In the most serious event the liberty of the subject has been scrupulously respected and his rights reserved, and no tribunal has ever been permitted to deal with that liberty which was not either composed entirely of trained lawyers or on which trained lawyers were not represented.

“In Ceylon, official panic replaced official respect for the law, and the Governor, with his eyes open, for no cause declared, deliberately deprived the King’s subjects of that protection which, it is England’s boast shall surround the trial of the most humble offender. Can we wonder that there is widespread throughout

the Island, among the Sinhalese, a feeling of deep-rooted, if silent, disappointment ?”

From then on the political history of Ceylon was to be different. Wijewardene, like most other nationalists, determined that he would not rest until the people of the country had self-government and such excesses on the part of the established government could not be repeated. The effort to separate the Sinhalese Christians from the Sinhalese Buddhists failed. When conditions had returned to normal and the Government permitted a public meeting of protest to be held, Sir James Peiris, a devout Anglican churchman, presided over it. (It was at this meeting that a prominent Methodist, Dr. Solomon Fernando, died immediately after he had made a speech.)

Wijewardene kept in close touch with the men who laboured incessantly to move the House of Commons, and through it the British Government, to recognise the blow to British prestige. When the censorship was lifted, he caused the despatches, reports and newspaper editorials of the British Press to be collected and published. The agitation for self-determination was on, and at the end of the war the movement was gathering strength.

LETTERS TO HIS FUTURE WIFE

WHEN the riots of 1915 broke out Wijewardene, who was an officer in the Ceylon Light Infantry, had just become engaged to Ruby Meedeniya. She was the second daughter of J. H. Meedeniya, a Kandyan chief of Ruanwella in the Sabaragamuwa Province. Mr. Meedeniya held office as a Ratemahatmaya, which was in those days an administrative post, and was honoured successively with the title of Dissawa and Adigar conferred by the Government. During the rule of the Kandyan kings, these titles were given to ministers or executive officers but under the British regime they were honorary.

Mr. Meedeniya was later nominated to the Legislative Council as one of the two Kandyan members. His elder daughter, Adeline, married Mr. (later Sir) Francis Molamure, advocate, who became Speaker of the State Council and the first Speaker of the House of Representatives, a responsibility which he usually discharged with skill and grace. Lady Molamure too was elected to the State Council and was subsequently a Senator.

It was not uncommon for young men of wealthy low country Sinhalese families to marry daughters

of Kandyan chiefs. Three of the Wijewardene brothers and two Senanayakes did so. The Kandyanans were essentially country folk, and the central regions of Ceylon, whence they came, preserved for a time many of the old ways of life that existed during the rule of the Kandyan kings. They were under foreign rule for a much shorter period than those who lived in the Maritime Provinces.

In the boarding at St. Thomas' College there were usually a sprinkling of Kandyan boys from the Ratnapura, Kurunegala, Kegalle and Badulla districts. They distinguished themselves more in sports than in scholarship. Their sisters went to Hillwood School, Kandy, or sometimes to Bishop's College, Colombo, as boarders. In those days it was always possible to identify a Kandyan maiden by her distinctive saree, hair style, jewellery and unaffected manner.

Meedeniya Adigar's wife was a Miss Senanayake, the daughter of a Church of England clergyman. She died and was buried in Jerusalem, whither she made a pilgrimage when she was old and feeble, in the hope that she might end her life in the holy city. Their two daughters and son were brought up as Christians.

The home of the Meedeniya family was in Ruanwella, in an area where violence and looting had occurred and the Adigar, his wife and younger daughter moved to Colombo. They were accompanied by Adeline Molamure, the Adigar's elder daughter, her husband, Francis Molamure, and their infant child. Their car broke down at Veyangoda and they had to seek shelter in the house of Mr. A. P. Goonetilleke, a planter of the district, whence Wijewardene fetched them. When the

party reached the Kelaniya bridge on the outskirts of Colombo, they heard rumours that a company of Punjabi troops was waiting to intercept them. Thereupon they abandoned the motor car and travelled to Colombo by train.

The Meedeniyas and Molamures stayed in Colombo at Wijewardene's residence, Rickman House, in Colpetty. During their stay there the house was searched by Punjabi soldiers. As the search was going on the inmates of the house were made to stand at attention while the soldiers went through their belongings, including Ruby Meedeniya's letters to her future husband. After the Meedeniyas returned to Ruanwella the correspondence of the couple was limited for a few months to postcards as Wijewardene was also under suspicion.

A batch of Wijewardene's letters to Ruby Meedeniya during their engagement was found among her papers after her death. The following excerpts from the letters show a sincere and serene character even in the midst of civil turmoil and personal emotion :—

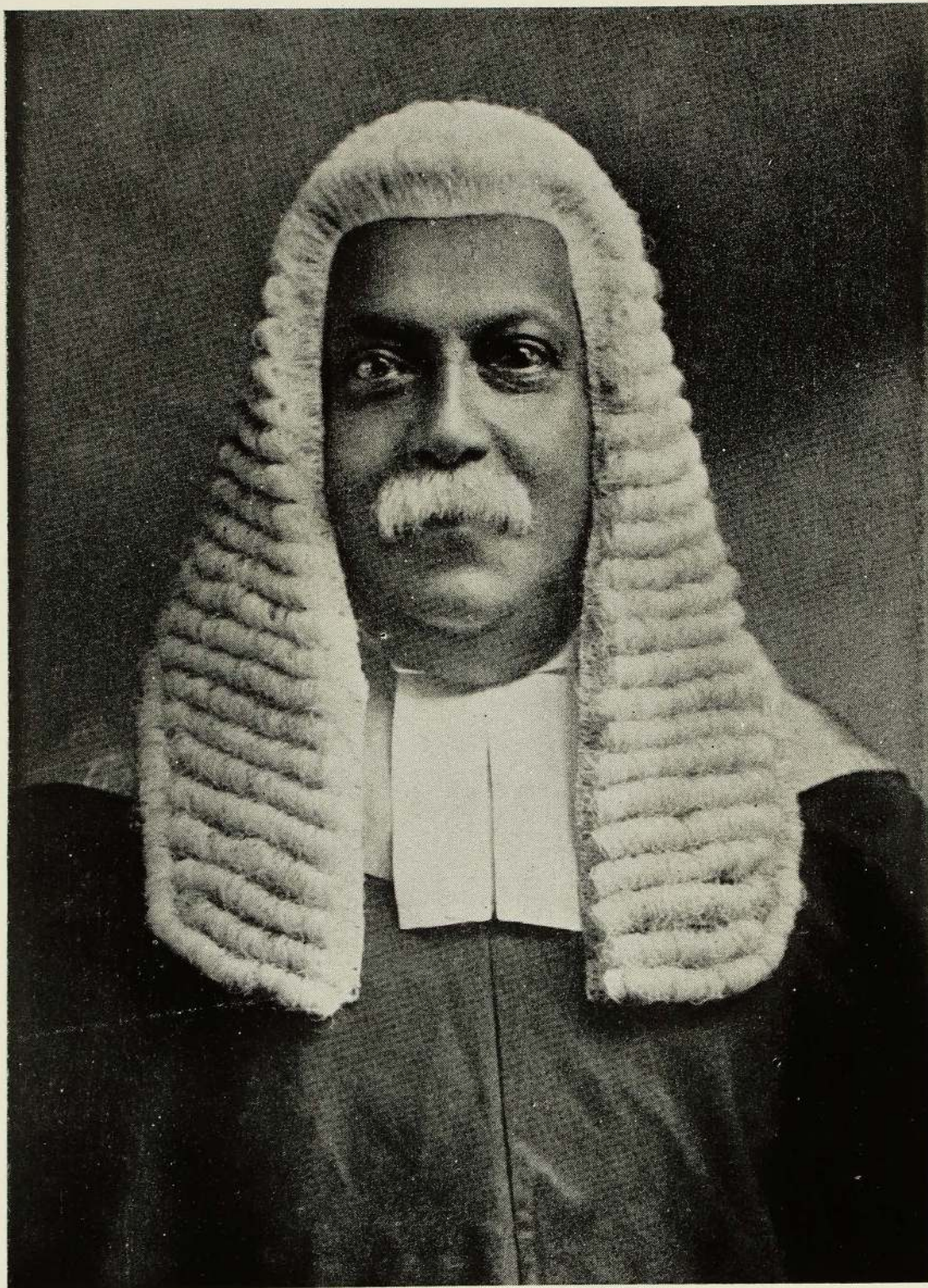
*Rickman House,
Colpetty.
31st May, 1915*

Rioting is going on all over Colombo. This is 11 o'clock in the night and my servant says that all the Moorish boutiques in the Pettah are being attacked. I understand the Town Guard has been called out for

duty. The servant is frightened that I will also be called out for duty with the Volunteers. He says that I should not get out till morning. If things get worse tomorrow we might be called out for duty. He is waiting to take this letter to the General Post Office. I hope he will get back alright. You will excuse my not writing a longer letter as I would like him to post this as soon as possible.

*Sept. 7th, 1915,
Rickman House.*

I am not demonstrative of my feelings. I rather adopt the attitude of allowing one to infer my feelings from my action and behaviour. I know it is a very slow process but I am inclined to think it is a sure one I had to get up very early this morning to catch the 6-10 train to go to Hunupitiya to superintend "the firing" by my volunteers. I am having quite enough of volunteering this week —as, in addition to this, I am orderly officer for the week, which means I have to be at headquarters every evening. Tonight we are having a dinner at the Bristol Hotel. It is the Voetlight Dinner. The Bar, consisting of the advocates, is entertaining Messrs. Shaw and Sampayo at dinner. We shall have a nice evening and I am trying to induce the Secretary to engage the Volunteer Band to play



SIR THOMAS DE SAMPAYO

during dinner. Life is too short and when we get an opportunity in this slow place we must enjoy ourselves. I suppose your father and mother will be attending the wedding of Mr. James Peiris' daughter next week. It will be a nice wedding. I like these social functions.

*Sept. 26th, 1915,
Rickman House.*

We all went to the Tamil Women's Fancy Bazaar yesterday. My mother and Harriet came here and took Adeline with them and from there they went to my other sister's (Mrs. E. W. J.) and went with her and children. I wish you were with us. We had a very nice time. I had to buy a lot of things. I am sending by Hercules a parcel of cakes for you. These were made specially for me by Mrs. Rockwood and Mrs. Sittampalam. They make the best cakes in Colombo. I hope you like them. My mother gave a parcel to Adeline too. Among other things I bought was a nice table centre. I had booked it long before the Fancy Bazaar was opened and it was curious to see the number of people wanting to buy it. We were at the Bandman's on Friday night. It was a poor show. I did not want to go owing to the tragic death of Dr. Solomon Fernando at the Public Hall. I knew him so well that I was very cut up about it.

Sept. 30th, 1915,
Rickman House.

I am glad you liked the sweets I sent you. I was interested in the recipe you mentioned for making love cake. Now you must try it next time I come to your place and I will help you. You shouldn't back out of it now.

I am thinking of visiting the estates tomorrow. I have not decided about it yet. If I do, I may be away from Colombo for 2 or 3 days. It is such a long time since I visited them last.

I was glad to hear that you read all the speeches delivered at the public meeting on Saturday. I hope you find them interesting reading. You should read the proceedings of the Legislative Council which will appear in tomorrow's paper. You will find them very interesting. I was there this afternoon during the whole debate. The gallery was uncomfortably crowded and 50 to 70 had to be content with standing accommodation.

While the Governor was making his financial statement Sir Hector Van Cuylenberg became ill and had to be carried out. There was a "breeze" between the Colonial Secretary and Mr. Ramanathan, and the latter gave the former such a bit of plain talking that he won't forget it for a long time. You should read the passage.....

There is no other man except Mr. Ramanathan who could or would do it. After the meeting was over when he came out to get into his carriage the crowd

gave him a rousing cheer and another was given to Mr. Harry Creasy. They both well deserved it. I shouldn't write about politics. You wouldn't like my letters then.

*October 20th, 1915,
Rickman House.*

.... I agree that it is best to do one's own things oneself. There is nothing I object to so much as to be under obligation to anyone.

15th Nov. 1915.

I am on duty for this week in the evenings from 5 to 6. Owing to the wet weather only a very few men have turned up for parade. I sent them away and have sat down to do something more pleasant than drilling two men. Thank you very much for your letters received on Saturday and this afternoon.

I went to the estate on Saturday morning and returned about 12 last night. It rained cats and dogs the whole time I was there yesterday but in spite of it I got out and inspected the work. I went to see Marcus Rockwood and another friend went with me. I ordered some radical alterations to the bungalow. When it is completed it ought to make a very good

country residence for us. The other friend who went with me is an engineer and he gave the design for the alterations.

Your father came to see me this morning and he was at my place for a considerable time. Incidentally, I asked him about a date for our wedding. Of course, he said there was hardly any time to fix it for December. He mentioned that we could have it in January and also said that May was the month for weddings. I think I must put my foot down at having it in May. It is a long time to wait. Don't you think so yourself? Let us try and get them to fix it for January. Here is a tip. I understand that your father and mother got married in January. So you better express a strong desire to get married in January yourself after making sure that it was in January that they got married. I think I will get a good date in January and get the date definitely fixed. (The wedding took place on the 26th January 1916). How did you get to know that when the Punjabis are gone the Volunteers will have to go to barracks? I thought of writing this to you last week but again kept back thinking it might worry you. Nothing is known definitely about it but there is a talk that we will have to go into barracks when the Punjabis are gone. In that case I will have to do soldiering until the war is over and I can make some pocket money. We had a rough time last time when we were mobilised for three months. Well, if its garrison work it won't be so rough.

28th Nov. 1915,
Rickman House.

6270c
Oh, last night for the first time I delivered a lecture in Sinhalese. Till the last moment I tried to get a substitute to deliver the lecture and failed. So I had to deliver it myself. I did the best I could. There was a huge crowd and the hall and verandahs were packed full. I explained to them the different slides as best as I could. I think I will be able to manage these lectures better as I get experience. It is very interesting work to give these people an interesting hour or two once a week. We intend to deliver these lectures all over Colombo and then in the country. The difficulty is to get people to come forward and undertake to deliver these lectures. I have made them fashionable I think now.

20th December, 1915,
Rickman House.

I was very pleased to find from your last letter that you are making preparations for the wedding. So it is definitely fixed. I must write and tell your father that notice of marriage must be given on the 7th of January I have not made any arrangements about my Christmas holidays. If I cannot get away to India I would like very much to spend 10 to 12 days upcountry. . . . I would like also to be present at the Galle Races at least one day to see my horse run.

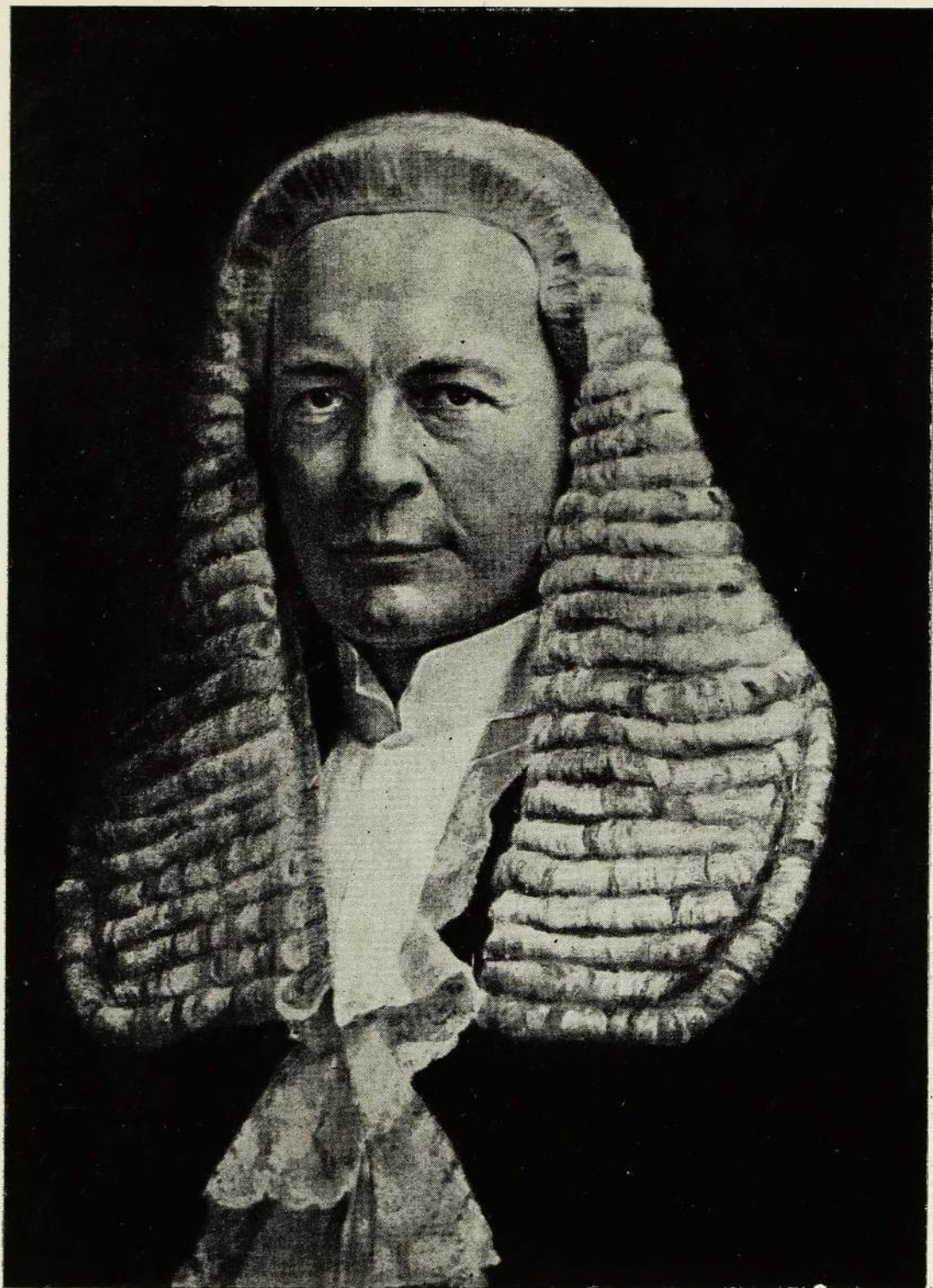
28th December, 1915.

I was going to make the trip (to India) not for any pleasure or anything like that. It was, if I may so put it, a sort of pilgrimage to one who has been a sort of father to me while I was in England and to whom I owe whatever success I have achieved in Ceylon since my return. It was to visit Mr. Corbet who I was told was down with a paralytic stroke. I had long promised to go and see him in Madras and also I wanted to inform him personally of my engagement to you. He would be very pleased to hear about it. But just before Christmas I heard that he had another fit and was ordered by his medical advisers to proceed to England at once and that he left four or five days before Christmas. Under these circumstances I did not care to do the trip to Madras.

F. H. M. Corbet, who had been *in loco parentis* to Wijewardene during his stay in England, was appointed Advocate-General of Madras in 1912, very probably on the recommendation of the eminent English lawyer, Sir Edward Clarke. He was fifty years of age at the time but he died within four years of his assumption of office in India. In a letter to Wijewardene from Madras, dated 1st December 1912, Corbet wrote :

My dear Richard,

Many thanks for the newspaper cuttings about the A-G's certificate. I was very glad to get them, and, as you have seen by now, have been able to put them to good use.



F. H. M. CORBET

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By kind courtesy of the Director, National Museums.

I have not thanked you enough, dear old boy, and I never can, for all you have done for me. But I must tell you of a concrete instance which will show you how far-reaching and how substantial are the results of your efforts.

Some days ago, a Chetty would-be-client came to engage me in a case. I had been told beforehand that I might ask him for Rs. 8,000/- to Rs. 10,000/- to appear for him in the appeal and argue part of his case. The record is enormous and the argument is expected to last several days. I asked for Rs. 8,000/- and he naturally demurred. So I told him he need not come to me and that his Vakil, who knew his case thoroughly, would do the whole argument better than I would, etc., etc., but that if he wanted the Advocate-General he must pay a big fee, however stupid the A-G might be. "No, no", says he, "I have read Sir Edward Clarke's speech about you, and I know better". I explained that Sir Edward's utterances on that famous occasion were dictated by kindness and affection, but our friend would have none of it; Sir Edward, he said, was not the sort of man to say such things unless he meant them. So I could protest no more.

Today my would-be client brings his principal with him and they make little speeches saying that they will pay me anything I ask, but will I please take into consideration their heavy costs in the past. I therefore said Rs. 7,000/- and they accepted with thanks and handed me a cheque for Rs. 1,500/- in advance, the rest to be paid before the hearing which is to be probably in January. They similarly paid my predecessor Sivaswami Aiyer Rs. 1,000/-, which they have

lost in consequence of his promotion to be Member of the Executive Council but as to that they say their only feeling is one of gladness on his appointment, hence my readily knocking off Rs. 1,000/- from my fee. The opposite party were prepared to pay me Rs. 10,000/- and have approached me several times lately, though without mentioning any figure, to press for an answer without giving the Chetty any more time. But "noblesse oblige". It is quite easy to be virtuous under present circumstances. (The Advocate-General had the right of private practice).

Now, what are your plans? Have you been called yet? As I read of Gokhale's triumphal progress through S.A., I regret more and more that you did not go with him, glad as we were that you were in Ceylon when we visited Sri Lanka. What about estate matters? When is your brother (to whom give my kindest remembrances) returning to England? What about your other brother for whom you have made English plans?

Looking back on that busy week in Colombo we realise how different it would have been if we had not been so fortunate in having the loan of motor cars. Please thank your brother and J. G. again on our behalf.

My wife desires to be remembered to you all, especially to your mother and the other ladies of the family, and with best regards from me to one and all.

Yours affectionately,
F. H. M. Corbet.

You will be interested in the enclosed copy of a letter from Reggie's House Master, Mr. H. H. Home, which please return.

* * *

It is obvious that a strong tie of friendship bound Corbet to Wijewardene. The only two photographs which hung in Wijewardene's study were those of his father and Corbet. The death of Corbet, hastened without doubt by the death of his two sons in the first two years of the 1914-1918 war, was mourned by many grateful Ceylonese.

MARRIAGE AND HOME LIFE

ALTHOUGH Richard Wijewardene, who had little use for personal publicity, tried to keep his wedding a strictly family affair, he did not fully succeed, as the report published in the *Ceylon Independent* of 27th January, 1916 shows. The journalist's description of the wedding has interest also as a good example of the kind of newspaper reporting which Wijewardene, more than anyone else, helped to kill. Nevertheless, it is worth reproducing if only to show how things were done in those days and how they were chronicled:

UNION OF TWO LEADING SINHALESE FAMILIES.
 Yesterday's Fashionable Wedding at Ruanwella.

WIJEWARDENE—MEEDENIYA

“The second marriage which has taken place from the ancient ‘Walauwa’ of Meedeniya Dissawa and his Kumarihamy at Ruanwella was celebrated yesterday, when their second daughter, Alice Gertrude Ruby, was given in marriage to Mr. Don Richard Wijewardene B.A., LL.B., Barrister - at - Law, son of the late Muhandiram Don Philip Wijewardene, and of Wijewardene Lama Ethani, of Sedawatte, Grandpass.

Unlike the previous wedding which took place in 1912, and which was attended by the highest in the land including the Vice-Regal party, yesterday's function was a quiet one and was confined to the close relatives of the parties. However, so great and so wide is the popularity of Meedeniya Dissawa, as well as of the Wijewardene family that, in spite of the fact that no invitations were issued, quite a large gathering assembled to honour the occasion. Mr. J. H. Meedeniya is one of the most trusted Kandyan Chiefs in the service of the Government and is at present the Dissawa of the whole of Sabaragamuwa Province, besides being a Justice of the Peace and an Unofficial Police Magistrate. He had the honour of being presented to His late Majesty King Edward VII, when he visited England in 1906.

“The bridegroom is a rising young lawyer practising his profession at the Metropolitan Bar, and with the training he has had in England he promises some day to be a shining light in the legal firmament. Mr. Wijewardene is also the Hon. Secretary of the Ceylon National Association and Joint Hon. Secretary of the Ceylon Social Service League. The union of two leading Sinhalese families was looked forward to with much interest by the numerous friends and relatives of the parties, and the event was favoured with every omen which is considered to be a happy augury on such occasions. The marriage was conducted strictly according to ancient Sinhalese customs, and the various rites were performed at the lucky hour and minute.

“The bridegroom's party left Colombo in a number of motor cars early yesterday morning and having

changed at the Ruanwella Rest House reached the 'Walauwa' at 11 o'clock where they were received with a procession of forty five elephants and over one hundred dancers. 'Pavada' was spread all the way from the gates of the extensive 'Walauwa' grounds up to the house, while the bridegroom walked under a canopy headed by the customary Kandyan insignia. Mr. Wijewardene, who is a Lieutenant of the Ceylon Light Infantry and who was attired in uniform, presented a striking figure in the midst of all the oriental splendour around him. It should be mentioned that there were signs of rejoicing all over the district, from Avissawella railway station to the 'Walauwa' a distance of twelve miles, and over double that number of pandals spanned the road at intervals, while every little wayside hamlet vied with each other to show their regard for their beloved Dissawa and the fair young bride, his daughter.

“The pandals, which bore words of welcome, blessing and happiness to the young couple were decorated in true Oriental fashion. The 'Walauwa' itself had been magnificently decked with decorations, the Kandyan 'ralipalang' playing a prominent part in the scheme of decoration. A special extension had been put up to the house in the form of a 'magul maduwa' and among the many ornaments here the bridal cake was about the most admired. It stood twenty feet high from the floor and was composed of light tiers highly decorated with designs symbolical of good luck. A series of shields of white satin, bearing the initials of the bride and bridegroom, added much to the pretty design on which the cake had been worked.



A WEDDING PHOTOGRAPH OF MR. & MRS. D. R. WIJWARDENE

It was the handiwork of S. M. D. Perera, the wellknown cakemaker of Colombo.

“The bridegroom’s party was received by Meedeniya Dissawa and his Kumarihamy and shortly after a party of seventy-five sat down to breakfast, among the guests being Mr. H. A. Burden, Assistant Government Agent of the Province, Mrs. Burden and Miss Burden. The ‘poruwa’ ceremony was timed for 2.52 p.m., the lucky hour, and all present assembled in the ‘Magul Maduwa’ in the midst of which stood the ‘Magul Poruwa’, a beautiful production of Kandyan Art. On the floor of this stage was spread a quantity of country rice, and on it some flowers were placed, while all round were arranged a number of Sinhalese sweet-meats, including oil cakes, milk-rice, ripe plantains, betel and coconuts.

“A few minutes before the appointed time, the bride who had changed into her bridal dress after breakfast, was conducted to the hall by her mother, and punctually at 2.52 o’clock, the bride and bridegroom entered the ‘poruwa’, and as they did so one of the men split open a coconut with a loud noise. The master of ceremonies, Mr. R. Dullewe, then entered the ‘poruwa’. After the bridegroom had presented the bride with a cloth and jacket, and placed a gold chain round her neck, the master of ceremonies proceeded to tie the right hand thumbs of the bride and bridegroom together with a golden thread. He next poured water on the hands out of a silver urn during which a party of men chanted the Jayamangala Gathas. The bride next knelt before the bridegroom and they exchanged salutations in oriental fashion. She proceeded to

do the same to her mother and father, after which the bridegroom followed suit. That was all the ceremony, and the bride and bridegroom were next besieged by the assembled guests and felicitations were showered on them.

“Mr. H. A. Burden, A. G. A., then proceeded to perform the civil rites. He went through the ceremony as set out in the Marriage Registration Ordinance, after which the register was signed and attested, the witnesses being Mr. J. W. Maduwanwala, Ratemahatmaya, and Captain E. W. Jayawardene. The bride and bridegroom then cut the cake, the latter’s sword being utilised for the purpose, and cake and champagne were passed round freely.

“Mr. Burden proposed the toast of the bride and bridegroom. He said that they had now come to a part of the proceedings which was more unofficial than the rest of the proceedings and that they would agree with him that it was a more pleasant task than the official part. Personally, until he had come there that day, he had not met the bridegroom but it was easy for anyone who knew the bride’s parents to deduce that the bridegroom was as good as themselves. That day his acquaintance with the bridegroom had been extended, and he was sure that they would all join him in wishing the best of good luck and a very happy married life.

“As regards the bride, his feelings were far more personal. No one who had been in charge of the Kegalle District had failed to estimate Meedeniya Dissawa at his true worth and they had all felt that it was only with a man like him that it was possible to



E. W. JAYAWARDENE, K.C.

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work that district. Through the Dissawa he (the speaker) had made the acquaintance of Mrs. Meedeniya and it was unnecessary for him to tell them in what esteem she was held by all of them. Through the parents one got to know the children, and the congratulations they had offered to the bridegroom were redoubled in her case. He concluded by wishing the bride and bridegroom health, wealth and happiness.

“The bridegroom in reply said he had hoped the quietness of the function would have saved his inflicting a speech on them but Mr. Burden had referred to him and his wife in such agreeable terms that he could not but thank him. He also thanked those present for the hearty manner in which they had received the toast. He wished to express the pride and pleasure he felt to see so many friends around them that day.

“The Dissawa also briefly thanked the A. G. A. for the very kind words which had been said of him, and which, he believed, he did not deserve.

“After this a most enjoyable time was spent by all present till the departure of the newly married couple.

“The bride was attired in Kandyan costume of white satin richly worked in gold. She wore a tulle veil over a coronet of orange blossoms and carried a pretty shower bouquet”.

Wijewardene had a great affection for his father-in-law, the Adigar, who often spent a day or two with his daughter's family when he made a trip to Colombo from Ruanwella. The two men would have long discussions at the dinner table on current events, with

one or more of the children listening, sleepy-eyed but deeply engrossed in their talk. When Meedeniya Adigar died, Wijewardene spared no pains in giving him a funeral in accordance with the ancient customs befitting the obsequies of a Sinhalese chieftain of high rank.

After their marriage the Wijewardenes lived for a time at Rickman House, the building in Galle Face since transformed to house the air-conditioned American Chancery. The house was old and the sea air ruined the books in the library and spoiled the furniture in the drawing room. It belonged to the family and Richard's mother moved into it later after extensive alterations had been carried out. During one of his visits to Ceylon, Rabindranath Tagore, the Indian poet, was a guest of Mrs. Wijewardene, Snr, at Rickman House. Wijewardene's next home was in De Saram Place close to the *Daily News* printing works in 2nd Division Maradana. From there a rickshaw took him to his place of business in a few minutes.

In later years he bought, from his brother Edmund, a house with a large garden, in Braybrooke Place. Although it was situated in an industrial area the premises were insulated by a high wall. There was enough ground there for the children to play, for Ruby Wijewardene's dogs and a small dairy. The two-storeyed house, which was called Warrington, was spacious and was constantly added to. Here the Wijewardenes entertained and "D.R." received, in the seclusion of his study, important persons who did not wish to be seen in confidential conversation with a newspaper proprietor in his office.

Ruby Wijewardene was a vivacious and attractive woman with excellent taste, a gracious hostess who charmed her guests with her youthful humour and forthright remarks. But she was unaffected and, one may even say, unassuming. Her passionate love of animals brought her very close to the Buddhist belief in the sanctity of all animate life. This attitude to dumb animals resulted in the Wijewardene house becoming a refuge for destitute cats and dogs for whom she was later to found a special 'home' when their numbers became unwieldy.

The house and garden in Colombo and, later, the property in Diyatalawa, were the only 'hobbies' Wijewardene allowed himself. He justified the time and money lavished on them by saying that he spent on these what others in a similar position would spend on horse-racing or at their clubs, both of which he had renounced when he started on his career as newspaper proprietor.

His fine collection of antique furniture was chosen piece by piece. Many of these were brought late in the evenings, after office hours, by an old man nick-named 'Dutchy.' They were real antiques—dusty, chipped and neglected, and the children would groan every time 'Dutchy' arrived with his *kabal badu* (old junk). But Wijewardene bought them and, with the help of carpenters and polishers, transformed them into the beautiful and typical pieces which graced his home. It was the same urge for perfection which took him each morning after breakfast to the garden to supervise every detail of the work done by the gardeners. Often in the evenings, after dinner, he would surround himself

with seed catalogues, and members of the family were summoned to help him choose flower seeds.

Wijewardene bought the beautiful house and estate called Arcadia which had belonged to Mr. G. M. Crabbe, a well-known tea planter and visiting agent. He had seen the property ten years earlier during a holiday in Diyatalawa and doubtless felt that it could be an ideal country house for a busy man in search of rest and recuperation, situated as it was amidst enchanting scenery with an incomparable climate. When it became his own, he was swept by such a passion to develop the place that not only his family but his close friends were carried away by it. Architects, landscape gardeners, engineers and garden lovers were continually accompanying him to Arcadia on those rare week-ends he snatched from his labours at Lake House and the days passed in a whirl of digging, planting, building and breaking until Arcadia as he left it, with its rock-gardens, pools and wild garden, emerged.

When he had put the house in order and the garden was laid out to his satisfaction, he enjoyed nothing more than playing host to the friends and relations he invited. During the visit of the Commission on the Ceylon Constitution of 1944, its Chairman, Lord Soulbury, and the two other members, Sir Frederick Rees and Sir Frederick Burrows, spent a week-end with Wijewardene at Arcadia as his guests and, round a rustic table among the pines, the foundation of the Soulbury Report, which led the way to political independence, was laid. A few weeks later Wijewardene had the first attack of the illness which brought about his death five years after.

The Wijewardenes had two sons and three daughters. The elder son founded a flourishing business of his own. Ranjit, the younger son, went up to Peterhouse, Cambridge, like his father, with a view to following in the father's footsteps as a newspaper proprietor. The three daughters married C. E. L. Wickremasinghe, G. B. S. Gomes and L. C. Gooneratne, respectively, all of whom joined the business of the Associated Newspapers of Ceylon, Limited, the company which owned Wijewardene's newspaper interests.

Wijewardene did not spend a great deal of his time outside home and office. He liked to be with his family or browsing among the books in his library or looking into his personal affairs when the calls of business did not keep him in the office. He was a member of the Orient Club, and in his younger days went there to see friends like J. W. de Silva who were well-informed on political matters and had proved to be sound advisers. But he had no wish to meet people whom his newspapers were obliged to criticise, or to furnish explanations to all and sundry as to why a particular article or news item was published in one or other of his newspapers. After he had given up horse-riding as a form of exercise he took a daily constitutional, walking in Victoria Park in the company of other regular walkers like Sir Mohamed Macan Markar, Sir Gerard Wijeyekoon or A. R. H. Canekeratne. It was not an exciting life but it was not an inappropriate one for a man who, over a period of years, wielded great power without ever forgetting that its exercise called for a high degree of responsibility.

ARUNACHALAM AND JAMES PEIRIS

THE aftermath of the civil disturbances of 1915 set the course and the pace for the reform movement in Ceylon. The two men who blazed the trail which led to self-government were undoubtedly Sir Ponnambalam Arunachalam and Sir James Peiris. Both of them had had distinguished scholastic careers at Cambridge University and they were conservative by nature. They were already elderly men when they entered the field to strive against Colonial rule, and in Wijewardene they found a companion and helper very much after their hearts.

Both Arunachalam and Peiris had influential friends among the ruling circles in England. As the nephew of Sir Muttu Coomaraswamy, Arunachalam was welcomed in the household of Monckton-Milnes and later kept up a correspondence with his son the Marquis of Crewe, who held high office in Liberal administrations early in the century.

A man of aristocratic bearing and temper, Arunachalam did not have the capacity to suffer fools gladly, or the gift of compromise so essential for a successful politician. He had been a bureaucrat himself, though kept out of the highest offices in the Government

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SIR PONNAMBALAM ARUNACHALAM

because he did not belong to the ruling race. His outstanding qualities could not, however, be overlooked and he was nominated by the Governor to the Legislative and Executive Councils. At a meeting of the Legislative Council he once walked up to the Governor, who was presiding, and obtained permission to withhold his vote on a measure on which his views did not coincide with those of the Government.

Sir James Peiris, who succeeded Sir Ponnambalam as President of the Ceylon National Congress, never held any office under the Government through his long and distinguished career. He had had a liberal education and possessed the Roman virtues. He was religious, respecting human relationships, tradition, authority and the pledged word. He had a responsible cast of mind (*gravitas*) which assigns importance to important things. Someone in Whitehall compared him to Mr. de Valera, then a rebel leader, but it was an inept comparison, for he carried moderation and understatement to a fault. He was always able to keep political and personal relationships apart. He once presided over a public meeting to protest against the Excise policy of the Government of the day, at which harsh things were said against the Governor, Sir Henry McCallum. A few days before the meeting he was dining with the Governor who chaffed him and asked him whether they were going to have toddy at the demonstration. A day or two after the meeting, James Peiris was standing before a collection of bottles of sauce and chutney at the All-Ceylon Industries Exhibition held at the Victoria Park of Colombo. He felt a gentle tap on the shoulder. Turning round he

saw Sir Henry McCallum who asked him—"Is that Peiris's hot sauce?"

In his political tactics he was a Fabian. He made no demands for independence. He wanted responsible government "always within the British Empire". As late as 1928, when he gave evidence before the Donoughmore Commission, he said that the country was not yet fit for self-government. But his contribution to the final result, when it was achieved, was substantial.

Wijewardene organised a dinner in honour of James Peiris on the eve of the latter's departure for England towards the end of 1922—a few years before they split over the University site controversy—to press Ceylon's claim for constitutional reform. The speakers included Sir Ponnambalam Ramanathan, Mr. Allan Driberg and Mr. H. J. C. Pereira. At the end of his own speech, Sir James said: "It will not be out of place if I express a word of thanks to my friend D. R. Wijewardene. He has been instrumental in getting up this demonstration. Mr. Wijewardene has worked with me for a very long time in connection with the National Association and other bodies, and I know the untiring way in which he does any work that is committed to him. And I wish to acknowledge the loyal and intelligent support which his newspaper has given to the Members of the Council and the good work that his paper has done in the cause of reform".

The reform movement did not start within the Legislative Council. Neither Arunachalam nor James Peiris were members of the Council when the National Congress was formed. The Council in those days was

presided over by the Governor and it had an Official majority. Most of the Unofficial members too were nominated by the Governor to represent the different racial groups in the island. The Legislative Council met to give formal sanction to Government measures, discuss the Budget and ventilate grievances. Every meeting was something of a State occasion. The Governor and most Official and Unofficial members wore black or grey morning coats. The Kandyan members wore their ceremonial dress (*tuppotti*), the Tamil members their buttoned-up long coats and turbans, and the Muslim members formal European dress with the addition of the red fez cap.

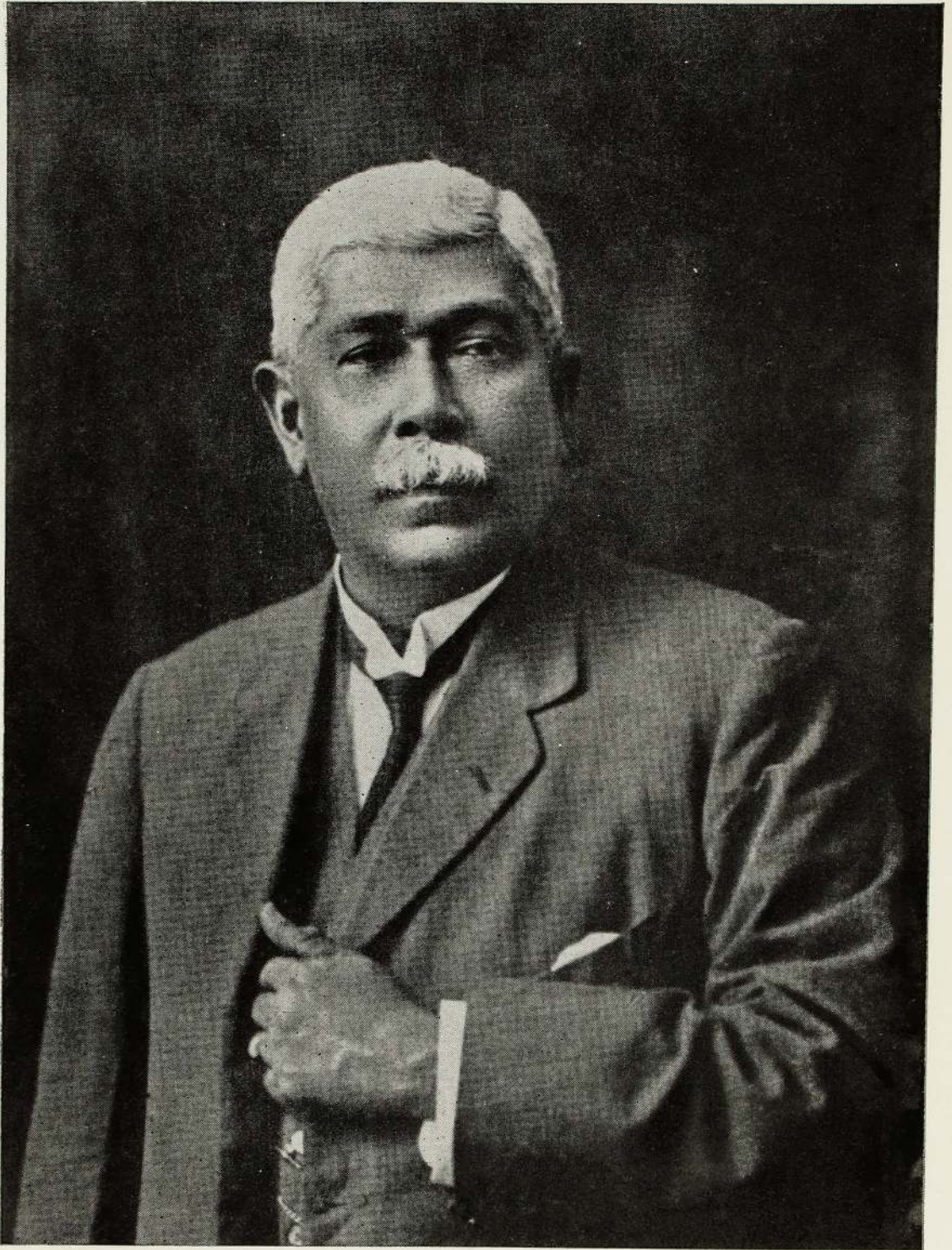
Reference has been made in an earlier chapter to the letter which James Peiris wrote in December 1908 to the Under Secretary of State for the Colonies on the political situation in Ceylon, at the latter's request. He had pointed out that, during seventy-five years, the only change that had been made in the constitution of the Ceylon Legislative Council was the addition of two Unofficial nominated members to represent the Kandyan and Mohammedan communities, respectively. Meanwhile, the population had increased fourfold and the Government revenue almost ninefold. "There are", he had said, "two reforms which are urgently needed to make the Legislative Council better suited to the present requirements of the Colony. They are the abolition of the system of racial representation and the introduction of the elective principle in the place of nomination". James Peiris pleaded that the people be given a voice in the government of the country and added that "it is not good policy to wait for a

general agitation in the country—and there are signs that such an agitation is commencing—before granting a reform which has been necessitated by the very changes which the English Government itself has initiated.”

Nine years passed, and there was little to show for the agitation by the advocates of reform. The memorials to the Secretary of State and deputations to Downing Street had produced the so-called Educated Ceylonese seat and scarcely anything more. It is interesting to note, in view of subsequent controversies on communal representation, that the memorial presented in 1909 to the Secretary of State for the Colonies by the Jaffna Association included among its five demands one which said that “excepting two or three seats that may be reserved for nomination by the Governor for the representation of minorities, all the Unofficial seats be filled by popular election and that provincial be substituted for racial representation.”

Wijewardene, who was a very active Secretary of the National Association, was behind the scenes of the efforts made to secure further reforms. The present writer, fresh from school, joined him at this time as a very junior journalist on his newspaper and a sort of personal private secretary. He often drafted the minutes of the meetings of the National Association and its committees, and accompanied Wijewardene to informal meetings of the leaders of the reform movement.

The launching of the new drive can be described in Wijewardene's own words :



SIR JAMES PEIRIS

“The National Association now galvanised into life continued to take an active interest in all political events of the day. Frequent meetings were held, memoranda drafted, memorials sent to the Secretary of State, and, when occasion demanded, public meetings were held.

“The man who gave much-needed direction and drive during the next phase, was just emerging into a public career. Sir Ponnambalam Arunachalam had shone brilliantly as a Civil Servant. He was a scholar, philosopher and proved administrator. He had now divested himself of his official habiliments and was looking round for an opportunity for service in a different field, under freer conditions. I persuaded him to deliver his epoch-making address on ‘Our Political Needs’ at a meeting of the National Association. That address was both a starting point and a blue print for the important constitutional changes which followed, and was listened to by a large audience at the Victoria Memorial Hall”.

The immediate outcome of the meeting, held on 2nd April 1917, was the formation of the Ceylon Reform League for the sole purpose of putting forward the case for a substantial measure of responsible government for Ceylon. Wijewardene was joint Secretary with W. A. de Silva. Sir Ponnambalam Arunachalam was President and his habit of visiting the League’s offices regularly and putting in a day’s work was an admirable example to his younger collaborators.

Intensely loyal to the Crown and ardent admirer of British institutions though he was, Arunachalam did not mince words in his criticism of the system under

which Ceylon was then governed. In his address he used such sentences as the following :

“The inherent evils of a Crown Colony administration remain. We are deprived of all power and responsibility, our powers and capacities are dwarfed and stunted, we live in an atmosphere of inferiority, and we can never rise to the full height to which our manhood is capable of rising. We have hypnotised ourselves to thinking that we are weak and inferior. . . .

“We are thus practically under a benevolent despotism wielded by a Governor who is responsible only to Downing Street ; and he exercises his powers through a bureaucracy predominantly European. . . .

“Colombo, one of the world’s greatest ports, is ill provided with means to help ships in distress and has seen large steamers sink in sight of her harbour. The city is a nest of foul slums and misery, and the abode of plague and tuberculosis. Malaria, which modern science has shown can be mastered, claims its victims throughout the island by tens of thousands. The conditions of labour are a scandal. While every civilised state is grappling boldly with drink, and putting it down, here its clutch is growing tighter. . . .

“We are exploited by European nations, and now also by Japan and America. We have become their milch-cow. Much of our wealth goes abroad. What is left imparts an air of prosperity to the professional and commercial classes. The real makers of the country’s wealth—the peasant and the labourer—are steeped in poverty. . . .

“The Legislative Council, as it is at present constituted, hardly answers a useful purpose. It provides, no doubt, seats of honour to a few Unofficials and an arena for their eloquence or for their silence. But they are little more than advisory members, and their presence on the Council serves to conceal the autocracy under which we live. . . .

“The swaddling-clothes of a Crown Colony administration are strangling us. They have begun even to disturb the equanimity of our European fellow-subjects. None are safe until all are safe. . . .

“There has been no real attempt to train the people in self-government. . . .

“We ask to be in our own country what other self-respecting people are in theirs—self-governing, strong, respected at home and abroad ; and we ask for the grant at once of a definite measure of progressive advance towards that goal. Ceylon is no pauper begging for alms. She is claiming her heritage. . . .”

During the next three years Arunachalam succeeded in stimulating the liberal forces in the country to take an active interest in the political future of the island. Wijewardene assisted him in organising two National Conferences before the Ceylon National Congress was founded at a meeting held on the 11th December 1919. In his presidential address Arunachalam said : “To me the Congress is the fulfilment of dreams cherished from the time I was an undergraduate at Cambridge”. He recognised Wijewardene’s help when, at the end of an important speech at a public meeting, he said that the Secretary of the National Association “worked

silently and unostentatiously but was dynamic, like a process of nature.”

Arunachalam was succeeded in the office of Congress President by James Peiris. Wijewardene had co-operated with Mr. Peiris in founding the Ceylon Social Service League of which he was elected as one of the two secretaries in 1914. It is interesting to recall that the first object of the League was “to bring home to the educated and wealthy classes of the community their obligations to serve those who are less favourably circumstanced than themselves.”

A great deal had been achieved for the political emancipation of Ceylon before Arunachalam's death in 1924 but, as a later chapter will endeavour to show, there occurred a parting of the ways of the two elder statesmen as they were within sight of the goal, and even Wijewardene, who was now exerting an increasing influence on public affairs as a successful newspaper proprietor, could not bring them together.

POLITICIANS WITHOUT POWER

IN and outside the Legislative Council, there was quickened political activity in the years following the disturbances of 1915. Two members of the Council, in particular, stood out as champions of popular rights and protectors of the public against official excesses. The most courageous and eloquent was Sir Ponnambalam Ramanathan (Arunachalam's brother) who fought, inch by inch, as it were, every step taken by the Government to whitewash the mistakes of its officials and give a varnish of legality to arbitrary acts.

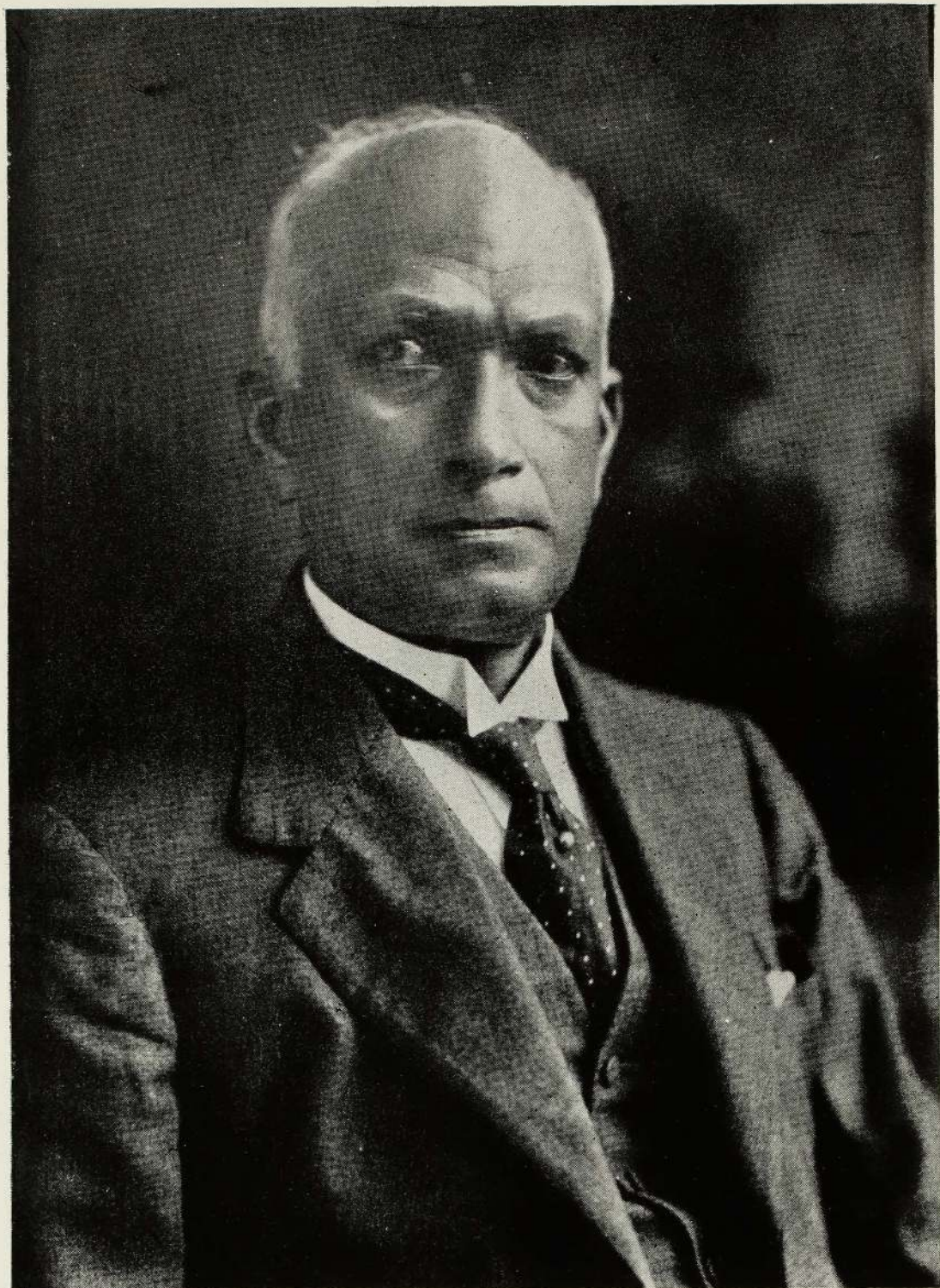
Across the floor of the Council he was pitted against the Governor himself and some of his ablest officials, notably the Attorney-General, Anton Bertram, who was an impressive speaker and had been in his day President of the Cambridge Union Society. It was Bertram who described Herbert Dowbiggin, the Inspector-General of Police against whom many of Ramanathan's barbs were aimed, as "the brightest ornament of the Public Service".

Ramanathan was often aided by Harry Creasy, an English solicitor and partner of the legal firm of Julius and Creasy. Creasy had been elected to one of the

two seats in the Council representing the Europeans. It required great courage on his part to attack the Government for conduct which was approved by a majority of his own community. Some of the acts vehemently condemned by Ramanathan had in fact been committed by European planters and merchants in the belief that they were carrying out instructions and helping to restore law and order. But Creasy refused to condone them. He had grown up in a Liberal tradition. He was the son of Sir Edward Creasy, author of "Fifteen Decisive Battles of History" and a former Chief Justice of Ceylon.

Dr. H. M. (later Sir Marcus) Fernando, who had been nominated in January 1917 to one of the two seats in the Council representing the Low Country Sinhalese, was another of Sir Ponnambalam Ramanathan's sturdy supporters. He had been the unsuccessful contender against Ramanathan for the so-called educated Ceylonese seat in the Council. He was a highly-qualified physician and had had a brilliant career in the Government service. He had a powerful intellect and could master the intricacies of any complicated matter with ease. He was an expert agriculturist and was a member of the Banking Commission whose recommendations resulted in the establishment of the Bank of Ceylon.

As a politician Dr. Fernando was somewhat of a reactionary and did not entertain a high opinion of the practical ability of his countrymen in general. As a member of the Governor's Executive Council he was able later to render important services of which the public was not always aware. Wijewardene had a



SIR MARCUS FERNANDO



great admiration for him, which was no doubt reciprocated, but they usually found themselves in opposite camps both in politics and in journalism.

Outside the Legislative Council the campaign for the appointment of a Royal Commission on the Government's conduct, following the 1915 riots, was pursued with unflagging vigour. E. W. Perera abandoned a promising career at the Bar to undertake the task of canvassing support among Members of Parliament and the Press in England. The war was still on and the German submarine menace made the voyage perilous. With great difficulty Mr. Perera was able to get a steamer passage under war conditions, and it is said that when he left the shores of Ceylon he carried the draft of the public memorial which he was to present to the Secretary of State in his shoes for fear that it would be discovered and confiscated by the Police. Mr. Perera's mission was a success to the extent that Sir John Anderson was sent to Ceylon to replace Sir Robert Chalmers with instructions to inquire and report to His Majesty's Government.

Mr. Perera was the son of Edward Perera of Kotte, a well known proctor practising in Colombo. He was a student of history and wrote an interesting monograph on Sinhalese Flags. He was a member of the Legislative Council and, later, of the State Council. A fearless and upright politician, he was not a good team-worker and was rather uncompromising in his views. Differences with the National Congress made him join the Liberal Party. The new party had been started to oppose the introduction of an income tax and had a brief existence. E. W. Perera was always a

close friend of Wijewardene, and in his retirement continued to see him and talk of old times.

A man who had considerable influence on the politics of his time was D. B. (later Sir Baron) Jayatilaka. He had his early education at the Vidyalankara Pirivena at Kelaniya, going on from there to Wesley College, Colombo. He was for a time principal of Ananda College. He took his degree at Oxford University, became a barrister and practised as an advocate. A leading oriental scholar, Jayatilaka wrote a clear style in Sinhalese which has hardly been matched in recent times. He had a sound knowledge of politics and was an effective speaker both in English and Sinhalese.

He was recognised as the chief layman among the Buddhists and was respected by the priesthood as such. Upon his election to the Legislative Council, Jayatilaka made his presence felt at once and, when the State Council came into existence, was elected Home Minister, Vice-Chairman of the Board of Ministers and Leader of the House.

Throughout the agitation for responsible government, Sir Baron Jayatilaka played a leading role. He was also President of the Royal Asiatic Society, of the Young Men's Buddhist Association and other public bodies. In company with D. R. Wijewardene he took a leading part in the movement for the establishment of a residential University in Kandy. He was a frequent contributor to the daily Sinhalese newspaper, the *Dinamina*, and was in fact largely responsible for its early success. Sir Baron was Ceylon's first official representative in India. He fell ill in Delhi and died



SIR BARON JAYATILAKA

in the aeroplane which was bringing him back to Ceylon.

Through much of his political life Jayatilaka was associated with the Senanayake brothers who, like Wijewardene himself, but unlike the ex-schoolmaster, were wealthy land owners. F. R. Senanayake had married the daughter of Mudaliyar D. C. G. Attygalle, owner of rich plumbago mines and estates. He was a barrister who did not find it necessary to earn a living by practice of the law, but he had many lawyer friends, including Lord Alverstone, a Chief Justice of England, after whom he named his Nuwara Eliya house. A man of attractive ways, straightforward, generous and courageous, he did not live to see the results of his efforts. He died in Calcutta in 1925 after an operation for appendicitis. His brother "D. S." was Ceylon's first Prime Minister and his own son "R. G." was Minister of Commerce in two Governments. Dudley Senanayake, Ceylon's second Prime Minister was his nephew, and Sir John Kotelawala, the third Prime Minister, was his wife's nephew.

It was of course D. S. Senanayake, the horny-handed son of toil of the family, who did most to alter the course of history in Ceylon. He was educated at St. Thomas' College but did not pass any examinations of note. While still in his teens, he started work as an agriculturist and manager of plumbago mines. When the time came, his masterly strategy breached the last barriers against self-government, and he himself became the first Prime Minister of an independent Ceylon.

To the end of his life, Wijewardene was a close friend of Senanayake. Although there were occasional

differences of opinion on public matters, Wijewardene's newspapers were of the greatest use to Senanayake in his political work. The name of D. S. Senanayake must necessarily occur many times in the ensuing pages.

A man who had perhaps the greatest influence on the political leaders of his time was E. J. Samerawickreme K.C., a great nationalist and devout Roman Catholic. He had a busy practice as a lawyer, but with no thought of reward he did much of the hard work in putting forward the case for constitutional reform, gave invaluable advice, composed differences among others, spoke no ill of any man and was in fact the keeper of the conscience of the national movement.

There is no public memorial to "E. J. S." As editor of Wijewardene's chief newspaper for seventeen years, I owed him a debt which I cannot repay. I always went to him with my difficulties. When he died, a clear and steady light went out in the public life of the country.

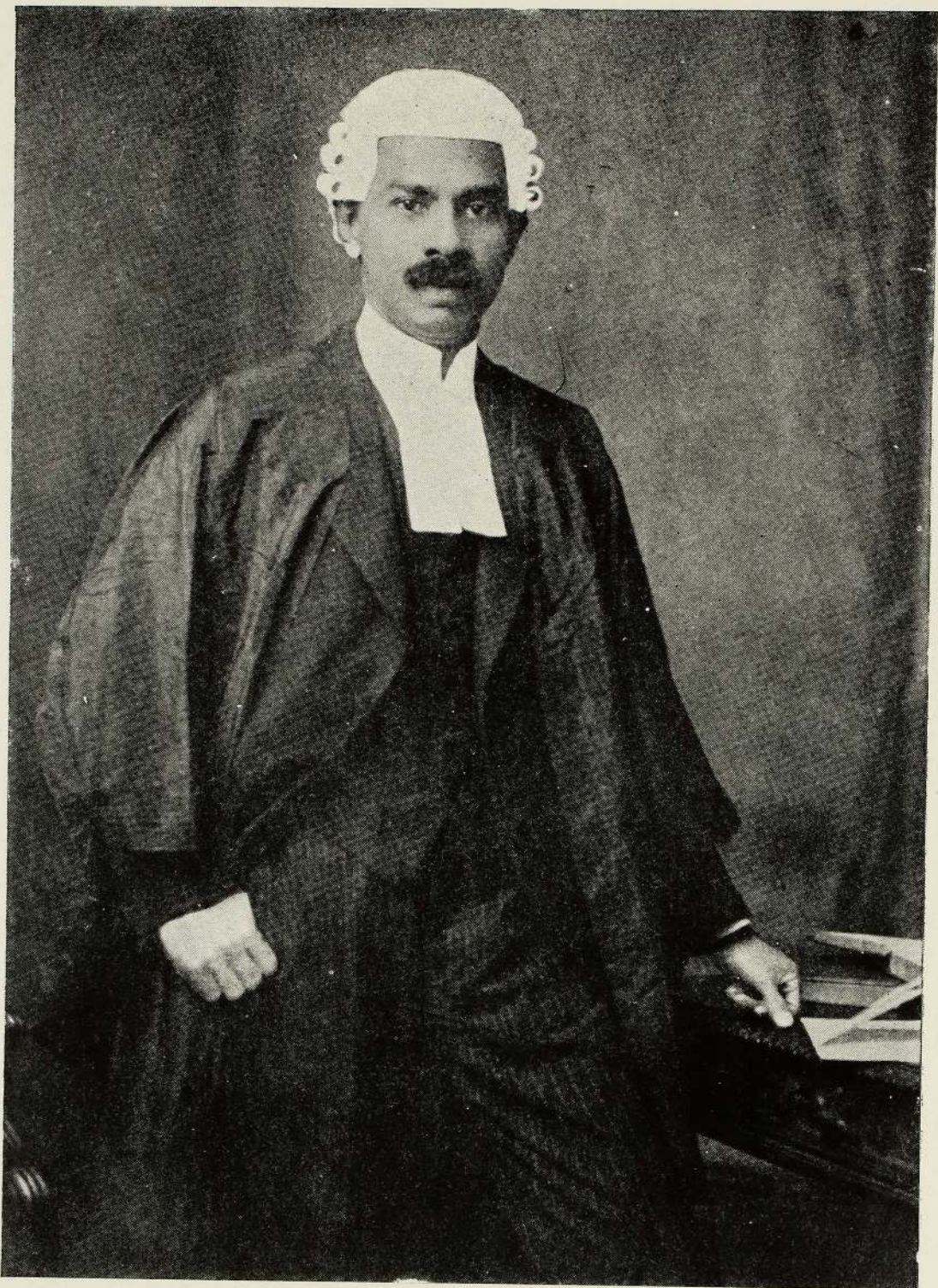
I often received from him such letters as the following :

28th February, 1940.

Dear Mr. Hulugalle,

Please allow me to lend a hand to the Ministers and the State Council, by giving room in tomorrow's issue of your paper to the letter sent herewith.

Yours sincerely,
E. J. Samerawickreme.



E. J. SAMERAWICKRAME, K.C.

6th March, 1940.

Dear Mr. Hulugalle,

Your editorial is a splendid selection and arrangement of the salient points. I drafted a letter to be sent to the Press, but as the debate will probably be over before it can appear, I am sending it to you to use it otherwise. It may be used as part of a Councillor's speech or be shown to a few of them or used in any other way that may occur to you.

Yours sincerely,
E. J. Samerawickreme.

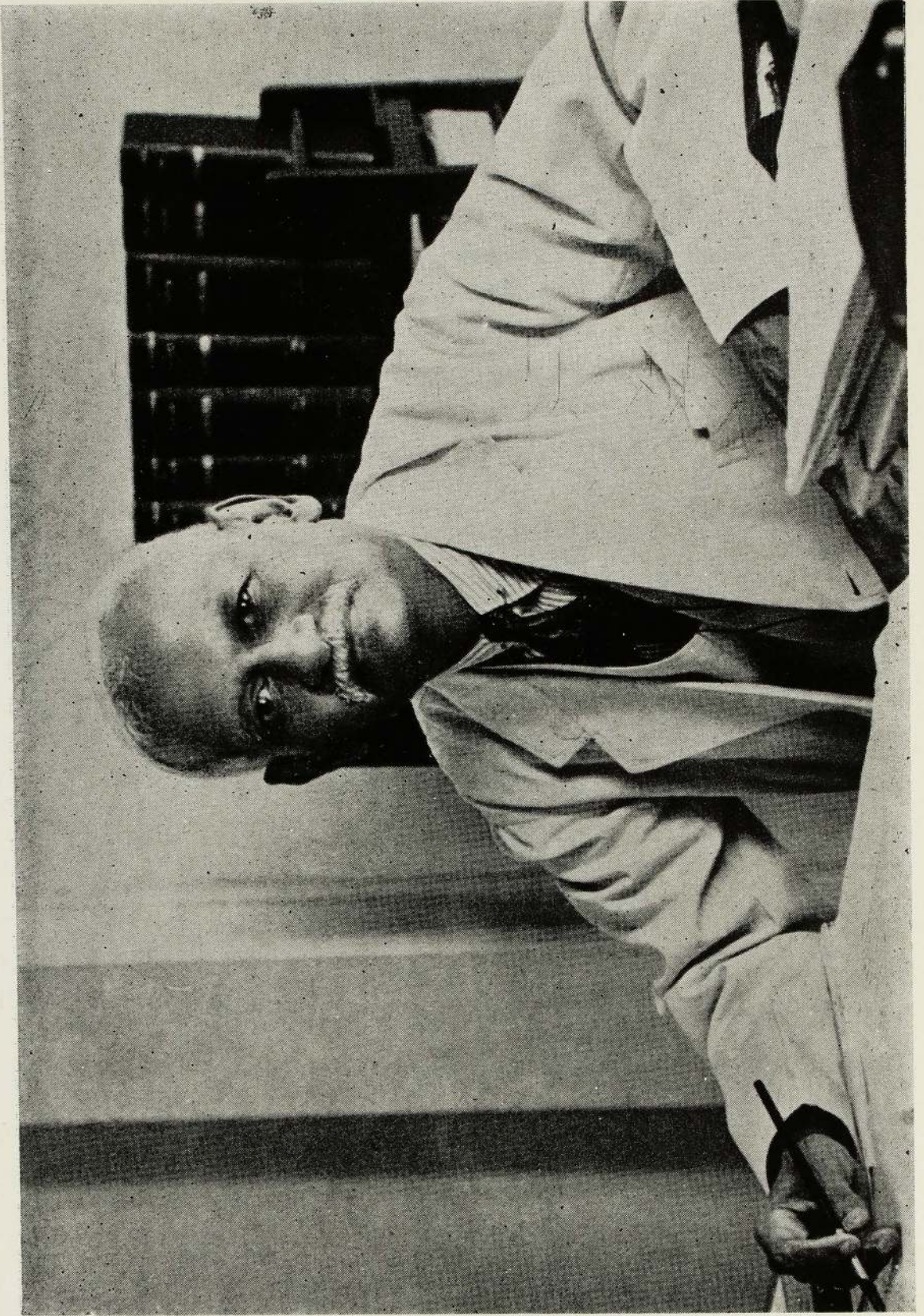
Wijewardene wrote, in recounting the story of the first twenty five years of the *Ceylon Daily News*: "One of the best features of the paper for many years were the occasional and well-timed letters signed 'E. J. S.' Mr. Samerawickreme's influence on Ceylon politics was unobtrusive but unfailing and real. He was guide, philosopher and friend of the paper till the very last days of his life".

Another man with strong national sentiment and many cultural interests was W. A. de Silva, who was co-Secretary of the Reform League with Wijewardene. He was a pioneer rubber planter, a scholar greatly interested in all forms of learning, a book-collector with the finest private library in Ceylon, a generous supporter of all good causes and a keen Buddhist. He entertained prominent visitors to the Island in his palatial house "Sravasti". Among them were Rabindranath Tagore and Mahatma Gandhi and Members of Parliament who had helped Ceylon, like

the Labour M.P., Colonel Josiah Wedgewood. Mr. de Silva was respected for his moderation and sincerity. He was successively a member of the Legislative Council and of the State Council, and was for a few years Minister of Health.

It would not be possible to mention here the names of all those who played an active part in the reform movement. They were not all agreed on what reforms should be introduced. Some were for a half-way house while others wanted full independence. Some wanted communal representation while others were uncompromising in the demand for territorial representation. But they were all agreed that some measure of reform was urgently needed.

One who can cast his mind back over forty years will remember the names of a large number of men of ability and seriousness who gave their support to Arunachalam, Ramanathan, James Peiris, Jayatilaka and D. S. Senanayake in their campaign for political reform. They belonged to all races and religions in the island and they came from Colombo and the provinces. There was, for example, George Wille, a good scholar and effective public speaker, who took a keen interest in social work and the improvement of labour conditions ; C. E. Corea from Chilaw, a fearless and uncompromising nationalist ; Francis de Zoysa, willing to go to the political wilderness for his beliefs ; M. A. Arulanandam, steadfast and loyal to the cause of freedom ; and several others who distinguished themselves later either in politics or in the legal profession, among them C. W. W. Kannangara, George



W. A. DE SILVA

E. de Silva, A. Mahadeva and M. T. de S. Amarasekera. While the legal profession in Colombo and the provinces made the greatest contribution to the national movement it held no monopoly. Buddhist priests had not yet embarked on political careers but Christian priests like the Methodist Rev. John Simon de Silva and the Anglican Canon Boteju lent a hand. Among the doctors who figured in the same ranks were two members of the Colombo Municipal Council who never forfeited the confidence of the ratepayers, Dr. W. P. Rodrigo and Dr. E. V. Ratnam. The young and dynamic organiser of the Ceylon Labour Party was A. E. Goonesinha.

The names of many of these men are now forgotten. But they were all men of worth, fit to be members of any legislative assembly. They were tolerant, public-spirited and had faith in the future of the country.

PURCHASE OF A WRECK

IT is a modern paradox that, as the newspaper reading public in a country increases, the number of newspapers diminish. There are today fewer newspapers in London, New York or Colombo than there were forty years ago. The time has probably come when even a quixotic millionaire would hesitate before starting a daily paper unless it came from an established organisation. The capital cost involved is prohibitive, and the chances of success problematical.

In the newspaper business, money alone cannot buy success. Certain qualities of imagination and tenacity are required in the person or persons directing operations. Such qualities are uncommon in the requisite combination even among shrewd and enlightened men.

The chief interest of D. R. Wijewardene's career lies in the way he mastered a new craft, not from the first rungs, as did the present writer and several others who worked with him, but always from the top of the ladder; meanwhile balancing the financial burden of the enterprise and those idealistic urges in the fulfilment of which he became a newspaper owner.

Wijewardene began his new career by buying the goodwill and plant of a bankrupt newspaper with a

disappearing circulation. Thirty years later he gave to his successors half a dozen profitable newspapers, housed in an imposing building equipped with some of the best machinery that could be bought in any part of the world.

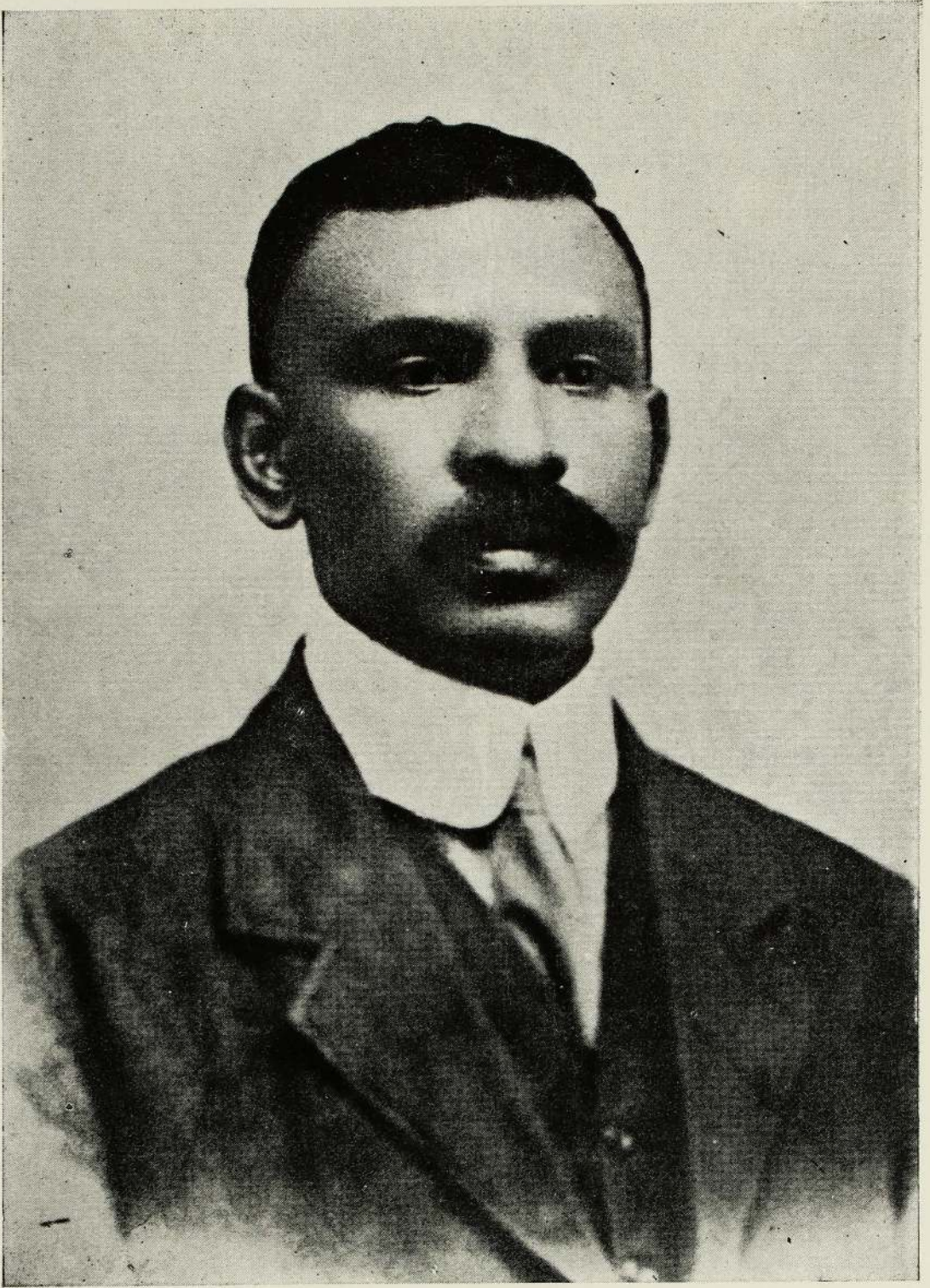
The *Ceylonese*, the newspaper whose goodwill and plant he acquired, was started in 1913 by Ponnambalam Ramanathan and a group of persons who supported his candidature in the election for the educated Ceylonese seat in the Legislative Council, notably Hector Jayawardene, a leading member of the Bar, his brother, Colonel T. G. Jayawardene, Dr. E. V. Ratnam and Mr. Francis de Zoysa. Ramanathan's opponent in the election, Dr. H. M. Fernando, was strongly supported by, and to a great degree inspired the policy of the *Ceylon Morning Leader*, a daily newspaper then owned by the de Soysa family with which he was connected by marriage. The *Morning Leader*, edited by Armand de Souza, continued to be hostile to Ramanathan. Many wealthy Ceylonese, who preferred Ramanathan's brand of democracy to Marcus Fernando's, subscribed the money required for the new venture in journalism.

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The first Manager of the *Ceylonese*, H. H. Marcus, and the first editor, Thayer, were Americans. Their methods of publicity, news presentation, sales promotion and reporting were distinctly American and contrasted strongly with the more conservative practices of Colombo newspapers modelled on English and Scottish journals of the day. The management of the *Ceylonese* sometimes hired a band to play in the premises to attract passing crowds.

For a time it looked as if the new paper would catch on. It had a vigorous policy and breezy style. It published a Sunday edition. The display of news stories was frequently sensational. But there were always too many cooks. Each of the directors thought that it was his duty to give orders to the editor. Shareholders claimed the right to have news items published or kept out when they were personally concerned. The income of the paper was never adequate to pay the expenses. Percival Deutrom, the last Manager of the *Ceylonese*, who wrote an account of the changeover from the *Ceylonese* to the *Daily News*, has said: "The degrading manner in which we had to collect money from advertisers to meet the daily needs had made the paper cheap and worthless in their eyes".

There was a succession of Editors in the few years of the existence of the *Ceylonese*. One of them, Lawrie Muttukrishna, also ran a shorthand and typewriting institute and was a hand-writing expert. He had a flamboyant style and was involved in many libel actions. To the defects of internal administration were added the difficulties of wartime censorship and the prohibitive cost of newsprint, ink, types and machinery. It was not surprising that the paper was moribund and groaning under a load of debt.

A writ was served on the company owning the paper by F. R. Senanayake for the recovery of Rs. 21,000, representing capital and interest of a loan he had made. It was at this stage that D. R. Wijewardene, at the time in uniform and mobilised as a Lieutenant of the Ceylon Light Infantry, and spending part of each day at the officers' mess, saw his opportunity.



F. R. SENANAYAKE

What followed may be described in his own words : “I decided to make an offer and went to the sale. F. R. Senanayake and his brother ‘D. S.’ arrived shortly afterwards, and as they were in a hurry to keep an appointment elsewhere, ‘F. R.’ asked me to bid up to Rs. 21,000, the amount of his writ. I was in an embarrassing position, when I found that the bidding was not lively, and the best offer was Rs. 15,000. I bought the paper, including plant and goodwill, for Rs. 16,000 and in addition paid ‘F. R.’ a cheque for the difference between the purchase price and the amount of the mortgage. Many people shook their heads and said that another man was preparing to walk the streets”.

The *Ceylonese* was housed in a property known as Tichborne Hall in Maradana, almost opposite the Ananda College. The building had been occupied some years before by a girls’ school known as Sanghamitta College and it was said to be haunted by the ghost of a former principal who had committed suicide there. The editorial and managerial offices and paper store were in one section which must have been built as someone’s bungalow when Maradana was a residential area of the city. The printing works were in a badly-ventilated barrack with a corrugated iron roof.

Wijewardene had no doubt made a bargain by buying a newspaper and plant for Rs. 21,000 ; for, during the war, it would have cost many times that sum to buy any printing machinery. From the point of view of efficiency, however, everything was wrong. The premises were unsuitable, the machinery inadequate, the staff incompetent and the location of the business

was such as to discourage advertisers. Before Wijewardene could produce the kind of newspaper he had in mind, it became increasingly clear to him, a great deal of work had to be done and much money sunk in the new venture. He accepted the challenge and did not quail before it. He made up his mind to learn his job slowly and surely and to find the money.

JOURNALISM IN CEYLON

THERE were of course many influential and profitable newspapers in Ceylon before Wijewardene started the *Daily News*. There were also outstanding newspaper men who, in their time, wielded considerable power.

Wijewardene was singular in the skilful way in which he brought about the transition from limited circulations to mass production. When he became a newspaper proprietor, readers were to be found mainly in Colombo and the provincial towns. Planters on estates received their papers a day or two after publication. The average daily sale of a paper did not exceed three or four thousand copies. When he died, newspapers were distributed to every nook and corner of the island, carried to their readers by the most modern means of transportation, including the aeroplane. The remarkable increase in literacy together with new methods of production and distribution sent up the circulations of newspapers by leaps and bounds. The *Dinamina* prints over 70,000 copies a day and the *Daily News* over 55,000 copies. Wijewardene was in fact fulfilling in Ceylon the same function which Northcliffe had set before himself in England a dozen years earlier.

When the *Daily News* was started there were in existence in Colombo four other daily newspapers published in English, namely, the *Times of Ceylon*, the *Observer*, the *Ceylon Morning Leader*, and the *Ceylon Independent*. The *Ceylon Observer*, which Wijewardene acquired in 1923, and the *Times of Ceylon*, are now both well over a hundred years old. What may be described as the first newspaper in the island was the *Government Gazette*, still going strong but so different from the *Gazette* of old whose contents included obituary notices recounting the virtues of departed ones, poetry of varied merit, and interesting and instructive communications on various subjects. Gradually, however, the publication discarded these embellishments and developed into the dull and prosaic weekly of today.

As the subject of this book was probably the most successful newspaper man produced by Ceylon, the inclusion of a brief history of journalism in the island in the present chapter would not be out of place. The era of newspapers independent of Government began with the arrival of Sir Robert Wilmot Horton as Governor of Ceylon in October 1831. Sir Robert was a politician. He had been an Under Secretary of State in England and had married the beautiful cousin of Lord Byron. It was said of him that he was never happy unless he had a newspaper controversy on his hands.

Within three months of Sir Robert's arrival, the *Colombo Journal* was published under Government auspices and with the encouragement of the Governor himself. It was printed at the Government Press and

edited by Mr. George Lee its Superintendent. Mr. Lee denied, however, that the *Journal* was a Government paper and that the Governor controlled him as Editor. He claimed that its profits covered expenses. Mr. Lee was assisted in the editorship by Mr. Henry Tuffnell, the Governor's Private Secretary and son-in-law. Sir Robert himself was a frequent contributor to the *Journal* and signed his articles "Timon," "Pro Bono Publico" and "Liber". Another contributor was the Treasurer, George Turnour, the gifted translator of the Mahawamsa. The paper was discontinued from the end of 1833, on the orders of the Government in London, after it had run for two years. The reason given was that the field should be left to private enterprise, but it can scarcely be doubted that the *Journal's* severe criticism of the authorities in London had more to do with the decision.

However, the field of private enterprise was soon occupied, as there was a clear demand for a free newspaper. The merchants of Colombo, Mr. G. Ackland and Mr. E. J. Darley among them, combined to start *The Observer and Commercial Advertiser*, which made its first appearance on the 4th February 1834. It is the newspaper which Wijewardene bought nearly 90 years later.

Colonel H. C. Byrde has described the state of expectation at the time: "I can well remember discussions in the Fort, for I had become associated with Messrs. G. Boyd, Ackland and others, and there were speculations as to getting up an exponent of public opinion, and how it was to be done, and who was to pay for it, and who would be Editor, and if it



was likely to pay, all of which resulted in the birth of the *Colombo Observer* under the editorship of the late Dr. Christopher Elliott who was, prior to this, stationed at Badulla as Assistant Colonial Surgeon, which appointment he resigned to come to Colombo”.

The new paper introduced itself to the public thus: “The first number is furnished gratis, inviting those who are inclined to favour a free Press to become subscribers....at 12 shillings a quarter. We appear before a public, fully aware of the difficulties we have to encounter, and from whom we hope for every indulgence, encouragement and support....

“Although we apprehend our type will not be the most pleasing to the sight just now, we trust ere long in that respect at least our paper will vie with any of its contemporaries. For the present we have availed ourselves of such material as could be spared by Government and a Missionary Society, who have kindly afforded what assistance we have required to enable us to commence at so early a period”.

The *Observer* attacked Sir Robert Wilmot Horton’s Government so relentlessly that a defence of the Administration was felt to be necessary. On the 3rd May 1837 appeared the first issue of the *Ceylon Chronicle* which was privately aided by the Governor and professedly “conducted by a Committee of Gentlemen”—the gentlemen being mainly of the Ceylon Civil Service. It was edited by the Rev. Samuel Owen Glenie, the Colonial Chaplain of St. Paul’s and afterwards Archdeacon of Colombo; but the Bishop objected to this partnership and Mr. Glenie retired, to be succeeded by Mr. George Lee who was

The Observer

AND

COMMERCIAL ADVERTISER.

Published on Tuesdays and Fridays.

(Price 12s. per quarter)

COLOMBO.
TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 4, 1834.

ADVERTISEMENTS by this paper will be charged according to the following scale.
Under Ten lines.....4d. per line
Above 12 & under 20.....3d. " "
Above 24 & under 40.....2d. " "
Half a Column.....10s. & 6d.
A Whole Column.....21s.
Second time of Advertisement two thirds, and the third time one half of the above prices, if printed on succeeding days of publication.
Parties engaging one half or a whole column by the month will meet with a liberal allowance for further particulars enquire at the Office No. 15, Chatham Street.

FOR SALE
At the Godowns of MESSRS. ACKLAND & BOYD
Rds. F. P.

London Particular Madeira in wood ... 600 " " Per Pipe
do do do in ... 400 " " " "
Bottle do do in ... 24 " " " "
do do Teneriffe Vidonia, coloured ... 400 " " " "
do do do in Bottle 13 4 " " " "
Cape Madeira, in wood ... 133 " " " "
do Hock do ... 50 " " " "
Houlston's Pale Ale, in wood ... 60 " " " "
do Ceylon Bottled 9 " " " "
do London Bottled 8 " " " "
London Bottled Porter & Stout 8 " " " "
Jona Jones' Chateau Lahitte)
do Leville) 24 " " " "
do St. Julien) 20 " " " "
do Old Chateau Margaux 12 " " " "
do Champagne 50 " " " "
Earlows Moselle 1. 28 " " " "
do Faintine ... 26 8 " " " "
Sherry in wood ... 300 " " " "
do do ... 150 " " " "
do Barlows ... 25 " " " "
do Cocchar's best London bottled ... 25 " " " "
do do and ... 20 " " " "
do Country bottled ... 20 " " " "
Port Wine, Barlows in quarts 28 " " " "
do do in pints ... 14 8 " " " "
do Hatson's, in quarts 25 " " " "
do from other Houses 22 " " " "
Sweet Pontac & Constantia in wood ... 60 " " " "
Noyaux and Frontignan ... 20 " " " "
Annette (in baskets containing 8 Bottles) ... 6 " " " "
Hoffman's Cherry Brandy ... 30 " " " "
Rum Shrub ... 24 " " " "
Genuine Highland Whisky ... 26 8 " " " "
do Cognac Brandy ... 22 " " " "
do Holland's Gin (in Boxes of 15 square) ... 35 " " " "
do do London bottled ... 20 " " " "
Ales
Chinchev Sugar Candy ... 30 " " " "
Preserved Ginger (in cases containing 4 jars) ... 23 " " " "
Salt Petre ... 25 " " " "
Bengal Pease ... 10 " " " "
English Flour ... 26 8 " " " "
Colomb 31st January 1834.

FOR SALE

At Mr. JAMES SMYTH'S King-Street, Fort, Rds. F. S. P. £. s. d.

English Ciarret ... Per doz. 50 " " 3 13 ..
Destourne do ... 20 " " 1 10 ..
Other Sorts do ... 12 " " 1 18 ..
Sauterne & Barsac ... 36 " " 2 5 ..
Bucellas ... 20 " " 1 10 ..
Johannesburg Rock ... 40 " " 3 " ..
Cape do ... 8 " " 1 16 ..
Muscat ... 24 " " 1 16 ..
Constantia (pints) ... 12 " " 1 18 ..
Old Port & Sherry quartal do do (pints) ... 26 8 " 2 " ..
L. P. Madeira do do ... 15 " " 1 2 ..
L. do 2 years in Bottles ... 24 " " 1 10 ..
L. do 2 years in Bottles ... 76 " " 1 4 ..
L. Teneriffe ... 12 " " 1 6 ..
Cape Madeira ... 8 " " 1 12 ..
Cognac Brandy ... 24 " " 1 16 ..
English Bottled Porter do do Pale & strong Ale ... 9 " " 1 3 ..
do do Pale & strong Ale ... 8 " " 1 2 ..

Ceylon Bottled Pale Ale .. 7 " " 10 6
Jamaica Rum .. 20 " " 1 10 0
Holland Gin .. 20 " " 1 10 0
Whiskey .. 32 " " 2 11 ..
White & Brown Vinegar .. 12 " " 1 18 ..
Dutch & Italian Cordials & Liqueurs per bottle ... 4 " " 6 ..
also a few Pipes of superior old L. P. Teneriffe per pipe 400 " " 30 ..
Colombo 31st January 1834.

FOR SALE.

J. J. CLAESSEN respectfully begs to acquaint the Ladies and Gentlemen of the Settlement that he has just opened a few packages of very Superior Goods, Comprising Ladies Fashionable Tippets, & Collars, Book and Jaconet worked Robes, Laces, Scalloped and Insertion Trimmings, Gentlemen's Superfine Drab & Black Hats, Striped Jeans, Stomonts, Satins, blue black Olive & Green Superfine Cloths, Black Blue & Green Lastings, Red & Blue Cambretts, Cubicas, white and coloured Quiltings, Balisor, & Pulicat Handkerchiefs, Demy & fancy cold Chintz, coloured Muslins, Ladies' silk Stockings, & Gentlemen's cold Socks, Batistoe, Striped Gingham, Union Stripes, Jaconet Muslins, Furniture and other fancy Prints, coloured Cravats, Silk and cotton Braces, cotton Stockings, and Ruppellets, & striped Denmark, West, & Bonnet Ribbons, black gailoon & Shoe Ribbon.—Hand & Key-hole Saws, Sailor's Jalay's & Instrument Knives, Penknives, Scissors, Ladies Gold and Silver mounted Switches, Hunting and jockey Whip, Gentlemen's Saddles and Bridles, Plated Spurs, Single and Double Barrelled Guns, Breakfast and Dinner Services, Oilmen's Stores—Cognac Brandy, Ale, & Wines as follows, Madeira, Sherry, Teneriffe, Constantia, Muscadelle, Valdepenas, Hock Swan, &c. &c.
No. 21, Baillie-Street.

N. B. The above has just received a few boxes of very superior teas, which he has it in his power to dispose of, particularly if taken by a box at a time at very reduced prices, he also holds a few bags of best Bengal Gram.

Messrs. AUSTIN have received per *Symmetry* a few improved Accordions with 4 and to keys which are for sale at their rooms—also a great variety of new Music for the Piano, Flute, Violin and Spanish Guitar.

The Accordion;
A NEW MUSICAL INSTRUMENT.

This elegant musical Novelty owes its popularity to the richness of its harmonies, and to the facility with which its pleasing effects may be obtained. Its tones are produced from its vibrating tongues which are caused to sound by a bellows moved by the hand, and different chords are obtained accordingly as different keys are touched by the fingers.

The chords are double in number to the keys, one series being sounded when the bellows is pressed, and another when it is expanded. As each note is invariably accompanied with its appropriate chord, it is as easy to perform an air with its full accompaniment on the Accordion as to play on any other instrument the same air with single notes.

The power which the performer has of increasing and diminishing the sounds by the management of the bellows, renders this instrument particularly adapted for slow expressive airs and sacred music.

An Instruction Book accompanies each instrument in which a simple notation is added to the tunes, which will enable those who have no previous knowledge of music to perform them without difficulty.

ADRIA'S SILVA, Government Jeef Contractor, begs leave to inform the public that he will be happy to receive orders for Beef, Mutton, Veal, &c. which he will send of the best quality and reasonable prices.
All orders will be punctually attended to.
Colombo 30th January 1834.

WANTED.

For the first Regt, a good Cook with an unexceptionable character, enquire at the Mess House, Prince Street, Fort.

WANT'S PORT WINE.

In 3 dozen Cases at 20 RIX DOLLARS Per dozen enquire of Mr. Winter, Colombo, 3rd February 1834.

AUCTION SALE.

At No. 23 BAILLIE STREET.
On Wednesday the 5th Instant, Mr. I. C. OORLOFF will sell by Public Auction the following Ladies Tamboored and Coloured flower, Lock-Muslin Robes, Lace, and Muslin Tippets and Collars assorted Ribbons China-leather Fans, Rich cut Glassware, Household Furniture, &c. &c.
Colombo 1st February 1834.

MADEIRA

Superior old mellow London Particular in bottle, to be had at 8 Chatham Street Fort, for Rds. 24 Per doz.
Colombo 1st February, 1834.

TO BE SOLD BY AUCTION.

At No. 23 BAILLIE STREET.
On Monday the 17th February the following Books, all in good order and neatly bound, 28 vol. of Encyclopaedia in French
20 " " Encyclopaedia Britannica
100 " " Oeuvres De Voltaire
60 " " Buliquis Noturus History in French
8 " " The Spectator
5 " " Modern Europe
3 " " Raynalds History of the East & West Indies
12 " " Gibbon's Rome
4 " " Anderson on Commerce
2 " " Van Couver's Voyare
2 " " Edward's West Indies
2 " " Pinkertons Geography
1 " " Persian Miscellanies by William Ouseley Esq
1 " " Percival Ceylon. And a variety of other Books.
Colombo, February 1st 1834.

NOTICE.

Messrs Groves & Co, beg to intimate that they are prepared to draw upon England to any extent and that bills at 60 days sight in sets for not less than £50 can be had of them at the rate of Exchange viz. 13 Rds. 4 is, the £ sterling.
Prince Street 30th January 1834.

GENERAL NOTICE

Notice is hereby given that unless the freight due upon the undermentioned Madeira Wine viz. M. 4, quarter Casks No. 1 & 2, branded PIM & Co. M. & Co.

Shipped by Messrs. Monters & Co. of Madeira and imported per *Symmetry* in February 1833, is paid forthwith, it will be sold by the undersigned to pay the expenses.

Groves & Co, Agents,
Colombo, 30th January, 1834.



FOR LONDON DIRECT

To sail positively the 1st March, the Ship "*Symmetry*" Capt. James Stevens Burthen 450 Tons Carries an experienced surgeon.
For freight or Passage apply to Messrs. Groves & Co, Prince Street, 28th January 1834.

FOR SALE.

A few Pipes of London Particular Teneriffe Wine imported per brw "Columbia" Rds, 100 per quartal Cask,
Apply at the Godowns of Messrs. Groves & Co, Prince Street 22nd January, 1834.

A REPRODUCTION OF THE FIRST PAGE OF THE FIRST ISSUE OF THE "OBSERVER", FEBRUARY 4, 1834.



now Postmaster-General. The Governor, as well as other members of the Service, contributed to the *Chronicle*. On the other side, in sympathy with the *Observer*, were Serjeant Rough, Chief Justice, and Mr. H. A. Marshall, Auditor-General. On the 3rd September 1838, the new paper folded up.

Probably the arrival of the new Governor had something to do with the discontinuance. On the 7th November, 1837, the Right Hon. J. A. Stewart Mackenzie became Governor, and with him came Mr. A. M. Ferguson, who was destined to play so large a part in the history of the *Observer*. Mr. Ferguson began writing to the *Observer* at once and the paper became a supporter of the Government. But the disappearance of the *Chronicle* did not mean that there was an end of opposition to the older papers. The types and printing presses of the *Chronicle* were sold to Mr. Mackenzie Ross who, on the 7th September, 1838, started the *Ceylon Herald* (not to be confused with the *Kandy Herald* of thirty years later). The new paper was a violent opponent of the Governor and the *Herald* went so far as to impute to him the intention of acquiring large tracts of land at nominal prices. Ross was tried for libel before Sir Anthony Oliphant and a British Jury but was acquitted.

In 1842 the *Herald* was taken over by Mr. James Laing, Deputy Postmaster at Kandy, who supported the Government. It then passed on to Dr. McKirdy, on whose death it devolved on the Secretary of the District Court. Mr. W. Knighton, who wrote two books on Ceylon, became Editor. In July 1846 it was bought for £450 by a group of persons who had

decided to start a new paper to oppose the *Observer*. Thus arose the *Ceylon Times*, now the *Times of Ceylon*, the first issue of which was published on the 11th of July 1846.

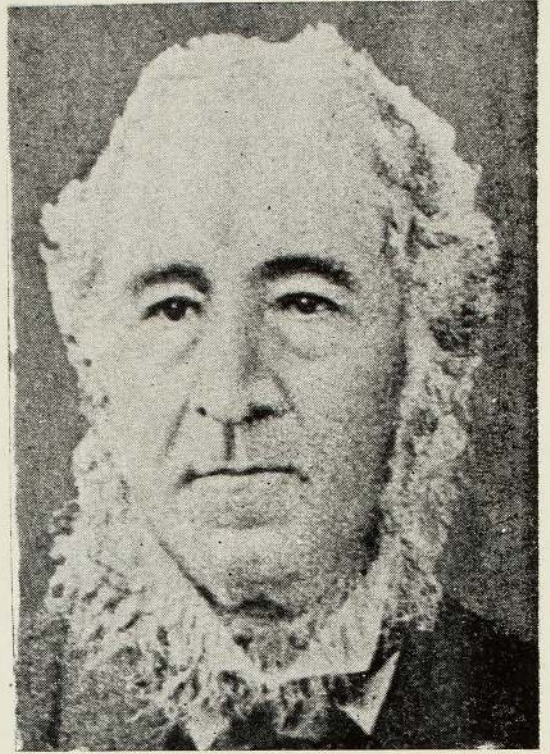
The greatest days of the newspaper were perhaps, those under the Cappers. John Capper had come out to Ceylon to join the firm of Acland & Boyd and became a junior partner in the year 1847 when it had to suspend payments. He left for England in 1851 and joined the London newspaper *Globe* as sub-editor. He was back in Ceylon in 1858 and acquired the *Ceylon Times* of which he became editor. In 1874 he sold the property to a limited company, which was not a success, and on its failure, John Capper again became the proprietor on the property reverting to him as mortgagee. Thereafter the paper was a great success. In 1946 it changed hands and was bought by a syndicate for a sum of about Rs. 7 million.

In 1858, a new Civil Medical Department was formed by the Government with Dr. Christopher Elliott as the first Principal Civil Medical Officer. This involved his severing his connection with the *Observer*. A. M. Ferguson, who as mentioned already, had arrived in Ceylon as Private Secretary to the Governor, Mr. Stewart Mackenzie, had joined the paper as sub-editor in 1846 and assumed a major share of responsibility in its production. When Dr. Elliott gave up the editorship, Ferguson bought the newspaper. He was joined in 1861 by his nephew John as Assistant Editor and reporter.

For nearly fifty years A. M. Ferguson dominated public opinion in the island. He won the admiration



DR. CHRISTOPHER ELLIOTT



A. M. FERGUSON



ARMAND DE SOUZA



JOHN FERGUSON

even of his opponents by the fearlessness and vigour with which he conducted the policy of his paper. Among his pet aversions was a fellow Scotsman, Judge Berwick. Berwick was promoted to the Supreme Court and in his new capacity he presided at a session at Kurunegala. There, in trying a man for bigamy, he held that there was no marriage contract as the formula had run: "Will you have this man for your lawful husband?", when it should have been: "Do you have this man as your lawful husband?". There was no doubt that Berwick was wrong. Ferguson got hold of this and wrote that they could not have such a man as a Judge of the Supreme Court and that he should be removed immediately.

The Governor asked the Attorney-General to state a case against the Editor and send it to the Judges of the Supreme Court for their opinion whether Berwick was right in his view that there was no marriage. The Judges held against their colleague. The *Observer* was jubilant and demanded that Berwick should revert to the lower court to dispense justice there. Berwick once attended a Fancy Dress Ball in the attire of "a Gentleman of the Nineteenth Century". The *Observer* commented that "the disguise was perfect".

Mr. A. M. Ferguson's younger son, Donald William, was for some years on the staff of the *Observer*. He was a scholar and fine writer on historical topics. His contributions were of such importance that a weekly supplement was issued gratis from August 1886 in which were published "papers bearing on the past history or development of Ceylon, or concise essays on topics bearing on modern local progress." No

student of Ceylon history can afford to do without the volumes of the *Literary Register* which Donald Ferguson edited. He returned to Scotland in 1893 and died there in 1910.

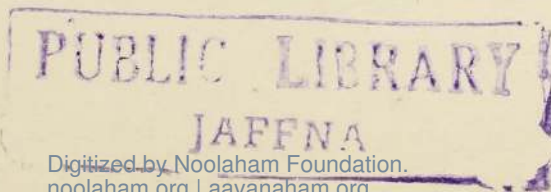
John Ferguson's connection with the *Observer* lasted for fifty-five years. He was a prolific writer on a variety of subjects and was for a time a member of the Ceylon Legislative Council. His son, R. H. Ferguson, was not a chip of the old block and did not make a success of his editorship. He sold the paper to a syndicate of members of the European Association who in turn sold it to D. R. Wijewardene in 1923.

The *Examiner* was first published on the 7th September 1846 with Mr. Bessell as Editor and Mr. John Capper as chief contributor. It was started by a few British merchants as a mercantile organ and was sold a few years later to Mr. R. E. Lewis of the firm of Parlett, O'Halloran and Co. Then it passed into the hands of a group of lawyers with C. A. Lorenz at their head. They included Mr. (later Sir Harry) Dias, James D'Alwis, C. L. Ferdinands and J. R. Dunuwille. In a letter to his friend and colleague at the Bar, Richard Morgan, Lorenz wrote: "I have purchased the *Examiner* from John Selby and placed it in the hands of Louis Nell. If, as I hope, we succeed in keeping up the thing, Fred, Louis and myself being a sufficiently strong staff for the purpose, we shall prove after all that Ceylon has arrived at a position when her children can speak out for themselves, and that in doing so they can exercise the moderation which even English journalists have failed to observe". The

paper was powerful and was influential so long as Lorenz was Editor. In 1870 ill-health compelled him to withdraw his active supervision of it and Leopold Ludovici took over the editorship. He was followed by Francis Beven. The paper ceased publication in 1900. Sir Thomas de Sampayo presented a full set of the files of the *Examiner* to D. R. Wijewardene.

In 1868, a bi-weekly newspaper, the *Kandy Herald*, was started by some planters. It was printed in Colombo in the offices of the *Times of Ceylon*, and Richard Morgan used frequently with heavy step to mount the staircase in the Colombo office to dictate an article in defence of Government policy. An early number contained the confidential despatch sent to the Secretary of State by Governor Sir Hercules Robinson on the petition sent to Her Majesty's Government by George Wall and other members of the famous Ceylon League. It was a bitter attack on the planters who were depicted as selfishly bent on securing for themselves the control of the finances of the Colony. This "unauthorised publication" caused a stir in England. Questions were asked in the House of Commons and the Colonial Office was said to have been worried about it. But the Secretary of State, the Duke of Buckingham and Chandos, whose attention was drawn to it, laughed away the episode by saying that such indiscretions were not unknown in England.

Sir Richard Morgan, Queen's Advocate, was a member of both the Executive and Legislative Councils and the most powerful person in Ceylon next to the Governor himself. There is an entry in his diary which reads: "I mean to write a series of articles for the



Lakrivikirana (a native newspaper with a large circulation) likely to prove essential to the natives: Vaccination, cattle disease, labour on coffee estates, irrigation, etc.”

Sir Richard was also interested, towards the end of his life, in a journalistic project for the benefit of his younger son. He intended calling the paper, the *Weekly Serendib*. The prospectus, found among his papers, stated that :

“The *Weekly Serendib* desires in no way to interfere with the other papers. Its aims are different; its efforts will take another direction. The advancement of the natives is its great object.

“It were vain to try to emulate the *Observer*, with its long and varied experience, its inexhaustible resources, stern firmness and unbending consistency. It has been charged with disregard to the feelings of others, but all this proceeds from earnest convictions....

“The *Ceylon Times* is, and will long remain, the great commercial organ, a work to which it devotes itself with singular ability, and for which its Editor’s extensive experience and its close and careful study of local subjects eminently befits it..

“The *Examiner* has our best sympathy. None can withhold sympathy from anything with which Charles Lorenz is connected....”

The *Weekly Serendib* never saw the light, although arrangements were well advanced for its publication.

The *Ceylon Independent* had as its first editor George Wall. He had founded the Planters’ Association of Ceylon and played a leading part in the agitation for

a more representative form of government. He suffered serious losses during the coffee crash and turned to journalism until he was able to put his affairs in some order. The paper eventually passed into the hands of Sir Hector Van Cuylenburg, Burgher member of the Legislative Council. For some years the Rev. (later Canon) G. B. Ekanayake wrote the important leading articles of the paper. At a still later period it was edited by the distinguished schoolmaster and historian, L. E. Blaze.

The *Ceylon Standard* was started in 1908 by a group of wealthy Sinhalese. A large amount of money was sunk in the project and an editor and sub-editor recruited from England. Mr. Windus, the editor, died shortly after his arrival and Mr. Wayman, the sub-editor left for Australia. The company went into liquidation and the *Morning Leader*, owned by members of the de Soysa family, rose on its ashes. The ownership of the *Morning Leader* later passed to a syndicate consisting of Mr. Charles Peiris, brother of Sir James Peiris, Mr. C. E. A. Dias and Mr. W. A. de Silva. In its last phase it was under the sole ownership of Mr. de Silva.

The *Morning Leader* was a power in the land so long as it was edited by Armand de Souza, father of Tori de Souza, editor-in-chief of the *Times of Ceylon*, and of Senator Doric de Souza of the Ceylon University. De Souza had an unfailing source of reliable information in Sir Marcus Fernando, for long the *eminence grise* of the Governor's Executive Council. So long as his brothers-in-law, the de Soysas, owned the paper, Sir Marcus was able to influence its policy but when

it went under new ownership he lost interest in it. After de Souza's death, at the early age of 47, the paper was edited for a short time by J. L. C. Rodrigo, fresh from Oxford and the London School of Journalism. Wijewardene had intentions of taking him on to his staff but when the editorial chair of the *Morning Leader* became vacant Rodrigo accepted an offer to occupy it. Not long after he decided that teaching classics was a more congenial calling than churning out editorials and started an academic career which culminated in the Professorship at the University which he held for many years with great distinction. Wijewardene in due course bought the *Independent* and put the *Morning Leader* out of business.

The Sinhalese Press had a creditable record. Mention has already been made of the *Lakrivikirana*, to which Sir Richard Morgan proposed to contribute a series of articles. One of the earliest Sinhalese papers was the *Lakminipahana*, first published in 1865. The *Sarasavisandarasa*, which was started by the Buddhist Theosophical Society, had, as its Editor, Pandit Weeragama Bandara who, in the words of Mr. W. A. de Silva, "brought a new spirit into Sinhalese writing. He introduced a fine style, elegant and popular, which created a new era in Sinhalese prose composition."

Two other Sinhalese newspapers which were popular at this time were the *Sinhala Baudhaya* and the *Sinhala Jatiya*. The latter was edited by Mr. Piyadasa Sirisena, a well-known publicist of his day.

H. S. Perera, a resourceful member of the staff of the *Sarasavisandarasa*, founded the *Dinamina* towards

the end of his life. It was bought by D. R. Wijewardene and his brother "D.C."—their first newspaper venture jointly or separately. They did so on the advice of D. B. Jayatilaka who by his well-informed articles and personal prestige helped to make it the most influential Sinhalese daily newspaper. Since then there have been several other Sinhalese newspapers, notably the *Silumina*, and *Janata*, both published by Lake House, the *Lankadipa* published by the *Times* group, the *Lakmina* and the *Swadesha Mitraya*. The last-named was founded and edited by D. W. Wickremaratchi, who rendered yeoman service to Wijewardene's *Dinamina* as Editor and Manager for some years.

The most widely read Tamil newspapers in Ceylon today are the *Virakesari* and the *Thinakaran*. Many Tamil newspapers with a more limited circulation have been published in Jaffna, but none of them has been a great commercial success although they have played an important part in the social and political life of the Tamils.

The first attempt at journalism in Jaffna was made in 1841, five years before the *Examiner* and *Ceylon Times* appeared, when the *Morning Star*, a bi-monthly Tamil journal, was launched under the editorship of Henry Martyn. The *Catholic Guardian* was started in 1876. Other newspapers published in Jaffna from time to time included the *Ceylon Patriot*, the *Jaffna Freeman* and the *Hindu Organ*. Batticaloa published a paper called *The Lamp*.

The *Catholic Messenger*, published in Colombo, has had a distinguished career and has never been more vigorous than it is today.

A SCRATCH TEAM

THE first issue of the *Ceylon Daily News*, which was published on the 3rd of January 1918, contained a special message from Sir Ponnambalam Arunachalam, in the course of which he said :

“The *Daily News* is fortunate in the time of its birth. New forces are at work among us, a new era is dawning for the country. She needs the devoted service of all her children, and will, I am confident, find none more zealous than the new daily.”

Although in later years the two of them did not always see eye to eye on political questions, there was always a bond of mutual respect between Arunachalam and Wijewardene. Temperamentally, they had much in common; they were both serious-minded persons, well-disciplined, thoughtful and prepared to scorn delights and live laborious days in pursuit of their ideals.

Arunachalam had prescribed a high standard for the *Daily News* but the resources for achieving it were, at the beginning, limited. The first world war was in its final year. All news and editorials dealing with the war were censored. Arrivals of paper and printing

supplies were intermittent and were affected by the German submarine menace. Publishers were often compelled to buy their requirements in the black market at exorbitant prices.

I first saw an early copy of the *Daily News* as a College Form boy at St. Thomas' College. One of the masters, Mr. E. Navaratnam, told me that the paper had been launched by an old boy, D. R. Wijewardene, a wealthy young lawyer who had recently returned from England. He added that Wijewardene intended to be his own Editor.

The editorship of the paper was then something of a mystery. In a sense Wijewardene was its editor as long as he lived, although he hardly ever wrote anything for publication. In narrating the story of the *Daily News*, he said: "I had no editor although nearly all the readers of the *Ceylonese* came over, as the sales figures showed. The late F. F. Martinus, a well known journalist of his time who had retired from the practice of his craft, might be considered the first Editor, as he was in charge for the first week of the paper's existence. I borrowed his services from one of my brothers for whom he was working in a business office".

F. F. Martinus, like his brother "O. E.", who served Wijewardene later, was an experienced journalist. He had worked on various daily papers, among them the *Times of Ceylon* and the *Standard*. He was for a short time Manager of the *Daily News*, but he had no head for business and continued to help on the editorial side until his death.

The *Daily News* did not in fact have a full-time Editor until the arrival of S. J. K. Crowther in 1919. During the first year of its existence, A.V. Kulasingham, who had been a member of the staff of the *Ceylonese*, wrote most of the editorials. Kulasingham left to become a proctor in Jaffna but returned to Colombo some years afterwards to study for the advocates' examinations. According to H. D. Jansz, who joined the staff of the *Daily News* in its first year, "the leader-writer, A. V. Kulasingham, had a habit of dictating long editorials as he walked up and down the room, puffing at a Jaffna cigar. For a short time he lived on the premises and would sometimes emerge from his bedroom with a book, from which he read eloquent passages with great relish to an admiring group of sub-editors and reporters, if they were not too busy to listen to him." Kulasingham later became Crown Advocate and leader of the Jaffna Bar.

Jansz himself was the mainstay of the *Daily News* editorial department despite his delicate and poetic appearance. He functioned in many capacities: leader-writer and acting Editor, chief sub-editor, chief reporter, shorthand writer, art, music, theatre and literary critic, parliamentary correspondent, humorous columnist and office poet. He served the Wijewardene group for forty years, twenty of them as Editor of the *Ceylon Observer*.

Editorials were written by various friends of Wijewardene who dropped in at the office with him towards dusk. Among them were Lionel de Fonseka, who had a high reputation as a graceful writer, and E. T. de Silva, then a rising politician. But the most

prolific contributor of them all was the veteran J. R. Weinman.

It is impossible to think how Wijewardene could have ever managed to run his newspapers in those early days without Weinman who had a capacious memory, great versatility, a style shot with irony and a need for earning money which could never be satisfied. Weinman was a senior lawyer at the Colombo Bar who had lost whatever practice he might have had. He had acted for a short time as District Judge and was now retained to appear in Court on occasions when an errant practitioner was hauled up and an 'ad misericordiam' appeal to the presiding judge was the only remedy.

He wrote an excellent series for the *Daily News* on "Our Legislature", using the pen-name of "An Old Parliamentary Hand". He wrote sketches of former politicians, lawyers and judges. He had known the giants of old like Sir Richard Morgan, C. A. Lorenz, Sir Harry Dias and Louis Nell and had an inexhaustible fund of stories about them. He wrote to all the Colombo newspapers and was sometimes on both sides of a heated controversy, castigating in one newspaper with a blistering pen what he had written in a rival organ. Another fine writer who contributed to the early issues was J. T. Blaze, also a briefless advocate. Blaze never fulfilled his early promise but the *Examiner* and *Standard* newspapers benefited from the output of his ready pen.

E. T. de Silva was an old friend of Wijewardene. They worked closely in the national movement and they shared the same political views. "E. T." was

one of the gifted sons of Gabriel de Silva, at whose house in Mutwal the Wijewardene brothers had their midday meal when they were students at St. Thomas' College. In recounting the early days of the *Daily News*, Wijewardene wrote later: "I would like to refer in this connection to E. T. de Silva, a contemporary of mine in London, who wrote many editorials and special articles. His early death cut short a life which showed brilliant promise. He was a powerful speaker and, had he been given the normal span of life, he would undoubtedly have been one of our leading public men."

Although Wijewardene claimed that the majority of the readers of the *Ceylonese* took his new paper, the *Daily News* had still a long way to go before it was able to pay its way. The *Ceylonese* could not have been selling even two thousand copies a day towards the end of its life. A newspaper with such a small circulation is almost entirely dependent on its revenue from advertisements, but even the few advertisers who were loyal to the old paper to the last were slow to transfer their contracts to the new one.

Paper stocks were low; the type faces were wasted; the printing machines were in poor shape; everything about the place seemed to have an odour of neglect and decay. The system of deliveries in Colombo had been allowed to run down and the newspaper parcels for provincial towns were seldom in time to catch the early morning trains.

The *Daily News* had thus to start its career trailing behind the other four English daily newspapers. Something drastic had to be done if it was to draw level

with them. Wijewardene's first move in the newspaper battle was to cut the price of the new paper to half of that of its rivals. He issued four and six pages, instead of the eight and ten pages published by the others, and sold the *Daily News* at five cents per copy. This meant that the newsagents had a smaller margin of profit per copy and less inducement to push the new paper but it was the best way of attracting new readers.

Wijewardene next reorganised town deliveries and speeded the despatch of newspaper parcels to the Railway Station each morning. He bought a T-model Ford van and had the names of the *Daily News* and *Dinamina* painted on its sides in large black letters on a yellow background. Great play was made with this innovation for publicity purposes and a large photograph of the vehicle was printed in the papers.

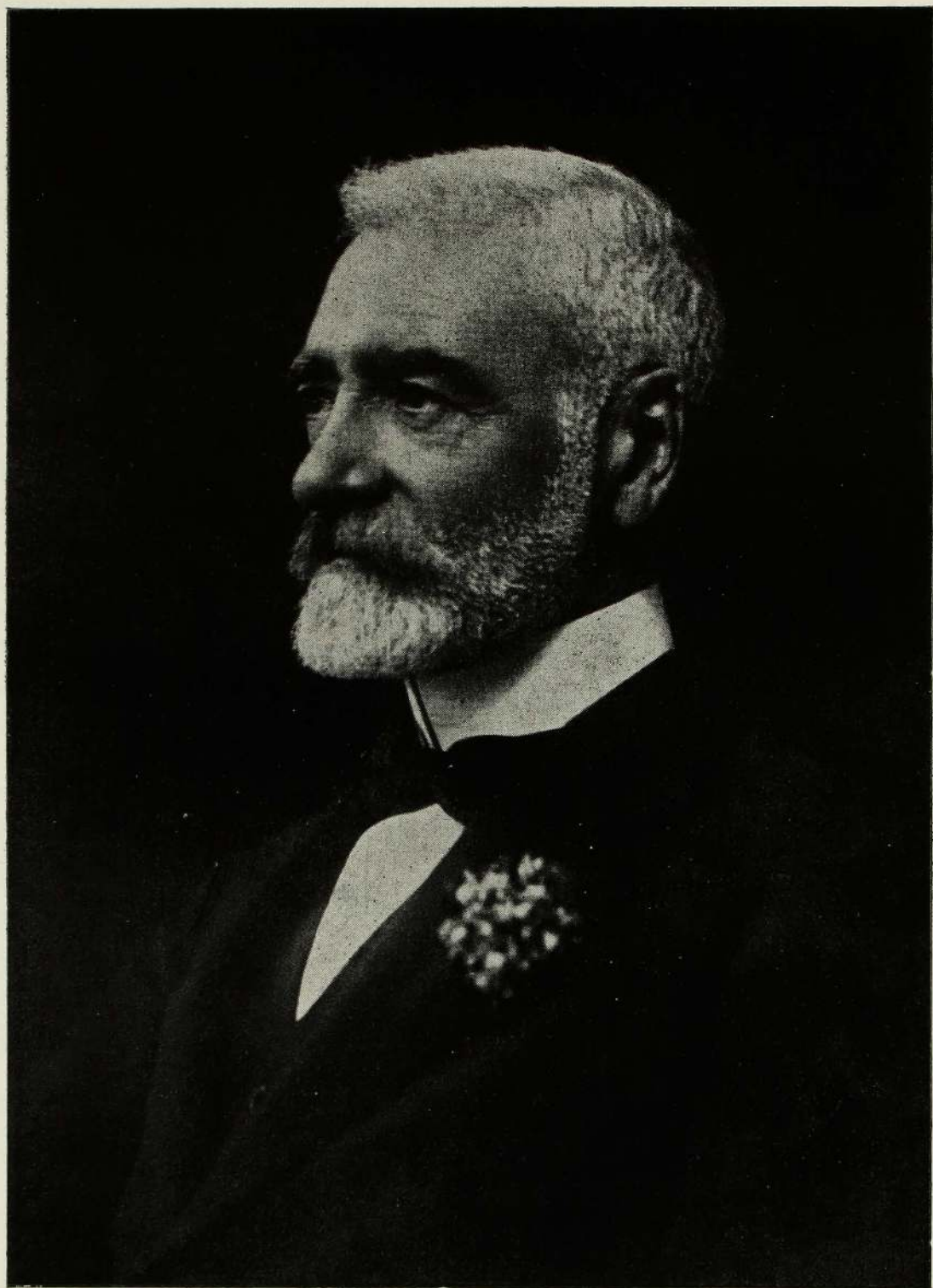
The Ceylon newspapers seldom published illustrations in those days. Only the *Times of Ceylon* had a plant for making half-tone blocks, but this was used mainly for commercial work and the *Times* seldom published any pictures. The *Ceylon Observer*, in its more enterprising days, had used wood-cuts made from drawings by such well known artists as J. L. K. Vandort, but it no longer published any illustrations. The *Morning Leader* and *Independent* hardly ever published a block except when a new Governor was appointed or some important person died. On such occasions blocks were made for the newspapers by the commercial printing establishments.

Wijewardene realised early that illustrations were an essential part of a popular newspaper. The cost

of a new block-making plant was, however, heavy and for some time he had to be content with the occasional picture ordered from a commercial printer, with all the delays involved in getting the work done outside.

The story of how one of the earliest picture "scoops" was obtained is related by Percival Deutrom, who was Manager of the *Daily News* at this time. He wrote: "It was shortly after the *Daily News* was started that Sir John Anderson, the Governor, died at Queen's House. This was a terrible shock to the country as Sir John was specially sent to redress the wrongs committed during the 1915 riots. On the morning of the Governor's death, Mr. Wijewardene rang me up and wanted me to try to get a photograph of the lying-in-state. I immediately left for Queen's House and contacted Sir Solomon Dias Bandaranaike, the Maha Mudaliyar. He was shocked at the idea at first, and did not think that the A.D.C. would allow it. But the A.D.C., when spoken to, saw nothing wrong in it, and gave me permission to have a photograph taken. A photographer from Plate's Ltd took an excellent picture with four officers standing with bowed heads at the four corners of the bier. Plate's made the half-tone block which was printed prominently in next morning's paper. This created a good impression and everyone was talking about the enterprise of the new paper".

Wijewardene introduced new methods progressively but with caution. In many small ways he showed qualities which make for success in business. He paid attention to detail and was methodical. He was convinced that no newspaper could hope to influence public opinion until it was financially sound.



SIR JOHN ANDERSON



He aimed at being independent both from political parties and outside financial interests. For forty years the ownership of the group of newspapers has remained in the hands of a small group of shareholders, mostly members of the Wijewardene family.

Every day Wijewardene had before him the figures for the receipts and expenditure of the previous day. He needed them because, at the start, he was working the business on a substantial bank overdraft. But even when he controlled bank balances running into millions, the same practice was followed so that he could keep an effective check on the finances of the business. He signed all the cheques himself until this responsibility was taken over by his brother "D.E." when the latter became a director of the company.

In the early days, at 2nd Division Maradana, members of the editorial staff and the manager and accountant were served, in the afternoon, with two biscuits and a cup of tea each by Wijewardene's faithful peon, Martin. The biscuits and the milk for the tea were brought from the house of the proprietor. The reporters were given twenty cents tram-fare from the office to the Fort and back. By walking a few yards they were able to save ten cents and spend the money so saved on a cup of tea and two cigarettes.

Wijewardene was neither a miser nor a gambler. He was a sound and conscientious business man. He knew the value of money, having had to borrow much of the funds required for the development of the newspaper business. He was always ready to take a calculated business risk, as he did when he built and equipped Lake House on borrowed money. The debt was repaid sooner than he could have expected.

A FRUITFUL PARTNERSHIP

WHEN Wijewardene started the *Daily News* there were four well-established newspapers with which it had to contend. Of these the *Ceylon Observer* was the oldest but it had already passed its best days. The paper was edited by R. H. Ferguson, son of the famous John who had left behind an honoured name as a prolific author and publicist. Its circulation, of between two and three thousand, was mainly among the older British residents and the missionaries who were allowed a fifty per cent reduction on the normal subscription rate.

Only the *Times of Ceylon*, also owned by Europeans, was making money. It had a daily circulation of about four thousand copies and was read not only by the British merchants, planters and public servants but also by a large section of the more well-to-do Ceylonese. There were in fact many Ceylonese families who were in the habit of leaving a copy of the *Times* on a table in the verandah to impress visitors. The advertisements and commercial news of the *Times of Ceylon* lifted it above its contemporaries as the paper of the business man, and it enjoyed a secure position financially.

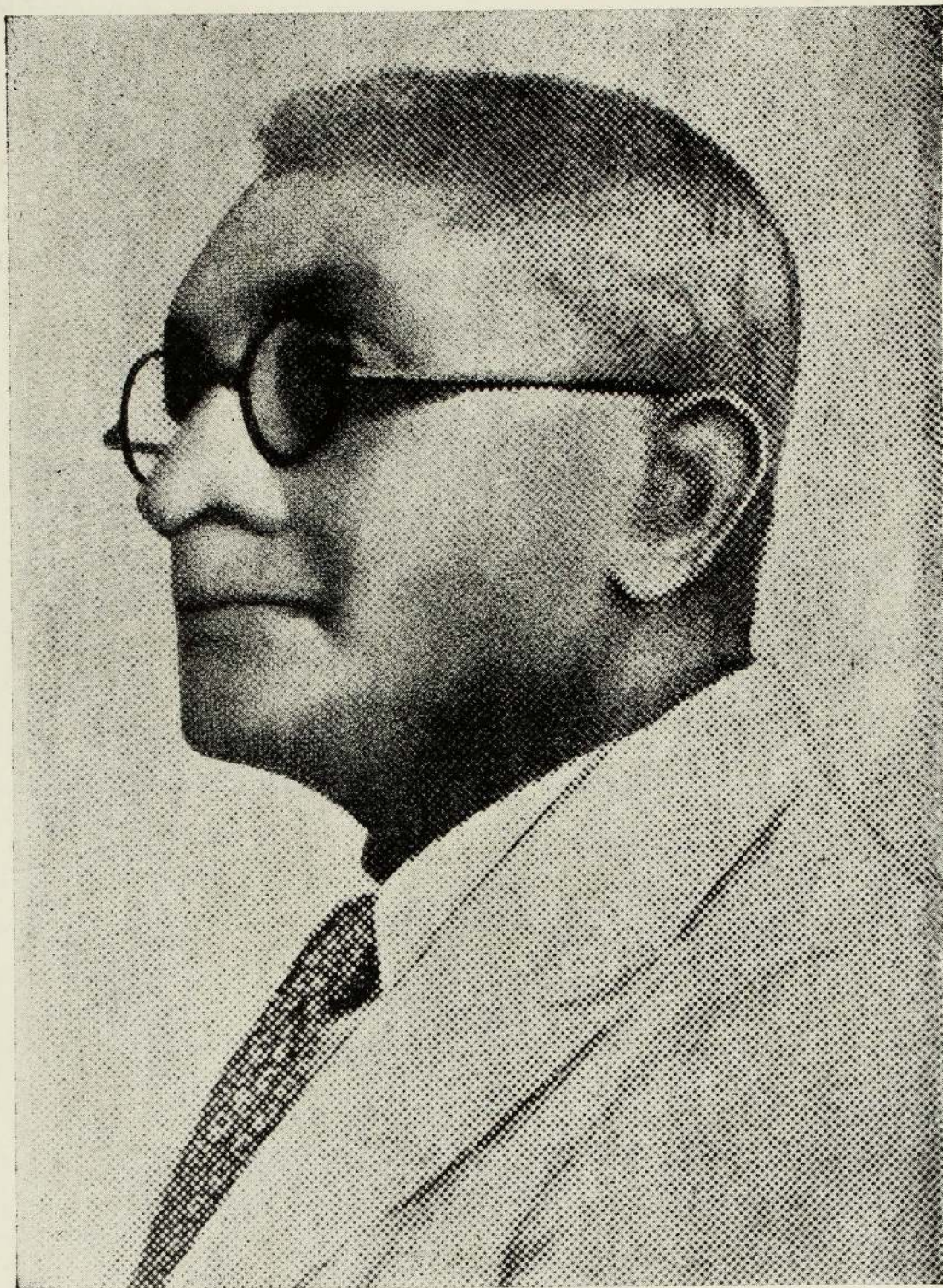
The *Times* was by no means the best written of the Colombo newspapers. The *Ceylon Independent* had able contributors, among them the Rev. G. B. Ekanayake, S. J. K. Crowther, Edmund de Livera and the Rev. J. S. H. Edirisinghe. The *Independent* was supported by the leading Burgher and many old Sinhalese families. None of these writers was, however, as well known and admired as Armand de Souza, the brilliant editor of the *Ceylon Morning Leader*. He did not encourage free-lance contributors, but two regular writers to the columns of his paper were the Rev. W. J. Noble, a Methodist missionary with notable literary gifts, and the Rev. Father E. Veerstraaten, a learned Jesuit.

Wijewardene's *Daily News* could not succeed without ousting de Souza's *Morning Leader* from the position it held. For a short time Wijewardene even toyed with the idea of offering de Souza the editorship of the *Daily News*. He was, however, wise enough to realise that the combination could not work. They had little in common other than a flair for journalism. Wijewardene set his sights on the *Morning Leader* and during the ensuing years the energies of the staff of the *Daily News* were mainly directed to the task of producing a better newspaper than its chief rival. For this contest Wijewardene had to find an Editor who could write as well as de Souza, if not better, and put across a policy which had a greater appeal to the general public than that which they got from the *Morning Leader*.

Wijewardene soon found the man he was looking for. He had known S. J. K. Crowther as a student

at St. Thomas' College, Mutwal, and met him also in England whither he had gone to study for the Anglican Ministry at Oxford. On his return to Ceylon Crowther had taken up a curacy at St. Paul's Church, Pettah. A few years later he became a Roman Catholic and accepted a teaching post at St. Michael's College, Batticaloa, his home town. He spent some of his leisure writing articles for the *Ceylon Independent* using the pen-name "Pagoda". It may have been on the suggestion of Lionel de Fonseka, a common friend, that Crowther began sending articles of a very amusing character to the *Daily News* signed "Jacques". In any case it was shortly after this that Wijewardene offered him the editorship of the *Daily News* and he accepted it. Thus began Crowther's long and fruitful connection with the *Daily News* which he edited with distinction and success until August 1931 when I took over from him.

Crowther had no experience as a working journalist when he joined the paper and even after that he was more of a writing editor than a newspaper man. But he was a superb writer whether on serious themes or as a humorist. He was also a prodigious worker. For many years he wrote nearly all the editorials, one or two special articles a week, a daily summary of the proceedings of the Legislative Council when it was in session and a feature entitled "Under the Clock Tower" when the editorial offices of the *Daily News* had moved into a building by the Colombo Clock Tower. This, it might have been thought, was a full week's work for anyone, but Crowther also wrote a couple of novels during his editorship of the paper. He wrote—later



S. J. K. CROWTHER

typed—fast, and was sustained by a humorous outlook on life as well as by the joy of the battle against the rival newspapers. Wijewardene provided the ammunition, as always, for he had useful contacts and, unlike his Editor, had his finger in many political pies. The partnership worked well on the whole, despite occasional tiffs.

Wijewardene and Crowther had afternoon tea together for twelve years except on days when the one or the other was not in the office. Here they discussed the topics of the days and the paper's attitude to them. Sometimes there was a visitor, more often than not a Member of the Legislative Council like E. W. Perera. After tea Crowther went back to his desk with three points clearly in his mind for the three paragraphs of the leading article, which he rattled off in half an hour or less.

The two men were friends, but strictly within the limits determined by their respective temperaments. They respected each other's talents even when they did not share each other's views. For many years they were the only two members of the organisation who had been abroad or received a University education and they could therefore adopt a lofty attitude in their relations with the staff. Wijewardene concealed his emotions and in the conduct of his business he was an individualist. The views expressed in his newspapers had to be, in the main, his views. The *Daily News* was his creation and his editor and other collaborators were expected to make their best contributions as his helpers and not as initiators or creators on their own account.

Wijewardene developed his journalistic flair by reading and observation until it became second nature with him. He had many of the qualities which made Lord Northcliffe a successful newspaper man, such as an unerring assessment of public taste, and what is usually described as news sense. He knew something of everything about the complicated newspaper business and was the only man who could have run the organisation if all the executive staff had decided to absent themselves one day. He also enjoyed the sensation that the organisation revolved round him.



THE STRUGGLE FOR ADVERTISEMENTS

THE *Daily News* in its early years was the only English language newspaper which did not have its editorial and administrative offices in the Fort, the heart of the business and shopping area of Colombo, where also stood the most important offices of the Government, including that of the Governor. The *Ceylon Observer* was in Baillie Street, the *Times of Ceylon* occupied a two-storeyed building on a part of the site of its present palatial home, the *Ceylon Independent* was in Chatham Street, and the *Morning Leader* had offices in the de Soysa Building at the junction of Queen Street and Upper Chatham Street.

Even though the staff of the *Daily News* was barely sufficient for the minimum requirements of a daily paper, it was too large to be accommodated in the main hall of the small bungalow in 2nd Division, Maradana. The editorial staff of the *Dinamina*, the managers of the two papers, accountants and book-keepers were all working in the same place. The editor of the *Daily News* alone had a room to himself. In this strange melee all sorts of incidents were possible.

H. D. Jansz recalls an incident in which he and the present writer were concerned : “When Herbert Hulugalle first joined the paper in 1918 as a boy fresh from

school, his strong resemblance to another member of the staff caused many amusing confusions. On one occasion the Editor (Crowther) rebuked one of these two youths for a fault committed by the other”.

Even worse was to follow. An irate commercial traveller once came to the office, breathing fire because he had been misrepresented in an interview by one of the two, and had to be prevented from assaulting the other, by the Editor himself who explained that the man he was looking for was not in the office.

So long as the *Daily News* had no office in the Fort it was not recognised by advertisers as a successful newspaper. Percival Deutrom, who was the first manager of the *Daily News*, tells the story of the move to the Fort as follows :

“From the outset it was clear that our situation in Second Division, Maradana, was unsuitable. We were at a great disadvantage, being so far away from the business activities of the Fort and Pettah. The other two morning papers had their head offices in the Fort, although their printing works were elsewhere.

“From the point of view of internal working it was convenient to have the *Ceylon Daily News* housed in a single building. But the advertisers in particular found the distance away from the business centre a hardship, with the result that we lost business that might have come our way.

“Mr. Wijewardene had been looking out for a suitable place in the Fort and it took him nearly two years to find one. In the meantime he had opened a sub-office in a part of a shop in Chatham Street, Fort,

where he installed a telephone and had a clerk on duty during business hours. This arrangement proved useful up to a point and it was worked until the editorial and administrative departments were moved to the top floor of a building at the corner of Queen Street and Chatham Street, just by the Clock Tower.”

The advantages of the change were enormous. The General Post Office and the Telegraph Office were near and in the days before teleprinters were installed in all newspaper offices, this proximity saved much time in the delivery of news messages to the editorial office and the posting of letters and newspapers. The Legislative Council, the offices of the Colonial Secretary and other Government Offices, the Port and the Governor’s residence were within a few minutes’ walk.

Advertisers, noticing the illuminated sign of the *Daily News* barely a hundred yards from Queen’s House, were duly impressed and decided that Wijewardene’s newspaper enterprise was thriving. But it was an uphill struggle at the start, as Deutrom has chronicled :

“Shortly after my first interview with Mr. D. R. Wijewardene, he phoned me up from the Officers’ Mess one morning. He was an Officer in the Ceylon Light Infantry which was then mobilized. He asked me whether I could see him at the mess that afternoon at 4 o’clock. He said he was also asking a Mr. Naish to come. (A. T. Naish was a European whom the Wijewardene brothers had engaged as Printing Manager of the Sinhalese daily newspaper *Dinamina*). We met at the Mess and, after tea, had an informal discussion.

“Wijewardene went that evening into the question of advertising rates. When I told him that the other morning newspapers worked on a minimum rate of 25 cents per column inch for contract advertisements, he replied that ‘no paper in the world can exist on such a rate’. He wanted the rate fixed at 50 cents. I told him that that was the rate the *Times of Ceylon* was charging and that it would be impossible to get advertisements at that rate. He arrived at a compromise and fixed 35 cents an inch as a minimum rate for contracts over a thousand inches a year. . . .

“From the start I found strong opposition from advertisers. Interviewing advertisers was a heart-breaking job. But Wijewardene stood firm, and his firm stand began to pay dividends when the advertisers found that they were not now dealing with the *Ceylonese*. But it took months and, in some cases, years, to break through the barriers.

“Advertisers felt in those days that they were conferring a favour by advertising in a newspaper. To many of them money spent on advertising was money thrown down a drain. The Pettah shops, especially, took years to learn the value of press advertising.

“The large British business houses were the hardest to tackle. They were content to advertise in the newspapers owned by Europeans, namely, the *Times of Ceylon* and the *Observer*. The other two morning newspapers, the *Ceylon Independent* and the *Ceylon Morning Leader* had little support from the British firms in spite of the low rates they charged. Government advertisements were not sent to the *Daily News*. The rule then was that a newspaper had to publish

continuously for two years before the Government recognised it as an appropriate advertising medium.

“The *Daily News* took over from the defunct *Ceylonese* its advertising contracts. The trouble began when these contracts expired and renewals became necessary. Several old advertisers dropped off, to come in later when they found that we were adamant in the matter of rates.

“The success of the paper involved more expenditure. The revenue was not expanding in proportion to its popularity. As Mr. Wijewardene said very rightly at the start, the advertisement rates charged at the time could never make a paper pay its way. (Captain Galpin, the General Manager of the *Times of Ceylon*, who was a fellow officer in C.L.I., had convinced him of this). Casual notices at Rs. 2-50 an inch were clearly an unworkable proposition. These were the rates charged by the other two morning newspapers and they would not agree to a general increase.

“Mr. Wijewardene took a bold step and increased the rates for casual advertisements in the *Daily News* to Rs. 5 per inch. This resulted, as was expected, in a reduction of the volume of such advertisements, but Mr. Wijewardene knew what he was about and his judgment was usually right. The other papers fell into line after a time and these rates ruled for several years.

“Two years had passed since the *Daily News* was started and we were now entitled to get our share of Government advertisements. The Colonial Secretary was written to on the subject but only a bare acknowledgment was received. A further communication

had no better result. We then learned that the Government was not pleased with the *Daily News*. (Those were the days of the British bureaucracy). Outspoken editorials and the general policy of the paper were not viewed with official approval. Government recognition of a newspaper depended on the policy the paper pursued. The *Daily News* even then was not prepared to trim its sails to the passing wind and Mr. Wijewardene would forego recognition rather than be 'subsidized'. He claimed the right of Government recognition on the merits of the paper as a medium of publicity for public notifications.

"I well remember Mr. Wijewardene wanting me to interview Mr. (later Sir Charles) Collins, who was then the Assistant Colonial Secretary in charge of this particular subject at the headquarters of the Government. I was instructed to take a firm line and, if it came to the worst, to tell Mr. Collins that the paper would not be dictated to in the matter of its avowed editorial policy.

"Mr. Collins was disarming and affable. He was agreeably surprised when he was informed that the circulation of the *Daily News* had reached a figure greater than that of any other newspaper in Ceylon. (It was, however, sold at half the price of the other papers at this time, but the price was doubled not long afterwards). It almost gave me a shock when he told me that he admired the outspoken leading articles and that he was a regular reader of the paper. He said he would look into the matter and, it must be said to his credit, within a very short time, we were informed that the Government Printer had been instructed to send advertisements to the *Daily News*'".

CONSTITUTIONAL CHANGES

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FOR some years before Ceylon won her independence, the Colonial Office was gradually relaxing its grip. It began to do so with the 1920 Constitution which gave to the Legislative Council an Unofficial majority. For the next twenty seven years, responsibility for the Government was shared between the Governor and his Officials on the one hand, and the elected representatives of the people, on the other, with increasing emphasis on what might be called representative government.

During this period the responsible sections of the Press exercised great influence. The elected members could achieve little in their struggle with the bureaucracy without the support of the popular newspapers. The senior officials of the Government, for their part, could neither make speeches from public platforms nor explain their actions in interviews or letters to the Press except on very rare occasions. The most they could do was to establish discreet contacts with influential journalists and feed them with unimportant information in exchange for an understanding attitude to Government policy.

Political agitation in India created ripples which lapped the shores of Ceylon. The visit to Delhi of Mr. E. S. Montagu, the Secretary of State for India, to examine with the Viceroy, Lord Chelmsford, the demands made by many sections of the Indian people for self-government, was followed with the greatest interest in Ceylon. Wijewardene was a close student of political events in India, and the Montagu-Chelmsford Report, when it was published, was for a time the document which was cited most often in the editorial columns of the *Daily News*.

In an earlier chapter reference was made to the part played by Sir Ponnambalam Arunachalam and Sir James Peiris in launching the campaign for constitutional reforms. This may be a convenient point to take up the story and follow it briefly to the stage when Ceylon once again became an independent nation after several centuries.

The address on "Our Political Needs" delivered in April 1917 by Arunachalam, on the suggestion of Wijewardene, was epoch-making. It was followed immediately by the formation of the Ceylon Reform League. Arunachalam was elected President of the League and E. J. Samerawickreme was now President of the National Association. Wijewardene was a Secretary of both bodies. Acting together, these two organisations despatched a letter to the Secretary of State for the Colonies on the reform of the administration, forwarding at the same time a copy of Arunachalam's lecture.

Shortly after this they telegraphed to the Prime Minister and the Secretary of State requesting that

Mr. E. S. Montagu, who was still in Delhi, be authorised to receive in India, on behalf of the Imperial Government, a deputation from Ceylon. The British Government was not prepared to accede to this request but the Secretary of State said that he would discuss personally with the Governor, Sir John Anderson, during his forthcoming visit to England, the whole question of the Constitution of Ceylon.

Arunachalam and his friends lost no time in preparing a scheme of reforms and submitting it to the Governor. This was amplified in a memorial to the Secretary of State approved by the Conference on Constitutional Reforms held in December 1917 and attended by 144 delegates. Before he could proceed on leave to England or write his report on the reforms, Sir John fell ill and died on the 24th March, 1918. The feeling of the country was expressed in a resolution passed by the Reform League which referred to "the great loss sustained by the people of Ceylon, its admiration of his character and personality and heroic discharge of duty, its gratitude for his wise and benevolent administration distinguished by courageous justice and impartiality, by sympathy and self-sacrificing devotion to the people's welfare". It cannot be said that the Ceylonese were not appreciative of beneficent rulers even when they were foreigners.

Sir John's successor, Brigadier-General Sir William Manning, was anxious to help Ceylon on the path of representative government but he felt that the Ceylonese reformers were in too great a hurry. They kept up the offensive with memorials and telegrams to the Secretary of State. The two memorials of 1917 were

followed by a more comprehensive one in September 1919 entitled "The Case for Constitutional Reform in Ceylon". Arunachalam sent a copy of this to his friend the Marquis of Crewe, asking him to use his influence with Lord Milner, the Secretary of State, to give real self-government under Imperial supervision. He said: "When you were Secretary of State for the Colonies you were prepared to deal with Ceylon liberally, but your intentions were defeated and your gifts whittled down by a reactionary Governor and bureaucracy, as little in touch with the people of Ceylon as with the spirit and ideals of British administration". He added: "I have asked my son Padmanabha to supplement it (the memorial) with any information you may want".

D. B. Jayatilaka, W. A. de Silva and others were in London seeing Members of Parliament and getting them to ask questions in the House of Commons. When it was known that the Governor had sent his despatch with his reform proposals, Arunachalam, as President of the newly-formed Ceylon National Congress, sent a telegram to the Secretary of State requesting the publication of the Governor's despatch and postponement of a decision until he received a delegation of Ceylon representatives.

Lord Milner was not willing to grant either of these requests. D. B. Jayatilaka and H. J. C. Pereira countered with a well-reasoned rejoinder, and after some delay, despite "pressure on his time", the Secretary of State met the Ceylon deputation on the 19th October, 1919. It consisted of H. J. C. Pereira, D. B. Jayatilaka,



SIR WILLIAM MANNING

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Dr. W. A. de Silva, Professor D. M. de Z. Wickremasinghe, the Rev. Fr. D. J. N. Perera O.M.I. and Dr. V. Gabriel.

The first public session of the Ceylon National Congress was held on the 11th December 1919 with Sir Ponnambalam Arunachalam in the chair. He left shortly afterwards for London where he met Lord Milner. He was accompanied by James Peiris and D. B. Jayatilaka. Reporting to Colombo on the interview, Jayatilaka wrote : “It was more or less an informal discussion. Our views were presented mostly by Mr. James Peiris. The interview lasted an hour and, so far as our scheme is concerned, I think it was fully explained. Lord Milner was sympathetic and so far as one could judge from his remarks, he seemed to agree with us as regards principles”.

This optimism was scarcely justified, to judge by what came after. When H. M. Government's scheme of reforms was announced in the House of Commons on the 28th July 1920, there was general disappointment among the local leaders, with a few exceptions. It is only fair to say that the scheme, for the first time introduced the principle of territorial representation and to the Legislative Council a majority of Unofficial members. The checks and balances in it enabled the Governor to ride any storm in the legislature caused by an unhelpful Opposition.

The National Congress held a special session in October and condemned the scheme out of hand. A resolution was passed stating : “This Congress rejects as utterly inadequate and reactionary, and as an affront to the people of Ceylon, the scheme of reforms enacted

by the Order in Council published in the Ceylon Government Gazette of 23rd September 1920 which, under the guise of extending popular electoral control, seriously curtails the power of the Legislative Council, increases the autocratic power of the Governor, restricts freedom of discussion and control of the Executive, imposes humiliating disabilities on the people's representatives, introduces invidious distinctions between communities, creates special representation and denies even the beginning of responsible government".

The special session was presided over not by Sir Ponnambalam Arunachalam but by Mr. James Peiris. In welcoming his successor to the presidential chair, Arunachalam said of the latter : "There has been no public movement which has not benefited by his ripe culture, trained and sober judgment, his high character and public spirit. His opinions are formed with deliberation ; they are based on reason and principle and guided by zeal for the public welfare and loyal attachment to the Throne. Everybody feels that he has nothing up his sleeve ; he is proof against official blandishments and knows not how to trim his sails to every wind. No wonder that he enjoys the unstinted confidence of the people of Ceylon without difference of race or creed and even of the Government. It is however not very creditable to the Government that a man such as he, who would be an honour to any legislative assembly in the world and an acquisition to any Cabinet, has not been utilised all these years in the service of the Crown or even in the Legislative Council".

These words unhappily almost marked the end of the association between these two outstanding leaders, the

pioneers of the reform movement. Thereafter their paths diverged. Arunachalam refused to join a deputation to the Governor who had offered a compromise to the National Congress on the constitutional issue. The deputation which met the Governor consisted of James Peiris, E. J. Samerawickreme, D. B. Jayatilaka, E. W. Jayawardene and G. A. Wille. They agreed to work the Constitution on the assurance given by the Governor that early action would be taken to remove certain features of the Constitution to which the Congress had taken objection.

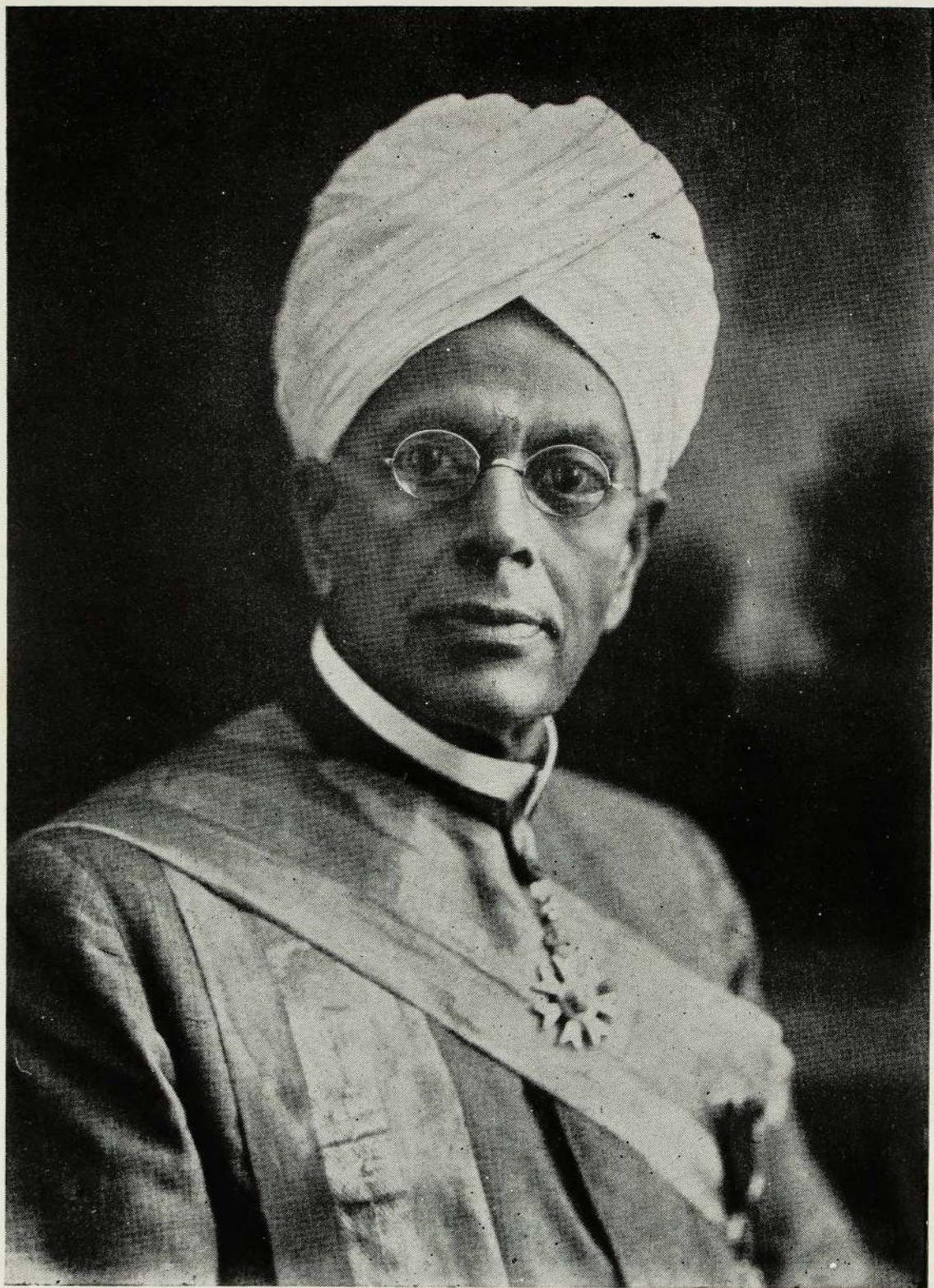
The new Constitution provided for the election of sixteen out of the thirty seven members of the Legislative Council. Among these was a seat to represent the City of Colombo, two for the Western Province, one for each of the other Provinces and one seat each for the Low Country Products Association, the Planters Association and the Chamber of Commerce.

Was there to be a place for Sir Ponnambalam Arunachalam in such a Council? He was urged by some among his friends to announce his candidature for the City of Colombo seat. He had strong claims as he was a distinguished citizen of Colombo. Likewise, James Peiris's friends advised him, as the President of the Congress and one who had a distinguished career in the Municipal Council, to stand for the City of Colombo. He could have easily won one of several seats, especially that reserved for the Low Country Products Association. Nevertheless his supporters, especially the brothers F. R. and D. S. Senanayake, insisted that he should stick to the City of Colombo seat. This, together with the fact that the Congress

was uncompromising in its opposition to the creation of a special seat for the Tamils of the Western Province, seemed to convince Arunachalam's friends that he was getting a raw deal from the Congress. The fact that his brother, Sir Ponnambalam Ramanathan, was at this time trying to unite the minorities against the Congress did not help to improve the relations between Arunachalam and his former colleagues of the Congress. In the end Arunachalam did not put his name forward for any seat in the Council.

The *Daily News* was not happy over the turn of events and sarcastically referred to the Senanayakes as king-makers. The leadership of the Congress passed to James Peiris who, in a memorandum which he submitted to the Secretary of State in company with D. B. Jayatilaka to counter the activities of Ramanathan, wrote : "The elections took place in May 1921. About this time the political views of Sir P. Arunachalam, hitherto an ardent reformer and opponent of communal representation in any shape or form, began to undergo a serious change for reasons which, though now an open secret, we refrain from discussing here. He transferred his activities to Jaffna where, with the cooperation of his brother, Sir P. Ramanathan, he brought into being, on August 1921, the Tamil Mahajana Sabhai, whose labours so far have been limited to the production of two memorials to the Government supporting communal representation".

Arunachalam who had played a pivotal role in the reform movement, died in February 1924 during a pilgrimage to the Hindu temples of South India. At the ensuing session of the National Congress full honours were given to his memory.



SIR PONNAMBALAM RAMANATHAN

BAILLIE STREET CHARACTERS

AFTER the move to the Fort, the *Daily News* and *Dinamina* made steady progress. The two newspapers now offered better value to both readers and advertisers. The articles were more readable, the news more up-to-date, advertisements were more varied and attractively presented and, perhaps most important of all, the papers had an enlightened and consistent policy. The business was making money and Wijewardene was ploughing back profits. The quality of the staff improved, and new machinery was installed for the production of well-printed and livelier newspapers.

One of Wijewardene's recruits to the *Daily News* at this time was O. E. (later Sir Oliver) Goonetilleke who, however, did not remain long with him. After a bright career at Wesley College, Colombo, Goonetilleke took his B.A. degree as an external student from the London University. He was first a teacher and, having been passed over for a scholarship to the Poona Agricultural College, he joined O. B. Wijeyesekera as Accountant of the Bank of Colombo which that enterprising financier had started in Baillie Street. In a couple of years there was a run on this bank as it did not possess adequate resources, and it had to close its doors.

Even in those days Oliver Goonetilleke had influential friends and one of them introduced him to Wijewardene who no doubt thought that he had at last found the man whom he was looking for to be Manager of the *Daily News*. Goonetilleke, however, knew what was best for himself and it was not long before he accepted a post as Assistant Railway Auditor. In due course he caught the eye of Wilfrid Woods, the Financial Secretary, and climbed the ladder until he found himself in such jobs as Railway Auditor, Auditor-General, Civil Defence Commissioner, Financial Secretary, Minister of Home Affairs, High Commissioner for Ceylon in London, Minister of Agriculture, Minister of Finance, and finally Governor-General. The only important post he has not held is that of Prime Minister. It is obvious that Ceylon has produced few abler men than Sir Oliver Goonetilleke. From almost their first meeting, he added Wijewardene to his list of influential friends, and in the course of their respective careers their paths met often, usually for the greater good of their country.

Ceylon journalism has seldom seen two more efficient newspaper men or more colourful characters than Orion de Zylva and R. E. de Alwis. De Zylva was brought to the office by Oliver Goonetilleke. He was a friend of Goonetilleke's brother-in-law, Oliver Jayawardene, and was at the time holding a minor post in the managerial office of the *Times of Ceylon*. He had read widely and wrote brilliantly even as a beginner in journalism. He worked as understudy to H. D. Jansz, the Chief Sub-editor, until he was himself appointed to that post. A fast worker he excelled in giving terse and crisp head-lines to news stories.



M. SARAVANAMUTTU



H. D. JANSZ



ORION DE ZYLVA



R. E. DE ALWIS

De Zylva was often called upon by Wijewardene to write the main editorial for the day and was able to produce a thousand words of telling prose in half an hour. His hand-writing was neat and regular and his manuscript was never marred by a single word crossed out. He would rather re-write the whole page than strike out a word, but he rarely had occasion to do this. Reserved and taciturn while at work, he was not always an easy companion in office. De Zylva seemed to despise any kind of comradeship at work. There were days when he dressed somewhat foppishly, dangling a monocle from a black ribbon and sporting a black homburg. On other occasions he was casual, almost careless in his dress.

Wijewardene not only admired his talent but had an affection for him. His colleagues respected de Zylva's gifts as a journalist but never took liberties with him. He had few friends but was 'persona grata' at Horagolla Walauwa. It was believed in the office that he had "ghosted" the biography of Sir Solomon Dias Bandaranaike which was called "Remembered Yesterdays". He wrote poetry to amuse himself and sometimes for publication. He was one of the few men of genius attracted to Ceylon journalism and under more favourable circumstances might have written books of a permanent value.

Another who gave his life's best work to the *Daily News* was R. E. de Alwis, Chief Reporter of the paper for many years. He had been on the staff of the *Ceylonese* and of a short-lived evening newspaper called the *People*, and had seen hard times. The best reporter in his time, journalism in Ceylon has not seen his equal

as a news-getter. He had a good educational background and the zeal of the convert to Roman Catholicism.

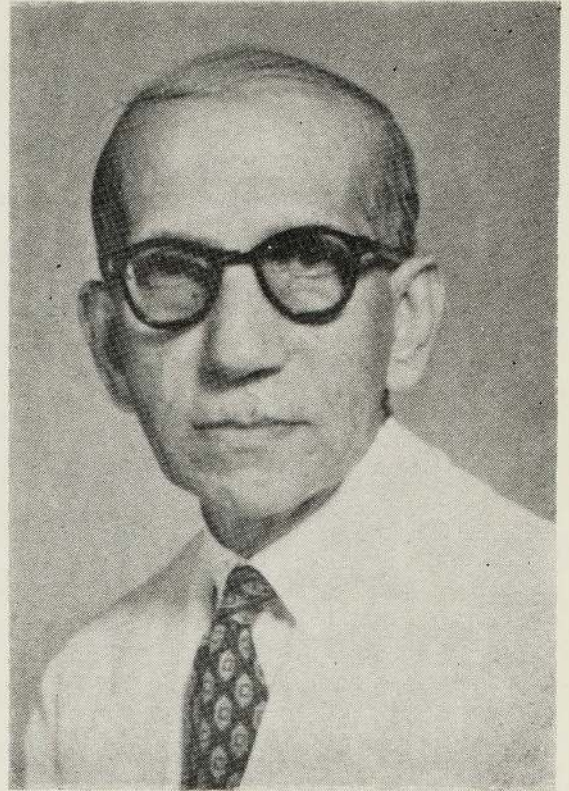
Alwis retained the confidence of men as far apart in politics as Sir Wilfrid Woods and Mr. D. S. Senanayake, Ceylon's first Prime Minister. They both used him for ferreting out information and rewarded him with bits of news everyone of which he called a "scoop". Alwis was in one sense the answer to the sub-editor's prayer for there was not a day in which he did not produce two or three of his scoops which generally found a place on the front page. He was, on the other hand, also a pain in the neck for a sub-editor. He delayed writing his "copy" till the last moment. He was the man to have by your side on a big occasion, for his enthusiasm knew no limits. He was a specialist in uncovering secret documents and Wijewardene gave him a bonus every time he brought something sensational for publication.

Alwis had only two heroes : D. R. Wijewardene and D. S. Senanayake, in that order. When Senanayake became a Minister and was in the habit of lunching in his office, usually in the company of Oliver Goonetilleke, Alwis arrived in time to eat the sweet which Senanayake, who was a diabetic, left for him. And he rarely went away without a scoop.

On the business side the most useful addition to the staff was G. V. Perera who was appointed Manager of the *Daily News*. He had been a practising advocate and had edited a well known series of law reports but he decided that he was not cut out for the profession of an advocate and preferred a desk job. He was for a



G. V. PERERA



P. C. A. NELSON



P. L. A. DEUTROM



C. R. CALVETT

short time Import Manager of H. L. de Mel & Co. As Manager of the *Daily News* he was a success. He was somewhat reserved and for that reason occasionally misunderstood. Deutrom records that "he was adamant in observing the rules laid down for advertisements, and advertisers often went away disappointed that they could not get their own way with him. Not infrequently I had to patch up differences, and explain to the advertisers that no offence was meant and that the Manager's grim attitude was only a mannerism". G. V. Perera's knowledge of the law was helpful to the office and his advice was valued in every department of the business. It was his boast that he never took a defaulting advertiser or agent to court unless he had a good case. His death in the prime of life in January 1944 was a loss to the organisation.

Wijewardene was now confident that it was only a matter of time before the *Daily News* forged ahead to the first place among Ceylon newspapers. The most effective challenge he could offer to the supremacy of the *Times of Ceylon*, then as now an evening paper, was for him to own an evening newspaper himself. He took the bold step of making a bid for the *Ceylon Observer*. The *Observer* had been sold by the last of the Ferguson dynasty to a syndicate backed by the European Association of Ceylon.

Most of the money of the syndicate came from W. H. Figg, then the chief shareholder of Messrs. Whittall & Company. The Managing Director of the *Observer* company was F. C. Gibbs, a printer, who had left H. W. Cave & Co. and founded the motor engineering firm of Rowlands Garages Limited. The *Observer*

had as its new editor, Charles Tower, a journalist with a European reputation. Tower was *Daily Mail* correspondent in Berlin when the first world war broke out and was manhandled by the mob before he could get out of the country. A permanent limp was one of the consequences of the incident. Lord Northcliffe, in the course of his last world tour, visited Tower in the Baillie Street Office in Colombo. When he returned to England, Tower joined the *Yorkshire Post* as leader writer and wrote the famous editorial which was the first shot in the campaign which led to the abdication of King Edward the Eighth, later Duke of Windsor.

Gibbs persuaded the directors of the *Observer* to sell the business to Wijewardene who bought it in 1923 for about Rs. 100,000 paying Gibbs a commission of Rs. 5,000. He borrowed Rs. 30,000 from his brother "D. L." for the new venture, which was repaid in shares when the ownership of all his newspapers was transferred to a joint stock company. The *Observer* was in Baillie Street where fifty years earlier many of the banks and business houses in Colombo had their offices. Wijewardene shortly afterwards rented the adjoining building and moved the editorial and administrative departments of the *Daily News* to it. A hole was knocked in the wall between the two buildings which gave the offices of the different papers free access to one another.

The *Observer* was in its heyday a power in the land. Until the Fergusons became too involved in politics it had shown great enterprise as a newspaper and was the pioneer in many fields. It sent out special correspondents to report on the tea regions of Assam and



THE PIGEON POST BRINGS THE NEWS TO THE "OBSERVER," OFFICE OF THE FALL OF SEBASTAPOL
IN THE CRIMEAN WAR.

Darjeeling, on the Cinchona Gardens of the Nilgiri Hills and Java; to West Africa to learn all about Liberian coffee, and to South and Central America to ascertain the progress of the coffee industry there.

In 1850 Galle was still the chief port of call for ships from England. The English mail came once a fortnight and the mail coach from Galle to Colombo took nine or ten hours. The delay in bringing the news induced the *Observer* to start a Pigeon Express for the most urgent news. It brought such items to Colombo in less than two hours, sometimes in three-quarters of an hour with favourable winds. A narrow open yard ran down the middle of the Baillie Street Office where the pigeons were kept.

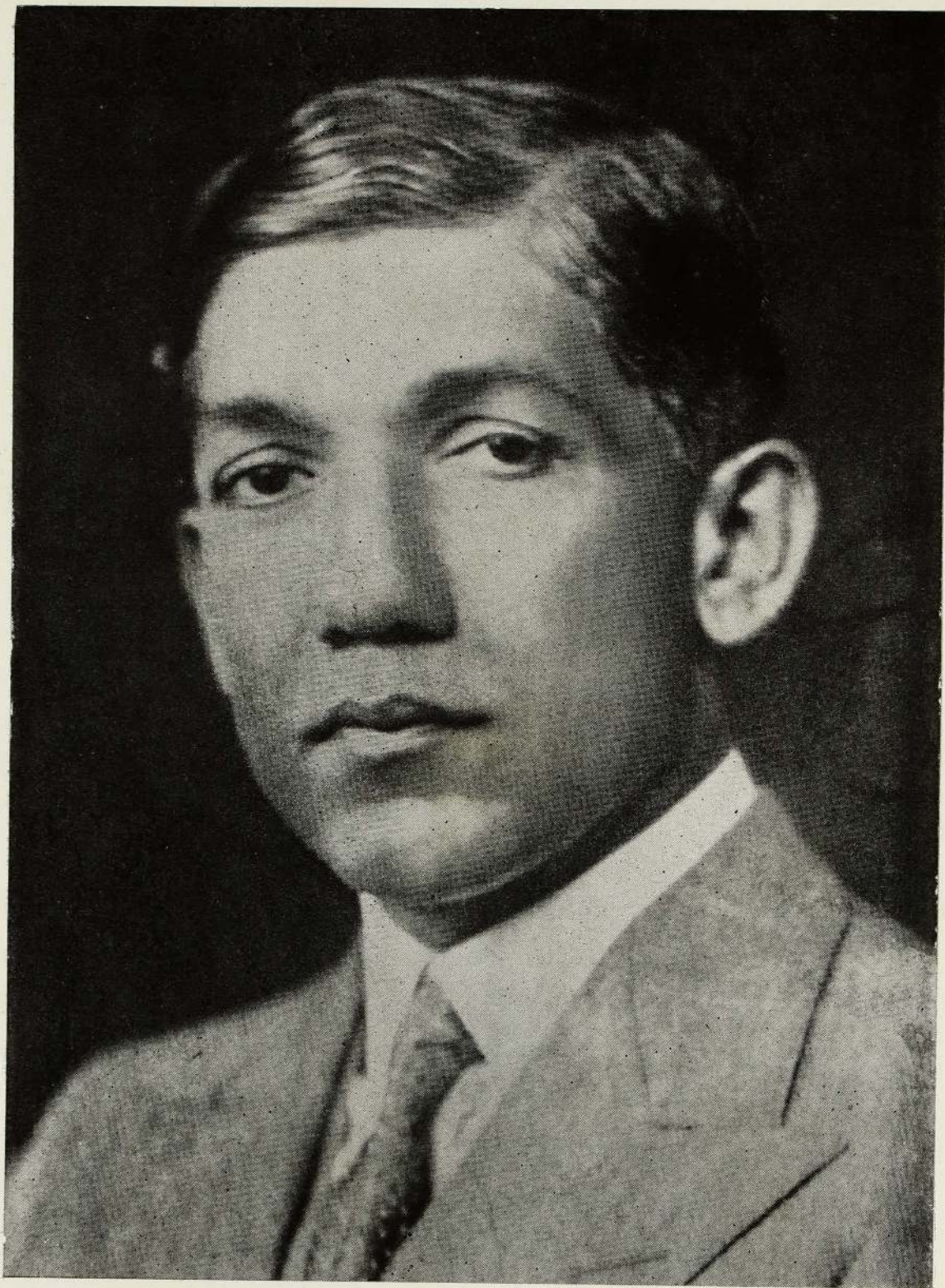
The first news brought by the Pigeon Express was the announcement of the recall of the Governor, Lord Torrington. The news of the fall of Sebastapool and of the Battle of Inkerman too reached Colombo on a thin quill of paper tied to the leg of an *Observer* pigeon. The opening of a telegraph line, the first in Ceylon, between Colombo and Galle, on the 1st January 1858, did away with the need for the Pigeon Service.

REJUVENATION OF THE "OBSERVER"

WIJEWARDENE was now the biggest newspaper publisher in Ceylon. He owned the *Daily News* published in the morning and the *Observer* published in the evening, in addition to the *Dinamina*, a daily newspaper in the Sinhalese language. With the *Observer* came Ferguson's Ceylon Directory, the big red reference book which celebrated its centenary in 1958.

Charles Tower's contract was terminated as he found that the Colombo climate did not suit him and the services of Christie Driberg, who had just retired from the Department of Agriculture, were engaged. Driberg wrote light verse and was an expert in some branches of agriculture, and it was thought that the *Observer's* reputation among the planters would be enhanced. As Ceylonese reporters were not welcome at some of the upcountry planters' association meetings, Walter E. Pine, a senior European reporter of the *Times of Ceylon*, was engaged on the staff.

H. D. Jansz, who had temporarily retired from newspaper work, was appointed sub-editor along with H. D. Jayasinghe from the old *Observer* staff. This was the beginning of Jansz's association with the



D. R. WIJEWARDENE
(at the time he acquired the "Ceylon Observer")

newspaper of which he was the distinguished editor for over twenty years.

The *Observer* office was a queer medley of old and new. Some members of the staff, like Carberry Perera, the Courts Reporter—father of the Rev. S. G. Perera S.J., the historian—had over fifty years' service. It was at this time that Wijewardene launched the *Sunday Observer*. It was a success from the start. Manicam Saravanamuttu, later Ceylon Minister in Indonesia and Malaya, joined as Sports Editor of the *Observer*, and was responsible for the Sunday paper with Willet Soysa. Saravanamuttu had returned from Oxford where he was a Ceylon Government scholar and had played cricket for the Authentics. He was a popular sports writer and made friends everywhere. Some years later he migrated to Malaya and made a great reputation as an editor and publisher and even more as a sportsman and popular personality.

J. R. Weinman, who never visited a newspaper office, was again the most prolific contributor. A. V. Kulasingham, who was back in Colombo from Jaffna reading law to become an advocate, eked out a living by writing editorials in his rounded periods.

In spite of all his efforts Wijewardene could not push up the circulation of the *Observer*. Charles Calvett, the young and indefatigable Manager of the *Observer*, did his best to get advertisements, which was no easy task after the paper ceased to be European-owned. Christie Drieberg found the strain of the editorship too much for him and retired. He was followed by P. B. Marshall, a former sub-editor of the *Manchester Guardian*. Marshall's tenure of office

was short. He was succeeded by J. D. Quirk who had been correspondent of the *Daily Mail* and the *Morning Post* at Constantinople. The climate of Colombo did not suit Quirk and he returned to Turkey. He wrote to the *Daily News* for many years as an occasional correspondent. Quirk was succeeded by John Bourne, who gave up the post of News Editor of the *Wolverhampton Express and Star* to go out to Ceylon. His chief interest was the theatre but he did much in other ways to improve the paper.

About this time, many bright young men joined one or other of Wijewardene's papers but only few remained to become journalists. One remembers R. R. Crossette-Thambiah, a future Solicitor-General who, among other things, started an important series of articles in the *Daily News* entitled "Shall Ceylon Have a Shoddy University?" He did not stay long enough to complete them. These articles inaugurated the campaign—to which reference will be made later—which resulted in the establishment of the University at Peradeniya. Another recruit at this time was E. B. Wikramanayake who many years later became Minister of Justice. J. H. O. Paulusz, who became the Government Archivist and later Ceylon representative at the Hague was a member of the editorial staff for a short time.

P. C. Thambugala, one of the great names in the Ceylon theatre, who was chief cashier at the Bank of Colombo, joined the printing department when the bank closed. He died young, at the height of his fame as an amateur comic actor. About this time also came to the office one who was Thambugala's

foil and equal as an actor, E. C. B. Wijeyesinghe. He took to journalism after two years of medical studies. Wijeyesinghe continued on the *Observer* staff for about twenty-five years as sub-editor until he was appointed Manager of the Press Trust of Ceylon and Reuter's Office in Colombo. He was also the Secretary of the Provident Fund of the group—a big man with a big heart.

The purchase of the *Observer* by Wijewardene opened the way for an ambitious scheme of building and equipping a modern newspaper establishment. In an article he wrote for the twenty-fifth birthday number of the *Daily News*, Orion de Zylva recalled the joining together of the two papers in the bonds of a single proprietorship in the following terms:

“At this time (it was the year 1923) a remarkable development occurred. The proprietor of the youngest newspaper acquired and became proprietor of the oldest newspaper. Both had much to gain from the amalgamation. The *Ceylon Observer*, in a state of decrepitude, had been for years struggling for existence. The consanguinity with the full-blooded *Daily News* put new life into its aging veins to such good purpose that today the *Observer* and its Sunday offspring are lively and virile partners in the great combination that is the Associated Newspapers of Ceylon, Limited. The formation of the Company was still to come. The two papers had their mating-season in Baillie Street, the old home of the *Observer* under the Fergusons. The younger paper drew fresh inspiration and momentum from the traditions and alliances of the old, and there followed in due time a new epoch in

the history of Ceylon and Eastern journalism—the founding of the Company and the creation of Lake House which, with its carefully-planned layout and the most modern newspaper-producing plant, is acknowledged to be a model of its kind for a similar organisation in either hemisphere”.

GETTING THE NEWS

THE great virtue of Wijewardene as a newspaper proprietor was that he had an exceptionally acute news sense. The news columns of the *Daily News* reflected something of his personality as much as the editorials. He inspired the views but he also was the chief news-getter. He used his contacts with politicians and other important persons to find out what was going on. He spent much time on the telephone getting information and passing it on to his editors, news editors or whoever else was on duty, for no hour was too early or too late when it was a question of getting an exclusive piece of news for one of his papers. It is difficult to say whether he modelled himself on born newspaper men like Northcliffe and Beaverbrook or whether he was instinctively one of the same genre. But there is no doubt he enjoyed the chase, and in general he did not allow his views to interfere with the objective reporting of news.

At the start of its career the *Daily News* was at a disadvantage. The majority of the higher officials were Europeans who met their compatriots, including the owners and editors of the British-owned newspapers, daily in their exclusive clubs. The top men of the

Times of Ceylon had no difficulty in talking to the Colonial Secretary or the Governor's Private Secretary. For his part, Armand de Souza, the editor of the *Morning Leader*, cultivated the friendship of high officials like Sir Hugh Clifford and Sir Edward Stubbs. Some years had to pass before the *Daily News* could catch up with these two papers in the race for news. But no opportunities were missed and some amusing incidents come to the mind of the present writer.

There was a senior clerk in the office of the Controller of Revenue, Fred Ginger by name, who was convinced that a well known Ceylonese business man was about to get a large tract of land by unfair means. He brought the secret files and left them over the week-end with Wijewardene so that the story of the scandal could be extracted from them. Ginger took back the files on Monday with the injunction that the news should be published only after he telephoned the passwords "White Horse Dead". This he did some days later and the scandal was exposed.

The *Daily News* created a sensation by bringing to light a secret memorial on the riots of 1915 submitted by the European community in Ceylon to the authorities in England. This was uncovered by a young courts reporter, the son of F. F. Martinus. It was the first of many "scoops" published by the *Daily News*. At a later stage, the late R. E. de Alwis was primarily responsible for bringing them. Among these was a memorandum sent secretly to the Secretary of State by a group of leaders of the minority communities with a view to thwarting the grant of responsible government. In the Legislative Council the then

Colonial Secretary refused to table a copy of the memorial in response to a demand by James Peiris with the comment that "members who desire to acquaint themselves with the contents of the document should apply to the authors; Government has no right to publish the document". He was fully confident that none of the signatories would give it. Alwis was able to obtain a copy surreptitiously from a member of the household of Sir Ponnambalam Ramanathan. Sir Ponnambalam was one of the instigators of the memorial.

The publication of the "secret" memorial created something of a sensation. Mr. H. J. C. Pereira, the President of the National Congress, cabled to the Secretary of State stating that the secret memorial which the Government had refused to publish had been discovered and that it contained gross mis-statements.

The *Daily News* interviewed a number of political leaders of the minority communities who condemned the memorial severely. Mr. E. R. Tambimuttu, who was then Member of the Legislative Council for the Eastern Province, said that "the statement in the mischievous memorandum that the Tamils favour the scheme of reform propounded there is quite unfounded." Mr. (afterwards Sir) Waitilingam Duraiswamy said in an interview published by the *Citizen*: "I had no hand whatever in the Minorities Scheme. My telegram to Sir Ramanathan shows that I was opposed to the very essentials of the absurd scheme. If we have to hand the guidance of our political matters to the Minorities, what is our politics worth? I cannot

understand how age and experience could have been guilty of such egregious blunders. I will never support any scheme of that kind that commits the Tamils to the back-waters of political uselessness. No sane Tamil unobsessed by personal magnificence could have been guilty of such a woeful exhibition of political absurdity. This is all the work of our old men. If they cannot lead in the right way they lead in the wrong way but they always lead, that is their one and only ambition". Several members of the Muslim community wrote to the newspapers repudiating the memorial.

As a piece of journalistic enterprise, the unearthing of the Minorities Memorial was noteworthy. Even Armand de Souza, editor of the *Morning Leader*, then a formidable rival of Wijewardene's paper, said that it was worthy of the great de Blowitz himself.

It was often good fun tracking a news story with Alwis. When I was editor of the *Daily News* Alwis came to the office one day with the information—obtained no doubt from Mr. D. S. Senanayake, though he rarely disclosed his sources truthfully—that Sir Bernard Bourdillon, the Chief Secretary at the time, was about to be transferred elsewhere. I had seen in *The Times* of London that the Governor of Uganda was about to retire and I asked Alwis to telephone to Sir Bernard, who was on holiday at Nuwara Eliya, to find out whether he was going to Uganda. Alwis did so, to be told that there was no foundation for such a surmise. Two weeks later I sent Alwis a telegram, congratulating him on his "scoop". He did not know whether I was referring to the birth of

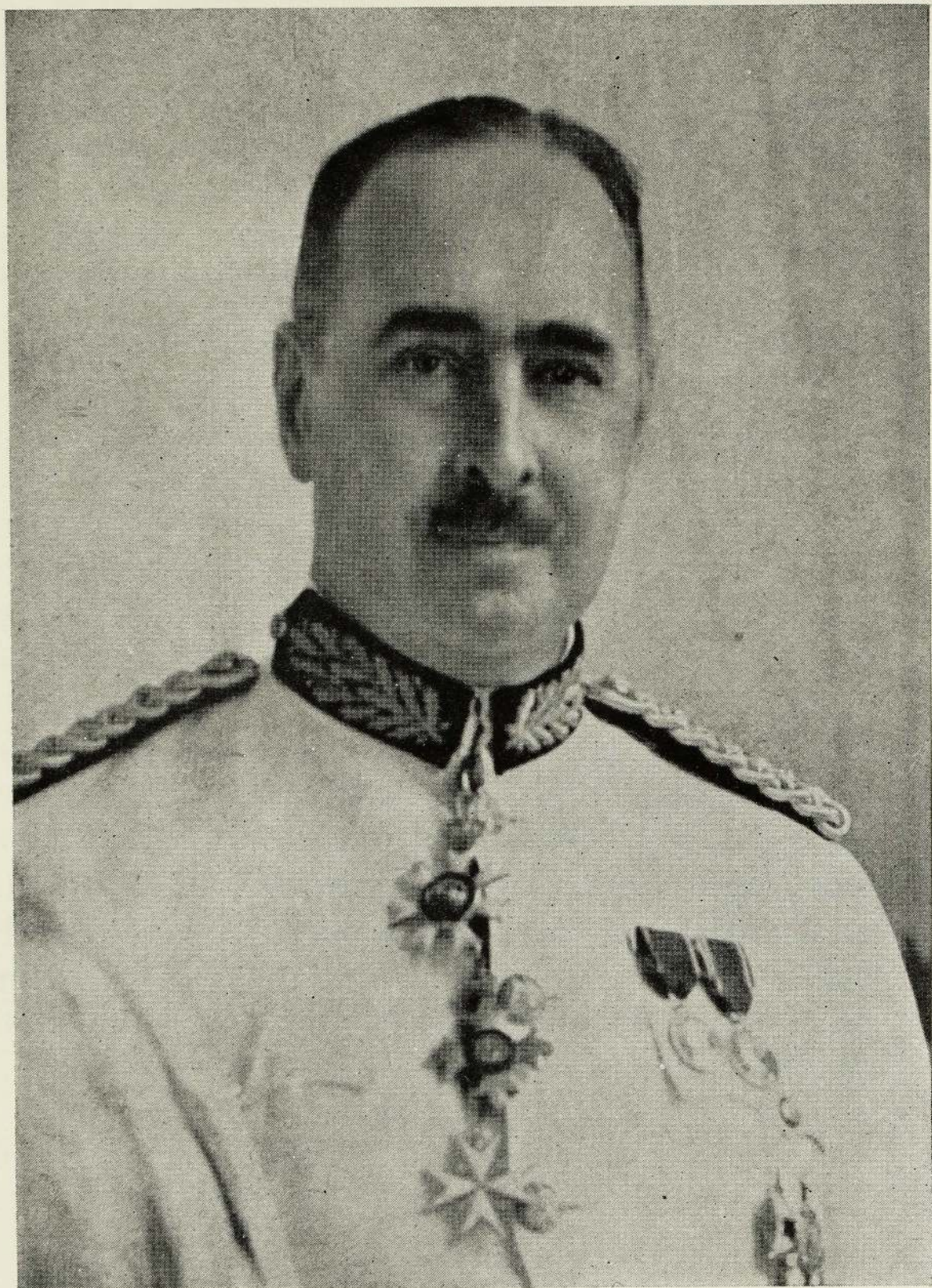
his eldest son, which had occurred during the previous night, or to something else. But the truth was that I had received a letter from Sir Bernard apologising for his denial of the news. He assured me that when Alwis telephoned to him he had no idea that he was going to Uganda and wondered how we had got the information before he did.

As the paper grew in influence its relations with the ruling powers became more cordial. Sir Andrew Caldecott, who was the Governor when the second world war broke out, was one of the best friends the island ever had. He was a very accomplished man and a great lover of the arts. He wrote sonnets and "Letters to the Editor" for publication in the *Daily News* over various pen-names. On the day of his departure from Ceylon, after he had been superseded as Governor and Commander-in-Chief by Admiral Sir Geoffrey Layton, I wrote and published an article in the paper about him. A few days later I received a letter from his Private Secretary H. C. Dobbs, in the course of which he said: "I hope you will forgive my writing to you like this but, having come to know that you were the author of the centre page article on Sir Andrew Caldecott which appeared on the 17th, entitled "An English Gentleman Retires", I thought I would just write to tell you what great pleasure it gave to Sir Andrew. It was wonderfully timed, appearing as it did on the very day he left the Island and it did, I believe, a great deal to cheer him up. He was naturally very distressed at leaving Ceylon, as were we all at his going, and I am not exaggerating at all when I say your article put new heart into us."

Sir Hugh Clifford, the friend of Joseph Conrad, and himself the writer of novels with a Malayan background, was Colonial Secretary in Ceylon in the early days of the century and came back as Governor after the first world war. The African sun had affected him, for he had seen service in Nigeria, and he had become more eccentric though scarcely less brilliant in his speeches and writings.

When the Legislative Council of Ceylon gave him a dinner, the Press was excluded by the fussy organisers, without his knowledge. He had an important announcement to make regarding the reform of the Constitution. Getting up to speak, he noticed that there were no reporters. Sir Hugh then said he would not make his speech until reporters were brought in, and proceeded to entertain the members of the Council with readings from Rudyard Kipling's poems from a small volume which he produced from his pocket. After much frantic telephoning, we were able to produce a reporter in evening clothes at the banquet hall to report Sir Hugh's important speech. It contained the announcement of the appointment of the Commission under the chairmanship of the Earl of Donoughmore to report on a new Constitution for Ceylon. *The Times* of London wrote one of its most delightful Fourth Leaders on the episode.

In those days Reuter's service was not as efficient as it is now. Telegrams were still sent by cable and they were costly, so that the trickle of news was small. Furthermore, Wijewardene felt that the news service was geared more to the evening papers than to the morning papers. For example, the close of day scores



SIR ANDREW CALDECOTT

of a Test cricket match in England very rarely appeared in the next morning's Colombo newspapers. Wijewardene was convinced that news was purposely delayed to miss the morning papers. I had personal experience of such a delay though I cannot say whether it was deliberately done or not.

At the end of the first world war there was a scheme for restricting rubber production. It was called the Stevenson Scheme, and it did not function satisfactorily as the Dutch Colonies, who were among the biggest rubber producers, had not joined the scheme. The market fluctuated with the hopes that the scheme might be brought to an end. The Government in England had appointed a Commission with a well known banker as Chairman to consider what should be done, and a statement was promised in the House of Commons on a certain day. Although the statement was made at four in the afternoon we received no telegram from Reuter's. As a young reporter it was my duty that evening to see that the *Daily News* received the news and I telephoned Reuter's office several times that night to be met with the answer that the Manager was out. At about midnight I went to the office and saw the cable on the Manager's table saying that His Majesty's Government had decided to terminate the Stevenson Scheme. Yet there was no communication from Reuter's till late next morning.

The *Daily News* took the risk and splashed the news on the front page. It was the most important commercial news of the year because it had an important effect on the sensitive rubber market. The *Times of Ceylon* was then regarded as the paper of the

merchants and planters, but that day there was not a merchant or planter who did not try to secure a copy of the *Daily News*. As usual on a big day, we left the office with the morning's milk. In fact some of us even went to the Railway Station in the van which took the papers for despatch by train to the provincial towns and the planting districts. The incident was thrown at the face of Reuter's on many an occasion after that.

Whenever Reuter's representative came from Bombay to renew the contract, Wijewardene had a tussle with him on the ground that there was discrimination in favour of the *Times of Ceylon*. For many years the General Manager was a shrewd Irishman called W. J. Moloney. He was accustomed to dealing with orientals, whether in Egypt, India or China. Every year a hard bargain was struck and with every improvement of the service a higher fee was charged. Reuters was then owned by Sir Roderick Jones and his friends, and the agency was not disposed to throw money on improving its services. When the Press Association and the Newspaper Society made a deal with Reuters, and its goodwill and assets came under the control of the British and Commonwealth newspapers, there was a great change. The volume of news grew to unwieldy proportions with the transmission of messages by radio and the installation of teleprinters in the newspaper offices. Today it is not so much a question of blowing up an item of a few lines to a column but of throwing away chunks of what comes through the teleprinter and getting the meat of a worthwhile story.

One of the "scoops" gained by the *Daily News* as a result of the lethargy of Reuter's was the result of good organisation on the part of Wijewardene and his staff. It was announced that the recommendations of the Donoughmore Commission on Constitutional Reforms would be tabled in the House of Commons on Monday, July 16, at 5 p.m. It was suggested to the Governor's office that arrangements be made for a summary of the Commission's recommendations to be issued to the Press before Government offices closed for the day, with an embargo that nothing should be published before midnight. This procedure is well-established nowadays, and newspapers would claim its adoption as a matter of right. But thirty years ago bureaucracy was more timid or was not willing to give a newspaper owned by a Ceylonese an advantage, and the suggestion was not entertained.

Wijewardene was not easily put off by official obscurantists and promptly telegraphed to the London Office of the *Daily News* to cable the desired summary as soon as the Commission's recommendations were tabled in the House of Commons.

Frederick Grubb, who was then London correspondent of the *Daily News* has described how the problem was tackled at the London end. "I shall never forget", he wrote, "the hectic hours the London Manager (Mr. Douglas Shaw) and I spent in the House of Commons lobby one afternoon in July 1928, when through the kindness of Colonel Josiah Wedgewood (who had a real claim at that time to be regarded as M. P. for Ceylon) we were enabled to obtain an early summary of the Commission's Report, embodying

the main features of a Constitution. In less time than it takes to tell the story, we had dug out the pith of the Commission's recommendations and almost before the recommendations reached the Government of Ceylon, thanks to our immediate cablegrams, the *Daily News* was able to publish the substance of the Commission's proposals. For this expeditious action we were commended by those who were mainly concerned, and our competitors magnanimously acknowledged that the *Daily News* had brought off a real scoop''.

Now from the Ceylon end. R. E. de Alwis, who went to and fro between the *Daily News* office and the Governor's Private Secretary with a view to get the news in time for the paper and failed, has described the sequence of the arrival of the cables from London:

“The first telegram was handed in at the London Post Office at 5-30 p.m., when it was about 10 p.m. in Ceylon. It was received in the local Central Telegraph office at a quarter to eleven p.m., i.e. in three-quarters of an hour. The second telegram was handed in at the London office at 6-40 p.m., about midnight in Colombo. It was received at the Central Telegraph Office in Colombo at 2-05 a.m. It had taken over two hours to despatch it because it contained over 2,000 words. The *Daily News* paid a large sum for that telegram because it wanted to be first with the news''.

On occasions such as this Wijewardene stood by in the office or printing room until the newspaper was printed. He got as great a thrill from it as the reporter or sub-editor handling the big news story.

There were many aspects of a newspaper which held the proprietor's interest: the power it wielded; the money it earned; the quality of the articles it printed; its circulation throughout the country. But all these things were subordinate, in Wijewardene's opinion, to news; not the sort of doctored news which some papers published to malign an opponent but what is called straight news by journalists. For Wijewardene believed, with C. P. Scott of the *Manchester Guardian*, that facts are sacred while comment is free.

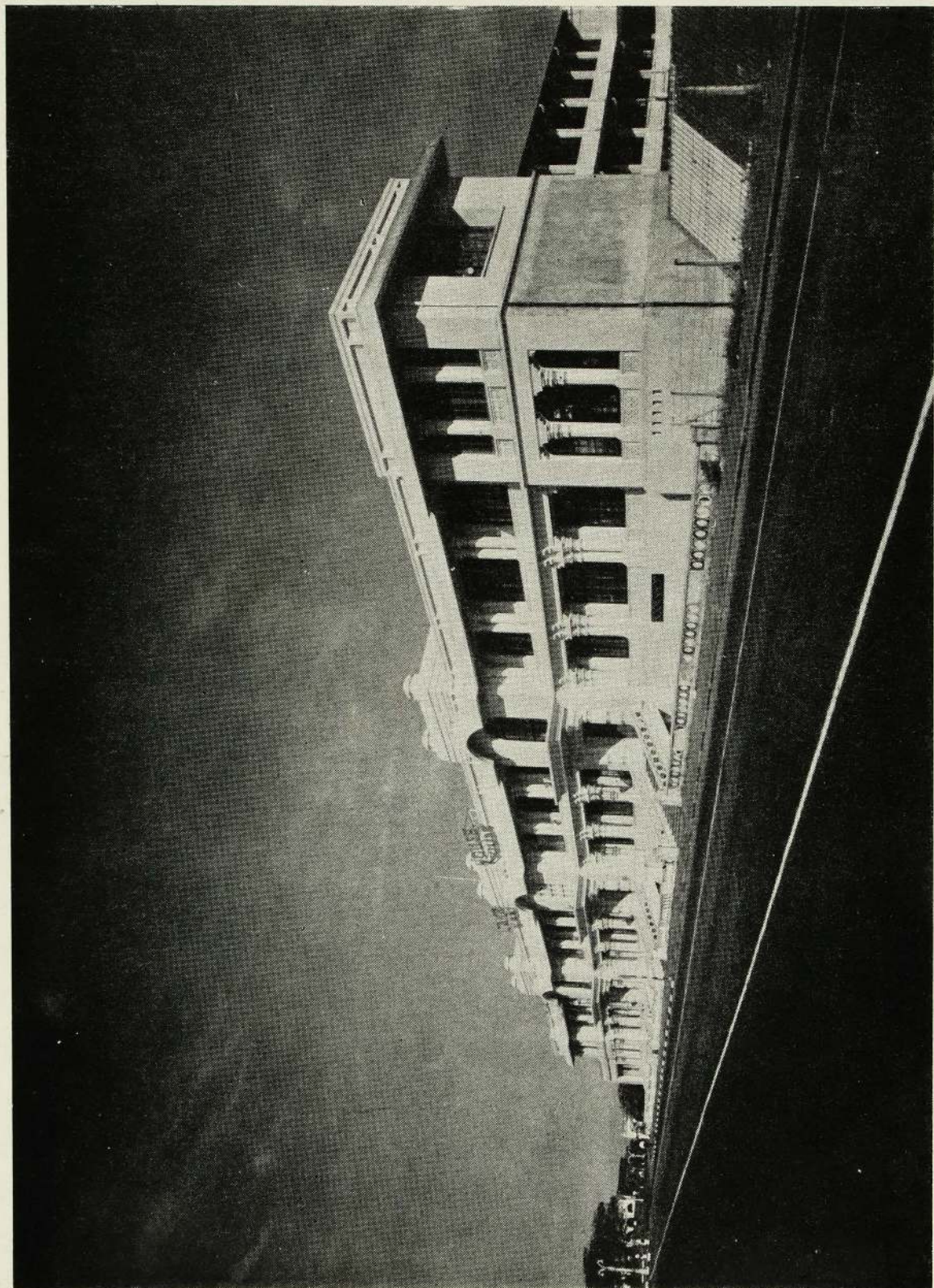
A reporter in the days before air travel had more opportunities of interviewing famous visitors. In my time as a reporter I had the experience of seeing in Colombo Lloyd George, the great war Prime Minister, Ramsay MacDonald, the first Labour Prime Minister and Georges Clemenceau, the French statesman who dominated the peace conference after the first world war. Alwis had plenty of fun interviewing Bernard Shaw and Charlie Chaplin among others. Shaw was mobbed when he landed in Colombo, and when Alwis was able to get near him he asked the great man: "Mr. Shaw, perhaps you are going round the world because the world won't go round you!" Shaw smiled and asked him: "Where did you pick up that joke?" Alwis confessed he had seen it in "Punch" and had kept it for just such an occasion as Shaw's first visit to Ceylon.

BIG BUSINESS

CROWTHER, the Editor of the *Daily News*, who took a humorous view of life before he began to bother about the sorry state of the world, could never understand why Wijewardene worked so hard. He came to the conclusion that Wijewardene bought the *Observer* because he was unhappy over having nothing to do in the mornings. His responsibilities as owner of the *Daily News* did not begin till about 11 o'clock a.m. With his new toy he could play from an earlier hour.

Having bought the *Observer* Wijewardene began making plans to build a palazzo for his newspapers. He leased the present site of Lake House from the Government on very advantageous terms. As usual he sought the best possible advice on all the problems involved in securing the land, arranging the finance, and building and equipping the new offices and printing works.

The man who made his task easy was Sydney Julius, the head of the legal firm of Julius and Creasy. He had a gruff manner but when he liked a person there was no limit to the help he would give. Julius handled the whole business of floating a joint stock company,



LAKE HOUSE

raising the money that was needed and arranging for the building contract. He made only a nominal charge for his services.

Wijewardene's interests in the newspapers were valued at about Rs. 600,000, for which he was issued ordinary shares of the Company. Other members of the family took about Rs. 100,000 worth of these shares. But there was not enough cash in hand for carrying out the programme of work which was envisaged. Julius rang up the senior partner of Messrs. Forbes & Walker, the well known firm of brokers, and asked him to arrange for Rs. 200,000 worth of debentures of the Associated Newspapers of Ceylon, Limited to be taken up by the firm's clients. The influence of Sydney Julius was such that the debentures were placed within a few minutes among half a dozen persons, including O. B. Forbes and W. E. Drury, partners of the firm, Sir Thomas Villiers, Gordon Pyper and two others. Julius then rang up Small of the firm of architects, Messrs. Adams & Small, and asked him to meet Wijewardene to discuss the plans for the new building. When the plans were ready, he interested Sir Edwin Hayward, the General Manager of Walker Sons & Co., Ltd., and a contract was signed.

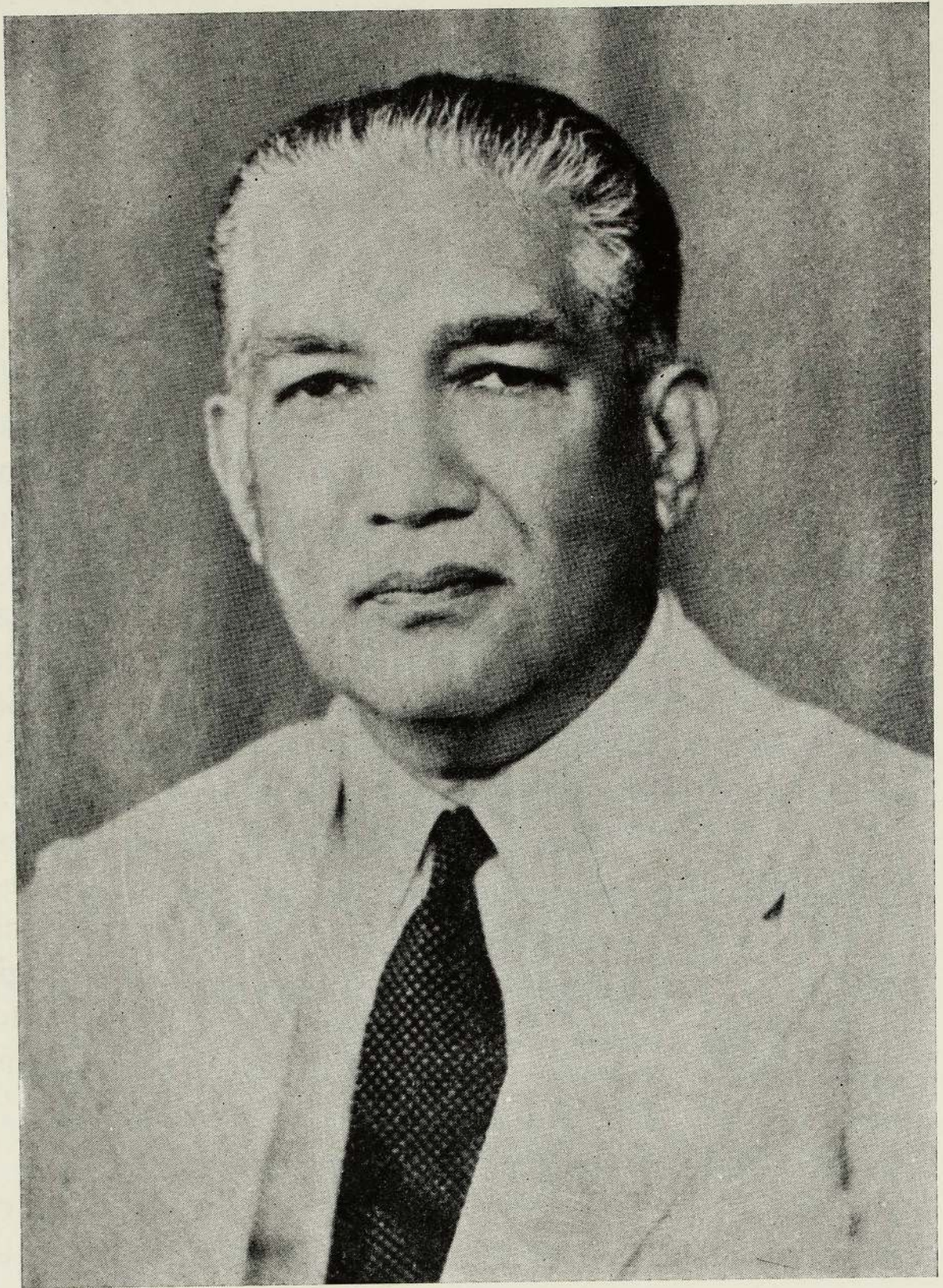
The building of the first section was a laborious process, for the site was water-logged and piles had to be driven before the foundation could be begun. Wijewardene and his managers and editors waited with some impatience for the completion of the building, both because the Baillie Street offices were uncomfortably crowded and because of the feeling that a new era in Ceylon journalism was about to begin. It was

not till October 1929 that the various departments moved into Lake House.

The formation of the Company and the work connected with the new building required new men to take some of the load off the chief proprietor. When Wijewardene had to pay a short visit to England, he entrusted the control of his financial affairs to his brother, Dr. D. E. Wijewardene, who had started a medical practice in Colombo and was acquiring a reputation as a skilful obstetrician. The business link between the two brothers lasted longer than either of them had at first intended.

Dr. Wijewardene reduced his work as a medical practitioner and spent more of his time in the newspaper office. He had the custody of the cheque books and the keys of the private safe for the next quarter of a century. He placed great confidence in his brother's judgment in business matters and on political questions. "D. R." consulted him on most other problems. Dr. Wijewardene was interested in machines and the printing works were kept spick and span largely through his efforts. As a medical man he was of great help to members of the staff. The partnership between the brothers worked very satisfactorily until "D. R.'s" last illness, when they parted company.

The man who was always in the confidence of the two brothers was P. C. A. Nelson. No one connected with the Lake House organisation has made a greater contribution to its success than Nelson. He had a brilliant career at St. Thomas' College but did not stay in school long enough to secure the high academic honours which would have come to him had he done so. From



DR. D. E. WIJWARDENE

school he joined the firm of Ismail & Sons which was doing a large business in Ceylon produce. The firm failed as a result of the speculative operations of one of the brothers, and Nelson was taken to Wijewardene by B. F. de Silva who was one of Wijewardene's closest friends. Quiet and thoughtful, there was no problem in the complicated newspaper business which Nelson did not master. He was completely loyal to Wijewardene and did not spare himself. He was very methodical and had a wonderful memory.

E. E. C. Abayasekara, who succeeded Nelson as the Secretary of the Company, joined the business somewhat later, as Private Secretary of the proprietor. As loyal and industrious as Nelson, he has wider interests and a capacity for independent judgment. He has a command of elegant English and a genuine love of the arts. No great business can flourish without such men as Nelson and Abayasekara.

Among the legacies which Wijewardene inherited from the former owners of the *Observer* was the London office. It came just in time to be of use in executing the plan for the new building and plant. The London office was first situated in Salisbury Court, Fleet Street, in the shadow of Wren's famous church of St. Bride's and on the site where now stands the headquarters of Reuter's news agency and the Press Association. It was managed by Douglas E. Shaw, a young man who had spent some years in planting and mercantile life in Ceylon and was, prior to his appointment in London, a member of the editorial staff of the *Observer* in Ceylon. His connections with Wijewardene's interests lasted for over thirty-five years.

From the one-room office in Salisbury Court, the London Office of the Associated Newspapers of Ceylon Limited moved across the Street and for many years had a floor of a block at the corner of Fleet Street and Fetter Lane.

The main business of the London Office was to get advertisements for Wijewardene's papers but there were many other duties, especially in connection with the purchase of machinery and equipment for the new building and contracts for paper and ink and other printing material. The London office bought the Ceylon rights of special articles and other features published by English newspapers and arranged for cabling news which was not covered promptly by the news agencies.

While the Ferguson family connection with the *Observer* was maintained for some years by R. H. Ferguson contributing a weekly letter from London, the *Daily News* had the services of a first class journalist. Frederick Grubb, who acted as the London correspondent of the paper for fifteen years from 1919 to 1934, was always in close touch with members of Parliament and rendered great service to the national movement by arranging meetings between Ceylonese politicians and the right people at Westminster or Whitehall.

In an article which he contributed to the twenty-fifth birthday number of the *Daily News*, Grubb wrote : "Those were the days when the panicky excesses of officialdom in 1915 were still rankling in the breasts of the Ceylonese people. The Colonial Office was always too prone to turn a deaf ear or a cold shoulder to even the most moderate representation. Deputies from

Ceylon, whatever their standing in the estimate of their fellow countrymen, were regarded with suspicion by successive Secretaries of State. I remember how one of the latter (who still sits in the House of Commons) did his best—or worst—to disparage in the eyes of his parliamentary colleagues Sir Baron Jayatilaka by making him out to be no more than a dangerous agitator who had better to be kept at arm's length. But those who were in the dock then are on the bench now. Truly the wheel has turned since those reactionary times, and we may hope to see it complete the full circle”.

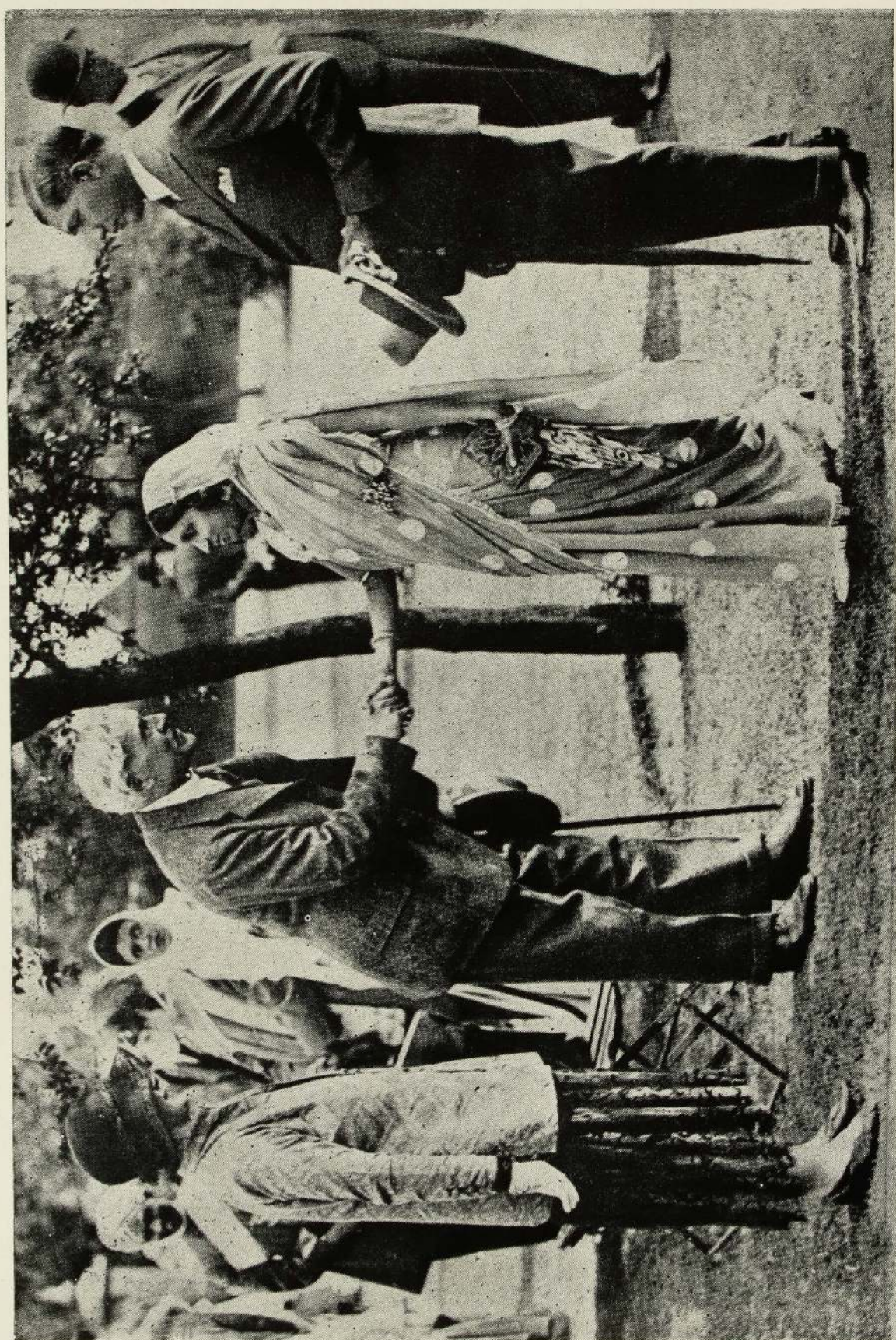
Among the many non-journalistic commissions carried out by Grubb was what he did to get for Ceylon from Windsor Castle the throne and regalia of the last Kings of Kandy. “I went to Windsor Castle”, he wrote, “for the purpose of ascertaining the exact location of this and the other historic regalia, and as a result of that visit I was invited to interview the King's private Secretary at Buckingham Palace. I saw Lord Wigram on more than one occasion, and the outcome of the negotiations, following the resolution passed by the State Council, was the restoration of the Throne and Crown Jewels to Ceylon. The striking episode, in which King George V took a personal interest, provided me with material for an article which appeared in *The Times* of London”.

Grubb lived in a neat cottage in Wimbledon and he and his kindly wife kept open house for visitors from Ceylon. The sub-editors were always delighted to deal with his “copy” because it was written in a clear hand and the paragraphing and punctuation left nothing to be desired. Wijewardene had an affectionate regard

for Grubb, and when in England, never failed to visit him at his Wimbledon home. Grubb was succeeded by John Hockin who, after a brief career as a planter in Ceylon, became a journalist and author.

Wijewardene paid several visits to England after he started his newspaper business. Although he was a member of what was then called the Empire Press Union he only attended the session held in England in 1930. When the delegates visited Liverpool and were entertained he was called upon to reply to the toast of the Union proposed by the Earl of Derby. Although he was very reluctant to make speeches, he made a good one when he could not back out of it. Again in 1935 he made a speech at the annual dinner in London of the Indian and Eastern Newspaper Society.

For the most part he spent his time in England on the business of his newspapers, ordering machinery, discussing news services or interviewing recruits for his editorial or managerial staffs. In all this work, D. E. Shaw, the London Manager of the Associated Newspapers, was his constant companion. He also made a point of seeing his doctor for a check-up during these visits. He was usually in a hurry to get back to Ceylon and, as he kept all the controls in his hands, his fellow directors and editors were always glad to see him back.



Mr. and Mrs. D. R. Wijewardene being received by the Prime Minister, Mr. Ramsay MacDonald, at the reception given by the British Government to the delegates to the Imperial Press Conference of 1930, at Hampton Court Palace. Sir Ponnambalam Ramanathan, K.C., who also attended the function, can be seen in the left corner with his daughter and son-in-law.

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THE FINANCIER

WIJEWARDENE was not a financier in the sense that making money is the be-all and end-all of finance. He did not buy and sell to make quick gains. In fact it cannot be said that he sold anything other than newspapers and the crops from his estates. Whatever he bought, he bought to keep and not to make a quick turnover. When the Company had surplus balances in the bank of two or three million rupees, earning no more than one or two per cent interest, it was the other directors of the Company who suggested more profitable investments. It was the same with his own money. The little men around him, who had an occasional flutter in the Colombo Share Market, sometimes recommended a share that was likely to appreciate in value.

On such occasions he rang up O. B. Jansz of Messrs. Keell & Waldock. One day there was a tip for Vogan Tea shares and Wijewardene asked the telephone operator to put him through to "Jansz". The telephone operator thought that he wanted to speak to H. D. Jansz, the Editor of the *Observer*, who lived in dread of Wijewardene's expressions of annoyance when something went wrong in the paper. What the Editor

heard on the telephone this time was the unexpected question : “Jansz, what do you think of Vogans ?” H. D. Jansz had never heard of Vogans, and wondered whether the boss was referring to a football team or someone who had applied for a job ? He had to do some quick thinking and concluded that Wijewardene was addressing the wrong Jansz. For a long time thereafter Hilaire used to be teased by his friends, especially his colleague E. C. B. Wijeyesinghe, with the question : “Jansz, what do you think of Vogans ?”

The building and equipping of Lake House was carried through during the depression years and cash balances were low. Wijewardene had accepted an invitation to attend the 1930 Empire Press Conference in London with Mrs. Wijewardene. To meet expenses he asked the bank for a loan of Rs. 25,000. This was refused ; but the shroff, who played the role of the middle man between the bank and Ceylonese clients, offered to raise the money from a Chettiar money-lender at 12 per cent interest. In such a transaction the shroff would get the money from the bank and lend it to the Chettiar at 6 per cent, and share the difference. Wijewardene was deeply humiliated, but had no alternative to borrowing the money from the Chettiar as the arrangements for the trip were already in hand. He never forgot the incident. He was determined to keep enough money in the bank at all times to meet all possible needs. It was not unusual for him a few years later to have a million rupees in cash in the bank and gilt-edged securities for an equal amount. Never again did he go to a bank for a personal loan. Rather, bank

managers came to him whenever they feared that he might favour one bank at the expense of another.

Wijewardene was scrupulous in all his money dealings and he insisted on a fool-proof accounting system both for his business and for his personal income and expenditure. He enjoyed discussing accounting matters with partners of the auditing firm of Ford, Rhodes & Thornton. He was also strict about contracts and expected a similar attitude from those with whom he did business. The law was allowed to take its course whenever advertisers defaulted on their contracts, even if they were his friends or relations.

When the second stage of the building of Lake House was under way there was considerable delay in finishing the job due to difficulties over steel supplies and for other reasons. When the construction work was over, Wijewardene invoked the clause in the contract which specified the damages payable by the builder in the event of delay. There was a great deal of correspondence between the two parties and one day, Mr. Clement Black, the General Manager of the building firm, said he would come round to the office to discuss a settlement. I was then a Director of the Associated Newspapers of Ceylon and Wijewardene asked me to come to the meeting. After some preliminary sparring, Black got up from his seat and walked from one end of the room to the other several times, muttering something. Wijewardene was calm. The difference had been narrowed down to about Rs. 100,000. At length Black stopped in the middle of the room and boomed: "Let's split the difference, Wijewardene. We shall pay you Rs. 50,000". The

compromise was sealed and the two strong men shook hands and parted.

Wijewardene seldom had cause to regret any investment he made. He seemed to have his father's shrewdness and his mother's luck. He bought Landscape Estate in Latpandura from the heirs of Captain Shand for around Rs. 400 per acre and replanted it with the advice of Roy Bertrand. He got his money back in a few years and before he died the estate was one of the best rubber properties in the district. He bought Arcadia at Diyatalawa from the estate of G. M. Crabbe during a slump in tea prices. His investments in property in the city of Colombo were as sound and appreciated in value considerably within a comparatively short time.

As stated earlier, Wijewardene bought up all the English language newspapers published in Colombo at one time or another, with the exception of the *Times of Ceylon*. He came very near to having an interest in that newspaper too. It happened like this. When I was in England in 1946, as a delegate to the Empire Press Conference, I travelled a great deal with Ward Price, a Director of the *Daily Mail* and a famous war correspondent. One day I mentioned to him casually that the *Times of Ceylon* was in the market and that the sale was in the hands of C. T. Rust and A. C. Stewart, the Editor-in-chief. S. G. Horniblow was then the Editor of the *Daily Mail*. He had been News Editor of the *Times of Ceylon* some years earlier. The two of them thought it would be a good idea to buy the paper with the backing of London financial interests. There were meetings at Northcliffe House to which I

was invited. We also had W. V. Hutton, the London Manager of the *Times of Ceylon*, at these discussions. I was obliged to say that my position there was anomalous as I was the Editor of the rival newspaper and a Director of the Associated Newspapers of Ceylon Ltd. of which Wijewardene was Chairman. I was then asked by the others whether Wijewardene would like to take an interest in the *Times of Ceylon* if the syndicate succeeded in gaining control. I said I would sound him and did so. Wijewardene asked me to go ahead and keep him informed.

No one was in a position to say what offer should be made for the *Times* without a study of balance sheets over a period. I suggested that the cooperation of Sir Clifford Figg should be sought. He was then the principal proprietor of Whittalls Limited, a Director of the Mercantile Bank and an honorary adviser on economic affairs to the Colonial Office. Sir Clifford, I believe, had certain enquiries made and had in his own mind the sort of figure that should be offered for the purchase. Meanwhile, however, the news was received in London that Mr. Sangarapillai and some others had bought the *Times of Ceylon* and its assets for a sum which was in the neighbourhood of half a million sterling.

Wijewardene was a good business man and usually succeeded in making his enterprises profitable. But he had no obsession about money-making. His only obsession was his newspapers, especially the *Daily News*, and that was enough to wear him down.

LIFE AT LAKE HOUSE

LAKE House was now the outward and visible sign of Wijewardene's success as a newspaper publisher. The architect, Mr. Small, of Adams & Small, had designed it as a modern building but, in accordance with the wishes of the proprietor, introduced decorative motifs from traditional architecture, such as moonstones, lotuses, swans and a concrete hood in the place of the eaves. This was sound psychology because it reminded the passer-by, a reader or potential reader of the newspapers published inside the building, that here was a national institution.

Wijewardene had given his personal attention to every detail of the building and equipment. For example, much trouble had been taken over the design of the lanterns at the entrances and the lamps in the different sections of the building. The lobby was paved with black and white marble. On the top of the two side walls of the lobby were frescoes painted by the French artist, Armand Vallee, depicting the development of writing. The Board Room was panelled with local woods of fine grain and all the furniture was solid and designed with care. Lake House was thus a dream come true and in many ways the most interesting

building in the Fort, despite a certain heaviness in appearance as a result of the attempt to blend ancient with modern.

On the technical and production sides, the improvements were revolutionary. An up-to-date rotary press had replaced the antiquated and slow cylinder machines. Hand-setting of type was given up with the installation of an impressive battery of Linotype machines. A block-making department enabled a liberal use of illustrations in the Company's publications. A well-equipped reference library was a boon to leader-writers and sub-editors. The proximity of the editorial departments and the concentration of the printing in a single plant resulted in a sharing of services and an economy of effort which benefited all the papers and saved the money of the Company.

Wijewardene did not believe in half-measures when he set his hand to a project. He sought the best advice in London, through the facilities now provided by his London office, and used the experience of local printers. Edward de Silva, a craftsman of the highest calibre, was the printer of the *Daily News* and Calvett, a young and enthusiastic printer, was Manager of the *Observer*. They studied the catalogues and prepared the requisitions. H. Wicebloom joined the *Daily News* from Messrs. H. W. Cave & Co. to be in charge of the new Process Department. H. C. Cottle, the retired Government Printer, and Biggs, the chief of His Majesty's Stationery Office, were consulted from time to time. In later years Wijewardene's chief adviser on printing matters was Bernard de Silva, now the highly competent Government Printer.

There were, of course, teething troubles. In spite of many trial runs, the rotary press did not behave too well on the first night. The Wijewardene family and a few of their closest friends turned up in the early hours of the morning to see the first papers come out of the new press, but not till the late afternoon did anything which could be sold to the public emerge from the press. The first thousand or more copies were spoiled. Either the cutters were not functioning, or the ink ducts were not giving a regulated supply of ink, or the reeled paper was breaking on the machine every few minutes. When the press did behave well, it was discovered that the choice of type was wrong. For some weeks, until new matrices were obtained from England, eye strain caused many old subscribers to give up the paper regretfully. The problem of getting a clear impression from the half-tone blocks was also not solved for some time. The excessive humidity necessitated experiments with many kinds of roller composition before the right type of roller was found.

When all these difficulties had been surmounted, the circulations of the papers increased by leaps and bounds. Wijewardene's courageous action in installing expensive modern machines had been fully justified. He had correctly gauged the potential demand for well-printed newspapers. His next task was to see that the morning papers were delivered at dawn to readers in different parts of the island. He put a fleet of motor buses and vans on the roads of Ceylon which carried passengers and parcels as well as newspapers. The *Daily News Bus* on the road was a good advertisement for his papers and rendered a public service at a time

when road transport was not as good as it is today, and helped Wijewardene's business. It required a bold man to launch out on such a project but at the time it was a marked success.

The journalist by nature is a nomad. The few who remain at the same job for a length of time do so because they are well rewarded in a heart-breaking profession or because they have no choice. John Bourne, Editor of the *Observer*, left after a couple of years at Lake House to return to England. A more serious loss was that of Crowther, the Editor of the *Daily News*. Wijewardene doubtless made the mistake of not giving Crowther a financial interest in the business. To do so would not have affected his own control of the policy of the papers, as he owned over 85 per cent of the shares.

The life of the Editor of a morning newspaper is not a comfortable one under the best circumstances, and is less so when the proprietor is in the habit of issuing directions from the back-seat to the man at the wheel. To take tea every afternoon with the proprietor and then climb the stairs to the editorial sanctum, light a pipe and dash off an editorial before rushing home to a hurried dinner was not sufficient compensation for all the irritations of the job. Crowther had had a liberal education at Oxford and must often have wished that he could write to please himself and not to echo the views of another. This in fact is the perpetual dilemma of an Editor who serves a proprietor holding strong views.

Crowther was not born to be an efficient machine. As Wijewardene was a restless person who wanted his own way in everything that concerned his papers, his

editors did not wish to take more responsibility than was strictly necessary to keep him quiet. This did not encourage initiative on their part ; on the other hand, it multiplied his own work. While the editors went home, forgetting all about the office when they got into their cars, Wijewardene was either still in the office or on the telephone inquiring about something that should or should not go into next morning's paper. He seemed to bear a grudge against the editors for disconnecting themselves in this way, and dropped hints about the need for editors of morning papers to remain in office until the first edition was ready for the press. This may be all right in a temperate climate but all those who kept late hours continuously, like Orion de Zylva and R. E. de Alwis, did not live to enjoy their retirement.

One fine day in 1931, Crowther decided to do what he must have often been tempted to do, namely, to put on his hat and go home, never to return to Lake House. He had adequate means to take this bold step, and did not bother about not getting a pension. He felt that he could always earn enough by his writings and in fact his typewriter has never been idle during the twenty-five years and more which followed.

I succeeded Crowther, after a very brief period of office as Editor of the *Observer*, and continued as the Editor of the *Daily News* for the next seventeen years until I was in a position to seek new pastures. My period of editorship coincided with the last phase of the struggle for political freedom. H. D. Jansz succeeded me as Editor of the *Observer* and held that office for about twenty years. We had joined the staff of the

Daily News in 1918, the first year of its existence and, as mentioned earlier, created some confusion by a certain similarity in appearance. We were both Editors now, occupying rooms at the two ends of the editorial floor. Again there was a certain degree of confusion in spite of the ravages of time. A certain visitor to Lake House who called on one Editor and then called on the other Editor was puzzled, and remembering a famous advertisement of that time, was heard to exclaim: "That's Shell That Was". Jansz retained his youthful looks much longer than did his harassed colleague on the morning newspaper.

Stories reached Wijewardene, who was generally referred to as the 'boss', or, more formally, as the 'Managing Director', that the young editors and their cronies upstairs spent too much time drinking tea, gossiping and swapping irreverent jokes about the V.I.P.'s who visited the Chief. He made sour comments about the happy family atmosphere which was bad for efficiency. The managerial staff put in a solid eight-hour day and he expected the same from the editorial staffs. Wijewardene felt that he was treating his staff well. He studied provident funds and pension schemes in England and Ceylon and started a scheme for the Lake House staff which in later years had assets running into millions of rupees.

He did not think that his men would ever want to strike. There was in the early 'thirties' a wave of strikes in Colombo. A. E. Goonesinha was building up his reputation as a labour leader by starting strikes, one by one, in all the large commercial firms in Colombo. In every instance he had succeeded in

getting some benefit for the strikers from the employers. Then came the turn of the printing staff of the Associated Newspapers of Ceylon Limited. Goonesinha wished to see Wijewardene and negotiate terms. Wijewardene refused to see him and turned him over to Charles Calvett, the Manager of the *Observer* and to me, then the Secretary of the Company which owned the newspapers.

The strike lasted several weeks but the papers were printed and distributed without interruption. The strain on the very few workmen who remained loyal to their employer was very great. They were sent home at night and brought back to work in cars under police protection. Meanwhile linotype operators were brought from Madras. The strike failed and the men who came from Madras were sent back. It was the first check to Goonesinha's successful run of strikes. I do not believe that there was another strike at Lake House while Wijewardene lived.

He was never a man to be brow-beaten. When the cinema monopoly boycotted his newspapers for some weeks over a disagreement on advertisement rates, he replied with a threat to enter the cinema business himself. He sent me to Bombay to interview all the film renters and offer to build a modern luxury cinema on a vacant lot next to Lake House on McCallum Road. The idea was abandoned only after the advertisers came to terms.

The war years did not present any serious problems so long as supplies of paper were secured. Important war news was always "the lead" on the front page,

which facilitated the tasks of news editors and sub-editors. Newspaper sales mounted steadily despite the reduced size of the papers. The transmission of news by radio instead of the old method of transmission by submarine cable increased the volume of news supplied by Reuters and other news agencies. The installation of teleprinters later on made the transmission more prompt and efficient.

While all the extensions and improvements were taking place, and with new activities such as a book shop and photographic studio, Wijewardene's own responsibilities were not diminishing. He now decided to appoint a General Manager to take over some of them. He engaged for the post G. K. Stewart, who had been a partner in one of the smaller commercial houses in Colombo and had served as Vice-Chairman and acting Chairman of the Ceylon Chamber of Commerce. Stewart was an urbane and well-groomed executive, with good connections in the commercial world. He had to learn the newspaper business after he joined Lake House, but he was able to relieve Wijewardene of some of his routine responsibilities.

The managerial team was an experienced one, with G. V. Perera, Percy Deutrom and E. W. Foenander. Foenander came from Plate's Limited where he had been doing excellent work on publications. He knew every managing director in the Fort and brought in several lakhs of rupees worth of advertising each year. He had an excellent journalistic background and was a good golfer. After a serious illness he was obliged to give up office work but started the *Fortnightly Review* to

occupy his spare-time and turned it into a bright and highly successful magazine.

Many writers whose names are well known in Ceylon and even outside were on the staff of Wijewardene's newspapers after they moved to Lake House. The best known is perhaps Martin Wickremasinghe, the brilliant novelist and short story writer in Sinhalese. He was the editor of the *Dinamina* and *Silumina*. D. B. Dhana-pala came from Allahabad and his writings under the pen-name of "Janus", caught the public fancy. He was a master of the art of writing biographical sketches and was very knowledgeable on all matters relating to Eastern art and culture. He was also a first-rate journalist. No one could layout an article or cut a picture on a newspaper page as well as he did. It was always a pleasure to work with him. He could be relied upon to rise to the occasion when important work was in hand. P. Nissanka occupied the *Dinamina* editorial chair longer than any of his predecessors and saw the paper making giant strides in circulation.

Jayanta Padmanabha came to the *Daily News* from Oxford and his work helped to raise the quality of writing in the paper. His prose was the envy of his colleagues, and his knowledge and love of the arts singled him out among a crowd of hard-bitten pen-pushers. He succeeded me as Editor of the paper. Wijewardene tried to make a tame journalist of Pieter Keuneman but the latter chose to give to the Communist party what Wijewardene thought was meant for mankind, at least that section of it which bought his papers.

J. Vijayatunga, author of "Grass for My Feet" was also on the staff for a few months. K. Dahanayake,

SOME WELL-KNOWN EDITORS OF SINHALESE
NEWSPAPERS



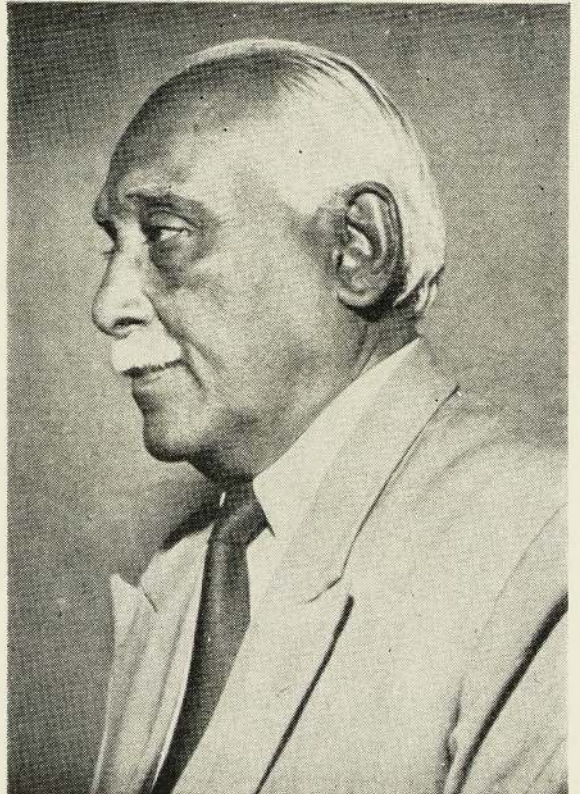
MARTIN WICKREMASINGHE



PIYADASA SIRISENA



H. S. PERERA



P. NISSANKA

twin-brother of W. Dahanayake, a future Prime Minister, was one of Wijewardene's favourite handy-men and special writers and he could usually turn his hand to any subject which interested the Managing Director. For many years J. L. Fernando, like Padmanabha an Oxford man, wrote the parliamentary summary and the weekly political notes. He was always in close touch with the Prime Ministers of the time and greatly admired the Chief. S. P. Foenander of the *Observer* and Frank Ondaatje of the *Daily News* were the two best-known sports writers for nearly twenty years. Betty Hunsworth at one time ran the women's pages of all the Wijewardene newspapers and was later assisted by Hilda Roversi.

Mention has already been made of Orion de Zylva and E. C. B. Wijeyesinghe who were the chief sub-editors of the two papers. For a year or two H. Roy Wiltshire, who had been on the staff of the London *Morning Post*, was on the *Daily News* staff. Austin de Silva, D. E. Weerekoon, A. C. Seneviratne, Denzil Peiris, M. T. Jaimon, H. E. R. Abayasekara, Fred de Silva, Frank Prins, C. F. G. Perera, B. R. J. Ondaatje, M. R. Ratnajinendra and L. P. Goonetilleke were among the back-room boys of those days. Vaman R. Bhatt, born and educated in Ceylon, was a quiet and very efficient sub-editor of the *Daily News* for some years. He emigrated to Delhi to become Pandit Nehru's Information Officer.

Important changes took place two years before Wijewardene's death with his delegating responsibility for the management of the business to L. M. D. de Silva

Q.C. and to his two sons-in-law, Esmond Wickremasinghe and George Gomes, who are the present Managing Directors. Mr. de Silva was later appointed a Member of the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council. Fred Moir Brown has done much to change the style of the *Daily News* and Tarzie Vittachi, who joined Lake House at the end of 1947, was an energetic editor of the *Observer* and a very popular columnist. Collette, who had already made his name as a brilliant cartoonist on the *Times of Ceylon*, transferred to the *Observer*. But all this belongs, strictly speaking, more to the post-Wijewardene period.

SELF-GOVERNMENT

WITH the election of James Peiris to the Legislative Council and the disappearance of Arunachalam from the political scene, the leadership of the National Congress passed to H. J. C. Pereira. He was one of the most brilliant advocates produced by the Ceylon Bar. His speeches as President of the Congress were never read out or written beforehand but delivered as if he were addressing a jury, and they contained flights of eloquence which can be read with interest even today.

Wijewardene's acquaintance with H. J. C. Pereira went back to the days when as a young man down from Cambridge he began to interest himself in politics. In his first presidential address to the National Congress H. J. C. Pereira made a reference to Wijewardene's newspaper as "one which has stood for Reforms constantly and whose principles have never changed as far as I know, and whose criticisms of our Congress have been perfectly independent—because they have praised us as much as they have cursed us."

James Peiris was now leader of the Unofficial members of the Legislative Council and was working within the Council for a further measure of reforms. He left for England towards the end of 1922 and the

Daily News, through its London Correspondent Frederick Grubb, gave a full account of his representations to the Colonial Office. Ceylon had a new Constitution given to it in 1923 which increased the number of Unofficial members and created the office of Vice-President of the Council. Sir Ponnambalam Ramanathan succeeded in securing the Western Province Tamil Seat and Arunachalam's son, Mr. (later Sir) A. Mahadeva was elected to it.

It soon became clear that the new Constitution could not function satisfactorily since the Government could not rely on a stable majority and the Governor could not over-ride the wishes of the legislature without precipitating a crisis.

Many of the battles between the Unofficial members and the bureaucracy were fought behind the doors of the Finance Committee which in practice became more powerful than the Council itself. It was presided over by Sir Arthur Fletcher, a charming and amiable Colonial Secretary. Heads of Government departments appeared before the Finance Committee to seek provision for their projects and programmes and were questioned and cross-examined by Unofficial members. After Sir James Peiris had been elevated to the Chair as "Mr. Speaker" of the Council, D. B. Jayatilaka was regarded as the leader of the Unofficials but he was by no means the most dynamic among them. The future Prime Minister, D. S. Senanayake, had entered the Legislative Council as member for the Negombo district and, by a combination of shrewdness, common sense and practical ability, was soon 'running' the Finance Committee. No doubt Unofficial members



H. J. C. PEREIRA, K.C.

went too far in baiting and bullying officials, but the Finance Committee proved to be an excellent training ground for future Ministers.

Sir Hugh Clifford, the Governor, came to the conclusion that it was no longer possible to conduct the government on traditional lines and persuaded the Colonial Office to appoint a Commission to "visit Ceylon and report on the working of the existing Constitution and on any difficulties of administration which may have arisen in connection with it; to consider any proposals for the revision of the Constitution that may be put forward; and to report what, if any, amendments of the Order in Council now in force should be made".

The Colonial Office thought that the time had come for a bold experiment, and a Commission consisting of the Earl of Donoughmore, Deputy Chairman of the House of Lords, Sir Geoffrey Butler, one of the M. P.'s for Cambridge University, Dr. Drummond Shiels, a Labour Member of Parliament representing one of the divisions of Edinburgh, and Sir Matthew Nathan, a former Governor of Hongkong, began its sittings towards the end of 1927.

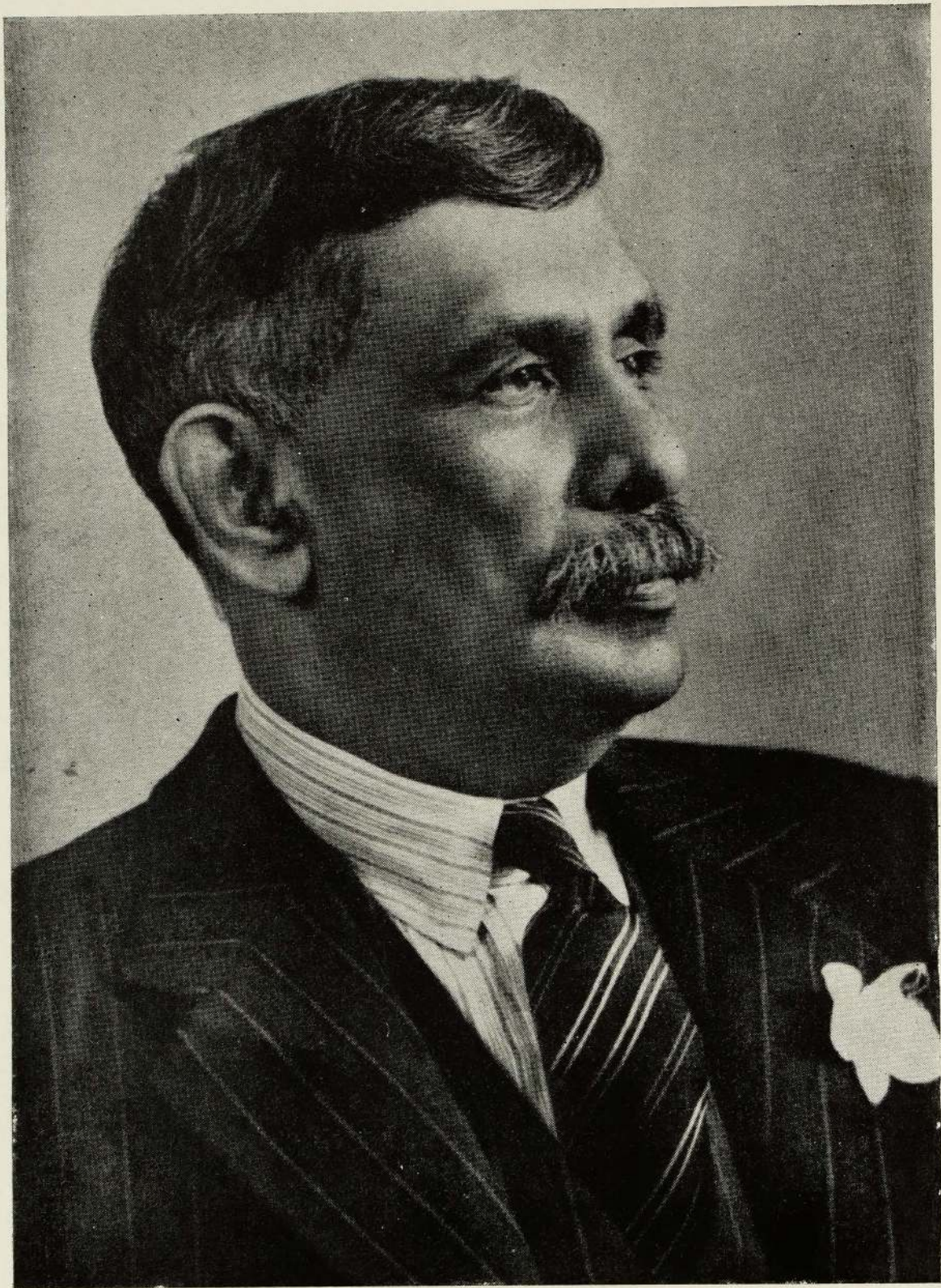
Sir James Peiris was no longer regarded as the champion of popular rights but as an elder statesman marooned in the presidential chair. He had been drawn into the acrimonious controversy over the University site and had felt obliged to say some bitter things about the *Daily News* and its proprietor. His evidence before the Donoughmore Commission emphasised Ceylon's unfitness for self-government and he put forward what he considered a workable

half-way house scheme. For this he was criticised by supporters of a full measure of self-government.

The truth is that, at this time, nobody quite knew what was best for the island. Had the politicians had any inkling of what the Commission was prepared to r e c o m m e n d they would have been bolder. Wijewardene himself sent a memorandum privately to the Commission proposing a scheme based on the system of diarchy formulated by the Montagu-Chelmsford Commission for India. The Congress which had asked for self-government was against adult franchise. An influential section of the Europeans were against self-government but supported adult franchise.

In this general confusion, Mr. E. J. Samerawickreme K. C., ever the peace-maker, suggested what he called a middle way, which the *Daily News* commended. Sir James, already annoyed by the paper's campaign on the University site issue, could not let this pass. He s h o w e d that both his scheme and Mr. Samerawickreme's proposals were against immediate self-government and against adult franchise, and he claimed that his scheme was much the more sensible of the two. He said: "I leave this question as to which scheme is more practical to the public to decide and to say whether they endorse the view put forward by the *Daily News* that, while Mr. Samerawickreme makes a serious effort to lead the country out of the present impossible situation, Sir James would plunge it into irretrievable confusion."

When the report of the Commission was published political leaders in Ceylon were struck by its bold



D. S. SENANAYAKE

features. The form of government proposed was a device far removed from the normal parliamentary system. The Chairmen of seven Standing Committees responsible for groups of subjects were to form a Board of Ministers with three officials. Communal representation in the Legislature was abolished. The system of diarchy adopted in India, and recommended by Wijewardene as well as other Ceylonese politicians, was rejected. Above all, every person over the age of 21 and mentally sound was given the vote.

The Tamil leaders were shocked by the abolition of communal representation and decided to boycott the new Council although the reason given for their rash step was that the proposed Constitution was not sufficiently democratic. In fact they held aloof until they realised that the only losers by their action were the Tamils themselves. E. W. Perera led the opposition to the new Constitution in the new State Council. The *Daily News* was critical of it, despite Wijewardene's admiration of one of its chief architects. It patted the boycotters on the back and was suspicious of Sir Baron Jayatilaka and D. S. Senanayake who seemed willing to give the scheme a chance. No doubt they were quite willing to become Ministers and wield as much power as they could under the Constitution.

Sir Baron became Minister of Home Affairs and Leader of the State Council, and Senanayake became Minister of Agriculture and started those imaginative land development schemes for which he will always be remembered. But to them, no less than to Mr. E. W. Perera, who declined to take any office under a system of government which he did not approve,

the Donoughmore Constitution was not the end, but only a means to an end. The agitation for a reform of the Constitution was kept up in the State Council until the Secretary of State promised to receive a deputation if there was unanimity on the part of the Board of Ministers. The Board consisted of five Sinhalese members, one Indian and one Muslim. The Ceylon Tamils had boycotted the General Election.

Having failed to secure unanimity, mainly because the minorities began to see unexpected virtues in the Committee system, Sir Baron Jayatilaka and Mr. D. S. Senanayake met the challenge of the Secretary of State, after the General Election of 1936, by getting their own supporters elected into the seven Standing Committees in such numbers as would ensure for their party a majority in every one of the seven Committees. This meant that all seven Ministers—Sinhalese—would support the reforms proposals propounded by Sir Baron Jayatilaka and Mr. D. S. Senanayake.

The mathematics of this manoeuvre, it was said, was worked out by Mr. C. Suntheralingam, Professor of Mathematics of the University College. Sir Baron justified his action on two grounds. Firstly, he said, the election to the Committees proved that the Donoughmore Constitution did not offer any special safeguards for the minorities. In the second place, claimed Sir Baron, as unanimity had been reached by the Board of Ministers, the Secretary of State's principal objection to the reopening of the question of the amendment of the Constitution had now been removed. The Soulbury Commission, which examined the position twelve years later, castigated this manoeuvre



E. W. PERERA

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with the comment that "if Sir Baron's first argument was ill-advised, his second was disingenuous".

The Ministers were in fairly close touch with D. R. Wijewardene during this agitation and, although he might have been inclined to agree with the retrospective verdict of the Soulbury Commission, he gave general support to the Ministers. He did not normally indulge in vendettas against politicians he disliked. The harshest punishment he meted out to those he distrusted was to keep their names out of his newspapers as far as it was possible. But he was at times influenced by his friends who had their own prejudices. E. W. Perera for example, would tell him that "D. B." and "D. S." were up to tricks. "D. S." would tell him that Claude Corea had to be watched. Or B. F. de Silva would telephone a story about something wrong in the Law Courts. Wijewardene did not mind attacks when deserved, but he had a patriotic belief that the Government was entitled to general support though it cannot claim immunity from criticism. This was something which he had learned from a close study of the working of the British Constitution. He never worked to pull down a Government or to smear men who carried the responsibilities of the State on their shoulders, although he was always prepared to criticise them when they did wrong.

No opportunity was missed to expose the anomalous consequences of the Donoughmore Constitution. It was pointed out that matters of the greatest importance were often decided by the single vote of the biggest nincompoop in an Executive Committee when it was more or less evenly divided on a controversial matter.

The Board of Ministers had responsibility only for questions of finance. All other decisions were taken by the appropriate Executive Committee.

It was clear that, despite the resistance offered by Sir Graeme Thomson and Sir Edward Stubbs, the Colonial Office was gradually yielding to the pressure of the State Council for an examination of the working of the Donoughmore Constitution. With this end in view the Secretary of State, Mr. Ormsby-Gore (afterwards Lord Harlech) sent to Ceylon as Governor one of the ablest men in the Colonial Service, Sir Andrew Caldecott. He brought a fresh mind to the consideration of the matter and produced a fair-minded report. But it did not please those who wanted full self-government or some of the minorities which were still hankering after communal representation or balanced representation as it was called. The State Council asked His Majesty's Government to send Sir Stafford Cripps, who was in India in connection with constitutional reforms in that country, to Ceylon for a similar purpose. This was refused but in May 1943 H. M. Government made a declaration to the effect that the post-war examination of the reform of the Constitution would be directed towards the grant to Ceylon of full responsible government under the Crown in all matters of internal administration.

When the Soulbury Commission was appointed in 1944 its terms of reference went somewhat further than this declaration and many feared that the reference to "full opportunity for consultation to take place with various interests including minority communities concerned with the subject of constitutional reform

and with proposals which Ministers have formulated'' would lead to the re-introduction of some form of communal representation.

The Commission was composed of Lord Soulbury, who had been a Cabinet Minister as Mr. Hereward Ramsbotham, Sir Frederick Rees, the Vice-Chancellor of the University of Wales and Sir Frederick Burrows, President of the National Union of Railwaymen and afterwards Governor of Bengal. D. S. Senanayake and D. R. Wijewardene, with the help of Sir Ivor Jennings and Sir Oliver Goonetilleke, arranged matters so that the Commissioners would be confronted with a strong case for a reversion to parliamentary government and a Cabinet system on the British model. None of them gave evidence in public but they met one or more of the Commissioners privately.

The Commissioners did not believe in half measures and gave Ceylon full self-government. Within three years of the publication of their report Ceylon became an independent nation within the British Commonwealth. No man contributed more towards the attainment of this result by his steadfast devotion to the cause of freedom than D. R. Wijewardene.

BEHIND THE SCENES

AS a patriot, a keen student of politics and the leading newspaper proprietor in the island, Wijewardene's influence behind the scenes was always considerable. Little did the general public know that, at every stage in the constitutional advance of Ceylon, he was consulted, and his support solicited by the men who formulated the reforms. Nothing illustrates this better than a correspondence he had with Sir Geoffrey Butler who was one of the four members of the Royal Commission of 1928 under the chairmanship of the Earl of Donoughmore.

Sir Geoffrey and D. R. Wijewardene were of the same age, they were both Cambridge men and both deeply interested in politics. Butler came from a family which had made its mark in English public life. His uncle was the famous Master of Trinity College, Cambridge. Two of his brothers were members of the Indian Civil Service who became provincial Governors. Sir Geoffrey Butler was the eighth son and eleventh child of a well known conveyancing counsel of Lincoln's Inn. Mr. R. A. Butler, a senior member of the British Cabinet, is his nephew.

Geoffrey Butler had as brilliant a career at Cambridge as anyone could wish for, and for six years until his



SIR GEOFFREY BUTLER

death he was one of the two members for Cambridge University in the House of Commons. Referring to his early death, the Dictionary of National Biography states: "In 1927 he was nominated a member of the royal commission on the Government of Ceylon, and he took a considerable part in the formulation of the Commission's recommendations, The trip to Ceylon, which both Butler and his wife greatly enjoyed, afforded him a much-needed rest and change; but undoubtedly his health had been affected by overwork, and the ill effects were aggravated by the fact that his physical disability made it difficult for him to take exercise. After his return he soon began to show signs of ill-health. He paid a short visit to America towards the end of 1928 in connexion with the work of the Employers Liability Assurance Corporation of which he was a director. By the time he returned he was seriously ill and he died on the 2nd of May 1929."

Butler thus did not live to see in operation the Constitution in the formulation of which he played a big part. His letters to Wijewardene show that he did not spare himself till the very end.

It was not entirely by chance that the two met in Ceylon but it began with a letter from Geoffrey Butler written from the Galle Face Hotel, on January 15th, 1928, which reads as follows:

Dear Mr. Wijewardene,

A very charming article in the *Daily News* carried me back to very happy Cambridge days and I felt that I could not help writing to say how very much I have been touched by it.

I have had so many people in England and here tell me about you that I have been wanting greatly to get the chance of a talk with you over old times at Cambridge and present day problems. I wonder if there would be a chance of seeing you. Your representative, the clever young Mr. Hulugalle tells me that unfortunately you are laid up with influenza. I hope by now you are better. I have a free day Wednesday and if it were convenient to you I should very much like to pay my respects to you. I would come round at any time which suited you. Perhaps you would drop me a message at the Hotel.

Yours sincerely,
Geoffrey Butler

A letter written by Butler from England, to Wijewardene, dated 1st March 1928, stated :

I enjoyed your letter immensely. I too found our talk that last day wonderfully agreeable and helpful, and I hope we shall always manage to keep touch. Since getting back I have been almost overwhelmed by trying to catch up with arrears of work but I have managed to break the back of these and to get in some hours each day on Ceylon”.

With the letter, Butler sent Wijewardene a copy of the Cambridge Review to which he had contributed an article on Ceylon, and said: “Forgive my mentioning your name in so trivial an effusion”, and continued, in a reference to the work of the Donoughmore Commission :

Amery (then Secretary of State for the Colonies) is just home from his tour. I have not seen him

for more than a handshake. I am pretty happy at the way things are going. I suppose it is inevitable that no one will be wholly pleased; but I think that we shall manage to get something which the man who looks into the realities of things will see safeguards and promotes those features and aims which you and I agreed were the essentials. At least I shall feel sadly grieved if you don't think so. I have great faith in the existence of realists among the public men of Ceylon and that these will dominate the situation in the end.

Wijewardene in his reply wrote:

I am anxious that the Commission's Report should have a good press and I am certain that, with what we know of the Commissioners—and especially with what I know personally to be your attitude towards our aspirations—there will be no cause for despair. I cannot help feeling that if the Commission's recommendations embody those essentials, which you were good enough to discuss with me, the Report cannot fail to have a good reception in Ceylon.

Writing on the 11th May 1928, Butler said:

The Report has been a very great and a very exacting task and we have had to give up all other activities, meet very frequently and work very long hours. I think it will bear on its face the mark of the pains spent upon it. I think the articles in the *Daily News* have kept a wonderfully good tone if I may be permitted to say so: at least those which I have seen. I am wholly hopeful of happy results.

In a letter dated the 30th June 1928, Butler wrote:

We have just signed the Report and I believe it goes out by the same mail as will this letter. So my official connection with Ceylon is ended and I feel like writing you a line to say as it were good-bye. It only remains for us to sit back and observe with philosophic wisdom whether the various parties concerned, official and unofficial, European or Ceylon born, will see behind the proposals the real belief in the Ceylonese which lies behind it.

I expect it will be attacked but hard words break no bones and I am convinced in my own mind that it sets out ideas and suggests mechanisms that cool and wise judgment will in the end believe to be sound.

In the meantime I hope you will think that it is bold as well as cautious, that it rests upon trust in the Ceylonese to work out exactly the Constitution they care to work out for themselves as they go along, that it puts European co-operation in just the form in which it is likely to be most helpful and least irritating to the Ceylonese, that it is designed to get practical social reform prominent on the programme of the legislature. (A cause likely to draw people of all views rather than to divide them). If the mechanism is not what you expected I hope at least it will strike you as designed to assist in the practical working of a free parliamentary legislature which will retain all the machinery in the present Rules and Orders of the Legislative Council....

Among all the criticism which will appear I shall read none with more avidity than your own and those of your paper whose restraint and public spirit in a difficult time I have learned very greatly to admire.

Wijewardene praised the boldness of many of the recommendations made by the Commission but was critical of others. He concluded a lengthy letter :

As I have already indicated everything depends on the type of men we get as Governor. I sincerely wish that circumstances could so shape themselves as to enable you to become Governor of this Colony at the threshold of the era which the new Constitution heralds..the more I read the scheme the more am I convinced that unless it is worked in the same spirit as that in which it has been framed it will possibly lead to a state of things calculated to put back the hands of the clock considerably.

Geoffrey Butler replied in an even longer letter. He wrote :

I am myself pleased with the reception of the Report. After all a Constitution is so much more than a mere document. It is a piece of history and demonstration of ideas. I felt that Ceylon was at a turning point in its history. It is unquestionably the most politically advanced of the Colonies ; by a series of circumstances it has the power of absorbing Western ideas and in the process making them seem 'sui generis' and not merely bastard..

I think Ceylon may well have a unique position in the history of the world like other small countries

of mixed races (not to mention England, Switzerland and Holland). I think where neither Japan, nor Siam nor the Indian provinces have succeeded, Ceylon may succeed in producing government suited to the Orient and of the Orient, but taking what is best from Orient and Occident alike. Your leading men have captured the atmosphere of Western culture; you can't, you don't want to go back on it. You have a better school system, with all its weaknesses, than any part of the Empire outside England. At the same time, your men can, if they chose, get nearer the peasant than we can and closer to your fundamental problems.

Butler gave as one of the Commission's reasons for recommending a Committee system:

The conviction that Ceylon was not having handed to it a dead or static Constitution but one plastic and pliable; and that at present the whole Empire and in time I think the whole civilised world will be watching what Ceylon does with it. For the more you look at the Constitution the more it seems like a bicycle: it can't stay still. It will keep erect by motion and the motion will come easiest at the hands (or feet) of those who think least about it. As you work the Constitution, if you decide to work it, you will find it 'finding itself'. No one is wise enough to say how it will develop: what is certain is that it will be your own creation, truly Ceylonese.

Butler added something which is as true today as when he wrote it:

The Sinhalese as the majority race will have to display tact, conciliation, great qualities of statecraft, if the Constitution is to work. It is not over the relation of the Council to the Governor that the interest is going to centre but over the relations of the Sinhalese to other interests and races. If these are based on vision and ability, you are not going to get interference by the Governor. There was little call for practical statecraft on the Sinhalese before, because they were excluded from effective power. But I can conceive the majority race glad to have someone in the position of the Governor with a veto like that of the proctors at Oxford. . . . In effect it is a thermometer rather than a veto and, as you say, you will beat out a conventional practice in due course.

Butler sent Wijewardene a copy of his new book on international law, the Preface of which had been penned at Nuwara Eliya. In his letter of thanks Wijewardene again spoke of the friendly reception the Commission's Report had received. He added: "It is amusing to see various people, with an eye on the next elections, taking credit for securing manhood suffrage. 'Alone I did it', says one local Labour representative and others are not slow in staking their claims".

The correspondence broke off when Butler left for the United States. As stated earlier, he was very ill when he returned and died soon afterwards. One can only speculate on what he would have made of the job of Governor had Wijewardene's hope been realised.

Ten years after the Donoughmore Report was published the Governor, Sir Andrew Caldecott, was

preparing a scheme of reforms at the request of Mr. Ormsby-Gore, later Lord Harlech, and Wijewardene had a conversation with him and outlined his views. He also lent to the Governor an article on the working of the Donoughmore Constitution which had appeared in the *Round Table*, of which Sir Andrew wrote to Wijewardene :

In the past three weeks I have read it through three times myself and have taken the liberty of lending it to Huxham and Howard, who had neither of them seen it before. I wish that all the representations on Constitutional Reform that I have read or heard over the past three months had been as sensible and as stimulating as this article !

When the war spread in South-east Asia there was a change in the administrative arrangements in Ceylon. Admiral Sir Geoffrey Layton was appointed Commander-in-Chief with a War Council which all but superseded the Governor's government. The atmosphere of Ceylon had a mellowing effect on the 'old salt' and he found it agreeable to protect and feed the island, with the full cooperation of the Ceylonese members of his War Council. Nor was he unsympathetic to the political aspirations of the country. In a letter he wrote to Wijewardene before his departure from Ceylon he said :

It has been a genuine pleasure to serve here in Ceylon and whatever I may have done to help along the general well-being of the island has been due to the cooperation and help of people like yourself who it has been a joy to me to meet.

I have pursued the matter we recently spoke about most vigorously and I hope it will be settled satisfactorily.

The very best of wishes to you and your great work.

When the Soulbury Commission arrived in Ceylon towards the end of 1944, Wijewardene was not in the best of health. Nevertheless, he followed their work with great interest. The Commissioners were his guests at his beautiful upcountry house, "Arcadia", at Diyatalawa, for a week-end. The Chairman of the Commission wrote on the 6th April 1945:

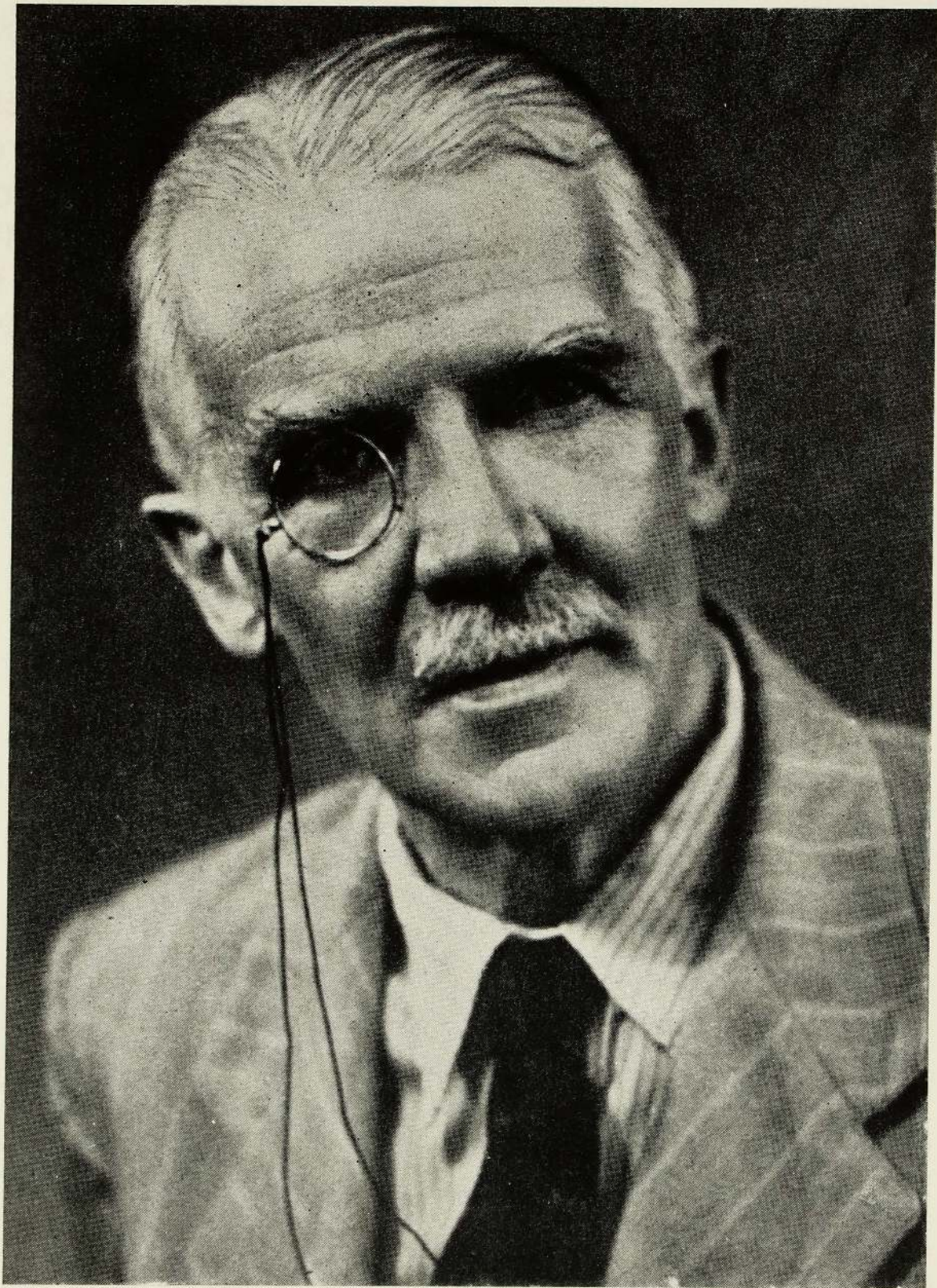
I am just writing to say *au revoir* as we are off early tomorrow and to thank you most warmly for all you have done for me and for the Commission.

The advice and assistance you have given to us will prove invaluable and will materially help us in solving a difficult problem. I am most grateful to you and may I say how much we appreciated the kind and generous terms of the leading article in today's issue of your paper.

Five years later Lord Soulbury was Governor-General of Ceylon and on the day of Wijewardene's death (13th June 1950) he wrote to the widow :

I cannot find words adequately to express my profound sympathy with you in the loss of your husband—a loss which is deeply felt by the whole of Ceylon and by myself. Few men have ever exercised such an immense and beneficial influence on the future of their country and nobody will ever realise how much Ceylon owes to your husband.

His wise counsel and remarkable foresight were an invaluable help to me when I was Chairman of the Commission on the Reform of the Constitution five years ago, and I can never be sufficiently grateful to him for the advice he gave me at that time. In his passing the country has lost one of its greatest citizens, and I have lost a personal friend for whom I had the utmost admiration and respect.



VISCOUNT SOULBURY

BIRTH PANGS OF A UNIVERSITY

THE bitterest controversy in which the *Daily News* was involved during the life of its founder was over the site of the Ceylon University. Wijewardene championed a University of a residential type, situated away from the distractions of the capital city. Against him there was a powerful array of educationists and public men who were determined to build the University in Colombo.

The "battle of the sites" roused passions which sundered friendships and smeared respected leaders. Accusations were bandied about, questioning the motives of those engaged in the controversy. It was said, for instance, that the University College staff were unwilling to forego the amenities of a large city : that the low country Sinhalese who lived in Colombo or the neighbouring coastal towns did not relish the idea of losing educational advantages which they had enjoyed over the rest of the island almost since the Portuguese arrived in Ceylon : that the Tamils preferred a non-residential University in Colombo because poor students from the Northern and Eastern Provinces would thus be able to live with relations or club together in cheap lodgings : and that Buddhists preferred Kandy

because the proximity of the ancient monasteries of Malwatte and Asgiriya would give the University a strong Buddhist bias.

There were in fact no sinister motives behind the agitation for a site near Kandy or in the minds of its opponents. Both sides believed passionately in the soundness of their arguments and acted in what they believed to be the best interests of the island. Nearly all those who figured in the controversy are dead. The University was established in Kandy but much of it still remains in Colombo. Even now it seems too early to judge whether a mistake was made.

Those who criticise the University because it has fallen short of the expectation of its founders forget that it is a young institution and that the too rapid Ceylonisation of the staff has led to a serious deterioration of standards. The spiritual and intellectual level of a University depends on the quality of the staff. Excessive nationalism at its impressionable age threatens to make the Ceylon University a second-rate institution.

The agitation for the establishment of a University in Ceylon began long before definite steps were taken to bring it into being. In 1911, Sir Henry McCallum, the Governor, appointed a committee with which Mr. Bridge, His Majesty's Inspector of Secondary Schools in England, was associated. It was directed to make a general survey of the system of education in Ceylon, with special reference to the provision for secondary and higher education. This committee recommended that a University College, which was eventually meant to be converted to a University, should

be established, and that it should be located in Colombo.

It is of interest to note that the first suggestion for a site in Kandy came from the Board of Education in England, to whom the committee's report was referred for its advice on the constitution and staff of the proposed University College. The Board said: "It seems likely that a University College interested in Eastern learning would be more suitably located in such a place as Kandy than in Colombo, and if this were done, there would be strong arguments for giving the higher teaching in other arts subjects and in science in a place which is probably more healthy, more suited to the students' life and less expensive than residence in Colombo can be".

Thanks to the interest taken by Sir Robert Chalmers, who had succeeded Sir Henry McCallum as Governor, the University College was started in Colombo in 1921 with Professor Robert Marris as its first Principal. Marris had been in the Indian Educational Service and had special duties in Mesopotamia during the first world war. He was a good administrator, taught philosophy and played cricket for the C.C.C., the European cricket club. He was able to get together the nucleus of a staff which included some first-rate scholars. He claimed: "We have made Universities in various parts of the Empire contribute to our staff: Oxford, Cambridge, Dublin, Durham, London, Edinburgh, St. Andrews, Bombay, Calcutta and Madras", and added: "We are building for a great thing, a University which, in the famous words of Newman, is 'to win the admiration of the young by its celebrity,

kindle the affection of the middle-aged by its beauty, and rivet the fidelity of the old by its associations' ”.

Pupils of Warden Stone will be interested in a letter from Marrs to Mr. Cecil Clementi, the Colonial Secretary seeking his permission to take the Warden, on his retirement, to the staff of the University College. He wrote on the 8th September 1924: “With regard to Classics at this College, you may remember that I asked for an Assistant Lecturer in Classics and you suggested that as there appeared to be no one in the island available for a such a post, we should postpone budgeting for the appointment. I have lately received a visit from Warden Stone, Principal of St. Thomas’ College. He is aged 53 and shortly retires from St. Thomas’. As he will probably stay in Ceylon, he asked me whether I could find any suitable employment for him in the U.C.” After giving the Warden’s qualifications to be a teacher of classics, Marrs added: “I should be very proud to be associated with Warden Stone in the academic work of the College and do not know how Government would look upon such a proposal. Could you kindly allow me to see you on the point at your convenience? The enclosed copy of Warden Stone’s alcaics may interest you”.

Robert Marrs himself was a leader of the English public school type. At Oxford he belonged to a Wadham set described by Humbert Wolfe, the English poet, of whom he was a close friend, in his autobiography, “The Upward Anguish”. “That young man”, wrote Wolff of Marrs, “who looked more like a Greek athlete out of Pindar than the son of a Nottingham Nonconformist Minister. Smith and Marrs



ROBERT MARRS

were the least complicated. Both were determined to pass into the Civil Service, and neither had any particular outside ambitions. They took their acquaintances as they found them, desired neither to be successes at the Union nor members of 'The Grid', liked a number of people well enough, cared desperately for none and therefore found life neither too oppressive nor unduly gay''.

Marrs' influence on the Ceylonese young men under his charge was wholesome but he did not put his trust in left wing thinkers and sought to keep them out of the University College staff and the public service. He was an Empire-builder in the best sense of the word and had a bureaucratic weakness of thinking that anyone who did not agree with the expert must be a fool or a knave. He retired on the eve of the outbreak of the second world war and worked during the war in the Board of Trade and the Colonial Office and as a member of special missions in the Colonial territories.

It was doubtless a tragedy that Marrs did not agree with Wijewardene on the site of the new University or try to convert him to the Buller's Road School. Instead, he put his trust in the belted knights and high ecclesiastics who shared his views. In the event, Marrs was defeated and left, not without bitterness. Everybody agrees that the situation of the University at Peradeniya is one of the most beautiful in the world, where "every prospect pleases". If the University fails to come up to expectations, it will be because the men and women who live in it are unworthy.

The University College Council, which was composed of well-known educationists and a number of

public men such as Sir Ponnambalam Ramanathan, Sir James Peiris, Sir Marcus Fernando and Mr. D. B. Jayatilaka, had been working on a scheme outlined by Professor Marrs for converting the College to a University and for erecting the necessary buildings. Marrs visited various sites in and near Colombo with one or more members of the Council. At the University College dinner in January 1926, he said : “My very good friend, Father Le Goc, may remember a day in 1921, or early 1922, when we crept like conspirators up Bambalapitiya Road to examine the site to which I refer and how we feared our identity might have been detected by the then editor of the *Morning Leader* who happened to be passing in a rickshaw while we were inspecting the site”.

It was to be expected that Marrs would be disturbed by a series of articles which began in the *Daily News*, in July 1921, under the general head-line : “Should Ceylon have a shoddy University?”. The conclusion to which the series led was that Ceylon should have a residential University, preferably in or near Kandy. Mr. Lionel de Fonseka wrote a rejoinder in the *Morning Leader* under the title : “Shoddy or Gossamer?”

The writers of the *Daily News* articles—there were two—drew heavily on the recently-published report of the Calcutta University Commission under the chairmanship of Sir Michael Sadler, a well-known British educationist. That report had called attention to the deteriorating standards caused by mass production of graduates and referred to the harmful influence of a great city on the thousands who flocked

to Calcutta University. The Commission recommended the establishment of a new and largely residential University at Dacca, the second city of Bengal.

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 The campaign to reopen the question of the site of the proposed Ceylon University aroused the suspicions of the Principal of the University College. Marris wrote a letter to the Colonial Secretary dated 8th February 1923, in which he said : “I submit that it is now time to consider how the University will stand as regards sites and buildings, lest other deliberations outstrip preparations of the necessary externals. Though sections of public opinion still regard it as an open question, the site of the University appears to be a *chose jugée*”.

The University College itself was situated in what was known as the educational triangle, so called because it also contained the Royal and Training Colleges. A bungalow belonging to Mr. T. H. A. de Soysa, called “Regina Walauwa”, was bought by the Government in 1921 and used as the library and administrative building. It was renamed “College House”. The College Council had meanwhile started negotiating with the Government for a large piece of land adjoining Buller’s Road. Of these negotiations, Marris said afterwards : “When we discovered this site of 94 acres on the other side of Buller’s Road, I felt at once that the problem of the site had been solved once for all”.

But he had counted without D. R. Wijewardene and the new Governor, Sir Hugh Clifford. The speech by Marris from which the above quotation is taken was made at a dinner at which the Governor, who had arrived in the island only a few weeks earlier, was

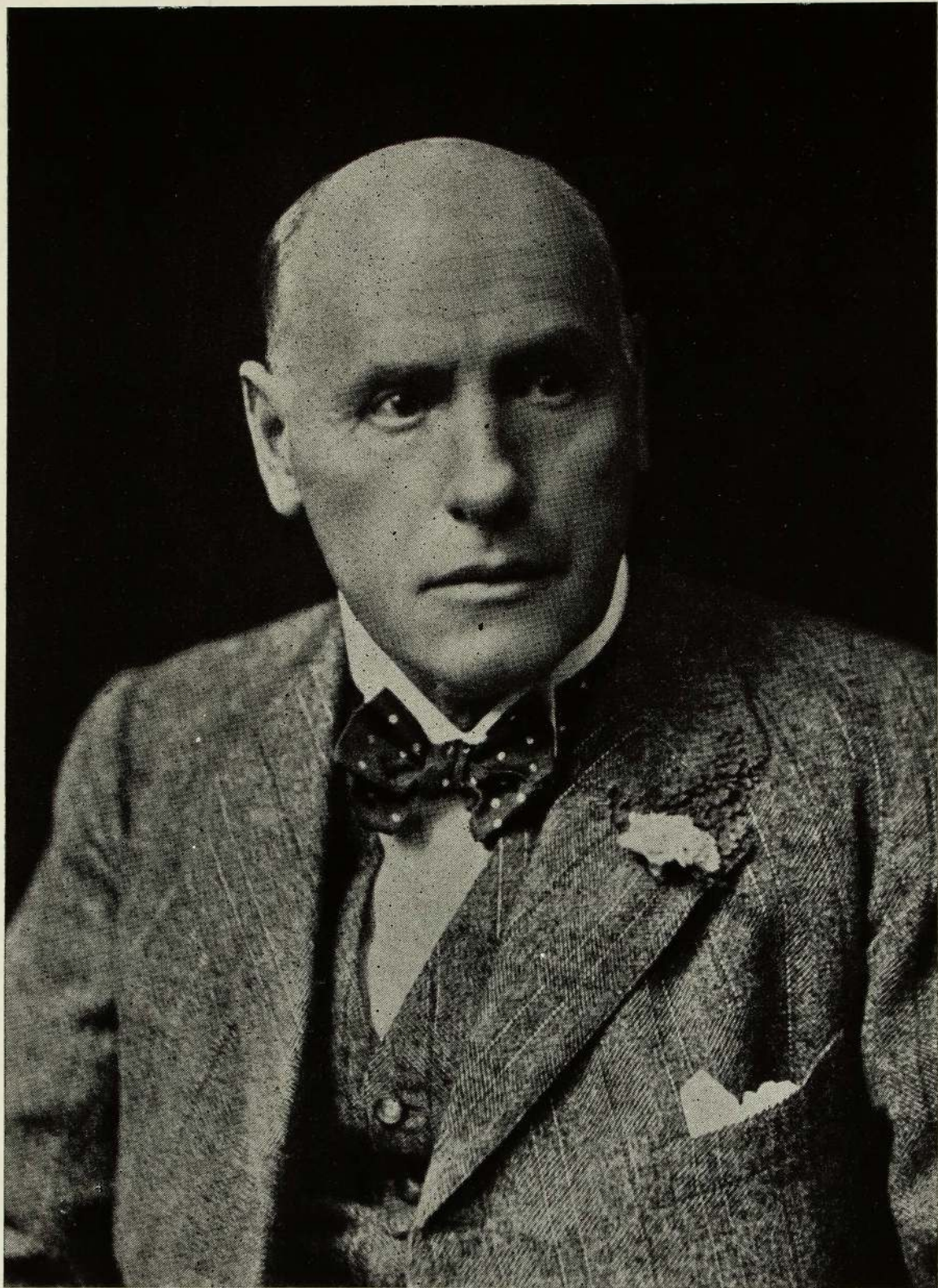
present. Intrigued doubtless by what was going on, and answering the promptings of one or more members of the Legislative Council, Sir Hugh called for a report on what had so far been done for the purpose of converting the University College into a full-fledged University. Marris had by then left for England on leave.

At the meeting of the Finance Committee of the Legislative Council on the 23rd April 1926, a suggestion was made by an unofficial member that the Buller's Road site which had been ear-marked for the University should be used for other purposes, and that the University should be built away from Colombo. The men behind this move were D. R. Wijewardene, Dr. Andreas Nell and Dr. S. C. Paul, all three wise and worthy in their respective spheres.

A meeting of the unofficial members of the Legislative Council was called by the Governor and it was held on the 31st May 1926. In the course of his speech, Sir Hugh said :

“With great respect for Mr. Marris, I do not think that as custodians of the public purse and custodians of the welfare of generations still unborn, you can delegate that duty to any individual, however able and enthusiastic he may be. The Legislative Council is the only body that can decide the questions connected with the University”.

When Professor Marris got wind of what was happening in Colombo, he rounded up Sir Marcus Fernando and Sir James Peiris, who were also holidaying in England, and prepared a memorandum which was signed by Sir Marcus and Sir James. The memorandum



SIR HUGH CLIFFORD

was sent to the Governor through the Secretary of State for the Colonies.

In Ceylon, the champions of the Buller's Road site were briefing Sir Ponnambalam Ramanathan who, however, was outmanoeuvred by Wijewardene and his two collaborators. Professor Leigh Smith, who was acting for Marris, wrote to Mr. Mark Young, the Principal Assistant Colonial Secretary, as follows :

“I was very pleased to hear from you over the phone, the other day, that you were going to send a copy of the proceedings at last Monday's meeting on the University site. All the more so as Ramanathan rang me up this morning, early, and gave me his version of what happened.

“Amongst other things, he told me that he had been asked by the Colonial Secretary to write a memorandum on the University question, and he proceeded to direct me to procure for him today such particulars as I had in the office bearing on the question. As it was a public holiday, I was able to tell him that the office was shut, and that I could not procure him the information. I told him that he would find what he wanted in the minutes of the College Council. But what he wants to do, apparently, is to get access to the files on the matter, and that I cannot allow him, of course, without authority to that effect.

“I feel that no important decision should be made, or steps taken in this University scheme without Marris being consulted. I don't mean Marris *qua* Marris but Marris *qua* Principal of the University College”.

What happened at the meeting of the Finance Committee of the Legislative Council on the 23rd April 1926

is perhaps best described in words used by Sir James Peiris in a speech to which reference will be made repeatedly in the ensuing pages. Sir James said :

“The Hon. Mr. A. F. Molamure very innocently asked the question whether a memorandum signed by a prominent educationist had been forwarded to the Government in which it was suggested that the site chosen for the University should be abandoned, and that 25 acres thereof should be appropriated to build a new Queen’s House and the remaining part used as a park, and that land for the University should be acquired outside Colombo.

“Just then the Hon. Mr. E. W. Perera, who had developed a sudden solicitude for those whom he invariably called bureaucrats and whose high-handed proceedings he never tired of exposing, said that the Governor, the head of the bureaucracy, should have a proper residence, and that 20 acres of the University site should be taken for a Queen’s House and that the rest of the land be used as a park or divided into building lots and sold”.

Sir James continued :

“The memorandum referred to by Mr. Molamure was signed by Mr. D. R. Wijewardene, his brother-in-law, and Dr. Paul. To these gentlemen, Sir Ponnambalam says, the arrival of a new Governor and a new Colonial Secretary afforded an opportunity to present afresh the old ideas which had been repeatedly considered and disposed of.

“I am sure you will agree with him that, but for the fact that there was a change in the Government, the

agitation would never have started, and but for the open sympathy shown by the Governor and his lieutenant it would have died a natural death, as such agitations started by the great educationist (a dig at Wijewardene) died in the past”.

This outburst was less than just to Wijewardene, of whom Sir James had said a few years earlier : “I wish to acknowledge the loyal and intelligent support which his newspaper has given to the Members of the Council and the good work that his paper has done in the cause of reform”. Nor was it true to say that the agitation against the Buller’s Road site would never have started had there not been a change in the Government. It had in fact started some time before Sir Hugh Clifford arrived in Ceylon as Governor.

Following the suggestion of the Governor, the Finance Committee of the Legislative Council, at its meeting on the 16th June 1926, decided that a Committee should be appointed “to consider the question of a site for the proposed Ceylon University and to submit a report thereon”. Mr. M. T. Akbar K.C., Solicitor-General and an Official Member of the Legislative Council, was appointed Chairman of the Committee by the Governor. He was a close friend of Wijewardene who seems to have had a voice in choosing the names of the other members of the Committee. They were A. F. Molamure, Wijewardene’s brother-in-law, D. B. Jayatilaka, Waitilingam Duraiswamy, W. E. Wait, the Controller of Revenue, and Herman Loos.

The Akbar Committee reported within a few months. In the course of its report it said : “We have given most anxious consideration to the question of the site,

and are of the opinion that no better site can be found than in the Dumbara Valley (in the Kandy district). . . . If the Government and the Legislative Council approve of our recommendations and the reasons we have given for them, we suggest that the next step shall be for the Government to appoint a strong Commission to work out the University scheme in detail with the help of experts”.

Sir Hugh Clifford’s part in all this was judged ambiguous by the supporters of the Buller’s Road site. The recommendation of the Akbar Committee was a bitter blow to Marrs and he felt let down by the Government. He wrote a blistering letter to the Colonial Secretary and his public comments on the Committee’s report were sarcastic. Who were these amateurs to tell him where the University should be built ?

The gubernatorial reaction to Professor Marrs’ attitude and feelings are contained in the following note by Sir Hugh Clifford which he ordered should be shown to the Principal of the University College :

“I have read Professor Marrs’ letter with much interest, but I think that it is a pity that he shows such a disposition to treat a matter of great public interest as if it were an essentially personal affair.

“Although Mr. Marrs chose the Buller’s Road site and is a strong advocate of its adoption, I am unable to accept his contention that the Government was ‘committed’ in the matter, or the implication, which runs throughout his letter, that in allowing the question to be publicly examined and debated, Government, in some mysterious fashion, has withheld support from him and from the University College Council.



“The controversy which has arisen on the subject of the best site has at any rate shown that opinions on the question are divided ; and as the decision is a momentous one, which will affect the whole future and character of the University, I certainly was not prepared to begin building on the Buller’s Road site until the Legislative Council has had an opportunity of studying the pros and cons and registering a final decision, which will settle the matter once for all.

“Professor Marrs complains that Government ‘has called a halt’. Does he seriously suggest that, public opinion being notoriously divided on the question, Government should forthwith have plumped for the Buller’s Road site, without any further enquiry, merely because it was favoured by him and his colleagues ? If this is not his meaning, what is his objection to the course which has been taken ?

“Personally I find Professor Marrs’ argument in support of the establishment of the University in the near neighbourhood of Colombo more convincing than that of those gentlemen who did not share his view ; but that does not in the least persuade me that Government acted otherwise than prudently in allowing the question to be thrashed out, before we really ‘committed’ ourselves to the adoption of the Buller’s Road site”.

The last sentence reads like a sop to Marrs. Sir Hugh Clifford did not personally favour a Colombo site whatever he may have thought of the arguments adduced against it. But he acted constitutionally in leaving the decision to the Legislature. Many people

doubtless thought that he had carried the spirit of democracy too far. Be that as it may, a storm of controversy broke out on the publication of the Akbar Committee's report, and the battle was now carried to the open.

OPEN BATTLE

THE battle of the sites now seemed to be going in favour of Wijewardene and his friends. It had been demonstrated that a newspaper campaign carried out with sincerity and vigour can sometimes prevail against great odds. The way it happened also threw interesting light on how the bureaucratic machine worked.

The champions of the Buller's Road site did not by any means give up hope. Indeed, they redoubled their efforts. A great mass meeting was held in the Bonjean Memorial Hall on the 6th June 1927. Sir James Peiris presided and the following resolution, which was proposed by Sir Marcus Fernando, was passed amid scenes of enthusiasm: "That in the opinion of this meeting, if the University of Ceylon is to be of the greatest advantage to the people of the country, it should be located in Colombo, on the Buller's Road site already selected for the purpose".

The platform of the large hall was full of important people. The Anglican Bishop of Colombo had his two Archdeacons with him as if to do honour to the Chairman, the most distinguished layman of their Church. The other ecclesiastics included the Rev.

Fr. M. J. Le Goc, Rector of St. Joseph's College, the Rev. Fr. Le Jeune O.M.I., the Rev. A. E. Restarick, Chairman of the Methodist Mission in Ceylon, and the Rev. A. Hutchison, Secretary of the Baptist Mission. Among the Members of the Legislative Council present were Sir Ponnambalam Ramanathan (who was given a great ovation) and Messrs. G. A. Wille, I. X. Pereira, A. Mahadeva, T. B. Jayah and C. H. Z. Fernando.

“There were also a number of ladies present”, states the newspaper report of the meeting. The ‘piece de resistance’ of the meeting was the fighting speech made by Sir James Peiris. The proceedings lasted three and a half hours.

Quotations have already been made from Sir James' speech. It was a powerful statement of the case for the Buller's Road site, uttered with emotion and passion, before a closely-packed audience. The speaker attacked the irregularity of the procedure which resulted in reopening the question of the site. He drew attention to the fact that all the Universities in the British Empire were built in large cities and that there was no capital city which did not have a University.

In his peroration, Sir James made another reference to Wijewardene. He said :

“I wish to quote from that memorable memorandum by the editor (laughter)—I beg your pardon—proprietor of the *Ceylon Daily News*. Mr. Wijewardene in his memorandum states that the University to be of use must command the confidence and enlist the cooperation of the different educational bodies in Ceylon. You have only to look at this platform and I wish to point out to him and to the Government that among the

conveners of the meeting there are at least 85 per cent of those who control the Secondary Schools of the Island which will have to supply the future students of the University, so that there can be no question that according to the condition which Mr. Wijewardene had laid down for success of the University there ought to be unanimous support for the resolutions which are to be laid before you. Let him withdraw his opposition, now that he knows we have the cooperation of the educationalists'' (loud applause).

It is a curious fact that, in one of the last notable speeches of his great career, Sir James should have been appealing to a man who was hardly known to the public but whose influence was felt everywhere. A man with less determination and weaker faith would have abandoned the fight against such powerful forces. But Wijewardene was not discouraged or dismayed. It was his way to work quietly ; in the words of Sir Ponnambalam Arunachalam, "like a process of nature".

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The propaganda let off by the meeting at the Bonjean Memorial Hall had to be countered. It could be done only by another such meeting. Wijewardene organised his meeting without beating any drums. Percival Deutrom, who was again on the managerial staff of the *Daily News*, was sent round the country in a motor car to sound prominent men in the provinces. The response was encouraging. There was in fact a great body of public opinion outside Colombo in support of the Kandy site. A meeting was held in the Public Hall of Colombo. The chair was taken by Sir Solomon Dias Bandaranaike K.C.M.G. (father of a future Prime

Minister) and speeches were made by D. B. Jayatilaka, H. A. P. Sandarasagara, Issac Tambyah and Francis de Zoysa, among others. The meeting was, in its way, a great success.

The Akbar Committee's report was about to be considered by the Legislative Council when that old parliamentary hand, Sir Ponnambalam Ramanathan, made a shrewd tactical move. On the 15th December, 1927, he introduced a motion in the Council seeking to ear-mark the Buller's Road site for the University. But it was rejected by a decisive majority.

The Akbar Committee's report then came up before the Council and a bitter debate ensued. Akbar moved: "That the proposed University shall be unitary and residential; that it shall be established in Kandy; that the Government shall appoint a Commission to work out the details of the proposed University".

Sir James Peiris, as Vice-President of the Council presided over the debate and showed signs of irritation when advocates of the Kandy site said things with which he did not agree. Was he going to intervene in the debate? Those who were for the Buller's Road site had no doubt about it.

Sir Ponnambalam Ramanathan had made his speech on the last amendment. The official report of the proceedings continues:

The Vice-President: I should like to know whether any other Honourable Members wish to address the House on the amendment.

Honourable Members: No.

The Vice-President: I think I will be shirking a very grave responsibility which rests upon me, if I

give a vote on this motion without giving my reasons for it''.

Sir James then proceeded to make his speech. He claimed that the Akbar Committee was not entitled to bring a motion and ask the Legislative Council to adopt it. Only its own Committees could report to the Council. He protested against the Government yielding to certain members. He urged the Council to vote against the Akbar proposals.

The official report then says :

Mr. D. B. Jayatilaka : I did not mean to speak on this. . . .

The Vice-President : The Hon. Member cannot speak now.

Mr. D. B. Jayatilaka : If I understand the Constitution of this House, the Vice-President of this House cannot take part in debates.

The Vice-President : It has been the custom of the House. . . .

Mr. E. W. Perera : You will remember, Sir, that after Sir William Manning spoke, he allowed other members to speak. I think you spoke yourself. . . .

The Vice-President : I took particular care to ask whether any other Hon. Member wished to speak.

Mr. D. B. Jayatilaka : But when you get up and speak for one side, and adduce arguments that we can meet, it is only fair that we should be allowed to speak.

Mr. G. A. Wille : There are other members also who have a good deal to say.

The Vice-President : All right, if the Council wishes to discuss the motion further, let it do so. I am not going to prevent any Member of this House from speaking now, because I do not want it to be said that I was trying to gag Members. But I asked Honourable Members whether they wished to speak before I spoke”.

Mr. Akbar's motion was carried by the Council. It was voted upon in three parts. The first, “that the proposed University shall be unitary and residential” was carried by 38 votes against 5 ; the recommendation that “it shall be established in Kandy” was carried by 23 votes against 15 ; and “that the Government shall appoint a Commission to work out the details” was carried by 25 votes against 16.

Sir Hugh Clifford decided at the outset that the Official members of the Legislative Council should have full liberty to speak and to vote according to personal conviction. He had expressed himself as being in favour of a site at Kandy, but he had made it clear that he was expressing his personal view, and that he had no intention of commanding the Official vote. Throughout the debate the Government scrupulously adhered to this undertaking not to use the Official vote.

A Commission, as recommended by the motion of the Council, was appointed by the Government. It was under the Chairmanship of the late Sir Walter Buchanan-Riddell, Principal of Hertford College, Oxford, and issued its report in 1929. Before the third reading of the Bill for the setting up of the University was passed, the Legislative Council was dissolved.

When the State Council under the new Constitution was elected, the University was one of the subjects placed under the jurisdiction of the Executive Committee of Education. Among the members of this Executive Committee were such formidable opponents of the Kandy site as Messrs. G. A. Wille, T. B. Jayah and the Chairman, Mr. C.W.W. Kannangara, who was also the new Minister of Education.

The Riddell Commission had recommended the Dumbara Valley site but now various influences were at work to upset the decision. One of the reasons urged against it was that malaria was endemic in the Dumbara Valley. Another was that there was not enough buildable land on the selected site. Wijewardene always felt that H. H. Reid, the University architect, had been prevailed upon to try to torpedo the Kandy scheme. Sir Thomas Villiers, who was a member of the Riddell Commission, and had tramped the Dumbara Valley, thought that a brilliant opportunity was missed when that site was given up.

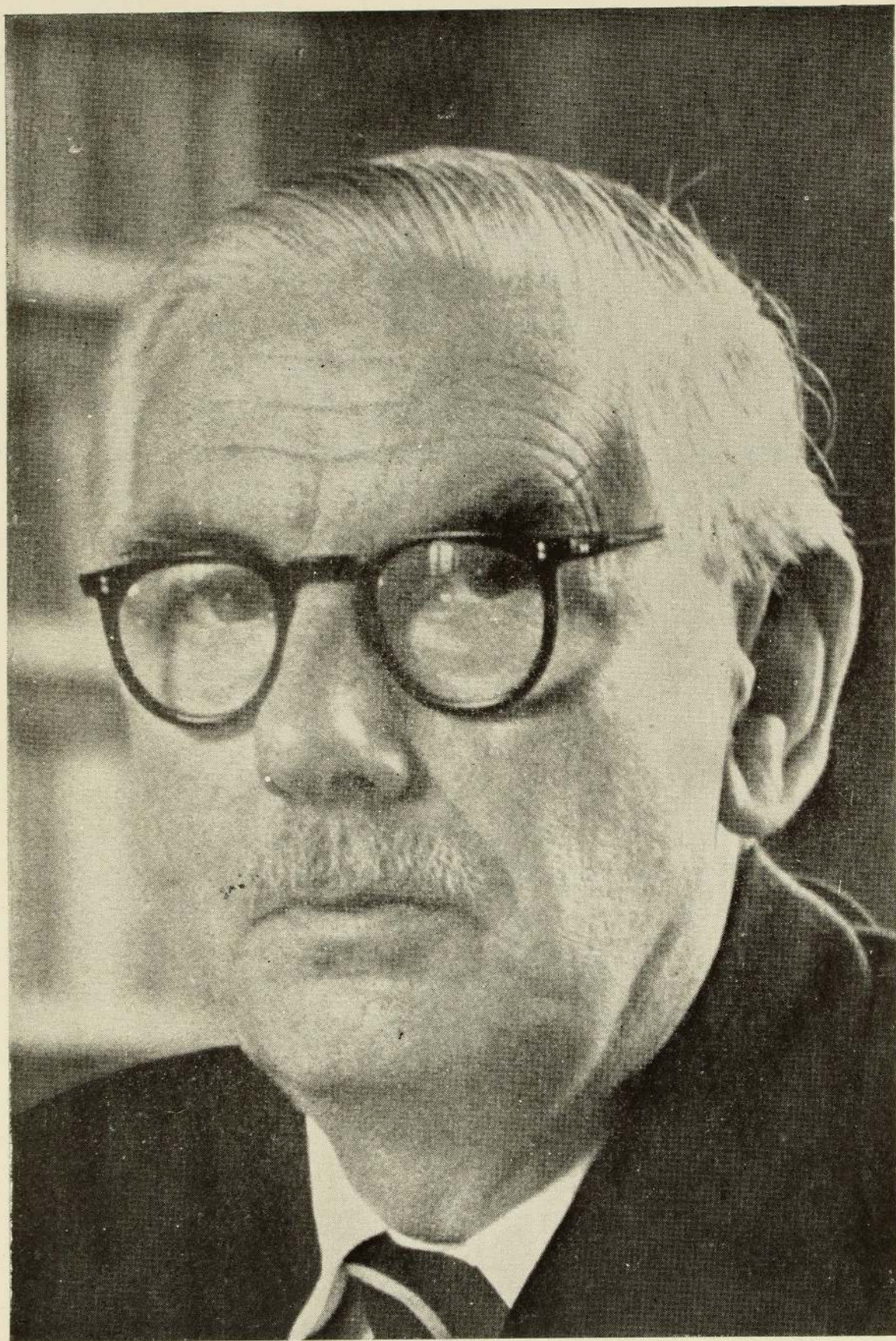
The scheme was hamstrung until Wijewardene overcame the opposition of Kannangara and worked on D. S. Senanayake and Sir John Kotelawala. Sir John was the Minister of Transport and Works with the responsibility for putting up the buildings of the new University. To give effect to the decision of the legislature he began by acquiring New Peradeniya estate, a tea plantation of about 300 acres within easy reach of Kandy town bounded on one side by the Mahaweliganga. There was a Railway Station and Post Office on the property. When the second world war broke out, the land was taken over by the South East

Asia Command (S.E.A.C.) under Earl Mountbatten for military buildings.

With the appointment of Sir Ivor Jennings as Vice-Chancellor of the University in 1940, events began to move fast for converting the University College into a University. He did all the paper work with consummate ease, but the residential University was yet to be. At the end of the war, Wijewardene was again pushing Sir John Kotelawala. This time it was to persuade him to appoint Sir Patrick Abercrombie as the University architect. Sir Patrick paid several visits to Ceylon, in the course of which he recommended to the Government the acquisition in all of about 2,000 acres for a catchment area for the water supply and other purposes. He planned the 'campus' and nominated Shirley D'Alwis to design the buildings under his supervision. Wijewardene did not live to see the transfer of the University to the new site or to receive the honorary degree which would surely have been offered to him. One of the halls of residence at Peradeniya has been named after him.

He left to the University all his books from the Donald Ferguson collection relating to the Dutch and Portuguese periods in Ceylon and all his old maps. He also bequeathed a valuable collection of books and manuscripts on Ceylon, bought from the W. A. de Silva library to the Buddhist monastery to be established on a site close to the University at Peradeniya.

The creation of this monastery—the Sangharama—engaged his attention during his later years. The impressive buildings, including the vihare, occupy a magnificent site on the banks of the Mahaweli and are



SIR IVOR JENNINGS

now nearing completion. His object in founding it was to enable Buddhist monks to obtain a University education in order that they may be able to carry out missionary activities both at home and abroad.

Wijewardene consulted Sir Patrick Abercrombie on the layout and building plans which were worked out in detail by Shirley D'Alwis. He made a trust for the purpose and contributed Rs. 200,000 towards it, naming as the first trustees H. H. Basnayake, Dr. P. B. Fernando, L. J. Seneviratna, Mudaliyar P. D. Ratnatunga and himself. On his death his elder son, P. S. Wijewardene, took his place and the latter has recently been joined by his younger son, R. S. Wijewardene.

THE "CHIEF" IN THE OFFICE

DURING three decades of journalism Wijewardene learned much about its techniques, but from the outset he possessed the instincts of a good newspaper man. He had a clear idea of the kind of newspaper he wanted, the resources at his command and the way to bring together the men and material needed for his purpose. Recently, Mr. Cecil King, the publisher of the London *Daily Mirror*, was reported to have said that if he tried to produce the sort of newspaper he would himself like to read he was sure to lose money. Wijewardene, on the other hand, was never happy unless he was trying to produce a newspaper of his own choice. Only when his newspaper family increased considerably did he lose control over some of the activities of its members. It played havoc with his nerves to watch them straying from his principles and methods.

Although all Wijewardene's newspapers were expected to reflect his own views, which he easily persuaded himself were the only reasonable views, the *Daily News* alone was the authentic voice so long as he was in harness. From the first issue of the paper until his last day in the office, he guided the policy of

the paper. A part of each morning was spent in thinking up subjects for editorials, tapping sources of information, quarrying facts in Government sessional papers and English reviews and journals, and carefully reading all the Ceylon newspapers for what he called "talking points".

With Crowther, who was his age and a contemporary both in school and in England, he discussed editorial subjects over tea and cakes in the Managing Director's room. With younger men, the suggestions or instructions, as the case may be, might be telephoned or conveyed in his room at any time of the afternoon. When he was engrossed in other business, or the main news of the day came in late in the evening, the editorials were written when most people were dining or in bed. On such occasions, Wijewardene was on the telephone a couple of times from his house to ask how the article was shaping, which meant reading part or the whole of it over the 'phone and sometimes altering it to suit his requirements.

Although he had no gift for writing, Wijewardene could inspire an article which was discussed next morning by the whole country and which influenced official action. There was no man of his time who had a surer political instinct and a sounder judgment than he had. In this way Wijewardene, by his industry and watchfulness, gave a lead to the country. He insisted that every article should say something clearly. He did not like tight-rope performances and warned leader-writers against the feeling that there is always another side to a question.

The fact that Wijewardene was, so to say, always looking over the shoulder of his writers had some disadvantages. When the "Chief" was not in town, the Editor was often in a quandary. One was never sure, even after an association extending over many years, what line Wijewardene would take on any subject. He might have been talking on the telephone with D. S. Senanayake or Sir Macan Markar or B. F. de Silva, his Law Library contact, and receiving inside information not available to the staff. This practice encouraged outsiders in high places, like Sir Oliver Goonetilleke, to telephone direct to the "Chief" and by-pass the responsible editors.

On one occasion it led to rather serious consequences. It had been suggested to Wijewardene by someone at the Law Library that the Supreme Court judges were giving themselves a mid-summer vacation to which they were not entitled. Wijewardene had a member of the staff write a pungent editorial on the subject which was published next morning with the somewhat ambiguous title of "Justice on Holiday." The Editor was had up for Contempt of Court before a Full Court, consisting of Sir Sidney Abrahams, Chief Justice, Mr. Justice Akbar (who was a close friend of Wijewardene), and Mr. Justice Koch.

It appears that Wijewardene went to bed on the night the editorial was written with an uneasy sensation that something was wrong with it. He woke up at about half past four in the morning and the offending paragraph (or sentences) flashed through his mind. His first impulse was to take up the telephone and have the editorial altered. But when he looked at the clock

he knew it was already too late and felt that he would have to face the music. Long before Sir Sydney Abrahams read his *Daily News* that morning Wijewardene was on the telephone contacting his lawyer friends to prepare a defence against a possible action in the Courts.

As Editor I stood my trial, having been moved from the dock to a seat behind the lawyers. I was defended by the two leading practitioners at the Bar, Mr. R. L. Pereira K.C. and Mr. H. V. Perera K.C. Sir Sidney Abrahams did most of the talking on behalf of the Judges and was nettled by an ingenious Affidavit for the defence drawn up by Mr. E. J. Samerawickreme K.C. which sought to excuse the article without making a full apology. He was also riled by the heading of the article "Justice on Holiday". In point of fact we had no defence. Wijewardene had been misled by his Law Library friend, for the Judges had only taken a holiday which they were obliged to do under the Courts Ordinance. I was sentenced to pay a fine of Rs. 1,000 and "imprisonment till the rising of the Court". As the Court was about to rise at once, the sentence of imprisonment meant nothing if the fine was paid promptly. To save face, however, it was decided to appeal to the Privy Council in London.

The *Daily News* retained Mr. Gavin Simonds K.C. with Mr. Hallet K.C. On the day the Appeal came up, Gavin Simonds (later Lord Simonds) was appointed a Judge of the High Court. Mr. R. L. Pereira, who happened to be in England and watched the proceedings, was not convinced that the best case had been made out for the appellant. Be that as it may, the appeal

was dismissed with costs. When the record of the case came back to Ceylon, I had still to serve my sentence. I disguised myself as a practising lawyer by wearing a black coat and striped pants and was allowed to serve the sentence of imprisonment "till the rising of the Court" seated among the advocates. At the lunch interval I was escorted by the fiscal to the rooms of the Registrar of the Supreme Court, Mr. Guy O. Grenier, an old friend, who gave me a warm welcome to his sanctum. I was back in the Court after lunch, but proceedings ended rather early and Mr. Justice Poyser, who seemed to be enjoying the situation, gracefully bowed me out of the Court as he left the Bench.

I had the best of personal relations with the Judges before whom I was tried. Akbar was my teacher at the Law College. Sidney Abrahams was anxious to get a good press for his reforms and invited me to his Chambers more than once. I met Koch on many occasions under more congenial circumstances. All three Judges retired prematurely, but that had nothing to do with the case. Simonds K.C., who might have won the appeal for us, rose to be Lord Chancellor of England.

Wijewardene was ever ready to do battle for the freedom of the Press even against those with whom he had collaborated in the struggle for constitutional reform. The Bill for granting to the Ceylon legislature parliamentary privileges similar to those enjoyed by the British Parliament was subjected to searching analysis and criticism by the Lake House newspapers. How these privileges could be abused was demonstrated

when the State Council appointed a Select Committee to inquire into a charge of breach of privilege in an article published by the *Daily News* about the conduct of the members on the occasion of the funeral of Sir Baron Jayatilaka. In addition to the Editor, the proprietor of the paper was summoned to appear before the Select Committee, and an attempt was made by the more irresponsible members of the Committee to humiliate the latter. Mr. L. M. D. de Silva K.C. with Mr. N. M. de Silva appeared for the *Daily News* and its owner. The whole thing fizzled out in the end.

An Editor's life is bedevilled with threats of libel actions, and there were some proctors who specialised in such cases. On one occasion the *Daily News* published a story about a foreign consul with a Polish name alleging that he was a spy. It was a very serious charge which could not possibly be sustained, although the reporter concerned said he had the news on the highest authority and Orion de Zylva, the sub-editor, was quite satisfied. Fortunately I went straight to Sidney Julius on receipt of the letter of demand for a large sum, and he settled it for an insignificant amount. More often than not, the cause of action in a libel case arises from carelessness or inexperience on the part of a sub-editor but the Editor has to face the music. When Wijewardene was in a bad mood the Editor's anxieties on such occasions were not lessened.

When a newspaper is outstripping its rivals and earning the respect of the public, all the sweat and tears that go into the daily task seem to be worth while. Wijewardene shared the thrills of success achieved by his staff and rewarded good work. But he was inclined

to be exacting in his standards and make too much of minor faults. By nature a kindly and simple man, the weight of responsibility seemed to develop an unhealthy tension which, in the end, sapped and undermined his strength.

The occasional full-dress 'post mortems' he held seemed to make severe demands on his equanimity. On such occasions he came upstairs to the Conference room accompanied by the General Manager and the peon Martin who carried a bundle of newspapers marked with a red pencil. He said bitter things about the work of senior members of the staff, but said them with a great effort and presumably because he felt that it was necessary to do so in the interests of efficiency. After one of these sessions he sometimes turned round to me and said: "Yes, you leave all the dirty work to me. Why don't you punish them yourself? I suppose you prefer a happy family atmosphere". On one occasion the Editor of a Sinhalese newspaper fainted during one of these explosions. But it has to be said that, in this way, Wijewardene exercised a perfect control of the columns of his newspapers down to the tiniest paragraph and head-line.

The late N. M. de Silva, then a young advocate doing a part-time job in the editorial staff of the *Daily News*, used to relate the following story of how he was ticked off for coming late to work. The 'Chief', after scrutinising the hall porter's log book, discovered that Neil was habitually late to work. So he got him down to his room for a chat and in the course of conversation casually remarked that he had seen him at Galle Face at about 4 p.m. the previous day. Neil

who had not been anywhere in the vicinity of Galle Face at 4 p.m. knew that this was another way of telling him that he was not at his desk at 4 p.m.

It was not unusual to find Wijewardene engaged in a quiet conversation, with one of the men he had chastised a day or two earlier, discussing some problem which had been engaging his attention. He would be seen asking the advice of the head printer, Edward de Silva, about some new machine, or a member of the circulation department about a drop in sales in a remote town, or a manager about an advertisement contract. Wijewardene made it his business to know what people were thinking about. He always listened to agents who came to the office from outstations to pay their bills. Although his knowledge of the Sinhalese language was not profound, he understood well the needs of the readers of his Sinhalese newspapers and sought to fulfil them.

When the day's work was over, he washed his face and brushed his hair, using a wash basin and mirror concealed in what looked like a writing desk. He would then stand by the window and look out towards the lights of the Regal Theatre, waiting for his car. His wife and children often came in to pick him up after work. Whenever he finished early, they visited his mother in her home or went to see a film which he thought would instruct or amuse the children. The strain of office work was thus relieved, even though he could never forget that men and machines were doing his bidding round the clock at Lake House.

Wijewardene's flair for selecting young men of promise and training them by giving them responsibility

was seen to advantage in his close association with E. E. C. Abayasekara, who is now Secretary of the Company, was for sometime his personal assistant, without any special designation, and later Assistant Secretary of the Company. At my request he has prepared a Note on his impressions of Wijewardene's handling of the administrative side of the business. He writes of the Chief:

He was a perfectionist. He also tended to expect his staff to work to the same standards as he had set for himself and to possess the same degree of interest as he had in the business and in the work of the office. Those who worked with him were hard put to it at times to satisfy him : often this meant anticipating his ideas, no easy task until one grew familiar with his ways of thinking. His drive, impatience and a natural incapacity to suffer fools gladly would contribute their quota of anxieties to those who had to work with him daily, but it was an association which also often brought the rewards one may expect to gain from working with a man of vision, motivated by ideals of service and possessed of an extraordinary capacity.

The Chief was endowed with, or had in the course of time developed, an exceptionally keen memory. He kept no notes, diaries or appointment books as far as his work in the office was concerned—unusual for a man who valued system and method—relying very largely on his memory not only for the day-to-day work but also to follow up and keep the pressure on the many projects he initiated or was interested in seeing through. And he used it to such advantage that those of us who had daily dealings with him were kept on our

toes most of the time and could not afford to relax. I had to see him regularly every morning when he came in, about 10 o'clock, with papers, letters and special matters to be put to him. I took instructions on these and other matters arising from letters he had received, as also on a variety of subjects he was himself continually initiating. In the afternoon or the following day when I saw him next it was rare for him not to question me on any single item which had been taken up the previous day and which I had not mentioned or on which I had omitted to make a report. His own explanation for a good memory was that it came naturally with and depended directly on the degree of one's interest in one's work.

In the day-to-day problems of the office, large and small, he was thorough to the point of fault. Thoroughness is part of the perfectionist's creed and in the early days when the foundations of the business were being laid and during the period it was being built, thoroughness and attention to detail must have doubtless contributed to the creation of a sound business organisation. But in later years when it had grown to comparatively giant proportions, the perfectionist in him, and perhaps also the habit of years, seemed to inhibit the Chief from handing over responsibility. The natural result was a tendency to over-centralisation, particularly as the Managing Director's direction and supervision extended over the entire organisation.

An illustration of his thoroughness and capacity for detail was his handling of the annual budget. A firm believer in the principle of the old adage "look after the pence and the pounds will look after themselves",

he insisted on a completely detailed budget and when the business had grown and its family included several commercial activities, the budget had reached considerable proportions. A less scrupulous man would have shied at it but right up to the time when illness compelled him to hand over the reins, he went over every item in detail ; and such was his grasp of the business that it was rare for any of the estimate schedules to be approved without a series of queries or a set of instructions resulting in further refinements in the presentation or arrangement, or which dealt with shortcomings in the business which had come to light in the process of scrutinising the estimates. By this means he also kept himself completely informed of the inner workings of the business.

Possessing the instincts and gifts of the born organiser, the Chief particularly enjoyed working out, by himself when time permitted, or with others, new methods, systems and other ideas conducive to improvements in any sphere of the organisation. Whilst keeping his own mind trained on possible improvements, he also continually encouraged and urged such members of the staff who, he felt, had a flair for it, to think up new schemes or to adapt systems which had by experience proved their value elsewhere. He took an especially keen interest in and care over the systems relating to the financial records. Some of those he instituted have more than stood the test of time, being sound and practical after 30 years.

“The Boss”, as he was informally called by the staff, had his own ideas as to what things and how things, should be done. His manner also did not

encourage criticism of his ideas, and in the interests of discipline, as he conceived it, and by which he laid great store, he would come down with a heavy hand on anyone who infringed procedures or rules which had been laid down. Nevertheless he could be open to and would be quick to recognise the value of new ideas which seemed good and no less quick to put them into use. During the last war when, with newsprint rationing, pages were severely curtailed and space was therefore at a premium, a suggestion put to him that in the interests of space-saving the British newspapers style of display for domestic announcements be adopted replacing the elaborate form then in vogue in the Ceylon press, was accepted by him and put into effect in a matter of hours ; however—and with characteristic predilection for thoroughness—not before a comprehensive scheme to cover all eventualities had been worked out.

There was little that was significant in the business or the administration that escaped the Managing Director's penetrating eye, and no department or, for that matter, member of the staff, was out of its range. His close scrutiny of the newspapers yielded a fairly regular crop of pointers to sins of omission or commission, particularly in the editorial, printing or advertising departments. These were probed as a matter of course. Any member of the staff who may have had the idea that there would be an easing off of the pressure whenever the Chief was away from the office on his infrequent and—from the point of view of the staff—all too short holidays, would be in for severe disillusionment : on such holidays, the Chief—perhaps as he had

a little more time to spare—seemed to have studied the papers even more intensively and the queries were larger in number and more searching ! Another device which he adopted and one which had the effect of keeping the wheels of the organisation running smoothly, was the firing of a regular barrage of queries or demands for “explanations” from heads of departments on various matters which appeared to suggest that something was wrong or that some particular improvement could be and, therefore, should have been, effected. It was one of my less enviable duties to send off these unwelcome missiles which almost invariably began : “I am instructed by the Managing Director.....” In the course of time some of the Managers worked out techniques of reply so as to have matters disposed of with the minimum of investigation ; in other cases, however, a reply to one query not infrequently laid bare hitherto undiscovered faults or shortcomings and in turn led to a whole series of further queries. The net result of this system of queries was that the Managers naturally did their best to leave no room for—from their standpoint—troublesome explanations, and to that extent laxity was effectually discouraged.

The Chief was very particular about selection of his staff. He liked to pick them himself and carefully. He made it a practice therefore to interview applicants and even to see all the applications himself, until in later years the expansion of the business and failing health made this physically impossible. Always on the lookout for youngsters who showed promise, he valued recommendations from contacts in leading

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schools for likely young men with the makings of good journalists or top-rate executives. His interest in the staff he engaged did not end with their appointment. Even in the case of those taken for junior posts, but more especially where he had a hunch that a particular new entrant might, given opportunities, blossom into more than a pen-pusher, he made a practice of periodically enquiring into his progress, not infrequently sending for and questioning him himself. For the more promising, his general technique was to entrust them with various new duties and responsibilities, a test which showed just how far their capacity stretched and in what directions. Before very long he thus had a fairly good idea of what his new men were capable of, and sometimes, these tests led to radical changes being effected almost overnight.

The Managing Director did not always take his managers into his full confidence where staff were concerned, owing perhaps to an innate or unconscious tendency to keep the direction in his hands. A new entrant was thus sometimes ordered to report on some aspect of the work of a department in which he was getting settled. What neither the new man nor the manager realised was that these "reports" were also a sort of a test, whilst a useful by-product might result from a fresh mind being brought to bear on old systems.

Though he realised that efficient staff could make a valuable contribution and was therefore loth to part with them, the Chief drew the line where interests of discipline or the maintenance of certain principles he considered paramount were, in his view, likely to be jeopardised. Instances which showed that, at the

same time, he could and would make generous allowances for human idiosyncracies; especially for those foibles associated more particularly with temperamental and gifted journalists, were not rare. Possibly, in the generality of cases, the Chief was able to get what may be termed their average best from his staff. His own high standards of work, his devotion to the tasks he had set himself and his own exemplary life, may well have, when looked at from this distance of time and in the context of his day, constituted a factor of no little importance in standards which the staff came to accept.

A man of action, the Chief had no difficulty in making up his mind quickly about most things. This is not to say that he did not consult, though this did not mean he would, for that reason, accept, the views of his managers or staff. I have seen him often go to not a little trouble to obtain the opinions of several persons over a problem. Likewise, he would, wherever possible, try to check some information or complaint he had received, by securing independent reports.

Members of the staff who had met the Chief at his home and found an unassuming man and charming host were taken aback by his 'very-strictly-business' attitude in the office. He expected, just as he himself gave, 100 per cent attention to work when on duty. He would not tolerate any hanging about and chatting in the corridors and used in earlier days to walk out of his room, when he had time to spare, and look down the office corridors ; and any one there without a satisfactory explanation had a thin time of it. Likewise, he discouraged persons from dropping in into his room

except when sent for or on business by appointment. On rare occasions a politician would call to see him about some publication : but he was usually referred to the editor. Acquaintances and relations did not on those grounds qualify for any privileges, and requests that some inconvenient news report be omitted were politely declined.

Though in later years his impatience seemed to increase, and he could be difficult over little things, I have not known him in any time of crisis to display other than a calm and serene attitude. There was even, I always suspected, a hint of an inner enjoyment which he possibly derived from contending with a difficulty. He had the faculty for and deliberately cultivated looking ahead and anticipating events. Not unnerved by any sudden or unforeseen developments, he gave the impression that an answer could be found if sought, to every problem.

The administration of the business as a whole was, basically, a highly centralised one, and although at the later stages, moves to decentralise it were introduced, the organisation remained strongly controlled from the centre as long as he was in the saddle. The Chief administered the business departments through a few senior officials and one or two others who functioned as personal assistants. Chief among the officials was the Secretary. He was the main channel through which most of the general administrative problems, including finance, staff, purchasing and like matters, big and small, were disposed of. He had, therefore, to shoulder a considerable burden and to be fully apprised of what was happening in practically every department

and activity of the business. As Secretary of the Company from 1935 to the end of 1949, when he joined the Board, and earlier as a personal assistant, Mr. P. C. A. Nelson carried this responsibility. As Manager of the *Daily News*, the *Dinamina* and the *Silimina* until his death in 1945, the late Mr. G. V. Perera, fulfilled a wide range of functions in his time, including all matters relating to advertising, the distribution of the newspapers for several years, as well as—being an advocate—those touching the law. In later years after a General Manager was appointed, some of the routine matters relating to staff, advertising, production, etc., previously referred to the Managing Director, were handled by the General Manager, and meanwhile the Administration had also, with the appointment of additional departmental managers, been undergoing a decentralisation process. But it continued to be the practice for nothing of any importance to be settled without the approval of the Chief who still also remained the principal initiator of any changes. Most of the other matters, including special problems to be put to the Chief and the Managing Director's correspondence, were dealt with by him through two (later one) other members of the staff, one of whom was myself. We functioned more or less as secretaries, but had also, when the occasion demanded, to undertake a variety of other duties. Even though some measure of decentralisation came into force, control remained at and was exercised from the centre.

The Chief eschewed the idea of having functionaries around him bearing designations, a reflection perhaps of his practical as against a theoretical approach to

problems of management, no less than of his modest and unassuming character. So too, in the old tradition, he valued the virtue of anonymity particularly as far as the newspapers were concerned. He strove consciously for higher standards for the newspapers so that they may earn for themselves honoured places in the public regard and he deprecated any tendency to create or build up personalities. In this he was the first to give his staff a clear lead.

The Chief never permitted his private life and his personal affairs to intrude into those of his position as Managing Director or into the Company's or office matters. Meticulous in the extreme, he even carried his own postage stamps in his pocket book and supplied the stamps for any letters he sent even of a semi-official nature. So long as he derived even a very minor benefit from it, he was particular that no part of the expenditure was charged to the Company and met the entirety from his own pocket.

Introspective by nature and not given to talk freely, it was seldom that the Chief let on when in the office what he had in mind, other than, of course, on matters which were immediately being dealt with. He therefore spoke little of his ideas and plans which were nonetheless always taking shape in his mind. On one occasion, however, he told me that he had planned to and would try to make Lake House a model institution, providing ideal working and other conditions, and any shortcomings there were would be remedied. Staff welfare projects, which in the earlier years he seemed to have had in view, but over which he had been cautious, came more to the forefront of his mind in later

years as the Company's financial position improved. Before the middle thirties and when few businesses would have thought of it, he had set up a Provident Fund with provision for building up a pension fund for which he provided the nucleus with a large personal contribution. The accounts of the Company from early years also record regular transfers to accounts intended for the benefit of staff, and such transfers were continued in various forms. Plans for a large up-to-date playing field with a club house, modelled after some of the best in Britain, were amongst his ideas for the staff until his death, whilst almost up to the time illness made travel impossible, he visited several building sites in the suburbs of Colombo in the search for a suitable locale for a staff building scheme. About two years before, he had had the Company's Articles of Association amended to provide for employee shareholdings.

Meanwhile the business itself had rapidly expanded and with it, too, the staff which had grown three and fourfold. The valuable personal link that existed in the past between the head of the business and each individual member of the staff had, in the nature of things, to give way in the changing set-up to staff connections of a much less personal nature. What was now, moreover, an over-centralised administration with its continuing insistence on high standards of discipline and work, must have also contributed its share in various ways to the beliefs and stories which came to gain currency and which painted the "Boss" as a hard man devoid of feeling and sympathy. Understandable enough perhaps in the circumstances, the picture itself was to those who knew him, a distorted

one. The seemingly hard and sometimes unrelenting attitude often, I suspected, cloaked misgivings as to whether he was being imposed upon or feelings of apprehension of the possible effects on discipline of a concession. I have known the Chief to turn down an application for a staff loan in the afternoon, but, when on second thoughts, he had had the circumstances checked, to have sent for and given the applicant the money from his own pocket. His peon Martin had several fines imposed on him for various lapses, but while the Chief would not think of cancelling a fine, it was not unusual for him privately to make good the fine to Martin on the latter's pay day ! He took in fact more than a superficial interest in the personal affairs of many members of the staff, actually seeking in some cases to put them on their feet and, in the case of older members of the staff, to have provision made for their retirement, rather in the manner of an old family friend ; and, considering that these were attempted in the midst of his multifarious responsibilities, they must be accounted signs of kindness and fellow-feeling. Records I have seen of assistance given to staff some thirty years ago, when the business was in its infancy, reveal a man with a generous heart.

A strict disciplinarian and a hard taskmaster, particularly during the formative period of the business after it moved to Lake House and the pressures of work and responsibilities mounted, he seemed to develop a mellow and more liberal outlook in later years to judge by his readiness then to give second and third chances to staff who made lapses which, in normal circumstances, would have been regarded as warranting little, if any,

such consideration. Whether it was the stern necessities of business building in earlier years which had not permitted such acts of liberality, or whether it was the result of a more sensitive feeling for the frailties of human nature, it is not easy to say.

The pioneering and creative impulses in the Chief would, in the form of the new ventures he was continually planning, bring freshness to and relieve the routine pressure of the daily round. It was rare for him—until illness overtook him—not to have a scheme afoot for some new enterprise. In later years the increasing tempo of politics and public affairs, the new and pressing problems which came in the wake of the 1939 war, and the burden he continued to shoulder in the business itself, left him little time to devote to new projects. He would then occasionally give some expression to the feelings of frustration he must have felt in not being able, as he put it, to break new ground. One of his chief interests was large scale publishing in Sinhalese. He had visualised schemes for several publishing ventures, including Sinhalese magazines, a first-rate Sinhalese dictionary, and various series of educative booklets and books as a contribution to filling the wide gaps which he saw existed in the range of works in Sinhalese. He had also projected a scheme for publishing, in editions which he intended should be of a sufficiently high scholastic quality to gain general acceptance as standard works, the body of Sinhalese literature regarded as the classics of the language.

The Chief's deep absorption in the problems of national upliftment was fairly patent to those who were in close touch with him. Though he was not generally

given to day-dreaming in the office, one occasionally found him gazing out into the distance, his mind clearly elsewhere. On some of these occasions he would allow himself to talk a little on whatever he had been thinking of—a milk marketing scheme or an educational problem. Sometimes, however, from a few stringent remarks followed by some such observation as “we must not let them get off with this sort of things.....”, one gathered he had received some inside information of what he felt was some nefarious plan and was planning a counter move.

Autocratic and a martinet though he was, the staff were in general always prepared to “take it” from the Chief, even if on occasion they might not have accepted his verdict as just and proper. One reason was perhaps because it was instinctively felt that the “Boss” was influenced in his decisions by considerations which flowed from the values he placed, rightly or wrongly, on high standards of work and discipline, which standards were applied to all alike. In the earlier years in particular, many of the staff were also no doubt prepared to work a good deal more than might have reasonably been expected of them, because they realised that the “Boss” and the institution were serving the national interest, and that the “Boss” himself, whatever else he was, was a man of generous and kindly instincts.



THE HUMAN TOUCH

WIJEWARDENE'S success in business and his power of applying himself unsparingly to his self-imposed duties sometimes gave the impression that he was an unfeeling robot. In later years the state of his health gave a querulous edge to his conduct in office which belied his real nature.

He often worked himself up to a frenzy when things went wrong or did not come up to his expectations. He always regretted such lapses but was too shy to own it. Looking through some old papers, I came across four letters. Two of these he wrote from England, when he was on business trips, to me in Colombo, and the other two from Colombo to London where I was attending a meeting of the Commonwealth Press Union. The letters from England are in his own hand and the two from Colombo are typewritten. There were many such letters over a period of thirty years. They reflect his simple character, human qualities, devotion to his work and public spirit.

National Liberal Club,
Whitehall Place, S.W. 1
24th September, 1937.

My dear Herbert,

I was very sorry to read about your brother-in-law's death. It seems to have been very sudden. Please convey to your wife my deep sympathy in her loss.

I am struggling through the business that has brought me here. I have interviewed about a dozen men for the executive post we are creating whom Shaw had seen previously. I have not been impressed with any of them. I am pursuing my enquiries a bit further to find out if there are men of good business talent without newspaper experience. I find it difficult to get all the qualities we require from purely newspaper-trained executives.

Odhams have discovered in Creswell-George a likely 'star' man of theirs. Apparently he has blossomed out since he came out to India and they were not aware of the amount of work he had done for them until he returned. They have sent him back, and Surrey Dane, who is really the second in command of Odhams' manifold activities, asked me not to take him away from them as they are finding it difficult to get the right sort of man for their jobs. He told me he could do with six Creswell-Georges. Still, he promised to look round for a man for us.

I met Paul Pieris twice or three times here. He privately told me that he had been cabled to get more expensive offices. In his report, he says, he has said

that no useful purpose can be served by keeping Ceylon House.

I entirely agree with him. Denounce the continuation of this. Apparently Corea wants to keep it going. As you know he was misled by those who stand to benefit. Somebody has suggested that it might be kept as a recruiting office for tourists. Don't countenance anything of this. Ceylon is spending far too much on tourists already.

I hope you are making full use of the Sino-Japanese war for raising circulations. The people in the press are very angry about the air raids. The Japs should not get any sympathy from anywhere.

I am hoping to get back as soon as I fix up the two or three things I have in hand. I do not want to stay a day longer.

Tonight is the India and Eastern Newspaper Society Dinner. Dr. Pieris is responding to the toast of the Trade of the East.

I hope you are taking some week-ends and a week or two off.

With kind regards,

Yours sincerely,
D. R. Wijewardene.

P. S. A tremendous fuss is being made in the press about the relaxation of the Quotas. The Secretary of State is receiving a deputation on the 8th October. I have arranged with Reuters to send a cable. See that it is properly displayed and commented on. Carry on the campaign for the abolition of the whole Quota system.

[The Quota system was imposed by Downing Street on Colonies to counter so-called unfair competition by the Japanese in the textile trade.]

Queen's Hotel,
Eastbourne.

23rd September, 1937.

My dear Herbert,

Received your cable about the Exchange Telegraph offer. I will be attending to it when I get to London today. In the meantime don't you think that the 'Independent' ought to make a start by subscribing to the Associated Press telegrams? If you agree, will you please tell Neil to arrange for it at once. It is better not to wait till my return to start it.

The Annual Dinner of the London Committee of India, Ceylon and Burma newspapers is fixed for Friday October 4 at Claridge's Hotel. I have received an invitation which I have accepted. Sir Stanley Reed and Nixon are trying to induce me to respond to the toast of the Press of India, Ceylon etc. along with Arthur Moore of the 'Statesman'. The Marquess of Zetland is down to propose the toast. I am strongly hesitating but they are insistent. I haven't given my final word. If I do accede to their request, it will be at the expense of any benefit I have derived from my holiday. As you know I do not like to do things which I cannot do and to my satisfaction. If I agree in a weak moment, it will be simply for the greater glory of Lake House.

Reuter might send a cable about the dinner and if my name is there, make a judicious splash for the sake of the papers. No photograph. A cable ought to reach Colombo on Saturday afternoon if one is being sent by Reuter. Lord Reading was due for a speech but he cannot attend now. Sir Edward Stubbs, I understand, is also attending.

According to my present arrangements I hope to be back in Colombo either on November 1st or November 2nd.

With kind regards,

Yours sincerely,
D. R. Wijewardene.

Lake House,
Colombo.
July 6, 1946.

PER AIR MAIL

My dear Herbert,

Thank you for all the letters you have written and for all the information you have sent in regard to newsprint, machinery, etc. I am glad to hear you are having a very interesting, though a somewhat strenuous, time. The several contacts you have made should prove very useful and valuable to the office, I am sure. I hope your tour on the Continent too will prove very enjoyable and instructive.

Stewart has written to you, I believe, in regard to the London "Times" correspondentship. If, as it is

rumoured, A. C. Stewart is retiring and this is falling vacant, you might see what you can do to secure it.

I am enclosing copies of correspondence exchanged with the Monotype Corporation's Indian Manager. If you can spare the time, would you please drop in at the Monotype Corporation's office and impress on the director in charge the present urgent need for Sinhalese type. If they are not in a position to make any machines just now, they could, as suggested in my letter of May 20, cut out the characters and make a complete die case, which could be used for casting the type.

In connection with the proposal to send young Abayasekara to the "Birmingham Post" for training, I wonder whether you have been able to get any information as to the premium and other terms on which English newspapers take on such trainees. I should like you to make a note to look into this when you can spare the time.

Yours sincerely,
D. R. Wijewardene.

Lake House,
Colombo.
Sept. 11, 1946.

My dear Herbert,

Thank you for your letter (from London).

I should like you to fix up the arrangement with Jack Miller for work here for three months. I presume

he will be paying his passage. He ought, I think, to be able to give the "Observer", both daily and Sunday, the brushing up they need in view of the recent efforts made by the "Times", to brighten their paper. With some new ideas, the daily "Observer" should be able to give the "Times" a better run than it has been giving it for some time. If necessary, you can get Shaw to give Miller a formal letter of appointment, his salary to be the rupee equivalent of £20 per week.

As regards young Abayasekara, I am writing to Shaw asking him to send Turner a formal application and to ascertain particulars of the terms, etc. I hope it will be possible to get Abayasekara on to a provincial rather than a London newspaper office. The "Birmingham Post" would, of course, be better as Hutton's brother will probably take a personal interest if asked to.

I was interested to hear of your talk with Deakin. Stewart, I gather, is retiring almost at once. Incidentally the "Times of Ceylon" deal is said to have fallen through. But Gardiner and Subbiah (of the General Trading Corporation) are now reported to be in the field.

Yours sincerely,
D. R. Wijewardene.

The "kindly instincts", to which Earle Abayasekara has referred, were also in evidence in his sympathetic attitude to struggling journalists and publishers. One of them, Mr. D. J. S. Pieris, wrote in his journal, the

Ceylon Business Express what he called “a sidelight on the life of the late Mr. D. R. Wijewardene”. In it he said :

“Ten years and two months ago, in May 1940, I met him for the first time. The interview was at Lake House and the business was to present him a copy of the first issue of this paper. He received me in his sanctum and offered me a seat beside him.

“‘I congratulate you on your new venture, but don’t you think you have started at a bad time?’ he asked. There was the war on and any new business was bound to meet with many difficulties.

“‘Excuse me, Sir, I think I will succeed if I maintain my enthusiasm, war or no war’, I replied in the feeblest tone that ever gushed out of my trachea. He smiled, ran his eye over the columns of my paper and said, ‘Yes, of course, nothing is difficult to the lover, they say, and that’s true’.

“It was a memorable day and I was very proud as I came down the steps at Lake House on my way back to 23, Canal Row, with a substantial currency note in my pocket—a token of good luck from Ceylon’s most influential man—the late Mr. D. R. Wijewardene.

“He was a good judge of men, or was I one of the few fools that he suffered gladly? I am sure that he had a hunch that I would carry on and it is with the greatest sorrow that I print these lines in his memory. He belonged to that rare category of hard, firm and kind men who get big things done and go down to history. His loss is irreparable.

“Again at 99 Braybrooke Place, nine years later, I met him for the second time. He sat with me in the verandah discussing the progress of my paper. I had gone there to sell him a few shares in my Company, The Ceylon Business Express Ltd. He said he read every copy of my paper and that he was following its progress. He referred to my uncle, the late Veda Mudaliyar W. Daniel Fernando Waidyasekera, whom he called a very enterprising man. He was glad that my paper was getting on well and he did not mind giving me every possible encouragement. That evening too I left him with a fat cheque in my pocket and today I am happy to see the great name of Don Richard Wijewardene appearing in my Share Register—an achievement in itself and a constant reminder to me of his words at my first interview, ‘nothing is difficult to the lover, they say, and that’s true’.

He is dead long live his name”.

W. Daniel Fernando in his day was an advertiser in the struggling *Ceylon Daily News* and Wijewardene never forgot a kindly deed.

THE 'CHIEF' AT HOME

INVITED to send some recollections of her father's home life, Nalini Wickremasinghe, Wijewardene's eldest daughter, writes :—

“It is difficult for us to believe today that my father, when he returned to Ceylon from Cambridge, was a very gay young man-about-town—so gay and so dandy that his friends affectionately named him ‘Dandy Dick’. His clothes were the last word in men’s fashions, and in a quieter way he retained this fastidiousness about his appearance right through life. In spite of the restricted social life at the time, especially for a young man recently returned from Europe, he threw himself into the round of parties, fancy bazaars and race meetings with the same zest that he organised reform meetings and deputations or carried out his tasks as Secretary of the Social Service League, Scribe of the Voet Light Society or Secretary of the Law Library. He had a wide circle of friends drawn from all communities, and his interests ranged from recipes for love cake to rare books and prints pertaining to Ceylon. One of the exciting ‘finds’ of that period was the discovery by Mr. E. W. Perera of the Lion Flag in Chelsea Hospital, London.

My father followed up the discovery by having colour blocks made of the flag in England and, at a time when colour printing was unheard of in Ceylon, a special issue of the *Dinamina* appeared in 1915, significantly commemorating the British take-over of Ceylon in 1815 with a large colour picture of the Lion Flag and of the last King and Queen of Kandy.

An old print of this flag, together with a picture of his father and one of Mr. F. H. M. Corbet, were the only pictures that adorned his study.

He was a perfectionist in whatever he did, whether at home or at work, whether it was politics, religion, newspapers or social entertainment. Every detail was thought out, personally supervised and expert opinion consulted if necessary.

As he became more and more absorbed in the newspapers he realised that friendships and even relationships would have to be sacrificed if they interfered with the policies which he thought were best for the newspapers and the country. The comments and criticisms of the newspapers could be effective only if he himself was above suspicion, and this principle he rigidly maintained. He cut himself off from all political and social organisations and maintained only a small circle of his intimate friends.

As a result, whatever leisure hours he had were spent at home browsing around his study with books, newspapers, magazines, — making plans, working out schemes to solve a particular political situation, to improve his newspapers, to erect a building, lay-out a garden or mastering the technicalities of coconut or rubber planting.

Often the family sat around in the study—curled up in his enormous armchair, scribbling on his blotter or delving into the drawers of his desk with childish curiosity. There was so much interesting material—long letters on political reforms and controversies dating back to 1915, newspaper cuttings, newspaper attacks, letters containing congratulations, resignations and abuse, all carefully folded and put away. I remember a cutting from an English newspaper. It was a small paragraph hardly 4 inches in length reporting a case of corruption in a local body in England. He was carefully preserving it for use in the event of local corruption being used as a pretext for refusing independence to Ceylon !

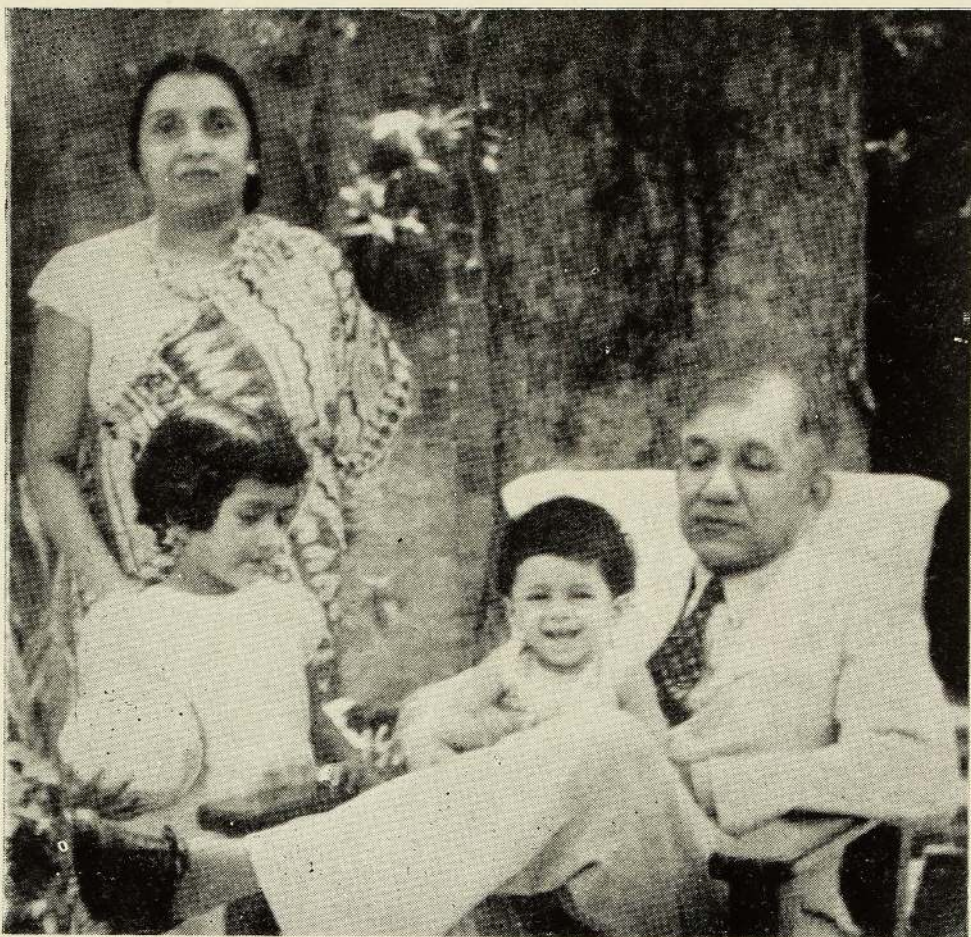
In spite of his being deeply absorbed in political and newspaper affairs, he always found time to help my mother with household problems, to play with the current baby of the family, to follow school activities, end of term reports, to take us along with him to the dentist and to plan out interesting holidays and outings for the family. He never failed to discuss the happenings of the day with us and to make us wildly enthusiastic over the battles the newspapers waged at different times. At the end of a long day's work he would sit at the head of the dinner table and explain the current political situation, and though we were scarcely in our teens, he would ask us for our views ! During a bye-election to the first State Council I was deeply moved by the financial plight of one of the candidates after reading one of his propaganda leaflets, and I canvassed my father's vote for him with a zeal which would have astonished the candidate concerned. On the afternoon

of the election I returned from school and to my amazement had a telephone call from my father, whom we did not dare to disturb in office, to say he had voted for my candidate ! I was very thrilled at my success in securing his vote, but my candidate disappointed me grievously by losing the election !

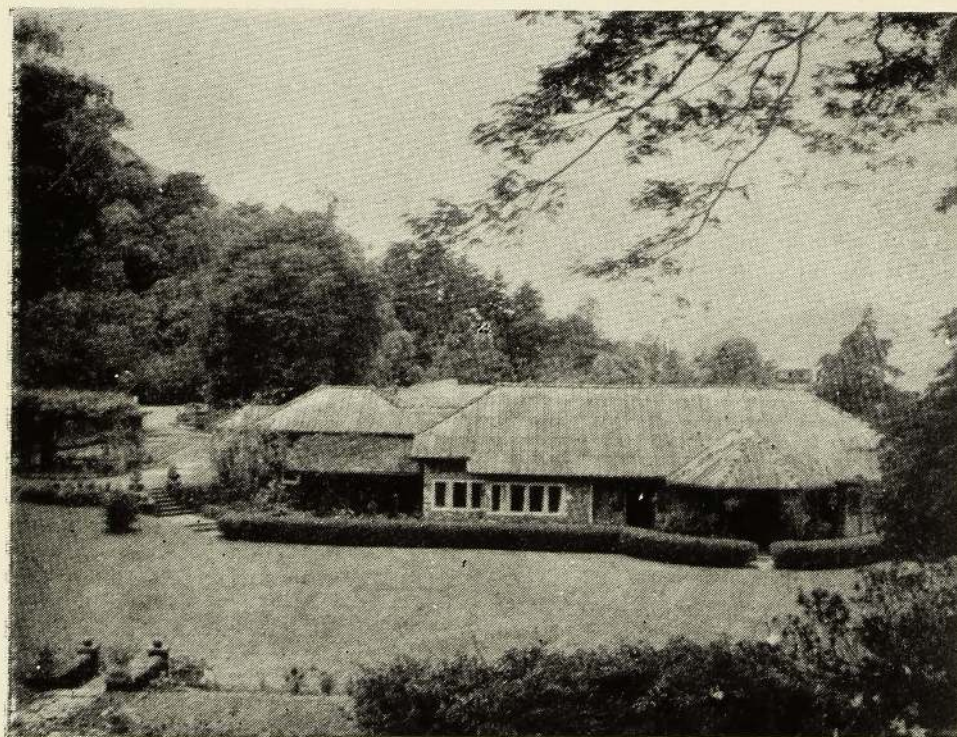
At home he was as stern a disciplinarian as he was in the office and it was with great trepidation that we would approach him with a special request. We usually had a 'meeting' among ourselves to decide who was to be the special emissary—often we would seek an ally amongst the older generation—but the most important factor was the timing. We had to get him in a good mood and that usually depended on his day at the office.

In spite of this, to us he was always a warm personality with a rare thoughtfulness and flashes of humour which remained with him to the last. The genial and happy side of his nature was most in evidence when he succeeded in leaving behind the cares and responsibilities of Lake House to ramble in the gardens of "Arcadia", with gardening experts, children and gardeners, all trotting obediently behind him, or in the bustling atmosphere of a social function or family wedding when he and Dr. Nell would consult books and authorities on all the details of traditional ceremonies. On such occasions he enjoyed playing host.

In later years, when failing health forced his close friend and physician, Sir Frank Gunasekera, to declare Lake House out of bounds, he was like one bereft, and when the forced inactivity became unbearably irksome, he would suddenly dress up, order the car and



MR. & MRS. D. R. WIJEWARDENE WITH TWO OF
THEIR GRANDCHILDREN



disappear without a word to anyone. A series of anxious telephone calls by my mother would find him serenely happy, seated at his desk at Lake House or visiting his grand children who were the special delight of his last years.

In spite of the serious nature of his illness he could never resign himself to being a patient, and to the last he valiantly kept going though his strength was fast failing him. He passed away on June 13th 1950. It was a peaceful end to a life of ceaseless and ardent endeavour. It was also to be the end of an era.

SOCIAL CHANGE

NEWSPAPERS mirror, and sometimes influence, change in the social life of a people they serve. It so happened that the forty years during which Wijewardene made his contribution to the public welfare as an organiser of deputations and committee meetings, and as a newspaper magnate, were among the most eventful in the history of Ceylon.

Those four decades saw two world wars and their far-reaching consequences. They saw the emergence of Ceylon from Crown Colony status to become an independent nation. They saw the transition of an unlettered people to one with the highest literacy rate in South-east Asia. The introduction of an adult franchise for elections to the legislature and to local government bodies made the rural peasantry and urban workers the repository of political power as if by a single stroke.

The judiciary and the administrative machine of the country, which had been overwhelmingly European, were Ceylonised, thus removing the invidious distinction between a ruling race and a subject people.

Malaria was conquered and medical services established in the remotest parts of the island. Internal

communications were improved by the rapid increase of road transport services, motor buses and lorries rapidly replacing bullock-drawn vehicles. Thermal plants and hydroelectric schemes brightened the towns and aided industry. Sound pictures replaced the silent films. The radio carried news and entertainment to distant corners of the island. Half a dozen international air-lines brought Ceylon nearer to all the great cities in the five continents.

The advance of science has of course affected all countries during this period ; in many of them to a much greater degree than is the case with Ceylon. Those who have lived through the past half century cannot fail to be struck by the changes it has brought about in the daily lives of the people. Side by side with these results of technical progress have occurred changes inspired by a shift in the general outlook of the people.

For example, the clothes of the Ceylonese have undergone changes dictated more by a consciousness that they are an oriental people than by demands of fashion. In 1910 there were still a large number of Sinhalese and Tamil women of the well-to-do and middle classes who wore European clothes, and the 'still life' on their hats could have been matched in the West Indies or the Southern States of America. Men who had been to England appeared in frock coats and wore top hats on formal occasions, such as Queen's House garden parties and weddings. Mudaliyars, chief clerks and even sub-editors of newspapers often wore a cloth to conceal the upper part of their trousers, like a butcher's apron, to signify respectability. Their female partners affected a jacket and a colourful skirt covering the

ankles, probably a hang-over from Portuguese times. The less fashionable women wore the jacket and cam-boy, still the normal attire of working class women, but usually of a richer material.

Tamil gentlemen wore their long coats and impressive turbans but their ladies, except for a small minority who followed Western fashions, clad themselves in their distinctive sarees as did the women of the Kandyan provinces. Low country Sinhalese ladies went over to the saree of an Indian style after a visit paid by Mrs. W. A. de Silva and some friends of hers to Bombay. Its general adoption made much quicker progress than a later attempt made by Mr. P. de S. Kularatne and Mr. C. W. W. Kannangara to popularise an Arya Sinhala national dress of cloth and long banian. The main trouble about the latter was that very few males look well-dressed in a cloth and banian, while the saree, whether Tamil, Kandyan or Low Country, is the most becoming dress for oriental women. But with the advent of a "people's government" this male attire seems to be coming into its own. American influence, by way of the South Sea Islands and the Philippines, has popularised the so-called bush shirt and the white or cream tuxedo. Forty years ago no one attended a public dinner without a silk-faced black dinner jacket and a wing collar.

The Ceylonese people were by origin a mixed society, the great majority being Sinhalese by race and Buddhist by religion. During the Colonial period there arose a horizontal division as well, separating a small Western-influenced minority from the mass of the people who were peasants or agricultural workers on foreign-owned

plantations. The former may be called a middle class for the lack of a better description. This middle class was the product largely of missionary schools. The products of such schools were often poor carbon copies of the alumni of public schools in England. Nevertheless, they manned the professions, and filled such posts in the public services as were open to them.

Before the first world war, the Ceylonese, with hardly any exceptions, were second class citizens in their own country. Ceylonese public servants were not trained for administrative posts. All the Government Agents, Assistant Government Agents, most of the heads of departments, higher police officers, and the holders of technical posts, such as engineers, foresters, accountants, printers and drill instructors were European.

This class feeling was even more pronounced in the industrial and commercial sphere. All the well-paid planting jobs, all the executive posts in agency firms, all the departmental managerships in the big stores in Colombo, Kandy and Nuwara Eliya, were held by Europeans.

The Burghers were in a somewhat favoured position, especially those with fair skins. There were many more judges, provincial surgeons and Crown proctors from the small Burgher community than from the far more numerous Sinhalese and Tamils.

The Colonial system, which was efficient and incorruptible in many ways, promoted among the majority of people an attitude of subservience, if not servility. A few independent spirits, some of whom had experience of a more egalitarian society, often ran into trouble. Incidents in railway carriages were not

unknown, although there were never special compartments for Europeans as there had been in some other tropical countries. Success in almost any department of life, official or commercial, depended on good relations with the European ruling class.

Times have changed. Subservience and servility have been replaced sometimes by ruder ways and lack of respect for authority. It may even be said that the favour of the political party in power is today as important as the goodwill and benevolence of the white bureaucracy of a few decades ago.

Young people of today can hardly imagine the conditions of a paternalistic society or quite appreciate the rewards of freedom. It used to be said, and no doubt it is said today, that the Ceylon villager is a perfect gentleman. The feudal structure of society forty years ago kept the village community better integrated despite the inequalities of office, of property ownership and caste. Men and women were content to live a relaxed life when there was nearly always enough for everyone. The landed proprietor, the peasant and artisan did not look far beyond their daily tasks. Nor did the Buddhist priest regard himself as a man of affairs. There was no question of gaining power for a political party or recruits for this or that ideology.

It was a society that could not last. The same ferments which in more advanced countries undermined and disintegrated the old order were at work in Ceylon. Central schools were brought to the villages, the Sinhalese and Tamil newspapers circulated freely, radio sets were installed in small as well as large towns and the

cinema made the people familiar with certain aspects of life in Western countries.

Conditions were ripe for far-reaching changes in the structure of society. The struggle for independence bred a spirit of nationalism. The leaders of the reform movement, men of education and culture, were able to contain it within the limits of public spirit and public service. With the influx of new men and the emergence of the class struggle, national unity gave place to new factions in search of power.

The improvement in the health of the people has been reflected in the spectacular increase in the expectation of life. People are no longer afraid to go into hospitals and the fear of the surgeon's knife has vanished. While the ayurvedic system of medicine has its uses for simple ailments, it is fast giving place to scientific medicine. The rising birth-rate—one of the highest in the world—and the spread of education have brought to the surface the acute problem of finding enough food and jobs. The intolerance which manifests itself at many levels of society has largely an economic basis. The desire for better living, for attaining *la bella figura* and for security in a period of inflation sharpens the edge of competition and intensifies the sense of frustration when success evades the aspirant. The problems are not peculiar to Ceylon. They exist wherever there is a change from old ways to new.

There are still large sections of the population whose lives have barely changed. The peasantry pursue their daily tasks as they do in other countries. But Ceylon has a literate and instructed society, thanks in great part to the scheme of free compulsory education and,

incidentally, to the newspapers which are read in all corners of the island. Given good leaders the future may be better than anything in the past. There is no reason why democracy should fail in Ceylon. The achievements of the men of Wijewardene's generation show what can yet be done to make it succeed.

SUCCESS OF A QUIET MAN

WHAT difference did the life and work of D. R. Wijewardene make to his country? The foregoing pages are an attempt to answer the question. Wijewardene's contribution to the story of Ceylon consists as much in what he was as in what he did. The example of his life can be an encouragement to those who would do something for the benefit of the island. At a material level, he proved that a hard-working Ceylonese of intelligence and character could succeed in building up a large business as well as any foreigner.

The reader of this book need not be reminded that Wijewardene was not a superman. He received as good an education as any Ceylonese with rich parents could have hoped for within the limits of his own intellectual interests and natural aptitudes. There were, it is true, many gaps in it. He knew little or nothing of science. He had little idea of music, was ignorant of the history of art and had no feeling for poetry or philosophy. But school and University and the milieu in which he moved had given him a sense of values and a feeling for gracious living. He encouraged others to use the opportunities provided



by his newspapers to promote the appreciation of things artistic. He was, for example, very susceptible to advice from Lionel Wendt, an aesthete if ever there was one. A very much closer friend was Dr. Andreas Nell who was always a welcome visitor in Wijewardene's home and who induced him to take a lively interest in archaeology and antiquities in general. He encouraged town-planning and his papers gave full support to such experts as H. V. Lanchester, Patrick Geddes and Patrick Abercrombie whose services were engaged by the Government for the planned development of Colombo and other towns in the island. He kept young architects like Shirley D'Alwis and Oliver Weerasinghe busy with private commissions and took an interest in the restoration of the Raja Maha Vihare at Kelaniya which was financed by his mother. He was greatly attached to his gardens and, even in the midst of a heavy morning's work, he would snatch ten or fifteen minutes to walk round the lawns and shrubberies, the planting of which he personally supervised.

Wijewardene had a small circle of friends in whose company he was happy, but he did not see them regularly, except those in whose company he took his morning walk round Victoria Park. Barriers of race and religion did not affect his friendships. B. F. de Silva, advocate, later District Judge, whom he had known since his school days, was probably his closest friend. Hardly a day passed without their meeting or having a long telephone conversation on current topics. Neil de Silva, B. F.'s son, writing in the *New Lanka* magazine of July 1950 on their friendship, said :

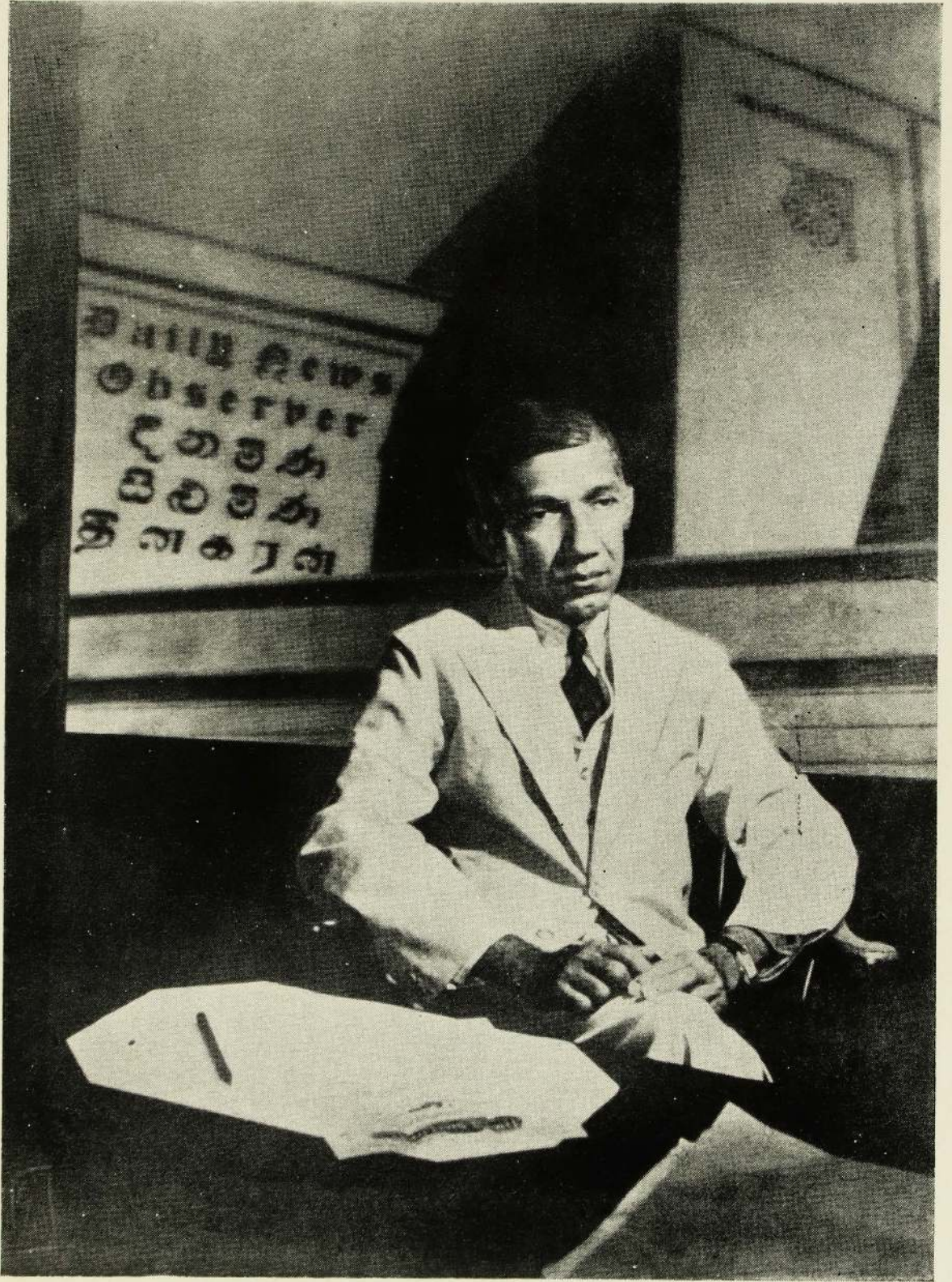
“He was a close personal friend of my father and as a boy I well remember the time when almost every day one friend would ring up the other and engage in a long and friendly discussion with complete candour and without reserve and we often knew in advance what the *Daily News* would carry the next day”. Mr. and Mrs. Marcus Rockwood he had known since his Cambridge days. They had helped him before his marriage to furnish his future home, and both Wijewardene and his wife always turned to them for advice on household matters. Among his other friends whom one met at his house or in his office there were Dr. Nell, Dr. S. C. Paul, D. S. Senanayake, Canon Boteju, E. W. Perera, J. W. de Silva, Sir Frank Gunasekera, A. B. Cooray, S. Mahadeva, the engineer, Fr. S. G. Perera, the Jesuit historian, Sir H. M. Macan Markar, A. R. H. Caneke-ratne and J. A. Martensz. Oliver Goonetilleke especially during his days as Civil Defence Commissioner would often drop in for dinner from next door.

Nothing has so far been said about Wijewardene's religious beliefs beyond the fact that he came of a Buddhist family and that he had made generous benefactions for religious causes. He was a devout Buddhist although meditation was perhaps not one of his ways of escape from the exhausting business of running a large newspaper organisation. Buddhism was a strong force in his family due to the influence of his mother who was an ardent and devout Buddhist. But his respect and tolerance for other faiths were such that he went to the extent of accompanying his wife to church in the early days of their married life as she was reluctant to go alone. One Sunday, the officiating

priest — he was a foreigner — asked that heathens should not be present in the church. Wijewardene walked out in a temper and his wife, thereafter, of her own accord gave up attending church though she remained a Christian. Some years later her husband and her sister, Lady Molamure, prevailed on her to resume her church-going. Wijewardene himself worshipped at and supported three or four of his favourite Buddhist temples. He would supervise personally every detail of the annual almsgiving which he had in his home for Buddhist priests. All the traditional paraphernalia were used on such occasions. The alms giving was a social occasion as much as a religious one, and ended with a family lunch at which the closest relations were present.

Wijewardene's blend of liberalism may not be appreciated by the planners and politicians of today. Their principal task is to find a way of satisfying the appetites of a fast-growing population demanding a higher standard of living, often regardless of the effort required to produce it. In his day the energies of the reformers were concentrated on gaining emancipation from foreign rule. The big question today is whether, in bringing about that emancipation, they did not also release forces which will destroy the freedom thus won. But of course there was nothing that they could have done, even if they wished to, to prevent the consequences of self-government.

The new nations of Asia and Africa, having gained their freedom, are confronted with problems arising from egalitarian passions and racial rivalries, brought to the surface by the disappearance of colonial rule



D. R. WIJewardENE

and the crumbling of feudal systems. With their great resources and long experience the older democracies have overcome such difficulties in a large measure. Ceylon has to find leaders capable of uniting her people. Her main problem today is that of creating a homogeneous nation in which every one of her citizens will have the chance to enjoy a decent standard of living as the result of a prudent development of her resources. It can be solved only if all sections of the island's inhabitants are able to feel that they form integral parts of the nation on a basis of equality.

Wijewardene's generation was not so acutely conscious of economic pressures as are the political leaders of today. For them the challenge of communism was remote and academic. It seemed as if the magic key of political freedom would unlock the gate to prosperity and popular contentment. They may have lacked foresight to think so but no one surveying their record can deny that they worked for worthy ends and achieved much.

When Ceylon became an independent nation, under the leadership of his schoolmate and lifelong friend, D. S. Senanayake, she had accepted many of the things which Wijewardene had advocated through his newspapers, in season and out, over a period of more than thirty years. As a result of his labours, Ceylon was better prepared than many of the other newly-emancipated countries to embark on an era of peace and prosperity under a democratic system of government, for no one can deny that his newspapers did as much as any other influence to bring about the smooth transition from Colonial rule to self-government.

When Ceylon received her freedom, there existed in the island a large measure of communal harmony, respect for law and order, a contented public service and a high standard of integrity among politicians. She had the best schools system and health services in South-east Asia. The people were proud of the development schemes in the dry zone started by the Prime Minister, the agricultural industries were not harassed by uncertainty and the country's credit was high in the money markets of the world.

All these features of the new-born nation were among the things for the accomplishment of which Wijewardene, taking his responsibilities as a newspaper proprietor seriously, had been working. Since, as an undergraduate at Cambridge, he felt the urge to embark on a career of public service, he gave the best part of his working life, his leisure and even his health for the promotion of what he believed to be good causes and to fight abuses of all kinds. In particular he left to his countrymen a self-respecting newspaper Press, responsible, trusted and listened to with attention by the leaders of the people when it expressed its views on the topics of the day.

He sought no rewards other than those which promoted the efficiency, influence and prestige of his newspapers. After the country achieved political independence, the Prime Minister pressed him to accept a knighthood in recognition of his services to his people. Wijewardene refused because he did not wish to compromise in any way the independence of his newspapers.

Whether democracy will succeed or not in Ceylon will depend even more on the character of her leaders

than on their courage and capacity. The lesson of Wijewardene's life is that men can achieve great things for their native land if they have faith in the future and are prepared to work for their ideals with self-discipline and tolerance.



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