

SURENDRANATH BANERJEA

the man and his mission.

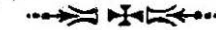
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**The Man and His Mission**



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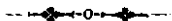
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# BABU SURENDRANATH BANERJEA.

## The Man and His Mission.

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### INTRODUCTION.

**I**N the modern public life of India, there is no name more prominent than that of Surendranath Banerjea. During the past thirty years and more, he has been before the public in the capacity of citizen, educationist, politician and journalist. He has been since the days of that ill-starred Viceroy of India, Lord Lytton, in the thickest of thick fights and has invariably come out unscathed from them. The key to his position lies in his utmost regard to the principles of constitutional agitation and the limits within which they can be carried on in India. At the present moment, when the country is passing through a crisis and when the basic ideas of constitutional agitation are misunderstood, it should be of the highest interest to our countrymen to learn what lessons they

can from the life of the Apostle of Constitutional Agitation in India.

#### EARLY LIFE.

Mr. Surendranath Banerjea is descended from a respectable family of Barhee Brahmans, a sub-division of the well-known Kulin Brahmans of Bengal. His father Babu Durgacharan Banerjea of Taltala was an eminent doctor in Calcutta during the middle of last century. Dr. Durgacharan was a remarkable person. He apparently believed in the pursuit of knowledge under difficulties. He prosecuted his medical studies, while a teacher, in the school presided over by David Hare, one of the pioneers of English education in Bengal. "Through his sympathy, his kindness, his assistance," said Mr. Surendranath on a memorable occasion, "my father was enabled to overcome the resistance which he met from his orthodox parents, in his efforts to acquire for himself a medical education and to lay the foundation of that career, with whose brilliant results it is not necessary for me to concern myself in this place." Mr. David Hare very generously allowed Babu Durgacharan to absent himself several hours during the day from school, to enable him to attend the lectures

in the Medical College. In after years, Durgacharan became "the ablest allopathic practitioner" in all Calcutta, and a dutiful and grateful son, Babu Surendranath, spoke in after days in the highest terms of David Hare's services to his beloved father and his countrymen.

#### EDUCATION.

Surendranath was born (the second son of his father) in 1848, the great year of the revolution in Continental Europe. He received his early education in the Calcutta Doveton College, where he was prizeman throughout his career. He passed the Entrance Examination of the Calcutta University, in 1863, in the first division and in January, 1868, took his B. A. Degree. At College, he produced an excellent impression on Mr. Sime, then its Principal and later, Director of Public Instruction in the Punjab and Mr. Sime suggested to his father the desirability of young Surendranath being sent to England to compete for the Indian Civil Service Examination. Babu Durgacharan, an undaunted soul, who appreciated Mr. Sime's suggestion with the whole-heartedness with which it was made to him, forthwith (1868) sent Surendranath to England. There he was trained under such

distinguished scholars as the late Dr. Goldstucker and Prof. Henry Morley, and in due time passed the examination. But as ill-luck would have it, Surendra was rejected by the Civil Service Commissioners on the plea that he had passed the prescribed age limit. He had now no course left to him but to apply to the Court to get the Commissioners do justice to him. He accordingly moved the Court of Queen's Bench for a mandamus against the Commissioners. The learned Judges being satisfied that justice was with the petitioner, granted a rule to show cause why the Commissioners should not reconsider the matter. This was enough. The Commissioners wished to avoid an indecent conflict with the Court and they forthwith rectified the error they had committed. On the day previous to the date of argument, they restored Surendra's name to the list of successful candidates. He returned to India in due course and was posted as Assistant Magistrate at Sylhet. Here, he worked for two years, when his career took a new turn.

#### LEAVES THE CIVIL SERVICE.

It would appear that in a particular case pending before him, he was charged with having

passed an order, transferring the case to the Farari list and having improperly issued a warrant, and then made a false statement, when called upon for explanation. Mr. Surendranath's reply was that he was not aware of having made any such order, and that he signed it along with other papers. This little incident, which under ordinary circumstances would not have been much minded, was magnified into a big affair by the Bengal Government of the time, which suspended young Surendra and appointed a Commission of Enquiry to sit upon him. Feeling ran high in Bengal (and elsewhere in India) for Mr. Surendranath was one of the first Indian Civilians to come out successfully and great hopes were entertained of him.

Before the trial commenced, Mr. Surendranath applied to Government to have it conducted in Calcutta in an open manner. This request was, however, refused, as also, it seems, his request to lend him the services of certain legal gentlemen. In the result, the Commissioners found that certain irregularities were proved against him, and the Government then and there removed him from the Service on the small pension of Rs. 600 *per annum*. "Monstrous sentence,"



declared an authority some twenty years afterwards for the frippery charges brought against a promising young man of 23. The subsequent conduct of Government itself towards Surendranath has been altogether unexceptionable and indeed altogether inconsistent with the belief in his guilt. More than all, his own dignified, manly and straightforward character, as Mr. Parekh has rightly observed, belies the accusations brought against him. In after years, we find him rarely regretting his severance from "the most distinguished" service. On the only occasion on which he does refer to it (presiding at an entertainment given to his friend, Mr. Romesh Chunder Dutt), he took pride in calling himself "an humble school-master." But perhaps the greatest commentary on the act of Government was its own conduct towards another Civilian, who was an Englishman. "Not long after the events above referred to, an English covenanted Civilian was found guilty by the officers appointed to investigate *his* case, of offences far more grave—involving pecuniary vagaries unparalleled in the modern history of the Service—than any that even his Judges thought to be established against Mr. Surendranath. Was this officer dismissed from the

Service? No, he was compelled to refund a sum of money belonging to Government that had somehow found its way into his private accounts, and he was suspended for a period of twelve or fifteen months, thereby suffering a considerable loss of salary for the time, but almost immediately on the expiration of the period of suspension, he being a relative of the Lieutenant-Governor of Bengal, was jobbed into the favourite and one of the highest-paid appointments in the Province, an appointment to which, even had there been nothing against him, he would not have been entitled either by standing in the service or ability. . . . . It illustrates the very different modes in which Indians and Europeans have been systematically dealt with by the Indian officials, and the fates of these two officials are thoroughly characteristic examples of the spirit which has for the last quarter of a century pervaded the majority of the bureaucracy."

A "TEACHER OF YOUTH."

It would be difficult to imagine the severity of the blow that was dealt out to this young Indian member of the Civil Service. He determined to live down the injustice and prove by his life the utterly mistaken estimate that had been formed

of his character. This is no easy thing, at least in this official-ridden country, from one especially under the official ban. "For years," as has been well put by a distinguished authority, "Mr. Surendranath fought on, like Grant, determined to fight along his line, until death or victory crowned his efforts." He became what he proudly calls himself a "teacher of youth". The teaching profession has had always great attraction for him. Pandit Isvar Chandra Vidyasagar, C. I. E., the great philanthropist, literateur, and social reformer, offered him a helping hand at this critical period of his life. He joined, at his instance, the now well-known Metropolitan Institution at Calcutta as Professor of English Literature on the small salary of Rs. 200 *per mensem*. This was in 1876. In after life, he cherished the highest regard for the great Pandit.

#### FOUNDING OF RIPON COLLEGE.

A little later, Mr. Banerjea undertook to lecture to the students of the City College, then newly established. In 1881, he was invited by Mr. Robertson, the then Principal of the Free Church Institution at Calcutta, to take up the Senior Professorship of English Literature, a

post which he held till the requirements of his own educational institution—which he christened the Ripon College in honour of the great and amiable Viceroy, whose name is a household word in all India—made him devote his undivided attention to it. He had always been extremely popular as a Professor, and students flocked by hundreds to any institution which he joined. In 1882, he took charge of a small school in Bow Bazaar, containing little more than a hundred pupils. This was the nucleus of the now celebrated Ripon College, which practically attained its present pre-eminent position within seven years from its passing into Mr. Banerjea's hands. It has on its rolls over 1500 youths. It is manned by some of the best graduates of the Calcutta University and it trains up young men for the highest standards in Arts and in Law. Since the institution of the Universities' Commission and the regulations following it, officialising Universities and Colleges, Mr. Banerjea has refused the proffered Governmental aid to keep his College and the schools feeding it entirely free from the trammels of officialism. Such a self-supporting institution, due entirely to the genius and energy of an educated Indian, as the *Pioneer* (no friend

generous enthusiasm, which did not lose its warmth, because it came fresh from the fountains of youthful hearts. Love is the secret of all success in life. Love is the fountain of knowledge. Love is the source of all true inspiration. Love illuminates the judgment, strengthens the vision of the seer. I wish you have some more of that love in the relations of daily life in India, love between the teachers and the taught, love between the rulers and the ruled. If you have teachers of the true type, inspired with the burning love of D'Rozio, of a Peary Charan Sircar, possibly you should have been spared the drastic recommendations of the Universities' Commission. Half the difficulties of education in this country arose from the unsympathetic relations between the teachers and the taught. I will not say that such relations are general; but they did exist and the wonder was that those who made the revolutionary proposals affecting the educational system of this country seemed to be in the enviable condition of blissful ignorance regarding them".

It is this ardent love for the rising generation that has made him so popular with them, wherever he may be—whether at Ahmedabad or at Poona or at Lahore or at Bankipur or Tangail or Dacca or remote Madras.

Mr. Banerjea attaches greater value to his educational than to his political work. "Political work," he says, "is more or less ephemeral, though none the less highly useful. Educational work has in it the elements of permanent utility." He says:—

"The empire of the teacher is an over enduring empire which extends over the future. The teachers are the masters of the future. I cannot think of a nobler

calling than theirs. Theirs is a heaven-appointed task—a sacred vocation—a divine mission. But how few realized their responsibilities or rose to the height of their mission? If the work of the present is to be perpetuated, it must be through those who are to be the citizens of the future. ‘Suffer the little children to come unto me’, said the illustrious founder of Christianity. Jesus Christ appealed not to the callous and the hard hearted, but to the soft, the gentle and the impressionable, whose souls had not been hardened by the rough buffeting of life”.

It is no wonder, then, that Mr. Banerjea exclaimed from his Presidential Chair at Ahmedabad :—

“Is there a nobler profession than that of a teacher? To them are entrusted the destinies of youth. They make or mar the fortunes of a country. But how many teachers are there, among us, who realize their grave responsibilities or rise to the height of their truly divine mission? Raise the status of the teacher—dignify and elevate his calling—draw to the professoriate of the country-men who will embrace it, not a mere bread-winning profession, but a high calling, a heaven-appointed task, a self-dedication to a sacred purpose, and you will not need Commissions and Committees, Reports and Resolutions to secure the efficiency of our Universities and the advancement of learning. The names of great teachers form land-marks in the educational history of this country.”

#### STUDENTS AND POLITICS.

Closely connected with the subject of education, is the topic of students and politics. This is now a well worn-out subject. In 1894, however, it had not yet lost its novelty. Madras students asked Mr. Banerjea’s advice on it. He said that students might discuss politics. What

is politics? "It is," says Mr. Banerjea, "the history of the everyday events that take place before our eyes. Students are not precluded from reading history; and what is history but the politics of the past? If students are not precluded from reading history, if students are not precluded from reading the politics of the past, if it is believed, and rightly believed, that history enlarges the mind, develops the judgment, elevates the character, communicates a new tone and impetus to our moral system, if all that is believed and rightly believed, as regards the politics of the past, why should you not expect a similar result as regards the politics of the present? Those, therefore, that would interdict the study of present-day politics by students should lay a ban as well as on the study of history. Will they do that? Besides, are not the students of to-day the citizens of to-morrow? That being so, should students be allowed to take an active part in politics?" "I must say," remarks Mr. Banerjea, "that with regard to this question, there may be a difference of opinion. I must say there is a feeling in the minds of some who may be willing to allow students to discuss politics, that although they may study politics, it is not open

to them to take an active part in the practice of politics. That is a view of the matter which may fairly be open to discussion." He, however, insists that politics should not be dissociated from morality. He says in an eloquent passage:—

But, gentlemen, when I ask you to study politics and discuss politics, I wish you to bear in mind that politics divorced from morality, politics separated from the principles of honour and honesty, is no politics at all. It is a species of political jugglery of which the practitioner ought to be ashamed. It is not this sort of politics that I ask you to discuss or consider. Bear this in mind that in the great work of the political regeneration of our country, upon which we are all engaged, the foundations must be based broad and deep upon the eternal principles of morality. We ask you to incur self-sacrifice—we ask you to give up your personal interests—we ask you to abandon your comforts and personal conveniences at the altar of your country's political deliverance. The key-note of politics is self-sacrifice and the abandonment of personal interests, personal considerations, and motives of personal convenience, for the promotion of the public good. The basis of politics is morality, and that is the kind of politics that I ask you, the students of Madras, to study to practise, and to devote your attention to, and then you will hasten forward the deliverance of your country from the state of things in which we happen to find it at the present moment.

#### THE INDIAN ASSOCIATION.

26th July, 1876, will ever be considered a red-letter day in the life of Surendranath Banerjea. It was on that memorable day that he, in conjunction with the late Mr. A. M. Bose, founded the famous Indian Association at Calcutta. A



melancholy interest, however, attaches to the formation of this great body. On the day appointed for the consideration of the proposal, Mr. Banerjea lost his only son. But he would not shirk the duty due to his motherland. In the afternoon, accordingly, he attended the meeting and in an eloquent speech, proposed the establishment of the Association which, before nightfall, was an accomplished fact. During the next thirty years, not only is he the heart and soul of everything connected with this Association, but sums up in himself the public life of India as no other single individual does.

#### WORK OF THE ASSOCIATION.

The beneficial work that this Association did during the two decades that followed its foundation is simply incalculable. Mr. Banerjea directed its work into different lines of public utility. One of the first things that claimed its attention was the right of the people to be governed, as far as practicable, by their own countrymen, and not by foreigners. The Civil Service in India represents really the ruling class. That being so, Mr. Banerjea lost no time in urging the admission of his countrymen into that Service. Just then, the maximum age for competing for it had been

reduced by Lord Salisbury from 21 to 19, a measure which had the effect of entirely excluding Indian young men from appearing at the open competition in England. "The protest which was inaugurated," writes a man of the times, "against this illiberal step by the Indian Association and was joined in by all India is a memorable event in the annals of this country. It was the first indication of united action and united feeling all through India, and the credit of evoking this universal agitation belongs to Babu Surendranath Banerjea." He undertook a special lecturing tour in Northern and Western India. He visited Rawalpindi, Multan, Ahmedabad, Poona and even Madras where a meeting was held at Pachiappa's Hall. It first revealed the possibilities of united action among all the Indian peoples for common political purposes and thus prepared the way for the birth of the Indian National Congress under the auspices of the Association and addressed crowded audiences everywhere. The agitation was a great success in India. But the Indian Government lacks initiative, so far as measures intended to ameliorate the condition of Indians are concerned. So, Mr. Banerjea determined on carrying the agitation to England itself, so that the authorities

of the Statute Book on the return of the Liberals to power. He also afforded some relief to India in the matter of the charges incurred by the Afghan War. "The Indian people" said he, "had nothing to do with this war. They are wholly guiltless, and had washed their hands of it." These were great victories for the Indian Association and the moving spirit of it was Mr. Banerjea.

#### PRINCIPLES OF AGITATION.

A word about the agitation itself. Mr. Banerjea addressed several meetings during those stirring times. Thousands of persons attended them. They were presided over by men like Maharaja Sir Narendra Krishna and Dr. K. M. Banerjea, and amongst his collaborators were Raja Digamber Mitter and Kristo Das Pal. Two cardinal principles dominate these and other speeches of Mr. Banerjea. Loyalty to the British Government and constitutional agitation for a representative and free Government for India. And what is 'loyalty'? In one of the most powerful of his speeches, that on Lord Lytton's Gagging Act, he thus defines it :

"Loyalty to the Crown is to be distinguished from subserviency, from obsequiousness to this officer or

that officer. We may criticise the measures of Government. We may criticise the acts of individual officers ; but such criticisms are not incompatible with allegiance to British rule in this country. The question then, is, are we loyal or are we not ? Are we wanting in loyalty, in dutiful homage, unswerving allegiance to the throne of Her who rules over this country, whose matchless purity of character, whose generosity of disposition, whose keen and ardent interest in the welfare of Her Indian subjects have created in our minds the highest respect for Her person, and have planted deep Her throne in the affection of the teeming millions of this country. ... ..

We are essentially a loyal people. By instinct, by tradition, by association, we are loyal. With us, the King is a semi-divine personage. He is the embodiment of Justice, Purity and Truth. Given to the performance of his pledges, he claims the unconditional homage of his subjects. And some of the greatest of our poets—those master delineators of the prevailing sentiments of the age in which they lived,—have clothed this feeling in suitable form and appropriate diction. ... ..

I say, we are essentially a loyal people, and however much English education might have revolutionised our mental constitution, it has not abated by one atom that character for deep and intense loyalty which has marked the history of our race from the earliest times. ... ..

I do not believe that there is a single native of India who does not wish from the bottom of his heart that the English rule might continue long for the benefit of India and the glory of England. We know full well the incalculable blessings which English rule has been the means of conferring upon the people of this country. The English rule in this country is essentially a progressive rule. The Government of today is not the Government of 25 years back. What were the dreams of our fathers are realities with us. What are our fondest hopes and aspirations will be cherished privileges with those who come after us and live to enjoy the benefits of British rule."

At the present moment when the Government is contemplating a Press Act more rigorous than the one that has just now been passed, the following extract will be read with special interest :—

“ The question is, indeed, not an Indian question. It is essentially an Imperial question. The question is not whether a certain number of Indians should have the right of free speech. The question is broader, vaster, deeper far. The question is whether in any part of the British dominions, whether in any part of the world, where floats the free flag of England—the flag which has “ braved the battle and the breeze ”, the flag which has stood forth in all ages and shines as the beacon of human freedom and human progress—the question is: whether in any part of the world acknowledging British rule, restrictions should be imposed upon the liberty of speech of any portion of Her Majesty’s subjects. We claim this privilege not as a matter of favour. We are no longer the conquered subjects of England. We are the incorporated subjects of a free Empire. Has not our Sovereign been graciously pleased to assume the title of Empress ? \* \* \* \* \*

We are British subjects, and are we to be deprived of an inalienable right of British subjects, in this summary and perfunctory manner. The Act is against the instincts of Englishmen, is against the genius of the British constitution.”

#### CONSTITUTIONAL AGITATION.

Mr. Banerjea may justly be called the Apostle of constitutional agitation in India. He has been a political ‘agitator’—in the best sense of the term—during the past thirty years. He has never once wavered in his faith in constitutional agitation. Even in the more recent history of

Bengal, he has held that all agitation must be constitutional to win the day.

It is impossible even to refer here to the many panegyrics he has delivered on the subject—so many and so long are they. But we must cite here one passage from one of his latest speeches, the speech on the Partition of Bengal delivered before the last Calcutta Congress (December, 1906). In deploring that a section of our people had lost all confidence in the utility of constitutional agitation and that they objected therefore to petitioning Government, when the agitation against Partition had been absolutely unheeded, he said:—

“ I may say, gentlemen, that I am not in sympathy with that view at all. I think that the political agitation must be continued and I further think that petitions should be submitted; you may say ‘no’ to the end of your life; and you will not convince me that in this matter.”

There is the man in a few words. What is that reform that Indians have obtained hitherto, which has not been the outcome of persistent constitutional agitation? Reform of the Legislative Councils, Reform of the Police, Wider Employment of Indians in the Public Service, Introduction of Local Self-Government on modern lines, the Repeal of an obnoxious measure like the

Lytton Press Act—are not these enough to testify to the success of constitutional agitation even in India? It is true that reforms come late, and sometimes too late. But, as Mr. Banerjea said in 1902 :—

“ Has the time come for the final judgment? I ask, are the results inadequate? Even if they were—what are 20 years in the life-time of a nation? The triumphs of liberty are not won in a day. Liberty is a jealous goddess, exacting in her worship and claiming from her votaries prolonged and assiduous devotion. Read history. Learn from it the inestimable lesson of patience and fortitude and the self-sacrificing devotion which a constitutional struggle for constitutional liberty involves.”

If constitutional agitation has been successful in the past, will that not prove successful in the present and in the future? Mr. Banerjea unhesitatingly answers ‘Yes’ and would fain convince his countrymen that that is so. What seem defeats now, would likely be the harbingers of glory in the fulness of time. Patience and perseverance and the inherent justness of the cause will win the day. “Need I impress these lessons,” says Mr. Banerjea, “upon a people who have presented to the world the noblest examples of these virtues? Every page of Indian history is resplendent with the touch of self-abnegation.”

## SELF-GOVERNMENT, THE GOAL,

What is the object of all this agitation? In one of his earlier speeches (1879), Mr. Banerjea said:—

“ We must have a practical share in the Government of our own country ; we shall permit no exclusive bureaucracy to govern India ; and it remains to be seen whether a great and civilised people will not comply with the legitimate prayer and demands of a subject race upon whom it has already conferred such inestimable blessings. There is yet another question looming in the not-far-off distance, which is slowly forcing its way into public prominence, and which must sooner or later claim a solution at our hand. That is the question of representative Government for India. . . . . We want to have a voice in the taxation and the Government of this country. Give us these privileges. Let us have opportunities for the gratification of our legitimate aspirations, and then from one part of the country to another, there will be a contented, happy and prosperous people blessing their own Government and blessing the Providence which has placed them under such a Government.”

“ I regard,” he said in 1882, “ the concession of Local Self-Government as the prelude, the precursor of national (may I venture to hope?) of Imperial Self-Government.”

## BELIEVE IN THE ENGLISHMAN.

Mr. Banerjea has the highest regard for the just and the freedom-loving Englishman. “ Englishmen,” he says, “ are essentially just. They are the sworn friends of Freedom and have often been known to exhibit the most marked sympa-



journey towards the destined goal must necessarily be slow and that the blessed consummation can only be attained after prolonged preparation and laborious apprenticeship. But a beginning has to be made."

Indeed, all that is immediately necessary is "a practical recognition of the claims of the people of India to a just and adequate representation in the Government of their country, by the gradual extension to them, of that system of Self-Government which has been the invariable accompaniment of British power and civilization and which, wherever it has been granted, has been the strongest bulwark of imperial rule and has evoked the affectionate gratitude of the people. Under the beneficent influences of Self-Government, alien races, hostile to the British connection, have been transformed into loyal and devoted subjects of the Crown. We need no such transformation. We are already sufficiently loyal, sufficiently attached to the British connection. But we are anxious for the permanence of British rule—for our permanent incorporation into the great confederacy of the British Empire."

#### INDIAN ABSOLUTISM.

That the Government of India is despotic is a commonplace. Could it continue as it is for

ever? As far as I could see, said Lord Morley, it should continue to be so for a long time to come. Well, even then, it represents only a transition. What should it change into? Should it not be gradually modified to bring into conformity with the cherished wishes and feelings of the governed? And in so modifying, what should be the aim in view? Great men have held, including theorists in the science of politics, that the sole aim of the Government of Great Britain in India should be to train the Indians to govern themselves in the fulness of time. Absolutely nothing is gained by ignoring this in practical politics: half the troubles of present-day India are due to the imperfect manner in which this guiding principle has been grasped by the authorities responsible for the Government of India. As Mr. Banerjea puts it:—

All history proclaims the truth that autocratic power is devoid of the elements of permanence and that authority to be permanent must be planted deep in the affections of the people and derives its sustaining breath from the vitalizing springs of popular enthusiasm. The voice of the people is the voice of God; and the right divine to rule is based on the unchangeable foundations of the love, the gratitude, the devotion of a people, evoked by the consciousness that they share with their rulers the responsibilities of Government. Despotie rule represents a stage of transition and the period of which should not be unnecessarily prolonged. But transition

must give place to permanence. All signs point to the conclusion that the period of construction has now arrived. The forces are there; the materials are there; they lie in shapeless masses. Where is the man of genius who will communicate to them the vital spark and transform them into a new and a higher and a grander organization, suited to our present requirements and fraught with the hopes of a higher life for us and a nobler era for British rule in India?

#### SIMULTANEOUS WORK IN ENGLAND AND INDIA.

It is a well-established fact that the Government of India is very slow in meeting demands for reform in the administration. This is partly due to its basic principles and partly to the inherent conservative nature of the Indian Englishmen who are practically its rulers. This defect—and a serious defect it is in the Government as it now obtains in India—was observed long long ago in India. During the 18th century, Missions to England from India were frequent, though they were undertaken for different reasons. Yet, they were essentially for the purpose of explaining the position of affairs in India. During the past century, when British Supremacy became an established fact, deputations to England were found to be of great value. In the Civil Service question, Mr. Banerjea induced the Indian Association to send Mr. Ghose to England.

We saw above how useful it proved to be. In 1879, Mr. Banerjea proposed that a permanent deputation be established in England to keep the English public informed about Indian questions. In after years, the Indian National Congress strengthened this scheme by the establishment of an organ of Indian opinion in England and a Parliamentary Committee to watch its interests in Parliament. Deputations of noted Indians too became more and more frequent, thanks to the energy displayed by men like the late Mr. W. C. Bonnerjee, and A. M. Bose, Mr. Norton, Mr. Mudholkar, Mr. Joshi, Mr. Banerjea himself and in later days by Mr. Gokhale. The man to popularise the utility of these deputations and to make them, during the earlier stages, a success was Mr. Banerjea. Mr. Banerjea believes much in their efficacy :—

“ If India is ever to rise to the full possession of the rights of British citizenship, that object can only be attained by persistent agitation carried on in this country, followed by persistent agitation carried on in England. The heart of India must in the first instance be profoundly stirred. Let us bear in mind that our primary field of work is in India. India must speak with one voice in tones of unmistakable import, the significance of which cannot be gainsaid. Then is the time to carry on our agitation in England, to submit our representations to the British public and lay our prayers if need be at the foot of the throne.”

The more so, as the Indian feels and believes that the Englishman in England is far different from his brother in India. At the last Lucknow Congress, (1899) Mr. Banerjea re-iterated his views on this subject.

MEMBER OF THE CALCUTTA CORPORATION.

Mr. Banerjea became a member of the Calcutta Corporation, in 1876, when the Corporation was organised on the elective basis. Later, he became the Chairman of North Barrackpur Municipality. In these positions, he has done considerable good work both to his countrymen and to his much-beloved city of Calcutta. On the abstract question, even now of some importance, whether Indians are fit or unfit for Local Self-Government, Mr. Banerjea has no misgivings. With many others, he believes that its origin is to be found in the Communal Government of the Indian villages. "Let me ask," he says, "were the Romans more fit for Self-Government in the days of the Republic or were the English more fit at the time of Simon-de-Monfort, or even in the days of the Tudors?" Education is worth little, he adds, if it is not finished in the practical school of public life. Municipal institutions, he frequently quotes from Mr. Gladstone, are

the seed pots, around which and upon which habits of political thought and political sagacity are formed throughout the country. He was the first to agitate for the formation of local bodies on an elective basis in the pre-Ripon days. His speeches on the introduction of the Calcutta Municipal Bill of 1888 and 1897 show unmistakably the knowledge he possesses of Municipal affairs in general and of the very eminent services that he and his colleagues in Council have done for the once insanitary Metropolis of India. Sir Henry Harrison, the distinguished Civilian who presided over the Calcutta Municipal Council during the eighties, had the highest regard for him as a Municipal Commissioner. Mr. Banerjea was the first elected representative of the Corporation on the reformed Bengal Legislative Council of 1893. His election was a triumph; and the *Pioneer* came out with an article on his life. He entered his protests against the Municipal Bill of 1897 from his seat in it. These protests, by the way, are masterpieces in Municipal criticism. The Bill evoked great opposition and was even reproduced on the stage. When it was passed into law in the teeth of the opposition that it met, he resigned, with

27 others, his seat in the Corporation (1899). He was thus for 23 years an active Municipal Commissioner and in that capacity made friends with men like Harrison, Beverly, Cotton and Scuttar. Towards the first of these, he always entertained the greatest personal regard. He was a sagacious man and a man blessed with no little statesmanship. One of Mr. Banerjea's sweetest speeches is that on the work of Mr. Harrison as Chairman of the Calcutta Corporation, delivered in 1892, on his premature death. "To have known Sir Henry Harrison," said he, "was to have loved him, respected him and admired him." It was through Mr. Banerjea's zeal that the Central Road of Calcutta came to be known after him as Harrison Road.

#### ACQUISITION OF THE "BENGALÉE".

Mr. Banerjea has influenced public opinion largely as a publicist. The *Bengalee* newspaper, which originally owed its birth to the public spirit of the late lamented Mr. W. C. Bonnerjee, and a few others, was in a moribund condition during the Lytton days. In 1879, at the height of the reactionary policy of that Governor-General, Mr. Banerjea took it over. He applied all his talents to it and in a short time, made it one

of the first newspapers in the land. Ten years ago, it was yet a weekly but now it is a daily with a large all-India circulation. It is, we think, the only Indian newspaper which subscribes for Reuter's Telegraphic Service. Its habitual moderation, its independence and its consistent advocacy of the Indian cause have won for it the esteem of all India.

#### THE CONTEMPT CASE.

The remarkable agitation that followed the celebrated and so-called Contempt Case of 1883 showed for once the popularity of Mr. Banerjea and his newspaper. Mr. Banerjea had exposed the vagaries of bellicose Civilians and military ragamuffins. There were, besides the non-official Anglo-Indians, the indigo-planters. The Ilbert Bill had, about the same time, raised a storm of controversy. It was during such a time that Mr. Banerjea was found tripping at his table. He published an extract from a now extinct Bengali paper that Mr. Justice Norris, of the Calcutta High Court, had wounded the feelings of the Hindus by ordering, in a certain case, the family idol to be brought into open Court. He animadverted on the conduct of the Judge and incidentally compared him to Jeffryes of unholy memory. Jus-



speech, the future Judge of the High Court (that had sentenced Mr. Banerjea) dwelt on the great qualities of "our illustrious countryman."

At the time this incident happened, Mr. Banerjea was popularly believed to have been 'sacrificed on the altar of the Ilbert Bill'. Mr. Justice Norris himself was a Bristol man and had been sent out at the instance of Mr. Bright, then a member of the Government. He had promised to Mr. Bright that he would make the interests of the Indians his own. That such a man should have turned so hostile towards a popular leader like Mr. Banerjea was an insoluble riddle. Men of the time put it down to the imperceptible influences of the Anglo-Indianism then, as now, rampant in the land. "Every one felt that it was not a judicial, but a political prosecution," wrote one, "and every one realised that it was no prosecution, but persecution of a patriot in whose incarceration the liberties of the whole nation were sought to be imprisoned." Whether this was so or not, Mr. Justice Norris himself seems to have altered his mind some time later. He made his "amende" to Mr. Banerjea and the party he re-

presents by helping their mission in England, in 1890. When Mr. Banerjea and his friends went to address meetings in Bristol, Mr. Norris had already forestalled them. Unsolicited, he sent a cablegram to the citizens of Bristol expressing his sympathy with the movement headed by Mr. Banerjea and asked them to give the delegates a hearty reception. "The success of the meeting at Bristol," said Mr. Banerjea in referring to it in his great speech at the Calcutta Town Hall on his return from England "was due in no small degree to the sympathetic interference of Mr. Norris. Unasked, unsolicited, and prompted by his own sympathies, he sent a telegram to a friend to do all that lay in his power to make the meeting a success. I think I should be only expressing your own feelings in the matter if I say that we are deeply grateful to Mr. Justice Norris for his telegram." Only one other point we would notice in this connection. While in jail, Mr. Banerjea is said to have sent in his resignation for his seat on the Magisterial Bench, but it is understood that on the representation of Sir Henry Harrison, its acceptance was refused by Government. Mr. Banerjea's popularity was so great at this time

that a collected volume of his speeches sold out rapidly, in 1884.

#### THE INDIAN NATIONAL CONGRESS.

He reached his high-water mark of popularity in 1883, simultaneously with the proceedings in the Contempt Case, in connection with which Lal Mohan Ghose was again despatched to England. In December of the same year, the Indian Association (of which Mr. Banerjea was Secretary) held the first National Conference at the Albert Hall in Calcutta at which delegates were present from Madras, Bombay and the United Provinces. It was the first national gathering ever brought together in India. This national gathering, styled the National Conference was again held in Calcutta in December 1885. Mr. Banerjea as the organizer of the Conference had to be present at its meetings and therefore could not attend the first meeting of the National Congress which assembled at Bombay in December, 1885. At every succeeding Congress, however, he has been a prominent figure; in fact one of its guiding lights. Between the years 1886 and 1893, he spoke almost entirely on the question of the introduction of the representative element into the Legislative Councils of India and the expan-

sion of their functions. Lord Cross' unsatisfactory Bill of 1890 fell far short of the expectations formed of Lord Dufferin's despatch on the subject. Accordingly, the Congress resolved, in 1889, to send a deputation of Indian representatives to England to enlighten English opinion on this subject. Mr. A. O. Hume, its General Secretary, sailed home in advance to arrange the details in conjunction with the Indian Political Agency already established there, Messrs. Banerjea Norton and Mudholkar, being the other principal members of the deputation. On the night previous to his departure, Mr. Banerjea was entertained at dinner in the Bell Vue Hotel by his friends. The late Mr. W. C. Bonnerjee presided and proposed Mr. Surendranath's health.

#### FIRST CONGRESS CAMPAIGN IN ENGLAND.

Thus commenced the first Congress Campaign in England. The deputation was assisted in their work by Mr. Dadabhai Naoroji and Mr. Syed Ali Imam, then resident in England. The British Committee of the Congress arranged the meetings, which were mainly confined to the Provinces—North of England, West of England, South Wales and Scotland. On the whole, the

delegates addressed more than thirty meetings. The first one was held at Clerkenwell, the Division of London which was then being contested by Mr. Naoroji. Sir William Wedderburn Bart., that trusted friend of India, presided. Mr. Banerjea's speech at it was typical of the rest of the series. "His speech on the occasion," wrote an English eye-witness at the time, "was magnificent and electrified his learned hearers by its close reasoning, by the appropriate language in which he clothed his ideas, and by the spirit which breathed in his utterances. Experienced speakers in and out of Parliament found in the Babu a deal which recalled the sonorous thunders of a William Pitt, the dialectical skill of a Fox, the rich freshness of illustration of a Burke and the keen wit of a Sheridan. The Babu is an effective speaker and understands the art of striking while the iron is hot. Throughout this powerful speech, he entirely drops himself and makes the Indian Natives' cause his own." His other speeches were equally well-admired. He received a tremendous ovation at Northampton then represented by Mr. Bradlaugh. At his initiative, three ringing English cheers were given him on his

entering the Town Hall. His speech was a grandly impressive piece of oratory of the highest order and was a rich treat to the listeners, who applauded with vigour at every possible opportunity. At Taunton, Dr. Meredith presided. "When I heard Mr. Banerjea speak," wrote a newspaper correspondent of the time, "I was surprised, startled, electrified. The English was pure, the pronounciation perfect, the rhetoric a pattern of style and ability and the address as a whole, one that well deserved the applause with which it was treated. We are accustomed to good speaking in Taunton—I do not refer to Mr. Allsopp's poetical effusions or Mr. Eiton's conversational drip—but we have seldom had the privilege of listening to a grander oration more ably delivered than that which our friend from the far East favoured us on Monday evening. The only thing like it that Taunton has recently enjoyed was that of Mr. W. Redmond, M. P., in the autumn of last year." At the Chelsea meeting, Mr. W. Martin Wood, M.P. presided and Mr. Banerjea's speech at it was admired as a 'magnificent' one. Its felicitous language, its eloquence, its earnest enthusiasm and its dignified and stately delivery compelled

the remark that "rarely, if ever, had it been surpassed there."

Mr. Augustine Honey, who organised the meetings held in the West of England and South Wales, thus referred to Mr. Banerjea's services in his report :—

"I cannot but remark on the great assistance the Indian National Congress movement has already received in this part of the country from the eloquent orations delivered by Mr. Surendranath Banerjea. His command of language, range of illustration and powerful appeals riveted the attention of his audiences.

I have rarely seen political audiences raised to a higher pitch of enthusiasm, stirred to a deeper sense of injustice, or at times, utterly electrified by the passionate appeals of Mr. Banerjea made for his countrymen to be admitted the right of a voice in the Government of their country. At all the meetings, the demand was that Mr. Banerjea should visit them again; and I would point out to you the great advantage the movement would gain by his presence, as that alone would ensure overflowing audiences in the towns already visited. I would strongly urge the importance of this fact upon your Committee."

The British Committee of the Indian Congress thus referred to his services in recording its high appreciation of the work done by the deputation in England :—

"Particularly does it desire to recognise Mr. Surendranath Banerjea's prolonged and able services; he attended all the meetings and succeeded by his powerful oratory in exciting an unusual degree of interest among his audiences."

## MR. GLADSTONE'S SYMPATHY.

Passing over the debate at the Oxford Union and the meetings that Mr. Banerjea and his coadjutors addressed at New Castle (then represented by Mr.—now Lord Morley—and at which they were entertained by the well-known Dr. Spence Watson) Dundee, Aberdeen, over which the late Professor Minto presided, and Glasgow which owed its success to the kindness of Messrs. John Tullis and Sons, the merchant princes of that town; we must notice, however briefly, the interview that the late Mr. Gladstone granted the deputation. An excellent report of it, by Mr. Digby, will be found by the interested reader in the columns of *Hindu* of the time. At the interview, Mr. Gladstone showed his sympathy towards the cause the deputation represented, in a thousand little ways. Mr. Banerjea sat during the interview right in front of the great Liberal Leader. The main object of the interview was to get Mr. Gladstone speak on Mr. Bradlaugh's Amendment on Lord Cross' Bill then in the House of Commons. This he ultimately consented to do. One remark of Mr. Gladstone must be set down here. He enquired if the two Indian gentlemen (Messrs. Banerjea and Mudholkar)



spoke English. "Oh! Yes" replied Mr. Hume, "they speak uncommonly well." "Ah!" said he, "I have often said nobody speaks such good English and with such admirable intonation as do people from the East Indies." As regards the practical point, the introduction of the elective element into the Legislative Councils, Mr. Gladstone said: "Well, it seems you must be prepared to wait a little longer for the realization of your hope. You will have to wait a while."

#### RETURNS TO INDIA.

Just before their departure, Mr. Banerjea and his friends were entertained to a dinner by Mr. E. C. Schwann, M. P., and Mrs. Schwann. On 18th June, 1890, Mr. Banerjea sailed from England. On arriving at Bombay, he was received by the Bombay Presidency Association, who arranged for a meeting at the Framji Cowasji Institute to acknowledge in a fitting manner the services rendered by him and by his colleagues.

Mr. Banerjea thence proceeded to Calcutta, being accorded a hearty welcome at every important station *en route*. An address of welcome was presented to him at Calcutta in which congratulations were offered him for his "signal success" in England.

• RISES IN PUBLIC ESTEEM.

During the next decade, Mr. Banerjea rose steadily in the estimate of both Government and the people. His moderation and his sense of fairness won for him the esteem of the Government and his admirable work in England enhanced his popularity with the masses in general. The withdrawal of the notorious Jury Notification, against which he entered his emphatic protest, in 1893, and the passing of the Indian Councils Act, (1891), and the Amending Act, in the same year, on the lines in which he had so long agitated and the repeal of the Vernacular Press Act were triumphs in constitutional agitation in India. In 1893, Mr. Banerjea was elected by the Corporation of Calcutta to represent it in the Bengal Legislative Council. No one was better entitled to the new privilege conferred on the Corporation under the Act, which Mr. Banerjea was not a little instrumental in getting passed. "I have spent" he said once with just pride, "the best part of my life-time in the service of the Corporation. I entered it when young. I have grown grey in its service. The work of the Corporation has been the pleasure and the pride of my life." In 1895, Mr. Banerjea was nomi-

nated President of the Poona Congress, an office the onerous duties of which he fulfilled with commendable tact and prudence. The incidents of the year are even yet remembered by many and the skilful manner in which Mr. Banerjea steered clear of the troublous water shows the stuff he is really made of. The speech he then delivered is a regular *vade mecum* of the politics of India. Its topics range from the poverty of the masses of India to Central Asian politics. Some of them, however, are of permanent value.

#### THE FUNCTIONS OF THE CONGRESS.

The following fine description of the true character of the Indian National Congress forms the peroration to his Presidential address :—

Dissatisfaction is the parent of all progress. It stirs us on to ceaseless activities for the betterment of our race. A golden age is, indeed, looming in the future. There is a golden age in store for us and our children. It is this feeling which reconciles us to the present. We feel that if political freedom, in the sense in which it is enjoyed by British subjects elsewhere, is not to be our lot, it will be the inheritance of those who, coming after us, will bear our names and carry on our work. In that faith we work. In that faith we ask others to work. It is the faith which is the cement of the Congress movement. It implies confidence in the progressive character of British rule. It implies confidence in ourselves. Let it not be said that this confidence is misplaced. Let it not be said that the enthusiasm which animated us in

the first days of the Congress movement is on the wane. The past ought to encourage us. The future ought to stir us into enthusiasm. The noblest heritage which we can leave to our children and our children's children is the heritage of enlarged rights, safe-guarded by the loyal devotion and the fervent enthusiasm of an emancipated people. Oh! Let us so work with confidence in each other, with unwavering loyalty to the British connection, that we may accomplish this great object within a measurable distance of time. Then will the Congress have fulfilled its mission--justified the hopes of those who founded it and who worked for it--not, indeed, by the supersession of British rule in India, but by broadening its basis, liberalizing its spirit, ennobling its character and placing it upon the unchangeable foundations of a nation's affections. It is not severance that we look forward to--but unification, permanent embodiment as an integral part of that great Empire which has given the rest of the world the models of free institutions--that is what we aim at. But permanence means assimilation, incorporation, equal rights, equal privileges. Permanence is incompatible with any form of military despotism, which is a temporary makeshift adapted to a temporary purpose. England is the august mother of free nations. She has covered the world with free States. Places hitherto the chosen abode of barbarism are now the home of freedom. Wherever floats the flag of England, there free Governments have been established. We appeal to England gradually to change the character of her rule in India, to liberalise it, to shift its foundations, to adapt it to the newly-developed environments of the country and the people, so that in the fulness of time, India may find its place in the Great Confederacy of Free States, English in their origin, English in their character, English in their institutions, rejoicing in their permanent and indissoluble union with England, a glory to the mother-country and an honour to the human race. Then will England have fulfilled her great mission in the East, accomplished her high destiny among nations, repaid the long-standing debt which the West owes to the East and covered herself with imperishable renown and everlasting glory.

## INDIA AND PARTY POLITICS.

Mr. Banerjea holds that India will profit by its being made a subject for party votes in Parliament. He says :—

Speaking for myself, I will say this, that until Indian questions are taken up as party questions, until they become factors in determining the issues of party contests, they cannot come to occupy a prominent place in English politics or engage a large measure of public attention in England. Before the English people can be expected to do justice to India, they must feel an interest in Indian topics ; and they will not, and cannot, feel any interest in them, so long as Indian questions remain outside the pale of party politics. We have it on the authority of John Morley that "Indian affairs entered materially into the great battle of parties" in the last century, and the impeachment of Warren Hastings, which for its moral results was a great and far-reaching event was mainly prompted by party considerations.

## SOCIAL REFORM.

Mr. Banerjea believes in the necessity for social reform amongst Hindus. Himself a practical reformer, he calls upon his countrymen to reform themselves socially and morally. He says :—

Gentlemen, I wish to repeat what I said the other day, that in our efforts for political reform, we are not likely to advance or to make any substantial progress, unless that progress corresponds, in some measure at least, with progress in every department of moral and social reform. You cannot give an impetus to the human mind at one point and keep it back at another. The impetus vibrates along the entire sphere of human existence and over-spreads the entire range of human energies. If advance we must in the direction of political reform, a corresponding advance must also take place in the direction of religious and social reform.

I am sure, therefore, having regard to the character of the struggle in which we are engaged, having regard to the newly-developed environments of our situation, if this ancient system of ours, which has come down to us as a heritage from the past is to be preserved, then it must be preserved upon new conditions and adapted to new circumstances. I am reminded of the grand old saying of a great prophet in the Bible. 'Let us take our stand upon the ancient ways. Let us look around and do that which is right.' I take it that that is the guiding principle of our Conference. You want to take your stand upon the ancient foundations of your social and religious system. You want to change it here and there and adapt it to the new surroundings, in the midst of which you are placed. We are all living in an ancient house and that house we must preserve. Change we must, if our ancient system is to be preserved. A system without the means of change is without the means of conservation. That is my attitude in regard to the Social Conference movement.

He reiterated these views in his speech at the Social Conference of 1903.

#### EVIDENCE BEFORE THE WELBY COMMISSION.

In 1897, Mr. Banerjea was called upon to give evidence before the Royal Commission on Indian Expenditure. His examination of Mr. Jacob's statement on behalf of Government shows the wide grasp he has of the public questions of the day. During the troubles of 1897—the first Tilak Trial, the deportation of the Natu brothers and the passing of the Sedition Act—he rendered great service to the country. At the 1897 Congress, he moved the resolutions relating

to these subjects and made a speech on them which is yet worth reading.

#### THE CURZON REGIME.

Lord Curzon arrived in India towards the close of December, 1898. Mr. Banerjea welcomed him on behalf of the Congress—which was then assembled at Madras—as representative of the Sovereign, who stands above all parties and as the utterer of the noble sentiment that “the Government (of India) should be so conducted that India may by slow and sure degree expand to the full measure of her growth”. For a time, everything went on well. The Lahore Congress (1900) thanked his Lordship—again through Mr. Banerjea—for his liberal famine policy and his stringent Shooting Regulation. But already his Lordship had begun alienating himself from the people. His quietly assenting to the Calcutta Municipal Act, which sounded the death knell of Local Self-Government in the capital of the Indian Empire and the Punjab Land Alienation Act which superseded, in Mr. Banerjea’s words, the reign of law by the reign of discretion, shook the people’s faith in him. His interference with higher education and the officialisation of the universities of India (by 1902) still further alien-

ated his Lordship from the Indian people. Still, there was no rupture. If that was so, it was due to the cautious procedure of constitutional agitators like Mr. Banerjea who were always anxious to judge his Lordship charitably. In 1902, Mr. Banerjea was for a second time nominated President of the Congress. This time the Congress met at Ahamedabad, the great industrial centre. Mr. Banerjea pleaded for a "moral protection" for Indian goods, as the Government would not grant legal protection. "All sacrifice" he said, "incurred for high national purposes and towards the attainment of great national ideals is repaid with compound interest." A point remarkable about the long address that Mr. Banerjea delivered on this occasion,—it covered as usual all the questions of the hour—was his especial anxiety to keep his countrymen to constitutionalism. It ends with a great panegyric on constitutional agitation. It is to be feared that Mr. Banerjea had his own misgivings about the evils of the policy of protraction that marks the Government of India. "Let not the words 'too late' he said, "be written upon British policy in India." As in the case of the stricken-down patient, so in the case of the



afflicted country, there comes a time when remedial measures, however promising, may be too late to be applied with advantage. In the physical as well as in the mortal world, nature takes her revenge upon the dilatory who neglect their opportunities or misread her clear unerring intimations."

#### REACTIONARY POLICY OF LORD CURZON.

Lord Curzon, however, was bent upon defeating the pious intentions of the constitutionalists in India. His downward career was bound up with his unstatesmanlike misreading of the Queen's Proclamation, his creating of class interests in Public Service, his abuse of the educated classes and the Indian peoples and his carrying out the Bengal Partition despite the protests and lamentations of the people affected by his scheme. These undoubtedly created a feeling of helplessness, nay of hopelessness in constitutional agitation. If to-day the voice of the constitutionalist is not heard as loudly as before, the Government has only to blame his Lordship. The spirited address that Babu Surendranath delivered in September, 1905 at Bhowanipur to protest against the Partition has a pathetic side pertaining it. It is the last word of a man, the

last protest of a believing man, of a sturdy constitutionalist, against an act as unjudicious as ill starred. "The Government has professed to rule our country with the best knowledge of the people and in accordance with our ideas and aspirations. But their acts, their measures, have been widely divergent from their professions. From this has sprung up the idea of starting the Boycott movement so that the people may touch the pockets of British tax-payers." So said Mr. Banerjee in another speech, in 1905. Even then the great leader had not lost faith in constitutional agitation. "We stand," he says, "shoulder to shoulder upon the platform of constitutional agitation and this will lead us to a victorious and triumphant conclusion." *Lebon temps viendra*: He hopes for the best. "No, the agitation will not be given up. The agitation will be continued." But what is the good? The Government does not listen to us. "Be it so. They may not listen to us now; but the time, will come when they must. A foreign Government the Government of a minority consisting of a few hundred thousand people swaying the destinies of millions, must respect the prayers of its subjects, if it wants permanence, if it wants that

its rule should be based broad and deep upon the loyalty and the gratitude of the people." At the Benares Congress of 1905, the hope was expressed that Lords Minto and Morley would do something to relieve the tension of feeling. But "the settled fact" theory has only tended to make matters worse. The best answer to Lord Morley's speech expounding it is contained in Banerjea's speech at the Calcutta Congress on the Partition question in December, 1906. That is a speech that cannot be retailed here. It is in Mr. Banerjea's best style. It is closely reasoned, argumentative and eloquent. Its faith in constitutional agitation and the inherent justness of the cause in behalf of which it is carried on is transparent. Mr. Banerjea says :—

I know not what the fate of this agitation will be. For the present, the signs are all against us. The future is enveloped in the deepest darkness and not the faintest streak of hope illumines the darkness of the situation. The heart of even the stoutest may quail, as he views the prospect before him. For eighteen long months have we carried on this agitation. Oh, God, for how much longer will it be our painful and laborious task to continue it! From the depths of our heart cries out a voice, "Oh, continue it, so long as the wrong is not righted. Let the banner, which has been uplifted, float right in the breeze, the emblem of your Hope and Triumph, until success is yours; and if, perchance, the banner should drop from your sinking hands, the God of nations will raise up others in your places who will carry it aloft, and aided by the irresistible forces of time

which make for justice and progress, they will carry it to an assured, if not, a speedy triumph." That is the voice that cries out from the innermost depths of our hearts and we bow to it.

#### THE EMERSON EPISODE.

The events of 1906 must still be fresh in the minds of most Indians. The arrest of Mr. Banerjea by Mr. Emerson, the District Magistrate of Barisal, his insulting the veteran leader and then fining him for resenting the insult and the final dispersal of the Provincial Conference assembled there -- these are now matters of history. That the executive, under the leadership of Sir J. B. Fuller, erred was demonstrated only too well by the decisions of the High Court and the interposition of Lord Morley. The acceptance of Sir Bamfylde's resignation, indeed, has done some good to the peace of the country. But the great wrong still remains and until that is either ended or mended, irritation is bound to continue. Wise statesmanship can see a way out of the present position.

#### BANERJEA, THE MAN.

To form a just and correct estimate of Mr. Banerjea we have only to refer to the opinion of Sir James Bourdillon, lately acting Lieutenant-Governor of Bengal. When Sir James left Calcutta to take up the post of Resident in

Mysore, he wrote a letter of warm appreciation to Mr. Banerjea, recognising his powers as the opposition leader, his great ability and his transparent and conspicuous honesty of purpose. The veteran has lived down a great deal of calumny in the past and he can well afford to let his calumniators alone.

Courage, brother, do not stumble,  
Trust in God and do the right.

AS A PUBLIC SPEAKER.

Mr. Banerjea's fame rests not a little on his great oratorical powers. His speeches bear marks of careful preparation, but are not so artistically drawn up as Mr. Naoroji's. Nor do they resemble the simple elegance of Mr. Gokhale, the attic gracefulness of Dr. Rash Behari Ghose or the melliflence of Mr. Norton. Mr. Banerjea casts his speeches in a different mould altogether. Whatever the subject, he strikes fire at once. Fact after fact, argument after argument, all bearing directly on the point in discussion, succeed each other and as each fresh view is presented and led forward to a logical conclusion, the rounds of applause that greet him prove that his demonstration has told and has been felt by all as legitimate and just. He couches his opinions and proposals always in vigorous and choice phrases, and the

charm of what he says has thus an additional power in commanding the acceptance of an educated and cultured audience. That is the opinion of a discriminating Englishman not unaccustomed to public speeches in England and Scotland. Mr. Banerjea believes in the moral governance of the world and his speeches breath the highest morality and loftiest patriotism. He has a rich, sonorous and clear voice. His delivery is excellent and is not marred by unseemly contortions. His perorations are magnificent and some of them altogether matchless. His descriptions are always graphic and his power of illustration great. Like the classic orators of the West, he melts himself in the cause he represents. The jarring first person pronoun—so characteristic of Lord Curzon is absolutely non-existent with him. That he carries the audience with him is only what must be expected of so finished an orator as he is. A collected edition of his speeches, in six volumes, has been published (and republished) by Messrs. Lahiri and Co., of Calcutta.

#### HIS PET STUDIES.

His favourite studies have helped him in acquiring that mastery over his tongue and voice that is now the wonder of all India. His speeches show

abundantly his intimate knowledge of Western classics. He is familiar with Cicero, Horace and Virgil. The English Bible has helped him no little. He delights in the study of history and biography of all ages and countries. His earlier speeches are mostly biographic and include studies of Chaitanya, Mazzini and Macaulay. He is, of all Indians, the best authority on Burke and the contemporary orators of the time. He is, in consequence, always in demand at Memorial meetings and at meetings intended to aid public movements. There has not been a single important meeting in Bengal during the past thirty years at which he has not been a principal speaker. Whether to praise the departed or to perpetuate their memory or to find the money for carrying out the objects aimed at, he has equally been in demand. His speeches in aid of Congress Funds are well-known. Important propositions have been generally entrusted to him at the Congress Meetings. Thus it was that he came to welcome Lord Curzon at the Madras Congress and thank him at the Lahore Congress!

#### AS A POLITICIAN.

As a politician Mr. Banerjea must be pronounced to be a great success. As he himself has save-

ral times pointed out, constitutional agitation has been a great success in India since its commencement, and that success it owes largely to him. If it is now a little discredited just at present, it is Government that is responsible for it mainly. He is a fair opponent. Even when he differs from others, he eschews personalities. Nothing raises his rebuke so much as discourtesy to opponents. He believes in his mission and he has consecrated his life to it. He has abundant faith in England and he would fain see the Government more alert and statesmanlike in dealing with large questions affecting Indians and their motherland.

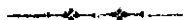
#### PRIVATE LIFE.

Mr. Banerjea loves Calcutta, "my native town", as he proudly called it in one of his speeches against the last Calcutta Municipal Bill. During the long time he was a city father, he was largely instrumental in purging it of its horrible insanitation. But he himself does not live in Calcutta. He has his residence at Manirampore, a village 13 miles to the north of Calcutta and not far away from the country-residence of the Viceroy at Barrackpore. He is Chairman of the North Barrackpore Municipality and was an Honorary



Magistrate until the middle of 1906, when he resigned, by way of protest against the highbanded act of the Eastern Bengal executive which the Government of India took no pains to rebuke. He comes to Calcutta daily at about 10 a. m. and remains there till nightfall. His working hours at College are between 10-30 a. m. and 2 p. m. and thence forward he works at the *Bengalee* office at Colootola. He leaves Calcutta daily by one of the evening suburban trains and spends the nights and mornings at his residence. He enjoys his holidays by busying himself with his books or attending *Swadeshi* meetings. Needless to say, the visitors who go to him to see him are very numerous. He has an only son and five daughters whom he has given a careful education. He is a fine strong man with an iron constitution, a flowing beard, high forehead and sparkling eyes underneath arched eyebrows. He has, during his unceasing activities of more than 30 years, never fallen seriously ill, except once, in 1890. His only hobby is walking, which he greatly enjoys round his own villa. He has some taste for gardening which he freely indulges in his extensive grounds. "He is" as the *Pioneer* once put it, "one of the most familiar

and popular figures of Calcutta Society and is a remarkable example of success through unprecedented difficulties of all sorts. When he began, he met appalling obstacles on every side. His perseverance broke them down and the future historian of our own time, whatever his political creed, will record it as a fact that public opinion in its present form owes its existence in Bengal chiefly to his efforts."



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