



Hon'ble Sir Pherozechah Mehta, K.C.I.E.

SPEECHES AND WRITINGS

OF THE HONOURABLE

SIR PHEROZESHAH M. MEHTA, K.C.I.E.

WITH AN INTRODUCTION

BY

DINSHA EDULJI WACHA

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Allahabad:

THE INDIAN PRESS.

1905.

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[Price Rs. Six.]

Allabad:
PRINTED AT THE INDIAN PRESS.

To
Dadabhai Naoroji, Esquire,

The "Grand Old Man" of India,

The Greatest of Indian Patriots,

The Most Selfless of Men and Stainless of Gentlemen,

As a Humble Token

of the

Editor's Love & Reverence.

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P R E F A C E .

THE Honourable Sir Pherozechah Merwanjee Mehta, K.C.I.E., M.A., Barrister-at-law, occupies a foremost position among the worthiest of our public men by reason alike of commanding talents and disinterested patriotism. His speeches and writings, which have always attracted considerable attention, are admired no less for their literary charm than for the soundness of his opinions,—closely argued, expressed in earnest language and breathing conviction in every syllable. Sir Pherozechah's public life began so early as in 1867, and during the long space of time that has elapsed since then there has not been any important problem, local, provincial or imperial, in the discussion of which he has not taken a conspicuous part. What a large part he has played in the public life of his city, province and country, is evident from his many speeches as well as his varied and numerous contributions to the Press; which are now presented to the world in this volume. It would be presumption on my part to pass an opinion on the character of Sir Pherozechah's pronouncements on public questions. Nor is it at all necessary, as there have never been two opinions among our countrymen in regard to their great literary and political value. This, however, I venture to say without the least fear of contradiction—that, as they are now made available to the public in a permanent form, they will be found of surpassing usefulness to every student of Indian public questions in the future. I may even go farther and claim for Sir Pherozechah's speeches and writings that the Indian statesman and administrator who wishes to acquire a firm grasp of the right principles of Indian govern-

ment and administration and who has the honourable (alas! so rare) ambition to keep himself *au courant* with the thoughts, opinions and wishes of Educated India will find an invaluable guide in the following pages.

Eloquence, though a bad master, is a singularly useful servant of a public man. The orator who is fascinated with the sound of his own voice and 'inebriated with the exuberance of his own verbosity' is a familiar enough figure in this as in other countries. Sir Pherozechah Mehta is not of this redundant species. Possessing in full measure what has been called the divine gift of eloquence, our Congress Knight never allows mere flatulent rhetoric to do service for arguments or facts. Otherwise, he would not be the wonderful debater he has been universally admitted to be. What has been said of the oratory of Gladstone is applicable to Sir Pherozechah Mehta as well: 'There was a lively imagination, which enabled him to relieve even dull matter by pleasing figures, together with a large command of quotations and illustrations. There were powers of sarcasm, powers, however, which he rarely used, preferring the summer lightning of banter to the thunderbolts of invective. There was admirable lucidity and accuracy in exposition. There was art in the disposition and marshalling of his arguments, and finally—a gift now almost lost in England—there was a delightful variety and grace of appropriate gesture. But above and beyond everything else which enthralled the listener, there stood out four qualities. Two of them were merits of substance—inventiveness and elevation; two were merits of delivery—force in the manner, expressive modulation in the voice.* It is equally true, if not truer still, that in our country no one shows such swift resourcefulness in debate. Writes

* James Bryce, *Studies in Contemporary Biography*, p. 430, etc.

Mr. Bryce of Gladstone:—‘His readiness, not only at catching a point, but at making the most of it on a moment’s notice, was amazing. * * * Never was he seen at a loss either to meet a new point raised by an adversary or to make the best of an unexpected incident. Sometimes he would amuse himself by drawing a cheer or a contradiction from his opponents, and would then suddenly turn round and use this hasty expression of their opinion as the basis for a fresh argument of his own. Loving conflict, he loved debate, and, so far from being confused or worried by the strain conflict put upon him, his physical health was strengthened and his faculties were roused to higher efficiency by having to prepare and deliver a great speech.’ Who can gainsay that the same high qualities in nearly as rich measure distinguish Sir Pherozechah as a debater? And it is also true of him, what Mr. Bryce says of Gladstone, that ‘the dignity and spontaneity which marked the substance of his speeches was no less conspicuous in their delivery. Nothing could be more easy and graceful than his manner on ordinary occasions, nothing more grave and stately than it became when he was making a ceremonial reference to some public event or bestowing a meed of praise on the departed.’

In the very able and interesting Introduction with which he has kindly favoured this collection, my dear and honoured friend and leader, Mr. Dinsha Edulji Wacha, reviews at some length Sir Pherozechah Mehta’s distinguished and eventful public life. I will not make any detailed allusion to it here. I may, however, be permitted just to indicate how comprehensive and representative his career has been, how many were the high and responsible positions our eminent countryman has worthily and honourably filled, equally to his own credit

and to the advantage of the public. Even a bare enumeration of them is instructive. Sir Pherozeshah has been a member of the Bombay Corporation during a period of more than thirty-five years, and been thrice elected its President. And when the history of local self-government in India comes to be written, it will undoubtedly be recorded that he is the greatest member of whom any municipal corporation in the whole country could ever boast. He has similarly taken an active part in the work of the Bombay University, of which he is so distinguished an *alumnus* and so sagacious and wise a Fellow, and he was the most stalwart colleague of the late Mr. Justice Ranade in fighting the educational battles of his Presidency in the University Senate. He has been a member of the Bombay Legislative Council for a period of fifteen years, and was on the Imperial Council for about three years, and must stand alone as having achieved the proud distinction of being the greatest of the Indian members of the Legislative Councils of India. Sir Pherozeshah Mehta was one of the founders and first secretaries, and has for more than ten years been President of the Bombay Presidency Association; he is President of the Bombay Graduates' Association; he was President of the Fifth Bombay Provincial Conference and of the Sixth Indian National Congress, of which he was one of the founders; he was Chairman of two Reception Committees of the Congress at Bombay; and he has filled many other positions too numerous to be mentioned. He has served the Motherland ably and faithfully for the best part of a life-time, and has his reward in the respect and affection with which he is looked upon as their greatest leader by a host of admirers all over the country; which, next after the approbation of his own conscience, is the greatest prize a public man may aspire to.

I count it a piece of singular good fortune that Mr. Dadabhai Naoroji has kindly permitted me to inscribe this volume to him. While to millions of his countrymen Mr. Naoroji is a sacred personality, our dear and venerable Grand Old Man has from the first inspired in me a very peculiar affection and reverence and I am almost proud to think that his gracious name is associated with a work with which I have had something to do. There is, besides, a peculiar propriety in the dedication of Sir Pherozeshah Mehta's Speeches and Writings to him. Not only that Sir Pherozeshah came early under the influence of that mastermind, when in London in the sixties of the last century preparing himself to join the Bar: he and Mr. Naoroji as well as Mr. Wacha belong to the same religious persuasion. In one of his papers printed in this collection Sir Pherozeshah Mehta incidentally refers to India as the land 'which helped us (the Parsee community) in our hour of need, which gave us kindly hospitality in our exile and which has given us shelter and nourishment for 1,200 years.' * The Parsees have more than discharged any obligation India may have placed them under, and made her their debtor instead. Some of the brightest ornaments of the Indian nation have been owned by the Parsee community;—industrial captains, merchant-princes and philanthropists like the first Sir Jamsetjee Jeejeebhoy and the late Mr. J. N. Tata, and political leaders like Mr. Dadabhai Naoroji, Sir Pherozeshah Mehta and Mr. D. E. Wacha. These three greatest of Parsee political leaders and patriots are animated by the same lofty ideals and have laboured with the same great ability and noble disinterestedness for the greater glory of the Motherland and the greater happiness of her children. It may

* 'The Retrospect,' p. 279 of the text.

accordingly be reckoned a happy coincidence that both Messrs. Dadabhai and Wacha are associated with this humble effort at bringing together some of the more notable utterances of their distinguished colleague and co-religionist. I am glad to be able to present to the readers the likenesses of the illustrious trio.

My grateful thanks are due to Sir Pherozechah Mehta for the kind permission he has accorded to me for bringing out this publication. And I am deeply indebted to our much esteemed countryman, Mr. Wacha, who has placed me under great obligation by many acts of personal kindness and affection, for the valuable Introduction he has contributed at my request. To great natural ability and unrivalled knowledge of facts on nearly all subjects of Indian politics and economics—in which respect he may be regarded as the Sir Charles Dilke of India—Mr. Wacha adds the advantage of lifelong friendship with Sir Pherozechah. The two patriots have been so closely and inseparably associated in almost their whole public activity that the appreciation of Sir Pherozechah with which the volume opens cannot but derive peculiar force and authority from its authorship. I feel that the Introduction certainly enhances the value of this collection.

My talented friend, Mr. M. Venkanna Pantulu, of the Maharajah's College, Vizianagram, has earned my thanks by laboriously setting himself to prepare the very useful analytical Index which is appended at the end of the work. Perhaps it will not be amiss to say here of my friend, that he is an unusually well-read man,—a literary recluse I call him—who because of his habit of 'keeping himself to himself', is not known to the public as he deserves to be.

I must not omit to mention either my acknowledgments to Mr. Sorabji Bomanji Munshi, assistant secre-

tary of the Bombay Presidency Association, who has taken much pains to supply me with much of the material brought together in this volume.

C. Y. CHINTAMANI.

Benares, 27th October, 1905.

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