

THREE DEPARTED PATRIOTS'

...

ANAND MOHUN BOSE,
BADRUDDIN TYABJI,
W. C. BONNERJEE

...

With appreciations by

D. E. WACHA & G. K. Gokhale

For lovers of nation &
THREE DEPARTED PATRIOTS.

SKETCHES OF
The Lives and Careers of
THE LATE
**ANANDA MOHUN BOSE,
BADRUDDIN TYABJI,
W. C. BONNERJEE,**

WITH THEIR PORTRAITS

COPIOUS EXTRACTS FROM THEIR SPEECHES
AND WITH APPRECIATIONS BY

Mr. D. E. Wacha & The Hon. Mr. Gokhale.

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PUBLISHERS' PREFACE.

A PART from their value as records of notable Indians, it is hoped that these little biographies will serve a useful purpose at this particular juncture in the history of the country. The virtues that Messrs Tyabji, Bonnerjee, and Bose had in common are just those that public life at present needs most. They are just those which it is necessary to infuse into the composition of the national character. They are just those which education must seek in every possible way to develop in the young. They are just those which the young must learn to admire and to cultivate if they would be worthy sons of the soil.

CONTENTS.

	PAGE.
ANANDA MOHAN BOSE	1
THE LATE MR. BADRUDDIN TYABJI ...	19
WOMESH CHUNDER BONNERJEE ...	36

APPRECIATIONS.

APPENDIX—A.

Bonnerjee, Tyabji and Bose.*

BY MR. D. E. WACHA.

MR. CHAIRMAN, — I think, Sir, that next to yourself I may claim in this hall the privilege of having enjoyed the close friendship of the three true and good men who have so silently passed away leaving the country all the poorer for their sad loss. The hand of the Reaper seemed to have been too busy in depriving us of these three distinguished countrymen of ours before their time when their need was the sorest. It was a cruel stroke of fate which cut them off so early, ere the good work which remained to the lot of each to be achieved was fully accomplished. But our will is not our own. It is the will of Him who is the giver of all life. All that remains to us, therefore, is to mournfully place on record the sense of that great loss which we, along with the rest of the country, have sustained by their untimely death.

The speakers who have preceded me have borne most eloquent testimony, each from his own point of view, to the principal incidents of their public life extending over more than a quarter of a century. There remains for me but little to add to that testimony. As far as Mr. Ananda Mohan Bose is concerned, my friendship began with him during the second Congress at Calcutta which, Sir, was held under your own distinguished Presidency in 1890. But the more I came into contact with him personally and by correspondence, the more his personality impressed me. His forensic ability in the profession he took up was well known. But to me he seemed as if Nature had made him more to shine in the pulpit than in the forum. His cast of mind was such. There was to be perceived in him a deep sense of religious fervour which so often found itself revealed when preaching in his own church the creed of which he was one of

* Speech delivered by Mr. D. E. Wacha at the Memorial Meeting held at Bombay.

the strongest pillars. In him was to be discerned all the gentleness, all the reverential spirit and all that earnest piety which distinguish the man of God. The last time I had the privilege of meeting him was in his own house in Dharantola in 1901. I can never forget that benign countenance, that extreme affability, and that polished courtesy with which he bade me good-bye, though even then he was far from well. And yet who would not admire that patriotism and that undying devotion which, in spite of extreme physical debility, impelled him to render what he deemed to be his last duty by his country and countrymen. What a pathetic figure he made, as was so feelingly described by the leading Bengalee organs of opinion, when almost in a dying condition he was carried in a sedan chair to lay the foundation stone of the Federation Hall which is destined to consecrate for ever the spirit of Swadeshism and keep its flame steadily burning among his people! This was Mr. Ananda Mohan Bose, a fine specimen of a highly cultured and intellectual Bengalee who had strenuously, unobtrusively and unselfishly devoted himself to the service of his country almost to the last hour of his death! Such a person deserves to live in the memory of us all.

I need not say that my relations with Messrs. Badruddin Tyabji and W. C. Bonnerjee were of a most intimate character. Indeed, as far as the first named is concerned, the friendship might be said to be hereditary. His father and my father were next-door neighbours, residing in Old Mody Street in the Fort. Both were merchants and both had great regard for each other, as my father more than once used to tell me and recount some interesting reminiscences of the past. It was a curious coincidence that the sons became equally known to each other. More. My children in turn were friends of the late Mr. and Mrs. Tyabji and their children. And I for one am glad that this hereditary friendship with the members of the Tyabji family is continued from sire to son, so to say. Such ample justice has been already rendered with a wealth of details to his public life by the speakers who have preceded me that I find myself quite a bankrupt as to what I could say more. The only supplemental obser-

vation that suggests itself to me is this. Mr. Badrud-din appeared to have been born a statesman. The more I knew him and the more I heard from his lips, many an observation on the condition of the country, its administration, and the right and proper duty of ourselves as citizens, the deeper that conviction grew on me. Had his *Kismet* been cast elsewhere, say, in a great Native State, Hindu or Mahomedan, I am perfectly certain that Mr. Tyabji would have risen to fill the highest post. He would have been another Sir Salar Jung. There were in him all the great qualities which contribute towards the making of an eminent statesman—talents of a high order, political sagacity, tact, judgment, suavity of manners, and, above all, catholic sympathy. As a Moslem, he was devotedly attached to his creed, and thoroughly understood its ethics with a broad-mindedness and tolerance which deserve the highest praise. Moreover, his early training and education in England had had its great formative influence on his character which was all through discerned in his public life. As a westernised Mahomedan, he could not sit inactive without reforming his community. He rightly conceived that the first and most important element of social reform among his co-religionists was education. The backwardness of Mahomedans in this respect he seems to have perceived from an early day; and he perseveringly endeavoured, and endeavoured with success, to lay the foundation of educational progress in his community. He chalked out the broad lines on which it should proceed. He knew well that reform meant reform first within his own domestic circle; and *pari passu* reform for the community by slow and easy gradients: in other words, on the lines of least resistance. Thus it was that he first lighted the torch of social reform in his own family and later on held it aloft, illuminating the way for those who had his force of character and resolution to associate with him in that noble and most beneficent work. We all know how his energies and efforts were directed towards the establishment of the Anjuman-i-Islam, and how these were crowned with success. It will for ever stand as an imperishable monument of his great social work.

In the entire community of Mahomedans in India, he was recognised as a towering personality and a power and influence for good. But more than a Mahomedan, he was proud to call himself an Indian. His heart beat in unison with the aims and aspirations of our national organisation, while his head had clear conceptions of the ultimate triumph of those objects. In his death, therefore, India loses one of her best sons, a pillar of progress, justice, freedom, toleration and catholic sympathy. It is to be feared it would be long before the country discovers another Tyabji.

There remains for me to add a few more words before I sit down with regard to Mr. W. C. Bonnerjee. It has been said by the great English essayist and politician that the lineaments of the man are to be discerned in the child. Mr. Bonnerjee was not a child in 1867. He was twenty-three years old, finishing his law course in London to qualify himself for the Bar. But at that very young age he showed those lineaments which as he grew old made him so regarded and esteemed not by his own men of Bengal but by his countrymen throughout the land. Perhaps some of you are aware of that most excellent paper he read on Hindu Law in London before the London Society, and another, later on, at the East India Association. The subject of the paper read before the latter was no other than the one about which so much is being said and written at the present day, namely: "Representative and responsible Government for India." To have read that most thoughtful, well-informed, and highly interesting paper at the age of 23 showed what remarkable talents Mr. Bonnerjee possessed. It would be out of place to refer to its salient points here, but, Mr. Chairman, you at least were present there, along with Mr. Dadabhai Naoroji, and could therefore speak from your personal experience as to the quality of that paper and the impression it produced on the hearers. Among them, there was that distinguished lawyer of Bombay, no other than the late Mr. Chisholm Anstey, a name still to be conjured and regarded with the highest respect. Some very independent and refreshing observations which fell from the lips of that constitutional and learned lawyer

deserve to be reproduced here, and I crave the indulgence of the meeting for a minute to refer to them. Mr. Anstey said: "I can safely say that Mr. Bonnerjee's paper, which contains so much that is novel and interesting and in which he has treated his subject in so fair and liberal a spirit, and with so much ability would, if adopted, go very far to a complete realisation of the view. I always have advocated in the matter * * What Mr. Bonnerjee has presented is this great truth, that when you seek to introduce this species of representation into India, you are not introducing a new thing, but only a new form of that which already exists there, which has existed there for thousands of years, and which cannot be rooted up out of the minds and hearts of the people, unless you exterminate the people itself. We are apt to forget in this country, when we talk of preparing people in the East by education and all that sort of thing for Municipal Government and Parliamentary Government that the East is the parent of municipalities * * Let us not be frightened by that bugbear incapacity; there is no nation unfit for free institutions. If you wait for absolute perfection, the world will come to an end before you have established your free institutions." Mr. Bonnerjee's profession, no doubt, kept him confined to it, but it did not signify that he had allowed politics to slide. The Congress, which took its birth in this city twenty-one years ago, revealed what kind of personage he was as its very first President. The rest is history and I will not travel over the same ground which Sir Bhalechundra and others have travelled. Having been closely allied with him since 1885, I can say with perfect confidence that there is not a leader of the Congress who has known the true political bearings of the country so well and thoroughly, and who has understood them so clearly. Whenever he has spoken with such profound knowledge and prescience as to make us exclaim why Mr. Bonnerjee would not speak oftener and enlighten his less fortunate brethren. But the traits above all others which characterised him were his shrewd commonsense, his penetrating judgment, his extreme modesty, his unobtrusiveness, a remarkable

presence and coolness of mind which tells us of the great steersman at the bark who can weather the storm and hurricane, and bring it to a haven of rest and safety. Had he entered Parliament he would have made his mark in that deliberative assembly and proved what splendid materials he had in him of a far-sighted and most discreet statesman. And as to his personal qualities, you had only to come into intimate contact with him to know what a personification of amiability, courtesy, and gentlemanliness he was. And how under a somewhat passive exterior there throbbed within a warm heart—a heart which burned with a steady flame for the greater good of the country, but in harmony with existing facts and circumstances. His also was the policy of proceeding on the lines of least resistance. Again, he too was a social reformer, but the reform was confined to his own household which to him was a thing of joy and beauty, seeing that he was surrounded by children whom he had brought up and trained after his own ideal. But alas! he too has gone to his last resting place, leaving behind him good, silent and patriotic work which shall scatter its fragrance all over the country for many a year to come. Not only Bengal but all India is poorer for his loss which it will be most difficult to fill.

In conclusion, I can only say that in the deaths of the three eminent Indians we have lost a veritable trinity of great souls, lofty sentiments, disinterested patriotism, and deep sympathy. Pure in faith, winningly sweet in courtesy, noble and kind, they have gone to their last resting place greatly loved and honoured by a whole nation. They knew naught but that ancient maxim which prescribes that the noblest motive is public good. They never cared for journalistic trumpets and rolls of newspaper drums. Indeed, I do not think I am using the language of exaggeration when I say that they belonged to that class of men who are greater than those who only seemeth great.

“There they rest from their toil
 In meadows immortally fair,
 And the Master of all brave souls
 Crowns them with fadeless leaves.”

Mr. Gokhale on Mr. Bonnerjee.*

—:—:—

Mr. Chairman, Ladies and Gentlemen,—We are assembled here to-day to give public expression to our grief that the hand of Death has removed from our midst our illustrious countryman,—Mr. Womesh Chandra Bonnerjee. The event, it is true, has not come upon us as wholly unexpected. For some time past it was well known that Mr. Bonnerjee's health has been completely shattered, that there was no hope of recovery, and that continued existence in that state was to him only a prolongation of agony. However, now that the end has actually come, and we are forced to realise that our great and trusted leader, whom it was a joy to love no less than to follow, is no more with us, the mind feels as completely bewildered and overwhelmed as though the great Destroyer had come with stealthy and noiseless steps and had inflicted on us our loss without warning, and with the shock of a sudden blow. Ladies and gentlemen, Mr. Bonnerjee was a man whose death would leave humanity the poorer in any age and in any part of the world. To India, in her present stage of transition, with difficult and complicated problems arising on all sides, his passing away is a national calamity of the first magnitude, and we indulge in no exaggeration when we say that our loss is truly irreparable. It is not my purpose to-day to attempt here an estimate of the character and career of our great countryman. Our loss is still too fresh and our sense of it too acute and poignant to permit of my undertaking any such task in a meeting of this kind. And all I beg leave to do in commending this resolution to your acceptance is to say a few words expres-

* Speech delivered by Mr. Gokhale at a Memorial Meeting held in London for expressing sorrow at the death of Mr. W. C. Bonnerjee.

sive of my profound admiration of the many noble qualities, both natural and acquired, of our departed leader, and of my humble appreciation of the great, the signal services which he has rendered to our national cause. Ladies and gentlemen, we all know that Mr. Bonnerjee was one of the most distinguished, as he was one of the most successful, lawyers that our country has produced. Now, if he had been only that and nothing else, even then his title to a public expression of our admiration and respect would have been unquestioned. National life, to be complete, must be many-sided; and a man who brings honour to the Indian name, no matter in what field, advances thereby our national cause and deserves to be honoured by us on national grounds. But Mr. Bonnerjee's claim to our admiration and gratitude rested, of course, on a much wider basis than his pre-eminent attainment as a lawyer. He was, in addition, an ardent patriot, a wise and far-sighted leader, an incessant worker, a man whose nobility of mind and greatness of soul were stamped on every utterance and every action of his life. His intellectual gifts were of the very highest order. Endowed with an intellect at once critical, vigorous, and comprehensive, a truly marvellous memory, luminous powers of exposition, captivating eloquence, great industry, and a wonderful habit of method and discipline, Mr. Bonnerjee was bound to achieve, in whatever field he chose to work, the most brilliant success. Then he had a wide outlook on life, deep and earnest feeling and a passionate desire to devote his great gifts to the service of his country. And added to these were a fine presence, an extraordinary charm of manner, and that combination of strength and restraint which made him one of the most manly men that one could come across. Such a man must tower above his fellow-men wherever he is placed. In a self-governing country he would, without doubt, have attained the position of Prime Minister. We in India twice made him President of our National Congress, and what was more, when the great movement was started twenty-one years ago and the first Congress ever held in India assembled in Bombay, the delegates unanimously elected Mr. Bonnerjee to guide them in their delibera-

tions. And since that time down to the moment of his death, Mr. Bonnerjee, with two or three others, was the very life and soul of that movement. He ungrudgingly gave to the cause his time and his resources—and this far more than is generally known. He cheerfully bore all its anxieties, his exertions for its success were unwearyed, and no man's counsel was valued higher by his countrymen, where the Congress was concerned. His courage was splendid, and it rose with difficulties, and his nerve and his clear judgment were a theme of constant admiration among his countrymen. With Mr. Bonnerjee at the helm, everyone felt safe. His was the eloquence that thrills and stirs and inspires, but his was also the practical sagacity that sees the difference between what may be attained and what cannot, and when the need arose no man was firmer than Mr. Bonnerjee in exercising a sobering and restraining influence. I can recall at this moment more than one meeting of the Subjects Committee of the Congress, at which really all important deliberations take place, where Mr. Bonnerjee's far-sighted wisdom and the great weight attaching to his personality steadied the judgments of wilder spirits, and established harmony where discord was apprehended. The loss of such a leader, no words that I can employ can adequately describe, and he has passed away at a time when he was more indispensable than ever, in view of the signs one sees of the vessel of the Congress being about to encounter somewhat rough weather. Ladies and gentlemen, it is really superfluous that I should dwell at any length before an assembly composed so largely of my own countrymen on the distinguished services rendered by Mr. Bonnerjee to our national cause. And, if I refer briefly to one or two of them, it is because they are not very widely known, and they illustrate how immense is the debt that we owe him. You are aware that no Englishman has ever served India more nobly or more zealously than the late Mr. Bradlaugh. Now, it was Mr. Bonnerjee who enlisted Mr. Bradlaugh's sympathies on our side and secured his powerful championship for our aspirations. Then the part Mr. Bonnerjee has played in

keeping together all these years the British Committee of the Congress and in maintaining unimpaired its activity in this country, will always constitute one of his best claims to our affection and gratitude. Very few, indeed, of our countrymen have any idea of the difficulties that have had to be overcome from time to time in this connection, of the worries they have involved, and of the sacrifices they have required. But, if our great friends, Sir William Wedderburn and Mr. Hume had been here to-day, they would have told you, as, indeed, our venerable chairman may, if he speaks a few words at the end, how invaluable have been Mr. Bonnerjee's co-operation and assistance in this matter. Ladies and gentlemen, I do not wish to detain you longer. Many of us lose in Mr. Bonnerjee not only a great leader, but also a warm generous friend. Who that has ever enjoyed the hospitality of his beautiful home at Croydon—now, alas, plunged into the depths of grief—will forget the singular charm of his personality, the charity of his judgments, his touching devotion to those around him, or the kindness he loved to lavish on all whom he admitted to the privilege of his friendship! And, speaking in this connection, may I say how our hearts go out to-day to the bereaved family, whose loss is beyond words, and especially to that stricken lady whose life has now been rendered desolate and to whom the world will never be the same again! One word more and I have done. Mr. Bonnerjee has now crossed the line which there is no recrossing. But he is not altogether gone from us. He has left us the precious inheritance of a noble example. He has left us his name to honour, his memory to cherish. Above all, he has left us the cause—the cause he loved so dearly and served so well. Our very sorrow to-day speaks to us of our duty to that cause and no tribute that we can offer to the memory of the departed will be more truly fitting than a resolve to recognise and an endeavour to discharge this duty according to the measure of our capacity and the requirements of our country.