

INDIA'S NATION BUILDERS

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India's nation builders by D. N. Bannerjea

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AUTHOR'S PREFACE.

It has been a great pleasure to undertake the present task, in compliance with the request to write short but reasonably complete narratives of Indians that have served as pathfinders in the difficult work of nation-building in India. But delightful in itself though the writing of the book has been, it has not been quite so easy as one might have expected, by reason of the paucity of reliable material, or difficulties in having access to such material as is actually obtainable. There is an abundance of books that may be used as running commentaries on the various movements in India, social as well as political, but there is unfortunately, a regrettable dearth of authentic biographies from which one might glean salient facts, dates or leading episodes in the careers of great men.

It is with a view of filling such gaps that the present modest attempt is made. But our object has not been so much to chronicle bare incidents as to strive to reveal the personality of the man whose contribution to one or the other of the liberalising movements in India comes under review. How far such attempts have been successful, we leave it to the readers to judge.

In the case of Sir Rabindra Nath Tagore, we have deliberately abstained from recording the personal

incidents of his earlier life, since these have been so graphically described for us, by the poet himself in "My Reminiscences"* and also since his personality and the fruition of his creative genius in the realm of Art and Literature have a more permanent interest than the details of his academic and poetic life. In any case his spiritual vision and the subtle and attractive garb with which he clothes the commonest of sentiments are the most outstanding features of the poet's entire career. Similarly in the cases of one or two others who, after a short-lived and strenuous activity in their respective spheres have since retired, for various reasons, from public life, we have avoided going into personal incidents.

The writer is in the fullest sympathy with the aspirations of his educated countrymen and with their demand that a substantial measure of self-government must be given to India immediately, in so far as it is compatible with the security and stability of the Empire as a whole. And it is the writer's firm conviction that a genuine concession to this demand, here and now, would strengthen the bonds between England and India, and that eventual fullest autonomy within the Empire would leave the destinies of India and the mother country indissolubly linked.

The author desires, however, to repudiate all methods of agitation that are not strictly constitutional, and to dissociate himself from any propaganda that exploits race-hatred to promote its

* Macmillan and Co., London, 7s. 6d.

ends. We sincerely feel that religious, social and political reform must go hand in hand, so that the prevailing anomalies in the Indian communities may not furnish a handle for the reactionary obstruction of the bureaucracy in India, nor that indifference to the demands of India's social emancipation may accentuate the revolutionary destruction of certain misguided idealists. There must be an advance towards the goal, through all the various avenues of approach.

Though the main ideas and opinions expressed in the book are my own, I take this opportunity to say that the study of "The Renaissance in India," by the Rev. C. F. Andrews, first aroused my interest in the study of Indian problems. This gifted writer surveyed the modern situation in India from the point of view of missionary activity: I have tried to review the modern developments in India in close association with their founders, in the light of their bearing on the birth and the gradual consolidation of the National Idea, as the result of the West meeting the East.

I express my thanks to the authorities of the British Museum for affording me every facility for getting at original documents, periodicals and books in general.

My thanks are likewise due to Colonel Josiah C. Wedgwood, M.P., for always assisting me with advice and suggestions in my literary ventures, and to the Rt. Hon. H. A. L. Fisher, the President of the Board of Education, for his inspiring glimpses into the character and life-work of the late Mr. G. K.