

**RABINDRANATH
TAGORE: A
BIOGRAPHICAL STUDY**

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Rabindranath Tagore: A Biographical Study by Ernest Rhys

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ERNEST RHYS

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BY
ERNEST RHYS



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TO
HILDE SCHUSTER
AND TO THE MEMORY OF
ALFRED SCHUSTER
WHO DIED FOR HIS COUNTRY

*"Grieve not for them who are to die, for all these are but
phantom forms moulded upon that One Real that is Myself,
unborn, undying, that neither slays nor can be slain."—
"Bhagavad Gita."*

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PREFACE

"NATURE shut her hands and laughingly asked every day, 'What have I got inside?' and nothing seemed impossible."

These words from Rabindranath Tagore's autobiography, referring to the eager mornings of his early boyhood, may serve as key to the following account, which attempts to relate him both to the old tradition in India and to the new day anticipated in his writings. Such as they are, the chapters that succeed must be left now to answer for themselves; but at the last moment I am tempted to add two or three passages. For since this book was written things have happened which have sadly changed our perspective; and they serve to recall a day, before their faintest shadow had fallen, when this visitor from India, lying ill in London, scanned the omens and read them very uneasily.

It was one of the rare occasions, during his

visit, when we were able to talk uninterruptedly about the state of India and our own affairs, and he spoke with alarm of the temper of the great nations and the life of the great cities like Paris and London, whose love of luxury, need of sensation, and craving for excitement were up against every finer instinct he cherished. When he spoke of the forces in the Western world which he thought must become disruptive and lead to trouble, and stretched out his hands, it might have been the moral map of Europe, with its teeming continent and restless atoms, that lay spread out before him. The major energies, as he viewed them, were not constructive; they did not make for the world's commonwealth, and by their nature they must come into conflict sooner or later.

Now, as I recall that afternoon—not much more than a twelvemonth ago—it is impossible not to see in the present war the grim realisation of those misgivings; and that they were not the passing fancy of a sick man is shown by the frequent allusions in his own pages to the