



researches from which is pouring forth and will pour forth, India's quota to the sumtotal of human knowledge and to the progress of his advancing thought. If it is the mission of India—as it is the dream of her poets and patriots and the hope of many advanced spirits in Europe and in America—to deliver to a worn-out, war-weary and exhausted world, the healing balm of her culture, the soothing message of her spirituality and the abiding secret of her eternal life on earth, it will ever rebound to his enduring glory that Asutosh paved the way for this consummation by introducing and encouraging studies and researches in Anthropology, and in the history, culture and civilization of ancient India, by making his Alma mater, a sanctuary of world's scholarship and a confluence of world's culture, which is welcoming within its doors, many savants and scholars, doctors and philosophers from different renowned centres of learning all over the world, and thus, by bringing about once more in the twentieth century, a cultural and intellectual communion of India with the cultural and intellectual world abroad! And this communion will herald the dawn of a new era in her history—it will hasten the day of her resurrection—the day of her spiritual leadership.

Apart from this crowning achievement—this accomplishment of his God-given mission which will at once hand down his name to, and will be the proud heritage of, the generations yet unborn,



Asutosh's interests and activities, knowledge and pre-eminence spread in so many directions, his abilities and intellect shone in such multifarious and often diverse subjects that eminence in any one of them would have raised a man from common mediocrity. It may be reasonably asserted—after making due allowance for the fundamentally different circumstances—that Asutosh belonged to that wonderful and extremely rare class of great men of which Julius Caesar in the ancient, Michael Angelo in the mediaeval and Napoleon, in the modern world and our Ram Mohan Roy were the most brilliant representatives. And he has left many marks of his Roman hand in the foundation and superstructure of a vital part of our national greatness and national well-being, not less in various other fields—in the fields of law and jurisprudence and in a lesser degree in Mathematics, in the realm of social reform and in the forward march of a newborn nationalism. No where, indeed, one might say in the India of today is to be met with such a unique personality in whom have risen and blended, the fearless reformer and the patient pioneer, the great thinker and the steadfast worker, the brilliant lawyer, the learned Judge and the renowned jurist, a reputed scientific and literary scholar, an eminent mathematician and a literateur, a profound idealist and a very practical, tenacious and struggling individual, a high official and a selfless patriot, a nationalist to the core of his



being, a sure judge of men and things, a born ruler and leader of men as also of thought, a constructive and organizing genius, a man of lofty ideas and high principles as well as a master of the minutest details, a high priest of Indian nationalism and an architect of the nation in making, almost a seer and a sage at times.



CHAPTER II.

Early Life.

The ancestral home in Hooghly district—His father, Ganga Prosad—Asutosh's birth—His father's interest in him—The influence of illustrious men on his infant mind—his early ambitions—His mother—His eminent tutors—His admission into high school, its famous Head Master and assistant Head Master—His varied reading and early fame, his proficiency in Mathematics—the boy becomes a Member of London Mathematical Association—his love of study.

For the proper understanding of the personality as well as the achievements of a great man, we must know the story of his life. We do not, however, propose to delineate, or deal with, the life-story of Asutosh in its fuller details and grandeurs; we leave to his biographer the privilege of narrating the story of his life, and of setting forth in due order and importance, the various, complex and innumerable incidents of his day-to-day-life, as he lived it. Let us bear in mind the more important and outstanding facts of his life, so that we may be all the better able to understand the man, appreciate his personality and judge his worth and his achievements; curiously enough, notwithstanding his complex character, his versatile personality, his meteoric rise, his brilliant career and varied works in life, the story of his life is, indeed, a very simple one from the very beginning to the end and can be, unlike others, told in brief.



Asutosh's father, Dr. Ganga Prasad Mukherjee, came of a very old and respectable Brahmin family that lived at and hardly stirred out of a village, in the district of Hooghly in Bengal—it is called Jirat-Balagar and is situated by the side of the sacred river of the Hindus—the Ganges. Towards the end of the year 1836, Ganga Prosad was born in the village home of his family. Rural Bengal, in those good old days was—not as it is today poverty-stricken, disease-ridden,—but a happy place to live in; the villages, big and small—not excepting the one we are just concerned with—were, in a word, flowing with milk and honey, abounding with fruits and flowers, fishes and vegetables; they were the very dwelling places of health and happiness—the veritable home of beauties and glories of Nature, characteristic of Bengal, particularly of rural Bengal; and the villagers lived in their placid but not 'pathetic' contentment, knowing few wants, little worries or cares or troubles that hang round our necks like a millstone now-a-days. Their outlook was narrow, and the horizon of their knowledge and experience, limited to a degree. They hardly went abroad; they scarcely came out of their homes—quite and peaceful as far as possible; they lived and passed their simple and uneventful life in their little circles, in their pleasant surroundings.

But Ganga Prosad left the beaten track. Endowed with a remarkable independence of spirit and



resoluteness of action, fired with higher ambitions and hopes than could be realized within the orbit of his rural abode, he proved the exception to the general rule—that of staying at home, following the common path. His innate thirst for knowledge, his profound love of learning, his striking aspirations—striking in a rural boy in those good old days—and his keen yearning for a larger and more glorious life drove him to Calcutta, 'the London of the East', where one could find ample scope for one's genius and talents, where there was, in that period, sufficient room for all sorts and conditions of men. But Calcutta in those by-gone-days was not surely the city of palaces as it is today; Calcutta was extremely unhealthy, dark and dirty—not exactly an enviable place to live in, so far as the common and poorer section of the people was concerned at any rate. Houses, no habitable and worthy, lanes and streets filthy and uncared for, jungles here and there, and a periodic, if not continuous prevalence of various diseases, were the characteristic features of the then capital of British India. All these and many other difficulties and disadvantages notwithstanding, Ganga Prosad came down to Calcutta to prosecute his studies; once settled here, nothing could make him swerve an inch from his chosen path—from his determination to rise into eminence. This spirit of adventure, this indifference to hardships and privations, this tenacity of purposes, this urge of a high ideal, this pursuit of a



Not

CSL

EARLY LIFE.

23

lofty aim—which drove him to leave his quiet and happy ancestral home in the village for a dubious career, for a hard life of struggle in Calcutta and which were the more salient features of his son's personality—marked the father out, from the very outset, as one destined to be great; and great he was not only in his own life—in the profession he followed, but great—greater still—as the father of one of the greatest and most brilliant men our country has produced in our times. Ganga Prosad graduated in 1861; and an excellent and comfortable post under Government, he could have easily secured, just as most of the first batches of the graduates had done; and thus was an easy, comfortable—almost luxurious—life within his easy reach, one, moreover, without much of the trials and tribulations the ups and downs that generally fall to the lot of a struggling individual in an independent profession. But then, he was not one of those ordinary, easy going and matter-of-fact people. He got himself admitted into the Calcutta Medical College and thus chalked out a path for himself, full of uncertainties and difficulties and struggles that prove quite a stumbling block to many an aspiring and ambitious youth. While Ganga Prosad was in his Third Year class in the Medical College, Asutosh was born in the early morning of the 29th June 1864, in a rented house in Malanga Lane, Bowbazar. The baby that grew into one of the stoutest and strongest man in Bengal—the Bengal Tiger—was, during



the first few years of its life, sickly to a degree, and it was only the unremitting and incessant care and vigilance of its noble and loving mother that kept its body and soul together. The then extremely alluring prospects of Government service in the Medical Department once more failed to attract the young, aspiring and independent youth, Ganga Prosad, after he had taken his Degree of Bachelor of Medicine, in 1866,—he once more elected to live an independent life, following the profession he qualified himself for.

The advice of some of his relatives and well-wishers who resided in the locality, induced him to settle at Bhowanipur, and by dint of his perseverance and skill, his knowledge and tact, he was able to make his mark in his profession in no time; he rose into eminence and fame, as a matter of course. As the years rolled by, his fair name and skill travelled all over the city and its suburbs and he began to enjoy a very extensive practice, he built the large mansion at the present Road (named after Asutosh) and took up his residence at the new building in 1880—the building which was the home of Asutosh, for, by far, the greater part of his life. As an eminent and successful practitioner, Ganga Prosad's was necessarily a very busy and active life; nevertheless, he found time to do many things beyond the sphere of his profession and in spite of his swelling practice. He was a pioneer in vernacular medical literature and is still remembered for his medical work in Bengali—'Chikitsa Prokasa'.



Ganga Prosad took, from the beginning, a very keen and profound interest in the education of his infant son; one day after his return from his school, the infant Asutosh told his father that he would not go to that school any longer; the students were huddled together in such a manner and there was so much noise and confusion that it was more a 'Jattra' (native theatrical) party than a school. If any child was the father of the man, Asutosh, surely was one; here was to be found the promise and potentialities of the great educational reformer in his very fifth year; at this complaint of his son, Ganga Prosad moved the school authorities and had this evil remedied. Ganga Prosad bade and made his son rise very early in the morning and took him with himself when he would take his morning constitutional; and this habit of his son acquired in his childhood endured to the very end of his crowded and strenuous life. At the infant school, Asutosh finished his course within a much shorter period than his fellow students. From his early infancy Asutosh showed unmistakable signs of his intellectual ascendancy, his love of knowledge and his keen yearning for a fuller and higher life that constituted the corner-stone of his complex character. After his studies were finished at the infant school, Ganga Prosad did not get his son admitted into a high school lest his son—the infant prodigy—would be spoiled by bad company or would have to wait too long to keep pace with the progress



of the ordinary students; so he took upon himself to supervise the boy's education at home and engaged very earnest and competent private tutors. The early days of his infancy were really a very important period in the life of the man; this was the formative period—the germinating time—when were sown the seeds of future greatness and glory, of the noble aspirations and lofty idealism, which, under fostering care and favourable circumstances, not only sprouted out but grew into a mighty and majestic tree in after life. Ganga Prosad may justly be called an ideal and worthy father of the ideal and worthy son, Asutosh; he took minutest care of, and gave the greatest attention to, the proper education of the infant prodigy that his son really was; he contributed, by every possible means, by example and precept by affection and supervision, to the development of his intellectual powers, to the building of his character and to the unfolding of his mind. No doubt, he earned a lot of money; many people, also, possess or amass a lot and some on, a far larger scale; but then how many of his country men—his well-to-do and rich country men—take up the education of their boys, so seriously and so earnestly? In the course of his morning walk, at the intervals of his frequent professional calls, he would snatch, not simply moments—but quite a good many minutes even hours—to imprint, to impress, upon the infant mind of his son, much that was good and noble, lofty and wholesome; thus he would encourage



and urge his aspiring son to go onward in his studies, to march forward in his life; thus would he hold up before his mind's eye a great ideal—the ideal of greatness to be achieved, the ideal of a noble life to be lived. And thus not leaving his child at the tender mercies of the overworked, half-fed school master not by burying him in a heap of books of all sorts and conditions—as is the case with most of the boys—but by his own affectionate exertion and personal supervision he enabled the noble infant soul to unfold itself in various ways. As he was making rapid strides in the progress of his education at home, the presence there, of many men of light and leading men of fame and eminence, appealed to boy's infant imagination, stirred his aspirations, urged and convinced him that he also could 'make his life sublime.' It was the presence and company of that great Bengali jurist and Judge,—one whose judgments have acquired almost classical authority and who, as an intimate friend of Dr. Ganga Prosad, visited his place frequently—Mr. Justice Dwarka Nath Mitter—that made him aspire to a seat on the Bench of the premier High Court of India; and this, quite in his infancy! Henceforth, the glorious prospects of High Court Judgeship and the Premchand Roychand Studentship—the blue ribbon of the Calcutta University—fascinated him and drowned all other thoughts in his mind. And a seat on the Bench was, at that time, the utmost and most exalted position that the children of the soil could aspire to; thus



Asutosh pitched his ambition into the highest key; he did not aim at second best; and this act of his infant mind grew into a strong—almost irresistible—habit and characteristic of the man that remained throughout his career and paved the way for much of the success that he won; this high ambition, this lofty ideal that took complete possession of the infant—at the period of life, though formative and impressionable, when the vast majority of the children care little for anything but play and recreation—proved ultimately to be the foundation and plinth of the future achievements. Apart from this loftiness of the ideal and ambition in life, the boy Asutosh brought a rare thoroughness, an uncommon earnestness and resolution to bear upon his studies at home, and his father was exceedingly careful of the company his son kept; he was convinced—as it is only too true and painfully true—that nothing works more havoc on, nothing injures the mentality and spoils the character of, infants and youths, more than the evil company of the bad and mischievous elements in society; so he kept his son—and took good care to do it—at an arm's length from this great source of mischief and misery. The boy, moreover, was fortunate in having as his mother a high-souled lady who was altogether above the ordinary, and different from the common, run of women; she was a pious, good-natured, devoted and careful mother, unlike those who would spoil their children with too much affection and too much licence; what with the presiding angel of his



mother, what with an eminent man and famous physician as a father, what with the presence of the many of the elite of the city as the latter's friends, the boy Asutosh was never in want of inspiration, example and advice ; under these happy auspices, began and progressed the instruction and education of the future intellectual giant, the hero of work and independence, in the most impressionable years of his early life ; and no wonder, he was advancing, in his studies, by leaps and bounds, till his progress was arrested, for some time, by an unforeseen circumstance - his sudden illness ; he began to suffer from palpitation of heart ; Ganga Prosad was much concerned about his infant son, and under European medical advice, he sent him to Mathura for a change ; at this place not only was he enabled to recruit his health but he was said to take three seers of milk daily ; few grown-up boys and adults are capable of taking so large a quantity of milk, today and this healthy, splendid appetite did not leave him through life.

At Mathura, the welcome change of climate and surroundings, the beautiful scenery and fresh atmosphere cheered him a good deal, and he was not only restored to his health and vigour - but he became doubly healthy and vigorous. On their way back, Asutosh and those who went with him, broke their journey at Benares and stayed there for a few days ; here he was fortunate enough to meet the late illustrious countryman of ours, Isswar Chandra Vidyasagore of revered memory ; Asutosh had

heard much of Vidyasagore, now that he saw him, great was the impression upon his infant mind of that prince of men. Once more he met him, after some time, at Messrs. Thaker Spink and Co's at Calcutta; here Vidyasagore presented him with an excellent copy of Robinson Crusoe and asked him to read it carefully. This present was cherished by Asutosh all his life as a precious memento and it still forms a valuable part of heirloom that he left his family. A sure judge of men and things as he was, Vidyasagore was keenly interested in, and much impressed with, the infant prodigy. After his return from Mathura, Ganga Prosad resolved to get his son admitted into a high school, and his choice, naturally enough, fell upon the South Suburban School; for not only was the school close by, but it was noted for the quality of its teaching and care taken for the boys; and it was also famous for the eminence and learning of its Head Master—Sj Sibnath Sastry—who became one of the most respected writers, thinkers, and reformers of the nineteenth century Bengal, as also on account of its second master—the late lamented Ashutosh Biswas who rose to be a leading pleader at Alipur and met an untimely and tragic death at the hands of some Bengali anarchists. Asutosh was quite fit for the Third Class, but he was taken into the Fourth Class, as he was considered too young for the former. By dint of the innate thoroughness—which was one of his characteristics in afterlife—the inquisitiveness of his



mind as well as the constant watch and wholesome advice of his father, the boy began to master his lessons quickly and showed considerable aptitude for many things beyond the range of his studies, such as for instance, for mathematics. Ganga Prosad engaged a learned professor, Sj Panchanon Paldhi, to coach him in Sanskrit literature and grammar. Knowing as he did the lofty ambition of his son to be a High Court Judge, Ganga Prosad wished his son to be a Vakil and in order to rise to the highest rung of the legal ladder, a vakil must be a good and impressive speaker and must have sufficient command of English. But strange as it may seem—for his was the one of the very few voices in the India of today that thundered forth its majestic eloquence and unique independence delivering the message of freedom, and culture and of intellectual regeneration, at Mysore, at Bangalore, at Benares, at Lucknow, at Lahore and at Calcutta—Asutosh was rather shy of speech in boyhood; so Ganga Prosad taught him how to deliver a speech, effectively, by bidding him stand on a stool by the side of a table; he also taught him how to pronounce English words correctly, by the help of a Chamber's Dictionary. Thus was the way paved for the rise of the Bengal Tiger whose commanding eloquence was looked forward to eagerly by thousands of his countrymen and it was echoed and reechoed through the length and breadth of the land. The renowned professor Sj Gangadhar Bannerji and the famous ex-Minister and public man



of Bihar—Sj. Madhusudhan Das M.A., B.L., C.I.E., who gave up his high post for the sake of his conviction—were among his interested private tutors at this period; Asutosh was, of course, not content with the progress of his studies at the school but extended his range of reading a good deal. His knowledge of, and aptitude for, History, Sanskrit, English and Mathematics were far in advance of his fellowstudents. His life-long studious habit that made him bury himself, in his spare times, in a heap of books, was strengthened at this time and he began to have a great liking for serious literature and thoughtful books.

While a student of the First Class he suffered rather badly from a good many boils all over his body. This was a great hinderance to him in his preparations for the coming Entrance Examination and he had almost to put a stop to the vigorous prosecutions of his studies for sometime; in consequence he could not secure the very first place in the Examination in 1879, at which he aimed and which he was expected, in the ordinary circumstances, to have won; instead he stood second. It was a matter of no little regret—it was a keen disappointment to him thus to have failed to carry off the highest laurels in the first University Examination. But the chief point to be noted in connection with the school life and school education of the boy who became a great intellectual giant and a hero of independent action and thinking in afterlife, was the outstanding fact that he was miles in advance of his



brethren; he not only mastered, or acquired a remarkable proficiency in, quite a large number of subjects—much too large for his fellow students—but he was also capable of sound and profound thinking on many serious matters; he had already formed and had his own opinions and views on many momentous questions, and like Disraeli and other great men, when his seniors and fellow students were enjoying themselves with various idle and unproductive things or reading all sorts of novels and sensational books, Asutosh developed, in a marked degree, an abiding taste for serious literature, an extraordinary studious habit and love of learning for its own sake; during this period, he had already chalked out a line of action for himself and meditated deeply upon the conditions of success and glory, and went on advancing steadily—sometimes a bit too rapidly.

He would be engaged in his studies from fifteen to eighteen hours a day; and his fame as a mathematical scholar spread far and wide—it reached England. While yet a school boy, he found himself a member of London Mathematical Association; he sent them many solutions of their problems and many were the prizes that fell to his lot; and most of his solutions were really good and quite original and were treated as genuine contributions to the study of Mathematics—they were called 'Mookerjee's Theorems.' These school-life achievements of Asutosh still find favour at the renowned centre of mathematical



studies—the University of Cambridge where they are included in the curriculum. His extraordinary talent and originality as a mathematician were manifested quite early in his life. Sj. Annadaprosad Bosu, M.A., was appointed a senior teacher of Mathematics in the South Suburban School; and when he heard of the fame of his pupil, Asutosh, he wished to test him; with this end in view, he gave his boys, a very subtle and intricate problem of simultaneous equation with three unknown factors; Asutosh solved this difficult problem quite easily and then began to read other books; after a while Annada Babu desired to know if the problem had been solved by any one in the class; but he knew it quite well that only one of them was equal to it and it was no other than his talented pupil, Asutosh. Then he walked up to the board to explain the problem but what was his plight when he found himself unable to do it! after several futile attempts at solution and with a perspiring forehead, he had to copy the solution of Asutosh; the teacher never, afterwards, forgot this defeat at the hands of his pupil.

Asutosh's innate and insatiable love of work and love of learning—and his strong abhorrence of idleness—were manifest quite early. Once it so happened on an auspicious day of Swaraswati Puja that Asutosh and his younger brother, Hemanta Kumar, disagreed as to whether the day was to be spent in festivities and enjoyments or in reading and



learning new things ; Asutosh held that the proper way of worshipping the Goddess of Learning was in profound devotion to learning and studies, and not in idle enjoyments and pleasures ; his brother wanted to give up all work and study, and spend the day in festivities. A reference being made to their father, Ganga Prosad bade both his sons join the other boys at the temple of Swaraswati.



CHAPTER III.

Academic Career.

Asutosh's admission into the Presidency College, its fame, its staff, its library and its students—Publication of his thesis in England—the range of his studies—his peculiar illness and recovery at Gajipur—His fresh illness—The result of I. A. Examination—Asutosh, a vegetarian—His early interest in University affairs—He takes the more difficult course in B. A.—his activities at the College—His achievements in B. A., M. A., P. R.S. M. A. (science)—His interview with the Director of Public Instruction and refusal of service—Joins City College as a law student—Interview with Vice-Chancellor—At the auction sale of a library—Articled to Dr. Rash Behari Ghosh.

Presidency College of Calcutta in the early eighties of the last century maintained its high—one might say highest—position among the educational institutions of the province, notwithstanding the highly eminent and even brilliant staff of many private colleges in and outside Calcutta. Those were the days of the first brilliant batches of graduates, and many of them—there were too many to name—were on the staff of the private Colleges. But the Presidency College had also many to be proud of; Mr. Tawney, who was the Principal, the old Dr. Booth, Messrs. Rowe, Macann, Elliot, Webb, Pearycharan Sircar, Prosanna Kumar Sarbadhicari, Perceval and others, were wellknown as much for their scholarship as for their solicitude for the student's wellbeing; it is a



long established fashion both among the best students and those coming of rich and noted families, to prosecute their studies at the Presidency College; so as a matter of course, Asutosh got himself admitted into its First Year Class in the year 1880. To compare great things with small, like Oxford and Cambridge, the Presidency College has been attracting most of the boys of the wealthy and aristocratic families—as also the sons of famous and rising men. Among the contemporary students were many who rose into eminence and made their mark in the public life of the country, such as : Byomkesh Chakravarty, Asutosh Chaudhuri, Bhupendra Nath Bose, Heramba Chandra Moitra, Satyendra Prosanna Sinha, Profulla Chandra Roy, Suresh Prosad Sarvadhicari, Abdar Rahim, Sumsul Huda and others. Many of the students—specially of the richer class rolled in wealth and luxury and would come to College in rich clothes and newer and newer things, making themselves happy and comfortable as much as they could; and unlike Oxford and Cambridge and many other British Universities which supply the one familiar soil for easy but profound friendship, which lasts through life, among the rising intellectuals and future leaders of men in the United Kingdom, no friendship worth the name, sprang up between any of his easy-going and ease-loving college chums and Asutosh who was a very quiet, unostentatious, simple and serious-minded student, always deadly earnest in his studies, burying himself in his



books all the time. His admission into the Presidency College was said by Asutosh to be a primary cause of his future eminence in life ; it was, no doubt, true to some extent at any rate. Here, not only was he enabled to sit at the feet of various teachers who formed a galaxy of gifted scholars of varied intellectual attainments and talents,—and their personal interest in, and close and intimate touch with him went a long way to urge, encourage and stimulate his youthful mind ; but its immense library with its countless books and numerous periodicals, was also a great factor in his collegiate education ; he would often wonder if it was given to any single human being to go through the sea of books on all possible subjects that human mind and human intelligence have been able to dwell on. Naturally enough, he would pass most of his time there, absorbed in reading.

Henceforth, Asutosh resolved and began to master Mathematics thoroughly ; he felt a keen desire to send to England his occasional writings and the problems he worked out, to publish them in British periodicals, and he actually sent a mathematical thesis to the 'Cambridge Messenger of Mathematics', which, though written five years before, was duly published. His love of learning and his intellectual capacities were so great and rare that he went through all the books prescribed for the M. A. Examinations in Mathematics as well as many masterpieces in English literature, such as Chaucer (text book for the M. A. in English). A fellow student of his was not a



little surprised to find him read Chaucer and said to him, "What are you doing Asu? you are reading Chaucer now! It is included in the M. A. course in English and you are now only in the First Year Class." Asutosh promptly replied, "One day I must take the M. A. course in English, what harm in reading it now?" In this way he would take time by the forelock and be in advance of his fellowmen; he, however, felt soon that in order to be a good and sound mathematician, one must learn French; for, not only Laplace but also many other pre-eminent mathematicians have produced numerous standard works on Mathematics in French; so Asutosh began, by his own exertion, to learn, and read a good many books in, French; he even acquired some knowledge of German. Mathematics, was, undoubtedly, his favourite subject now and hereafter, but English and Sanskrit literatures as well as Science claimed his attention no less. History, also, attracted him considerably and time and often, he would be profoundly absorbed in its study and contemplation. Nor was the lesson of History lost upon him, trained and accustomed as he was from his boyhood, to exact sciences. He sufficiently profited by the study of history to have within his grasp, not only a faithful story of the past, not only a narration of the important events of the dim and distant past long passed off, or of the epochs and centuries recently gone, not only a consistent and connected account of the deeds and doings of his fellowmen that are



no more, or a sound knowledge of their arts and sciences, their institutions and their philosophy; but he was able, by his study of History, to arrive at a correct theory of the rise and fall of nations, and of civilizations and cultures of the different peoples on earth. And this study of history in this higher and wider and fuller sense—and the profound knowledge and the broad outlook that he gained therefrom,—made him a liberal-minded and far-sighted statesman, and a sage, even a seer that he undoubtedly was in his better mind ! And it was really due to his study and love of History, as much as to his patriotism, that he was actuated, quite early in life, with a strong desire, and moved by an irresistible will, to have the broken and scattered fragments of his country's ancient history, woven together into a faithful and live picture of its hoary civilization and culture in the various phases and in their different aspects, so as to mirror India to her own children, and enable her to regain her soul lost in age-long slumber.

Dr. Ganga Prosad made it a point to go to bed at ten in the evening. He enjoined upon his son to sleep early; but a little after the father was abed, Asutosh used to light his lamp and continue his studies quite late in the night, and thus he would keep up late hours from day to day, without the knowledge of his father as well as of other members of the family. One day, however, in the dead of night, his father found him not only wide awake but absorbed in reading.



amidst a heap of books ; he mildly took his son to task and pointed out that Nature does not let them who disobey her laws, go scot free, rather she punishes them severely. But this habit of studying late in the night—this sort of mental labour and intellectual strain—which was more than ordinary human constitution could stand, told upon his health badly, and he was attacked with a most painful malady in the brain, which went from bad to worse as the summer set in and progressed ; Dr. Ganga Prosad took minutest care in the treatment of his son, but to no effect ; so he sent him away for a change of climate and surroundings to Gajipur, where his own brother was the District Engineer. With the increase of atmospheric heat, the disease took such a serious turn that he would be quite senseless for sometime, but as the rains set in, it showed signs of lessening. Gajipur is noted—or was noted at the time—for its beautiful roses ; the sweet fragrance and soothing beauty of the cluster of roses that bloomed in profusion there, by the side of which he would take his walk, went a long way in the recruitment of his shattered health ; but it was really an accident that cured him of his serious and troublesome malady ; it was rather curious it so happened that one morning, a furious black bee came rushing upon him on its swift wings, it came from a heave near by, which was stoned by another fellow, but the angry bee supposed poor Asutosh to be the culprit and stung him so severely that he dropped down senseless, and the advice and assistance of all present, including



those of the attending physician, could not bring him back to his senses ; he came back to himself after a lapse of twentyfour hours ; he opened his eyes, as though he rose from his swoon, a new man—a dead weight having gone down from his head. The doctors agreed that the poison of the bee destroyed the poison that caused the disease. Asutosh's trouble and illness were not, however, over ; after his return from Gajipur, he was attacked with typhoid and though he was cured, after sometime, under the able treatment of eminent physicians, he was too weak for any mental or physical labour ; his examination—I. A—was near at hand ; too weak and enfeebled as he was, he was not dissuaded from appearing at it ; the condition of his health and constitution at this time, may be judged by the fact that he had to be stimulated in the course of the examinations, with the help of an electric battery, and when the result was out, one and all were surprised to find his name not only appearing among the successful candidates, but being placed Third in order of merit ; that he stood Third, notwithstanding all those adverse circumstances—his prolonged and serious illnesses that would have surely prevented an ordinary man from putting in an appearance, from succeeding, at any rate, and that necessitated an electric battery to stimulate his strength to stand the strain of examination—was, indeed, more than his best well-wishers could expect ; it was truly a marvellous fact. The result



of his examination did, of course, exceed the highest anticipations of all, but it is no surprise to us, now that we have the whole of his extraordinary career before us. Two events of this period need a special mention here ; after his illness that affected his brain, Asutosh who, in the course of his preparations for his examination and in the midst of his serious and multifarious studies, had had enough of mental labour and intellectual strain gave up fish and flesh and became a strict and simple vegetarian, and it was not until after a lapse of twenty years in 1900 that he was almost forced to take to fish, at the importunities of his doctors—as he was badly attacked with diarrhoea. In the year 1881 his uncle Sj. Radhika Prosad Mukherjee became a Fellow of the Calcutta University ; this was indeed a turning point in the drama of his life, and thus began a connection between the University and his family which not only proved to be the most momentous in its history but is happily, continuing from generation to generation ; from this time, the dry and uninteresting minutes and the papers of the University that were sent to his uncle, Asutosh would go through, with breathless interest and attention. Thus from his very second year in the College, he began to acquaint himself with the details of the proceedings as also of the inner life and working of the University he was destined to reform, to reshape and renovate into the greatest temple of learning in Asia and one



of the most renowned centres of scholarship and research in the world.

The B. A. students of the period had to choose between two courses A and B ; 'A' course included English, Mathematics, Sanskrit, Philosophy, History and Additional Mathematics and the students had to take up English and Mathematics and any three among Sanskrit, Philosophy, History and Additional Mathematics. Besides English and Mathematics, 'B' course students had to choose any two subjects among Physics, Chemistry and Physical Geography. Owing to the inherent difficulty of getting very high marks in the 'A' course—as high as 'B' course—as also to the fact that the former included one subject more than the latter—though the total marks were same, no student could stand first in the B. A. Examination from 'A' course during a period of ten years from 1874—83, only with one solitary exception, that of Mr. Canady. Asutosh was, now, determined to make good his failure—no doubt under circumstances altogether beyond his or other's control—in the two previous University Examinations, by scoring the highest place in the B. A. He took the more difficult 'A' course, leaving the easier 'B' course ; indeed it grew into a habit characteristic of him to shun the easy path, and take to the more arduous, more difficult one, for as he said on a famous occasion after a lapse of forty years, 'the more difficult and perilous the duty', the greater its charms and attractions ; and throughout his crowded life, the more onerous the



responsibilities, the more thorny his path, the more was he attracted to, the more did he delight in, them.

Dr. William Booth, the well-known Mathematician, was at that period, the professor of the Mathematics at the Presidency College, and Asutosh was not only a pupil to his liking but one quite after his heart; he was a great teacher, an earnest friend of the students, an erudite scholar and simple-minded man. One day it so happened that he actually read 75 pages of a difficult book in such a hurried way that other students who had also taken up Additional Mathematics, could not at all follow the learned professor and gave up the subject; but as the book was already read by him long before, Asutosh found it not at all difficult to keep pace with the progress of his teacher, who, between them, went so far as to finish the books prescribed for the M. A. Examination also. Asutosh was now determined to profit by his very painful previous experiences of the regrettable effects of excessive reading; he did not forget this time what a terrible pass he was brought to by too much mental labour and too much reading that he freely indulged in; now he took much care to observe the rules necessary to preserve his health, and he took exercises and walks regularly; whenever he had leisure, he would repair to the college library and be absorbed in the useful and thoughtful books; he was always full of wonder and admiration to see the huge collection of books there, and felt a keen desire to possess his own library at home, and a very good



one too ; and afterwards he had the satisfaction of having a very large and rich library—if not the largest and richest possessed by a private individual in India. Among the periodicals, that were brought out to the College, the 'Educational Times' attracted his attention considerably for in that paper, many eminent and learned men of Europe, published many problems and articles, while others sent replies ; Asutosh was also strongly inclined to send to it, his own articles and his answers to other's problems ; in 1883 he sent his "Extension of Theorem of Solmons" to the "Cambridge Messenger of Mathematics." A brilliant and versatile scholar as he was at the college, Asutosh was not a student merely confined to his books ; occasionally he gave excellent proof his organizing capacities and debating faculties. On the death of one of his professors—Dr. Hugh Macann—he raised a subscription and placed, in his memory, a marble tablet in the Library Hall and delivered an eloquent and impressive speech at meeting held to mourn his loss ; he was also an active and prominent figure in the College Debating Club in which he developed his powers of expression and argument. Next year 1883 in the B. A. Examination his hopes and aspiration were fulfilled and he stood first scoring very high marks in all the subjects—he obtained 96 out of 100 in Philosophy, hitherto unknown. As we have already said, Asutosh aspired to the Premchand Roychand Studentship, but it was



now proposed to utilize the decent amount that is usually given to the P. R. S. men by sending some students to England for some higher courses of study; Asutosh did not at all like the idea and published an anonymous article, adducing very strong reasons against the proposal, refuting the arguments of its supporters; it was ultimately dropped by the Syndicate, after they had read Asutosh's article. At this time, Mr. Surendra Nath Bannerjee was sent to prison, and when he came out, after serving his term, the whole of Calcutta was stirred to the utmost and numerous meetings were held; Asutosh was drawn into the agitation and spoke at two different meetings, as we have referred to before. He was also attracted to Theosophy and read it for three years. The fashion of taking a 'chadar' on was common enough at that time; Asutosh also used to take it, though he was not anxious for it; but after a fall from a tram car, for which he had to thank his flowing 'chadar', he gave up the habit of taking it, without at all caring for the jests and smiles of his fellow-students; and this is the point to be noted in this connection; the predominant trait in his character—that of sticking to his decisions and carrying them out, caring little for the frowns and favours of his fellow-men, great or otherwise—was already fairly developed. The very next year he appeared at the M. A. Examination in Mathematics and stood first. Asutosh's versatile and profound scholarship was, by this time, well-known



in academic circles and received due recognition at the hands of the University authorities. The Hon'ble Mr. C. P. Ilbert—Vice-Chancellor—referred to the brilliant young scholar, in the course of his Convocation Address thus, "In the M. A. examination, Mr. Asutosh Mookerjee to whose achievements my predecessor referred in 1884, maintained his pre-eminence as a Mathematician and for the sake of the profession to which I belong I am glad to see that he has devoted himself to the study of law and has carried off the gold medal recently offered for competition among law students by my friend Moharaja Sir Jotindra Mohan Tagore." He was then appointed an examiner in M. A. (in Mathematics), within a year of his passing the M. A. examination. In 1886 he appeared at the P. R. S. examination—the highest in the University—with Mathematics, mixed Mathematics, and Science, and he was awarded the very handsome prize of Rs. 10,000, attached to the highly honoured and coveted degree (P. R. S.); he was anxious to appear, again, at the M. A. examination in purely scientific subjects, and with the permission of the Senate, he sat for M. A. in physical science with no little success; it is superfluous to state that Asutosh's studies were not confined to his text books. He carried on a good deal of original thinking and from time to time sent his problems and his papers to the British periodicals for publications. He began now to attend the Tagore Law Lectures and showed



remarkable aptitude for Law, carrying off the gold medals for three years. The extraordinary character and achievements of the brilliant graduate, noted alike for the range of his reading and the depth of his learning, attracted considerable notice.

The Director of Public Instruction called him to his office, and offered him a post in the Educational line on Rs. 250, quite a decent salary to begin with, at that time. Asutosh told the high official, that highly honoured as he was by his kind offer, he could not all the same, bring himself to accept it, unless he was granted the same status and privilege as the members of the Indian Educational Service and unless it was also guaranteed that he would not have to serve outside Calcutta. Naturally enough the good Director was surprised and angry at this unreasonable and unnatural attitude of the promising Bengali youth. He said to Asutosh that the members of Indian Educational Service were recruited in England by the Secretary of State ; so he could not appoint him to that Service but while serving in the subordinate service, Asutosh could rise and might be promoted to it, and that a member of the Educational Service like members of other Services are bound to be transferred. He however asked Asutosh what line he would take up and Asutosh told him that he intended to be a Vakil ; whereupon Sir Alfred Craford—the Director—said that there were plenty of Vakils and Asutosh would not shine in their midst. But, unfortunately for him, he proved a false prophet.



as all the world knows. This refusal of the excellent offer of the comfortable berth with great prospects and possibilities both from the material and intellectual points of view—brings—or rather brought—into prominent relief the ideal, the independence and dignity of spirit, of the man. Why should he accept a back seat, in his own country's service, why should he rot in a subordinate position, while people far inferior to him in every respect, would enjoy a fat salary and luxurious position, over his head? It was, he considered, beneath his dignity and galling to his self-respect. But it is admitted on all hands today that had he accepted a professorship of Mathematics, his favourite subject, for which he developed extraordinary aptitude, he would have worked his way to the front rank of world mathematicians.

After getting the highest University degree and prize—P.R.S.—and sitting for M.A. in another subject he began to attend Law lectures in the City College and read Smriti in the Sanskrit College, in both of which he displayed considerable proficiency. It is to be noted here that there was quite a galaxy of brilliant intellect on the staff of the City College when Asutosh joined the lawclasses there. Annanda Mohun Bose, Kalicharan Bannerjee, Krisna Kamal Bhattacharyya, Dr. Guroo Das Bannerjee S. P. Sinha—(now Lord Sinha) were among the teachers at whose feet the redoubtable jurist-Judge sat and learned his lessons in law;



of the numerous Sanskrit works that Asutosh studied in original and acquired remarkable knowledge in, were Manu, Jajñabalka, Maitak-hara Dayavaga, Dattak Chandrika and others. Hon'ble Mr. C. P. Ilbert—the Member of Viceroy's Council and Vice-Chancellor—called him to his house one day and asked him if he would like him to do any thing for him (Asutosh). Any other youth thus asked by one of the few highest officials of the land, would have considered themselves thrice fortunate, and would have wrung from him promises that might have made for the realization of his high ambitions and aspirations in the world. But not only was Asutosh made up of different stuff, he was fascinated and fired by a different and higher idealism than mere material prosperity, worldly success or happiness. Thanks to his uncle's connection with the University, he was now well acquainted with the affairs of the University as well as with the working of the system and longed to be a Fellow; so he told the Hon'ble Member and Vice-Chancellor, to make him one. The former promised him his help, but as he went Home next year, Asutosh could not become a Fellow at that time. Another very interesting and instructive incident need special mention here. After the death of the then Surveyor-General in India in 1887—who, though a very busy official, was deeply interested in, and studied, Mathematics at home—his valuable library was being sold by auction. In that library, there



were two very rare and old French mathematical works which Asutosh made up his mind to buy, when the sale was going on, an European official came there and whispered something into the auctioneer's ears; in consequence the bid for the books rose very high and Asutosh's last was Rs. 100 and 150 for the two books. But the auctioneer kept them for the European official for Rs. 101 and 151, for the latter wanted them at all costs. This gentleman was no other than Mr. Justice O'kinaley who was very much surprised indeed, to have a bill for Rs. 252 for two old and worn-out books, and he was told, this unhappy fact was due to the eagerness of a young Vakil—Asutosh Mookerjee,—to have the books himself. Mr. Justice O'kinaley enquired of Dr. Rash Behari Ghosh if he knew a young Vakil—Asutosh Mookerjee, by name; Sj. Asutosh was by by this time articted to Dr. Rash Behari Ghosh and he sent the youngman to the learned Judge with a letter of introduction. Mr. Justice O'kinaley was delighted to meet the young Vakil and said to him that he did not require a letter of introduction, the two old books were sufficient introduction in themselves; then he presented Asutosh with those two valuable books that he made such a high bid for; since then, Mr. Justice O'kinaley remained a great friend of Asutosh.



CHAPTER IV.

Active Life and sudden End.

Asutosh becomes a Fellow—His election to the Syndicate in his 24th year—His memorable resolution for inclusion of Bengalee in the curriculum—His Doctorate—His appointment to the Tagore Professorship—His election to the Bengal Council and nomination to the Calcutta Corporation, he is returned to the Imperial Council—He makes his presence felt in the Council and the select Committee on the Universities Bill—His fight and attitude on it—His elevation to the Bench when he was 40 He becomes Vice-Chancellor—His subsequent reforms and labours in the University—his second Vice-Chancellorship—His manysided interests and wide activities—The University Commission—He becomes Acting Chief Justice—He retires early and takes up the Dumraon Case at Patna—His dramatic end—the last fateful journey to the place of his birth—the unique homage and nation-wide grief.

After having taken his degree in Law—B.L. - in 1888, Asutosh enrolled himself as a Vakil of the Calcutta High Court, and five years later, he was a Doctor of Law! He wrote to Mr. Ilbert at Home that he was not yet a Fellow of the University, anxious as he was to be one. Mr Ilbert replied to say that he had spoken of him to Lord Lansdowne—the Viceroy-elect—and when His Lordship came to India, Asutosh's modest aspiration and yearning for the Fellowship were fulfilled. But Dr. Booth who was one of the greatest of his friends, insisted on his becoming a member of the Syndicate, the election to this most important body of the University was



to take place within two months hence. Acting according to the advice of Mr. Booth, Asutosh saw his three other well-wishers—Drs. Guroodas Banerjee and Mohendra Lall Sircar as well as Mr. Justice O'Kinaley who alone, gave him encouragement and promised him help. Before the election took place, Mr. Justice O'Kinaley went Home but not without giving him advice, and asking him to depend upon Col. Jaret in the matter of election. Col. Jaret was true to his word and stood by Asutosh and helped him even when he was under the shadow of a most terrible bereavement the death of his only son. There was a pathetic and glorious touch in the words that this true Christian gentleman said to Asutosh when the latter went to him; he said that God had given him a son, and He had taken him away; but that was no reason why he should not do him (Asutosh) the good office he promised him. This rare spirit of charity, of resignation and of service that moved that high-souled Englishman was worthy of a true Christian!

Sir Alfred Craford who offered Asutosh an appointment on Rs. 250 presided at the meeting of the Senate at the time of election to the Syndicate, he was against Asutosh's election, but to no effect; Asutosh became a Member of the Syndicate, duly elected, when he was only 24—this was the first time in the annals of the University that so young a man was elected to its governing body. In 1892, Asutosh



brought forward a momentous resolution in the Senate for the adoption of Bengalee language and literature as a subject for all the University Examinations up to M. A., and he delivered a most eloquent and forcible speech on this memorable occasion but in vain ; he had to reckon with opposition from various quarters ; Bengalee Literature was rejuvenated and reborn only the other day and it had yet to fight its way to universal recognition ; the debate that followed in the Senate was a very keen one ; the Europeans and their supporters said that there was serious dearth of good books in Bengalee and it was not a good enough language, then both the Pundits—champions of Sanskrit—and Mahomedans opposed the proposition ; so his motion was defeated by 17 to 11. He had, however, the satisfaction enlisting the support and sympathy of one of the fathers of modern Bengalee Literature—Bankim Chandra Chatterjee the renowned novelist—and of other men of light and leading, such as Chandra Nath Bose, Mohendra Nath Roy, Rev. Dr. Macdonald, Mr. A. M. Bose and Pandit Hara Prosad Sastri. Defeated as he was at the beginning of his career he was not a man to be bent down under the weight of depression and disappointment, he held and clung to his ideal and his objective steadfastly and lived to see his cherished hopes fulfilled by getting our mother-tongues a place as honourable and as high as other languages in the University Curriculum.

We have followed our hero rather a little closely to the threshold of his career; we have seen him work his way not only to the deliberative body—the Senate—, but also to the executive,—the Syndicate—of the premier University of India; we have seen him enter the portals of the premier High Court of India, as well, as a promising member of the Vakil Bar, serving his apprenticeship sitting at the feet of the greatest Indian jurist of modern times, who was also one of the most brilliant men, and an eminent leader of our generation; we have seen him acquire a good deal of fame for his profound and wide reading and versatile scholarship, no less for the brilliance of his varied intellectual gifts and of his academic career; possessed as he was of a robust optimism and undying faith in the cause of his country, of a singular devotion to his ideal coupled with an iron tenacity of purpose, of an undaunted courage wedded to a resolute will—all of which began to be manifest in his words and actions—his rise into eminence was as good as guaranteed, it was only a question of time. So we will take a rapid retrospect of his subsequent career crowded as it was with multifarious activities and works, ideas and thoughts.* It is a career which has undoubtedly very few parallels in modern India, in the volume, variety and complexity of

* Many facts and incidents of his life will be dwelt on in the chapters following as we review his career and personality in their different aspects and in the various fields of his labours.



sustained intellectual labour, in the significance and excellence of its striving and lastly, in the magnitude of its output, and we will not dilate upon it at this stage, as it occupied so much of the public life of the country and was so much before the public gaze.

The Calcutta High Court was at the height of fame and glory during the period when Asutosh began his career and made his mark; Paul and Garth, Woodrofe and Jackson. W. C. Bonnerjee, and T. N. Palit, Lal Mohun Ghosh and Rash Behari Ghosh, Guroodas Banerjee and Amir Ali were among the race of giants who were the shining lights of its Bench and Bar. With an established reputation as a versatile scholar* Asutosh entered its portals and continued his legal studies with considerable enthusiasm and zeal, receiving in 1894 his Doctorate in Law at the hands of his University. Contrary to the prophesy of Sir Alfrad Craford he was rising into eminence and coming to the front rank of Vakils. Four years later he was appointed Tagore Professor of Law, one of the most privileged and honoured Chairs of the University, and only renowned jurists and learned and eminent lawyers are called upon to fill it from year to year; Herbert Cowell and Arthur Philips, Rash Behari Ghosh and Gwroodas Bannerjee, Amir Ali and Mohammad Yoosoof,

* His versatile scholarship, his love of learning and his eminence as a mathematician are treated in a separate chapter.



Federick Pollock and J. G. Woodrofe, Saroda Charan Mitter and Golap Chandra Sastri were among his distinguished predecessors in the exalted Chair; but very few of the Tagore Law Professors have been invited to the post so early in life, as Asutosh was. And his 'Law of Perpetuity in British India', embodying his illuminating Tagore Lectures is considered to be an authoritative and standard work on the subject. In 1899, Asutosh was elected to the Bengal Legislative Council to represent the Calcutta University, and he took a prominent part in criticising the Calcutta Municipal Bill—the famous Mackenzie Act, but when the Bill was placed on the Statute Book in the teeth of universal non-official opposition in and outside the Legislature, Asutosh was nominated to the Calcutta Corporation by the Government of Bengal; in 1901 he was again returned to the Bengal Council which now, sent him to the Imperial Legislative Council as their non-official representative. His popularity at this time may be judged by the fact that in the matter of election to the Imperial Council, he was able to defeat such notable leaders of public opinion and aristocracy as Mr S. N. Banerjee and the Moharaja of Darbhanga who is the premier noble man in Bengal, Bihar and Orissa. On the floor of the Indian legislature, he at once made his presence felt and won an easy recognition of his personality by dint of his keen insight, his sure grasp of the principles underlying



the legislations, his grip of the realities of a situation, his forensic eloquence and his debating powers. His opposition to the reactionary legislative measures was vigorous and effective, and along with the late Mr. Gokhale, Asutosh led the Opposition—insignificant, no doubt it was, in numerical strength, in the face of overwhelming majority of official phalanx; he pressed and presented the Indian point of view, on the floor of the House, on the Select Committee for the short period he was there, with an eloquence and skill that made a strong impression on the Council as well as on the general public outside. When in January 1904, he took his seat in the Council, Hon'ble Mr. Raleigh who was the President of Lord Curzon's famous Universities Commission, had already introduced the Indian Universities Bill, based on the recommendations of the Commission; when the Commission sat at Calcutta, Asutosh was co-opted a member thereof, in consideration of his association with the Commission and with the Calcutta University—with the latter, for the last 16 years—as also of his well-known mastery of the intricacies and complexities of, and his unique acquaintance with, the life and working, of the Universities in India, he was at once placed on the Select Committee on the Bill. Mr. Gokhale who was already there found an able collaborator in Asutosh and they, between them, opposed the measure at every stage, moving scores of amendments one after another,



but to no effect. But there was a difference—though not a fundamental one—between the attitude of Mr. Gokhale and that of Dr. Mukhopadhyaya, as our hero was then called. As Mr. (now Sir) B. K. Bose, at present Vice-Chancellor of the Nagpur University,—who was also a Member of Supreme Council at that time wrote recently (in the *Calcutta Review*), to Mr. Gokhale, the Bill was thoroughly reactionary and retrogressive and be it said, the Indian public opinion was fully at one with him, in unreservedly condemning the various provisions of the Bill; in fact, the agitation that raged through the length and breadth of the land, following its introduction in the Council, was fierce and virulent; and the heat and dust of the controversy that ensued blurred the eyes of the Indian public, even those of the most level-headed and farseeing among them; but Asutosh alone, among the Indian public men and publicists, saw through the Bill; he was aware, along with others, that the Bill was ostensibly calculated to heighten the efficiency of the University, and its constituent institutions, to strengthen the academic element in the former at the cost of the nonacademic, to invest Government with powers of more stringent control and of management in most of the affairs of the University, and generally to improve the quality of higher education, at the cost of the quantity; the people saw in it an attempt to officialize the University and a menace to higher education,



he condemned all these provisions; but he discerned more than these; he found out in the provisions of the Bill much that he could take advantage of, to realize his great ideal of a truly teaching and research University to fulfil his dream of reviving the glories of Nalanda and Taskhasila, by turning his 'alma mater' into a great centre of learning and researches, original thinking and intellectual activity, from a mere examining and 'degree giving' institution. He thought, in the words of Sir Bipin Kristo Bose, the measure was an advance on the existing law, and deserved a trial; when the Bill came out of the Select Committee, it bore clear impress of Asutosh's constructive criticism and was, as the Hon'ble Member in charge of the Bill testified, 'in large part, his (Asutosh's) work.' It was one of the unique glories of Disraeli, to have foreseen, with an extraordinary flash of prescience, that the second Reform Act of the last century, would not weaken, but strengthen, the British Tory Party; similarly, it rebounded to his greatness as a politician of long vision that Asutosh foresaw the brilliant future of his University under the provisions of the new Act; what is greater still, he had the privilege of actually accomplishing the herculean task of transforming it into the flourishing the teaching and Research University that it now is.

In the same Year—1904—Asutosh was appointed a Judge of the Calcutta High Court; and the dream

of his boyhood, the ambition of his school days and college life was fulfilled in a very important and essential part; various explanations have been put forward of his translation to the Bench when he was only 40; one is that this was the preliminary necessary to this appointment to the Vice-Chancellorship, but his immediate predecessor was not a Judge and another is that Lord Curzon wanted to silence a formidable opponent; but the fact seemed to be that this exalted appointment; no doubt, at such an early age, was a natural reward of, and sequel to, his rapid eminence and his fame at the Bar—he was earning about Rs. 10 000 a month at this time; Lord Curzon took good deal of credit for his impartiality in the appointment, as he maintained, of one of his greatest critics to this highest judicial office.* But if his elevation to the Bench, was an undoubted acquisition to the High Court, the public life of the country in the arena of politics and in the realm of legislation, at any rate, was distinctly poorer; for with his elevation the promising career of a great politician and legislator as also, of a respected municipal Commissioner, was cut short; no doubt, he was not a politician at heart—not of the type that today, is more than common and he was not sorry to exchange the quiet, unostentacious, if trying and learned labours of one of His Majesty's judges for

* Review of his brilliant record as a Judge appears in a subsequent chapter.



the popular, 'checkered and sensational life of the politician. And he had also to give up much of his worries and activities; but he did not give up his mathematical studies and researches, and he pursued his favourite subject and continued his labours therein, whenever he could find time; his zeal for the betterment of the affairs of the University, his activities and anxieties for its reformation and renovation under the new Act, knew no abating but were on the constant increase. He was appointed to the Vice-Chancellorship as a matter of course. As we shall refer at considerable length to his momentous labours and his monumental works at the University, after he was raised to the Bench, we need only touch upon this part of his career, at the stage. After the passage of the Universities Bill the Senate of the Calcutta University failed to comply with its obligation to submit to the Government of India for their sanction, the draft Regulations concerning all matters connected with it. Then Asutosh was called upon to preside over a small but strong Committee appointed by the Government for the purpose of the preparation of Regulations. Under Asutosh's guidance, the Committee submitted the draft Regulations within a very short time, which were sanctioned by the Government of India in toto. The University was now at the parting of ways and the promulgation of the Regulations were the starting point.



of its future extensions and progress in a hundred directions. But the machinery created by the Regulations had yet to be put in motion—and many conflicting interests adjusted, many jarring voices and incongruous notes reconciled—and all these required a master pilot, a Roman hand, to steer the ship of the University clear of a thousand and one dangerous cliffs and treacherous shoals; and no wonder the choice of the Government fell upon Asutosh to reshape, reform and rejuvenate, the University in the light of the higher and nobler ideals and newer ideas. Thus in 1908 he was temporarily relieved of his official duties on the Bench and was deputed to the gigantic task of reorganising the University in accordance with the New Regulations and under the new Act. Asutosh—was also equal to the task and rose to his full height, applying himself heart and soul to the reorganization and reconstruction of the University; but of these later. The history of the University of Calcutta from the 1906 to 1914—the year of his assumption of the Vice-Chancellorship and that of his retirement from the office—the history of the enormous expansion of its functions, of the unheard-of development of its activities, of the heightening of its ideals and of its unprecedented progress in the realms of higher studies and—researches—is also the vital part of Asutosh's life-story. And we propose to deal with it in greater length hereafter.