



reactionary Bills; Mr. S. N. Mullick's Bill provided for a Board of Accounts and a Treasurer who was to be something like an Accountant-General; it also aimed at a Senate mainly elected from various constituencies; Mr. J. N. Basu's Bill provided for a Senate also mainly elected on a purely communal principle with a reservation of seats for Mahomedans. But both the Bills sought to revive the Rector and to give the Minister this dignified office, making him practically supreme in all matters of the University, internal, academic or administrative.

'Ditcher' referred thus to these Bills, in the 'Capital.'—"The two reformers referred to—Mr. S. N. Mullick and Mr. J. N. Basu both of whom would make the Minister of Education Rector of the Calcutta University with power to control the Senate with his heart's desire which may take the form of putting his pigmy knife into the calf of a giant Vice-Chancellor of transcendent worth." Both the Bills aimed at making the Minister supreme in the constitution and administration of the University. Those were the days of Non-co-operation and the Legislative Council was clean packed with loyalists and constitutionalists; and the Government always commanded a large majority therein; so the situation was desperate from the University point of view; but, happily, public opinion was thoroughly roused against the reactionary proposals; and even the veteran educationist and renowned scientist, Dr. P. C. Roy—who could never be accused



of any undue partiality towards Asutosh—left his test-tube and raised his emphatic voice against the subversive movement to 'reform' the University 'out of existence'. Happily for University and Asutosh, the greatest source of support and strength came from the most authentic, authoritative and independent quarters—from the Reports of the Royal Commission on the Universities of Oxford and Cambridge in England, of the Sadler Commission, as well as from independent administrators and rulers; in India. "If there were any danger" the Commissioners tersely declared in England, 'that grants of public money would lead to State interference with opinion in the Universities, it might be the less of the two evils that they should decline in efficiency rather than lose their independence in order to obtain adequate means.' In the course of his Address to the Allahabad University, Sir Harcourt Butler said, "... There is one matter which causes me some little apprehension, namely, a tendency to interfere with the freedom and initiative of the University from outside. I am impressed by the consideration that any undue interference with the University will militate against the future development not only of the University but also of the province..." Sir Reginald Craddock, First Chancellor of Rangoon University said in the course of a speech in 1922, "... Any such pressure (from official quarters, to 'invade the independence of the Senate,' or 'to



starve the University and the constituent Colleges') would have to be stoutly resisted by the University itself, as indeed by all citizens in Burma who prefer the genuine to the sham and are not to be imposed upon by falacious ideals of national welfare. A University so enchained will be a body without a soul..." It is not quite well-known—but it is a fact—that the Governor of Assam, the Hon'ble Member of the Governor-General's Executive Council, in charge of Education, and the Hon'ble Minister and Director of Public Instruction, Assam, (who are, all of them, Fellows) were won over by Asutosh;—at any rate they did not support the official and non-official Bills intended to limit the autonomy of the University.

But the monumental Report of the Sadler Commission brought the greatest succour to the hands of Asutosh; in this Report which was the result of protracted deliberations, and of a most shifting enquiry and prolonged tour, the Commissioners sought to preserve the autonomy and integrity of the University as well as to recognise the 'demands of the democratic principle' by proposing the creation of an Academic Council to deal independently with the academic affairs and educational matters, as also of a Court to be the supreme body of the University largely composed of elected members, representative of every shade of opinion and interest in the country and 'vested with extensive legislative and financial functions in the adminis-



tration of the University,' and the connecting link between the two was to be an Executive Council entrusted with the management of financial and administrative affairs; besides, there was to be a Board of Secondary Education. Various Universities in India took advantage of the constructive proposals of the Commission and carried out the contemplated reforms into their structure; but nothing was done in the Calcutta University—the very University for whose benefit the Commission was appointed. The numerous critics of Asutosh and the newly awakened 'reformers' left the elaborate and illuminating Report severely alone and applied their own 'surplus virgin minds'—to use Sir A. Choudhuri's pithy words—to the glorious work of reformation, without caring at all for the recognized authorities and advanced and accepted thought (in progressive countries) in educational matters. It will be beyond our scope to dwell at length on this most critical juncture in the history of higher education in Bengal, but the fact remained that in spite of their immense resources, unlimited power and natural vantage position as the custodians of public funds, the official reformers had to curb down their reforming zeal; the fact was that the reactionary forces that gathered round the official standard, the ominous clouds that threatened to destroy the independence and integrity of the University and sap the foundation and structure of the sacred Temple of Knowledge and Learning,



were routed by the sturdy independence, indomitable courage and heroic stand of Asutosh. It is this fight, this noble stand and the 'tiger' qualities displayed by him which won him the striking tribute from the greatest thinker-poet of our age; Tagore, said in course of his 'tribute of appreciation' ".....Asutosh heroically fought against heavy odds for winning freedom for our education .."

Apart from his stubborn and unbending attitude and desperate fight that he had to put up all along, three of his feats stand out in broad relief, as they contributed a good deal to his hard-fought victory. One was a unique utterance of his in the Senate when the University was faced with bankruptcy and starvation, in which he enunciated the glorious doctrine of 'freedom first, freedom second and freedom always', and avowed that he would go abegging from door to door, like the 'rishis' of old, rather than surrender the birth-right of the University; as Dr. Sylvain Levi says, 'Never did Sir Asutosh rise to greater heights than at this crisis'. Next was his brilliant and bold Convocation Address of 1922; in this heroic utterance of his, he mercilessly exposed the utter hollowness of the preposterous pretensions of the 'reformers' and justified his standpoint by referring to the highest educational and administrative authorities and ended with a peroration that will live for ever in the annals of his country's freedom. "We can not shut our eyes to the facts" declared he boldly, in the immediate presence of the Governor



and the Ministers and other reformers, "that there have been abundant indications of what looks like a determined conspiracy to bring the University into disesteem and discredit. A satirist, gifted with uncommon sense of humour, recently classified the members of this confederacy as political adventurers, academic imposters and sanctimonious critics. I can not vouch for the logical accuracy of this classification, much less for its completeness... They appear to have discovered from the depths of their inner consciousness and without adequate knowledge of the academic affairs in other parts of the civilized world that our activities have been developed on an extravagant scale"*. But perhaps his greatest contribution to this fight for 'freedom for our education,' his most remarkable stand in the unequal battle to win independence for our academic life and thought was his historic letter to Lord Lytton, in which he sternly refused the Governor's 'insulting offer' of Vice-Chancellorship, which is unique and unparalleled

*"A Convocation speech by Sir Asutosh Mookerjee is not an accident or an episode, but an event in the educational development and progress of India. In the present crisis through which Calcutta University is passing one looks to him for a diagnosis of unimpeachable accuracy; for a prognosis of confident reliability. He did not disappoint us on Saturday; on the contrary he exceeded our expectations. He stood up four-square in moral and intellectual grandeur to answer the criticism concentrated upon him...and only the intellectually dishonest could fail to be wholly responsive to his candour of soul and plenary vision of life....."—'The Capital' dated 21th March, 1923.



in the history of British rule in India and will hand down his name to the generations and generations to come, as a fearless patriot, as a scrupulous guardian of the highest honour and best interests of the nation above all, as a 'man' 'who can speak and act fearlessly according to his convictions'...After this manly refusal Mr. Bhupendra Nath Basu was appointed to be his successor. Mr. Basu, an old Senator and a veteran public man and statesman, showed no indication to trifle with the integrity of his 'alm mater', but brought an open mind to bear on his arduous task. Unfortunately he could not continue long in office and died shortly after. He was succeeded by one of Asutosh's colleagues on the Bench—Sir Ewert Greaves. But Sir Ewert proved a Tartar and strictly followed in Asutosh's footsteps; holding fast to his Ideal, he strikingly upheld the best of traditions of Asutosh and stoutly fought for the independence, and welfare of the University. Thus the Damocles' sword hanging over the University was withdrawn.

It is a welcome relief to turn from the sickening trends and tendencies of the unhappy controversy to the brighter and better aspects of his achievements; if we have to bid goodbye to the unflinching and invincible fighter and the bold and skillful strategist, we have to deal with the statesman, the patriot and the reformer in the realm of education. Looking back after the lapse of some years, it seems a real miracle, an unfathomable mystery that the man

who fought so desperately, and with such super-human skill and courage, with such tireless energy and endurance, brought to a successful close, the unequal fight with the Governor, the Minister and the Legislature, could, during the same period, leave such a remarkable record of constructive activities and striking achievements. And the engulfing conflicts and bitter controversies notwithstanding, there was no lessening of the stirrings of new life called into being, no waning of the new spirit breathed, no slackening of the new energy infused by Asutosh into the 'steel framework' of the University; so that Prof James Wilford Garner of the University of Illinois and a scholar of international fame, delivered, at the University, a course of brilliant lectures, on the Development of International Law; the well-known Prof. Arther Antony Macdonnell of Oxford, delivered, as the first Stephenos Nirmalendu Ghosh Lecturer, a course of lectures, on 'Comparative Religion'; Dr. Stella Kramrisch discoursed on Indian Arts, its contact with Arts of other civilizations and its place in the system of Indian Æsthetics; in this period, too, Sir Kash Behari Ghosh Travelling Fellowships were, for the first time, awarded to the distinguished scholars who went abroad to investigate educational methods and to carry on research in special branches of learning; the Degree of Bachelor of Commerce was first instituted and radical changes were made in the Regulations of the Matriculation Examinations and



the intellectual output of research and original works, also, steadily increased in variety and quality.

In accordance with the new Regulations sanctioned on the 26th June, 1917, the University was called upon to arrange for, and it did undertake, teaching and researches in as many as twenty main branches of knowledge, such as : Sanskrit, Pali, Arabic, Persian, English Indian Vernacular, Comparative Philology, Mental and Moral Philosophy, Pure Mathematics, Applied Mathematics, Physics, Chemistry, Physiology, Botany, Geology, Zoology, Experimental Psychology, History, Political Economy and Political Philosophy. But to name the subjects is but to understate the truth ; for, each of them is composed of several groups ; in the main department of Sanskrit, for instance, arrangements had have to be made for study and research in nine distinct groups : Literature, Vedas, Law and Science of Interpretation, Vedanta, Sankhya, Yoga, Nyaya and Vaishesik, General Philosophy, Prakrit and Epigraphy. Few people realize the magnitude of and possibilities in, the subjects taught ; Asutosh nicely observed, 'truth is that the term Sanskrit, though composed of only eight letters, conotes in the domain of knowledge an empire by itself'. In the departments of Pali—which, in the words of Lord Ronaldshay, cover 'the far-reaching field of Buddhistic studies'—there are provisions for four groups : Literary, Philosophy, Epigraphic and Mohajanic ; in the branch of Islamic studies, facilities exist for



teaching and research in Theosophy, Philosophy, Literature, Rhetoric, Grammar and Science. The Study of Tibetan in an Indian University has an importance all its own; for it is essential for a proper 'reconstruction of the history of Indian civilization during the first thousand years of Christian era; for in this dark period innumerable Sanskrit books were carried into the mountain fastnesses of Tibet and translated by learned Lamas; the originals have disappeared but the translations are still preserved as the 'memorials of Indian civilization'. The late lamented Sjs. Sarat Chandra Das and Satis Chandra Vidyabhusan were the only scholars amongst us who could probe into the mysteries of these studies; the University, with considerable difficulty, was able to make some beginning in this, fascinating subject. Major Campbell, the political officer at Sikkim and a reputed Tibetan scholar, induced the Dalai Luama to send out to the University the Tibetan scholar Geshe Lobzang Targe; but he went back as he could find no one who could discourse with him on equal terms. Thanks, however, to the enterprising zeal of Asutosh, he was subsequently able to secure two scholarly Lamas for the advanced students. The University has, moreover, a splendid collection of Tibetan block prints and manuscripts, the library of the late Mr. Sarat Ch. Das and more than one hundred volumes on various subjects. Closely connected are the study of Chinese and Japanese, for which arrangements have been



made. We need not refer at length to the numerous branches and branches within branches, to the various departments of studies that Asutosh founded in the Calcutta University; let us, however, mention two distinct departments the establishment of which has been his life-long dream, as it is certainly the crowning achievement of his brilliant career as an educational reformer, as an intellectual regenerator, as a constructive statesman and a farseeing patriot of his country: these are the Department of Ancient Indian History and Culture and the Department of Indian Vernaculars; in the former, provisions have been made for the study of Vedic and Epic India, political history of Post-Vedic period and the historical geography of Ancient India; optional subjects are Archaeology, Social and Constitutional History, Mathematics and Astronomy, Racial and Anthropographic History; and under the inspiration and able leadership of Asutosh, the University has—immense difficulties (for want of suitable text books) notwithstanding—arranged for teaching and research in such diverse branches of Ancient Indian History as these:—

Indian Epigraphy, Indian Fine Arts, Indian Iconography, Indian Coinage, Indian Palaeography, Indian Architecture, Indian Mathematics, Indian Race Origin, Indian Economic Life, Indian Social Life, Indian Administration, Indian Religion and Indian Astronomy. The departments of vernacular literatures and languages are among the normal features in the life and working of the Universities all the



world over, and it sounds like a paradox that the inauguration of this department should be reckoned as one of his crowning achievements in his triumphant career ; but unfortunately, Indian Vernaculars were relegated to the background in Indian Universities ; Asutosh, as we have seen, fought, so far back as 1892 for the recognition of Bengalee in the University Curriculum ; though baffled on that occasion, he never relaxed his exertions and his zeal for his cause and it was due to his persistent endeavour, his patriotic fervour and his creative imagination, that the Indian vernaculars came into their right place in the premier University in India ; provisions have thus been made for teaching in Bengalee, Hindi, Guzrati, Oriya (principal languages), Assamese, Urdu, Maithali, Telugu, Tamili, Carnarese, Malayan and Sinhalese. And in furtherance of the 'scheme of preparation and publication of typical selections in all the Indian vernaculars from the earliest stages to the modern time' the University brought out splendid volumes, giving specimens from the earliest manuscripts, in Bengalee, Hindi. and Zendavesta. And besides the eight Professorships (in the domain of Science) created with the Palit and Ghosh Endowments, Asutosh founded five more Chairs out of the munificent gifts of Rs. 5.50.000 by Kumar Guru Prosad Sing of Khaira : such as Chairs of Chemistry, Physics, Agriculture, Indian Fine Arts and Indian Linguistics and Phonetics. The University maintains two



Chairs, one for Botany and the other, for Zoology *
As we have already said the Departments of Indian vernacular and of Ancient Indian History and Culture as well as the University College of Science and Technology stand out prominently as the most remarkable of his achievements in the region of intellectual regeneration and educational progress of his country. As he said in 1922 "There is no other University in India where facilities are provided for the cultivation of Indian Vernaculars on so extensive a scale. But let me ask, whether this would have been possible unless the University had a department of Pali which included learned Sinhalese monks, a department of Sanskrit which included a Prakritist professing the Jain religion, a department of Islamic studies which included Persian scholars, a department of Comparative Philology which included a Gazrati scholar, a department of History which included a Mahrati scholar, a department of Economics which included a Telegu scholar, and a department of Anthropology which included a Tamil and Malayan scholar. It is because the University comprises men of high intellectual attainments in so many branches of human knowledge, it is because the University has broken through the barriers of narrow provincialism ..that it has become possible to open the new department of

*Since Asutosh's death, three Chairs have been sanctioned, to be named after him and devoted to some of the subjects, close to his heart—Chairs of Islamic and Oriental Studies and of Mediaeval and Modern Indian History.

Indian Varnaculars... It is the unique triumph of this University that it was the first here or elsewhere to establish a Chair devoted exclusively to the promotion of study and research in Ancient Indian History and Culture and that it was also the first seat of learning where the highest degree in the Faculty of Arts could be earned as a result of competent knowledge of the subject, which must be captivating to all truly patriotic Indians." The supreme importance of this department can hardly be overestimated from the point of view of a proper reconstruction of a fuller and truer history of Ancient India;—specially when, in the face of facts and traditions recently brought to light, so well-known a scholar and author, as the late Mr. Vincent Smith, asserted that India was not suitable for democratic institutions. Even the famous Cambridge History, in the words of Asutosh "has not realized our highest conception of historical work... The time, however, has not yet arrived for undertaking a history of ancient Indian History and Culture from the standpoint of philosophic student of History. Notwithstanding the labours of generations of assiduous scholars in many lands, we are still on the threshold"... Let us again quote from his former speech, "we feel encouraged from time to time when so eminent critics, so sagacious and impartial as, Prof. Foucher, Dr. Thomas or Prof. Sylvain Levi, come forward generously to recognise our efforts to wake up interest in these neglected



fields and to carry the horizon of India, beyond present India. And yet let it not be forgotten that in the department of Science perhaps more than in the department of Letters, University teachers and students, have systematically carried out original investigation of acknowledged value. We have, indeed made the University College of Science a nursery of young men of exceptional ability—Mathematicians, Physicists, Chemists, Botanists, Zoologists—whose researches have been eagerly accepted for publication by scientific societies and scientific periodicals in foremost seats of learning in Europe, America and Japan”.

Apart from these reforms and innovations which have changed the structure as well as the life and working of the University, transforming it into a centre of highest studies and researches, Asutosh's regime synchronised with a steady, phenomenal and unprecedented rise in the number of graduates and undergraduates turned out by the University. Before Asutosh stepped into the leadership of our academic life and thought, the number of students at the various institutions and of the candidates appearing at the University examinations, were very small; but with Asutosh's ascendancy in the affairs of the University, the movement* of educational

* “The growing demand of the people of Bengal for educational facilities is one of the most impressive features of our age and is in itself healthy and admirable”... The Report of the Calcutta University (Sadler) Commission.



progress and expansion received a great impetus, and the demands of popular education, of liberal culture and of enlightenment became widespread and incessant and the demands came from all quarters and are ever on the increase; the new generations in Bengal with their innatelonging for, and love of, study and learning, came, in their ever increasing numbers to the shrine of the Goddess of Learning; and the educational institutions of the province doubled, the annual rush of the candidates at the University examinations became tremendous; Asutosh rose equal to the occasion, grasped and faced the situation, in a manly and patriotic way; himself an ardent student and enthusiastic scholar, he was not at all alarmed by this welcome invasion of the sacred temple of the Mother by so many thousands of devotees; he deliberately refrained from stiffening their course; rather did he work to smooth their path and blessed their careers with the University's hall mark; the result was that his dream, his hope and his ambition to endow every villiage, every hamlet, nay every home in Bengal with its graduate and its undergraduates was on the road to its realization; * in this nation-wide policy he did not aim at ideal excellence or perfection; but deliberately and courageously

*A comparisson between the annual numbers of graduates before and during, Asutosh's regime, will speak for itself.

1885—1908—	Average annual number of graduates—			438
1909—1915—	Do	Do	Do	1027
1916—1924—	Do	Do	Do	2464



worked to "scatter the seeds of science and of song, that climate, corn, animals, men, may be milder, and germs of love and benefit may be multiplied."

These were, in a nutshell, a barest outline of some of the innovations and achievements of his glorious career as a reformer and creator in the realm of education; but like all creations and reforms, and the workings of all forward policies and the pursuits of new ideals—his measures had their full share of criticism and appreciation, like all reformers and creators in history, he was virulently condemned as well as intensely admired and profusely applauded; we can only refer to some of these criticisms and appreciations and this, very briefly. In consideration of most of these criticisms, one is invariably struck with a good deal of irrelevancy, of loose thinking and confusion of ideas displayed not only by the man in the street, but also by those who are expected to be more well-informed. A very common type of criticism—forcibly urged but fallacious all the same—is this: the University (under the inspiration and leadership of Asutosh) has been unnecessarily swelling the volume of popular discontent and adding to the growing economic distress of the people, by an increasing flow of graduates and under-graduates; but it is easily forgotten that this economic distress is world-wide, that this popular discontent and unemployment are inseparable from the critical period of transition which nations and individuals are



passing through ; nor are these serious evils, of University's making, far less of its seeking ; this hydra-headed demon of popular economic distress and discontent has not suddenly come to the front—it has been raising its head gradually. Lord Minto referred to the growing evil but hoped "that with each succeeding year, the growth of home industries and the consequent demand for greater technical knowledge, together with the restoration of Indian Arts and Letters, will throw open fields of employment which, now, scarcely exist for those who need never think they have wasted their time in University." Good Lord Minto ! he did not live to see the fate of his pious wish. After the lapse of two decades during which many Commissions and Committees sat and reported without any tangible amelioration of the popular discontent or distress, Sir J. C. Bose thus spoke of this burning topic in London..."The present unrest in India is due to severe economic distress. The Universities are turning out a large number of science trained men who do not find scope for their activities. For the removal of the threatened economic danger, a comprehensive state policy is required."*

*Dr. J. C. Bose was more clear in Presidential Address to the Science Congress in India in January 1927; referring to this 'severe economic distress' he said, "I found poverty practically unknown in Norway and Denmark. The miracle is accomplished through Science of utilizing all the available resources of the country...The Universities are turning out every year a large number of young men trained in methods of science who form the most important intellectual



It is impossible to condemn Asutosh or his University for the growing economic distress, for the educated unemployment and under-employment that have permeated every stratum of the middle class people in Bengal, that, in short, threaten to engulf the whole community and result in huge wastage of nation's intellectual wealth and potentialities. Dr. Sadler and his colleagues on the University Commission did not bring the head of Asutosh on the charger but laid the blame at the door of the system. "It is impossible" they said in their Report, "not to recognize that a system which leads to such results (humble status and low pay of graduates) must be economically wasteful and socially dangerous and must in the end, lead to the intellectual impoverishment of the country." So the ultimate responsibility for this growing menace rests upon those who have, in their hands, the direction of public policy and of administration and alteration of the system—upon our rulers as well as upon the leaders of the people, to some extent, at any rate.

But the critics who condemn Asutosh, for adding, by an unnecessarily large influx of graduates and under-graduates, to the prevailing economic unrest and unemployment and under-employment among the educated, forget the important steps he took

asset of the country but find no scope for their activities. It is the function of high statesmanship to foresee the economic danger and so shape state policy that India's trained youth and her great potential wealth may be utilized for the benefit of the country."



towards the solution of this gigantic problem; strictly speaking, it was not within his province to try and tackle the problem; it is the clear duty of the statesmen, of the rulers and leaders of the people, and not of a reformer in the realm of education, to put their heads together and solve it; but Asutosh, as we have said more than once, was not merely an educational reformer; he was a statesman of long vision and he anticipated the enormous proportions the problem has now assumed; he got Captain Petavel to think and write out a proper plan for its solution in the form of five lectures—Self-Government and Bread Problem; he brought out two editions of these lectures and broadcasted them in India and abroad. The scheme and the plan formulated in these lectures were warmly approved by many notable Indians, pre-eminent in the sphere of commerce, industry and economics—by Sir R. N. Mukherjee, Sir Dinshaw Wacha and others, as well as by such well-known foreign journals as 'The Times' of London and 'Hibbert Journal' of America; the late Mr. C. R. Das, Mr. Kumar Krishna Dutt and other eminent men interested themselves in the scheme of educational colony on co-operative basis proposed by Captain Petavel. It is now in experimental stage and is being worked out at Deoghur. The part played by Asutosh in this movement is more important and entitles him to greater glory than are now generally realized.

Closely connected with this criticism based on



‘economic unrest,’ there is another, very plausible but still more erroneous. There is a class of critics who are wont to lose their mental equilibrium—who are greatly alarmed at the ever increasing stream of educated young men, specially when there is little scope for most of them; they labour under the impression that we in Bengal have already enough, more than enough of our graduates and undergraduates—we have more of these young people in our midst than is good for us, good for them, good for the body politic. But nothing is further from truth, there is no greater and sadder illusion than to flatter oneself with this belief; the fact is that the proportion of the educated few with the teeming uneducated and illiterate masses is only negligible. Fortunately for us and the University, there is a glaring admission of no less an authority than Lord Lytton than whom Asutosh had no greater antagonist, no more exalted opponent—an admission which is conclusive on this point and must take the wind out of the sail of the self-sufficient critics. “I know that so far from having too many educated men” declared His Lordship in the course of a Convocation speech, “it (our country) has not enough—it is idle to dream of building the manhood of Bengal upon the foundation of wide-spread illiteracy.”

Many charges are brought against Asutosh of lowering the standard of examination, of cheapening the degrees and of sacrificing the quality of



education for quantity. But unfortunately, people have vague, fantastic idea - or have no idea at all—when they speak gibly of lowering the standard of examination. An ideal examination is not one which is extra stiff or difficult, which, moreover, aims at the minimum number of success among the examinees; an ideal examination is that which is best suited to the prevailing circumstances of the country and in which proper regard is had to the academic conditions and intellectual equipment of the young men. In this connection we will refer to the significant words of one who was the president of Lord Curzon's famous Universities Commission and who had, in His Lordship's words, 'unique familiarity' with British University life. "Our critics" said Dr. Thomas Raleigh in the course of his Convocation Address to the Calcutta University, (when he was Vice-Chancellor) "are too ready to assume that the acknowledged defects of our system are peculiar to British India... The standard of our degrees, is not perhaps, so high as it ought to be. But when I examined in the schools at Oxford it was my duty to pass, as I did pass, a considerable number of gentlemen who ought to display a great mobility in the field of learning, because they travel with a minimum weight of equipment." As regards the charges of cheapening the degrees and upholding the quantity—though not at the cost of quality—of education, Asutosh must plead guilty to a some extent, but not in the way his critics would have it. Asutosh, as we said,



resolved to scatter the blessings of education and culture far and near and everywhere and he was anxious to bring all sorts and conditions of men, rich and poor, high or low, prince and peasant within the beneficent influence of the University ; so he deliberately kept its door wide open; in the absence of any forward policy and nation-wide programme in education adopted * by our rulers, rather in the presence of 'a retrogressive policy' * and opposition in the all-important question of educational advancement, Asutosh's was the only policy best calculated to bring the blessings of education to the largest numbers of his countrymen. But by no stretch of argument or imagination could he be charged with sacrificing the quality, at the altar of quantity, of education. He did not, of course, make the examinations extra stiff; he even 'passed' many—it might be, too many—who could not have passed in other men's regime. But how, by this policy or action of his, could he be said to have sacrificed the quality of education ? Did he discourage the 'quality' ? Was he, by thought, word or action, opposed to the best sort of education that might be given to the young men ? The head and front of his offending was that he did not insist,

* "A retrogressive policy has been followed since Lord Dufferin's time... The results on secondary and collegiate education were deplorable. National education not being recognised by Government as an obligation..." Sir Sankaran Nair's Minute of Dissent to the Government of India's Despatch to the Secretary of State, dated 16th April, 1919.



with a vengeance, on this 'quality' in all, in the thousands of the candidates that sat for the various examination, and this, surely, is far from sacrificing the quality at the cost of quantity.

The criticisms levelled against the Post-Graduate Departments are many and various; it is, however, not possible for us to refer to most of them or to refer, at any great length. The charges of premature developments, of 'thoughtless' expansions and of extravagance are common enough. It is gravely argued that the supreme need of the country—the need of the hour—is the spread of primary education and the spread and improvement of secondary education; the developments of the University in the domain of higher study and research are premature and are a luxury. No one in his senses, will question, far less minimise, the need and importance of primary and secondary education in India. But why should University education, and higher studies and researches be a luxury on that score? and if these are to wait for a millennium in primary and secondary education—then their time will never come; let us quote from Asutosh; "Some enthusiasts" he said in 1912, "may be inclined to urge on this occasion, the so-called paramount claims of adequate provisions of universal primary (and we might add, of secondary) education, before any increase of expenditure on higher education and research. To them, I would only reply, if higher teaching has to wait for admittedly needful development until a full



satisfactory scheme of general primary (and we might say, of secondary) education is established through the length and breadth of the land, the day for these higher developments will never come. The two demands stand on ultimately different planes, and history teaches very clearly that in all the great seats of culture and civilization, learning, speculation and research of the highest type have developed and benefitted the world, independently of any general system of primary education. From the narrow point of view of material prosperity, active and liberal promotion of learning and research is, at least, as important as arrangements under which every tiller of the soil and every mechanic may learn to sign his name and read a newspaper. Even less I am prepared to listen to the warning voices of those who often, in the interests of secondary education declare that no higher developments in M. A. teaching will be profitable until secondary schools have been placed on a perfect footing. Why—to mention a specially striking illustration—is teaching of Indian History in our schools, more particularly in the earlier periods, so lamentably defective and barren—mainly because the so-called teachers of history never themselves have had any proper training in the subject, no such training has anywhere been provided by the colleges and the Universities..”

The charge of ‘thoughtless expansion’ was brought forward by no less a person than the ‘responsible’ Minister of Education in the first ‘Reformed’



Council. It is difficult to understand what exactly the Minister meant—what exactly the charge really amounted to; inscrutable are the ways of the Power on High as well as the powers that be. But the expansions of the functions of the University so far from being 'thoughtless', left nothing to be thought out; the utter hollowness and absurdity of the charge is apparent to all who has the least acquaintance with the life and working of the University since 1904; indeed nothing can be more elaborately thought or thrashed out, under the Act of 1904 which clearly referred to the 'instructions of students' and appointment of 'University professors, Lectures' etc., the new Regulations were framed after prolonged deliberations in 1906. In the latter half of sutosh's first tenure of Vice-Chancellorship, the Government of India sanctioned and have been maintaining many Chairs; then came the labours and Report of Post-Graduate Consolidation Committee in 1916; the Report of this Committee on which sat six Europeans and three Indians as well as the scheme framed thereunder were blessed by two successive Governors of Bengal—Lords Carmaichael and Ronaldshay—and were minutely deliberated upon, and then sanctioned by the final authority—the Government of India; and the outcome of all these and subject-matter of all these were the expansions of the University which were characterized as 'thoughtless'. The distinguished scholar and our late Governor, Lord Ronaldshay thus



spoke of these expansions and the scheme, "...But the greatest land mark in the history of the University in recent years, is undoubtedly the creation of the Post-Graduate studies. As Rector of the University, I gave the scheme my wholehearted support, because it seemed to me that it was calculated to establish in Calcutta under the auspices of the University, a real centre of learning and research...I had in mind the famous Indian Universities of a past age, such, for instance, as Nalanda. I had vision of a modern Nalanda growing up in this the greatest and most popular city of the Indian Empire..."

The charge of extravagance is a very plausible one ; none the less it is difficult to make out what it really means ; the critics who bring this serious charge persuade themselves that the University has been suffered to expand its functions, to develop its activities on an extravagant scale. But nothing is further from fact ; so far from living and thriving on extravagant lines, it is as yet far from attaining its maximum expansions ; it has a great future and immense possibilities ahead ; as Dr. C. Y. Raman said in 1923..."Even now, the scheme of Post-Graduate studies at Calcutta has not reached its maximum development..." Only a short time ago, it was prominently reported* in a leading Paper in India

The following will speak also itself for :—

* A film university will shortly be founded in New York. It will be connected with the famous Columbia University, of which Dr. Nicholas Murray Butler is head. The University had the first



that a well-known carpenter in New York has been appointed to the newly created Chair of Internal Decoration in a famous American University. "If the Universities of Oxford and Cambridge" (which by the bye, enjoy fabulous incomes) said Asutosh in his ever memorable Convocation speech of 1923, "are deemed not to have done enough in the way of provision for advanced teaching and research, would it not be an error of the first order to assume that our arrangements are sufficient to meet the rapidly growing needs of our community? If it is apprehended that without further provision, Oxford and Cambridge are likely to find their position as centres of intellectual life seriously imperilled before long, is not there grave danger to our future progress as a nation, should our growth be atrophied at what is but the commencement of our career?" But often the charge of extravagance is put forward on the basis of the proportion of teachers to the number of students in the Post-Graduate Departments; here again the critics miss the mark; it is, however easy to trace the genesis of this error of judgment, and

school of practical journalism in America, where the students actually produce a paper as part of their studies. The cinema school will have a course lasting two years. It will only be open to those who have previously taken the first two years of a science course.

A motion picture degree will be given to students who graduate. They will be allowed to specialize in various departments, but the course is intended to cover the three great branches of the film world—producing, selling and showing.



for this, we have only to look to the state of things prevailing in almost all the educational institutions; here there is no special teaching, no special study and the teachers have generally to take classes varying from 40 to 150 students, and the result is that there is seldom any intimate personal relationship, any proper and individual guidance and sympathetic understanding between the teachers and the taught, and this is the bane of the present system of education in our country. As Dr. Sadler and his colleagues pointed out in their Report, "In the lack of personal guidance and of intimate contact between the teachers and the taught is the greatest defect of the present system. No reform is more necessary than one which will bring back a real intimacy of personal relationship between teacher and taught." This serious defect in our whole educational system Asutosh sought to remedy in the University; here the claims of special study and research require special teachers, who have specialized in their subjects; and the whole object and scheme of higher study will be frustrated without the 'personal guidance of the teachers without a close and 'intimate contact' between the teachers and the taught. So Asutosh had had to engage not only an efficient staff but also a staff sufficient in numerical strength to give the individual students and research scholars the necessary 'personal guidance' and to establish 'a real intimacy of personal relationships' between themselves and the students. And how far the University is



guilty of extravagant stuff may judged by the very lucid and straightforward Memorandum of the Presidency College submitted by Mr. James and his colleagues, in which they compained not of extravagance, but of the inadequacy of the stuff employed by the University in many departments.

Let us now turn to the other side of the shield ; it is no little satisfaction to find that not only 'so many of the best and truest men of our people' but also of other independent countries, 'are in full sympathy with us'; and not only 'the sister Universities,' in, but also others beyond the boarders of, India, 'are eager to imitate and emulate what have been 'boldly initiated' here. Dr. Ganga Nath Jha, perhaps the greatest living orientalist in India, said, in the course of his Convocation Address to the Allahabad University, "The term Post-Graduate need not lead any one to the hope or fear that we are going to reproduce the conditions prevailing at Calcutta. That, I am sorry, to say is beyond us. But I must confess that institution (C. U.) will serve us as an ideal. It is mainly the Post-Graduate Department of the Calcutta University which, with all its defects, has demonstrated, beyond doubt—that work of the highest kind, can be carried on in India. I have had several occasions of judging the work that is being done there in the domain of oriental studies ; and I am prepared to assert that most of the thesises submitted by researchers of the Calcutta University are superior to many of these that have imanated



from persons trained elsewhere." "The Department of Post-Graduate teaching" declared Dr. Jha on another occasion, "stands out prominently as the monument of his deep scholarship and far-sightedness; with all its defects, the said department, during the few years of its existence, has produced a band of scholars whose enthusiasm and work in the cause of research have shown what even an Indian University can achieve. . ."

"Today" said Lord Lytton on a memorable occasion, "we can think only of the great intellectual powers he placed at the service of the University, of the years of unremitting toil that he cheerfully spent in organizing and administering its higher branches and of the renown, not only in India but in Europe which he, thereby gained for Calcutta..." "He multiplied Chairs, and Lectures and and Publications" wrote Dr. Sylvain Levi, "so that while the other Universities of India vegetated, the University of Calcutta saw its faculties flourish, its students gather together and the teachers of Indian nationality installed in every department of instruction and India herself installed in the centre of programme of studies." "After all" said Sir Ewert Greaves, on the anniversary of his death, "the Post-Graduate department was the crown and glory of Sir Asutosh Mookerji's work as an educationist, and it is in this that his memory will chiefly live. In so saying, I am not merely expressing my own views but the considered judgment of his colleagues on the



University Commission who considered it an abiding glory that he had established for the first time in an Indian University, a department for the development and encouragement of research in all branches of learning." But perhaps the most remarkable tribute to the organizing genius and constructive statesmanship of Asutosh as a builder and reformer in the realm of intellectual regeneration and of educational progress of his country is this that distant Universities in foreign lands have begun to follow his lead and imitate his example. Let us again quote from Dr. Raman who has seen most of the well-known Universities of the world. Said Dr. Raman, at a meeting of the Council of Post-Graduate Teaching in Science, ... "A few days ago I came to know that foreign Universities have not been slow to imitate the example set by the Calcutta University in this respect; the University of Toronto in Canada has adopted an organization substantially similiar to that which now exists at Calcutta for the encouragement of Post-Graduate Studies. As you all know Toronto has one of the largest and most important Universities of Canada and it is no small compliment to the originality of Sir Asutosh, that other countries should follow the example set here."

Few people realize the magnitude and significance of his singular achievements and his solid labours in the great nation-building, nation-lifting department of education, in the domain of educational reform and intellectual progress. Long before the famous



declaration by the British Government in England of the aim of their policy towards India—the policy of making India a self-governing partner in the British Commonwealth of Nations—long before the Ideal of a free, and self-supporting India having an honoured place in the comity of nations was accepted and worked up to by all the politicians in India, Asutosh laboured for this consummation in the intellectual sphere; who knows, when it will please God that India will take her place among the free nations of the world; but thanks to Asutosh's statesmanship, his imagination and idealism, India has already been accorded an honoured place in the cultural and intellectual world, in the republic of Letters and Science.

The goal of British policy is the establishment of self-government in India; a free self-contained, self-supporting and self-governing India is today the accepted ideal of all political parties and national workers and leaders; and Asutosh did much to hasten and herald this glorious day by making India, making Bengal, self-contained, self-respecting and self-governing, to some extent—in the matter of the highest educational institution, where facilities exist for highest studies and researches, and where highest intellectual works are carried on. A free and self-governing India can not, with propriety, always depend upon foreign lands and foreign Universities, for the education and training of her best and ablest intellect; she must herself—within her own



boarders—give this education and training and develop the best intellect and equip the ablest youths with necessary knowledge and culture. These facilities, this training and education are given by the Calcutta University, thanks to Asutosh's constructive statesmanship and patriotic activities.

Nor are the immediate consequences of the great impetus given by him to the nation-wide movement for enlightenment and progress, less striking. Immediately after his accession to power in our academic life, all sections of the community, boys and children of all stations of life, even from the lowest strata of society flocked to the schools and colleges and were brought under the enlivening influence of the University; the rural classes, eternally following their ancestral avocations, left the beaten tract and sent their children to schools and some of them to the colleges. And the pursuit of this course of action by all classes of the population is fraught with great and momentous consequences. It has disturbed the placid contentment of millions, and signs are visible around of stirrings of a new life, the clash of new ideals and conflicts of new ideas with many, old and worn out ones; this new spirit and the new influence of education and progress—infused by Asutosh—have penetrated into the inner depths of our social and domestic life and has not left untouched, even the fair sex. 'The adoption of academic ambition' eloquently says the University Commission in their Report, "even by a small portion of the cultivating



classes is an event of great moment in the social history of Bengal ; it may be the herald of a social revolution." This 'social revolution' may be a far off reality—beyond the range of the practical. But there is no denying the fact that the great movement for enlightenment and progress—which Asutosh struggled all his life to further and help forward from his place in the University—has come to stay and has taken deep roots in the soil.

Apart from the intrinsic and historic value of the actual reforms and expansions and innovations that he carried out, Asutosh's labours and his works in the University have another and a very momentous aspect which is often overlooked. In all his activities and his achievements, in all his strivings and sacrifices, if there is any thing that stands out more prominently than others it is his fidelity to the lofty Ideal, his constancy to high principles, that have been accepted by advanced spirits and have been governing academic life and thought all the world over. Before the Indian Universities Act came into force, its author—the brilliant pro-consul, Lord Curzon—thus conceived the highest Ideal for the University : "...It (the Ideal University) ought to be a place where all knowledge is taught by the best teachers to all who seek to acquire it, where all knowledge so taught is turned to good purpose... and its boundaries are receiving constant expansion. If I may borrow a metaphor from politics, there is no scientific frontier to the domain of knowledge



...where the governing body of the University shall be guided by expert advice and teachers will have real influence upon teaching; where the courses of study shall be framed for the development not of the facile automatum but of the thoughtful mind..." But it is one thing to preach a lofty idealism and another, to practise it; it is one thing to conceive, and wax eloquent over, a high Ideal and quite a different thing to work up to it. And Asutosh upon whom devolved the gigantic task of reforming and revolutionizing the life and working of the University under the new Act, conceived the highest Ideal and never swerved from, but followed in storm and stress, the path chalked out, in its light. "It is the duty of the University" he observed in 1922, "to gather from the persistent past, where there are no dead, and embody within, its walls the learning of the world in living exponents of scholarship who shall maintain in Letters, and Science and Arts, the standards of Truth and Beauty and canons of criticism and taste. It is further incumbent upon the University to enlarge the boundaries of human learning and give powerful aid to the advancement of learning by the development of creative capacity. A University so designed to the service of the nation can not be restricted to a narrow or chosen teaching. ... To my mind the University is a great storehouse of learning, a great laboratory for training as well of men of thought as of men of action.



“It has been our ambition to bring the University in intimate touch with the Nation, because of the supreme part it must play in national consciousness”.

As he conceived and worked up to this lofty Ideal, he stood up ‘four square’ and fought sternly and resolutely for the high principles at once essential and sacred to all true progress and greatness in academic life and thought. And never was he greater, never did he soar to loftier planes than, when in the most critical hour in the history of academic freedom and development in our country, he stood “unreservedly by the doctrine that if education be our policy as a nation, let it not be our politics, that freedom is its life-blood, the condition of its growth and the secret of its success.” Happily, no matter however stoutly he might have been opposed, no matter however desperately he might have fought for this noble Ideal and these high principles, he was in excellent company; the Ideal and the principles he upheld are accepted by the thought leaders, all over the world. Sir J. C. Bose also spoke feelingly in this strain, upholding the high Ideal, in his recent Address to the Convocation of Nagpur University, “The highest function of a University is the advancement of frontiers of knowledge for the common benefit of humanity...” “The University” said Lord Haldane (in a striking Address) than whom there is no higher authority in matters educational, “is a place of research, where the new and necessary knowledge is to be developed. It is a place of training where



the exponents of that knowledge—men who seek authority based on it—are to be matured and receive their spiritual baptism...Freedom and Development are the breath of its nostrils and it can recognise no authority except that which rests on the right of Truth to command obedience...'

As we have already said, Asutosh's works and achievements in the domain of educational advancement may be viewed from different standpoints; his throwing open of the flood-gates of Knowledge and Culture, his widening of the doors of his 'alma mater' has an important bearing on the present and future history of his country. It is the unique privilege of the Universities in the advanced countries of the world to supply not only the advanced spirits but also the standard bearers in the cause of Progress and Truth in every sphere of human activities and thought; but in India, the Universities 'made in the doll factory of the bureaucracy', were wont to move in the narrow and sterile grooves; it was reserved for Asutosh, (to use Tagore's inimitable words again) not only to have 'heroically fought against heavy odds for winning freedom for our education' but also to have performed 'the miracle of introducing a living heart into the steel framework'; and thus our University, under the leadership and inspiration of Ashutosh—living or dead—has been making up the lee-way in the intellectual and



cultural race started all over the world by foreign Universities. And it is the ever increasing streams of youngmen trained or turned out by the University who are working, and accelerating the march of the movements of progress and freedom in every direction ; it is from the ranks of these youngmen, call them whatever you will, it is from these that the torch-bearers of political freedom or social emancipation or the many ministering angels of suffering humanity have come forward and will come forward in the days and years to come ; at the psychological moments in the country's history, in hours of sorest trials and tribulations, it is these young men who have rallied round the banner of Surendra Nath, of Gandhi, of Chittaranjan and Profulla Chandra and have courted untold hardships and privations ; it is again these young men with an exuberance of energy and an abundance of idealism, who can—as has been recently pointed by the greatest living master in Bengalee fiction—lay down, and have actually laid down their lives for the sake of an idea, on the altar of the Ideal.

This liberation from the fetters of ignorance and superstition, this elevation to higher planes of culture and idealism, this awakening of the nation's youthful manhood into a new life and thought for which Asutosh worked—as few individuals have done in India—have a world-significance. Today the world is tottering, stumbling and bleeding under the chariot-wheels of its masters—groaning under



the iron heels of its elders ; today world-youth — is awake and active and anxious to wrest from the faltering hands of its elders the reins ; there is a world-wide youth-movement, youth-assertion, youth-awakening. As Dr. Brojendra Nath Seal said, the other day), in a prophetic strain, 'the cult of the world is the cult of the youth.. youth is the saviour of the world.' Not only in the West and America, but also in Russia and Turkey, in Egypt and Persia, in China and Japan, the youth is awake and out to wrest from the enfeebled grasp of the old, the banner of Progress and Truth. Shall India, shall Bengal lag behind in this awakening of youths of the world—India, which, before the very dawn of civilizations and birth of history, hailed 'holy light ! offspring of heaven, eternal, coeternal'...? Asutosh said, 'No', and an emphatic 'no' it was. From his place at the helm of affairs at his University, he laboured and struggled and toiled for the awakening and uplift of the youth-spirit in India, for a cultural and intellectual regeneration of his country's youthful manhood and thus it was his proud privilege as a reformer in the realm of education to have worked, in his own country for the youth-movement of the world and thus to have elevated, enlivened and enriched his country's youth with the spirit of the world-youth.



CHAPTER IX.

The Powerful Public Man.

His unique position in public life—His activities in the legislature and brief career in the old Imperial Legislative Council—He was a skillful parliamentarian but no typical politician, his shrewd suspicion of an 'unenlightened' democracy—His strong views on the place, the rights and functions of the University in the body politic—He uniformly upheld the grand democratic doctrine of Napoleon—His emphatic views on the question of students and politics—The conflict of his opinions, his policy and his actions with those of Mahatma Gandhi and Deshabandhu Das, the call of the leaders of the Non-co-operation Movement to boycott educational institutions in touch with the Government, the students' response and Asutosh's bold stand in Bengal—The two standpoints and policies, an estimate of their respective consequences, their practical worth and moral excellences.

'The most powerful public character in India', Asutosh was naturally among the most predominant and pre-eminent public men of his country; but this pre-eminence stands on a different footing from that of any one of his compatriots; for unlike them, Asutosh worked for and won his unique position in public life—in a sphere other than politics which, unfortunately, absorb almost all our activities and energies and attract most of our able and active men. No doubt as a prominent public man he shone as much in the Senate as on the floor of the Legislative Council; hence in his early days, the fame of the politician in Council Chamber was equal to the

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ascendancy of the educationist, and though his elevation to the Bench put an end to the activities of the public man in the political sphere, Asutosh's varied interests and unparalleled versatility, his momentous labours and singular achievements in the domain of educational expansions and intellectual regeneration, reacted upon, and influenced, every department of our public life. As Lord Lytton eloquently said, "Sir Asutosh Mookerjee was the most striking and representative Bengali of his time. The versatility of intellect and variety of his interests were so great that there is scarcely any department of the public life of this province which has not been left the poorer by his death."

It is almost a truism to say that it was not his labours in the sphere of politics—but in the realm of educational expansion and progress—that really established Asutosh as the 'most powerful public character in India'; in his mature active life, he was never in the political arena but was, for a brief period, in the legislature; as the representative of the Calcutta University in the Bengal Legislative Council, Asutosh very quickly made his presence felt. When the Calcutta Municipal Bill—the notorious Mackenzie Act—was on the legislative anvil, he took a prominent part in criticising the reactionary Bill and voicing public opinion against it. His contribution to the debate on the floor of the House impressed the Government considerably and he was, as we have already seen, nominated to the newly constituted Corporation



of Calcutta and remained a Commissioner thereof for years. On his election to the Imperial Legislative Council, as Bengal Council's representative, his powers of expression and of criticism, the clarity of his judgment and the breadth of his outlook, his keen discernment of good features in an ostensibly bad measure, his forensic eloquence and his superb debating faculties made him a formidable opponent of the Treasury Benches and a powerful factor to be reckoned with ; his activities in the Legislature, not to speak of his association with the Corporation, marked him out as a rising politician, a prominent public man, a keen debator, an incisive speaker, a courageous leader and a faithful champion of the public opinion.

And the Imperial Legislative Council of those days was not exactly like its present, or even its immediate successor. Today, under the Government of India Act of 1919, Indian Legislative Assembly is a decided improvement, out of all recognition, upon the old Council, in the strength of elective and non-official element and in the matter of composition, and of constitution. The old Council before the Morley-Minto Act, was worse than a 'gilded sham', with its official block, convened as it was from time to time, to register the decrees of an unrepresentative alien Executive and invest them with the mockery of a legislative sanction.

Any one who has no acquaintance with the dreary proceedings of our legislature of the period,



will have little idea as to what the task and position the few patriotic Indian public men were therein. But now two decades have rolled by; another generation has sprung up; looking back from the high pedestal of our present day conditions one cannot but be filled with admiration at the manly stand, the tenacious fight and the heroic spirit of our lonely representatives surrounded by the official phalanx in the Council Chamber where our destinies were sought to be moulded. Dr. Rash Behari Ghosh, the greatest Indian jurist, a most brilliant speaker and a towering, striking personality, could readily be imagined to have floored his big official colleagues in the Council as easily as a giant does a pigmy. It can also be imagined that Mr. Gokhale—than whom few greater politicians and debators have arisen in our midst and who had devoted all his life to the politics and public affairs of his country—should often outshine the official luminaries. But, for Asutosh, a newcomer as he was to the Imperial Council, to have dealt with the Universities Bill in the manner he did, laying it bare in its defects, its far-reaching effects and its possibilities was really worthy of a veteran parliamentarian.

As we have had occasions to refer to, Asutosh grasped the fundamentals and potentialities of the measure more ably than any other Indian member; and he was able to visualize the future course of progress and the future field of expansion of his



'alma mater'. It was only for a very brief period that he was in the Imperial Council; the Universities Bill was calculated to radically change the character and constitution, ideal and function of the Universities; and it was most far-reaching in its effects, as it was meant to regulate and control, mould and restrict higher education; so it drove the country into a vortex of intense agitation. But Asutosh's able handling of this controversial measure, his mastery of the facts of his case, his firm grip of the principles involved and of the interests at stake, his sense of the actualities of the present as well as of the potentialities of the future, entitle him to a equal share of credit and glory with his great colleague—the late Mr. Gokhale; but his elevation to the Bench rung the curtain on the career of the rising politician and legislator.

He could, as we have said, lay bare a complicated piece of legislation and subject an intricate problem, or a subtle and ingenious scheme, to the search light of his enlightened criticism; he could as easily see through a controversial measure; he could elucidate and explain a far-reaching and complex administrative proposal or dwell, or enlarge, upon larger questions of policy and principles, in a very lucid manner; he was always able to deliver a crushing invective against, or pass severe strictures upon, a person; through his criticism of a retrograde measure was telling and impressive, to a degree,



none-the-less could he discriminate between the good and bad elements of a mainly objectionable scheme or Bill; he would use his great forensic and dialectical skill and his compelling eloquence, as easily in support of his own proposition as in condemning and demolishing that of his opponents, a great lawyer and shrewd judge of men and things as he was, he always had a firm grasp of the basic principles and fundamentals underlying an important Bill or a difficult question of public interest; lastly, he would always be, on the look out for, as he had always had his eyes fixed upon, the opportunity—the opportunity of defence and of attack, of work and action, of learning and thinking; he would seize it and turn it good account as soon as it would present itself; he would seldom let a favourable chance slip through his fingers.

Like a shrewd navigator, it was his wont to watch the weather and examine the atmosphere, before embarking on his voyage; and like an experienced general that he was, who had been in the thick of the fight many a time and had won his wars first in his brain, then in the field, he would gather up his forces, calculate his strength, take hold of every strategic point and wait for the opportune moment to give his formidable adversary the expected battle; sometimes it so happened that no quarter was given, and flank movements, frontal attacks as well as blows at the most



vulnerable points, were equally good; these qualities of rare parliamentary leadership he possessed, and used to the full when necessity arose, in the course of his lifelong activities in the University.

For all his eloquence and activities in the Legislature he was not, by nature and temperament, a politician in the narrower and in the present day acceptation of the term; he never dabbled in politics—except once or twice in his student days; nor was he, by any means, a hero of a hundred platforms; the fact was he never took any prominent part in any political agitation. Whatever his views and opinions might have been on the burning questions of the day, on the broader political issues, on the more paramount policies and the abiding principles underlying the actions and mission of the rulers of the land, whatever might have been his actual feelings on the various situations that cropped up and developed from time to time, he was precluded, by his official position, to make them public, so we will leave him where he was; and it is best not to identify him exclusively with any particular party or programme; but it can be said and said without fear of contradiction that his heart was always with the nation, if not his head; he felt as keenly as the most ardent and emotional patriot, and even condemned emphatically, the humiliating conditions, the atmosphere of unnatural inferiority—that his



countrymen smarted under; his sensitive soul, his majestic nature, his independent spirit—his whole personality—rebelled at the manner in which some of the vital needs, some of the supreme interests of his country—as for instance, proper facilities and encouragements of higher studies and researches and the educational progress in general—were ministered to by the rulers of our land, the custodians of public fund, as he aptly termed them. But it may be conceded—it is even clear—he had a deep respect for established order of things, for established and enduring institutions such as the University; one may go further and say he cared a good deal for the much talked of, much abused, much misunderstood things—Law and order; he had, indeed not a little regard for law and order, in the true sense of the words; but not so much, perhaps, for the so-called laws which constitute the glorified decrees of an irresponsible executive, placed on the Statute Book in the teeth of popular opposition, which, moreover, are the negation of all sacred laws and violate the fundamental principles of equity and fairness, justice and liberty;—he was too great a jurist, too learned a legislator, too eminent a citizen to have any great and real regard for these ‘lawless laws.’ But the fact remains, he left politics severely alone; he had a shrewd suspicion of the undeveloped democracy—a democracy, without adequate education and culture, without a due sense of responsibility; and he meant to combat the evils, the