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for

CONFERRING AN HONORARY DEGREE

on

H. R. H. THE PRINCE OF WALES

on

Tuesday, the 27th December, 1921



Calcutta University Press

1921

PRINTED BY ATULCHANDRA BHATTACHARYYA
AT THE CALCUTTA UNIVERSITY PRESS, SENATE HOUSE, CALCUTTA.

ADDRESS

BY

SIR ASUTOSH MOOKERJEE, Kt., C.S.I.,

VICE-CHANCELLOR OF THE UNIVERSITY

YOUR EXCELLENCY, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,

On occasions when Honorary Degrees are conferred in this University, the Vice-Chancellor is expected to dwell at some length on the eminent position and attainments of the distinguished recipients; but whatever may verily be pleaded in defence of this time-honoured custom, a departure may well be sanctioned when we are assembled to show our regard for the Heir-Apparent to the Throne. The event may rightly be interpreted as possessing a significance rather national and imperial than scholastic and academic. We rejoice to think that now forty-six years ago, when the Senate of this University desired to honour His Royal Highness Albert Edward, Prince of Wales, whom Queen Victoria of loved and revered memory, had sent out in our midst in token of her deep affection for the millions of her subjects in her Indian Empire, we were authorised to give expression to our feelings in a manner befitting an academic body and to open our roll of Honorary graduates with his illustrious name. We remember, again, with pride and pleasure that thirty years later

His Royal Highness George Frederic Ernest Albert, Prince of Wales, graciously consented, like his august father to join the rank of our Honorary Doctors of Law. We recall, further, with gratitude and exultation the memorable day when six years later, our great Sovereign and his consort vouchsafed to us the high privilege of approaching Their Gracious Majesties on this very spot, with a dutiful address expressive of our deepest feelings of loyalty and devotion. It is thus appropriate in the highest degree that on the present auspicious occasion we should be anxious to extend to His Royal Highness the Prince of Wales such enthusiastic welcome as lies in our power and thereby to renew a connection between the Royal House and our University which, to our joy, already possesses a hereditary character.

But let me emphasise that there are additional weighty reasons of a personal nature, why we are gratified by this opportunity to give outward expression to our feelings of esteem and admiration. Though still in the threshold of what is bound to prove a career of signal beneficence, His Royal Highness has given abundant proof of true nobility of soul. Whether amidst the peaceful life of an ancient seat of learning and culture, or amidst the storm and stress of a battle-field in the greatest of wars recorded in modern history, his high sense

of duty and good comradeship secured for him the affectionate regard of all who were brought into contact with him. To their surprise and delight, he united inexhaustible courtesy with chivalrous courage, and untiring energy with unfailing serenity of temper. It is no wonder that a Prince of the Royal House, so richly endowed by Nature, gifted with an ever-radiant smile, warmly interested in the welfare of the rising generation, anxious to meet and mingle with youth and to understand their hopes and aspirations, ever ready to open out his mind to them and to give them an insight into the ideas he holds in reverence as true and honourable—It is surely no wonder that such a Prince should, by universal testimony, conquer all hearts wherever he might go, in the Dominions of Canada, in the Australasian Colonies, in the United States of America, and, let me couple without hesitation the name of my motherland, India.

What then can be more eminently befitting than that he should prove to be one of the greatest of ambassadors that have ever served the British People,—the founders of commonwealths, the pioneers of progress, the stubborn defenders of liberty? What, again, can be more natural than that we should, with pride and pleasure, invite him, who symbolises in his person all that is best in the traditions of that race,

to enter the portals of our Academy, which has been charged by our Gracious Sovereign to conserve our ancient learning and simultaneously to push forward Western science? It is, indeed, by a wise dispensation of Providence that the destinies of India have been united to those of a western nation so progressive and enlightened as Great Britain; this has rendered it possible for us to maintain and develop our highly cherished national culture, intellectual and spiritual, and, at the same time, to take full advantage of the immense opportunities of advancement afforded by all the knowledge, all the science, all the skill of the West. But while we realise the truth that the destiny of men is in their own hands, that their future is for themselves to shape, we look for comradeship to the nation which has been a lesson to oppressors, an example to the oppressed and a sanctuary for the rights of mankind,—that comradeship which is the key to all well-being and happiness in the democratic life of the British Empire to-day, comradeship between nation and nation, between race and race, between people of all ranks in all walks of life. We have been taught to believe that every man and woman under the law should have an equal chance and equal hope, and that individuals and society will have their highest development and the largest allotment of human

happiness where this is secured by the spread of education along with liberty under law—liberty, not license, civilisation, not barbarism, liberty clad in the celestial robe of law, that law which alone is the authoritative expression of the will of the people. The dynamic effect of the fusion of ideals, eastern and western, is already visible over this vast continent, the repository of an ancient and glorious civilisation. If I may be permitted to recall the language of our Gracious Sovereign, when ten years ago he gave us the watchword of Hope, “on every side I trace the sign and stirrings of new life”; I see, indeed, the majestic vision which unfolded itself to that great Puritan Poet, the mighty-mouthed inventor of harmonies, the God-gifted organ-voice of England: “Methinks, I see in my mind a noble and puissant nation rousing itself like a strong man after his sleep and shaking her invincible locks.” To have thus roused India from the slumber of ages and now to help her to reconquer for herself her position as a leading nation of the civilised world by assigning to her an honourable place of equality amongst the members of the commonwealth of Britain, will be not only the final realisation of the beneficent purpose of Providence, but also the crowning glory, the noblest achievement of the British race—the race that has secured from unwilling kings the

charters of its political rights, the race that has afforded incontestable proof of its humanity by the abolition of slavery within its world-wide territories. The truest course, the surest course, for every member of that great commonwealth to follow is, I doubt not, to recognise that Indians, like Englishmen, are high-spirited and fearless; both alike will do justice, will have justice, and will put up with nothing but justice from each other and from the nations at large. Weld them together, more and evermore, in a comradeship for defence of liberty under law. Their union of heart and purpose will record the triumph of justice and humanity, and will leave its indelible mark upon the pages of the history of Freedom in every sphere of activity of civilised man. We fervently hope that no sullen clouds of coldness or estrangement may ever obscure our fair relations and that the action or inaction of men who meditate disunion may not succeed to mar the benevolent purpose of Providence; and we venture respectfully to charge the future King of the British People with a cordial message of good-will from us, assuring them of our desire to strengthen the golden link which connects India with Great Britain and the Royal House.

My Lord, I trust I shall be forgiven if I bring my address to a close on a personal note. On the

occasion when forty-six years ago, an Honorary Degree was first conferred on a Prince of Wales, the distinguished graduates of this University were invited to witness the ceremony. One of the earliest graduates was permitted as an act of special favour to bring his little boy into the Senate House to have a glimpse of the Prince. The tumultuous acclamation which greeted His Royal Highness as he entered the hall made an ever-lasting impression on the mind of the boy. Thirty years later, the boy had developed into a Syndic and recorded his concurrence in a proposal to confer an Honorary Degree on the second Prince of Wales. Six years later, this very Syndic as Vice-Chancellor of this University and as the spokesman of the Senate had the high privilege to present a loyal and dutiful address to His Most Gracious Sovereign. By a singular turn of events, he now stands before you and has the supreme satisfaction to invite your Excellency, as Chancellor of this University, to confer an Honorary Degree on the third Prince of Wales.

SPEECH

BY

H. R. H. THE PRINCE OF WALES

After H. R. H. had received the Degree, he spoke as follows :

YOUR EXCELLENCY, MR. VICE-CHANCELLOR, LADIES
AND GENTLEMEN,

I thank you for the very high honour which you have conferred on me by granting me an honorary degree of your University.

My father, His Imperial Majesty the King Emperor, received this honour at your hands in 1906, and six years later recalled the pleasure which the ceremony had afforded to him, in his reply to a loyal address presented to him by the representatives of your University.

On the latter occasion His Majesty dwelt on the high ideals which should animate Universities in India, and in his confidence that the labours of your governing body would be inspired by those noble standards and that you would shoulder your high responsibilities with a courage which would command success. At the same time His Majesty's deep interest in the cause of education was shown by his special commands to his Governor General regarding the expansion and improvement of education generally in India.

I am gratified to hear that his wishes in the latter respect have borne fruit. It will be of interest to His Majesty to learn from me that his confidence in you was not misplaced ; and that in the rapid expansion of educational facilities, which has occurred, one of the important features has been the co-operation of bodies such as your University, in measures calculated to extend and improve the system of higher education in India in proportion to the expansion and progress which is taking place in other departments of education in this country. That this co-operation is cheerfully given in the face of financial and other difficulties redounds to your credit.

Gentlemen, I will not detain you longer. I trust that the honorary degree with which you have presented me to-day, will form a real bond of union between me and the University of Calcutta.
