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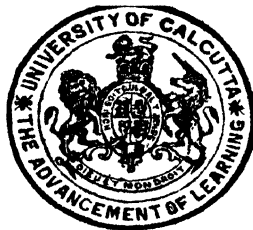
Prof. W. S. URQUHART, M.A., D.Litt., D.D.,
Vice-Chancellor of the University

at the

ANNUAL CONVOCATION

on

Saturday, the 8th February, 1930



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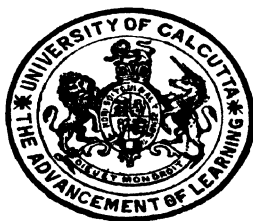
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YOUR EXCELLENCY, LADY JACKSON, MEMBERS OF
THE UNIVERSITY, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,

On this the third occasion on which you have visited the University as our Chancellor, we offer you our cordial welcome and express our gratitude to you for the interest you continue to take in the University, in its present doings and its immediate future. In the problems which will confront us in that immediate future and of which more will be said in the course of this address, we are confident that we can count upon Your Excellency's generous co-operation.

Another year of academic life has come to a close, and we hope that the strenuous work in which many of the members of the University have been engaged, has meant progress in certain directions. It has been a year of comparative peace within the central portion of the University, and the interruptions of regular work which occurred in one or two of the Colleges, were not of long duration and are now happily things of the past.

As a University, we have suffered some serious losses in the course of the year. The late Maharajadhiraj Sir Rameshwar Singh, G.C.I.E., of Durbhanga, was an Honorary Fellow of the University, and it is to his munificence that we owe the Durbhanga Building which has been for many years a useful centre of our work. We offer our sympathy as a University to his family, as also to the family of the late Maharaja Sir Manindrachandra Nandy, K.C.I.E., of Cossimbazar, who was an exceedingly generous benefactor

of the University and of many other educational institutions, and who will long be remembered as one of the most versatile and earnest promoters of learning, as well as one of the most unselfish of men, whom modern India has known. We also mourn the death of Nawabzada Ashrafuddin Ahmed, Khan Bahadur, C.I.E., who, since 1890, has been a Fellow (or Honorary Fellow) of this University, and, in his earlier days, gave valuable assistance on the Arabic and Persian Boards of Studies.

Through the retirement of Dr. George Howells of Serampore College, the University has lost the services of one who devoted much time and energy to what were, in his view, the best interests of the University. He was a member of innumerable committees, and took an active and useful part in the deliberations of the Senate. He was specially interested in the Post-Graduate Department and contributed greatly to its development and strengthening.

Two of the members of our professorial staff have been absent during the year. Sir C. V. Raman, whom we congratulate upon the honour of Knighthood bestowed upon him since our last Convocation, has just returned from a triumphant scientific progress in the West, where he has been lecturing before the leading Universities and Scientific Societies of Great Britain and the Continent of Europe, and has received, amongst other distinctions, the very rare honour of an honorary degree from the University of Freiburg. Prof. Radhakrishnan has been creating a great impression by his lectures in Oxford, and I have heard that when he goes to London, he, ever loyal to his national

garb, is apt to be stopped in Regent Street and thanked by unknown admirers for the inspiration of his addresses. Mr. H. C. Ray has just returned to the department of History with a London Ph.D. to his credit, and a remarkable series of testimonials to the value of his work from the most widely recognised authorities in his subject.

Meantime their colleagues in Calcutta have not been idle. Dr. Dineshchandra Sen has been continuing his work upon *Eastern Bengal Ballads*, having already published six substantial volumes. Dr. Haldar has been increasing his reputation as a writer upon Hegelian philosophy. Dr. Banerjea has been adding to the volume of his work in Economics, and Dr. Stella Kramrisch has written a very considerable portion of an important German Encyclopædia of Asiatic Art. The scientists also have not been without their meed of recognition. *Nature*, one of the best-known scientific journals, speaks of the work of Prof. J. N. Mukherjee in Colloid Chemistry "as having established his reputation throughout the scientific world as an eminent worker in this subject" and describes his recent address before the Science Congress as "an excellent example of the great progress which India has made in science during the last twenty years." Prof. P. N. Ghosh and his immediate associates have been contributing important articles to the same journal as well as to other scientific reviews. In a recent article the leading scientists of Britain described the quality of the Indian research in Pure Physics in terms which Prof. Raman modestly declares to be excessively generous, but in which

we suspect there is a very considerable amount of truth. These are simply outstanding examples which go to show that work of a very advanced character is being done in this University, and that many of the members of our staff are acquiring a reputation which has travelled far beyond the bounds of Bengal, and even of India.

One of the most important events in the year has been the setting up, after prolonged negotiation, of an Arbitration Board. This has been welcomed by teachers as giving them an added sense of security, and it is hoped that it will fulfil the expectations which have been formed regarding it.

Committee meetings during the year have been incessant. One of them, to which Mr. Syamaprasad Mookerjee gave able secretarial assistance, was appointed to formulate the latest views of the University upon the subject of the Secondary Education Bill, and these views were for the most part endorsed by the Senate. They represent an adjustment of the tradition which left secondary education in a position of somewhat uncertain equilibrium between the control of the Education Department and the University, to the newer conception that there should be a special Board entrusted with the management of this particular form of education. The chief difficulty was to state adequately and fairly the relation which the proposed Board should hold to the University on the one hand and the Education Department on the other, and it is hoped that the solution offered by the University, which represents a very, considerable com-

promise between opposing views, will commend itself favourably to the Legislature.

Another important Committee dealt with the situation which has arisen owing to the fact that the existing arrangement with the University in respect of the Post-Graduate Department in particular comes to an end in the course of this year. The Committee was appointed with a view to ascertaining the academic requirements necessary to preserve, consolidate and stimulate the essential features of the present scheme of teaching and research; and to suggest any changes which might be necessary in the constitution of the different administrative and academic bodies with a view to securing more effective economic co-ordination of resources and activities. It considered, amongst other things, the possibility of a more economical organisation of the offices, and attempted, either directly or through sub-committees, to arrive at a correct estimate of the financial situation which would arise if the teaching and research activities of the University were to be placed on a satisfactory basis. No one will deny the comprehensiveness of this aim or the diligence of the members of the Committee. Their patience was at times almost completely exhausted, but they returned to the task with surprising renewals of vigour, and were able, faint yet pursuing, to hold no fewer than seventy-six meetings, greatly assisted by the indefatigable labours of the two Secretaries, Mr. S. P. Mookerjee and Dr. J. N. Mukherjee. I think also the Members of the Committee will un-animously agree that a special debt of gratitude is owed by the University to Dr. W. A. Jenkins for his

assiduous toil in connection with this work. The Committee accumulated and attempted to digest—with what success I shall not presume to say—an enormous amount of information. The Report has been placed before the Senate and will be discussed at a meeting a week hence. It is, therefore, not possible to discuss at the present stage the merits of its conclusions. It is enough to say that the Report, contrary to the initial expectation of many, is in form unanimous, although the minutes of dissent on particular points are numerous. It represents an attempt to get rid of certain difficulties which have emerged in course of the years in the present organisation, difficulties which I make bold to say the illustrious founder of the present system, to whom the University will ever be conscious of owing an immeasurable debt, would have been the first to recognise as demanding consideration. Our aim has been to place the teaching and research activities of the University on a more satisfactory basis; and we agreed on one thing, namely, that it was unfair to the teachers of the University that the present uncertainty regarding the tenure of their appointments should continue. We were also unitedly of opinion that the activities of the University which it was essential to maintain, could not be carried on except through an expenditure which would involve an increase of resources. This may seem to some a startling and unwelcome conclusion, but I may point out that, in recent years, accounts have been balanced only through considerable trenching upon a temporary University reserve which is now almost completely-

exhausted, or will be exhausted at the end of the present financial year. After that the current income of the University will not be able to meet the expenditure.

Is the solution then to be the cutting down of our expenditure? I can only say that this seems to me impossible to any appreciable extent unless the activities of the University are to be very seriously hampered, and I think all the members of the committee would agree with me. The necessity for economy was never far from the mind of any one of us, but we were also of opinion that efficiency is of even greater importance and that, if due regard is to be had to this, involving fairness of treatment to the members of our staff, and if we are to be properly appreciative of the traditions and present opportunities of our University, the total expenditure cannot be diminished and may even have to be slightly increased. I think I am right in saying that this is the main trend of our Report. I am aware that the University is taking a heavy responsibility in suggesting this further inroad upon the resources which are available for the educational needs of the Province, and if I thought that the suggestion arose from a disregard of other educational necessities or was made with a view to perpetuating inefficiency and extravagance or even in order to maintain the *status quo* simply for the sake of maintaining it, I personally would have nothing to do with advocating this generosity. I do not pretend that all is well in every respect with the Post-Graduate Department—it is not in any human institution to claim perfection—neither do I deny, that, in many

respects and in certain directions, there is room for alteration and improvement and economy. But I think that, taking a view of the whole situation, there is abundant justification even for increased expenditure should that be found to be necessary, and I appeal to the Local Government for a generous treatment of the needs of the University, should that be found to be possible—and I think it is possible—without undue sacrifice of other educational interests.

In this Province, in the thoughts of the people, the University is regarded as standing at the summit and as forming an integral part of the whole educational system, and its welfare is regarded as affecting the welfare of the whole. In illustration of this, I may mention that, within the last few days, the sum of Rs. 10,000 has been offered *to the University* for the improvement of primary education in the villages of Bengal, the whole sum to be expended within the next two years, and that this gift has been accepted by the Syndicate, with a grateful recognition of the confidence indicated.

We have in this University an heritage which we cannot afford to despise or neglect or even maintain in a state of merely partial efficiency. Especially is it necessary in these critical days that the resources of the country should be liberally devoted to the training of the future leaders of the country so that they may be sent out properly equipped for the difficult life they will have to live. Would it be considered out of place in this connection to repeat the suggestion made elsewhere that the Government of India might re-

cognise that some of the achievements of this University are of national and imperial importance and deserve corresponding support and encouragement? Even in these days of the equalising of the rights of all the provinces, there might be still some sentimental as well as practical regard for the first-born amongst the Indian Universities. Is it too much to throw out the hint that more amongst the great merchants both Indian and European whose firms owe so very much to the loyal service in their offices of the humbler alumni of our Colleges might turn from superficial criticism to positive assistance of our education and make substantial contributions to educational funds which would enable us to elevate the whole standard of that training about which in their lighter moods they sometimes make merry but upon which the prosperity of their business so essentially depends? It would indeed be a profitable investment, for it would yield a return of good-will towards those who at present so largely control the industrial development of the country, and would do much to remove the bitter spirit of envy and constant talk of exploitation which are so prevalent in regard to those whose own energy and capacity and perseverance have led in so many cases to such amazingly profitable results.

In respect of finance generally it may be said that this University is, as in so many other countries, on the horns of a dilemma. If it is to depend upon internal resources, *i.e.*, upon fee income, it can do so only by increasing the number of the students, which means lowering its standards and so exposing itself to the criticism of academic worthlessness. If

it is to keep its standards high, it must limit the number of its students, diminish its income and find itself a pauper unless, as, again, every other University in the world does, it is to draw more largely upon external assistance, either in the shape of Government grants or private benefactions.

I turn from these mundane but necessary considerations to offer the congratulations of the University to you who, to-day, are receiving your degrees. It is a great event in your lives, and you are now proceeding to higher studies in which you will be still more closely associated with the University, or you are going out into the world to occupy responsible positions and, in many cases, to become leaders amongst your fellow countrymen. I offer you the sincere good wishes of the University for your success. I trust that you will take with you some clear consciousness of what University training ought to do for you and what, I hope, it has done.

A University trained man or woman ought to be able to exercise a balanced judgment, to extract the soul of good out of the confusions of controversy, or the truly valuable out of that which seems to be indifferent. You will usually find that beneath the vehemently expressed dogmas of opposing controversialists there are truths upon which both sides can agree. It is for the cultured men of the country to drag these confused and covered truths out into the clear light of day. Men may be divided in opinion as to the particular kind of political status they want, but they are not divided in their belief that India has peculiar traditions and aptitudes of her own. It is for

the University teachers and the students guided by them, through patient study of past history and present facts, properly to appreciate that tradition and cultivate those capacities. The spinning wheel may be viewed by different people with varying degrees of practical respect, but there would probably be unanimity in regard to the idea symbolised by it, *viz.*, that, in the inevitable development of industrialism, India should be saved as much as possible from some of the terrible accompaniments of the first beginnings of industrialism in the West and should discover some method of uniting the expansion of industry with increasing care for the welfare and individuality of the worker. Is it necessary for the prosperity of the people that so frequently as in the West, the fair countryside should be darkened by the smoke of multitudinous factory chimneys, that people should leave the open country for the crowded city streets where they jostle one another for a livelihood and have hardly room to breathe? It is for the University-trained men to put positive meaning into the demands of the people, to see that the national unity which is so passionately desired is no empty shell but an opportunity for faithful service of the commonwealth, leading to a removal of the spirit of indifference which separates class from class and a growing consciousness that the health and economic and spiritual prosperity of the people are the concern first of all of those who have had the special preparation for life which a University can give. The destinies of India can best be accomplished by the increase of her own internal strength. The development of a people comes from within and

not from without, and it is for you students and graduates of the University to guide that development in the years that are to come.

Education by lessening illiteracy and in connection with the present enthusiasm for the education of women is bringing everywhere new forces into being, and it is for you to guide these forces into the service of a better organised society. The University ought to take the lead in the regrouping of natural and historical groups, so that they may cease to be mutually antagonistic, and may be serviceable to higher ends. It is for you, graduates of the University, to take the lead in this regrouping and reorganisations, and the best wish that we can wish for you is that you may be conscious of your high calling and great opportunities, and zealously endeavour to be faithful to that spirit of enlightenment and sympathy and goodwill which your University, by its essential nature, is pledged to cultivate. The late Swami Vivekananda said once : “ My whole ambition is to set in motion a machinery which will bring noble ideas to the door of every one.” If the University has brought to you any noble ideas, it will have fulfilled its task, and if you open the doors of your minds to these ideas, communicate them to others and live by them, you will not fail in that future of great promise which lies before you.
