

Financial 57 DEPARTMENT.

From

SURGEON MAJOR-GENERAL C. SIBTHORPE,
SURGEON-GENERAL WITH THE
GOVERNMENT OF MADRAS,

Madras,



No. 1044 6

ENCLOSURE.

Dated 13th Nov 1895

Received 17th Nov 1895

Regd. 18th Nov 1895

No.

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From

GENERAL C. SIBTHORPE,
 SURGEON MAJOR-GENERAL WITH THE
 SURGEON — GOVERNMENT OF MADRAS,
 Madras,

To

THE HON'BLE THE CHIEF SECRETARY TO GOVERNMENT,
 Financial DEPARTMENT.

SIR,

In accordance with the wishes of Government contained in para 2 of G.O. No. 772 ~
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I have the honour to be,

Sir,

Your most obedient servant,

C. Sibthorpe

Surgeon Major-General,

Surgeon-General with the Govt. of Madras.

AN
INDIAN JOURNALIST:

BEING THE
LIFE, LETTERS AND CORRESPONDENCE

OF

DR. SAMBHU C. MOOKERJEE

LATE EDITOR OF 'RELS AND RAYYET'
CALCUTTA.

BY

F. H. SKRINE, L.C.S.

Calcutta:

THACKER, SPINK & CO.

1895.

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Address

"AN INDIAN JOURNALIST."

(From the *Dumfries Courier*, September 28, 1895.)

It would not have been necessary to open the series of articles which appeared in our columns some time back on the Native Press, if instead of being circulated, as is too often the case, by ill-qualified men, disappointed at their inability to obtain Government employment, it was carried on by men like the late editor of *Reis and Royce*, Dr. Sambhu C. Mookerjee. The life, letters and correspondence of this cultured and broad-minded man have now been published under the title of "An Indian Journalist," by Mr. F. H. Skrine, of the Indian Civil Service (Calcutta: Thacker, Spink and Co.; Dr. Mookerjee was well worthy of the distinction accorded, so far as we know, to no other Native journalist in India, of having an English Civilian for his biographer, but the honour is well in keeping with the life of its subject, who for many years enjoyed the personal friendship of distinguished civilians, of Provincial Governors, and of successive Viceroy. Mr. Skrine has performed his self-imposed task in no patronising manner, but in the spirit of one who while delighting to do honour to a great and good man does not hide his faults. The subject of the biography was not free from faults, and Mr. Skrine does not attempt to make him appear otherwise. We are glad to note that in dedicating the book to Sir William Hunter, the author raises his voice against the "persistent vituperation" heaped upon the race from which Dr. Mookerjee sprang. Some years ago Sir F. Moon, once Inspector-General of Jails, told the London Statistical Society that he considered that in the matter of truth and honesty the Bengalis were neither better nor worse than many nations boasting of a higher civilization or a purer faith; and that they "in no degree merited the wholesale condemnation with which they were generally visited by those who wrote and talked much but really knew very little of them." Mr. Skrine is evidently of the same opinion and puts these detractors of the Bengalis into two classes, those who know nothing of them and have been dazzled by "the brilliant sophistries of Macaulay"; and those who judge the race by the "cringing sycophants who dance attendance in high officials' ante-rooms or belong to families who during a century of intercourse with us

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in the capital have lost some of their native virtues without acquiring ours." The more closely Englishmen are brought into acquaintance with the Bengali language and character the less likely they are to fall into these errors. But on this side of India people form their estimate of the inhabitants of the Lower Provinces not so much from Macaulay's brilliant sophistries as from what they hear and read respecting the vernacular prints of Bengal, which, however, represent the views of writers bent on doing their little best to throw mud on the British administration rather than the true public opinion of Bengal. The basis of the estimate is therefore a wrong one, and it should not be forgotten that there are papers and papers and that as much difference exists between some of the rabid Calcutta prints, and the paper which Dr. Mookerjee founded as between darkness and light. *Reis and Royce* has always been remarkable for the mingled ability, candour and charitableness of its criticisms, and the periodical has enjoyed a degree of influence approached by no other native weekly. The paper was so well managed by its founder as to attract general notice and bring him into confidential relations with the makers of history. In the words of his biographer, "it sobered his judgment, and deepened his sense of responsibility"—two qualifications which the native journalists whom Dr. Mookerjee has left behind, should cultivate as being essential to those who, exercising a formative influence over their fellows, desire to use their influence aright.

There was in the mind of Dr. Mookerjee a constant struggle between the liberal impulses born of his learning and his wide knowledge of literature on the one hand, and his inherited prejudices on the other. It is characteristic of the largeness of his heart that in this struggle it was the restrictions which hampered his usefulness to his fellows that succumbed, rather than those which went against his own personal enjoyments. True to his Brahman descent he abstained for the greater part of his life from animal food and even from fish, and it was only in deference to the persistent entreaties of his friends that in the closing years of his career he adopted the more stimulating diet which his medical advisers considered necessary. His belief in the brotherhood of man and his desire to lighten the burdens of others showed themselves in innumerable directions. In his morning walks he would often stop and converse with the Municipal sweepers, and would question them respecting their caste and social customs. In the same way he would when relieving

* *An Indian Journalist*: Being the Life, Letters and Correspondence of Dr. Sambhu C. Mookerjee, late Editor of *Reis and Royce*, Calcutta. By F. H. Skrine, I. C. S. Calcutta: Thacker, Spink & Co. 1895.

"loafers" enter into earnest conversation with them. It is related that on one occasion he kept a guest waiting for supper for some time, while talking to a paliki-bearer. He deemed the comfort of his servants of greater importance than his own; and when they had retired to rest he would never allow them to be disturbed on any pretext. He would spend his time, brains and money in the interests of his friends without stint, and indeed found it impossible not to make a liberal response to the calls of friendship or of distress. From this cause he was prevented from making anything like the provision for his family which as Mr. Skrine remarks "is every day effected by men without a tithe of his mental gifts, but also without a tithe of his milk of human kindness." Rank was repeatedly pressed upon him, but his sturdy independence led him to refuse it; and his high-minded contempt of mere sordid gain caused him to neglect his many opportunities for acquiring wealth. He was no mere sycophant, and his friendship with men filling the exalted places of the land was due to no self-seeking endeavours to thrust himself upon them out to their own desire to become acquainted with a Native of great originality and personal charm. He was a warm supporter both with voice and pen of movements, having for their object the prevention of cruelty to dumb beasts. But this interest for the brute creation did not lead him to encourage in the slightest degree the fantastic theories of the Cow Protection societies. Neither did he care one jot for the Congress movement, for he felt the national programme to be premature and unsuited to Indian conditions and knew full well that the advancement of his fellow-countrymen laid in other directions. He firmly believed in the English rule as the best and only possible one, and as inspired by a deep sense of justice. He was naturally of warm and impulsive temperament, and when he heard a tale of wrong, he would, as Mr. Skrine remarks, promptly pour forth "unmeasured abuses on men and measures which calm reflection showed him to be in no way deserving of censure."

The greater part of this most interesting biography of one whom India could ill-afford to lose, is occupied with extracts from the correspondence which Dr. Mookerjee had with all sorts and conditions of men. These letters have been placed at Mr. Skrine's disposal by the friends of the deceased journalist, and he has made a most judicious selection of them. He has exercised a wise restraint in the case of the letters of the Marquis of Dufferin, Sir Auckland Colvin, and Sir Charles Elliott for,

to use his own words, the time has not yet come when opinions expressed by these administrators in unguarded intercourse should be given to the world. A few letters from living administrators which there is no reason to hold back are, however, given including one Lord Dufferin wrote to Dr. Mookerjee, from the Embassy at Rome in 1890, in which he says: "that Lord Lansdowne should like and appreciate you was certain, and I am sure that your admiration for him will increase as you become better acquainted with him." Lord Lansdowne was the last Viceroy whose friendship the Calcutta journalist was destined to enjoy, for Lord Elgin had only assumed office a few days when Dr. Mookerjee succumbed to the asthmatic troubles to which he had long been a victim, and in consequence of which he had years before joined the great army of opium-takers. Sir John Ardagh wrote a letter of condolence on behalf of the new Viceroy, which stated that his Excellency had heard with much regret of the death of one whose reputation as an able and independent writer was well known to him and whose acquaintance he was looking forward to making. Amongst the many interesting reminiscences with which the volume abounds, may be mentioned an incident which illustrates the tendency shown by Sir Richard Temple, then Lieutenant-Governor of Bengal, throughout his whole career in India to allow no matter of public interest to escape his notice, and if need be his interposition. Dr. Mookerjee, who was a man of wide cosmopolitan sympathies, joined with the late Nawab Abdool Luteef in organizing a public meeting for the purpose of congratulating the Turks on their successes at Plevna, in the early stages of the Russo-Turkish war. Regarding the demonstration as being likely to offend Muscovite susceptibilities, Sir Richard Temple interdicted it. The aggrieved Mahomedans sought the aid of Dr. Mookerjee and he advised an appeal in higher quarters. Accordingly an appeal was made with success; the meeting was held; and we suppose no one was a penny the worse for it. Dr. Mookerjee may be placed, with the still lamented Justice Telang in the category of those natives of this country who are connecting links between rulers and ruled, and who by their labours, as well as by their personal example and influence, do immense service in welding together the diverse communities of the land in the bonds of Imperial brotherhood and loyalty.

(From the *Press*, October 5, 1895.)

For much of the biographical matter that issues so freely from the press an apology is needed. Had no biography of Dr. Mookerjee, the Editor of *Reis and Rayat*, appeared, an explanation would have been looked for. A man of his remarkable personality, who was easily first among native Indian journalists, and in many respects occupied a higher plane than they did, and looked at public affairs from a different point of view from theirs, could not be suffered to sink into oblivion without some attempt to perpetuate his memory by the usual expedient of a "life." The difficulties common to all biographers have in this case been increased by special circumstances, not the least of which is that the author belongs to a different race from the subject. It is true that among Englishmen there were many admirers of the learned Doctor, and that he on his side understood the English character as few foreigners understand it. But in spite of this and his remarkable assimilation of English modes of thought and expression, Dr. Mookerjee remained to the last a Brahman of the Brahmins—a conservation of the best of his inheritance that wins nothing but respect and approval. In consequence of this, his ideal biographer would have been one of his own disciples, with the same inherited sympathies and trained like him in Western learning. If Bengal had produced such another man as Dr. Mookerjee, it was he who should have written his life. On another ground one feels, after reading the volume, not dissatisfied but unsatisfied. Written so soon after the events with which it deals, the life and letters necessarily indicate the suppression of matter that would probably have been more interesting than any that has been published. Mr. Skrine has exercised a judicious reserve, the necessity for which he may regret as much as his readers, and the result is very obvious incompleteness. Unfortunately, the desire to know more is likely to remain ungratified, for interest in the circumstances will have passed away before publication becomes no longer indiscreet. Of all men the editor of a newspaper is and should be least before the public in his own person, and long after his death the seal of the editorial confessional must remain unbroken.

Of the execution of the task by Mr. Skrine it is impossible not to speak favourably in view of the difficulties he had to face. He has made the most of the materials placed at his disposal, and we cannot grumble at the restraint he has exercised. The perfect biographer is a man of the stamp of Boswell, who sinks his own personality, who has no views himself and no desire to display his

learning and the extent of his reading. Mr. Skrine's is a personality not easily suppressed, nor, except for artistic reasons, would anyone wish it. It is impossible in reading the *Life and Letters* not to think of the writer as well as of the subject, to look in on him in his study and watch his methods of composition. We imagine, for instance, a carefully indexed commonplace book, which supplies on every other page quotations from "a Latin poet," "the greatest of French novelists, Honoré de Balzac," "the anonymous editor of the letters of Bussy-Rabutin (Amsterdam, 1738)," "an Irish member of Parliament of the last century" (who, an irrelevant note informs us, was "Richard Lovell Edgeworth of Edgeworthstown, father of the well-known novelist"). Attention is, in fact, distracted from the view by the officiousness of the guide. But if this is a flaw in the biographer's art, it furnishes incidentally some information on diverse subjects, some really interesting quotations, and makes us familiar with the writer's mental furniture and opinions. His reflections on the journalistic career, for instance, will awake a comfortable feeling of self-pity in the breast of every obscure newspaper-man:—

"The man of genius who, for his sins, embraces the calling of journalist is debarr'd from gratifying the 'last infirmity of noble minds.' His works are written on sand. They deal with ephemeral topics: and they are clean forgotten before the broadsheets which give them to the world are dry. The English custom of anonymity is to blame for this absence of a powerful edocor of all that is best in a man: and there are many who think that this drawback outweighs its admitted advantages. A youth who adopts this ungrateful profession must accept the inevitable, and will be fortunate if, by the time he is a grey-headed drudge, his fame is known to the brethren of the quill and midnight oil. The great actor has a more enviable lot. His triumphs are equally evanescent: but then he is sustained by the magnetism of applause, spurred to excel himself by the sympathy of his audience: while the traditions of his feats long survive him. Mookerjee was essentially a journalist; and the fact places his biographer at some disadvantage. For the gentle reader—like Napoleon when the name of a candidate for employ was submitted to him—asks 'What has he done?'"

Mr. Skrine's views on early marriage are his own, and are at least evidence of independent judgment. Dr. Mookerjee, it should be remarked, in explanation, was born in 1839 and was thus eighteen years of age at the time of his marriage. The event

suggests the following paragraph :--

"At a time when old England was ringing with stories of military and naval disasters Dr. Johnson remarked that public woes deterred no man from eating his dinner as usual. People marry, and are given in marriage while their country's destinies are trembling in the balance ; and Dr. Mookerjee gave hostages to fortune during the throes of the last great struggle for Empire, in 1857. His wife was a scion of the Bural family of Jorasanko. This event was far from having the sinister influence on his mental development which is assigned to early marriages by self-styled friends of India. They are stigmatised as the root of the decay which is consuming the country's manhood. That the children of the upper middle classes in many parts of Bengal are mere human weeds is but too evident ; but the cause of deterioration must be sought for in adverse physical conditions rather than in a custom which is hallowed by the acquiescence of a hundred generations. Doctrinaire-reformers forget that human nature is more powerful than convention, and that the sexual instinct is far stronger and is manifested at an earlier stage of life in the tropics than in temperate regions. The institution of marriage regulates this overwhelming impulse, just as law does the equally powerful craving for revenge. Hence marriages in early life are good in themselves and a cause of good to society ; and would-be reformers should ponder well the lessons afforded by countless ruined careers the outcome of an undue postponement of the nuptial rites."

The biography is warmly appreciative without being needlessly laudatory ; it gives on the whole a complete picture of the man ; and in the book there is not a dull page. Dr. Sambhu Chunder Mookerjee essayed many parts, but was above all things, and almost in spite of himself, a journalist. As a boy at college he started a short-lived magazine ; he was only a youth when he was appointed Editor of a daily paper in Calcutta ; when he was not on the regular staff of a paper, the itch for writing made him a frequent contributor to the press. But he did not for a time realise that journalism was the profession for which he was best fitted. He was at different times Political Adviser, Nawab and Secretary to several native Princes, positions for which his virtues disqualified him as much as his abilities recommended him ; he acted as Secretary to the Oudh Taluqdars' Association, and twice he made attempts to join the legal profession, but in spite of a natural bent in the direction of the law, he failed for one reason or another to follow

up his intention to the extent of qualifying himself for practice. It was as editor of *Reis and Rayet* that he chiefly distinguished himself and exercised his greatest influence. The bulk of the letters reproduced at the end of his biography belong to this period, beginning in 1882 and ending with his death in 1894. During that time he carried on correspondence with Sir Auckland Colvin, Lord Dufferin, and other men of influence, only a few passages of which, for obvious reasons, have been published. One of these letters--from Sir Auckland Colvin--has so much personal interest that it was worth giving in full. It is dated Government House, Naini Tal, May 27th, 1892, and runs thus :--

"My dear Dr. Mookerjee,--I write to thank you for your telegram and, although, as I see you think and as I feel, there is but little to congratulate me on, I appreciate the kindness of your message and admire its epigrammatic form.

The fact is, that after nine years as Councillor and Lieutenant-Governor I do not feel particularly grateful for a decoration which is ordinarily given when a man is appointed (not when he ceases to be) a Lieutenant-Governor.

My reward I look for in the results of my work--the reorganisation of the Oudh and Jhansi administration ; the reform of the Police ; the water supply of our five great municipalities ; the success against scarcity in Kumaon and Garhwal in 1890, and again this year ; the introduction of technical education, of a measure for Village Munsiffs' Court and Honorary Munsiffs ; the great impetus given to vaccination in municipalities and in the rural tracts ; the commencement made in village sanitation ; the great and genuine extension of Female Hospitals ; the obtaining from India of the two important lines of rail from (a) Lucknow to Benares *via* Rai Bareilly, and (b) from Bareilly *via* Rampur to Moradabad ; the unravelling of the Rampur plot ; the action taken in regard to criminal tribes and reformatories ; Hume finally buffeted and Wheeler condemned--these things are more satisfaction to me than the stars in many firmaments.

I was glad to see Mr. Evans knighted. Well ! all these are vanities. What is important to us all is health and sufficiency of means. I fear you lack the first, though 'Reis and Rayet' alike contribute to the second. I take both into my retirement, and hope to avail myself of them in some form of literary work. I was born (like you) to write ; and by cursed spite only went astray into practical administration."

A few of the letters addressed to Dr. Mookerjee are of such minor importance that they might have been omitted with advantage, but not a word of his own letters could have been spared. To say that he writes idiomatic English is to say what is short of the truth. His diction is easy and correct, clear and straightforward, without Oriental luxuriance or striving after effect. Perhaps he was never so charming as when he is laying down the laws of literary form to young aspirants to fame. The letter on page 285, for instance, is a delightful piece of criticism: it is delicate plain-speaking, and he accomplishes the difficult feat of telling a would-be poet that his productions are not in the smallest degree poetry without, one may conclude, either offending the youth or repressing his ardour.

The letter from Professor Vambéry is also remarkable for its plain-speaking. Dr. Mookerjee had written referring to the Mahomedan and Hindu communities, "My ideal is to form a nation by a harmonious social fusion of the two component parts of the population under the British Crown," a statement of his views that might have led anyone unacquainted with his common-sense methods to imagine him more of a visionary than he was. Professor Vambéry certainly addressed him in reply as if he had received that impression. He says, writing from Budapest in December 1889:—

"In presenting yourself as 'an exceptional person who has always loved the Mahomedans as brethren and has earnestly tried to interpret between Hindus and Mahomedans and effect a union of hearts between two peoples whose social and political interests in India are identical,' you have certainly put before yourself a very useful, but at the same time a very arduous task. As far as my limited experience and unpretentious notions go, the solution of this problem in Asia has always seemed to me an unanswerable difficulty. You evidently know better than myself, that in Asia the partition wall between mankind is not the nationality, but religion. The Mahomedan scripture says—'All true believers are brethren,' as well as that unbelievers are one nation, a saying which implies a strict unity between the followers of one faith, and does not admit any partition by race or nationality. I am, therefore, at a loss to understand how your idea to form a nation by a harmonious social fusion of the two component parts of the population, sublime and high-minded as that idea is, could be carried out without shaking the very foundation of the respective communities. Of course you are on the best way in proposing to effect that idea

'under the British Crown, which has given us such a strong and equitable Government as we could never hope to form ourselves; which has advanced us to a new life, and is daily improving us, and which I devoutly pray will keep us in hand until the time comes under God's Providence when we are in a position to help ourselves.' This argument speaks decidedly whole volumes in favour of the soundness of your views. The time will and must come when many of our countrymen and co-religionists will share in these healthy views, but I beg leave to say that this time is yet very, very far, and that it would be much easier to make all Europe one community of a common interest and aim, than to mould the different nationalities and creeds of Hindostan into one nation. What you have to do is to proceed on the way inaugurated by your British teachers without any premature aspirations unfit and eventually dangerous to the present stage of culture of the great mass of the peoples of India. What you have achieved hitherto under the guidance of Great Britain and assisted by the innate splendid mental capacities of your people, is quite unique in the history of civilisation of mankind. Your hitherto made progress appears the best guarantee for the future development of India. You enjoy liberties which are the object of envy not only of all Asia and Russia, but also of many parts of Europe, and the benignant rays of liberty will certainly increase in the measure as the sun of enlightenment rises over the horizon of your vast and glorious country."

Dr. Mookerjee's opinions on public affairs are so well known from the pages of *Reb and Rayet*, that it is hardly necessary to quote isolated references. One or two may, however, find a place. In February, 1891, writing of the Age of Consent agitation he says:

"As for ourselves, the time is one when everyone is bound to declare himself on one side or the other. I can only pity the handful who may have by independent thought come to the conclusion that the Age of Consent Bill interferes with the Hindu religion. Thank God, our religion is more elastic than that! It stands any amount of clipping, especially in its dead twigs and leaves. In the interest of civilisation and of our good name as a nation and the credit of our Rishis themselves every man who pretends to patriotism and culture among us should disavow the tricks of the Garbhadhanists."

Of the cow protection movement he wrote in September, 1893, to a fellow-Hindu:—

"You seem to have a superstitious dread of the word *special*. But be at your ease, no special laws have been rushed through the legislature for the destruction of the cow-protectionists. The law was already in existence under which Government are acting; and they will, you may be sure, do nothing which has not been repeatedly done before. And what was the harm in principle or in practice if they did something special in the way of legislation and administration? *Salus republicæ suprema lex*. That is exactly what you lawyers and politicians are apt to forget. I respect law; and justice I reverence above everything, but we should beware of making fetishes of these and paying them blind adoration. Great as law is, my friend, and greater as justice; existence is above them all. You are profoundly ignorant of where you are. You are sleeping in the crater of a volcano. Government have already wasted much valuable time. They listened to your Bengal politicians who would lay the evil of Discord by holding brotherly meetings of Hindus and Moslems, and so forth. They would not take our stronger counsel; they were afraid of you and your friends--the parliamentary badgers. But their policy of peace-at-any-price only encouraged the spirit of lawlessness, and riot upon riot at last opened their eyes, and they decided to act with firmness. The effect cannot now be the same as before, specially if they adopt half measures as if they were.

Willing to wound and yet afraid to strike.

These are difficult matters, and I am not surprised that, in default of special knowledge of the situation, you should be at sea. What surprises me is your talk on the cow-question, your protestation of toleration, &c., all ending in the remark that the riots have been caused by the action of the officials unduly favouring the Mahomedans. But it is useless to argue with one who at this hour says, 'a little rowdyism is needed.' It is a relief to know that you are no official. But then you would have talked differently, perhaps gone to the other pole. You are still young, Kisari, and it may befit you to be bellicose. I am past the years of recklessness and am for peace. War, even in my time, is not so horrible to contemplate from a safe distance at home. But I have no wit to see the fun of war within my own country and between our own people, and I pray to God to avert such a calamity from us."

For much more that is well worth reading we must refer readers to the volume itself. Intrinsically it is a book worth buying and reading, and it may also be noted that the profits of the pub-

lication go to the family of Dr. Mookerjee, who were not left too well provided for. It is hoped that a second edition may be called for, and having that in view we would suggest a careful re-reading for "literals" which will be found on the first page of the Dedication, and here and there throughout the book. On page 160 we should query the word "idiotisms;" probably Dr. Mookerjee wrote "idioms." The full and useful index--Mr. Skrine in the course of his reading has marked and taken to heart Carlyle's recommendation--should be transferred to the close of the book.

(From the *Englishman*, October 15, 1895.)

WHETHER the life of the late Dr. Sambhu Chunder Mookerjee would prove interesting, as Mr. Skrine says it would, no matter how indifferently written, is not, perhaps, a practical question. The work* before us leaves nothing to be desired either in the way of completeness, impartiality, or lifelike portrayal of character. The late editor of *Reis and Rayees* came, we learn, of the purest Brahmin stock, being thirty-fourth in descent from Sriharsa, the reputed author of the last Indian epic *Niradh Charita*. He inherited his literary gift, therefore, through five centuries. "It must be admitted," writes his biographer, "that the pursuits of Sambhu Chunder's immediate progenitors were hardly favourable to the conservation of literary energy. Stern necessity had degraded them from the altar to the shop. His father, Mothur Mohun Mookerjee, far from posing as a visible manifestation of divinity, supported himself as a manufacturer and trader in the Calcutta bazaar." Mr. Skrine follows Mookerjee through all the vagaries and struggles of his early life. He was, it appears, an only son, and therefore spoiled. After a short spell at the local Missionary school his father removed him through fear of his conversion to Christianity, and placed him at the Oriental Seminary at Garanhata, where he speedily distinguished himself. He became an enthusiastic student, joining the Calcutta Public Library. "But," says Mr. Skrine, "the spectacle of a lad in his early teens reading with solemn elders had its ludicrous side. In order to escape the mild 'chaff' lavished on him, he pored over his English classics while seated outside the Library in a pony carriage his father had

* "An Indian Journalist": being the Life, Letters, and Correspondence of Dr. Sambhu C. Mookerjee, By F. H. Skrine, I.C.S. Calcutta. Messrs. Thacker, Spink and Co., 1895.

provided to take him to school."

While at the Hindu Metropolitan College he started a periodical called the *Calcutta Monthly Magazine*, which soon came to grief. Then he became for a short time editor of the *Morning Chronicle*, but a difference in political opinion between the editor and proprietor led to his resignation. He employed his enforced leisure in the composition of a pamphlet on the Mutiny, which created considerable sensation at home, and was generally voted too good to have been written by a Native. A short time previously, at the age of eighteen, he had married a member of the Boral family of Jorasanko. The union was a happy one. In a short time Mookerjee became attached to the staff of the *Hindu Patriot*, and became, as Mr. Skrine justly says, "one of a little knot of brilliant youths who held the banner of Indian journalism higher than any of their successors have done." For two years he worked for this journal, and then deserted it for a short time to study law, but soon returned to his more congenial occupation, which he continued at for another three years. Subsequently he became Secretary to the Calcuttas' Association of Oudh, and editor of the *Samachar Hindustani*, the organ of the Association. Then he was appointed Dewan to the Nazim at Murshidabad, but was soon driven from the Nazim's Court by the intrigues which prevailed there. A third spell at *Hindu Patriotism* was followed by an attempt at what Carlyle would call "schools mastering," but like that great man he found that teaching was not in his line. Subsequently he became Secretary to Raja Sheoraj Singh of Kachipur, and Minister to the Raja of Hill Tippera. Finally in 1882 he started his life work in *Real and Ruyet*, which he edited with vigour and success until his death from pneumonia in 1894.

We have briefly outlined Mookerjee's career from the material which Mr. Skrine has in his valuable work placed at our disposal; but it would be unjust to that work to judge of it from this epitome. Mr. Skrine deals with his interesting subject with the unflinching instinct of the biographer. Every side of Dr. Mookerjee's complex character is treated with sympathy tempered by discrimination. It would have been impossible, for example, for his biographer to hit upon a better method of bringing out the perpetual struggle which was going on between prejudice and liberalism in the mind of the enlightened Brahmin than by means of the instance mentioned in the following passage:—

"His inherited prejudices were continually at war with these liberal impulses which were the growth of a life-long devotion

to letters. Thus he was always ready to welcome those of his countrymen who had outraged unenlightened public opinion by crossing the seas, and he once advised a friend, who consulted him as to the readiest method of gaining notoriety, to visit Europe and take his wife with him. But after receiving a visit from one of the 'England returned' he always ordered the *breakfast* used during the call to be emptied and cleaned, and everything polluted by his touch to be destroyed. In this struggle between inbred conviction and acquired culture the latter was, on the whole, victorious."

Mr. Skrine's narrative certainly impresses one with the individuality of a remarkable man. To Mookerjee's amiable qualities his biographer bears eloquent testimony, which is supplemented by that of numerous correspondents whose letters appear in the subsequent part of the volume. His own letters show that he had not only acquired a command of clear and flexible English, but that he had also assimilated that sturdy independence of thought and character which is supposed to be a peculiar possession of natives of Great Britain. His reading and the stores of his general information appear to have been, considering his opportunities, little less than marvellous. Mookerjee's correspondence has evidently been well sifted, and the letters given in Mr. Skrine's volume are so admirably selected that the omission of any one of them would be a distinct loss. The long list of his correspondents included, among others, Lord Dufferin, Lord Rosebery, Sir William Hunter, Sir Auckland Colvin, Sir Lepel Griffin, Sir Donald Wallace, Sir Griffith Evans, Professor Vambéry, Colonel Sir J. C. Ardagh, Dr. Mitra, Mr. G. Venkata Appa Rao, and Mr. G. Svanala Row. The last two were budding poets. One of the epistles to the last named is a fine specimen of destructive criticism:—

"But how came you to write such stuff as the opening lines of your heroic couplets?

"All hail to you, my country's faithful friends,
From Britain's Isle, on which our ideal depends,
And where you worked so well for Bharat-land,
That we can sure achieve a success grand."

"The very punctuation, carefully as you have in obedience to metrical necessity, punctuated the passage, is faulty. There is not, in an opening salutation, a single mark of admiration either at the beginning, in the middle, or at the end. The grammar is not better in other respects. What does 'And' connect? It is a mere

stop-gap. 'Can' ought to be 'might.' There is no end to the filling-in process. What a succession of pleonasm in 'Britain's isle' and 'Bharat-land'! Say you that it is Bharat--and, not Bhārat? Does that mend the matter? Do we ordinarily say--Johnson-land or Goldsmith-land? Why not say at once *Bharat-land*? Of course, without special warning most readers will read 'Bharat-land' as if it were *Bharat-land*. The crowning blunder is in the scanning of the last line. Are our brethren in the South accustomed to pronounce the penultimate word as *ma-ten*? or how came the *Hindu* to admit such a verse?"

Very interesting, too, are the letters which Dr. Mookerjee received from his numerous correspondents. Sir Auckland Colvin writes from Nairi Tal in 1888 praising a recent contribution of Mr. George Curzon to the *Nineteenth Century*. It will be remembered that Sir Auckland was Mr. Curzon's bitterest opponent in the recent Chitral controversy. In a still more delightful letter Sir Auckland says that he was born, like Dr. Mookerjee, to write, and that it was only by cursed spite that he went astray into practical administration. A letter from Lord Dufferin after he had left India deserves to be reproduced:—

"British Embassy, Rome, May 16, 1890.

"My dear Dr. Mookerjee,--I was delighted to get a letter from you, for I am sure you well know that there are very few of my Indian friends towards whom I feel a warmer regard, or for whose character and abilities I have greater respect than I have for yours. I am still a diligent reader of 'Reis and Rayer' and in that way I have kept myself pretty well informed of everything that has been going on in India since my departure.

"I am, however, very much grieved to learn of your having been so seriously unwell. An attack upon the chest is always a critical matter, and as you are not very robust you must have felt it all the more acutely. Nor does it in the least surprise me that all your friends as well as your readers should have been rendered very anxious about you.

"That Lord Lansdowne should like and appreciate you was certain, and I am sure that your admiration for him will increase as you become better acquainted with him.

"In regard to my own proceedings I have not much to tell you. We are very pleasantly situated at Rome, which is one of the most interesting capitals of Europe, surrounded by all the most agreeable associations both of Art and Literature, and possessing a very charming station and society. In winter I get some fox-hunting

and in the summer boating, which supply the air and exercise necessary for one's health. Rome, however, was not a good place to come to immediately after leaving India, for what is wanted under such circumstances is a bracing climate, which Rome is not. As a consequence I had rather a tiresome though not a really serious illness when I reached London, which was very disappointing, as it prevented me from seeing any of my friends. This summer I am going to spend on the sea coast in Italy, so that it will not be until next year that I shall really get my holiday at home.

"Believe me, my dear Dr. Mookerjee, yours sincerely, Dufferin and Ava."

Curiously enough, the last letter Dr. Mookerjee received and which he never lived to acknowledge, was from Lord Lansdowne, who was leaving India. It is as follows:

"Dear Dr. Mookerjee,--Your kind letter reached me just as I was leaving, and I was obliged to write my answer on board the steamer.

"I retain a very agreeable recollection of my intercourse with you during the past five years.

"You will receive a copy of my photograph from Colonel Ardagh. With best wishes,

"Believe me, dear Dr. Mookerjee, Yours faithfully,--Lansdowne."

One of the first to express his condolence with the family of the deceased writer was the present Viceroy, Lord Elgin. Mookerjee appears to have won the affection not only of the dignitaries with whom he came in contact, but also of those in low estate. He had his failings, no doubt, but, as was becoming, these are not emphasised in the present work. The impression left upon the mind upon laying down the book is that of a good and able man whose career has been graphically portrayed.

(From *Power*, September 22, 1895.)

I HAVE been reading Mr. Skrine's life of Dr. Sambhu Chunder Mookerjee, entitled "An Indian Journalist" which was published last Sunday. The publication of this work is the only notable event of the past few days. That a Civilian who is the biographer of no less a person than the Lieutenant-Governor of the day should unbend himself so far as to undertake the task of writing

the life of an Indian Journalist, who all along occupied a more or less isolated position in his community and was more of a dreamer than a worker, is indeed a very gratifying sign of the times—though old Sambhu was one of those men whom it was impossible to know without loving him passionately. Old Sambhu had a heart, and he felt for others to an extent which is rare in this cold, calculating age. I can forget Sambhu's word-painting. I can forget his scholarship. But the qualities of his heart I can never forget. As a writer of racy paragraphs he was unsurpassed, perhaps unapproached—amongst Bengalees of course. But I fear he was little else besides. As a writer on serious subjects he was not quite successful. He was about the worst man that could be selected for drawing up a petition. His principal defect was his lack of all sense of proportion. Latterly he became ambitious of becoming another Kristodas Pal, without even the rump of a party behind him. He became the friend and correspondent of Viceroy and Governors and would treasure up their letters with a vanity which would be disgusting in a less simple, warm hearted and guileless man. His letters to Lord Dufferin are very remarkable productions. He takes the Marquis into his confidence and insists on him long accounts of his minutest affairs—his health, projected visits and even his arrangements for the conduct of his paper in his hypothetical absence. No village matron gossiping in the ghat could enter into minutest details about herself than are enshrined like gems in Sambhu's letters to the white lords of the Indian creation. He had almost degenerated into a snob. Indeed, latterly he appears to have become a veritable autograph hunter. Any European of distinction whom he happened to meet anywhere was sure to be the recipient of a letter from Sambhu. From Lord Rosebery down to the humblest guest at Government House, not one escaped the attentions of the autograph-hunter. The story of Sambhu's life as narrated by Mr. Skrine is rather disappointing as it leaves several gaps which somewhat puzzle the reader.

Lord Dufferin and Sir Auckland Colvin appear to have found in Sambhu a regular correspondent. They evidently regarded him as a garrulous old fool and enjoyed his pleasantries. They appreciated his scholarship and his command of the English language, his rich fund of humour, his quaint observations of men and things in general, his frankness and the truly oriental warmth of his heart. They liked him all the more for giving it hot and strong to his own countrymen, and for his out and out support of the measures

of Government. The writer of the Baroda Pamphlet was not the same man who week after week sang Hosanna to the glory of the White Brahmins whose worship occupied so much of his last days. But I doubt if any one ever took him seriously. Seriousness was foreign to his constitution. Poppy and Mandagoora do not make a man serious. Sambhu was a splendid failure in life. There is not another instance of a man endowed with so much ability who failed to accomplish anything worth accomplishing. His scholarship was something astonishing. His literary powers were unquestionably of a high order. But still his life was a failure. We all loved, liked and adored him, but I for my part never expected him to play a prominent part in the affairs of his country. His paper, *Reti and Rayet*, appeals to fit audience but few. To the people at large, his very name was unknown. It was only those who had the privilege of his friendship that could form some idea of the lovable nature of the man. A more forgiving man never lived, nor one whose heart was so full of sympathy for those that sought his counsel or help. Every young man whom he knew worshipped him as a demi-god. His love truly surpassed the love of woman. Greater scholars than he may possibly arise amongst us. Better writers we may see. But never more shall we look upon another of such a kind, warm and sympathetic heart as Sambhu. His conversation was a rare intellectual treat, and he could rivet the attention of his hearers for hours, till even the small hours of the morning: Time passed so swiftly and agreeably in his charming company. The Dutt of Wellington Square, specially Jogesh Babu and Sreesh Babu, literally idolized him. But for their almost romantic devotion to Sambhu, the entire course of his life would perhaps have been directed in a different channel. Jogesh Babu had been the guardian angel of the gifted man, and but for such a devoted admirer we do not know what would have been his fate. Babu Jogesh Chunder has been mainly instrumental in bringing about the publication of this biography. He has performed a task of love and discharged a duty to his departed hero, who was everything to him and to whom he was everything. It is he who has supplied the materials, and whose loving care has passed the pages through the press. Thinking of Sambhu I cannot but think of that loving and chivalrous soul but for whom the world would have heard very little of one of the greatest Bengalees of the present century. As for Mr. Skrine, his too has been a labour of love and we cannot be too thankful to him.

(From the *Times of India*, September 30, 1895.)

It is not that amid the pressure of harassing official duties an English Civilian can find either time or opportunity to pay so graceful a tribute to the memory of a native personality as Mr. F. H. Skrine has done in his biography of the late Dr. Sambhu Chunder Mookerjee, the well-known Bengal journalist (Calcutta: Thacker, Spink and Co.); nor are there many who are more worthy of being thus honoured than the late Editor of *Ram and Rayar*. In a dedication of this volume to Sir William Hunter Mr. Skrine observes that gratitude was among the motives which led him to undertake the biography of his distinguished Bengali friend, but he felt, too, that Mookerjee's was a career which should not be allowed to pass into oblivion. "He came of a race which has undergone persistent vituperation from people forgetful of Burke's axiom that a nation may not be impeached. The detractors of the Bengalis," he adds, "belong to two classes. The first knew nothing of the seventy millions of the Lower Provinces, and have been dazzled by the brilliant sophistries of Macaulay. The second judge Bengalis, as Macaulay did, by the cringing sycophants who came attendance in high official ante-rooms, or belong to families who, during a century of intercourse with us in the capital, have lost some of their native virtues without acquiring ours." There is without doubt much truth in this generalisation; and we may at any rate cordially agree with Mr. Skrine that the story of Mookerjee's life, with all its lights and shadows, is pregnant with lessons for those who desire to know the real India. Like his namesake (but not kinsman) Horish Chunder Mookerjee, and still more perhaps like that fine exemplar of the cultured Bengali, the late Kristodas Pal of the *Hindu Patriot*, Sambhu Chunder Mookerjee was dowered with an individuality which almost even in boyhood marked him out as distinct from his fellows. He came of the purest Brahman stock; and the blood of more than thirty generations of high priests ran in his veins, the "bluest of the blue," as he described it. His immediate progenitors, however, were alien to the shop, and we find his father trading in a small way in the Calcutta bazaar, while his mother was the daughter of a seller of firewood and oilseeds. Sambhu Chunder was born in 1839, and was an only son, and as such was allowed to do pretty much as he liked—a circumstance which accounts for

what Mr. Skrine calls, with perhaps rather unnecessary frankness, "the waywardness which marred his highest endeavours in after-life." His father, a Hindoo of the fine old crusty type, was strongly opposed to his boy acquiring much of an education, and looked with special horror upon the prospect of his learning English, the tongue of the *malchha* being to his mind a potentiality for the seduction of his darling boy from the straight path of religious duty.

Accident, however, brought about what the old man so dreaded, and his mother supporting him in his wish, young Mookerjee soon distinguished himself at school, and at a very early age started a periodical called the *Calcutta Monthly Magazine*, which, however, had but a brief and fitful existence. He then appears to have joined the *Morning Chronicle*, a daily paper owned by Mr. Love. Mookerjee and his proprietor came to loggerhead over Lord Dalhousie's policy in Oudh, and the young man had to leave. He devoted his attention for some time to writing political articles for the *Hindu Intelligencer*. His chief friends at this time were Sooresch Chunder Dutt and Kristodas Pal, who had become translator in the District Judge's office at Alipur. With these two of his intimates Sambhu soon fell in with Horish Chunder Mookerjee of the *Hindu Patriot*, and was soon afterwards invited to join the staff. This was in 1857, and the dark cloud of the Mutiny had already settled over the country—a circumstance which, under Dr. Johnson's principle that public woes deter no man from eating his dinner as usual, did not prevent Mookerjee from taking unto himself a wife. On the *Patriot* our young journalist—he was barely eighteen—soon distinguished himself. He became one of the "little knot of brilliant youths who held the banner of Indian journalism higher than any of their successors have done." A young man of convivial temperament, keen observation, genial humour and great originality, Mookerjee soon became a popular man far outside the coterie of the *Patriot*. Like Walter Savage Landor, he "warmed both hands before the fire of life," but his enjoyment of the good things of the world, Mr. Skrine tells us, unhappily laid the foundation of a malady to which he eventually succumbed. He was bidden to a wedding feast, where "a surfeit of oranges and green cocoanuts brought on an attack of asthma which undoubtedly curtailed his life." Anti-opiumites will be interested to learn that Mookerjee found the only palliative for his malady in the drug which they so vigorously denounce. It

was at this period of his career that our journalist, who was nothing if not versatile, threw himself with much ardour into the study of Homœopathy, which was then a good deal of a novelty. Mookerjee formed a laboratory and communicated the results of his experiments to the leading homœopaths of Chicago and Philadelphia, through whose good offices he eventually received the degree of M.D.—a somewhat dubious distinction coming from such a source in those days, but one of which he was very proud. From Medicine he turned his attention to Law, and severing his connection with the *Patriot* became an articled clerk with a firm of English attorneys. He was not long in discovering that the profession was unsuited to him, and the sub-editorship of the *Patriot* falling vacant he gladly embraced the opportunity of returning to the work for which he was undoubtedly admirably suited. The arrangement had hardly been entered upon when Hurish Chunder was seized with a serious illness, and so for three years Sambhu was virtually editor of the paper. Then, at the age of thirty-nine, Hurish Chunder died, and the *Patriot* fell into the hands of a youthful millionaire, whose extravagant instincts soon led Mookerjee to seek another sphere of labour. This he found in the Secretaryship of a new 'Talukdars' Association at Lucknow, in which post it was an important part of his duties to edit a weekly journal in English called the *Samachar Hindustani*, in opposition to a local Anglo-Indian journal edited by a bitter opponent of the Talukdars. This rival Mookerjee's brilliant talents soon drove from the field altogether; and Mookerjee came still further into prominence by a series of articles on burning questions of the day which he contributed to the *Patriot*, of which by this time Kristodas Pal had become editor.

Still wayward and restless, and allowing his fine genius but too few opportunities of displaying itself, we next find Mookerjee in the capacity of Political Adviser, and soon afterwards Dewan to the Nawab Nazim of Bengal, whose life was made very unpleasant for him by the intrigues of his predecessor's friends, who nearly succeeded in effecting his ruin on a charge of misappropriating State papers. His political career was not a long one, and he was fain to return to the *Patriot* once more. Almost one of the first pieces of work he did on his return was an exhaustive but singularly brilliant review of Sir William Hunter's *Annals of Rural Bengal*, of which Sir William Hunter is once reported to have said that he would rather have been the author of the review than of the book. Whether this is so or not, the review placed Mookerjee at a bound

in the foremost rank of men of letters. The ball was then at his feet, but once again his fatal love of change impelled his genius elsewhere, and landed him into the head-mastership of the Calcutta Training Academy. But the "twice-boiled cabbage" of the school-room was even less to his taste than the drudgery of an attorney's office, and although he became "the centre of a coterie which included the fine flower of the Indian intellect of the day" he soon made his way to fresh woods, and he became Secretary to a Kashipur Rajah. A caste matter—the refusal to eat wild boar's flesh—terminated this engagement, and Mookerjee then became Personal Assistant to the Nawab of Rampur, a position from which the intrigues of jealous courtiers again ousted him. It was soon after this that his wife fell dangerously ill, and in the interval of nursing her Mookerjee found time to establish and edit *Mookerjee's Magazine*, a venture which was afterwards merged into the journal with which his name was so long and honourably associated, *Reis and Rayyet*, or Prince and Peasant. While still editing this journal and contributing many brilliant articles to its pages—articles which earned the warm appreciation of many distinguished English Civilians high up in the service—Mookerjee became Minister to the Maharaja of Hill Tipperah. At length, in 1882, he settled down once more, and for this time permanently, into the editorial chair of *Reis and Rayyet*, and here he dealt with the topics of the day in his own peculiar vein, "the Professor's, tempered with a certain dry humour." No weekly paper, Mr. Skrine tells us, not even the *Hindoo Patriot*, in its palmiest days under Kristodas Pal, enjoyed a degree of influence in any way approaching that which was soon attained by *Reis and Rayyet*. "It brought Mookerjee into confidential relations with the makers of history. Lord Dufferin, amongst others, was his constant correspondent." For twelve years Mookerjee enjoyed the confidence and friendship with many of the best-known men of the time in India, among them Sir Auckland Colvin, Sir W. W. Hunter, Major Evans Bell, Sir Salar Jung, Colonel Ardagh, Sir T. Madhava Rao, Dr. (now Sir) W. H. Russell, Colonel Osborn, Mr. Robert Knight, Sir D. M. Wallace, Professor Vambéry, Sir Griffith Evans, Professor Paul Deussen, Sir W. H. Rattigan, and many others. A man of singular board-mindedness, his inherited prejudices were yet continually at war with the liberal impulses which were the growth of a life-long devotion to letters. His entire life, says his biographer, was a protest against the foolish and suicidal doctrine that there is no excellence of life or thought outside the Hindoo

pale. "Mahomedans were to be found among his closest friends ; and he would frequently exultate in the contrast between the exquisite courtesy of high-born followers of the Prophet and the thinly disguised barbarism of so many 'belated' Hindus." His breadth of mental vision led him to profoundly distrust the so-called "National" movement and the "Congress," and all its works he regarded as "premature and based on ignorance of mankind." Nor was he any the less uncompromising in his attitude towards the Cow Protection movement. For he was intimately acquainted with "the secret springs which move the wirepullers." A man of large heart and great qualities, his death from pneumonia in the early spring of last year was a distinct and heavy loss to Indian journalism, and it was an admirable idea on Mr. Skrine's part to put his Life and Letters upon record.

(From the *Madras Standard*, September 30, 1895.)

It is rarely that the life of an Indian journalist becomes worthy of publication ; it is more rarely still that such a life comes to be written by an Anglo-Indian and a member of the Indian Civil Service. But, it has come to pass that in the land of the Bengali Babus, the life of at least one man among Indian journalists has been considered worthy of being written by an Englishman. Dr. Sambhu C. Mookerjee, late Editor of *Reli and Rayet* was a well-known scholar. He was a man of high intellectual attainments and a brilliant writer who cultivated assiduously the acquaintance of men in authority and of position. He died last year and his "Life, Letters and Correspondence" are now presented to us by Mr. F. H. Skrine, F. C. S. The life story of Mr. Mookerjee occupies but a small portion of the book before us. It was a chequered one. Mookerjee was a Brahmin by birth and a Brahmin of Brahmins all his life. At the age of five, he was sent to a day school kept in the house of a local Zemindar, but here he was more remarkable for his pranks than for application to study. He was transferred to a sectarian seminary and later on he joined the Hindu Metropolitan College where he completed his studies. While at College, he started the *Calcutta Monthly Magazine* which had a mushroom existence. Out of College, he became for a short time the Editor of the *Morning Chronicle*. He then joined the staff of the *Hindu Patriot*. There he did not remain long. At this period he began the study of the science of Homœopathy and in recognition of his

researches in this branch of learning, he obtained the degree of M. D. from an American University. His next resolution was to become a lawyer and he became an articled clerk in the office of a firm of European Attorneys. But he disliked the profession and he rejoined the *Hindu Patriot* as Sub-Editor. Again, he left that paper to become the Secretary to the Talukdar's Association and Editor of the *Samachar Hindustani*. His next enterprise consisted in giving up journalism for a time and becoming the Dewan of the Nawab Nazim of Bengal. Here he got into difficulties and love of change induced him to accept the Head Mastership of the Calcutta Training Academy. He had no charm for the school-master's rod and we hear of him next as Secretary to the Raja Sheoraj Singh of Kashipur and then as Minister of Hill Tippera. He was ousted from this place by the intrigues of those attached to the Raja. In 1882, he founded *Reli and Rayet* and from that date till his death in 1894, he continued as its Editor. It was Mr. Mookerjee's good fortune to associate with some of the best known men in India, and his conservative opinions in social and political matters seem to have endeared him to Europeans particularly. Some of them at least would not have befriended him if in spite of his ability and his natural gifts, he were a Congress-man. The chief attraction of the book before us consists in the letters from and to Mr. Mookerjee contained in it ; and the interest in them would have been considerably heightened if they were not expurgated editions. It is certainly creditable to be told that Mr. Mookerjee was in corresponding terms with such persons as Major Evans Bell, Sir William Hunter, Sir Salar Jung, Sir Madava Row, Sir Auckland Calvin, Lord Dufferin, Sir Lepel Griffin, Professor Vambery and Lord Lansdowne. The style in which the letters are written is indeed creditable to the writer, but in some places they seem to be laboured and disclose the vanity of the writer and his great contempt for educated Bengali young men in general and Congress men in particular. The letter addressed to Sir Salar Jung contains a flattering account of the writer and his labours ending evidently with a request for patronage which Mr. Skrine omits to publish. There are several letters to Sir Auckland Calvin written very familiarly beginning with "My dear Sir Auckland" and ending with "Yours sincerely." But Sir Auckland, except in one letter, addresses him only as "Dear Dr. Mookerjee" and "Yours truly." In one letter Mookerjee says "At one time I thought of going to Madras to the Congress, to see how they ordered the matter down south and

keep our Boys of Bengal in check, particularly in matters of social discipline. It was not to be. I could not get a P. O. or other presumably safe steamer and I would not form part of the cargo of Babudom of all castes in charge of Thomas Cook and Sons." The book contains a letter published from Sir Lepel Griffin; but there is none to Sir Lepel; similarly while there are not less than half a dozen letters of Major Evans Bell published, not one of those written to him appears in print. Sir Lepel says in his letter "I need not tell you that your estimate of the attacks made upon me by the Anglo-Bengalee press is a just one, as is your statement of the source from which they proceed." It is not difficult for us to guess what Mookerjee must have written to elicit such a statement. In another letter to Sir Auckland Colvin he says "Our people the Boys of the Period in the press and on the platform—are rather difficult to please. I myself don't. But I don't care." The Boys of the period, we suppose, were the leading Congressmen in Calcutta. In a third letter he writes:—"All my friends are mad about the Congress and Congressists, besides all have been long since engaged. If I asked perhaps I could get a separate tent away from that bustle of our Indian Runnymede, but I would not ask Hume or Bonnerjee." It strikes us that Mookerjee would not have succeeded in becoming familiar with Viceroys and Governors—not even found an Englishman as his biographer—were it not for his anti-Congress tendencies. In many of his letters to men in authority, he goes out of his way to have a fling at the Congress or his "Bengali boys." And we doubt whether Mookerjee could have discharged his duties faithfully as a journalist trammelled by the friendship of Viceroys and Governors.

(From the *Tribune*, October 2, 1895.)

"An Indian Journalist: being the Life, Letters and Correspondence of Dr. Sambhu C. Mookerjee, late Editor of *Reh and Rayet*, Calcutta," is a book of which the title itself should be attractive to newspaper writers and readers. The interest of the book is heightened by the fact that it has been written by Mr. F. H. Skrine, of the Bengal Civil Service. The book is a well bound octavo volume of nearly 500 pages, but the actual life story of the late Indian journalist occupies only 71 pages, the rest being taken up with correspondence. Mr. Skrine is a Civilian who is nearing his time for pension, and according to himself he has great sympathy with the people of India. But he is discriminating in his

sympathy, and that is one of his reasons why he has selected the late Dr. Sambhu C. Mookerjee as his hero. The late Editor of *Reh and Rayet* was a profound student and an accomplished writer, who has left his mark on Indian journalism. In that he has found a Civilian like Mr. Skrine to record the story of his life he is more fortunate than the great Kristodas Pal himself. There are some special reasons why the memory of the late Editor of *Reh and Rayet* has been so honoured. Babu Sambhu Chunder Mookerjee used to carry on correspondence with such men as Lord Dufferin, Sir Auckland Colvin and Sir Charles Elliott, and—what is perhaps more important—he was not well disposed towards the Congress. But Mr. Skrine is not perhaps aware that this change came over Babu Sambhu Chunder after Lord Dufferin had honoured him with his acquaintance. At the Calcutta Congress of 1886 Babu Sambhu Chunder Mookerjee was a prominent figure, and expressed the greatest admiration for the great national movement. However, it is needless to rake up the past. Mr. Skrine deserves our thanks for his tribute to the memory of an Indian journalist, and perhaps we shall hear of fewer battles royal in the Calcutta Municipality between him and certain other Indian journalists. As the book is published for the benefit of Babu Sambhu Chunder Mookerjee's family we hope it will have a large sale among the Indian as well as the Anglo-Indian public.

(From the *Mahmmadan*, October 5, 1895.)

THE late Dr. Sambhu C. Mookerjee, Editor of *Reh and Rayet*, who died in Calcutta in February 1894, was a man who did good work during his time. He has been fortunate in having a friendly biographer to tell the story of his life and to preserve his letters and correspondence. The career of "An Indian Journalist" as described by F. H. Skrine of the Indian Civil Service is exceedingly interesting. The work has apparently been a labour of love to the author, who feels almost a sort of affection for those qualities of kindness, generosity, and independence of character which distinguished Mookerjee and made him beloved of all those who were intimately acquainted with him. Besides being possessed of more of the milk of human kindness than ordinary mortals, he owned abilities of no mean order which gained him the respect of some of the highest officials and the friendship of many eminent men. In his dedication of the work to Sir W. W. Hunter, Mr.

Skirne says that Mookerjee was an instance of a Bengali with "backbone," and it was this backbone added to a love of justice and fairplay and a detestation for the conventionalities of society, which in his case should have been the more harassing as he came from a Brahmin house of "the bluest of the blue," which gives a charm to the pages of Mr. Skirne, and creates a sympathy in the reader with the struggles, the aspirations and the literary work of this gifted Bengali. What we admire in him most is his earnestness coupled with his disregard of custom that fell foul of convenience. He was a Reformer at heart and hence the irresistible fascination that he exerted had its origin from a very early age. It was his first love and he remained true to it up to the very end. If he had been more ambitious, more careful of the ways of the world, more eager to attract the attention of the wealthy and the influential, he would certainly have been more honoured and more rewarded. But it is this absence of the desire of appearing great and distinguished which adds to the intrinsic value of the man and makes us cherish a greater respect for his undoubted talents. He took to journalism because he loved it and he adhered to it throughout his life with occasional breaks. Though he played many parts in his life he did not play them long enough to earn distinction in any of them, and his fame must rest upon his work as a journalist. We are glad that he has been saved from that oblivion which is the common lot of most journalists. Mr. Skirne fully recognises this fact and he deserves the thanks of all the labourers in a field whose labour is not well remembered, in having rescued one of the most deserving of their number from being altogether forgotten.

There is also a particular interest in the life of Dr. Mookerjee which lends additional value to the account given by Mr. Skirne. Mookerjee came upon the scene at a very important period in the history of Bengal. Born in 1839, he was about eighteen years of age when the great mutiny broke out. The people in this country were just awakening under the British administration to a higher estimation of their own rights. The work of education had just been taken in hand, and the ambition of many young men in Bengal were roused to do something worthy of themselves and of their land. The time was teeming with the promise of progress, and those who were willing had the opportunity given them of rendering valuable service to the State. The caste and social customs of the Hindus were coming in contact with the methods and peculiarities of a people so different from their own. Men's

minds were made up for change, but what that change would be could not exactly be defined. Mookerjee, who, as we are told, was descended from fifty generations of high priests had all the traditions of the east clinging to him, but he had an exceedingly liberal mind and was one of the first to admit whatever good there was to be found in European measures of civilisation. Though at the age of eighteen he published a pamphlet for the special advice of the people of England on the great mutiny, and though he expressed the opinion that that mutiny was brought about by certain flaws in the British administration, he still was never slow in all his writings to give full credit to such reforms as were introduced by the ruling power. His honesty and his fearlessness in this respect makes his character all the more noble as his position was one of great difficulty. But if his position had been less encumbered, he would not, perhaps, be entitled to such a high place for independence which he has earned and which can be read in many of his letters.

His simplicity was also great and his love of humanity was most noteworthy. In reading his life, we are reminded much of another man of letters—poor Oliver Goldsmith, who tried his hand at many professions but who had to remain a bookseller's hack to the end of his days. We notice the same intention of doing good and being frustrated. The same love of the good things of the world. The same kindness towards his fellow men as well as towards the lower animals. The same desire for literary fame and nearly the same mischances in obtaining it. We believe what Mr. Skirne tells us that Mookerjee had "the divine spark in him." He possessed the love of ideal beauty. He admired nobility wherever he found it, and though we see no pieces of poetry by him in the pages before us, it is possible that he wooed the unkind muses in his more tranquil hours.

His letters are marvels of pure diction which is heightened by his nervous style, and the proof of the busy life he led and the esteem in which he was held by many is that they should have been addressed to such men as H. E. Lord Dufferin, Sir Lepel Griffin, Sir W. W. Hunter, Major Evans Bell, the late Sir Salar Jung and many other nobles with whom he kept up a correspondence during his busy life, though he was seized by a disturbing complaint (asthma) at a very early age, and which certainly interfered with the value of his work.

The life has been told by Mr. Skirne in a very pleasant manner and which should make it popular not only with Bengalis but with

all those who are able to appreciate merit unmarred by ostentation and earnestness unspoiled by harshness. The book should occupy a honoured place in the library of *Rev and Rayet* where the illustrious dead had long laboured and laboured with great effect. The book may be obtained at Messrs. Thacker, Spink & Co., Calcutta.

(From the *Rec*, October 12, 1895.)

THE Anglo-Indian book of the month in our humble opinion, is no other than "An Indian Journalist: being the Life, Letters, and Correspondence of Dr. Sambhu Chunder Mookerjee, late Editor of *Rev and Rayet*, Calcutta," by F. H. Skrine, I. C. S. (Thacker, Spink & Co.) Although we have only been able to take a few cursory glances through the four hundred and seventy-eight pages of this black-and-gold volume, we feel assured the work is a deeply interesting one, which deserves to be read thoughtfully and carefully. Honest and outspoken to a degree, the late Dr. S. C. Mookerjee was a prince among journalists, and a man in a million. The letters interspersed through the work are both instructive and of great value, while the name of the author will vouch for the excellence of the biography. The latter, moreover, appears to be in every sense a labour of love, for it is stated that the proceeds are to go to the family of Dr. Mookerjee. It is therefore greatly to be hoped that the book in question will be read by the educated men of all communities in India, and further that there will soon be a call for a second edition, which, by the way, is not altogether a frequent occurrence in this country. We are not a little surprised that the work has not been more widely reviewed by the Indian Press than it appears to have been up to this. A colotype portrait of Dr. Mookerjee embellishes the work.

(From the *Morning Post of India*, October 15, 1895.)

THE latest addition to the current literature of the country is a neatly got up and handy volume, entitled "Life and Letters of Sambhu Chunder Mookerjee," by Mr. F. H. Skrine, of the Bengal Civil Service. It is, indeed, very good of Mr. Skrine to write a notice of the eminent Indian journalist, whom we lost in the early part of 1894, and to bring out a carefully-edited selection from his correspondence: and it is very generous of him

to direct that the proceeds of the book, minus the costs of publication, should be devoted to the support of the family of the subject of the memoir, who have been left unprovided for. Mr. Skrine has performed his self-imposed task, as he says, amid harassing official cares, and in an uncongenial climate, and he brings to the work an unquestioned sympathy with educated natives, and an appreciation of their capacities, motives, and aspirations. Written by a man of undoubted literary talents the book was ushered to the notice of the public with a large promise, and it is only fair to say that the execution has fulfilled all just expectations. The book would, no doubt, have been much more useful and interesting, if the numerous letters of the Doctor, and the replies thereto, could have been published in full. But unfortunately the obligations that every writer has to the living, and the impolicy of placing at the disposal of the public all of what transpires behind the scenes, prevented Mr. Skrine, as it has always prevented many more eminent writers, from writing and publishing with a total want of reserve. As it is, however, the book has a unique interest, being the memoir of a member of the subject race by a member of the ruling body; and as such, it ought to be widely read in every part of India.

The life of Dr. Sambhu Chunder Mookerjee was a peculiar one. His genius, bright and brilliant in the extreme, was fitful and erratic. Till advanced in years, he never settled down steadily to anything, and though his talents, his literary accomplishments, his wide and varied range of reading, his culture, and his incisive humour, were recognized and appreciated by his countrymen all over India, his want of tact and of singleness of aim and purpose, and of devotion to one leading idea and principle of life, marred what would otherwise have been one of the most prosperous and useful careers. Mr. Skrine has felt a natural delicacy in bringing out this side of the question, and in depicting the shadows that darkened the brightness of the picture. As a thorough-going admirer of Dr. Mookerjee, he will not admit that the subject of his sketch committed even one mistake; and would rather believe in a conspiracy against him, of all his educated and wealthy countrymen, than say that Dr. Mookerjee was once misled by a misguided enthusiasm into doing something he should not have done. Mr. Skrine has said, with all the tact and shrewdness of the practised advocate, all that can possibly be said in defence of his hero at each particular turn of life; but whether that is the true duty of the biographer, we do

not know. If Dr. Mookerjee had been alive to-day, he would have been glad to see that many things, which he thought to be great and serious blunders and almost irreparable mistakes, had been presented to the world in a different light by his thorough-going admirer. One reading through Mr. Skrine's pages, would imagine Dr. Sambhu Chandra Mookerjee to be an ideally perfect man, which he was far from being. While giving full credit to Mr. Skrine for this whole-hearted advocacy, as it were, we are not sure that it is the proper course to pursue. The true use of biography is that men, who have their voyage of life yet to go through, and their names and fortunes yet to make, might learn from the lives and experiences of others how to avoid the shoals and quicksands that obstructed their paths; to observe how they had acted in grave emergencies and interesting situations; and to shape their own lives by the light of the lessons thus derived. If Mr. Skrine had interspersed his book, as he might very easily have done, with criticism and remarks leading to this end, it would have been simply invaluable.

Besides the fact that he edited *Mookerjee's Magazine* and *Reis and Rayet*, the only important features of Dr. Mookerjee's life were that he had been in three native courts, and that he latterly came to be a regular correspondent of several high officials. For obvious reasons his career in the native courts, in none of which he had a happy one, could not be described or delineated in detail; and the remarks of the officials, so far as they let us into opinions about public topics or about each other, have to be carefully avoided. These are the difficulties under which a contemporary author must write; and we can only regret, but cannot get over them. In reading these pages, one cannot help regretting how a man Dr. Mookerjee might have been if he had settled down to one course of life in early manhood, and pursued that course with life-long energy and devotion; if he had not been attracted to the use of opium; and if he had devoted more attention to the eminent Kristodas Pal, to questions of policy and imperial matters, and left local politics and personalities alone. With all his faults, however, Dr. Mookerjee was one of the most cultured and accomplished men this country has produced. It is impossible not to admire his bright intellect, his chaste diction, and his keen sense of the humorous; and it is indeed fortunate that the Indian public should have a monograph, exhibiting so clearly out his best qualities, from such an accomplished writer as Mr. Skrine.

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