

## PREFACE

THE last twenty years of Lord Curzon's life begin and end on a note of pathos. It is, indeed, almost impossible to exaggerate the intensity with which he felt the isolation of his position on his return from India and the shock of Lady Curzon's death. And towards their close came the bitter disappointment caused by his failure to become Prime Minister. But if these years are heavily burdened with pathos they tell a story of most amazing courage. For it may be confidently asserted that few men wracked, as Lord Curzon was, with bodily pain would have maintained the struggle which a continuance in public life demanded. Yet for the last ten years of his life, with the exception of a few months in 1904, he was continuously in office, and for five consecutive years combined the onerous duties of Foreign Secretary with leadership of the House of Lords.

During these last twenty years, too, the wide range of his interests comes clearly into view; for they cover the period of his Chancellorship of Oxford University and of his Presidentship of the Royal Geographical Society, both of which offices he stamped with the impress of his own imperious personality. And the zeal with which, single-handed, he sought to conserve the architectural heritage of Great Britain was only equalled by the enthusiasm with which, aided by a Government Department, he rescued from decay the ancient monuments of India.

So much courage, so gallant a bearing in face of so great difficulties, such passionate devotion and such high ideals provide an example and an inspiration which will long survive him. Upon a wreath laid on his tomb two years and more after his interment, were written these lines:

"A humble token from one he helped to make a man of."

By Sir Bijay Chand Mahtab, B.C.L.E., K.C.S.I., I.O.M., Maharajadhiraja Bahadur of Burdwan.

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The writer of these words, so eloquent in their sincerity and simplicity, was but one, we may be sure, of many who lived worthier lives for having known him.

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RONALD SHAY.

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