PREFACE.

To write the life of the Hon'ble Kristo Das Pal fully and satisfactorily is by no means an easy task. He has left nothing in the shape of notes or diary, and the sources from which the facts of his early and domestic life may be obtained are scanty. The same difficulty occurs, though in a less degree, in regard to the events of his public career. Private letters received by him from high officials cannot be made use of for this purpose as they are all of a strictly confidential character, and as they reflect the personal, and perhaps the private opinions of men still living, and still in the service of Government.

More than two years had elapsed since the death of Baboo Kristo Das Pal, and yet not even a suggestion had been made by any one to write the biography of so eminent a man; and if abler men have not come forward, a humble friend may be excused if he undertakes a difficult task even at the risk of failure. Public encouragement was tardy at first, and far from re-assuring. Had it not been for the prompt pecuniary assistance rendered by His Honour the Lieutenant-Governor of Bengal, His Highness the Maharaja of Vizianagram, and Her Highness the Maharanee Sarnamoye, the work could not have been undertaken at all. But pecuniary assistance was not all that was needed. I stood in need of literary help and information. I gratefully acknowledge that, but for the literary help rendered me most kindly by Baboos Shum bhoo Chunder Mukerjee, Surendra Nath Banerjee, Noren-
dra Nath Sen, and several other gentlemen, it would have been difficult for me to complete the work.

I am deeply sensible of the many imperfections which will be found in this work; but my chief aim has been to repay, in however inadequate a measure it may be, the debt of deep gratitude which I owe, in common with the rest of my countrymen, to the memory of the late Hon'ble Kristo Das Pal.

In honouring the memory of the great dead, we create those examples by which the living may profit, and which may guide the footsteps of succeeding generations in the difficult path of social and moral reform which may lie before them. Though the prophet and the saint should die, the immortal fire outlives the organ that conveyed it, and the breath of liberty is not extinguished but survives him. Thus spoke Grattan before a spell-bound audience of the Irish House of Commons. Kristo Das is dead; but his work is being continued, and his spirit still lives among his countrymen; and it is the hope that his example of moderation, sobriety and earnest enthusiasm for the public good may continue to instruct and stimulate his countrymen in all their patriotic efforts that has led me to undertake the difficult task of writing his biography. How far I have been successful in this task, how far I have described Kristo Das as he deserved to be—the undisputed leader of the transition epoch of modern Bengal, as Mr. Cotton describes him, it will be for the reader to say.

Perhaps I ought to add a word of explanation. It may be objected to my treatment that I have given undue prominence to persons living, and still more to those long since dead and gone. No one, I am sure, who feels the absence of a biographical literature in India,—no one, above all, who, with the best of us, deplores that fatal
desideratum towards the creation of Indian nationality, the absence of the history of our political noviciate, the absence, in particular, of the history of the Press, which has been and is still the best expression of that noviciate, will, I am sure, judge so captiously. Indeed, I have been encouraged and assisted by men, eminent for patriotism and for their efforts in raising our people. I am confident that the generality of my countrymen, however they may regret my want of ability—of which none can be more conscious than I am—will be glad to hear of the pioneers in Bengali political thought. For myself I was advised, and I felt, that no Biography of Kristo Das Pal could be complete without a notice of his contemporaries, and specially of the living publicist who was his earliest literary friend, who assisted weekly in the Hindoo Patriot during its best period—from 1866 to 1872—under his management, and who with himself constituted, in Kristo Das's own favourite expression, "the Beaumont and Fletcher of the Indian Press—," or without an account of the great man, early cut off by an inscrutable Destiny, who was the father of political thought in Bengal, who was the Gamaliel at whose feet they sat, who, in fact, moulded the career of both—I mean the late Hurish Chander Mookerjee. It is a national misfortune that we have no record of the latter's life or collection of his scattered writings.