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James Silk Buckingham
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Travels in Assyria, Media, and Persia

Cornish-born writer, traveller and controversialist James Silk Buckingham (1786–1855) spent much of his early life as a sailor in the Atlantic and the Mediterranean and went on to publish accounts of his extensive travels to India, Palestine and Persia. His criticisms of the East India Company and the Bengal government led to his expulsion from India in 1823. In the 1830s he became a Member of Parliament and campaigned for social reforms. He founded several journals, including the periodical *The Athenaeum*. This illustrated two-volume work, published in 1829 and reprinted here from its second edition of 1830, recounts Buckingham's journey through Assyria and Persia en route for India, giving vivid descriptions of its ancient sites and his views on the modern inhabitants of the region. In Volume 1 he starts his narrative at Baghdad, describing Isfahan and the Achaemenid capital, Persepolis, before arriving at Shiraz.

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Travels in Assyria, Media, and Persia

VOLUME 1

JAMES SILK BUCKINGHAM



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TRAVELS
IN
ASSYRIA, MEDIA, AND PERSIA,
INCLUDING
A JOURNEY FROM BAGDAD BY MOUNT ZAGROS,
TO
HAMADAN, THE ANCIENT ECBATANA,
RESEARCHES IN
ISPAHAN AND THE RUINS OF PERSEPOLIS,
AND JOURNEY FROM THENCE
BY SHIRAZ AND SHAPOOR TO THE SEA-SHORE; DESCRIPTION OF BUSSORAH,
BUSHIRE, BAHREIN, ORMUZ, AND MUSCAT; NARRATIVE OF AN EXPEDI-
TION AGAINST THE PIRATES OF THE PERSIAN GULF, WITH ILLUS-
TRATIONS OF THE VOYAGE OF NEARCHUS, AND PASSAGE
BY THE ARABIAN SEA TO BOMBAY.

BY J. S. BUCKINGHAM,

AUTHOR OF TRAVELS IN PALESTINE AND THE COUNTRIES EAST OF THE JORDAN; TRAVELS
AMONG THE ARAB TRIBES; AND TRAVELS IN MESOPOTAMIA; MEMBER OF THE
LITERARY SOCIETIES OF BOMBAY AND MADRAS, AND OF THE
ASIATIC SOCIETY OF BENGAL.

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TO
SIR CHARLES FORBES, BART. M.P.
ESPECIALLY DISTINGUISHED AS THE WARM AND STEADY FRIEND OF OUR
ASIATIC FELLOW-SUBJECTS IN INDIA,
AS WELL AS THE BENEVOLENT ADVOCATE AND PROMOTER OF
THE FREEDOM AND HAPPINESS OF MAN, WITHOUT DISTINCTION OF
COLOUR, CASTE, OR COUNTRY,
THESE VOLUMES OF TRAVELS,
COMMENCING AT BAGDAD AND TERMINATING AT BOMBAY,
ARE HUMBL Y INSCRIBED,
AS A TRIBUTE OF GRATITUDE, ESTEEM, AND
REGARD, BY HIS
FAITHFUL AND AFFECTIONATE FRIEND,
THE AUTHOR.

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P R E F A C E

TO THE FIRST EDITION.

IN presenting to the Public a Fourth Work of Travels in the Eastern World, I am not without the apprehension that this portion of my labours may be thought to have been executed with less care and attention than preceding ones. It has unquestionably been my desire, as well as my interest, to make them all equally worthy of public approbation; but the circumstances under which each of the several volumes were prepared, and over which circumstances I had no power of control, differed so ma-

terially from each other, that this alone would be sufficient to account for still greater variations in their execution than is even likely to be discovered in them. The Travels in Palestine were prepared in India, under the disadvantages of absence from books and authorities essential to their illustration ; but, on the other hand, with the advantage of more complete leisure than it has ever since been my good fortune to enjoy. The Travels in the Decapolis, or Hauran, and Countries east of the Jordan and the Dead Sea, were written out for publication entirely on ship-board, during a stormy and disagreeable passage from India, under circumstances of the most painfully oppressive nature, and the most hostile to calm and abstracted literary composition ; but, on the other hand, with the advantage of freedom from all other occupation, and ample command of time, whenever the intervals of moderate weather admitted of writing. The Travels in Mesopotamia

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were written and arranged in London, under the disadvantage of repeated interruptions from ill-health, and the anxiety and labour dependent on the prosecution of my claims for redress of injuries done me by the Government of India, before a Parliamentary Committee; but with the advantage of a mind more at ease than it had been for seven years before: my perseverance having been just then rewarded by a complete triumph over the traducers of my personal character and literary reputation, the tribunal to which I appealed having completely vindicated all my claims, and put to shame the wickedness of my accusers. The Travels in Assyria Media, and Persia, which form the present Volume, and complete the Series of the continuous Route followed in my overland Journey to India, have been prepared under circumstances which are probably without a parallel in the history of literary undertakings, and may at least excuse many imperfections, which, under other and more favour-

able auspices, could not claim such indulgence. The favourable reception given to the previous Volumes, and the natural desire to have the Series completed by the publication of the present, combined to urge its early appearance: but being, at the period of commencing its preparation for the press, almost incessantly occupied, by having in my own hands the Editorship of a Daily and a Weekly Political Journal, and of a Weekly and a Monthly Literary Journal, I could only hope to accomplish the task of bringing out this Work, in a manner at all worthy of acceptance, by devoting a portion of those hours which are ordinarily given to recreation and repose, to the labour which such an undertaking involved. This resolution was accordingly made, and has been at length faithfully redeemed; for I may truly say, that not a single page of it has been written, arranged, corrected, or revised, but after the hours at which even the most studious generally repair to their couch, to

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recruit by sleep the exhaustion caused by the labours of the day.

That, under the circumstances described, errors of style and defects of arrangement should appear, will not be deemed wonderful; and that, under other circumstances, the task might have been more satisfactorily executed, cannot admit of doubt. But, when it is not possible to do all we desire, and in the very best manner we could wish, it is better to endeavour to execute our duty in the best manner that we are able, than altogether to abandon the attempt as impracticable. It is on this maxim, at least, that I have acted; and it is rather in extenuation of imperfections, which this necessarily brings in its train, than from any other motive, that I have ventured at all to allude to the subject. It will complete the picture of hurried and interrupted composition, if I state, what is literally the fact, that having left London on business of some importance, which called me to cross the Chan-

nel to Guernsey, and being driven back by tempestuous weather, in the Watersprite, which made an ineffectual attempt to accomplish the passage, and, though one of the finest steam-packets in the service, was obliged to bear up, and anchor again in Weymouth Roads at midnight, I am now writing this Preface, in the Travellers' Room of the Crown Inn, at Melcombe Regis, with an animated conversation passing all around me among the enquiring and intelligent fellow-passengers who are occupants of the same apartment. Having pledged myself to the Publisher, to finish every part of my task before a given day, this cannot be deferred till my return, and is therefore thus hurriedly completed: but it is at least in keeping with the whole picture, that a Work begun amidst the conflicting duties and labours of four separate and voluminous Journals, already described, should be terminated by a hasty sketch like this, in the interval of a stormy passage by sea,

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and in the momentary expectation of seeing the signal for immediate re-embarkation displayed.

I cannot conclude, however, even this imperfect address, without saying a word or two on the subject of the Illustrations, and the typographical execution of the Work. To Colonel Johnson, of the East India Company's Engineers, I am indebted for the beautiful View of Muscat, which was painted by Witherington, from a sketch of Colonel Johnson's, and engraved by Jeavons, on a reduced scale, for Mr. Pringle's Annual, 'The Friendship's Offering,' a copy of which Colonel Johnson kindly permitted me to take. To the same friend I am also indebted for a View of the Entrance to the Harbour of Bombay, with the several characteristic features of a trankee, a peculiar kind of boat; fishing-stakes, marking the boundaries of certain banks, secured from general navigation; and a fisherman on a catamaran, a rude raft, of three logs of wood,

encountering and killing a sword-fish, larger than himself and his raft together; all of which are accurate delineations of real and natural objects seen at Bombay: but which, by some irremediable oversight, has been placed at the head of the Chapter descriptive of Bussorah, on the Euphrates, the chief port of the Persian Gulf. To the kindness of my friend, Mr. James Baillie Frazer, the intelligent author of a *Tour in the Himalya Mountains*, and a *Journey in Khorassan*, I owe the two interesting views of the Ruins of Persepolis seen under the aspect of an approaching storm, and the Ruins of Ormuz, with its sweeping bay of anchorage. With these exceptions, the Illustrations of the Work to the number of twenty-six, are from original sketches of the scenes and objects described, taken in the course of the journey, and completed from descriptions noted on the spot. The manner in which these have all been drawn on the wood by Mr. W. H. Brooke, and in which the greater

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part of them have been executed by the respective engravers, whose names appear in the list, is such as, I hope, will confirm the established reputation of the artists themselves, at the same time that they cannot fail to gratify as well as to instruct the reader. The typography may fairly challenge a comparison for beauty with the production of any press in the kingdom.

And now, having said thus much in indication of what I am sure will be admitted as merits, being the production of other hands; and in extenuation of what I am ready to admit as defects, being the production of my own; I commend these hurried labours to the indulgent spirit of my intelligent countrymen; sincerely wishing them perpetual exemption from all the privations and inconveniences which they will find detailed in the ensuing pages, and which are inseparable from travelling in countries so far removed from our own in habits, manners, and usages, as well as in geographical

distance ; and assuring them, that if the performance of these journeys occasioned me more suffering than I should again be willing to undergo, the retrospect affords me a continual and inexhaustible source of agreeable associations ; and that I shall consider myself amply rewarded for all I have undergone, if I have the happiness to find that the humble record of whatever I may have deemed worthy of observation in other countries, may be thought to deserve the approbation of the enquiring and intellectual classes in my own.

J. S. BUCKINGHAM.

Weymouth, Nov. 16th, 1828.

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CHAPTER I.



ASSEMBLING OF THE CARAVAN, UNDER THE WALLS OF BAGDAD.