

# THE CONQUEST OF SCINDE.

## A COMMENTARY.

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### SECTION I.

#### MATTERS PERSONAL.

GENERAL WILLIAM NAPIER has recently published a book, entitled "The Conquest of Scinde," in which, while he attempts to vindicate the policy which led to the subjugation of that country, and to exalt the merits of the General by whom that policy was carried into effect, he has thought fit to bestow on myself no small measure of censure and aspersion. In that work, I am systematically represented as destitute alike of military and diplomatic skill, the pertinacious opponent of a policy, at once conducive to the civilization of India, and essential to the maintenance of our

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Indian Empire, and the adviser of measures which would have led to the annihilation of a British force. Grave as these accusations are—acquiring an additional importance as put forth by one enjoying a high reputation both literary and military—and embodied in a work which, with much of the spirit, and something of the interest of fiction, affects an historical character, it will not, I think, appear unnatural that I should seek to expose these misrepresentations, to vindicate a reputation which for a quarter of a century I have maintained unimpeached, and to satisfy those friends who have honoured me with their support through good report and bad, that their esteem was not bestowed on one undeserving of their kindness. To the public, the only apology I can make for intruding on their notice is, that so inextricably has General Napier mixed up the grounds on which he rests the justification of his brother's public measures with the calumnies so industriously heaped on myself, that, in exposing and refuting the latter, I shall in reality be correcting misrepresentations of important facts of public interest, having a direct bearing on our national character and honour, and furnishing to some extent the materials from which a “History of the Conquest of Scinde” *may yet* be written.

Before proceeding to examine and correct the misstatements of General Napier's “Conquest of Scinde,” which I propose to do under separate

heads, (to each of which a separate section shall be devoted,) let me advert generally to the circumstances which brought me into contact with Sir Charles Napier.

A lengthened residence in Scinde as British Political Agent, had enabled me—if I may venture to rely on the expressed opinion of those well qualified to judge—to acquire a practical and accurate knowledge of the characters and feelings of its princes and its people, qualifications for which Sir Charles Napier has never disguised his contempt. The results of my experience I communicated to Sir Charles, when, in October 1842, on my summary removal from Scinde, I finally resigned into his hands the supreme authority in that province. To the value of the information supplied, he *then* bore very handsome testimony, and did me the honour publicly to express the high sense he entertained of my military and diplomatic talents. We parted from each other with expressions of mutual esteem and regard—he to carry out the instructions of the Governor-General, and I to make arrangements for visiting England. Before I could do so, however, my services, for which a requisition had been made by Sir Charles Napier, were placed at his disposal by Lord Ellenborough, and I joined him on the 4th of January in the capacity of British Commissioner. I observed with regret, that during my absence he had been betrayed into the adoption of measures which were impolitic, and, as I

conceived, unjust; but I regarded them as the natural blunders of a man suddenly invested with unlimited powers, among a people of whom he had neither knowledge nor experience, and impressed with the erroneous but sincere belief, that the policy he pursued, was, to use his own words, that on which the tranquillity of Scinde depended. I endeavoured to impress upon him, however, that the result to which his measures inevitably tended, was precisely the reverse of that "peaceable settlement" of the country which he professed to have in view, and that the course he was pursuing would necessitate war. Nearly a month before the battle of Meeanee, I not only clearly foresaw the sad events that were to follow, but I declared to Sir Charles Napier my conviction, "that every life which might hereafter be lost in consequence, would be a murder." Admiring him as a gallant soldier, and giving him credit for his professed anxiety to maintain peace, I could not disguise my regret at his persisting in what I deemed unjustifiable proceedings, and my sorrow that his should be the hands to work results so disastrous—disastrous, I mean, not in a military, but in a political and moral sense.

The leading events which preceded and followed the annexation of Scinde are familiar to all; the less creditable details have, however, been studiously concealed.

Like all Orientals, the Ameers were childish in disposition, constitutionally addicted to intrigue—

and their conduct had afforded us an excuse for imposing on them more stringent bonds than those previously in force. They had, however, been without distinction accused, as a body, of deeply laid schemes for our destruction; this accusation I knew to be false, and its falsity was demonstrated by the friendly aid they had given us when our national honour, and the safety of our armies, were in imminent peril. They had urged much, very much, in their own behalf, through myself, their only medium of communication with Sir Charles Napier. Their spoliation and imprisonment had been justified solely on the grounds of a treacherous attack made on myself: not only did I know them, with the exception of Meer Shadad, to be entirely guiltless of all participation, direct or indirect, in that attack, but I knew farther, that to their protection I owed my life. In spite of the assurances I had given them, the Ameers not present at the battle of Meeanee were despoiled, imprisoned, and transported. A ward of my own, the youthful Ameer Hoossam Ali—entrusted to me by a dying father, and that father a staunch friend of the British nation—for whom I had solicited and obtained the General's pardon, was, without a pretence, condemned to the same fate. Even had the wretched captives been guilty of all the atrocities charged upon them, but of which I knew them to be innocent, their treatment was, I considered, unnecessarily harsh, and contrasted strangely with that of the

family of Tippoo Sultan, on the fall of Seringapatam.

All these circumstances my conscience impelled me to make known to those who had a right to interrogate me on the subject; and I sought, by every means in my power, to enlist the sympathies of those in authority in behalf of unfortunate princes, who, by a series of unjust acts of aggression, and by the rude violence of their followers, anxious only for the independence of their country, were forced to resistance, and then punished for it—their possessions confiscated, and themselves sent into captivity and treated with indignity. Could worldly considerations have swayed me, I should doubtless have pursued a very different course; but I should have been unworthy of my country, unworthy to claim kindred with Englishmen, or longer to serve my honourable employers, had I hesitated between my duty and my interest under such circumstances.

In making the revelations which I did to the home authorities, I only gave effect to intentions of which I had long before apprized Sir Charles Napier. Yet, when we parted on the 21st of February, we did so with assurances of mutual regard. He expressed himself of me, both orally and in writing, in the warmest and strongest language; and I gave him credit for that rarest of all virtues in men vested with despotic power, which accords to others what it claims for itself, the right to form and express an independent judgment. In this

conviction, and with the same frankness that I had displayed towards him in Scinde, I duly apprised him of my proceedings in England. I was, however, soon painfully convinced that I had overrated the magnanimity of his disposition, and I learned with surprise and grief, that his friendship was the penalty I had to pay for my honesty. True, in his reply he thus expressed himself:—“I neither do, nor have I a right to object to your defending both the cause of the Ameers and your own exertions; nor am I at all worried at any one defending them.” As to my “own exertions,” I may say at once, I had neither made a merit of, nor founded claims upon them. No: my urgent pleas in behalf of the Ameers, and the disclosures I was compelled to make, constituted the head and front of my offending.

From the moment that the nature of my advocacy of the Ameers was known, I was loaded with obloquy and ridicule—my diplomatic talents, once highly lauded, were now decried—my judgment was vilified—the former estimate of my abilities was suddenly discovered to have been greatly exaggerated, and I was pronounced the dupe of native intrigue, devoid of the most ordinary penetration. I was attacked in the newspapers both by General William Napier and anonymous scribblers—and a Second Scinde Blue Book was prepared, to destroy my reputation and prospects. In this, foot-notes of surpassing bitterness were appended to letters which had been replied to, at

the time they were written, without animadversion; much of my correspondence tending to exculpate the Ameers was suppressed, none of my personal representations on the subject alluded to; but all having an opposite tendency were duly paraded, and enforced with comments, notes, and explanations. As a climax to these persecutions, General William Napier collects all the slanders with which I have been aspersed, and for the benefit of those who care not to wade through a Parliamentary Blue Book, weaves them into an exciting romance, which he dignifies with the title of a history.

Intemperate and unmannerly as were the personalities indulged in by General William Napier in his newspaper effusions, I did not seek to repel them;—*for this I knew I could not do, without exposing to the public the less creditable features of the Scinde policy.*

Even after seeing the Second Scinde Blue Book, my sense of public duty and obedience to my superiors, restrained me from making a public appeal through the press. I did at one time present a memorial to the Government of India, craving permission to vindicate my character, and this I accompanied with "Observations," embodying a review of the Second Blue Book. Having been advised, however, by those whose opinions I valued, that to press my memorial might prove injurious to the public interests, I was induced to withdraw it. I was, moreover, assured by high



authority, that my public character had not really suffered in the estimation of those who best understood the merits of the case,—the present Government of India, the Ministers connected with its affairs, and the Court of Directors; and I saw that I had not fallen in the estimation of my comrades.

These considerations reconciled me to the sacrifice of my private feelings to the public good; but to appreciate my forbearance, let it be borne in mind how grievously during the debates on the Scinde question my public character was traduced, on the authority of the Second Scinde Blue Book, both in Parliament and in the Court of Proprietors: how the world was likely to be misled by the publication of Sir Charles Napier's letter to my address of July the 22d, 1843, a reply to which I was prohibited from publishing,—and how, again, I was assailed in the first volume of General Napier's "Conquest of Scinde." Even then I refrained from a public reply, because I felt assured, that the same authority which had imposed silence on me on public grounds, would deal equal justice to my assailant, by interdicting the continuation of the latter work. I was mistaken; and the second volume, now published, contains even grosser attacks on my public character, than did its predecessor. To vindicate that character, therefore, is no longer optional; it is a duty I owe to myself and to my family; and though my defence must be greatly weakened by

my want of power to refer to unpublished official documents, sufficient, I trust, will be found to vindicate my character from the gross calumnies to which it has been exposed.

Having thus adverted to the cause of the hostility to which I have been exposed on the part of Sir Charles Napier and the Historian of Scinde, I proceed to notice some of those misrepresentations, or invidious and depreciatory remarks, which, as they have reference rather to my individual than my public character, it may be as well to dispose of in advance, and to separate from the consideration of matters of more public interest.

First, let me advert to a charge of ingratitude which General Napier hints at rather than expresses. At page 466, vol. ii., he says:—"After a short stay at Bombay, he (Major Outram) proceeded to England, openly professing his obligations to the man who had risked the Governor-General's displeasure to get him restored to a public situation."

The impression which this passage is calculated to convey to the minds of those who are ignorant of the real state of matters, is erroneous in the extreme. So far from my recall to Scinde in the capacity of a Commissioner, being a kindness to myself, or having been esteemed by me as such, it is notorious to all my friends who were in Bombay at the time, and to many still in Scinde, that I returned to that country at great personal