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The Life of Reginald Heber, Lord Bishop of Calcutta

Reginald Heber (1783–1826), had for a long time been interested in the Church of England's overseas missions when he was appointed second Bishop of Calcutta in 1823. The diocese had been established only in 1814, and included India, Southern Africa and Australia; Heber's short episcopate involved much travelling around his scattered flock. His widow, Amelia published his *Sermons* and *Narrative of a Journey through the Upper Provinces of India* (also available in this series), before writing this two-volume biography, published in 1830 and also containing previously unpublished writings by Heber. Volume 1 focuses on Heber's early life and career, including travels across Scandinavia and Russia, and describes how he became active in literary as well as church matters, publishing poetry and the hymns for which he is now best remembered, and working with the Church Missionary Society. His unfinished *History of the Cossaks* is included in an appendix.

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Amelia Heber

Frontmatter

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The Life of Reginald Heber, Lord Bishop of Calcutta

VOLUME 1

AMELIA HEBER



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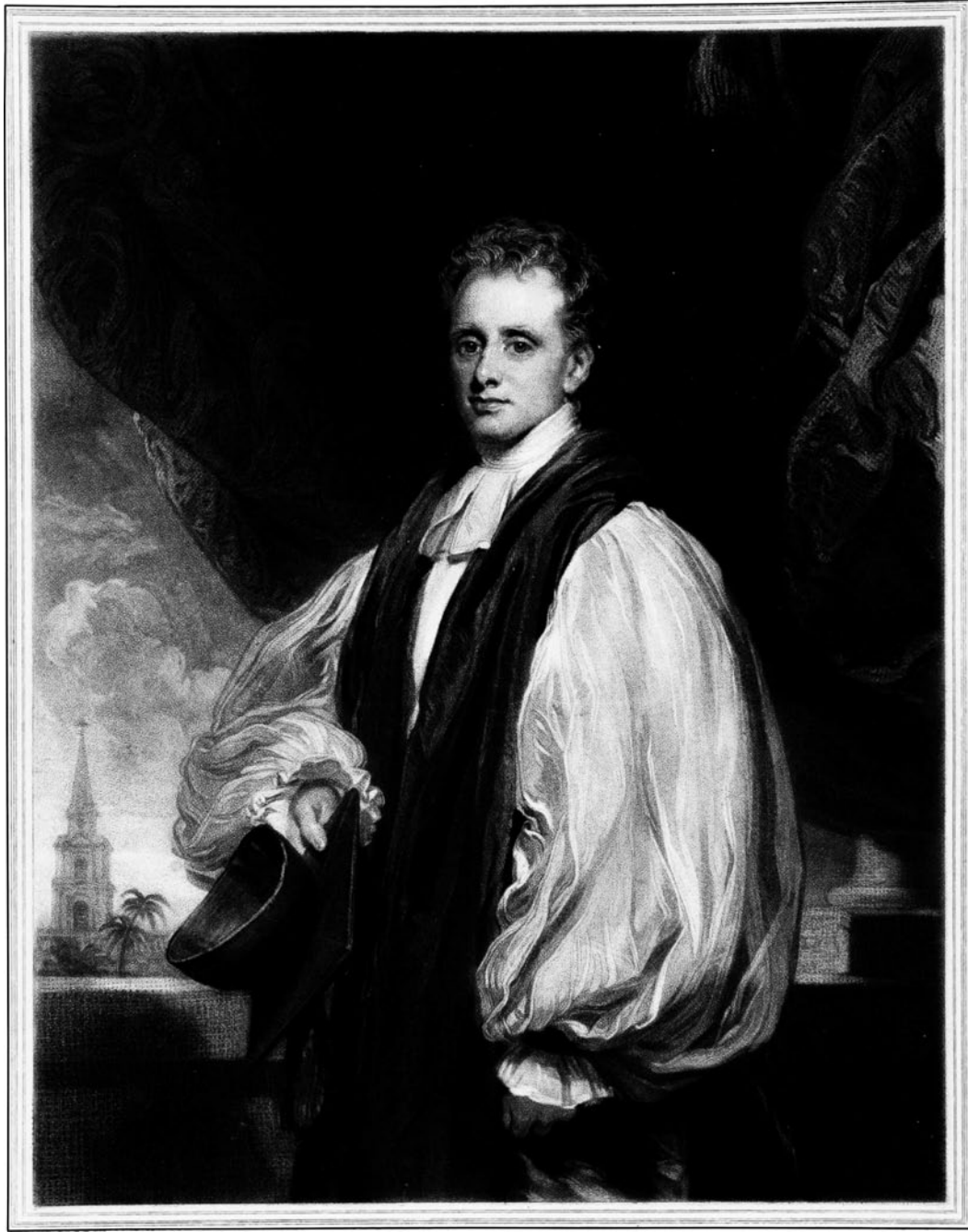
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Tho^s Phillips Esq^r R.A. Pinx^t

Sam^l Cousins Sculp^t

THE RIGHT REV.^d REGINALD HEBER, D.D.

Lord Bishop of Calcutta

London Published by John Murray Feb^r 1830

THE
L I F E
OF
REGINALD HEBER, D.D.

LORD BISHOP OF CALCUTTA.

BY HIS WIDOW.

WITH
SELECTIONS
FROM HIS
CORRESPONDENCE, UNPUBLISHED POEMS, AND PRIVATE PAPERS;
TOGETHER WITH
A JOURNAL OF HIS TOUR
IN
NORWAY, SWEDEN, RUSSIA, HUNGARY AND GERMANY,
AND
A HISTORY OF THE COSSAKS.

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TO

JOHN THORNTON, ESQ.

MY DEAR SIR,

I cannot gratify my own feelings more than by inscribing the following pages to my husband's dearest friend. The grave has had no power to interrupt the attachment which bound you to him from your earliest years; and the memory of his gifted mind and of his virtuous heart is cherished by you with all a brother's affection. You will, therefore, feel a deep, though melancholy gratification, at receiving this attempt made by his widow to exhibit to others what it was your privilege to know and appreciate. You need no assurance of the unchanging regard which, in the full maturity of his character, he continued to entertain for the beloved companion of his boyhood and of his youth.

AMELIA HEBER.

11, *Clarence Terrace, London,*
May 1st, 1830.

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P R E F A C E.

It has been the editor's wish, in this publication, to portray her husband's character from the dawn to the close of his life; to trace its gradual development; to follow him through the course of an active, though private life; and, finally, to represent him in the high and responsible station to which he was called, where all the energies of his powerful mind, and all the influence which his talents and his virtues enabled him to exercise over his fellow-creatures were employed in forwarding the great object for which he rejoiced to labour, and for which he was content to die.

Without the help of the kind friends who have allowed her to select from the Bishop's private correspondence such letters as seemed fitted to promote this object, the editor could never have hoped to accomplish it. If, in executing her task, she has done justice to the virtues of him whom they loved, and for whose loss they still mourn, she feels that they will deem themselves more amply repaid for their kindness, than by the most public acknowledgement of her thanks. To Sir Robert Harry Inglis, however, more is due. On one important point, the editor has considered herself bound to act in opposition to his advice. She has, therefore, an additional reason to be grateful for the undiminished activity and zeal with

which he has again encouraged and assisted her in the publication of her husband's works.

There is one point on which the editor wishes to be allowed the expression of her opinion. Her loss invests her with the melancholy privilege of raising her feeble voice in support of the forcible representations made in the memorials to Government, which are included in the appendix to the second volume, on the necessity of dividing the see of Calcutta. Few can better estimate the weight of responsibility which this diocese imposes upon an individual; and no one else can bear such witness to the mental labour and anxiety which it caused to her husband. He himself, zealous as he was to discharge all its duties to the utmost, at the expence of domestic happiness, of health, and of life itself, was deeply convinced of the necessity of such a division. He never complained, even to his wife, of his own discomfort or fatigue; but he was anxious for assistance, because he felt that no one, however great his energy, or however entire his devotion to his task, can do all, or near all, that ought to be done in the great field of usefulness presented by the Indian bishoprick; a field which, to the glory of God, is enlarging every day. That such an impossibility is not merely imaginary, must be apparent to any who reflect that, not only the spiritual interests of the Indian continent and of Ceylon, but those of New South Wales, including Van Diemen's Land and its dependancies, of the Mauritius, of the Cape of Good Hope, and, by a recent enactment, even of Madeira, are committed to the charge of the Bishop of Calcutta.

It has been urged that the duties of the Governor-General far outweigh those of the Bishop, and yet have never been thought too much for a single individual. But, not to mention the subordinate governors of

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Madras and Bombay, who relieve the Indian viceroy from the administration of so large a portion of the empire, it should be remembered that the “Governor-General *in Council*” has, as the expression implies, a certain number of coadjutors experienced in the affairs of the country, and that without the concurrence of a majority of these, no measure can be determined upon; so that a portion of the responsibility devolves upon them. He has also public and private secretaries appointed by Government; his sway is confined to India, without comprehending Ceylon, Australasia, the Mauritius, the Cape, or Madeira: nor has the argument that a single sovereign is sufficient for an extensive empire, ever been held sufficient to demonstrate that a single bishop must be so likewise.

Compared with the Governor-General, the Bishop of Calcutta has many other disadvantages; he has not only to act entirely on his own responsibility; but almost every official document connected with his vast diocese must be written with his own hand, while in consequence his private affairs are either neglected, or devolve upon some person, if such should be found, in his own family. A public secretary and a chaplain, it is true, are allowed him by Government; but as the former has hitherto been engaged, at the same time, in the important offices of registrar to the archdeaconry and proctor to the supreme court, he has been unable to afford more than nominal assistance. Though a private chaplain, too, might relieve him from some of his ordinary ceremonial duties, yet, not to speak of the circumstances which, for nearly two whole years, deprived Bishop Heber of this aid, and which are but too likely to recur, there are so few clergymen in India, that there may easily be a call for the chaplain’s services at a distant station, to which, accordingly, the Bishop would feel himself bound to send him, however great the personal inconvenience thus incurred.

Three invaluable lives have already fallen by this kind of voluntary

martyrdom. Men, ready to make the same sacrifice, will, it is to be hoped, through God's blessing on His Church, always be found. But are such the lives we should be heedless and unscrupulous about throwing away? Or can we be said to feel a due regard for the well-being of our brethren in India, while we carry our economy to such a pitch, that we will not allow any one to undertake the care of their spiritual interests, unless he is willing to engage in a task for which no human strength can be equal, and to encounter the almost inevitable risk of sinking under the burthen in the very first years of his ministry?

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