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the Life, Writings and Correspondence of Sir William Jones 1
Edited by Lord Teignmouth
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The Works of Sir William Jones

A renowned Enlightenment polymath, Sir William Jones (1746–94) was a lawyer, translator and poet who wrote authoritatively on politics, comparative linguistics and oriental literature. Known initially for his Persian translations and political radicalism, Jones became further celebrated for his study and translation of ancient Sanskrit texts following his appointment to the supreme court in Calcutta in 1783. He spent the next eleven years introducing Europe to the mysticism and rationality of Hinduism, becoming a pioneer in comparative religion. Through works such as his nine 'Hymns' to Hindu deities and his translation of the Sanskrit classic *Sacotalá*, Jones inspired and influenced Romantic writers from William Blake to August Wilhelm Schlegel. These thirteen volumes of his works, published in 1807, begin with a memoir by his friend and editor Lord Teignmouth (1751–1834). Volume 1 explores Jones' heritage and birth through to his departure for India.

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The Works of Sir William Jones

VOLUME 1:
MEMOIRS OF THE LIFE,
WRITINGS AND CORRESPONDENCE
OF SIR WILLIAM JONES 1

EDITED BY
LORD TEIGNMOUTH



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SIR WILLIAM JONES KN.^T

ÆTATIS 47

London. Published Jan. 25th 1806, by John Hatchard Piccadilly.

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THE
WORKS
OF
SIR WILLIAM JONES.

WITH
THE LIFE OF THE AUTHOR,
BY
LORD TEIGNMOUTH.

IN THIRTEEN VOLUMES.

VOLUME I.

LONDON:

PRINTED FOR JOHN STOCKDALE, PICCADILLY;
AND JOHN WALKER, PATERNOSTER-ROW.

1807.

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TO LADY JONES.



MADAM,

I HAVE the honour to present
to your Ladyship, the MEMOIRS of the
LIFE of Sir WILLIAM JONES; and it will
afford me the sincerest pleasure to know,
that the expectations which induced you
to request me to undertake this work,
have not been disappointed by the pe-
rusal of it.

I have the honour to be,

MADAM,

Your Ladyship's most obedient
humble Servant,

TEIGNMOUTH.

CLAPHAM,
June 20, 1804.

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P R E F A C E.



IN presenting the public with an account of the Life of SIR WILLIAM JONES, I feel a particular anxiety, to guard against the charge of presumption for an undertaking, which may be thought to require a more than ordinary share of learning and abilities. I hope therefore, to have credit for a declaration, that nothing but the earnest solicitation of Lady Jones, who knew my affection for her Husband when living, and my unabated regard for his memory, and who conceived that these qualifications might supply the deficiency of more essential talents, could have prevailed upon me, to enter upon a literary career, so foreign to the habits of a

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life, of which more than fifty years are now elapsed.

It may be proper to notice the materials, which I have used in this compilation, and to explain the plan which I have adopted in the arrangement of them. The first, is a single sheet written by Sir William Jones, containing short notices of his situation and occupations during every year of his life; it is indeed extended beyond the date of his existence, to the 50th year, opposite to which the words $\sigma\upsilon\upsilon \textcircled{\omega}$, *if God pleases*, are inserted; it appears to have been hastily written, a few months only before his death, and although the dates are sometimes inaccurate, and the notices too brief to supply more than a reference, it suggested enquiries which have sometimes terminated satisfactorily, though more frequently in disappointment. This paper however dictated the plan of the work, and I have endeavoured, as far as my materials permitted, to trace the life of Sir William Jones, year by year.

For the first twenty-two years of it, my

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authorities are ample and satisfactory; they consist principally of memoranda written by Sir William himself, and in describing the occurrences of this period, I have frequently availed myself of his own words. I wish indeed that I could have used them exclusively, but the paper is not altogether in a form to admit of publication.

The account of the last twelve years of his life in India, is chiefly supplied by my own recollection, assisted by information collected from his writings and correspondence.

Of the events of his life between 1768, his twenty-second year, and the date of his embarkation for India in 1783, my information is less complete, although I have spared no diligence in endeavouring to collect all that could be obtained. I was in hopes that the recollection of his contemporaries at Oxford, where he occasionally resided until he left England, might have supplied some material anecdotes, and that farther information might have been procured from his companions in Westminster Hall, or on the Circuit, but my

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researches have had little success, and I am chiefly indebted to his correspondence for the information which I have been able to communicate.

In the arrangement of these materials, it was my wish, as far as possible, to make Sir William Jones describe himself; and with this view, I have introduced his letters into the body of the Memoirs. They develop his occupations, hopes, pursuits, and feelings; and although the narrative, from the introduction of them, may lose something in point of connection, this inconvenience, I flatter myself, will be more than compensated by the letters themselves. By this mode they will excite an interest, which they might have failed to produce, if the substance or subjects of them only had been interwoven into the narrative, with a reference to the letters themselves in the Appendix.

This arrangement has however imposed upon me the necessity of translating many of the letters of Sir William Jones and his learned correspondents, from the Latin or

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French, and I have endeavoured to give the sense of them in a plain familiar style. But I must warn the reader, that he is to expect nothing more in these translations, and that those who are qualified to peruse the original letters of Sir William Jones, will find in them an elegance which I do not pretend to transfuse into my version of them. Some few sentences of the original letters have been purposely omitted in the translation, and many passages of the originals themselves have been suppressed.

The Latin letters of Sir William Jones are printed in the Appendix, and with respect to them it is further proper to observe, that in consequence of interlineations, corrections, erasures, and mutilation from time, I could not always ascertain the exact words which he ultimately adopted. In such cases I have been compelled to exercise my own judgment, and I desire the reader to notice this remark, lest any inaccuracy of mine should be imputed to a man, who was equally qua-

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lified to guide the taste of the elegant, and correct the errors of the learned.

To elucidate the life, occupations, and opinions of Sir William Jones, was the principal object which I had in view, in the selection of the letters now presented to the public; some have been inserted, as calculated in my opinion to afford entertainment to the reader. I am very sensible that many of these letters relate to topics not generally interesting: engaged in literary pursuits from his earliest youth, extending and cultivating them with ardour during his life, and never losing sight of them under any accumulation of business, the letters of Sir William Jones necessarily refer to habits so dear to him, and so long established; and I must request the reader to carry this remark with him to the perusal of his correspondence throughout, and particularly of the letters written by him in Bengal, which frequently relate to Indian literature, as well as to subjects and occupations peculiar to that country.

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The Memoirs and Appendix contain some original compositions of Sir William Jones, which have not hitherto been published; they are not of equal importance with those of which the public are in possession; there are still more, which I have not ventured to print.

It would have been easy to have enlarged the size of these volumes, but having no ambition to extend them beyond their proper limits, I have confined them as closely as I could to the object of them, that of elucidating the life and opinions of Sir William Jones. With this rule constantly in my recollection, I have avoided dissertations on the events of the times; the notice which I have taken of characters incidentally mentioned, is brief and explanatory only; and I have suppressed many observations, which would have added more to the bulk of the Memoirs, than to the information or entertainment of the reader.

I have now given such explanation on the subject of the Memoirs, as appeared to me

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necessary; but I cannot conclude the Preface, without mentioning some information which materially affects an important passage in these Memoirs, vol. ii. p. 249, and which I received from Bengal, long after it had been printed.

The passage alluded to, is stated to be an exact translation from one of the mythological books of the Hindûs; it first appeared in a note annexed by Sir William Jones, to an *Essay on Egypt and the Nile*, in the 3d vol. of the Asiatic Researches, by Lieutenant (now Captain) Wilford, and relates to *Noah* (under the designation of *Satyavrata*) and his three sons.

Captain Wilford has since had the mortification and regret to discover, that he was imposed upon by a learned Hindû, who assisted his investigations, that the *Purana*, in which he *actually* and *carefully* read the passage which he communicated to Sir William Jones, as an extract from it, does *not* contain it, and that it was interpolated by the dextrous introduction of a forged sheet, disco-

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loured, and prepared for the purpose of deception, and which having served this purpose, was afterwards withdrawn.

The uncommon anxiety of Captain Wilford to re-examine all the authorities quoted in his essay, led to the detection of the imposition, and he immediately determined to publish it to the world, in another essay which he was then preparing, and which I understand to be now printing in Bengal. To guard against the effects of any accident which might prevent the execution of this determination, he communicated the circumstance to his friends, that it might eventually be made known to the public, and in the explanation now submitted to them, I only anticipate the sollicitude of Captain Wilford, to expose the imposition which has been practised on him *.

* The particulars of the imposition practised upon him by the *pandit*, whom he employed in making extracts from the books of the Hindûs, are detailed by Captain Wilford, in the introduction to a work now printing in Bengal, under the title of *An ESSAY on the*

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In vol. ii. p. 175, of the Memoirs, the reader will find mention of an unsuccessful

SACRED ISLES in the West, with other Essays connected with that Work.

In the course of collating the Sanscrit authorities quoted or referred to, in this *Essay*, he discovered some discolorations in the manuscripts, which led to suspicions of deception, which examination fully verified. The discovery naturally excited an apprehension, that a similar imposition had been practised upon him, with respect to his former *Essay on Egypt and the Nile*, and he had the mortification to find it well grounded. His first step was to inform his friends of it, either verbally, or by letters, that he might secure at least the credit of the first disclosure.

“ The forgeries of the pandit, (Captain Wilford observes,) were of three kinds: in the first, a word or two only was altered. In the second, were such legends, as had undergone a more material alteration; and in the third, all those which he had written from memory.

“ With regard to those of the first class, when he found that I was resolved to make a collation of the manuscript, he began to adulterate and disfigure his own manuscript, mine, and the manuscripts of the college, by erasing the original name of the country, and putting that of *Egypt* or of *Swetam* in its place.

“ To prevent my detecting those of the second class, which were not numerous, but of the greatest importance in their nature, (and as books in India are not bound as in Europe, and every leaf is loose,) he took out one or two leaves, and substituted others with an

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attempt of the Hindûs, to impose upon Sir William Jones, a forged Sanscrit book on oaths.

The same sagacity which detected the

“ adulterous legend. In books of some antiquity, it is
“ not uncommon to see a few new leaves inserted in the
“ room of others that were wanting.

“ To conceal the more numerous impositions of the
“ third class, he had the patience to write two voluminous sections, supposed to belong, one to the *Scanda-*
“ *Purana*, and the other to the *Bramanda*, in which
“ he connected all the legends together, in the usual
“ style of the Puranas. These two sections, as he wrote
“ them, consist of no less than 12,000 *slocas* or lines,
“ the title of which he borrowed.”

The above is an extract from Mr. Wilford’s Essay, and affords a remarkable though not a singular instance of industry and ingenuity in literary forgeries. I shall only add, from the same Essay, the following lines immediately applicable to the passage which has occasioned my remarks.

“ A few instances of the impositions of my pandit,
“ will exemplify his mode of proceeding. The first is a
“ legend of the greatest importance, and is said to be
“ extracted from the *Padma*. It contains the history
“ of *Noah* and his three sons, and is written in a masterly style. But unfortunately there is not a word
“ of it to be found in *that Purana*. It is however
“ mentioned, though in less explicit terms, in many
“ Puranas, and the pandit took particular care in pointing out to me several passages, which more or less
“ confirmed this interesting legend.”

Life—V. I.

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fraud in this instance, might have discovered the forgery of the pundit employed by Mr. Wilford, if the original document had been submitted to the inspection of Sir William Jones. In this country the fabrications of a Chatterton, escaped for a season, the penetration of the learned and acute.

In the Postscript to the Memoirs, I have omitted to mention in its proper place, that a monument was erected at Oxford to the memory of Sir William Jones, by a subscription of the gentlemen residing in Bengal, who had received their education at the university there and at Cambridge. The inscription on the elegant monument executed by Flaxman, at the expense of Lady Jones, and placed in the anti-chamber to the Chapel of University College, Oxford, is annexed to the Preface.

It has frequently been remarked, that the characters of very eminent men cannot be closely examined without a considerable diminution of the respect, which their general fame has excited.

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From whatever source this remark may have proceeded, or to whatever degree of truth it may be entitled, I cannot but express a solicitude, that it may derive no confirmation from the work now presented to the public. Impressed with admiration, respect, and esteem for the memory of Sir William Jones, whether I contemplate his genius, his learning, or his virtues, I wish to transfer my own feelings to the minds of my readers; but whilst I distrust my own efforts, I am equally anxious to guard against extravagant expectations in them, and any want of discernment in myself.

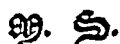
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NOTE.—The originals of the Latin and French letters, of which translations are inserted in the Memoirs, will be found in the Appendix, by referring to the number annexed to the translation.