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The Muhammadan Period: Volume 1

Henry Miers Elliot Edited by John Dowson

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The History of India, as Told by Its Own Historians

This extensive eight-volume work was first published between 1867 and 1877 by the linguist John Dowson (1820–81) from the manuscripts of the colonial administrator and scholar Sir Henry Miers Elliot (1808–53). Before his death, hoping to bolster British colonial ideology, Elliot had intended to evaluate scores of Arabic and Persian historians of India, believing that his translations would demonstrate the violence of the Muslim rulers and 'make our native subjects more sensible of the immense advantages accruing to them under the mildness and the equity of our rule'. Volume 1 contains introductory material and Elliot's original preface; early Arab geographers' chronicles, including Ibn Khordadbeh's ninth-century *Book of Roads and Kingdoms* and tenth-century works by Estakhri and Ibn Hawqal; histories of Sindh, including the *Chach Nama*; and extensive appendices giving further contextual information and ethnographic notes on India.

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VOLUME 1

HENRY MIERS ELLIOT
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THE
HISTORY OF INDIA,
AS TOLD
BY ITS OWN HISTORIANS.

THE MUHAMMADAN PERIOD.

EDITED FROM THE POSTHUMOUS PAPERS
OF THE LATE
SIR H. M. ELLIOT, K.C.B.,
EAST INDIA COMPANY'S BENGAL CIVIL SERVICE,

BY
PROFESSOR JOHN DOWSON, M.R.A.S.,
STAFF COLLEGE, SANDHURST.

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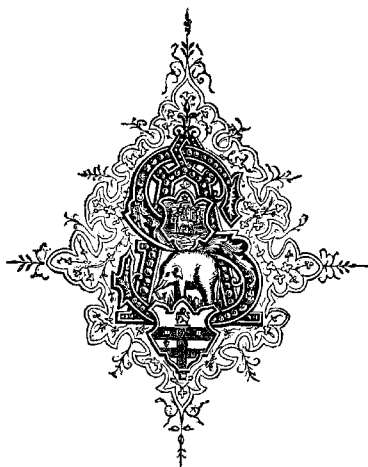
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PRELIMINARY NOTE.

[*THESE are not the days when the public care to listen to the minor details of an author's life; but Sir H. M. Elliot's relations and the thinned number of his personal friends—while confidently leaving his posthumous works to speak for themselves—recognise the double duty of placing on record the more prominent events of his career, and of defining under what guarantee his writings are now submitted, so to say, to a new generation of readers. The former will be found in a separate note, but to explain the origin and progressive advance of the present publication, it may be stated that after Sir Henry Elliot's death, at the Cape of Good Hope, his fragmentary papers were brought to this country by his widow. And as the introductory volume of the original work had been issued under the auspices and at the cost of the Government of the North-Western Provinces of India, the MSS.—constituting the materials already prepared for the more comprehensive undertaking in thirteen volumes—were placed at the disposal of those ever liberal promoters of Oriental literature, the Directors of the East India Company, by whom they were submitted to a Committee consisting of the late Prof. H. H. Wilson, Mr. Edward Clive Bayley, of the Bengal Civil Service, and Mr. W. H. Morley, of the Inner Temple, a gentleman who had distinguished himself as an Arabic scholar, and who was reputed to be well versed in other branches of Oriental lore. On the recommendation of this Committee, the Court of Directors readily sanctioned a grant of £500 towards the purposes of the publication, and Mr. Morley was himself entrusted with*

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the editorship. Mr. Morley's circumstances, at this critical time, are understood to have been subject to important changes, so that, although he entered upon his task with full alacrity and zeal, his devotion soon slackened, and when the MSS. were returned four years afterwards, they were found to be in such an imperfectly advanced state as effectually to discourage any hasty selection of a new editor. For which reserve, indeed, there were other and more obvious reasons in the paucity of scholars available in this country, who could alike appreciate the versatile knowledge of the author, and do justice to the critical examination of his leading Oriental authorities, or other abstruse texts, where references still remained imperfect.

As Lady Elliot's adviser in this matter, a once official colleague of her husband's, and alike a free participator in his literary tastes, I trust that I have secured the best interests of the projected undertaking in the nomination of Professor J. Dowson, of the Staff College of Sandhurst, who has so satisfactorily completed the first volume, under the revised distribution of the work, now submitted to the public.—EDWARD THOMAS.]

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EDITOR'S PREFACE.

The foregoing note has described how, sixteen years after Sir Henry Elliot's first volume was given to the world, his papers were placed in my charge for revision and publication.

My first intention was to carry out the work on the original plan, but as progress was made in the examination of the voluminous materials, the necessity of some modification became more and more apparent. The work had long been advertised under the revised title which it now bears, as contemplated by the author himself; its bibliographical character having been made subordinate to the historical. It also seemed desirable, after the lapse of so many years, to begin with new matter rather than with a reprint of the old volume. Mature consideration ended with the conviction that the book might open with fresh matter, and that it might at the same time be rendered more available as an historical record.

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In the old volume, Sir H. Elliot introduced a long note upon "India as known to the Arabs during the first four centuries of the Hijri Era," and under this heading he collected nearly all the materials then within the reach of Europeans. Since that compilation was made, it has been to a great degree superseded by new and more satisfactory translations, and the work of Al Istakhrí has also become available. The translation of Al Idrísí by Jaubert was not quoted by Sir H. Elliot, but an English version of the part relating to India seemed desirable. The subject had thus outgrown the limits of an already lengthy note, and a remodelling of this portion of the book became necessary. The notices of India by the early Arab geographers form a suitable introduction to the History of the Muhammadan Empire in that country. They have accordingly been placed in chronological order at the opening of the work.

Next in date after the Geographers, and next also as regards the antiquity of the subjects dealt with, come the *Mujmalu-t Tawárikh* and the *Futúhu-l Buldán*. In the latter work, Biládurí describes in one chapter the course of the Arab conquests in Sind. The *Chach-náma* deals more fully with the same subject, and the Arabic original of this work must have been written soon after the events it records, though the Persian version, which

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is alone known to us, is of later date. The Arab occupation of Sind was but temporary, it was the precursor, not the commencement, of Musulmán rule in India. On the retreat of the Arabs the government of the country reverted to native princes, and notwithstanding the successes of Mahmúd of Ghazní, the land remained practically independent until its absorption into the Empire during the reign of Akbar in 1592 A.D. Priority of date and of subject thus give the right of precedence to the Historians of Sind, while the isolation of the country and the individuality of its history require that all relating to it should be kept together. The "Early Arab Geographers," and "The Historians of Sind," have therefore been taken first in order, and they are comprised in the present volume.

So far as this volume is concerned, Sir H. Elliot's plan has been followed, and the special histories of Sind form a distinct book, but for the main portion of the work his plan will be changed. In classifying his materials as "General Histories" and "Particular Histories," Sir H. Elliot adopted the example set by previous compilers of catalogues and other bibliographical works, but he sometimes found it convenient to depart from this division. Thus the *Kámilu-t Tawárikh* of Ibn Asír and the *Nizámu-t Tawárikh* of Baizáwí, are general histories, but they are classed among the particular histories, be-

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cause they were written shortly after the fall of the Ghaznivides, and their notices of India are confined almost exclusively to that dynasty.

The great objection to this arrangement in an historical work is that it separates, more than necessary, materials relating to the same person and the same subject. Thus the *Tárikh-i Badáúní* of 'Abdu-l Kádir is particularly valuable for the details it gives of the reign and character of Akbar under whom the writer lived. But this is a general history, and so would be far removed from the *Akbar-náma* of Abú-l Fazl, which is a special history comprising only the reign of Akbar. A simple chronological succession, irrespective of the general or special character of the different works, seems with the single exception of the Sindian writers to be the most convenient historical arrangement, and it will therefore be adopted in the subsequent volumes. This plan will not entirely obviate the objection above noticed, but it will tend greatly to its diminution.

Upon examining the mass of materials left by Sir H. Elliot the bibliographical notices were found for the most part written or sketched out, but with many additional notes and references to be used in a final revision. The Extracts intended to be printed were, with some important exceptions, translated; and where translations had not been prepared, the passages required were generally,

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though not always, indicated. The translations are in many different hands. Some few are in Sir H. Elliot's own handwriting, others were made by different English officers, but the majority of them seem to have been the work of *munshis*. With the exception of those made by Sir H. Elliot himself, which will be noted whenever they occur, I have compared the whole of them with the original texts and the errors which I have had to correct have been innumerable and extensive. But with all my care it is to be feared that some misreadings may have escaped detection, for it is very difficult for a reviser to divest himself entirely of the colour given to a text by the original translator. In some cases it would have been easier to make entirely new translations, and many might have been made more readable; but, according to Sir H. Elliot's desire, "the versions are inelegant, as, in order to show the nature of the original, they keep as close to it as possible; and no freedom has been indulged in with the object of improving the style, sentiments, connection, or metaphors of the several passages which have been quoted:" the wide difference in the tastes of Europeans and Orientals has, however, induced me to frequently substitute plain language for the turgid metaphors and allusions of the texts.

The notes and remarks of the Editor are enclosed in brackets [], but the Introductory chapter on the Arab

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Geographers must be looked upon as being in the main his work. Where any of Sir H. Elliot's old materials have been used and throughout in the notes, the distinctive mark of the brackets has been maintained.

The reference made by Sir H. Elliot to the works of other authors are very numerous, especially in the articles which appeared in his printed volume. Some of these references have been checked, and the passages referred to have been found to be of very little importance. They would seem to have been made for the author's rather than for general use, but still it is difficult to determine beforehand what particular part of an article may attract attention or excite opposition. I have worked under the great disadvantage of living in the country, far away from public libraries, and have been confined in great measure to the limited resources of my own library. It has thus been impracticable for me to verify many of these references or to judge of their value. I have therefore deemed it more expedient to insert the whole than to omit any which might eventually prove serviceable.

With the advertisements published before the work came into my hands, there was put forth a scheme of spelling to be observed in the reprint of Sir H. Elliot's Glossary and in this work, by which Sanskritic and Semitic words were to be made distinguishable by dia-

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critical marks attached to the Roman equivalent letters. Admitting the ingenuity of the scheme, I nevertheless declined to adopt it, and so a determination was come to, that the long vowels only should be marked. It seemed to me that this system of spelling, while it would have required a great deal of minute attention on the part of the Editor and Printer, would practically have been unheeded by the general reader, and useless to the scholar. In doubtful cases, the affiliation of a word without proofs or reasons, would have been valueless; but more than all this, the many Turanian words must have appeared with a Sanskritic or Semitic label upon them. Either too much or too little was attempted, and even if the design could be completely accomplished, a philological work like the Glossary would be a more fitting vehicle for its introduction than a book like the present.

To shorten the work as much as possible it has been determined to omit the Extracts of the original texts, but even then, it will be impossible to include the whole of the materials in the three volumes advertised.

I have throughout been anxious never to exceed my powers as Editor, but to place myself as far as possible in Sir H. Elliot's place. I have not attempted to controvert his opinions, or to advance theories of my own, but palpable errors have been corrected, and many alterations and additional notes have been introduced, which

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have been rendered necessary by the advance of knowledge. With the unrevised matter, I have used greater freedom, but it has been my constant aim to complete the work in a manner that its designer might have approved.

It only remains for me to express my obligations to Mr. E. Thomas for many valuable hints and suggestions. I am also indebted to General Cunningham for several important notes, which I have been careful to acknowledge *in loco*, and for placing at my disposal his valuable Archæological Reports, which are too little known in Europe, and some extracts of which appear in the Appendix.

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SIR HENRY ELLIOT'S ORIGINAL PREFACE.

A FEW months since, the Compiler of this Catalogue was engaged in a correspondence with the Principal of the College at Delhi on the subject of lithographing an uniform edition of the Native Historians of India. On referring the matter to his Honour the Lieutenant-Governor, North Western Provinces, it was replied that the Education Funds at the disposal of the Government were not sufficient to warrant the outlay of so large a sum as the scheme required, and without which it would have been impossible to complete so expensive an undertaking. At the same time it was intimated, that, as few people were acquainted with the particular works which should be selected to form such a series, it would be very desirable that an Index of them should be drawn up, in order that the manuscripts might be sought for, and deposited in one of our College Libraries, to be printed or lithographed hereafter, should circumstances render it expedient, and should the public taste, at present lamentably indifferent, show any inclination for greater familiarity with the true sources of the Muhammadan History of India.

The author willingly undertook this task, as it did not appear one of much difficulty; but in endeavouring to accomplish it, the mere Nominal Index which he was invited to compile, has insensibly expanded into several volumes; for, encouraged not only by finding that no work had ever been written specially on this matter, but also by receiving from many distinguished Orientalists, both European and Native, their confessions of entire ignorance on the subject of his enquiries, he was persuaded that it would be useful to append, as far as his knowledge would permit, a few notes to each history as it came under consideration, illustrative of the matter it comprehends, the style, position, and prejudices of the several authors, and the merits or deficiencies of their execution.

Brief extracts from the several works have been given in the

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fourth volume, in order to show the style of each author. Some of these have been translated in the three first volumes; of some, where the text is of no interest, the translation has been omitted; but in most instances, the English translations exceed the Persian text. As the translation and the printing of the Persian text occurred at different periods, the translation will be found occasionally to vary from the text, having been executed probably from a different manuscript, and the preferable reading taken for the fourth volume. The versions are inelegant, as, in order to show the nature of the original, they keep as close to it as possible; and no freedom has been indulged in with the object of improving the style, sentiments, connexion, or metaphors of the several passages which have been quoted.

The author has been very particular in noticing every translation known to him, in order that students, into whose hands this Index may fall, may be saved the useless trouble, which he in his ignorance has more than once entailed upon himself, of undertaking a translation which had already been executed by others.

He had hoped to be able to append an account of the historians of the independent Muhammadan monarchies, such as of Guzerát, Bengál, Kashmír, and others; but the work, as it is, has already extended to a length beyond what either its name or the interest of the subject warrants, and sufficient information is given respecting their annals in many of the General Histories. For the same reason he must forego an intended notice of the various collections of private letters relating to the history of India, and the matters which chiefly interested the generation of the writers.

The historians of the Delhi Emperors have been noticed down to a period when new actors appear upon the stage; when a more stirring and eventful era of India's History commences; and when the full light of European truth and discernment begins to shed its beams upon the obscurity of the past, and to relieve us from the necessity of appealing to the Native Chroniclers of the time, who are, for the most part, dull, prejudiced, ignorant, and superficial.

If it be doubted whether it is worth while to trouble ourselves about collecting such works as are here noticed, it is sufficient to reply that other countries have benefited by similar labours—exem-

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plified in the *Scriptores Rerum Italicarum*, the *Auctores Veteres Historiæ Ecclesiasticæ*, the *Monumenta Boica*, the *Recueil des Historiens des Gaules*, and a hundred other collections of the same kind—but no objection is urged against them on the ground that each chronicler, taken individually, is not of any conspicuous merit. They are universally considered as useful depositories of knowledge, from which the labour and diligence of succeeding scholars may extract materials for the erection of a better and more solid structure. This country offers some peculiar facilities for such a collection, which it would be vain to look for elsewhere; since the number of available persons, sufficiently educated for the purpose of transcribing, collating, and indexing, is very large, and they would be content with a small remuneration. Another urgent reason for undertaking such a work in this country, is the incessant depredation which insects, moths, dust, moisture, and vermin are committing upon the small store of manuscripts which is now extant. Every day is of importance in rescuing the remnant from still further damage, as was too painfully evident a short time ago, from a report presented to the Asiatic Society of Bengal, respecting the injury which has already been sustained by their collection.

On the other hand, it must not be concealed, that in India, independent of the want of standard books of reference, great difficulties beset the enquirer in this path of literature, arising chiefly from one of the defects in the national character, viz.: the intense desire for parade and ostentation, which induces authors to quote works they have never seen, and to lay claim to an erudition which the limited extent of their knowledge does not justify. For instance, not many years ago there was published at Agra a useful set of chronological tables of the Moghal dynasty, said to be founded on the authority of several excellent works named by the author. Having been long in search of many of these works, I requested from the author a more particular account of them. He replied that some had been once in his possession and had been given away;—some he had borrowed; and some were lost or mislaid; but the parties to whom he had given, and from whom he had borrowed, denied all knowledge of the works, or even of their titles. Indeed, most of them contained nothing on the subject which they were intended to

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illustrate, and they were evidently mentioned by the author for the mere object of acquiring credit for the accuracy and extent of his researches.

Again, a native gentleman furnished a catalogue of the manuscripts said to compose the historical collection of his Highness the Nizám; but on close examination I found that, from beginning to end, it was a complete fabrication, the names of the works being taken from the prefaces of standard histories, in which it is usual to quote the authorities,—the very identical sequence of names, and even the errors of the originals, being implicitly followed.

Against these impudent and interested frauds we must consequently be on our guard, not less than against the blunders arising from negligence and ignorance; the misquoting of titles, dates, and names; the ascriptions to wrong authors; the absence of beginnings and endings; the arbitrary substitution of new ones to complete a mutilated manuscript; the mistakes of copyists; the exercise of ingenuity in their corrections, and of fancy in their additions; all these, added to the ordinary sources of error attributable to the well-known difficulty of deciphering Oriental manuscripts, present many obstacles sufficient to damp even the ardour of an enthusiast. Besides which, we have to lament the entire absence of literary history and biography, which in India is devoted only to saints and poets. Where fairy tales and fictions are included under the general name of history we cannot expect to learn much respecting the character, pursuits, motives, and actions of historians, unless they are pleased to reveal them to us themselves, and to entrust us with their familiar confidences; or unless they happen to have enacted a conspicuous part in the scenes which they describe. Even in Europe this deficiency has been complained of; how much more, then, is it likely to be a subject of regret, where despotism is triumphant; where the active elements of life are few; and where individual character, trammelled by so many restraining influences, has no opportunity of development.

It must be understood, then, that this Index has not been constructed on account of any intrinsic value in the histories themselves. Indeed, it is almost a misnomer to style them histories. They can scarcely claim to rank higher than Annals. “*Erat enim historia*

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nihil aliud, nisi annalium confectio. * * * * Hanc similitudinem scribendi multi secuti sunt, qui, sine ullis ornamentis, monimenta solum temporum, hominum, locorum, gestarumque rerum reliquerunt. * * * Non exornatores rerum, sed tantummodo narratores fuerunt.”¹ They comprise, for the most part nothing but a mere dry narration of events, conducted with reference to chronological sequence, never grouped philosophically according to their relations. Without speculation on causes or effects; without a reflection or suggestion which is not of the most puerile and contemptible kind; and without any observations calculated to interrupt the monotony of successive conspiracies, revolts, intrigues, murders, and fratricides, so common in Asiatic monarchies, and to which India unhappily forms no exception. If we are somewhat relieved from the contemplation of such scenes when we come to the accounts of the earlier Moghal Emperors, we have what is little more inviting in the records of the stately magnificence and ceremonious observances of the Court, and the titles, jewels, swords, drums, standards, elephants, and horses bestowed upon the dignitaries of the Empire.

If the artificial definition of Dionysius be correct, that “History is Philosophy teaching by examples,” then there is no Native Indian Historian; and few have even approached to so high a standard. Of examples, and very bad ones, we have ample store, though even in them the radical truth is obscured by the hereditary, official, and sectarian prepossessions of the narrator; but of philosophy, which deduces conclusions calculated to benefit us by the lessons and experience of the past, which adverts on the springs and consequences of political transactions, and offers sage counsel for the future, we search in vain for any sign or symptom. Of domestic history also we have in our Indian Annalists absolutely nothing, and the same may be remarked of nearly all Muhammadan historians, except Ibn Khaldún. By them society is never contemplated, either in its conventional usages or recognized privileges; its constituent elements or mutual relations; in its established classes or popular institutions; in its private recesses or habitual intercourses. In notices of commerce, agriculture, internal police, and local judicature, they are equally deficient. A fact, an anecdote, a speech, a remark, which

¹ *De Orat.* II. 12.

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would illustrate the condition of the common people, or of any rank subordinate to the highest, is considered too insignificant to be suffered to intrude upon a relation which concerns only grandees and ministers, "thrones and imperial powers."

Hence it is that these works may be said to be deficient in some of the most essential requisites of History, for "its great object," says Dr. Arnold, "is that which most nearly touches the inner life of civilized man, namely, the vicissitudes of institutions, social, political, and religious. This is the *τελειότατου τέλος* of historical enquiry."¹ In Indian Histories there is little which enables us to penetrate below the glittering surface, and observe the practical operation of a despotic Government and rigorous and sanguinary laws, and the effect upon the great body of the nation of these injurious influences and agencies.

If, however, we turn our eyes to the present Muhammadan kingdoms of India, and examine the character of the princes, and the condition of the people subject to their sway, we may fairly draw a parallel between ancient and modern times, under circumstances and relations nearly similar. We behold kings, even of our own creation, sunk in sloth and debauchery, and emulating the vices of a Caligula or a Commodus. Under such rulers, we cannot wonder that the fountains of justice are corrupted; that the state revenues are never collected without violence and outrage; that villages are burnt, and their inhabitants mutilated or sold into slavery; that the officials, so far from affording protection, are themselves the chief robbers and usurpers; that parasites and eunuchs revel in the spoil of plundered provinces; and that the poor find no redress against the oppressor's wrong and proud man's contumely. When we witness these scenes under our own eyes, where the supremacy of the British Government, the benefit of its example, and the dread of its interference, might be expected to operate as a check upon the progress of misrule, can we be surprised that former princes, when free from such restraints, should have studied even less to preserve the people committed to their charge, in wealth, peace, and prosperity? Had the authors whom we are compelled to consult, portrayed their Cæsars with the fidelity of Suetonius, instead of the more congenial

¹ *Lectures on Mod. Hist.*, p. 123.

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sycophancy of Paterculus, we should not, as now, have to extort from unwilling witnesses, testimony to the truth of these assertions. From them, nevertheless, we can gather, that the common people must have been plunged into the lowest depths of wretchedness and dependency. The few glimpses we have, even among the short Extracts in this single volume, of Hindús slain for disputing with Muhammadans, of general prohibitions against processions, worship, and ablutions, and of other intolerant measures, of idols mutilated, of temples razed, of forcible conversions and marriages, of proscriptions and confiscations, of murders and massacres, and of the sensuality and drunkenness of the tyrants who enjoined them, show us that this picture is not overcharged, and it is much to be regretted that we are left to draw it for ourselves from out the mass of ordinary occurrences, recorded by writers who seem to sympathize with no virtues, and to abhor no vices. Other nations exhibit the same atrocities, but they are at least spoken of, by some, with indignation and disgust. Whenever, therefore, in the course of this Index, a work is characterized as excellent, admirable, or valuable, it must be remembered that these terms are used relatively to the narrative only; and it is but reasonable to expect that the force of these epithets will be qualified by constant advertence to the deficiencies just commented on.

These deficiencies are more to be lamented, where, as sometimes happens, a Hindú is the author. From one of that nation we might have expected to have learnt what were the feelings, hopes, faiths, fears, and yearnings, of his subject race; but, unfortunately, he rarely writes unless according to order or dictation, and every phrase is studiously and servilely turned to flatter the vanity of an imperious Muhammadan patron. There is nothing to betray his religion or his nation, except, perhaps, a certain stiffness and affectation of style, which show how ill the foreign garb befits him. With him, a Hindú is “an infidel,” and a Muhammadan “one of the true faith,” and of the holy saints of the calendar, he writes with all the fervour of a bigot. With him, when Hindús are killed, “their souls are despatched to hell,” and when a Muhammadan suffers the same fate, “he drinks the cup of martyrdom.” He is so far wedded to the set phrases and inflated language of his conquerors, that he speaks of

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“the light of Islám shedding its refulgence on the world,” of “the blessed Muharram,” and of “the illustrious Book.” He usually opens with a “Bismillah,” and the ordinary profession of faith in the unity of the Godhead, followed by laudations of the holy prophet, his disciples and descendants, and indulges in all the most devout and orthodox attestations of Muhammadans. One of the Hindú authors here noticed, speaks of standing in his old age, “at the head of his bier and on the brink of his grave,” though he must have been fully aware that, before long, his remains would be burnt, and his ashes cast into the Ganges. Even at a later period, when no longer “Tiberii ac Neronis res ob *metum* falsæ,”¹ there is not one of this slavish crew who treats the history of his native country subjectively, or presents us with the thoughts, emotions, and raptures which a long oppressed race might be supposed to give vent to, when freed from the tyranny of its former masters, and allowed to express itself in the natural language of the heart, without constraint and without adulation.

But, though the intrinsic value of these works may be small, they will still yield much that is worth observation to any one who will attentively examine them. They will serve to dispel the mists of ignorance by which the knowledge of India is too much obscured, and show that the history of the Muhammadan period remains yet to be written. They will make our native subjects more sensible of the immense advantages accruing to them under the mildness and equity of our rule. If instruction were sought for from them, we should be spared the rash declarations respecting Muhammadan India, which are frequently made by persons not otherwise ignorant. Characters now renowned only for the splendour of their achievements, and a succession of victories, would, when we withdraw the veil of flattery, and divest them of rhetorical flourishes, be set forth in a truer light, and probably be held up to the execration of mankind. We should no longer hear bombastic Bábús, enjoying under our Government the highest degree of personal liberty, and many more political privileges than were ever conceded to a conquered nation, rant about patriotism, and the degradation of their present position. If they would dive into any of the volumes mentioned

¹ Tacitus, *Annal.*, I. 1.

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herein, it would take these young Brutuses and Phocians a very short time to learn, that in the days of that dark period for whose return they sigh, even the bare utterance of their ridiculous fantasies would have been attended, not with silence and contempt, but with the severer discipline of molten lead or empalement. We should be compelled to listen no more to the clamours against resumption of rent-free tenures, when almost every page will show that there was no tenure, whatever its designation, which was not open to resumption in the theory of the law, and which was not repeatedly resumed in practice. Should any ambitious functionary entertain the desire of emulating the “exceedingly magnificent” structures of his Moghal predecessors,¹ it will check his aspirations to learn, that beyond palaces and porticos, temples, and tombs, there is little worthy of emulation. He will find that, if we omit only three names in the long line of Dehli Emperors, the comfort and happiness of the people were never contemplated by them; and with the exception of a few saráis² and bridges,—and these only on roads traversed by the imperial camps—he will see nothing in which purely selfish considerations did not prevail. The extreme beauty and elegance of many of their structures it is not attempted to deny; but personal vanity was the main cause of their erection, and with the small exception noted above, there is not one which subserves any purpose of general utility. His romantic sentiments may have been excited by the glowing imagery of Lalla Rookh, and he may have

¹ This was the grandiloquent declaration of a late Governor-General [Lord Ellenborough] at a farewell banquet given to him by the Court of Directors. But when his head became turned by the laurels which the victories of others placed upon his brow, these professions were forgotten; and the only monument remaining of his peaceful aspirations, is a tank under the palace walls of Dehli, which, as it remains empty during one part of the year, and exhales noxious vapours during the other, has been voted a nuisance by the inhabitants of the imperial city, who have actually petitioned that it may be filled up again.

² The present dilapidation of these buildings is sometimes adduced as a proof of our indifference to the comforts of the people. It is not considered, that where they do exist in good repair, they are but little used, and that the present system of Government no longer renders it necessary that travellers should seek protection within fortified enclosures. If they are to be considered proofs of the solicitude of former monarchs for their subjects' welfare, they are also standing memorials of the weakness and inefficiency of their administration. Add to which, that many of the extant saráis were the offspring, not of imperial, but of private liberality.

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indulged himself with visions of Jahángír's broad highway from one distant capital to the other, shaded throughout the whole length by stately avenues of trees, and accommodated at short distance with saráis and tanks; but the scale of that Emperor's munificence will probably be reduced in his eyes, when he sees it written, that the same work had already been in great measure accomplished by Sher Sháh, and that the same merit is also ascribed to a still earlier predecessor; nor will it be an unreasonable reflection, when he finds, except a ruined milestone here and there, no vestige extant of this magnificent highway, and this "delectable alley of trees," that, after all, that can have been no very stupendous work, which the resources of three successive Emperors have failed to render a more enduring monument.¹ When he reads of the canals of Fíroz Sháh and 'Alí Mardán Khán intersecting the country, he will find on further examination, that even if the former was ever open, it was used only for the palace and hunting park of that monarch; but when he ascertains that no mention is made of it by any of the historians of Tímúr, who are very minute in their topographical details, and that Bábar exclaims in his Memoirs, that in *none* of the Hindústání Provinces are there any canals (and both these conquerors must have passed over these canals, had they been flowing in their time), he may, perhaps, be disposed to doubt if anything was proceeded with beyond the mere excavation. With respect to 'Alí Mardán Khán, his merits will be less extolled, when it is learnt that his canals were made, not with any view to benefit the public, but for an ostentatious display of his profusion, in order that the hoards of his ill-gotten wealth might not be appropriated by the monarch to whom he betrayed his trust. When he reads that in some of the reigns of these kings, security of person and property was so great, that any traveller might go where he listed, and that a bag of gold might be exposed on the highways, and no one dare touch it,² he will learn to exercise a wise scepticism, on ascertaining

¹ Coryat speaks of the avenue, "the most incomparable I ever beheld."—*Kerr*, ix. 421.

² It is worth while to read the comment of the wayfaring European on this pet phrase. Bernier, describing his situation when he arrived at the Court of Sháhjahán, speaks of "le peu d'argent qui me restoit de diverses rencontres de voleurs."—*Hist. des Etats du Grand Mogol*, p. 5.

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that in one of the most vigorous reigns, in which internal tranquillity was more than ever secured, a caravan was obliged to remain six weeks at Muttra, before the parties who accompanied it thought themselves strong enough to proceed to Dehli;¹ that the walls of Agra were too weak to save the city from frequent attacks of marauders; that Kanauj was a favourite beat for tiger-shooting, and wild elephants plentiful at Karra and Kalpi;² that the depopulation of towns and cities, which many declamatory writers have ascribed to our measures of policy, had already commenced before we entered on possession; and that we found, to use the words of the Prophet, “the country desolate, the cities burnt, when the sons of strangers came to build up the walls, and their kings to minister.”

If we pay attention to more general considerations, and wish to compare the relative merits of European and Asiatic Monarchies, we shall find that a perusal of these books will convey many an useful lesson, calculated to foster in us a love and admiration of our country and its venerable institutions.

When we see the withering effects of the tyranny and capriciousness of a despot, we shall learn to estimate more fully the value of a balanced constitution. When we see the miseries which are entailed on present and future generations by disputed claims to the crown, we shall more than ever value the principle of a regulated succession, subject to no challenge or controversy. In no country have these miseries been greater than in India. In no country has the recurrence been more frequent, and the claimants more numerous. From the death of Akbar to the British conquest of Dehli—a period of two hundred years—there has been only one undisputed succession to the throne of the Moghal Empire, and even that exceptional instance arose from its not being worth a contest; at that calamitous time, when the memory of the ravages committed by Nádír Sháh was fresh in the minds of men, and the active hostility of the Abdáli seemed to threaten a new visitation. Even now, as experience has shown, we should not be without claimants to the pageant throne, were it not disposed of at the sovereign will and

¹ Captain Coverte (1609–10) says that people, even on the high road from Surat to Agra, dared not travel, except in caravans of 400 or 500 men.—*Churchill*, viii. 252. See Jahángír's Autobiography, 117; *Journ. As. Soc. Beng.*, Jan. 1850, p. 37.

² *Elphinstone's Hist.*, ii. 241.

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pleasure of the British Government, expressed before the question can give rise to dispute, or encourage those hopes and expectations, which on each occasion sacrificed the lives of so many members of the Royal Family at the shrine of a vain and reckless ambition.

It is this want of a fixed rule of succession to the throne, which has contributed to maintain the kingdom in a constant ferment, and retard the progress of improvement. It was not that the reigning monarch's choice of his successor was not promulgated; but in a pure despotism, though the will of a living autocrat carries with it the force of law, the injunctions of a dead one avail little against the "lang claymore" or the "persuasive gloss" of a gallant or an intriguing competitor. The very law of primogeniture, which seems to carry with it the strongest sanctions is only more calculated to excite and foment these disturbances, where regal descent is not avowedly based on that rule, and especially in a country where polygamy prevails; for the eldest prince is he who has been longest absent from the Court, whose sympathies have been earliest withdrawn from the influence of his own home, whose position in charge of an independent government inspires most alarm and mistrust in the reigning monarch, and whose interests are the first to be sacrificed, to please some young and favorite queen, ambitious of seeing the crown on the head of her own child. In such a state of society, the princes themselves are naturally brought up, always as rivals, sometimes as adventurers and robbers; the chiefs espouse the cause of one or the other pretender, not for the maintenance of any principle or right, but with the prospect of early advantage or to gratify a personal predilection; and probably end in themselves aspiring to be usurpers on their own account; the people, thoroughly indifferent to the success of either candidate, await with anxiety the issue, which shall enable them to pursue for a short time the path of industry and peace, till it shall again be interrupted by new contests; in short, all classes, interests, and institutions are more or less affected by the general want of stability, which is the necessary result of such unceasing turmoil and agitation.

These considerations, and many more which will offer themselves to any diligent and careful peruser of the volumes here noticed, will