



FOR CONSULTATION ONLY 1870

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
A HISTORY



OF THE

SEPOY WAR IN INDIA.

1857—1858.

BY

JOHN WILLIAM KAYE, F.R.S.,

AUTHOR OF THE "HISTORY OF THE WAR IN AFGHANISTAN."

VOL. II.

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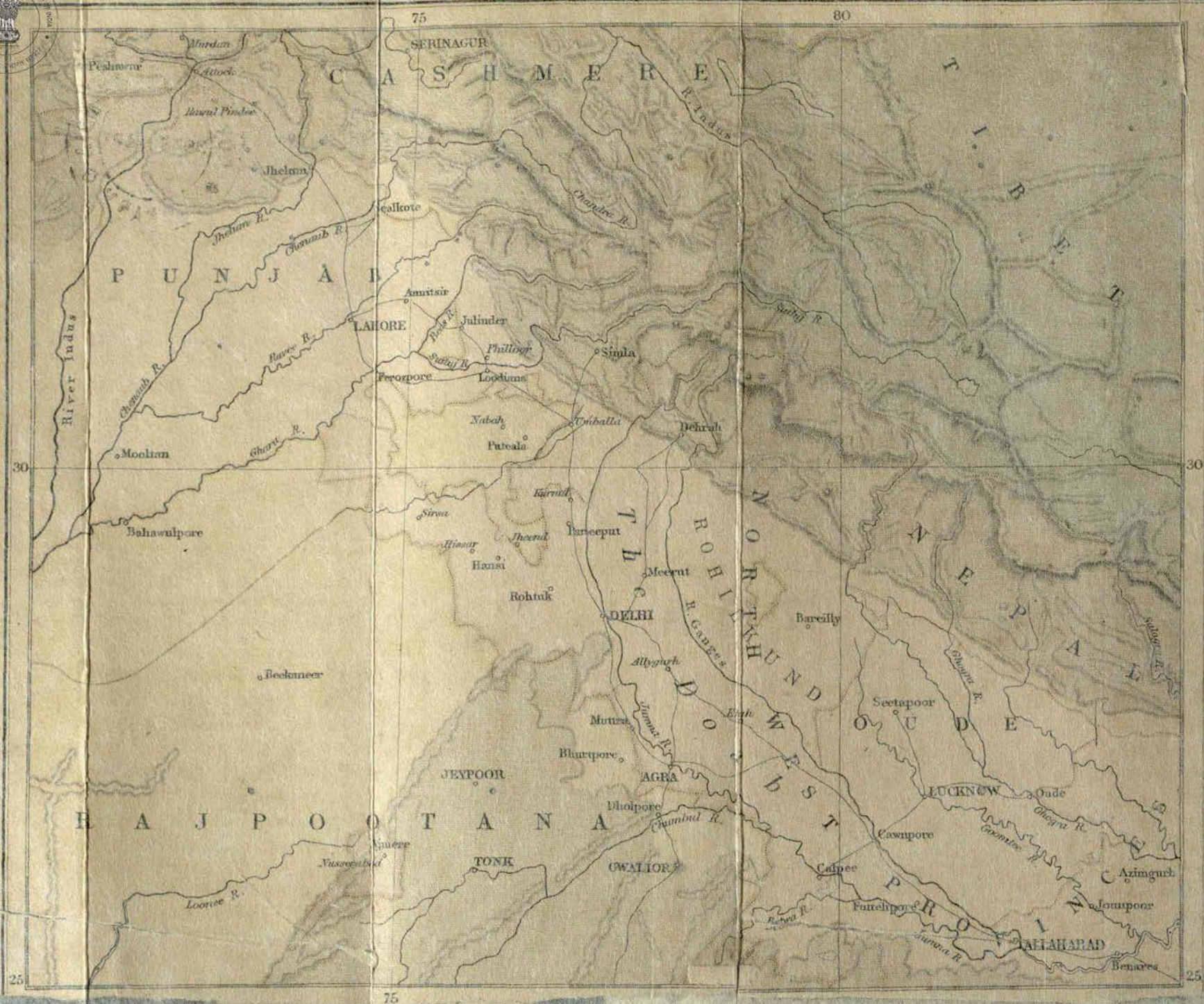
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THE PUNJAB NORTH WEST PROVINCES &c 1857.

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PREFACE TO VOL. II.

WHEN the first volume of this book was published, I had little expectation that the second would be so long in course of completion, as the result has shown it to have been. In truth, I had not measured aright the extent of the work before me. But when I came to take account of the wealth of my materials, and to reflect upon the means of converting them into history, I saw clearly that the task I had undertaken was a more arduous and perplexing one than I had originally supposed.

It is not difficult to make the reader understand my perplexities; and I hope that, understanding, he will sympathise with them. The events to be narrated covered a large area of space, but were compressed within a small period of time. Chronologically they moved along parallel lines, but locally they were divergent and distracting. The question was how it was best to deal historically with all these synchronous incidents. To have written according to date, with some approach to fidelity of detail, a



PREFACE.

CSL

number of separate narratives, each illustrative of a particular day, or of a particular week, would have been easy to the writer, and would in some sort have represented the character of the crisis, one of the most distinguishing features of which was derived from the confusion and distraction engendered by the multiplicity of simultaneous outbursts in different parts of the country. This mode of treatment, however, though it might accurately reflect the situation, was not likely to gratify the reader. The multiplicity of personal and local names rapidly succeeding each other would have bewildered him, and no distinct impression would have been left upon his mind. But though the nature of the subject utterly forbade all thought of unity of place and unity of action, with reference to the scope of the entire work, there was a certain unification of the several parts which was practicable, and which suggested what might be called an episodic treatment of the subject, with such connecting links, or such a general framework or setting, as historical truth might permit. And, in fact, different parts of the country were so cut off from each other when mutiny and rebellion were at their height, that each series of operations for the suppression of local revolt had a separate and distinct character. Certainly, in the earlier stages of the War, there was no general design—little co-operation or cohesion. Every man did what was best in his eyes to meet with vigour and sagacity an unexpected crisis. The cutting of our telegraph-wires and the interruption of our posts were among the first hostile efforts of the insurgents in all parts of the country. Joint action on a large scale was thus rendered impossible, and at the commencement of the War it would scarcely have been desirable. For our people had to deal promptly



with urgent symptoms, and references and consultations would have been fatal to success.

Thus circumstanced with respect to the component parts of this History, I could not easily determine to what particular events it would be best to give priority of narration. One thing soon became unpleasantly apparent to me. I had made a mistake in forecasting the plan of the entire work, in an "Advertisement" prefixed to the First Volume. It was impossible to write adequately, in this instalment of my book, of all the operations which I had originally intended to record. With materials of such great interest before me, it would have been unwise to starve the narrative; so I thought it best to make confession of error, and to expunge my too-hasty promises from subsequent editions of the work. In pursuance of this revised scheme, I was compelled to put aside much that I had written for this Second Volume, and though this has necessarily retarded its publication, it has placed me so much in advance with the work to be accomplished, that I hope to be able to produce the next volume after a much shorter interval of time.

The selection made for this volume from the chapters which I had written may not perhaps be the best, but it is at least sufficiently intelligible. After describing the earlier incidents of the mutiny, as at Meerut and Delhi, at Benares and Allahabad, and at different stations in the Punjab, I have narrated, up to a certain point, those two great series of operations—the one expedition starting from Bengal with troops drawn from the Littoral, the other from the North-Western Frontier, with forces derived from the Hill Stations and the Punjab—which were consummated in the capture of Delhi



and the first relief of Lucknow. In the one I have traced the movements of Neill and Have-lock, under the direction of Lord Canning, and in the other of Anson, Farnard, Wilson, and Nicholson, with the aid and inspiration of Sir John Lawrence. It is by thus following the fortunes of individuals that we may best arrive at a just conception of the general action of the whole. For it was by the energies of individual men, acting mostly on their own responsibility, that little by little rebellion was trodden down, and the supremacy of the English firmly re-established. It will be seen that I have adhered very closely to pure narrative. The volume, indeed, is a volume of fact, not of controversy and speculation; and as it relates to the earlier scenes of the great struggle for Empire, it is mostly an account of military revolt and its suppression.

Dealing with the large mass of facts, which are reproduced in the chapters now published, and in those which, though written, I have been compelled to reserve for future publication, I have consulted and collated vast piles of contemporary correspondence, and entered largely into communication, by personal intercourse or by letter, with men who have been individually connected with the events described. For every page published in this volume some ten pages have been written and compiled in aid of the narrative; and if I have failed in the one great object of my ambition, to tell the truth, without exaggeration on the one hand or reservation on the other, it has not been for want of earnest and laborious inquiry or of conscientious endeavour to turn my opportunities to the best account, and to lay before the public an honest exposition of the historical facts as they have been unfolded before me.



Still it is probable that the accuracy of some of the details in this volume, especially those of personal incident, may be questioned, perhaps contradicted, notwithstanding, I was about to say, all the care that I have taken to investigate them, but I believe that I should rather say "by reason of that very care." Such questionings or contradictions should not be too readily accepted; for, although the authority of the questioner may be good, there may be still better authority on the other side. I have often had to choose between very conflicting statements; and I have sometimes found my informants to be wrong, though apparently with the best opportunities of being right, and have been compelled to reject, as convincing proof, even the overwhelming assertion, "But, I was there." Men who are personally engaged in stirring events are often too much occupied to know what is going on beyond the little spot of ground which holds them at the time, and often from this restricted stand-point they see through a glass darkly. It is hard to disbelieve a man of honour when he tells you what he himself did; but every writer, long engaged in historical inquiry, has had before him instances in which men, after even a brief lapse of time, have confounded in their minds the thought of doing, or the intent to do, a certain thing, with the fact of having actually done it. Indeed, in the commonest affairs of daily life, we often find the intent mistaken for the act in the retrospect.

The case of Captain Rosser's alleged offer to take a Squadron of Dragoons and a Troop of Horse Artillery to Delhi on the night of the 10th of May (illustrated in the Appendix) may be regarded as an instance of this confusion. I could cite other instances. One will suffice:—A military officer of high rank, of



stainless honour, with a great historical reputation, invited me some years ago to meet him, for the express purpose of making to me a most important statement, with reference to one of the most interesting episodes of the Sepoy War. The statement was a very striking one; and I was referred, in confirmation of it, to another officer, who has since become illustrious in our national history. Immediately on leaving my informant, I wrote down as nearly as possible his very words. It was not until after his death that I was able orally to consult the friend to whom he had referred me, as being personally cognisant of the alleged fact—the only witness, indeed, of the scene described. The answer was that he had heard the story before, but that nothing of the kind had ever happened. The asserted incident was one, as I ventured to tell the man who had described it to me at the time, that did not cast additional lustre on his reputation; and it would have been obvious, even if he had rejoiced in a less unblemished reputation, that it was not for self-glorification, but in obedience to an irrepressible desire to declare the truth, that he told me what afterwards appeared to be not an accomplished fact, but an intention unfulfilled. Experiences of this kind render the historical inquirer very sceptical even of information supposed to be on “the best possible authority.” Truly, it is very disheartening to find that the nearer one approaches the fountain-head of truth, the further off we may find ourselves from it.*

* It may be mentioned here (though not directly in confirmation of the above) as a curious illustration of the difficulty of discerning between truth and error, that the only statement seriously im-

pugned in a former work of history by the author of this book, was the only one which he had made as the result of his own personal knowledge—the only fact which he had witnessed with his own eyes.



But, notwithstanding such discouraging instances of the difficulty of extracting the truth, even from the testimony of truthful men, who have been actors in the scenes to be described, I cannot but admit the general value of such testimony to the writer of contemporary history. And, indeed, there need be some advantages in writing of events still fresh in the memory of men to compensate for its manifest disadvantages. These disadvantages, however, ought always to be felt by the writer rather than by the reader. It has been often said to me, in reply to my inquiries, "Yes, it is perfectly true. But these men are still living, and the truth cannot be told." To this my answer has been: "To the Historian all men are dead." If a writer of contemporary history is not prepared to treat the living and the dead alike—to speak as freely and as truthfully of the former as of the latter, with no more reservation in the one case than in the other—he has altogether mistaken his vocation, and should look for a subject in prehistoric times. There are some actors in the scenes here described of whom I do not know whether they be living or whether they be dead. Some have passed away from the sphere of worldly exploits whilst this volume has been slowly taking shape beneath my pen. But if this has in any way influenced the character of my writing, it has only been by imparting increased tenderness to my judgment of men, who can no longer defend themselves or explain their conduct to the world. Even this offence, if it be one against historical truth, I am not conscious of having actually committed.

I have but a few more words to say, but because I say them last it must not be thought that I feel them least. I am painfully sensible that in this narrative



I have failed to do justice to the courage and constancy of many brave men, whose good deeds deserved special illustration in this narrative, and would have received it, but for the exigencies of time and space, which have forbidden an ampler record. This, perhaps, may be more apparent in other volumes than in this. But, whatever may be the omissions in this respect, I do not think that they will be attributed to any want of appreciation of the gallantry and fortitude of my countrymen in doing and in suffering. No one could rejoice more in the privilege of illustrating their heroic deeds than the author of these volumes. It is one of the best compensations of historical labour to be suffered to write of exploits reflecting so much honour upon the character of the nation.

J. W. K.

Penge—Midsummer, 1870.

ERRATA.

At page 13, line 11, for "Zeemut Mehal," read "*Zeenut-Mehal*." [Also in heading of Chapter I.]

Page 100, line 13, for "Suraj-ood-dowlah," read "*Suraj-ood-dowlah*."

„ 131, line 15, for "beleagured posts," read "*beleaguered post*."

In Contents-heading to Chapter IV., Book IV., *del* "Death of General Anson."



CSL
It is stated in a note at page 134, that the Act of the Legislative Council, May 30, 1857, extending the powers of the local authorities for the suppression of mutiny and rebellion, is given entire in the Appendix. The omission was not discovered till the whole volume was printed off. The Act will be given (with the later Acts to the same effect) in the next volume.



CSL

HISTORY OF THE SEPOY WAR.

BOOK IV.—THE RISING IN THE NORTH-WEST.

[May, 1857.]

CHAPTER I.

IMPORTANCE OF THE SEIZURE OF DELHI—MORAL INFLUENCES—POSITION OF THE DELHI FAMILY—EARLY HISTORY—SUCCESSIVE DEGRADATIONS—THE QUESTION OF SUCCESSION—INTRIGUES OF ZEEMUT MEHAL—DEATH OF PRINCE FAKIR-ODDEEN—RENEWED INTRIGUES—VIEWS OF LORD CANNING—STATE OF MAHOMEDAN FEELING AT DELHI—THE NATIVE PRESS—CORRESPONDENCE WITH PERSIA—THE PROCLAMATION—TEMPER OF THE SOLDIERY.

It was a work of time at Calcutta to elicit all the details of the sad story briefly outlined in the preceding chapter. But the great fact was patent to Lord Canning that the English had been driven out of Delhi, and that, for a time, in that great centre of Mahomedanism, the dynasty of the Mogul Family was restored. The tremendous political significance of this revolution could not be misunderstood by the most obtuse, or glossed over by the most sanguine. The Emperors of Delhi had long ceased to exercise any substantial authority over the people whom they

Lord Canning and the Delhi Question.



had once governed. For fifty years the Master of the Delhi Palace had been, in the estimation of the English, merely a pageant and a show. But the pageantry, the show, the name, had never ceased to be living influences in the minds of the princes and people of India. Up to a comparatively recent period all the coin of India had borne the superscription of the Mogul; and the chiefs of India, whether Mahomedan or Hindoo, had still continued to regard the sanction given to their successions by that shadow of royalty, as something more assuring than any recognition which could come from the substance of the British Government. If the Empire of Delhi had passed into a tradition, the tradition was still an honoured one. It had sunk deeply into the memories of the people.

Doubtful, before, of the strength of these influences, Lord Canning now began to suspect that he had been misinformed. In the preceding year, he had mastered the whole Delhi history, and he knew full well the peculiar circumstances which at that period made it so perilous that the Imperial Family should be appealed to in aid of the national cause. He saw before him, in all their length and breadth, the incidents of family intrigue, which imparted a vigorous individuality to the hostility of the Mogul. He knew that the chief inmates of the palace had never been in a mood of mind so little likely to resist the temptations now offered to them. He knew that the old King himself, and his favourite wife who ruled him, had been for some time cherishing animosities and resentments, which rendered it but too likely that on the first encouraging occasion they would break into open hostility against the usurping Englishman, who had vaulted into the seat of the Mogul, reduced him



to a suppliant, and thwarted him in all the most cherished wishes of his heart. 1804-37.

With as much brevity as may suffice to make the position clear, the Delhi story must be told. The old King, Behaudur Shah, whose sovereignty had been proclaimed, was the second in descent from the Emperor Shah Allum, whom, blind, helpless, and miserable, the English had rescued from the gripe of the Mahrattas,* when at the dawn of the nineteenth century the armies of Lake and Wellesley broke up their powerful confederacy, and scattered the last hopes of the French. Shah Allum was the great-grandson of Aurungzebe, the tenth successor in a direct line from Timour, the great founder of the dynasty of the Moguls. Even in the depths of his misery and humiliation, he was regarded by the most magnificent of English viceroys as a mighty potentate, whom it was a privilege to protect, and sacrilege to think of supplanting. The "great game" of Lord Wellesley embraced nothing so stupendous as the usurpation of the Imperial throne. Perhaps it was, as his brother Arthur and John Malcolm declared, and as younger men suspected and hinted, that the Governor-General, worn out by the oppositions and restrictions of the Leadenhall-street Government, and broken in health by the climate of Calcutta, had lost his old daring and cast aside his pristine ambition. Perhaps it was believed by him and by his associates in the Council

The Delhi story—Shah Allum.

1804.

* Lord Lake's first interview with him is thus officially described in the records of the day: "In the magnificent palace built by Shah Jehan the Commander-in-Chief was ushered into the royal presence, and found the unfortunate and venerable Em-

peror, oppressed by the accumulated calamities of old age and degraded authority, extreme poverty and loss of sight, seated under a small tattered canopy, the remnant of his royal state, with every external appearance of the misery of his condition."



1804—5.

Chamber that it would be sounder policy, tending more to our own grandeur in the end, to gather gradual strength from this protective connexion with the Emperor, before endeavouring to walk in the pleasant paths of imperialism. But in either case, he recoiled from the thought of its being suspected in England, that he wished to place the East India Company, substantively or vicariously, on the throne of the Moguls. "It has never," he wrote to the Secret Committee of the Court of Directors, June 2, 1805, "been in the contemplation of this Government to derive from the charge of protecting and supporting his Majesty the privilege of employing the Royal Prerogative as an instrument of establishing any control or ascendancy over the States and Chieftains of India, or of asserting on the part of his Majesty any of the claims which, in his capacity of Emperor of Hindostan, his Majesty may be considered to possess upon the provinces originally composing the Mogul Empire. The benefits which the Governor-General in Council expected to derive from placing the King of Delhi and the Royal Family under the protection of the British Government, are to be traced in the statement contained in our despatch to your Honourable Committee of the 13th of July, 1804,* relative to the evils and embarrassments to which the British power might have been exposed by the prosecution of claims and pretensions

* The objects are thus enumerated in the despatch to which reference is made: "The deliverance of the Emperor Shah Allum from the control of the French power established in the North-West quarter of Hindostan, by which the Government of France has been deprived of a powerful instrument in the eventual prosecution of its hostile designs against the British Government in

India, and the British Government has obtained a favourable opportunity of conciliating the confidence and securing the applause of surrounding states by providing a safe and tranquil asylum for the declining age of that venerable and unfortunate monarch, and a suitable maintenance for his numerous and distressed family."—*July 13, 1804.*



on the part of the Mahrattas, or of the French, in the name and under the authority of his Majesty Shah Allum, if the person and family of that unhappy monarch had continued under the custody and control of those powers, and especially of the French."

It must have taxed the ingenuity of Lord Wellesley, even with the experienced guidance and assistance of Sir George Barlow and Mr. Edmonstone, to design a scheme for the continuance or restoration of the Empire on a small scale—a scheme whereby Shah Allum might become more than a pensioner, a pageant, and a puppet, and yet less than the substance of a sovereign. He was to be a King and yet no King—a something and yet nothing—a reality and a sham at the same time. It was a solace to us, in the "great game," to know that we "held the King;" but it was a puzzle to us how to play the card. It was, indeed, a great political paradox, which Lord Wellesley's Government was called upon to institute; and he did the best that could be done, in the circumstances in which he was placed, to reconcile not only the House of Timour, but the people who still clung reverentially to the great Mahomedan dynasty, to the state of things which had arisen out of those circumstances. It was determined that a certain amount of that dignity, which is derived from territorial dominion, should still be attached to the person of the Emperor; that within certain limits he should still be the fountain of justice; and that (negatively) within those limits the power of life or death should be in his hands. And in addition to the revenues of the districts thus reserved as an appanage of the Throne, he and his family were to receive stipendiary allowances amounting to more than a hundred thousand pounds a year.



Thus the Emperor of all the Indies—the Great Mogul, traditionally the grandest sovereign in the Universe—became, whilst still indued with the purple and the gold of imperial state, and rejoicing in the appearance of territorial dominion, virtually a pensioner of a Company of Merchants. The situation was one which conferred many advantages on the British Government in India, but it was not without its dangers. Even in the depths of his misery and degradation, the King's name was a pillar of strength; the rags of royalty were revered by the people. And Lord Wellesley saw clearly that if the ancestral State of the Mogul were perpetuated—if he were left to reside in the Palace of Shah Jehan, with all the accompaniments of his former grandeur around him, in the midst of a Mahomedan population still loyal to the House of Timour—there might some day be an attempt to reconstruct the ruined monarchy in the person of one of Shah Allum's successors, which might cause us grievous annoyance. So it was proposed that Monghyr should become the residence of the Imperial Family. But the old King shuddered at the thought of removal, and the shudder ran through his family, from the oldest to the youngest, male and female, relatives and dependants. Not, therefore, to inflict any further pain or humiliation upon them, Lord Wellesley consented that they should abide in the Delhi Palace. At some future time their removal might be effected without any cruel divulsions, any of those strainings and crackings of the heart-strings, which must attend the exodus of Princes born in the purple, with the memory of actual sovereignty still fresh within them.

1806.

Akbar Shah.

In December, 1806, Shah Allum died, and was succeeded by his son, Akbar Shah. It happened that



the English officer, who at that time represented the British Government at Delhi, was a courtier of the old school, whose inveterate politeness of speech and manner had ample scope for exercise at the ex-imperial Court. Mr. Seton would have died rather than hurt the feelings of the humblest denizen of the Palace. In the caricatures of the period he was represented saluting Satan with a low bow, and hoping that his Majesty was well and prosperous. Associated, at this time, in a subordinate capacity with Mr. Seton, but much trusted, and consulted by him with the deference shown to an equal in age and position, was young Charles Metcalfe, who, although little more than a boy, saw clearly the store of future trouble which the British Government was laying up for itself by not curbing the pretensions of the now effete Mogul. "I do not conform," he wrote, "to the policy of Seton's mode of managing the Royal Family. It is by a submission of manner and conduct, carried on, in my opinion, far beyond the respect and attention which can be either prescribed by forms or dictated by a humane consideration for the fallen fortunes of a once illustrious family. It destroys entirely the dignity which ought to be attached to him who represents the British Government, and who in reality is to govern at Delhi; and it raises (I have perceived the effect disclosing itself with rapidity) ideas of imperial power and sway which ought to be put to sleep for ever. As it is evident that we do not mean to restore imperial power to the King, we ought not to pursue a conduct calculated to make him aspire to it. Let us treat him with the respect due to his situation; let us make him comfortable in respect to circumstances, and give him all the means, as far as possible, of



1806—37.

being happy; but, unless we mean to re-establish his power, let us not encourage him to dream of it." No grey-haired politician could have written anything wiser than this; and when, after the lapse of a few years, the writer himself became "Resident" at Delhi, and had the supreme direction of affairs, all his boyish impressions were confirmed. He was brought face to face with a state of things offensive alike to reason and to humanity; but neither he nor his successors in the Residency could do more than recommend one measure after another which might gradually mitigate the evils which stood out so obtrusively before them.

Time passed; and the English in India, secure in their great possessions, dreading no external enemy, and feeling strong within them the power to tread down any danger which might arise on Indian soil, advanced with a firmer step and a bolder presence. They no longer recoiled from the thought of Empire. What had appeared at the commencement of the century to be perilous presumption, now seemed to be merely the inevitable accident of our position. The "great game" had been imperfectly played out in Lord Wellesley's time; and ten years afterwards Lord Hastings saw before him the results of that settlement where nothing was settled, and resolved to assert the supremacy of the British Government over all the potentates of India. Times were changed both at home and abroad, and our feelings had changed with them. The Company had not quite forgotten that it had been established on a "pure mercantile bottom." But the successes of our arms in Europe had given us confidence in ourselves as a great military nation; and, though the Directors in Leadenhall-street, true to their old traditions, might



still array themselves against all projects for the extension of our military and political power in the East, it was felt that the people of England would applaud the bolder policy, if it were only successful. From that time England became arbiter of the fate of all the princes of India. There was no longer any reluctance to assert our position as the paramount power. It was a necessary part of the scheme then to put down the fiction of the Delhi Empire. The word Empire was, thenceforth, to be associated only with the British power in the East; and the mock-majesty, which we had once thought it serviceable to us to maintain, was now, as soon as possible, to be dismissed as inconvenient lumber.

It might be narrated how, during a period of thirty years, the sun of royalty, little by little, was shorn of its beams—how first one Governor-General and then another resisted the proud pretensions of the Mogul, and lopped off some of the ceremonial obeisances which had so long maintained the inflated dignity of the House of Timour.* All these humiliations rankled in the minds of the inmates of the Palace; but they were among the necessities of the continually advancing supremacy of the English. It may be questioned whether a single man, to whose opinion any weight of authority can fairly be attached, has ever doubted the wisdom of these excisions. And humanity might well pause to consider whether more might not yet be done to mitigate that great evil of rotting royalty which had so long polluted the atmosphere of Delhi. That gigantic Palace, almost a city in itself, had long been the

* It was not until 1835, that the current coin of India ceased to bear the superscription of the Mogul em-

perors, and the "Company's rupee" was substituted for it.



1806—37. home of manifold abominations; and a Christian Government had suffered, and was still suffering, generation after generation of abandoned men and degraded women, born in that vast sty of refuge, to be a curse to others and to themselves. In subdued official language, it was said of these wretched members of a Royal House, that they were "independent of all law, immersed in idleness and profligacy, and indifferent to public opinion."* It might have been said, without a transgression of the truth, that the recesses of the Palace were familiar with the commission of every crime known in the East, and that Heaven alone could take account of that tremendous catalogue of iniquities.

1837.

Behaudur
Shah.

On the evening of the 28th of September, 1837, Akbar Shah died, at the age of eighty-two. He had intrigued some years before to set aside the succession of the Heir-Apparent in behalf of a favourite son; but he had failed.† And now Prince Aboo Zuffer, in the official language of the day, "ascended the throne, assuming the title of Abool Mozuffer Surajooden Mahomed Behaudur Shah Padshah-i-Gazee." It is sufficient that he should be known here by the name of Behaudur Shah. He was then far advanced in age; but he was of a long-lived family, and his three-score years had not pressed heavily upon him. He was supposed to be a quiet, inert man, fond of poetry, a poetaster himself; and not at all addicted, by nature, to political intrigue. If he had any prominent characteristic it was avarice. He had not long succeeded to the title

* Sometimes, however, great crimes were punished. Prince Hyder Shikoh, for example, was executed for the murder of his wife.

† Indeed, he had made two separate efforts, in favour first of one son, then of another. The first endeavour was attended with some eventful circumstances which might have led to violence and bloodshed,



1837.

Sir Charles
Metcalle.

Lord Auckland.

before he began to press for an addition to the royal stipend, which had in some sort been promised to Akbar Shah. The Lieutenant-Governor was unwilling to recommend such a waste of the public money; but the Governor-General, equally believing it to be wasteful, said that, although as a new question he would have negatived it, the promise having been given it ought to be fulfilled—but upon the original conditions. These conditions were, that the King should execute a formal renunciation of all further claims upon the British Government; but Behaudur Shah did as his father had done before him. He refused to subscribe to the proposed conditions, and continued to cherish a belief that, by sending an agent to England, he might obtain what he sought without any embarrassing restrictions.

Rammohun
Roy.

Akbar Shah had employed as his representative the celebrated Brahmin, Rammohun Roy, and ever still regarding himself as the fountain of honour, had conferred on his envoy the title of Rajah. English society recognised it, as it would have recognised a still higher title, assumed by a Khitmudgar; but the authorities refused their official recognition to the Rajahship, though they paid becoming respect to the character of the man, who was striving to enlighten the Gentiles, as a social and religious reformer. As the envoy of the Mogul he accomplished nothing; and Behaudur Shah found that the "case" was much in the same state as it had been when Rammohun Roy left India on the business of the late King. But he had still faith in the efficacy of a mission to England, especially if conducted by an Englishman. So when he heard that an eloquent lecturer, who had gained a great reputation in the Western world by his earnest advocacy of the rights

George
Thompson.



of the coloured races, had come to India, Behaudur Shah invited him to Delhi, and was eager to enlist his services. He had many supposed wrongs to be redressed. Lord Ellenborough had given the finishing stroke to the system of nuzzur-giving, or tributary present-making, to the King, by prohibiting even such offerings by the Resident.* Thus had passed away almost the last vestige of that recognition, by the British Government, of the imperial dignity of the House of Timour; and although money-compensation had been freely given for the loss, the change rankled in the mind of the King. But the Company had already refused to grant any increase of stipend to the Royal Family until the prescribed conditions had been accepted;† and Mr. George Thompson had no more power than Rammohun Roy to cause a relaxation of the decision. And in truth, there was no sufficient reason why the stipend should be increased. A lakh of rupees a month was sufficient, on a broad basis of generosity, even for that multitudinous family; and it would have been profligate to throw away more money on the mock-royalty of Delhi, when it might be so much better bestowed.‡

There was, indeed, no ground of complaint against

* Nuzzurs had formerly been presented by the Governor-General and the Commander-in-Chief—by the latter, it would seem, as recently as 1837, on the accession of Shah Behaudur.—See Letter of the Government of India, May 23, 1838. And in the cold season of 1842-3 Lord Ellenborough's secretaries presented nuzzurs to the King, without any intimation to the Governor-General; who, on learning what they had done, was surprised and indignant in the extreme, and put a stop to the nuzzur-giving for ever. Mr. William Edwards, one of the secretaries concerned, has given an interesting

account of the affair, which will be found in the Appendix.

† Letter of the Court of Directors, Feb. 11, 1846: "It being impossible for us to waive this condition (of executing a formal renunciation of all further claims) the King must be considered as having declined the offered benefit."

‡ In addition to this monthly lakh of rupees, paid in money, Behaudur Shah continued to enjoy the proceeds of some crown lands, and also of some ground-rents in the city.—See evidence of Mr. Sanders at the King's trial: "He was in receipt of a stipend of one lakh of rupees per



the British Government; and, perhaps, the King would have subsided into a state, if not of absolute content, of submissive quietude, if it had not been for that activity of Zenana intrigue, which no Oriental sovereign, with nothing to do but to live, can ever hope to resist. He had married a young wife, who had borne him a son, and who had become a favourite, potential for good or evil. As often it has happened, from the time of the patriarchs downwards, this son of his old age also became a favourite; and the King was easily wrought upon by Queep Zeemut Mehal to endeavour to set aside the succession of the heir-apparent in favour of the boy-prince. The unjust supercession, which his father had endeavoured to perpetrate against him, might now some day be put in force by himself, for the gratification of his favourite. But it was necessary in such a case to walk warily. Any rash hasty action might be followed by a failure which could never be repaired. In any case, it would be better to wait until the child, Jewan Bukht, were a few years older, and he could be extolled as a youth of promise. Meanwhile the great Chapter of Accidents might contain something in their favour. So hanging on to the skirts of Circumstance, he watched for the coming of an opportunity. And ere long the opportunity came—bringing with it more than had been looked for, and not all to the satisfaction of the royal expectants.

The story may be briefly told. In 1849, Prince
mensem, of which ninety-nine thousand were paid at Delhi, and one thousand at Lucknow, to the members of the family there. He was also in receipt of revenue to the amount of a lakh and a half from the crown lands in the neighbourhood of Delhi. He also received a considerable sum from the ground-rents of houses and tenants in the city of Delhi."

1849.

The story of the succession.



Dara Bukht, the Heir-Apparent, died. At this time the King, Behaudur Shah, had numbered more than seventy years. In natural course his death could be no very remote contingency. The question of succession, therefore, pressed heavily on the mind of the Governor-General. Lord Dalhousie was not a man to regard with much favour the mock sovereignty of the Mogul. Others before him, with greater tenderness for ancient dynastic traditions, had groaned over the long continuance of a state of things at which reason and truth revolted; and the extinction of the titular dignity of the Kings of Delhi, after the death of Behaudur Shah, had been urged upon the Government of the East India Company.* But the proposal stirred up divisions in the Council-Chamber of Leadenhall, which resulted in delayed action. The usual expedient of waiting for further advices from India was resorted to, and so Lord Dalhousie found the question unsettled. The death of Prince Dara Bukht afforded an opportunity for its settlement, which a Governor-General of Dalhousie's temperament was not likely to neglect. The next in succession, according to Mahomedan law, was Prince Fakir-ood-deen, a man thirty years of age, reputed to be of quick parts, fond of European society, and tolerant of the British Government. And the Governor-General saw both in the character of the man and the circumstances of his position that which might favour and

* Writing on the 1st of August, 1844, the Court of Directors observed: "The Governor-General has given directions to the Agent that, in the event of the demise of the King of Delhi, no step whatever shall be taken which can be construed into a recognition of the descent of that title to a successor with-

out specific authority from the Governor-General. If in these instructions the abolition of the title is contemplated, we cannot give it our sanction until we have heard further from you on the subject, and have had time to consider the purport and the grounds of the recommendation which may be offered."



facilitate the changes which he wisely desired to introduce. 1849.

It was manifestly the duty of the British Government not to perpetuate a state of things which had nothing but tradition to gloss over its offensive deformity. But the operation that had become necessary was not one to be performed violently and abruptly, without regard to times and seasons. Feeling sure that the opportunity could not be far distant, Lord Dalhousie had been contented to wait. It had now come. Prince Dara Bukht was the last of the Delhi Princes who had been "born in the purple." He had been reared and he had ripened in the expectation of succeeding to the Kingship of Delhi; and there might have been some hardship, if not a constructive breach of faith, in destroying the hopes of a lifetime at the very point of fruition. But Prince Fakir-ood-deen had been born a pensioner. He had no recollection of "the time when the King of Delhi still sat on the throne and was recognised as the paramount potentate in India." It could, therefore, be no injustice to him to admit his accession to the chiefship of the family upon other conditions than those which had been recognised in the case of his father; whilst it was, in the opinion of the Governor-General, sound policy, on the other hand, to sweep away all the privileges and prerogatives which had kept alive this great pretentious mock-royalty in the heart of our Empire.

Lord Dalhousie's measures.

The evils to be removed were many; but two among them were more glaring than the rest. The perpetuation of the kingly title was a great sore. Lord Dalhousie did not overrate its magnitude. Perhaps, indeed, he scarcely took in its true proportions. For he wrote that the Princes of India and



1840.

its people, whatever they might once have been, had become "entirely indifferent to the condition of the King or his position."* And he added: "The British Government has become indeed and in truth the paramount Sovereign in India. It is not expedient that there should be, even in name, a rival in the person of a Sovereign whose ancestors once held the paramountcy we now possess. His existence could never really endanger us, I admit; although the intrigues of which he might, and not unfrequently has been made the nucleus, might incommode and vex us." I have said before that Lord Dalhousie "could not understand the tenacity with which the natives of India cling to their old traditions—could not sympathise with the veneration which they felt for their ancient dynasties."† Time might have weakened the veneration felt for the House of Delhi, but had not, assuredly, effaced it. There was still sufficient vitality in it to engender, under favouring circumstances, something more than discomfort and vexation. But Lord Dalhousie erred only in thus under-estimating the proportions of the evil which he now desired to remove. He was not, on that account, less impressed with the fact that it would be grievous impolicy on the part of the British Government to suffer the kingly title, on the death of Behaudur Shah, to pass to another generation.

The other evil thing of which I have spoken was the maintenance of the Palace as a royal residence. Regarded in the aspect of morality and humanity, as already observed, it was an abomination of the worst kind. But, more clearly even than this, Lord Dalhousie discerned the political and military disadvantages of the existing state of things, by

* Minute, February 10, 1849.

† *Ante*, vol. I. p. 356.



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which, what was in reality a great fortress in the hands of a possible enemy, was suffered to command the chief arsenal of Upper India. "Here," wrote the Governor-General, "we have a strong fortress in the heart of one of the principal cities of our Empire, and in entire command of the chief magazine of the Upper Provinces—which lies so exposed, both to assault and to the dangers arising from the carelessness of the people dwelling around it—that it is a matter of surprise that no accident has yet occurred to it. Its dangerous position has been frequently remarked upon, and many schemes have been prepared for its improvement and defence; but the only eligible one is the transfer of the stores into the Palace, which would then be kept by us as a British post, capable of maintaining itself against any hostile manœuvre, instead of being, as it now is, the source of positive danger, and perhaps not unfrequently the focus of intrigues against our power."*

There was undoubted wisdom in this. To remove

* It does not appear, however, that Lord Dalhousie laid any stress upon the fact that no European troops were posted in Delhi. Nor, indeed, did Sir Charles Napier, who at this time was Commander-in-Chief of the British army in India. He saw clearly that the military situation was a false one, and he wrote much about the defence of the city, but without drawing any distinction between European and Native troops. In both cases the anticipated danger was from a rising of the people, not of the soldiery. With respect to the situation of the magazine, Sir Charles Napier wrote to the Governor-General (Lahore, Dec. 15, 1849), saying: "As regards the magazine, the objections to it are as follows: 1st. It is placed in a very populous part of the city, and its explosion would be very horrible in

its effects as regards the destruction of life. 2nd. It would destroy the magnificent palace of Delhi. 3rd. The loss of Government property would also be very great, especially if my views of the importance of Delhi, given in my report, be acted upon; namely, that it and Dinapore should be two great magazines for the Bengal Presidency. 4th. It is without defence beyond what the guard of fifty men offer, and its gates are so weak that a mob could push them in. I therefore think a powder magazine should be built in a safe place. There is a strong castle three or four miles from the town which would answer well, but I fear the repairs would be too expensive; more so, perhaps, than what would be more efficacious, viz., to build a magazine in a suitable position near the city."



the Delhi Family from the Palace, and to abolish all their Alsatian privileges, upon the death of Behaudur Shah, could have been no very difficult work. But to Lord Dalhousie it appeared that this part of the duty which lay before him should be accomplished with the least possible delay. He conceived that there would be no necessity to wait for the demise of the titular sovereign, as in all probability the King might be persuaded to vacate the Palace, if sufficient inducement were held out to him. He argued that, as the Kings of Delhi had possessed a convenient and favourite country residence at the Kootab, some twelve miles to the south of Delhi, and that as the place was held in great veneration, generally and particularly, as the burial-place of a noted Mahomedan saint and of some of the ancestors of Behaudur Shah, his Majesty and the Royal Family were not likely to object to their removal, and, if they did object, it was to be considered whether pressure might not be put upon them, and their consent obtained by the extreme measure of withholding the royal stipend. But the representative of a long line of Kings might not unreasonably have demurred to the expulsion of his Family from the old home of his fathers, and it demanded no great exercise of imagination to comprehend the position.

Views of the
Home
Government.

When this exposition of Lord Dalhousie's views was laid before the Court of Directors of the East India Company, the subject was debated with much interest in Leadenhall-street.* Already had the strong mind of the Governor-General begun to influence the councils of the Home Government of India. There were one or two able and active members of

* Sir Archibald Galloway, who century, was Chairman of the East had taken part in the defence of India Company. Delhi at the commencement of the



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the Court who believed implicitly in him, and were resolute to support everything that he did. There was another section of the Court, which had no special faith in Lord Dalhousie, but which, upon system, supported the action of the local Governments, as the least troublesome means of disposing of difficult questions. But there was a third and powerful party—powerful in intellect, more powerful still in its unflinching honesty and candour, and its inalienable sense of justice—and this party prevailed. The result was that the majority agreed to despatch instructions to India, negating the proposals of the Governor-General. But when the draft went from Leadenhall-street to Cannon-row, it met with determined opposition from the Board of Control, over which at that time Sir John Hobhouse presided.* It was contended that the British Government were not pledged to continue to Shah Allum's successors the privileges accorded to him, and that the Court had not proved that the proposals of the Governor-General were either unjust or impolitic. Then arose one of those sharp conflicts between the Court and the Board which in the old days of the Double Government sometimes broke in upon the monotony of their Councils. The Court rejoined that the proposals were those of the Governor-General alone, that the concurrence of his Council had not been obtained, that the contemplated measures were ungenerous and unwise,† and that it would give grievous offence to the

Conflict between the Court and the Board.

* Mr. James Wilson and the Hon. John Eliot were then Secretaries to the Board.

† "The question," they said, "is not one of supremacy. The supremacy of the British power is beyond

dispute. The sovereignty of Delhi is a title utterly powerless for injury, but respected by Mahomedans as an ancient honour of their name, and their good feelings are conciliated to the British Government by

Mahomedan population of the country. They were prepared to sanction persuasive means to obtain the evacuation of the Palace, but they most strongly objected to compulsion.* The Board then replied that it was not necessary in such a case to obtain the consent of the Members of Council, and that if they had felt any alarm as to the results of the proposed measure, they would have communicated their apprehensions to the Court (which, however, was a mistaken impression)—that there was no sort of obligation to continue to the successors of Shah Allum what Lord Wellesley had granted to him—that it was a question only of policy, and that as to the effect of the proposed measure on the minds of the Mahomedans, the local ruler was a better judge than the Directors at home (and this, perhaps, was another mistake); but when the Indian minister added: “The chance of danger to the British Empire from the head of the House of Timour may be infinitely small; but if a Mahomedan should ever think that he required such a rallying-point for the purpose of infusing into those of his own faith spirit and bitterness in an attack on Christian supremacy, he would surely find that a Prince already endowed with the regal title, and possessed of a royal residence, was a more efficient instrument in his hands than one placed in the less conspicuous position contemplated by Lord Dalhousie and his advisers,” he spoke wisely and presciently. On receipt of this letter, the Court again

the respect it shows for that ancient honour. The entire indifference of the Princes and the people of India to the condition or position of the King is alleged; but the Court cannot think it possible that any people can ever become indifferent to the memory of its former greatness. The traditional deference with which

that memory is regarded is altogether distinct from any hopes of its renewal. But it is a feeling which it is impolitic to wound. From mere hopelessness of resistance it may not immediately show itself, but may remain latent till other causes of public danger may bring it into action.”



returned to the conflict, urging that they felt so deeply the importance of the subject that they could not refrain from making a further appeal to the Board. They combated what had been said about the implied concurrence of the Council, and the argument against the claims of the Delhi Family based upon the action of Lord Wellesley, and then they proceeded to speak again of the feelings of the Mahomedan population. "The amount of disaffection," they said, "in the Mahomedan population, which the particular measure, if carried into effect, may produce, is a matter of opinion on which the means do not exist of pronouncing confidently. The evil may prove less than the Court apprehend, or it may be far greater than they would venture to predict. But of this they are convinced, that even on the most favourable supposition, the measure would be considered throughout India as evidence of the commencement of a great change in our policy." "The Court," it was added, "cannot contemplate without serious uneasiness the consequences which may arise from such an impression, should it go forth generally throughout India—firmly believing that such an act would produce a distrust which many years of an opposite policy would be insufficient to remove." Then, having again entreated most earnestly the Board's reconsideration of their decision, they concluded by saying, that if they failed, they would "still have discharged their duty to themselves, by disclaiming all responsibility for a measure which they regarded as unjust towards the individual family, gratuitously offensive to an important portion of our Indian subjects, and calculated to produce an effect on the reputation and influence of the British Government both in India and elsewhere, such as



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1849.Summary
of the
argument.

they would deeply deplore." But the last appeal fell on stony ground. The Board were obdurate. They deplored the difference of opinion, accepted the disclaimer, and, on the last day of the year, directed, "according to the powers vested in them by the law," a despatch to be sent to India in the form settled by the Board. So instructions were sent out to India, signed ministerially by certain members of the Court, totally opposed to what, as a body, they believed to be consistent with policy and justice.

On full consideration of this correspondence, conducted as it was, on both sides, with no common ability, it is difficult to resist the conviction that both were right and both were wrong—right in what they asserted, wrong in what they denied. It was, in truth, but a choice of evils that lay before the double Government; but each half of it erred in denying the existence of the dangers asserted by the other. Much, of course, on both sides was conjecture or speculation, to be tested by the great touchstone of the Future; and it depended on the more rapid or the more tardy ripening of events on the one side or the other to demonstrate the greater sagacity of the Court or the Board. If there should be no popular excitement before the death of Behaudur Shah, to make the King of Delhi, in his great palatial stronghold, a rallying-point for a disaffected people, that event, followed by the abolition of the title and the removal of the Family from the Palace, might prove the soundness of the Court's arguments, by evoking a Mahomedan outbreak; but, if there should be a Mahomedan, or any other popular outbreak, during the lifetime of Behaudur Shah, it might be shown, by the alacrity of the people to rally round the old imperial throne, and to proclaim again the sovereignty of the House



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of Timour, that the apprehensions of the Board had not been misplaced, and that the danger on which they had enlarged was a real one. There was equal force at the time in the arguments of both, but there was that in the womb of the Future which was destined to give the victory to the Board.

Lord Dalhousie received the instructions bearing the official signatures of the Court in the early spring of 1850,* but he had before learnt in what a hot-bed of contention the despatch was being reared, and when it came, he wisely hesitated to act upon its contents. It is to his honour that, on full consideration, he deferred to the opinions expressed by the majority of the Court, and by others not in the Court, whose opinions were entitled to equal respect. "The Honourable Court," he said, "have conveyed to the Governor-General in Council full authority to carry these measures into effect. But I have, for some time past, been made aware through different channels, that the measures I have thus proposed regard-

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Measures deferred.

* Some powerful protests were received by members of the Court—among others by Mr. Tucker, then nearly eighty years of age. In this paper he said: "That they (the Delhi family) can be induced voluntarily to abandon their palace, I cannot, for one moment, believe. The attachment of the natives generally to the seats of their ancestors, however humble, is well known to all those who know anything of the people of India; but in this case there are peculiar circumstances, the cherished associations of glory, the memory of past grandeur, which must render the palace of Delhi the object of attachment and veneration to the fallen family. . . . If the object is to be accomplished, it must be by the exertion of military force, or intimidation disgraceful to any Government, and calculated to bring odium

on the British name." "I have the highest respect," he said, "for the talents, the great acquirements, and the public spirit of Lord Dalhousie, but I must think that an individual, who has only communicated with the people of India through an interpreter, cannot have acquired a very intimate knowledge of the character, habits, feelings, and prejudices of the people." The veteran director erred, however, in making light of the strength of Delhi as a fortified city. "It is not," he said, "a fortress of any strength. . . . It has been repeatedly entered and sacked by undisciplined hordes." "There is, in fact," he continued, "no ground for assuming that Delhi can become a military post of importance, especially now that we have advanced our frontier to the banks of the Indus."



1850.

ing the throne of Delhi, have not met with the concurrence of authorities in England whose long experience and knowledge of Indian affairs entitle their opinions to great weight, and that many there regard the tendency of these proposed measures with anxiety, if not with alarm." He added that, with unfeigned deference to the opinions thus expressed, he still held the same views as before; but that, although his convictions remained as strong as ever, he did not consider the measures themselves to be of such immediate urgency as to justify his carrying them into effect, "contrary to declared opinions of undoubted weight and authority, or in a manner calculated to create uneasiness and doubt." He was willing, therefore, to suspend action, and, in the meanwhile, to invite the opinions of his Council, which had not been before recorded.

palace
intrigues.

Whilst the main questions thus indicated were under consideration, another difficulty of a personal character arose. The King protested against the succession of Fakir-ood-deen. Stimulated by his favourite wife, Zeenut-Mehal, he pleaded earnestly for her son, then a boy of eleven. One objection which he raised to the succession of his eldest surviving son was a curious one. He said that it was a tradition of his House, since the time of Timour, that no one was to sit on the throne who had been in any way mutilated; Fakir-ood-deen had been circumcised, and, therefore, he was disqualified.* The objection was

* The statement was an exaggerated one—as all the Mogul Emperors, up to the time of Hoomayoon, were circumcised. After the accession of this prince, for reasons given in a very interesting note, at the end of the volume, furnished by

my learned friend, Mowlavee Syud Ahmed, C.S.I., the rite was discontinued, generally, in the family. But for certain physical reasons, an exception was made, with respect to Fakir-ood-deen, and Zeenut-Mehal seized upon the pretext.



urged with much vehemence, and, it was added, that Fakir-ood-deen was a man of bad character. The immediate effect of these representations was that Lord Dalhousie determined for a while to suspend official action with respect to the question of succession, and to see what circumstances might develop in his favour.

In the mean time he invited the opinions of his colleagues in the Supreme Council. It consisted, at that time, of Sir Frederick Currie, Sir John Littler, an old Company's officer of good repute, and Mr. John Lowis, a Bengal civilian, blameless in all official and personal relations, one of the lights of the Service, steady but not brilliant. The first shrewdly observed that we might leave the choice of a successor until the King's death, which could not be very remote, and that we might then easily make terms with, or impose conditions upon, the accepted candidate, for the evacuation of the Palace. The General looked doubtfully at the whole proposal. He believed that the Mahomedan population of India still regarded with reverence the old Mogul Family, and would be incensed by its humiliation. He counselled, therefore, caution and delay, and in the end persuasion, not compulsion. But John Lowis laughed all this to scorn. He did not believe that the Mahomedans of India cared anything about Delhi, or anything about the King; and if they did care, that, he said, was an additional reason why the title should be abolished, and the Palace vacated, with the least possible delay.*

Opinions of
the Council.

* "But, if these fears are not groundless, surely they afford a positive reason for taking the proposed step, because the result anticipated, as it appears to me, can arise only if

the Mahomedans (no doubt the most restless and discontented of our subjects) have continued to look upon the representatives of the House of Timour as their natural head, and to



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The result of these deliberations was that a despatch was sent to England, recommending that affairs should remain unchanged during the lifetime of the present King—that the Prince Fakir-ood-deen should be acknowledged as successor to the royal title, but that advantage should be taken of the pretensions of a rival claimant to the titular dignity, to obtain the desired concessions from the acknowledged Head of the Family—that inducements should be held out to him to leave the Palace and to reside in the Kootab, and that, if necessary, this advantage should be purchased by the grant of an additional stipend.

Agreement
with the
Heir-
Apparent.

To all the recommendations of the Governor-General—so far as they concern this history—the Home Government yielded their consent. Permission was then granted to the Delhi Agent to make known to Prince Fakir-ood-deen, at a confidential interview, what were the intentions and wishes of the British Government. A meeting, therefore, took place between the Prince and Sir Thomas Metcalfe; and the former expressed himself, according to official reports, prepared to accede to the wishes of the Government, “if invested with the title of King, and permitted to assume the externals of royalty.” An agreement was then drawn up, signed, sealed, and witnessed, and the work was done. It was, doubtless, pleasant to the authorities to think that the heir had acceded willingly to all the demands made upon him. But the fact is that he consented to them with intense disgust, and that throughout the Palace there were great consternation and excitement, and that no one

count upon the Palace of Delhi as a rallying point in the event of any outbreak amongst them. If it be so, it is surely sound policy, on the first favourable opportunity, to remove the head, and to put the projected rallying point into safe hands.”



1850.

was more vexed than the mother of the rival claimant, Queen Zeenut-Mehal.

I must pass hastily over the next two or three years, during which the animosities of the Queen Zeenut-Mehal, and of her son, Jewan Bakht, continued to fester under the irritations of a great disappointment. And ere long they were aggravated by the thought of a new grievance; for the King had endeavoured in vain to induce the British Government to pledge itself to make to his favourites, after his death, the same payments as he had settled upon them during his life. The intrigues which, if successful, would have secured to them so much at the expense of others, altogether failed. But the King lived on—lived to survive the heir whose succession was so distasteful to him. On the 10th of July, 1856, Prince Fakir-ood-deen suddenly died. It was more than suspected that he had been poisoned. He was seized with deadly sickness and vomiting, after partaking of a dish of curry. Extreme prostration and debility ensued, and although the King's physician, Ahsan-oollah, was called in, he could or would do nothing to restore the dying Prince; and in a little time there were lamentations in the Heir-Apparent's house, and tidings were conveyed to the Palace that Fakir-ood-deen was dead.*

1856.
Death of
Fakir-ood-
deen.

How that night was spent in the apartments of

* The Palace Diary of the day says: "Having felt hungry, the Prince imagined that an empty stomach promoted bile, and partook of some bread with curry gravy, when immediately the vomitings increased, which produced great debility. Every remedy to afford relief proved ineffectual, and H.R.H. rapidly sunk. Mterza Elahee Buksh sent for Hakim Assan-oollah to prescribe. The Hakim

administered a clyster, which, however, did no good. At six o'clock, the Heir Apparent was in a moribund state, and immediately after the noise of lamentation was heard in the direction of the Heir-Apparent's residence, and news was brought to the Palace of H.R.H.'s demise. His Majesty expressed his sorrow. The Newab Zeenut-Mehal Begum condoled with his Majesty."



Queen Zeenut-Mehal can only be conjectured. Judged by its results, it must have been a night of stirring intrigue and excited activity. For when, on the following day, Sir Thomas Metcalfe waited on the King, his Majesty put into the hands of the Agent a paper containing a renewed expression of his desire to see the succession of Jēwan Bakht recognised by the British Government. Enclosed was a document purporting to convey a request from others of the King's sons, that the offspring of Zeenut-Mehal, being endowed with "wisdom, merit, learning, and good manners," should take the place of the Heir-Apparent. Eight of the royal princes attached their seals to this address. But the eldest of the survivors—Meerza Korash by name—next day presented a memorial of his own, in which he set forth that his brethren had been induced to sign the paper by promises of increased money-allowances from the King, if they consented, and deprivation of income if they refused. An effort also was made to bribe Meerza Korash into acquiescence. He professed all filial loyalty to the King; declared his willingness to accede, as Heir-Apparent, to such terms as the King might suggest; but when he found that his father, instigated by the Queen Zeenut-Mehal, was bent on setting him aside altogether, he felt that there was nothing left for him but an appeal to the British Government. "As in this view," he wrote to the British Agent, "my ruin and birthright are involved, I deem it proper to represent my case, hoping that in your report due regard will be had to all the above circumstances. Besides being senior, I have accomplished a pilgrimage to Mecca, and have learned by heart the Koran; and my further attainments can be tested in an interview."



By this time Lord Canning had succeeded to the Governor-Generalship, and a new Council sat beside him. The whole question of the Delhi succession, therefore, was considered and debated by men uninfluenced by any foregone expressions of opinion. In truth, the question was not a difficult one. The course which Lord Dalhousie meant to pursue was apparently the wisest course; although he had erred in believing that the Mahomedans of Upper India had no lingering affection for the sovereignty of the House of Delhi; and not less in supposing that the removal of the King and the Royal Family from the Palace in the city would not be painful and humiliating to them. But, with laudable forbearance, he had yielded to the opinions of others, even with the commission in his hands to execute his original designs. Lord Canning, therefore, found the Delhi question unsettled and undetermined in many of the most essential points. Bringing a new eye to the contemplation of the great danger and the great abomination of the Delhi Palace, he saw both, perhaps, even in larger dimensions than they had presented to the eye of his predecessor. He did not, therefore, hesitate to adopt as his own the views which Lord Dalhousie had recorded with respect to the removal of the Family on the death of Behaudur Shah. "It is as desirable as ever," he wrote, "that the Palace of Delhi—which is, in fact, the citadel of a large fortified town, and urgently required for military purposes—should be in the hands of the Government of the country, and that the pernicious privilege of exemption from the law, which is conceded to the Crown connexions and dependants of the King now congregated there, should, in the interests of morality and good government, cease." It was scarcely possible,

Views of
Lord Can-
ning.

indeed, that much difference of opinion could obtain among statesmen with respect to the political and military expediency of placing this great fortified building, which dominated the city of Delhi, in the secure possession of British troops; nor could there be any doubt in the mind of a Christian man that, in the interests of humanity, we were bound to pull down all those screens and fences which had so long shut out the abominations of the Palace from the light of day, and excluded from its murky recesses the saving processes of the law.

But the extinction of the titular sovereignty was still an open question. Lord Canning had spent only a few months in India, and those few months had been passed in Calcutta. He had no personal knowledge of the feelings of the princes or people of Upper India; but he read in the minutes of preceding members of the Government that the traditions of the House of Timour had become faint in men's minds, if they had not been wholly effaced; and he argued that if there was force in this when written, there must be greater force after a lapse of years, as there was an inevitable tendency in time to obliterate such memories. "The reasons," he said, "which induced a change of purpose in 1850 are not fully on record;* but whatever they may have been, the course of time has assuredly strengthened the arguments by which the first intentions were supported, and possibly has removed the objection to it." He further argued that as much had already been done to strip the mock majesty of Delhi of the purple and gold with which it had once been be-

* That is, not on record in India. The reasons are fully stated above; but Lord Canning apparently did not know that the "Court's despatch" was really not their despatch at all.



dizened—that as first one privilege and then another, which had pampered the pride of the descendants of Timour, had been torn from them, there could be little difficulty in putting the finishing stroke to the work by abolishing the kingly title on the death of Behaudur Shah. “The presents,” he said, “which were at one time offered to the King by the Governor-General and Commander-in-Chief have been discontinued. The privilege of a coinage carrying his mark is now denied to him. The Governor-General’s seal no longer bears a device of vassalage; and even the Native chiefs have been prohibited from using one. It has been determined that these appearances of subordination and dependence could not be kept up consistently with a due respect for the real and solid power of the British Government, and the same may be said of the title of King of Delhi, with the fiction of paramount sovereignty which attaches to it. . . . To recognise the title of King, and a claim to the external marks of royalty in a new person would be an act purely voluntary on the part of the Government of India, and quite uncalled for. Moreover, it would not be accepted as a grace or favour by any but the individual himself. But,” added the Governor-General, “whatever be the degree of rank inherited, the heir whom in right and consistency the Government must recognise, is the eldest surviving son of the King, Prince Mirza Mahomed Korash, who has no claims from early reminiscences to see the unreal dignity of his House sustained for another generation in his own person.”

The policy to be observed having thus been determined, the Governor-General, with the full concurrence of his Council, proceeded to issue definite in-



structions for the guidance of his Agent. The substance of them is thus stated :

"1. Should it be necessary to send a reply to the King's letter, the Agent must inform his Majesty that the Governor-General cannot sanction the recognition of Mirza Jewan Bakht as successor.

"2. Mirza Mahomed Korash must not be led to expect that his recognition will take place on the same terms as Fakir-ood-deen's, and that during the King's lifetime no communication is to be made, either to his Majesty, or to any other member of the family, touching the succession.

"3. On the King's demise, Prince Mirza Mahomed Korash should be informed that Government recognise him as the head of the family upon the same conditions as those accorded to Prince Mirza Fakir-ood-deen, excepting that, instead of the title of King, he should be designated and have the title of Shahzada, and that this communication should be made to him not in the way of writing, negotiation, or bargaining, which it is not the intention of the Governor-General in Council to admit, but as the declaration of the mature and fixed determination of the Government of India.

"4. A report to be made of the number of the privileged residents in the Palace ; to how many the privilege would extend, if the sons and grandsons, but no more distant relatives of any former King were admitted to it.

"5. The sum of fifteen thousand rupees per mensem from the family stipend to be fixed as the future assignment of the heir of the family."



as they were then known to Lord Canning—were the state and prospects of the Delhi Family at the close of the year 1856. But there was something besides reserved for later revelation to the English ruler, which may be recorded in this place. The King, stricken in years, would have been well content to end his days in quietude and peace. But the restless intriguing spirit of the Queen Zeenut-Mehal would not suffer the aged monarch to drowse out the remainder of his days. She never ceased to cling to the hope that she might still live to see the recognition of her son as King of Delhi, and she never ceased to intrigue, at home and abroad, by the light of that pole-star of her ambition. One impediment had been removed by death. Another might be removed in the same way. And if the British Government would not favour the claims of Jewan Bakht, other powerful Governments might be induced to hold out to him a helping hand. It was stated afterwards that the King had never resented the determination to exclude the Delhi Family from the Palace, as the exclusion would not affect himself, and he had no care for the interests of his successor.* But it has been shown that Queen Zeenut-Mehal was loud in her lamentations when it was known that Fakir-ooddeen had surrendered this ancient privilege; for although she hated the recognised heir, she knew that he was not immortal; and changes of Government, moreover, might beget changes of opinion. There was still hope of the succession of Jewan Bakht so long as the old King lived; and therefore she desired to maintain all the privileges of the Kingship unimpaired to the last possible moment of doubt and expectancy.

* Evidence of Assan-oolah, on the trial of the King of Delhi.



1857.

Meanwhile, the youth in whom all these hopes centred, was growing up with a bitter hatred of the English in his heart. The wisdom, the learning, the good manners of the Heir-expectant were evinced by the pertinacity with which he was continually spitting his venom at the English. He did not hesitate to say, even in the presence of British subjects, that "in a short time he would have all the English under his feet."* But his courage was not equal to his bitterness; for if he were asked what he meant by such language, he would answer that he meant nothing. He was "only in sport." He had been for years past imbibing this venom in the Zenana, under the traitorous tuition of his mother, and he was ever anxious to spit it out, especially in the presence of women.

To what extent the intrigues thus matured in the Queen's apartments may, by the help of her agents, have been made to ramify beyond the Palace walls, it is not easy to conjecture. There is no proof that in or about Delhi the question of succession was regarded with any interest by the people. It little mattered to them whether one Prince or another were recognised as the head of the Family and the recipient of the lion's share of the pension. If attempts were made to excite the popular feeling to

* See the evidence of Mrs. Fleming, an English sergeant's wife, who thus recites an incident which occurred on the occasion of a visit paid by her to the Queen Zeenut-Mehal: "I was sitting down with his sister-in-law, and Jawan Bakht was standing by with his wife. My own daughter, Mrs. Scully, was also present. I was talking with Jawan Bakht's sister-in-law, when Mrs. Scully said to me, 'Mother, do you hear what this young rascal is saying? He is telling me that in a short time he will have all the infidel

English under his feet, and after that he will kill the Hindus.' Hearing this I turned round to Jawan Bakht, and asked him, 'What is that you are saying?' He replied that he was only joking. I said if what you threaten were to be the case, your head would be taken off first. He told me that the Persians were coming to Delhi, and that when they did so, we, that is, myself and daughter, should go to him, and he would save us. After this he left us. I think this must have occurred about the middle of April, 1857."



1857.

manifest itself on the side of Jewan Bakht, they were clearly a failure. But there is at least some reason to think that the emissaries of the Palace had been assiduous in their efforts to stir into a blaze the smouldering fires of Mahomedan zeal, and to excite vague hopes of some great Avatar from the North-West, which would restore the fallen fortunes of the House of Delhi, and give again to the Mahomedans of India the wealth and honour of which they had been deprived by the usurpation of the English.

So it happened that as the new year advanced there was unwonted excitement among the Mahomedans of Delhi. The Native newspapers teemed with vague hints of a something coming that was to produce great changes, resulting in the subversion of the power of the English. Exaggerated stories of the Persian war, and most mendacious statements of reverses sustained by the English, were freely circulated and volubly discussed. At one time it was said that the Persians had come down to Attock, and at another that they were in full march through the Bolan Pass. Then it was alleged that the real history of the war was, that the Shah of Persia had for five generations been accumulating munitions of war and heaping up treasure for the purpose of conquering India, and that the time had now come for action. Russia, it was said, had placed its immense resources freely at the disposal of the Shah. A thoroughly appointed army of nearly half a million of men, with immense supplies of military stores, had been sent to the aid of Persia; and if the regular military forces of the Czar were not sufficient, a large contingent of Russian police would be sent to reinforce them. There were eager speculations, too, as to the course that would be adopted by the French and the Ottoman Govern-

State of feeling in Delhi.

ments. "Most people," it was declared in a Native newspaper, rejoicing in the name of the "Authentic News," "say that the King of France and the Emperor of Turkey will both side with the Persians." And it was added that the Russians were the real cause of the war; for, "using the Persians as a cloak, they intend to consummate their own designs by the conquest of Hindostan." Other writers affirmed that although Dost Mahomed, Ameer of Caubul, pretended to be the friend of the English, and took their money and their arms, he was prepared to turn both against the infidels and to cast in his lot with Persia. Alike in the Bazaars and in the Lines—in the shops of the money-changers and in the vestibules of the Palace—these stories excited vague sensations of wonder and of awe, which were strengthened by the circulation of the prophecy, which took different shapes, but pointed in all to the same result, that when the English had ruled in India for a hundred years they would be driven out, and a Native dynasty restored.*

* See the following, written by Sir James Outram in January, 1858: "What amazing statements and opinions one hears both in India and in England. What can be more ridiculous than the cry that the rebellion was caused by the annexation of Oude, or that it was solely a military mutiny?" [This, it should be observed, is addressed to Mr. Mangles.] "Our soldiers have deserted their standards and fought against us, but rebellion did not originate with the Sepoys. The rebellion was set on foot by the Mahomedans, and that long before we rescued Oude from her oppressors. It has been ascertained that prior to that Mussulman fanatics traversed the land, reminding the faithful that it had been foretold in prophecy that

a foreign nation would rule in India a hundred years, after which the true believers would regain their ascendancy. When the century elapsed, the Mussulmans did their best to establish the truth of their prophet's declaration, and induced the Hindoo Sepoys, ever, as you know, the most credulous and silly of mankind, to raise the green standard, and forswear their allegiance, on the ground that we had determined to make the whole of India involuntary converts to Christianity." As to the text of the prediction, a native newspaper, citing it as the prophecy of the "revered saint, Shah Mamut-oollah" puts it in these words, the original of which are in verse: "After the fire-worshippers and Christians shall have held sway over the whole of



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Warnings.

That the King was intriguing with the Shah of Persia was reported in the month of March to the Lieutenant-Governor of the North-Western Provinces by a Native correspondent, who added: "In the Palace, but more especially in the portion of it constituting the personal apartments of the King, the subject of conversation, night and day, is the early arrival of the Persians.* Hassan Askari† has, moreover, impressed the King with the belief that he has learned, through a divine revelation, that the dominion of the King of Persia will to a certainty extend to Delhi, or rather over the whole of Hindustan, and that the splendour of the sovereignty of Delhi will again revive, as the sovereign of Persia will bestow the crown upon the King. Throughout the Palace, but particularly to the King, this belief has been the cause of great rejoicing, so much so, that prayers are offered and vows are made, whilst, at the same time, Hassan Askari has entered upon the daily performance, at an hour and a half before sunset, of a course of propitiatory ceremonies to expedite the arrival of the Persians and the expulsion of the Christians."

This warning was of course disregarded. A rooted confidence in our own strength and security, and a haughty contempt for the machinations of others, was at that time a condition of English statesmanship. It was the rule—and I fear that it is still the rule—in such a case to discern only the exaggerations and

Hindustan for a hundred years, and when injustice and oppression shall prevail in their Government, an Arab prince shall be born, who will ride forth triumphantly to slay them."

* It was stated, however, in evidence on the King's trial, that the war with Persia had excited very little interest in the Palace. Assan-colah, the King's physician, said,

that the native newspapers, coming into the Palace, reported the progress of the war, but that "the King never seemed to evince any marked interest one way or the other."

† This man was a Mahomedan Priest of the Hereditary Priesthood, who dwelt near the Delhi Gate of the Palace, and was ever active in encouraging intrigues with Persia.



1857.

absurdities with which such statements are crusted over. The British officer to whom such revelations are made sees at a glance all that is preposterous and impossible in them; and he dismisses them as mere follies. He will not suffer himself to see that there may be grave and significant truths beneath the outer crust of wild exaggeration. When, therefore, Lieutenant-Governor Colvin received the letter announcing that the King of Delhi was intriguing with the Shah of Persia, and that the latter would ere long restore the monarchy of the Mogul, he laughed the absurdity to scorn, and pigeon-holed it among the curiosities of his administration. He did not consider that the simple fact of such a belief being rife in Delhi and the neighbourhood was something not to be disregarded. It in reality very little mattered whether the King of Delhi and the Shah of Persia were or were not in communication with each other, so long as the Mahomedans of Upper India believed that they were. It is the state of feeling engendered by such a belief, not the fact itself, that is really significant and important. But there is nothing in which English statesmanship in India fails more egregiously than in this incapacity to discern, or unwillingness to recognise, the prevailing sentiments of the people by whom our statesmen are surrounded. The letter sent to the Lieutenant-Governor of the North-Western Provinces was produced, at a later period, as strong evidence of the guilt of the King of Delhi; but the recorded history of this document is, that it was "found among the papers of the late Mr. Colvin."

Intrigues
with Persia.

The story of the correspondence between the King of Delhi and the Shah of Persia was not a mere fable. Authentic record of such transactions is rarely to be obtained, and history must, therefore, fall back upon



evidence which may not be altogether conclusive. The facts, however, appear to be these.* The power of Mahomedanism is greatly weakened by sectarian divisions. A Soonee hates a Sheeah, or a Sheeah hates a Soonee, almost as much as either hates a Christian. The King of Delhi was a Soonee, whilst the King of Oude and the Shah of Persia were Sheeahs. Now, it happened that whilst Behaudur Shah was in great tribulation because he could not persuade the English Government to gratify the cherished wishes of his favourite wife, he was minded to become a Sheeah. There were some members of his family settled in Oude, who were also of this persuasion. Whether by invitation, or whether of his own motion, is not very apparent, but one of them, the King's nephew, Meerza Hyder by name, accompanied by a brother, visited his Majesty at Delhi, and carried back on his return tidings that the great change had been effected, and that the Mogul sought to be admitted within the pale of the Sheeah religion. This man was known in the Delhi Palace as one rejoicing in intrigue. It could not have been difficult to persuade the old King that the fact of his conversion might be turned to good account, and that if nothing else would come of it, it would make the Shah of Persia and the King of Oude more willing to assist him in the troubles and perplexities by which he was surrounded. It is probable that he had no very clear notion of what might come of such an alliance—no very strong hope that it would end in the overthrow of the English—but he was readily persuaded to address letters to the King of Persia,

* They are mainly derived from the evidence of Assan-oolah, the King's physician, of all the witnesses on the trial of Behaudur Shah the most accurate and trustworthy. I see no reason to question his statements.



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and to despatch them secretly by confidential agents. And this was done before the emissaries from Lucknow had taken their departure. There is a suspicion also that he sent letters to Russia; but, if he did, in all probability they never reached their destination. There was, however, from that time a vague belief in the Palace that both the Persians and the Russians were coming to the deliverance of the King, and that ere long he would again be surrounded by all the splendour that irradiated the Mogul throne in the meridian of its glory.

These intrigues, whatever their importance, were well known in Delhi in the early months of 1857; and the impression which they produced on the minds of the people was strengthened by the sight of a proclamation which was posted on the Jumna Musjeed in the middle of the month of March. This proclamation, purporting to have been issued by the King of Persia, set forth that a Persian army was coming to release India from the grasp of the English, and that it behoved all true Mahomedans to gird up their loins resolutely, and to fight against the unbelievers.* The name of Mahomed Sadik was attached to it; but none knew who he was. In outward appearance it was but an insignificant affair; though it bore rude illustrations representing a sword and a shield, it does

* It is well known that a copy of a proclamation addressed to Mahomedans generally, urging a war of extermination against the English, was found in the tent of the Persian prince at Mohumrah, after the engagement which took place there in the spring of 1857. There was no special reference in this document to the restoration of the Delhi sovereignty; it called upon "the old and

the young, the small and the great, the wise and the ignorant, the ryot and the sepoy, all without exception to arise in defence of the orthodox faith of the Prophet." Afterwards it was frankly acknowledged by the Persian Government that they had attempted to create a diversion against us in India—such expedients being all fair in war.



1857.

not appear to have produced any great excitement in Delhi, and the attention which it attracted was short-lived, for the paper, after the lapse of a few hours, was torn down by order of the magistrate. But the native newspapers published the substance of the proclamation, accompanying it with vague and mysterious hints, or with obscure comments, obviously intended, in some instances, to be read in a contrary sense. There was in these effusions hostility to the British Government—but hostility driven by fear to walk warily. Ambiguous, enigmatical language suited the occasion. It was stated that a communication had been addressed to the magistrate, informing him that in the course of a few weeks Cashmere would be taken; the intent being, it is said, to signify that the Cashmere Gate of Delhi would be in the hands of the enemies of the British Government. There was plainly a very excited state of public feeling about Delhi. The excitement was, doubtless, fomented by some inmates of the Palace; and the King's Guards conversed with the Sepoys of the Company, and the talk was still of a something coming. But Behaudur Shah, in the spring of 1857, was never roused to energetic action. Much was done in his name of which he knew nothing, and much besides which he weakly suffered. And as, in that month of May, news came from Meerut that there was great excitement among the soldiery, and some of the Native officers at Delhi were summoned to take part in the great on-coming trial, those who sat at the King's door talked freely about the revolt of the Native

* See evidence of Sir Theophilus Metcalfe. It was stated, however, in the Native papers, that the proclamation was posted up in the streets and lanes of the city.



army, and in the vestibules of the Palace it was proclaimed that the dynasty of the Moguls would soon be restored, and that all the high offices of State would be held by the people of the country.*

* Mokund Lal, the King's secretary, said: "I don't know whether any direct proposals came to the prisoner, but the King's personal attendants, sitting about the entrance to his private apartments, used to converse among themselves, and say that very soon, almost immediately, the army would revolt and come to the palace, when the Government of the King would be re-established, and all the old servants would be greatly promoted and advanced in position and emoluments."



CHAPTER II.

STATE OF THE THIRD CAVALRY—THE COURT OF INQUIRY—THE COURT MARTIAL—IMPRISONMENT OF THE EIGHTY-FIVE—THE TENTH OF MAY—RELEASE OF THE PRISONERS—GENERAL REVOLT OF THE SEPOYS—INACTIVITY OF THE EUROPEAN TROOPS—ESCAPE OF THE MUTINEERS—QUESTION OF RESPONSIBILITY CONSIDERED.

WHILST the vague feeling of excitement above described was gathering strength and consistency at Delhi, and the "something coming" appeared to be approaching nearer and nearer, events were developing themselves in the great military station of Meerut, thirty miles distant, which were destined to precipitate a more momentous crisis in the imperial city than had been anticipated by the inmates of the palace. The Native troops at that great headquarters station were smouldering into rebellion, and the Sepoy War was about to commence. The brief telegraphic story already recorded,* when it expanded into detailed proportions, took this disastrous shape.

The Third Regiment of Native Cavalry was commanded by Colonel Carmichael Smyth. He had graduated in the regiment, and had seen some service with it, but he had never earned the entire confidence of officers or men. He was not wanting

Colonel
Smyth and
the Third
Cavalry.

April—May,
1857.

* *Ante*, vol. i. p. 595.



April,
1857.

in intelligence or in zeal, but he lacked temper and discretion, and the unquestionable honesty of his nature was of that querulous, irritable cast which makes a man often uncharitable and always unpopular. He had a quick eye for blots of every kind; and, being much addicted to newspaper-writing, seldom failed to make them known to the public. Nobody knew better than Colonel Smyth that the Bengal Army was hovering on the brink of mutiny. He had, in the earlier part of the year, visited the great fair at Hurdwar, where the disaffection of the Nineteenth Regiment had been freely discussed. He had afterwards gone to Mussooree, where he learnt from day to day what was passing at Umballah, and he was so impressed by what he heard respecting the general state of the Sepoy regiments and their readiness for revolt, that he had written to the Commander-in-Chief to inform him of the dangerous state of the Army. But when the general order went forth that the men were no longer to bite the cartridges, Colonel Smyth thought that the opportunity was one of which he should avail himself to allay the excitement in his own regiment, and he therefore held the parade of the 24th of April, with results which have been already described.*

General
Hewitt.

Not so thought the officer commanding the Meerut division of the Army. General Hewitt was an old Company's officer, who had risen to high rank by the slow process of regimental and army promotion, and who in quiet times might have drowsed through the years of his employment on the Staff without manifesting any remarkable incapacity for command. The burden of nearly seventy years was aggravated by

* *Ante*, vol. i. p. 567.

April,
1857.

the obesity of his frame and the inertness of his habits. But he was a kind-hearted, hospitable man, liked by all, and by some respected. It was his desire to keep things quiet, and, if possible, to make them pleasant. He lamented, therefore, that Colonel Smyth had made that crucial experiment upon the fidelity of his regiment which had resulted in open mutiny. "Oh! why did you have a parade?" he said to the Colonel. "My division has kept quiet, and if you had only waited another month or so, all would have blown over."

It was necessary, however, after what had occurred, in an official point of view to do something. So he ordered a Native Court of Inquiry to be assembled. The Court was composed of six members, four of whom were Native officers of the Infantry and two Native officers of the Cavalry. The witnesses examined, including those who had manufactured and served out the cartridges, said that there was nothing objectionable in them—nothing that could offend the religious scruples of Hindoo or Mahomedan—nothing that in any way differed from the composition of the cartridges which the Sepoys had been using for years. The oldest troopers in the regiment, Hindoo and Mahomedan, were examined; but they could give no satisfactory account of the causes of alarm and disaffection in the regiment. They could only say that a general impression of impurity existed. One Mussulman trooper, with much insolence of manner, blustered out, "I have doubts about the cartridges. They may look exactly like the old ones, but how do I know that pig's fat has not been smeared over them?" But the next witness who was examined—a Hindoo—took one of the cartridges into his hand and handled it freely, to show

The Court of
Inquiry.



April,
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that in his eyes there was nothing offensive in the new ammunition. Altogether, the Court of Inquiry elicited nothing. It dealt with material facts, which were well known before. But it was not the palpable, but the impalpable—a vague and voiceless idea—that had driven the regiment to mutiny. That which the troopers dreaded was not pollution, but opinion. They were troubled, not by any fear of desecration to their faith or of injury to their caste, but by the thought of what their comrades would say of them. In a military sense, in an official sense, all this was unreasonable in the extreme; but every man felt in his inmost heart more than he could explain in intelligible words, and the shadow of a great fear was upon him, more terrible for its indistinctness.

The proceedings of the Court of Inquiry were sent to Head-Quarters; and whilst the orders of the Commander-in-Chief were awaited, the Eighty-five were dismissed from duty, and ordered to abide in their Lines. There was, then, for a little space, a fever of expectancy. What meetings, and conspiracies, and oath-takings there may have been in the Sepoys' quarter during that long week of waiting, can be only dimly conjectured; but one form of expression, in which their feelings declared themselves, was patent to all. It was written in characters of fire, and blazed out of the darkness of the night. From the verandahs of their houses the European officers saw these significant illuminations, and knew what they portended. The burnings had commenced on the evening preceding the fatal parade of the 24th of April, when an empty hospital had been fired.* Then followed a more expressive conflagration. The house of a Sepoy named Bridge-Mohun Singh, who

* Colonel Smyth says it was a horse-hospital.

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had been the first to practise the new mode of using the cartridges, was burnt down. This man (the son of a pig-keeper), who had been dismissed from an Infantry regiment and imprisoned for theft, had enlisted under a new name in the Third Cavalry, and had managed so to ingratiate himself with the Commanding Officer, that he was seldom absent from the Colonel's bungalow. To the whole regiment, and especially to its high-caste men, this was an offence and an abomination, and nothing could more clearly indicate the feeling in the Lines of the Third than the fact that this man's house was burnt down by the troopers of his own regiment.

In the bungalows also of the European residents, during this first week of May, there was much excitement and discussion. There was plainly a very disagreeable entanglement of events out of which it was not easy to see the way, and people said freely that it ought never to have arisen. But speculation with respect to the Future was even more busy than censure with respect to the Past. What, it was asked, would be the issue of the reference to Headquarters? The more general belief was, that orders would come for the dismissal of the recusant troopers; but even this, it was thought, would be a harsh measure, that might drive others, by force of sympathy, to rebellion. It was an interval which might have been turned by our English officers to good account in soothing the feelings of their men, and explaining everything that was of a doubtful or suspicious character. Some, indeed, did strive, with a wise foreknowledge of the coming danger, to accomplish this good object; but others believed that all was right, that there was no likelihood of their regiments being driven either by their fears or their



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resentments to revolt against the Law; and they drowsed on placidly in the conviction that it was but an accidental ebullition, provoked by the mismanagement of an indiscreet Commanding Officer, and that the general temper of the Native troops at Meerut was all that could be desired.

In the first week of May the instructions so eagerly looked-for were received from the Head-Quarters of the Army. The fiat of General Anson had gone forth from Simlah. A Native General Court-Martial was to be assembled at Meerut for the trial of the Eighty-five. The prisoners were then confined in an empty hospital, and a guard of their own regiment was placed over them. The tribunal before which they were to be brought up for trial was composed of fifteen Native officers, of whom six were Mahomedans and nine were Hindoos. Ten of these members were furnished by the regiments at Meerut—Artillery, Cavalry, and Infantry; five came from the Infantry regiments at Delhi. On the 6th of May the Court commenced its sittings,* and continued its proceedings on the two following days. The examination of Colonel Smyth and the other witnesses for the prosecution elicited no new facts, and, indeed, the whole case of military disobedience was so clear, that the trial, though it was protracted during three days, was little more than a grim formality. Every man felt that his condemnation was certain, and sullenly abided the issue. The prisoners could put forth no defence which either Law or Discipline could accept.

* The charge was, "For having at Meerut, on the 24th of April, 1857, severally and individually disobeyed the lawful command of their superior officer, Brevet-Colonel G. M. C. Smyth, commanding the Third

Regiment of Light Cavalry, by not having taken the cartridges tendered to each of them individually for use that day on parade, when ordered by Colonel Smyth to take the said cartridges."



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But when the Havildar Muttadeen Singh pleaded, on behalf of himself and comrades, that they suspected some foul design because their Commandant took so much pains to convince them that it was all right, and to induce them to fire the cartridges, there was something not altogether irrational or illogical in the argument. If there was nothing in the ammunition different from that which they had always used, why, it was asked, should the proceedings of the Colonel have been so different?* But in effect the defence of the prisoners was little more than a confession, and the Court, by a vote of fourteen members against one, found the Eighty-five guilty, and sentenced them to imprisonment and hard labour for ten years. But with this there went forth a recommendation to "favourable consideration on account of the good character which the prisoners had hitherto borne, as testified to by their Commanding Officer, and on account of their having been misled by vague reports regarding the cartridges."

The proceedings went up, in due course, to the General commanding the Division, and Hewitt approved and confirmed the sentence. "I would willingly attend," he remarked, "to the recommendation of the Court, if I could find anything in the conduct of the prisoners that would warrant me in so doing. Their former good character has been blasted by pre-

The sentence confirmed.

* The same difficulty suggested itself to the Court. Colonel Smyth was asked, "Why did you tell the men that they would have to fire, instead of merely ordering them to do so?" Colonel Smyth's answer was: "The parade was in orders the day before, and entered in the order-book as usual, and each man was ordered to receive three cartridges. I wished to show them the new way of loading without putting the cartridges to the mouth, and attended the parade for that purpose. When I came on parade, the Adjutant informed me that the men had not taken their cartridges, and it was on that account I ordered the Havildar-Major to take a cartridge and load and fire before them; and it was then, also, that I said, that when the whole Army hear of this way of loading they would be much pleased, and exclaim, 'Wah! wah!'"



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sent misbehaviour, and their having allowed themselves to be influenced by vague reports instead of attending to the advice and obeying the orders of their European superiors, is the gist of the offence for which they have been condemned. It appears from these proceedings that these misguided men, after consultation together on the night of the 23rd of April, 1857, came to the resolution of refusing their cartridges. Having so far forgotten their duty as soldiers, their next step was to send word to their troop captains that they would not take their cartridges unless the whole of the troops in the station would do so likewise. Some of them even had the insolence to desire that firing parades might be deferred till the agitation about cartridges among the Native troops had come to a close. In this state of insubordination they appeared on parade on the morning of the 24th, and there consummated the crime for which they are now about to suffer, by repeatedly refusing cartridges that had been made as usual in their regimental magazine, when assured, too, by Colonel Smyth that the cartridges had no grease on them—that they were old ones, and exactly similar to what had been in use in the regiment for thirty or forty years. Even now they attempt to justify so gross an outrage upon discipline by alleging that they had doubts of the cartridges. There has been no acknowledgment of error—no expression of regret—no pleading for mercy.” “To the majority of the prisoners,” therefore, it was added, “no portion of the sentence will be remitted. I observe, however, that some of them are very young, and I am willing to make allowance for their having been misled by their more experienced comrades, and under these circumstances I remit one half of the



sentence passed upon the following men, who have not been more than five years in the service." And then followed the names of eleven young troopers, whose term of imprisonment was commuted to five years. The sentence was to be carried into effect at daybreak on the 9th of May.

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The morning dawned, lowering and gusty, and the troops of the Meerut Brigade were drawn up on the ground of the Sixtieth Rifles to see the prisoners formally dismissed to their doom. The Third Cavalry had received their orders to attend unmounted. The European troops and the Artillery, with their field-guns, were so disposed as to threaten instant death to the Sepoys on the first symptom of resistance. Under a guard of Rifles and Carabineers, the Eighty-five were then brought forward, clad in their regimental uniforms—soldiers still; and then the sentence was read aloud, which was to convert soldiers into felons. Their accoutrements were taken from them, and their uniforms were stripped from their backs. Then the armourers and the smiths came forward with their shackles and their tools, and soon, in the presence of that great concourse of their old comrades, the Eighty-five stood, with the outward symbols of their dire disgrace fastened upon them. It was a piteous spectacle, and many there were moved with a great compassion, when they saw the despairing gestures of those wretched men, among whom were some of the very flower of the regiment—soldiers who had served the British Government in trying circumstances and in strange places, and who had never before wavered in their allegiance. Lifting up their hands and lifting up their voices, the prisoners implored the General to have mercy upon them, and not to consign them to so ignominious a doom.

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Then, seeing that there was no other hope, they turned to their comrades and reproached them for quietly suffering this disgrace to descend upon them. There was not a Sepoy present who did not feel the rising indignation in his throat. But in the presence of those loaded field-guns and those grooved rifles, and the glittering sabres of the Dragoons, there could not be a thought of striking. The prisoners were marched off to their cells, to be placed under the custody of a guard of their own countrymen; the parade was dismissed; and the Sepoys, Cavalry and Infantry, went, silent and stern, to their work, to talk over the incidents of that mournful morning parade.*

It was Saturday. So far as English eyes could see or English brains could understand, the day passed quietly over. The troop-captains of the Third Cavalry visited the prisoners in the gaol, which was situated at a distance of about two miles from the cantonment, to be for the last time the channel of communication between them and the outer world. It was their duty to adjust the balances of the Sepoys' pay, and they were anxious, in the kindness of their hearts, to arrange the settlements of the prisoners' debts, and to carry any messages which the men might desire to send to the families from whom they had been sundered. And whilst this was going on in the gaol, wild reports were flying about the Bazaars, and there was a great fear in the Lines, for it was

* Lord Canning's commentary on these proceedings may be given here: "The rivetting of the men's fetters on parade, occupying, as it did, several hours, in the presence of many who were already ill-disposed, and many who believed in the cart-ridge fable, must have stung the brigade to the quick. The consign-

ing the eighty-five prisoners, after such a ceremony, to the gaol, with no other than a native guard over them, was, considering the nature of their offence, and the known temper of a part of the army, a folly that is inconceivable."—*Letter to Mr. Vernon Smith, June 5, 1857. MS. Correspondence.*

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said that the Europeans were about to take possession of the magazines, and that the two thousand fetters, of which Rumour had spoken before, were now ready, and that the work of the morning was only an experiment and a beginning. But the shades of evening fell upon Meerut, and the English residents, after their accustomed ride, met each other at dinner, and talked cheerfully and confidently of the Past and the Future. At one dinner-table, where the Commissioner and his wife and the Colonel of the Eleventh Sepoys were present, a rumour was mentioned to the effect that the walls had been placarded with a Mahomedan proclamation calling upon the people to rise against the English. But the general feeling was one of indignant disbelief, and each man went to his home and laid his head upon his pillow as tranquilly as though from one end of Meerut to another there had been no bitter resentments to be gratified, in the breasts of any but the manacled, harmless, helpless prisoners in the great gaol.

I must pause here, a little space, for the better explanation of what follows, to speak of the great cantonment of Meerut. This military station was one of the most extensive in India. It covered an area of some five miles in circumference, the space being divided by a great mall or esplanade, along which ran a deep nullah, or ditch, cutting the station into two separate parallelograms, the one containing the European and the other the Native force. The European Lines were on the northern quarter of Meerut, the Artillery Barracks being to the right, the Dragoons to the left, and the Rifles in the centre. Between the barracks of the two last stood the station church; a great plain or parade-ground stretching out still further to the northward. The Sepoy Lines

The Meerut
Cantonment.