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A
HISTORY
OF THE
ISLAMIC PEOPLES

*(Translated from the German of Dr. Well's Geschichte
der Islamitischen Völker)*

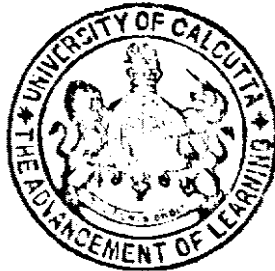
BY

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To
Sir Asutosh Mookerjee
with
affectionate regards.

INTRODUCTION.

I.

This is neither the place nor the occasion for a review of the great services rendered by Sir Asutosh Mookerjee to the cause of learning in Bengal. Suffice it to say that his eight years' tenure of office as Vice-Chancellor of the Calcutta University is a hand-mark which will defy the storm and stress of time. In every sphere of learning his influence will be felt, his services acknowledged; and, as time goes by, his figure will loom larger and larger on the intellectual horizon of his country. The severance of his connection with the University would have been a misfortune at any time; but more than ever is it so at this juncture, when so many things call for his activity and sympathetic guidance.

The Mohamedan Community has special reason to be thankful to him. It was he who introduced Islamic History as a subject of higher study in the University of Calcutta. Hitherto that subject had been neglected, and shockingly so, where it should have attracted special care and interest. Even forsooth in pure centres of Islamic Study Islamic History has been at a discount.

And yet it does not need a very prophetic vision to see its necessity and usefulness. It will teach the Mohamedans what they were, and it will teach the non-Muslims what the Muslims have been in the past. It will set ideals before the one, and it will inspire respect in the other. It will help forward the cause, so dear to us all;—mutual understanding and mutual toleration, the first necessary step to that higher Unity which is at once the dream of the poet, the fervent prayer of the philosopher, the hope of the rising generation, and the true destiny of India.

It is most encouraging, indeed, that this subject should have taken well with students, and we trust it will grow more and more popular as time goes by.

But it is impossible to dismiss this subject without expressing a hope that the authorities will ere long do something to make the study of Islamic History more satisfactory and systematic than it is to-day. Of course we have only just made a beginning ; what possibilities lie beyond ? Who can tell ? Let us, at least, cleave to the sunnier side of doubt.

The present translation owes its origin to the suggestion of Sir Asutosh Mookerjee, and it is therefore only fit and proper that it should stand linked with his great name.

II.

Dr. Gustav Weil is too well-known to require any introduction or recommendation. Among Oriental Scholars in Germany he holds an honoured position, and in spite of continuous researches and the unwearied industry of his countrymen his work still retains the confidence of scholars all over the world. The work of which I now offer an English translation, is a volume at once handy, compact and scholarly—suited most eminently for students who need a safe and trustworthy guide to lead them through the labyrinth of Mohamedan history. It is moreover free from cumbrous foot-notes, which though necessary and useful to scholars, are yet somewhat distressing to students. I have not, however, altogether succeeded in avoiding the foot-notes, but I have been as sparing as possible. I could not overlook the results of more recent investigations and researches, and I have therefore thought it necessary to incorporate them wherever I deemed such a course essential in the interest of learning and scholarship.

Dr. Weil's *Geschichte der Islamitischen Völker* may safely be made the basis of a more detailed and more extended investigation ; and as such, I trust, the English translation which I now offer to the Public will be welcome to students and scholars alike, both here and abroad.

I must not, however, omit to mention that I do not at all agree with some of Dr. Weil's observations regarding the Prophet. As I propose to write a separate work dealing

with the Prophet and the History of Islam I do not think it wise to burden the pages of this translation with lengthy notes, discussing, criticizing and refuting individual views of the author.

It remains for me now to offer my most grateful thanks to Mr. H. B. Hannah, of the Calcutta Bar, for his uniform kindness and courtesy in revising the proofs of this book; to Dr. Horovitz of Aligarh for his constant and ever ready help in explaining doubtful and difficult passages in the text; and to Miss Essie Whitehead for valuable suggestions, and for unfailing sympathy and encouragement in my work.

CENTRAL LAW COLLEGE,
Calcutta, 9th April, 1914. }

S. K. B.