

OF THE PUNJAB

BEING

THE HISTORY OF THE PRINCIPAL STATES

IN THE PUNJAB

AND THEIR POLITICAL RELATIONS

WITH THE BRITISH GOVERNMENT.

BY

LEPEL H. GRIFFIN

BENGOAL CIVIL SERVICE; UNDER SECRETARY TO THE GOVERNMENT
OF THE PUNJAB,

AUTHOR OF "THE PUNJAB CHIEFS", "THE LAW OF INHERITANCE
TO CHIEFSHIP."

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PREFACE.

The title of the present work may perhaps be open to objection as too comprehensive, seeing that there are many Chiefs in the territories administered by the Punjab Government, bearing the title of Raja, whose histories have not been here included. But my object has not been to record the biographies of reigning families so much as to give a connected account of the political relations of the British Government with the Independent States of the Punjab from the commencement of the present century.

With Kashmir and Bahawalpur, now its greatest feudatories in North India, the Government had nothing whatever to do until the first Sikh war. The history of the former province is full of interest and will richly repay the most patient and laborious enquiry, but it was not till the defeats on the Satlej had shaken to its fall the corrupt monarchy of Lahore that Kashmir was known to English Statesmen as more than the name of a distant valley which romance and poetry had delighted to paint with their most brilliant colours. Bahawalpur was even less known than Kashmir, till the campaign of 1848 brought its Chief as an ally to the side of the British, and, even after the annexation of the Punjab, its internal politics were the subject of no interference on the part of the Government, until anarchy and civil war threatened to reduce the country to its original desert, when the Paramount Power was compelled to interpose in the interests of the people whom tyranny had driven into rebellion and crime.

Among the hills from which the Satlej and the Ravi flow are Chiefs who bear the name of Raja, mostly of Rajput descent and whose pedigrees stretch back in unbroken succession for several thousand years. But their history has little more than an antiquarian interest. At

the time when the Gurkhas attempted the conquest of the Punjab hills, these petty Chiefs appear for a moment in the light of history, but, the wave of invasion having been beaten back, they again disappear and are no more seen. Dynasty after dynasty has ruled in Hindostan and has passed away. Two creeds, strong to conquer and foreign to the land, have been predominant from the Bay of Bengal to the Passes of the Khaibar. But before Muhammad, God-intoxicated, shattered the idols of Arabia, before the founder of the Christian faith gathered his few disciples by the Lake of Galilee, the little Rajput principalities were existing in their quiet valleys; and when the day arrives that the name of England shall be no longer a power in Hindostan, but only a vague memory, one leaf of her long and wondrous story, the Rajputs will still be ruling their ancient valleys and tracing back their ancestry to the Sun.

With the powerful Sikh Chiefs of the Cis and Trans-Satlej the case is very different. Their rule is not sacred by antiquity. Whatever the origin of the race to which they belong, the Sikh chiefs are, nevertheless, Autochthones, Earth-born, and then ancestors, but a few generations ago were themselves driving the plough over the very lands which they to-day rule as Independent Chiefs. But their history is a most important part of the general history of India. Their fierce enthusiasm, in the days when Sikhism was a living faith, enabled them to conquer the Punjab and defy the enmity of the Muhammadan Empire. It was their faith which made them strong, as it was the absence of all religious enthusiasm in the Muhammadans of India which proved their weakness and ultimately their ruin. They had indeed changed from the days when the noblest chivalry of the West went down before their levelled lances and the war-cry of God and the Prophet.

With the British Government the relations of the Cis-Satlej States have been more or less intimate from the time of the conquest of Dehli by Lord Lake in 1803, and it is the history of these relations and the policy which the British Government has adopted towards its feudatories which it is here chiefly desired to record.

This history has been written in considerable detail and without reserve, except with reference to events of recent date regarding which obvious political and personal reasons forbid the expression of opinion or detail in relation. As far as I am aware no chapter of Indian History has ever been written so unreservedly or with so much detail as the present volume, and on this account I would desire to call attention to a conclusion which may fairly be drawn from its pages

The time may perhaps have passed, though of this I am by no means certain, when educated Englishmen, regarding with some degree of pride the conquest and possession of India, yet believed that the country was won by intrigue, violence and fraud. That each new province added to British India signified new crimes, and that the conquerors were only successful because they were unscrupulous. If this belief has been generally abandoned by educated men, it is still the belief of the vast majority who have neither the means nor the inclination to inform themselves of the truth. It is encouraged and stimulated at the present day by writers in England, some of them men of ability, who either find it profitable to abuse their country or who are so unfortunate as to be able to find nothing but national shame and incapacity, where others would find monuments of national energy and glory.

A sufficient answer to hostile criticisms on the Government of India is found in the political history of the Cis-

Satlej States for the last sixty-five years. These States form but a small portion of India, but they are and always have been considered a most important portion, in their control many principles of 'the highest moment were involved and it may fairly be assumed that the policy which the Government adopted towards them was the same policy which it maintained towards the rest of India. It is neither reasonable nor honest to assume that an administration which was just and generous in one province was tyrannical and rapacious in another. The Government of India has had one policy and one alone, whether the Punjab, or Oude, or Bengal was concerned, and, if its policy has been unscrupulous, traces of its want of principle will most assuredly be found in its relations with the Cis-Satlej States. On this point let the facts which I have recorded bear their own witness. My personal opinion is valueless like that of any other individual it may be prejudiced by association, by tradition, by interest, but facts are uninfluenced by prejudice. The conclusion to which I am convinced that any honest mind will arrive after reading this history, in which the single endeavour has been to record the truth, is that the policy of the British Government, so far as the Sikh States are concerned, has been uniformly liberal, enlightened and just: that in no single instance has it abused its strength to oppress its weaker neighbours, but that, on the contrary, it has taken less than its undoubted right and has decided disputed questions with a generosity and disinterestedness which will be looked for in vain in the administration of any other country.

Absolute power is a dangerous and too often a fatal gift which few have ever been able to use wisely; but the time will assuredly come when the just and generous policy of England in the East will be acknowledged by the world as her highest title to respect and honor.

It was but a short time ago that enquiries were instituted in India as to the opinion entertained by the people of the British Government, and on this subject many educated native gentlemen and high English officials recorded their views. The enquiry was chiefly remarkable as proving the excellence of the intention of a Government which invited such open discussion, and as illustrating the curious tendency of Englishmen to criticise unfavorably whatever belongs to their own race or country. But seriously to compare the British administration with those which preceded it, or with the majority of those which exist side by side with it to-day in India, is an insult to the intelligence. There have been, it is true, Muhammadan and Hindu Princes who have ruled with strength and justice, and whose names are still held in honor. But these have been very few. Native rule in India, in former days, signified oppression of the most terrible kind, insecurity of life and property; luxury and debauchery in the Prince, misery and want in the people, and although much has been written regarding the preference of the people for the rule of their hereditary Chiefs, the simple fact remains that whenever an opportunity has been afforded them, the people have accepted British rule with the most unfeigned satisfaction.

The Punjab proper, during the time of Maharaja Ranjit Singh, was certainly a favourable specimen of a Native State. Yet the revenue system of Ranjit Singh was but an organized system of pillage and the country was farmed to contractors, who were bound to pay a certain sum into the State treasury and were permitted to collect as much more as was possible for themselves.

In the Trans-Indus districts, which are now so tranquil that the raid of a few marauders across the border is an event of importance, the revenue, twenty five years ago, was collected by an army whose march down the frontier

could be traced by the smoke of burning villages. Where the people were less warlike the revenue officers were not less cruel, as Kashuur, ground to powder by Sirdar Hari Singh, Nalwa, and the Jalandhar Doab, squeezed dry by the Shaikh tax gatherers, will surely prove. If there be any feeling of nationality in India whatever, it may be most fairly looked for among the Sikhs. But in no part of India was British rule accepted more gladly by the people, and that they have not had reason to regret the change is shown by the uninterrupted peace and prosperity of the country and by the willingness with which Sikhs and Muhammadans fought, in 1857, to maintain the British power.

Many Native States in India at the present time are ruled well, and, in the Punjab territories, Patiala, Jhind and Kapurthalla enjoy an administration as substantially just as that of the British provinces. But this is alone due to English example, as the Rulers of these States readily admit. They have voluntarily adopted the English Revenue system; in some cases the English Codes of Law, and, in a modified form, the Procedure of the English Courts, they encourage education and introduce into their territories roads and canals. English example has done much, but its work is not yet complete, and, were its influence withdrawn, India would at once relapse into the anarchy and misery from which the British Government has rescued it. The education and civilization of a nation are not achieved in fifty or a hundred years, and the work is both more difficult and more tedious when, as in India, Chiefs and people have so much to unlearn before they can understand the new lessons we desire to teach them.

I believe that if the criticisms on British administration in India are carefully considered it will be found that they almost invariably turn on the unsympathetic nature of the Government and of the English character generally. So far as these criticisms attempt to assert an obvious fact

they are unobjectionable, but they become harmful when they attempt to go further and to prove that the want of sympathy between the English and the natives is a grave danger to the Empire. The English are not a demonstrative or sympathetic race, and, if there be a danger in such a national characteristic, it must be accepted with equanimity, for it is inevitable. But the natives of India are far less sympathetic and demonstrative than the English, they do not ask for our sympathy and if it were offered to them they would decline it.

A Hindu family lives very much alone, its joys and sorrows are nothing to its neighbours, and the social life of India at the present day is altogether undeveloped. Patriotism and Nationality, as we understand the terms, have no meaning in India, from time immemorial the country has been ruled by foreigners, sometimes well, sometimes ill, the people have borne the burden of the incapacity and the vices of their rulers, patiently, without complaint; they have accepted good government as they welcome the sun-light and the summer rains, with a quiet gladness but with no feeling of thankfulness, for they knew not and cared not whence good government came.

The heart of the people in India is deep and if we endeavour to find there any affection for ourselves we shall most surely seek in vain. But esteem is stronger and better than love, and it will last unchanged when love has passed through its stages of passion, indifference, and disgust. For the English Government the people of India entertain a sincere esteem. They may not like all its ways and its eager fretful love of change and progress, but they know it to be just, they know themselves secure in person and property, while they are year by year increasing in wealth under the protection of a Government which demands little more than half of what they have

been compelled to pay to the most liberal Government which has preceded that of the English.

If any certain augury of the future can be drawn from the events of the past, a popular rising in India against the Government may be pronounced impossible, so long as the administration of the country is based upon just and enlightened principles.

The delay which has taken place in the publication of the present work is owing to the enormous mass of materials in the shape of official correspondence which it was necessary to examine. The political records of Government and of the Agencies of Dehli, Ambala and Ludhiana, from the commencement of the present century, are exceedingly voluminous, and it has literally been the labor of years to index them and master their contents. The difficulties in the way of obtaining full and authentic information of the history of the States previous to their connection with the British Government have also been very great, although the Chiefs concerned have placed their whole family and State records at my disposal and have facilitated my enquiries in every possible way.

The history of the Mandi State would more appropriately have found a place in a volume which I had hoped and still hope to publish on the Rajput Chiefs, the materials for which have been in a great measure collected. But, considering the length of time over which the preparation of the present work has extended, I have thought it better to include Mandi as the most important and as, in some way, a representative specimen of the Rajput Hill Chiefs, rather than leave its history to form a fragment of a future work, which I may neither live nor have leisure to complete.

LEPEL GRIFFIN,

Under-Secretary to Government Punjab.

Lahore, November 9th 1870.

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