



THE FALL



OF THE

MOGHUL EMPIRE

OF HINDUSTAN.

A NEW EDITION,
WITH CORRECTIONS AND ADDITIONS.

BY

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P R E F A C E.

Two editions of this book having been absorbed, it has been thought that the time was come for its reproduction in a form more adapted to the use of students. Opportunity has been taken to introduce considerable additions and emendations.

The rise and meridian of the Moghul Empire have been related in Elphinstone's "History of India: the Hindu and Mahometan Period;" and a special study of the subject will also be found in the "Sketch of the History of Hindustan" published by the present writer in 1885. Neither of those works, however, undertakes to give a detailed account of the great Anarchy that marked the conclusion of the eighteenth century, the dark time that came before the dawn of British power in the land of the Moghul. Nor is there is any other complete English book on the subject.*

The present work is, therefore, to be regarded as a monograph on the condition of the capital and neighbouring territories, from the murder of Alamgir II. in 1759 to the occupation of Dehli by Lake in 1803. Some introductory chapters are prefixed, with the view of showing how these events were prepared;

* One or two English writers, however, have dealt with portions of this history; and reference to their works will be found hereafter; most of them are of old date, and scarce.

and an account of the campaign of 1760-1 has been added, because it does not seem to have been hitherto related on a scale proportioned to its importance. That short but desperate struggle is interesting as the last episode of mediæval war, when battles could be decided by the action of mounted men in armour. It is also the *sine quâ non* of British Empire in India. Had the Mahrattas not been conquered then, it is exceedingly doubtful if the British power in the Bengal Presidency would ever have extended beyond Benares.

The author would wish to conclude this brief explanation by reproducing the remarks which concluded the *Preface* to his second edition.

“There were two dangers,” it was there observed; “the first, that of giving too much importance to the period; the second, that of attempting to illustrate it by stories—such as those of Clive and Hastings—which had been told by writers with whom competition was out of the question. Brevity, therefore, is studied; and what may seem baldness will be found to be a conciseness, on which much pains have been bestowed.”

“The narrative,” it was added, “is one of confusion and transition; and chiefly interesting in so far as it throws light on the circumstances which preceded and caused the accession of the East India Company to paramount power in India.” The author has only to add an expression of his hope that, in conjunction with Mr. S. Owen’s book,* what he has here written may help to remove doubts as to the benefits derived by the people of India from the Revolution under consideration.

* *India on the Eve of the British Conquest*, 2nd Ed. (W. H. Allen, 1887.)

Finally, mention should be made of Mr. Elphinstone's posthumous work, "The Rise of British Power in the East."* That work does not, indeed, clash with the present book; for it did not enter into the scope of the distinguished author to give the native side of the story, or to study it from the point of view here presented. For the military and political aims and operations of the early British officers in Madras and Bengal, however, Elphinstone will be found a valuable guide. His narrative bears to our subject a relation similar to that of the "Roman de Rou" to the history of the Carling Empire of Northern France.

* *Edited by Sir E. Colebrooke.* (Murray, 1887.)

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CONTENTS.

PART I.

CHAPTER I.

| | PAGE |
|--|------|
| Preliminary Observations on Hindustan and the City of Dehli | 1 |

CHAPTER II.

| | |
|--|----|
| Greatness of the Timurides | 15 |
| Causes of Empire's decline | 17 |
| Character of Aurungzeb | 18 |
| Progress of disruption under his descendants | 20 |
| Muhamadan and Hindu enemies | 20 |
| The stage emptied | 22 |

CHAPTER III.

| | |
|------------------------|----|
| Muhamad Shah | 23 |
|------------------------|----|

CHAPTER IV.

| | |
|----------------------|----|
| Ahmad Shah | 27 |
| Alamgir II. | 34 |

CHAPTER V.

| | |
|---------------------------|----|
| Afghan invasion | 39 |
|---------------------------|----|

CHAPTER VI.

| | |
|---|----|
| Overthrow of Mahrattas at Pānipat | 44 |
|---|----|

PART II.

CHAPTER I.

A.D. 1760-67.

| | PAGE |
|---|------|
| 1760. Movements of Shahzada Ali Gohar, after escaping from Dehli | 63 |
| Shojaa-ud-Daulah | 64 |
| His Character | 64 |
| Ramnarayan defeated | 65 |
| M. Law | 68 |
| 1761. Battle of Gaya | 69 |
| 1762. March towards Hindustan | 70 |
| 1763. Massacre of Patna | 71 |
| 1764. Flight of Kasim and Sumroo | 72 |
| Battle of Buxar | 74 |
| 1765. Treaty with British | 75 |
| 1767. Establishment at Allahabad | 77 |
| Legal position | 77 |

CHAPTER II.

A.D. 1764-71.

| | |
|---|----|
| 1764. Najib-ud-Daula at Dehli | 79 |
| Mirza Jawan Bakht Regent | 79 |
| The Jâts | 80 |
| „ attacked by Najib | 83 |
| Death of Suraj Mal | 84 |
| 1765. Jâts attack Jaipur | 84 |
| 1766. Return of Mahrattas | 87 |
| 1767. Ahmad Abdâli defeats Sikhs | 87 |
| 1768. Mahrattas attack Bhartpur | 87 |
| 1770. Rohillas yield to them | 88 |
| Death of Najib-ud-Daula | 88 |
| State of Rohilkand | 89 |
| Zâbitâ Khan | 91 |
| 1771. Mahrattas invite Emperor to return to Dehli | 92 |

CHAPTER III.

A.D. 1771-76.

| | PAGE |
|--|------|
| Agency of Restoration | 93 |
| Madhoji Sindhia | 95 |
| Emperor's return to Dehli | 95 |
| 1772. Zābitā Khan attacked by Imperial force under Mirza Najaf Khan | 96 |
| Flight of Zābitā | 97 |
| Treaty with Rohillas | 98 |
| Zābitā regains office | 99 |
| Mahrattas attack Dehli | 100 |
| 1773. Desperation of Mirza Najaf | 101 |
| Mahrattas attack Rohilkand | 102 |
| Opposed by British | 103 |
| Advance of Audh troops | 104 |
| Restoration of Mirza | 105 |
| Abdul Ahid Khan | 105 |
| Suspicious conduct of Rohillas | 109 |
| Tribute withheld by H. Rahmat | 109 |
| 1774. Battle of Kattrā | 111 |
| 1775. Death of Shojāa-ud-Daula | 112 |
| Zābitā Khan rejoins Jāts | 113 |
| Najaf Kuli Khan | 114 |
| Successes of Imperial army | 115 |
| 1776. Zābitā and the Sikhs | 116 |
| Death of Mir Kāsim | 117 |

CHAPTER IV.

A.D. 1776-85.

| | |
|--|-----|
| Vigour of Empire under M. Najaf | 119 |
| Zābitā rebels again | 120 |
| 1777. Emperor takes the field | 121 |
| And the rebellion is suppressed | 122 |
| Sumroo's Jaigir | 122 |
| 1778. Abdul Ahid takes the field against the Sikhs | 123 |
| Unsuccessful campaign | 124 |
| 1779. Sikhs plunder Upper Doab | 125 |

| | PAGE |
|--|------|
| | 126 |
| 1780. Dehli threatened, but relieved | 126 |
| Mirza Najaf's arrangements | 127 |
| Popham takes Gwalior | 128 |
| Death of Sumroo | 123 |
| 1781. Begam becomes a Christian | 130 |
| 1782. Death of Mirza | 133 |
| Consequent transactions | 134 |
| Afrasyab Khan becomes Premier | 135 |
| Mirza Shaffi at Dehli | 138 |
| 1783. Murder of Shaffi | 139 |
| Action of Warren Hastings | 140 |
| 1784. Flight of Sháhzádah Jawán Bakht | 141 |
| Madhoji Sindhia goes to Agra | 142 |
| Afrasyab murdered | 143 |
| 1785. Tribute demanded from British, but refused | 144 |
| Death of Zábítá | 145 |
| ndhia supreme | 146 |
| Chálisha Famine | 147 |
| State of Country | |

CHAPTER V.

A. D. 1786-88.

| | |
|---|-----|
| 1786. Gholam Kadir succeeds his father Zábítá | 149 |
| Siege of Rághogarah | 150 |
| 1787. British policy | 151 |
| Measures of Sindhia | 152 |
| Rájput confederacy | 153 |
| Battle of Lalsot | 154 |
| Mohammad Beg's death | 155 |
| Defection of his nephew Ismail Beg | 156 |
| Greatness of Sindhia | 158 |
| Gholám Kadir enters Dehli | 159 |
| But checked by Begam Sumroo and Nájaf Kuli | 161 |
| Gholám Kadir joins Ismail Beg | 162 |
| 1788. Battle of Chaksána | 164 |
| Emperor proceeds towards Rajputana | 164 |
| Sháhzáda writes to George III. | 165 |
| Najaf Kuli rebels | 166 |
| Death of Sháhzáda | |

| | PAGE |
|---|--------------|
| Siege of Gokalgarh | 167 |
| Emperor's return to Dehli | 167 |
| Battles of Fatihpur and Firozabad | 168 |
| Confederates meet at Dehli | 170 |
| Sindhia is inactive | 172 |
| Benoit de Boigne | 172 <i>n</i> |

CHAPTER VI.

A. D. 1788.

| | |
|--|--------------|
| Defection of Moghuls and retreat of Hindu Guards | 174 |
| Confederates obtain possession of palace | 175 |
| Emperor deposed | 177 |
| Palace plundered | 178 |
| Gholam Kadir in the palace | 179 |
| Emperor blinded | 180 |
| Approach of Mahrattas | 182 |
| Apprehensions of the spoiler | 183 |
| Moharram at Dehli | 184 |
| Explosion in palace | 185 |
| Gholam Kadir flies to Meerut | 186 |
| His probable intentions | 186 |
| His capture and punishment | 188 |
| Sindhia's measures | 190 |
| Future nature of narrative | 191 |
| Poetical lament of Emperor | 192 <i>n</i> |

PART III.

CHAPTER I.

A. D. 1788-94.

| | |
|--|----------|
| Sindhia as Mayor of palace | 207, 208 |
| British policy | 209 |
| 1789. Augmentation of Sindhia's Army | 210, 211 |

| | PAGE |
|--|------|
| 1790. Ismail Beg joins the Rajput rising | 199 |
| Battle of Pātan | 200 |
| Sindhia at Mathra | 202 |
| Siege of Ajmir | 204 |
| Jodhpur Raja | 205 |
| Battle of Mirta | 205 |
| Rivals alarmed | 207 |
| French officers | 208 |
| 1792. Sindhia's progress to Puna | 209 |
| Holkar advances in his absence | 210 |
| Ismail Beg taken prisoner | 211 |
| Battle of Lakhairi | 211 |
| Sindhia rebuked by Lord Cornwallis | 213 |
| His great power | 214 |
| Rise of George Thomas | 215 |
| 1793. He quits Begam's service | 216 |
| Sindhia at Puna | 217 |
| 1794. His death and character | 218 |

CHAPTER II.

A.D. 1794-1800.

| | | |
|-------|--|---------|
| | Daulat Rao Sindhia | 221 |
| | Thomas adopted by Appa Khandi Rao | 222 |
| 1795. | Revolution at Sardhana | 223 ff. |
| | Begum delivered by Thomas | 226 |
| | Becomes a wiser woman | 227 |
| | Movements of Afghans | 229 |
| | Battle of Kurdla | 230 |
| 1796. | De Boigne retires | 230 |
| 1797. | General Perron | 231 |
| | Musalman intrigues | 233 |
| | Afghans checked | 233 |
| | Succession in Audh | 234 |
| 1798. | War of the <i>Bais</i> | 235 |
| 1799. | Afghans and British, and treaty with the Nizam | 236 |
| | Rising of Shimbunath | 237 |
| | Thomas independent | 237 |
| | Revolt of Lakwa Dāda | 238 |
| 1801. | Holkar defeated at Indor | 239 |
| | Power of Perron | 240 |

These, with a number of artisans and handicraftsmen, formed the chief population of the towns; some of the money-dealers were very rich, and 36 per cent. per annum was not perhaps an extreme rate of interest. There were no silver or gold mines, external commerce hardly existed, and the money-price of commodities was low.

The literary and polite language of Hindustan, called *Urdu* or *Rekhta*, was, and still is, so far common to the whole country, that it everywhere consists of a mixture of the same elements, though in varying proportions; and follows the same grammatical rules, though with different accents and idioms. The constituent parts are the Arabised Persian, and the Prákrit (in combination with a ruder basis, possibly of local origin), known as Hindi.* Speaking loosely, the Persian speech has contributed nouns substantive of civilization, and adjectives of compliment or of science; while the verbs and ordinary vocables and particles pertaining to common life are derived from the earlier tongues. So, likewise, are the names of animals, excepting those of beasts of chase.

The name *Urdu*, by which this language is usually known, is said to be of Turkish origin, and means literally "camp." But the Moghuls of India first introduced it in the precincts of the Imperial camp; so that as *Urdu-i-muáli* (High or Supreme Camp) came to be a synonym for new Dehli after Shahjahán had made it his permanent capital, so *Urdu-ki-zabán* meant the *lingua franca* spoken at Dehli. It was the common method of communication between

* Kindred tongues are still spoken by some of the Sudras of the Deccan; and it is the common element of the various rustic dialects of the Northern Districts of Hindustan.

different classes, as English may have been in London under Edward III. The classical languages of Arabia and Persia were exclusively devoted to uses of law, learning, and religion; the Hindus cherished their Sanskrit and Hindi for their own purposes of business or worship, while the Emperor and his Moghul courtiers kept up their Turkish speech as a means of free intercourse in private life. The Chaghtai dialect resembled the Turkish still spoken in Kashgar.

Out of such elements was the rich and still growing language of Hindustan formed, and it is yearly becoming more widely spread over the most remote parts of the country, being largely taught in Government schools, and used as a medium of translation from European literature, both by the English and by the natives. For this purpose it is peculiarly suited, from still possessing the power of assimilating foreign roots, instead of simply inserting them cut and dried, as is the case with languages that have reached maturity. Its own words are also liable to a kind of chemical change when encountering foreign matter (*e.g.*, *jau*, barley: when oats were introduced some years ago, they were at once called *jau*i—"little barley").

The peninsula of India is to Asia what Italy is to Europe, and Hindustan may be roughly likened to Italy without the two Sicilies, only on a far larger scale. In this comparison the Himalayas represent the Alps, and the Tartars to the north are the Tedeschi of India; Persia is to her as France, Piedmont is represented by Kábul, and Lombardy by the Panjáb. A recollection of this analogy may not be without use in familiarizing the narrative which is to follow.

Such was the country into which successive waves of invaders, some of them, perhaps, akin to the actual

ancestors of the Goths, Huns, and Saxons of Europe, poured down from the plains of Central Asia. At the time of which our history treats, the aboriginal Indians had long been pushed out from Hindustan into the mountainous forests that border the Deccan; which country has been largely peopled, in its more accessible regions, by the Sudras, who were probably the first of the Scythian invaders. After them had come the Sanskrit-speaking race, a congener of the ancient Persians, who brought a form of fire-worshipping, perhaps once monotheistic, of which traces are still extant in the Vedas, their early Scriptures. This form of faith becoming weak and eclectic, was succeeded by a reaction, which, under the auspices of Gautama, obtained general currency, until in its turn displaced by the gross mythology of the Puránas, which has since been the popular creed of the Hindus.

This people in modern times has divided into three main denominations: the Saráwagis or Jains (who represent some sect allied to the Buddhists or followers of Gautama); the sect of Shiva, and the sect of Vishnu.

In addition to the Hindus, later waves of immigration have deposited a Musalman population—somewhat increased by the conversions that occurred under Aurangzeb. The Mohamadans are now about one-seventh of the total population of Hindustan; and there is no reason to suppose that this ratio has greatly varied since the fall of the Moghuls.

The Mohamadans in India preserved their religion, though not without some taint from the circumjacent idolatry. Their celebration of the Moharram, with tasteless and extravagant ceremonies, and their forty days' fast in Ramzán, were alike misplaced in a country where, from the movable nature of their dates, they

sometimes fell in seasons when the rigour of the climate was such as could never have been contemplated by the Arabian Prophet. They continued the bewildering lunar year of the Hijra, with its thirteenth month every third year; but, to increase the confusion, the Moghul Emperors also reckoned by Turkish cycles, while the Hindus tenaciously maintained in matters of business their national Sambat, or era of Raja Bikram Ajit.

The Emperor Akbar, in the course of his endeavours to fuse the peoples of India into a whole, endeavoured amongst other things to form a new religion. This, it was his intention, should be at once a vindication of his Tartar and Persian forefathers against Arab proselytism, and a bid for the suffrages of his Hindu subjects. Like most eclectic systems it failed. In and after his time also Christianity in its various forms has been feebly endeavouring to maintain a footing. This is a candid report, from a source that cannot but be trusted, of the result of three centuries of Missionary labour.

“There is nothing which can at all warrant the opinion that the heart of the people has been largely touched, or that the conscience of the people has been affected seriously. There is no advance in the direction of faith in Christ, like that which Pliny describes, or Tertullian proclaims as characteristic of former eras. In fact, looking at the work of Missions on the broadest scale, and especially upon that of our own Missions, we must confess that, in many cases, the condition is one rather of stagnation than of advance. There seems to be a want in them of the power to edify, and a consequent paralysis of the power to con-

vert. The converts, too often, make such poor progress in the Christian life, that they fail to act as leaven in the lump of their countrymen. In particular, the Missions do not attract to Christ many men of education; not even among those who have been trained within their own schools. Educated natives, as a general rule, will stand apart from the truth; maintaining, at the best, a state of mental vacuity which hangs suspended, for a time, between an atheism, from which they shrink, and a Christianity, which fails to overcome their fears and constrain their allegiance."—*Extract from Letter of the Anglican Bishops of India, addressed to the English Clergy, in May, 1874.*

The capital cities of Northern India have always been Dehli and Agra; the first-named having been the seat of the earlier Musalman Empires, while the Moghuls, for more than a full century, preferred to hold their Court at Agra. This dynasty, however, retransferred the metropolis to the older situation; but, instead of attempting to revive any of the pristine localities, fixed their palace and its environs upon a new—and a preferable—piece of ground.

If India be the Italy of Asia, still more properly may it be said that Dehli is its Rome. This ancient site stretches ruined for many miles round the present inhabited area, and its original foundation is lost in a mythical antiquity. A Hindu city called Indráprastha was certainly there on the bank of the Jamna near the site of the present city before the Christian era, and various Mohamadan conquerors occupied sites in the neighbourhood, of which numerous remains are still extant. There was also a city near the present Kutb Minár, built by a Hindu rajah, about 57 B.C. according to General Cunningham. This was the original

(or old) Dilli or Dehli, a name of unascertained origin. It appears to have been deserted during the invasion of Mahmud of Ghazni, but afterwards rebuilt about 1060 A.D.* The last built of all the ancient towns was the Din Panáh of Humáyun, nearly on the site of the old Hindu town; but it had gone greatly to decay during the long absence of his son and grandson at Agra and elsewhere.

At length New Dehli—the present city—was founded by Shahjahán, the great-grandson of Humáyun, and received the name, by which it is still known to Mohamudans, of Shahjahánabad. The city is seven miles round, with seven gates, the palace or citadel one-tenth of the area. Both are a sort of irregular semicircle on the right bank of the Jamna, which river forms their eastern arc. The plain is about 800 feet above the level of the sea, and is bordered at some distance by a low range of hills, and receiving the drainage of the Mewát Highlands. The greatest heat is in June, when the mean temperature in the shade is 92° F. ; but it falls as low as 53° in January. The situation—as will be seen by the map—is extremely well chosen as the administrative centre of Hindustan ; it must always be a place of commercial importance, and the climate has no peculiar defect. The only local disorder is a very malignant sore, which may perhaps be due to the brackishness of the water. This would account for the numerous and expensive canals and aqueducts which have been constructed at different periods to bring water from remote and pure sources. Here Shahjahán founded, in 1645 A.D., a splendid fortified palace, which continued to be occupied by his descendants down to the Great Revolt of 1857.

* *Vide* "Handbook to Dehli." By the Author.

The entrance to the palace was, and still is, defended by a lofty barbican, passing which the visitor finds himself in an immense arcaded vestibule, wide and lofty, formerly appropriated to the men and officers of the guard, but in later days tenanted by small shopkeepers. This opened into a courtyard, at the back of which was a gate surmounted by a gallery, where one used to hear the barbarous performances of the royal band. Passing under this, the visitor entered the 'Am-Khás* or courtyard, much fallen from its state, when the rare animals and the splendid military pageants of the earlier Emperors used to throng its area. Fronting you was the Diwán-i-Ám (since converted into a canteen), and at the back (towards the east or river) the Diwán-i-Khás, since adequately restored. This latter pavilion is in echelon with the former, and was made to communicate on both sides with the private apartments.

On the east of the palace, and connected with it by a bridge crossing an arm of the river, is the ancient Pathan fort of Salimgarh, a rough and dismal structure, which the later Emperors used as a state prison.† It is a remarkable contrast to the rest of the fortress, which is surrounded by crenellated walls of high finish. These walls being built of the red sandstone of the neighbourhood, and seventy feet in height, give to the exterior of the buildings a solemn air of passive and silent strength, so that, even after so many years of havoc, the outward appearance of the Imperial resi-

* *Quasi*, "Intermediate area."

† This building is assigned to Salim, son of Sher Sháh, the Afghan interrex of Humáyun, A.D. 1546. Others suppose it to be of the time of Jahángir. In any case it is much older than the rest of the modern City and Palace.

dence continues to testify of its former grandeur. How its internal and actual grandeur perished will be seen in the following pages. The Court was often held at Agra, where the remains of a similar palace are still to be seen. No detailed account of this has been met with at all rivalling the contemporary descriptions of the Red Palace of Dehli. But an attempt has been made to represent its high and palmy state in the *General Introduction to the History of Hindustan* by the present writer.

Of the character of the races who people the wide Empire of which Dehli was the metropolis, very varying estimates have been formed, in the most extreme opposites of which there is still some germ of truth. It cannot be denied that, in some of what are termed the unprogressive virtues, they exceeded, as their sons still exceed, most of the nations of Europe; being usually temperate, self-controlled, patient, dignified in misfortune, and affectionate and liberal to kinsfolk and dependents. Few things perhaps show better the good behaviour—one may almost say the good breeding—of the ordinary native than the sight of a crowd of villagers going to or returning from a fair in Upper India. The stalwart young farmers are accompanied by their wives; each woman in her coloured wimple, with her shapely arms covered nearly to the elbow with cheap glass armlets. Every one is smiling, showing rows of well-kept teeth, talking kindly and gently; here a little boy leads a pony on which his white-bearded grandfather is smilingly seated; there a baby perches, with eyes of solemn satisfaction, on its father's shoulder. Scenes of the immemorial East are reproduced before our modern eyes; now the "flight into Egypt," now St. John and his lamb. In hundreds

and in thousands, the orderly crowds stream on. Not a bough is broken off a way-side tree, not a rude remark addressed to the passenger as he threads his horse's way carefully through the everywhere yielding ranks. So they go in the morning and so return at night.

But, on the other hand, it is not to be rashly assumed that, as India is the Italy, so are the Indian races the Italians of Asia. All Asiatics are unscrupulous and unforgiving. The natives of Hindustan are peculiarly so; but they are also unsympathetic and unobservant in a manner that is altogether their own. From the languor induced by the climate, and from the selfishness engendered by centuries of misgovernment, they have derived a weakness of will, an absence of resolute energy, and an occasional audacity of meanness, almost unintelligible in a people so free from the fear of death. Many persons have thought that moral weakness of this kind must be attributable to the system of caste by which men, placed by birth in certain grooves, are forbidden to even think of stepping out of them. But this is not the whole explanation. Nor, indeed, are the most candid foreign critics convinced that the system is one of unmixed evil. The subjoined moderate and sensible estimate of the effects of caste, upon the character and habits of the people is from the Bishops' letter quoted above. "In India, Caste has been the bond of Society, defining the relations between man and man, and though essentially at variance with all that is best and noblest in human nature, has held vast communities together, and established a system of order and discipline under which Government has been administered, trade has prospered, the poor have been maintained, and some domestic virtues have flourished."

Macaulay has not overstated Indian weaknesses in his *Essay on Warren Hastings*, where he has occasion to describe the character of Nand Komár, who, as a Bengali man-of-the-pen, appears to have been a marked type of all that is most displeasing in the Hindoo character. The Bengalis, however, have many amiable characteristics to show on the other side of the shield, to which it did not suit the eloquent Essayist to draw attention. And in going farther North many other traits, of a far nobler kind, will be found more and more abundant. Of the Musalmans, it only remains to add that, although mostly descended from hardier immigrants, they have imbibed the Hindu character to an extent that goes far to corroborate the doctrine which traces the morals of men to the physical circumstances that surround them. The subject will be found more fully treated in the concluding chapter.

CHAPTER II.

A.D. 1707-19.

Greatness of Timur's Descendants—Causes of the Empire's Decline—Character of Aurangzeb—Progress of Disruption under his Successors—Muhamadan and Hindu enemies—The Stage emptied.

FOR nearly two centuries the throne of the Chaghtais continued to be filled by a succession of exceptionally able Princes. The brave and simple-hearted Bábar, the wandering Humáyun, the glorious Akbar, the easy but uncertain-tempered Jahángir, the magnificent Shahjahán, all these rulers combined some of the best elements of Turkish character—and their administration was better than that of any other Oriental country of their date. Of Shahjahán's government and its patronage of the arts—both decorative and useful—we have trustworthy contemporary descriptions. His especial taste was for architecture; and the Mosque and Palace of Dehli, which he personally designed, even after the havoc of two centuries, still remain the climax of the Indo-Saracenic order, and admitted rivals to the choicest works of Cordova and Granada.

The abilities of his son and successor ÁLAMGIR, known to Europeans by his private name, AURANGZEB, rendered him the most famous member of his famous house. Intrepid and enterprising as he was in war,

his political sagacity and statecraft were equally unparalleled in Eastern annals. He abolished capital punishment, understood and encouraged agriculture, founded numberless colleges and schools, systematically constructed roads and bridges, kept continuous diaries of all public events from his earliest boyhood, administered justice publicly in person, and never condoned the slightest malversation of a provincial governor, however distant his province. Such were these emperors; great, if not exactly what we should call good, to a degree rare indeed amongst hereditary rulers.

The fact of this uncommon succession of high qualities in a race born to the purple may be ascribed to two main considerations. In the first place, the habit of contracting marriages with Hindu princesses, which the policy and the latitudinarianism of the emperors established, was a constant source of fresh blood, whereby the increase of family predisposition was checked. Few if any races of men are free from some morbid taint: scrofula, phthisis, weak nerves, or a disordered brain, are all likely to be propagated if a person predisposed to any such ailment marries a woman of his own stock. From this danger the Moghul princes were long kept free. Khuram, the second son of Jahángir, who succeeded his father under the title of Shah Jahán, had a Hindu mother, and two Hindu grandmothers. All his sons, however, were by a Persian consort—the lady of the Táj.

Secondly, the invariable fratricidal war which followed the demise of the Crown gave rise to a natural selection (to borrow a term from modern physical science), which eventually confirmed the strongest in possession of the prize. However humanity may

revolt from the scenes of crime which such a system must perforce entail, yet it cannot be doubted that the qualities necessary to ensure success in a struggle of giants would certainly both declare and develop themselves in the person of the victor by the time that struggle was concluded.

It is, however, probable that both these causes aided ultimately in the dissolution of the monarchy.

The connections which resulted from the earlier emperors' Hindu marriages—led, as the Hindus became disaffected after the intolerant rule of Aurangzeb, to an assertion of partisanship which gradually swelled into independence; while the wars between the rival sons of each departing emperor gave more and more occasion for the Hindu chiefs to take sides in arms.

Then it was that each competitor, seeking to detach the greatest number of influential feudatories from the side of his rivals, and to propitiate such feudatories in his own favour, cast to each of these the prize that each most valued. And, since this was invariably the uncontrolled dominion of the territories confided to their charge, it was in this manner that the reckless disputants partitioned the territories that their forefathers had accumulated with such a vast expenditure of human happiness and human virtue. For, even from those who had received their tithedeeds at the hands of claimants to the throne ultimately vanquished, the concession could rarely be wrested by the exhausted conqueror. Or, when it was, there was always at hand a partisan to be provided for, who took the gift on the same terms as those upon which it had been held by his predecessor.

Aurangzeb, when he had imprisoned his father and conquered and slain his brothers, was, on his acces-

sion, A.D. 1658, the most powerful of all the Emperors of Hindustan, and, at the same time, the ablest administrator that the Empire had ever known. In his reign the house of Timur attained its zenith. The wild Patháns of Kábul were temporarily tamed; the Shah of Persia sought his friendship; the ancient Musalman powers of Golconda and Bijapur were subverted, and their territories rendered subordinate to the sway of the Empire; the hitherto indomitable Rajputs were subdued and made subject to taxation; and, if the strength of the Mahrattas lay gathered upon the Western Ghats like a cloud risen from the sea, yet it was not to be anticipated that a band of such marauders could long resist the might of the great Moghul.

Yet that might and that greatness were reduced to a mere show before his long reign terminated; and the Moghul Empire resembled—to use a familiar image—one of those Etruscan corpses which, though crowned and armed, are destined to crumble at the breath of heaven or at the touch of human hands. And still more did it resemble some splendid palace, whose gilded cupolas and towering minarets are built of materials collected from every quarter of the world, only to collapse in undistinguishable ruin when the *Ficus religiosa* has lodged its destructive roots in the foundation on which they rest. Thus does this great ruler furnish another instance of the familiar but ever-needed lesson, that countries may be over-governed. Had he been less anxious to stamp his own image and superscription upon the palaces of princes and the temples of priests; upon the moneys of every market, and upon every human heart and conscience; he might have governed with as much success as his free-

thinking and pleasure-seeking predecessors. But he was the Louis Quatorze of the East; with less of pomp than his European contemporary, but not less of the lust of conquest, of centralization, and of religious conformity. Though each monarch identified the State with himself, yet it may be doubted if either, on his deathbed, knew that his monarchy was dying also. But so it was that to each succeeded that gradual but complete cataclysm which seems the inevitable consequence of the system which each pursued.

One point peculiar to the Indian emperor is that the persecuting spirit of his reign was entirely due to his own character. The jovial and clement Chaghtai Turks, from whom he was descended, were never bigoted Mohamadans. Indeed it may be fairly doubted whether Akbar and his son Jahángir were, to any considerable extent, believers in the system of the Arabian prophet. Far different, however, was the creed of Aurangzeb, and ruthlessly did he seek to force it upon his Hindu subjects. Thus there were now added to the usual dangers of a large empire the two peculiar perils of a jealous centralization of power, and a deep-seated disaffection of the vast majority of the subjects. Nor was this all. There had never been any fixed settlement of the succession; and not even the sagacity of this politic emperor was superior to the temptation of arbitrarily transferring the dignity of heir-apparent from one son to another during his long reign. True, this was no vice confined exclusively to Aurangzeb. His predecessors had done the like; but then their systems had been otherwise genial and fortunate. His successors, too, were destined to pursue the same infatuated course; and it was a defeated intrigue of this sort which probably first brought

the puppet emperor of our own time into that fatal contact with the power of England which sent him to die in a remote and dishonoured exile.

When, therefore, the sceptre had fallen from the dead man's hands, there were numerous evil influences ready to attend its assumption by any hands that were less experienced and strong. The prize was no less than the possession of the whole peninsula, estimated to have yielded a yearly revenue of the nominal value of thirty-four millions of pounds sterling, and guarded by a veteran army of five hundred thousand men.

The will of the late emperor had left the disposal of his inheritance entirely unsettled. "Whoever of my fortunate sons shall chance to rule my empire," is the only reference to the subject that occurs in this brief and extraordinary document.

His eldest surviving son consequently found two competitors in the field, in the persons of his brothers. These, however, he defeated in succession, and assumed the monarchy under the title of *BAHÁDUR SHÁH*. A wise and valiant prince, he did not reign long enough to show how far he could have succeeded in controlling or retarding the evils above referred to; but his brief occupation of the monarchy is marked by the appearance of all those powers and dynasties which afterwards participated, all in its dismemberment, and most in its spoil. Various enemies, both Hindu and Musalman, appeared, and the Empire of the Chaghtai Turks was sapped and battered by attempts which, though mostly founded on the most selfish motives, involved a more or less patriotic feeling. Sikhs, Mahrattas, and Rájputs, all aimed at independence; while the indigenious Mohamadans, instead of joining

the Turks in showing a common front to the common enemy, weakened the defence irrecoverably by opposition and rivalry.

In the attempt to put down the Sikhs, Bahádur died at Lahor, just five years after the death of his father. The usual struggle ensued. Three of the princes were defeated and slain in detail; and the partisans of the eldest son, Mirza Moizudin, conferred upon him the succession (by the title of JAHÁNDÁR SHÁH), after a wholesale slaughter of such of his kindred as fell within their grasp. After a few months, the aid of the governors of Bihár and Alláhábád, Saiyids of the tribe of Bárha, enabled the last remaining claimant to overthrow and murder the incapable Emperor. The conqueror succeeded his uncle under the title of FAROKHSIAR.

The next step of the Saiyids, men of remarkable courage and ability was to attack the Rájputs; and to extort from their chief, the Mahárájah Ajit Sing, the usual tribute, and the hand of his daughter for the Emperor, who, like some of his predecessors, was anxious to marry a Hindu princess. But the levity and irresolution of the Emperor soon led to his being, in his turn, dethroned and slaughtered. The race was now quite worn out.

A brief interregnum ensued, during which the all-powerful Saiyids sought to administer the powers of sovereignty behind the screen of any royal scion they could find of the requisite nonentity. But there was a Nothing still more absolute than any they could find; and after two of these shadow-kings had passed in about seven months, one after the other, into the grave, the usurpers were at length constrained to make a choice of a more efficient puppet. This was the son

of Bahádur Sháh's youngest son, who had perished in the wars which followed that emperor's demise. His private name was Sultan Roshan Akhtar ("Prince Fair Star"), but he assumed with the Imperial dignity the title of MOHAMMAD SHAH, and is memorable as the last Indian emperor that ever sat upon the peacock throne of Shah Jahán.

The events mentioned in the preceding brief summary, though they do not comprehend the whole disintegration of the Empire, are plainly indicative of what is to follow. In the final chapters of the First Part we shall behold somewhat more in detail the rapidly accelerating event. During the long reign of Mohammad foreign violence will be seen accomplishing what native vice and native weakness have commenced; and the successors to his dismantled throne will be seen passing like other decorations in a passive manner from one mayor of the palace to another, or making fitful efforts to be free, which only rivet their chains and hasten their destruction. One by one the provinces fall away from this distempered centre. At length we shall find the throne literally without an occupant, and the curtain will seem to descend while preparations are being made for the last act of this Imperial tragedy.

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ERRATA.

Page 34, line 20, for *Siyar-ul-mutakharin*, read *Siyar-ul-mutakharin*
 " 111, " 33, for effected, read affected.
 " 163, " 20, for *Shah Alam*, read *Shah A'lam*. (N.B. The accent
 on this name is misplaced throughout the
 remainder of the book.)
 " 297, Index, after *Ranjit Singh of Lahor*, insert *Rohillas and*
Robilkund, 25, 35, 56, 73, 88-9, 106 ff.

rench 2
 2
 252
 253
 254
 254
 fall of Perron 255
 257
 259
 260
 261
 262

IV.
 263
 264
 tish 266
 267
 268
 270
 270

friendly intentions towards them 270
 Their power curbed 271
 No protection for life, property, or traffic 272
 Uncertain reform without foreign aid 273
 Concluding remarks 276
 278

of Bahádur Sháh's youngest son, who had pe in the wars which followed that emperor's demise private name was Sultan Roshan Akhtar ("Fair Star"), but he assumed with the Imperial dig. the title of MOHAMMAD SHAH, and is memorable as the last Indian emperor that ever sat upon the p throne of Shah Jahán.

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INDEX

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 sun becomes more verti-

THE FALL OF T

the monsoon blows up from
 the Bay of Bengal, when a
 place and
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PAR T I.

CHAPTER I.

Preliminary Observations on Hindustan and the City of I

THE country to which the term Hindustan is strictly and properly applied may be roughly described as rhomboid, bounded on the north-west by the river Indus and Satelej, on the south-west by the Indian Ocean, on the south-east by the Narbadda and the Son, and on the north-east by the Himalaya Mountains and the river Ghágra. In the times of the emperors, it comprised the provinces of Sirhind (or Lahore), Rajputána, Gujrát, Málwa, Audh (including Rohilkand, strictly Rohelkhand, the country of the Rohelas, or "Rohillas" of the Histories), Agra, Allahábád, and Dehli: and the political division was into *subahs*, or divisions,* *sarkars* or districts; *dasturs*, or sub-divisions; and *parganahs*, or fiscal unions.

The Deccan, Panjáb (Punjab), and Kábul, which also formed parts of the Empire in its widest extension at

* A *subah* often contained two or more Provinces, the one being of historical origin, the other an administrative arrangement.

of Bahádur Sháh's youngest son, who has in the wars which followed that emperor's death the private name was Sultan Roshan Akhtar ("Fair Star"), but he assumed with the Imperial title the title of MOHAMMAD SHAH, and is memorialized as the last Indian emperor that ever sat upon the throne of Shah Jahán.

The events mentioned in the preceding Part we shall rapidly accelerate. The provinces will be understood by many, though they were independent during the first quarter of the century, though acknowledging a weak and temporary subordination to the Crown of Dehli.

The highest point in the plains of Hindustan is probably the plateau on which stands the town of Ajmir, about 230 miles south of Dehli. It is situated on the eastern slope of the Aravalli Mountains, a range of primitive granite, of which Ábu, the chief peak, is estimated to be near 5,000 feet above the level of the sea; the plateau of Ajmir itself is some 3,000 feet lower.

The country at large is, probably, the upheaved basin of an exhausted sea which once rendered the highlands of the Deccan an island like a larger Ceylon.† The general quality of the soil is accordingly sandy and light, though not unproductive; yielding, perhaps, on an average about one thousand *lbs. av.* of wheat to the acre. The cereals are grown in the winter, which is at least as cold as in the corresponding parts of Africa. Snow never falls, but thin ice is often

* *Vide* Part II. chap. i.

† But see "Geological Report," by Messrs. Blanford and Medicott, Calcutta, 1879.

formed during the night. During the spring heavy dews fall, and strong winds set in from the west. These gradually become heated by the increasing radiation of the earth, as the sun becomes more vertical and the days longer.

Towards the end of May the monsoon blows up from the Indian Ocean and from the Bay of Bengal, when a rainfall averaging about twenty inches takes place and lasts during the ensuing quarter. This usually ceases about the end of September, when the weather is at its most sickly point. Constant exhalations of malaria take place till the return of the cold weather.

After the winter, cucurbitaceous crops are grown, followed by sowings of rice, sugar, and cotton. About the beginning of the rainy season the millets and other coarse grains are put in, and the harvesting takes place in October. The winter crops are reaped in March and April. Thus the agriculturists are never out of employ, unless it be during the extreme heats of May and June, when the soil becomes almost as hard from heat as the earth in England becomes in the opposite extreme of frost.

Of the hot season Mr. Elphinstone gives the following strong but just description:—"The sun is scorching, even the wind is hot, the land is brown and parched, the dust flies in whirlwinds, all brooks become dry, small rivers scarcely keep up a stream, and the largest are reduced to comparative narrow channels in the midst of vast sandy beds." It should, however, be added, that towards the end of this terrible season some relief is afforded to the river supply by the melting of the snow upon the higher Himalayas, which sends down some water into the almost exhausted stream-beds. But even so, the occasional

prolongation of the dry weather leads to universal scarcity which amounts to famine for the mass of the population, which affects all classes, and which is sure to be followed by pestilence. Lastly, the malaria noticed above as following the monsoon gives rise to special disorders which become endemic in favouring localities, and travel thence to all parts of the country, borne upon the winds or propagated by pilgrimages and other forms of human intercourse. Such are the awful expedients by which Nature checks the redundancy of a non-emigrating population with simple wants. Hence the construction of drainage and irrigation-works has not merely a direct result in causing temporary prosperity, but an indirect result in a large increase of the responsibilities of the ruling power. Between 1848 and 1854 the population of the part of Hindustan now called the North-West Provinces, where all the above described physical features prevail, increased from a ratio of 280 to the square mile till it reached a ratio of 350. In the subsequent sixteen years there was a further increase. The latest rate appears to be from 378 to 468,* and the rate of increase is believed to be about equal to that of the British Islands.

There were at the time of which we are to treat few field-labourers on daily wages, the Metayer system being everywhere prevalent where the soil was not actually owned by joint-stock associations of peasant proprietors, usually of the same tribe.

The wants of the cultivators were provided for by a class of hereditary brokers, who were often also chandlers, and advanced stock, seed, and money upon the security of the unreaped crops.

* The former for N.W.P.; the latter for Audh.

CHAPTER III.

A.D. 1719-48.

Muhammad Sháh—Chin Kulich Khán, his retirement from Dehli—Movements of the Mahrattas—Invasion of Nádir Shah—Ahmad Khán repulsed by the Moghuls.

GUIDED by his mother, a person of sense and spirit, the young Emperor began his reign by forming a party of Moghul friends, who were hostile to the Saiyids on every conceivable account. The former were Sunnis, the latter Shias; and perhaps the animosities of sects are stronger than those of entirely different creeds. Moreover, the courtiers were proud of a foreign descent; and, while they despised the ministers as natives of India, they possessed in their mother tongue—Turkish—a means of communicating with the Emperor (a man of their own race) from which the ministers were excluded. The Saiyids were soon overthrown, their ruin being equally desired by Chin Kulich, the head of the Turkish party, and Saádat Ali, the newly-arrived adventurer from Persia. These noblemen now formed the rival parties of Turán and Irán; and became distinguished, the one as founder of the principality of Audh, abolished in 1856, the other as that of the dynasty of Haidarábád, which still subsists. Both, however, were for the time checked by the ambition and energy of the Mahrattas. Chin Kulich was especially brought to his knees in Bhopál, where the

Mahrattas wrung from him the cession of Málwa, and a promise of tribute to be paid by the Imperial Government to these rebellious brigands.

This was a galling situation for an ancient nobleman, trained in the traditions of the mighty Aurangzeb. The old man was now between two fires. If he went on to his own capital, Haidarábád, he would be exposed to wear out the remainder of his days in the same beating of the air that had exhausted his master. If he returned to the capital of the Empire, he saw an interminable prospect of contempt and defeat at the hands of the Captain-General Khán Dauran, the chief of the courtiers who had been wont to break their jests upon the old-fashioned manners of the veteran.

Thus straitened, the Nizám, for by that title Chin Kulich was now beginning to be known, took counsel with Saádat, the Persian, who was still at Dehli. Nádir Sháb, the then ruler of Persia, had been for some time urging on the Court of Dehli remonstrances arising out of boundary quarrels and similar grievances.* The two nobles, who may be described as opposition leaders, are believed to have in 1708 addressed the Persian monarch in a joint letter which had the result of bringing him to India, with all the consequences which will be found related in the *History of Hindustan* by the present writer, and in the well-known work of Mountstuart Elphinstone.

It would be out of place in this introduction to dwell in detail upon the brief and insincere defence of the Empire by Saádat 'Ali, in attempting to save whom the Khán Daurán lost his life, while the Nizám attempted vain negotiations. The Persians, as is well-known,

* So the *Sijar-ul-Mutákharin* and Áli Házin.

advanced on Dehli, massacred some 100,000 of the inhabitants, held the survivors to ransom, and ultimately retired to their own country, with plunder that has been estimated at eighty millions sterling, and included the famous Peacock Throne.

The Nizám was undoubtedly the gainer by these tragic events. In addition to being Viceroy of the Deccan, he found himself all-powerful at Dehli, for Saádat 'Ali had died soon after the Khán Daurán. Death continuing to favour him, his only remaining rival, the Mahratta Peshwa, Báji Rao, passed away in 1740, on the eve of a projected invasion of Hindustan. In 1745 the Province of Rohelkhand became independent, as did the Eastern Subáhs of Bengal, Bihár, and Orissa. Leaving his son to represent him at Dehli, the Nizám settled at Haidarábád as an independent ruler, although he still professed subordination to the Empire, of which he called himself *Vakil-i-Mutlak*, or Regent.

Shortly after, a fresh invader from the north appeared in the person of Ahmad Khán Abdáli, leader of the Dauráni Afgháns, who had obtained possession of the frontier provinces during the confusion in Persian politics that succeeded the assassination of Nádir. A new generation of Moghul nobles was now being formed, whose valour formed a short bright Indian summer in the fall of the Empire; and the invasion was rolled back by the spirit and intelligence of the Emperor's son, the Vazir's son Mir Mannu, his brother-in-law Gházi-ud-din, and the nephew of the deceased Governor of Audh, Abul-Mansur Khán, better known to Europeans by his title Safdar Jang. The decisive action was fought near Sirhind, and began on the 3rd March, 1748. This is memorable as the last