

THE
VIEWS AND OPINIONS

OF

BRIGADIER-GENERAL JOHN JACOB, C.B.,

AIDE-DE-CAMP TO THE QUEEN;
AIDE-DE-CAMP TO THE GOVERNOR-GENERAL OF INDIA, &c. &c. &c.
LATE COMMANDING-IN-CHIEF THE BRITISH FORCES IN PERSIA;
AT PRESENT COMMANDING THE SIND IRREGULAR HORSE,
AND POLITICAL SUPERINTENDENT OF THE
NORTH-WEST FRONTIER OF SIND.

COLLECTED AND EDITED

BY

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SECOND EDITION.

LONDON:
SMITH, ELDER & CO., 65, CORNHILL.
BOMBAY: SMITH, TAYLOR & CO.

1858.

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PREFACE.

WE frequently find theorists advocating the application of Natural Law to the affairs of men. We more frequently find the legislators and actors in these affairs working in contempt or ignorance of that law. But it is of very rare occurrence to meet a man possessing at once the ability, will, and opportunity himself to apply the Law of Nature in many departments of common business. And believing that General Jacob has both faithfully and successfully so applied it, I have collected some of his views, and now lay them before the public, in the hope that they may become as useful to others as they have been to myself.

I beg the reader to bear in mind, when perusing the following papers, that they are not the effusions of a mere theorist, but contain some of the pungent maxims arrived at by a man whose life has been passed in action. Himself believing in Universal Law, the General has dared to apply its principles to business immediately in hand, presuming that what was true for the whole could not but prove true for

the particulars of this whole. And thus, testing his theory by practice, and finding his assumptions borne out by practical results, he now claims to affirm these with the authority of a master.

The foregoing observations apply equally to the papers upon civil and upon military matters. But it is upon their application to the latter that I propose to remark: for it is but too manifest that our existing military system in India has failed; and that if England still purpose to hold India, she must do so by means either of undisguised English military occupation, or of a Native army re-organised on sound and lasting principles.

Choosing the former course, we must be prepared to maintain in India an English force as large as, or larger than, we were able to maintain in the Crimea; to acknowledge before all the world that our rule in India is based, not on the good-will of the governed, but upon palpable military occupation; to maintain our English army in India, still undiminished, in the event of an European war; to increase this army in the contingency of our European enemies extending their influence into Asia; to drain (beyond the drain already involved in our government as foreigners) India of that wealth which is now returned to her in the form of pay and pensions to a vast Native military establishment; and, lastly, to create and provide for discontent among a large section of our Indian subjects who now trust to the military profession for subsistence.

Choosing the latter course, it is incumbent on us to lose no time in availing ourselves of such material for

a loyal and efficient Native army, as may be ready to hand; and in availing ourselves of all workmen able to fashion this material into shape.

Convinced that neither the present military resources of England, nor the present financial resources of India, could permanently support, in India, an English army equal to holding our Eastern empire; and convinced, moreover, that if those resources could respond to this demand, England would not be justified in subjecting India to an English military occupation—I accept the alternative of reorganising our Native army; and I appeal to the military papers contained in this volume, and to the practice upon which they are founded, in proof of the assertion which I now publish—that we have at least one man among us who can discern and point out to us the material for a Native army, and who has shown himself able to organise it into loyalty and efficiency.

It is unquestionable that, standing alone, at the hazard of his commission, and subjected to prolonged obloquy and opposition, General Jacob has during a period of many years past, exposed the vices of the system now failing us; has predicted that the combined direct and indirect operation of this system would result in failure; and has, at the same time, advocated, elaborated, and carried into effect, under very adverse circumstances, and without once faltering, a new system, capable of bearing every test, and which, though often assailed,—and sometimes virulently,—has never yet been shown to be hollow or defective.

Whether for good or for ill these principles, which

General Jacob has exemplified in the constitution of his regiments of Sind Irregular Horse, have, from the first, had in view the reformation of our Native armies in India. The reformation thus exemplified has, from the first, been declared to be, not in degree, but in essence; to aim, not at a modification of the existing system, but at a radical, essential abolition of this system, in favour of another by him introduced. This latter was, in the first instance, tried with one, subsequently with a second, and is about to be tried with a third regiment of horse. In the two first instances, the men enlisted were drawn from the very heart of those districts now in revolt. In both these instances, the experiment met with strenuous and continued opposition from all quarters; and was stigmatised as mere theory, inapplicable to the real practice of war. In both instances it proved, under severe and prolonged trial, to be completely successful.

There remained, however, one supposed objection to the permanent and extended application of the General's system. It was this—that though successful when carried out under his immediate direction, it would fail if entrusted to less able men. Nevertheless, one of the regiments so trained was recently sent on foreign service under the command of a young lieutenant; was harassed by sea as cavalry seldom have been harassed; and was then scattered under its *Native* officers to Kurrachee, Bombay, Poona, and elsewhere. Yet those detachments remained staunch under their native officers while mutiny was being enacted in these stations,

by regular troops; and showed, as plainly as need be, that *the School* had formed both officers and men.

Meantime, the other regiment so trained remained, under another officer, on the frontier; and this officer's military powers were unavoidably contracted by the presence of a senior officer in command of an irregular corps from Bengal. To the rear of this frontier was the station of Shikarpoor, holding disaffected regular troops;* to its right front was the Punjaub, in which nearly every regular regiment was in revolt or disarmed; to its left front was the State of Khelat, in temporary disorder, attributable to the Khan's demise; and in its immediate neighbourhood was a border chief† striving to awaken rebellion. Yet this second regiment

* The most important arm, the Native Artillery, actually broke out into open mutiny; while one of the most trusted Subedars in the only Native Infantry regiment at the station of Shikarpoor was arrested, and soon after executed, as ringleader of a plot to mutiny and murder. I should add, that no European troops were stationed within several hundred miles of the frontier.

† This borderer wrote to all his neighbouring chiefs, calling upon them to strike a blow for freedom. He told them it would be in vain to tamper with the troopers of the Sind Horse, but that they should all assemble at Jacobabad on an appointed day, under pretence of making their usual obeisance, and should, then and there, upon a signal to be by him given, rise and murder the European officers, and afterwards raise the surrounding country.

Among the chiefs so addressed was one, of whose tribe some five hundred men had, within the past ten years, been destroyed by the officer then commanding the Sind Horse. Yet he, like all his neighbours, returned for answer that the English Government had

stood and stands staunch, although in a position, and under temptations, than which it were difficult to imagine any more trying to the loyalty of mercenaries.

I am well aware that, in thus plainly laying the truth before the public, I may incur, from some persons, the charge of undue presumption. But I am not less confident that every man, really careful for the honour and welfare of our Indian Government and its army, will dispassionately consider whether the system advocated and practised by General Jacob is or is not adapted to our requirements; and, in the event of his denying its suitability, that he will support his denial by valid reasons, and endeavour himself to submit a system which Theory may argue, and practice have proved, to be preferable. Meanwhile, to those who look for precedent I would suggest that our own history affords an example of an army remodelled upon a regiment of Silidar Horse—which regiment was Cromwell's.

Having found occasion to use the term “Bengal,”

been just to them, and that they would take no part in the proposed massacre. Many of them also sent in trusty agents, bearing news of what had occurred.

Upon receiving this intelligence, the officer commanding called for two of his native officers, informed them of the plot, and directed them to provide for its frustration, and for securing its ringleader. They arranged accordingly; and the borderer had no sooner arrived upon the day appointed, than he was quietly arrested. Yet his plot had been divulged to some hundreds of the men in the lines; and its divulgence was, further, known to many of the border chiefs on the frontier. The traitor alone remained ignorant of his own betrayal.

in connection with the defects of our military system, I deem it on every account proper to explain that I am far from intending to cast reflections upon any officer or body of officers. The development of the present crisis has assured me that our failure is attributable, not to individuals, but to system; and for the framing of this system the executive are not responsible.

For myself, had not the Indian army, to which I belong, been disgraced by mutiny, I had assuredly remained silent. But as matters are, I should deem myself culpable in neglecting to submit to our legislators, and the English people, information which they should, in the present crisis, possess; and towards supplying which I chance, by a long residence with General Jacob, on his personal Staff,* to have been favourably circumstanced.

I am convinced that no unprejudiced person, accurately acquainted with the history of our native army, can read these military papers, or become familiar with the practice on which they result, without perceiving that the principles advocated are in exact conformity with whatever has been or still may be worthy in the constitution of that army. I believe there is scarcely a commanding officer or an adjutant of a regiment who would not at once acknowledge that the details in which he has found

* As Assistant in the Revenue and General Department when the General was acting as Commissioner in Sind; as Aide-de-Camp when he was in Command of the Cavalry Division Persian Field Force; and as Political Secretary when he was Commander-in-Chief in Persia.

himself hampered are those pointed out in these papers. And all who have perused the works of the late Sir John Malcolm, and the selections from the correspondence of the late Lord Metcalfe, recently edited by Mr. Kaye, will be impressed with the coincidence of the principles enunciated by these statesmen with those independently practised by General Jacob. One principle, common to all three writers, cannot be too strongly urged. It is this—*That from the moment when the command of a Native Regiment becomes less sought for than other employ, we may date the commencement of our downfall. To render this command so sought for, we must place the commander in a position to be looked up to by his own men, and by society, whether English or native; and we must support him in the exercise of full authority. To do this involves selection,—selection, that is, of officers for a class of appointments more essential to the existence of our rule in India than any other class of appointments whatsoever, be they military or civil.*

LEWIS PELLY.

CAMP POKRUM,
December 1857.