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YUSOFIYAH KHALID, R.N.C.S.

L I F E
OF THE
AMIR DOST MOHAMMED KHAN,
OF
K A B U L :

WITH HIS POLITICAL PROCEEDINGS TOWARDS THE
ENGLISH, RUSSIAN, AND PERSIAN GOVERNMENTS,
INCLUDING THE
VICTORY AND DISASTERS OF THE BRITISH ARMY
IN
AFGHANISTAN.

By MOHAN LAL, Esq.,

KNIGHT OF THE PERSIAN ORDER OF THE LION AND SUN ; LATELY ATTACHED TO A
MISSION IN KABUL.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

LONDON:
LONGMAN, BROWN, GREEN, AND LONGMANS,
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HER MOST GRACIOUS MAJESTY QUEEN VICTORIA.

DEDICATION

TO

HER MOST GRACIOUS MAJESTY QUEEN VICTORIA,

SOVEREIGN OF

GREAT BRITAIN AND OF THE INDIAN EMPIRE,

AND TO HER ROYAL CONSORT,

HIS ROYAL HIGHNESS THE PRINCE ALBERT.

SINCE the creation of the world it has been the custom and rule of the devoted loyal servants of every ancient and modern Government, that either on receiving marks of distinction, or the honour of being presented to their lawful Sovereign, they submit some present showing their homage and attachment to the Throne. This usage of submissive devotion has not been limited to human beings, but it has been adopted ever by other species of God's creatures, and has met with the approbation of the greatest in the world. If we trace back as far as three thousand years, we find, from tradition as well as from historical anecdotes, one of the most striking instances in an insignificant creature of God, namely, a small ant having secured a grain of rice in its forceps, crept some distance, and having gained an access

into the presence of the wise and great Solomon, laid it under his feet, who accepted the said present!!

My fortunes have been bright, and I may say enviable, even in this land, by having the honour of being presented to your Majesty and to your Royal Highness, and also invited to your palace. The conversation which I had the good fortune to have with your Royal Highness, mingled with your detailed and minute knowledge of all the sad events of Afghanistan, did not only cause sensations of surprise in me, but was a source of proud gratification as showing that the conduct and zeal of public servants abroad, whether English or foreigner, are justly noticed and appreciated by so dignified a personage as your Royal Highness. Taking all the preceding points into consideration, I am utterly at a loss how to show my heartfelt gratitude, and in what manner to lay my unfeigned homage and devoted attachment at the feet of your gracious Majesty and your Royal Highness but by dedicating this work—the unworthy endeavours of my feeble pen in a foreign language.

If the honour so to dedicate this book is conferred upon me, it will at once show to the subjects of your Majesty's Indian Empire, that your Majesty knows how to appreciate their fidelity and devotion, and will lead them to the lofty consideration and appreciation of their present English Sovereign in a more dignified manner than they or their predecessors had ever enjoyed.

For my own humble part, I shall say no more ; but conclude this dedication by adding that, while I live I shall consider myself the proudest and happiest servant by promoting the honour and interest of your mighty Government, and with heart shall ever pray, that as long as the oceans are filled with water, and the heavens decorated with sun and moon, the gracious shadow of your Majesty and his Royal Highness the Prince Albert may never be diminished from the heads of your British and Indian subjects, and both the kingdoms of England and India may never be deprived of the protection of your royal descendants.

MOHAN LAL, *Kashmirian.*

(In the Service of the Honourable East India Company.)

4, *George Street, Manchester Square,*
London, 20th June, 1846.

P R E F A C E.

THE kind reception which my late publication, 'Travels in the Panjab and Afghanistan,' has met with from the public, deserves my hearty thanks. The greater part of my Travels having been published some years ago, had in some measure lost the interest of novelty; but the flattering mention made of them in the last edition of the valuable work of the Honourable Mountstuart Elphinstone,* a most

* "Mohan Lal, a (Kashmirian) gentleman of Delhi, accompanied Sir Alexander Burnes to Bokhara, and came back by Mashad and Hirat, has also published his travels. They appeared in English at Calcutta, and would have been invaluable if they had not been preceded by the works already mentioned. Even now they contain much new matter, and from the spirit of inquiry and observation as well as the command of a foreign language which they display, reflect high credit on the author and on the English Institution (now the College) at Delhi, where he received his education."—ELPHINSTONE'S *Kabul*, 1838.

talented and respected authority of this country, induced me to reprint them, with some additional information on the Commerce of the marts on the Indus.

Neither in the preceding publication nor in this, do I for a moment pretend to boast of the value of its information, eloquence, or style. On the contrary, I am fearfully conscious of abundant errors both in grammar, idiom, and, above all, of repetitions; but when I tell the public that I am a stranger to the customs, manners, and in great measure to the language of the English, and that I have written the MSS. and published these two volumes in a short space of time, without the assistance of a friend, as I had expected, I feel assured that I shall be excused on account of these great deficiencies. Whatever portion of the MSS. of these volumes (excepting about one hundred pages in the beginning) I was able to write every day, went to press immediately in the same way; and this will plainly account for errors and repetitions.

Besides the great expense incurred by the publishers in bringing out my late Travels, and these volumes, I beg to state, that about 300*l.* has been

disbursed by me in employing a copyist, paper, and some of the portraits; a fact which will exonerate me from the imputation of having published them merely with the view of benefiting myself by their sale.

Whilst in Afghanistan I had prepared the 'Life of Dost Mohammed Khan,' both in English and Persian; and the information on which the MS. was prepared was supplied to me by his own courtiers and relations: but unfortunately all the MSS. were plundered during the insurrection of Kabul, and delivered to Mohammed Akbar Khan, who refused to give them back to me on any account. Afterwards it was out of my power to collect such satisfactory accounts as would place the circumstances of the Amir's life in a chronological series; and I therefore fear that these volumes will on many occasions be open to censure for misplacing the occurrences and the subjects contained in them.

The anecdotes inserted in the work, and especially in reference to the adventures and morals of the Amir Dost Mohammed Khan, &c., were generally communicated to me by the people with whom he associated. Not knowing what would be agreeable

to the "English mind," and anxious as I was to avoid anything unpleasant of every kind, particularly when the Dedication was approved of by Her Majesty, and returned to me with only one correction, I wrote to the publishers and printers to erase such lines from the manuscripts as they might think not consistent with the rules of this country. To this, I am told, they kindly attended.

The Dedication to Her Majesty, and, I may say, the whole of the work, is written after the Persian style. Purity of idiom and eloquence in composition, which are at the command of the natives of this civilized land, are not to be expected from a foreigner of a limited education, like myself. The generosity of the impartial community at large will, on these considerations, forgive me for the blunders of every description which may disfigure the pages of these unworthy volumes.

The observations which I have made on our policy in Afghanistan, the reasons of sending an expedition, its means of success, and the cause of the disasters, are entirely the repetition of what I had despatched to the Government of India, in 1842, and which received the favourable notice of the Earl of

Ellenborough, then Governor-General of India. His Lordship writes to the Secret Committee at home in the following flattering manner.*

“In the letter from the intelligent Mohan Lal, which forms one of the enclosures of this letter, your Honourable Committee will be put in possession of the manner in which the King Shah Shuja-ul-Mulk was, on the 5th April, treacherously murdered by a son of Navab Mohammed Zaman Khan.

“Your Honourable Committee will peruse with deep interest the observations on the causes of the late insurrection at Kabul.

“Your Honourable Committee will find amongst the enclosures No. 24, an interesting paper by Mohan Lal, on the causes of the Afghan insurrection, and on the events which succeeded the outbreak at Kabul in November last.

(Signed) “ELLENBOROUGH.”

The opinions so favourably expressed by this high

* ‘Parliamentary Blue Book of Afghanistan,’ pages 262, 264, 341.—I have left out many words, and omitted several other names, to make this extract as short as possible.

and talented personage then holding the reins of the empire of India, will, I am sure, be a sufficient ground for me to request the public to throw a glance on the contents of these volumes, and to grant forgiveness for the errors.

MOHAN LAL, *Kashmirian.*

30th June, 1846.

4, *George Street,*
Manchester Square, London.

CONTENTS OF VOL. I.

CHAPTER I.

	PAGE
Sons of Abdal—Honourable Mountstuart Elphinstone, late Captain Arthur Conolly, and Sir Alexander Burnes—Predecessors of Dost Mohammed Khan—Origin of the Afghans—Sons of Rahimdad—Dost's Father becomes Chief—Promoted—Goes to punish the Momand Chief—Gets a title—Goes to fight the Osbeks—Places Zaman on the throne—Salary of Dost's father—Dost strikes coin so as to honour the name of his father—Envy of Vafadar Khan against Sarfraz Khan—Names of the Chiefs murdered with Sarfraz Khan—Folly of Vafadar Khan—Miracle of Dost's uncle	1

CHAPTER II.

Brothers of Dost Mohammed Khan—Dost's early training—Shah Zaman—Dost becomes the confidential attendant of Fatah Khan—Defeat of Shah Shuja—Youth of Dost Mohammed Khan—He returns to Kabul—His sister married to Shah Shuja—Fatah Khan's treaty with Mukhtar and with Qaisar—Intrepidity of Dost—He and Fatah leave Qandhar—They rebel from Shah Shuja—Are compelled to return to Qandhar—Fatah Khan is confined, and Dost escapes—Dost besieges Qandhar—Fatah is released—

	PAGE
Dost and Fatah join Kam Ran—Dost gains a victory— Fights with Shuja—Makes peace, and allies himself with Shuja—Dost and his brother desert the camp—Shuja gains a victory—Measures of Dost—His bravery—He defeats his enemy—Shah Mahmud becomes king, Fatah Khan Vazir, and Dost is dignified—Mirza Ali Khan— Mohammed Azim Khan—Dost is made Sardar—Expe- dition to Kashmir—Rebellion in Kabul—Suppressed— War with the Sikhs	21

CHAPTER III.

Brothers envy Dost Mohammed Khan—He chastises the Kohistanis—Expedition against Hirat—Murder of the Vazir Fatah Khan—The Sardar takes up arms—Besieges the Bala Hisar—Takes Kabul, and makes Sultan Ali king, and himself minister—His intrigues—Murder of Shah Sultan Ali—Mohammed Azim Khan—The Sardar procures money from the Sindhians—He deserts—Takes Ghazni—Fights with Azim Khan—Corresponds with Ranjit Singh—Sikh force at Peshavar—Dost's treachery towards Azim Khan—Death of Azim Khan	90
--	----

CHAPTER IV.

Succession of Habib-ullah Khan—He is defeated by the Sardar—Peace is concluded between them—Habib- ullah's secret intentions—Flight of the Sardar—Sherdil Khan and the Sardar join against Habib-ullah—Policy of Dost—He takes the Bala Hisar—Intrigues and rup- ture between Sherdil and Dost—Siege of the Bala Hisar —Peace between the brothers—Death of Sherdil Khan —The Sardar sole master of Kabul—Sayad Ahmad's war with the Sikhs—Rebellion at Tagav, and defeat of the Kabul force	130
---	-----

CHAPTER V.

	PAGE
Haji Khan joins the Sardar—The Sardar punishes the rebels—Takes Bala Bagh and Jalalabad—Jealousy of the brothers—His escape from assassination—Marches against Shah Shuja—His letter to the British political agent at Lodianah—Sir Claude Wade's answer—The Sardar writes to Shah Shuja—Reaches Qandhar, and defeats Shah Shuja-ul-mulk—Correspondence discovered among the spoils—Ingratitude of the Qandhar chiefs towards Dost Mohammed Khan—The Sardar's interview with his dying brother—Flight and evil designs of the Peshavar chiefs—Haji Khan Kakar	150

CHAPTER VI.

Preparations for a new expedition against the Sikhs—Design of the Sardar to assume the Royal title—He is surnamed Amir-ul-momnin—His method of procuring money—Barbarity exercised towards a rich trader—New coinage—The Sikhs depute Dr. Harlan to Sultan Mohammed Khan—The Amir is incensed, and threatens Dr. Harlan—He encamps at Shekhan—Truce with the Sikhs—The Amir's treacherous designs—His violent altercation with Pir Mohammed Khan—His plans and counsellors—Ranjit Singh arrives, and sends an embassy to the Amir—Oath of friendship between the Amir and Sultan Mohammed Khan—The Amir seizes the Sikh envoys—Breaks up his camp—Sultan Mohammed takes the captive envoys with him—Rage of the Amir	168
--	-----

CHAPTER VII.

Difficult situation of the Amir—Duplicity of the Qandhar chiefs—The Amir designs to seize some nobles—His	
---	--

	PAGE
plan betrayed by Akhundzadah—He arrests Abdullah Khan Achakzai—Releases him—Sisters of the Amir—Saddu Khan murdered by a Kohistani bribed by his wife	183

CHAPTER VIII.

The Amir fears the Hazarahs—History of Yazdan Bakhsh—Dost Mohammed's plan for seizing the Hazarah chief—Courage and devotion of his wife—Both are seized by the Amir—They negotiate for their release—The Mir escapes, and afterwards his wife—He consolidates his power—Haji Khan and Mir Yazdan Bakhsh—The Khan plans the ruin of the Hazarah Mir—His scheme to entrap him—Fails—He makes Haji Khan Governor of the Hazarahjat—Becomes suspicious of him—Haji Khan seizes Mir Yazdan Bakhsh—Plunder of the Hazarahs—The Mir is strangled—The Sardar's relations with Persia—His education—He humbles his rival relatives, and increases his own power—Disgrace of Haji Khan—The Amir's administration of justice	192
--	-----

CHAPTER IX.

The Wives of the Amir—Their jealousies—Cruel treatment of one of them by the Amir—An anecdote—A Kashmirian wife—Her escape from the Amir—Bitter enmity entertained towards the Amir by Sultan Mohammed Khan—Wives, Sons, and Daughters of the Amir—His policy of depressing his brothers and raising his sons to power—Expedition against the Sikhs—Mirza Abdul Sami Khan arrives at the camp—Victory of the Afghans—Honours bestowed on Akbar Khan—How to estimate the sons of the Amir—State of the Amir's dominions—Revenues—Encouragement of Commerce—Character of the Amir—His military force	214
--	-----

CHAPTER X.

	PAGE
Connexion of the British with Afghanistan—Policy of Russia—Her alliance with Persia—The Afghans lean towards the British Government—Claims on Peshavar—Policy of Lord William Bentinck—Of Lord Auckland—Letter from the Amir to the Governor-General—Reply of the latter—Mission of Sir Alexander Burnes—The Amir demands the restoration of Peshavar—Sir Alexander's Reply—Dissatisfaction of Dost Mohammed Khan—His letter to the King of Persia—His plan of balancing Russia, Persia, and England against each other .	243

CHAPTER XI.

A Persian Envoy arrives at Qandhar—The Chiefs of that place make a treaty with him—Letter from the Shah of Persia to the Amir—Instructions of the Persian Envoy—Mr. Ellis's despatch to Lord Palmerston—Sir John Macneil at the Persian Court—The Shah marches against Hirat—Despatches of Sir John Macneil—Russian intrigues—Various letters to the Chiefs of Qandhar—Their treaty with the Shah, under the guarantee of Russia—Negotiations of Sir A. Burnes at Kabul—The Russian Envoy, Capt. Vikovich—Diplomatic etiquette in Asiatic courts—Letters relating to Capt. Vikovich—His proceedings at Kabul—Progress of Russian influence there—The English mission retires—Various documents	265
--	-----

CHAPTER XII.

The British Mission leaves Kabul—Iniquitous counsels given to the Amir respecting it—He rejects them—The Amir attaches himself wholly to Russia—Departure of Captain Vikovich—Honours paid him—Affairs of Sindh	
---	--

	PAGE
—Opinions current in Hindustan relative to Russia— The Asiatics anticipate reverses for the British power in the East—Correspondence, and other Documents— Reasons for the advance of the Army of the Indus— Negotiations set on foot by the British Government	334

CHAPTER XIII.

Reluctance of the Indian Government to interfere with Captain Vikovich—Proceedings of Count Simonich—Sir A. Burnes and Sir J. Macneil urge the necessity of vigorous measures—The north-western Frontier—Lord Wellesley's opinion—Policy of the British government— Shah Shuja—Correspondence, and extracts from various sources illustrative of British policy in Afghanistan— The British government resolve to restore Shah Shuja— Mission to Ranjit Singh—Tripartite Treaty—Prepara- tions—Declaration of the Governor-General—Letter to the Shah of Persia	360
---	-----

ILLUSTRATIONS OF VOL. I.

PORTRAIT OF THE AUTHOR	<i>to face Title-page.</i>
PORTRAIT OF THE QUEEN	<i>to face the Dedication.</i>
PORTRAIT OF THE HON. MOUNTSTUART ELPHINSTONE	<i>to face Page 10</i>
PORTRAIT OF AKBAR KHAN	„ 153
PORTRAIT OF THE AMIR DOST MOHAMMED KHAN	„ 169
PORTRAIT OF MIRZA SAMI KHAN	„ 177
PORTRAIT OF THE EARL OF AUCKLAND	„ 250
PORTRAIT OF SIR ALEXANDER BURNES	„ 254
PORTRAIT OF SIR JOHN MACNEIL	„ 279
PORTRAIT OF THE MAHARAJAH RANJIT SINGH	„ 370
PORTRAIT OF MOHAMMED HUSAIN KHAN	„ 378