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CENTRAL INDIA,

INCLUDING

M A L W A,

AND ADJOINING PROVINCES

WITH

THE HISTORY,

AND COPIOUS ILLUSTRATIONS,

OF THE

PAST AND PRESENT CONDITION OF THAT COUNTRY.

BY MAJOR-GENERAL

SIR JOHN MALCOLM, G.C.B. K.L.S.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

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P R E F A C E.

THE name of Central India, though new, and still indefinite as to the exact limits of the territories it comprehends, has been adopted in this work because it is the appellation by which Malwa and the contiguous provinces are designated in the official records of the Supreme Government. This region was hardly to be traced in the best maps, and we knew little of its inhabitants beyond the reports of that continued warfare and anarchy to which they had been exposed for the last thirty years, when the outrages committed by the hordes of plunderers to whom it had become a home, compelled us to enter it with our armies in order that we might subdue them.

In January 1818 the Author was placed by the Marquis of Hastings in the military and political charge of Central India; and during the four years he filled that station, his own attention, and that of the able public officers under

his authority, was directed to the object of collecting materials for the illustration of its past and present condition. These he formed into a report, which was transmitted to Calcutta, where it was printed by order of Government. Several copies were sent to England, from which copious extracts found their way into periodical publications. This report having been drawn up amid the hurry of other duties, and when the Author was in a bad state of health, had many imperfections that required to be corrected: he therefore solicited permission from the Honourable Court of Directors to make it the groundwork of this memoir, which in consequence contains the substance of that official document.

Notwithstanding this advantage, the Author has found his task much more difficult than he had anticipated; and he almost despairs of attracting general readers to a work, which, although it contains much new and interesting matter, is necessarily filled with names harsh and unpleasant to an Englishman's ear, and fatiguing to his memory. He has, however, endeavoured to obviate this serious objection, by throwing many of the unavoidable minute details into the notes, and transferring

others to a very full Appendix and comprehensive Index. But, after all, these volumes must derive their chief merit from the collection of facts illustrative of the genuine history and character of the Natives of India, and from the fiscal and statistical information they contain.

Though the previous studies and occupations of the Author had prepared him for the task he undertook; still there was such a blank to fill up; so little was known, and so much knowledge was indispensable before he could venture to transmit a report that was to be the foundation of public measures, that he would almost have shrunk from the undertaking, had he not been assisted in his researches by many public officers distinguished for their zeal, activity, and talents. Their designations, the duties they performed, the nature of the communications they contributed, together with the other sources of information, are stated in the Appendix*. A perusal of this list will greatly enhance the value of the facts, and shew that they possess every requisite to establish their authenticity.

So favourable an opportunity has seldom occurred of observing the character of all ranks of the Natives of India, as that which the Author enjoyed. The situation in which he was placed enabled him to obtain the most minute information at a period when peculiar circumstances tended to bring every virtue and vice that belonged to individuals or communities into prominent action; and if he has succeeded in conveying this knowledge to the European reader, his object is attained. Throughout this work the Author has purposely abstained from making comparisons between the habits, privileges, and condition of the inhabitants of Central India, and those of other parts of that vast continent. Such opportunities presented themselves at every page, but even a superficial notice of them would have swelled these volumes to an inconvenient bulk;—besides this, it was thought, for many reasons, expedient to reject them, and to leave to others the task of comparing the facts stated, with information derived from other sources. It appeared, however, incumbent on the Author to offer some general reflections on the fabric of the British power in the East; how far it has been

affected by late conquests; and also to state his opinions regarding the species of administration best adapted to Central India and countries similarly situated. To this object he has devoted the concluding chapter, which contains the result of all his experience; nor has he there recommended any measure which he does not, from sincere conviction, believe to be both practicable and indispensable. To explain this still farther, he may add, that there is not a sentiment therein expressed, which has not in substance, and nearly in words, been previously submitted, in a public or private form, to his official superiors, or to those whose duty it was to communicate with them; and he believes, that although differences of opinion may exist, chiefly as to the mode of introducing such arrangements, his suggestions are not essentially at variance with the sentiments entertained by the eminent persons to whom his letters were addressed.

The Author need hardly state in this Preface, what a knowledge of the station he filled implies, that, in the prosecution of all his measures, he acted merely as the executive officer of the Supreme Government. The peculiar circumstances

of the countries committed to his charge required that he should have great latitude of action, and this was granted to him with scarcely any restriction. Indeed, to this unlimited confidence, and to the personal as well as public support of the Marquis of Hastings, and the liberal and just principles of that nobleman's administration, he must ascribe that success with which his labours were attended.

The Appendix will be found to contain some valuable papers.—A short memoir of the map, written by Lieutenant Gibbings, assistant-quarter-master-general, who constructed it, should have been included, but this useful document has unfortunately been lost; it becomes necessary, therefore, to state, that its contents shewed that the accompanying map of Central India was entirely composed from original and authentic materials. These consisted of measured routes and military surveys, corrected by the tables of latitudes and longitudes furnished by Captain Dangerfield, whose scientific papers, alike illustrative of the Geology and Geography of the countries he visited, will be noticed hereafter.

For his kind aid in correcting the press, and for his opinions and observations on different parts of this work, the Author is under great obligations to Mr. W. Hamilton, a gentleman well known to the public by his *Indian Gazetteer*, and *Description of Hindustan*, works which have diffused a general knowledge of our Eastern possessions beyond any that have been published.

Mr. W. Hamilton has also digested a *Geographical Index of the Provinces, Cities, and Towns* mentioned in the course of the *Memoir*. This useful compendium has, for more easy reference, been kept distinct from the *General Index*, and forms the concluding number of the *Appendix*.*

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