

THE MAKING OF A FRONTIER

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Sewel Simla photo.

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*A. Durand*

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# THE MAKING OF A FRONTIER

FIVE YEARS' EXPERIENCES AND ADVENTURES  
IN GILGIT, HUNZA, NAGAR, CHITRAL, AND  
THE EASTERN HINDU-KUSH

By COLONEL ALGERNON DURAND, C.B., C.I.E.

BRITISH AGENT AT GILGIT, 1889-1894; MILITARY SECRETARY TO THE  
VICEROY OF INDIA, 1894-1899

WITH PORTRAIT, MAP, AND ILLUSTRATIONS

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DEDICATED  
TO  
THE OFFICERS AND MEN  
BRITISH AND NATIVE  
WHO SERVED AT GILGIT  
1889-1893

## PREFACE

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SOME word of explanation seems due when an unknown writer obtrudes a personal narrative on the public. My reason for writing this book was, that as the story of the development of the Gilgit Frontier, told in my letters and diaries, was read with interest by some who saw those papers, it seemed probable that its publication might give to those who have no chance of seeing the sort of life their countrymen lead on an uncivilised frontier, a faithful idea of what such an existence means. The book is a plain and unvarnished tale of the experiences of a frontier officer in times of peace as well as in those of war.

It was written under adverse circumstances, in the scanty hours of leisure snatched from official work in India, and it could not, for obvious reasons, have been published while I was Military Secretary to the Viceroy of India. The events it describes began ten years and ended five years ago. It contains no information which has not been at the disposal of the man in the street, but it has this advantage: that

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having been behind the scenes it has been possible for me to avoid including the inaccuracies of the mere looker-on.

The book contains no dissertations on Frontier policy, no criticisms or attacks on those who direct that of the Government of India. I have no wish to join the bands who ride out to do battle with the windmills of the forward or backward policy, and it is, in my old-fashioned opinion, disloyal for an officer still in the service to criticise his superiors, even should he consider that he has grounds for his views, which is not my case. Moreover, such criticism is generally foolish. For the man on the Frontier sees but his own square on the chessboard, and can know but little of the whole game in which he is a pawn. It has been my aim merely to give a faithful account of the policy pursued on the Gilgit Frontier, of the steps taken to give it effect, and of the result attained. The reader who expects to find cut-and-dried dogmatic opinions as to the management of our relations with Frontier tribes will be disappointed. These, as a rule, can only be given, with their full effect, by men who know nothing about the question.

The reader also who expects to find a book on the Frontier stuffed with "tales of wild adventure—mostly lies"—will not find them here. A certain amount of exciting incident there could not help



being in five years' work in a wild country, but much of the book is a record of peaceful service. It tells of a constant struggle to raise a stretch of Frontier 300 miles in length from a condition of incessant war, anarchy, and oppression, into a state of fairly established peace, prosperity, and good government.

For much of the ethnological information in the book I am indebted to *The Tribes of the Hindu Kush* by Colonel Biddulph, who was for some time in Gilgit.

Owing to the courtesy of the Editors of the *Fortnightly* and *Contemporary*, I have been enabled to make use of articles published in their reviews, portions of which are incorporated in the book.

Many of the illustrations are from photographs taken by Captain J. R. Roberts, I.M.S., Agency Surgeon at Gilgit, whose success in this line is only to be surpassed by his skill in the sterner duties of his profession, and by his devotion and kindness to the sick and wounded.

ALGERNON DURAND.

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