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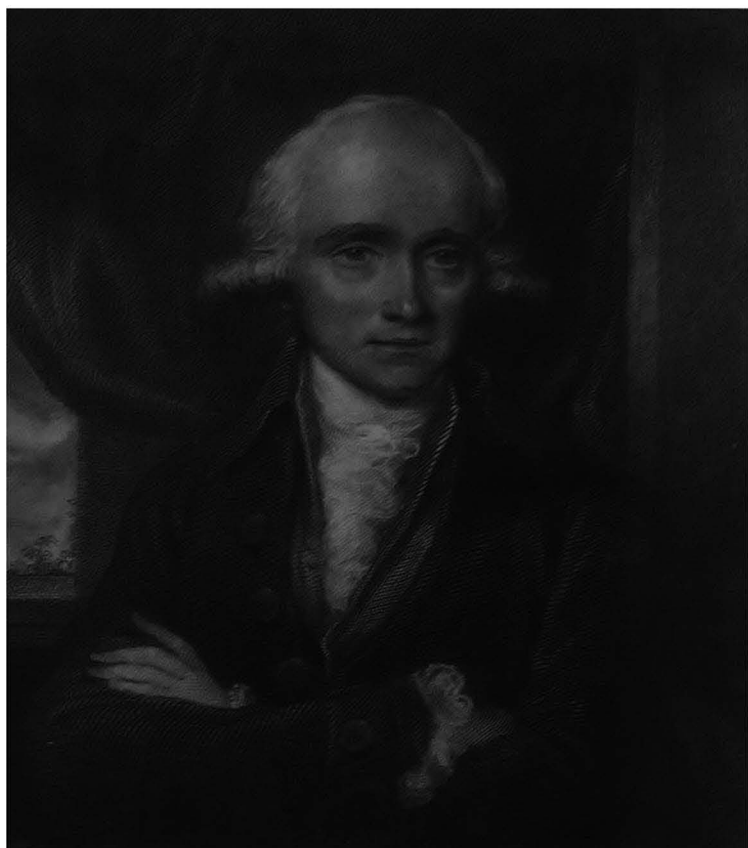
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THE HISTORY OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

BY JAMES MADISON

NEW YORK: PUBLISHED BY J. B. BAKER, 1840.

MEMOIRS  
OF  
THE LIFE  
OF THE  
RIGHT HON. WARREN HASTINGS,  
FIRST GOVERNOR-GENERAL OF BENGAL,

COMPILED FROM ORIGINAL PAPERS.

BY THE REV. GEORGE MUNRO, M.A.,  
CHAPLAIN TO THE ROYAL HOSPITAL AT CHELSEA, AND RECTOR OF IVYCHURCH,  
AUTHOR OF  
THE LIFE OF SIR THOMAS MUNRO.

VOL. I.

LONDON:  
RICHARD BENTLEY, NEW BURLINGTON STREET,  
Publisher in Ordinary to Her Majesty.

1841.

V2, L, L8

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LONDON:

Printed by W. Clowes

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## ADVERTISEMENT.

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THE following volumes I offer to the public, not without a distressing consciousness that they do imperfect justice to a subject at once so important and so comprehensive as that which they have undertaken to discuss. Neither of any lack of zeal on my part to bring about a different issue, nor of the absence either of care or of assiduity in digesting the materials submitted to me, can I indeed accuse myself; for the compilation of the work has constituted my principal literary employment throughout the space of four entire years. Yet I feel, when all is done, that the results of my labours fall far short of the anticipations which I had ventured to form when they began; and that a larger share of indulgence must be sought for at the hands of my reader, than, under ordinary circumstances, I should be entitled to expect. Let me, however, tell my own tale with all the brevity

and candour which are becoming in one situated as I now am, and then throw myself, without hesitation, upon the considerate kindness of such as may take the trouble to follow the details of my explanation and judge of their fitness.

That the task which I have now completed—I do not say how imperfectly—was not an easy one, may be gathered from the following statement of facts:—Not long after Mr. Hastings's death, and at a period when, of the friends of his manhood, many were yet alive, it was proposed to Mr. Southey to become the biographer of the greatest statesman whom British India has produced. The proposition being acceded to, the whole of the family papers were put into Mr. Southey's hands, who kept them by him a good while, and then returned them with a frank avowal that he could not command the time and attention that would be necessary for the management of an undertaking so extensive and so complicated. Mr. Hastings's executors were much disappointed at the result; and the project lay for a time in abeyance, till by and bye the late Mr. Impey, the son of Sir Elijah Impey, and a man every way qualified for the undertaking, revived the idea. To him, in his turn, the voluminous documents

were committed, and in his possession they remained, if I mistake not, about six years. But Mr. Impey did nothing with them. His assiduity at the India House appears, indeed, to have been extraordinary, for he visited that great depôt of historical information every day; and the countless memoranda which I have discovered in his own handwriting, show that he left few of the Company's records unexamined. Yet not one page of the memoirs had he begun to write when he died, and all the hopes which the friends of Mr. Hastings's good name rested upon his exertions died with him. Once more, therefore, the papers were restored to the drawers and cabinets of Daylesford House, where, in absolute confusion, they remained, till, in the summer of 1835, they were finally handed over to me. I confess that I received them with unmixed satisfaction, because my opinion of Mr. Hastings's character and merits had long been formed; and I rejoiced in the thought that through me so illustrious a name might be in some sort redeemed from unmerited neglect. But as I certainly was not then aware of the stupendous nature of the undertaking on which I was about to embark, so I do not hesitate now to acknowledge, that had the truth been made



apparent to me, I should have declined it. That which Mr. Southey and Mr. Impey failed to effect, I had certainly no right to attempt. Nor after the attempt was made should I have gone forward with it, but for a constitutional weakness, if the feeling deserve no harsher name, which renders it positively painful to me to be foiled in any purpose of the sort, till I shall have exhausted both mental and physical strength in the endeavour to effect it. After many distressing pauses, therefore, and many hours and days of absolute despondency, the work has at length been brought to a termination, and now goes forth with a thousand imperfections upon its head, which no human eye can see more clearly than my own, but which I profess myself quite incompetent to remedy.

It will be seen that in the management of my work I have rendered Mr. Hastings as much as possible the narrator of his own acts and intentions. There can be no doubt in the mind of any thinking person as to the wisdom of this arrangement, more especially in cases where, like the present, consecutive series of letters have been even partially preserved. But the letters entrusted to me are not always consecutive; and it has unfortunately happened, that precisely at points where most of all it

was essential that I should find materials for my biography in the handwriting of the subject of it, or of his personal friends, such materials were wanting. This has been especially true in reference to Mr. Hastings's early history,—to that period in a great man's life which is often more replete than any other with interest,—when, forcing his own way to eminence through innumerable obstacles, he conveys to others the gravest lessons of wisdom and enterprise and moderation. Over that stage in Mr. Hastings's career a dense curtain is drawn, which his correspondence with Lord Clive can be said very imperfectly to raise; and I have been forced, in consequence, to generalize where I could have wished to proceed upon a different principle, by speaking more of the nature of the employments in which he was engaged, than of the condition, and habits, and personal occupations of the man. I lament this exceedingly; but I cannot help it, any more than I have been able to escape, in the course of the chapters which follow, from frequent epitomes of historical detail, without keeping which immediately in view, the reader might find in the correspondence much that would be to him unintelligible. It were idle to expect that they who peruse such epitome

will give the writer credit for the degree of toil which has been bestowed upon them; for that which we read with ease in ten minutes, we are all too apt to forget, may have cost as many days, or even weeks, in the composition. But the experienced in such matters know better. It is a far harder task to compress than to dilate, even when the subject may be familiar to us; the difficulties are increased a thousand-fold, when, for the attainment of a few grains of truth, we are compelled to wade through whole piles of old and often unmeaning correspondence. This has been precisely my case while striving from the letters of Mr. Hastings's friends, to fill up blanks in his personal history, which his own could not supply; and I am reduced at last simply to the expression of a hope that as the labour has been excessive, so the results may not wholly disappoint either my own wishes or the wishes of others.

Of the memorable impeachment to which Mr. Hastings was subjected, as the reward of a long life spent in his country's service, I have given no detailed account. I do not apprehend that any judicious critic will blame me for this; for as the charges brought against him were assumed to spring out of the vices which disfigured the whole

of his administration, so is their refutation far more satisfactorily set forth in a plain unvarnished narrative of the administration itself, than could have been done by lingering over the iniquitous proceedings with which his public life was consummated. For Mr. Hastings, like every other great and good man, is the best guardian of his own fair fame even in the grave. His actions and his motives alike speak for themselves. And as the issues of the trial were, as far as character was affected by them, altogether satisfactory, I cannot conceive that to follow the course of its progress could excite the interest or gratify the tastes of any one. Besides, the task was long ago performed with perfect impartiality by a pains-taking though anonymous compiler, who has woven into a consecutive history the events of each day as they befel; and to that volume I confidently refer all who may be desirous of farther information, touching both the violence of the accusers, and the forbearance and long suffering of the accused.

Finally there is one great and obvious truth of which no candid inquirer, when he sits down to try the moral probity, not of Mr. Hastings alone, but of other Englishmen by whom the affairs of

India have been administered, will ever be forgetful :—the whole of our proceedings in Asia, have been from the first, and still are, grounded upon moral wrong. We are usurpers there of other men's rights, and hold our empire by the tenure of the sword. For this neither the nation, nor individuals, may be in strict propriety responsible, because the current of events, and not their own ambitious plans, swept the India Company onwards to the position which they now hold ; yet the facts are as I have stated them to be, and we cannot escape from them. Now unless the moralist be prepared to contend, that an English Governor of India is bound to betray the trust which is reposed in him,—that some rule of abstract right requires that he shall sacrifice the interests of his employers, whenever the efforts to sustain them may threaten to involve him in the necessity of encroaching still farther upon the rights of the native princes,—I think that he will be very cautious how he condemns proceedings which arise, not out of any selfish anxiety on the Governor's part to increase his own wealth, or his own renown, but from a conscientious zeal to uphold the honour and advance the prosperity of the commonwealth from which his authority is derived. Far be it from me

to insinuate, that in any of his proceedings Mr. Hastings was ever driven to cover private wrong with the cloak of public duty. Individual chiefs may have fallen before him, as they fell before his predecessor, and continue to fall now; but to the people at large his administration was a blessing, as the reverence in which his memory is still held may suffice to prove. And if it be the true end of all government to secure the greatest possible amount of good to the greatest possible amount of persons, then had he no cause to blush for the effects of his just and gentle, yet vigorous, sway over tribes, whom their native princes were either unable, or unwilling, to protect from anarchy.

To sum up all, Mr. Hastings has been accused of cruelty and oppression. The very persons whom he was represented to have most deeply injured, were among the foremost to declare their attachment to his person and government. Mr. Hastings has been accused of involving British India in an expensive war, for the mere purpose of gratifying his own inordinate ambition. The whole energies of his mind were devoted either to the maintenance of peace, or to remedy the blunders of others, which rendered war inevitable. Mr. Hastings has been accused of venality and corruption to an incal-

culable extent. He returned home after thirty-five years spent in the service of the Company, during thirteen of which he presided over the destinies of India, with a fortune barely adequate to support him in the rank of an English country gentleman. And even that, the prosecution to which political and personal hostility subjected him swept away.

Surely since the days when Athens sent her best benefactors into banishment, there has been no such instance of devotion to the public interests bringing to him who practised it so strange a reward. For if Mr. Hastings was corrupt, it was to advance the interests of England that he practised his corruption; if he was venal, she and she alone profited by his venality; if he was rapacious, into the public treasury all the fruits of his rapacity went. And so skilful was he in the management of materials, beneath which, for the most part, empires are crushed to pieces, that the very country in which he was described as building up this extraordinary fabric flourished and grew great under its shadow. Yea, and more than this. The system of administration, for introducing which Mr. Hastings underwent such a lengthened persecution, earned for his successors who acted faithfully up to it, the thanks

of the legislature, and the gratitude of the nation. So full of inconsistencies are all human affairs, and so little is even the best of men the master of his own fame and fortunes!

And now there remains for me only the pleasant task of expressing the deep sense which I entertain of the kindness of all those who, whether directly or indirectly, have afforded me assistance in the collection of my materials. Among these I am especially called upon to mention by name Sir Charles and Lady Imhoff, the near connexions and devoted attendants on the last hours of the deceased; Mr. and Mrs. Winter, the former the rector of Daylesford, the latter the amiable niece and companion for many years of the late Mrs. Hastings; Mr. Anderson, of St. Germain's, and Mr. Augustus Thompson, of the Middle Temple, the sons of two of Mr. Hastings's oldest and most faithful friends; and last, though not least, Mr. E. B. Impey. To this latter gentleman, indeed, I am indebted for such details of Mr. Hastings's private habits and tastes as would have scarcely reached me through any other channel; and the value of such information can be estimated only by those who, like myself, have felt how unsatisfactory, in cases like the present, it is to depend,



in forming our judgment, absolutely on written documents, and on the sort of notion which they are apt to create of the moral feelings of the writer.

Finally, let me thank the Directors of the East India Company for the liberality with which they threw open for my inspection the voluminous records at the India House, and the consideration which induced them to afford me every accommodation and facility for making extracts from them. I am fully aware that mine is not a solitary case; for the same privileges which they afforded to me they are prompt to afford to all who seek them: yet is the personal obligation laid upon me in nowise diminished by the consideration that I am but one out of many on whom similar favours have been bestowed.

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