

**ELIHU JAN'S STORY;
OR, THE PRIVATE LIFE
OF AN EASTERN QUEEN**

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Elihu Jan's story; or, The private life of an eastern queen by William Knighton

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WILLIAM KNIGHTON

**ELIHU JAN'S STORY;
OR, THE PRIVATE LIFE
OF AN EASTERN QUEEN**

UNIV. OF CALIFORNIA

ELIHU JAN'S STORY

OR

THE PRIVATE LIFE OF AN EASTERN QUEEN

BY

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ETC.

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1865.

et

PREFACE.

ELIHU JAN is not a fictitious character. She was brought up in the Court of Lucknow from her seventh year, as related in the first chapter of the following work. She was for many years hookah attendant to the queen of Oudh, and of course thus became acquainted with much that happened in the palace. After the mutiny, she was first an ayah in the household of Mr. Johannes, the wealthy merchant of Lucknow, and subsequently entered my wife's service in the same capacity. She has been with us now nearly three years, is still in our service, and, so far as I have been able to verify her

accounts of the queen's private life, I have found them to be true. I therefore believe the truth of the whole, and I have narrated it as much as possible in her own words, and with her own reflections—allowances being made for the translation from Urdu into English.

HIMALAYA CLUB, MYSOORIE:

June 1864.

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CALIFORNIA

ELIHU JAN'S STORY.



CHAPTER I.

PERSONAL REMINISCENCES.

THE earliest thing I can remember is that my father, Ashabad Khan, lived with his two brothers in our village, long, long ago, some fifteen or sixteen miles from Lucknow. The cottage was divided into three tenements, each of which had its separate door, and was shut off from the rest by its own partition wall. The lands the three brothers cultivated were crown lands, belonging to the king at Lucknow, and it was not without difficulty that the rent was paid. It was not the rent alone that made the difficulty, but the exactions of the various king's servants, who claimed sums as their rights over and

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above the rent, which my father and uncles were afraid to refuse them. My mother had died at my birth, and my only female companion was a cousin, the daughter of a younger brother of my father, who was five or six years older than I, and who took care of me.

At length, what with exactions, and what with bad crops, things went from bad to worse, and one year the Sepoys came down upon us to force my father and uncles to pay the rents due, for they were much in arrears. My father and uncles ran away, and I and my cousin were taken off as slaves to the palace in Lucknow. I was about seven years of age, and I am an old woman now of near thirty, but I cannot tell exactly how old I am, or how old I was. This I know, that my father was a good Soonly * Mussulman, and that at the court they brought me up as a Sheeah ; but I have always been an unhappy creature—unhappy and miserable—since the time when I killed my mother at

* The Soonnies are the Protestants ; the Sheeahs, the Roman Catholics of Moslemism.

my birth. What luck or good fortune can the child expect that kills its mother?

Arrived at the palace, we were washed and dressed, and taken into the queen's apartments. I was speechless with astonishment at the grandeur of the rooms. The ceiling was beautifully painted, the walls were richly ornamented with large mirrors and gilt edgings. Chandeliers hung from the roof, and the floor was covered with a large carpet, and in the centre of the carpet was a white cloth. Upon the upper end of this white cloth was a smaller and richer carpet, with cushions, and a large pillow for the back gorgeously trimmed with thick gold fringe. The cushions were covered with crimson velvet, with flowers of gold thread worked on them. With her back leaning against the large round pillow sat the queen smoking her hookah. She was dressed in light-coloured clothes, all of one colour. She preferred light blue, lavender, or straw-coloured garments, with rich embroidery, and she wore much jewellery, nose-rings, ear-rings, bracelets, anklets, and such-