

RULERS OF INDIA: WARREN HASTINGS

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Rulers of India: Warren Hastings by L. J. Trotter

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L. J. TROTTER

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WARREN HASTINGS**

RULERS OF INDIA

35-249

Warren Hastings

BY CAPTAIN L^{ionel} J^{ones} TROTTER

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NOTE

The orthography of proper names follows the system adopted by the Indian Government for the *Imperial Gazetteer of India*. That system, while adhering to the popular spelling of very well-known places, such as Punjab, Lucknow, &c., employs in all other cases the vowels with the following uniform sounds:—

a, as in woman: á, as in father: í, as in police: é, as in intrigue:
o, as in cold: u, as in bull: ú, as in sure: e, as in grey.

PREFACE.

DURING the present year three folio volumes of 'Letters, Despatches and other State Papers preserved in the Foreign Department of the Government of India, 1772—1785,' have been printed by Authority, under the careful editing of Mr. George W. Forrest. The period covers the entire rule of Warren Hastings. The present volume endeavours to exhibit for the first time the actual work of that great Governor-General, as reviewed from the firm standpoint of the original records now made available to the students of Indian history.

August, 1890.

CHAPTER I

FROM CHURCHILL TO CALCUTTA

1732-1761

WARREN HASTINGS, the first Governor-General of British India, was born at Churchill in Oxfordshire on the 6th December, 1732. A few miles off, across the Worcestershire border, lay the manor of Daylesford, which had belonged to Warren's forefathers from the days of Henry II down to the first years of George II. One conspicuous member of the family was that Lord Hastings, whose loyal services to the House of York were requited by Richard III with a violent death. On his successor Henry VII bestowed the Earldom of Huntingdon, a title which ere long fell dormant until, in 1819, the right to bear it was confirmed to Francis Hastings, as lineal descendant of the second Earl. From another branch of the same stock had sprung the Earls of Pembroke, one of whom followed the banner of the Black Prince in the war between Peter the Cruel and his brother Henry of Castile.

At the close of the great civil war which cost our first Charles both crown and life, the fortunes of the Daylesford family had undergone a sad eclipse.

Having freely risked his life and pledged or parted with nearly all his property in aid of the losing cause, John Hastings was fain at last to make over all his Yelford lands to Speaker Lenthall, and bury himself in the old decayed manor-house at Daylesford. In 1715 Daylesford itself was sold by Samuel Hastings to a Bristol merchant. Samuel's son, then Rector of the parish, had two children, of whom Pynaston, the younger, was only fifteen years old when in 1730 he married Hester Warren, daughter of a gentleman who owned a small estate in Gloucestershire. The young wife died but a few days after the birth of Warren, her second child; and a few weeks or months later Pynaston himself disappeared from Churchill, to seek his fortune elsewhere. The care of his motherless children devolved on their paternal grandfather, whose straitened means ere long drove him to accept a curacy at Churchill. Meanwhile Pynaston's elder brother, Howard, was earning his livelihood as a clerk in His Majesty's Customs.

The rest of the truant widower's life-story is soon told. Within two years he had married again, this time a butcher's daughter. By-and-by he took holy orders, and went out as chaplain to the West Indies, where he ultimately died. Nothing more is known, or perhaps is worth knowing, of the man who begot one of the greatest Englishmen of the eighteenth century. Pynaston served at least as a link in the chain of hereditary causes which helped to foreshape the character of his son. In after years it pleased

Burke's distempered fancy, fed by some scandal which Francis brought from India, to taunt Warren Hastings with his 'low, obscure, and vulgar origin.' Had the charge been never so well founded, it could have taken nothing from the honour due to one whose public record needed no blazonry from the College of Heralds. It is clear that Hastings was a gentleman by birth and breeding; and his great accuser has only bespattered himself with the mud which he flung so recklessly at the object of his wrath.

From the village school at Churchill, where tradition said that he 'took his learning kindly,' little Warren at the age of eight was transferred by his uncle Howard to a school at Newington-Butts, near London. Child as he was, he had already conceived a purpose which many years afterwards blossomed into a fact. One bright summer's day, as he lay and mused beside a stream which skirted his native village, he 'formed the determination' to purchase back Daylesford.

The boys at Newington appear to have been well taught, but very poorly and scantily fed. After two years of semi-starvation, which no doubt stunted his growth and impaired his natural strength, Warren was removed to Westminster School, of which Dr. Nichols was then head-master. The list of under-masters included the scholarly Vincent Bourne. Among Warren's schoolfellows were Lord Shelburne, Churchill, Cowper, and his lifelong friend, Elijah Impey. In mental aptitudes and fine scholarly tastes

the bard of Olney and the future Chief Justice of Bengal had much in common with their younger associate. And that boyish friendship held them fast together in after years. When Hastings was impeached by the House of Commons, Cowper steadily refused to believe him guilty. From the day when Impey clasped hands again with Hastings in Calcutta there grew up between them an intimacy which even sharp public differences could not permanently impair.

Young Warren's life at Westminster gave fair promise of future achievement. A strong brave soul lay seething within his puny frame. 'Quick he was and mild,' says Gleig; 'much addicted to contemplation, and a hard student; but he was likewise bold when necessity required, full of fire, ambitious in no ordinary degree, and anxious to excel in everything to which he addressed himself.' He liked playing at cricket, but his favourite pastimes were swimming and rowing, in both of which he acquired no common skill. His sweet temper and engaging manners seem to have made him a general favourite, while his cleverness and diligence in school-hours won many an approving comment from the head-master himself.

In 1747 he came out first on the list of candidates for a King's Scholarship; Impey taking only the fourth place. Two years later the death of his good uncle changed the whole course of Warren's life. His new guardian, a distant relative named Chiswick, was a Director of the East India Company. He