

THE SIKHS

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The Sikhs by Sir John J. H. Gordon

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SIR JOHN J. H. GORDON

THE SIKHS

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THE SIKHS

BY

GENERAL

SIR JOHN J. H. GORDON, K.C.B.

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS BY THE AUTHOR

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2/11/05.

WILLIAM BLACKWOOD AND SONS
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P R E F A C E.

No visitors at the celebration of the King's Coronation in London received a heartier welcome than the soldiers of the many races and classes who so well represented the Indian Army. Our home people were able to see the quality of the men who compose it, while they themselves were enabled to form a clearer conception of Britain's strength and resources and the character of her people. They were supremely pleased at being present on such an auspicious occasion as the crowning of their King-Emperor, and carried away with them, and left behind them, feelings that should draw closer the ties which bind

India and its people to the British Crown. Politically it was a practical gain for all.

Conspicuous among them were the Sikhs, —tall, bearded, dignified-looking men, intelligent and keen observers, —whose soldierly bearing was the admiration of all who beheld them. The name Sikh is reminiscent of very hard fighting against us fifty years ago, and of equally hard fighting for us on many a field since. Belonging to an exceptional as well as a fine martial race, more than ordinary interest is attached to them on account of their origin and religion. In the following pages I have given a short sketch of this warlike race, and of their rise through much tribulation to power as a nation, and transformation by the fortune of war into loyal and hearty subjects of the Great Queen Victoria. In addition to personal notes made during many years' service with Sikhs, I have drawn information from various old works relating to

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them by Malcolm, Cunningham, M'Gregor, Smyth, and others, and also from the History of the Punjab by Syad Muhammad Latif and Dr Trumpp's Translation of the 'Granth,' the Sacred Book of the Sikhs.

J. J. H. GORDON.

35 ONSLOW SQUARE, LONDON,

1st September 1904.

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THE SIKHS.

CHAPTER I.

ORIGIN OF THE SIKHS.

OF all the many peoples of India none possesses for us greater or more varied historical interest than the Sikhs, a people who four hundred years ago as a reformed religious sect sprang from the ranks of the Jats, a numerous as well as the most important agricultural tribe in the Punjab, descended from the ancient Scythian Getae. They stand out prominently as men of action, who have preserved inherited racial characteristics foreign to Orientals, and evolved themselves by the strength of their own arms into one of the finest military types to be

found anywhere. Their story furnishes a stirring and romantic chapter in the world's history, carrying the imagination back in full flight over the lapse of centuries.

Taking their rise among the disciples of the peaceful Nanak, a Jat Hindu religious reformer, they ultimately, under the pressure of persecution, became a community of warriors, who by the genius of a young Sikh chief, Ranjit Singh, were welded into a nation at the dawn of the nineteenth century. After they lost his strong guiding hand they struggled desperately with us for supremacy in several pitched battles on the Sutlej in 1845-46, when we found them indeed foemen worthy of our steel. Though then disastrously defeated, they doggedly clung to the idea that, after all, they were a match for the British, and rose a second time three years later. Again they fought with all their vigorous might, but being completely vanquished in the open field, they then, like brave men as they are, submitted to the decree of war,