

**DACOITEE IN EXCELSIS; OR,
THE SPOLIATION OF OUDE, BY
THE EAST INDIA COMPANY,
FAITHFULLY RECOUNTED**

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Dacoitee in excelsis; or, The spoliation of Oude, by the East India Company, faithfully recounted by Samuel Lucas & John Robert Taylor

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SAMUEL LUCAS & JOHN ROBERT TAYLOR

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WITH NOTES AND DOCUMENTARY ILLUSTRATIONS

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"I WAS PLEASED, HOWEVER, AND SURPRISED, AFTER ALL WHICH I HAD HEARD OF OUDE, TO FIND THE COUNTRY SO COMPLETELY UNDER THE PLOUGH; SINCE, WERE THE OPPRESSION SO GREAT AS IS SOMETIMES STATED, I CANNOT THINK THAT WE SHOULD WITNESS SO CONSIDERABLE A POPULATION, OR SO MUCH INDUSTRY."—*Bishop Heber.*

INTRODUCTION.

A PETITION on behalf of the King and Royal Family of Oude, who have been shamefully despoiled of their kingdom and revenues, has been recently presented to both Houses of Parliament, and it is not conceived possible that so glaring an injustice can be perpetrated in the face of Europe as that the inquiry simply sought, as the object of this Petition, can be withheld or suppressed by the interests or persons implicated. When this inquiry is obtained the truth will be known, which has been so carefully and ingeniously concealed from the British people. It will be seen how persistently they have been kept in the dark as to a process of exhausting levies tending to confiscation; as to the nature of an interference calculated to a nicety to embarrass and obstruct, without assisting a dependent government; and as to an alliance so insidiously interpreted as to subvert the very dynasty it affected to sustain. It will be seen how falsely a pretended care for a native race can be made the excuse for thwarting their inclinations, while appropriating their substance; and how, consulting our own objects alone, we can enforce a revolution to which they were adverse, and can thrust upon them our rule because we coveted their rupees. It will be seen that while the indignant denunciations of Burke and Sheridan have become a species of lost tradition, we can still parallel the acts of Hastings; that the

story of "The Begums of Oude" is not without a sequel; and that we have not yet outlived the evil days of corporate rapacity and proconsular violence. It will be seen what worse than equivocal deeds may still be committed in the English name, in reliance on our natural indifference to transactions out of our observation, and almost beyond our scrutiny; and it will be fully seen, when a full investigation is granted, how worthless is that apology contrived in the "Oude Blue Book" by official ambition and private interests, possibly only half-conscious of their conspiracy, but certainly calculating on the ignorance of English readers. The truth in its full and authentic form has yet to be revealed; and, as a preliminary to inquiry, it is here proposed to give a compendious history of the spoliation of our faithful and unresisting Ally, designed in contravention of existing treaties, without reasonable cause, with signal ingratitude, in completion of a purpose long cherished, and consummated by an act of violence which is now defended by well-digested calumnies and authoritative slanders. The terms which are here employed may appear strong, but their import has been deliberately and seriously considered, and their proof is forthcoming in a substantial form hereafter; but for the present it is restricted to certain of the points in question. One very considerable point shall be mentioned at once. When the officials of the East India Company were compiling their reports of the ruin of Oude, in answer to the requirements which they knew how to interpret, and while they vied with each other in representing its revenues as failing—its army disorganised—its landholders in rebellion—its cultivators impoverished—in some places its fertile lands relapsing into a desert, and its industrious ryots sold off into slavery; when they stated that 40,000 ploughs had disappeared from a single district,

which could not by any possibility have contained them,* and that the districts generally were given up to crime, havoc, and anarchy, by the misrule of a government at once imbecile and corrupt;—when they thus spread their vague indictment so as to cover the whole land, from the palace precincts to the coverts of the jungle, and substantially described an entire people as brought low and becoming weary by means of the multitude of their oppressions and miseries,—this fiction of official penmanship—this *Oriental romance*, as it can be otherwise proved to be, could not, to the evident surprise and discomfort of its propagators, be reconciled to one simple and obstinate fact,—that the people of Oude, nevertheless, preferred their own country to the contiguous territories of the East India Company. Notwithstanding the alleged inducements to emigrate, notwithstanding the obvious facilities to emigrate which existed on three sides of them, this perverse population would not come forth, in any appreciable numbers, to give a colour to the case of the Indian officials.† They preferred the slandered régime of their native princes to the grasping but rose-coloured government of the Company; and those who had actual experience of both, to the number of some 50,000, employed as Sepoys by the Company, were accustomed to leave their property, wives, and children behind them, to send home any wages they were able to accumulate, and eventually to return themselves when their term of service had expired. Since, however, that the territory of Oude has come under the dominion of the East India Company, 4,000 individuals‡ have departed from

* “Oude Blue Book,” p. 8; and “Reply to the Charges against the King of Oude,” p. 22. Calcutta.

† The official bewilderment at this circumstance will be referred to hereafter.

‡ “Reply to the Charges against the King of Oude,” p. 57. Calcutta.

Lucknow alone; it is alleged that provisions have risen, that crime has increased,* that the soldiers of Oude decline our service, and that its inhabitants are indisposed to our assumed sovereignty. The facts which are filtering through the Indian press, as gradually as its dependent position will permit, are answering the charges contained in the "Oude Blue Book;" or, in other words, they obliterate the only excuse of which these fictitious charges were the scaffolding,—that the people were miserable, and required a change of government. When, moreover, we are assured that the British officers, as they entered the country, could hardly believe their eyes at the signs of high cultivation and of general prosperity which they saw around them, we have further evidence to the same effect in conflict with the Annexation pretext. But the fallacious bearings of the "Oude Blue Book" will be examined in some detail in their proper place in this scandalous history. It is now proposed to give a summary statement of our treatment of Oude from the earliest date; to dispel the calumnious charges which were the foundation of our recent proceedings; to show that from first to last, in our treatment of this unhappy country, we have been outraging moral equity; and in our latest act have violated international law; and thus, that there are the clearest grounds on behalf of the dispossessed family, either for an Address to Her Majesty, or at least for an inquiry by a Committee of one of the Houses of Parliament. Those who raise the question here are prepared and resolved to pursue it, and are content to abide by the issue of an appeal to the justice of the English People.

* "Reply to the Charges against the King of Oude," p. 57.

THE SPOILIATION OF OUDE.

CHAPTER I.

SHOWING HOW THE COMPANY MADE ACQUAINTANCE WITH SHOOJAH-ODD-DOWLAH'S RUPEES, AND HOW QUICKLY THEY IMPROVED THEIR INTIMACY WITH HIS TREASURES AND TERRITORY.

THE kingdom of Oude is situated at the root and in the heart of the Indian peninsula.* Interposed between the Ganges and the Himalayas, it comprises about 24,000 square miles, and contains 5,000,000 inhabitants. Its population is bold and warlike, and furnishes the best constituents of our Indian armies. Its fertility is so remarkable among the principalities of this prolific region, that it is commonly spoken of as "the Garden of India;" and its national revenues have been in fitting proportion to its productiveness. The East India Company, with that discernment which has ever distinguished them, turned its capacities of every description to their profit from an early date. Not only have they drawn their best troops from its peasantry, but they have taken a large portion of

* "The kingdom of Oude is bounded on the north and north-east by Nepal; on the east by the British district of Goruckpore; on the south-east by the British districts of Azimgurb and Jounpore; on the south by the British district of Allahabad; on the south-west by the Doab, including the British districts of Futtehpore, Cawnpore, and Furrukhabad; and on the north-west by Shahjehanpore. It lies between N. lat 29° 6'—25° 34', and 79° 45'—83° 11' E. long.; is 270 miles in length, from south-east to north-west, and 160 in breadth. The area is 23,923 square miles; population, 5,000,000, being 250½ to the square mile." — *M. M. Mussehooddeen*. According to the Post Office authorities, Lucknow, the present capital of Oude, is distant from Calcutta 619 miles. It is a fine city, and reminded Reginald Heber of Dresden. Its architectural and other characteristics are fairly described in that apocryphal narrative, "The Private Life of an Eastern King."