

**A HISTORY OF INDIA:
FROM THE EARLIEST TIMES
TO THE PRESENT DAY**

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A History of India: From the Earliest Times to the Present Day by Thomas Keightley

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THOMAS KEIGHTLEY

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HISTORY OF INDIA,

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BY
THOMAS KEIGHTLEY,
AUTHOR OF THE "HISTORY OF ENGLAND," "HISTORY OF GREECE," "HISTORY OF ROME,"
"OUTLINES OF HISTORY," ETC.

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PREFACE.

THE present work may be regarded as supplemental to my History of England. It was not, however, undertaken with that view, but solely at the desire of my publishers, Messrs. Whittaker & Co., who wished to add a History of India to their Popular Library, and deemed me well qualified to write it. It is rather remarkable that my late friend, Dr. Arnold, of Rugby, when I informed him that I had (as I then thought) done with history, should have proposed to me this very subject, or rather a History of India and our Colonial Empire in general, to complete my account of the British Empire.

In this, as in all my historic epitomes, I have endeavoured (a thing nearly impossible) to unite fulness of information with brevity of narrative; and I trust, that from it may be derived a tolerably clear idea of the origin and progress of our Indian Empire. For my materials, I am indebted to the Histories of Mill and Wilson, and of Thornton, and the various histories, narratives, and biographies that have appeared, from the days of Clive and Orme, down to our own time. In the First Part, I have chiefly derived my information from Mr. Elphinstone's History of India, and the translations of Ferishta. It was not to be expected, that for the sake of a mere epitome, I should consult the archives of the India House, or carefully examine the Debates of Parliament, or the Reports of Committees. I have only aimed at giving a condensed view of the history, as it is to be found in the works just mentioned.

The historic literature of our Indian Empire is very creditable to the servants of the Company. Its commences, as is well known, with the "History of the Military Transactions of the British Nation in Indostan," of Orme, the Thucydides, as we may style him, of our Indian Empire; for, like the illustrious Athenian, he has narrated with fulness, candour, and impartiality, the struggle for dominion of two potent nations; and viewing the affairs of Bengal as episodic, his work, though unfinished, possesses an epic unity. The style is remarkably clear, and not devoid of picturesqueness and animation; and as to the objection that has been made, of his being too minute, I very much doubt if that be a fault, in one who has to furnish materials for all future writers on the same subject. Certain I am, that without reading Orme's work, we shall never fully understand the mode in which the foundations of our wonderful empire in India were laid. It ought to be esteemed one of the classics of our language, and the species of oblivion into which it appears to have fallen is a discredit to our nation. I think, however, that if a new edition of it were published, in the octavo form, with notes by a competent person—Mr. Wilson, for example,—and lithographed copies of the excellent plans which it contains, it would find many readers and purchasers. After Orme's History may be mentioned the various historical writings of Wilks, Duff, Malcolm, Todd, and many others, all of which are extremely valuable.

It were greatly to be wished that Mr. Wilson, instead of writing notes to, and continuing the History of Mill, had become himself the historian of our Indian Empire. I know no one so well qualified to write that history in all its fulness, with all the detail which would leave nothing to be desired; for though Thornton's has many merits, and is written with much impartiality, it is rather a popular history, and the author avoids going much into detail, contenting himself with general views. As to Mill, I always regretted that he should have become the historian of India; for though I have not the slightest doubt of his honesty, his political notions were too utopian, and his prejudices so strong, that perhaps a third of his work is useless, and all his elaborate reasonings and theories are refuted by his annotator, often by simply showing that he was unacquainted with the real facts, and was combating a phantom of his own creation. As a writer on public law and political economy, Mr. Mill would, I think, be more in his place than as a historian.

On the various epitomes of the History of India, it would be unbecoming in me to make any observations; if I found fault with them, it might be ascribed to jealousy; if I praised them, it might be asked why I undertook a work, for which, it was apparent, there was little need.

It only remains for me to say a few words on the orthography of Oriental names and terms. Our earlier writers followed in some the Portuguese mode of spelling, in others they gave the sounds of their own language. Sir William Jones adopted the vowel sounds of the Italian language, marking the long vowels with an accent (*á é í*), a very elegant system, and one which I wish had been generally adopted; but it has the disadvantage of giving sounds to vowels, which they have not in English; and the words, therefore, cannot be pronounced at sight, by mere English readers. In consequence, though the system is followed by scholars, such as Elphinstone and Wilson, the more usual mode is to give the English sounds, though the double vowels (as *oo*), when they frequently occur, are disagreeable to the eye. As to myself, I have followed the two systems indifferently, merely using an *open* instead of an acute accent (*í á*, for *í á*); writing, for example, *Najpút* and *Rajpoot*, *Awir* and *Auser*. I wish, however, I had not used the *é*, for the proper mode of expressing the long *e* of other languages in ours, is by *ai* or *ei*, as in *rain*, *reia*, just as in French. I know that it is becoming the practice, to pronounce the latter diphthong like our *y*, a sound which it never has in our language, except in the mis-spelt *height* and *slight*, and the mis-pronounced *either* and *neither*. In fact, it is, I believe, nearly peculiar to the German language, and was given by Erasmus to the Greek *ei*, a diphthong which, for the last two thousand years at least, has been pronounced by the Greeks like our *ai*, or the Latin and Italian *é*; and hence, I think it is, that our scholars have gotten their erroneous ideas on this subject. I therefore follow those who write *Hyster* and *Khyber*, and not *Heider* and *Khaiber*, or *Kheiber*. There is another sound, about which there is a difference, namely, the short *a* in our *but*, which is of perpetual occurrence in Indian words. The usual way is to write it with a *u*, as in *Jumna* and *Punjab*, but some use the short *a*, of the Sanscrit I believe, and write *Jasna* and *Panjab*. Of this, I totally disapprove; for few would ever pronounce that short *a* otherwise than in English. Finally, it is better to use *d* than *ou*, for the long *a* of the Eastern languages is sounded as *in far*, not as *in fall*.

The coins mentioned in the following pages are the Rupee and the Pagoda; of which, the latter is equivalent to about four of the former. The rupee (Sanskrit *rupya*, silver) varies in value, but that of the Company is generally worth about 2s. In the time of Clive and Hastings, its value seems to have been higher, or rather the rupees then spoken of were those of the native princes, for Mill (iii. 325) gives the current rupee at 2s. *4d.*, and the Sicca rupee at 2s. *8½d.*, and our computations for those times are given after him. In counting, 100,000 rupees make a *lac*, and 100 *lacs*, or ten million rupees, a *crore*, so that a *crore* of rupees (at 2s.) is a million sterling. The usual way of stating sums in rupees is as follows: 2,76,34,270, namely, *crores*, *lacs*, *rupees*.

I have to apologize for two very shameful *errata* in the early pages of this work; of the former of which, I trust, the reader will be equitable enough to say, *Incuria fudit*.

T. K.

Albury Lodge, Newbury,
May 1, 1817.

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