

**SIR ROBERT G.
SANDEMAN: K.C.S.I.,
PEACEFUL CONQUEROR
OF BALUCHISTAN**

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Sir Robert G. Sandeman: K.C.S.I., Peaceful Conqueror of Baluchistan by A. L. P. Tucker

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A. L. P. TUCKER

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TO THE
ANGLO-AMERICAN



SIR ROBERT SANDEMAN
FROM A PORTRAIT BY THE HON. JOHN COLLIER

Frontispiece

G. H. R.

UNIV. OF
CALIFORNIA

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INTRODUCTORY.

SIR ROBERT SANDEMAN was one of many of our countrymen who have given their lives to the service of our Empire on the Indian frontier. He spent his life there, from early manhood until his death on January 29, 1892, in his fifty-seventh year. "He died, as he lived, in the discharge of his duty"—says the inscription on the memorial tablet in our church at Quetta—"Fervent in spirit and serving the Lord." The truth of these few simple words is not to be challenged. It is manifest to all who knew and remember him, as well as to those who know the wild country which he served so well. There his memory is yet green and his name still casts a spell.

It was in Baluchistan, the southern portion of our Indian frontier, that his life's work was done. That wide region of mountain and desert he found in a state of misrule and misery, at times of open civil war. At his death he left behind him a well-ordered country where British influence was supreme and—more than that—welcome. His was no military conquest. No great victories in the field marked his career. Force was not his weapon, although, on proper occasion, few could be more forceful or swift to act than he. In a country where bravery is the first of native virtues, his courage was often tried and his fearlessness well known. But over and above these qualities, which in our frontier service have been common and indeed are expected, there was in him much more. His leading motive, so strong that it was almost a passion,

was love for his fellow-creatures, especially the half-civilised peoples among whom his life was spent. It was a delight to him to adjust their fierce quarrels, and redress the grievances among them which caused so much misery and bloodshed. This, coupled with a strong sense of duty and inexhaustible tenacity and patience, made him the great man that he was. For Sandeman was great undoubtedly, although he himself did not know it. "I might have been a great man," he once remarked in his home circle, "but for the telegraph." Official distinction was probably in his mind when he spoke: of this no great share fell to him. His greatness lies rather in the work which he actually did, the value of which is now clearer than it was in his lifetime. He came to that wild country as a messenger of peace and goodwill, much opposed, much misunderstood, and greatly daring. Peace and goodwill were the foundations that he built upon: a structure so founded was bound to last. In his lifetime his influence and hold upon the country stood firm in the Afghan War of 1878-80 under the most exacting strain. After his death the widespread frontier troubles of 1897 did not affect Baluchistan. And now, in the past few years, when the strain on our Indian frontier has been greater and more protracted than ever before, Baluchistan has proved a source of strength and security. It has most amply fulfilled its founder's hopes and plans.

Sandeman's life¹ has already been written by his contemporary, Dr. T. H. Thornton, who was Secretary to the Governments in India under which Sir Robert worked. This book is of great value and gives a full and sympathetic description of Sir Robert and his work. Much more, however, has been made public during the twenty-five years which have passed since the "Life" appeared; and his story will bear telling again in the

¹ Thornton's "Life of Sir Robert Sandeman". Murray, 1895.

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INTRODUCTORY

brief fashion of this series of Empire Builders, among whom he merits a high and honoured place. The writer can only claim that, holding for upwards of two years (1905-7) the same office, he was able to learn on the spot how marvellous was the hold on the chiefs and peoples of Baluchistan which Robert Sandeman had established, and which his memory and system maintained.

CHAPTER I.

EARLY YEARS.

ROBERT GROVES SANDEMAN was born at Perth on February 25, 1835. He came of a good old Scottish stock, which gave to Perth in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries several distinguished citizens. One of the best known was Robert Sandeman, who founded the "Sandemanian" Church of simple Christian people, to which the great scientist Faraday belonged. This Robert died in America in 1771. His "patience, boldness, and love of conciliation" passed in a marked degree to his namesake and kinsman a century later. His fourth brother, Thomas, was Treasurer and Magistrate of Perth. Thomas' grandson, Robert Turnbull Sandeman, entered the military service of the East India Company in 1824. His regiment was the 33rd Bengal Infantry which he commanded throughout the first Sikh War. He retired in 1862 with the rank of Brigadier-General. He married a Miss Barclay, and Robert, the subject of this memoir, was their son.

Robert was one of a family of ten. When he was ten months old his parents returned to India, leaving him and his elder brother in the care of his aunts at Perth. For these four ladies, who were unmarried, Robert had and retained a lifelong affection. Their love he never forgot: the strong religious beliefs, which they imparted, he carried with him all his life. He did not see his father again until many years later, when he arrived in India, a young military Cadet, as his father had been

before him. Then father and son at once became fast friends and companions: the man and the boy loved each other.

Robert was sent to school at the Perth Academy, and, later, to St. Andrews University. At neither did he distinguish himself. He was not studious then or afterwards. Nor was he, when a boy, great at athletics. He was a strong fellow, mischievous and bold enough, ready to fight on occasion, tender-hearted to animals, and very sensitive and affectionate. When a home letter, which he expected, did not come, he walked thirty miles to Perth to find out the reason. Dr. Miller, his old schoolmaster, thus summed him up before he sailed for India:—

“Robert Sandeman! Ye did little work at school, but I wish ye well. And I would not like to be the Saracen of Bagdad or the Tartar of Samarkand that comes under the blow of your sabre.”

Robert went to India in 1856. Although for a brief while he had tried life in a business office, he was resolved to be a soldier. So he sailed as soon as his commission was granted, bearing with him a pleasant face and manner, a stout frame and heart, little learning, and no interest. In India he soon joined his father's regiment.

Early in 1857 rumours were afloat in India of danger and coming trouble. The mysterious unleavened cakes were being passed from village to village. Mutiny by the native army was in the air. By May the cloud had burst in the outbreaks at Meerut and Delhi, and the storm was gathering strength on all sides. The disarming of all doubtful or disaffected regiments was ordered. Among them was the 33rd.

Colonel Sandeman was one of many British officers in the Indian Army who absolutely believed in their men. He and his officers, says Lord Roberts,¹ trusted in them

¹“Forty-one Years in India,” Lord Roberts, Vol. I., Chap. X.