

**A BOSWELL OF
BAGHDAD,
WITH DIVERSIONS**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649208890

A Boswell of Baghdad, with diversions by E. V. Lucas

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Edited by Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd.
Cover @ 2017

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E. V. LUCAS

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Edward Verrill BY
E. V. LUCAS



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S. B. GUNDY
TORONTO

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I.—INTRODUCTORY

A CURIOUS and very entertaining work lies before me, or, to be more accurate, ramparts me, for it is in four ponderous volumes, capable, each, even in less powerful hands than those of the Great Lexicographer, of felling a bookseller. At these volumes I have been sipping, beelike, at odd times for some years, and I now propose to yield some of the honey—the season having become timely, since the great majority of the heroes of its thousands of pages hail from Baghdad; and Baghdad, after all its wonderful and intact Oriental past, is to-day under Britain's thumb.

The title of the book is *Ibn Khallikan's Biographical Dictionary*, translated from the Arabic by Bn Mac Guekin de Slane, and printed in Paris for the Oriental Translation Fund of Great

A Boswell of Baghdad

Britain and Ireland, 1842-71, some centuries after it was written, for its author was dead before Edward II ascended the English throne. Who would expect Sir Sidney Lee to have had so remote an exemplar?

Remote not only in time but in distance. For although we may go to the East for religions and systems of philosophy that were old and proved worthy centuries before Hellenism or Christianity, yet we do not usually find there models for our works of reference. Hardly does Rome give us those. But there is an orderliness and thoroughness about Ibn Khallikan's methods which the *Dictionary of National Biography* does not exceed. The Persian may be more lenient to floridity ("No flowers, by request," was, it will be remembered, the first English editor's motto), but in his desire to leave out no one who ought to be in and to do justice to his inclusions he is beyond praise.

The modernity of the ancients is continually surprising us. It is one of the phenomena to which we are never quite inured (and could we be so we should perhaps merely substitute the antiquity of the moderns as a new source of wonder),