

PRÉFACE.

THE *Times* of September 16th, 1857, begins its leading article thus. "It is not saying much, perhaps, but there are few countries and few histories about which the English know less than they do about India." Whether this statement is true in its whole breadth or not, it expresses the view under which this volume was proposed by myself, and encouraged by persons who are better judges than I can be of the amount of existing knowledge of India and its affairs. The aim of the work, and the treatment of its subject, are as humble as can well be. I simply wish to put in the way of others a convenience which I should often have been glad of myself for obtaining a general notion of what our Indian empire is, how we came by it, and what has gone forward in it since it first became connected with England. I have adhered strictly to the object of the book, because I had not scope for anything beyond narrative. To form a judgment on past transactions, and speculations on future destinies, would have been at least as interesting to myself as relating

events: but it is not what is most wanted at present moment. A clear conception of past incidents and of the present field of action is the first requisite. Political criticism and speculation must necessarily follow, and be the great national business of the coming time; and that time will be when "the tempest and whirlwind of our passion" under our present calamity have run their course. Our hearts are palpitating too strongly at this moment to leave our judgment free and fair. When the emotion has calmed down, no doubt the natural effect of all powerful emotion will appear in the strengthening and enlightening of the judicial, inventive and reflective faculties, and India will be governed incomparably better than it has ever been yet. But the English people have much to do before that stage is reached; and the very first thing to be done, in order to will and act worthily, and even to mourn duly and righteously, is to learn the broad facts of Anglo-Indian history. As these facts are scarcely to be had, but by the study of bulky works, and of many of them, I have attempted a brief sketch which may be better than nothing to many who have little leisure, and may serve as an introduction to further study to those who have more.

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