
The First Afghan War and Its Causes

Durand Henry Marion

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Author: Durand Henry Marion

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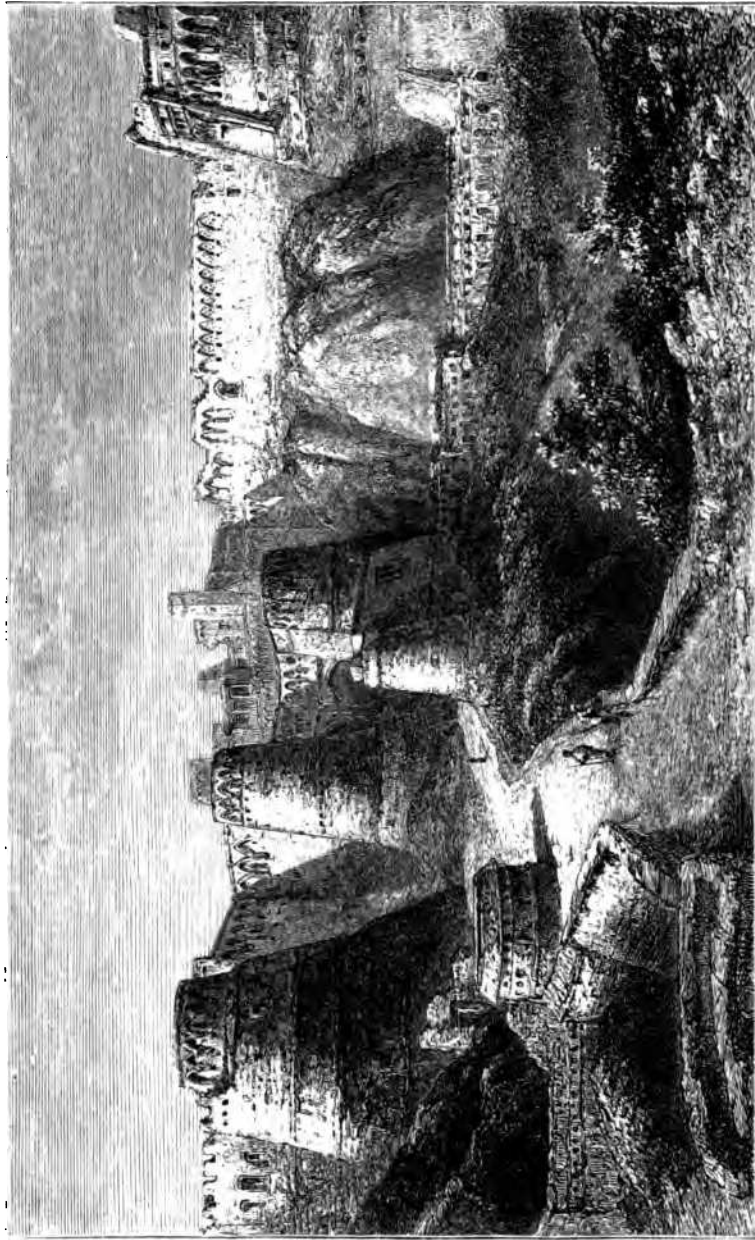
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THE
FIRST AFGHAN WAR

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THE CARUL GATE OF GHUZNEE
FROM A SKETCH MADE ON THE SPOT BY SIR HENRY DURAND

THE
FIRST AFGHAN WAR
AND ITS CAUSES

BY THE LATE MAJOR-GENERAL

SIR HENRY MARION DURAND, K.C.S.I., C.B.

OF THE ROYAL ENGINEERS



WITH FRONTISPIECE

LONDON
LONGMANS, GREEN, AND CO.
1879

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INTRODUCTION.

MORE than thirty years ago my father, then Captain Durand, of the Bengal Engineers, being at home on leave, began to write this history of the Cabul War. He had some special qualifications for the task, for he had served through Keane's campaign, had personally known most of the men whose actions he was to chronicle, and afterwards, as private secretary to Lord Ellenborough, had enjoyed unusual opportunities of obtaining correct and full information upon many important matters connected with the subject of his work.

It was never completed; for in 1848, convinced that an outbreak in the Punjab was imminent, he threw up his furlough and returned to India—just in time to take a part in the battles of the second Sikh War. For two or three years after the close of the campaign his duties afforded him a certain amount of leisure; but the life of an Indian official is at best ill suited to the prosecution of a literary task requiring such close and constant application as the one he had undertaken, and I believe he never resumed it. A portion of the manuscript was converted into a long review article, which is repeatedly quoted by Sir John Kaye, and has had a marked effect upon the historian's treatment of some parts of his subject. The rest was left untouched, and the narrative breaks off abruptly with the arrival of Lord Ellenborough in India. It is, therefore, a fragment, and in parts a rough one.

Nevertheless, fragmentary though it be, I have ventured to bring it to light. Now that war has again been declared against the Ameer of Cabul, and that the defiles of the Khybur have once more reverberated the roar of British guns, I think the

story of our victories and reverses in Afghanistan, told by one who bore a part in the former, and early recognised the errors of policy which led to the latter, cannot be altogether devoid of interest. I have not attempted to elaborate or complete the narrative. Such an attempt could only have had the effect of detracting from any value it may now possess; and the manuscript goes to press almost as I found it. In one or two places, however, I have permitted myself to deviate from the original text. With some hesitation—for truth is truth, and I would not willingly garble my father's work—but in deference to the opinion of others, and with the desire of sparing pain, I have suppressed the statement of certain circumstances which, though indubitable and not wholly devoid of historical interest, were not, perhaps, necessary to the completeness of the story. And I have slightly altered that portion of the manuscript which tells of the storm of Ghuznee. A writer is necessarily at a disadvantage in describing an exploit in which he was one of the chief actors, and I found it difficult to supplement the text satisfactorily by means of notes. The alterations are, however, slight, and there is not a sentence of my own in the account. The whole is taken from papers in my father's handwriting, and I have kept his words.

It is, probably, needless for me to point out that a work like this, written thirty years ago, and left in the rough, affords neither an exposition of my father's views with regard to our policy in Central Asia, nor a fair specimen of his literary powers. For the opinions of men and measures which the book puts forward I offer no apology. They differ considerably in some respects from the ideas now generally entertained, and they are often as strongly expressed as they were strongly held. But, however strongly held and expressed, they were not hastily formed; and, right or wrong, they are the result of careful and conscientious thought.

For those who knew the writer personally, or who are acquainted with the course of events in India during the last forty years, it would not, perhaps, be necessary to add anything more. But the career of an Indian official is as a rule little known in England, and rapidly forgotten by Englishmen, even in India;