WARREN HASTINGS

THE remarkable collection of Warren Hastings' letters to his friend, colleague, and eventual successor, John Macpherson, which Professor Dodwell has edited and Messrs. Faber and Gwyer have just published, forms a welcome and timely reminder of the place in our history which modern historians claim for Warren Hastings as of right. The strength of that claim is enhanced by Professor Dodwell's work, for his tribute to Hastings' pre-eminent qualities as a statesman is a fine one. The reader also, taken behind the screen right into Hastings' private and personal life, will readily echo the Professor's interjection—' How human and attractive a man does Hastings show himself in these familiar letters ! ' Here they help to fill a gap which is still wide, and enlarge effectively, and very pleasantly, the vivid portrait of Hastings in a still more intimate aspect that ' Sydney C. Grier ' (Miss Greig) presented in her *Letters of Warren Hastings to his Wife* in 1905. Further, the men, and their methods and limitations, under or with whom it was Hastings' lot to work during the critical period which the letters cover, are sketched with a sure hand, the touches of which are none the less effective because they are brief. Professor Dodwell is to be warmly congratulated on his valuable and thorough work.

Macpherson in himself is an inconspicuous figure in our Indian history. His social gifts and accomplishments were remarkable, but no noteworthy achievement stands to his credit, nor does his character compel admiration. There is no reason for dissent from Lord Curzon's description of him as ' the least esteemed and most volatile of all the men who have occupied the Governor-General's seat.' [1] But he has fairly earned this distinction—for many years he was Hastings' intimate friend, he rendered him great services in England at a very critical time, and he long enjoyed Hastings' unlimited confidence. The letters, cooler and more distant as they draw to a close, end in August 1787. Hastings' impeachment was then certain, and he was a fallen man, to all appearance ruined. One would be glad to learn that Macpherson had sought a renewal of the former

[1] Lord Curzon of Kedleston, *British Government in India*, vol. 2, p. 166.

friendship, but it does not seem that he did so. He died in 1821, surviving Hastings by only three years, living long enough to see, or rather to hear of, his old friend's complete vindication in Parliament in 1813.

Hastings' place in our history was fixed for a full quarter-century by Macaulay's brilliant Essay. Macaulay, writing in January 1841, speaks of him as 'one of the greatest men that England has ever produced.' His considered eulogy of Hastings forms a very noble and familiar passage in the subsequent Essay. Yet it is linked with condemnation for public crimes so great and atrocious that Hastings' title to recognition in history as a really great Englishman would be very insecure if it rested only on a foundation 'necessarily hasty and imperfect,' and modestly classed by its writer as ephemeral. The Essay appeared in October 1841.

There was something of the prophet in Warren Hastings. In July 1788, when his State trial at Westminster had opened with Burke's terrible denunciation, he writes:

> And, though the most complete acquittal should close the present trial, my reputation will still be blasted by writers yet unborn, and will continue to be so as long as the events that are connected with it are deemed to deserve their place in the history of this country.[2]

Again, in 1797, when the trial was over and he was a free man, cleared of the unbridled invective to which he had to listen as year after year rolled on, he writes,[3] considering how he is to convey to posterity some memorial which will protect his future fame:

> But how was this to be done? Not by an appeal to the printed evidence, for who, even at this day, would impose upon himself the labour of reading twelve volumes in folio of a subject already obsolete? Not by an abridgment of them, for that would be liable to the imputation of partiality; and by whomsoever it were executed either partiality or prejudice would, of necessity, prevail in the execution of it.

The first historian who dealt with the career of Warren Hastings was James Mill, whose *History of British India* was begun in 1806 and published in 1818, the year of Hastings' death. Mill, who was born in 1773, can hardly have been unaffected by the furious controversy that divided public opinion on the question of Hastings' guilt or innocence during the period of the trial. Whether he was so or not, the portion of his work that deals with Hastings' administration is certainly biassed and unfair: indeed, on one point of prime importance in the story of the Rohilla War

[2] Letter, July 17, 1788. *Critical Studies and Fragments*, by the late S. Arthur Strong, M.A.: London, 1905.

[3] *Proceedings on the Trial of W. Hastings*, preface, p. vii.: De Brett, 1797.

he has since been convicted of grave misrepresentation. His work, the first comprehensive and authoritative history of our connexion with India, was very favourably received. On the strength of it he was admitted to the East India Company's service, and was one of the heads of departments at the India House when Macaulay sailed for India. Macaulay knew and esteemed Mill, and was much grieved by the news of his death in 1836. In 1840 his History reached its fourth edition, and was regarded as a standard work of generally accepted authority, long since stamped with the hall-mark of the high approval of the *Edinburgh Review*. Macaulay clearly trusted and used it freely; Mill was to him 'the historian of British India.' [4]

The weightiest blow that Macaulay's Essay has received was delivered by Sir James Stephen in 1885 in his *Story of Nuncomar*. Stephen had contemplated writing an account of Hastings' impeachment, but he found the materials so voluminous, and the matter so intricate, that he doubted if he would be able to finish it, and if anyone would care to read it if he did. He therefore concentrated on one subject, the story of Nuncomar, observing in his introductory chapter:

> For Macaulay himself I have an affectionate admiration. He was my own friend and my father's and my grandfather's also, and there are few injunctions which I am more disposed to observe than the one which bids us not to forget such persons. I was moreover his successor in office and am better able than most persons to appreciate the splendour of the service which he rendered to India. These considerations make me anxious, if I can, to repair a wrong done by him, not intentionally, for there never was a kinder-hearted man, but because he adopted on insufficient grounds the traditional hatred which the Whigs bore to Impey and also because his marvellous power of style blinded him to the effect which his language produced.

And he proceeds to analyse and refute Macaulay's censure of Hastings and Chief Justice Impey with great severity.

Mr. Birrell takes us further on the point of prejudice in his *Obiter Dictum* on Carlyle, remarking:

> So with Macaulay the good Whig, as he takes up the History, settles himself down in his chair and knows it is going to be a bad time for the Tories. Macaulay's style—his much-praised style—is ineffectual for the purpose of telling the truth about anything. It is splendid, but '*splendide mendax*,' and in Macaulay's case the style was the man. He had enormous knowledge and a noble spirit: his knowledge enriched his style and consecrated it to the service of liberty. We do well to be proud of Macaulay, but we must add that, great as was his knowledge, great also was his ignorance. . . . He looked out upon the world, but, behold, only the Whigs were good. . . . Mr. Gladstone has commented with force

[4] Preface to the *Essays*, edition 1852.

upon what he calls Macaulay's invincible ignorance, and further says that to certain aspects of a case (particularly those aspects most pleasing to Mr. Gladstone) Macaulay's mind was hermetically sealed.

It cannot have been otherwise in the case of Hastings, where the innocence of the illustrious accused connoted the discredit of the illustrious accusers.

The most recent writer of eminence who has touched on the career of Warren Hastings is the late Lord Curzon of Kedleston, who thus summarises his position in our history:

> When Mill wrote his History and Macaulay wrote his Essay, no serious attempt had been made to explore the evidence on which the presumed case against Hastings rested, and the echoes of the intoxicated declamations of Burke and Sheridan had not completely died away. To anyone who reads the reports of the trial it is almost inconceivable that men of rectitude and honour can have believed the stories that the Prosecution narrated, or painted the diabolical picture which they drew. Macaulay knew better, and in his Essay we see an often painful effort at the same time to denounce and to defend. He writes as though he were conscious of the triumphant greatness of the man, whom, nevertheless, he felt it his duty, as a sound Whig Pamphleteer, to flagellate and expose. The result is a composite picture that is now seen to bear but a slender resemblance to the truth. . . . Hastings now stands forth, not indeed as a perfect or saintly figure—for he did some things that are open to censure and even to grave reproach—but as a man greatly suffering and sorely ill-used, but boldly daring, supremely competent and greatly achieving.[5]

This is the view generally accepted by those who have studied our Indian history, in that country or in the library. Mr. A. Edward Newton remarks that 'an immense amount has been written on Warren Hastings, but, as is usual, when Macaulay has written on a subject, what he has said is remembered, and all else is forgotten.' The remark is probably just, for current writers still appeal to Macaulay in their judgment of Hastings, and of Clive also.

The course that the world took in Hastings' lifetime in regard to his Indian career is curiously like that which history has followed in regard to his memory. The provocative and damaging advocacy of his agent in England, the 'intolerable' Major Scott, brought on the thunder of Burke and the impeachment. In the same way Gleig in his unfortunate and exasperating book, doing what Hastings most dreaded by assuming principles of public conduct which Hastings would have disavowed, evoked Macaulay's indignant censures. The impeachment ended in acquittal, followed by a period of oblivion and retirement, from which Hastings emerged in extreme old age, to meet with public

[5] Lord Curzon of Kedleston, *British Government in India*, vol. 2, pp. 146 and 163.

honours and acclamation and find, in his own words (1813), that 'the colours of my setting seem all too vivid,' [6] and be able to congratulate himself on 'having outlived all the prejudices which have during so many years prevailed against me.' [7] So in history the missionary historian Marshman (1867) makes, perhaps, the first weighty impression in Hastings' favour. The Rohilla War, he says, 'is one of the few stains on the bright and honourable career of Hastings,' and he dismisses as a foul imputation the assertion (not Macaulay's) that the Brahmin Nuncomar was judicially murdered by Hastings through the agency of Chief Justice Impey. From 1867 we pass on to Sir James Stephen's work, already noticed, and thence to the modern rehabilitation work to which Lord Curzon refers.

The great public crimes attributed to Hastings, stated in order of their date, are—the stoppage of the Delhi Emperor's Bengal tribute (1772); the sale to the Vizier of Oudh of the Kora-Allahabad districts (1773) held by the Emperor as 'a royal demesne for the support of his dignity' under Clive's settlement of 1765; and the Rohilla War (1774). They are followed by the Nuncomar episode (1775), in which Hastings' alleged action is not reckoned by Macaulay as a crime, although Chief Justice Impey, who supported him, is much less fortunate. Then come the Benares outbreak (1781) and the harsh and cruel treatment of the Begums of Oudh and their servants in 1781–2. Other charges have also been made against him: on those that reflected on his personal integrity the judgment of history has, long since, been in his favour. In his first administration he wrote: 'God forbid that the government of this fine country should continue to be a mere chair for a triennial succession of indigent adventurers to sit and hatch fortunes in,' and he did not fail to act up to that early profession.

Of Macaulay's conclusions on these five major charges the most damaging to Hastings is that on the Rohilla War, and the most striking that on the Nuncomar episode. Yet the first of these needs large revision, and the second is altogether erroneous.

The war is a complicated story, discoloured by misapplication to the Rohillas of the designation 'nation,' and of 'extermination' to the consequences of their conquest. They were not a nation, but a recent settlement of Afghan soldiery who formed but a fraction of the large population of the tract that they ruled. They were not exterminated, if by that word their utter destruction is conveyed. After the battle of April 23, 1774, not one of

[6] *Some Unpublished Letters of Warren Hastings*, quoted by kind permission of the Rev. G. T. Shettle from his *John Wiclif and other Essays*, 1922.

[7] *Letters of Warren Hastings to his Wife*: S. C. Grier, 1905, p. 5.

them was put to death, as far as is known Those that were actually under arms when the war was over, and did not remain in the one Rohilla State that was left in Rohilkhand, were removed, 'bag and baggage,' across the Ganges to the territory of their countrymen on the other side. Some of the ladies of the family of two of their chiefs, who were taken prisoner and detained in the Vizier's camp, did suffer much distress and hardship, but they were not subjected to personal outrage or gross insult. Hastings did all in his power to ensure that the war was conducted with humanity. He was abominably served after the battle by Colonel Champion, the commander of the British contingent, who broke down altogether and attacked Hastings for his own failure, with inexcusable and almost demented malignity.

Was the Rohilla War just? It certainly was not undertaken solely with the object of obtaining money, although financial advantage was an 'accessory argument' in Hastings' case for it: the financial distress of the Company was very great. Rohilkhand in the hands of a perfidious and unstable power—and the Rohillas were both—was a weak part in the defensive line of the Company's frontier, for Oudh, allied with and easily supported from Bengal, was, as its ruler, the Vizier, said, 'in reality the door of Bengal, and I am what you may call the barrier to that country'; and the acquisition of Rohilkhand completed the defence of the Vizier's dominion. Rohilkhand, in connexion with frontier defence, was to the Company in 1774 very much what Sind was in 1843, an important, though not an indispensable, section of the frontier line. Hastings' case is that the Rohillas had afforded the Vizier a just cause for war, and all the consequences of it, by their repeated breach of engagement, and that the Vizier had a right to our concurrence and assistance in the prosecution of it. He is right on the first head; on the second he is on less sure ground. His concurrence was the outcome of an entanglement of his own making, from which he was glad to be freed, but drawn into again, in spite of a sanguine attempt at extrication, by a 'gradation of events' beyond his control. As to the conclusion of the whole matter, Lyall (1889) and Strachey (1892) differ: the former's view that the invasion by us of Rohilkhand was unprovoked and unjustifiable is the more convincing.[8] The war, then, is a stain on Hastings' record, but the stain is very different from the black mark imprinted in the Essay.

With regard to the case of Nuncomar, Macaulay advances with the greatest confidence the opinion that Chief Justice Impey hanged him unjustly in order to support Hastings, and

[8] *Warren Hastings*: Sir Alfred Lyall, K.C.B., 1889; and *Hastings and the Rohilla War*: Sir John Strachey, G.C.S.I., 1892.

that Hastings was the real mover in the business. It is not in dispute that the arrest of the Brahmin on May 6, 1775, on a capital charge and his trial and conviction were most serviceable to Hastings. The friendship between Hastings and Impey, Nuncomar's vindictive hatred of Hastings, and Hastings' detestation of the Brahmin, the dislike by the three majority councillors of the Supreme Court and its judges, their intention of ruining Hastings, and their open support and encouragement of Nuncomar—all these are common ground. And on his construction of them Macaulay arrives at his conclusion, which he clinches by an appeal to a letter written in 1780 by Hastings, in which he speaks of Impey as a man 'to whose support he was at one time indebted for the safety of his fortune, honour and reputation.' Yet it is practically certain that this passage does not refer to Nuncomar at all. Impey at about the same time writes of Hastings:

> The power which is exerted against me would not have existed in the hands in which it is, if I had not helped to keep it there.

Both men are obviously referring to the convulsion in Calcutta in June 1777, when General Clavering attempted to seize the government by force, and the question whether or not Hastings had resigned was referred for decision to the judges of the Supreme Court, Impey presiding. Their decision, after an all-night sitting, was that Hastings was still Governor-General under the Regulating Act of 1773: he retained office, and the attempt to dislodge him by violence failed. He writes in the strongest language of the disgrace and humiliation implied by his resignation, and speaks of the issue of the contest as the preservation of his honour and fame. This undoubtedly is the incident, comparatively recent, to which both he and Impey referred in 1780, when their long friendship was for a while interrupted, and both men were deeply moved. Stephen observes on this point with conclusive force:

> If there was such a bond of infamy between two men each would shun all reference to it, especially to a third person, as he would shun the avowal, even to himself, of any other abominable and horrible crime. Macaulay's supposition is not only revolting and improbable, but quite unnecessary.[9]

Apart from that there is Stephen's high authority for the scrupulous fairness of the trial before the whole bench of judges and a jury, and the impartiality of Impey's summing up. If, then, the prisoner was put to death unjustly, the injustice must lie in

[9] *The Story of Nuncomar:* Sir James Fitzjames Stephen, K.C.S.I., 1885, vol. 2, p. 45.

the failure of the judges to suspend the sentence and refer the case to the Crown in England. Impey gave weighty reasons before the House of Commons in 1788 when he defended himself on the motion for his and Hastings' impeachment. One of them was the conduct of the gentlemen who possessed the powers of the Government and used them, as they undoubtedly did, 'to insult and weaken the administration of justice, and to overawe and indeed to threaten the judges.' Another he thus expressed:

> Had this criminal escaped, no force of argument, no future experience, would have prevailed on a single native to believe that the judges had not weighed gold against justice, and that it would ever preponderate.

Had the Government moved the judges to respite the prisoner, Impey says rightly that they must have done it at once, for they would have indeed incurred a great responsibility if they had not. But the Government did nothing, and the judges allowed the law to take its course. They might well have done otherwise, for the rigour of the sentence was excessive; but they had before them reasons strong enough to justify their inaction, and they cannot collectively have acted in bad faith. There is, says Lyall, no need whatever to dissent from Pitt's view that the accusation of a conspiracy between Impey and Hastings for the purpose of destroying Nuncomar was destitute of any shadow of solid proof. Sir Alfred thinks, indeed, that Hastings may have given a hint to the prosecutor to come forward with the forgery charge at so opportune a moment. Against this there is Hastings' declaration on oath that he never did directly or indirectly countenance or forward the prosecution, corroborated by the circumstance that the forgery charge was the outcome of protracted litigation between the parties, and the prosecutor, described by Nuncomar as his inveterate enemy, came forward with the charge as soon as he obtained the incriminating paper, of which he had been long trying to obtain possession. Stephen's view that Hastings had nothing to do with the prosecution, and that there was no sort of understanding between Hastings and Impey, is the more convincing, and more in correspondence with the character of Hastings.

Of the other major charges it is enough to say that on those relating to the treatment of the Emperor in 1772–3 Hastings has a complete and convincing answer, and that is the case also, in the writer's opinion, on the Benares charge. The extent of his responsibility for the compulsion applied to the Oudh Begums and the cruel treatment of their servants is not easily measured. These two last transactions belong to the war period, when every coin in the Calcutta treasury and every man whom the Calcutta Government could raise was needed for the armies which Hastings

sent over the breadth and length of the Indian peninsula to preserve Bombay and save Madras from annihilation in a period of extreme national peril and humiliation. It should be remembered that Raja Cheyt Singh of Benares actually raised a body of 500 cavalry in January 1774 at Hastings' request, to aid in the expulsion of armed bands of raiders who were harrying Behar, and later in the same year, at the call of the Vizier of Oudh, mustered a large army to suppress a rebellion in that kingdom. Again, the younger of the two Begums of Oudh died, as far on as 1816, in possession of estates and treasures valued at over a million sterling, the administration of which she made over by deed to the British Government, the head of which in 1781 is denounced for robbing her of her domains and treasures.[10]

Hastings' return to England, his misplaced confidence in royal favour and the claim on his country of his own splendid services, his failure to realise the power and intensity of the storm that soon broke upon him, his purchase of Daylesford, the ordeal of his long State trial, his financial ruin and its relief by the East India Company—all these are incidents and phases in a familiar story. The great speeches against him at Westminster have passed into history: his own account of one of the most famous of them (Sheridan's) should be better known. He writes (July 17, 1788):

> People admire this as a perfect model of eloquence. Many think it turgid nonsense. . . . It is strange to hear a man after declaiming against me as a monster, and roaring with assumed fury at the enormities which I had committed, pass in the transition of a minute to sallies of pleasantry, put on the most comic arrangement of features, and (I am most sorry to say it) convulse the whole assembly with laughter. This buffoonery met with its portion, and a large one, of applause.

The frivolity of his countrymen, 'who made his sufferings the subject of their entertainment and the argument of convivial discourse,' called forth his most rooted contempt, as did 'the foul invective, such as would be worse than death to many minds, uttered unreproved,'[11] to which he had to listen.

In his long trial, now recognised as a blot in our judicial history, as his impeachment should be as one of its crimes, he bore himself with patience rarely broken, and his habitual dignity. The kneeling at the bar stung him to the quick. When the trial was over he was a forgotten man: his public life was

[10] *Calendar of Persian Correspondence*, vol. 4, Nos. 757 and 1134; and *The Last Will and Testament of Bahu Begum: Bengal, Past and Present*, April-June, 1924.

[11] *Critical Studies and Fragments*, by the late S. Arthur Strong, M.A., 1905. This previously unpublished letter was found by Mr. Strong among the papers of Lord St. Oswald preserved at Nostell Priory.

over, and there is little subsequent trace of those great qualities which enabled him to preserve our Empire in India and lay the first foundations of its administration. In 1798, indeed, he wrote a very able letter to the Secretary of State for the Navy, pressing for the occupation of Perim Island, in the Red Sea Straits, when India was threatened by the French operations in Egypt. In this, as in other matters, he was far in advance of his time. But, save for a disappointment about a peerage in 1806, the quiet life at Daylesford was little broken until his remarkable reception in the two Houses of Parliament and at Oxford in 1813 and his presentation to the allied sovereigns in London in the following year, in which his name was added to the list of Privy Councillors. In 1815 he writes:

> On the 8th October, 1750, I first set my foot in the land of Bengal, 65 years ago. What an age it is permitted me to look back upon, with my bodily or mental faculties, though impaired, not destroyed, and as my memory presents to me the record of times past to be able to say—'*quorum pars non parva fui*,'—and like a grain of sand in the way of the ball of a billiard table to have given its eccentric direction to the rolling events of the world, which they would not have obtained if I had never had existence.[12]

In the spring of 1818 he became seriously ill, and his death followed in August. A fortnight before it he dictated a letter to the East India Company soliciting the continuance of his annuity to his wife, the attractive woman with whom his marriage was so indefensible, and his long married life so happy and blameless.

Lord Curzon of Kedleston, himself the greatest of Hastings' successors who have belonged to our own time, has indicated in the work that he has left behind him that the writing of an account of the career of Hastings was within his contemplation. Our historical literature is much the poorer for its absence, for no man has ever been better qualified to write that account than he. He has, however, left other memorials of Hastings by those methods in which he pre-eminently excelled. Hastings' country seat at Alipore—'the milk-white building, with smooth shining surface,' of which the secret is now lost—was rescued by Lord Curzon from neglect and decay, and purchased and fitted as a State guest-house for the reception of the Indian princes and other personages of great distinction who visited Calcutta when that city was the seat of the Government of India. The transfer of the capital to Delhi has unhappily destroyed Lord Curzon's 'fair scheme' of Hastings House, and this memorial and significant building has since been appropriated to common-place purposes. However, in the Victoria Memorial Hall, the stately and beautiful building which Calcutta owes to Lord

[12] The Rev. G. T. Shettle's work, already quoted.

Curzon, the great marble figure of Warren Hastings stands in the paved quadrangle, a special room is set apart for him and his relics, while pictures of him and his wife, in some cases obtained by Lord Curzon's personal and unwearied labours, hang upon the walls.

It is not so with him in his own country. The Abbey holds an inconspicuous memorial tablet, surmounted by his bust, erected by his widow : the India Office has Flaxman's unsatisfying statue of him, executed for the East India Company in 1823, and transferred afterwards from the India House to its present site. In the council chamber at the India Office his full-length portrait by Romney (1795) hangs above the President's chair in the council chamber, and possibly depicts him as he stood during his trial. This picture was bequeathed to the Company by Hastings' friend Larkins, the Accountant-General at Calcutta, who gave evidence for him at the trial, and for whom the picture was painted. Each of the two great clubs that have a special connexion with India, the Oriental and the East India United Service Clubs, has a portrait of him. The club-house of the latter in St. James' Square was the residence of Philip Francis, Hastings' worst enemy, from 1791 until his death in 1818. A recent and pleasing little memorial to Hastings is to be found in America, where the name of 'Daylesford' has been given to a station on the Pennsylvania Railroad, 'as Hastings was the hero of an old man who lived in these parts, and was given the privilege of naming the shed and platform that have formed the station there.' [13] In Westminster Hall the spot where he faced his accusers has been marked by a brass tablet let into the stone floor, by order of Parliament moved for and secured by Lord Curzon. 'But the nation,' he comments, 'has never taken any step to testify its supreme debt to one of its greatest sons.' [14] Macaulay's fine peroration at the close of the Essay regarding the Abbey as Hastings' rightful resting-place will be remembered here.

Surely such a memorial is due to the 'man separated while yet a schoolboy from his native country, and from every advantage of that instruction which might have better qualified him for the high offices and arduous situations which it became his lot to fill,' whose first stretch of service in India included 'the only period of Anglo-Indian history that throws grave and unpardonable discredit on the English name,' [15] and whose stainless record in that period stands almost alone.

[13] *A Magnificent Farce :* A. Edward Newton, The Atlantic Press, Boston, 1921.

[14] Lord Curzon, *Government of India*, vol. 2, p. 139, note.

[15] Lyall, *Warren Hastings*, p. 202 ; and *British Dominion in India*, p. 60 4th edition.

Later he held his high office as Governor-General at a time when, under Lord North's Administration, political degradation seemed to have reached its climax, and the indispensable aid and support of the Ministry was withheld from him, while his position was for a time rendered almost intolerable by colleagues whose conduct has long since been judged as indefensible. Yet he saved our Empire in India, 'retrieving in the East the national loss suffered in the Western world' in that period of disaster and fearful danger. A passage that he read in his defence before the House of Lords in 1791 runs thus:

> The valour of others acquired, I enlarged and gave shape and consistency to, the dominion which you hold there; I preserved it; I sent forth its armies with an effectual but economical hand, through unknown and hostile regions, to the support of your other possessions; to the retrieval of one (Bombay) from degradation and dishonour; and of the other (Madras) from utter loss and ruin. . . . I gave you all, and you have rewarded me with confiscation, disgrace and a life of impeachment.

This may be criticised as self-praise, but every word of it is true. In every one of these great operations he was hampered by the breakdown of the minor administrations which he rescued, and by intrigue and timidity in his own. He was the first Englishman who controlled the policy of our scattered Indian possessions as a combined whole, and among the first of those who perceived the great advantage of the combination and pressed for it. He was the founder of our internal administration of the first great Indian province that we governed, on lines necessarily incomplete and imperfect, but truly drawn and still subsisting. Mr. Arthur Strong has been right in speaking of him as 'one of the greatest constructive powers in English history.'

These, in brief, are Hastings' services and sufferings. Many opinions have been recorded since 1841 on the question whether, in his public life, he was unscrupulous and unprincipled. They vary from Morley's untenable view that he openly set aside all pretence of righteous principle, to the eulogy, sometimes indiscriminating, of his modern defenders. Lord Curzon's words which I have quoted give the fairest summary of his career. Judged by Stephen's test—the proof of the great charges against him—he must be held to deserve grave reproach for his engagement in the Rohilla War. Lyall's view, that he was singularly blind to the political immorality of our participation in it, has not been disturbed. The case was well put by a young servant of the Company posted at Patna in March 1774, when the Company's brigade was marching to join the Vizier's army. He writes:

> Mr. Hastings' settlement . . . doth not meet with the approbation of people in general. It is called hiring the troops to the country Powers.[16]

[16] *Palk Manuscripts*, 1922, p. 238.

Nor can Hastings escape censure in respect of the cruel treatment of the Begums and their servants. That treatment was the outcome of measures to which he assented, not without good reason, and on the enforcement of which he most strenuously insisted. He cannot be absolved of responsibility for the consequences of his policy, although he was many hundred miles from the scene of their occurrence and had no knowledge of them. The statesman, who gets the credit of his enterprises when they succeed, must also take his share of discredit when their execution is disfigured by acts that cannot be defended.

Hastings' case was that, though all his actions could be justified by extreme necessity, they needed no such justification. 'I am what I am,' he writes in July 1788, 'though all the universe combine to applaud or to condemn me.'[17] He admitted and was conscious of nothing blameworthy. In private life he was blind to the obvious aspect of his second marriage: it was legal, and that sufficed him. Nevertheless he proved a most devoted and affectionate husband, and was, besides, kindly and generous, with nothing coarse or cruel in his disposition. I do not think that he was vindictive, holding him rather as one of those proud men who know how to remit, but not to forgive. Lyall is very unjust to him in his public character when he speaks of his 'political escapades' in connexion with the Benares outbreak, and the coercion of the turbulent and irresponsible Begums. Hastings was never other than serious in his undertakings, and levity in public affairs was always odious to him. The reproach and censure which is his due must be tempered by his discarded plea of extreme necessity.

Time must show the result of Lord Curzon's reminder of the absence of any memorial of Hastings by the nation. Clive owes the noble statue that overlooks St. James's Park from the steps of the India Office to the touch of that unwearied hand, now, alas, vanished. Yet in the great Hall of History, if such there may be, there should now be none to remain studiously covered when the pensive shade of Hastings enters and withdraws. And, if in that assembly Lord Curzon's motion should be brought forward, there should be no dissentient voice among those who have sought, without prejudice, to appraise the true value of the services to his country of 'one of the greatest men that England has ever produced.'

A. L. P. TUCKER.

[17] *Critical Fragments and Studies*: the late S. Arthur Strong, M.A.

'THE MIRROR OF BEAUTY'

SEIJO HIROSÉ lived amid a jumble of curios in his little house in a side-street off Tansu-machi, Tokyo. Like many people of his kind, he had seen better days before the great earthquake of 1923, as some of us had before the Great War of 1914. Perhaps this bond of misfortune, but recently past, drew us together, for it was unlikely that his devotion to me was feigned only to loosen my well-frayed purse-strings, or owed its origin entirely to the strange chance of our first meeting, sufficiently exciting though it was to have justified some feeling of gratitude towards myself. With curio dealers, however, I have never felt quite sure of my ground, and at first I assumed a guarded attitude in my dealings even with Hirosé, whom I happened to like.

Curio dealers are, in themselves, curious all the world over; contemptuous of the ignorant souvenir hunter, they have an equally divided passion for hoarding genuine antiques and for deceiving the foolish foreigner into buying worthless imitations at a high price. I believe they respect the person who can distinguish between the real and the false among objects of art and antiquity as much as they despise the unlearned, though they have no use for the former as means of livelihood.

I certainly felt a slight contempt in Hirosé's attitude towards myself as he displayed for my pleasure an endless amount of rubbish at my first visits, but, since he did not press me to buy, I assumed that he was only feeling his way. My small knowledge of his profession kept me silent in the early days of our acquaintance, and I drank his pale tea in large quantities without any outburst of enthusiasm for his wares. But one evening on my tenth or eleventh visit I confessed to him that I was far more interested in his conversation (for he was a veritable mine of information concerning Japanese folk-lore) than I was in his collection of curios, which appeared to me only third-rate. The flood-gates were now opened, and a torrent of apologies and excuses for the wretched poverty of his miserable shop burst upon this eminently learned and exalted person's ears. 'No,' I said, 'I know nothing whatever about Japanese curios and works of art, but I am most anxious to have some small acquaintance