INTRODUCTORY

The original edition of Capt. Cunningham's book appeared in 1849. A second edition was finished in 1851, but, as is explained in the second preface by his brother, this edition did not make its appearance till 1853, after the death of the author. The second edition did not differ materially from the first beyond certain re-arrangements and certain additions to the notes, with the exception of Chapter IX. This chapter, which deals with the events leading up to, and the progress and result of, the first Sikh War, was considerably modified in the second edition. Even in this form the chapter contains many statements of an injudicious nature. Indeed, as the result of certain strictures upon the policy of the Government of India in dealing with Gulab Singh of Jammu, the author was dismissed from his employment in the Political Department by the Honourable East India Company and sent back to regimental duty. These strictures, together with a note upon the subsequent punishment meted out to the author, will be found in their proper place in Chapter IX.

To turn to the volume as a whole. The author, as he tells us in his own prefatory note, spent eight years of his service (from 1838 to 1846) in close contact with the Sikhs, and that too during a very important period of their history. His experiences began with the interview between Lord Auckland and Ranjit Singh in 1838 and lasted down to the close of the first Sikh War, when he became resident in Bhopal. The result of his eight years' residence was to give him a great insight into the history of the Sikhs and to inspire in him a partiality which is only too clearly visible in his handling of the events leading up to the outbreak of hostilities with the British. The whole book bears evidence of most meticulous care, and the voluminous footnotes show the breadth and variety of the author's study.

Chapter I deals with the country and its people. There is a detailed description of the industries of the Punjab and its dependencies, much of which has been rendered archaic by the natural march of events. The ethnological part of this chapter has been carefully
INTRODUCTORY

The fervour of their belief rose triumphant over persecution, and the Sikhs found their opportunity in the years of disorder which followed the death of the Emperor Bahadur Shah in 1712.

Chapter IV relates the gradual establishment of Sikh independence down to 1764. Northern India was a wild welter of confusion. The Mughal Empire was falling rapidly to pieces under the repeated blows of invaders from north and south. First Nadir Shah and his Persian hosts, and then the Afghan Ahmad Shah Durrani, swept down upon the imperial capital. Like Rome of old, Delhi felt again and again the hand of the spoiler, and its glories became a thing of the past. The advent of the Marathas upon the scene seemed at first the prelude to the establishment of Hindu supremacy in the north of India. But the battle of Panipat (1761) proved fatal to their ambitions and left the stage open for the development of a new power in the Punjab.

Amid all this confusion the Sikhs gradually achieved their independence. At first they were mere bands of plunderers, but gradually these bands became united into a formidable fighting force. In 1748 the army of the Khalsa became a recognized organization under Jassa Singh, and though it frequently suffered defeats, it never lost its definite character after that date. The Sikhs sustained their greatest disaster at the hands of the Afghans at Ludhiana in 1762, but the waves of Afghan invasion had spent their strength. In 1763, at Sirhind, the Sikhs avenged their defeat of the previous year and permanently occupied the province of Sirhind. In the following year, which witnessed the last Afghan invasion, they became masters of Lahore.

INTRODUCTORY

And in the same year, at a meeting at Amritsar, organized themselves into a ruling political system, described by the author as a 'theocratic confederate feudalism'. The condition of the Punjab during these years of bloodshed and disorder was miserable in the extreme. To find any parallel in European history one would have to go back to the days of King Stephen in England or to some of the worst episodes of the Thirty Years' War. Waris Shah, the author of the story of Hir and Ranjha, who flourished during this period, gives, in the epilogue of this poem, a vivid account of the state of the country:

Fools and sinners give counsel to the world.
The words of the wise are set at naught.
No man tells the truth or cares for justice,  
Telling what is untrue has become the practice in the world.  

With violence men commit flagrant iniquity,  
In the hands of tyrants there is a sharp sword.  
There is no Governor, Ruler, or Emperor.  
The country and all the people in it have been made desolate.  

Great confusion has fallen on the country,  
There is a sword in every man's hand.  
The purdah of shame and modesty has been lifted  
And all the world goes naked in the open bazaar.  

Thieves have become leaders of men,  
Harlots have become mistresses of the household.  
The company of devils has multiplied exceedingly.  
The state of the noble is pitiable.  
Men of menial birth flourish and the peasants are in great prosperity.  

The Jats have become masters of our country,  
Everywhere there is a new Government.¹  

The Sikhs had become a nation and, in theory, a united nation, but in actual fact such was far from being the case. The new State was composed of a number—twelve is the usually recognized total—of leagues or 'Misals'. Instead of uniting and forming a solid State, these 'Misals' were almost constantly engaged in civil war, grouping and regrouping in the struggle for pre-eminence. It needed a strong hand to check these internecine disputes, and, fortunately for the Punjab, Ranjit Singh appeared on the scene. The career of the one-eyed Lion of the Punjab is fully described in the text and needs but little reference at this point. The Maharaja's real career commences with his acquisition of Lahore in 1799. From that date he steadily extended his sway over the whole Punjab. Many books have been written on the career of this remarkable man and upon the system of comparatively orderly government which he introduced. There exist in the Secretariat at Lahore a number of manuscript records (accounts, muster rolls, pay sheets, &c.) of his government. These are not under examination, and it is hoped that a great deal of additional light will be thrown upon his system of government as a result. The papers that have been examined up to the present time (1915) show how actively Ranjit Singh interested himself in the details of his administration. As regards his character, he was not altogether without faults. Temperance and chastity were not his conspicuous virtues. But with all his shortcomings, he was a strong and able ruler admirably suited to the conditions of the time. The Maharaja's territorial expansion brought him into contact with the Cis-Sutlej States, which were under English protection, and so into contact with the English. The result of this was the Treaty of 1809, which Ranjit Singh loyally observed down to his death in 1839, although at times he showed symptoms of irritation at the rising power of the English. The death of Ranjit Singh in 1839 was the signal for the outbreak of a series of palace revolutions, in which the army of the Khalsa played a part hardly dissimilar from that of the Praetorian Guards at their very worst. This period of the story is fully dealt with by the author in Chapter VIII. The disorder culminated in the crossing of the Sutlej by the Sikh forces and the consequent outbreak of the first Sikh War. From this point of the story the partiality of the author causes many of his statements to be viewed with suspicion. In his eyes the war represents a national tide of self-preservation rising against the ever-encroaching power of England. Such was far from being the case, and very different motives actuated the corrupt administration of Lahore. Terrified of the power of the army, that administration flung its legions across the Sutlej in the hope that they would be either annihilated or so seriously crippled as to cease to be a danger in the future. At the same time the outbreak of hostilities would divert attention from the shortcomings of the central government—a political manoeuvre strongly reminiscent of some of the actions of Napoleon III. The author gives a somewhat turgid description of the battles of the war—indeed, the language in the account of the battle of Sobhaon reminds one of the story of the battle in the poems of Mr. Robert Montgomery—and he concludes his narrative by some general remarks upon English policy in India. From the latter I have removed some passages which are not only injudicious but which have been stultified by the march of events.

¹ I am indebted to Mr. C. F. Usborne, C.S., for the above translation.
elusion of the first war, he probably lost touch with Punjab politics.

It is not possible in a short introduction of this nature to follow the history of the Sikhs in detail since the Punjab came under British control. That the Sikhs settled down peacefully and loyally under the new regime is sufficiently borne out by the records of the Mutiny, when the newly raised Sikh regiments—many of them composed of the disbanded regiments of the Khalsa army—did excellent service. The Sikhs have displayed their warlike aptitude in other fields since 1857 and are to be found today taking their share in the great European War.

In 1911 the Sikh population of the Punjab numbered a little over two millions out of a total population of some twenty-three and a half millions. As regards modern conversions to Sikhism and the relation of that religion to Hinduism, Mr. Candler has the following interesting remarks in an article which appeared in Blackwood's Magazine in September 1909: The truth is that the Sikhs have only partially rid themselves of caste. They were able to suppress the instinct so long as it endangered their existence, but when they became paramount in the Punjab and the Khalsa was sufficient for its own needs, the old exclusive Brahmanical spirit returned. The influence of Ranjit Singh's Court increased this retrogressive tendency, and in spite of the Guru's teaching it is not always easy for a low-caste Hindu to become a Sikh to-day. Still, it is not always impossible. The acceptance or rejection of a convert is likely to depend on whether the majority in the district Singh Sabha or Sikh Council is conservative or progressive. The so-called Conservative Party is naturally exclusive, while the so-called Progressive Party are really purists who would revert to the injunctions of Nanak and Gobind. They are ready to receive all converts whom they believe to be genuine, of whatever caste. The Sikhs now number a little over two millions, and in the last ten years the numbers have only risen in proportion to the general increase in the Punjab. The lack of converts is due as much to apathy as to obstacles placed in the way by the priests.

H. L. O. GARRETT

BIOPGRAPHICAL NOTE

ON THE CUNNINGHAM FAMILY

ALLAN CUNNINGHAM, the father of the author of this volume, was born in the parish of Keir, Dumfriesshire, in 1784. Although apprenticed to his elder brother, then a stonemason, he soon showed a literary bent. At the age of eighteen he made the acquaintance of Hogg, the Ettrick shepherd, and the acquaintance ripened into a warm friendship. Early in the nineteenth century he commenced his career as an author, and his poems began to appear in various periodicals. When R. H. Cromek, the engraver, was travelling in Scotland in 1809, collecting Scottish songs, he met Cunningham, who showed him some of his work. Upon Cromek's advice Cunningham then went up to London to try his fortune at literature. For some years he worked both as a mason and as a literary man, producing a number of poems in the Day and the Literary Gazette. In 1814, Chantrey, the sculptor, to whom he had been introduced by Cromek, engaged him as his superintendant of works, and this connexion lasted down to Chantrey's death, in 1841. During this period he produced a quantity of literary work of a varied nature. He had become acquainted with Sir Walter Scott, when the latter was sitting for Chantrey, and in 1820 submitted to him a drama, Sir Marmaduke Maxwell. It was considered unsuitable to the stage, but Scott was favourably impressed with the style. In 1825 appeared The Songs of Scotland, Ancient and Modern, which contained the well-known sea song, 'A Wet Sheet and a Flowing Sea.' His connexion with Chantrey gave him an intimate knowledge of the artistic world, which he turned to account in his Lives of the Most Eminent British Painters, Sculptors, and Architects, which he published from 1829-33. His last important work was an edition of Burns, which appeared in 1834. Late in life he made the acquaintance of Carlyle, who had a warm regard for him. Cunningham died in 1842, leaving five sons and a daughter.

Joseph Davey Cunningham, the eldest son and the