

Too scrappy
Very well expressed
but disjointed
g#-
The Life and Work,
of
Warren Hastings

92
SECOND PRIZE

The life and work of Warren Hastings can be described briefly viz; to lay the fabric on which the present Indian Empire is founded.

Born on December 6th 1732 his mother dying at his birth, he was taken charge of by his uncle and attended school at Newington Butts, thence to the famous Westminster School, perhaps here was formed the character that was afterwards to sustain his convictions in many trying moments.

His earliest ambition was to purchase the old home at Dalesford. He proved a capable scholar, obtained a king's scholarship at 15, an outstanding feat at this institution but was unable to follow at the University owing to the death of his uncle.

After being a King's scholar for two years, he was placed under a private tutor to study bookkeeping and accounts, following which through the influence of his Guardians he obtained a position as writer in the East India Company, arriving in October 1750 to begin his brilliant Indian career.

As a writer his work seems to have been ledger work, to supervise the warehouses used for storing the articles brought by native traders, his salary being £5 per year.

The year 1753 changed his whole Indian history. After the Black Hole incident we find him a prisoner on bail, his safety threatened by corresponding with Drake

he fled to Falta, served as a volunteer and first made the acquaintance of Clive, who placed the negotiations with the defeated Khabob in Hastings' hands. He married in 1756 the widow of Captain Campbell who died in 1759 leaving two children. After the battle of Plassey he went on a mission to Murskibadad, was made Resident to succeed Scrafton, thus showing that his abilities were early recognized, by establishing the title to the 24 Paraganas he shows that his aim was to further the Company's interests.

He finds administration very corrupt, endeavours to remedy this state of affairs, displaced one Mir Jafar, and made enemies who caused considerable trouble later.

He seems to derived no pecuniary advantage though the opportunities were many.

After 14 years work in the Council at Bengal he resigned, returned to England a comparatively poor man proving his honesty in public affairs.

A pathetic event in his life was that on reaching England he heard of the death of his eldest son.

From this time 1765 he lived quietly in England meeting many famous men of letters and for study, and recreation, engaged in literary work. He at this time suggested a chair in the University for teaching of the language used in the Indian Courts. Being called to the House of Commons as a witness in an inquiry on Indian Affairs, his local knowledge was recognized and he was sent to Madras in 1769, funds for this voyage being borrowed, he met his future wife the Baroness Imhoff on

board.

As second in the Council he instituted better systems of investments of the Company's finances in 1771 he was made second in the Council at Calcutta. Arriving in 1772 his work seems to have been to place affairs on a more satisfactory basis, proceeding with his usual caution and good judgement.

Here Kand Humar crosses his path accusing two native Princes of various offences these were prosecuted against the wish of Hastings, and finally acquitted. he also had a revision of laws made at this time in original Sanskrit which was translated in 1775.

His many duties are impossible to enumerate a few such as plagues, to fight, police reform, help the many Rajahs, with both civil and military aid, and watch over the Company's various interests, check abuses etc. yet he found time to send a mission to Tibet the first of its kind with instructions to look out for anything to further trade.

His arduous tasks were impeded by the Regulating Act, which resulted in Hastings being outvoted in the Council after many years of toil found himself in a strenuous position by the Acts of politicians in England. By this Act Hastings was made first Governor General with a council of four.

On their arrival in India totally unacquainted with affairs they commenced

an investigation into the past administration of Hastings engineered by Sir. F. Phillips.

Had Hastings not continued to do what he thought his duty to himself and the Empire in spite of opposition, and had he resigned in 1774 there would perhaps have been no British India to-day.

In 1775 Kand Kumar accuses Hastings of accepting bribes. This and the Poonah War formed the base of the charges brought by Phillips. After Hastings had left the Council as a protest accompanied by Barwell he was fined by the Councillors £35000. Kand Kumar by the way meeting a well deserved fate by hanging on August 5th but his actions were to cause Hastings trouble ten years after.

Although he had sent in his resignation the death of Colonel Monson improved his position. He revoked this, and proceeded to revise the land settlements of 1772. On the arrival from England of news that his resignation had been accepted Clavering tried to usurp his position. Hastings however was much loved by all who knew him, and he was supported by Judges and the Military.

Events now threatened the existence of the British India, owing to the war with France and Hastings spared no effort to further British prestige, impeded by Phillips he challenges and wounds him in a duel. but on his arrival in England he continued to attack Hastings while in India Coote had saved Madras put

Bombay in a better position the Indian Empire saved from a crisis as grave as the Mutiny by Hastings' policy.

Sending Leslie with 36,000 men and followers the greatest military feat of the time, across India, by other acts he established British Influence from Calcutta to Bombay, a general pacification treaty being signed in 1782. His wife preceded him to England and he arrived age 52 years.

Of the now famous impeachment little can be said in the scope of this essay for this was due to the politics of the times lasting from 1787 to 1795 Hastings being acquitted on all charges voted on.

The trial was a warning to those in charge in India but a poor reward to Hastings. A born ruler and statesman it reduced him almost to poverty but he was eventually granted a pension and he fulfilled his youthful ambition by purchasing Daylesford.

So we leave him a martyr to North Burke, Fox, and the politicians of that day, he who gave his best for the Company and England, leaving the British in the first position in India, by his own sound judgement and executive abilities, in spite of adverse circumstances, receiving abuse. Instead of reward, one small honour was conferred upon him by Oxford University.

After living as a country gentleman, he died after a short illness, and was buried in Daylesford Church in 1818, and his bust is in Westminster Abbey, with the legions

of Great Englishness.