

AURANGZEB AND DARA.

Dara was Shah Jahan's eldest son ; he had been declared his successor and admitted to a considerable share in the Government during his father's lifetime. He had great talents for command but was haughty and rash. Had he succeeded to the throne he would have made an excellent Emperor, could have made the firm government of the Muguls still firmer and the whole future history of India perhaps would have been changed. His character was an exact contrast to that of his brother Aurangzeb. It is very interesting to note Shah Jahan's own opinions of these two princes. "Dara had talent for command and the dignity becoming the royal office, but was intolerant to all who had any pretensions to eminence ; whence he was 'bad to the good and good to the bad.' Aurangzeb excelled both in action and counsel, was well fitted to undertake the burden of public affairs, but full of subtle suspicions and never likely to find any one whom he could trust." Aurangzeb was pure and even austere in his private life, he is regarded by the Mussalmans as the greatest of the sovereigns that the world has ever seen. Under him the Mogul Empire attained its greatest splendour ; but by the time of his death it was rapidly falling into decay. He was a sincere and a bigoted Musalman. "He at one time professed his intention of renouncing the world and taking the habit of a Fakir." His zeal was shown in prayers, in reading the *koran*, in promoting his own faith and discouraging idolatry and infidelity. His views in religion were very narrow. From the beginning of his reign all his measures directed against the Hindus were almost intolerable. He forbade ostentatious display of idol-worship, and insulted and destroyed many Hindu temples in India. So severe was the persecution that throughout Bengal all Pagodas were destroyed and even in the holy city of Benares temples were demolished and mosques built on the ruins and the "images ever used for the faithful to tread on." Hindu pilgrimages, fairs and festivals were prohibited. He degraded the Hindus by the special tax *jiziah*—a tax odious as being a "tax on infidels" and a token of religious degradation—and passed a ridiculous order that no Hindus

should ride a *palki* or an Arab horse without permission. But Dara was a free thinker of Akbar's school and unlike his brother openly professed the tenets of Akbar and had actually written a book to reconcile Hindu and Mahammadan religion. Dara even brought some pundits from Benares and caused them to translate the 50 *Upanishads*. This made the prince popular amongst the Hindus but unpopular amongst the Mussulmans who regarded him as an infidel. Mahammadans regarded Aurangzeb as the champion of Islam. He cordially detested the Hindus and the *Shias*. He laid out no money in building mosques or in endowments. He had special hatred to be under any recognised clergy. With all his bigotry he was not superstitious like Dara, who opened his trenches in the siege of Candahar on a day and hour fixed by astrologers, and when in the same seige failures crushed him he had recourse even to magicians and other imposters who promised him to put him in possession of the place by some supernatural means.

“Dara was a frank and highspirited prince, dignified in his manners, generous in expense, and liberal in his opinions.” Aurangzeb's universal mistrust destroyed his own happiness and his every undertaking. He secretly investigated into every man's character. He disgusted nobles and chiefs by his jealousy and distrust. He was suspicious of all round him and even of his sons. When prince Azab entreated permission to come to Ahamednagar for a change of air he remarked “That is exactly the pretext I used to Shah Jahan in his illness.” He even imprisoned his sons when he suspected that his sons were meditating independence.

“Aurangzeb was a man of wild temper and cold heart.” These feelings were conspicuous in the manner in which he received the account of the death of his oldest and most intimate friends. He was cautious and designing. When Shah Jahan's illness led a scramble among his sons for the throne, the artful Aurangzeb conducted himself with great caution. He did not assume the royal title. He, of course, collected an army but made no open declaration of his intention. He left Dara and Shaja to weaken each other and applied his own art and stratagem in winning Murad

over to his side. The artful Aurangzeb joined Murad and congratulated him on assuming the royal title and declared his own desire to renounce the world and proceed on a pilgrimage to Mecca after he had liberated his father from the thralldom of the irreligious Dara. He also took an oath to adhere to his brother and during the whole campaign he continued his profession of devotion and humility always, acknowledging Murad as his superior and treating him with great respect and attention. After totally crushing Dara he entered Agra and explained his own conduct to his father and protested his inviolable respect and duty. When he had obtained possession of the capital and the treasury, he threw off his mask. He no longer talked of pilgrimage to Mecca but at once assumed all the powers of Government. He then placed his father in captivity in his own palace. He did not feel secure enough on the throne while there was a single relation left alive who might disturb his tranquility. He invited Murad to an entertainment and allowed him to drink himself into a state of helplessness when he was put in chains and conveyed to Gwalior where he was put to death after a mock trial.

“Aurangzeb was acute and sagacious though not extended in his views”. He was courageous and skilful in military tactics and calm in moments of danger. Once Jaswant Sing treacherously attacked his baggages and created such a unexpected tumult that it almost caused the dispersion of his army. In the midst of such tumult he dismounted himself and sitting on a chair he issued directions in serene and cheerful countenance and took measure to check the disorder. Though Dara was as sagacious and as calm in moments of danger, he was never cheerful in times of danger or so skilful in military tactics. Aurangzeb was so very skilful that he always anticipated his brother in all his movements and proceedings, and was always too quick for him. Aurangzeb was always on the look out to propitiate enemies and to gain friends. He won over his mortal enemy Jaswant by a complementary letter written by his own hand.

“Dara was always impetuous and impatient of opposition and

his overbearing temper made him many enemies". Dara's calm resignation to his fortunes and his manly bravery and Aurangzeb's merciless temper and crooked policy may be best seen in the story of the contest for the throne. When at Ajmere Dara saw all was lost, he got disheartened and fled in hurry with his troops in all directions; even the horse on which he mounted straggled and fell off; some even robbed the remains of his last resources. He reached the neighbourhood of Ahmednagar after eight days and nights of incessant marching through the intolerable heat and dust of the scorching season. To add to his misfortunes he severely suffered from the merciless attacks of the *kolis* of the hill. His wife was wounded. A few days after when he was preparing to take refuge in Ahmednagar, news was brought to him that the gates of that city were closed against him. These tidings and the lamentations of the women made Dara half-dead with consternation. Thus conscious of the desertion of the whole world and mad with the thought of what would become of him and of his family, he fled to the chief of Jun, whom he had formerly laid under the greatest obligations. This ungrateful chief received him with outward demonstrations of attachment and then betrayed him into the hands of his vindictive brother. So pleased was Aurangzeb when his brother was made captive that he ordered the prolongation of the feasts and rejoicings of the anniversary celebration that was being held then. Dara was by his special order brought in loaded with chains on a sorry elephant and was then conducted through the most populous parts of the city. The sympathy of the people was roused but it was shown only in groans and tears. The general indignation was so great that the following day when the chief of Jun was going to court, an angry mob assailed him with reproaches and curses and growing warmer began to throw mud and then tiles and then stones at him, and at last got to such a fury that several lives were lost and the chief himself would have been torn to pieces had he not been protected by the police. A few days after this tumult a mock trial was held and Dara was pronounced worthy of death as an apostate from the Mahomedan religion. Aurangzeb with seeming reluctance gave the orders. When the executioners entered

Dara with his son was preparing his food : he immediately read his fate and snatched a knife to defend himself until he was overpowered. His body was exhibited to the populace on an elephant. His head was cut off, carried to Aurangzeb, and washed before his presence. When he was satisfied that it was Dara's head he began to lament with many expressions of sorrow.

Aurangzeb passed the most unhappy days of his life immediately before his death. "I see nothing but divinity everywhere ; I have committed many crimes" he said, "and I know not with what punishment I am to be seized." He drove the Rajputs from the firmest supporters of his throne to the jealous enemies of his empire. The other Hindus were generally irritated during his reign for his many acts of oppression. He issued an edict forbidding all governors any longer to receive Hindus into the public service. In the south he destroyed Bijapur and Golconda, the two towers of the Moslem power. Aurangzeb's views in religion were as narrow as in politics. He brought the ruin of the great empire that his forefathers had built up. He was engaged for 25 years in war, first of intolerance, and then of aggression, which exhausted the resources of his country and hastened the downfall of the house of Baber. He could not make any full or free concessions, he was prejudiced in all matters. He lost an opportunity of turning the most formidable enemy Sivaji into a zealous servant. When he died he left a sort of will which contained instructions that his funeral expenses were to be defrayed from a sum of four rupees and a half saved from the cap which he had made and sold and that the sum of Rs. 805 which he had gained by the sale of the *koran* which he had copied with his own hands should be distributed among the poor.

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