

AUTHOR'S NOTE

THE life-story of Eldred Pottinger presents itself naturally in two phases—phases more strikingly and dramatically contrasted than is often the case when Life, and not the romancist, weaves the tale. First Herat, action, fame; then Kabul, endurance, disaster. In Herat we had the hero—youth and courage triumphant over desperate odds. At Kabul we have the man—hampered, baulked, and finally traduced. No triumph here; yet—and this is the greater glory—no loss of spirit, courage, or faith.

In the first phase, his figure more or less dominated the stage, though even then he was being steadily drawn into the vortex of that Kabul tragedy, of which this book is a record.

In the second phase, Eldred Pottinger became a unit—though still a striking one—in a vast, crowded arena; for which cause this book is named, not after him, but after the great event in which he played so noble a part. No single figure, however heroic, could be made to dominate the tale of the First Afghan War without fatally upsetting the proportions of the whole; and Eldred Pottinger would have been the last man to wish himself thrust forward at the expense either of proportion or of truth.