

A  
NARRATIVE  
OF A  
VISIT TO THE COURT OF SINDE;  
A  
SKETCH  
OF THE  
HISTORY OF CUTCH,  
FROM ITS FIRST CONNEXION WITH THE BRITISH GOVERNMENT  
IN INDIA TILL THE CONCLUSION OF THE TREATY OF 1819;  
AND SOME  
REMARKS ON THE MEDICAL TOPOGRAPHY  
OF BHOOJ.

By JAMES BURNES,  
SURGEON TO THE RESIDENCY AT BHOOJ.

25<sup>th</sup> Oct 1827  
Gul Hayat Institute

---

EDINBURGH:  
PRINTED FOR ROBERT CADELL, EDINBURGH;  
AND WHITTAKER, TREACHER, AND ARNOT, LONDON.

1831.

# CONTENTS.

---

	PAGE
Preliminary Observations relative to the Map of Sinde,	3
Introductory Letter, . . . . .	7
 NARRATIVE OF THE VISIT TO THE COURT OF SINDE,	9
Remarks on Alexander's Route, . . . . .	136
 SKETCH OF THE HISTORY OF CUTCH, . . . . .	143
Preliminary Notice, . . . . .	145
SECTION I.—Introductory Outline of the History of	
Cutch before the British Connexion, . . . . .	147
SECTION II.—From the Commencement of the British	
Connexion to the Conclusion of the Treaty of 1816,	162
SECTION III.—From the Conclusion of the Treaty of	
1816 to the Conclusion of the Treaty of 1819,	194
Postscript, 1829, . . . . .	221
Addenda, . . . . .	228
Medical Topography of Bhooj, . . . . .	241
Map of Sinde, facing the Title-Page,	
Map of Cutch, facing . . . . .	145
Genealogical Table, facing . . . . .	142





Gul Hayat Institute

# EXPLANATORY OBSERVATIONS

RELATIVE TO THE

## MAP OF SINDE.

I HAVE carefully examined all the maps of Sindh in common circulation, but have found none so generally correct as the one from which the prefixed, as far as it relates to that country, has been partly compiled. It was sent to me while on my route to Hyderabad, by my brother, who had copied it from "A Sketch of the Indus from Shikarpoor to the Sea, by Samuel Richards, 1810," in the Quarter-Master General's Office, Bombay; a delineation which must have been constructed, I think, from native information. I have made a few additions to it, as well as some alterations, which are, I believe, very nearly correct; although, as I

had not even a compass with me, and could judge of distances only from doubtful information, and the time occupied in passing from one station to another, it cannot be considered entitled to the same credit as a map constructed on mathematical principles. While I say this, however, I am free to express my conviction, from personal observation, that it is a truer delineation of Sinde, and its grand feature the Indus, than any which has hitherto been published in Europe.

There are many serious objections to a map of a country like Sinde ever being critically correct. Some of these will be noticed in the course of my narrative ; and I may remark here, in addition, that the inconstancy of the Indus itself is an insurmountable obstacle to any thing like accuracy in the representation of that river.

These observations, however, apply only to the sketch of Sinde. The delineation of Cutch, the Bunnee, the Northern Runn, Puchum Island, the Koree river, &c. will be found strictly correct; being, in fact, a reduced copy of a map compiled from actual measurement and observation by my brother Lieutenant Alexander Burnes, assistant quarter-master-general of the army, and intended to illustrate that officer's memoir on the eastern mouth of the Indus and the formation of the Runn.

The dominions of the Ameers of Sinde extend from the district of Shikarpoor on the frontier of Cabûl, and the island of Bukkor in the Indus, along

---



## MAP OF SINDE.

5

the level plain, watered by that river, to the sea ; a space of about two hundred and fifty miles. Their general boundaries are the British principality of Cutch, and the Indian Ocean to the south ; the kingdom of Jessulmere and the Registah, or Sandy Desert, to the east ; the mountains of Belochistan on the west ; and the provinces of Seewistan and Bahawulpoor on the north. The Indus traverses the country in a direction nearly diagonal ; fertilizing the soil in its course, but, like the Nile, often proving pernicious to those who dwell on its banks, by the swamps which its annual inundations create. The temperature in the summer months is high, and proportionally low in the winter season. While I was in Hyderabad in January 1828, rain fell in torrents for many days, attended with a sensation of more piercing cold than I had ever experienced even in Europe.

The capital of Sinde is Hyderabad, situated about 130 miles from the sea, on the eastern side of the river. Its population may be estimated at 20,000 souls ; and that of Tatta, the only other city of note in the province, at 40,000.



## INTRODUCTORY LETTER.

7

## INTRODUCTORY LETTER.

*Bhooj Residency, 10th June 1828.*

TO THE RESIDENT IN CUTCH,

SIR,—I have the honour to submit to you some observations on my late visit to Sinde, together with a few remarks, which may probably be considered of importance, on the actual government of that country. As I have had an opportunity, which no European officer ever before enjoyed, of being intimately acquainted with their Highnesses the Ameers, and as I was at some pains, during my residence at their capital, to ascertain their characters and habits, I am not without the hope of bringing to the notice of government some new and interesting particulars regarding the singularly-constituted court of Hyderabad.

I was indeed allowed little leisure for writing while in Sinde ; and as I left that country under an impression that I should immediately return to it, I was less minute in my inquiries than I would have otherwise been ; though I had nevertheless collected a small stock of information, which I flattered myself might be of some importance to government. Since my return to Cutch, however, I have had an opportunity, through your kindness, of perusing several documents on the subject of Sinde, and I have been surprised to find, that most of the

matter relative to its history, resources, &c. which I proposed to communicate as new, is already on record, in a form which I have no expectation of equalling, in the various reports of Messrs Crow, Seton, and Ellis, and also in Pottinger's Travels in Belochistan.

Under these circumstances, I fear that little more remains for me than to give a mere personal narrative of my proceedings. But, even in pursuing this apparently easy course, I shall encounter some difficulty. An official form is certainly not the best suited for detailing the impressions made upon my mind, by the scenes through which I passed ; nor ought these probably to constitute the subject of the following pages. Still as government, by their letter of the 23d April last, have left the nature of my report in a great measure to myself, I must rely on the kind consideration of the Honourable the Governor, to pardon the introduction of matter, which, although unnecessary in a public point of view, may not, I hope, be devoid of interest to himself and his colleagues.—I have the honour to be, &c.

JAMES BURNES.

This letter originally formed part of the narrative, but has been detached from it, in order to divest the paper as much as possible of its official shape ; and, for the same reason, the numbers of the paragraphs have been omitted.

# NARRATIVE OF A VISIT

TO THE

## COURT OF SINDE.

EVER since the final occupation of Cutch by the British troops in 1819, our government has been brought in close connection with Sinde, and attempts have been made on our part to cultivate an amicable intercourse with the Ameers. But these haughty and jealous chieftains, who, from the first, had viewed the extension of our Empire in this direction with distrust and apprehension, uniformly maintained a cold and unfriendly attitude towards us. Treaties had been entered into, but without any feeling of cordiality on their part; no European officer was allowed to cross the frontier from Cutch; and even an envoy, who had proceeded from Bombay to Sinde, in 1820, on the invitation of their own minister, was coolly received at their court, and abused after he left it.



It had been an object of policy to avoid a war with the Ameers ; but the British government had, nevertheless, been forced on two occasions, one so late as 1825, to assemble large bodies of troops in Cutch, in order to awe them into the maintenance of treaties, and to prevent their taking advantage of our being engaged in the Bhurtpore and Burmese operations, in order to invade our territories or those of our allies. It is scarcely to be doubted that the court of Hyderabad gave protection and support to the Meeanah plunderers who infested and devastated Cutch in 1825 ; and, indeed, every thing led to the impression, that it was the terror of our power alone which had prevented the Ameers from openly declaring war against us, and that they had no wish whatever to keep up friendly relations with us. Their distrust and jealousy were understood to extend equally to the government and its European servants ; and nothing appeared more improbable than that a British officer should be invited, on any pretence whatever, to visit Sind.

In this state of affairs, considerable surprise was excited, when, on the 23d of October last, a letter of the most friendly nature was received from the Ameers by the Resident in Cutch, requesting that I should be permitted to proceed without delay to Hyderabad on account of the alleged sickness of Meer Mourad Ali, one of the principal chiefs. As private reports did not represent the disease of his Highness as dangerous, it was now our turn



to be suspicious ; and many and various were the surmises formed as to the real object of the request. Some maintained, that, as peace had been restored in India, by the fall of Bhurtpore, and the termination of the Burmese war, and as the Russians had entered Persia, the Ameers had taken this mode of prudently making friendly advances to our government. Few gave them credit for sincerity in the reason assigned ; and several of my friends were strongly of opinion that I ought not to venture into Sind without some specific assurance of protection.

For my own part, I had ever felt a feverish anxiety to cross the forbidden frontier, and particularly to view the classic river Indus. Nothing could, therefore, be more satisfactory to me than the invitation ; and, without considering whether the undertaking involved danger or not, I prepared to enter upon it with the best possible spirits and without a moment's delay. My arrangements were soon completed ; and, on the evening of the 25th, I commenced my march, accompanied by the Sindian vakeel or agent at Bhooj whom the Ameers had ordered to attend me, together with an escort composed of a small detachment of the 21st regiment of native infantry, a few troopers of the Poonah auxiliary horse, and about a dozen horsemen in the service of his Highness the Rao of Cutch. The Sipahis \* were the picked men of the

\* *Vulgo*, Sepoys.

Bhooj brigade, who had been selected for their size and appearance, and they attracted much notice and admiration during my stay in Sindh.

It was not long until I discovered that my attendant, the vakeel, had been placed near me by his suspicious masters to gain a knowledge of my temper and proceedings. I took my measures accordingly ; but in the journey afterwards, he was ever in the way to prevent my obtaining correct information, and on more than one occasion, I found that he had even deceived me. He was a supple and deceitful Hindoo, named Gopaldass ; one of the few of his religion, who still exercise a little influence at the intolerant Court of Sindh, from their being more patient and expert in political intrigue than the Mahommedans. He had so far gained the confidence of his masters, as to be deemed worthy of being employed to watch the motions of the vizier of Cabûl, and had acquired, in that theatre of oriental diplomacy, a competent knowledge of the arts of dissimulation and falsehood. Soon after my arrival at Hyderabad, I was under the necessity of forbidding him my presence ; having found that he repeated with exaggeration whatever fell from me to the Ameers and their minister, Meer Ismael Shah.

On my arrival at Luckput, on the 28th, I gave orders for the immediate embarkation of my baggage, and was much surprised when he informed me that he durst not cross with me into Sindh



without another express order from Hyderabad. It was in vain that I threatened to return instantly to Bhooj, and pointed out to him the responsibility he incurred, by insulting the British government in detaining me after so pressing an invitation from the Ameers. He declared that it would cost him his life should he venture to take another step ; and at last confessed, that he had not even communicated to his court, the fact of my having consented to accompany him, from a fear, as he affirmed, that I might change my mind, and bring down ruin and disgrace upon himself. Nothing could exceed my chagrin at this communication ; but as it was evident the Ameers were not in fault, I deemed it prudent quietly to await the return of a messenger whom he despatched.

The city of Luckput is a large fort of an irregular polygonal shape, two miles and a-half in circumference, situated on a gravelly ridge at the western extremity of Cutch, on the bank of the Koree river, or eastern branch of the Indus, into which the tide flows, and which is navigable for boats of considerable size, as far up as the town. It was founded by Rao Gore, about seventy years ago, and derives its name from the great-great-grandfather of the present prince of Cutch. It was an open paltry village till the beginning of this century, when it was fortified by Futteh Mahommed, the renowned vizier or jemidar, whose discerning eye discovered in it a highly favourable

situation, as well for advancing the commerce of his own country as for repressing the encroaching power of Sinde, and who used every exertion to make it a large and populous city. The inhabitants, however, do not at present exceed 6000 souls ; consisting chiefly of mercantile speculators from other countries, and the families of Hindoos who have been driven from Sinde by the intolerance of the Mahommedan faith. The walls have suffered less from the earthquake of 1819 than those of most towns in Cutch, and are at present in a state of good repair ; but the houses of the inhabitants, which occupy only about a third of the area inside, are much dilapidated, and of a mean description.

Futteh Mahommed, who has just been mentioned, deserves a passing notice. He was a Musulman of Sindian extraction, who, from the humble station of shepherd, raised himself to the supreme rule in Cutch, about the year 1788 ; and enjoyed a greater degree of fame and respect, both at home and abroad, than any legitimate prince who had ever sat on its throne. At the confused period when this Cutchee Cromwell appeared, the country was groaning under the tyranny of Rao Rahiden, a monster, who, having apostatized to the Moslem creed, determined to spread it by the sword throughout his dominions, and deluged Bhooj with blood ; it being his usual practice to parade the streets with a body of negroes, putting to death every human being he met, whom scruples

---



or fear prevented exclaiming, Allah Akber. He was at length imprisoned as a lunatic, through the address and bravery of Futteh Mahommed, who, being hailed as a deliverer, restored the province to tranquillity, by a firm and judicious exercise of authority; and continued to wield its resources for many years, during which he often displayed views of policy, and traits of generosity and courage, which would have done honour to an European sovereign. A revolution in 1801 having thrown him from his high station, his energy enabled him speedily to recover the ascendancy; but his renewed sway soon betrayed an altered temper, and less worthy motives; for, soured by the misfortunes and ingratitude he had experienced, he became the merciless persecutor of his private enemies, and the ruthless scourge of the unhappy people he had so long cherished.

Futteh Mahommed, nevertheless, bears the only name in the history of Cutch on which the mind can dwell with a feeling of reverence. Living at a period when the country was a scene of dissension, and exposed as a prey to any daring adventurer, the superiority of his mind enabled him to seize the government; and he was well qualified to reduce it to order. His actions speak for themselves. In prosperity, and during the first ten years of his administration, he was prudent and just, and the popular voice was unanimous in his praise. Adversity effected a complete transformation in his

character ; and his subsequent actions, which his friends attempted to palliate on the plea of necessity, evince how readily he forsook his maxims of moderation, and how little he regarded the reputation he had gained. But if we take into consideration the place where he passed his early life, and the bloody examples which were daily before his eyes, we cease to wonder at his excesses, and are only surprised at the virtue and self-denial, which, amidst the greatest temptation, he had so long maintained. He was the chief whom Colonel Walker endeavoured to interest in his philanthropic but abortive scheme of abolishing infanticide, and who, in answer to that gentleman's expostulations, retorted with a disquisition on the divine origin of this inhuman practice. That he disapproved of it, however, may be fairly inferred from his comparatively enlightened sentiments in other respects ; and that he did not put it down by force, must be pardoned on the same principle that we excuse ourselves for permitting Suttee cremations. He died so late as 1813, leaving his power to his two eldest sons ; who, however, were unable to retain it.

The immediate neighbourhood of Luckput is a parched, deserted, and unproductive country, of the most uninteresting appearance ; which has evidently, at no remote period, been under water, as is clear from the abundance of decayed shells and other marine productions. With the exception of



one or two small gardens under the walls, there is no cultivation within two leagues of the town. A few miles distant, at the foot of the nearest hills to the south east, are the ruins of an ancient city, called Wagum Chaora Ka Ghud, which, I believe, have not been mentioned by any preceding writer. It is supposed to have flourished about nine centuries ago, and must have belonged to the Chaora Rajpoots, who then occupied this part of the country. The stones of which Luckput is built have been taken chiefly from the remains of the city.

Before passing into Sindé, it may not be amiss to take a brief review of the history of that country, and of the revolutions which raised the present rulers to power.

From the days of Alexander the Great to the birth of Mahommed, a period of nine hundred years, little light is thrown on the history of Sindé; which is known at both these epochs, and during the reign of the Greek monarchs of Bactria, to have been governed by Hindoo Rajahs. But the rapid progress of Islamism, together with the sudden rise of the empire of the Saracens, produced a new era in the annals of this, as in those of many other nations; and so early as the 20th year of the Hejira, the fertile regions watered by the Indus had attracted the attention of the Caliph Omar, who, after founding the city of Bussora on

the Euphrates, despatched an expedition from Bahrein in the Persian Gulf, in order to reduce them under his authority ; but the attempt proved unsuccessful. Towards the close of the same century, however, while the enthusiastic soldiers of the Mahommedan faith were engaged in subduing Spain on the one side, and Samarcand on the other, a zeal to propagate the “ religion of God and his apostle” among the Pagan Hindoos, inflamed as usual by a thirst of glory and dominion, but alloyed in this instance with the less noble motive of procuring female slaves for the seraglio of the commander of the faithful, induced Hediaz ben Yousuf, the lieutenant of the Oommiade Caliph Walid in Sejestan and Candahar, to detach one of his generals, Mahommed Cossim, to extend the power of their sovereign towards India, and Sindé flourished under the protection of the vicegerents of the prophet, successively in Syria and at Bagdad, till 391, the date of its conquest by Sooltan of Ghizni.\*

## Gul Hayat Institute

\* The history of Sindé may be faintly traced to a more remote period than that mentioned in the text ; for we are told that, two hundred years before the time of Alexander, the Persian Empire had extended itself to that country, under the reign of Darius Hystaspes, whose admiral, Scylax, a Greek, descended the Indus to the sea, and imposed a tribute upon the nations on its banks ; to enforce the payment of which, some writers assert, was one of the objects of the Macedonian expedition. The Hindoo Prince who reigned in Sindé, at the time of Mahommed Cossim’s invasion, was



The revolution which conveyed the ensigns of royalty from the feeble hands of this conqueror's descendants, relieved it for a moment from a foreign yoke, and encouraged the Soomras, a great native tribe in which the local government was vested, to make an effort for independence ; but they were soon vanquished by the victorious arms of Mahommed Ghorî, whose successor, the enterprising Altimush, proclaimed himself the lord paramount of Sînde in the year 612. Now annexed to Delhi, the province remained a fief of that crown for two centuries, during which the Soomras became extinct, and their authority passed into the family of Summa, then settled upon the confines of Muckran, whose traditions claim for it a genealogy from the downfall of Babylon ; while Hindoo branches, derived probably from members of this family, who fled before the first Mahommedan invaders of India, are still to be found in the Rao of Cutch, and the Rajpoot Jarajas of that country and Kattiwar. In the confusion occasioned by the dreadful irruption of Tamerlane, this dynasty threw off its allegiance ; and its members continued to reign under the designation of Jams, sometimes as vassals, but

---

Dahir, the son of Chuch, a Brahmin, who had raised himself to the throne by a marriage with the widow of the last Rajpoot sovereign, and whose history is fully recorded in a Persian work named after him, " The Chuch Nameh," of which I brought an abstract with me from Hyderabad.

often uncontrolled, through a succession of several generations, till their power was entirely annihilated by the elevation of the celebrated Baber to the throne.

On the distribution of the Mogul realms into Soobahs or divisions in the time of Akber, Sindh was attached to Mooltan, but was occasionally ruled by separate viceroys, nominated by the court of Hindostan, till the invasion of Nadir Shah, when it was ceded to Persia by virtue of the treaty concluded between that monarch and the emperor Mahommed the Second ; who, to use the polished terms of the instrument itself, “in consideration of an affection stronger than father ever showed to son, or brother to brother,” dismembered to his conqueror, as a peace-offering, all the territories bordering on the Indus which were then deemed worthy of his acceptance. This arrangement concluded, Nadir Shah visited Tatta ; but his assassination, which occurred soon after at Meshed, in Khorassan, having left a field open for the ambitious schemes of his general, Ahmed Khan Seedozy, that aspiring chief declared himself king of Cabûl, and laid the foundation of the Douranee empire, to which Sindh after a time submitted, and has ever since been considered subordinate.

The house of Calora claimed a lineage from the princely blood of Abbas, the uncle of the prophet ; but its greatness in Sindh is traced to Adam Shah, a native of Belochistan, who gained a high influ-



## COURT OF SINDE.

21

ence from the reputed sanctity of his character, and as the chosen disciple and delegate of a famous Mahommedan preacher, in the middle of the fifteenth century \* of our era, and whose descendants, inheriting the holiness of their ancestor, succeeded to his spiritual power, and were revered as saints, till about 1705, when they were honoured with a title and a jaghire, by the great Aurungzebe. With temporal rank thus added to religious veneration, the grandeur of the family rapidly increased; and in a few years their glory reached its zenith by the issue of a firmaun under the emperor's signet, installing their representative in the viceregal government of Tatta.

The patent for this investiture was granted about 1735, in the person of Meean Noor Mahomed, † who may be styled the flower of the race,

---

\* It is rather a singular coincidence, that, at this very period, (the middle of the fifteenth century,) should have appeared the two religious leaders, who have exerted so much political influence on the countries bordering on the Indus; namely, Adam Shah, the head of the Caloras, and Nanna, the founder of the Sikhs now so formidable.

† “ In the person of Meer Noor Mahommed, the authority which was at first an usurpation of itinerants, became legitimated, and the descendants of a mendicant elevated to the government of Sinde. The stock, however, was held in holy veneration; religious prejudice, therefore, combined with worldly power to awe the public mind, and many features of the country at the present day, mark the impression of the double influence.”—Crow.



## VISIT TO THE

22

and who, on transferring his fealty to Persia, agreeably to the treaty of Delhi, contrived, by address and solicitation, to obtain from Nadir Shah a confirmation of its privileges, which he enjoyed during his lifetime, and bequeathed to his posterity at his death. When this event took place, Ahmed Shah had seated himself firmly on the Affghaun throne, and in order to regulate the payment of his tribute from Sinde, was advancing into Sewistan. One of the first to offer him homage was Mourad Yab Khan, the eldest son of Meean Noor Mahommed, who had been raised to the musnud by the suffrages of the grandees, and whose dignity the king was at first pleased to ratify; but, having proved himself unworthy of the trust, he was deposed, and his honours devolved on one of his younger brothers, Meean Gholam Shah, who, after a struggle for the supremacy, at length boldly seized the reins of government, and commenced an active administration, though not unchequered by reverses, of fifteen years.

Civil dissension being at an end, he led in person two expeditions against the "infidels of Cutch," and defeated the Rao's troops at the great battle of Jarrah, memorable for the barbarity of the Rajpoots, who, seeing victory hopeless, turned their swords against their own women and children, to prevent their falling into the hands of the invaders, and where, as the historians of the country allege, a hundred thousand corpses strewed the

field. Such bloodshed might have satisfied the triumph, and glutted the revenge of the most inveterate enemy; but it was not sufficient for Gholam Shah, who, disappointed in the hope of adding a province to his dominions, and enraged at the obstinate valour of a nation fighting for independence, resolved, by a refinement in persecution known only to Asiatics, to inflict upon it a novel and most signal act of vengeance, the disastrous effects of which should remain as a monument of his wrath to future ages. With this view he commanded an embankment to be thrown across the eastern branch of the Indus within his own territories, and dug canals for the purpose of withdrawing the waters of that river entirely from Cutch; and, by this master stroke of implacable resentment, he had the stern gratification of depriving his adversary of nearly half his revenue, blasting the hopes and expectations of a thousand families, and transforming a valuable district of rice country into a gloomy and unproductive waste. The injury has indeed proved irreparable; for, from the influx of the tide, the tract alluded to has become a dreary salt marsh, and the principality may be said to have declined ever since.

A splendid mausoleum, inclosing a tomb of white marble, inscribed with Arabic apothegms of mercy and humility, perpetuates the memory, and commemorates the achievements, of this destroyer, near the capital of Sind, where his cha-



racter is esteemed as that of a brave and victorious prince. He closed his career, in 1771, after a few hours' illness; his sudden death being attributed, by the pious Moslems, to a curse uttered against him by a fuqueer, whose hut he had sacrilegiously directed to be cleared away, during the erection of the fortress of Hyderabad, which he had the merit of founding.

The demise of Gholam Shah left the musnud vacant for his eldest son, Meean Surufraz Khan; who, far inferior in talents to his sire, was equally unprincipled in conduct, and to whose capricious tyranny is ascribed the ruin of his line. Among the most distinguished personages at his court, was Meer Byram Khan, the chief of a Beloche tribe, named Talpoor, whose members had, for many generations, held the highest offices of the state, and whom, from an impulse of jealousy and suspicion, for which history can show no foundation, he ordered to be put to death, together with his son Sobdar Khan; an act of wanton cruelty and injustice, which led eventually to his own dethronement, after a short reign of five years.

Surufraz was succeeded by his brother Mahomed Khan, and his cousin Sadik Ali Khan, neither of whom retained the government longer than a twelvemonth, and who, together with himself, expiated their crimes or imbecility, by a life of imprisonment and a violent end, agreeably to the mode of disposing of unfortunate princes which



prevails in eastern palaces. The ensigns of state were then assumed by Gholam Nubbee, a brother of Gholam Shah ; who, reckless of consequences, and untaught by the fate of his three nephews, immediately entered into an intrigue to assassinate Bejur Khan, the surviving chief of the Talpoors, and son of Byram, who had been absent on a pilgrimage to Mecca at the period of his father's murder. But his treacherous attempts proved utterly unsuccessful, and ended in his own overthrow. He was slain in battle by the adherents of his rival, when the whole power of Sinde fell into the hands of Bejur Khan, who, with a magnanimity scarcely to be expected, was the first to take the oath of allegiance to Abdûl Nubbee, the brother of his fallen enemy.

But neither generosity nor experience could influence the conduct of the ill-fated race of Calora. No sooner had Abdûl Nubbee obtained his seat on the musnud, through the grace of a man who had suffered the bitterest persecution from his family, than, pursuing the wicked policy of his predecessors, he began also to seek the destruction of Bejur Khan, which he at length effected through the friendship of a Hindoo confederate. \* On this event no bounds could restrain

---

\* “ He essayed numerous modes in vain, but at last effected his purpose by the co-operation of his friend Maharaj Bysing, Rajah of Joudpoor. From him two assassins were sent as messengers on business to Meer Bejur Khan, who,

the fury of the Talpoors, who flew to arms in great numbers ; and a series of bloody commotions followed, which brought about a total revolution in the government of Sinde. Abdûl Nubbee fled into the mountains of Belochistan ; and, after various attempts to recover his power, (in one of which, through the assistance of the king of Cabûl, he was partially successful, and added to his crimes the murder of Abdullah Khan, the son of Meer Bejur,) he passed the remainder of his life, as an exile, in poverty and contempt.\* Futteh Ali Khan, the son of Sobdar, and grandson of Byram, whose bravery and perseverance, excited by revenge, had been chiefly instrumental in effecting the change, was, by the general voice, called to the direction of affairs, and was shortly afterwards confirmed as ruler of the country by the patent of the king,

---

availing themselves of the pretence of secret information to gain a nearer approach, plunged their daggers into his breast, and he instantly expired.”—Crow. The Ameers made this murder a plea for requiring the gentlemen of Mr Smith’s embassy in 1809 to appear at their durbar unarmed ; an insulting proposal, which, it is scarcely necessary to say, was at once rejected.

\* “ Timour Shah, after some unavailing attempts to restore him, (Abdool Nubbee) conferred on him the government of Leia as an indemnity for Sinde, and formally invested the chief of the Talpoories with the government of that province. Abdool Nubbee repaid the Shah’s bounty by rebelling in his new province, was defeated by the royal troops, and ended his days in poverty at Dera Haujee Khan in Upper Sinde.”—ELPHINSTONE’S *Cabûl*.



Timour Shah. On his own elevation, this prince liberally resolved to admit to a participation in his high destiny, his three younger brothers, Ghoolam Ali, Kurm Ali, and Mourad Ali; and the four agreed to reign together under the denomination of the Ameers, or Lords of Sindh. While they all lived, the strong and unvarying attachment they evinced for each other, gained them the honourable appellation of the *Char Yar*, or "the four friends;" and although Meer Futteh Ali died in 1801, and Ghoolam Ali in 1811, this government, a phenomenon in history, has continued, with little alteration, from its first commencement to the present moment. There are still some remnants of the exiled house living under the protection of Runjeet Sing, the celebrated Sikh chieftain, and the king of Joudpoor.

The intercourse of the British with Sindh has been rare, and for the most part unsatisfactory. The great advantages of Tatta as an emporium for the trade of central Asia, early invited English speculators to the Indus; but the constant opposition of the Portuguese prevented their effecting a permanent settlement, and if we may judge from the indignities offered to the ambassadors of James the First to the King of Persia, as they passed through in 1614, our countrymen must, at that time, have been in bad repute. About 1758, Ghoolam Shah encouraged the Bombay Government to establish a factory at Tatta, which was withdrawn,



however, some years after ; though so late even as the beginning of this century, Mr Crow appears to have been our commercial resident at that city. The ambitious schemes of the French made it necessary in 1808-9 to send missions to the chief powers in the north of India, in order to counteract their intrigues ; and while Mr Elphinstone and Sir John Malcolm were deputed to the courts of Cabûl and Persia, an envoy also proceeded to Hyderabad, who, although indifferently received, gained the object of the governor-general. Before this embassy, the Ameers had seen no British subjects, except as petitioners for mercantile benefits ; which gave rise to a reproach they have been often known to apply to us, unwittingly in the same terms as a much greater personage, that we are a nation of shopkeepers. Of this erroneous impression, we may presume that they are by this time pretty nearly cured. Our transactions with their Highnesses subsequently to our invasion of Cutch in 1816, are detailed in the sketch of the history of that country subjoined to the present narrative.

I waited with the greatest impatience till the morning of the 3d November, when the expected letter from the Ameers arrived. It was couched in the most friendly terms ; begging me to come with all convenient speed to Hyderabad, and informing me that two noblemen, high in their favour, had been despatched to meet me, and con-

duct me to their court. I prepared immediately to obey the welcome summons, and made arrangements for taking the straight route by Pallia and Gharee; but here again the vakeel interfered, stating that he had been directed to conduct me by the road of Bhey, or Mugrbhey, a large town in a westerly direction, situated in the province of Jattee. It certainly excited my surprise, that if the Ameers required my presence for the cure of a dangerous disorder, they should prescribe a circuitous route, by which the journey would be protracted so many days longer. The vakeel, however, could not give any satisfactory explanation, and the killedar of Luckput strongly urged me not to venture; but I found afterwards that these suspicions were most unjust, and that my detention, both there and on the road, was merely to enable the Sinde authorities to receive me with greater civility and distinction.

All things being prepared, I embarked in the afternoon with a fair wind, and reached Kotree, the landing-place, on the opposite side, about five o'clock. The distance in a direct line is not more than four miles, but, from the windings of the stream, our voyage must have exceeded eight. One of the most extraordinary effects of the great earthquake in 1819 was produced upon this channel, \* which, before that dreadful convulsion, was

---

\* The following particulars regarding this river are related by my brother in his memoir of the eastern mouth of .



fordable at low water, but which is now at all times impracticable for foot-passengers. From

---

the Indus, and will serve to convey an idea of the monstrous policy pursued by the Caloras for the ruin of their enemy, the Rao of Cutch, whose country has never yet recovered from the effects of their vengeance.

“ The disadvantages which Cutch labours under are not altogether natural, but have originated from jealousy of a neighbouring power, which has been evinced in a most cruel degree, by depriving it of the fresh water of the Indus, and thereby destroying a large tract of irrigated land, and converting a productive rich country into a sandy desert.

“ The Raos of Cutch had at no distant period three Tanas in the dominions of Sinde, viz. Ballyaree, Raoma ka Bazar, and Budeena, their right to which was undisputed. The year 1762 gave, however, a new era to both nations, and it was the commencement of a calamitous one for Cutch. Ghoolam Shah Kalora, after bringing an army of eighty thousand men into Cutch, and meeting with a warm reception at a hill above the small village of Jharra, returned full of vengeance to Sinde, and threw a bund across the Phurraun river at Mora, which, although it did not entirely prevent the waters of the Indus passing by Luckput, so impeded the progress of the main stream that all agriculture depending on irrigation from it ceased.

“ Previous to the battle of Jharra in 1762, the eastern branch of the Indus or Phurraun emptied itself into the sea by passing Luckput and Cotasir, and the country on its banks participated in the advantages which this river bestows throughout its course. Its annual inundations watered the soil, and afforded the natives of Cutch a plentiful supply of rice, the whole country between Sinde and Luckput then known by the name of ‘ Sayra’ being cultivated ; and so fertile was it, that it yielded an annual revenue to the govern-



the low and level nature of the Sindian coast, it is scarcely discernible from Luckput ; but the shores of Cutch are distinctly seen, and present a bold striking appearance from the opposite side.

Kotree is merely the name given to the landing place in Sinde. There is neither house, bunder, nor inhabitants, nay, not even the usual party of soldiers for the collection of the revenue ; a precaution seldom neglected by either the Cutch or Sindian government, and the omission of which, in this instance, is only to be attributed to the want of fresh water, which is not procurable for the use of man within many miles of the shore. We saw about a hundred camels on the beach, which had come laden with ghee from Sinde, together with several merchants who were preparing to embark for Cutch. Some delay occurred in landing the baggage ; but by seven o'clock we marched, with a beautiful moonlight, for Lah, in a direction nearly north-westerly. We continued our journey till eleven o'clock, by which time we reached our destination. Not a tree, house, nor human being, except our own people, was to be seen on the

---

ment of from seven to eight lacs of corries, upwards of two lacs of rupees. The bunds thrown across deprived it of this advantage, and the channel, which had been before deep and navigable, became now quite shallow and filled with mud, there being no running stream to carry it off."—*Memoir of a Map of the Eastern Branch of the Indus*, by Lieutenant A. Burnes, assistant quarter-master-general of the Bombay army.

road, which extended for about eighteen miles over a level tract of country, a continuation of the great Northern Runn, or, in other words, a perfect desert. I found the road firm and hard, though I was informed that it would be impassable, or nearly so, in the rainy season.

At Lah there are two or three trees in the immediate neighbourhood ; but the same appearance of Runn extends all around, interspersed with scattered and stunted shrubs. The country, as far as the eye can reach, is a dead unproductive flat, nor is there a hill or village visible in any direction. A few Sindian soldiers, not above eight or ten, whose only place of residence is an open wooden shed, and whose chief food is camel's milk, are stationed at Lah to collect a tax on the merchandize which passes; and they are its only inhabitants. But even from these few specimens I could at once distinguish a different people, different manners, and different language from those of Cutch. They were men of large size, dressed in frocks resembling those of English labourers, of a coarse dark blue cotton, trowsers of the same material, and the national cap, which is of a cylindrical form, about eight inches in height, and commonly made of coloured cloth. Like their countrymen in general, they wore long beards and moustachios, and were armed with swords, daggers, matchlocks, and shields. I shall probably have occasion afterwards to allude to the military retainers of the



Ameers ; in the meantime, I cannot refer to a more exact delineation of the appearance, dress, and accoutrements of the Sindian soldier, than that which is given in the frontispiece to Pottinger's Travels in Belochistan. Lah has been chosen as a post, I presume, from its being the first place on the road from Cutch where water is drinkable; though this is saying too much for the muddy brackish fluid which was presented to us : none of the Sipahis with me could swallow it, and they were obliged to depend on the small supply they had brought with them from Luckput. I found the place extremely disagreeable ; for, besides there being no water to drink, the air was impregnated with saline exhalations and the disgusting effluvia of camel's dung.

It would be uninteresting, as well as unnecessary, to follow particularly the course of my journey through the barren and desolate tract I traversed during the two following days. On the morning of the 4th I halted at Vere, twelve miles, and proceeded about thirteen miles further to Himiut on the forenoon of the 5th. Neither of these places merits a detailed description ; they are names merely given to stations in the desert, where a little brackish water is to be obtained from marshes in the neighbourhood. At Himiut I learned that the officers who had been despatched from the court to receive me, had taken the route by Ruree, and instead of pursuing my march

to Mugrbhey, I accordingly turned towards that town and reached it on the night of the 5th, a distance from my last stage of about twenty miles. The road from Lah to Ruree extended in a direction nearly north, through a continuation of the same sort of country as I have already described, a desert Runn, without an elevation to vary the scene. As I approached nearer Ruree, I saw several extensive marshes of fresh water which are supplied, I presume, from the Sunkra\* and Meeta Meera branches of the Indus, as laid down in our maps, but which are unknown to the natives by these names.

It required little discernment to discover that the road from Kotree to Ruree was quite unsuited

---

\* The Sunkra river is mentioned in the treaty of partition between Nadir Shah and the Emperor Mahommed, as the common boundary between Hindoostan and the Persian provinces. Hence Major Rennell infers that the eastern branch of the Indus is named Sunkra ; which, however, is certainly not the case for many miles from its mouth. It is called at Luckput, the Koree, and farther up, the Phurraun. The meaning of the word Sunkra is " narrow ;" and although such a supposition is highly improbable, the contracting parties perhaps only meant by " Nulla Sunkra" a narrow river, which was known to both. It is worthy of remark, however, that the natives of Sinde have no other name, at Hyderabad, for the Indus than that of the " Derya," or sea. They distinguish it from the ocean by terming it the " Derya Sheereen" or " Meeta Derya," which means the fresh water sea, in contradistinction to " Derya Shor" or salt water sea.



## COURT OF SINDE.

35

for military purposes. I question if it be at all passable in the rains; and although, during the dry season, artillery could, no doubt, be conveyed by this entrance into Sinda, still the total want of supplies, and, I may almost say, of fresh water, for a distance of above forty-nine miles, would render it extremely inconvenient for the passage of an invading army. In these inhospitable tracts, and all along the Delta of the Indus, the camels of Sinda, so famed throughout the whole of Asia, are reared, and they are the only species of conveyance used in the country, carts being unknown. The traffic by land, between the lower provinces and Candahar, is carried on by means of these animals, which are supposed to acquire a greater hardihood, from being brought up in salt marshes, where they are limited, from the first, in their allowance of fresh water.

The villages of Sinda, on this side the Indus, are much inferior in appearance to those of Cutch, and are entirely destitute of the stone buildings and tiled roofs, which give an air of neatness and comfort to those of the latter country. They are for the most part collections of low huts, composed entirely of clay and thatch, while even the mosques, with which they abound, are generally of the same frail materials, and only distinguishable, indeed, by their greater elevation, and a feeble attempt at ornament. Many of the inhabitants of the province live in grass hovels in the fields

which they cultivate.\* Most of the villages have no name except that of their actual owner; and it is not unusual for the whole population of a place to remove their dwellings to another station, as inclination or necessity prompts them, and when either food or forage fails.

The town of Ruree is superior to most of its kind, and was till lately a place of considerable opulence. Being, however, so far removed from the freshes of the Indus, and depending chiefly on the periodical rains, it has, during the last few years, suffered very severely from want of water, like the neighbouring country of Cutch. The inhabitants are now reduced to below five hundred; but at the time I visited them, grain was so plentiful that our horses were fed with rice, cut unripe, instead of grass. Towards the west I was told that there was cultivation in abundance, but that the opposite direction was a dreary waste. The only object of interest at this place is a large mosque, sacred to the memory of Peer Noor Shah, which is visible at a great distance, and which was built a hundred and fifty years ago, of stones brought from the neighbourhood of Tatta. Near the town is a large tank of excellent water.

Immediately on my arrival at Ruree, I was

---

\* The moveable houses of the people of Sinde are mentioned by Arrian, as one of the peculiarities of the country in the days of Alexander.



visited by the Khans whom the Ameers had sent to meet me, and who were introduced as Hyder Khan Lagharee, the governor of the province of Jattee, and nephew of the principal vizier, and Bahadoor Khan, both distinguished officers of the Sinde government. They received me with great courtesy, each embracing me in a ceremonious manner, and after a profusion of civilities on their part, entered into a long complimentary message from the Ameers, who, they assured me, were highly gratified by my visit. They brought orders from Hyderabad that neither I nor my retinue should be permitted to pay for any supplies on the route ; and although I was of course unwilling to accept, and remonstrated strongly against, such an expensive mark of kindness to above a hundred persons, I was forced to comply, in order to avoid giving offence. Fifty camels were in attendance, by command of the Ameers, who had given positive directions that none of my followers should be allowed to walk. The Khans even considered seriously how my palanquin bearers could be mounted ; and although this was impracticable, I was obliged to consent that the Sipahis of the guard, and all others, should proceed on camels. The supplies were of an expensive description ; nothing in fact seemed to be spared that could add to my comfort, or that of my attendants ; and sugar, sweetmeats and opium, were daily issued in great profusion.

---

Having thus given a sketch of my route as far as Ruree, it appears unnecessary to dwell upon uninteresting details. From Ruree I marched to Shahkapoor, ten miles; to Butora, boating it across a deep but narrow river which appeared to be almost stagnant, three miles; to Amra, a small village, three miles; Meerpoor, a considerable town, four miles; Thoora, four miles; Laiqpoor, six miles; Damaka-got, five miles; Bunna, five miles; Cabulpoor, eight miles; Meeanee, four miles; Triccul, five miles; Soomerjee Wusee, eight miles; Jumrajee Wussee, four miles; Hyderabad, four miles.

All these places bear the general features I have already described. In addition to them, I passed through clusters of temporary villages, which do not require any observation, further than that they gave an appearance of extreme populousness to the country. At Laiqpoor and Triccul, I took up my abode in wicker bungalows, in the middle of gardens, beautifully shaded, and decked with flowers: these were the hunting lodges of the Ameers. The country continues level till within a few miles of Hyderabad, when it begins to assume a more hilly appearance. From Ruree to Toorta the extensive cultivation and richness of the soil were every where remarkable. I had to cross a number of canals, dug for the purposes of agriculture, from the branches of the Indus; and over many of these, small brick bridges had been



thrown, on which *Mot,hs*, or draw-wells were constantly at play, for irrigating the fields. The transition from the parched deserts of Cutch to the exuberance of vegetable life which was now before me, could not fail to produce the most pleasurable feelings, and a contrast in my mind highly favourable to Sindé.\*

It was on the evening of the 8th, that I arrived at Bunna, and saw for the first time the river Indus. My impatience to view this famous classic stream had been so excited, that I left all my baggage behind, and riding nearly forty miles during the day, reached its bank at sunset quite exhausted and fatigued. The feeling with which my curiosity was at length gratified, I will not attempt to describe; but I question whether my Hindoo attendants, who began to mutter their

---

\* “ In every step of his progress, objects no less striking than new, presented themselves to Alexander. The magnitude of the Indus, even after he had seen the Euphrates and the Tigris, must have filled him with surprise. No country he had hitherto visited, was so populous and well cultivated, or abounded in so many valuable productions of nature and of art, as that part of India through which he had led his army.”—ROBERTSON’S *India*.—“ The province of Sind, in many particulars of soil and climate, and in the general appearance of its surface, resembles Egypt; the lower part of it being composed of rich vegetable mould, and extended into a wide delta, the river Indus, equal at least to the Nile, winding through the midst of this level valley, and annually overflowing it.”—RENNELL’S *Memoir*.

prayers to the river as an object of adoration, and who considered immersion in its sacred waters a nearer step to everlasting bliss, felt a stronger, or more overpowering emotion than I did, in contemplating the scene of Alexander's glories. Never before did the worship of water or water gods appear to me so excusable, as in observing the blessings every where diffused by this mighty and beneficent stream.

It is at Bunna that the Pinyaree branch leaves the parent stream. The channel of the latter is here above a mile wide, with a large dry sand bank in the middle. My march from Laiqpoor to Bunna, and from thence to within a short distance of Hyderabad, was through a thick hunting forest belonging to the Ameers, which concealed every other part of the country from my observation. The road extended for many miles along the verge of the Indus, which, at a short distance above Bunna, is a large beautiful river nearly a mile broad, studded with boats, filling its channel from bank to bank, and moving majestically forward, at the rate of about three miles an hour.

Nothing could exceed the attention I experienced on the route from my Mihmandars, who themselves frequently sat up to watch me during the night. A large cotton mattress, covered with crimson silk, was always carried near me in case I should feel disposed to alight; flaggons of cooled sherbet, and other luxuries were also liberally

---



supplied. The Ameers had sent several hawks, which afforded an attractive sport on the road, and supplied my table with every species of winged game, which indeed is more abundant in Sind, than in any country I have ever visited. My great object being to reach Hyderabad without delay, our rate of travelling was as rapid as possible. There must have been at least a thousand persons in our party, most of whom were mounted on camels. The Khans themselves adopted this mode of travelling, which is the most usual and comfortable in Sind, and moved so expeditiously, as generally to keep pace with my horse. Their saddle was a silken cushion, which entirely relieves the rider from the effect of the uneasy gait of the camels. The road by which we travelled had never before, I believe, been passed by any European. The eager curiosity evinced by the inhabitants to see me was beyond all bounds ; my tent was surrounded constantly by a flock of gazers ; and crowds came from all parts of the country to look at the Feringee or European. Some even affected sickness to gain admittance to my presence ; and on my discovering the pretence, they readily acknowledged that their only wish had been to see me, from a belief that it might improve their fortunes.

As I approached nearer Hyderabad, (within thirty miles,) I was met by Mahommed Khan Tora, a nobleman related to the family of the

Ameers ; who, together with another officer of rank, named Moussa Cahitan, had been sent to compliment me, and who brought with them a number of attendants. From these persons, I learned that unusual preparations were making for my reception at Court ; “for” said they, “other Europeans have come into Sinde on their own affairs, but you are here by the invitation of the Ameers, and will be made welcome in a different manner from them.”

At the nearest stage to the capital, I was received by the Nuwaub Wullee Mahommed Khan Lagharee, the prime minister of Sinde, whom, as a mark of great respect, the Ameers had sent to congratulate me on my arrival. He was accompanied by a splendid retinue, composed of nearly all the men of consequence at court, and was carried by eight bearers in a meeanah or elevated chair, made of crimson velvet, with rich fringe and golden ornaments, from which, the moment he saw me, he alighted and cordially embraced me. He is a venerable looking man, of great age and respectability, with the address of a courtier, combined with much natural dignity and kindness. I was placed opposite him in his litter ; and in this manner we continued our journey for a considerable distance.

On the morning of the 10th of November, I entered Hyderabad ; and no language of mine can do justice to the busy and varied scene which was



then before me. Upwards of ten or twelve thousand persons must have been assembled, all of whom manifested an intense curiosity to see me; the women even, very unlike the gentle Hindoo ladies, pressed themselves close to the chair, and such was the concourse that it was almost impossible to proceed, although the Sindian soldiery spared neither sword nor matchlock in endeavouring to clear the way. Within a mile of the city, I was mounted on a large black horse, handsomely caparisoned, which had been brought out by Wullee Mahommed Khan, and led slowly forwards; but the crowd being found quite impervious, my conductors recommended me to enter my own close palanquin, or box, as they termed it, to be out of sight, and escape the pressing of the multitude.

In this manner, after much labour, in one of the hottest days I had ever experienced, we at length reached the gate of the fortress of Hyderabad, which is appropriated solely to the residence of the Ameers and their families, and where I learned, for the first time, that I was immediately to be introduced to the lords of Sinda. The silence which reigned within the fort formed a strong contrast to the noise and tumult without. After passing through some narrow streets, which were inhabited only by the immediate retainers of the court, I found myself, unexpectedly, among a crowd of well-dressed Sindians, in a large open

area, the walls of which, on either side, were fancifully decorated with paintings, and the ground covered with variegated carpets. At one end appeared three large arched doors with curtains of green baize, towards one of which I was led by the vizier and another officer; and before I could collect myself from the suddenness of the transition, my boots were taken off, and I stood in presence of the Ameers.

The *coup d'œil* was splendid. I had an opportunity of seeing the whole reigning family at a glance, and I have certainly never witnessed any spectacle which was more gratifying, or approached nearer to the fancies we indulge in childhood, of eastern grandeur. The group formed a semicircle of elegantly attired figures, at the end of a lofty hall spread with Persian carpeting. In the centre were seated the two principal Ameers on their musnud, a slightly elevated cushion of French white satin, beautifully worked with flowers of silk and gold, the corners of which were secured by four massive and highly-chased golden ornaments, resembling pine-apples, and, together with a large velvet pillow behind, covered with rich embroidery, presenting a very grand appearance. On each side, their Highnesses were supported by the members of their family, consisting of their nephews, Meer Sobdar and Mahommed, and the sons of Mourad Ali, Meers Noor Mahommed, and Nusseer Khan. Farther off sat their more dis-



## COURT OF SINDE.

45

tant relations, among whom were Meer Mahmood, their uncle, and his sons Ahmed Khan, and Juhan Khan. Behind stood a crowd of well-dressed attendants, sword and shield bearers to the different princes.

To an European, and one accustomed to form his notions of native ceremony by a much humbler standard, it was particularly gratifying to observe the taste displayed in dress, and the attention to cleanliness, in the scene before me. There was no gaudy show of tinsel or scarlet; none of that mixture of gorgeousness and dirt to be seen at the courts of most Hindoo princes, but, on the contrary, a degree of simple and becoming elegance, far surpassing any thing of the kind it had ever been my fortune to behold. The Ameers and their attendants were habited nearly alike, in angricas or tunics of fine white muslin, neatly prepared and plaited so as to resemble dimitry, with cummerbunds or sashes of silk and gold, wide Turkish trowsers of silk, tied at the ankle, chiefly dark blue, and the Sindian caps I have already described, made of gold brocade, or embroidered velvet. A pair of cashmere shawls of great beauty, generally white, thrown negligently over the arm, and a Persian dagger at the girdle, richly ornamented with diamonds, or precious stones, completed the dress and decoration of each of the princes.

Viewing the family generally, I could not but

admire their manners and deportment, and acknowledge, that, in appearance at least, they seemed worthy of the elevation they had gained. The younger princes, indeed, had an air of dignity and good breeding seldom to be met with, either in the European or native character. The principal Ameers were the least respectable of the party in point of looks ; probably from having had less advantages, and more exposure to hardships in early life. \* They are in reality older,

---

\* Mr Crow's account of the four brothers is subjoined ; but, as he wrote at the end of last century, it must be borne in mind that the description applies chiefly to Futteh and Gholam Ali, the present chief Ameers being then very young. " The infancy of the four princes was passed in great obscurity, and even poverty, under the latter part of the reign of the Caloras, who were not, as may be supposed from the dissensions, friendly to the tribe. The present rulers of Sind have been seen, it is said, tending cattle in its jungles, and cooking their own meals. Certain it is, that their understandings, dispositions, and manners, betray great barbarity of education, and that since their advancement to an affluent sphere, they have derived little cultivation from literature or society. Their ideas extend no farther beyond the mountains and desert which bound their country, than to events at Candahar, and the highest reach of their wisdom and policy is watching the motions of the king, and bribing his officers to gain delay or remission in their payment of the tribute ; their solicitude at home is to guard their personal safety, and to enrich themselves individually, and all the rest of their occupation consists in self-gratification, without a single glance at the condition of the people or the real interest of the country.



but did not appear above the age of fifty, from the very careful manner in which their beards and hair are stained. With one exception, there is little family likeness between them and the younger chiefs, who have inherited from their mothers fair complexions, jet black hair, with long eyelashes and eyebrows. Meer Nusseer Khan struck me at once as a particularly handsome man.

The general style of the Sinde court could not fail to excite my admiration, as much as the appearance of the Ameers. All the officers in attendance, judging from their dress and manners,

---

“ The Persian language is cultivated at the Durbar, and taught at the public schools, and Meer Futteh Ali Khan, with characteristic inflation and ignorance, conceiving himself the Rûstom of the age, and the exploits of the Talpoories worthy transmission to posterity, has employed a poet, a Sindian of more presumption than learning, to record them in verse like Ferdozi, and called the book in rival distinction to his immortal work the Shah Nameh, the Futteh Nameh. With the same vanity he has lately directed the loves of a Beloeche pair, as related in some of the country tales, to be translated into Persian verse, upon the model of Jani's Eusuph and Zuleika, that the diffusion of these poems may establish the fame of Sinde as well in letters as in arms. The Futteh Nameh is rehearsed in durbar, and many of the courtiers mark their adulation, by committing the most fulsome passages to memory. Whenever the prince moves abroad he is preceded by a poet, who proclaims his praise in loud and hyperbolick strain, and the prince does not blush, occasionally to animate him by a command to raise his voice.”

---

seemed to be of superior rank. There was no crowding for places ; the rabble had been shut entirely out of doors ; and there was a degree of stillness and solemnity throughout the whole, and an order and decorum in the demeanour of each individual, which, together with the brilliant display I have mentioned, impressed me with a feeling of awe and respect, I could not have anticipated. It is scarcely necessary, after what I have described, to say that their Highnesses received me in a state durbar. The native agent who had accompanied the two last embassies from our government was present, and assured me that the arrangements on this occasion, and the nature of my reception were very different, indeed far superior to any ceremonial he had seen during a residence of twenty years in Sinde.

As my boots had been taken off at the door, I determined not to uncover my head, and accordingly walked up the centre of the hall with my hat on. The whole family immediately saluted me, and I was requested to take my seat in front of the chief Ameers, and partly on their musnud. A conversation was at once commenced in the Persian language, and I was asked fifty questions in a breath ; Are you well ? Are you happy ? Are you pleased ? Have you been treated well ? &c. In answer to these civilities, I replied in the best manner I could ; that, from the moment I had entered Sinde, I had experienced nothing



but kindness and respect, and that I was thankful to them for the marked attentions I had received. Meer Kurm Ali observed that I was a guest who had come by invitation ; that every thing they had was at my disposal ; that they had appointed their chief minister, my Mihmandar or entertainer, who had their orders to comply with my wishes in every respect ; and that, at a short distance from the town, a garden had been prepared for my reception, which I might either occupy as I chose, or take up my residence with themselves within the fortress of Hyderabad.

Several inquiries then followed regarding Mr Elphinstone and Sir John Malcolm, Sir Evan Nepean, the Governor-General, and his Majesty King George the Fourth, for all of whom the Ameers professed the greatest respect and esteem. The resident in Cutch, they observed, had acted the part of a friend in permitting me to visit Sinde ; and by the grace of God the friendship between themselves and the British government, would now be greater than it had ever been at any former period. From this, their Highnesses passed to the subject of medicine, commencing a minute scrutiny regarding my age, as well as how and where I had studied my profession. In this respect, they seemed inclined at first to adopt the opinion not uncommon in Europe, that youth and knowledge can scarcely be conjoined ; and they were evidently somewhat disappointed that I had

neither gravity nor gray hairs to support my pretensions. The first observation I heard made between themselves, was in reference to my youthful appearance.

After having sat about an hour, all strangers were ordered to withdraw, and the subject of Mourad Ali's illness was introduced. From his general appearance, I could scarcely have conceived that he was labouring under any disease, however trivial ; and on examination I was gratified to find, that, instead of an immediately dangerous disorder, as I had anticipated, the case was one, which, with proper care and attention, might be relieved, if not perfectly cured. The whole family expressed great satisfaction when I announced this circumstance to them, and expressed my belief that his Highness would be restored to health without a surgical operation, of which they seemed to entertain great apprehensions. Towards the end of the interview, when the reserve on both sides had worn off, and I found I was to be met with confidence and civility, I considered it my duty to take every becoming means in my power to conciliate them by my manners and conversation. In this I had reason to believe I succeeded ; for at my departure from their presence, both the chief Ameers assured me they had never before met with an European with whom they had been so much pleased.

From the durbar I was conducted by the Nu-



wab Wullee Mahommed Khan through the same eager crowd to the place allotted for my residence, a large walled garden about a quarter of a mile from the town, the trees of which had been hewn down, and the cultivation destroyed to make room for myself and my people. Several tents were pitched, and among the rest one of great dimensions (about forty feet long with the walls twelve feet high) made entirely of green cloth with scarlet ornaments, and fitted up with cushions, carpets, couches, &c. which was intended as my sitting-room, and had really a striking appearance. I had scarcely recovered the surprise occasioned by the scene around me, which, with the occurrences of the morning, reminded me strongly of some I had read of in the Arabian Nights' Entertainments, when my attention was further attracted by the arrival of several attendants bearing large trays of provisions. One of these was placed at my feet, and contained about a dozen silver dishes filled with prepared viands of different description, all ornamented with gold leaf, for my own breakfast. The others held "baked meats" also, for the Mahommedans among my servants, and were accompanied by a profusion of fruit, sweetmeats, and articles of food for the Hindoos who were with me. The same ceremony was repeated in the evening; and it was only when I positively declared that I could make no use of what was so

liberally supplied, that the practice was in part discontinued.

In the afternoon of the same day I was again summoned to the presence of the Ameers, when I saw them privately, and without state or parade. They were dressed nearly in the same manner as in the morning, but without cummerbunds and arms, and had very few attendants. Their conversation was extremely conciliatory, and referred chiefly to the subject which interested them most, the illness of Mourad Ali. His Highness had been suffering for five months ; and I learned that they had not sent for me until all the native practitioners had given up hopes of curing his disease, and until he himself had despaired of his recovery. His brothers, Futteh and Ghoolam Ali, had died of, or rather perhaps with, complaints of a similar nature, which seem to be hereditary in the family, and he himself had gone so far as to make his will, settle his property, and prepare long written advices for his children. Under these circumstances, the anxiety of Mourad Ali and all connected with him for the restoration of his health, will be readily understood, as well as their subsequent satisfaction.

No time was of course lost in at once entering on the cure ; but I encountered some difficulty at first in overcoming the habitual distrust of the Ameers to try medicine from the hands of a stranger, and suffered not a little inconvenience,

---



personally, from being obliged to go shares with my patient in my own prescriptions, according to the Beloeche rule, which requires the physician to swallow one pill before he administers another. Mourad Ali positively refused to take any remedy without this previous ceremony ; and as my complaisance could not bring me to inflict on myself the nauseous dose more than twice, an unfortunate attendant was selected as the subject of experiment, and underwent, without mercy or necessity, such a course of continued sweating and purgation, as must have left on his mind and body, any thing but a favourable impression of the European mode of practising physic. Latterly, when I became more intimate with the Ameers, the custom was dispensed with ; though they took care to intimate to me that their doing so was the highest compliment they could have paid me, and even made so much of the matter, as to direct their envoy to bring it to the notice of the Governor of Bombay, as an extraordinary proof of their confidence and friendship for the British.

By a rigid attention to diet and constitutional treatment, together with the application of the most simple dressings to the disease itself, all dangerous symptoms disappeared by the 20th of November, that is, ten days after my arrival at Hyderabad. I will confess that I was myself taken by surprise ; and it is hardly possible to describe the gratification and gratitude of the Ameers when I

announced to Mourad Ali the propriety of his resuming with moderation his usual pursuits. The illness of one confines the whole family ; and none of them, therefore, had breathed fresh air outside the fortress for many months. Preparations were immediately made for a hunting excursion, to which they all proceeded, and I was also invited. The Ameer suffered no inconvenience for some weeks from his disorder ; while a dread of the consequences prevented his neglecting the regimen prescribed. But when this ceased he was guilty of some acts of imprudence and excess, which brought on a slight relapse, but did not much retard his general recovery.

The suddenness of a cure so unexpected, and which was to be attributed in a great measure, to the removal of the irritating substances formerly applied, impressed the Ameers with the idea that there were no bounds to my skill in my profession ; and some fortuitous circumstances contributed to strengthen the delusion. I had occasion to administer a small quantity of a powerful medicine to Mourad Ali, who declined taking it even after the same dose had been tried on the luckless attendant I have mentioned, till he was positively assured by me what would be the exact effect upon himself. I saw at once that this was in their estimation a grand test of my knowledge ; and it was one certainly which perplexed me considerably. Having no alternative, however, I



## COURT OF SINDE.

55

boldly hazarded a guess, which the event, luckily for my reputation, proved correct; and this circumstance, trifling as it may seem, excited so much the attention of the Ameers that they alluded to it often afterwards.

But to nothing, in this respect, was I more indebted than to the sulphate of quinine; a remedy hitherto perfectly unknown in Sind, and the effect of which, as it scarcely ever fails in stopping the intermittent fevers of natives, I could generally foretell with a degree of precision that astonished them. By means of this valuable medicine, I was enabled shortly after my arrival, to cure, in two days, a favourite child of the prime minister, who had been suffering from fever for months together, with several other persons in the immediate service of the Ameers; and I would no doubt have gone on to raise my character higher, had not their Highnesses, the moment they discovered the effect of the quinine, seized the phial which contained it without ceremony, and ordered it to be sealed and locked up for their own proper use at a future period. Even afterwards, when I myself fell sick, no solicitations could induce them to part with a single grain, though I was dangerously ill; and when at my departure, I made a request for the bottle in exchange for another, as it was one which belonged to a valuable medicine chest, the proposal was at once rejected, evidently from

an idea, that it might share with its contents some supposed talismanic virtue.

Sinde would be a fair field for English quackery to flourish in. The Ameers never thought of doubting that I had the power of restoring the vigour of youth, provided I was disposed to do so; and Meer Sohrab sent me a letter from Shikarpoor, requesting me to bring to his senses one of his children who had been twelve years an idiot! Meer Noor Mahommed was disappointed that I did not possess the lamp of Aladdin or the wand of Prospero, to transform his mean and contemptible figure into the stately form of his brother Nusseer Khan. I was applied to by Meer Mahommed to remove a white speck from the neck of one of the beauties of his Seraglio, which had been born with her; and his Highness was evidently displeased when my attempts proved unsuccessful. The circumstances of my interview with this lady are curious. It was proposed that I should meet her in a garden, with a wall about five feet high between us; but as I objected to this mode of examining a patient, she was brought to my tent, muffled up among a crowd of old and ugly females, her attendants. She was very beautiful, almost as fair as an European, and altogether a favourable specimen of the women of Sinde, who are superior in appearance to those of India. I saw several dancing girls, whose elegant forms might have graced the harem of the Caliph Walid.



In proportion as Mourad Ali's health recovered, the kindness and attention of the Ameers towards me increased. During my stay at Hyderabad, for the succeeding two months and a-half, every means were adopted by them that could afford me comfort or amusement. The vizier waited on me every morning and afternoon to accompany me to the durbar, where I passed six hours, and often more, daily in their company, and where they received me latterly in nearly the same manner as they did the younger princes. After the first or second visit the ceremony of taking off the shoes, which was, I understand, rigidly insisted on during the two or three short interviews the late envoys had with them, was entirely dispensed with; and the whole arrangement of their court was changed, that a chair might be introduced for me. No entreaties could induce them to discontinue the extravagant system of entertainment for me and my people, which was kept up to the very last day I remained in Sinde.

The conduct of a despotic prince regulates that of his followers. No sooner did the Sindian courtiers observe the disposition of the Ameers towards me, than they began to vie with each other in their obsequiousness. While I was at Hyderabad I was visited, I believe, by the heads of all the tribes resident at court. Letters were read in my presence at the durbar which were to be sent to the Sikhs and other allies, announcing

Mourad Ali's recovery, and highly complimentary to myself, together with congratulatory addresses from Meers Sohrab and Thara, entreating that every distinction might be paid me. Persian verses filled with the grossest flattery were repeated daily, and appeared extremely satisfactory to the Ameers, who themselves took the trouble to explain to me the meaning of the difficult passages.

The example of the rulers had a proportionate effect on the people of Sindh. The intelligence of Mourad Ali's recovery passed through the country like wild-fire, and crowds flocked from all quarters, in the expectation of obtaining relief, many of them from incurable diseases. In every direction, around the garden which I occupied, there were encampments of strangers who had come from a distance. My gate was surrounded by petitioners from morning to night; and the moment I appeared abroad, I was assailed by the most piteous entreaties for medicine and assistance. All these demands on me I was obliged to attend to; nor is there any period of my life during which I underwent more continued labour than in Sindh. The Ameers gave me credit for my assiduity, and thanked me for expending, as they had been informed by report, four thousand rupees worth of medicine on their subjects. I assured them of my readiness to do my endeavours, but did not conceive it necessary to add, that the ut-



most the Honourable Company was likely to suffer on the occasion was nearer forty rupees than the amount they had alluded to.

The consequence of my unremitting exertions was a violent attack of fever, which confined me to my bed for several days. The kindness I then experienced ought not to be omitted here. The Ameers did indeed refuse me the quinine; but they were constant in their inquiries, and extreme in their expressions of anxiety. During the whole of a day in which I was delirious, Wullee Mahomed Khan, whose good feeling I had gained by attention to his children, and frequent conversations with himself, never left my bedside; and when I recovered my senses, the first object which met my eye, was the respected old man kneeling in earnest prayer for my recovery. Such Samaritanism would do honour, and might be an example, to many of a purer creed and better education.

The supreme power in Sindh is understood by foreign states to be vested in the hands of the two youngest, and surviving brothers mentioned in the early part of this narrative, Meers Kurm and Mourad Ali, who are known, both at home and abroad, by the designation of the Chief Ameers, and whose seals are affixed to all public documents issued in the name of the government. But although these have, certainly, no equal in political consequence, there are, nevertheless, other members

of the family who are scarcely inferior in rank to their Highnesses at the court of Hyderabad. Both Futteh and Gholam Ali left sons to whom they bequeathed their shares in the administration, and who, although they have been, on account of their youth and the grasping spirit of their uncles, kept much in the back ground, have lately acquired a degree of influence in the state. Meer Sobdar, in particular, the son of Futteh Ali, who had been consigned to neglect, and appeared till within these few months as an humble attendant in the train of the Chief Ameers, has, since I left Sinde, raised himself, by a successful rebellion, to almost an equality with them; and Meer Mahommed, the son of Gholam Ali, would no doubt be equally fortunate had he spirit or inclination to hazard the attempt. The two sons, also, of Mourad Ali, Meers Noor Mahommed, and Nusseer Khan, must be enumerated amongst the heads of the government.

All these chiefs are in possession of portions of Sinde, the revenues and control of which they respectively enjoy. During the lifetime of Meer Futteh Ali, no division took place in this respect, and his younger brothers were content to owe to his liberality the means of supporting their expences and dignity. After his death the province was portioned out into four equal shares, of which two were allotted to Ghoolam Ali, who engaged to pay the usual charges of the state, and one each to Kurm and Mourad Ali. Since the de-



mise of Ghoolam Ali in 1811, several divisions have, at different times, taken place, and Mourad Ali, on the plea of having descendants, has contrived to despoil his brother and Meer Mahommed of much of their possessions; but, with the exception of the districts in the hands of Meers Sohrab and Thara, who will be mentioned in the sequel, the country is partitioned at this moment\* into four unequal shares, of which the largest belongs to Mourad Ali, and the others to Kurm Ali, Meer Mahommed and Sobdar. Mourad Ali's territory is subdivided into portions for his sons and himself. It is not my intention to say any thing further regarding the revenues of Sind, except that they are not supposed to exceed in all forty lacs of rupees annually.

In addition to the princes above alluded to, there are many other nobles of the Talpoor tribe, always resident at the court of the Ameers; but although they all enjoy the title of Meer or Lord, none of them are permitted to interfere in the affairs of the state, and they derive their lustre and importance solely from their relationship to the reigning family. Of this lineage are Meers Sohrab and Thara, who command in separate districts of their own. They are feudatories of the principal Ameers, who, at the period of the expulsion of the Caloras, acquired, by their own

---

\* June 1828.

bravery, considerable portions of territory, which they have ever since retained. Meer Sohrab resides at Shikarpoor, on the borders of the Punjab, and Meer Thara at Meerpoor, in the Thurr, where they hold separate courts of their own. Meer Sohrab, though opposed at first to Futteh Ali,\* appears generally to have supported the

---

\* “ When foreign attack no longer threatened, Meer Sohrab Khan, with a majority of the Talpoory and other chiefs, proposed that the son of Meer Abdulla Khan, Meer Ghoolam Hussain Khan, who has now arrived at years of discretion, should assume the government of Sinde, to which by direct descendancy he was heir, and in consideration of whose minority only, it had, it was urged, been entrusted to Meer Futteh Ali Khan. To this argument Meer Futteh Ali Khan replied by putting his foot in the stirrup. Both parties collected their forces, and, three whole days, were the ranks drawn out on either side in battle array. In this intestine contention of the Talpoory tribe, relations were divided on the different sides, sons threatened fathers, and brothers forgot their birth; the elders of the tribe wisely held out the mischief of such an unnatural butchery; and the women flung themselves between their swords to prevent it. Both parties were persuaded. Meer Ghoolam Hussain Khan acknowledged the sovereignty, and accepted the protection under which he now is, of Meer Futteh Ali Khan, and he acknowledged the independence and perpetuity of the distinct possessions of Meer Sohrab Khan and Meer Tarrah Khan. This accommodation perfected, Meer Futteh Ali Khan made a handsome provision in jaghires for three brothers he had, Meer Ghoolam Ali Khan, Meer Kurm Ali Khan, and Meer Mourad Ali Khan, according to their seniority, and in order to preserve them in an harmonious support of the general

---



Ameers ; but Meer Thara has, on more than one occasion, gone to war with them, and suffered severely as the penalty of his rashness. They are both very old men, and Meer Thara is blind with years. His son, Ali Mourad, is probably the most troublesome subject under the Sinda durbar, and has lately rendered himself well known both to the British and Cutch governments by the protection he has afforded the Meanah plunderers. The relationship of these leaders to the Ameers may be seen from the genealogical table of the Talpoors. \*

To a casual observer, it might appear that the power in Sinda was pretty equally divided among the aristocratic members of its government ; but a closer inspection will show, that the fabric, though upheld by many, is in reality for the elevation of a single despot. This is Meer Mourad Ali, whose superior energy of character enables him to carry with him the feelings and support of the other branches of the family. He is younger than his brother, but the latter is entirely subservient to his views, and in common with the rest,

---

interest of the family, for which they had all laboured in the field, and Meer Ghoolam Ali Khan with signal zeal and effect, he admitted them likewise to a participation in his power and placed their musnuds on each side of his own, an order which is preserved to the present day.”—CROW.

\* Meer Thara died in August 1829, leaving his possessions to his son Ali Mourad.

---

is willing to acknowledge him as the only efficient head, and representative.

In explaining my sentiments as to the cause of this fact, it may appear overstrained to speak of the affections of the heart, in reference to Asiatic despots. Still there is one virtue for which this family has ever been distinguished, which has carried with it its own reward, and to a continued exercise of which, they have owed their greatness, and since its tranquillity, for the last thirty years. I allude to the personal attachment, mingled perhaps with policy, which induced Futteh Ali, on his obtaining his own power, to place the musnuds of his brothers on an equality with his own, and restrained them, individually, from any attempt to usurp the whole authority thus divided amongst them. Although it might be supposed that rival and conflicting interests would weaken and destroy so delicate a feeling as that I have now adverted to, it is nevertheless still perceptible, generally, in all the branches of the family, and induces the younger to yield a ready obedience to the wishes of the elder, and at all events to restrain their own ambitious projects, during the lifetime of their seniors. Fanciful as this opinion may seem, it is impossible that any person could have witnessed the constant anxiety and unwearied attention of Mourad Ali's relations for his recovery, without coming to the same conclusion ; nor can I indeed account, in any satisfactory manner, for the cir-



cumstance of a complicated machine like the government of Sind, apparently so ill connected, having held together so long, without a kindred sympathy in its component parts.

Mourad Ali is about fifty-five years of age, of low stature, and stout habit of body. His complexion is rather fair ; and his countenance is the index of a sullen and gloomy mind. He is cold and repulsive in his manners, seldom relaxes into a smile, and never condescends to familiar conversation. His personal attachments are confined to the circle of his family ; and whether it be affection which procures him their support, or a dread of his power, which induces them to accord it, at all events it is a cruel and remorseless disposition, on his part, and terror on that of his subjects, which enables him to sway the destinies of Sind. Inconsistent as it may appear, this tyrant is at heart a poor hypochondriac, constantly haunted by the fear of death and the phantoms of his own gloomy imagination. Some of his subjects deny him even the merit of personal courage, though such a supposition is highly improbable ; but I have myself known him pass several sleepless nights, from a horror of the consequences of bodily derangement of the most trivial description.

The prevailing feature of Mourad Ali's character is avarice ; and he is ever too ready to sacrifice, for its gratification, his own dignity and

the interests of his people. Seldom making promises, he even more rarely fulfils them ; and altogether his character may be summed up as that of a selfish and gloomy despot, an Asiatic Tiberius, or Philip the Second, ruling a kingdom by the energies of his mind, with none of the better feelings of the human heart. His resemblance to the former of these monsters is so complete, that I cannot refrain from adding here the words of the Roman historian, as equally descriptive of both : “ *Multa indicia sævitiae, quamquam premantur, erumpere—seu natura, sive ad-suetudine suspensa semper et obscura verba—odia in longum jaciens, quæ reconderet auctaque promeret.*”

The character of Meer Kurm Ali forms a perfect contrast to that of his brother. He is a man of approved personal bravery, and, as far as the etiquette of the court permits, is cheerful, condescending, and even affable. Fond of dress and display, he courts popular applause, which Mourad Ali affects to despise ; and till lately he was generous to profusion. Even yet he is liberal, although he now shows a disposition to follow the general policy of the Sinde court, and to hoard money. I found the public voice at Hyderabad decidedly in his favour, as a prince who was kind to his subjects and attendants, and who was strict in the performance of his promises. In person he is below the middle size, with a pleasing coun-

---



tenance and engaging manners. Although but five years older than Mourad Ali, he bears in his appearance the furrows of age, with traces of early intemperance ; and, in all human probability, he will ere long leave his more robust and energetic brother the unrivalled actor in the scene.

Kurm Ali is possessed of slender talents, though his education has been good ; and he is of so indecisive and easy a disposition, that he has accustomed himself through life to regulate his conduct chiefly by the advice and wishes of others. It is not unlikely, therefore, that, were he even to survive his brother, he would sink, not unwillingly, into obscurity, as he has no children of his own, and would probably have neither the power nor the inclination to control his nephews. On the other hand, such is the kindly feeling which exists between the brothers, that, were he to die first, Mourad Ali would no doubt inherit his treasures and possessions, and retain the sole authority in his own hands.

Meer Mahommed Khan, the son of Ghoolam Ali, is the next in rank to the chief Ameers. He is about the age of thirty, and a handsome man, though somewhat disfigured by a hare-lip. He inherited from his father great wealth and political consequence in Sinde. For some time he took his seat on the musnud with his uncles ; and, in common with them, he enjoyed the honour of a salute from the ramparts of Hyderabad,

when he appeared abroad. Being, however, of a mild and unambitious character, he has renounced, apparently without regret, all this semblance of dignity ; together with the most substantial part of his property, of which he has been despoiled, on various pretences, by Mourad Ali and his favourite servants, from an inability to control them, or to manage his own affairs. He is singularly good-natured, quite indifferent to state or parade, and much liked by his immediate retainers, many of whom have made large fortunes in his service.

Meer Mahommed has no family ; and I may here remark, that it is the custom of the Court of Sind to put to death all children born to the princes of slave women. — The butchery which this horrid cruelty engenders must be shocking, as I was assured that one member of the family alone had consigned to the tomb no less than twenty-seven of his illegitimate offspring. The authority of ages may sanction, and the rites of religion sanctify, the inhuman practices of Suttee and infanticide among the Hindoos ; and we may pity, if we cannot pardon, the misguided feeling which impels the proud Rajpoot to crush at her birth the daughter, whose preservation, as in Cutch, too often ends in her prostitution ; but humanity turns with unmingled horror from the monstrous barbarity I have now mentioned, which is as repugnant to the precepts of the Koran as it is



to the dictates of nature, and for which we search in vain for any reasonable apology. "They are utterly lost," says Mahommed, "who have slain their children foolishly, without knowledge, and have forbidden that which God hath given them for food ; devising a lie against God."

Meer Mourad Ali's eldest son, Noor Mahommed, is about thirty years of age, and may be considered as nearly the counterpart of his father, with all the bad, and but few of the strong, parts of his character. He was very unpopular ; and I never heard of any virtue he possessed, except a selfish attachment to his parent. Accumulation of wealth is the apparent object of his life. This chief is the only one of the family who is illiterate ; and I have myself been present when he was obliged to request the assistance of a servant in composing a common Persian note to his father. He has a son, a fine-looking boy, named Meer Shadad, who has attained the age of twelve years.

Meer Mahommed Nusseer Khan is the second son of Mourad Ali, and is by far the most engaging and popular of the reigning family in Sind. He is twenty-five years of age, of handsome figure though rather corpulent, with much dignity of manners, and a noble expression of countenance, undisfigured by the least resemblance to his father or brother. The dissimilarity, fortunately, is as complete in character as in personal

appearance. Nusseer Khan is as generous as they are sordid, and has lavished the treasures which were allotted him with profuse liberality ; a quality which, whether a virtue or a vice, has ever been known to receive general praise and approbation, particularly in Asiatic countries.

During my march to Hyderabad, his Highness's virtues and poetical genius formed the theme of constant commendation ; and, presuming that the vanity of authors was much the same in all parts of the world, I took an opportunity, on my first visit, to request, as a particular favour, that he would honour me with a copy of his works, entitled the *Dewan Jaffieri*, the fame of which, I added, had extended all over India. This compliment was most graciously received ; and a few days after he presented to me a beautiful illuminated copy of them, with an inscription on the title-page written by himself. If they are really his own composition, they do him infinite credit ; but I must confess that his conversation never exhibited any proofs of an exalted imagination.

The present of the *Dewan Jaffieri* was followed by gifts of a superior description from the other Ameers ; who, although they could not compliment me with books written by themselves, begged my acceptance of elegant editions of the Poems of Hafiz and Sadi, some of which had had a place for many generations in the library of the Caloras, and, in addition to their real value,



were beautiful specimens of Persian penmanship. Amongst several curiosities given me at the same time, Wullee Mahommed Khan presented me with a pair of handsome green slippers, which had been pressed by the royal feet of Shah Shuja Ool Moolk, the king of Cabûl, and for which he entertained a true vizier-like reverence.

Nusseer Khan has ever expressed a favourable feeling towards the British government. He has been unremitting in his civilities to our native agent at Hyderabad ; and, during my residence there, he was even more attentive to me than the others. He is the darling of the soldiery, from excelling in all manly exercises, and the most likely of the younger branches of the family to attain that pre-eminence which some one or other will probably in the end acquire. He does not appear a very determined or aspiring character ; but it is impossible to foretell how his disposition may be influenced by a fair field for his ambition, particularly as the stream of public opinion is so decidedly in his favour.

I had no opportunity of becoming personally acquainted with Meer Sobdar, who, when I was in Sindé, happened to be out of favour at court. He made some advances to me ; but the Ameers objected to my having any communication with him. He is the son of Futteh Ali, the chief to whom the Talpoor family owes its greatness ; and he was born in 1801, a few hours before the death of his fa-

ther, who had only time to entreat the kindness of his brothers to his infant before he expired. For many years Sobdar was the adopted child of Kurm Ali ; but, being subject to epilepsy, and having one day fallen down in the durbar, in consequence of that distressing disorder, Mourad Ali contemptuously asked his brother what he expected to make of such an unfortunate wretch ; and since then, until very lately, he has lived in obscurity, on a paltry pension of 25,000 rupees per annum.

Sobdar naturally traced his misfortunes to Mourad Ali ; and when this prince was seized with his late dangerous illness, he and his few adherents could scarcely suppress a feeling of exultation at his expected death. This, together with a demand he had made publicly for the restoration of his rights, inflamed the rage of Mourad Ali ; and although Sobdar was obliged, by the commands of the Ameers, to attend at the durbar, I observed that he was never addressed by any one, nor received with the slightest demonstration of respect.

But Mourad Ali had mistaken, in some measure, the character of Sobdar, who was secretly carrying on intrigues with some of the surviving friends of his father, and with Meer Ali Mourad, the turbulent son of Meer Thara, to obtain a restitution of his birth-right. My presence prevented his bringing his plans to maturity ; but



immediately after I left Hyderabad, he found means to escape to the Fort of Islamkote in the desert, where he was joined in the course of five or six days by the conspirators and their followers, amounting to 15,000 men, and marched direct on Hyderabad. The principal Ameers were taken perfectly unawares at the boldness of the undertaking, and prudently settled matters by a compromise; consenting to grant Sobdar a share of the country, and a participation in the government. This young prince's elevation was highly unsatisfactory to all the other chief members of the family; and it is most probable, that, when a favourable opportunity presents itself, no means will be left untried to remove a barrier so prejudicial to their interests.

The personal appearance of Meer Sobdar is favourable. He is about the middle size, and rather inclined to corpulency. In his manners he is formal; although, from the restraint in which he was constantly placed, I had probably no means of judging correctly of him in this respect. Great pains were, I understand, taken with his education; and although he is, no doubt, a man of weak mind, and most likely the tool only of a party, he is not deficient in literary taste and attainments, if a knowledge of Persian books and poetry can be dignified by such an appellation.

The government of Sinde is a pure military des-

potism ; and the great misfortune of the people, next to the circumstance of their being entirely at the mercy of their rulers, is, that the latter are ignorant of the important truth, that in a well regulated kingdom the interest of the prince and the people are identical. Like all Asiatic governors, the Ameers have no idea of sacrificing present gains, however trivial, for future advantages ; and, as they unfortunately consider the stability and grandeur of their dynasty as depending chiefly on the accumulation of wealth, their course of internal policy is directed to this object, and is pursued with comparatively little benefit to themselves, and great detriment to their people. Under this short-sighted system, the imposts and taxation in Sind are enormous, and have the effect of paralyzing nearly the whole trade, and deeply affecting the industry of the country. The revenues are farmed to the highest bidders ; who, as they enjoy their contracts only by the grace of their masters, and can never, on any pretence, obtain exemptions for themselves, are obliged to exert to the utmost, during their ephemeral reign, their powers of exaction and oppression.

It has excited the surprise of every European who has cast a thought on this state of affairs, that a government, so formed and conducted, should have maintained its existence for so long a period. The family feeling which unites together the Ameers, I have alluded to ; and the his-



## COURT OF SINDE.

75

tory of Asiatic kingdoms is the best evidence of what man will suffer with patience, and what princes may inflict with impunity. Sindé has, besides, advantages over other countries similarly situated ; advantages which, to a certain extent, enable her to struggle against the curses of misrule and ignorance. She is almost independent of the periodical rains, and of the famines and disasters too frequently attendant on the failure of these in the provinces surrounding her. Heaven has blessed her with a constant and never-failing boon in the river Indus,—that source of commerce and fertility of which no tyranny can despoil her ; which enables the cultivator not only to till his fields with little trouble or expence, but to look forward in due season to a certain harvest, and to transfer, should he wish it, with facility and profit, the abundant product of his toil to other countries. Notwithstanding all the opposition of the rulers, the same fruitful cause reduces the price of labour and of food lower than in Cutch ; the inhabitants of which are known in seasons of scarcity to seek invariably for subsistence in Sindé, rather than to emigrate into our own territories. Hence there is an appearance of plenty and contentment throughout this misgoverned land, which would surprise any traveller who did not take every circumstance into consideration.

I may remark further, that there are bounds to the horrors of despotism as to all other human

evils ; and it is but justice to confess, that the Ameers seem rather to be ignorant of true notions of policy, and misled by the delusions of prejudice, than wantonly cruel and iniquitous in their proceedings. Moreover, they cannot be blind to the danger and hopelessness of oppressing their subjects beyond certain limits ; and, luckily for the latter, the system of finance carries with it a check which operates partially in their favour. The government has seldom any greater sympathy with the farmer than with the ryot, and, consequently, is not deaf to appeals against him, or unwilling that discussions between the parties should be referred to the expounders of the Mahommedan law. Another fact is, that, as the Mussulmans are all soldiers, and have rarely money or patience sufficient to become lease-holders, the revenues are for the most part in the hands of Hindoos ; a class which possesses little favour at court, and no influence or respectability in the country, except that of wealth. The farmers do not, as in Cutch, combine with their leases the power of civil magistrates ; and, as they are constant objects of jealousy and dislike to the Mahommedan military governors of the districts, who envy their riches and despise their persons and religion, the people no doubt profit by this application of the political maxim *Divide et Impera*. It is melancholy, however, to reflect that the only safeguard of property in Sind is derived from a sort of balance between the evil pas-



sions of the rulers ; and that it may too often happen to be the interest of the latter to unite, with one accord, to rob the helpless villager of the profits of his labours.

Yet even under all these disadvantages it may be doubted whether Sinda has for many years enjoyed comparatively greater blessings, or stood higher in political consequence than at the present moment. Ignorant and oppressive as her rulers are, her annals do not show that she has ever been much better governed in recent times ; and they have at least the merit of having maintained her in a state of tranquil, and almost uninterrupted repose for the last thirty years. The restless and daring spirits also, who were instrumental in bringing about the revolution which ended in the downfall of the Caloras, have, in the course of nearly half a century, either disappeared from the stage, or become incapacitated by years. The present generation know only by tradition of the murders and rapine of their fathers ; and while a calm has thus succeeded the tempest in Sinda, as in all empires which have undergone commotions, a degree of order and permanency has gradually crept into the government which was before unknown to it.

It is but too true that there are many signs of decay and depopulation in Sinda ; but the people invariably trace these evils to the season of civil discord ; nor is there any evidence to show that they

have increased in any unusual degree, during the administration of the Ameers, or that the latter are really more indifferent to the interests or commerce of their subjects than the later Caloras ; one of whom, Surufraz Khan, besides being a blood-thirsty tyrant, discouraged trade and manufacture by every means in his power, and amongst the rest by expelling the British factory from Tatta.\* The revenues have without doubt much

---

\* As a proof that the state of affairs in Sind is not worse now than during the time of the Caloras, I give the following extract from Major Rennell, which was written before the elevation of the Talpoor family : “ The Hindoos, who were the original inhabitants of Sindy, and were reckoned to outnumber the Mahommedans in the proportion of ten to one in Captain Hamilton’s time, are treated with great rigour by the Mahommedan governors, and are not permitted to erect any pagodas or other places of worship, and this severity drives vast numbers into other countries.—RENNELL’S *Memoir*. Mr Elphinstone also proves that many of the present evils of Sind are to be attributed to causes altogether independent of the conduct of the Ameers. I have already mentioned that Abdool Nubbee had on one occasion obtained the support of the King of Cabûl, and I give the words of Mr Elphinstone to show in what manner the assistance was afforded. “ About this time (1781) broke out the rebellion of the Talpoories, which ended in the expulsion of the governor of Sind. In the course of next year, the King (Timour Shah) sent a force under Muddud Khan to reduce the insurgents, which soon overran the whole province. The Talpoories retired to their original desert, and the other inhabitants appear to have fled to the hills and jungles to avoid the Doorannee army. Muddud Khan laid waste the country with fire and sword ; and so



diminished ; but the defalcation in this respect is to be attributed chiefly to sacrifices wilfully made by the Ameers, such as turning large tracts of their most productive districts into hunting forests, instead of farming them out for the purpose of cultivation. \*

The dismemberment of the Cabûl monarchy, while it has absolved the Ameers from their irksome allegiance to a lord paramount, and rendered them almost independent sovereigns, has enabled them to appropriate to themselves, without difficulty, the valuable district of Shikarpoor, which they seized about five years ago, and the additional revenues of which they now share with Meer Sohrab, who governs it. The same cause has relieved them from the obnoxious annual tribute of

---

severe were his ravages that a dreadful famine followed his campaign, and the province of Sinde is said not yet to have recovered from what it suffered on that occasion.”—ELPHINSTONE’S *Cabûl*.

\* Of the passion of the Ameers for hunting, the following is a characteristic anecdote. “ Meer Futteh Ali has depopulated, at a loss to his own revenue of between two and three lacs of rupees annually, one of the most fertile spots in the neighbourhood of Hyderabad, because frequented by a species of antelope called Kotapacha, which he has most pleasure in hunting. A short time ago the youngest brother (Mourad Ali) unrelentingly banished the inhabitants of an ancient village and razed it to the ground, because the crowing of the cocks and the grazing of the cattle disturbed the game in his brother’s jagire which was contiguous.”—CROW.

fifteen lacs of rupees, which they were bound to pay to the Affghaun court ; for although Runjeet Sing has frequently intimated his intention, as head of the Cabûl states, of demanding the usual subsidy, they have invariably denied his right ; and he has either been too much occupied with his neighbours, or restrained by his political engagements, to lead an army into Sinde as the only means of enforcing his claim.

The whole family of the Ameers are extremely strict in the observances of religion ; and I have myself seen some of them kneel down to pray in the public durbar. An extraordinary difference,\*

---

\* The difference of religious opinion which exists in the family of the Ameers, will appear even more extraordinary from the following remarks on the Sheeah and Soonee sects by Sir John Malcolm, and an extract I shall give from the pen of Major Pottinger. It must be borne in mind that the Ameers themselves are Beloches, and extremely proud of their descent. “ It is evident, therefore, that the Soonee and Sheeah faith can never exist in any concord with each other. A stranger to the name of Mahommed is more acceptable to a zealous man of either of these religions than the opposite secretary, who insults him with an hourly attack of his favourite tenets ; and their disagreement, as has been before stated, relates to matters of faith or rather opinion more than to practice.” —MALCOLM’S *Persia*, Vol. ii. “ With regard to religion they (the Beloches) with a very few exceptions to the westward, are Soonee Mussulmans, and inveterate in their hatred and enmity against the Sheeas, under which persuasion, I am convinced, it would be more dangerous to



## COURT OF SINDE.

81

however, exists among them on this important point; which, strange to say, is the most marked between the two brothers whom I have represented as so much attached to each other. The Talpoors were originally Soonnees, like the Beloches and Sindians in general; but their connection with Persia has infected the court with the heresies of that kingdom; and, with the exception of Mourad Ali and Sobdar, who are still attached to the orthodox doctrines, they have become Sheahs or followers of Ali. Meer Mourad Ali's gloomy mind leads him to dwell much on the subject of religion, and to add to his other evil qualities those of a bigotted enthusiast. The rest are scarcely more liberal. At the time I was confined to my residence by indisposition, I sent a Hindoo medical assistant to bring me a report of the state of my patient; but when he went to the durbar, it was unanimously agreed that his putting his hand near the seat of the disease might be prejudicial, and he was dismissed accordingly, with an apology to me for not accepting his services.

---

appear in Belochistan, than even as a Christian.—POTTINGER's *Belochistan*. The author of Anastasius also thus characterizes the two sects: "As the difference between them is small, so is the hatred proportionably intense. The Turks are all Soonnees, the Persians all Scheyis; the former are more fanatical and the latter more superstitious."

When I left Sinde, I carried with me two gold watches belonging to the Ameers to be repaired; but one of my servants having by chance hinted that there was a Hindoo in Bhooj who was qualified for the task, they were not consigned to my charge, till I gave a pledge that they should not pass into the hands of an accursed *Boot Purust*, or worshipper of idols. Among the inscriptions inlaid in gold on a highly-valuable Damascus sword, with which their Highnesses presented me, there is a verse written by their vizier, and highly applauded by themselves, containing a prayer that a hundred thousand Hindoos may perish by its edge. \*

I had frequent discussions with the Ameers on the subject of religion. They professed to have a respect for the Christian faith, the founder of which had been esteemed a great prophet by Mahommed. Their questions and style of reasoning often amused me exceedingly, and particularly on one occasion, when they asked me whether I was one of the Christians who paid adoration to the hoofs of the ass which carried our Saviour into Jerusalem, and which they understood were still preserved as a relic in a house of religious worship in Europe. It is scarcely necessary to add,

---

\* “ Of ancient steel and water, I am the produce of Persia ; I am light in appearance, but I am heavy against my enemies. When a brave man wields me with his strength, a hundred thousand Hindoos will perish by my edge.”



that they know nothing of the distinctions between Catholics, Greeks, and Protestants.

A spirit of religious toleration cannot be enumerated among the few virtues of the Sinde government or its subjects ; and in no respect whatever is the oppression of the Ameers more apparent than in their zeal for the propagation of the Mahommedan faith. It is really difficult to conceive how any Hindoos should have continued to reside in the country ; and the fact can only be accounted for by that attachment, which man shares with the vegetable, to the soil in which he is reared. The indignities they suffer are of the most exasperating description. They are even forced to adopt the Mahommedan dress, and to wear beards. Till lately, none of this class were permitted to ride on horseback ; and amongst the few who now enjoy the privilege, a small number only in the immediate service of government are allowed the comfort and honour, as it is esteemed, of a saddle. Merchants of wealth and respectability may be seen mounted on asses and mules ; animals considered so unclean, that none but the vilest outcasts in other countries can touch them with impunity : and, even from this humble conveyance, they are obliged to descend and stand aside when any bloated Mussulman passes by.

The Mahommedans are encouraged and exhorted to destroy all the emblems of idolatry they may see in Sinde. The degraded and unfortunate

follower of Brahma, is denied the free exercise of his religion; the *tom-tom* is seldom heard, being only beat when permission is granted; and although there are a few temples without images at Hyderabad, the sound of music never echoes from their walls, It is in the power of any two "true believers," by declaring that a Hindoo has repeated a verse from the Koran, or the words "Mahommed the Prophet," to procure his immediate circumcision. This is the most common, and, by the persecuted class themselves, considered the most cruel of all their calamities; while, as it is resorted to on the slightest pretence, and always performed with a mockery of its being for the eternal happiness of the sufferer, mental agony is made to add its bitterness to bodily infliction. Such severities recal to memory the stern fanaticism which attended the standard of the Prophet on the first promulgation of Islamism, when the alternative offered to idolaters was death or conversion; and when the Caliph Omar prohibited the conquered Christians of Jerusalem from riding on saddles, ringing bells, or appearing abroad, except in a particular habit; nor is it improbable that the Ameers are stimulated by an enthusiastic ardour to imitate so sacred an example as that of the Commander of the Faithful.

Of their summary mode of administering justice towards Hindoos, I had myself an opportunity of judging. A Banian merchant came to my re-



## COURT OF SINDE.

85

sidence one day with several articles of cloth, &c. for sale ; and, after leaving the garden, returned in the course of an hour, complaining that he had been robbed of a valuable piece of silk by one of the Sipahis of my guard. I naturally felt indignant at the supposed misconduct of the Sipahi, as tending to degrade both myself and the character of the native army in the eyes of foreigners, and immediately entered into a careful investigation of the circumstance. The Hindoo could produce no evidence, while the innocence of the accused was attested by numerous witnesses. I had made up my mind as to the falsehood of the charge, when I was privately apprised that the Banian was acting by the advice of my friend Gopaldass, the vakeel, who had pointed out to him the probability of my at once paying the value rather than allow the imputation of theft to rest where it was laid. I dismissed the business, therefore, telling the parties that, should I hear more on the subject, I would bring it at once to the notice of the Ameers.

The Hindoo appearing on the following day with the same story, I, accordingly, in the afternoon, informed their Highnesses of the dispute ; adding, that the accusation was against one of a body, the meanest soldier of which had a character indispensably necessary to his remaining an hour in the service, that they were the men who fought the battles of the state, and that it was in-

cumbent on me to protect their reputation : and I requested that an inquiry might be instituted, promising, in the event of there being any proof against the Sipahi, that he should be sent to Bhooj, where he would meet with the severest punishment. The Ameers heard me with great politeness ; expressed their regret at the circumstance ; and begged to know who the person was that had given me so much annoyance. I replied, a Hindoo. The name acted like a charm : Mourad Ali stopped me at once by pronouncing any investigation perfectly unnecessary, and forthwith issued his commands that the offender should be confined and admitted into the bosom of the faith ; an order which I observed several persons run with alacrity to perform. On my remonstrating against this extremity, his Highness replied with a savage grin, " You do not know the Hindoos of Sinde ; they are all blackguards and rascals." The catastrophe in this case, however, was luckily prevented ; and I am happy to add, that I had influence enough with Wullee Mahommed to obtain the release of the culprit unknown to the Ameers.

The bigotry which leads to these cruel excesses, betrays itself also in an unbounded and superstitious respect for the Seyuds, or descendants of the Prophet. The religious awe evinced by the Hindoo for his Brahmin priest is not more profound or abject than the veneration in which this tribe is held in Sinde. The meanest wretch, who can boast



his origin from the holy stock, enjoys a place in society higher than temporal rank can bestow. Among the crowds who came to me for medicine all readily gave place to a Seyud ; and the only persons I ever saw admitted to any degree of intimacy with the Ameers were of that privileged class. No person under any provocation would dare to abuse or strike one, unless at the risk of being torn to pieces by the populace ; and in consequence of the privileges and immunities they enjoy, they flock from all the neighbouring countries into Sinda, where, besides being the most insolent, useless, and lazy members of the community, they exercise a most baneful influence on the minds, and are a constant tax on the purses, of the deluded inhabitants. Fuqueers, or religious mendicants, infest the public highways at Hyderabad ; demanding alms in a tone of overbearing insolence, indicative of the power they possess, and affording a melancholy evidence of the moral degradation of the people.

The evils of intolerance I have mentioned, are so glaring that it is scarcely possible for a stranger to be a week in the country without their being obtruded on his notice. The Hindoo vakeel who accompanied me, was the butt of every species of ribaldry and wit that could enter the imaginations of my conductors, or their followers, on the march ; and amongst the many who secretly pray for such a consummation, none seemed to

have a more devout wish to see the British colours flying on the bastions of Hyderabad, than the Hindoos of respectability ; who, uninvited, entered on the subject of their grievances, and discoursed largely of the cruelties and indignities to which they were subjected.

The Ameers of Sind are less sunk in sensuality and indulgence than Mahommedan princes in general. They seem to be men of too proud and ambitious a turn of character to be much influenced by the allurements of pleasure, or it is more probable that these have already palled upon their taste. Mourad Ali asked me, on one occasion, whether I had any objection to his taking *daroo*, a word which I understood in its usual acceptation of ardent spirits ; and I was proceeding to explain that it would be better to avoid all stimulants, and particularly wine, for the present, when he abruptly interrupted me by begging that I would not use the name of the forbidden juice of the grape in the presence of a true believer. I found afterwards that his Highness only meant a pomegranate ; and although this anecdote may give an impression of display before a large assembly, still I believe it is well ascertained that the Ameers never indulge in intoxicating drugs or liquors. They have been known to dismiss persons with disgrace from their presence, who have appeared before them redolent of wine ; and Bahadoor Khan Cokur, a Beloch chief of high birth in the service



of Mourad Ali, was suspended from his employments for a considerable time, from having been once seen in a state of intoxication. The Ameers universally objected to take medicine in the shape of tinctures from the spirits they contained. There is not a hookah to be seen at their court, nor do any of the family ever eat opium. It were to be hoped, that this temperance on the part of the rulers had had a proportionate effect on their subjects ; but experience obliges me to declare, that most of the soldiery, and many of the courtiers, are addicted to every species of indulgence that can either enervate the mind, or debilitate the body. The eating of opium is as common in Sindh as in Cutch ; and I found no present more acceptable than a few bottles of brandy, and no annoyance more intolerable than incessant indirect applications to repair the ravages of unlawful disease, or to renew the powers wasted in luxury and debauch.

The Ameers commence business about two hours before day-break, when each holds a private levee to listen to complaints, and adjust the affairs relative to his peculiar province. It is on this occasion only that they wear turbans. About sunrise they repair to their apartments to dress, and appear shortly afterwards in durbar, where the whole family regularly assemble, and where all state proceedings are transacted. The letters which have arrived during the night or preceding day, are then thrown before them in a heap, and

the time is passed in reading or giving orders regarding them, and in conversation, till ten or eleven o'clock, when they withdraw to their morning repast. At two o'clock they again show themselves abroad, and remain together till dark, when they separate for the night to their respective places of abode. My visits were always during the public durbars ; nor had I, on any occasion, an opportunity of conversing privately with any one of the principal chiefs. On retiring to their residences the younger princes held separate courts of their own, where every thing formed a contrast to the stately ceremonial of the elder Ameers. There all restraint was thrown aside ; and we visited the stables, saw boar-baiting, fencing, ball practice, wrestling, and many other species of amusement.

During the lifetime of Meer Futteh Ali, and while the convulsions by which the family gained the supreme power were recent, extraordinary precautions were taken to prevent treachery or combinations against themselves. The four brothers used to eat together, and sleep in one chamber, which was lighted only at the door way, while numbers of saddled horses and attendants were kept ready for any emergency. The continued tranquillity of Sind for the last thirty years has at length lulled its rulers into confidence ; but their vigilance is still such as in a great measure to bid defiance to conspiracy. They do not now, as formerly, dine and repose in the same room ; but they

---



all pass the night in halls outside of their apartments, with their arms by their sides, and watched by trusty retainers.

Their distrust of each other is one of the most singular features in their character. I have already mentioned, that Mourad Ali's illness had confined them all within the fortress of Hyderabad for many months ; and when they proceed on their hunting excursions, they are too cautious to leave any one of their number behind. It was merely by lingering a few miles in rear of the rest that Meer Sobdar found means to escape to Islamkote and there raise his rebellion. Power under such a system of suspicion and alarm is scarcely to be envied ; and I gave Mourad Ali credit for the justice of a sentiment he once feelingly expressed to me, and which he had copied, no doubt, from some Persian author,—that there is a heavy load, like lead, on the head of princes, the full misery of which none but princes can appreciate ; a fair confession, that his was any thing but a bed of roses.

In their manners at the durbar, the Ameers were courteous, but for the most part haughty and reserved ; nothing approaching to familiarity appeared to exist between them and their most favoured servants. When a chair was brought in for me, two couches were at the same time introduced, one of which was occupied by the principal chiefs, and the other by the young princes. All the

courtiers and attendants sat at a respectful distance on the floor, or stood outside ; and I never, on any occasion, except once or twice when Meer Ismael Shah and some favourite peerzadas or saints were allowed the honour, observed even their highest officers permitted to sit on the same elevation with themselves. The Ameers generally came into their levee together, and left it at the same moment. During my stay at Hyderabad, all the durbars were held in Mourad Ali's apartments, on account of his illness ; but it is customary for them to meet alternately at each others' residences.

I have already, in describing my first interview, alluded to their dresses, and the general style of their court. With the exception of the Cashmere shawls, and the loongies or sashes of silk and gold, which I formerly mentioned, and which are made at Tatta, the cloths worn were generally of English manufacture. As the cold season advanced, and they were obliged to lay aside the muslin tunics, their Highnesses used to appear in robes or cloaks made of the most valuable description of Cashmere shawls, gorgeously embroidered with gold lace, and lined with the black fur of Candahar. On other occasions, their apparel consisted of European damask silk, or satin lined with some warmer material, and quilted with cotton, so as to be nearly impenetrable to a sword or a dagger. One of the best-dressed men at their



court, their uncle, Meer Mahmood, a particularly handsome old man, wore a surcoat of flowered pink satin. Meers Kurm Ali and Nusseer Khan were differently attired almost every morning, and I have often recognized a favourite servant clothed in the habiliments they had worn a few days previously.

But of all the things which are calculated to engage the attention of a stranger on visiting the court of Sinda, none will excite his surprise more, or is really more worthy of observation, than the brilliant collection of jewels and armour in possession of the Ameers. A great part of their immense treasure consists in rubies, diamonds, pearls, and emeralds, with which their daggers, swords, and matchlocks are adorned, and many of which they wear as rings and clasps on different parts of their dresses.\* The fall of the Cabûl monarchy has reduced to indigence and ruin most of the princes and nobility of that kingdom, and has forced them to part with ornaments of great value, many of which have been bought up, at low prices, by persons sent by the Ameers to take advantage of their necessities. Merchants, with precious stones, are encouraged to visit Sinda from

---

\* The Ameers have still in their possession the emerald alluded to by Colonel Pottinger, larger than a pigeon's egg ; but what is that compared to the one mentioned in the description of the famous peacock throne, which was cut in the shape of a parroquet, as large as life ?

all parts of Asia, in consequence of the ready market they meet with at the capital for their valuables ; and one or two Persian goldsmiths are engaged at court, where they work in enamel, and contrive expedients to display the jewellery of their masters to advantage. The art of enlaying letters of gold on steel has also been brought to the greatest perfection by these artisans.

The Ameers have agents in Persia, Turkey, and Palestine, for the purchase of swords and gun-barrels, and they possess a more valuable collection of these articles than is probably to be met with in any other part of the world. I have had in my hand a plain unornamented blade which had cost them half a lac of rupees. They estimate swords by their age and the fineness of the steel, as shown by the *johar* and *awb*, or temper and watering. One, which Kurm Ali presented to me, bears the Mahommedan date 1122, (A. D. 1708,) and was valued in Sind at two thousand rupees. The armoury of their Highnesses is graced with swords which have been worn by almost every prince renowned in Asiatic story ; and I have had the honour of trying the balance of weapons which had been wielded by Shah Abbas the Great, Nadir Shah, Ahmed Shah Doranee, the present king of Persia, and many other equally illustrious personages. The blades are embellished with inscriptions in gold, which, in the case of those belonging to members of the family who are Sheahs, usually consist of short prayers to Huz-



rut Ali for aid and protection, and in that of the others, of verses from the Koran or appropriate quotations from Persian authors. On all belonging to Kurm Ali I observed the words *Bunduh Ali Mahommed*, "the slave of the descendants of Mahommed Kurm Ali;" and on that he gave me, besides a couplet from the Shah Nameh, there was one of his own composition, together with a stanza from the pen of Wullee Mahommed. Meer Nusseer Khan presented me with one on which were inscribed six lines written by himself for the occasion, and where my own name is introduced.

The swords do not appear heavier than our common English sabres, but they are differently balanced, and I have seen one of the young princes with a single stroke cut a large sheep in two pieces; a feat which somewhat reminded me of that told of the famous Saladdin in Sir Walter Scott's "Tales of the Crusaders." There is a certain mode of striking with them, which requires great practice and dexterity, as one of Meer Ismail Shah's sons broke a very valuable blade in a similar experiment a short time before I went to Hyderabad. Our English cutlery, which is so generally esteemed throughout Europe, has little value in the estimation of the Ameers. They had never heard of a sword from Great Britain of any price; and I raised their curiosity to the utmost by informing them that his Majesty had lately present-

ed one of his great lords (the Duke of Northumberland,) with one worth a lac of rupees.

They seemed to be fully sensible, however, of the superiority of our gun-locks, a number of which they entreated me to beg the government to procure for them. I saw several expensive and highly finished fire-arms which had been presented to them, from time to time, by our authorities in India, thrown aside as useless, without their locks, which had been removed to be put on their own fowling pieces. For the shape and appearance of the latter I must again refer to the frontispiece to Pottinger's Travels. Those belonging to the Ameers resemble the two there delineated, with the addition of being highly ornamented. The barrels, which are all rifled, are chiefly brought from Constantinople; they are about double the length of ours, and of a very small calibre. The Sindians never use small shot, and they place no value on pistols or detonating locks. When they observed that their jewels and armour excited my admiration, some of them made a point of appearing differently decorated every day, and always handed me their swords for examination.

The histories attached to these, many of which had passed through generations of kings, together with local subjects, formed the chief part of our conversation, though it often took a more interesting turn. It would be impossible for me to fol-



low the Ameers in all their ideas and opinions as developed by their discourse ; but I shall endeavour, as far as my memory serves me, to recount a few particulars. They were evidently unwilling at first to say any thing regarding India ; but when they found that I had no objection to gratify their curiosity they became extremely inquisitive. The revenues of our empire seemed especially to claim their attention ; and many were the attempts made to ascertain from me the exact amount paid by the *Ijaradars*, or Farmers of Hindostan, as they designated the Honourable Company, to the king of Great Britain, for their lease of the country. My explanation on this subject proved far from satisfactory. When I stated my belief that there was little or no surplus revenue either to the king or company, and that the expenditure of some of the governments was greater than the receipts, Kurm Ali exclaimed with astonishment, “ How is that possible ? Your power extends over five mighty kingdoms.” I replied, that it was true, the territory was immense, but that our system was different from that of the Mahommedans and Mahrattas, who lived only for themselves and their own generation ; that we were making laws for future ages, and although we personally did not profit, still our children and the posterity of the ryots would know the advantage of our policy. In the justice of this they seemed ready to acquiesce, for they remarked that

it was by our intellectual superiority alone we held India.

On the subject of Bhurtpore they asked several questions, and amongst others the cause of our having taken it. I answered that the Rajah had brought his misfortunes entirely on himself by an insolent and overbearing conduct, which it was impossible for a great government to submit to from any state ; and that the proud fortress once called Bhurtpore, was now levelled with the dust. To this observation, which might have conjured up some uneasy anticipations in their own minds, they rejoined, that every kingdom we had conquered was divided in itself, and that no instance had yet occurred of our having had to contend with one where prince and subjects were united in a common cause. The Ameers, no doubt, indulged the illusion, that their's was the happy principality which would, with one accord, resist a hostile invader ; but I referred them to the history of all the conquests of Hindoostan whether the courtiers had not invariably deserted their sovereign when he was likely to be unfortunate.\* To the Bur-

---

\* “ But what contributed most to weigh down the scale of conquest was the degeneracy of the Patans, effeminated by luxury, and dead to all principles of virtue and honour, which their corrupt factions and civil discord had wholly effaced ; it being now no shame to fly, no infamy to betray, no breach of honour to murder, and no scandal to change parties.”—  
FERISHTA.



mese war they also once alluded, and remarked that many of our troops had perished in that struggle ; to which I replied, that it had been by the climate, and added, what they either did not know, or were unwilling to allow, that the peace had been brought about by the cession of large tracts of country, and a considerable payment in money.

But no topic was so interesting to the Ameers as that of Cutch ; to which they repeatedly referred, and respecting which they made the most minute inquiries. They all spoke of it as a province which would make the best hunting-forest in the world, and requested me frequently to describe the mode of sport, and particularly hog-hunting, followed by English gentlemen in that country. Their admiration was at its height when I informed them that in a single district above sixty wild hogs had been killed by a small party of officers in the course of a month. One day they observed, that, as the government probably required at other stations the troops composing the Bhooj brigade, they would garrison Cutch for us with five or six thousand Beloches, as a token of friendship ; a proposal which, I believe, would have been communicated in a letter through me, had I not evinced marked indifference concerning it.

They often descanted on the disadvantages we had suffered by taking such a wretched country into our hands, which cost us more than it pro-

duced ; and they told me once, that, if government would transfer the sovereignty of it to them, they would provide the security of the richest merchants for the regular payment of a tribute equal to the present subsidy. I had the curiosity to inquire how they would profit by such an arrangement, even if it were practicable, and found it to be their opinion that the revenues were embezzled by the ministers of the Rao. On my assuring them that there was really very little wealth in Cutch, Mourad Ali intimated, that he could find means to extract some. As they appeared so interested, I entered into an explanation with them to show the respect we had for treaties, which, whether injurious or not, we were bound by honour to maintain ; and surprised them, perhaps, by adding, that we would waste our blood and treasure as readily in the defence of Cutch, as of the richest and most productive of our dominions.

Regarding the war between Russia and Persia, and even the capture of Tabreez, intelligence of which arrived when I was at Hyderabad, they expressed no concern. The Sikh, as they termed Runjeet Sing, they generally spoke of disrespectfully, and once mentioned to me, in an indignant manner, that he would not allow one of the faithful to approach within several feet of him. With respect to the affairs of the Punjab, Mourad Ali asked me whether our government did not supply money to Seyud Ahmed Shah, who is now carry-

---