

XXIII.

DESCRIPTION OF THE YAK OF TARTARY,

CALLED

SOORA-GOY,

OR

THE BUSHY-TAILED BULL OF TIBET.

 BY LIEUTENANT SAMUEL TURNER.

THE *Yak* of *Tartary*, called *Soora-Goy* in *Hindostan*, and which I term the bushy-tailed bull of *Tibet*, is about the height of an *English* bull, which he resembles in the figure of the body, head, and legs. I could discover between them no essential difference, except only that the *Yak* is covered all over with a thick coat of long hair. The head is rather short, crowned with two smooth round horns, that, tapering from the setting-on, terminate in sharp points, arch inwardly, and near the extremities are a little turned back; the ears are small; the forehead appears prominent, being adorned with much curling hair; the eyes are full and large; the nose smooth and convex; the nostrils small; the neck short, describing a curvature nearly equal to both above and below; the withers high and arched; the rump low. Over the shoulders rises a bunch, which at first sight would seem to be the same kind of exuberance peculiar to the cattle of *Hindostan*; but in reality it consists in the superior length of the hair only, which, as well as that along the ridge of the back to the setting-on of the

tail, grows long and erect, but not harsh. The tail is composed of a prodigious quantity of long flowing glossy hair descending to the hock, and is so extremely well furnished, that not a joint of it is perceptible; but it has much the appearance of a large bunch of hair artificially set on. The shoulders, rump, and upper part of the body is clothed with a sort of thick soft wool, but the inferior parts with straight pendant hair, that descends below the knee; and I have seen it so long in some cattle which were in high health and condition, as to trail upon the ground. From the chest, between the fore-legs, issues a large pointed tuft of hair, growing somewhat longer than the rest. The legs are very short. In every other respect, hoofs, &c. he resembles the ordinary bull. There is a great variety of colours amongst them, but black or white are the most prevalent. It is not uncommon to see the long hair upon the ridge of the back, the tail, tuft upon the chest, and the legs below the knee white, when all the rest of the animal is jet black.

These cattle, though not large boned, from the profuse quantity of hair with which they are provided, appear of great bulk. They have a down heavy look, but are fierce, and discover much impatience at the near approach of strangers. They do not low loud (like the cattle of *England*) any more than those of *Hindustan*; but make a low grunting noise scarcely audible, and that but seldom, when under some impression of uneasiness. These cattle are pastured in the coldest parts of *Tibet*, upon the short herbage peculiar to the tops of mountains and bleak plains. That chain of lofty mountains situated between lat. 27 and 8, which divide *Tibet* from *Bootan*, and whose summits are most commonly clothed with snow, is their favourite haunt. In this vicinity the southern glens afford them food and shelter during the severity of winter; in milder seasons the northern aspect is more

congenial to their nature, and admits a wider range. They are a very valuable property to the tribes of illiterate *Tartars*, who live in tents and tend them from place to place, affording their herdsmen a mode of conveyance, a good covering, and subsistence. They are never employed in agriculture, but are extremely useful as beasts of burthen; for they are strong, sure footed, and carry a great weight. Tents and ropes are manufactured of their hair; and I have, though amongst the humblest rank of herdsmen, seen caps and jackets worn of their skin. Their tails are esteemed throughout the *East*, as far as luxury or parade have any influence on the manners of the people; and on the continent of *India* are found, under the denomination of *Chowries*, in the hands of the meanest grooms as well as occasionally in those of the first ministers of state. Yet the best requital with which the care of their keepers is at length rewarded for selecting them good pastures, is in the abundant quantity of rich milk they give, yielding most excellent butter, which they have a custom of depositing in skins or bladders, and excluding the air: it keeps in this cold climate during all the year; so that after some time tending their flocks, when a sufficient stock is accumulated, it remains only to load their cattle and drive them to a proper market with their own produce, which constitutes, to the utmost verge of *Tartary*, a most material article of merchandise.