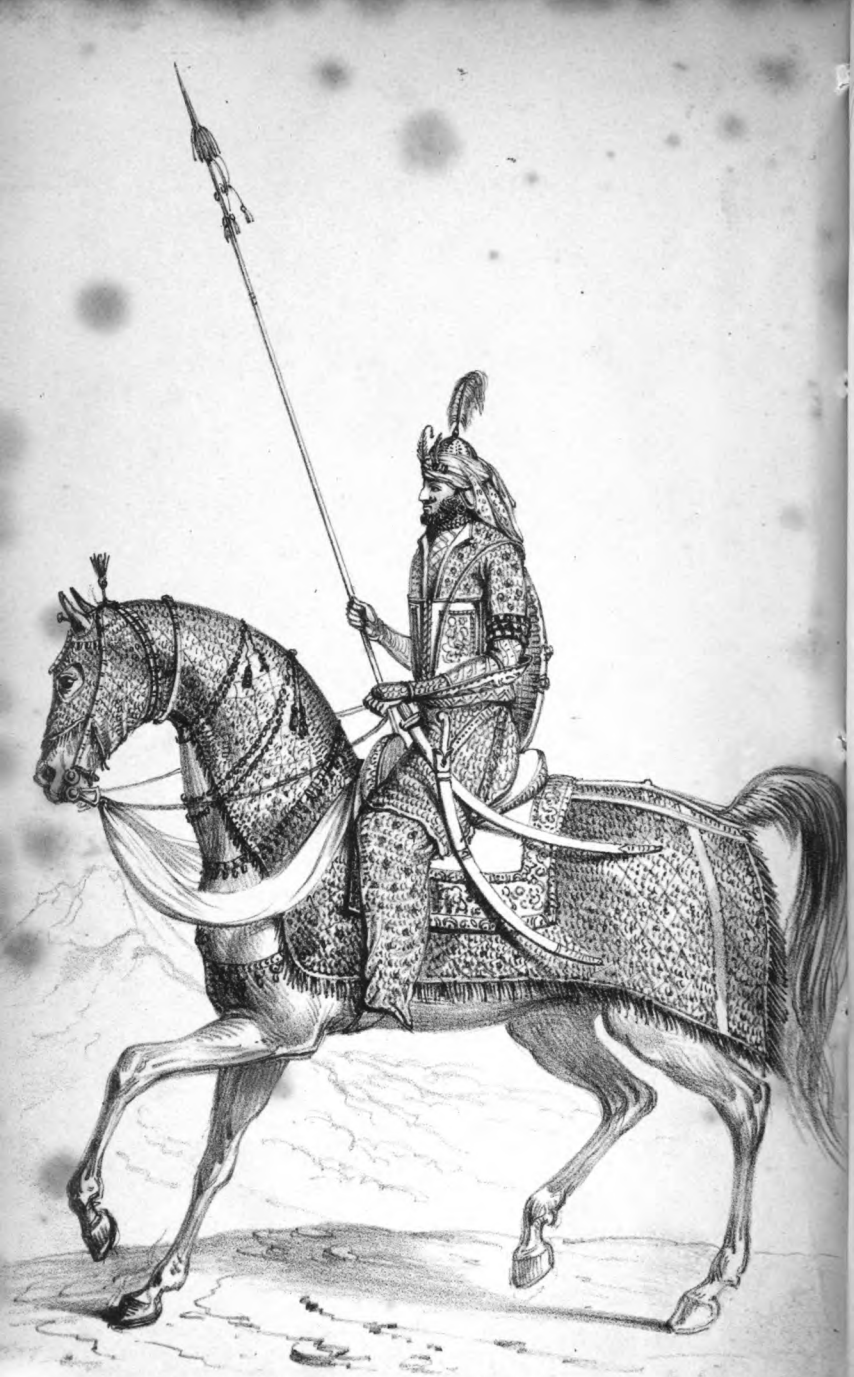

MAHARAJAH SHERE SING.

ADVENTURES

OF

AN OFFICER

IN THE

SERVICE OF RUNJEET SINGH.

BY

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THE SECOND VOLUME.

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THE SECOND VOLUME.

ADVENTURES OF AN OFFICER.

CHAPTER XI.

The lion asks help from the mouse, to free him from the net he had got into—None so blind as those that won't see —As the cold of snow in the time of harvest, so is a faithful messenger to them that send him, for he refresheth the soul of his masters.

"What shall we do, Azīzūdīn? eh, *faqīrjī!* speak plainly, and let me have none of your half-and-half counsel."

Thus spoke Māharājah Runjīt Singh to his most confidential servant, on the 16th August, 1831, not many weeks after the occurrence of the events narrated in my last. The answer given by the secretary was, as usual, canny,

though sensible; he said, quickly but respectfully, "the friends of the *durbār* are the poor *faqīr's* friends, and your Highness's enemies are mine, but it need not be told that I always loved the *faringī*." Thus much he said, and looked hastily round as if he thought there might be listeners, and then more slowly and lowly continued; "I am but a *faqīr*, and the Rājah is a rich man, powerful, and able; what can your Highness's slave do in opposition to his will?"

"Yes, it is exactly as I thought," replied Runjīt; "I'm but second here; 'tis the Dogra Rājah who ruleth at Lāhor; the old Sikh is a tool in his hands; the son and grandson of a king is to be bearded in his own *durbār* by this upstart mission. Tell me, *faqīr*, does your fear of him exceed your gratitude to me?"

"My life is welcome as a sacrifice on my lord's behalf; speak but the word, and thy slave will this instant throw himself into a well, or otherwise devote himself for the king and master of his heart."

"Yes, *faqīr*, I do not distrust you; but there is an undue leaning on your part towards these Rājahs; be it from love or fear, the effect is the

same, and is most inconvenient to my service, preventing access to my presence, and hindering in many ways the transaction of business; listen to me. I know the power and the address of these creatures of my own upraising, and I so little love contention, that I will not disturb them—that is, if they let me alone—but, by the favour of Sri Purakjī, I'll be master in my own kingdom, and I'll e'en defend those of my servants who serve me faithfully, and not allow them to be trampled on. Bellasis shall be recalled from Kāngrā; that neighbourhood is now too hot for him; but he is a good soldier and an honest man; we'll give him a clearance of his accounts, after the Rupar *mulakāt*,[1] and put him into some honourable post:—mind me, *faqīr*, not a hair of his head shall be touched; his safety shall be your responsibility."

The Māharājah quite warmed as he thus spoke, and Azizūdīn seeing him so earnest, and having really no ill-will towards myself, but merely going with the current against me, replied, "*Bu Chashm*, the royal pleasure is mandate enough for the *faqīr;* but how does

[1] Meeting, conference.

your Highness purpose to remove Bellasis? He is firm, nay, obstinate; and he has a peremptory order to yield only to your Majesty."

"Neither need be; order the preparations to be made; we'll take Ajit Singh and Attar Singh Sundhanwāllas; let also Colonels Odam Singh and Ali Baksh be warned to attend with their battalions; we will move towards Kāngrā with the new moon, and return to Amritsir in time for the *Daserah*.[1] Give the necessary orders on both matters; let it be generally understood that every *jāgīrdār*, with his men-at-arms, must attend fully equipped, and with all possible display, preparatory to proceeding to Rupar."

"Your Highness's orders shall be obeyed," replied the *faqīr*, who had scarcely finished the sentence before Rājah Dhyān Singh entered, and was received as cordially as usual by Prince and secretary. His quick eye, however, at once told him all was not right, and though the Māharājah's countenance was unreadable, the undue officiousness of the *faqīr* showed to the powerful

[1] A great Hindoo festival, after the breaking-up of the reins.

minister that the subtle Moslem had been tripping. Quietly, however, he introduced his budget, and having discussed more confidential matters, proposed to the Māharājah to move to the *durbār*.

The debates of that day, I understood, were more than usually noisy; an eaves-dropper had heard part of the conversation of the *Khilvat*,[1] and had retailed it, with exaggeration, to some of the *surdārs*, opposed at heart to the Rājah: when, therefore, the affairs of Kāngrā were brought on the tapis, there were more than the usual number of voices in favour of the foreign officer, and even the *faqīr*, backed by the echo of other tongues, declared his confidence in my integrity. Rājah Dhyān Singh set down the *faqīr*, who quailed before him, but not so Jamadār Khushiyāl Singh, who, thoroughly hating the man that ousted him from the first place in the council, omitted no safe opportunity of thrusting at the Rājah and his party. The friends of the *Bhais* joined in the wordy war, and the Māharājah, as usual, was diverted with the *takrār*,[2] and quite lost his uneasiness of the

[1] Retirement, privacy. [2] Fight, tumult, quarrel.

morning in the pleasure and excitement of the sparring before him.

When the Māharājah considered that enough had been said, and opinions sufficiently disclosed, he turned the subject to that of the approaching *Daserah* festival, questioned the Surdārs as to the state of their troops, asked if their numbers were complete, and their arms and accoutrements all in good order; the commandants of the different *Top Khānas*[1] at Lāhor were called to the presence, each closely questioned as to any deficiencies, and told that they would be held responsible for the appearance of their batteries at Amrītsir, where they would be inspected, and put through the manœuvres that they would have to perform at Rupar; practice at the target was also enjoined, so that they should make a good display before the English.

The above was all duly reported to me, but not by my own *Vaqīl;* for, never having trusted him, I relied less upon his reports than on what I gathered from other quarters. I heard also that there was considerable excitement at Lāhor,

[1] A park of artillery.

and that, although Rājah Dhyān Singh was the main-spring of all measures, was the minister of the interior, the head of the council, and the commander-in-chief, yet there was not wanting voices to murmur against the grasping propensities of him and his friends; and I was led to believe that, at this time, there were many at court who would have readily joined in any well-devised outbreak against his authority. But the fact was, that the Māharājah was so surrounded by the creatures of his minister, and was so dependant on him in all the concerns of government, that he could not, even if he would, shake him off, and was therefore obliged silently to put up with the domineering *Vazīr*, only occasionally hauling him up in open *durbār*, when he very much exceeded the bounds of moderation in the exercise of his deputed authority.

The communications from the *durbār* to my address at this time were flattering and conciliatory to the highest degree. I was told that his Highness would probably visit Kāngrā, and take me with him to Rupar, where my skill and address, it was expected, would gain for myself

fresh honours, and do credit to the Sikh government, and the ruler's discernment. Soft words turn away wrath, and they were not lost upon me; but my heart was not now at Kāngrā, and I cared no longer to rule its destinies; the events of the last few months had both altered my views, and deadened the aspirations that I had been enthusiastic enough to indulge in, regarding my charge. I began to see the folly of hoping to effect any thing permanent on a shifting sand, such as was the government I served; and my eyes suddenly opened to the impossibility of one man working out the plans that I had desired for my principality. I saw, too, that their greatest success could only save the ship from wreck during my own life, or that of Runjīt Singh: and that on the boulversement that would take place on his death, my improvements and reformations would only mark my people and government for more signal spoliation; to be perhaps, as Surhind or Lāhor, an object pointed at, to mark, by its desolation, the æra of some great event.

My heart was, besides, far from being in my employment, and while I should have been in-

specting my works, and examining my accounts, my thoughts were with her I had lost, devising schemes for her recovery, and racking my brain as to where she could be concealed, what the cause of her silence, whether the whole party had been cut off, or had met with captivity worse than death.

While I was one day pacing the ramparts in such thoughts, the sounds of a *sitār*[1] fell upon my ear. Caring little for instrumental music, and indeed scarcely knowing one tune from another, I passed more than once three blind old musicians, who, ensconced in an open tower, were vigorously plying away at their strings; suddenly, however, one of them struck up a song, the words of which thrilled through my soul, and drew me quickly to the spot.

" The Sun has set 'mid clouds afar,
Why shines not then my evening star?
The night clouds gather round my tower,
Where is the lamp for Māhtāb Kowr?
Star of my heart, arise! arise!
Light up thy Māhtāb's evening skies!
Lamp of my soul, return, return!
And in thy Māhtāb's presence burn!"

[1] A kind of guitar, with three strings.

It was a song that my sweet girl had often warbled; many a time had the words reproached me, when I heard them from her plaintive voice, as I approached her tower; and now I thought what a fool I had been to lose one opportunity of enjoying her society, while yet in my reach, and wondered how I could ever have allowed my caution so far to control me, as to give her a shadow of reason for complaining of my absence.

Disengaging myself from the few followers that attended my steps, I sauntered towards the musicians, and in one, despite of his assumed blindness, I recognised Akrām Khān Mūltānī, the Jamedār in whose charge I had placed my affianced bride. At the sound of my voice, the man looked up, but suddenly recollecting himself, shewed, as before, two apparently sightless orbs; striking up, however, in a different measure, he sang as follows:

"There is a bird that sings by night,
And there is a flower that shuns the light,
And words there are, that may not be said,
Till the midnight clouds o'er the sky are spread."

"More meant than meets the ear," thought I, as I looked hard at the musician, and then

turned away, and joined my followers. After some tedious hours of remaining day, I sent a trusty servant to bring Akrām Khān to my presence.

This was a task that required a little adroitness, but my *peshkhidmat* soon suggested a plan by which the Mūltāna was to be introduced as an express from Lāhor. Now attired as a Sikh, and with all the swagger and bluster of the *Khālsa* soldier, my *jamadār* entered, threw down his packet, and seated himself on the carpet. I desired the attendants to withdraw, when my companion, raising himself from the floor, and stretching out his hands, begged forgiveness for his unwonted *gustākhi*.[1]

"Where is she, Akrām?" was my reply.

"Safe as yet, my lord."

"You torture me, man, by your delay; tell me where you left the lady, and how you dare to show yourself without your charge."

"Pardon your servant, my lord, but Akrām Khān has not eaten your salt to neglect your orders, or to betray his trust;" and, opening the breast of his wrapper, he showed me a deep and

[1] Impudence.

still unhealed scar on his chest. "This wound, *khudāwand*, was gained in your service, in protecting the ladies; and it is by their order, and on their errand, I now stand before you."

"I was hasty, my friend; but tell me all?"

"In few words it shall be done, my lord. We had no sooner cleared the subterranean passage, and emerged into the open country beyond Kāngrā, than, night as it still was, we could perceive more than one party of horsemen hovering around; one troop of a dozen passed close by us, but, showing a bold front, and one of us before, and one on either side of the ladies, we gave the '*Wah! Gūrūji!*' and hastily swept by. Less fortunate, however, was our next rencontre; for, trying to pass a similar party in like cavalier manner, just as the day dawned, the leader fixed his keen eye on my comrade, Jenghis Khān, and roared out, 'They are not Singhs, but *sugs*[1] of Moslems, and they have women with them; have at them, my men.' The voice was one I knew, and the eye was not unfamiliar; but before I could collect my thoughts, or determine the question as to his

[1] Dogs.

identity, round wheeled the squad; we were three, the enemy were twelve; we were moreover encumbered with our charge. The two ladies, however, shewed little symptom of fear, except urging on their steeds; and as, by our rapid sweep past the enemy, we had gained fifty yards on them before their leader's short parley with himself told him to wheel and follow, I had strong hopes of escape, with our hard and well-fed cattle, from the small, half-starved nags of the enemy.

"Desiring my comrades to continue the retreat, but at a gentler pace, I drew up my own good horse, and facing him round to my pursuers, stood as steady as a rock to receive, as it were, their charge. Astonished at my boldness, every man drew rein; and, taking advantage of the opportunity, I discharged my matchlock at their leader when within twenty yards of me, and sent him rolling on the plain; the whole party poured in a volley in return, but so hastily, and without aim, that a graze on my knee was the only consequence; and, under cover of the smoke, I turned round, and at speed followed my friends, who, slackening their pace, allowed me to overtake them, when my two companions

played the same game I had done, and with equal success, each bringing down a man, but not without each of themselves carrying away a wound.

"We were, however, now less unequally matched; we were still three, they but nine; we, flushed with our success, their ardour somewhat damped. The odds, however, were still too great for us to attempt resistance: we, therefore, pushed along, keeping the ladies always a little in advance, and occasionally one or all of us delivering our fire, and, without interrupting our retreat, reloading our matchlocks. Thus, for a full hour, and over good eight *kōs* of country, we had fled, and were now within view of a *Gurhi*,[1] the *Killadār*[2] of which was my friend, and would have gladly sheltered us. The young Rānī was still boldly urging on her horse, but the lady mother's courage or strength began to fail; and, unable to keep up her flagging horse, she fell behind. I cheered her, shewed the haven at hand, but all would not avail; and as on her account we were brought nearly to a stand, and thus afforded a

[1] Fortress. [2] Governor of a fort.

better mark, a volley was poured in by our pursuers, that brought to the ground one of my comrades, and the horse of Chanda Kowr.

I seized the rein of her daughter's horse, and urged him on, but she bade me desist, declaring she would not leave her mother. All hope was now lost of effecting our object; and, though I might with ease have saved myself, I preferred to die in defence of those whose salt I had eaten; throwing myself, therefore, from my horse, and lifting the Kowr from hers, I dragged the two tired horses back the few paces to where lay the old lady, entangled beneath her dying steed. With a death-blow right and left, I brought our own two good nags to the ground; my surviving comrade slew his, and from their bodies we formed a sort of a rampart."

"Can you not at once come to the point, and tell me where the ladies are?" I exclaimed impatiently.

"If my lord will give me his ear for a moment longer, all shall be known." I was in his hands, and knowing how impossible it is to get some people to tell anything in any way but their own, I bade him proceed.

"My master will not care to hear how Akrām Khān was rescued; how, attracted by the firing, my friends from the fort came up in time to see the dastard Sikhs carry away the ladies, and to save myself from bleeding to death. Both my comrades were quite dead, and for a time I was thought so, but youth and a good constitution saved me; and, saving this scar and this, and these two gunshot wounds, I'm not the worse," baring as he spoke his breast, arm, and thigh. "For twenty days I was Mānik Chund's guest; he told me that his *Sowārs* had followed the tracks of the ravishers to the fort of Rāj-ki-kot, some miles north of Jamu."

"The brothers again," groaned I, "and so I thought; but proceed, friend."

"As soon as I could move, I disguised myself as a minstrel, and, jealous as are the warders, and difficult as is all access, I soon found a corner in the very dwelling of the Rājah. My *sitār* was not idle, and my lord knows that Akrām Khān's hand is good for more than the bridle or *tulwār*. I soon learnt where the two ladies were confined, and had even one brief interview, and attempted another, but, failing, I nearly paid

the penalty with my life. I therefore thought it was better to risk no more, but to take to my lord the welcome intelligence that the ladies are safe, and honourably treated."

"Then why this mystery, man? What is the meaning of all this mountebank paraphernalia? You had good news to bring; why delay or hesitate in delivering it?"

"As I've said, my lord, I was nearly detected; and indeed it did become known that Akrām Khān, in disguise, was acting the fiddler in the Rājah's garden; to prevent pursuit, therefore, and lull suspicion, I left part of my raiment, and made such other show, as to let it appear that I had thrown myself into the river, and was drowned. For the same reason, my lord, I must not now appear in my own person, or it would bring danger not only on myself, but on my master, and on the ladies he would save. The Rājah is a terrible man, my lord; his spies are every where; they may now be watching us."

"Let them," replied I, "ay, let them take my defiance to their master."

"Not so, my lord; forgive me, but we must be prudent; I have friends in the fort, and th

two *blind rāgīs*[1] that you saw with me are stanch men and true. Leave the matter to us, and we will effect by stratagem what ten thousand men could not do by force, nay, what the Māharājah in his might could not effect."

"Let it be so, Akrām, and remember that when you've released the ladies, all that I have is yours; you may for ever command me."

"My master is liberal and kind, but Akrām Khān's wants are few; a good horse and a fair *maidān*, and he is a happy man."

"Good, my friend, you may live to see enough of battle, and the best blood of Arabia and Tartary shall be at your bidding. But tell me, Akrām, is Rāj-ki-kot the place of strength we hear? Does it equal Kāngrā?"

"Equal Kāngrā! my lord jests with his servant: true I saw but little of Rāj-ki-kot, yet it was enough to show how impregnable is its position, and that man has done for it almost as much as nature. The rock, isolated still more than that of Kāngrā, has more ample resources, and is approachable only by means of baskets or ropes, let over a tremendous precipice; it is

[1] Rāg, a song; Rāgī, songster.

then bristled with guns, manned by European deserters, and is garrisoned by hill-men and the Rājah's choicest troops. The Māharājah has never seen the place, and Dhyān Singh will take care he never does."

"A formidable place indeed; but tell me, my friend, do you know what shells are? Could they not turn out the rascals?"

"Do I not, my lord?[1] Was I not one of the few that with old Diarām cut their way through the *faringī's* ranks at Hatrās, and have we not reason to know what shells are? But the case is here very different, and not all the shell-

[1] The siege of Hatrās is a tale familiar to Indian ears; it was a sketch in Lord Hastings' best style, which was bold and decided, seldom requiring to be re-touched. It was once upon a time (not now of course), the practice of the English to send a single regiment, with a couple of guns, or perhaps even a wing with one gun, to capture a strong fortress; a practice that frequently involved a failure in the first attack, the necessity of sending, in the second instance, a much stronger force than would at first have done the work, with great needless expenditure of life, time, and treasure. Or, if the first small party succeeded in taking the place, the garrison generally escaped. Lord Hastings prohibited single guns being ever, on any pretext, detached, and strenuously urged the policy of never sending a force so small as to invite repulse.

throwing guns in Hindūstān could materially affect the comfort of the garrison of Rāj-ki-kot; it is as many kōs in circuit as Kāngrā is *quadams*."[1]

"I must go myself, Akrām; you look averse to the measure, but indeed I must."

"Impossible, my lord; you would only ruin the scheme; your absence from Kāngrā would at once be known, and, even if not, you could never disguise yourself from the keen glances of the Rājah's followers."

"You are right, my friend," was the answer I at last felt compelled to give; and, after a little more parleying, and again assuming his Sikh demeanour, my Mūltānī proudly withdrew.

Lost in anxious thought, I meditated on my blasted hopes, and on the nest of hornets among whom I had ensnared myself. In the midst of my cogitations, a real messenger from Lāhor arrived with important tidings which shall be told in my *vaqīl's* own words. After the usual *tuslimāt*,[2] he told me that there had been a very sudden outbreak among the soldiery at the

[1] Paces. [1] Salutation, obeisance.

capital; they refused to march or to prepare to march before their arrears were paid up.

"The *gurchuras*, my lord, were most violent, and cut down their officers; throughout the regiments and *paltans* there was one cry for the blood of the *Munshis*,[1] who, my lord knows, are the paymasters, or rather muster-masters of the troops; and though some innocent men have perished, many a deed of rapine and extortion has been avenged; and if no other good be effected by the present tumults, they will, for a while, make commandants and pay-distributers

[1] The system obtaining in the civil administration of the Punjāb, by which every offence has its fixed price, has gradually crept into the army; fines are imposed on the soldier for military offences, or for leave given and taken without reference to the *Commander-in-Chief* (when there is such an authority); the commanders of divisions and brigades are seldom disturbed in their arrangements, and they put the finances of their regiments into the hands of Persian writers, frequently low, intriguing fellows. These men, having the accounts entirely in their own hands, and the pay being frequently nearer twenty-four months than twelve in arrears, can plunder the soldier to an enormous degree, and, at the time, probably with impunity. But the day of reckoning comes; in any military tumult, the Munshis are the first victims, and many a life is paid as the forfeit for former extortions.

more careful as to the portion of their soldiers' pay that they appropriate. Did all our authorities take example from my master, these scenes could never occur. All Lāhor is in a fever, shops are shut, and the moneyed men are in terror of their lives, or at least of spoil and dishonour.

"The Māharājah has shown great spirit as well as his usual discretion; he has promised redress and clearance of arrears, but has declared that, though he pardons the past, he will clip the noses and ears of all future offenders. Should matters take a worse turn, thy servant will again petition, these few words being given in all haste."

"Another broil!" I exclaimed. Blood! blood! how true is it that "who sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed!" and I tried to turn from the sickening subject, but little besides Rāj-ki-kot and Lāhor entered my thoughts that night, and less of sleep fell on my eyelids.

CHAPTER XII.

Bellasis, giving the fish he is angling for a sudden jerk, breaks the line, and loses the prize.—"The wrath of a king is as messengers of death, but a wise man will pacify it."

It was all I could do to forbear accompanying Akrām Khān, but I saw that my own presence would only ruin my hopes; having a thousand times enjoined courage and prudence, with a heavy heart I sent him away. I had no doubt of either his bravery or fidelity; and he knew me well enough to be sure that the richest reward in my power would seem in my eyes small, for the man who should restore Māhtāb Kowr.

To avoid risk, I did not send any letter by Akrām Khān, but on his approach to the place of Māhtab's imprisonment, he was to re-assume

the disguise of a minstrel, and, by frequent repetition, I had taught him a song which he was to sing in her hearing, to the same familiar air which had already caught my attention.

"Duly as evening's hour returns,
Thy constant star, my Māhtāb burns;
But where the fountain, pure and bright,
To image back its steady light!
Oft as night spreads her curtain damp,
Love lights up memory's faithful lamp;
But oh, it shows, and not dispels,
The gloom that in my bosom dwells."

Happily for me, my mind was not allowed leisure to prey on itself during the subsequent interval of suspense. The very evening of Akrām Khān's departure, as I paced the ramparts, following him in thought, and weighing, for the ten thousandth time, my own hopes and fears, I was interrupted by the approach of my *Naīb*. He made his salute, and, as he seemed to have something to say, I beckoned him nearer.

"Well, Sohan Lāl, what is your news?"

"Does the *Sāhib* remember the shoe that we found when Chānd Khān was murdered?"

"Do I not? What of it now?"

"I think I have got the fellow to it."

"What! and old Rām Singh? Have you caught him?"

"No, *Sāhib*, I have no news of him, nor do I think he was concerned in the murder; it was Bhūp Singh who committed it, I am sure."

My readers may perhaps remember, that after the attempt to murder me soon after my arrival at Kāngrā, when I sentenced Nand Singh for the crime, his brother was the ruffian who fired at me from the ranks and wounded me, and that I arrested the vengeance my troops were inclined to take, dismissing the man without injury. After my recovery, my mind was so engrossed with other subjects, that this rascal, (Bhūp Singh by name,) never entered my thoughts; but now that his name was suggested, I at once acquiesced in the probability of his being concerned in Chānd Khān's murder. I desired Sohan Lāl to proceed, and the substance of his communication was as follows:—

"*Sāhib*, your *gholām*,[1] and Ali Verdi Khān,

[1] Slave.

have often talked over that bloody business; we wondered how such a *dugha-bāz*[1] as Sukhun Lāl had succeeded Chānd Khān as your *Vaqīl* at the *durbār*, nor were we ignorant of the jealousies there entertained against my master. You look angry, my lord, that your servants should thus talk of your affairs, but if men have ears and tongues, the Māharājah himself cannot prevent their using them. The Mūltānī said one day, 'I wonder what is become of Bhūp Singh!'

"'Gone to Lāhor, I suppose,' said I, without much thinking.

"'If so,' replied Ali Verdi, 'it is for no good to our master.'

"I had no particular reason for what I had said, but my own words afterwards recurred to me, and I wrote on the subject to one I knew at Lāhor. Your servant, my lord, is bound not to disclose his friend's name, but I will stake my life on the truth of his intelligence."

Here I could hardly forbear interrupting Sohan Lāl. I had been harassed into an irrita-

[1] Literally, sporter with deceit, dishonest, scoundrel, humbug.

bility that at times I could scarcely control, and the mysterious ascendency that a foreigner holds over the natives of India insensibly nourishes a domineering spirit, that we are ourselves hardly aware of till it encounters some opposition. I checked myself, however, feeling that I could not justly punish my *Nāib* for being faithful to his word; and perhaps a little swayed by knowing the independence of his character, and that, if I did not choose to take the information as he chose to give it, he would unhesitatingly walk off. It was with intense interest that I listened to the rest of his tale.

"My lord is doubtless aware that, while Chānd Khān supposed himself safe in his secret pranks, he was completely in the power of Rājah Dhyān Singh, who can pay higher for information than any other man at Lāhor, and therefore knows more. He was always anxious to get my master out of his road, and if Nand Singh was not openly encouraged by him in what he did, at least he knew that the death of my lord would not displease the Rājah. Bhūp Singh hastened back to Lāhor when he left Kāngrā, and communicated with the Rājah, through

Sukhun Lāl, likewise a mere tool of the great man's.

"It was but a bungling scheme they laid, in determining on the murder of Chānd Khān, that the blame might fall on my master. Sukhun Lāl had reasons of his own for wishing to get the Multānī out of the way, however; and Bhūp Singh was just in that state, thirsting after blood, and hardly restrained by his employers from falling directly upon the *Sāhib*, that he was glad to flesh his sword on one whose death would certainly give my lord distress, and probably bring him into danger. It was in the disguise of a *Buniah*, that Bhūp Singh first gained admission, and learned the spot of Chānd Khān's confinement."

Here I could not repress myself any longer. "And how," I exclaimed, "did he enter that night? How did he carry off old Rām Singh? Which among my men is the traitor?—speak, you *nimakharām*."[1]

"My lord, what is the use of this violence? Your servant will tell all he can, but he must take his own time."

[1] Faithless to the salt; traitor.

"You had better speak," I answered in great anger; "if you refuse to give me full information, you shall be put in irons, and punished as a traitor; ay, both you and Ali Verdi Khān."

"The *Sāhib* can do as he pleases; the Mūltānī knows nothing of what I have been telling, and I will not say one word beyond what I had first intended."

I was ashamed of myself, and felt how I was lowered in my deputy's eyes by this violence; as, therefore, I could not compose myself at the moment, I dismissed Sohan Lāl, saying, "I will hear the rest to-morrow; enough for this time." He withdrew in silence, scarcely even making a *salām*.

When alone, I reproached myself bitterly for the violence I had shewn, and felt that I had thus perhaps closed the only door by which I could obtain tidings of a point I had much at heart, and even, as my restless fancy suggested, possibly connected with what lay nearest my soul. "These brothers!" thought I, "whence have they power? Is there no escaping their toils? Am I but a fly, caught in the net they have woven round me, and are they watching

my struggles till they find it convenient to pounce on their victim? Is my treasure even now in their grasp?" And these thoughts almost overwhelmed me.

The night wore on in restless anxiety. Exhausted by mental conflict, I found it some relief to listen to a storm that was gathering outside, and to watch the lightning flashing into my room, which was only lighted by a small oil lamp, standing on the top of a tall, slender, brass tripod. While I lay tossing from side to side, striving to fasten my thoughts on the elemental strife without, I heard the sentry who paced outside my chamber challenge some one who approached.

"An express from the Māharājah's camp," was the reply, and the messenger was ushered into my presence. I opened the packet eagerly. The first enclosure I saw to be from Sukhun Lāl, and flung it away in disgust; the next was from the *faqīr*, and I laid it down to decipher at leisure, while I read the third document, a *parwānāh* from the Māharājah, desiring that all might be ready for his reception at Kāngrā on the third day from that which was now dawning.

Before issuing the necessary orders, I perused Azīzūdīn's communication.

"To the asylum of exaltation and nobility, the support of magnificence and valour, Colonel Bellasis. May he be dignified by an increase of royal distinctions. The Māharājah has commanded the poor *faqīr* to communicate to his favoured servant, Colonel Bellasis, the satisfaction felt in the sublime mind by his faithful guardianship of Kāngrā. But, as his Highness desires to see his newly-raised troops in perfect discipline, he intends for a season to remove his trusty servant, and to employ him in preparing the troops for the interview that is to take place at Rupar, with the English *Lord Sāhib*. Kāngrā will, for the present, be again held by its former governor, and as soon as the Māharājah can spare his faithful and esteemed servant Bellasis from duty in the field, he will be at liberty to return to his charge."

I felt a choking at my throat as I read this announcement of the royal will; often as I had desired to be relieved of my charge, and full of painful associations as Kāngrā now was to me, I felt a wrench in separating myself from it. It

was consolatory, however, to find that the fortress was not to fall into the immediate power of the brother Rājahs, and I also had a vague hope that in my movings I might learn some tidings of Māhtāb Kowr. And then, with unspeakable disgust, I took up the *urzi* of my *Vaqīl*, and read it, feeling all the time as if my hands and eyes were contaminated by the touch and sight of such a perfidious wretch's writing.

After a preface of more than usual adulation, Sukhun Lāl went on to say: "Your Excellency's servant watches his master's interests with the same unslumbering vigilance. The disturbances mentioned in my last *urzi* were soon quelled by the decision of the Māharājah, and your slave accompanied the royal train when it left Lāhor. Through his Excellency's good fortune, we have proceeded prosperously so far on our road to Kāngrā. Reports have reached your well-wishers, that the Māharājah designs to terminate my lord's prosperous reign, but those who know the *Sāhib's mizāj*,[1] cannot suppose for a moment that he will be displaced tamely, and

[1] Temper, character, disposition.

they rejoice in thinking that the attachment of his troops makes him too powerful for the Māharājah to wish for any misunderstanding with him. Enough has been said."

I tore the paper into fragments, and flung it away, exclaiming, "A clumsy tool Dhyān Singh has got. Can he imagine by such a poor contrivance to urge me into disobedience and ambition? He will not get me out of the way so easily." I then prepared my answer to the *durbār*, despatched it, and made the necessary arrangements for his Highness's arrival. In the midst of these employments, Sohan Lāl's conversation of the preceding evening was continually recurring to my mind. He was, as usual, in his place, prompt, steady, energetic, but no words passed except on his own immediate business. Pride and shame withheld me from referring to any other subject, and he shewed no sign of remembering our interview. When evening came, I was feverishly impatient for some communication with my *Nāib*, and as time wore on without bringing him, I was about to swallow my pride, and summon him to my presence; but then I remembered that by this

time he was probably sunk in the periodical oblivion to which he subjected himself by intoxication. Exhausted and unhappy, I lay down, and fell asleep.

On the day appointed, the royal cortège made its appearance, and I certainly did feel some reward for my adherence to my word, when the Māharājah himself approached the gate, and obtained entrance only by going through the formalities he had himself prescribed. "See, *faqīr jī!* I have one servant, at any rate, who obeys my commands," said Runjīt, as he entered. Then calling me to sit on the *farash*[1] near him, he said, in an encouraging tone, "Bellasis, this is the best day's work you have done yet. I must have you awhile with me in the field, but you shall soon come back to Kāngrā, and in the mean time old Dandāwr Singh will faithfully hold his former post."

I bowed submission to the royal mandate; and, at any other time, I should have felt gratified, as Runjīt personally inspected the district under my charge, and expressed his wonder and surprise at the aspect it wore. "This cannot

[1] Carpet.

be prepared for show," said he to those around him, as he rode through the spacious streets and well supplied *bazārs*. "I wish Kāshmīr had been in such hands." A look passed between the brothers, Dhyān and Gulāb Singh, and Khushiyāl Singh could barely seem not to hear a speech that implied such censure on himself.

Azīzūdīn, who always tried to keep the peace, (perhaps afraid that violent altercations might bring to light secrets that were as well withheld from the royal ear,) now put in his word; "The Asylum of the Universe probably remembers Wādipūr." "Ay," said Runjīt, laughing, "when I was expected to arrive in the evening and set out the next morning, my viceroy ran up long lines of katcha walls, with painted doors, and had these *jhut mut*[1] streets illuminated, so that we seemed passing through extensive *bazārs*. It happened that I halted next day and discovered the trick; I made him forthwith pay down as much money as it would have cost to build the real houses, and some of these days I'll take a peep to see how they get on."

I smiled, as in duty bound, but my thoughts

[1] Unreal, *make-believe*, deceptive.

were elsewhere. Sohan Lāl sedulously avoided any but official intercourse with me, and I thought it useless to urge him to disclosures while the cloud was on his brow.

One day I was summoned to a private interview with the Māharājah, the *faqīr* alone being present. Runjīt was evidently nervously anxious as to the figure he and his troops should cut before the English, and he questioned me earnestly on my opinion. "Tell me," he said, "tell me, Bellasis, do you think these *faringīs* would face my men, if it came to a fight? You look disconcerted, but you ought to know enough of me to understand that, when I ask an opinion, I want one; not a mere echo of my own words." I was, and could not help appearing a good deal taken aback: I was averse to offend, and did not see how I could reply without touching the Māharājah on the most tender point. But I stuck to my principle, and answered sincerely, "that I did not think his army could successfully confront one with European discipline."

"But why, Bellasis? see my guns—look at my infantry—count my cavalry—and then measure the numbers of these *faringīs*."

"Your Highness's servant wishes well to the *Khālsa*, and to the government whose salt he eats, but he answers honestly, and says what he thinks."

"Then, tell me, man, why you think so? Fear not, speak out."

"I may be wrong, but there are many reasons; the Europeans have superior discipline and better leaders, and their gradations of rank are more complete."

"But we could bring four times their number into the field."

"Which force you have no one to handle—it would therefore destroy itself."

"What! could not Ventura, or Court, or Avitabili? Could not yourself? but perhaps you would not: is that your meaning?" and the old chief's single eye glanced fire. This was the point that I had feared the conversation would come to; however, I replied respectfully that I trusted there was no occasion for asking the question, and that the friendship between the Company would remain unbroken. But he was not to be so answered, and said impatiently, "That is no reply to my question." "Please

your Highness, I would neither offend nor deceive, but, since you ask me, I must answer, that I could not fight against the English." "You should have told me so before," exclaimed the Māharājah, violently—"you have deceived me—you have eaten my salt,[1] only to fail me when most wanted."

My ears tingled at the reproach, but feeling how little I had deserved it, how well I had worked for all I had received, I replied in a tone less respectful than was my wont, "I *have* eaten your Highness's bread, and moreover have been honoured with your favour, but I may say that I have done my duty, and more than my duty, in lieu thereof. I have encountered danger and provoked enemies, because I would not betray my trust, but would obey to the letter your

[1] It can scarcely be necessary to tell any reader that salt is the emblem and pledge of fidelity all over the East. But the highest notion of honour in this country only extends to remaining faithful to one master, as long as a man continues in his employ: it is no blot on a soldier's character to quit one service, and sell himself to an enemy. Loyalty to an individual or party, as an inherent part of the character, such as we see, or at any rate, read of, in Europe, is not dreamed of here.

own orders. On the other hand, let me remark, that you enrolled me as your servant without stipulations, and surely, if it was free of your Highness to discharge me at any time, I was equally at liberty to choose another master. As I have told you, I am not an Englishman, but I have so much fellowship with them that I could not draw a sword against their cause."

The old *faqīr*, who was seated on the blind side of the Māharājah, had been casting deprecatory looks at me throughout the debate; but when I came to this explicit declaration, he gazed in silent astonishment. I was prepared for an outbreak of the lion's wrath, but for the moment every other feeling in him seemed swallowed up in surprise at my plain dealing. He looked at me for some moments, as if to make sure he had heard my words aright; and then his better nature prevailed. "Well done, *faringī!*" he exclaimed, "Eh, *faqīrjī?* Do you think there are many tongues in the *durbār* that would speak as honestly?"

Azīzūdīn, seeing what was his cue, launched forth in praise of my sincerity. "Precious are the pearls of truth, when strung on the bracelet

of faithful actions. Happy is the sovereign in the sunshine of whose favour the blossoms of uprightness expand and bloom. Sweet is the fruit of righteous dealing, though the husk may be unpalatable."

"*Bus, bus, faqīr*,"[1] interrupted the king. "Bellasis has risked his head, but the danger is past. I know now what work he will do, and what he will not; and I believe that, what he undertakes, he will not flinch from."

I was not astonished after the preceding conversation, that the *faqīr* took an early opportunity of seeing me alone, nor at the excessive cordiality of his manner. "You have weathered a storm," he said, "but now you have only prosperous breezes to waft you to the haven of your desires." I sighed, feeling bitterly that even the royal favour could do little to lighten the load on my heart. "My friend looks sad," continued the courtier, "what is his grief? Can the poorest of the Māharājah's servants do aught to relieve it?"

Azīzūdīn was certainly a strange confidant for a love affair; but though I might as well have

[1] Enough, used precisely as the Italian "Basta."

talked of music to one born deaf as of my feelings for Māhtāb Kowr to the *faqīr*, yet he could understand the fact, that I had lost a certain property which I valued, and that I was jealous lest it had fallen into an enemy's hands. My heart longed to disburthen itself, and I had much confidence in the soundness of his counsel; I therefore related the bare facts of Māhtāb's story, and my suspicions of the brother Rājahs being concerned in her capture. The old man listened with interest, for to him each character introduced was like a piece to a chess-player, and he calculated how it would affect his game.

"The brother Rājahs!" he said at length; "you talk, *Sāhib*, as if there was but one soul in those two or three bodies!"

"And is it not so?" I replied; "have they not thus gained wealth, rank, influence? and are they fools enough to give up all this by quarrelling?"

"You are right, they will keep up their appearance of unanimity; but, my friend, if two men ride one horse, one must have the front seat, and the other must be less comfortably

placed, and think you this will produce no heart-burning? Any attack from without they would join to repel, but you are not the man I take you for if you can imagine that Dhyān Singh and Gulāb Singh can be without jealousies between themselves. Of Suchet Singh I do not speak; he is in every way inferior to his brothers."

I acquiesced in the probability of the *faqīr's* opinion, and then asked his advice. "Wait," he answered, "wait till I consider; we must do nothing rashly; but I think I shall be able to help you."

Somewhat relieved at having so able an ally in my quest of Māhtāb Kowr, I was a shade less anxious to hear the rest of Sohan Lāl's story, and resolved to wait his time. My *Vaqīl* had presented himself on the day of his arrival: I could but order the reptile from my presence, and forbid him ever again to approach, and he had too much to dread from investigation to seek any reason for my conduct. Moreover, I had now no longer use for a *Vaqīl;* I could not conceal from myself that my position was lowered, and this no man likes; but I was too

proud to let my feelings be seen, and indeed I had now little to attract me to any spot in the Māharājah's dominions, except the one wherein lay my treasure:

During my stay at Lāhor, I had not witnessed any of those revels that I heard were common at the court; but at Kāngrā, where I was in a manner the host, I was obliged nightly to attend the Saturnalia.[1] Runjīt himself rarely became

[1] A subject that no man would willingly bring before the woman he wishes to respect and admire; but if ladies will lend their presence to scenes of infamy, they must excuse a friend who tells them of their error. A young woman not acquainted with Indian life might attend a *nātch* in perfect simplicity; and, if she went, the fault would be in those who took her there. But it is difficult to believe, that any matron who has been some years in India, is not aware of the character of these disgraceful spectacles; and passing strange is it that she should grace them with her presence. The remarks and jests called forth among the natives on these occasions it would be as difficult for a modest woman to guess, as it would be for me to put in words fit for her to read; but my ears have tingled at hearing such insults, and my indignation and shame have burned at seeing ladies expose themselves to such. In Hindūstān, where Europeans have been long known, women are not compromised by adhering to their Western habits of life; though, I think, *dancing* is a most undesirable performance on the part of Christian ladies before people who look on that exercise as

intoxicated, and it was incredible what quantities of liquid fire he swallowed without its affecting his sobriety. Few of his courtiers, however, could thus carry the liquor, and he took a devilish pleasure in seeing them drunk. Even worse, I now witnessed what Gulabī had described of his plying the miserable nātch-girls with ardent spirits and intoxicating drugs, and setting them like so many furies to fight with each other. I cannot express the disgust these scenes occasioned, and they fixed the determination, that had been floating in my mind, to quit the service and country of the Māharājah, as soon as I obtained tidings of Māhtāb's fate.

One evening, before we quitted Kāngrā, Dhyān Singh solicited the royal permission to visit his *jagīr* before joining the rendezvous at Rūpar. Runjīt was in a good humour, and

a badge of infamy: but among the Sikhs it is different; and if ever Englishwomen again form part of a cortège in the Punjāb, it is fervently to be hoped they will not, by undue freedom, expose themselves to such gross and insulting observations as once happened. Forgive me, fair friends; I speak thus because I reverence the female character; and it is not for the lady subjects of the first lady in the world to degrade their sex among strangers.

granted the request. It was all I could do not to look significantly at Azīzūdīn, for my thoughts instantly flew to Rāj-ki-kot; although the Rājah had not specified that place as the point he was going to, something assured me of his destination, and my heart trembled. When I met the *faqīr* in private, he agreed with me; "but," added he, "I hope this visit of the Rājah to his own castle will further your views; my spies are round him, though he thinks himself so safe. By this time, Akrām Khān has probably reached Rāj-ki-kot; one of my retainers, who is a confidential Munshi of Dhyān Singh's, shall manage matters. Ah, Colonel *Sāhib!* what an advantage we possess, who can use the pen, that key to greatness! *Allah* be praised, the poor *faqīr* need trust his thoughts to no one he does not choose, while the Rājah, ay, and the Māharājah himself, cannot communicate with others without help!"

The *faqīr*, when he had delivered himself of this harangue, took his departure, and in a few days we were all under weigh for Amritsir. I quitted Kāngrā with a pang, yet was on the whole pleased to find myself in active military life. Every day I manœuvred my men, and

wrought hard to perfect their training. "What is all this for?" would sometimes rise to my mind; but I dismissed the thought, anxious to do my duty for the present, and glad of a channel into which I could direct the eager restlessness of my spirit.

CHAPTER XIII.

Confidence in an unfaithful man, in time of trouble, is like a broken tooth, and foot out of joint.—SOLOMON.

One hour of the day remained of an evening in the month of September, when a cavalcade was seen approaching the new and still-rising fortress of Rāj-ki-kot. It was a spot of which the strength and position were hardly known beyond its immediate precincts: the present possessor understood its value as a resource in any evil day, and took every precaution to prevent its fame from going abroad. The leader of the cavalcade, having motioned the running-footmen who were by his side to the rear, beckoned nearer to him one who, riding a step behind, seemed by his bearing and attitude privileged above his fellows.

The *sowāri* did not consist of less than five hundred horse and foot, a bold-looking and strangely mottled assemblage; there were Hindūs, Sikhs, and Mūsalmāns, in apparent good fellowship; for, save and except those immediately around the chief, the party seemed fully enjoying themselves; and the loud hearty laugh, the rough joke, and the capering and prancing of the well-conditioned horses, betokened that the service was a good one, and the men well satisfied with themselves and each other. Those who ran beside and immediately around the chief wore the features and costume of hill-men; the rest, as I have said, were a mingled host, Purubis[1] alongside of Pashāwaris; wild Akālis, and swaggering Sikhs, and strutting Pathāns, abreast of soberer, though more martial. Rājpūts.

The leader of this band, attired in a costume half Frank, half Oriental, might, by a slight stretch of imagination, have been taken for a knight of St. John, or for one who led the hosts in the campaigns so misnamed the Holy Wars. He was clearly of an Eastern mother, though

[1] From Purub, Easts, Easterns.

his complexion was light; his features were large, but of perfect symmetry; eyes dark and piercing; form and bearing light, compact, and noble; his stature was middle-sized, and of faultless proportion, save for a slight lameness, which defect, however, did not appear as he rode. The chief's dress consisted of a back and breast-plate of polished steel, his arms bore gauntlets of the same metal, and a half-casquè, half-turban, completed his armour; his weapons being a double-barrelled pistol of exquisite workmanship at the pommel of his saddle, and a common-looking sword by his side. The running attendants carried double-barrelled guns and rifles, and all in the train were well-armed, though after various fashions, with long match-locks, spears, carbines, pistols, knives, and swords.

The man who was summoned to approach the leader was a smart little figure, with more of the secretary than the soldier in his air. His features were sharp, and his eye had all the Hindū acuteness, with a sinister expression, very repelling until he spoke; and then the ease of his manner, his fluent discourse, and an irre-

sistible "bonhomie," made you think how unjust had been your first impression. At his master's sign this man approached, and took the place of the attendants, who fell in the rear.

"What was it, Chundu, that you told me yesterday *he* said?" inquired the leader, in an unconcerned manner, but emphasizing the pronoun.

"My lord, with my own ears I heard him say that the Māharājah only wanted opportunity to destroy you; that he felt your wealth, ability, and influence over the army, and, above all, the unanimity that subsisted among the branches of your house." Something like a smile curled the chief's lips, and was followed by a long-drawn breath that might have been a half-sigh.

"It may be so," he muttered, "yet I cannot believe it; I am more necessary to him than the fawning *faqīr*, the bluff Bhāis, or the treacherous Jemadār. Among the buffoons and fiddlers around him, where would he find one to fill my place? Ay, or among the *faringīs* either. He could not do without me—no—I'm safe—

but then"—and he stopped, looking as if he thought he had already said too much.

The servant however, not perhaps catching his eye or his tone, repeated, "*Safe*, indeed, my lord! It may be my lord's pleasure rather to follow than to lead; but count your possessions and your well-wishers, my lord; cast your eye on the country we are now passing through, and on those towers we are now approaching, and then say what is there in the Punjāb to resist you."

The chief did glance at the massy battlements before him, and there were pride and ambition in his eye, as he exclaimed, "Yes, these towers would resist a strong host:" but in a moment recovering his usual calm and gentlemanly demeanour, he added, "You are mistaken, Chundu, if you think I would draw my sword against the Māharājah; he has made me what I am, and I should be worse than a dog to requite him with rebellion. No; these walls are built for other purposes: the Māharājah is weak and worn out; he may die to-morrow, he may be dead this moment: who then guides the States? Who is there, among the besotted, cowardly,

drunken crew, to hold the government for one day; to keep friendship, or rather peace, with the *faringīs;* to command the respect of the provinces; and, above all, to restrain and curb our own soldiery—that mass of ruffians which it has been his Highness's pleasure to collect, and that he alone can compel? They are now deeply in arrears, and many of the leaders very unpopular, some of the best, as well as some of the worst. Runjīt Singh's death would be the signal, if not for total anarchy, and a rush on the *toshah-khāna,*[1] at least for much bloodshed and many masters. And then, who would be safe? Certainly not those who had neglected to prepare for their own safety. I'm saying more than perhaps is wise; but *you have* a nose and tongue, Chundu; you are prudent, and will not run the chance of losing them."

There was little alteration of tone throughout this speech; the speaker seemed rather communing with himself, than expressing any opinion to his companion, and he continued in the same strain; "It is no secret that the Māharājah's

[1] Wardrobe, place where jewels, apparel, and such like aluables, are kept.

only son is a fool, and *his* son again is a child. How then can we avoid commotion? This land of rivers, fated to be the field of perpetual battle, must again be fought for, again be won. But enough of this. Tell me, where are those foolish women? and how fare they?"

"In the western tower, my lord; they sigh their time away, but *she* will be soon complaisant enough."

"None of your smirks, Chundu; tempt me not by such words. Is she not a Rājpūtnī, and of a princely house? No, I should dishonour myself if I dishonoured her."

The menial shrunk at the retort, and still more at the glance of his master, who was not, he saw, in a mood to be trifled with; he therefore answered respectfully, "The ladies are honourably tended, Rājahjī; they have nothing to complain of; but as I was ignorant of your Highness's intentions, I did not think it right to listen to their lamentations, or do more than assure them of right honest treatment."

"'Tis well, Chundu, for, by the ashes of my father, and by the head of my first born, I would avenge their wrong, and doubly would I

chastise him who wronged them in my name. They may be foolish, weak, infatuated; what woman is not? The mother may be desirous to sell her child to a *faringī*, and the girl may love her own disgrace; but should I, therefore, dishonour myself, and be handed down to posterity as the spoiler of the fallen house of Kāngrā? Yet I would I had not seen her. It is hard to think of so much beauty falling into the hands of a *faringī*, ay, of the upstart. But, Chundu, you at least ought to have known me better than to think I would take such poor revenge. That scoundrel, Bhūp Singh, might fancy that he had brought me an acceptable prize; but you—did you ever know me crush a dove to be revenged on a hawk?"

"My lord is ever generous and noble, and his servant well knew that the ladies would meet honourable treatment at his hands. Indeed, it was mainly to rescue them from the ruffians they were with, that I accepted the charge in your Highness's absence; so careful have I been not to curtail their comforts, that, I fear, they have had too much liberty. A minstrel lurked about here for many days, and once, when he

was strumming his *sitār* outside, I fancied I heard responsive notes from within. One day, too, the younger lady held out money, as if to give in charity to the fiddler, but when he approached to take it, he lingered as if he had more to say than thanks for the coin. I appeared, however, from the recess in which I stood, and the musician made his *salām* and walked off. When I made inquiries, there was no trace of him to be found; but, unless I am mistaken, I caught a glimpse of him yesterday in a *faqīr's* habit."

The chief listened in silence, and not unmoved. "This must," he at length said, "be an emissary from Bellasis." Then, after another pause, "Tell them, Chundu, that their *purdah*[1] shall never be lifted by me or by my servants; and on you I leave the fulfilment of my orders. I am myself a Pahāri[2] and a Rājpūtra, and desire the honour of the most distant branch of our stock. If they are disgraced, it shall be their own doing, not mine."

[1] Screen, used as expressive of the seclusion of women's apartments.

[2] Mountaineer.

Chundu thought that this was his time to interpose, and strike a blow by which to gain favour with his secret master, without risking his safety with him whom he outwardly served. In a tone of the softest and most adroit flattery, he replied, "As the stars shine in a dark night, so do virtuous deeds in a wicked court. My master's generosity will bind all his own tribes to him more firmly than ever, and the *faringīs* in our service, who are not to be despised, will honour the chief who acts according to their own fanciful notions about letting women have their own way. By restoring the lady to him on whom she has fixed her affections, my lord will do more for the honour of the house than by thwarting her; a woman will accomplish what she sets her heart on, or will perish in the attempt; should she die in our hands, or even escape and throw herself into the *Wilāyatī's* arms, my lord's name would be branded with cruelty among both Pahāri's and *faringīs*."

The wily secretary saw by his master's countenance that he had said enough, had made the impression he desired, and he therefore was silent.

No words passed till the cavalcade approached what no longer seemed an embattled fortress but a scarped hill, rising abruptly from the plain, and detached by considerable intervals from the other peaks and ridges that, like the billows of an ocean, rose in all directions around. A voice from above challenged the party; the pass-word and countersign were given; a huge basket was let down by a windlass; the leader and half a dozen of his followers entered it without dismounting, by a sort of wicket, which being closed, a signal was given, and the precarious machine was in an instant raised two hundred feet above the natural level, to a broad terre-pleine, where were drawn up, to receive their lord and master, Rājah Dhyān Singh, six thousand troops, the flower of hill and plain. The Rājah emerged from his basket, received the *nuzars* of his officials, and touched the proffered swords of his chief officers,[1] glanced

[1] The immemorial Eastern custom of approaching a superior with an offering is to be seen every day in both the native Courts and European offices in India, on all festivals and great occasions, including Christmas-day. Soldiers present the hilt of their swords in token of their devotion to their master's service; traders bring trays of

at his retainers, and with a kind word or courteous gesture to those most worthy of notice, dismissed them, and wended his way towards where the board of works was in full play.

As he approached the nearest tower, a lean, emaciated person, whose eye beamed with intelligence, came forth from a group of workmen, and, *rupee* in hand, offered his welcome. "Ah, Ahmad! how fares it with thee? How proceeds the work?" inquired the Rājah kindly, and in his most dulcet strain.

"*Ap ki ikbāl se*, all goes on well, but it would be better if your excellency was more at your own house, and among those who pray for you."

"Would I could be so, Ahmad! Thank you, however, all the same; but what is this? what

almonds and sugar-candy, or fresh fruit; civil officials bring a few rupees, laid on a white napkin; and no respectable man approaches without offering a piece of money. The European merely touches the coin with a *salām*, but outside the door his understrappers are on the look-out to fleece the retiring visitors, very possibly saying they act by their master's order. *Chehazi* is a true prototype of the hangers-on round English officials.

are you after here?" pointing to a half-sunken shaft and gallery with embrasure-like openings.

The *rāj-mistri*[1] smiled, and energetically pulling his long, thin, black beard, replied: "It meets your Highness's approbation, I trust? See here, *Rājājī;* if your guns were to fire from the eminence on which we stand, it would be what the *faringīs* call *plunging* fire, and a single shot would strike but a single object; whereas, one sent horizontally may carry death through a whole *pultan.* Your slave has, therefore, been talking with old Fyz Ally, the *tōp-chī,* who is a very *hoshyar*[2] man, a perfect Lokhmān;[3] indeed, my lord, it was he who shewed me the plan, for I only saw the defect, but had not the skill to remedy it, when old Sponge Staff said, 'Ahmad, you are an ass, though the *Rājah Sāhib* thinks you a smart fellow.' I was angry, your Highness, and would have struck him, but he is an old man, so I only said, 'No *gāli,*[4] if you please, *Commandantjī,* but shew me what to do, and I'll gladly do it; I am anxious

[1] Mason, builder. [2] Clean, smart, intelligent.

[3] A celebrated Eastern fabulist, an Æsop, but applied to any genius. [4] Abuse, bad language.

to be taught, and not too old to learn.' Thus I softened the old fellow, and he shewed me the plan, your Highness."

"If you don't make shorter work of shewing me, Ahmad, I shall be of Fyz Ally's opinion," interrupted the Rājah.

"Why, don't you see it, my lord? The terre-pleine of every tower is sunk, until, instead of being two hundred feet or more above the surrounding country, it is not more than thirty feet; just enough to give a good command, and to prevent escalade. In each tower will be three openings for guns, one to fire down each of the two adjoining curtains, and one to scour the country in front." The Rājah's brow darkened, as the *mistri*, with breathless eagerness, explained his design.

"You are a fool, Ahmad; why, you are throwing away my money, and destroying the very strength of my fortress. And you, too, Chundu, you are worse than an idiot, you must be a rogue."

The secretary shrunk back abashed, but not so the mason. "Forgive your slave, my lord," he said, but his wild eye glanced fire, and be-

tokened any thing but meekness under rebuke; "pardon your servant, but consider before you condemn."

The Rājah smiled, and replied, "Good; go on, Ahmad, I was wrong to speak so: go on, I'm attentive; show me your scheme throughout."

The *mistri* joined his hands with a more subdued air. "*Ap māf ki jī*,[1] there will be no fort in the world like Rāj-ki-kot. What is Lāhor? What is Amritsir? Bah! they are but so many thin walls laid one against another, to tumble down by the concussion of their own guns; but your Highness will have a noble fortress, without blemish."

"Well, Ahmad, I hope so; but I've travelled far to-day and need rest: let me hear how it is to be, or I must leave you."

"Pardon your slave, my lord, he proceeds to present his *urzi*. The circuit, you are aware, is three *kōs;* a tower at every hundred *kudam* will give forty towers, each of which will be, as I've said, sunk above a hundred feet, and will at

[1] With your Excellency's pardon.

bottom be seventy feet in width. But, as there, the wall, or rather the side of the hill, will be a hundred and thirty feet thick, tapering to the top, there will be ten steps or terraces between the terre-pleine at the bottom, where the guns will work, and the slope of the breastwork, corresponding with the main breastwork that is to run all round the building. Below, as I've said, will be three embrasures for guns: these will have shutters to close at will, and conceal the guns: and each intermediate terrace shall be loop-holed for matchlockmen, wall-pieces, and so forth; while from the upper one, the troops will fire over, as from an ordinary breastwork."

"Ah! I see your meaning now; but Ahmad, you have put your guns and men into a well: pray how are they to get in and out?"

The *mistri* smiled. "So I thought, at first, your Highness, but the remedy is simple enough. If my lord will allow his slave to accompany him towards the *Khās Mahāl*,[1] he will understand the whole plan."

"Why not here, my friend? I am all attention."

[1] Private apartments.

"Because, your Highness, the key of the padlock is there."

"Good friend, *mistri*, you deal in riddles, but you must be humoured;" and the chief, with his few followers, and a train of idlers, proceeded towards his own residence.

Suddenly they came upon a huge hole and stopped, the Rājah exclaiming, "Why, what have we here? Has there been an earthquake? Or are you mad, Ahmad?"

The *mistri* pulled his beard more fiercely than ever; his eye was wilder, and his gesticulation more abrupt, while he said, "No, my lord; this is the key I talked of; here will be a hall, a hundred feet in diameter, sunk eighty feet; it may be roofed over with a dome, and be a perfect *bihisht*[1] as a dwelling-place in the hot weather. Four ramps will descend at a gentle slope into the subterranean apartment; and from it four galleries will be cut slanting towards the outer towers. The passages will be just wide enough for a gun, except at the point where each gallery branches out into ten roads to the respective ten towers; and there will be room

[1] Paradise.

for guns to cross each other. In recesses off the galleries will be the magazines; and, should the enemy ever throw in shells, all the garrison, except those on duty, may lie here as safe as their hearts can wish. The towers themselves can be roofed at a height of twenty or thirty feet for the same purpose. Fyz Ali told me this was a late European discovery, and that the *faringīs* themselves have not made much use of it."

"Not bad, indeed, Ahmad," said the Rājah; "but, taking your own comparison, your plan locks the guns up too much for my fancy; there are too many loop-holes—things only fit for women and cowards."

"Not so, my lord; your guns are still as free as ever to work all round the lower terre-pleine, and even at top to play around as on ordinary ramparts; for, the parapet at top being sixty feet wide, you have only to divide it into two steps, and you have a platform of thirty feet for your upper tier of guns to play on, and a breast-work as many feet thick to cover your battery. One great advantage of this upper story, as of all raised works, is, that when the upper defences are knocked off, you have only to sink

your terre-pleine and breastwork by clearing away the rubbish, and you have in a few hours a more formidable, because a thicker parapet between you and the enemy, and if you lose a trifle in elevation, you gain proportionally by a more horizontal fire. By such a double, or, if you like, treble or even quadruple tier of guns, and tenfold tier of small arms, as every step from top to bottom of the tower would be perforated, your Highness would, as Fyz Ali says, invert the common order of attack and defence, which supposes all fortresses to be weak, inasmuch as they can only bring one, two, or three guns to bear upon a point, whereas the besiegers may bring any number; but this source of weakness my master must now see has been overcome by his servant, or rather by Fyz Ali, and we can pour upon the enemy (if ever we find one bold enough to attack Rāj-ki-kot) a heavier fire from any one quarter than he can bring to bear on it. This principle, Rājajī, you will observe, may be carried to any extent; it need not be restricted to the towers, but every curtain may be so hollowed out, and the whole circuit of Rāj-ki-kot may bristle with successive tiers of large and

little guns, as Fyz Ali says they do in the big boats of the *faringīs*, one of which often carries seventy and eighty, placed in double or treble boxes, one above the other."

"Now I see the *tujwiz*,[1] Ahmad, but the expense will be enormous, and, before entering on such a scheme, you ought to have had my permission."

"Less expense than my lord may at first sight suppose; earth is wanted in many directions for the works in progress; it must be dug, and surely better take it where good may be done, than make unsightly holes, to be afterwards levelled down at great expense, or else become receptacles for filth. Thus, when I had marked off the lines, I requested the Kotwāl to forbid earth being taken from any other place, so while the *ghurib-log*[2] help themselves, they do your Highness's work; for, as there are buildings going on all round, as well as shafts and galleries, the one assists the other. Again, the very thickness of the walls saves expense; if they were thin, they would require to be faced

[1] Plan, contrivance, principle.

[2] Poor people, lower class.

with masonry, but now they need only be smoothed and cleared."

"Ah! I see, Ahmad, you are seldom wrong, but in future always consult me: an *urzī* costs nothing, and a word in my ear, less; one or other, on such occasion as this, might save you a lecture, or something worse; *rukhsat*;"—and Rājah Dhyān Singh pushed into his own apartment, after an absence of seven months, and after a day's journey of thirty *kōs* over a rough and hilly country.

What he did when he got there my information does not state; whether he kissed his wives and hugged his children is not therefore for me to say, but presently he merged from the *zanāna* with the boy, Hira Singh, by his side. He was a lump of a lad, with nothing striking in his features, which were smooth, of ordinary cast, and had a rather disagreeable, pampered expression. He was, however, the pet of him who ruled the Punjāb, and the darling of his father, the wise and calculating Dhyān Singh, who was now indeed a Rājah of Rājahs; in that Runjīt had lately conferred the princely title on the boy, Hira Singh.

Emerging from the *underun*[1] with the boy, and addressing him with every endearing epithet, Dhyān Singh went up to one of the *Hulwāis*, or confectioners, a score of whom, with their temporary ovens, were hard at work in the inner area of the palace, preparing sweetmeats for distribution to the thousands who would be assembled at the approaching nuptials of the little Rājah.[2] It was indeed for this purpose that the father had obtained leave of absence from court; and it was in the hope of accomplishing the first

[1] From under, within; the inner, or women's apartments.

[2] At a wedding there is no limit to the feasting, but the resources of the bride's parents. A man will spend the earnings of years on these occasions: on a small scale, I may mention that I have known a man, whose pay was four rupees a month, and who had a large family to support, spend eighty rupees at his daughter's wedding. The proportion may be carried up to the wealthiest in the land, and many instances vastly exceed that scale. I have known a Musalmān feed all of his own faith, amounting to nearly six thousand men, in the town where he lived, on the occasion of his daughter's marriage. Sweetmeats form a most important part of the feast; and the confectioners, with their portable ovens, as described in the text, are generally installed within the centre area, surrounded by dwellings, which forms a part of the common plan for native houses.

wish of his heart, and securing an heir to his house, that he was now about to unite his first-born darling to a daughter of one of the oldest families in the hills.

Caressing the child as he walked along, the ambitious father murmured half aloud, "Is it not for thee, my darling, *piārra*,[1] my *tota-myna*,[2] that I do all this? that I tread the slippery paths of ambition, and watch the pillow of that drivelling dotard? For thee I toil; wilt thou ever repay my labours, requite my love? Oh, for one peep into the future!" Then, seeing himself observed, the Rājah stopped at one of the ovens, and, taking up a piece of *luddu*, put it into the mouth of the boy, who, pampered with dainties, unceremoniously rejected the mixture of *ghi*, *mida*, and *chuni*.[3]

The same night the Rājah held secret council with more than one who was little esteemed at the Lāhor *durbār*. He did not say much, but listened to every opinion expressed, and it was late when he withdrew to his own chamber.

A watch of the night still remained, when the

[1] Beloved. [2] Parrot-blackbird, a term of endearment.
[3] Clarified butter, flour, and soft sugar.

Rājah left his couch; he was always an early riser, but now his mind was excited, and, after the first snatch of sleep that fatigue procured him, he was unable to close his eyelids.[1] Ascending therefore the roof of his dwelling, he threw himself on a *charpāī*, and seemed long wrapped in thought, ever and anon uttering his ruminations aloud.

"Can they be all worlds, those little lamps that twinkle above me? Is each a world larger than this? The *faringīs* say so."—Again, after a pause, "How often have I watched them! How exactly they return at their appointed season! Some never set—some rise but a short way—some traverse the whole breadth of the sky, but all are constant, all, except those strange wanderers, and Lena Singh can calculate even their movements precisely. Ah! there is the star of my fate! At whatever hour, what-

[1] An Eastern practice, familiarly known in the West; the better sort of houses have generally flat roofs, surrounded by balustrades, where the men sleep in the hot weather. The inhabitants of inferior dwellings commonly sleep in the street; nor is the practice found dangerous, probably from the universal custom of covering the face during sleep.

ever season, he is always stationary, burning steadily, though dimly—yes, I would make him the star of my destiny."[1]

The Rājah was a man of realities; he had in him little poetry and less astronomy, so his soliloquy may appear absurd. But, sleeping much in the open air, and guided in their computation of time, and on their marches across vast trackless plains, by the motions of the heavenly bodies, Asiatics, even the most illiterate, are better acquainted with the simple laws of nature, or rather with the results of those laws, than many an educated European. I have heard an old cowkeeper's wife assign as a reason for knowing the hour when a robbery was committed, that a certain star was then on the meridian. It was therefore not unnatural that a mind wrought up as Dhyān Singh's now was, should in its heavings strike against the popular and mysterious thoughts connected with the stars.

"Oh, for one peep into the future!—one

[1] The Rājah seems to have alluded to the Pole star, which he probably believed to be stationary, as to the casual observer it appears.

glance at those lights as they really are! But, pooh! what connexion have they with my affairs? Can those impostors, Muthsudden and Sundeo Dās, who practise on the drivelling Runjīt, really tell to-day what shall happen to-morrow?[1] They cannot in fact deceive even him, though he affects to credit them, to gain popularity. Oh! were I a king! no *faqīr* or astrologer, Moslem or Hindū, should infest me! A king indeed! who will be so when *he* dies? Kurak Singh would not if he could—Nāo Nihāl is a lad, but he gives promise of spirit and ability, alas! much more than does my boy! But the race is not always to the swift, nor the battle to the strong; so the wise men of the West say; and so I have seen in those who entered life with me. I do not see that the active and the daring have gained the mark so often as the cautious and deliberate. The tree requires years to bring it to perfection, and then,

[1] Two Pundits, professors of astrology, and treated with great consideration by Runjīt Singh. Every narrative of Indian individuals, from kings to Thugs inclusive, shows their prevalent superstition: it is difficult to believe the extent to which the daily practice of life is influenced by charms and omens.

an axe in the most ignoble hand may fell it in an hour.

"I feel the destiny of my house to be great, but who will tell me whether I am to gain the prize myself, or only open the way to it for my family? And for which of my family? Oh, if I could rouse my own boy to ambition! If he lets the prize slip, his uncle will not. And then these plaguy women—I shall make a fresh breach with Suchet Singh, by releasing the girl he had his eye on. But never mind, it will suit Gulāb Singh to be on my side, and if it did not, he would find ground of complaint, whatever I might do!"

Rājah Dhyān Singh was nominally a Hindū; but, like most hill-men, he knew little of the doctrines of Brāhma, and had heard much more of the spirit that dwelt in this dell, or the demon that haunted that mountain, than of the Creator, Preserver, and Destroyer. At court he had been sickened by the buffoonery of religion; seeing Hindū and Moslem ascetics alike countenanced by the prince, who called himself a pure Deist, and a disciple and successor of those who shed their blood to found a faith purified from the abuses of Muhomed and of Brāhma. Having seen

this, and witnessed the orgies of master and servants, of monarch and priests, the Rājah was thoroughly disgusted with all.

As a man of understanding, with some intuitive sense of right, he saw the grossness of the ministers of a righteous Being, openly pursuing vice and delighting in obscenity, or even in their sitting in idle self-worship and abstraction. Dhyān Singh's mind, therefore, was a blank as to religion; and, but that he was devoured by ambition, it would have been a field wherein to sow the seed of truth. By this I am far from meaning that he was a pure-minded man; I believe he was of the genuine Machiavellian school, one who looked only to the end, reckless of the means. He did not indulge in gratuitous cruelty or injustice, or love the vices for their own sake; but ambition was his idol, to which he sacrificed present peace and security, and the highest honours a subject could attain; and scorned all for an object that he could scarcely define to himself, and in the road to the attainment of which his good sense showed him accumulating difficulties, growing even out of the fulfilment of his present measures. Yet, under

the bewitchment of this idol, he seared his conscience to acts that twenty years before the bold and intelligent Dogur would have died rather than share in.[1]

[1] The early chapters of this work give some account of Dhyān Singh and his family, now the most influential in the Punjāb, and perhaps hereafter to be connected with British history. Gulāb Singh is the elder brother, and in the family pact he has charge of their conquered territories in the hills: while he manages those of Dhyān Singh, he yearly adds to his own by conquest, or by the terror of his name. He has overrun the whole district between Kāshmir and Attok; and inflicted such terrible vengeance on the people of Sūdan (a large district south-east of Mozaffarabād), cutting up, maiming, flaying to the amount, it is said, of twelve thousand persons, that the men of Dūndi and Satti, two adjoining territories, sent in their submission, but begged *not to see his face*. Of course, the brothers must unite in this barbarous policy, though it is difficult to believe such horrors of either, seeing their mild and winning demeanour. They are alike too in their boundless ambition and fathomless duplicity; as wary as they are daring, as little disposed to use force where cunning will succeed, as they are unscrupulous in the employment of violent measures where such seem called for. Of Gulāb Singh I have heard tales which I can hardly believe myself, and, therefore, will not task my reader's credence with. His information, like that of his brother, is considerable; and though not a very accurate geographer, nor with clear ideas as to the direction in which his lieutenant, Zorāwar Singh, went to push his conquests, he has a good estimate

"Well, Colonel *Sāhib!* what think you of this?" said the *faqīr* to me, as he placed in my hand a despatch from Chundu, from which I have chiefly compiled this chapter. I hardly dared to admit the hopes that the communication inspired, but I thanked Azīzūdīn from my heart, and waited with increased but less desponding impatience the result of our attempt.

of the wealth and products of China, as well as of Europe. In manner, Gulāb Singh is highly mild and affable: his features are good, nose aquiline, and expression pleasing, though rather heavy. Indefatigable in business, he sees after every thing himself; hardly able to sign his name, he looks after his own accounts, and often has the very gram for his horses weighed out before him. Since the death of Runjīt Singh, the Rājah has been in bad odour with the *durbār*, for holding out against the present monarch, and with the army, from the numbers killed in his famous defence of the *Suman-būrj*, in the commencement of 1841, as well as from the summary punishment inflicted on the mutineers in Kāshmir: both Gulāb Singh and his brother are, therefore, always surrounded by regiments of their own *Dogur* clan, who serve them in fear and trembling, having their families in the Rājah's hands, and knowing that any dereliction from duty would entail torture on them. But Gulāb Singh's history would itself fill a volume; and if the public give encouragement, some portions of it may appear.

CHAPTER XIV.

By means of a certain golden talisman, Bellasis has another peep at what is passing at Rāj-ki-kot—He at length enjoys what is commonly said to make amends for parting —that is, people who have never parted say so.

I must still keep the thread of my narrative at Rāj-ki-kot, where transactions so important to my happiness were going on, and where every movement of the body politic was laid open to the *faqīr's* inspection, by means of secret agents; while he and I and the other satellites in attendance accompanied the slow march of the Māharājah towards Amritsir.

Before dawn, on the morning after Dhyān Singh's return to his fortress, he was on horseback inspecting the works, commending or blaming, as he deemed expedient, and noticing the slightest new feature in the buildings. He next proceeded to the *top-khanā*, and was shown round by Commandant Fyz Ali, an old, one-eyed fellow, already mentioned by Ahmad *rāj-mistri*.

In joint command with him was a dissipated-looking European, known by the name of John Brown; the two appeared in very bad fellowship, but moved on together, to exhibit the guns to their common master.

The parade of the battalions followed, when the Rājah retired to his *zunānah* for a few hours, and then took his seat in the Hall of Audience, where he listened to the numerous *urzis* of his followers and subjects, issued orders on various matters, and finally summoned to his presence Fyz Ali and John Brown. They entered, the first with an air of independence, the second like a cringing slave. The freedom and the obsequiousness were, or appeared to be, equally unnoticed by the Rājah, who bade them both be seated on the carpet, muttering to himself, "I'm not Frenchman enough yet to keep my commandants standing."

Fyz Ali had been a trooper in the Bengal Native Horse Artillery, and had accompanied a detachment of that corps to Egypt; he was a smart, intelligent soldier, and rose to the rank of Hāvildār.[1] He had served some fifteen years,

[1] Applied to a non-commissioned officer; a sergeant; literally, a holder of a place or trust.

had received several severe wounds, and had also distinguished himself by carrying despatches through the Mahrātta camp on two occasions, when the English were hemmed in by their enemies. For such service Fyz Ali looked for promotion, but was told it was not his *lumber*,[1] and daily he saw inferior old men, cowards and malingerers, raised to the post he considered his right.[2] He was a man of family and education and, being unfortunately a bit of a poet, he once got into a scrape by some doggrel rhymes on the imbecile commander of his brigade, who, not being able to take up the matter officially, waited his time, and used various devices to bring Fyz Ali within the power of the law. But he had too cautious a hand to deal with. In despair, therefore, of a better opening, his commander had him brought to a Court-Martial for being out of his place at mounted exercise,

[1] Corrupted from the English word *number*, and as such naturalized in the Hindūstanī language.

[2] Promotion in the Indo-British army, a few years ago, went almost entirely by seniority: some improvement has recently been made, but nevertheless Fyz Ali's story is not all fiction, nor is it long since a gallant officer lived who might possibly have recognised the tale as fact.

the charge being magnified into repeated disobedience of orders, in refusing to *go* into his place. The charge was triumphantly refuted, and splendid testimonials were laid before the court; acquittal of course followed, but thenceforward Fyz Ali was a marked man, "a Court-Martial Bird," little indeed better than a jail one. For a time he tried to stem the torrent, and was nobly supported by his immediate commanding officer; but all would not do; and, to save himself from disgrace and ruin, he deserted. Runjīt Singh jumped at such a man; he was instantly made an adjutant, on three *rupees* a day, and shortly after a commandant on five; he had instructed a good portion of the Māharājah's artillerymen, and drew many a recruit from the Company's troops; but, being a superior man, he was not satisfied with his lot, and felt himself more than ever tied by the leg.

Dhyān Singh had long noticed Fyz Ali: and, under the influence of that extraordinary partiality which seemed like a spell over the mind of Runjīt Singh, the Rājah had obtained the artilleryman to serve among the troops at Rāj-ki-kot; and there, by gratuities and by a dis-

play of the little attentions with which he so well knew how to draw to him such minds, he soon converted the mere mercenary into a warm partisan.

John Brown was of a different stamp. The son of an honest labourer in England, he embarked for India, a sober, steady lad, liking a mug of home-brewed ale after his day's work, but hardly knowing the taste of spirits. When he took his last look at England, it was with wet eyes and a lump in his throat, and he thought of the day he should return from "Ingee" with money enough to buy a farm and settle in his native place. On board ship, when the soldiers' rations were served, he was obliged, like the rest, to drink his two drams at the tub. At first he took it as he would medicine; but, in the monotonous confinement of a ship-life, he very soon learned to look forward to the stimulus, and soon it became needful to him; so that he landed in Calcutta, as thousands of the Company's recruits do yearly, with hardly a thought beyond the grog-shop.

Perfectly illiterate, surrounded with profligacy, and without a friend to warn or protect

him, he soon fell into the common routine at Dum-Dum, did as little duty as possible, and was drunk as often as he could, got an occasional reprimand or extra drill, and paid off his ill-humour on the first "black fellow" that came in his reach. In this condition, he came up the country; when at Kurnaul he was once flogged for being drunk on guard; and, while he was still smarting from the punishment, he fell in with the emissary of a clever scoundrel who had before deserted to Dhyān Singh's service.

Brown escaped from his regiment, and crossed the Sutlej. At first he was delighted at finding himself, as he fancied, a rich and independent gentleman, considered as a commander, and receiving five rupees a day: but he soon found himself a very slave; that he was closely watched; that he must make up his mind to live and die at Rāj-ki-kot; and, in the event of a siege and any suspicion falling on him, he would be blown from one of his own guns. His tempter was now dead, from the effects of dissipation; and such wretched fellowship as Brown had found with him was ended; he was now alone on earth, encouraged to spend his pay in profligacy,

that he might not save money, and might drown in liquor the remembrance of the country and companions he had quitted for ever. Fyz Ali and he were associated in command, but the proud and independent Mūsulmān despised the degraded *Kāfr*, and the Golandāz scouted the unclean drunkard.

Accustomed to nothing but contumely, and sunk in the mire of vice too deeply to make any effort to recover himself, Brown became more thoroughly debased than those around him, and was only able mechanically to go through his military work. Dhyān Singh saw and pitied his case, but, not liking to turn him adrift, and knowing how far the very name of a European commandant went, he tried to keep up the credit of the artilleryman. This conduct, however, only exasperated Fyz Ali, without benefitting Brown; he was too far gone to respect himself, and therefore it was too late to make any one else respect him. It may seem strange that the Rājah set any store by such a character; but perhaps, looking on him as a savage animal, he thought that the head that could stand so much liquor must be supported by a stout heart.

In the Punjāb intoxication is common, and Dhyān Singh himself, though not a Sikh, frequently drank hard. But, more likely, he kept the European as a check on Fyz Ali, who, as the quick eye of his chief saw, had in him inflammable and dangerous stuff.

I have dwelt at some length on these two men, for they are fair enough specimens of the deserters from the Company's ranks, who are to be found in the Lāhor service, and who, leaving a certain competency for what they consider an Eldorado, generally live to find, when too late, that in every particular they have been deceived, and that in security and comfort they sacrifice, and, in eventual prospects, they forego, far more than they gain in temporary increase of rank and pay.[1]

[1] Here again I gladly bear testimony to an improved state of things, though enough of evil remains to call for further interference. It is Maria Edgeworth, I think, who says, "physicians are abundantly diffuse and exact when describing *symptoms*, but surprisingly brief when they come to treat of *remedies*." I would not be one of these doctors, nor would I dwell needlessly on defects inherent to the world we live in; but it is laziness and not contentment to put up with evils which may be remedied. No man could have seen a detachment of recruits march through Calcutta ten or fifteen years ago without earnestly deprecating the

The two commandants each wore what might have been a cast-off Horse Artillery jacket, tight breeches of Amritsir *chint*,[1] a red *kumerband*,[2] and a yellow *rumāl*,[3] twisted horizontally, and then transversely over the head, forming a low, rakish-looking turban. Thus attired, and with

plan adopted with newly-landed European soldiers in every thing connected with their comfort and morals. Her majesty's officers are becoming more rational, but I have seen a newly-arrived regiment undergoing a full-dress parade in Fort William, in April and May. The vice and mortality arising from injudicious arrangements are frightful, and pretty nearly equal in the three Presidencies. Considerations of finance, as well as of humanity, might open the eyes of those in authority to the advantage of locating their European troops in the hill-stations, with such facilities for communication as might enable the men to be brought down speedily on any emergency. The rivers present the readiest highway from the mountains; and a few small, powerful steam-tugs, with well-constructed flats, would supersede the necessity for three-fourths of the plain stations for European troops. The first outlay would be considerable, but in ten years the expense would be covered by the saving of life; and who can estimate the advantage to the minds of the men, or the additional honour to the European character, if rescued from the stain of intoxication and its attendant vices? As to service, surely a regiment fresh from the hills would be worth two that had been demoralized and parboiled in the plains.

[1] Chintz, printed cotton cloth.

[2] Girdle. [3] Handkerchief.

bare feet, the Christian and Moslem sat on the ground, before their Hindū master, who, addressing them kindly, recommended unanimity, if not friendship, and then asked them about Ahmad's plans for the fortifications. Brown, half-besotted, had just sense enough to answer that he knew nothing about the matter, to which Fyz Ali assented, with a very significant grunt, and added, "He's a smart fellow, Ahmad Mistri, but then, Rājahjī, he wants looking after; he is willing and intelligent, but he has no *ilm*,[1] and when he has caught hold of a simple notion he runs crazy upon it."

"So it seems to me, Fyz Ali, and it was for that reason I sent for you to ask you to take charge of the works; your pay shall be doubled, and, when all is finished, you shall have a handsome *khilāt*."

"The Rājah is kind, but only on one condition will I take such charge."

"Name it."

"Free permission to do as I like, to pull down and build up at will."

"Peremptory enough, Fyz Ali, but I agree;

[1] Science.

you understand the business, and can be trusted."

The old fellow was delighted, and proceeded to explain his plans, which were much what Ahmad had laid before the Rājah, and continued, "But we have not mentioned the ditch, my lord; there must be one at least round every tower, to prevent entrance by the low embrasures. These ditches shall be from thirty to sixty feet deep; when we come to water, we will put in alligators and water-snakes, and in the dry ones we'll put tigers, and all sorts of wild animals; and we can call the towers after the manner of each. There is much in a name, Rājahjī, and men would think the *Sher-ki-burj*,[1] or the *Ghāryāl-ki-burj*,[2] a more formidable place than the *Suman-burj*."[3]

"Bus, bus, Fyz Ali, you shall have your own way, only don't you run crazy too; if you make me such a fortress as I like, you shall have your *khilāt*, and all other *purwusti* I can bestow; and if you fail——"

[1] Tiger tower. [2] Crocodile tower.
[3] Tower of state.

"Then blow me off from one of my own guns."

"Very well; now you may go, and send Chundu Munshi to me."

The man of pen and ink soon made his appearance; his master called him to sit near, and motioned all the other attendants to a respectful distance; they accordingly formed a circle out of ear-shot of the confidential conversation, that followed in a low tone.

After a momentary silence, that expressed a hesitation on the part of the Rājah to unbosom himself, and a deference on that of the servant to intrude, unbidden, on his master's thoughts, the former abruptly commenced: "Yes, they must go, Chundu; the women shall have their liberty. But I must not appear in the transaction; the charge shall be yours to effect their escape, and to do so in such manner that they suffer no injury, and that they be not intercepted before an asylum is gained. You well understand me, Chundu; I must not quarrel with my fiery brother; and, though I hate the minion Bellasis, it may be well not to place an unfathomable gulf between us; he's bold and

wise, and, what's more extraordinary still, he appears to be honest; friendship, therefore, with such a man, is preferable to hate."

"On the head of thy servant be my master's orders," replied the secretary. "The slave feels assured that he can, without difficulty, execute the commission entrusted to him, and he pledges his head to do so."

"Good, my friend; let not to-morrow's sun rise on their presence in my dominions. But as for the scoundrel you said brought them here —how did the villain, brother of the wretch Nand Singh, dare to defile my premises, and again venture to mix up my name with his atrocities? Desire that he be fettered and cast into the darkest of my dungeons, and there fed with the scantiest portion of bread that will sustain life; I'll teach the miscreant to make me partner in his villanies."

"The order is given, Rājahjī, but for one moment would your Highness condescend to see Bhūp Singh? He may, as he says, make disclosures which his stubborn spirit after punishment will for ever refuse."

"Stubborn, indeed! there are means to bend

less flexible wills than his;" and the Rājah's lip curled with an expression not to be misunderstood. "However, shew him to the presence," he added; "we'll hear what he has to urge; I would not punish even such a dog unheard."

Chundu waved his hand to an attendant, and whispered in the ear of one who retired and quickly returned, bringing with him a Sikh of about thirty years of age, whose cool and cruel eye was his only marked feature; but which at once told him to be Nand Singh's brother, the man who attempted to shoot me on the morning of the other's execution, the murderer of Chānd Khān, and the ravisher of Māhtāb Kowr. The fellow perceived by his reception that all was not right; undaunted, however, he accosted the Rājah as his equal, more than as his superior; more as the one who, though above him in office, was, as a mongrel, or even *usil*[1] Rājpūt, much below a real Sikh.

"Prosperity attend the great Rājah, the pride of Lāhor, the prop of the Punjāb," was his approaching address; but a sharp, brief reproof silenced him, when Chundu, by the Rājah's

[1] Thorough-bred.

order, desired him to say if indeed he had murdered Chānd Khān, and by whose orders he had brought the ladies of Kāngrā to Rāj-ki-Kot, and what were his intentions and expectations in so doing.

Brief as were the questions, the fierce culprit could hardly restrain himself to listen to them out, when, stamping energetically, he exclaimed, "Was I the murderer? and why did I carry off the young girl and the old hag? I killed him to please you, Rājahjī, and I brought the lass here for the same reason, and scurvily have I been treated for my pains; not yet paid for the first job; and now, when she is in your hands, you attempt to fix a quarrel on me as recompense for the second. But I have friends, Rājahjī, and, by the blood of the martyred Govind, I'll have the wench, or a thousand ducats for my trouble! As to Chānd Khān, whose death you call murder, the job was too grateful a one to require heavy payment; a hundred *Nanik Shāhies*[1] will therefore satisfy me; but in future I must be paid down, and be treated with more consideration; for, by the

[1] Rupees, coined in the name of Nanik Shāh.

ashes of my murdered brother, I like not this questioning, and this parading of the prisoner before your assembled Dogras, who are hardly without hearing of such unseemly talk." The Rājah had just patience to hear him out, and then ordered the fellow from his presence into the dungeon already allotted as his abode.

" He's a dangerous villain, that Bhūp Singh," remarked the Rājah to his secretary; " he must never again see the daylight; he is both bloodthirsty and incautious; his impetuosity in shooting Bellasis on his public parade should have cost him his life; and, from what you have said, though there was address and courage displayed in getting rid of Chānd Khān, there was more of fool-hardiness than either. And this abstraction of the girl and her mother has been done in bad style, and has been bruited about the country, to my no small annoyance. I want no such awkward assistants; give heed, therefore, to my instructions; and more, make known to Sukhun Lāl, that in employing Bhūp Singh he very much exceeded his orders, and that he deserves for so doing to lose his ears, and may yet, if he amend not his ways, reap the reward

of his late ill arrangements, in dismissal, if not worse requital; tell him to remember that I hold his sons as hostages, and that, at the least notice of tripping, their fate is sealed."

"My master's orders are laws to his servant," replied Chundu.

After some moments of silence, and apparently of deep thought, he resumed: "I don't like these never-ceasing hostilities that Zorāwur Singh is carrying on; on all sides they are beset with difficulties; already we have more territory than we can calculate or cover; additions only bring us into neighbourhood with wilder and fiercer tribes, who may not only repel us, but turn back the tide of conquest. Already but a thin partition separates us from the immense Chinese empire; and another, even less defined, parts us from the *faringīs*, who look on our hill movements with as much jealousy as does the durbār. Several Europeans have already been prying about the bounds of Ludāk, and Kāshmīr has now become a place of resort to them. We must draw in our horns, Chundu, or we shall have the *faringīs* fingering our possessions."

"True, my lord; would that your Highness could so convince the Rājah Golāb Singh."

"Yes, indeed, my friend, my brother is obstinate; he can see but one object, and that is, a universal hill-dominion. He has seen so little of the *durbār*, and talks so little with any but his rude soldiery, that he cannot picture to himself any effectual opposition to his desires, or any impediment that the stroke of a *talwār* cannot remove."

"The Rājah is a great prince, valiant and wise; but he has not the sagacity of my master, who, saving his presence, is not as are the chiefs of the hill or the plain; but is rather as are the Europeans, a diver into futurity, a wise and prudent calculator of events."

"Tush, Chundu, I need not your flattery; keep it for other ears." Slightly disturbed, the Secretary sunk back for a moment into silence, and then rejoined: "If my master were to send the Rājah Suchet Singh to co-operate with Zorāwar Singh, matters might be retarded. The young Rājah is fiery, and would not brook a second place, while the old *Vazīr* would not tamely yield the precedence; and between the

conflicting pretensions, your Highness's desires would be effected, and further conquests at least retarded, if not prevented."

"A capital idea, Chundu; you deserve reward, and shall have a *khilāt*[1] and *purwusti* for so bright an expedient. But my time is short; to-morrow I must be on my way to Ruper, and the day is already on the wane; so see to the ladies, and report to me when you have them fairly under weigh."

The purport of the above was pretty faithfully reported to me; and, what was more to the point, I received within a few days an anonymous letter, intimating that, if I proceeded to Amritsir, I should in a house specified find the object of my desires; the letter went on to say that, as doubts might arise in my mind, and I might fear to trust myself at Amritsir on the bidding of an unsigned *khut*,[2] Sodhi Kurtār Singh, a holy man in attendance on the Māharājah, was in full possession of the circumstances

[1] A *Khilāt* is a dress of honour; *Purwusti* is the favouritism that knaves ask and fools bestow, or that fools ask and knaves bestow, whichever the reader pleases. Folly and knavery there must be in an office where *purwusti* abounds.

[2] Billet.

both of my case and that of the writer, and would guarantee my safety and the fulfilment of the object of my journey.

With the document in my hand, I flew to the old *faqīr*, and questioned him as to the Sodhi:[1] "He's a holy man, friend, but what occasion has a Christian to deal with a Sikh priest?"

"Read, *faqīrjī*," was my reply, and I thrust the letter into his hand. He perused it calmly, word by word, and then again examined the paper, and his lynx eye appeared to pierce it through and through: while he uttered half aloud, "The document is a true though a strange enough one; the Sodhi is a good man, and would not mix his name in treachery; nor would any mean villain dare to attach it to scheme of ill. I'll accompany you, my friend, to the Sodhi's *derah*,[2] and hear what he has to

[1] The Sodhis, claiming descent from the founder of the Sikh religion, are generally treated with respect, and, in the Punjāb, as merchants and traders, are exempted from half tolls, a privilege of which they frequently take advantage, by officiating as carriers for others, and "receiving the difference," as the Horse Guards say. *This* is a case of *purwusti*, illustrating the preceding note.

[2] Dwelling, tent.

say, and if he guarantees your safety, it only remains to gain the Māharājah's permission, and to speed you on your way."

The *faqīr* called for his elephant, and I, mounting my good steed Chanda, we moved to the dwelling of the Sodhi, whom, though in the immediate neighbourhood of the court, I had not yet seen, the fact being that, though in high repute and favour, the priest was really too respectable a man to enjoy the society of such as met in the pavilion of Runjīt.

As we approached the royal purlieus, we perceived a venerable Sikh seated on the ground, under a small *shamiyāna*,[1] in front of a still smaller *rauti*;[2] five *chelahs*[3] were sitting respectfully before him, as the old man read from a large volume, on which he was so intent that he did not perceive the approach of our train. The *faqīr* beckoned to me not to disturb the reading, so we waited for a minute or more, until the *sodhi*, looking up, perceived us and our atten-

[1] Canopy, awning.

[2] A tent with gable-ends and side-poles, instead of the usual pole in centre.

[3] Disciples.

dants crowding around: courteously he arose, and shutting his holy book, bade us be seated on the carpet by his side, and requested that we would state the object of our visit.

Faqīr Azīzūdīn drew the letter from his waist, when the *sodhi*, taking a *fac-simile* from a side-pocket, placed it in my hands: "The *Sāhib* reads Persian, and will perceive that the poor *sodhi* is in full possession of his secret. The fame of Colonel Bellasis has reached even my retreat, and if I, a poor descendant of *Govindjī*, can further the *Sāhib's* desires, I shall be proud and happy. All is prepared; the Māharājah's consent has been obtained for the Colonel *Sāhib* to precede the camp; horses and escort are already waiting at every stage, and two more suns may see my friend at Amritsir."

I resolved to start at the third watch of the night; and, taking from my new ally some brief directions regarding my safety, and receiving an amulet with his name engraved on it, which, in case of need, I was to show, I prepared to depart, as I wished to pay my respects to the Māharājah, and make some other arrangement: but the *sodhi* stopped me until he could call a

retainer, in whose especial charge I was to proceed. Kunhi Singh was a *sodhi* too, and receiving me in charge from his patron and kinsman, as he would a bale of Kāshmīr shawls, promised to carry me safely to Amritsir, and thence to attend to my desires. My protector was a funny fellow, of whom I may speak more anon; but now, warmly thanking my new friends, and hardly remembering the *faqīr's* presence, I was hurrying away.

"Not so fast, *Sāhib*," uttered Azīzūdīn, half annoyed at my thus throwing him overboard; "you have not yet done with me, and may need my good offices with the Māharājah, so why discard me so hastily?" Clumsily enough I excused my rudeness, and the *faqīr* smiled, and observed that it was excusable in one who was love-smitten. We hastened to the presence, and there I had to endure one coarse speech; but, not admitting of another, I interrupted his Highness, and told him that, though we did not veil or lock up our female relatives, we held all thoughts regarding them as pure as could Sikh, Hindū, or Moslem. The monarch took the rebuff in good part, and asked if he could more di-

rectly further my wishes, adding, that already a *parwānah* had been issued to forward me at the royal expense, and a *ziyafat* of three thousand ducats to await my arrival at Amritsir.

I thanked him for his kindness, and said I would ask one other favour—that he would write to Captain Wade to assist any clergyman, who might be at Ludiāna, to come dāk to Amritsir, to marry me there to Māhtab Kowr. Runjīt Singh was amused at the idea, but good-naturedly consented, and forthwith ordered a *kharitah*[1] to be prepared, asking that a *Padri*[2] might be despatched with all haste, and that he would find a palanquin dāk[3] and escort laid for him from Filor[4] ghāt to Amritsir.

[1] A purse or bag, thence applied to letters of ceremony and state, which are enclosed in embroidered silk bags.

[2] The Portuguese term, applied all over India to clergymen.

[3] Post, relays of horses or bearers.

[4] Filor is the ferry, opposite to the military station of Ludiāna; there is a brick fort, formed from one of the old royal Serāis, looking with its minars like a congregation of chimneys. Runjīt set much store by the place, though even in its triple wall and scarped ditch it is of little strength, and good only against a coup-de-main. The fort does not command the ferry; it belongs, I believe, to the Aluwāla Chief; though a Royal Post is maintained at it, the fort and ghāt is now under the orders of Lena Singh Majetia.

I wrote to the same effect to Captain Wade, and enclosed a letter that was to be delivered to any Minister of the Protestant faith that might be at Ludiāna; excusing myself for the sudden and urgent call, and entreating that he would, with the least possible delay, join me at Amritsir.

Having myself seen these letters and the Mā-harājah's *muraslah*[1] despatched, I returned to my quarters, and put my affairs in such train that, should any accident befal me, my little property should fall into the hands of those for whom it was intended. In such employment I spent some hours, and then had a farewell interview with some of my Kāngrā officials, who now, with real grief, saw my preparations for departure, not perhaps for any personal affection for me, but at losing one who had protected and fostered them, and under whose care their business had thriven. The rumour of my departure had little time to spread, but there were nevertheless many of the traders and other inhabitants of Kāngrā who had accompanied the camp

[1] Correspondence, documents.

assembled at my tent that night; and some of the protestations and prayers in my behalf came, I do believe, from the heart; and well they might, for, saving the legal rights of Government (one-third of the crop), nothing had, during my short reign, been taken from the cultivator, who, for once at least in the Lāhor territory, had reaped where he had sown, and had been able to calculate on the fruits of his own field.

To keep the *Tuhsildars*[1] and *Muskuri*[2] entirely from the *zemindar*,[3] and to save him from all domiciliary visits, had been my great objects; I therefore purposely omitted to collect the rents by the usual system of one rate on this produce, another on that; so much on the cow, buffalo, or calf, and so much for each *pugri*,[4] (a capitation-tax being in the Punjāb as elsewhere one most ruinous to the interests both of Government and subject). I had made my calculations, and, perceiving that the impost for which I was responsible could easily be realized by taking one-third on all fields, whether of grain or other

[1] Collector. [2] Lower officials, constables.
[3] Landholder, cultivator. [4] Turban, applied to head.

crops, I early promised that such should be my limit, and that, at the option of the cultivator, the division should be made by arbitrators, one on the part of Government, and one from the *zemindārs*, they two choosing the third assessor; the owner of each field was also at liberty to choose between a *kunkut* or *butai* division; that is, whether Government should take a third of the grain when cleared, or a third of the standing crop. The system answered so well that I seldom or never had complaints, and the cultivation of Kāngrā doubled under my administration.[1] Forgive, gentle reader, this digres-

[1] Native officials always claim free quarters, and their highest enjoyment is to be out in the district living on the fat of the land. *Tuhsildār* is the native collector, ten or twelve of whom are in each of the Company's districts, subordinate to the European officer; they are now generally well paid, receiving from £200 to £300 per annum, as salary, but their actual incomes are often treble that sum. If honest, they are content with a *nazar* at the two great festivals of the year, which doubles their salary. *Muskuri* is an extra inferior, executive officer, the lowest class of all; he executes decrees, and seldom is paid more than seven or eight shillings a month from Government; the proportion of his salary and actual income being about the same as existed between the salary and emoluments of all officials in

sion, but it is needful to show why and how there could be so strange a fact as real regret on parting, between the Governor and the governed.

My tent was hardly cleared by midnight; and with the loud cries and prayers of my subjects still ringing in my ears, I threw myself on my *chārpāī*, but it was not to sleep; and when, faithful to the moment, my *peshkhidmat* came to tell me that the *ghuri* had told the expiration of the third watch, I arose unrefreshed, and with a feverish throbbing at my temples that told the disturbed and anxious state of my mind. But, wasting no time, and hastily performing my ablutions, and forcing a *chupāti* and cup of "eau sucrée" down my throat, I pushed my way through the crowd that still beset my doorway, threw myself on my horse, and at a quick canter set forth on my pilgrimage of love.

For some miles, I rode on, without exchanging a word with my comrades. The morning air was chilly, and, as the cold currents came

the days of Lord Clive, when a Collector received a hundred pounds or so per annum, salary, and realized a large fortune in ten or twenty years.

down from the hills, I was glad to draw my *labāda*[1] closely around me, and, by keeping my good horse in rapid motion, to cause my stagnating blood to flow. The morning was one of those beautifully clear ones that, after the breaking-up of the periodical rains, often usher in the cold weather; the moon was young, and had therefore set, but the heavens sparkled with a thousand lamps, each brighter than the other, and they quite sufficiently lighted my way.

Looking around, I perceived that I had eight companions; two of the *khās ghorchuras*, the Sodhi Kunhi Singh, and a companion of his own; and then there were my *peshkhidmut* and three of my household; all good men and true, bearing my buckler and bow in the field, or preparing my rude food or mattress in the camp. The eighth was a mounted guide, a most necessary person in the Punjāb; for even with one we were often at a loss, and my other attendants would have, in all innocence, ridden in any direction I chose to take them.

Indeed more than once did I amuse myself by

[1] Wadded and quilted pelisse.

going quite right about, just to see if I should be followed, and true enough, all hands, guide and all, pelted after me as if in full view of Amritsir; and it was very often that I had to tell our leader that Amritsir lay nearly south-west, whereas we were going in any direction but that. By daylight, however, with the regular relays, at seven *kōs* intervals, arranged by my mysterious correspondent, we had made good some thirty miles, and considerably before mid-day had reached Dinanagar, a large cantonment and town on a branch of the Rāvi, and a favourite place of resort of the Māharājah's during the hot months.

We had now ridden eighty miles; and though I, accustomed to long excursions and rapid movements, and now provided with relays of horses, did not at all feel fatigued, but was urgent to reach Amritsir, my followers having no such inducements as I had, felt both hungry and tired; we, therefore, called a halt for an hour, and reluctantly I awaited their will. Seated on a rude *chārpāī*, I gazed intently towards Amritsir, or, beating my boots with my riding-whip, I counted the minutes that I was

detained, and shortly after mid-day was, to my delight, again in my saddle.

Our direction had, during the morning, been under the low range of the Kāngrā and Nurpūr hills, and parallel to the course of the river Byās, before it emerges from the last break in the range that runs past Ruper, by Nandpūr Makhowul, towards Nurpūr. Hitherto, the river was a rapid and noisy torrent, rolling over boulders of all sizes; but, as I left its track, and stretched westward towards Dinanagar, the stream had already lost its mountain character, and was assuming the usual placid aspect of the Punjāb rivers; not that, in any part, until it joins the Sutlej, does it acquire the muddy hue of that river, which it flows into with a comparatively deep and blue current.

At Dinanagar, I scarce glanced at the Rāvi, and immediately giving it a wide berth on my right, we dashed along the Amritsir road, keeping the Hussali canal on our left. The country seemed to me, as I rapidly rode along, to have improved in cultivation since I last passed, and with a strong recollection of localities, I called

to mind, as I hurried by, the occurrences of my upward march to Kāngrā; the insidious attentions of Nand Singh and the every-day traits of Sikh character that then, as new, so much affected me.

Such recollections glanced through my mind as some recognised object fell on my eye; but my thoughts were on her I was to meet at Amritsir, and though my mind was much relieved as to her well-being, there was still a remnant of fear and doubt remaining.

The evening shadows were lengthening as I approached Buttāla, the abode of the Kowr Sher Singh, where, with a prudent reserve, the Prince kept himself aloof from the complicated politics of the day; and where, with a more questionable policy, he spent his days in sporting and his nights in debauchery. I had but once seen him, and had then been treated courteously; I therefore thought it not right to pass his door without the formality of a visit, and, when near at hand, sent a message that though in a hurry, and on important business, I would, if permitted, pay my respects, and for one moment

attend on the Māharājah's son. A gracious message was returned by a Mutamad[1] of the Kowr's, whom I bade to turn about, and show me to his master's hall.

Booted and spurred, I rode up to an open pavilion, where, in luxurious guise, the prince was enjoying the afternoon's air. He received me with much favour, expressed himself an admirer of Europeans, and declared his especial regard for the character I had earned at Kāngrā. He asked the purport of my long and rapid journey at such a juncture, when my presence was so much required. I told him plainly why I was going, and said that I should still be in time for the Rupar conference.

The Prince was much amused; he however made more civilized remarks than did his reputed father; and, calling to the commandant of his body guard, he desired that a squadron of twenty picked men should accompany me, and a like number immediately proceed half way to Amritsir, and there await my coming, and escort me into the city.

I thanked the Kowr, but declined the escort,

[1] Messenger, ambassador.

and told him that it would only detain me; that I was most anxious to proceed, and had already ample guard in the *Ghurcharas*, the Sodhi, and my own people.

"Ah, *Sāhib*, you look too much to the word of a Sodhi; believe me, they are not all to be trusted; and I have lived to see the safeguard of both Bedi and Sodhi violated; rely on it that a few good *tulwārs* are better guard than the pass of the high priest Bikramājit himself. Besides, there are many Akālis about Butāla, and more about Amritsir, gathering like foul birds for the approaching Duserah, and you know they care not for the Māharājah himself, much less for Bāba,[1] Bhai, or Sodhi, *Sāhib*."

At another time, I should have disregarded the friendly advice, but now I had an object in view that enjoined all necessary caution; I therefore accepted the kindly aid, and, partaking of a slight refreshment, I again, after repeating my thanks, threw myself on the horse prepared for me, and through crowds of gazing Sikh soldiers (more than one of whose wild eyes and blue attire told me, as did his coarse lan-

[1] Father, brother, or descendant (of a holy man.)

guage, that he was an Akāli) I passed along at such pace, that I was quickly beyond reach of insult or injury.

My train now mustered twenty-eight souls; our speed, therefore, soon slackened, for I saw that, if I continued my present pace, I had good chance of riding alone into Amritsir.

One watch of the night had passed, and I had now, with the exception of about two hours' halt between Dinanagar and Butāla, been eighteen hours in the saddle, and ridden over one hundred and fifty miles of country, when the walls of Gobindgurh, with the young moon glancing from behind it, suddenly opened on my view. Amritsir and Gobindgurh have often been described; I will therefore leave the holy tank and the religious capital of the Sikhs to the reader's imagination, as I will the supposed countless hoards of money there amassed; besides I had little thought at the time for other treasure than my own, and little ability or desire to meditate on aught but the lost and recovered flower of Kāngrā.

CHAPTER XV.

The grand event with which this book ought properly to terminate—Steel is a better metal than gold — A modern Agesilaus.

If the reader has ever been, for long years, separated from the object of his love; or, if even the absence of a month or week has brought to his heart nights of weariness, and days of desolation, he can understand my feelings when, rescued from such a tissue of dangers, I clasped my bride to my heart, and heard in her own sweet words the touching narration of her perils, and of the process, to her quite incomprehensible, by which she was released. To the reader of these pages, who has been in such a position, the filling-up of the blank in this part of my story will be no difficult task; and to all the rest of the world, any thing I might write

would seem mawkish, so I will even let them settle the matter in their own minds as they may think most proper; and will pass on from matters of sentiment to details of fact.

Having recovered my treasure, I was resolved that there should "nought but death part her and me." Māhtāb had long seen the absurdity, and worse than absurdity, of the religion she had been reared in, and was prepared, by her natural rectitude and purity, to embrace a better faith as soon as it should be presented to her. I felt my own incompetence to be her instructor, and never was so conscious of the discrepancies between my own belief and practice, as when I sought to lay before her the principles of Christianity. The research that we together made into the elements of Christian truth was not, I hope, without use to me, and ended in my bride becoming in heart and soul a convert. Her mother offered no opposition to the change. All that Māhtāb did was right in her parent's eye, and sickness and sorrow had so impaired her natural energies, that she was little more than a passive witness of events.

When the clergyman, whose services I had

requested, arrived at Amritsir, the Rāni offered no opposition to our wishes; and I was united to Māhtāb Kowr, by Christian rites, in the presence of God and man.

The old lady did but live to see her child entrusted to a faithful guardian; in a few days she expired, and now, indeed, Māhtāb was all my own; we had neither of us any other creature on earth to claim our affections; and how they were centred on each other I will not attempt to describe.

The crowning of my good fortune I considered to be, that the Māharājah permitted my proceeding to Ruper by water, instead of marching with his camp, escaping thereby the bustle of the royal cortège, and substituting for it the quiet and privacy of a river-trip.

Having had two boats fitted up at the nearest *ghāt*, we embarked on the Byās, and dropped down the stream, until, at Hurri-ki-Putan, it joins the Sutlej.

The rivers of the Punjāb had had few describers from the days of Sikunder the Great to those of Sikunder Burnes; but, about the time my narrative commences, attention had been

excited towards them and their capabilities. During this very year, Captain Burnes had navigated from the ocean to Lāhor, ascending the Rāvi, the most winding, intricate, and shallow of the five rivers. Captain Wade had made an excursion down the Sutlej, but I was perhaps the first of European blood that had embarked on the Byās, whose bright blue waters seemed unwilling to mingle with the Sutlej's muddy stream.

The boats of the Sutlej and Byās are very primitive structures, in shape resembling what I remember in civilized life as a snuffers-tray, and in workmanship the clumsiest that can be imagined. These great flat-bottomed vessels are chiefly used as ferries, and for longer trips there are the Indus boats, of somewhat better build, but still awkward and clumsy. These unpromising-looking craft, however, navigate safely to the very mouth of the river, and are far more comfortable habitations than of many a better looking build. We had embarked in one of the latter, fitted up with a large cabin formed of *sirki*, a fine and polished reed that abounds on the river banks. The stems are laid parallel to

each other, and threads passed through them, at intervals of about a foot, and thus a mat is formed, which is used for innumerable purposes; it is light and strong, and keeps out both sun and rain.

The mode of working the Indus boats is as little ship-shape as their build, yet it, too, answers all the purposes required. One huge sail, with bamboos tied together for yards, is hoisted on a rough and far from perpendicular mast, when the breeze is favourable. But the main dependence for progress in descending is the force of the current, and in ascending the long rope by which the vessel is tracked. The *mullahs*[1] are Mūsalmāns, here a hard-working and light-hearted race; many of them very fine-looking men, absolutely amphibious in their habits; they are to be seen, through heat and cold, diving, swimming, wading, dragging, and ever and anon, a huge pair of bare legs, dripping with moisture, are thrust in at the cabin-window, as the *mullah* enters to caulk a leaky seam in the boat. One man was all day busy at the mill, grinding the wheat for the evening's meal

[1] Boatmen, on the Ganges called Dāndis.

of the whole party, and the ceaseless noise was very disagreeable. I was always obliged to recollect that the inconvenience of doing without food *might* be greater to them, than that of hearing the noise was to me, and thus to check the order to stop the mill that was constantly rising to my lips.

Our voyage was monotonous, and, had we not been together, would have been dull. The banks are generally low and sandy, and the principal features of the river are never-ending sand-banks.

From its quitting the hills to its outlet, the Indus, in all its branches, flows through a plain that appears to have no inclination beyond what it may derive from the figure of the earth; but the force of the current proves that there is a vast though gradual descent throughout its career. No river, I suppose, in the world, is so variable in its course as the Sutlej, and its wanderings cause many a bitter feud. A single season often changes the bed of the river several miles; and crops that are sown in the territory on one side of the stream may ripen in the dominions on the opposite, seeming as if the very

elements partook of man's instability in this troubled region. As we tracked along the Sutlej, seeing very often nothing but a tract of sand on either side between us and the horizon, it seemed as if the grey waters beneath and the grey sky above were but one expanse, with a brown line drawn across it. There is no time when a wild desert plain looks sublime, except when the yellow full moon is rising on it, and then there is an air of vastness and mystery over the expanse.

I hardly knew myself in the perfect tranquillity of this period, having never since I reached manhood had such a calm in my existence. Of course I should, after some time, have felt *ennui*, but our trip did not last long enough to wear out the charm, and I look back to it as a season of the purest enjoyment.

One calm, bright, cool evening, we were moored off Tihāra, on the left bank of the stream. In other parts of India, the place would have been nothing remarkable, but in the surrounding desert it was quite an oasis. A grove of *sissu* trees extended for a mile or two, and, though none of the trees were large, the verdure

and shade were most refreshing. Māhtāb and I had wandered some distance, and sat down on the stump of an old tree, looking at the wild peacocks flying past, listening to the thousand doves that had their habitation in the surrounding branches, and wondering who had planted the grove.

An old man, with a long white beard, passed at some little distance from us, and paused for a moment, leaning on his staff as he saluted us. I *salāmed* to him in return, and beckoned him to approach. "His age was like a vigorous winter, frosty but kindly," and there was something about him that seemed to me familiar. I asked the old man his name, which he said was Hosein Shāh; he told me he was a *faqīr*, that he had collected money enough to repair an old *edgāh*[1] in the grove, and to dig a well there for the refreshment of travellers.

We accompanied the man to his habitation, a small mat hovel in the heart of the wood. Close by was the *edgāh*, fresh, white, and clean, and the neatly-finished well gave promise of refreshment. Some trees of a larger growth than the

[1] Mūsulmān shrine.

surrounding *bābul* and *sissu* shaded the spot, and a clump of dates made a picturesque variety in the foliage. The hermit of this cell was quite unlike the usual class of *faqīrs;* he talked soberly and civilly, asked no alms, and was clean and simple in his dress. Still, as he talked, some remembrance haunted me; but, as he shewed no symptom of recognition, I concluded that I must be mistaken in the vague idea which possessed me, that I had seen him before.

We continued our voyage next morning, and, for a week, had little in the external world to claim our attention, except the increasing clearness with which we saw the hills. During the day they were not visible, but in clear weather we had glimpses of them, morning and evening, as if the sky had opened to reveal to us a new world. Our course lay occasionally through banks, well cultivated, but, except at the ferries, we rarely saw an inhabitant. At the *ghāts* there were picturesque groups of travellers, standing and sitting on the bank, or in the flat-bottomed boats, as if they had been arranged by a painter.

Here a Sikh soldier, all beard and swagger, with his European red jacket, and high, narrow, characteristic turban, conspicuous even at a distance by his white teeth, a beauty that the tribe preserve unsullied by their abstinence from tobacco. Or there would be a tall, wiry Singh, a *shikāri*[1] of the Māharājah's, with a long knife in his girdle, a matchlock poised on his shoulder, and a scarlet powder-horn by his side, with a jacket of tiger's skin round his gaunt shoulders. Perhaps one of the passengers would be a *Brāhman* traveller, with his quiet, sly, subdued countenance, and white beard, as strong a contrast to the overbearing air and black *mane* of the Singhs, (who mostly dye their beard when it begins to grizzle) as his loose muslin garments and ample turban were to their tightly girded costume. We passed many places on the Punjāb side, which shewed remains of habitations, and here there was but one reply, "It was a Mūsalmān village,—the Sikhs plundered and left it desolate."

I can fancy nothing more delightful than the climate on the Sutlej, during the beginning

[1] Sportsman, hunter.

and the end of the cold season; and as we advanced northward, we found the scenery equally lovely—the Himalāyas forming a noble amphitheatre to the north and north-west; the plains at their base, green and well cultivated, and the river frequently stretching into a wide expanse, to which the abrupt turns gave a lake-like appearance.

One morning early we had gone out to enjoy the delightful breeze; "*eating* the air" is, indeed, the fittest term to apply to the eagerness with which a temperate and bracing climate is relished by those who have endured the heat of the plains. The mist rose in a white cloud from the river, but the sky behind the blue hills to the east was of a clear red. Presently a spark of fire appeared above one of the peaks, and in two minutes more, the sun leaped forth, throwing a column of crimson light on the grey waters of the Sutlej. Beyond, and to the left of the low undulating ridge before us, rose chain after chain in endless succession, backed by the snowy pinnacles which, in the morning light, stood up white and cliff-like, their sides seamed apparently by deep and nearly perpendicular

ravines; but, as the day advanced, all was merged iuto one soft, mottled, blue and white haze.

The increasing heat of the sun made us look out for our boat, which was tracking along-side, when we were arrested by the approach of two travellers, who evidently were in quest of us. In the first, we immediately recognised Akrām Khān, the Multānī, and in the other, the hermit of Tihāra. We were delighted to see our faithful servant, of whom he had had no certain intelligence since the day he had left Kāngrā for Rāj-ki-kot. His tale was soon told: he lingered about Māhtāb's prison, vainly seeking for some means of introducing himself, until he learned that the bird was flown. Not knowing the cause of her removal, he feared some fresh disaster, and hastened to Kāngrā in quest of me. There, too, he was disappointed, finding me gone; but he followed my steps to Amritsir, and at that city gathered enough to lead him to hope that I had found Māhtāb. Thence he had pursued me to Chaundi-ki-ghāt, where we now were. I told him that I had not forgotten my promise, that his services should not go un-

rewarded, and desired him now to get into one of the boats. "But what," I asked, "is the old *faqīr* from Tihāra doing here?"

"Will the *Sāhib* allow him to accompany me into the boat?"

"Certainly," and I again looked at the old man with an increasing assurance that I had before known him. However, I postponed my investigations, as the travellers were tired and hungry, told them to eat and sleep, and that in the evening we would have a conversation.

The sun was sinking behind the low land to our West, and one of the wide, lake-like bends of the river was glowing like a topaz; the huge, clumsy, dark sail that had been hoisted to our boat, and was still unstruck, looked picturesque in that subdued light which throws so strange a beauty over the commonest objects; we had brought-to early, and I was walking alongside of Māhtāb's *doli* on the high turfy bank, when Akrām Khān came to make his *salām*. I immediately inquired about the *faqīr*.

"The *Sāhib* then does not recognise Rām Singh?" replied the Multānī.

"To be sure I do! How stupid not at once

to see through his disguise! But what is the meaning of all this mummery?" My old soldier, in reply, gave the following narrative:

"On the night of Chānd Khān's murder, he had lain down to rest as usual, under guard, with his fellow *détenu*, old Rām Singh, (who, now standing before me, and divesting himself of his *faqīr* habiliments, I was surprised I had not before recognised.) The latter was wakened by finding a bandage forcibly applied to his mouth, and hearing a deep low voice commanding him to rise and accompany the speaker. Before the old man was well awake, he was blindfolded, and led away by two stout fellows; unable to speak or see, he could make no resistance, nor did he know by what road he went, or by what companions he was accompanied, for several hours. He was tied on a horse, and led along at a gallop till the whole party were weary; and then, when taken down and allowed to use his mouth and eyes, he found himself still pinioned,—out of sight of Kāngrā, or any other object that he recognised, and surrounded by a band of ruffianly Sikhs. One, who seemed the leader, he described as particularly ferocious,

and as having his hands and his *kumerband* smeared with blood.

Rām Singh gathered from their conversation that they were proceeding to Lāhor, where he was to be given up prisoner, and he knew what sort of fate would there await him. Famishing and desperate, the old man asked for some food, when the brutal leader flung an old shoe at him, and said with a sneer, "There, you may make your breakfast on that. I have lost the fellow to it." The old man had not been a jailer without learning something of the laws of evidence, and when his arms were a little loosened, to enable him to eat the scanty fare afterwards given to him, he made himself master of the shoe.

The party proceeded for some days; and then, when they were one night plunged in a debauch, Rām Singh effected his escape. He wandered, almost starving, as a *faqīr*, till he reached the Sutlej, and crossed into the British territory.

There he felt comparatively safe; and, having in his wanderings seen the old deserted *musjid* at Tihāra, he resolved to assume the name and character of a Mūsalmān, and take up his abode

beside it. Under the name of Hasan Shāh, he begged a sum sufficient to repair the ruin, and then settled himself in the retreat. Amid his wanderings, he had always kept possession of the old shoe, but he was dismayed one morning at not finding it; he could not account for the loss;—a traveller had taken shelter with him the preceding night, but what stranger would purloin anything so apparently worthless?

Rām Singh had continued this peaceable life till the time when we visited his abode, and was much pleased to find I did not detect him. Soon after, however, Akrām Khān, on his way in pursuit of me, begged a night's lodging from the *faqīr* of Tihāra: the old man knew he could trust his visiter, and accordingly discovered himself, and they both set out next morning in quest of me.

I was indeed much pleased to see the old man, whom I had long supposed murdered; but I advised him, if he accompanied us to Ruper, there to maintain his disguise. Putting his tale in connexion with what Sohun Lāl had begun to tell me, I began to find some clue to Chānd Khān's murderer; for, at that time, the reader

must remember I was not in possession of all those details which I have anticipated in the preceding chapter, to keep up the thread of my narrative.

In two days more, we reached Ruper, a ruinous and depopulated town, standing on the verge of the Khādir,[1] at the left bank of the Sutlej. But all now looked gay and splendid, with the British encampment gleaming out from among the trees and turrets of the Ruper bank; while on the wide, flat sand, that stretched on the other side from the brink of the stream up to the first low but abrupt chain of hills, lay Runjīt Singh and his chivalry. I hastened to my quarters, and was next day admitted to present my *nuzar* to the Māharājah; and, having made all arrangements for the privacy and security of my *zanāna*, I set myself wholly to my professional work.

The splendours of that gorgeous meeting are too fresh in public recollection to require repetition here. For the time, I got into the spirit of the affair, and really enjoyed the fine appearance the Lāhor troops made, although I was

[1] Low land, by the river side.

too well acquainted with the genuine nature of the material they were composed of, to be blinded by the show.

What took place at the confidential interviews between the Eastern and Western potentates, I cannot say, not having been present; what was said by the king and the lord, or how *faqīr* Azīzūdīn tried to fathom Mr. Prinsep, and how the latter thought he had blinded the former, remain for the future historian of the extraordinary connection that so long subsisted between two Governments, agreeing in nothing but in making fine speeches to each other, that the friends of the one should be the heart's delight of the other, and that all who dared to look askance at the Briton were to be exterminated by the Sikh, whose enemies again were to be made minced-meat of by the lords of Hindūstān.

What was the ostensible object of the gorgeous scene now displayed, I am at a loss exactly to know. It seemed that the British Government wanted something, they did not quite like to say what, or perhaps they hardly knew themselves. But one thing was evident, that the successors of the Moghul, lords of the

greatest empire the world has ever yet seen, courted the alliance of an upstart robber; for, after all, and stripping him of his tinsel, what was he more than a bandit on a large scale? One plundering by wholesale, and never compensating for temporary spoliation by subsequent good management, but, in common with other destroyers of the human race, looking on the gold of the traders as his own, and considering that rāiyats were made only to be squeezed, and corn-fields to be reaped, but not by those who sowed them.

Runjīt Singh more than once consulted me, while at Ruper, as to any possible treachery that might be intended, and also asked my opinion as to the relative merits of his troops and those of the English that were present. I set his mind at ease on the first point, and on the other told him, with my usual openness, that the body of Lancers in the Governor-General's camp could ride through his cavalry,[1] and that

[1] When this book was lying in an unfinished state, two or three years ago, a gentleman, who had served in the Kābūl campaign, made some observations, which seem to me worth inserting here, though the intervening time has so mightily altered the position of affairs. The opinion of

the European regiment, if needed, would stand to be mowed down by his guns until not a man remained. And, further, that the example of such men and the *esprit d'armée* had spread

an intelligent eye-witness, formed at the time and on the spot, may help to the future solution of those causes which led to the reverses that the British arms sustained in Kābūl.

"I only wish from my heart that our Government would remember the opinion Bellasis expresses as to the relative power of European and native troops, and act upon the principle in Afghānistān. Two squadrons of dragoons at Kāndāhar and two at Kābūl—fellows that *won't* be refused—to serve as an edge and an example to Shāh Shujah's 'Jān Bāzes.' Four batteries of *European* artillery, and four good European regiments, fresh from Europe or the colonies, without any Indian prejudices as to equipage and camp-followers, and prepared to rough it a little if necessary, would be amply sufficient for our military occupation in Afghānistān.

"Our Hindūstānī troops might then safely be withdrawn, and besides an enormous saving in extra batta being thus effected, (sepoys draw sometimes four and five rupees extra per month, as compensation for rations, while Europeans have only half a pound of beef daily), we should be saved that excessive *dislike and detestation* which the Afghāns entertain towards *us*, in consequence of the bullying and swaggering propensities of our Indian sepoys; which feeling more than neutralizes the good effect of their acknowledged courage and heroism in the field. By the people of Afghānistān, the natives of India, whether Hindū or Indo-Mūsalmān, are thoroughly despised, and nothing but dread of their numbers and of their Nizām prevents the Afghāns

throughout the native troops, and that consequently there are Sephai corps that have done, and would again do, as the best of the Europeans.

from wreaking their vengeance on individuals of them. European soldiers, on the other hand, are respected: nay, even liked, and, so long as the 'unclean animal' forms no part of their fare, Afghāns have no objection whatever to eat with them, considering them, as 'people of the Book,' in every way entitled to that privilege: while their acknowledged reputation for personal courage and physical strength —their great superiority in the art and discipline of war— their higher standard of truth, justice, and sincerity (which, low as it may sometimes be, far exceeds the most exalted principles to be met with among the Mohamedans of Afghānistān), and that mysterious moral influence which the meanest native of Britain possesses over the Asiatic mind, prepare the Afghāns to acknowledge them as conquerors. With the above-mentioned number of European troops as a reserve, we may safely venture, *gradually*, to increase and discipline the corps of native Afghāns under British officers, in the service of Shāh Shujah; and by degrees, get rid of the hated Hindustānīs. By a judicious enlistment of different tribes, Ghiljis, Durānis, Hazāras, Momunds, Phārsewans, Khyborees, &c., each being paid directly through British officers, all danger of insubordination may be avoided; while, by restricting the age of admission into the ranks to from fourteen to sixteen (although, by doing so, a longer time may be required to render the regiments efficient), we shall get men accustomed to discipline. For the supply of officers to such a force, a corps of cadets should

"But," replied Runjīt, "my men are the same, or finer, and hardier, and more inured to battle."

"Forgive me," I would reply, "but they have no rallying point, nothing that, if scattered to-day, would bring them together to-morrow. Suppose that in battle your Highness's *ch'hātā*[1]

be formed, from among the sons of the principal chiefs, who will be found most willing to join it, and these should be carefully instructed under British officers, and declared well qualified, before being entrusted with commissions. In short, we must adopt with these Afghāns (who have no prejudices, other than our Hindūstānī followers may have taught them), the same system of discipline which has been found to answer so admirably among similar brave and independent tribes in Europe, and not attempt to follow the 'Bengal regulations' too implicitly. But this is not all—*while British officers are employed with Shāh Shujāh's troops*, a corresponding protection must be afforded to the interests of the *rāiyats*, in order that our name may not be mixed up with acts of injustice and oppression. For this purpose, the revenue settlement of each district, talook, or village, *as arranged and agreed on by the Afghāns themselves*, should be registered, and every payment duly recorded by British superintendents, appointed for the purpose, who will be able to check any unjust demands.

"This, in fact, is the system adopted by Sir C. T. Metcalfe, with such good effect during his administration of Hyderabad."—J.

[1] Umbrella, badge of rank.

(far be the day!) was to fall, who, in the absence of Rājah Dhyān Singh, would lead? or whom would the troops obey?"

"Ah, Bellasis, you look gloomily on my power. I like to hear you say what you think, but let it be to me alone; such opinions would not do to be spread, for I do not look to end my empire in my own person, but rather expect that it will extend to Kāsi. The *brāhmans* at least tell me that it is destined to embrace the holy city, and that the banner of Govind will yet wave over the mosques that have been permitted to defile the city of the gods."

"Banāras is very far,[1] your Highness, within the boundary of the Europeans; it is as far as from Jowāla Mukhi to the Atak and back again."

"Oh, I know very well where Kāsi lies, and I don't pretend to expect that I shall wrest it from the *faringī*; but there is no knowing what may happen; they may give it to me. They complain that it is only Bengal that pays them; that the Upper Provinces only bring expense, and that the revenues of the Duāb and Delhi are swallowed up in their outlays. But have I not

[1] Banāras is the Kāsi of the Hindūs.

twenty thousand men at this moment present, while Lord Bentinck has scarcely two? Surely there is no such difference between us but that, by a night attack, I could destroy his escort, and seize his person; would they not then ransom him by the transfer of a province, or even by a gift of the lands down to the Jumna, which are mine by right, won by my sword?"

"Such enterprise would surely fail, for the English do not sleep in the neighbourhood of an army, such as your Majesty's, without ample security against surprise. Besides, if you took Governor, Council, and Secretaries, it would not alter their policy a jot; but within a month you would find Lāhor occupied, and Gobindgurgh ransacked."

"You certainly are free spoken, Bellasis; don't you know that I have many allies in Hindūstān? Did you never hear what Durjan Sāl offered me to help him at Bhartpūr?"

"I am the well-wisher of the Khāsla, heartily so, for I am not ungrateful for your Highness's favours; and, as I love the English banner, I would rather, for its own sake, see its lust of conquest restrained, and that the British Go-

vernment should consolidate their already huge possessions than extend them. But can a prince of your Highness's sagacity for a moment suppose that, Mahrāthā, Ghurka, Jāt, or Mūsalmān would desire your success, or even wish to change the English for the Sikh rule? It is not unknown to so discerning a ruler that those who nearest approach to our own opinion, but still do not adopt it, are those who give most offence; thus Sūnīs sell Shīahs,[1] and think they do God a service; Budhists cordially detest Hindūs; and do not both faiths hate Sikhs, whether as innovators and heretics, or as heathens, and as dripping with the blood of their brethren? And yet the Sikh has much in common with both Mūsalmān and Hindū. No, believe me, your Highness, the brother estranged is the bitterest foe; indeed, have you not had at your own court ample specimens of the

[1] Nor are the respective parties always very careful to ascertain the distinctions: Sūnis are often seized, and, to show their creed, curse Ali and all his adherents; and thus frequently they increase their own sufferings, being tortured for attempting to deceive the faithful, until they acknowledge the imposition, when they have the satisfaction of being sold as *genuine Shīahs*.

disunion among the Princes of India? Have you not had Holkar and Appā Sāhīb as your suppliants? And as for the usurper Durjan Sāl, it was easy for him to give away, or rather to offer, what was not his own; and his nephew's treasure would, doubtless, in his opinion, have been well applied in putting down its owner; on the same terms you would find allies enough every where; the discontented and the dispossessed would assure you of a large share of the property you might recover for them."

"Ah, but when recovered, we could help ourselves."

"Yes, and, doubtless, your friends would so think; and their first device would be how to get rid of, or at least to outwit you."

"I like you, Bellasis, for you do not flatter; you must stay at court for a while, and I'll not forget your interests."

In such manner we often conversed, and I always found his Highness, when alone, both reasonable and affable. I was of course present at the several public interviews given and received, but then I was only one of many, where every one was trying to elbow for himself a

place; I had therefore little wish or opportunity to get beyond the threshold.

During our stay at Ruper, Lord William Bentinck sent for me, and, by permission of the Māharājah, I waited on his lordship, whose Quakerlike simplicity struck me exceedingly; indeed, stripping him of his followers, and taking him aside, as was his pleasure to go, in the attire of an English farmer, no one could for a moment have accused him of being the greatest potentate on earth; the man who had most freely under his control the largest mass of God's creatures, and the largest portion of territory and of wealth, the kings of the earth being as pigmies to him, and the huge empire of Russia and China not even equalling his empire in substantial power: and yet this man appeared, and was in reality, the personification of simplicity, and, however erroneous some of his measures, and vulgar the instruments and the machinery he used, he was, I do believe, a thoroughly honest man, as he was a fearless and uncompromising one.

He had then just weathered the half-batta storm; a campaign more trying, perhaps, to

British interests than any they had yet undertaken, and which nothing but the right feeling of the majority of the officers, and, perhaps, want of decided leaders, prevented ending in open and wide-spread mutiny. He was right in not yielding to the loudly expressed cries of the military; but he was wrong in the manner in which he executed his invidious commission, and more wrong still in not separating himself from the unjust act by putting himself on half-batta too. But enough, and peace to his ashes; he meant well, and may the odium rest on those who calmly and coldly, from across the ocean, sent out such orders, and again and again repeated them, as not one of themselves would have dared to enforce!

Lord William Bentinck appeared to be but very partially acquainted with the position of affairs in Central Asia and along the Border, where his thoughts were so anxiously turned. With surprise I now gathered that no steps, or scarcely any, had been taken to procure authentic information. Here I learnt was a news-writer, believed to be corrupt; there another,

known to be so; and in another quarter, a subaltern officer would be sent, or rather allowed to wander unaccredited, at his own expense, and at his own risk; or a commercial agent or traveller hardly permitted to go where the British government should have given lakhs to have induced intelligent and honest agents to venture.

Moorcroft, himself I believe in their employ, though as a traveller on his own bottom, gave such information as, if acted on, would have prevented the encroachments of Gulāb Singh on Ladāk and the Chinese frontier; and it was only now that a mission from Bombay under Lieutenant Burnes had tardily wound its way up the Rāvi, under the guise of bringing English *Dray* horses for his Highness's especial riding, but in reality to spy out the land, which could, under the same intelligent officer, have been better and more honestly done in a hundred other ways.

"You have travelled, I believe, Colonel Bellasis," remarked Lord William to me; "you have been in Persia and Afghānistān?"

"I have, my lord I served some years in the former country, and at Kābūl and Kāndahār I spent several months."

"What is your opinion of the state of affairs in those quarters?"

"That all is at sixes and sevens in both; that any power that can pay may establish its influence there to-morrow. As to patriotism, or a care for any chief, or for any master, domestic or foreign, the feeling is dead. However, as of the two, the Persians are least to be depended on and the easiest to assail, I would venture to suggest,—but I intrude."

"By no means, Colonel, I shall be obliged for your opinion; pray, proceed."

"I was about to say, my lord, that it seems to me that the best policy the masters of India can pursue will be to frighten the Persian, and foster the Afghān. The former are venal to a degree; they would take your last rupee, and then turn against you; besides, you are too far off to effectually influence them. Occupy Kharāk, shew them how easily you could make a descent on their coast, open a communication with some of the discontented and starving princes in the

South, touch the Persians on the tail, my lord, and they'll not make much head-way; threaten Shirāz, and they will not trouble Hirāt."

"This is quite a new view of the matter," observed his lordship; "pray continue."

"But, for the Afghāns, I recommend quite a different policy. They are a poor people; they want unanimity and common sense to guide their counsels; they want money; they want confidence in something or somebody. In Dost Mohamad they have, I am inclined to think, as good a man as they are likely to get; he is not too honest for his times, or so straightforward as to fall by the crookedness of those around; he eagerly seeks your alliance, and bows his neck to your yoke. Send him a brigade; give him such a body-guard as will secure him at Kābūl, and enable him to go out in his districts, collect his rents, chastise his turbulent, and encourage his peaceful feudatories. But, at present, though unquestionably the best of his nation, he dare scarcely leave the Bāla Hissār, lest on his return he should find the gates closed. If a Ghilji or a Suddozie considered he could support himself for a day in the sove-

reignty, Dost Mohamad would be shot like a dog; but no one lusts for the bed of thorns, unless, indeed, the dotard Shāh Shūjah, or his more besotted brother, the blind Zemān."

Lord William listened to me with much attention, and saying that he hoped to have an opportunity of renewing the conversation, wished me a very good morning.

I had not, however, the good fortune to enjoy another interview, which disappointed me much, as, from all I heard and saw, I had formed a high estimate of his lordship's wisdom as well as benevolence. Of his unostentatious simplicity what can I say? It has since been to me the wonder of many a solitary hour, and I have in vain sought for its parallel in ancient or modern history.

CHAPTER XVI.

Bellasis feels that his head is still in the lion's jaws—Some hints for the people called Christians.

Though I was evidently in high favour, and believed to have faithfully executed my trust at Kāngrā, it was beyond the Māharājah's comprehension that I could have served him without also helping myself: when, therefore, some of the hangers-on of the *durbār* suggested that I should be squeezed, and declared that I had well feathered my nest, and ought to be made to disgorge a lākh or more, Runjīt could not resist the bait. Either affecting however, or really intending to let me off easily, he ordered a full acquittance to be given of my Kāngrā accounts, on my paying down thirteen thousand rupees. I spurned the imputation indignantly, and said that I had already accounted to the

last cowrie, for the money that had passed through my hands, and that I had neither intention nor ability to pay another rupee.

My message, with due exaggeration, was reported to the king, and he thereupon reduced the demand one-half; I sent back the same reply; he became angry, and ordered my *dera*[1] to be plundered. Expecting some such result, I had drawn together a strong band of followers and well-wishers, and determined to defend my right: the determination was perhaps a rash one, but it had the desired effect. The Bhyah entrusted with the commission had orders not to use violence, or excite commotion so near to the English camp, but to do every thing short of coming to blows.

Bhoop Chānd was a sensible sort of fellow, and soon saw his errand was a fruitless one; he was, however, not ill-disposed, and dallied long enough to enable my friend, the *faqīr*, first to persuade the Māharājah that I had yielded, and, when he was pacified, to obtain my pardon, and have me excused from payment. Such prevarication came quite within Azīzūdīn's system

[1] Tent.

of ethics, and probably Runjīt was glad, on reflection, to have a pretext for avoiding a breach of the peace.

For a day I was much enraged, and kept my tent; but, feeling that the full receipt I had obtained secured me from further annoyance, and determining never again to interfere in matters of finance, I allowed myself to be persuaded that the proposed violence was only a part and parcel of the Punjāb system, and by no means reflected on my personal character. It was sulkily enough, however, that I obeyed the next summons to *durbār*, where I was received with extraordinary favour. No notice being taken of my late recusancy, I was insensibly led from my own dark thoughts to fall in with the jovial humour of the ruler. Whatever was the cause, whether he had that day been gratified by any unusual civilities from the British side, I never saw him so facetious or so loquacious.

He drew me on to talk of military matters, "fought his battles o'er again," made me minutely describe my brief campaign in the hills, and observed, "Ah, Bellasis! there you certainly caught the *Pahāris* in a trap, and served

them in their own coin! But, it was a venturous game to play: your force was small, and had they been commonly prudent, had one deserter from you joined them, you would not be here to-day to boast of the royal favour."

"True, your Highness; but I had taken all precautions, and without some hazard no scheme can ever be achieved."

"You are young, Bellasis, and youth is rash. No prudent Commander ever risks so much as that, failing his immediate object, he cannot bring off his troops. You might have been cut off, and your loss might have lost Kāngrā to the state. Prudence, however, is more easily acquired than pluck. I don't exactly blame, but rather caution you, for I wish you well, and propose your promotion."

In my heart I was seeking little but a fair pretext to ask for my dismissal, and this, within the last twenty-four hours, had been afforded. The Māharājah, by his winning tones and kindly speeches, seemed aware of my thoughts, and as my temper was not one to bear malice, his honeyed words had the effect that sweets from a ruler's lips usually have on his servants.

Answering, therefore, with respect, if not with humility, I only slightly hinted at the cause of offence, and declared myself, as ever, a faithful servant of the Khālsa.

"We know it, Colonel Sāhib; the appearance of every thing at Kāngrā bespeaks your activity and your honesty, and we shall take care that you go not unrewarded."

Many of those present at this interview bit their lips at finding I had rather gained than lost ground from the late fracas; once or more an attempt was made to twist my words against myself. Among those most opposed to me was my old enemy, Tej Singh; but the Māharājah, seeming to have got up the scene for the purpose of soothing me, and shewing that I was in favour, arbitrarily prevented all hostile interference; and, calling me his well approved friend, made me a present of a handsome horse, and, seeing that the desired effect had been produced, dismissed the *durbār*.

Azīzūdīn, who now looked on me as a special protégé of his own, took an early opportunity of congratulating me on my good fortune. The old man's friendship for me was

never tested by any very urgent demand, and I am glad of it, lest my feelings for him should have been changed. Having shewn me very great kindness, he seemed really attached to me, and, if a Moslem can actually love a Christian, to take pleasure in my society, and devise my welfare.

The *faqīr* had been so long used to dissemble, that it was difficult to know, nor did he always himself seem to be sure, when he was in earnest. Surrounded by sectarians, himself the minister of a bitter enemy to his own faith, and keenly watched by a hundred eyes, he had weathered the storms of a quarter of a century, and was now unquestionably the most trusted, as he was the most trustworthy servant of the state.

He had been so much accustomed to hear and to take a share in the mummery of Khālsa superiority and Sikh excellence, that he now half believed they were realities; and himself a moral man, he hardly looked with disgust on the filthiness of his master's character.

One day, the old man being more than usually loquacious, asked me about his old friends and acquaintances. "The *Sāhib* knows every thing;

he reads the English Akhbārs,[1] and they seem to know what all the world are about. I was thinking, Colonel *Sāhib*, while on my *chārpāī* last night, what you told me yesterday of the stars being worlds, and probably full of living beings; and it brought to my mind the littleness and the nothingness of this narrow circle of ours. It reminded me of a story an old *bai. rāgi*[2] once told me, of a country whose king was selected tri-annually; but the terms of government were that, on the completion of each monarch's period, he was to be banished to a neighbouring island. The candidates were always many, the successful one ate, drank, and made merry, and, when his time was up, submitted to his fate. But, after a time, one was elected who made it the study of his three years' reign to prepare for his after-banishment; instead of building palaces in his kingdom, he sent his family and his treasures to the island, and there prepared his gardens and dwelling-houses, so that when the period of his translation arrived, all was prepared, and he moved into a more comfortable berth than the one he

[1] Newspapers. [2] A recluse, devotee, Hindū.

had quitted. Ah, *Sāhīb*, I had not sense, when the *bairāgi* told me this, to understand the allegory, but now I see that the riches of the world do not make a man happier in life, nor smooth his last moments, nor avail him hereafter, but that mercy and truth, justice and honesty, are the treasures the old man bade me lay up in my coffers."

"Yes, *faqīrjī*, they are the stores that moth and rust do not corrupt, and against which thieves do not break through and steal."

"The *Sāhib* speaks wisely."

"I speak the words of our holy book, and I wish I could more abide by its precepts, my friend."

"Has the *Sāhib* an *Anjil*?[1] I never saw one, nor ever before heard a gentleman talk of one; I thought they were only meant for the preachers at Ludiānah, who, I hear, have endeavoured, under pretence of teaching English, to introduce Christianity."

"The *Anjil* is the book of life, the word of truth, *faqīrjī*, and Christians are bound, if they

[1] A holy book.

believe the tenets of their own religion, to propagate it; but doubtless there is a time and a season for all things, and I am far from thinking it right, under a false garb, even to do good, and am decidedly of opinion that English literature and the Christian religion should not be coupled. As to the Ludiāna Padris, there is neither deceit nor force used by them; they declare that they left their own land to try and convert you, and no one who does not choose need listen to them. Not but that I consider we should be conferring the greatest of blessings on you all if we could make you Christians."

"What! make us hog-eaters, drunkards, riotous livers, and debauchees! for, saving your presence, Colonel *Sāhib*, are not all these concomitants of Christianity?"

"No more than gross beastliness is of the tenets of Nānak, or than crimes that I could mention are enjoined by the prophet; on the contrary, as I have said, our religion commands peace, love, purity, and universal charity. He who best acts up to such principles comes nearest to his profession; he who acts contrary to them is but a Christian in name, a heathen at heart.

Our Missionaries are not always the wisest and most judicious of men, but they are generally simple, earnest, and right-minded; look into the conduct of any of them, and if you can see the vices that pervade the conduct of Hindū, Sikh, and Mūsalmān recluses, then will I allow that we are in error."

"Forgive me, *sāhib*, I speak less of what I know than of what I have heard; I know that Christians are wise and brave, and I have even seen them gentle and kind; but, performing no ceremonies, having no temples, and saying no prayers, I hardly knew they had a religion. Ah! it is a great many years ago since Metcalfe Sāhib was at Amritsīr, but I remember it as if yesterday. He had with him three or four other *Sāhibs;* they were all good men like himself, and their memories have remained; but it is of Fergusson, *Sāhib*,[1] I would speak; he was

[1] These observations were actually addressed to me by *faqīr* Azīzūdīn, and are preserved to show the force of one good example above a "hundred homilies." The individual referred to in the text is thus mentioned by Sir Walter Scott, in a letter to Lord Montague, written in 1820:—

"Sir Adam is well, and his circle augmented by his

wounded by the Akālis in the night attack on the English camp.[1] The Māharājah was much vexed, and sent me next day to inquire after the health of the wounded gentleman, whom I expected to see covered with blood, and writhing in agony; but, lo! as I entered his tent, I saw only a gentleman lying in a bed, propped up by pillows, and reading a book. The sheets were snow-white, not a drop of blood was visible; and so placid and at ease was the *Sāhib*, that I fancied I must have made a mistake, until I spoke, and Captain Fergusson put down his

Indian brother, Major Fergusson, who has much of the family manner, an excellent importation, of course, to Tweedside."—(See Lockhart's Life of Scott.)

This was the officer who commanded Sir C. T. Metcalfe's escort when at Lāhor.

[1] This attack was intended as a surprise, but the enemy were deceived as to British discipline. The small party under Captain Fergusson, (who, if report errs not, fought in his paejāmmas when he received the wound referred to by the *faqīr*,) quickly formed, and scattered the assailants. Runjīt Singh was greatly enraged with the Akālis for this wanton attack on the camp of a friendly guest, and heaped on the fanatics every term of abuse; but he chiefly upbraided them for cowardice, *after having attacked* the camp, to allow so small a party, about four hundred, to repulse so many thousands of them!

book, and told me that he was very happy, that he was reading his good book, and felt no pain. I have often thought of him, *Sāhib;* he must have been a good gentleman; and so clean and spotless were his sheets, just as must have been his heart—*wāh! wāh!* he was a good *Sāhib.*"

"Yes, my friend," I replied, "there are good and bad among us, as among yourselves: 'the *jama*[1] does not always cover a *faqīr*,' says Shekh Sādi."

"True, *Sāhib*, and if all Christians were like Fergusson *Sāhib* and yourself, we could better understand you, and more rightly appreciate the good that is undoubtedly in your characters, for who ever doubted the word of a *Sāhib?*[2] and

[1] Cloak or wrapper.

[2] This confidence in the truth and integrity of British officers has been spread, even further than their power. The Bengal artillery officer, who lately went from Herāt to Petersburg, found the feeling already existing at Khiva. It may not be amiss to suggest the importance of not weakening this most valuable ally, by incautiously disseminating every rumour that may reach a camp or station. The credit of the officers of the British mission at Herāt received a severe shock in consequence of their having stated, on what they believed unquestionable authority, that five hun-

where there is truth, there is the foundation of right."

We would then talk on more private and personal matters, and I could see that the interest the old man took in me was not affected, but that I had decidedly touched a chord in his heart.

"What would you wish, *Sāhib?* would you like Kāshmīr, Mūltān or Peshāwar? In the Māharājah's present mood, they are all within your reach, and I need not say that my word is at your service; but do not, I pray you, believe yourself safe from the machinations of the Rājah and his partizans; for a time and for their own reasons, they appear to have left you unmolested, and even in regard to the lady to have acted generously, but they have a reason, rely on it, and trust them not."

"Thank you, my kind friend," I replied; "I appreciate the Rājah's favours at their true value; and as for myself and prospects, I have little thought and less care. I have suffered

dred men had been killed in the battle of Rāmlān, when the Herātis afterwards ascertained that the number killed did not amount to *one-tenth* of that stated.

much during my short service, and, but for one tie to the country, I should at once beg for my discharge; whether I go here or there, therefore, or whether I remain in the presence, is to me indifferent. If I could be assured of doing good in any quarter, to that would I turn; but Kāshmīr has been so long mismanaged and ground down. Peshāwar is so lawless, and Mūltān is so hot, that the government of any would be sad up-hill work. Besides, I confess to you that I see a coming storm, from which it behoves all wise men to keep aloof; and during my short career, I have witnessed so much of the unruliness of the Sikh soldiery, that I shall be unwilling to put myself unnecessarily into their power."

"The Khālsa soldiers! what of them, *Sāhib?*"

"What are they, *faqīr Sāhib*, but a band of ruffians? was not Nand Singh an officer of these heroes? and was not his brother Bhoop Singh in their ranks? and indeed, seeing that his Highness, instead of hanging or blowing away robbers and other miscreants, fills up his ranks with them, what other fruit can he expect than is daily reaped—misconduct before the enemy, op-

pression in the provinces, and insubordination towards their officers?"

"What would *you* do?"

"Hang up a score."

"Is the *Sāhib* of Avitabile's school; does he delight in blood?"

"No, *faqīr Sāhib*, I do not; and that is the very reason I would shed a little; I would not imprison or place in irons my officers or other men holding respectable situations; but I would, on the contrary, make the soldier's post one of respectability, the officer's one of honour, and I would pay him and treat him as one placed far above his *sipāhis*;[1] indeed, unless you do so, it is impossible to expect that they will respect or obey him. Nor is it in human nature that the man who was in irons to-day should either respect himself or be respected to-morrow. If, in short, I ever again command a body of the Mahārājah's troops, I must have full authority over them."

"You were not much interfered with at Kāngrā?"

"Not much indeed, except that my life was

[1] Soldiers.

in hourly peril, and that nothing but Providence saved me from both my own men and Government."

"Come, come, *Sāhib;* the Māharājah was ever kind."

"So he was, and I should rather say, from my enemies, high and low."

While the two courts remained encamped opposite each other, I made acquaintance with more than one of the English officers, and had many interesting conversations with one of them who had been long stationed at Ludiāna, and who seemed well acquainted with the politics of both powers, and with the under-current that guided the counsels of the Calcutta and Lāhor cabinets.

I will venture on another dose of history for the reader, by giving some of the particulars gathered in these conversations.

Not long before the Ruper interview, Captain Murray, the British Political Assistant at Ambāla, had died. He was an excellent public officer, and a conscientious though reserved and somewhat eccentric man. Having been many years at Umbāla, and being intimately acquainted with the histories of the Sikh families on either bank

of the Sutlej, he saw with regret the curse brought on so extensive a country by the Lāhor supremacy, and strove with all his might to keep it within bounds, by opposing Runjīt's constant claims, as lord paramount, to new patches of territory on the left bank of the river. But in this laudable design, Captain Murray was much thwarted by the Agent at Ludiāna, who stood up for the Lāhor claims; and, as the battle was fought in Calcutta, the latter prevailed.

Each year saw Runjīt obtain a village or an *ilāka*,[1] until, with little exception, both banks of the Sutlej were acquired by the wily old Māharājah, who petted his Ludiāna friend and made much of the man who so well served his interests. At the Ruper meeting, the Agent was treated with every honour, and called by the Māharājah his son. From what I saw of Runjīt, however, I am not of opinion that he really liked or was most influenced by those whom he was most familiar with: on the contrary, I believe that opposition was what he respected, and that he only appreciated what he dearly, or at some price, acquired, and that if he flattered Murray least, he esteemed him most.

[1] Possession, estate, government.

It was in the year 1805 that Holkar, taking refuge beyond the Sutlej, was pursued by the victorious General Lake even to the Byās, when the Mahrātah, finding he could get no help from the Sikh, succumbed. This seems to have been the first time the British and Lāhor Governments came in contact; and, so little was the former acquainted with the state of things beyond the Sutlej, that Lord Wellesley's letters to General Lake then alluded to Runjīt Singh as to one (though perhaps the most powerful), of many; and in such general terms as show that it was only the sudden flight of Holkar in that direction which reminded the British that such a people as the Sikhs existed. The Māharājah was, however, better informed than his more civilized neighbours; and it was only just to try the length of his tether, and as a dying effort to extend his influence to the south of the Sutlej, that he made his brief campaign, while Mr. Metcalfe[1] was in the Punjāb.

The reader may remember that in September, 1808, the Sirhind and Mālwā Sikhs earnestly petitioned for British protection, and that Mr.

[1] Afterwards Sir Charles.

Metcalfe was sent to discuss the arrangements with Runjīt. While both parties were encamped at Kāsūr, the Māharājah suddenly broke up his camp, and taking the British envoy some marches with him, swept by Farid-kote and Mulair-kotla, to Ambāla, and, in spite of Mr. Metcalfe's remonstrances, gave away or appropriated the territory then acquired. Nor was it until Sir David Ochterlony, at the head of a considerable force, backed by a reserve under General St. Leger, reached Ludiāna, that the conqueror would yield up his late acquisitions, and consent to treat on the basis of a mutual recognition of the status existing when the conference commenced at Kāsūr.

Eventually, Runjīt was obliged, very reluctantly, to give up the fruits of his last campaign, and tacitly to admit, to the Patiāla and other Sirhind and Mālvā Sikhs, how much he dreaded the British arms. This was a solitary struggle, a single bold attempt to conquer or to conciliate the southern Sikhs, for, in his endeavours to detach them from their proposed league with the English, he granted them large portions of his late acquisitions, especially to his maternal

uncle, Bhāgh Singh of Jhind, who thus acquired both Ludiāna and Umbāla, and afterwards much embarrassed the arrangements of the British.

It had been the mutual feuds of the chiefs that first tempted Runjīt across the Sutlej, and he was very sore at finding so fair a field and so easy a conquest plucked, as it were, from his grasp; and until he saw Ochterlony's battalions, he persisted in calling the Jumna his natural boundary.

The whole southern bank of the Sutlej had been for generations in the hands of *Pathān* and other Mūsalmān Chiefs, servants or feudatories of the Delhi throne. Of these the most considerable at the time of Runjīt's rise (and, indeed, with Mulair-Kotla, almost the only one that survived the break-up of Mūsalmān supremacy in that quarter), was Rāi Aliās of Rāj-ki-kot. He, too, was sinking fast; one by one his possessions crumbled away, till little has remained but his fort and the lands it commanded. Doubtless, but for the British interference, all up to the Jumna would have swelled the Lāhor *rāj;* but, in consequence of their interference, the territory as then found has, with the few changes

caused by lapsed feifs, resumptions, &c., remained in statu quo. Nearly one half of that portion of the territory in question, protected by the British, belongs to Karam Singh of Patiāla, whose revenue of twenty lakhs exceeds all the others put together. Jhind is next in importance, then Khytal, and then Nāba.

These are the four larger powers, protected by the English; among them they enjoy a revenue of thirty-five lākhs, and could bring into the field twenty thousand men of all sorts. There are besides perhaps as many as a hundred petty chiefs and ten times that number of lordlings, whose total revenue may be ten lākhs, and who could furnish twelve thousand soldiers. But from what I could hear, though they were well disposed to the British, and stout-looking fellows into the bargain, they would not be efficient allies in the field. Accustomed to nothing beyond a boundary dispute, they would come into action as mere militia-men, and would not make a stand against the regular troops of the Punjāb or any other state. The cavalry especially, except a few personal retainers of the chiefs, are very inferior to those of Lāhor.

The Lāhor possessions on the left bank of the Sutlej were, in a previous chapter of these Adventures, esteemed at twelve lākhs of rupees; not above four lākhs, however, reach the treasury; and the territory, like the British portion, is mostly in *jāgir* to military or religious chiefs: the former descendants of those who helped Runjīt Singh and his ancestors in the consolidation of the Sikh power; the latter claiming kindred with the early spiritual leaders. These possessions are scattered in patches from the Sutlej to the Jumna, but lie chiefly along the bank of the former. The inhabitants of these trans-Sutlej States, whether under the Lāhor or British Government, comprise as few Sikhs as those of the Punjāb, and chiefly consist of mixed tribes, as Gujars, Jāts, Rāins, Dogars, &c. In all the States, a large portion of the cultivators are Mūsalmāns, and you may go into village after village belonging to the Sikhs, without meeting a Singh.

The officer who kindly furnished me with the above heads of information took me round the lines of the English, and I was much struck with the completeness of every thing in their camp

equipage: long accustomed to the makeshifts of the Persian and Sikh armies, I was quite delighted with the contrast. The two squadrons of Lancers especially struck me; each man looked fit for an officer; and I was also much pleased with the dashing style of the Horse Artillery. In the several days that the troops were out, I did not observe a single accident occur, or any part of the harness give way, although every move was done at a gallop, and the coming about, to bring the guns into action, was always at a fearful rate: indeed, I was prepared to see one gun crush the other. But the movements of the horses soon showed me that they too knew the sound of the bugle, and that little was required in the men but to hold hard. The practice was also excellent; I never saw better in any part of the world; and though we had been trying to get up a return play of our own, the Māharājah was wise enough to give up the rivalship, seeing that, however we might succeed, we should show small after the English display.

As I have said, Runjīt was most anxious about the appearance of the Sikhs in this, his first

interview with the Governor-General. He had desired my presence; but he himself gave all the orders at the time, and selected the troops that were to show off. Besides the regulars, attired like the English except their head and foot gear, there was the élite of the Sikh army; thousands, clothed in yellow and green silk vests, with a loose dégagée turban, half flowing over the shoulder. To an unpractised eye, these men, with their long dark beards and fierce aspect, looked more warlike than the quiet and subdued *sipāhis*, and the statue-like European soldiery; but no soldier could for a moment compare the silken array with the broad-cloth, or the gold and tinsel of the Sikhs, with the simple solidity of the British, and doubt the result of an encounter. The quiet, proud bearing of the Company's *sipāhis*, quite as much as that of the Europeans, seemed to assert their superiority, as the Māharājah and his train rode slowly down their line and inspected them, as they afterwards did us.

Once or twice, in spite of Runjīt's good arrangements, a fracas nearly took place, from inquisitive idlers prowling into the English

ranks, pulling about the men's weapons and handling their accoutrements. Such conduct was generally taken good-humouredly, but occasionally a churl and hot-blood met, and then a hand would be raised, or a blade half-drawn. But all ended peaceably; and, if Lord William Bentinck was as well pleased with the result of the interview as was the Lāhor Chief, one point was gained, that of putting the parties in good humour with one another.

A bridge was prepared a little above the town of Ruper. The English camp was on their own bank, and very picturesque it looked, lying among the trees and cultivation that fill up the alluvial bed, between the stream and the high ridge that bounds the *khādir*. The Sikh encampment, on the other side, occupied a small sandy plain, that lies between the river and the barren range of hills that form the lower steps of the first Himālayan range.

After all formalities had been arranged between the two powers, the Māharājah paid the first visit, which the Governor-General returned next day. After this there were mutual inspections of the troops, and other such military spectacles,

till the camp broke up. The Māharājah determined on making a progress towards the north, and I obtained a month's leave to visit Lāhor, and show the capital to my bride.

Māhtāb Kowr being a hill-woman, was, as I have already said, less fettered by custom and form than the people of the plains, and could more readily adapt herself to new customs. Affection, too, wonderfully quickens a woman's powers; and her anxiety to be in all respects my companion gave my wife an aptitude to learn that astonished me. Coming thus anonymously before the world, I may be excused for dwelling a little on her who was, while I had her,

"The dove of peace to my lone ark,
The only star that made the stranger's sky less dark."

And now, when on the eve of quitting this land, I record the remembrances furnished by my sojourn in it, I can hardly believe that she is not by, to read, to comment, to suggest, as was her wont.

I see thine eye still beaming!
I hear thy voice's tone!
It haunts me in my dreaming,
It visits me alone.

Oh! canst thou be departed,
  While thus thy form I see?
Can I be broken-hearted,
  While thou art thus with me?

It is but a delusion—
  I know thou dost not live?
Yet love I the illusion,
  Beyond what truth could give—
Loved as thou wast while nearer,
  My bosom now is taught
Thou canst be even dearer,
  Enshrined in holy thought!

CHAPTER XVII.

Monarchs seldom sue in vain—Bellasis gets a roving commission—One half of the world know not how the other half live—The Bhoria's tale.

Both camps had broken up; and on the morning of the 2nd of November, the two banks of the Sutlej, late teeming with life, and sparkling with the pride and pomp of the Māharājah's court, and the prouder, if less gaudy, array of the English Vicegerent, were silent and forsaken: the beautiful scenery of Ruper was again left to repose, or to witness the debaucheries of its savage lord, the Sikh Rājah, Bhūp Singh, one of the many lordlings of the day who are a curse to the land they devour.

The night before the dispersion of the camps, the Māharājah sent to me at a late hour. I was surprised, for although I knew that he often

transacted business with the Rājah or *faqīr* at such untimely hours, it had not hitherto been my lot to be so disturbed; however, I immediately went, and found his Highness in his sleeping tent, half reclining against a large bolster on a *chārpāī*, Azīzūdīn sitting on the ground by his side, and two attendants in the distance.

"Ah, Bellasis!" was the greeting, as I was ushered in by the waiting Bhāya, "you have been quick, my friend; your Peshkhema has gone off; how is that?"

"The camp was broken up, I understood, your Highness, and that I had a month's leave of absence."

"Yes; but why such haste? which way do you propose to travel?"

"By Kāpurtalla to Lāhor, your Highness."

"Ah, so I thought; but I have an errand for you elsewhere, my friend; here, sit by the *faqīr*; he'll tell you."

I was in no very good humour at being disturbed from my bed, and in still worse at what seemed the cancelling of my leave; but, when monarchs tell their servants to sit in their presence, they are seldom disobeyed. I accordingly

sat myself down beside Azīzūdīn, who, quickly perceiving the cloud on my brow, commenced muttering a string of ejaculations and pithy sentences, as much with a view of giving himself time to put his speech into a pleasing and complimentary form, as to let me recover my temper. Meantime, Runjīt Singh closed his one eye and slept, or affected to sleep; and the two attendants remained outside the tent.

"Ah, *Sāhib*," at last opened out the *faqīr*, "your *ikbāl* is great; the light of the sun each day more brightly shines on you; and my friend, as a scholar and a sage, knows that happy is the man on whom the royal favour is turned; and withered the wretch from whom it is averted."

Here I began to look very impatient; but catching the *faqīr's* eye which twinkled, as much as to say, "all this is a part of my business, be patient," I waited, while he went on. "But the *Sāhib* is wise, and knows the truth of all this; his servant will, therefore, explain that it is the Māharājah's orders that Colonel Bellasis should travel to Lāhor by way of Ludiāna, Wadni, and Firozpūr. It is many years since his Highness has visited the south bank of the

Sutlej; he is therefore desirous of sending a trusty servant who *can* observe and *will* faithfully report the state of affairs. You are desired to keep a journal and to note every occurrence, and, above all, to mark the state of the different forts belonging to the lieges, whether they are in a defensive condition, and especially whether any have been added to, or are now in progress of addition, in which latter case you are positively to forbid the measure, and to bring the owner to the presence."

I was thunderstruck; the order in itself was no very vexatious one, and to many would have been a boon; but I did not like the kind of duty, and had made my arrangements for a month's holiday; so I looked black. The *faqīr*, observing my countenance, glanced at me expressively, and remarked, "I thought it would be so, *Sāhib*, that you would not have words to express your gratitude. The Māharājah is reposing, we may retire; if you will leave the tent, I will follow as soon as I can collect my papers."

I rose, and walked off, and was not well out of the tent when I heard Runjīt turn round and

chuckle something to the Secretary, who shortly followed me. I did not conceal from him my annoyance; but the old man, taking me by the arm, replied, "Be patient, *Sāhib*, it is all for your good; the duty is a pleasant and may be a very profitable one, and will keep the royal eye on you."

"It is a work, however, that I do not mean to undertake," I replied moodily.

The *faqīr* was aghast. "The *Sāhib* is not mad?—he does not drink, or I should suppose him intoxicated."

I laughed, and replied, "Truly, *Hakimjī*, you try my patience; here have I made all my arrangements for one route, and you send me by another double as long: how am I to take my wife? and shall I not be considered a spy by the English?"

"Why, *Sāhib*, I have arranged for the lady, and have detained your boats, which can take her comfortably to Firozpūr; and for yourself, did you not tell me you had an invitation to Ludiāna?"

"Thanks for the boats, my good friend, and you are right as to my invitation to Ludiāna;

but how is that to frank me to Wadni, and into the old castle at Firozpūr? Why, *faqīr Sāhib*, the two old women will use spells against me, and *jādū-kur* me,[1] unless indeed Captain Wade has me seized as a spy."

"The *Sāhib* is not afraid;" and the old man looked queerly at me.

"No, *faqīrjī*, I am not; but it is one thing to be a spy, another to be a soldier; I am willing to take my chance of being shot, but I have no desire to be hanged."

"You *Sāhib-log* are a strange race; there is not a *Surdār* from Atar Singh, or Lena Singh Majetia, downwards, that would not jump at your mission; and here you object, as if you were offered an injury."

"Offer it then to them. I have no fancy for prying into other men's halls."

Azīzūdīn understood his work: like a skilful angler, he gave me leave to exhaust my pettishness, and then, when I paused, gently drew towards me, half reasoning, half flattering. I saw his game, and felt more than once inclined to turn restive upon him, but in the end he talked

[1] Bewitch, use spells.

me over, so that I consented to let Māhtāb go by water to Firozpūr under a suitable escort, and agreed to make a rapid stretch round my destined course, so as to meet her in time at the rendezvous. The *faqīr* had *purwānahs* ready for me, desiring all *Surdārs*, *Jagīrdārs*, *Thanadārs*, and others exercising authority, or enjoying the Lāhor protection, to obey all orders given by the excellent Colonel Bellasis; to throw open their castles and towers to him, to provide him with suitable escort, and all else that he might demand.

Before noon, the next day, I had embarked my wife; and, mounting a good stout roadster, within the hour I had reached the ancient town of Chamkour, famed for its defence in the olden times against the Delhi throne. Here I took a glance at the ancient *kila*, moralized after the usual fashion of travellers; and, changing my hack for my good steed Chānda, rode him at a rattling rate to Machiwāla, likewise an old place, and one still thriving. Here I had another fresh horse, and, before the sun was well down, was at the hospitable board of my friend —— at Ludiāna, who, to enable him to entertain me, had

got permission to go in advance of his regiment, and himself accompanied me in my pleasant ride. It was almost all in the *khādir* of the Sutlej, and in the rainy season would have been a wet scamper; but now our ride was over a green and pleasantly varied country, the path being sometimes above, sometimes below, the high bank of the river.

At Ludiāna I stayed but one day, and therefore was unable to examine it as minutely as I wished. I had time, however, to perceive that the fort does no credit to its architect; and that the new town has a forced and mushroom aspect; hundreds, if not thousands, of shops being empty, and many, with fair and smooth fronts, being roofless. The roads are bad and dirty; a moiety of the inhabitants are Kāshmirians, a filthy, noisy, idle, and litigious race. One bazār is fine and broad, the others are narrow and poor, much as in other native towns, except that they are more straight and regular.

Early the second morning, I shook my kind host by the hand; and, turning south-west, cantered across the country to Jagrāon, a large and neat town of considerable trade, and in the middle of

a rich tract of country, belonging to Fatteh Singh Aluwāla. This chief, not long before, had been discontented and even in rebellion; on which account Runjīt Singh was now jealous of his movements, and desired especially that I should thoroughly observe and report on what was the condition and spirit of his extensive estates south of the Sutlej, giving him as they did such opportunity of intrigue.

I found Jagrāon a very neat and thriving place; well walled against a cavalry inroad; with a citadel, admirably suited to the times for which it was built, and, even now, imposing. Here I halted two days, to allow my horses and servants to come up, and to make such inquiries as I should deem requisite. I was treated with every respect and attention by the authorities, and during my stay picked up a good deal of information. I was astonished at the extent and value of the Aluwāla territory in this quarter, spreading like a net from the Mamdot border to the Jumna, and commanding the several roads into Hindūstān.

I then made a morning's ride to Wadni, and found there a rather extensive fort, built of burnt

brick, in good order; it was interesting to me from the sad and varied fortune of its nominal owner, Sada Konwar, Runjīt Singh's mother-in-law, and the maker of his fortunes, who then was, and had long been, a prisoner. From Wadni I nearly retraced my steps, turning north, and, giving Jagrāon a wide berth to my right, I rode across the open plain to Dhāramkot, a royal demesne, with a small half-mud, half-brick fort, of no strength, but with a considerable, though dishevelled town attached.

Here again I halted a day, and, to the horror of the grain-dealers, witnessed the opening of two grain-pits. These deposits are made in seasons of plenty; the pits being dug in any high, dry spot, filled, and covered over, and sometimes left untouched for years; when opened, the local authorities get a fourth, and the owner generally sells the remainder at such enhanced price as amply repays him for the original outlay, with interest and expenses. These deposits are the great resource of the country against famine, and but for the arbitrary and heavy exactions above noted, which eventually fall on the consumer, would be more numerous, and do much

to relieve the plague of hunger which periodically depopulates the border, as it does many parts of Hindūstān. The owners and authorities in this instance were not a little astonished that, bearing a royal order for free quarters, I neither asked for anything, nor seemed to expect a fee of any kind; the first fright therefore of those interested being over, I was overwhelmed with politeness.

Two hours before daylight the second day, I started with the moon. At seven miles on my right was Isa-Khān-ki-kot, a small walled town, of very bad fame, belonging to the Aluwāla chief. By the light of the moon, I rode through, and with some difficulty across the town; for, its limits being contracted, it is more than usually crowded. I then dismounted, and climbed the rampart, which is only a wall of five feet thickness, with a breastwork on it of scarce a foot, and may be taken as an average of the defences of walled towns on the border. The entrance gateway is large and imposing, and has rooms offering some accommodation above, from the roof of which must be an extensive view; enabling the marauders, who receive shelter

within the walls, and harass the neighbourhood by their predatory incursions, to see the coming traveller, and to make their arrangements for meeting him.

Half an hour of daylight remained, when I was again in my saddle, and cantering along with a single orderly. About a *kōs* from Isa-Khān-ki-kot I saw some persons lying almost naked on the bare ground, in four groups, each of two or three persons; and, beside each, some glittering substances, like small fish. The noise of our horses' hoofs roused one of the sleepers, but he did not speak. I hailed him as to who or what he was.

"Bohuryas, my lord."

"What are you doing here?"

"Hunting, please your excellency; here is our *shikār*."[1]

"*Shikār!* what *shikār?*—and what are those shining things by your side?"

"Our *shikār, Sāhib*—they are *sandas;*" and at my bidding he brought me two large disgusting-looking creatures, in shape and features like

[1] Game.

lizards,[1] but as large as rats, several hundred of which were lying by the men, each of whom, except the speaker, had his wife and children with him. The *sandas* are, I believe, the same reptile that in South America and in the Dakhan is pretty freely eaten; and is known to Englishmen as the Guana. My curiosity was excited at the heaps that lay around, so I asked the *sowār* who was with me, "Do *you* eat them? and do others?"

"*They* do, but Hindūs and Mahomedans do not," replied my orderly.

"They'll be bad before they can be eaten," I observed.

The Bohurya grinned. "They are not dead,

[1] According to Sir W. Jones, lizards formed part of the food of the Arabs. "That a race of men, *Tazis* or *Kourseas*, as the Persians call them, who drank the milk of camels, and fed on lizards, should entertain a thought of subduing the kingdom of Feridun, was considered by the general of Yeozdegird's army as the strongest instance of fortune's levity and instability."—*Asiatic Researches*, vol. ii. p. 16.

Fishes and other aquatic animals, without scales, are considered unclean in the East, as they also are considered in the law of Moses.

Sāhib," and he gave one a nudge to make it stir; the poor reptiles must, therefore, have been half killed, and left to linger to preserve them untainted till required. I was reflecting on the cruelty of man, looking in wonder on the whole scene before me, and thinking on the wretched lot of the hunters, and of the mothers and children lying, almost without clothing, on the bare ground beside the men. The Bohurya, however, who had been addressing me, appeared to have no companions; he had his whole heap of living matter to himself. The day was just dawning, and while I was thus cogitating, I saw the Bohurya questioning my attendant, and heard him repeat "Bellasis." I threw him a rupee, and cantered on, but had not gone a hundred yards until we were stopped by the loud cries of the Bohurya, who came rushing breathlessly up as we slackened our pace. "Will the *Sāhib* forgive his slave?"

"Forgive what? don't tease me, I have no time for foolery."

"The *Sāhib* does not recollect his slave; but may I speak? and shall I be pardoned?"

"As far as I am concerned, if you slew my

brother. But be quick; see, my horse is impatient."

"Enough—your slave is Azim Bohurya; the *Sāhib* will recollect he honoured me with his notice at the trial."

"Ah, what brings you here? But I have no time now; follow me to Firozpūr, and here," pitching him another rupee, "is an earnest of your safety." Saying this I touched my horse's flank and pushed on, but turning round perceived the poor wretch with both hands to his head, placing it repeatedly on the ground. Before sunrise I was at Jhira, a large town, a little to the left of the road; it has a mud fort very much in decay. I here merely changed horses, and spoke for a few minutes to the Thānadār. The place, with some adjoining territory, is a *jāgīr* of Kowr Sher Singh's, in consequence of which the Thānadār and his subordinates were inclined to take some airs, but I put them down instantly, and ordered the former to attend me to Firozpūr.

The country shortly beyond this assumed a much wilder and more uncultivated aspect. Around me the lands were bare, but far on my

right I could see heavy coarse grass, and on my left a forest of small jungle and underwood. At three miles from Jhira we passed Mehrsingwāla, and then entered a forest of small trees, many of them little more than underwood; one kind (the *Jhand*) is of the *Bābūl* (Mimosa) species, but of inferior quality; the rest, the *Bhan* and *Kariel*, are hardly fit for firewood, and useful for nothing else. This forest lasted with little interruption till we passed the small fort and village of Kūl, and the village of Shersingwāla on our right, when we entered on a wide, open plain, generally quite bare, but with occasional patches of grass; the plain is cut transversely by a deep, narrow, canal-like *nalah*, which, in its windings, we had more than once to cross. As we entered this plain, we could, at a distance of eight miles, perceive the towers of Firozpūr.

The day was yet early, and the air was cool; I therefore rode leisurely across the plain, and was surprised at the absence of all cultivation, though, here and there, was the appearance of old wells, with relics of little towers attached to each ruin; they and their wells were equally dilapidated.

The Rānī sent as a deputation to give me the *istakbāl*,[1] her adopted son and the Master of her Horse, neither of them very taking-looking fellows: and their followers, a very tag-rag set, more like bandits than followers of a Queen. I was shown to a neat little *bāradāri*[2] in a newly laid-out garden, north of the town, close to a tank, which the Rānī was then excavating, to leave in memory of herself and husband, as they had no children.

Before I had well finished my breakfast, I observed a nearly naked, spare, sinewy man, coming at an easy swinging pace up to the *bāradāri*. I at once recognised the Bohurya, and gave orders for his entertainment. In the afternoon, not feeling disposed for any employment, I summoned my new retainer, and from his own lips gathered a tale that may take its place here, as a fresh illustration of the land of my sojournings.

[1] Meeting, a deputation sent to meet an honoured guest, and escort him to his destination.

[2] Literally, twelve doors. Applied to a garden-house, which is generally a square, with three doorways on each side.

THE BOHURYA'S TALE.

"Where I was born, or who was my father, is more than I can tell the *Sāhib Bahādur;* but my earliest recollections are of the neighbourhood of Delhi, when the party with which I dwelt hovered around the tombs of the old city during the day, and at night entered into the *faringī* cantonment, or gleaned what they could from the townsfolk. At times we got rich booty, and again we would be for months without success; living on such vermin as you saw me, *Sāhib*, collecting last night. My father, or rather my owner, for he did not conceal from me that no blood of his ran in my veins, was the leader of the band. Bhutenda I understood to be their head-quarters, and all large towns and cantonments their haunts; our harvest was a double one—we were thief-catchers as well as thieves; our kinsmen were the *Chokidārs*[1] in many of the wealthiest houses of the territory, and our hardiest and expertest hands were trackers, employed by the magistrates, kotwāls, and their subordinates.

[1] Watchmen.

" Ah, *Sāhib!* it makes me laugh even at this day, when I think of the funny pranks we played, and of how we managed the police. I will tell you one of them, as it will interest you more than to hear that we starved to-day, feasted to-morrow, that I was thrashed and fostered at the will of one who used me very much as he did his tātu, and would have cut my throat when useless, as readily as he would that of his broken-down quadruped. Sungtia was my foster-father's name. He was a spare, small man, apparently worn out, but possessed of immense powers of endurance; between dawn and starlight I have dragged myself forty *kōs* at his heels. I hated him—how could I else? but his genius commanded me. He was indeed a noble robber, a profound deceiver, a most skilful tracker; the genius by which he managed to deceive his own pursuers enabled him to detect the futile attempts at concealment of those against whom he was employed; and little as he cared for any one living, and difficult as it would have been to ascertain what he loved, what his object in life was, still he had the point of honour that forbade him, unless for a decided object, to betray, or

to assist in convicting those of his own tribe. Gūjar, Jāt, Mewāttī, and Rāngur, however, and all the other host of marauders, were fair *shikār* for Sungtia Bohurya, and all came just as kindly to his net. But to my anecdote.

"In a certain suburb of Delhi lived an old Pathān family: they were poor but respectable; chance threw Sungtia into their company, and made him useful; they were grateful, as much so as a proud Moslem could be to one he considered more impure than a Christian, worse than a Hindū. Sungtia was, in his way, proud; the pride of talent and of energy distended his meagre and stunted person, as did his Afghān blood the goodly form of Rustām Khān. In one of his visits, the Bohurya caught a glance of the daughter of his host, was smitten, and at another time was detected attempting an interview; he was beaten with shoes from the premises, and warned of a worse fate if he again trespassed. 'When I again enter, your shoes shall be put to another purpose;' was his cool and taunting reply, as Sungtia hurried into the street.

"My father (so I call him) was wary; slowly and surely he worked; he had an able coadjutor

in the magistrate, who loved forms more than realities—law more than justice; indeed, had not such a *gharib parwāi*[1] been in office, how could poor Bohuryas have existed? Sungtia had long had his eye on a certain wealthy banker in the Chāndni Chouk;[2] he wanted a few of his money-bags, but now he cared less for the treasure than for revenge; in fact, he was resolved to plunder the dwelling, and fix the outrage on Rustām Khān. A night was settled on for our gang to do the job; it was a dark stormy one, no star was visible. We had already prepared our measures, by burying a bag of rupees in a corner of the Pathān's dwelling, through the instrumentality of his *Chokidār*, who was a Bohurya, though he passed as a Mewātti.

"We had seventy men that night employed; two small parties, each of a dozen of our boldest comrades, covered the approaches to the two nearest *thānah* stations; a string of thirty men completely cut off our victim's dwelling from neighbourly assistance, or from any chance aid; some few stout raw hands were kept as carriers; and six expert and experienced leaders entered

[1] Protector of the poor. [2] The Regent Street of Delhi.

the dwelling, the door of which they found ready open, and the two *Barkandāzes*, who should have watched, in a heavy sleep on the ground, caused by a drugged potion administered by an ally within. Our friends proceeded direct to the *zenānā* roof, where the old banker slept, seized him, and, on peril of his life, forbade him to utter a word, or do more than show the spot in which that day jewels to the amount of eleven thousand rupees had been deposited, and cash to a somewhat greater amount. The old man refused, swore he was poor, and had nothing but his cooking-utensils in the house, to which *his friends* were welcome. My father gave the signal to put a chilli[1] bag over the banker's head; one instant it was applied in spite of the victim's struggles; and being removed, he was asked if he would now show his hoards? The big drops of agony falling from his brow, the old man told his tormentors to follow him, showed them the treasure, which was seized,

[1] Chilli is the pod from which red pepper (*Kyan*) is made; a bag of chillies hung over their victim's heads was the Mahrātta favourite mode of extracting treasure. The fashion is not unknown to other ruffians.

and in less time than I have taken to describe the occurrence, the box was emptied, and the despoilers had separated into different parties; not meeting again until they reached an old tomb agreed upon.

"My father, however, never left the town; he and two or three others had, by a circuitous route, gained the hovel in which they resided before the lazy *thānadār* was roused, and, in compliance with the banker's desire, was endeavouring to trace the course of the spoilers. 'Oh, we shall make nothing of these various tracks, Chand Rām,' said the head policeman to his subordinate; 'we must have Sungtia Bohurya.'—As desired, Chand Rām went for my father as he had often before done, and found him in a heavy sleep, and in no good humour at being disturbed. When, however, he was well awakened, and told the value of the prize, and therefore the probable amount of the salvage, or at least of the reward, his professional pride and avarice seemed excited, and, calling to his fellows loudly, he told them to be up and stirring, for there was good *shikār* on foot.

"They accompanied the police, and affecting

for a time to beat about the premises, and to go first one way and then another, they at last followed with but little hesitation the well defined tracks of four pair of feet; and well they might, for the shoes had been abstracted, and placed on men as nearly as possible filling them, during the early part of the night; and been thus used to make prints right up to the Pathān's house, into the threshold of which they were then thrown. But I see, *Sāhib*, that I am becoming tiresome, so it may be enough to say that we not only gained a large booty, and were never so much as suspected of the robbery; but that we had the pleasure of seeing the proud old Moslem and his gay sons rattling their chains as they pounded *kunkar*[1] on the high road.

"It was a favourite recreation of my respected father's to mount his pony, and go and look at the *kydees*[2] as they were at work, and congratulate his old friend on the comfortable berth he had procured him. We thus picked

[1] Limestone, or rather lime *clay*, almost as hard as stone, used for metalling roads.

[2] Prisoners, usually employed in gangs to labour on the roads, or at other public works.

up many useful acquaintances; and were able to do them numerous good offices, and could at any time effect the release of our friends, either by watching opportunities to help them to loosen their fetters, or by directly bribing their guard to let the prisoners escape, or even to desert with them. I was but a boy in those times, my lord, and, as I have said, was not always over daintily treated, but still there was an excitement in the work that I enjoyed. Evil days however came on our gang; success had made us rash; we neglected the arts by which we had risen, and soon paid the forfeit.

"Our boldness had excited attention; our old coadjutor the magistrate was promoted to a judge; the new one turned out the Kotwāl and his crew, but that was of little consequence; we were soon as intimate with the new police as with the old, and it was our own imprudence and treachery in our camp that caused our downfall.

"The citizens of Delhi, finding that the police would not take care of them, set themselves more actively to take care of themselves, and began to be more cautious as to the persons they

employed as *chokidārs*. In short, my father's time was come, his web was spun, and the old man was killed in a night-attack on a house whose inmates had got information of our intention.

"Without an able leader, we soon lost credit with the police, and even ceased to rely on each other, as it was clear there was a spy in the band; we therefore separated; I with two or three others came northwards, and have since generally kept to the banks of the Sutlej; until, shortly before the accident that unfortunately befel the *Sāhib*, I was induced to cross the river, and join the band that undertook to destroy my lord. He knows the rest: why should the slave then dilate further than to show how he is now in the presence?

"The circumstances were thus: when old Dundāwar Singh resumed his charge at Kāngrā, he was astonished to find several score of prisoners kept at the public expense. Saving my lord's presence, he laughed at the *fāringī* fashion, and ordered us all to be turned adrift, on payment of fines proportionate to our means, or rather to our ostensible means, desiring that all who could not or would not pay should be ham-

strung. I was poor, and seemed poorer, but I paid down twenty-five *nānakshahies*, and am now at the *Sāhib's* service, as ready and bold a hand, though I say it, as any on the border; whether it be to hunt man and beast, or to endure hunger and fatigue. Of the latter qualification the *Sāhib* has this day had a specimen; and in the long chase we gave Aliverdi Khān there was surely proof of endurance, and even of ability. The *Sāhib* looks suspicious, but his slave can be honest, if it is worth his while to be so, and he feels no greater ambition than to obey the bold Colonel Bellasis."

Such was the wretch's statement, when separated from much of its irrelevant matter. I did, as the fellow remarked, look doubtingly upon him; but after some reflection I desired him to be *hāzīr*, feeling that I might want such bloodhounds. I therefore ordered that he should be clothed and fed, and told him that he should receive four rupees a month for food; and as he worked, should be rewarded.

CHAPTER XVIII.

Bellasis turns over some more leaves in the volume of human life; ventures to prose a little; draws a picture that some will think unnatural—Prosperity does not always contribute to happiness.

And now, having sketched the Bohurya, I will try to give some notion of the country and institutions of which he, and the many who resemble him, are the offspring. The little principality of Firozpor, in which I now found myself, is a fair specimen of the Sikh and border system, and I will enter into some details of a territory that is now familiar to the Company's servants, in order to give an idea of other Sikh States, little known to Europeans. The nominal extent of the old Rānī's kingdom was a hundred square miles, but not one-tenth of that land was in the undisputed possession of Luchman Kowr;

indeed the townlands alone could be called her's, and were cultivated by families living within the town, and crowded even into the ditch of the fort. The town, therefore, though of great antiquity, was at the time I visited it little more than an assemblage of Zamindārs' huts, mixed up with a few Bunya's shops, and overhung by an old crumbling fortress, crammed to the throat with dogs, filth, and old women.

I paid my respects to the Rānī, and found her very conversable, addressing me though she did from behind a thick hood thrown over her face. She told me she was a friend of the Māharājah's, but that her territory rejoiced in the British protection; her subjects, she said, were rebellious and idle, more apt to fight than to pay their dues, and, being all Mahomedans, paid but little respect to a woman and a Sikhni; they had broken her husband's heart, and in her absence they had admitted the enemy into the fortress, and, but for the British, would have deprived her of her right.

"They have ever been a rebellious race," continued the old lady, "and are not the subjects for a woman's rule; would that I had half

the lands in my own country, on the pleasant and peaceful banks of Jumna!" [1] The old lady, finding I listened, was rather more diffuse in her narrations and complaints than I need here be; suffice it that I paid her the more respect, because I did not hear, either at Firozpor or on my road, of any of the abominations occurring under her rule that were so common else-

[1] Luchman Kowr might well prefer the banks of Jumnā to those of the Sutlej. Her father's estate of Buria and Jagādrī, on the Jumnā, is one of the finest in the protected Sikh states. The bamboo fence, better than an embattled wall, around Jagādrī, is alone well worthy of the traveller's visit. As proof that the Sikhs were not all and always barbarians, I may say that Luchman Kowr's father, fifty years ago, found Jagādrī a mean village, and left it at his death a commercial city of considerable consequence. His bamboo fence protected the inhabitants from sudden inroads, and his character gave confidence to settlers against oppression. He made some few rude laws and enforced them; one was for the preservation of the bamboo fence; the penalty against cutting a single branch being the splitting of the offender's finger. The plantation accordingly soon became a thick jungle, so thick that it was impervious to all, but beasts of prey who shared its haunts with the wild peacock: a tiger has been known to take refuge within it. But in those days the country around was a grass jungle: it is now for miles in every direction one broad sheet of cultivation, and of splendid mangoe groves.

where; for whether it was as a woman, or as a stranger and of a different religion, among a wild and high-spirited people, she ruled with moderation, and seemed to be more respected than those who received more lip-service.[1]

I ascended the roof of Luchman Kowr's palace, if a couple of little rooms, each about fifteen feet by nine, and as many high, may be so called; and from the top had a good view of the surrounding country, of its desolation, of its endless bare plain, varied only by few and single trees, and by fewer and wretched village sites, which at large intervals covered rather than ornamented the country. The watch-towers already mentioned were the most striking points in the landscape, and gave fearful proof of the insecurity of all around. Far in the distance, south-west, the towers of Mumdot were just perceptible; the only other object of note was the Kot of Dulchi, a large Dogar village, two miles north

[1] Let me not by this be thought that I advocate the system. The Sikh states suffer too much by female rule, for any one who has witnessed its consequences to do other than reprobate the system. For one Luchman Kowr that may be found, we will meet a hundred Empress Catharines.

of the town of Firozpor; its inhabitants, nominally dependant, were always in rebellion against the Rānī's authority, as they had ever been against every ruler.

Many of these rude people, whose clan forms the majority of the Firozpor population, were hanging about the outer Court of the Rānī's dwelling while I was there. Their appearance struck me; their immense noses and large, strongly-marked features, their spare but athletic frames, and their bold independent bearing, all brought to my mind legends of the gallant deeds of their reputed ancestors, the Chohāns of Delhi.

There was an air of poverty and of squalidness all around Firozpor; scarcely a thriving shop in the town, and not one acre in thirty of the land under cultivation; the inhabitants seeming to prefer waiting on Providence, doing anything but work, and following any pursuit but that of industry. And yet there was a something in the place that interested me, and there was much in the old Rānī's situation that excited my best sympathies.

Towards evening I pursued my way to the

ghāt of Bāraki, five miles from the town. The first kōs ran nearly north, over high and tolerably cultivated lands, with good crops of wheat and barley on them, but without any fixed road or path between the fields; my way then inclined to the west for a mile, over a coarse grassy *Kādir* country, and then in the same direction for two miles, over a deep, heavy sand. On the first part of my journey from the town, I met large flocks of cattle moving in to the walled enclosure, for protection during the night; the cows and oxen seemed very much more numerous than the population, and the sheep and goats scarcely less so. As I now approached the ferry, I beheld with pleasure my own flag waving over my wife's boat, safely moored beside ten or twelve passage-boats.

I found Māhtāb well and comfortable; she had been five days making the voyage from Ruper, including one whole day she halted at Tihāra, to visit again the scenes of our upward voyage. The weather had been unsettled, and the river had very much fallen during our stay at Ruper, but there was still ample water for her boats, and, unused as she was to such con-

veyance, she found the trip as comfortable a one as loving wife could do in her husband's absence. We halted for a day at Bārāki Ghāt, for the double purpose of enabling me to make out my report for the Māharājah, and to observe the nature of the ferry and the extent of traffic that passed it.

The village of Bārāki is a large Dogar settlement, divided into three hamlets, called Chyneki, Syteki, and Bārāki Khās; they are situated at intervals of about half a mile from one another, but the lands of all are in common. Five thousand acres may be the area, half in the *Kādir*, half in the high ground; the latter portion has six or eight wells, around each of which a few acres are cultivated, and perhaps five hundred acres of the low land may be loosely so; but no care or labour is expended, the ground being merely scratched up, and the seed then thrown in to take its chance; the produce consequently is seldom above ten or twelve maunds, when it might be twenty or even thirty, and no such thing is known as raising a second crop in the year on the same ground.

The population of the three hamlets may be

five hundred Dogars, Māchis, and Mallahs; the latter, as their name denotes, are boatmen: they also fish, one division of them with nets, another only with hooks. The Māchis are more agricultural and domestic, working as servants, cooks, and labourers. The lordly Dogars, who form the majority, sit, smoke, sleep, and talk during the day, under the half dozen meagre Barkain trees that adorn their villages, and sally out at night to avenge their real or fancied wrongs, to carry off their neighbours' cattle, or to recover their own. They of course lose as much as they gain by such practices, for the trackers of the country are expert, and for one cow or buffalo that they steal they are liable in retaliation to lose a flock. They are the village *māliks*[1] in the Firozpor territory, and for some miles along the river on either side, and eke out their means by their hereditary right to a third of the village produce, and by the *ghi* and milk from their large flocks. But, as I have said, their loved pursuit is plunder, even though they must know it is little productive. They follow it, I presume, for its excitement, and are known to

[1] Masters, lords.

undergo more danger and fatigue in their unlawful enterprises than in more legitimate pursuits would gain them a fair competence.

Their common weapon is the sword and shield, and in their raids they are generally accompanied by another class whom I omitted before to mention, I mean the scavengers of the village, here called *chulāhs*, and elsewhere known as *hulālkhor*,[1] *khākrob*,[2] *&c.*, and all over India employed as guides, watchmen, and carriers. In this part of the country, they are a peculiarly hardy and bold race. They profess no particular religion, pursuing at an humble distance the rites of the Mūsalmān, Hindū, or Sikh, according to the leading tenets of the village they inhabit, or rather of the suburb they are permitted to defile. They are to all intents slaves here; and indeed, throughout India, they are the property of the village or of the liege lord, just as so many cattle; are scarcely better cared for, and much worse thought of; their only safeguard being the facility with which they can move to

[1] One to whom all food is lawful, that is, one of the lowest tribe.

[2] Sweeper.

a neighbouring or hostile territory, in which case their secession or abduction is looked on quite in the light of so many head of oxen being stolen. As I passed by more than one place in my late ride, I found the inhabitants warm on the loss, by such means, of a portion of their "hereditary bondsmen."

Strange as it may appear, under such nurture, scantily fed and clothed, and from infancy looked on and treated as vermin, these people (Chulāhs) are hardy, bold, and enterprising; like wolves, they are from childhood put in a defensive position; if they are starved by their village masters, they must, in self-defence, steal with them or from them, plunder the crop they are set to watch, or live jollily on the enemy in their excursions with their masters, who in their raids seldom touch grain, or eatables, or indeed anything, but cattle and coin.

The Chulāh weapon is a light, short spear, or more frequently a heavy, iron-headed *lāthi*; the latter, though formidable in appearance, is really less effective than a lighter and more handy stick, being top-heavy and requiring great strength to wield it with effect.

But I have quite run away from the *ghāt* to the Bārāki locations, which are about a mile and a half from it. The ferry is just below the termination of a newly-formed island, five miles long, and averaging half a mile broad; this island is covered with high rank grass, and is frequented by tigers, who feed upon hog-deer, and on the cattle driven there from both sides for pasturage. The ferry at this time (early in November) was three hundred yards wide, but in the rainy season the stream is not less than two miles broad, and runs with a force of not less than five miles an hour; it is now sluggish. The passage to and fro in the rains does not take less than six hours; now half an hour is sufficient.

Bārāki had been wrested from the Firozpor estate; its ruler therefore lost the valuable transit duties, which are now divided or contested by the Kasūr and the Khye chiefs. The right of the latter I cannot understand, as no part of his territory here touches the river, the village of Bārāki having been seized by the Khān of Mumdot: however, such is the case at present, and a valuable perquisite it is, to be able to levy from five annas to as many rupees on every

camel-load passing; cloths, *pāshmināhs*, and groceries pay the higher rates, grain the lower; every different article paying a distinct duty.

This *ghāt* is still a considerable thoroughfare, but it labours under several disadvantages, not the least being the heavy drag of deep sand for two miles on the Firozpor side. Many an inroad has been made at this passage, where, by keeping near the island, or at a point just below, a bold cavalry will, for three months in the year, find no difficulty in crossing, as the cattle-stealers indeed do throughout the year. Pāk Patan, however, about one hundred and twenty miles below by the river, was the great thoroughfare of the older invaders of India, as Hurriki, thirty miles above, has been of later times; the latter is now the chief mercantile passage, employing from twenty to thirty flat-bottomed boats, being three times the number in use at Bārāki.

But my reader may be as tired as was my wife at this tirade on robbers, and on their haunts and routes. She begged me more than once to lay down my pen and talk to her, but I put on one of my winning smiles, and told her I

was writing of her, of what a good little wife she is, and how she is already able to act as my secretary, and is better to me than a *Mohāfiz-duftar*.[1] She smiled a real sunny smile, and told me not to banter my little wife: but I was, and told her I was, quite in earnest. As evening approached, we ascended the choppered roof of our boat, on the top of which had been prepared, by the old *faqīr's* care, a nice platform of planks with a surrounding railing. There we sat for hours, *eating* the fresh breezes of evening, watching the sun touching the horizon, and then counting star after star as it arose; the names of many were not unknown to Māhtāb, and I loved to teach her the little I knew, and explain how they are applied by Europeans to solve so many interesting questions of our own limited sphere. The dear creature would press closer to me and say, "And shall we, my own husband, inhabit one of those bright spots together—shall we there know no cares, no fear?"

"Perhaps so, darling," said I, as I drew her closer up to me, "but it matters little for the locality; if through Him in whom we believe we

[1] Keeper of the Records.

are received into his own abode, we know that we shall have perfect peace, purity, and love; will not that be happiness?"

"Yes, my husband; and when we are harassed by parting, and the fear of it, I love to think of Heaven, and of that blessed assurance in the book you taught me—'they shall go no more out thence.'" She looked upwards, and then said, "I try not to let distrust and fear darken our present happiness, but I cannot always banish the foreboding that tells me I must soon leave you. Oh, how I have dwelt on the thought of having your child laid in my bosom, of first hearing its voice—of showing it to you!"

"And so it will be, I trust, dearest; why should it not?"

"I know not why; I suppose it is only bodily weakness that depresses me."

"Try, my own Māhtāb, to trust in the most Merciful, that all will be well!"

"Yes, dearest, all will be *well*, I know, whatever the result. Without this assurance, could I keep my senses for a day, when I think of the peril and anguish that await me? Does not our

book call this hope 'the anchor of the soul?'" And her lovely face beamed with faith and love. She then added more composedly, "A short time will now realize my fears or disperse them; and in the mean time, my love, my *life*, let us be together; only let us be *together*, and my human fears will not then, I hope, interfere with my heavenly trust."

There was a piteousness in the tones of Māhtāb, but there was more of love and devotion in her sweet face than even her words expressed. I kissed away her tears, bade her be comforted, and told her that, whatever should separate us, it would not be of my seeking, or without her consent. Thus did we talk, and while away the time; the bright smile again came to her brow, and she bade me tell of my own land, of my own people: "I am but a foolish girl, and cannot help that these weak thoughts should come over me; now that I have so much to live for, so much to love, it relieves my heart to tell you all; and oh, perhaps it may be so, that quieter times may come, and that we may live to see your home, and that your sisters will receive the wild mountain girl."

"That they will, my Māhtāb, and be proud to do so; if they would not, they should be no sisters of mine;" and then I would tell her of that home I had left as a boy, that I had returned to as a man, just to see it before it became desolate, its members all scattered with new ties, new cares, the head of it in the dust; the mother still the centre of her scattered family, with her children's children in every quarter, but yet a lonely, almost a desolate being. Yes, what is life, its gains and pleasures? we bring up our children, pray that they may be spared to us—for what? to leave us before we are well become acquainted, and to be consequently strangers to us for life; looking on father and mother, not as loved friends, but as persons to pay their way, and to load light remittances with heavy advice.

I did not trouble Māhtāb with all these profound reflections, but in intervals of silence my thoughts involuntarily took such turn; and what is uppermost will out, so, gentle reader, you must be the victim.

The night was well worn before we left the roof of our boat; and I was scarcely asleep

before I was somewhat rudely disturbed by a special messenger from the Māharājah. Accustomed to such molestation, I took the despatch, and, placing it under my pillow, again turned myself to rest; but I was not to be so let off, and for a time was kept awake by the repeated and surly applications of the Bhāya for an answer. I desired that he should be patient, go to sleep as I was doing, and that in the morning he should receive his orders. The fellow was loud and saucy, and I could hear him tell my *peshkhidmut* that he was not used to deliver his credentials to servants, and that he would not put up with the *faringī* airs, even though I might be a favourite. I affected only to know that the man wanted an answer, and called out good-humouredly, "Give him a good *khāna*,[1] some liquor, and a comfortable *chārpāī*, and he'll be in a better humour in the morning." The soft word had the usual effect: "*Salām, Sāhib*," in dulcet tones was the reply, and once more I turned round to sleep.

Betimes I was stirring, and what was my surprise on opening the despatch to read, "The

[1] Feed.

khāirkhwāhī[1] of the good Bellasis has not been unobserved, the royal tongue acknowledges it, and it is registered in the archives of the state: under his Highness's rule, worth never goes unrewarded; and it is his pleasure to honour those who have been obedient and faithful; and who has been more so than the wise and valiant *Sāhib* now addressed?"

What comes next? thought I, surely some mischief, after all this palaver; and I continued to read. "Hasten to Lāhor to report; the royal camp will reach the capital on the 20th November, when his Highness will expect an account of your proceedings; and purposes then to invest you with a *khilat* of General, and the command of seven thousand men, at the head of whom you will proceed into the Derajāt, and arrange the whole border from Mūltān to Peshāwar. The frontier is at all times troublesome, and just now unusually so, which is the reason that you are deputed to tranquillize it. Perfect confidence is placed in you; your powers will be plenary; the governors and Kārdārs of Peshāwar, Attok, Dera Ishmael Khān, and Ghāzī

[1] Good wishes, good service to Government.

Khān, as well as of Mūltān, will be placed under your orders.

"Your head has been exalted; the proudest of the *Surdārs* have long sighed for the appointment, which the Māharājah has hesitated to confer on any but yourself. Be not elated beyond prudence, nor forget the practices that won you favour. The prayers of the subject are blessings to the king, and they can only be obtained through the instrumentality of faithful agents. Know the secret of your promotion, and respect the orders of the Māharājah."

The *purwānah* was in the *faqīr's* handwriting, and bore the Māharājah's sign manual; a cipher slip was enclosed, which, after compliments, was to the following effect:—"The heart of the poor *faqīr* is heavy at the separation from his friend; his thoughts are, however, with the noble Bellasis. My friend, I have talked much with the Māharājah regarding you; he says you are the pearl of the age, the one honest man in his kingdom; I replied, that you were all and more than his Highness believed, and I suggested that Kāshmīr would be a proper place for you.

"'I have thought of it,' replied the Māharājah, 'but the *Rājah* does not think him equal to so difficult a government.' This was said in a significant and under-tone; and then abruptly and more directly addressing me, he said, 'I have it, *faqīr!* He shall be *mālik* of the Western border. Am I not daily pestered with tales of the Murrees, the Kutuks, and the Afridees? Bellasis is a bold fellow, and in truth his pluck shall be tried; tell him, that for every rebel leader's head that he brings in, he shall have a *khilat.* Ah, he is just the man for the work!' and his Highness seemed to enjoy having hit upon so good a project. He then musingly continued,—'But'———(and the name missed my ear, it may however be guessed) 'will be offended; let him! his anger cannot harm me, and will keep Bellasis stirring. Yes, *faqīrjī*, produce your *kulamdān*[1]—write'—and the *purwānah*, as enclosed, was dictated.

"Now, my friend, refuse not the Māharājah's free gift; it is better than a principality to you; it makes you ruler over princes. Bear in mind, I pray you, our conversations at Ruper; put

[1] Inkstand.

away from you all thoughts of abandoning so good a service, so kind a monarch; trust your poor friend and hearty well-wisher, who will not only watch your interests, but be as your own *Vaqīl* at Court. And as for the lady, the honoured Kowr, for a moment I did think she might be a hindrance, but his Highness knew better, and chiding me, remarked, 'She is not a pale face; is she not one of ourselves, though now his wife? and what is to prevent Bellasis taking his *zanāna?*' The Māharājah as usual was right; but it has struck me that you would like to have early notice to enable you to retain your boats, and perhaps send the excellent lady by water to Mithenkot. Your pay is to be the same as Ventura's and Allard's. Hoping for a happy meeting before the expiration of many days, consider me as ever your warm friend. To say more would be needless, and unnecessarily prolong this already lengthy though friendly epistle."

I took the letters to my wife, and explaining the meaning, asked what reply I should give.

"Take the office, my love, it is one of honour, and do not let me be a hindrance to your plans. I

was wrong last evening; don't mind me, dearest; act as if I had no wishes on the subject."

"Like my Māhtāb. But look not sad, my own bird; this scheme, if it separate us for a week or two, will assuredly prevent further and future separation. Can you act the trooper, sweetest? will you ride by my side along the wild Afghān border ?" and I tapped my wife's smooth, sweet face.

"Can I not? and what would I not do that we may be together? and what should I fear while you are my guide and guard ?"

"I am but half in earnest, my own wife, and dream not of parting; but I was thinking that, if I am to be keeper of the border, I should save myself much after-trouble, if I could first, quietly and unknown to all, ride along the whole line; in one month, I should thus hear and see more than would reach me in years of more open investigation."

"Oh yes, let us go," was her reply; "my ambling *ghoont*[1] and my little Arab will carry me without fatigue from one end of the country

[1] Hill pony.

to the other; let us go; I'm sure you wish it, and you will not find me in the way."

"Not willingly, I am sure; but you little know the difficulties, nay, dangers of the route and plan I propose; the berth will be a stirring one."

"If there is to be danger to you, then, indeed, I should be there; for who will care for you, who watch and tend you in the absence of your Māhtāb? and as to a stirring berth, would not any *you* could get be so?"

"We will talk all this over in the evening, but now I must answer these letters, for I hear the Bhāya beginning to grumble;" and so I took out my portfolio, while my wife seated herself on a small rug close to me, to pursue her English studies, and wrote my despatch.

CHAPTER XIX.

Bellasis takes the public into his confidence, and condescends to reason with that mysterious personage—Hints on pathognomy, or the language of signs.

Looking back on what I have written, it strikes me as just possible that, because my adventures are not precisely those which they think one with my assumed title ought to have met with, some people may actually doubt the reality of my acts and writings. But, gentle reader, surely, you must by this time see that I have a way of my own, be it right or wrong, of working out my purposes; and that, although I have neither been authoritative nor as servile as others in my situation have been and would be, it is just possible that an adventurer in the Punjāb may be only a moderate monster, avoiding extremes, and acting up to what he deems right.

But I must answer the royal mandate; accordingly, putting on the robe of prudence and the etceteras of plain-dealing and straightforwardness, I wrote that I had been acting according to my instructions, and that I was prepared with a full report of proceedings, which should be presented at court without delay: and in reference to the Māharājah's intentions regarding the western border, I stated that "I am the servant of the Māharājah; he exalted me, and it was his pleasure to degrade me; but, as I have eaten of the *Surkar's* salt, so am I ready to devote myself to his will, on the terms that the details for carrying out his orders be left entirely to myself. To petition further would be disrespectful."

To Azīzūdīn I wrote, "To the *hakīm* of the age, the wise in *durbār*, the trusty in need, the kind and considerate father. Thy pleasure-giving epistle warmed the heart of thy well-wisher, and caused a ray of gladness to rise on his clouded soul. My friend, as I represented to you, I have no particular wish to remain in the Punjāb; I am still young; I have health and character, with good connexions in my own

land; I was therefore in earnest in stating that but one tie held me to this country. The Māharājah, however, has been kind, and has again exalted me above my expectations; and in you I feel that I have a real friend; my life is therefore again at the disposal of the *Surkār*, and wherever it is his Highness's pleasure to send me, there will I cheerfully go.

"My friend, arrange for me that I shall have good regiments, and efficient commandants; if I have not, it is needless my going; let as many Hindustānīs as possible be sent; and, above all, urge on the Māharājah the necessity of keeping my appointment secret, until such time as, when on the border, I may find it convenient to assume command. Let brigades, as if to strengthen the frontier, be sent under Sheikh Alibuksh, Mehmān Singh, and Dildār Khān, and, by the Māharājah's permission, I will communicate to them my orders. If his Highness has no objection to the scheme, I propose to proceed by water to Mūltān, as if on leave of absence to Bombay for six months; from Mūltān, after having made my inquiries, and then disclosed myself or otherwise arranged with Sewan

Mul, as most expedient, I would wish to ride along the Derajāt border to Peshāwur, arriving there as soon as, if not before, any definite tidings could reach; and thus picking up many honest opinions, and much real information as to the frontier. My friend is aware how difficult it is for a man in authority to hear the truth; how every view comes to him through a distorted medium; and on the contrary how freely every thing is communicated to the poor traveller; how he has nothing to do, but be civil and liberal of his *hookah*,[1] say little, and keep his ears open.

"One other point I have to mention. The Māharājah ordered, in the *purwānah* written by your friendly hand, that I should be assured of a *khilat* for the head of every chief I bring in. His Highness intended, I presume, to be jocose with his servant; but to prevent mistake, tell our common master that, while no exertion shall be spared to put down his enemies, he must expect no such service as he alludes to from me; for in my country, while we are taught to meet the foe manfully, we are equally enjoined to re-

[1] Smoking-pipe.

spect his corpse, and to bind up his wounds; all mutilations therefore are in our eyes barbarous. My friend will explain this point."

All that remained was, to read the letters to my wife, and send them off by the Bhayā. She listened, holding my hand with far more love and devotion as my wedded wife, than she had ever done during the exciting and romantic days when she was my betrothed, and with the same sweet, artless countenance that she showed in childhood, when it was happiness enough to gaze on me, and anticipate my every wish.

It was my desire, as I told the *faqīr*, to reach Mūltān in the guise of a private traveller; I therefore resolved to retain the two boats I had on the river, and merely to run across to Lāhor, receive my credentials, return to the river, and, embarking there, drop down to Mithankot, whence I could easily ascend the Chenāb to Mūltān. Māhtāb begged to accompany me to the capital. "That terrible time you left me at Ruper," she said, "gave me a feeling I never had before. Since being your wife, I had never been a whole day without you till then; and when day after day passed in solitude, I felt the

sad possibility that we might live asunder. Till then, I never thought of existence apart from my husband."

I would fain have "bid the heart be still, that beat too warmly for its peace," yet I would not have had her feel less acutely, so I promised that she should accompany me, and I managed to lay a *dooli* dāk to Lāhor, for us both.

My route lay through the old city of Kasūr, where, as usual, I claimed admittance, on the ground of the royal *purwānah* I bore; but Shām Singh was too tenacious of his own position to thus recognize my authority, and simply sent me a message to say that there was no entrance for uninvited strangers within his walls. It was not my wish to delay, nor the Māharājah's that I should come in hostile contact with those I visited. I therefore sent a polite reply, that the question should be referred to the *durbār*, and proceeded on my way.

I arrived at the capital a few days after the Māharājah himself, who had, on leaving Ruper, made a rapid sweep along the eastern hills, where he was least expected. Avoiding beaten roads, he had studiously sought out the castles

and villages of those who least looked for such a visit. To some few, the royal movement proved a blessing; but to the majority, and especially to those least able to bear the burthen, the camp and court, as do all camps and courts, brought a curse and a plague. During this short tour, some few *jāgīrs* were resumed, and *nuzarānahs* to a considerable amount were received; but the *bigāris*[1] and the poorest husbandmen were those who suffered most; the former driven with heavy burthens, like beasts from stage to stage, unremunerated, and uncared for, and the latter, daily and hourly plundered of their grain and fodder, and too thankful if not also seized as *bigāris*.

Nor were such scenes unknown in my own camp; and all I could do, and all I could say, did not altogether prevent the practice, even under my own eyes. Once, on my travels, I saw the brother of a chief of high standing, and owner of a territory of several lākhs of yearly revenue, holding the horse of a common Munshi of mine as he dismounted; and on another occasion, witnessed the same *Surdār* assisting the

[1] Men seized to carry burdens, without recompense.

other in climbing up a ladder: the inference being that any man in authority can hardly prevent his followers going through the land as a pestilence. The chiefs and officials so well understand the system, or rather so little intelligible does any other appear to them, that, on their own lands, when the plague comes, they just look at it as a visitation of Providence; thank their stars, they too have had their day, or may have, and just grin and bear the passing evil; heaping all personal civilities on the visitors, while possibly they are exerting themselves to keep back the supplies, or to throw the onus of supplying the *rasad* upon a neighbouring territory.

I was soon summoned to the presence, and was received most graciously. As desired by me, no notice was taken of my proposed deputation to the frontier, but his Highness carelessly observed, that my request for six months' leave of absence was complied with, and it was only necessary that I should report myself monthly to the *faqīr*. I thanked his Highness for his kindness, and then presented a report of my late deputation.

Faqīr Azīzūdīn was desired to read it, which he did in his usual clear and business-like style. After attentively listening to the end, the Mahārājah observed, "Ah, Bellasis! so Shām Singh would not let you in! he is ruffling his feathers on the grounds of our approaching alliance with his house, but we'll teach him to respect our *purwānah*."

"The *Surdār* is a *khāir khwāh*, faithful and brave!" was responded by many voices, and I, unwilling to unnecessarily embroil myself, pleaded for pardon for the offender.

"You are a strange person, Bellasis; they tell me you are hot, and I too have seen your blood boil; but in this and other cases you seem to possess more of the lamb than the lion."

I replied, smiling, "I would reserve my strength and my anger for the enemies of the *rāj*, but Surdār Shām Singh is a faithful servant, even though the royal favour may have spoilt him."

At my so unexpected interference in behalf of the offender, many were the "*Wāhs!*" and loud the acclamations from the hangers-on, in my favour: the friends of Shām Singh especially

trumpeted my merits, and declared that there must have been a mistake; that on my own account the *Surdār* would have felt honoured by my presence, and, as bearer of a royal mandate, the gates must have been and surely were thrown open to me.

The Māharājah was by no means deceived by the outcry; however, he permitted himself to be softened by the interest taken in the offender; he therefore exclaimed, "Such an example must not go unpunished; and but that I remember the father's services, his son should not have another opportunity to shut the gates of Kasūr against his sovereign. But, taking all things into consideration, we will on this occasion simply fine Shām Singh fifty thousand rupees: Eh, Dena Nāth, note the *jurimānah*,[1] and see that it is realized." Murmurs and further remonstrances arose, but the Māharājah silenced the speakers with, "*Bus!* the order is given, we'll hear no more on the subject, and Shām Singh may thank my clemency." The business of the day then proceeded, and there was the usual strange mixture of accounts and of politics, of fines and maim-

[1] Fine.

ings, with speeches on mercy and forbearance. In due course, the *durbār* broke up, and I returned to my dwelling.

In thus sketching off these my reminiscences, I feel that, taking them in the lump, they will not bear scrutiny; that they are not only patchy, but that they appear to give different views at different times of the Māharājah and of his people. But, trifling as are my notes, their inconsistency lies less in my showing than in my hero's acting; for who that ever saw him or witnessed his acts, but must have pronounced Runjīt Singh to be the wisest and most foolish of monarchs; the gentlest and purest, as well as the most ferocious and debased of kings?

Writing, then, simply what I saw and heard, I rather report facts and impressions than lay down matured opinions; which latter remain for the historian to form, when the subject has passed from the stage, and when, taking him as a whole, with his lights and shadows, his opportunities and advantages, and then considering the times in which he lived, a fair estimate of his character may be formed, placing him in a niche, at least, parallel with the pretended re-

generator of Egypt—the wholesale butcher—the merciless slave-dealer; who can talk of civilization, of rights, and of justice, in a manner that the more unsophisticated ruler of the Punjāb would never have thought of doing.

If the latter, then, had less vigour, he had less hypocrisy; if his views were more confined, it was the result of circumstances; and, with far less opportunity of knowing the truth and judging rightly, his career was much less marked with blood than that of Muhammed Ali, and the whole system of his government was spotless, as compared with that of the massacre of the Mamelukes. Enough, however, has been shown in these pages to prove, that, though not altogether a pandemonium, still the Punjāb is not the country in which an honest man should choose to serve. "Then how," it may be asked, "do you, Colonel Bellasis, professing morality and uprightness, reconcile to yourself your having sought such service and your still continuing in it?" The question is easier to ask than answer; and in reply I might ask the soldier, the lawyer, the trader, in any country, how he can reconcile this or that act to his conscience? And further, I may say,

that as long as I remained in the service, I at least found in it less of slavery than perhaps in any European army; and that I was less likely to have to act against my conscience than if serving with more civilized powers.

Despotism is good, if it can be pure and energetic; each petty chief in the Punjāb is a despot; I was one; and if my ability could have equalled my intention, I might, during even my short career, have effected much good; but in Russia, Prussia, Austria, France, or England, what could a soldier of fortune have hoped for? At best, as a hoary subaltern, to slay or be slain by Circassians, Poles, or Italians, fighting for their liberty, or to waste the morning, ay, and noon of life on the coast of Africa, or the West Indies, as a subordinate engaged in the most revolting duties; to live uncared for, and to die unpitied! But, in such a service as that I had sought and gained, there was at least excitement and quick promotion; and, above all, opportunity of following the bent of one's heart, whether for good or for evil. It is not then the office in the Punjāb, more than elsewhere, that either ennobles or degrades.

I am thus diffuse because I know that many, who will begin by despising me as an adventurer, would, on the strength of a bit of parchment from their own sovereign, open their fire on their own countrymen, or would unhesitatingly serve as contingents, to put up any tyrant, or crush any struggle for liberty.

I made the preparations for my expected trip, quietly and cautiously, assisted only by my friend the *faqīr* and his brother, my old acquaintance, Nūrūdīn. The *Khalifa*, though very inferior to his elder brother, is still a most useful servant to the state. His appointment combines, as nearly as possible, the European offices of commissary-general and head storekeeper; he also assists his brother in communicating with Europeans, is supposed to understand their temperament, and not to be too touchy about their neglect of forms.

I need hardly note that many Europeans, low-born, low-bred, and low-minded, think fit to lord it over all Asiatics, and to show their own dignity by refusing the usual civilities to those in every way entitled to them, whose feelings are hurt, and their position among their

own countrymen lowered, by such rough contact with overbearing foreigners. Clever, supple characters, therefore, the willows rather than the oaks are selected at native courts to deal with Europeans, and none perhaps ever did their work more dexterously than these two brothers.

Azīzūdīn I have already noticed as the eloquent mouth-piece of his master; he is also the sole channel of communication with the English Government, and to his good sense and adroitly administered advice may be attributed the long subsistence of friendly relations between the two powers. Like his master, or rather like all mankind, the *faqīr* is inconsistent; but I look on him as by far the best man in the Punjāb, the one who, with greatest temptations, has run through a long career with least reproach. He is perhaps the only one of the Lāhor courtiers, who has not a blood-feud to maintain, or who has not enemies, seeking his destruction; consequently, in any outbreak, his life would be safer than that of any other man in the court.

Short as was my stay this time at Lāhor, I saw fresh instances of those characteristics which

struck me on my first arrival, and one I will record as illustrative of national manners.

It was about noon that I was returning one day from *durbār*, and riding at a smart trot, with only two orderlies, along the suburbs of Lāhor. Suddenly I was met by a crowd of people, weeping, tearing their hair, and making violent gestures. This I should not much have noticed, such being the usual expressions of grief, but four of the party bore huge lighted torches, which glared even in the strong sunlight.

My readers may be aware that this is the oriental mode of expressing the absence of the light of justice, and the darkness of the ruler's eyes. The plan frequently succeeds; a blazing torch can be held up, where a poor petitioner dare not approach the governor, and the appeal perchance attracts attention and obtains redress. Before I knew where I was, the crowd I met had recognised me, and shouted, "It is the *faringī* favourite, Bellasis!—make him go with us!—the *deori* will not be closed against him!" and, on the instant, two fellows seized my reins. I was so irritated that I struck Chāndha severely in the loins, and the horse, to disengage himself

from his forward load, reared straight on end, throwing my tormentors on their backs, and nearly transfixing me on the spear-points of some of the party behind.

A pause followed, and then the crowd selected two spokesmen, who apologized for the violence of the rest, and entreated me to accompany them to the presence, and be their advocate, in a case of great oppression. I recommended the plaintiffs not to try a tumultuary appeal, but to come the next day to me, and state their grievances, promising to do my best for them. After some little demur, my counsel was adopted, and the crowd dispersed, with blessings and acclamations.

I need not trouble my reader with the details of the case ; luckily, it was one easily adjusted, and I had the pleasure of sending back the deputies, well-contented.

CHAPTER XX.

The lamp is extinguished.

My business did not detain me more than a week at Lāhor, and we lost no time in returning to our boats at Bāraki, or rather at Gundasingwāla, the village on the Punjāb side of the *ghāt*, where our boats lay. Let me be forgiven if I linger over those days, every event of which is burned into my memory; and which now, when I look back on them, seem to have comprised an age. They have left me the withered being that I am; perhaps more fondly and fancifully tenacious of my sorrow than I ever was of my happiness.

Once on a time,
I saw a stately forest tree
That spread abroad in summer time
His branches free:

And if the storm some boughs had snapped,
His roots were but more firmly wrapped,
His stem more strong to see.

There came an hour
When one sweet plant around him threw
Her tendrils soft, and closely grew,
His own dear flower!
Wove round each branch her fingers slight,
And brought of beauty and delight
A precious dower.

I loved to trace
How that rough tree was fondly grasped,
And how, while love his branches clasped,
In close embrace,
All lovingly he lent his power,
To prop and feed the gentle flower
That gave him grace;
Till not one twig, or leaf, or spray,
Of all the forest king's array,
But was with its own tendrils curled,
And with its own sweet blossoms pearled.

A flame within the forest sprung;
On burning wings it swept along,
Leaving the traces of its wrath,
Blackness and ashes in its path,
It breathed upon the tree,
Dried up his verdant leaves and shoots,
But left unscathed his vigorous roots—
But where was *she?*

The lovely flower that round him grew,
And from his breast her life-blood drew;
Whose tendrils, till in death grown cold,
Has ne'er relaxed their loving hold,
Low on the ground was laid!

The naked stem,
Blackened and bare, still braved the storm,
Unchanged his stature and his form,
But reft of every gem.
He asked no other flower to come,
And twine around his leafless home—
The circling months that o'er him flew,
Bathing his withered boughs with dew,
Sunshine, and rain, and breeze might bring,
But brought to him no second spring.

Before we resumed our voyage down the river, I paid another visit to Kasūr, where my reception was very different from that I had met a few days before. Shām Singh had received a royal *purwānah*, and could no longer refuse me admission, having also had proof that the Māharājah would not be trifled with; the chief felt that it behoved him, by a double portion of assiduity, to make up for his former churlishness. Still, he could not conceal how irksome my presence was, and I did not feel inclined to remain long where I was an unwelcome guest.

During this visit, I gleaned some particulars of a place that contains much to interest the traveller; the impression left by my first hasty survey of the town and country was confirmed on closer inspection. I now ascertained that, of a fertile and extensive territory, but a small proportion is cultivated, and that the whole is sub-let by Shām Singh to a farmer, for less than a third of the revenue it might easily yield. The population is much like that described in the last chapter but one, as inhabiting Firozpor: in both places, the same causes have worked the same effects; constant aggression, continual raids made or suffered, insecurity of life and property have made Kasūr even more a desert than the neighbouring estates; and where in the Punjāb can real good cultivation be found? or where the old and hereditary cultivators and village chiefs?

No where—every thing is done loosely, and as by people fed from hand to mouth, while the rural population will all tell you that they are settlers, that they have come from the west and south-west, allured by promises of rich lands and liberal terms; they came and found a coun-

try wasted and desolated by the Persians, the Mahrāthās, the Afghāns, and the Sikhs. One part or other of Northern Hindūstān has been continually exposed to the sword, but all the invaders passed through the Punjāb; it has therefore suffered the most, and bears to this day, in almost every quarter, testimony to the blighting effects of war, and its train of ills, pestilence and famine among them.

Though this is not the place to enter into either the statistics, or the romance of Kasūr and its territory, they have too many interesting recollections attached, for us thus summarily to pass by this city of the dead, this mighty mass of ruin.

The present town occupies the *enceinte* of one of the twelve Pathān forts of modern days, while the remains of the ancient city lie in massive ruins for miles to the north and east. The Kasūr territory being opposite the Bāraki of Firozpor *ghāt*, and between the other two great thoroughfares of invasion, Hariki and Pāk Patan, suffered perhaps more than any other portion of the frontier, except Firozpor, from predatory inroads; and what man failed to accomplish, nature

completed; the Sutlej, in its wanderings, though it has perhaps increased the Kasūr lands, has, by throwing up beds of sand, destroyed many rich locations, while the Byās, a river that improves instead of deteriorates the lands on its banks, has completely forsaken the Kasūr territory, and instead of, as of old, uniting with the Sutlej at Kasūr, now does so some thirty miles higher up, at Huriki.

As the traveller approaches Kasūr, from the Khādir of the Sutlej, his eye is attracted in the far distance by the high kanker bank of what must have been the old bed of the Byās, rising two hundred feet above the Khādir, sprinkled with date-trees, and the highest cliff capped by a *faqīr's takiya*,[1] close to the ruins of an ancient tower; the last remnant of the castles of the old Rājpūt lords, when Kasūr was a Hindū principality; and when, as history, or rather as local legends say, a King of Delhi came, wooed and won the daughter of the Prince, and by degrees converted his bride, her father, and subjects, to the tenets of Mohammed. It was not always thus

[1] Pillow, resting-place; applied especially to the dwelling of a devotee.

persuasively that Islam gained her converts. The legend is probably correct, for all along this border, and indeed from the Jumnā to the Attak, are tribes after tribes of converted Hindūs, still bearing their old Pagan designations, and retaining many of their prejudices and customs; the same village often containing Hindū and Mahommedan, Rājpūts, Jāts, &c., calling each other brethren, and on certain occasions associating, and even sometimes intermarrying.

The Rājpoot dynasty fell under an inroad of Afghāns, and their descendants, the Pathān chiefs, were, as already narrated, driven out by the Sikhs. The many forts still in repair, with the many others of the Pathān times now crumbling to the dust, tell of the troubles and insecurity of their day, and the desolation of the whole country for miles around tell the same tale, as does Sirhind and old Lāhor.

Had time permitted, I would gladly have prolonged my stay at a place so full of tradition, and presenting such peculiarities of custom and character; but we had a long trip before us, and the cold weather, that golden season in

Hindūstān, was slipping away. We, therefore, resolved to continue our course down the river, and started for Bāraki, our little fleet gliding down the stream, at the rate of about three and a half miles an hour. Thirteen miles from Bāraki we came to Mumdot, a Sikh dependency, the name of which has already been brought before the reader in Chānd Khān's list of disaffected states. The Khān is a reluctant vassal of Lāhor; but considering me as a *Sāhib* in the Māharājah's favour, Jumāl-ū-dīn Khān thought it worth while to be on the river bank, with his brother and son, and all he could muster of his retainers, some fifty foot and half as many horse, to do me honour, and invite me to his castle.

I declined the invitation on the plea of haste, but received him with respect; and, under a *shamiānah* hastily pitched, talked for an hour with the chief. He is a fine-looking man, of good and manly features; a sportsman, and liking all Franks, or, at least, professing to do so. He asked me for a chit, which I gave, not exactly to the effect he desired, but such as in reason I could give; he produced very many for

my inspection, some of them pretty considerably absurd, and watched my countenance while I read them, which fortunately I observed, or I might have hurt his feelings by the amusement that I could with difficulty conceal.

The town of Mumdōt is a miserable collection of huts; the fort is an old, imposing-looking place, but of no strength, and fast crumbling to pieces. They are on the edge of the Kādir, and run a fair chance, by a freak of the river, to be soon bodily carried away.

What has been said of misrule at Kasūr and elsewhere may, to the full extent, apply to Mumdōt; indeed more amply, for, instead of attempting to irrigate his extensive and rich lands bordering on the river, Jumāl-ū-dīn Khān has tried to increase his revenues by resuming the rights of the village head-men; he has consequently very much lessened his income, decreased his population, and rendered those who remain thoroughly discontented.

Jumāl-ū-dīn Khān's territory yields to him, one way and another, fines, one-half of all crops, transit duties, and *adālut*, the yearly sum of fifty thousand rupees; and this from a tract of

country not less than sixty miles long, bordered all the way by the Sutlej, and capable, in all its breadth, of being irrigated from that river.

About eight miles below Bāraki, we entered the Bāhāwalpūr territory on our left; the Mā-harājah's dominion still continuing on our right. The former, though still in many places covered with deep forests of tamarisk, showed symptoms of more cultivation and of better government than the neighbouring country on either bank.

All went smoothly, until we arrived near Pāk Patan,[1] a considerable town about six miles from the river; already mentioned as the high road of the early invaders of Hindūstān, but more famed for its annual fair. Wishing to see a place I so often heard of, I determined to halt the next day, and ride over to Pāk Patan, and gave orders accordingly. Māhtāb, in her weak and nervous state, dreaded even a few hours' separation; but she tried to laugh off her own

[1] *Pāk Patan,* "the passage or entrance of purity." The place has acquired this name from a local tradition, connected with a low doorway, scarcely high enough for a man to creep under: every one who squeezes through this entrance obtains pardon of his sins.

misgivings. The weather was heavenly; nothing could be more delightful; the days cool, the mornings and evenings bracing. That evening, as we sat on the roof of our boat, and saw no symptom of life around, except the other four boats of our fleet, containing our servants, baggage, and guard, we agreed that in such calm tranquillity, thus left to ourselves, we could have nothing to wish, no desire to gratify.

As usual, it was late before we retired. Fearing no ill, I had left the arrangement of the night-guard to Alverdī Khān, who simply planted a sentry opposite to each boat, as a matter of form, not as considering any necessary. I dreamt not of misfortune; but my precious wife, before descending from the roof, exclaimed, "And is it the last time we are to sit here together, and must I go on without you to-morrow, my husband?" The dear girl was so overwhelmed by her feelings that she could give no reason for her fears, except the depression of spirits induced by bodily weakness; and, as I pointed out to her the natural result of the terror and excitement she had undergone, I tried to calm and comfort her; and had scarcely succeeded in

so doing, and seen her sink into a sweet sleep, when I was roused with cries of "Fire!" and the voices of my servants, exclaiming that the bagbage-boat was in flames.

I started from my couch, and remembering that the few goods I had in the world were contained in that boat, I pulled on a dressing-gown, and telling my frightened wife to remain quiet, I rushed out to see what could be done. The boat was about a hundred yards from the one we occupied, and I had scarce reached it when I heard from the spot I had just left a rush of men, a few dropping shots, and one piercing shriek. The voice was hers; I rushed back, but was received in the arms of several stout ruffians, who bound my hands behind my back, and threw me on the ground. The agony of body I then suffered was great; my arms were all but dislocated; but what was it to the racking of my mind?

I called in my despair to all and every one of my people, but so well had the attack been arranged, and so completely were we surprised, that all able and willing to strike in my behalf were either cut down or served as myself. No

further violence, however, was offered; and as I lay in this state of fearful helplessness, I perceived that the band of ruffians quietly dispersed, seeming either to have effected their object, or been baffled in it. An oppressive silence followed the late shrieks and clash of arms; sometimes a moan from one of those bound like myself, or a deep breath from one of the wounded beside us, was the only sound. I listened in vain for the voice I wanted to hear; and when I called out my wife's name, my blood was curdled by the vacant silence into which my voice died away.

At length morning dawned; I had ceased to struggle, from sheer exhaustion, and probably the cold air of the morning reduced the swelling in my limbs; I found that I could work my right hand out of its fastenings, and soon released myself entirely. In the dim light I sprang into the accommodation-boat, and for the first moment could distinguish no object: groping along I stumbled over a dead body, which I soon recognised as that of one of the female attendants; and then a feeble voice besought for the love of Alla a little water to drink. I brought some to the poor sufferer, another of my wife's women,

and when she had drunk it, bid her tell where was her mistress: she pointed to the cabin window. "Now I understand it all!" I ejaculated. "She threw herself into the river!" The woman motioned that I was right. I left the poor creature to her fate, and, rushing out, loudly called to my people; some few who, like myself, had broken their bonds, approached. No one knew any thing of their mistress; I dragged the river in all directions for a quarter of a mile, but that day of despair closed on me without a clue to my lost one's fate.

I found that seven of my people had been killed, ten wounded, and two carried away by a band of horse and footmen, said to have been not less than two hundred in number. All agreed that they were no common robbers; that we had been watched and tracked; that the firing of the baggage-boat was a mere *ruse* to draw me away from Māhtāb, who was the object of the attack; it was moreover said that none of the assailants struck but in self-defence, and that they seemed to have been anxious to execute their purpose without doing bodily injury to me or my followers.

They had carried off their own wounded and killed, so that we were unable to gain any immediate clue as to who or what they were; from the tracks of their feet they appeared to have separated into twos and threes immediately they got into the long grass jungle out of sight of the boats. All my people agreed that thei mistress had not been carried off, so the cruel alternative remained that, in attempting to escape, most likely in the hope of reaching me, she had fallen into the river and was drowned.

All that day, I have said, we searched, and while thus occupied, the fever of my brain was still; but when night again came, then indeed I felt the full desolation of my condition, all the bitterness of my lot. My people watched me with affectionate solicitude, and I was averse to act the woman before them. That night again no sleep came to my eyelids, and before dawn we were all again out, and with the aid of the chief of Pāk Patan, who, alarmed at such an occurrence in his district, offered zealous assistance, we searched high and low for several miles below our anchoring ground, when at length towards evening, at no great distance from the boats, we

hooked up the remains of what had been Māhtāb Kowr.

The sight of her, still beautiful in death, still uncorrupted, quite overcame my frame, already worn to exhaustion. I sunk faintingly beside her, and it was long before I could be brought to understand where I was and what had occurred. My senses, however, came too soon, I took my loved one in my arms, and bore her for the last time to her couch; there I myself laid her out, attired her as if in mockery in her wedding garments, and watched her during the night; while my servants, by breaking up some large boxes, nailed together a rude coffin.

The sound of the hammering during the night came on my soul as the knell of her departing spirit; it was anguish to look on her, and yet I could not withdraw my eyes. Before morning a change had come over her countenance; the same calm, sweet smile was there, but the colour was changed, corruption was doing its work, the cankerworm was already at play. At sunrise the coffin and grave were reported ready; the former was brought into the cabin; once again I kissed my wife, I threw myself beside her

corpse, and yearned that I could have died for her. My attendants had retired, but, fearing something wrong from my long delay, they again entered and gently roused me to exertion. As calmly as I could, I took her in my arms, and, placing her in her last cold narrow abode, I wrapped the snow-white cloths around her, and for ever in this world bade adieu to her who had been the light of my eyes, the darling of my soul.

While the lid was being fastened down, there I sat, watching the movements of those who struck the nails, as if every blow was aimed at her, and surely as if every nail entered my own soul. They carried her out, and seldom has young wife been carried and followed to her grave by more sympathizing mourners than was Māhtāb Kowr, attended by no Christian but her husband.

But why should I thus dilate? why harrow my own soul, and again open the wounds that time has softened though not healed? As I read our beautiful funeral service over all that was dearest to me on earth, I felt that though she could not come to me, I should go to her, and

that possibly she was then looking on me, and watching, with affectionate sympathy, the genuine outpourings of my broken heart.

I stopped at the *ghāt* for a week; and enclosed the tomb, planting wild flowers over it, and a girdle of evergreens around. She was Nature's own child, as pure, as uncorrupted, as Nature's self; and there she sleeps her last sleep, lonely and unmolested, in no burial ground of man, but in the broad plain of Pāk Patan; the heavens for her canopy, all nature for the bounds of her domain.

The last time I visited the spot of my angel's earthly slumber, I was sitting alone on the ground, in the dusk of the evening: I felt something touch my face, and, in the more than woman's weakness to which I was reduced, I started, and even trembled. The next moment I saw a beautiful butterfly, which had just emerged from its chrysalis; and this trifling incident, bringing thus palpably before me the most vivid type of our own resurrection, did more to release my heart from the grave in which it was buried, and to carry my thoughts

towards a glorious hereafter, than perhaps any thing else could have done.[1]

Glorious creature of the spring!
Floating life! embodied joy!
From thy rainbow-tinctured wing[2]
Breathing bliss without alloy!

Chill is their heart, their bosom cold,
And dim their eye to see,
Who in the heavenly form behold
A type of fluttering vanity!

Different far the angel voice
With which to me thou speakest,
When, mounting upward to rejoice,
Thy cold, dark tomb thou breakest!

"Sown in corruption," but a worm,
On earth's dark breast to perish;
"In glory raised," a beauteous form,
For Love and Light to cherish!

I could have lingered for ever beside the place where my hopes lay buried; but I remembered

[1] There is a beautiful Irish superstition, that a spirit which has departed in peace afterwards hovers about its former haunts, in the form of a white butterfly.

[2] The wing is the organ of respiration in butterflies.

I had still duties to perform, and that an unmanly yielding to sorrow was not the way to show thankfulness for the treasure that had been lent me, and for the hope given by Christianity. I roused, therefore, and tried to employ myself, but soon found that if I could ever regain my elasticity of mind, it would not be while occupied in pursuits so closely associated with my last one. Indeed, as I had told the *faqīr*, but one tie bound me to Asia, and that one being severed, I resolved to seek a different land. I therefore at once wrote suitably to Azīzūdīn, and tendered my resignation; begging for permission to continue my voyage to Bombay, there to embark for Europe.

In due course, I reached Bāhāwalpūr, and there received answers to my letters; the *fāqīr's* was kind in the extreme, nothing could have been more so; had I been his son, he could not have shown more real commiseration. The answer, however, to my request for *rukhsut* was in different sort; it certainly expressed a proper feeling for my misfortune, but informed me that my marriage was an arrangement of my own, and one which in no way concerned the *Surkār;*

that I, and not my wife, was the servant of the state, and I was told plainly that my request should not be granted.

Had I not felt that Azīzūdīn was in a measure my security, and would probably suffer by my secession, I should without ceremony have decamped; for I felt that, while I had acted in every way honourably and openly, I had neither been treated fairly nor courteously. I therefore declined the *malām kurse* offerings sent by the Māharājah, and replied distinctly, though respectfully, that, as I had engaged to perform a certain duty, I would do it; although I had neither received my *purwānah* of installation, nor had my instructions; but that, after I had inspected the border, and done what lay in my power for its security, I should then tender my resignation; and I hinted that I meant, if refused leave, to take it. I wrote in still plainer terms to the *faqīr*, telling him that my mind was irrevocably made up, and that nothing should detain me longer than six months in the country, unless it was to be avenged on Māhtāb's murderers, of which I saw but little chance; though at the same time I caused to be proclaimed a reward

of ten thousand rupees for the simple disclosure, with proof of the instigator of the deed.

My pen has lost its fluency, and I feel that my task is already ended, though I should wish, for consistency's sake, to finish my career with credit, to fulfil my engagement, and to tell my readers how I did so.

CONCLUSION.

In reading the foregoing pages, let it be remembered that they were written so far back as the year 1840. Some of the prophecies given by Bellasis have been realized, some falsified, by the events which have since occurred, but on the whole, he has reason to be satisfied with the extent to which his prognostics have been fulfilled.

The Punjāb has been troubled—mightily so, and has only been saved from wreck, by the good faith of its powerful neighbour. Since Bellasis began his career, four, we may say five, powers have reigned and passed away—Runjīt,

his son, and grandson, have been gathered to their fathers: the short-lived party of Chānd Konwar has been dispersed, and the throne has been occupied by Sher Singh, who, to Bellasis, seemed without a chance of reigning. And now, while the pen is yet in my hand, he too has finished his career, having been slain in open durbār by the Sandāwāla Surdārs, instigated by Dhyān Singh, who has again fallen, a second victim before the sun set, in the snare he had laid.

The next day, Lena Singh and Ajīt Singh, Sandāwālas, were attacked by Hira Singh and the troops, and were slain while defending the citadel of Lāhor. The troops showed wonderful forbearance; Hira Singh had the Treasurer, Misr Benirām, and the Bhāi, Ghurmakh Singh, imprisoned, and then murdered. What new tragedies are to be enacted, the present cold season will show.

In little more than three years all these events have occurred: to develop their causes, and trace out the effects in all their tragic course, may furnish an interesting chapter in Punjāb history, more startling and romantic in its rea-

lities than fancy could paint. Bellasis, however, deals rather with the past than the present, and desires, as rarely as consists with intelligibility, to come across the path of the historian; satisfied if he can point out some of the springs of men's actions, and, by glances at the back-scenes of Punjāb society, account in any measure for the peculiarities and inconsistencies of Sikh character.

History gives (or ought to give) a well-proportioned *Map* of events, while historical romance only offers *pictures* of men and manners, and seeks to sketch the interior scenes of life, and details that escape the casual observer, rather than to chronicle occurrences already recorded in official documents.

Since this work was commenced, the writer has had opportunities for testing the correctness of many opinions there hazarded; and, while he feels there is much to claim apology in the patchiness of a book, written at detached periods, and distant intervals of leisure, still, as he has not discovered any material error in what was already written, he has not deemed it necessary to recast the whole book.

In conclusion, it is enough to say that Bellasis continued his progress from Pāk Patan to Multān, and thence visited the Derajāt and the whole of the Western Border, up to Peshāwur: that the conduct of the Lāhor Ruler then drove him through one of the passes in the Sulimāni range, into Afghānistān, just at the time that Shāh Sujah was making that effort for his throne, which ended in his defeat at the battle of Kāndahār, in which Bellasis took a part. His fortune afterwards led him to Kābūl and Jalālābād, and on the neutral ground of the Khāibar and Peshāwur he experienced some adventures, which, if the reading public give encouragement, may hereafter be laid before them.

THE END.

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