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LETTERS OF THE LATE MR. MOORCROFT.*

LETTER I.

MY DEAR T— :—Though long silent, I have not been unmindful of the obligations imposed on me by your friendship. Knowing the kind feeling you attach to my humble endeavours to serve our country, I shall not apologize for reciting a few of the most prominent events of my journey, as far as its interests are therein concerned.

Partly by concerted combinations, by the efforts of a friend acquainted with my destination and objects, and partly by the influence of accidental circumstances, my party gained admittance into Leh, the capital of Ladakh, though somewhat in opposition to the will of the governors, who had sent to stop us on the frontier, and had indicated a road to Toorkistan, without indulging our curiosity to visit this city. For a period somewhat tediously long, our prospects fluctuated between expectation and repulse, and sometimes suspense hung over the very brink of failure. A phalanx of Kashmeeree traders, whose foresight of foreign competition in a lucrative commerce was sharpened by their fears, in judicious array, waged a steady and active opposition against our views. Long residence, command of the language of the country, and a thorough knowledge of the character and feelings of the governors, gave them great advantages, and our visit and its motives were, by their representations, viewed only with suspicion and alarm. However, a candid exposure of circumstances and open conduct, aided with due appliances, gradually assuaged the keenness of distrust, and led to an engagement of commerce betwixt the members of the government of Ladakh and British merchants. Confidence grew largely and rapidly after this event, and brought forward a tender of the allegiance of a country half as large as England, to the justice and power of the Hon. Company. An outline of the principality of Ladakh, as much details of interior and exterior relations as may enable our Government to appreciate the value of the subjection, and the cost of the protection, have been transmitted to the political department. This indication is sufficient for you, if you should wish to see the statement; but it is necessary to caution you not to expect much information, as, previously to the actual tender of the allegiance, we did not much indulge in distant excursions, and from that period to its transmission, a shorter time elapsed than was necessary to execute these objects in an adequate manner, even if we had not had to contend against the difficulties of language and of a most rugged country. A scrupulous non-interference with the shawl-wool trade, and the practice of medicine, have softened the feelings of the Kashmeerees towards us; and a knowledge of the allegiance of Ladakh having been tendered to the British Government (a fact which, at first kept secret, is now learnt by some of the principal Kashmeeree merchants), has restrained opposition within moderate bounds, if not repressed it altogether. The trade of Ladakh, though it may not be held as very great, in the estimation of our commercialists, is nevertheless far from being inconsiderable, and much exceeds the estimate made by the few Europeans who have spoken respecting it. As a point of union for trade, from Hindoostan with Shagra, Siling, and Peking, by one route, and with Chinese Toorkistan by another, as also with Baltic, Gilgit, Chitral, Budukshan, Terghona and Oosbuk Toorkistan, the situation of Leh is particularly well suited.

* From the *Calcutta Literary Gazette*. We are sorry to be obliged to say that the errors, especially in proper names, are numerous; some we have been able to correct; others we must leave as we found them.

Tea is imported into this capital from Terchundo, by way of Lhassa, to the amount of about two lakhs of rupees annually, and is exported to Kashmeer, Afghanistan, and the Punjab; but its principal consumption takes place in the former country. It consists of black, green, and mixed, with a very small quantity of the finer kinds. The three former kinds are worse packed, in the leaf state, in thick square cakes. From what I have seen of its use, I think the introduction of this vegetable into Hindoostan would be a national benefit; but to have it cheap enough to be general, it should be grown in our own mountains. I have detailed some particulars, which show that the tea-plant is the spontaneous produce of the hill countries in the Company's dominions, or something which used as a substitute produces, at least, no prejudicial effects. An old minister of Nepaul informed me that two trees had been brought from China, and had flourished in a garden in or near Kathmandoo; that one of them died some years ago, but that the other was alive and in a flourishing state. Tea is, I believe, propagated principally by seed, and I submit to you whether it might not be worth while to write to the resident to endeavour to procure some seeds, if the tree yields any, and to sow them in your garden. The Punjab furnishes to Yarkund, Kashgar, and other parts of Chinese and Oosbuk Toorkistan, white cloths and others embroidered in silks. Russia made a bold attempt, a few years ago, to rival Noorpoor, which, within the last thirty years, has much diminished, by its manufactory at that town, at Gunguta and Putankoth. The consumption of bastos, checked muslins and turbands, made at Rahown, Hooswarpoor, and Buswara, and the lower price and better quality of the bastas first sold, would have secured the trade to Russia, or, perhaps, to Britain through that country, had it not been for one of those frauds, which, disgraceful to commerce, always defeat their object. The second importation looked just as well as the first, but, when the cloth was washed, it broke into holes and soon crumbled into rags. After the discovery of the bleaching powers of the oxygenated muriatic acid were discovered, and applied to the purpose of whitening cloth, the principle was used without due caution, and an immense quantity of cloth was injured by the process in Britain. It seems not improbable that some of this was exported to Russia, and thence to Toorkistan; however, for this supposition I have no better foundation than conjecture. The Punjab sends annually about 60,000 goat-skins, dyed red, to Yarkund, and 40,000 are annually consumed in that city and its environs. It is not easy to make out the capital which annually passes through Leh, but I find that Kothee-Mull, a banker at Umrutser, has generally from two to three lakhs employed through the medium of Russool Joo, Azim Joo, and other Kashmeeree merchants at this place. The Tooranee traders complain heavily of the Kashmeerees having ruined their trade in all the old articles of consumption exported from Hindoostan to Toorkistan; insomuch, indeed, that most of them have quitted the field and entered into other lines of commerce with Bokhara and Russia. The merchants of Tooran, at least those I have seen, are completely our friends, and, without exception, the most liberal Asiatics I have met with. One individual, whom I had cursorily seen at Umrutser, lent me Rs. 4,000 on my note, when I was greatly distressed for money at this place, and has since advanced Rs. 10,000 more at Yarkund, with an offer of a further sum should I require it. A Noorpooree has also given me Rs. 5,400 on my credit at Umrutser. The former I had an opportunity of serving, in having had an attack of symptoms threatening apoplexy, and afterwards a surgical complaint from which he was relieved. The latter was nearly blind, but fortunately recovered his sight. It is but justice to say,

that the Tooranee advanced his money before he was ill; and if the Noorpooree first came to me as a patient, his gratitude has outstripped the obligation. These helps have been incalculably beneficial; have prevented the appearance of poverty which stared me in the face; enabled me to forward plans in agitation, and relieved me from a load of anxiety that for a period was oppressive beyond expression. I had upwards of forty people to support, and the supplies I expected did not arrive, nor have they yet come to hand, though I understand they are on the road through Kashmeer. No one, save the principals in my party, was acquainted with my distress; my credit was never injured, and is now as high as I can wish.

No information has yet been received here of my drafts in liquidation of the first advances having been honoured; yet, instead of apprehension, the parties have offered to increase the obligation, and I am not yet called upon for a draft for the Rs. 10,000, nor shall be till it be known that the money has been actually paid at Yarkund to my commissioner. It remains for me to make out, by examining the clothing and utensils of the natives, and the markets of Chinese and Oosbuk Toorkistan, what articles of British manufactures are likely to be desirable, under modification for these and the adjacent countries. This done, it will be necessary to establish a depôt, and I agree with you most fully that the vicinity of Joshee Muth is better suited than any other locality for this purpose. But a suitable road must be found, and for a time it will be well to keep off the Lhassan territory. Now I learn that there is a road from Budree Nath to Dunkur in Peetu, a pergunna in Ladakh, on the frontier of Bushehur; and I have written to the present surveyor-general, who is a zealous, intelligent, and active character, on the subject of having this line examined; for, if we can make out a tolerable road, I think I can induce the principal Tooranee merchants to visit Joshee Muth.

The kinds of commodities suited to Ladakh have been in great measure ascertained and described. These, of themselves, will occupy no very small capital for the former principality, and they will also be suitable for your neighbours of Changthang. It must not be concluded that, because I am thus occupied, I am forgetful of the ostensible objects of my mission. It is only through commerce that these can be got, and as you are little interested in this matter, I shall not enter upon it further than to express confidence in finding the animals suited to the object, though at the expense of time. I have just heard from one of my commissioners, within eight days' journey of Yarkund; a second will proceed to Indejan, if necessary, and a third to Bokhara. If I succeed in all my objects, the merit will rest greatly more with my commissioners than with me, and I really believe that few persons have been more fortunate in meeting with men of ability, and I must add, of attachment to the cause. Mahomed Azeem Khan assures me of his earnest support in Afghanistan, but the death of Meer Qubeck Ulee Khan, the chief of Balkh, has produced a chasm in that line of road which will not be readily filled. Our interest at Yarkund will be very strong, but whether the governor will dare to receive us, and agree to our views, without reference to Peking, is as yet doubtful. The reference would take up forty days by the route adopted, since the country of the Kujjah of Kashgar has been taken by the Emperor of China, although there is a road by which an army marched from Peking to Aknoo, within two days' journey to Yarkund, in forty days. I must not omit to observe that, in the reign of Shah Juban, there was a great commercial road from the vicinity of Nujubabad to Khoten, and that I saw a fragment of it, in 1812, near Chanpoor. If it could be managed to open this road through

Changthang, the shortening of distance, and the removal of difficulties, would be greater than is conceivable to those who have not seen the countries of Changthang and of Ladakh. Hitherto, horses bought from the Kosaks, Kalmaks, and Kirghiz, have been the only beasts of burden used between Leh and Yarkund, a journey of thirty days. When you learn that each horse has for his ration five pounds of barley a-day, with an allowance of grass in general so small as not to exceed, when procured for him by his master, the weight mentioned (I speak largely), you will not be surprised that many perish, even with the burden of two and a-half maunds. I had heard that once a camel was brought from Yarkund as a present to Kayha Tunzeen, and that the Kalmaks had been accompanied in their invasion of this country in the reign of the Emperor Aurungzebe, by a considerable number of these animals. With reference to the desert nature of the country to be traversed, the depth and the rapidity of the Shayook and Ovenasa rivers, which I have seen, and the occasional injury done by water to merchandize carried on horses only about fourteen hands high on the average, I was anxious to have it ascertained whether the Bactrian camel would not perform this journey; with this view, I commissioned a Tooranee merchant to buy and bring some on my account to Leh. This man arrived yesterday, having brought one male and three females, with a foal at the foot of one of them, which was dropped on the journey. The cost of a good horse at Yarkund, that is of a coarse strong animal, is from forty to fifty rupees, that of a camel seventy rupees, with enquiries. The former carries two and a-half to three maunds; the latter four at least. The maintenance of the camel in a woody country is very little expensive, and with a due proportion of females the stock increases. The relative value of the horse and camel for this journey can only be determined by actual trial; but it is one point gained to know that the latter can perform it.

Within less than two months, I expect to hear the determination of the Chinese authorities of Yarkund, as the Meer will despatch two couriers on horseback in charge of horses loaded with warm clothing for my whole party, provided matters can be arranged without reference to the emperor. If this reference take place, more time will be required. Our friends the Kashmeerees had propagated a report that we had a park of artillery, many guns and much ammunition, with a well-furnished treasury; in a word, that our preparations had much more the air of a design for taking countries than of arrangements of a commercial nature. The Chinese were much alarmed, and the Alim Akhoond, or principal law officer, sent for Moollah Khal Mahamud, and told him that he must present his compliments to me, and inform me that rumours had so alarmed (I believe he said *frightened*) the Chinese, that he doubted much for my safety. Moollah Khal observed that the accounts received were gross exaggerations; that the leader of the party was a British merchant, and had no more armed men with him than he had thought necessary for the security of his property in countries little known to Europeans; that he, M. K., would venture to become security for the country receiving no injury from our visit; on the contrary, he was of opinion, that the intercourse would be beneficial. On this representation, the message was withdrawn. Moollah Khal is of opinion that the interest of the Sahibzadah, Kuajah Shah Neas, of the family of the Kuajahs of Teshkund, backed by the personal representations of Meer Izzut Ollah, will have great weight with the Moosulman governors, who may take the responsibility from the Chinese authorities. But he conceived that it will be required by the latter authorities that our arms be sent by Surik-kol to Indejan; in which case, he (Moollah Khal)

would engage to convey them in safety to that city. Moollah Khal is the individual who brought my camels. He was formerly a horse-merchant, and foresees advantage to his interest by aiding my views. To visit Yarkund, I consider as of great importance, for if the good-will of the Chinese and Moosulman governors can be gained, a passage for our merchandize may be opened to Khoten and the bordering part of China proper. Were it not for this circumstance, I should have had no objection to have crossed the highlands of Pomer, which might have been effected by a successful negotiation with the chiefs of the Kirghiz hordes; and if we could find entrance into their tents, this would be managed. With Kosaks or Kalmaks, there would be less of difficulty and of danger. In some way, however, I must have an interview with two or three of these chiefs who are possessed of the most consideration on these plains. On whatever road we go, we must cross the great old road of commerce from Persia and part of Russia, with China and Chinese Toorkistan.

The principal inducement to open a communication with the Kirghiz, is the command of shawl-wool it would give to our manufacturers, without the objections which in my mind oppose the abstraction of this article from Kashmeer. A body of people, approaching in number nearly to that occupied by the branches of the third or fourth rank of manufacturers in Britain, is wholly dependant on the manufacturing of shawl-goods for its support; and, under the rapacious and iron hand of its oppressors, has not, nor can obtain any outlet for its labour. That epidemic amongst the shawl-goats of Ladakh and Changthang, and of other western provinces of Lhassa, of which there has been some indication at Netee, has destroyed hundreds of thousands, along with sheep, yaks, cows, and jabboos, or as here they are called zhos, without number. Of course, the diminished yield of wool has been severely felt by the looms of Kashmeer, but, instead of imputing the scarcity to the right cause, the governing authorities are so ill-informed as to take up the idea that the diminution is produced by some exportation of the article to other quarters, and of course our interference, although a mere trifle, is swelled into importance; for, though placed near the best sources of intelligence on this point, I cannot discover that above 100 horse-loads have been directed from the usual channel, of which the amount obtained by Mr. Rutherford cannot be very considerable. However, I would not now be instrumental towards removing a single maund out of the market of Kashmeer, from a persuasion that a much greater portion of evil would result to one class of human beings by its abstraction, than its manufacture could create of good to another. To the former, its employment is indispensable to the earning of their subsistence; whilst the latter have hitherto done very well without it. You will join me in opinion that we had better procure our shawl-wool from other quarters, which at present do not supply it to that country. Rutherford, however, is not likely to be acquainted with this stage of things, and need not lay the efforts of his agents strongly to his conscience, as what they have done cannot have been felt. Raja Runjeet Singh, however, slackens not his impositions, but rack-rents the unfortunate Kashmeerees to the last farthing he can extort. A year of great plenty in that province (Kashmeer) has reduced the price of rice far below the usual standard, and the surplus produce compensates not to the revenue farmer the lowering of its value, his calculation being founded upon a much higher rate. He has been thrown into arrears with the Singh, whose measures for realizing the balance have exasperated almost every individual of that most populous country against their ruler. Rapacious as were

the Dooranees, they were irregular in their oppression, and many escaped through a careless scrutiny, mixed with something like feeling. But the raja is a systematic grinder, oppressing most mechanically. From infancy acquainted with details, he knows, and is capable of counteracting, all the schemes devised by cunning; yet, such is the contradiction in human affairs, that I have witnessed the most barefaced abuse and speculation in the administration of his stud, which escaped detection, although occurring almost under his very eye. If Mohumud Azeem Khan were immediately to make a vigorous attack from Peshawer, across the mountains, upon Kashmeer, he would almost certainly succeed in driving out the Sikhs, from the aversion to the Singh existing not only in the Moosulman but amongst the Hindoo population. Little dependance is to be placed upon Kashmeeree reports; but a Khorasanee trader, just arrived, tells me that Azeem Khan has a large force ready for the attack of Kashmeer or Peshawer, and that his brother, Dost Mohumud Khan, is in command of a considerable army, which he means to lead upon Lahour. If, encouraged by his success at Munkera, Dost Mohumud attempt to realize this operation, he will have deep cause to regret his temerity; for Runjeet will certainly defeat him, unless there be great defection in the army of the Singh, which is not very probable; or, unless the Dooranee invite the Juns to attack Umritser, whilst he hovers in front of the Singh, and avoids a general engagement. By this latter plan, the Singh's power, circumstanced as it now is, on the whole range from the Attock to the Sutlej, would be placed in a most perilous situation, as the Juns could bring above a lakh of men into the field at almost the shortest notice, and would carry Umritser, the fort not being able to protect, though competent to overawe that city. I have heard it stated, that the plunder of Umritser would be little short of seven millions of rupees; but the treasure of the Singh, in the fort of Gobind-Gurh, amounting to between seven and eight krur, is perfectly safe either from surprise or desultory attack. It is not conceivable that any government can be permanent which creates so much, and such continued, discontent as that caused by the Sikh rule.

As far as I can understand my servant, now on the road from Kashmeer, Runjeet Singh has in some degree repaired the mischief done by the first obstacles thrown in my way, as to loss of time and expense, by allowing him to traverse Kashmeer; and although the obligation be not very great, as no merchant has ever been stopped by any former governor of that country on complying with its customs, yet I shall acknowledge the favour in a suitable manner. Instructions from the chief law-officer at Yarkund, for my guidance, were confided to Agha Mehdee, on his way from St. Petersburg to Leh. The Agha died on the mountains of Karakerum, and all his papers were destroyed. The loss of the document alluded to puzzled me much, and compelled me to despatch Meer Izzut to Yarkund. However, all circumstances considered, it is probable that we have gained rather than lost by not having received the instructions, or rather by the death of the Agha. This individual appears to have been one of those extraordinary characters which rarely rise up in Asia. From the condition of an orphan by a Hebrew-Toork father and a Kishtwaree slave, he worked his way, by dint of natural genius and industry, through the successive stages of menial, petty trader, and itinerant merchant, up to the state of a commercial and political envoy from Russia, and in his last expedition he trenched, and successfully, upon the adventures of a military freebooter on no small scale. This man's life had been made up of a rapid succession of

extraordinary incidents, and after the many anecdotes of him, recited to me both by his friends and by his enemies, I am at a loss how to class him except generally as a man endowed with natural talents of a surprising cast. If he had lived a few years longer, he might have produced scenes in Asia that would have astonished some of the cabinets in Europe. As far as I could distinguish truth in the discordant details of animosity and of friendship, I have detected traits of an expansion of view, seldom indeed entertained by the stronger mind when uncultivated, and except by his own exertions that of Agha Mehdee was wholly so. The exploits of Agha Mehdee, recorded by the pen of a Holcroft, would display more of the living manners of the north-western part of Asia, than can be collected from the writings of fifty exotic travellers in these countries. I regret not to have seen him, though his mental abilities and the other powers he had at command, displayed in opposition to my objects, as they almost certainly would have been, might have caused me still more strongly to regret the rencontre. His property is lost, and it is said that he has left a child now wholly destitute in Kashmeer. I will look out for it, and, if possible, procure and educate it.

Within the last few months, the province of Lahoul, on the right bank of the Chundra Bhagha, or early stream of the Cheenab, and dependant on Koolloo, is said to have had its assessment of tribute increased by the Singh beyond its means of payment. The Raj of Koolloo has ever been on terms of peace and friendship with the principality of Ladakh; but driven, it is asserted, to desperation, by an oppression of which the demands cannot be eluded, the Wuzeer has connived at, if not authorized, a foray upon the purgunu of Peete, in which more than 200 horses were carried off, besides other plunder. The astonishment produced by this event on the governors of Ladakh was extreme, as the Wuzeer of Koolloo had always been esteemed by them an upright and friendly character. Report says that, when the new assessment was notified to the Wuzeer by the agent of the Singh, the former observed, that the resources of the country were inadequate to the demand, and that he saw no mode of meeting it except by marauding on his neighbours; to which it was observed, that the means he might employ to raise the sum required were wholly immaterial to the Singh, but that the raising of the money was indispensable. By this outrage, the intercourse between the two countries has been stopped, and upwards of 200 horse-loads of merchandize from the Punjab to Ladakh and Yarkund have been detained at Tonsdee, the capital of Lahoul, through want of means of transport, the Lahoulee carriers not daring to furnish horses, through fear of reprisal. Almost incredible as the encouragement to plunder neighbours may appear to some, it does not seem so very extraordinary to me; as when I was at Sooltanpoor, Munnee Geer, the Singh's agent, actually deprived the Wuzeer of his silver qoohqu, on account of some delay in getting up the whole of the tribute.

A short time ago, Rajah Runjeet Singh sent two hurkaras to Leh, with a letter evincing anxiety respecting my health and future movements. This was accompanied by one to the Meers, enquiring minutely after my objects and destination, and also into the cause of the diminished supply of shawl-wool to Kashmeer. There was an obvious indelicacy in addressing these inquiries to a person in the Meer's situation, and as well to answer them in a suitable manner, as to shield the friends of the Meer in the Punjab from feeling any of the ill-effects which might be consequent on a candid development of plans and circumstances, accompanied by observations, I took up the pen on the

part of the Meer. Runjeet's motives and designs being clear to me, I took occasion to alarm his ruling passion, by setting before him the injury his revenue in Kashmeer would sustain by his prosecuting the system it was reported he had in contemplation regarding this country. However managed the language, the mere exhibition of the facts by me would have been impertinent, had not the reasoning been likely to avert the mischief which must have resulted from the execution of his plans, and this motive will, I trust, extenuate the offence in the eye of our Government, to whom I have forwarded the correspondence in copy. I seized the opportunity of representing the impression the current reports of his tyranny, over the countries under his sway, produced here, and am willing to hope that he will not actively interfere with the concerns of this country, until our Government shall have determined upon the tender. With much confidence, I look for the support of Sir Edward's opinions upon this subject. In the early part of his life, he was privy to the endeavours made by Mr. Hastings to open an intercourse with Lhasa. Now, protection afforded by the hon. Company to Ladakh, will not only actually command the intercourse between Lhasa, its western provinces, and Ladakh, but also the lucrative trade carried on from the tea provinces, and the western parts of Asia. It will likewise open to our merchandize an *entré* into those parts of Asia, through our own efforts, to which it has made its way only by Russia and its subjects. Of course, the success of any commercial project can be safely estimated by experiment alone; but when the road to the markets shall have been freed from artificial obstacles, we shall soon learn the value of these marts, now almost unknown to us.

Gurhdokh has been greatly averse to communication, and however selfish the motives of its authorities, looking to peculiarities in their situation, with which I was formerly less acquainted, I cannot now so much disapprove their conduct. Hitherto, every movement on our parts has been cautiously avoided, that might excite any further anxiety, than such as our long residence at this capital would necessarily create. But to this reserve has been sacrificed, *pro tempore*, an acquaintance with many objects of natural history desirable to be made. However, finding myself strong in interest, I prepared for an excursion in a direction which will bring me on the frontier of Changthang. Representations from Gurhdokh have produced delays, and we are told of the summits of the hills being covered with armed men to intercept our progress.

This report, communicated by the authorities of this place, furnished me with an opportunity of setting forth that it was one of the customs of Europeans to procure specimens of the natural productions of countries new to them, from motives of curiosity and for the promotion of science; that, towards accomplishing this object, I was about to make a journey to some lakes and wilds in the country of Ladakh, the frontier of which I did not mean to cross; that I did not see what cause for umbrage two peaceable Europeans, with thirteen or fourteen attendants, not military, accompanied by a hundred sheep, and a few asses loaded with grain, could reasonably give to the authorities of Gurhdokh, whilst confining themselves to the diversion of shooting wild animals within the country of Ladakh; that I had too high an opinion of the wisdom of the Government of Lhasa to believe they would appoint individuals to conduct the affairs of a distant province, who could take alarm at the approach of Europeans so circumstanced within the precincts of a territory not under their control; that my party would most cautiously refrain from any thing that could reasonably be offensive to any individual, and that if natives of Changthang should be induced to visit them from any motives,

they might be assured of being treated with respect, and with such hospitality as might be within the command of strangers and travellers.

LETTER II.

My Dear Traill :—For your most friendly and most acceptable present of Murray's work, accept my sincere thanks. Along with the books detained by poor Laidlow, the former reached me two hours ago. To Sir R. Colquhoun, express, I beseech you, a sense of my acknowledgments for your joint offer in respect to reviews. Of this, however, it would be ungenerous in me to avail myself, considering the doubtful issue of the enterprize in which my party are engaged.

From circumstances, I have thought it right to increase the pay of my party, and beg you will oblige me by handing the accompanying representation, with my best regards, to Captain McHough.

Runjeet Singh is, I presume, arrived in Kashmeer; and I have this day written to him for the purpose of procuring a renewal of my passport through that province, should the answer of the Chinese governors of Kashkar and of Yarkund refuse to accede to my wish of visiting those cities. George sets off to-morrow to the frontier of Bushehur, to meet and escort any one of the gentlemen of Subathoo to this capital; and, this effected, it will remain for them to cultivate the intercourse, should I fall. The Kashmeerees raised a most vigorous opposition to the accomplishment of this plan, by working upon the fears of the raja; but we carried our point, notwithstanding all the representations of danger from the armed force of Changthang, should we attempt to go through Peetee, which is reported to be held in joint tenure between Lhassa and Ladakh. It was stated in reply, that we should confine ourselves to the Ladakh part, and do no injury to any one. If the Changthang people, duly apprized of our intentions and objects, should think proper to act offensively against us in the territory of Ladakh, they must not be surprised if we should resist. However, I am not under the slightest apprehension, as I well know their character. I proceed in another direction, in the hope of obtaining a flock of sheep of the kind of which I sent you a lock of wool. The inhabitants of Bohtea work this into a kind of shawl, inferior, indeed, to that made from goat's wool, but still very good. Farewell.

Ever sincerely yours,

WILLIAM MOORCROFT.

Leh Ladakh, June 8, 1822.

LETTER III.

Beyenoor Pheang, June 11, 1836.

My Dear Traill :—Your letter of the 24th December reached me last night, and I answer its contents as they occur. In communications which have, I trust, come to your hand, my delay at the capital of Ladakh has been accounted for. Altogether, it is quite as well that I did not reach Bokhara at the time when the Russian embassy was at that city; as this occurrence would have furnished to the suspicious sovereign grounds for belief, that the rencontre was the result of a preconcerted scheme, and to this notion the conduct of the Russian ambassador would have been favourable. The object of that Russian, and its failure, may have an influence on my business; but, whether good or evil, it is as yet impossible to pronounce. I rest my hopes of success principally upon the introduction probable by the intervention of religious characters and of medical recommendations [*sic in orig.*]. The king labours under a

surgical complaint, which has hitherto baffled professional aid, according to the account given to me by Meerza Jowad, the physician of the king of Ferghana. The objections you have started to the acceptance of the allegiance of Ladakh, are in perfect accord with the circumstances which you suppose to exist, *viz*, its insulated and distant situation in regard to our present possessions, and its connection with China directly or intermediately through Lhasa. In regard to the first point, I have the pleasure to inform you, that Ladakh adjoins the frontier of Bushehur, without any intervening territory; and with respect to the second, that there exists no relation with China of a political nature. The last direct communication with that country consists in a letter from the Emperor Kéen Lung or his father, requesting the raja of Ladakh to give him information respecting the movements of Ae Khaguthe, sovereign of Kashkar, with whom the former was at war, and from whom he wrested his country. It would appear that the emperor almost allowed the raja to be his relation, as he conceded to the latter the honour of being descended from the stock of Heaven, as well as himself. There is something whimsical in this claim to heavenly origin amongst sovereigns, so widely distant. The Incas of Peru derived from the sun, the Chinese emperors and the rajas of Ladakh from Heaven, and the family of Raja Sunsar Chund from the moon. The emperor detailed in his letter a long list of presents, and amongst others some vases of *lapis lazuli*, which I was desirous to see, as no specimen I have met with of this substance was by its structure applicable to such a purpose. I have reason to think that I was gratified in the monastery near Pheang; but instead of these vases being *lapis lazuli*, they were merely Porcelain, of the colour of *lapis lazuli*; but whether glazed with it or with cobalt, I was unable to determine. As far as I know of the manufacture of this ware, cobalt is generally, if not always, employed to give the blue, and not *lapis lazuli*; however, the colour was little inferior to that of the latter.

Returning from this digression, I have to remark, that Ladakh has no further connection with Lhasa than what arises from community of religion, of language, and of manners, and by such other bonds as must naturally arise from its vicinity to it, and through commercial communication; to which may be added, a treaty between the two states, which arose out of the following occurrence. About a century ago, in consequence of some oppression exercised by a Lama on the neighbouring peasantry of Lhasa, in compelling them to assist in building a gorpha, or monastery, in the province of Changthang, the Lhasan government thought proper to seek redress, by taking from Ladakh the whole of the country of Changthang, as the Lama was a subject of the former principality. If this story be correct in its main features, there seems to be a prodigious disproportion between the offence and the punishment. However, to reconcile Ladakh to an act which deprived her of her richest possession, the Lhasa government engaged that all the shawl-wool produced in Changthang should be sold to no one save the Ladakh government, or their authorized agents. China gained such an ascendancy in Lhasa, consequent on her interference in aiding to drive the Nepaulese out of the territory of the latter, in the year 1792, as to render Lhasa tributary; and China sanctioned the usurpation of Lhasa, in respect to Changthang, for the purpose of the latter serving to cover the frontier of her rich, but weak province of Khoten, then recently wrested from the Kuaja of Kashkar. Putting justice out of the question, which in the territorial arrangements of Asiatic states is sometimes neglected, there seldom was a greater political oversight committed than that of the Celestial cabinet, in not consolidating the Chinese possessions, by cap-

turing, or at least rendering tributary, the states of Ladakh, Kufalon, and Balhe [*sic*], the only dominions of an independant nature existing then, in the whole line between Lhassa and Yarkund. But ignorance of exterior affairs generated a blunder, connected with that timidity, which is the predominant and, indeed, governing feature of Chinese politics.

In the eighth year of the reign of Aurungzebe, that ambitious monarch had an opportunity of making Ladakh tributary, and struck 2,000 vushurdfees at Leh, with an inscription communicating this event; gave a new name to the raja, and built a mosque. The allegiance to Delhi was continued till the invasion by Ahmed Shah Obhalu, who, taking for himself the rich province of Kashmeer, also secured the obedience of Ladakh, which was lately lost through the inability of the Dooranee government to continue that protection for which their supremacy was acknowledged. Arriving in Ladakh some time after the lapse of the Afghan authority, I was desired to submit a tender of the allegiance of this principality to the hon. Company. Farther I cannot go into this subject at present; and the relation has only been brought forward to explain the probable reason of the neglect of China to secure a country, which is the key of Khoten, &c.—that is, fear of this measure giving umbrage to the ruler of Delhi. Her discretionary foresight on this point is limited to blocking up the old road from Hindoostan to the interior of Khoten; but a small colony of the former natives of India, now amalgamated with the Moosulmans of the province, bear witness of the former communication between the countries in Khoten, after the expulsion of the Kuaja of Kanpur from his dominions. The Chinese punished the Kalmak government for their supineness in suffering the Guah Kuan to effect this conquest unmolested, by attacking them at a moment when two-thirds of the population of that country were swept off by the small-pox, which a few years before was introduced into Siberia for the first time. China had now got rid of two powerful neighbours, and in order to break the spirit of the Kalmaks, she distributed them largely into various provinces, and caused them wholly to evacuate Khoten. The destruction of the Kalmak power as a government, furnished to China the opportunity of attacking Lhassa, not as an ally, but as a tributary, which she would not have been able to effect without this preparation. China next enlisted vast numbers of Kalmaks into her army, of which they form the best materials; and she placed others on the north-western frontier, to breed horses for her cavalry. But China may have prepared also, by these operations, means for her own punishment. The Kalmak population are becoming strong, and China has recourse to poison, to prevent the Kalmak chief, arrived at manhood, from giving instruction and advice to his son and successor. This diabolical system effectually answers two purposes *at present*; but by the conquest of the Kashkar dominions, an accessibility has been afforded to the interior of China, and views of weakness presented, which may lead to a new order of things: and a slight impulse might generate events wholly unsuspected by the politicians of Europe, who are not too well informed of what is going on in these countries, and a reflected operation is, perhaps, capable of effecting alterations capable of rousing them out of their slumber. In one word, the allegiance of Ladakh accepted by Britain, would produce an influence that would completely change the character of our connections with China. I leave these hasty ideas to *your discretion confidentially*, the whole view I have taken being *largely detailed* to the Government; but, whether they will see matters in the same light as that in which they present themselves to my view, I cannot determine. I have perhaps said enough, however, to convince you that China has no hold on

Ladakh, nor has Lhasa. I know that within these few weeks the minister of that government, with the concurrence of the Chinese resident, has written to the following purport on the occasion of the Ladakh government asking their advice: "Every government is the best judge of its own affairs." As to the existing government of Ladakh, it is feudal. It has no money revenue, but derives revenue in produce, labour, &c. The raja, converted to Islamism in the reign of Aurangzebe, soon threw it off, and returned to Lamaism, which is professed by sixteen-twentieths of his subjects, although there are in his dominions many Kashmerees and Baltee Moosulmans, who are Sheahs; and Tooranees, who are few, and of the Soonic persuasion. A new race, that of the Argoons or Urgoons, is springing fast into consequence by members in and near the capital. It is the issue of Ladakhese mothers, principally by Kashmeree sires, and the individuals, less than the Indo-Britons [*sic*], are distinguished by acuteness of intellect. It is said that, formerly, the people of Ladakh had a popular representation or Wittenagemote, suppressed by the father of the present minister. Of this fact I am not quite convinced; but the many are not satisfied with the few; and two months ago, a seditious placard was affixed to one of the gates, accusing the reigning raja of tyranny, and threatening that the elders of the people would, on finding their remonstrances neglected, apply to me, with a request to take the reins of government into my hands. Of this I knew nothing till eight days after the placard had been removed, for placing which the complainants had availed themselves of the temporary absence of the raja at a religious ceremony, at which I was present. I do not thank the writers for bringing my name thus prominently forward, and conceive it to be a *ruse de guerre* of our commercial opponents.

You will not expect that I should treat of the mysteries of Lamaism, when I tell you that I counted upwards of a hundred folio volumes of one work upon the canons, ordinances, principles of this religion, &c., in the library of a monastery, a few weeks ago. The prophet Xachiamoon, or Xachiamoonie (Shakeamunf), existed above 1,000 years before the Christian æra. There is a triune god, and some of the precepts, exhorting to patience and forbearance under injuries, are nearly similar in true essence to those preached by our Saviour. But there is a Metempsychosis, with a record of inferior deities, as in the Grecian and Roman mythology. I must leave this matter, lest I exhaust your patience; and I really see the subject most imperfectly through the cloud of astrological, magical, and mystical farce and allegory, in which the tenets of this religion are involved.

I agree with you completely as to the most eligible line of road for Com-Com being by Joshee Muth, were Changthang pervious, and if I can get access to Chinese Toorkistan, a great step will have been effected towards this object. Changthang is wonderfully rich in gold mines, to the working of which the Chinese have raised objection, both political and religious, and as yet in the main efficient. As far as I can judge, the Chinese are a most strange people, and whether more sagacious or childish, I cannot determine; but this I do know, that they are most abominably abandoned, timid, and cruel.

In regard to shawl-wool, from the reports of Gerard, it would seem that he has been acting on a large scale, and the Mullick of Kashmeer deputed as an ambassador to Ladakh from the Soobadar Motee Ram, and from Jowahir Mull, the contractor of the wool and shawl-duties, arrived a few days ago, to make inquiry as to the cause of the shortness of the supply. The latter farms the duties for twelve lakhs per annum, and will, I apprehend, have some little trouble in realizing the original sum this year. The Soobadar wrote to

me on this subject, hinting that my advice or assistance would be acceptable. Of course I decline all active interference, but shew civility. The Begengee wool, which I know not by this title, is, I presume, the common sheep's wool of Changthang, the general produce of many varieties of the kind. I have been long aware that our spinning machinery gives a twist much too tight and hard for shawl-cloth. It would be no difficult operation to bring some hundreds of the starving Kashmeer population to Joshee Muth, and they would give us yarn of the requisite openness and looseness of twist, for manufacture at home, if there be a difficulty. I have, in effecting this by spinning-mills, seen shawl-dealers deceived at first sight, by our imitation of shawls of which the cloth is quite as good as that of Kashmeer, and the figure-weaving is beautiful. Now, for the imperfections in our shawls, the first arises from their being compounded of two different materials, which exhibit a difference in the wear, and contrast differently after being washed. The feel of the shawl is much inferior in fulness and richness to the shawl of goat's-wool. The borders are most negligently sewn on, whilst their attachment of Kashmeer shawls is so beautifully accurate, that the line of union is not discoverable except by a Ruffoogur. The flat needle-embroidery of the Ruffoogurs is much superior also to ours; and on the whole, I fear the shawl-dealers are more complaisant than candid, occasionally, in delivering their opinions, as, notwithstanding the accuracy of the imitation, the difference cannot long escape the discernment of an artist. Accident favoured me with a large collection of most beautiful patterns of shawls, drawn by the best artists in Kashmeer, by the orders of Mohummud Azeem Khan, and this I have forwarded to Calcutta, but have not had any intimation of its having been received. A few days ago, I had the pleasure of examining a bale of shawls, got up expressly for the Russian court, and these articles assuredly exceeded in beauty any I ever before witnessed. The shawl-trade in Kashmeer is on the decline. It was lately of vast magnitude. There were 18,000 shops of weavers, which, at four individuals each, give a total of 72,000 in this branch alone. The separation of the hairs from the wool is a most tedious and expensive process. I long considered this point, and attempted an alteration, which proved right in principle, but wrong as to the season of attempting it. By losing my way, I found the method, literally, and now can extract the wool almost perfectly clean, within a very short time.

It is to be regretted that we have not now an importation of skimmers, pattern-drawers, &c.; but in all the other branches save in that of embalging, our artists are *now* superior to those of Kashmeer. I would agree with you as to an increased demand producing an increased supply of material, on a sufficient field, were the principle or rather practice to be applied in Europe; but when I know that the lands of Changthang are capable of bearing ten times the stock I saw upon them; that the demand for shawl-wool has been so far increasing as to have called it from Toorkistan to the looms of Kashmeer, and that for many years past the available supply from Chanthang has fluctuated between 800 and 900 horse-loads, and gives no higher, I perceive a want of accord between theory and practice, for which I cannot account. There are other sources of supply now known to me, since my residence in this country; but as I advocate the growth of tea on our own mountains, and the breeding of horses within our own territories, so, on the same principle, I conceive the rearing of goats on our own Indian mountains to be the soundest policy. In Scotland, there may be inaptitude in the climate; but I know there have been errors in the management of the government. The animals were sound and

well before they were brought from the sterile mountains into the rich pastures of the plain. Sheep and goats are subject to foot-rot and to scab, more or less, according to breed and to locality, and I have seen the former largely in low pastures in Changthang; but I kept a flock of shawl-wool goats, during the rainy season, at Hajeepore, in Behar, and they had neither foot-rot nor scab. The French flock were first infested with scab, but they got well, and have sold from fifty up to 400 livres a head. I received intelligence of the importation and whole transaction from a female correspondent in France, in 1818-19.

The breed of sheep in Jooar is indigenous to that country, and somewhat similar to that of Bushehur, Lahoul, Chamber, and Kotven. It is not a degenerated breed of Tolmy, and the latter would not answer even in Jooar. You are right as to the principle of sending the sheep to the mercy of mountaineers at certain seasons. The place ought to be somewhat bordering on the *mestu* practice of the Spanish shepherds; but I should follow it farther. The natives of Mana send their sheep annually into Changthang, and pay for the liberty of pasturage, during the summer months, a trimushee for a score, I think, perhaps more, but not much more: I have the particulars in my notes. I could adopt the practice without difficulty after a time. The foot-rot is a local disease, like the thrush in the foot of the horse. The scab gives way to external and not to internal means. Lucerne must form a large winter resource, with endive and turnips. The subject is not new to me, and I entertain no fears for the result, except in respect to that epidemic, which has lately done so much mischief in a vast extent of country.

If the government will allow me full sweep, I shall be able to do much, and I want only a range of country, which promises no revenue nor any thing yet available to their purpose. I am now in progress to purchase a flock of 200 sheep, of that breed of which I sent you a little wool. I believe this to be dwarfed, by poor keeping, into a race the smallest, perhaps, on the face of the earth; but I should be bold enough to wager, that a square inch of the skin of a ram, now travelling with me, contains more fibres of wool than are to be found on the same (I mean, an equal surface) of that of the skin of the finest-wooled sheep in Europe. The fleece of this animal is to the touch nearly as hard as a door-mat, but the fibres of a lock are most beautifully fine; and yesterday, a piece of cloth was brought to me, that at first sight and feel reminded me of merino kerseymere. Shawls are made of it in Balkh, not so fine, by any means, as those of Kashmere, but fine enough to convince me of the importation of this breed into Britain being a national object. The Mullih of Kashmere, in return for my civilities to him, will, in ten days, meet me in the sheep district, to adjust terms of keeping a flock, for two years, on my account; and a lama engages to take care of another. I am going to operate for cataracts on a raja in the mountains, and I trust he will give aid to my project. I chose the sheep myself, and will leave nothing to others on which I can exercise my own judgment. I shall stand in need of your aid with the work, in a matter by which our country is to benefit, and probably not me, according to the usual fate of projectors. The mutton of this sheep is, perhaps, not to be surpassed in flavour. I shall be thought to be strangely enthusiastic, if not something more; but this I disregard, as long as I feel that I am right in principle.

In 1815-16, I learned from the old dewan of the grandfather of the present raja of Nypal, that two tea-plants have been brought from China into a garden in the latter country, and long ago wrote to Gardner on the subject. In a late letter, I wrote in such a manner to the government, respecting tea, as, I am

willing to hope, from the disposition of the government, may, in conjunction with better opinions, be of some use on this point; and I neglect not to examine the practicability of procuring seeds by Yarkund and by Siling.

The fruits escape not my attention. Here we have the jargonelle and cressanee pears, and the brown beurree is, I believe, in Kashmere. But pray send to Gerard, as the apples, apricots, and vines, of the north of Bushehur, are, according to the report of Puddeer Ram, not much inferior to the apples and apricots of this country, and the grapes are better. I would send, through expectants in me, these articles from Bushehur, but your interest is better than mine in that country.

George is a very fine fellow, and is gone to the border of Ladakh, to convey some one of the Subathoo party to this place, for the purpose of gratifying a wish signified, and of keeping up the communication after our departure. For, though we get on here now, there will be a great struggle after we leave our friends; and it behoves us not to lose the ground we have gained for the interests of our country.

I have been highly gratified by finding, through the evidence given before the House of Lords, that there is not a single British-Russian merchant acquainted with the *existence, even*, of the trade with China carried on through Yarkund. This evidence has enabled me to detect an error into which the gentlemen of our late embassy have fallen, naturally enough. They have seen British woollens in almost every town through which the embassy passed,—were one to ask how they knew them to be British woollens, they would be puzzled to give a convincing answer. I thought that I saw much British cloth, in the summer months, in Ladakh; but observing a queer kind of ornament on one shoulder of each party, I ventured to ask leave to examine it, and found, to my mortification, that it was a printed gold coat of arms, the name of French and of Dutch manufacturers; and I have seen no other British cloth, save scarlet, here called *Saglat*, an obvious corruption, which is the genuine appellation in Toorkistan for broad-cloth.

I have no more paper; and perhaps you may congratulate yourself upon this circumstance, as reaching the end of my march before my companions, I am seated on a stone, under a willow, fast by a large stream, surrounded by a band of natives, who bother me with questions, and also poison me with the stink of *khung*; many of them in high spirits, produced by that liquor. God bless you. Farewell.

Ever sincerely yours, WILLIAM MOORCROFT.

Finished at Bazgo, on the road towards Kashmere, June 11, 1822.

THE ESTATE OF ALEXANDER AND CO.

THE "Creditor" of the estate of Alexander and Co., whose letter was the subject of a communication from the solicitors of that estate, inserted in our last Journal (page 75), has conveyed to us his acknowledgment that the explanation given by the solicitors has removed his apprehensions.

The writer adds:—"Why do not the assignees at home publish their account-current of the estate, for the information of the creditors, the greater number of whom are residing out of London, and consequently have not an opportunity of waiting on them, as suggested by the solicitors?" We can only say, that we should readily give insertion to such statements; but, having no claims upon the estate, we have no title to apply for information.

The writer, moreover, regrets, "that the solicitors confined their attention to the single point first referred to," and that "all the other matters, in the two letters, which fell under their notice, as well as that of former statements, remain unanswered."

LETTERS OF THE LATE MR. MOORCROFT.

LETTER IV.

MY DEAR TRAILL :—I beg your acceptance of a waistcoat made in Kashmeer. Notwithstanding our great delays, the cause of commerce will, I trust, be greatly benefited by arrangements already made, and by those that are in prospect. I have not been idle whilst here, and when my despatches shall reach Calcutta, the Government will, I hope, not be dissatisfied with what has taken place. I send you many seeds. Perhaps the most valuable to the mountains, and what indeed is beyond all estimable value in Europe, is a plant I found in Ladakh, which is a specific for the rot in sheep, and fattens these animals and goats quicker than any other forage known, when made into hay; but whilst green, no quadruped will eat any other part save the flower, and this for the sake of a honey-like secretion with which it is covered. Bears are very greedy of it; cows eat it sparingly, and it blinds horses for a time. This plant, called *prangos*, is nearly allied to the *cicuta*, or hemlock family, but is, I conceive, a nondescript. I have been the first to point it out to the inhabitants of Kashmeer, as indigenous to these mountains. My determination is formed, and not to be changed except through orders from home. I hope the Government will allow me to build a cottage near Joshee for a residence, where I think I may benefit the cause of commerce as well as of agriculture, especially of sheep-farming, for which I have collected materials, and such a flock as I have now in Ladakh, under the care of a Cho, who is a friend, is perhaps, for beauty of fleece, scarcely to be surpassed by the best flocks of Spain or Saxony. This flock will remain at keeping until I return, but if I die, it will be delivered up to any agent deputed from the Government to receive it. The sheep is of a very small kind, and none of the wool is exported. During the last year, my expenses have greatly exceeded my salary, and, perhaps, I may never retrieve the expenditure, except through consciousness of having endeavoured to be useful. In my last, I requested you, I believe, to oblige me by taking some measures to ascertain if Dhun Singh and his family would sell to me the homestead of Lacoor, and lease the rest for seventy or ninety years, or sell the whole in perpetuity to my child, born in this country; in fact, to do what can be done legally. Capt. Evans, at Ganjam, and the society at Saugor, form a precedent to the Government to grant me a long lease of untenanted, uncultivated ground, from Joshee up to the border. I can obtain settlers of a desirable kind, and can introduce modes of outturn heretofore not thought of. An influence has been exerted that will, I trust, in process of time, convert our unproductive mountains into the abodes of plenty and happiness: you may think me enthusiastic, but what has happened may possibly also induce some confidence. The manufacturing coalition on the continent, according to accounts I have seen, is great against Britain; but we have resources of uncommon magnitude, and I trust you will have your share in aiding me to develop some as yet not tried. But, according to the scale in which I hope to operate, a large range will be required, and when improved, the country will revert to the Government with a large population,—if *this be desirable*,—a new capital and new sources of industry: 130,000 people are *here* employed on the shawl-manufacture, and their labour only just saves them from starving, whilst the country could raise raw materials of great value for exportation, or for working up at home. I have never had a true idea of what oppression in a government was, till I witnessed its effects here. You

would be highly gratified could I duly lay before you the rank in which our national character is held by Asiatics in the countries I have visited; and the just administration of the mountain territory is one of the grounds of apprehension to the governors of Chouthan, that their subjects would desert them. If I be established in the mountains, the knowledge I now possess of the character, means, habits and politics of the authorities connected with Chinese rule, will enable me, I trust, gradually to establish a correspondence useful to all concerned; and I can carry the points aimed at in my journey to the north, when the principal difficulty to a most valuable intercourse will have been overcome. Things on our frontier have not a very agreeable aspect; but I am willing to hope that we shall be able to make our way through the troubled country of Kabool. I have raised the military strength of my party to thirty men, whom George has put into a tolerable state of discipline. He is a very fine fellow, and exerts himself to the utmost in his endeavours to forward my views.

There are a few trifles at Almora, of which, should I fall, I must beg your acceptance; but should I live, I may, perhaps, ask you for them in person. George desires his best remembrance.

Ever sincerely yours,

WILLIAM MOORCROFT.

Kashmeer, July 24, 1823.

G H U Z Z U L.

What the fountain of life gave to Khizzar* of yore,
 Thy lip hath a hundred-fold borne to my own;
 Whilst nature, outshone by its rubies, forbore,
 And hid her vain gems in the breast of the stone.

By thy glance of enchantment, our souls are betrayed;
 In thy cheek's smiling dimple, imprisoned they lie;
 And burns all my bosom with flame undecayed,
 Where passion's fond flow'rets but blossom and die.

My heart is bound up in those ringlets:—it sighs,
 But alas!—my control of its pulses is o'er.
 Ah cruel!—can pity disdain such a prize?
 Can'st thou seek with that glance but to pierce it the more?

How to paint thy soft graces:—how picture thy charms!
 Oh! seek not lost Khacan; † for long ere this hour,
 When the flow of thy ringlets his reason disarms,
 A world has been lost by their magical power!

* Khizzar, the prophet Elias, who drank of the fountain of immortality.

† Khacan, the assumed poetical name of the late shah in all his works.