

Fasciculus 11 – Moorcroft in Ladakh

plus several letters sent from Leh

Transcribed from digital images of original documents in the British Library
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Transcriber's Notes:

- 1st section on the Manufacture of Shawls: skipped
- Four sections on specific topics, respectively “Caps of the Ladakhees”, “Hosiery for females”, “On the manufacture of Paper from Cotton &c”, and “Sketch of an attempt by Russia to form a connection with Ladakh” have all been grouped together despite being spread across the journal and interrupted by letters. All the letters have been grouped together and kept in their original (chronological) order.
- There are a few transcribers' inserts in square brackets in the text; longer comments in endnotes. Moorcroft's own footnotes have been indented, for ease of following the text.
- Pagination: The pages are numbered on the obverse only, with odd numbers. At p. 45, there is a break in the sequence, as the library clerk who inserted the page numbers seems to have turned 2 pages together, and the numbered 45 ought to be 47. We have noted this in the transcript, and resumed the pagination as it appears on the MS. We have also inserted the relevant even numbers of the reverse of the pages, in square brackets. The 4-digit numbers refer to the Library's numbering of their photographic slides in the folder IOL_593

Pages 1 to 23 [1249 to 1272]

Notice of particulars respecting the Manufacture of Shawls in Kashmeer continued
[To be included in a separate document containing all or most of Moorcroft's writing on pashmina and the Kashmir shawl.]

23/1273

On the Caps of the Ladakhees

The male population of Ladakh wear high Caps of black Silk Velvet or of woven Cloth, felted Cloth not having been yet applied to this purpose in this Country. The Sketch below[*] will furnish an idea of the form and measures of the Cap of the Kaloon or Wazeer supposing the two sides to be squeezed together. Its outside consisted of two pieces of Russian Silk Velvet the edges turned inwards and stitched together very firmly. Immediately within the Velvet was a coarse Cotton Cloth stiffened with Paste of Wheat to give to the Cap some firmness. A piece of Mooltan Chintz served as the lining of the upper and greater portion and a stripe of China Sky-blue Silk Brocade

*[*An area set aside for a sketch is blank]*

[24]/1274

with flowers in gold thread $4\frac{3}{4}$ inches in breadth lined the lower edge. When the Cap was wore the brocade was turned to the outside all round for half its depth and to make this easy to be done there was a perpendicular slit about two inches in length through the back part of the rim. The Caps of the other classes differ from this only in being a little shorter and of less costly materials and consisting generally of strong home made black Cloth with a clipped Nap. The Raja, Kaloon, Noona Kaloon and other Officers of the Government wear their Caps upright or nearly so, this erectness being considered as a mark of dignity. And a second stiff cap of a conical form made at Yarkund worn within the former gives it support. In the other orders the top of the cap falls forwards or backwards to one side or the other according to the taste or convenience of the wearer but the flatter it lies on the head the greater humility it indicates in the possessor.

Black Silk Russian Velvet of a close pile two feet in breadth sells at Leh at from four to five Rupees per yard which I apprehend to be a lower price than would answer for British Velvet of an equal quality. However few persons use Silk Velvets and I presume that very thick Cotton Velvet may be afforded at so low a rate as to supersede the use of woollen cloth with those persons who are in easy circumstances. ~~A Cap of black cloth~~

25 /1275

This Velvet should have a strong back & be faced with a thickset and rather long pile like that of the strongest and best Corduroy. But the Cloth must be left plain and be of a shining black. A considerable saving in the material and in the labor will be

made by weaving the sides of the Cap in the shape and of the dimensions given, observing that the Cloth be so much larger as to allow sufficiently for the turning in of the edges. I conceive the highest price obtainable for two pieces of Cotton Velvet for a Cap will be three Rupees and considering the fluctuating value of the Yamboo or Ingot of Silver for which it may be expedient to change them when not laid out in the purchase of raw material, perhaps it may be well to estimate the Rupee at little more than two Shillings. It is presumed that the primary object of the liberal & provident Merchant of large Capital in a Country new to him and to his fabrics is to satisfy the demand of the market with his commodities at a low a price rather than at a high one in reference to large and ultimate gains but it is obviously just that his spirit of enterprise should not be checked by less. As the Manufacturer is to share in these ultimate gains of a Commerce created by the explorations of the Merchant the former should in principle meet the latter by selling to him all new Goods suggested by him at as low a rate as he can afford them. In reference to the vast improvement of the apparatus employed in the fabrics of Cotton within a short period, the increasing

35 /1285 [*the section resumes 10 pages later after three letters*].

From Page__ Caps of Ladakhees continued

increasing cultivation of the material the power of raising it in British India to almost any extent, the low freight and the reduced wages of manual labor in Britain it is hoped that the Cap pieces will be charged very moderately. The consumpt[ion] of Cotton in this article will indeed be trifling at first but as far as it may go it will occupy a certain portion of Capital and labor and will soon lead to extension. The price I have quoted

[36]/1286

Ladakhee Caps – for men

as the highest procurable at Leh may serve as a basis for arranging the price of the Cap between the Manufacturer and the Merchant.

It might be well to prepare two thousand Caps as a trial. The lustre of of [sic] black Hair Plush might tempt but unacquainted with its price and ignorant and doubtful whether its roughness in one direction may not counteract its appearance I can only venture to mention without recommending its application to this use. It is not expected that the lowest Orders of people will purchase Cotton Velvet Caps at three Rupees each when they can procure a Cap of Country Cloth for 4 Anas or 15^d. I shewed a thick worsted Cap such as is in use amongst Lascars to the Merchant whom I consider not only as the best informed but as the individual most favourably disposed to us of any at Leh.

After objecting to its shape which I told him could be brought to that desired he remarked that its much greater warmth than that commonly employed would render the wearer more subject to attacks of head ach when he should happen to sleep without it than the former. I drew out the lining or double and shewed that it could be prepared single. It then became merely a question of price. I proposed that

the lower edge should be lined for turning up with a piece of sky blue Chintz well glazed having a pattern of a yellow flower insulated in imitation of Brocade printed upon it. To the probability of this taking amongst the lower orders he assented

37 /1287

Hosiery for females

provided the price did not exceed a Rupee and he thought it would not be unsafe to try the Market with one or two thousand of this description.

Hosiery – The lower orders of females in this Country though they wear Boots have never yet indulged in the use of knit woollen Stockings perhaps on account of no other being procurable than those of Kashmeer which are of considerable price compared with their flimsy texture and consequently indifferent wear. If once the women were to begin to try strong coarse but soft woollen Stockings such as are made at Bala in Wales they then would by [illeg] their elasticity causing them to adapt themselves to the size and form of the limb be so much more comfortable than the stiff felt or the little yielding Country Cloth as soon would produce a predilection in their favor and cause a very large annual consumpt. They should however be very strong and very cheap. The article is bulky, low priced and never likely to produce larger profits but may even generate loss if it be not carefully guarded against the Moth in the rainy season. Yet it is one of those articles which though not directly profitable in any material degree may become so ultimately by forming a medium of exchange against those by raising a preference for

[38]/ 1288

for British Merchandise and by giving employment to Women and Children at home. If it be thought advisable to make a trial of coarse Stockings which cannot entail the risk of much loss they should be of two kinds Viz. One to reach to the swell of the leg or half Stockings the other up to the Knee. As they will each be wore in Boots their color is perhaps of small consequence and no sacrifice of price should be made on this account but strength softness and low price are indispensable to their introduction on a large scale. Perhaps 1500 pair of each variety would be sufficient for a trial of the market.

William Moorcroft

Supt of the Hon' Compy's Stud

on deputation to Chinese and Oosbuk Toorkistan

Leh, Capital of Ladakh

May 7th 1821

[40] /1290]

On the manufacture of Paper from Cotton &c

When I left England I was desired by a most respected friend who had been in the Hon Company's Civil Service to make myself acquainted with the mode of

manufacturing paper from Cotton as practised in India which he thought might be usefully followed in Britain.

In every City and place I visited in Hindoostan at which I understood that Paper was made I neglected not to enquire to be enabled to communicate the process to my friend but was uniformly answered that Paper was there manufactured not from Cotton but either directly from the fibres of the Sun Hemp (*Crotalaria Juncea*) or more commonly from Cloth, that had been made of that material.

When in the neighbourhood of Kashmeer I renewed my enquiries and learned that Paper was there prepared from Cotton Rags alone, from Cotton and Silk Rags mixed, from Silk Rags alone and from the fibres of the Hemp (*Cannabis Sativa*).

Paper from Cotton Rags alone is made in large quantity, of various thickness and color for all the uses to which paper ordinarily is applied but that of other materials is only made to order and but in small quantity.

Cotton rags are washed perfectly clean then squeezed dry and after being thoroughly

41/1291

moistened with a strong ley of vegetable Alkali are pounded into a smooth paste in Mortars and Pestles worked by Pedals.

This Paste when washed thoroughly white and reduced into the state of "fine Stuff" is thrown into a Vat mixed with water till of a proper consistence and then worked into sheets in the usual manner. These when dried are slightly washed or sponged with Rice water and after becoming dry are polished by being rubbed with a smooth stone.

Paper is stained of a great variety of colors by coloring matters being diffused through the fine Stuff, when in the Vat.

The stained papers are more used in layers interposed between Shawls in bales than for any other purpose.

The common Kashmeer paper is easily torn and very subject to be eaten by worms. Perhaps the first imperfection arises from it being in general too thin and the second from the Rice water or rather mucilage tempting the worms.

Some of the thicker Paper made from Cotton rags is smooth and beautiful and it is said that the Silk Paper is particularly lustrous and durable. No Specimen of the latter has yet fallen into my hands.

I do not understand that the Rags are rotted or that any part of the process of making Paper from Cotton rags differs materially from that employed in preparing it from cloth or fibres of [illeg.] Hemp.

[42]/1292

If Cotton Rags be not now manufactured into Paper in Britain there would seem to be no substantial reason why they should not be applied to this end as no difficulty ~~apparently~~ presents itself in the manufacture and the paper is apparently applicable to most of the purposes for which this article is commonly used. It would certainly

answer well, printed or stencilled, for hanging Apartments the dressing with Rice Water enabling it to receive from the stone a polish of a high glaze. The Vegetable Alkali employed to discharge the grease & color from the Cotton Rags is brought from Hindoostan, is said to be prepared principally from the Ashes of a Shrub that grows in the Desert of Beekaner and known there by the Name of Ashkar. It is sold in Kashmeer at the rate of from one to two Rupees per Turuk of six Sers Kashmeeree. The strength of the Ley is not known.

William Moorcroft

Supt of the Hon Compy's Stud

On deputation to Chinese and Oosbuk Toorkistan

Leh, the Capital of Ladakh

May the 7th 1821

85/ 1337

Sketch of an attempt by Russia to form a connection with Ladakh
In July 1812 I was at Daba in the Country of Gurhdokh or Chanthan when a circumstance trivial in itself gave rise to a suspicion in my mind that this Country had previously been visited by Russians.

Whilst I was sitting at the Durbar of the Wuzeer and Deba of the Chief Authorities of Daba in a room much crowded by people two small Dogs suddenly rushed towards me fondled caressed me pushed jumped barked and appeared as much rejoiced at seeing me as if they had recognised in me an old and favored acquaintance.

After their first demonstrations of joy were somewhat subsided they appeared desirous of showing their accomplishments by sitting up on their haunches and pushing forwards their fore legs in succession as is sometimes taught to these Animals in imitation of presenting Fire Arms. The breed indigenous to the Country of Tibet is that of the large woolly haired Shepherds Dog. One of these animals was of the Pug kind and the other as far as my memory serves was a Terrier. It was remarked immediately by the Spectators that these Dogs did not caress any other individual of the Assembly in the same manner not even their Masters. They were said to have been brought by Ooroos, Russians and to have been given by them to the Wazeer and Deba.

Russians were said now and then

[86]/1338

to come to the fair of Gurhdokh and Ahmed Khan the principal Agent of the Raja of Ladakh for collecting Wool stated that sometimes as Armenian Merchants they went to Kashmeer and the Punjab coming to Leh by the way of Yarkund. Some thick drinking Glasses of coarse manufacture were said to be Russian as was also a straight Sword belonging to the Gurphun of Gurhdokh afterwards seen to [?by] me. But although several persons at Daba talked of the coming of the Russians as no uncommon occurrence yet the Gurphun positively asserted that they had never visited his station and declared his belief that that they had not come at all into Tibut. That there was ground for believing that mercantile intercourse existed

between Russia and Tibet was clear not only by the articles just mentioned but by others of different descriptions yet as the Gurphun appeared sincere both in his conversation and his acts I was at a loss how to account for the difference in the evidence on this point. Some time after my arrival at Ladakh I was informed that the Emperor of Russia had caused a letter to be written from him by an Officer of rank to the Raja of Ladakh but as it was in the Russian character and a document said to be a Translate was in Nogaee Toorkee¹ its contents were only understood in part. Their general purport however was as follows. The Emperor after much introductory compliment expressed his satisfaction at learning that the Raja of Ladakh protected foreign Merchants and governed his Country with justice. That he was desirous of farther connection with

87 /1339

him but as the Country of Eesa Khan intervened and his Officers were oppressive and unjust to Merchants the intercourse with Ladakh was rendered difficult and the difficulty could only be overcome by a new line of road. This the Emperor was of opinion could be effected if the Raja would exert his friendly offices with Omar Khan the King of Kokhan to open a passage through his Country. There were also allusions to the benevolence and justice of the Emperor and expressions of desire that an answer might be returned either by the person who delivered the letter or by an Ambassador who would be received and treated with due respect and honor at St Petersburg. An answer was returned but whether it contained more than a complimentary acknowledgement I was not informed. Nor have I been able to ascertain the exact period when this letter was forwarded accounts differing between the dates of six and nine years and it has not been thought proper to make minute enquiries. The original Letter in Russian as well as its Translate was put into my hands and there seemed proof of its authenticity by the character, the recurrence of the name of the Emperor and the Seal of a person who bore the insignia of several orders of honor appended to it. The Bearer of this letter from Russia was an individual of the name of Agha Mehdee an Adventurer of extraordinary talents. A Hebrew of the name of Ibraheem as it was supposed from Persia resided for some time in Kashmeer as a Dealer in Shawls and purchased from the Raja of Kishtwar

[88]/1340

a female Slave of that Country for five hundred Rupees. This female afterwards deserted her first Protector leaving Agha Mehdee her son by him an infant. Ibraheem died but whether he left property or how it was disposed of is unknown to my informant. The child was supported by some of his Fathers friends and at an early age was compelled to seek his own fortune. His education was of that scrambling kind allied to his destitute condition and picked up almost wholly by his own industry and talents. Once while in the situation of a menial Servant he managed to raise a little Capital and commenced dealing in Shawls by which after various journeys into Persia, Tataria and Russia he realized a property

comparatively considerable. But in the Country of the Euzofzies he was attacked by Thieves and plundered of all he was worth the Robbers leaving him only a Girdle. Reduced to absolute poverty his acquaintance with the languages of Persia Tatory and Russia all of which he spoke and wrote well and his knowledge and address induced Aga Suleeman an Armenian Merchant to advance to him the Sum of two thousand Rupees. With Shawls to this amount he went to Russia and after expending in travelling a thousand Rupees he returned with six thousand Rupees as the profits of the expedition. Investing this sum in the same merchandise he realized thirty thousand Rupees from his second adventure and this reinvested and resold gave him

89 / 1341

a Lakh of Rupees and twenty thousand Looms said to be worth about a shilling each.² Agha Mehdee was now a Merchant in some estimation in Russia but unfortunately he placed the whole of his Capital in the hands of one Abeel an Armenian Merchant or Banker of great reputed wealth but who suddenly became a Bankrupt and as it was supposed fraudulently. His [sc. The] reputation of the Agha had so much increased in Tatory that Moollah Purtab a Khojund Trader put into the hands of a Servant of his own under the guidance of Agha Mehdee a property in Merchandise and Imports amounting to fifty Yamboos or about a thousand Pounds. This property was, as stated by the Agha, placed likewise in the hands of the Bankrupt not without strong suspicion on the part of Moollah Purtab of the Agha having first appropriated the proceeds to his own use and only informed him of the Money being deposited in trust when the failure of the Banker became known to Agha Mehdee. And some statements of the Agha having availed himself of the Servant of Moollah Purtab being ignorant of the Russian language and of having entered the Merchandise of the latter in his own name in the Custom House books of Russia and having prevailed on the Servant to return to Yarkund if true, seem to give color to Purtab's suppositions. During Agha Mehdee's former journeys into Russia he had formed an intimacy with a Nobleman, who had considerable influence at the Court of St Petersburg and who introduced the Agha to the notice of the Sovereign. Upon the representations of the former it

90/1342

is presumed that Agha Mehdee was charged with the first Letter to the Raja of Ladakh. The Enemies of the Agha have accused him of his having deceived the Emperor by relations of the Raja being disposed to become his Tributary and that he had actually substituted a letter nearly to this effect in lieu of that written by order of this Chief. As some years elapsed betwixt the first letter of the Emperor and the time when Agha Mehdee undertook his second mission it is said that he experienced opposition from a General at Moscow who considering him as a Chevalier d'Industrie abusing the confidence of the Sovereign delayed furnishing to him an escort ordered by the Emperor. However the war in Russia may account for the delay of his Mission. On his second journey to Ladakh he was invested with the

character of an Envoy had an Order of Honor bestowed upon him with which he was so elated as to assume airs of superiority over his brother Merchants that disgusted the latter, if indeed their representations may not have sprung from the real superiority the exercise of his talents had given. Report conveyed advice of his approach to Leh and I was disposed to attribute the repeated delays of the Prime Minister to his expectation of the Agha. The Agha it appears was fond of the pleasures of the Table and though practically acquainted with the derangement produced by the difficulty of breathing on

91 /1343

the heights of Karakorum in the process of digestion when the Appetite is indulged he could not refrain from his usual quantity of animal food. He was seized with indigestion and died but his arrival was announced as immediate and his death had been concealed. However some of the Kashmeeree Courtiers of the Kaloon or Minister had informed him of this event adding that he had died without Heirs that his property was large and might be appropriated without difficulty. That in order to prevent this occurrence which was considered as probable his principal Servant subsequently to his decease had assumed the character of his Partner and prepared a Story to this effect with which he purposed to impose on the Kaloon. Moollah Purtab who had been for some time at Leh in the hope of wresting from the Agha some remuneration for his loss received information of his death and of the advice given to the Kaloon by his Courtiers. He silently left Leh and conducted with much management the Kafilah to the House of Mohsin Alee the principal Merchant in Leh and under whose protection he considered the property secure from the rapacity of the Governors of the Country should they on the plea of holding it for the Heirs of the deceased or under any other pretence attempt to invade it.

Mahummud Zuhoor was the Son of a Bokharan Dealer in Shawls residing in St Petersburg. He represented that his Father was the Bondsman of Agha

[92]/1344

Mehdee and that he accompanied him as a kind of Supercargo and Representative of his Father. Moollah Purtab bore witness to the fact of the Father of Mahummud Zuhoor being a Man of property in Russia and the Minister was led to believe that his Son had a just claim on the whole property of the Kafilah. Whether Moollah Purtab did really credit the account of Mahummud Zuhoor is not obvious but it is notorious that his silent expedition saved the property in the first instance and his representations joined to those of Mohsin Alee and of Mahummud Zuhoor diverted the Kaloon from taking charge of the Merchandise. Mahummud Zuhoor placed in the hands a large Sum in Gold Ducats of Holland under the apprehension of the Kaloon seizing all his property, but when he redemanded the Money Purtab refused to refund the whole on the ground that Agha Mehdee was not empowered by him to make use of his Merchandise but that he had cajoled and sent back his Purtab's Servant and appropriated the proceeds. That Agha Mehdee had actually paid him a small Sum from the proceeds of the Bankrupt Estate and on his own account thereby acknowledging himself Purtab's Debtor. That the interest of the Capital of

the Merchandize which Purtab had paid had in six years doubled the principal but that he only asked for the balance due to him on the Principal foregoing a claim to interest.

93 /1345

Much contention arose between the Parties which at last was quieted by an Arbitration who on a view of all the circumstances awarded to Purtab the balance of his Account. As soon however as this adjustment had taken place some of the Moosulman Servants who had accompanied Agha Mehdee from St Petersburg informed the Imam of Leh that the whole of the property of the Kafilah belonged to the Emperor of Russia and neither to Agha Mehdee nor to Mahummud Zuhoor the former however being the regular Envoy from the Emperor and the latter merely his Servant. A letter was delivered to the Raja from the Emperor but I have not seen it nor am I acquainted with its contents. I was informed that the Agha was charged with a letter from the Emperor to Raja Runjeet Singh and it was intimated that it might be put into my possession. I declined to be concerned in the translation but in a few days two large letters were brought to me open. One was in Russian on large English Imperial Paper and the other in Persian on nearly the same kind of Paper but plain whilst the former was ornamented with a gold border. Both had been pierced by a Ribband to which a Seal had been affixed and been large as appeared from its general outline impressed on the Paper. I enquired how the Seal had been broken and was told that in consequence of the difficulty there was in translating the last letter from the Russian notwithstanding Agha Mehdee read and wrote both languages it was deemed proper

[96]/1346

proper to have a Translate formally prepared by Meerza Aboo Turab a Persian in the Service of H I Majesty. That though the Translate was well done as to its meaning the Persian writing was but indifferent and Agha Mehdee broke the Seals in order to have the Translate copied by a Moonshee of Keppuk Shah[,] the Alim Akhoon of Yarkund and the latter was that shown to me. The proceeding seemed greatly irregular but the Envoy had as reported very ample powers. This letter was in its terms greatly complimentary and its intention was to commence an intercourse with the Chief or Sovereign of the Punjab who was also lauded for his attention to the cause of Commerce by the favor he showed to foreign Merchants. Eight Horses were loaded with dyeing Stuffs for the purpose of dyeing Shawl Goods in Kashmeer of colors represented on patterns of English Superfine Broad Cloth, Flannels and Shawl Cloth. The colors were Scarlet, Orange, Yellow, Green, Blue Lilack & Purple in all 52 of which the following were the proportions Scarlet 10 patterns, Orange and yellow 19, Green 4, Blue 11 Purple and Lilack 8. Besides specimens of the same colors but not so numerous in Shawl Yarn & Silk.

[LETTERS]

[26]/1276

To

C. T. Metcalfe Esquire
Secretary to the Government
Political Dep^t
Fort William

Sir

1 I beg leave to submit to you a copy of a letter written by the order of H M the present Emperor of Russia to the Raja of Ladakh and sent to this Country about six years ago by H M Envoy, Agha Mehdee.

2 The letter written in Russian characters by my friend and companion Mr George Trebeck is an exact facsimile of the original and an accurate copy of the Translate of this document into Nogaee Toorkee has been executed with great fidelity by Meer Izzut Oollah Khan who has endeavored to render the sense of it in Persian as far as this was practicable but he has been foiled in portions from the badness of the Toorkee as well as from certain Terms such as Titles employed in it being unintelligible to him.

I am, Sir, your most ob^t & hble Svt

Leh Capital of }
Ladakh Jan 1st }
1821 }

William Moorcroft
Supt of the Honble Compy's
Stud

On deputation to Chinese and Oosbuk Toorkistan

To C. Metcalfe Esquire
Secretary to the Gov^t
Political Department
Fort William

Sir – I have the pleasure to inform you that this day an engagement has been made by the Raja, the Kaloon or Wuzeer and other Authorities of the Princi:

27 /1277

pality of Ladakh for the establishment of a commercial intercourse by British Merchants with this Country and through it to Chinese and Oosbuk Toorkistan under certain conditions and limitations which have been subscribed to by me on the part of the Merchants.

2 – Accompanying I submit, in original, the engagement entered into in Tibutee and Persian and signed by the Raja and the principal Officers of the Govt and also those in English and Persian, in copy, which were subscribed by me.

3 – It may be observed that I have exceeded the discretionary powers with which I may have been invested by the Merchants from whom I was specially deputed in taking upon myself to form a condition for others, but when it is considered that unless I had agreed to this condition no other British Merchants would have been permitted to traffic in this country a circumstance wholly inconsistent with the principles and spirit on which the present enterprize is conducted and that in their favor a reduction of nearly one fourth of the amount of the Duties levied on Merchandise of Traders from the Punjab is effected I am willing to hope that in subscribing to the terms alluded to I have acted not with imprudence.

4 – By this arrangement with Ladakh it may reasonably be expected that within a moderate period British Woollens, Cottons, Hardware of patterns suited to the taste of the Country which I am endeavoring to procure with many other articles of a miscellaneous character will find

[28]/1278

entrance into the Cities of Yarkund, Kashgar, Aksoo and Eela in Chinese Toorkistan, into those of Khoten and even into Toorfan Iskee, Kamool and other Cities in the North West of China out of the reach of our Commerce as at present carried on by Sea with that Country.

And also into Kashmeer, Chitral, Kafiristan, Budukshan, Indejan, Bulkh, Bokhara Samarkund and the other principalities and States of Oosbuk Toorkistan.

5 –In the course of within the last month the Moosulman Raja of Little Tibet has unsolicited tendered his aid towards furnishing Porters, Provisions and any other means his Country would afford and also by introducing us as his friends to the Moosulman Chiefs, his Relations and Allies on the road to Budukshan and Kokhan.

~~6 – Since the engagement with the Ladakh Authorities has been concluded a Yarkund Merchant to whom I have had an opportunity of being surgically useful has offered to advance to me fifteen thousand Rupees in money if I should require this Sum.~~

I am, Sir, your most obedient & humble Ser^t

William Moorcroft

Leh, Capital of }

Ladakh }

May 4th 1821 }

Supt of the Hon' Compy's Stud

on deputation to Chinese

and Oosbuk Toorkistan

29 /1279

To C. T. Metcalfe Esquire

Secretary to the Gov^t

Pol^t Department

Fort William

Sir

In a former letter under date of the 1st of Jan^y of the present year I had the pleasure of transmitting to you the copy of a letter written by the order of H M the Emperor of Russia to the Raja of Ladakh; I beg now to submit to you a copy of a letter written also by the order of the Emperor to Maharaja Runjeet Singh.

2- The Copy in Russian characters is a faithful facsimile executed by Mr George Trebeck but the ornamental parts in the copy are in Indian Ink whilst in the original they were in gold. The Persian Translate was made at St Petersburg by Meerza Aboo Turab, who is in the service of the Emperor.

3- Agha Mehdee, the Russian Envoy mentioned in the letter, had in charge a second address from H M to the Raja of Ladakh, which has not yet come into my hands.

4- From Shamei or Sinpola on the Irtysh Agha Mehdee was escorted by a Troop (80) of Russian Cavalry across the Kosak and Kirghiz Steppes for a journey of two months to Toorfan Yungee on the borders of Chinese Toorkistan about a day and a half journey northwards from Aksoo.

5- On the heights of the Mountain of Karakorum Agha was suddenly attacked by a violent illness and died.

[30]/1280

6- In the middle of last month (April) Mahummud Zuhoor arrived at Leh with a Kafilah laden as was presumed with the effects of Agha Mehdee.

7- Information was given to me that Agha Mehdee was entrusted by the Emperor of Russia with a sealed letter to Raja Runjeet Singh and it was intimated that it might be put into my possession. I declined the proposal. A few days afterwards two letters of which the copies are enclosed were brought to me without a seal and I was told that the Seal had been broken up by Agha Mehdee at Yarkund in order to have the Persian Translate written in a fairer character by Mookhtab Saoh[?] the Moonshee of Kippuk Shah the Alim Akhoon of that City & that the letters had been seen by many persons.

8- Some Emeralds and Rubies offered for sale by Mahummud Zuhoor were brought to me by a Kashmeeree Merchant who wished for my opinion as to whether they were real Emeralds or imitations. Three of them were set in Gold as an Armlet; three others of a larger size round and oval cut rose[?] fashion were unset. They were larger than any I have seen except some wore by Maharana Doulut Rao Scindia, but though their surface was well finished and of exquisite polish their interior was full of flaws and their water was rather of a lighter tint than is esteemed by Jewellers in Europe.

31 /1281

The Rubies were uncut small and but of light value. Had the Emeralds been free from flaws they would have been very valuable and as they were had a splendid and imposing appearance.

9- Most of the Horses of this Kafilah were loaded with dyeing Drugs intended to be employed in Kashmeer in dyeing Shawl Goods according to the specimens of colors on flannels furnished by a British Artist at St Petersburg to which City they were to be conveyed; but as Mahummud Zuhoor was not acquainted either with the materials or the manner of using them he desired my advice on these particulars. The assortment appeared to me equally extensive as judicious containing Cochineal, Indigo, Wood Burberry root and many other Dye Drugs in substance and bottles filled with Dyes in the state of Paste and a large quantity of acetate of Lead, Alumine Potass, Soda, Lime & other articles as Mordants. There being no Labels or written instructions or Books along with the packages induced me to observe on the strangeness of this occurrence which was greatly at variance with the excellence of the materials and the care with which they had been packed. And the singularity of this oversight was not diminished by the fact of Agha Mehdee having] been capable of writing Russian Toorkee and Persian. It was stated that Agha Mehdee had remained under the tuition of a British

[32/1282]

Artist until he had become proficient in the art of dyeing which had rendered labels or written Memorandums unnecessary. I suspected that the papers of the deceased had been destroyed for some sinister purpose but told Muhummood Zuhoor that if he would send for a Dyer from Kashmeer I would communicate to him such information as I might possess respecting the application of the Mordants and of the Dyes to which they were appropriate. He seemed grateful for the aid I was willing to afford.

10- Soon afterwards I was told in confidence that some of the Moosulman Servants who had accompanied Agha Mehdee from St Petersburg had informed the Imam as a secret that the Kafilah belonged not to Agha Mehdee but to the Emperor of Russia of whom the Agha was merely the Envoy and Agent.

11- Within a few days I learned from unquestionable Authority that Muhummood Zuhoor was about to sell the dyeing Drugs to a Kashmeeree and to go to Bokhara.

12- Thinking it incumbent on me to endeavor to save the Emperor's property and to prevent if possible Muhummood Zuhoor from committing so heinous a breach of trust I desired Meer Izzut Oollah Khan strongly to contrast the impropriety and danger of the line I understood he was about to pursue with the personal benefit and reputation that would accrue to him from an opposite conduct.

33 /1283

That if he persisted in his apparent design of appropriating the property of the Emperor to his own use that of his Father who is a Shawl Merchant at St Petersburg would certainly be rendered responsible for the amount of his peculations if he were himself not visited by corporal punishment for the crime of his Son. That it was most probable the Emperor would cause the transaction to be represented to the King of Bokhara and equally probable that he would be punished by the latter or be given up to the Emperor. That, if on the contrary he would endeavor faithfully to

execute the Commission with which Agha Mehdee had been charged as far as lay in his power it was most probable that he would receive the reward intended for that individual on the successful execution of his Mission. That he knew as earnest of farther recompense Agha Mehdee had already been honored by the Emperor with the gift of a gold chain & Medal of great value and with other marks of distinction. That besides giving him what aid I could in regard to dyeing I would furnish him with a Certificate setting forth that he had explained to me the dilemma in which he was placed by the death of Agha Mehdee, his desire to accomplish the object of his Mission according to the orders of the Emperor and his request that I would assist him with my advice.

13- Muhummood Zuhoor affected to be greatly obliged by this counsel which he promised most punctually to follow but I have

[34]/1284

since learnt that he has actually sold the Drugs and has despatched Servants to Kashmeer to purchase Shawls for him with which he will proceed to Bokhara. I also am informed that he does not purpose to deliver personally or even to transmit the Emperor's letter to Runjeet Singh and in this I apprehend he is influenced by a desire to retain an Emerald which from circumstances I am led to think was intended for that Chief. I have offered to take charge and transmit the letter to Runjeet Singh if he be disinclined so to do and he has promised to transfer it to me. If he should not abide by his word in this particular I will forward to the Raja a copy of the Translate with a full explanation of the circumstances.

14- As there is not a paper of any description in the property of Agha Mehdee there is of course no documentary proof of the funds belonging to the Emperor and the party who divulged the secret is dependant on Muhummood Zuhoor so it is not to be expected that he will become public accuser and give evidence against him and even were this to happen his testimony contradicted by others and unsupported by written proof would be of no avail.

In a word there is not any ground for my interfering except in the way of representation and advice, which surrounded as this man is by Kashmeerees eager to get good bargains and un-influenced by moral principle are little likely to be of use.

15- Muhummood Zuhoor has in his possession a considerable Sum in Dutch

35/1285

Gold Ducats some of which are of a coinage of so late a date as 1819.

16- After Agha Mehdee should have executed his Commission at Ladakh Kashmeer and Lahour he was ordered by the Emperor to purchase a large number of Shawl-Wool Goats from the Kirghiz near Toorfan Yungee which were to be convoyed across the Steppes by a Guard of Russian Cavalry now at Senapolze?] ³waiting for his orders into the interior of Russia, but the whole of this expensive [illeg.] is likely to be infructuous.

I am,

Sir,
your most ob^t & hble Ser^t
William Moorcroft
Supt of the Hon' Compy's Stud
on deputation to Chinese and
Oosbuk Toorkistan.
Leh, Capital of Ladakh
May 6th 1821

[38]/1288
To Walter Nisbet Esquire
Secretary to the Board of Trade
Fort William

Sir
I have the pleasure of transmitting a Drawing of a pattern for the corner of a Shawl Handkerchief designed as I have reason to believe by the Orders of the last Dooranee Governor of Kashmeer Moohummeed Azeem Khan. The Centre piece has not reached my hands.

2. This pattern is thought by Dealers in Shawls who have been in Russia to be particularly well suited to the Russian Market.

Leh, Capital of } I am, Sir, your most ob^t & hble
Ladakh, May 7th} Ser^t
1821 } William Moorcroft
Supt Hon Compys Stud
on deputation to Chinese and Oosbuk Toorkistan

39 /1289
To H. H. Wilson Esquire
Secretary to the Asiatic Society
Fort William

Sir - The skins of some wild Quadrupeds of this Country I have now the pleasure to forward are in a state so mutilated as very imperfectly to convey an idea of their sizes and form but as some of these differ considerably in color from the same kind of Animals found in other parts of Asia to which Europeans have had access I have thought that they may not be altogether unacceptable to the Society until opportunities may occur for procuring others less imperfect which the present state of our commercial relations with Ladakh promises speedily to realize.

2. The Skins now transmitted are

1st That of the Lynx.

2nd Those of the Leopard, Male and Female, the latter is the largest.

3rd That of the Bear.

4th That of the Fox.

5th That of a variety of flying Squirrel> which was very beautiful before an attempt was made to cure it, but a Servant [illeg.] out of the preserving Liquor without my knowledge, officiously and endeavouring to unfold the fins[?] or side processes broke and spoiled the skin.

6- As from circumstances I have yet had but a cursory view of the wild Animals of this Country I shall postpone giving any account of them until I may possess the means of doing it with more accuracy.

Leh Capital of

Ladakh May 7 1819 [?should be 1821?]

I am, Sir, your most ob^t & most humble Ser^t

William Moorcroft

[42] /1292

...

My Dear Palmer,

You will most heartily participate in the gratification I experience on the successful accomplishment of a commercial engagement with Ladakh.

Our mutual friend Metcalfe will have handed to you the Agreement formally executed, almost along with this,

43/1293

if accident shall have placed it in his hands rather than any other of the prolix details with which I have troubled him. The value of this new connection is not lessened by the difficulties which opposed its execution.

Timidity in the Rulers supported by intrigues of Kashmeeree and Lhassan Merchants have presented an opposition so obstinately and unceasingly alert as to call forth the utmost exertions of patient counteraction on my part.

Narrations of Particulars would be intricate, tedious and useless. *L'affaire est faite.*

The apprehensions of the Raja were nearly insuperable. The Ranee being a Purda Nusheen, at least with regard to us, approaches towards creating an interest with her were difficult if not dangerous. However a mark of attention ~~towards~~ to wit.[?]

Benares Dooputhas and other trifles of female apparel, though wholly without precedent in this Country, was not lost on her acute discernment. She was in want of Pearls. I had some for more convenience in carriage than cash. A Gift savored of an Agent of Government, and a sale at the usual rate of value would afford no immediate advantage, nor prospect of future benefit, from the visits of Feringhees.

The matter was modified without open avowal of its object without violation of delicacy on her part or too great sacrifice on mine to be inconsistent with the character of a Trader. A diminished price, well understood, was the basis of adjustment, and we soon felt the value of this arrangement. Once matters had an aspect nearly hostile. To the exercise in archery, usual amongst the Tatars in the

Spring was superadded the novel assistance of the dastardly Kashmeerees, who exchanged the Distaff and Pen for the Bow and Quiver. My Escort was

[44]/1294

directed quietly to renew their long suspended manual Exercise. Two Sipahes had deserted. George, the Apothecary, Meer Izzut Oollah Khan, his Son and a Squad of twelve in the aggregate, turned out as Volunteers. The Drill was at first undervalued by the Rulers and considered as a dance for amusement but its gradual development in manouvre displayed combinations of powers that surprised and admonished [sc. astonished?]. Our most inveterate adversary, or first Municipal, desired to be initiated. The strength of our Army, 24, will be maintained. I give a black uniform and fur Cap and have requested Runjeet to furnish me with twelve stand of Arms⁴. A progress has been made by the Volunteers that operates beneficially on the Sipahes. You will ask on all this if "*le jeu vaut la chandelle*"⁵ the expenditure of money and time "*les frais d'un Baron*"⁶ with the Table of an Anchorite and all his imaginable privations. My judgment may be erroneous but I look to great effects from patient and fostering management.

There is enough of wealth diffused through this Country by Commerce (though naturally poor in the extreme) to pay profitably for the articles I have suggested in various papers and as *l'appétit vient en mangeant*,⁷ new sources will be discovered for the gratification of new desires. Looking forwards the prospect is still more alluring if Chinese jealousy can be allayed. Communication with Russia by the towns of Kiachta and Eela points out the mode of commencing by frontier stations. *Ce n'est que le premier pas qui coûte*,⁸ and it will be seen whether this can be made by me with advantage. A letter from the second Moosulman Authority in Yarkund to Meer Izzut Oollah Khan is in general character friendly

1295 [page not numbered]

and promising, but he refers for full explanation on our views and designs to details given by him to the Russian Envoy when on the point of departing from that City for Leh. On the Mountain of Karakorum the Envoy could not forego his usual gratifications and paid the forfeit of his imprudent indulgences with his life. This event has much disappointed me and embarrassed my designs for the present as no explanatory memorandum is found in his effects. I would have gone with Meer Izzut Oollah to Yarkund to adjust terms with the Chinese officers leaving the Merchandise to follow with George, but the long continued peace of that neighbourhood has lately been disturbed by an irruption of the Kirghiz from the western Steppe. The Chinese Governors of Kashgar punished some of their revolting Moosulman subjects by the extermination of their families. And the new Monarch of China has visited this severity by causing the heads of the Joong-Joong or first Residents his two Umbans or Resident Counsellors, all Chinese, and the head of the Moosulman Governor to be taken off which has just been done. This punishment has struck terror into the heart of every Chinese Authority on the frontier and not one probably is now bold enough

to venture upon any measure which may carry with it the air of an innovation. Nay, were I to visit Yarkund without intimation perhaps the Joong-Joong out of an excess of zeal, might introduce me to the Sovereign of the Celestial Empire at Peking instead of permitting me to pursue my route and intention towards paying my devoirs to the Commander of the Faithful at Bokhara, a mutation of plan not altogether convenient in my present circumstances. But round about or direct, sooner or later, we shall carry our points if it be pursued "*avec obstination moutonnaire*"

1296

moutonnaire bien dirigée"⁹, Expectation awaits the arrival of the Kafilah Bashee at Leh who was commissioned to bring Horses from Yarkund for the carriage of my Wares. If he arrive not speedily a Tooranee Merchant to whom I have been surgically useful and well known to the Governor of Yarkund will endeavour to negotiate for our reception, as the novel occurrence of the inroad has disturbed my intention of personal and abrupt appearance. If he succeed not the next attempt will be to secure a passage by Surakol under the Governors sanction through the Kirghiz Tribe on the heights of Pameer. Failing in this we must take the lower road by Baltee and Gilgit over Pameer into Indejan and Kokhan and for this I have made some preparation with the Raja of Baltee and have given a thousand Rupees as a *douceur*¹⁰ to a Peerzada of great influence at the Court of Kokhan to precede and pave the way for us to the presence of Omar Khan the sovereign of that Country. This road presents in itself many commercial advantages as bordering in Kaferistan which abounds in Gold and whose inhabitants now "*en friche*"¹¹ as to Commerce, from their fondness for finery may after due appliances be brought to terms of intercourse notwithstanding the illegalities[?] with which they have been loaded by those who only visit to ravage the Country and to carry off Children as Slaves. But the roads are somewhat difficult and I must pay largely to ensure the friendship of the Moosulman Chiefs in the first instance. However as the great point of the friendship of Ladakh is secured we leave no Enemy behind and half of our difficulties are removed. Money, patient perseverance, medical practice, proof of immediate and prospect of future benefit must accomplish the rest. Hafiz has

45 /1297

not yet arrived with the Merchandise and Treasure but he will come in good time. To open the road this trip for our merchandise to the Cities of Chinese Toorkistan Khoten and of the N W of China is a vast desideratum but if not this journey the road must open by degrees.

You will see by some of my MSS if you have time, or courage to wade through them that at periods long past there has been great traffic from Hindoostan to China by Caravans in the very line I am now upon. The Chinese since their conquest have obstructed a path somewhat grass grown subsequently to the decline of the Moogool Empire but often and advantageously beaten in the reign of the Magnificent Shah Juhan. It seems direct into the heart of China and its first great

Pass is only fourteen days journey from this place. But the policy of China has closed this Ghat rendered the present route circuitous and restricted to the frontier in regard to Strangers. I must repeat that I wish not to mislead but may be misled myself. If I am in error as to my expectations of Tatory and China proving in time a great outlet for British Merchandise I have at least to plead in support of the probability of there being a Market for certain wares, the authority of Russia. Observe her steady, persevering efforts to gain a commercial, or political footing in these Countries, not by the old roads described by Jenkinson, Oshek[?], Bell &c but by new routes across Kokhan &c. Weigh her sacrifices. A commercial Envoy accredited by the Emperor, furnished by H I M with letters to Native Chiefs, loaded with honors, attended by a numerous Escort of Cavalry, entrusted with a heavy Purse and much Jewellery. If modern example fail to carry conviction of the importance of commercial

[46]/1298

connection with these Countries turn over the page of Ramudios[?] and note the anxiety of European Nations excluded from Trade with the East by the Portuguese in their endeavors to induce the Sovereigns of Russia to become their Carriers to and from China, notwithstanding the enormous length of land Carriage between the Capitals of the two last Empires. But this prospect has long ago faded from our sight by the facilities of transports by Sea. To be ranked an Enthusiast little discourages me either from entertaining the views I conceive to be just and fraught with advantage to my Country, however Apathy may estimate their worth, or from prosecuting them up to their objects, as far as is in my power and in consistence with my present official duties. The *Ne plus ultra*¹² to the circulation of our Wares in the interior of China from the Sea is I apprehend very limited, their supply being small in proportion to the vast populousness of this Country and its accumulation of wealth during the many Centuries it has been undisturbed by invasion or domestic commotion.

To create a demand for our manufactures they must be modified and adjusted to the taste of the Country. By this principle my hints towards new fabrics have been governed. Of course they will be communicated to you and you will have the opportunity of determining whether their basis be founded in truth or in the ardour of imagination. I am looking out for a Draughtsman from Kashmeer to copy clothes, dresses &c.

If it be determined to prosecute this Trade, the mode of doing it will become a primary point for consideration. Will you and Mackillop continue it, will there be an association of Merchants to form a general

47/1299

purse for its prosecution, or will the Hon Comp^y take it up? The outlay will be large and Patience will perhaps be largely drawn upon before large profits be realized. I see not my way clearly as to raw material. The Hon^{ble} Comp^y are buying Sheeps Wool from this Country by their agents whence it is inferred (as stated elsewhere)

that its importation militates not against the landed interest in Britain and creates no opposition to the measure. The finer kinds reach not our Manufacturers nor can they without due arrangements (not within the power of the Commercial Agents) which on my return I will take the liberty to submit.

Your former speculation in Shawl Wool proved that this material was then undervalued and I experienced no light reproof for accomplishing the very object as to Britain, which I am led to believe has lately been splendidly rewarded in France in the instance of M. Jaubert. Russia sends patterns for colors, for cloths to be dyed in Kashmeer and dyeing drugs and what is more to the point some of these specimens are upon our Shawl Cloth in direct proof that though she may admire the tints she disapproves of the Material. Can there be a more striking fact to indicate the necessity of obtaining Shawl Wool for our Manufacturers and opens it not a Market for our fabrics in Exchange? Were farther indication required to shew the necessity of Shawls being made from Goats Wool let me draw your attention to the circumstance of the Orders of the Emperor to take Shawl Wool Goats to Russia from the borders of this Country. But

1300

the exertions of the Board of Trade published through the struggles of Mr Rutherford to compete with the Kashmeerees in purchasing the raw material evince a change in the sentiments of our Shawl Manufacturers.

I wish to explore a new Mine of this article and think its accomplishment probable. To carry on the Trade with China and Tatory on a remunerating Scale a Depot on the Mountains is indispensable but of this I must reserve details till I see you, as many collateral and important points that spring out of local information merit cautious consideration, and can only be appreciated in personal discussion. You will agree with me that as a Servant of the Hon^{ble} Comp^y it is my duty to submit in the first instance my sentiments in a public manner to the Political Secretary.

Ulterior adjustments and movements upon them, should they be thought worthy to be acted upon, will I presume be a subject of arrangement between the Government and the independent mercantile Interest, for I sufficiently understand your motives for entering into this speculation. You are aware that I cannot pronounce on the period of my return. I must implore your patience. The profits from a commercial speculation of at least three years duration are not likely to be large but my journey has been clogged with difficulties of no common nature. I have sold some broad Cloths at a saving price to you (about 50 per Cent advance bating the cost of carriage) with a view to encourage a Merchant to push it into China by the N W. And I hold out a sight of a Depot in the Hills with a prospect of beneficial encouragement to the first

49 / 1301

Merchants, who may visit it, accompanied by a good stock of Ingots of Silver. Of Horses I speak not at present but my expectations are nothing damped by what I have seen and heard on this subject. I could not write till I had settled with the

Governors and my only opportunity of forwarding despatches with safety is by three of Raja Sunsar Chunds Shepherds, who have been with me ever since June last, and who must accompany a Kafilah to Chumba on the tenth inst. Say every thing that is kind to your Circle. Remember me to Mackillop, and use your influence with the Government that they may not think me idle, or willingly dilatory.

Leh Capital }
Of Ladakh }
8 May 1821}

I am
My dear Palmer
Your affectionate Friend

William Moocroft
Supt of the Hon Compys Stud
On deputation to Chinese
and Oosbuk Toorkistan

To John Palmer Esq
&c &c

Leh, Capital of Ladakh }
May 8th 1821 }

To

H.H Wilson Esq^{re}
Secretary to the Asiatic Society
Fort William

Sir

As far as my memory retains the recollection of the shapes and combinations of the letters in the inscriptions on the sheets of Copper I had the honor of forwarding to you from Punkhesur[?] through the kindness of the Commissioner of Kumaon, they bear so close a resemblance

[50]/1302

to one form of the characters now used in Tibut as almost to convince me of their identity.

2nd If this presumption be well founded it is probable also that the language there made use of is that of Tibut and equally probable that no one at Calcutta will have been able to make out the purport of the inscription and that that it will be returned to the Ravul of Buddreenath without that gratification of curiosity I was willing to hope might have resulted from its transmission.

3rd Under these circumstances I see no other mode of attaining a knowledge of its contents then by sending either the plates themselves or a facsimile to Lhassa or

Ladakh to have the inscription first copied in Tibuttee from them and then translated into Persian.

4th But though Lhassa be the University of Tibut and possess stores of learning and such proofs of progress in the art of engraving and block printing on wood as will one day much surprise the literate of Europe yet this Metropolis is objectionable because instead of being interested in our favor the Rulers behold Europeans with fear if not with aversion, and the resident Kashmeeree Merchants, the only persons who could translate from Tibuttee into Persian dread our approach lest we should supersede them in their very gainful Commerce.

5th There are several Kashmeerees at this place sufficiently conversant in the language of Tibut for all common purposes though but little acquainted with the Mysteries of the religion of Xacheeamoon or the probable mystical language in which they may be enveloped.

6th Besides this obstacle the repugnance to enquire

51 /1303

into any other religion save that prescribed by their own Prophet is in opposition to our views, but the latter amongst so venal a people may be readily subdued by a due address to their interest.

7th There may exist therefore at Leh the power of producing a general interpretation of the meaning of the legend but probably neither quite an exact nor an elegant translate.

8th The development of its contents may perhaps display other historical facts besides those of the Religio loci.

Tradition reports circumstances strongly warranting a suspicion either of Alexander having visited this Country, or having sent some Officer to follow the course of the Indus from the point at which he crossed that River or that this Country has been explored either by Seleucus by some of his Bactrian successors, or by their Commissioners.

9th A most precious vestige of Grecian workmanship has been stated to me by the Servant of the Owner to be preserved with religious care, as if indeed the existence of the State of which he is the head depended upon its safety.

10th A journey of a fortnight would probably clear up my doubts respecting its origin but as the possessor is not on amicable terms with the Rulers of Ladakh and the road through his Country is circuitous, it would, if taken by me, renew apprehensions and distrusts, which have cost me much time and labor to allay and I am therefore compelled most reluctantly to forego the opportunity.

11 If however certain other roads expected to be opened to me should be closed against me by the

[52] / 1304

Chinese Authorities I shall be reduced by necessity to pursue the southern line and may ascertain the facts of the case without awakening the fears of the Ladakhee Governments.

12th Building one presumption upon another it seems barely possible that the Inscription may contain some information relating to the period in which it was engraved or impressed, and if its Antiquity date not from an Era more remote than that of the Macedonian Sovereign perhaps some intimation of his presence in Asia may here be preserved.

13 The society will I am satisfied seize with eagerness any opportunity of verifying even a distant hint on so interesting a subject and I will under the hope of such an occurrence use my influence with the governing Authorities, the principal Lama and with the British Factor to have the inscription translated with all possible fidelity should the Most Noble the President think proper to authorise the Commissioner for Kumaon to cause the Plates to be sent under the charge of two Hurkurus (without badges) to Leh through the assistance of Captⁿ Ross of Busehur.

14th The expense of the transport including also that of remuneration to the Copier and Translator will be most trifling in comparison with the gratification that must arise from a consciousness of having made every attempt practicable to arrive at a knowledge of the meaning of the inscription. I entertain not the most distant apprehension of any accident happening to the Plates.

15 I venture to take the liberty more urgently to press this point from the disappointment experienced in all my

53 /1305

endeavors to trace the works of the Grecians in the Punjab in buildings, statues or coins.

16th The presumed identity of Chundra Kotach with the name of Sandracottus, the portraits of Alexander in his Persian Costume but retaining the Grecian Helmet, in the possession of Raja Sunsar Chund led to an expectation of discoveries, which might perhaps have been realized had not the Emperor Juhangeer plundered and carried off the Archives of his Ancestors. A slender hope still remains that a translate of the Pedigree of his family may contain some allusion to the connection of his predecessors either with Alexander, Seleucus or Megasthenes.

17th I was told that at Makursa the ancient Capital of Koolloo I should find ruins of buildings left by Alexander, but not a vestige was visible. The inscription at Koomla Gurh belongs to Sekunder Sakee[?] and the Copper Coins dug up in Sekunders Camp on the Sewalik were those of the same Invader and of some of the Kalifs. At Budukshan something may yet remain to indicate the former visit of the Hero, or of some individuals of the Bactrian Dynasty, but the religious furor of Ameer Temoor exerted in destroying all the inanimate representations of man leaves little chance of any relic of Grecian Art being discoverable either in Samurkund or Bokhara.

I am Sir

Your most Obedt & most Humble Serv^t

Leh Capital of
Ladakh Ma 8th
1821

William Moocroft
Supt of the Hon' Companys
Stud

On deputation to Chinese and Oosbuk Toorkistan

[54] /1306

My dear Sir¹³

Whatever conclusions you may have formed of the motives and objects of my journey, I am willing to hope you will be disposed to congratulate me on the successful accomplishment of a commercial arrangement with Ladakh.

An unsigned Copy of the Engagement formally executed by the Raja and the principal Officers of the Government in Tibutee with a Translate in English faithfully conveying its meaning and even its idiom as far as was compatible with the construction of our language, along with a transcript of the engagement given by me are herewith transmitted. This agreement, for unauthorised, I dare not call it Treaty opens to British Commerce a field from which it hitherto has been excluded. It presents extraordinary facilities and we have to compete with no commercial nation except Russia. And if by the greater advance of our Manufacturers towards perfection in executing their fabrics the greater Capital and greater enterprise of our Merchants, the Manufactures of Russia, which as far as I have yet seen are only indifferent copies of ours, cannot be surpassed both in excellence and cheapness, my reliance on the ingenuity and industry of our countrymen will be greatly disappointed. Nor have we any competition to fear with our own Commodities imported by Sea into China as the latter must be absorbed in a sphere greatly distant from that now displayed to our exertions for many thousand Miles. This Commerce will have a Novel Character, widely differing from that carried on in any other quarter the fabrics being modelled upon those now in use and in accordance with the taste of

55 /1307

the Natives of this part of Asia, but improved by the skill of the British Manufacturer. I have not forwarded to you the suggestions I have ventured to make to the Political Secretary because they will reach you I presume, in due course, and I have been too much occupied in collecting materials for working upon, to have had time to copy them and to have them accompanied by drawings.

What has hitherto been done as hints for Manufacturers bears but a small proportion to the collection my visits to Yarkund, Kashgar, Indejan, Samarkund, Bokhara and other Cities of Toorkistan and Afghanistan will enable me to make. A belief that European Manufacturers had too much if not wholly overlooked the principle of accommodating our fabrics to the wants, taste, and custom of Asiatics induced me to attempt to bring this point to issue. And the employment of some Capital in this manner with the experience of a few Years will determine whether my conclusions be erroneous or true. The Principality in which I now am, as large at least as England, naturally of scanty population, arising partly from the inaptitude of its soil to produce a large quantity of vegetable food, and partly from a want of sagacity and of acquaintance with modes of improving the condition of Society in its Rulers would have been condemned to perpetual poverty but for the prosecution of Commerce. This has diffused through Ladakh generally if not wealth at least a

competency which enables its inhabitants to purchase all these articles I have taken the liberty to indicate as subjects

[56]/ 1308

fitting for the ingenuity of our Artists to be employed upon. Their conformity with the taste of the Natives aided by superior execution, will cause them to slide into the market without struggle and soon to supersede fabrics of inferior merit. Nor do I see in this substitution any of that moral injustice which often accompanies commercial competition but on the contrary a general bettering of condition and a more frugal and more advantageous employment of time.

This Country from various peculiarities is ill adapted for manufactures, but is capable mediately or immediately of raising or collecting raw materials. To barter these, to improve the lands would be a wiser occupation of time than on fabrics which give a most miserable recompense for labor, though in the present state of things indispensable. In perfect accordance with this principle of commutation of labor is the practice lately adopted by the Hon Compy of importing Wool from Tatory. It would seem that its importation has excited no apprehension of its lowering the price of Wool raised in Britain and thus prejudicing the landed interest though benefitting the manufacturing and commercial classes. If the quantity of Wool imported be no larger than the new fabrics for the market of China and Tatory can take off, no prejudice can possibly occur to our Wool-growers and I apprehend some time must elapse before the supply can exceed the demand. The better Wool of Tatory generally will answer for the fabrics required for this Country and the very coarsest may suit our Carpet Manufacture for which our improved and fine Wools are, I presume, not well adapted. I purpose to enter

57 /1309

into the subject of the Wool Trade in Tatory more at large and where it will less break in upon Topics more urgent. The neighboring Country of Chanthan or Gurhdokh to the Eastward of Ladakh abounds with Wool and with Gold, as I believe, I have elsewhere observed.

Wealth, for wealth it here may be called, is much greater and more equally extended than in Ladakh and the consumpt of various articles of our manufactures will be far greater than in the latter Country.

But the Authorities of Chanthan are unwilling to enter into any arrangement with us; in fact they cannot and dare not make any formal agreement.

I had a long conversation with a Chubba or great Lhassan Merchant, and the principal agent of the Raja of Ladakh for purchasing Shawl Wool in Chanthan.

“You are mistaken” said the former addressing me “in attributing the unwillingness of the Authorities of Chanthan to allow Europeans to enter their Country to a fear of the latter conquering and appropriating it to their use. They have no such fear. The Chinese Governors reside in Gurhdokh only for three years and it is of no consequence to them after their administration is concluded what becomes of the Country. But they are afraid of incurring the displeasure of the Emperor by entering

into direct and friendly arrangement with Europeans. They tremble for their personal safety.* If I observed they have no powers to form a commercial intercourse with us”

*And good cause they have to tremble. A short time ago some Kirghiz from the western Steppe made an irruption into Kashgar and were joined by the Moosulmans of some neighboring villages. The Governors of Kashgar exterminated the families of the insurgents. The new Sovereign of China visited[?] this severity by ordering the heads of the Joong-Joong his two Umbans or Resident Counsellors all Chinese and that of the Moosulman Governor to be taken off which has just been done.

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“these powers may be found at Lhasa and our Government had formerly communication with the Grand Lama through Mr Bogle and Capt Turner who went to Lhasa and to Tushoo Loomboo.”

“Things” observed the Chubha “are much changed in our Country since those periods. Then the Grand Lama was comparatively independent but since the aid of the Chinese was called in to repel an irruption of the Nypaleees 1792, the power of the Pontiff over his own Country has vanished and that of the Emperor of China has taken its place. If” continued he “you were to address the Grand Lama on the subject of commercial intercourse he now must refer to the Chinese Residents and they in their turn to the Emperor. From your relations with China you can augur of the success of such an application far better than I can.” “It appeared to me”, I replied, “that the object was not considerable enough to justify the expense and trouble of an European Mission to Peking and no other form of application would be satisfactory.” Under existing circumstances I requested the favor of his advice as to some mode by which commercial intercourse might be set up. “I dare not give advice” remarked the Chubba, “but as yet there has been no order from Peking to prohibit the Merchandise of any Country from entering Chanthan. Therefore I conceive that there cannot be any objection to your sending a Native Agent with your Goods to Chanthan, although an European would not be permitted to visit that station.”

“Would you buy any of these Goods?”

“Certainly if they should suit me” was his reply.

“There will” I observed, “be a large Depot for European Merchandise of various descriptions in the Hills on our

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side. If you will come and see them I now engage that you shall have no duties to pay and I pledge myself for your personal safety, for that of your Servants, and of your property to any amounts.” “Though willing” he said, “to buy your Goods if they suit my market I dare not depart from my accustomed line of journey.”

And I am convinced that what he said was perfectly true. You will observe that there is a condition enjoining that no Caravan of ours shall go from Leh to Gurhdokh until one shall have gone from Gurhdokh to Leh. This I suffered to stand as marking

attention on the part of Leh to the desires of Gurhdokh and as tending to lessen the feelings of irritation which may arise from the former having neglected the advice of the latter in respect to us. The Gurhdokhees pretended that some unforeseen and urgent occurrence in Chanthan compelled the Gurphun to recall the Members of his Council who were on the road to Leh to confer with me. On a general review of the whole of this business I see no reason to apprehend hindrance to our Caravans proceeding through Gurhdokh, whilst conducted by Natives, to Leh, on complying with the usual customs and assuredly no danger of the Authorities detaining the Goods. Europeans may on our side skirt the Mountains from near Neetee through Busehur [Bushahr] to Peetee [Spiti] in Ladakh on the Northern frontier of Busehur and I will submit to the Gov^t the propriety of a survey being made of this line to ascertain the practicability and expense of a path being drawn out in case any material difficulty should occur on the road through Chanthan to Ladakh. In former times a vast commercial intercourse took place between Hindoostan and the countries under

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the rule of the Hojah of Yarkund apparently by the road of Joshee Muth. The reasons which formerly rendered this road eligible probably still exist although not sufficiently obvious to us from our circumscribed acquaintance with its line but several facts concur at present to make Joshee Muth or its vicinity eligible as a Depot. It is easy to push on Goods to Daba or Gurhdokh in the route of the Chubbas, its vicinity through an obliging Com: [Company] Resident affords an opportunity through various little acts of kindness and attention to conciliate the Authorities of Gurhdokh so as to prevent their opposing the progress of our Merchandise and through this Depot, Goods may be despatched even to Lhasa and perhaps to Seling.¹⁴

It is not quite in an order of things consonant with the interest of a great manufacturing and commercial nation to suffer its Commodities to be superseded on the very frontier of its territory by those of another Nation less manufacturing and less commercial and brought by land carriage a much greater distance. This only requires to be fairly seen, to be appreciated and the due remedy, a fair and manly competition, to be set up. Within eight or nine years the Emperor of Russia has caused two Embassies to be despatched to Leh with commercial views, as it now should seem although a message real or pretended of the Emperor Paul, to Bokhara, gave reason to suppose that that Potentate aimed at objects more political than commercial. This present I M has sent an Envoy in an accredited capacity, furnished him with letters of introduction to Native Chiefs, loaded him with Insignia of Honor, caused him to be escorted by a large Guard of Cavalry to the Chinese

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border and has given to him in charge a large sum in Gold Coin and also Jewellery to a considerable amount. Some of the letters and money and jewels I have seen so that of the general fact there can be no reasonable doubt. The distance from Shamir or

Sinpola on the Irtish across the Kosak and Kirghiz Steppes to Toorfan Yungee and thence to Ladakh by Aksoo and Yarkund takes up three Months and a half. The precautions taken by H I M to give consequence to the Envoy and to ensure his personal safety evince the high degree of interest that Sovereign takes in the Commerce of this Country.

It is important to draw your attention to the fact of stripes[?] of our "imitation" Shawls forming some of the specimens of colors sent from St Petersburg to be imitated in Kashmeer. This furnishes a direct proof that though Russian taste may approve the tints of our Shawl Cloth, it disapproves the materials or a Commissioner would not have been sent from the Metropolis to procure Shawl Cloth in Kashmeer. Nothing it is submitted can more forcibly demonstrate the absolute necessity of our Manufacturers procuring Shawl Wool for their fabrics of Shawls.

And this I am willing to hope may be effected within a moderate period in some degree in exchange for certain articles of British Merchandise.

Once more I revert to the newly formed engagement the value of which is not lessened by the difficulties experienced in effecting its execution. The arguments and intrigues of Kashmeer and Lhassa Merchants presented an opposition so unceasingly and obstinately alert as to call forth the most watchful and patient counteraction on my part. The timidity of the Raja naturally abundant was artfully heightened by continual whisperings and suggestions of our

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ill intentions and of the danger to which the Country was exposed by our presence. Expresses with letters soliciting advice were despatched to Kashmeer, Gurhdokh and to Lhassa. The Soobadar of Kashmeer was requested to express the desire of the Raja to Raja Runjeet Singh that he would so exact [sc. exert?] his authority as to prevent the road through Koolloo being open to Europeans in future, and compliance with this was promised, or rather so strong a representation to Raja Runjeet Singh as probably would induce him to close this route. It happened however that I had previously requested Runjeet Singh to give passage to our Merchandise through Kashmeer, which he declined assigning the disturbed state of its southern frontier from Banditti but granted a transit through Koolloo before the desire of the Raja of Ladakh was intimated. The advice of Gurhdokh was unfriendly to us, but stopt short of promising the assistance required if mischief should arise from our propositions being rejected. And no answer was returned from Lhassa within three months the period assigned for the declaration of an explicit and final Resolve on the part of Ladakh. I learned that the character of the Ranee was somewhat decided but measures to interest her in our favor were attended with delicacy, difficulty, and perhaps with danger. However my present to the Raja was accompanied by a Gold and Silver Veil of Benares, Dacca and Cosimbazar Muslins, Brocades, Silks, English Linens and British and Hooshearpoor White Cloths offered to the acceptance of the Ranee. Though wholly without precedent, these trifles were graciously received and served as an earnest of future compliments from the visits of the Feringhees in the judgment of this acutely discerning female. She

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was in want of Pearls. I was provided with rather a large stock purchased as being more convenient for carriage than Cash. A Gift would have evinced the liberality of Governments, rather than the interestedness of an itinerant Merchant. The difficulty was adjusted by a diminution of price, well understood without direct avowal of its object, without violation of the Ranee's delicacy, and without sacrifice of consistency in my character of Merchant. The good effects of this arrangement were soon felt and we have now a powerful interest at Court.

The death of Agha Mehdee though it has removed an opponent with whose abilities a straightforward conduct might have found it difficult successfully to contend, has nevertheless involved me in some embarrassment as to my future progress. Kippuk Shah principal Moosulman Judge at Yarkund has answered Meer Izzut Oollah Khan's address with civility and warmth in respect to personal invitation, but has referred for particulars in relation to our views and designs to the Russian Envoy to whom all circumstances are said to have been fully explained just as he was about to depart for Leh. But not a single written paper was found in the effects of the deceased and we are wholly in the dark regarding Alim Akhoons sentiments or instructions. In this dilemma I was strongly disposed to have accompanied Meer Izzut Oollah to Yarkund for the purpose of adjusting the amount of the Duty on our Merchandise, and other terms with the Chinese Officers but the irruption of the Kirghiz alluded to in my note and of which I have been only just apprised disturbs my intention of appearing before them

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unannounced. For such is the degree of terror struck into the heart of every Chinese Officer on the frontier that not a single individual is to be found bold enough to take upon himself the responsibility of any measure which may be construed into an innovation. And perchance the Joong-Joong in proof of his zeal might introduce me to the presence of the Sovereign of the Celestial Empire at Peking instead of allowing me to prosecute my design of paying my devoirs to the Commander of the Faithful at Bokhara, a change of plan that would be rather inconvenient in my present circumstances.

If a Kafilah Bashee expected from Yarkund do not arrive speedily a Tooranee Merchant to whom I have been surgically useful well known in Yarkund will proceed to that City and endeavor to negotiate for a friendly reception. If this be not conceded he will attempt to secure a passage by Surakol [Sarikol] through the Kirghiz Tribes on the heights of Pameer. Since the conclusion of my negotiations with Ladakh (paid on the diplomatic character of phrase wholly unsuited to my present mission) this Merchant has offered to advance to me fifteen thousand Rupees and I have requested in case he succeed for the road to Surakol to purchase a hundred common horses for my merchandise and baggage with suitable apparatus or 30 or 40 Kirghiz Camels. Failing in my attempts in both these roads I must endeavor to take a southern line by Baltee and Gilgit through Chitral and over the heights of Pameer to Indejan and Kokhan. For this latter route I have made some

preparation with the Raja of Baltee and by a douceur of a thousand Rupees have engaged a Peerzada of great influence at the Court of Kokhan to precede us and pave the way to a favourable audience

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of Omar Khan the Sovereign of this State. The lower road has its commercial advantages, the Country of Kaferistan being rich in Gold and the Natives more tractable than has been reported by those who visit their Mountains to plunder their property and to carry off their children as slaves. This route opens also to Budukshan and Bulkh but the line preferred for the first trip was through Yarkund for the purpose of establishing a rate of duty according to which our Merchandise may obtain entrance into the large Cities of Chinese Toorkistan and those of the N W of China Proper. The Country now named Chinese Toorkistan suffered in the contest between the Kojah and the Chinese about seventy years ago as remarked in the Notice on the Province of Khoten, but has ever since been in a state of repose and as it seems to be the policy of the Chinese Government to draw little or nothing in the shape of Revenue from their frontier Countries on the land side, satisfied if the taxes suffice for their defence and the expense of the local administration, wealth must have accumulated in its Cities. But this accumulation is probably trifling in comparison with that which has taken place in the Cities of Toorfan, Iskee, Kamool &c which have enjoyed profound peace undisturbed by foreign invasion, or by domestic commotion for many Centuries and to which our Commodities if they have gained admission at all must have had access only in a very trifling degree. By some route or other I mean to reach Kokhan and Bokhara and after having sold my Merchandise I shall begin to purchase Horses but my funds will be more confined than is desirable. How this Commerce is to be carried on in future I do not know, whether

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by Messrs Palmer and Mackillop alone, by an association of Merchants, or by the Hon Comp^y. By whomsoever it shall be conducted it will be beneficial to our Country and in no long time become a concern of mighty magnitude in woollens, cottons and Hardware of the coarser kinds. Taylors Scissors of the largest size are at present most in request and I am obliged to economise my stock. Every man in this Country cuts out and sews his own clothes and it has become somewhat fashionable to carry a pair of our Scissors stuck in the Girdle, in company with the Dagger or Knife. I sold a bale of superfine scarlet Cloth, bating the expense of way charges at about 50 per cent advance upon the invoiced price, to a Merchant of Yarkund, not so much for the immediate advantage as to furnish an opportunity for it being exhibited to the Chinese Governors of that City through whose approbation it might find its way to the Cities in the NW of China Proper. He confessed that he had never seen cloth so bright in color and even in fabric. Our chintzes I conceive must undergo a modification for the Asiatic Market and though not so much assured of the fact as yet to venture on recommending the change contemplated I see reason for strongly

suspecting that groups of flowers disposed as in the drawings of Shawl-patterns procured at Lahour and of different sizes will have more attractions for the inhabitants of those Countries in which Chintz is sufficiently warm for clothing than most of our elegant patterns. A curious idea regarding the tempers of Europeans being much more irritable than those of Orientals seems to have full possession of the minds of those Asiatics with whom we are not much in communication. Raja Runjeet Singh

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ordered his Servants to recommend short marches not lest I should be incommoded by but should become "angry from the heat". And here the Raja and his Officers after a general enquiry into my health express a hope that I am not "angry" on account of the cold. The Rulers of this Country have acted as if they were resolved to put my temper to the test by appointments, disappointments and delays according to the Murhutta system and in various other ways. I had purchased Ytr of Roses at Ghazeepeer for presents, the Kaloon heard of it and requested a little. This was complied with accompanied by an enamelled bottle with Gold Stopples [?Stopper]. The request was repeated the following day for a friend and so on till my stock of patience was almost exhausted and that of my bottles completely so. A person of some rank sent to purchase a quarter of a yard of superfine blue Cloth, which color is not here much in favor. The bales were made up in the most careful manner to exclude the rain, none were open and there was no prospect of other sale. However I indulged the desire and whilst doing it found a precedent in the Mercer who sold a shillings worth of Brocade of five Guineas a yard. Other trials of temper were of a very different nature. The Tatars in the first Months of Spring exercise in Archery. This year the practice was continued longer and with much more of ceremonial than usual. And the dastardly Kashmeerees to whom the use of military weapons was proscribed by Meerza Hyder and the Emperor Akbar and who have never since ventured to employ them now assumed courage enough to exchange their Wool and their Pen for the Bow and Quiver. Their feeble and awkward efforts

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would have furnished a fund of amusement to our School Boys but the object was to awe and to intimidate and I thought it right to prove its failure. The Sipahes of the Escort were directed to renew their long discontinued manual exercise beginning with the elementary movements. For a time the practice was considered as a dance of amusement and almost a fit subject for ridicule but as progress was made in manoeuvres it surprized and when the changes and combinations were executed with precision and rapidity and the manual directed by Fugle they not only surprised but admonished [sc. astonished?]. The Lonpa or first Municipal Officer who to his civil adds military duties and in the absence of the Raja acts as General, originally our inveterate Opponent, now desired to be initiated and requested that the Naik might furnish the words of command and their corresponding movements. His Son and probable Successor privately essayed the practice but an unlucky cut of

the finger by the flint of the Musket damped his military ardor. The Guard that accompanied my party originally consisted of fourteen Goorkhas preferred by me on account of their having been accustomed to mountainous paths and to a Country less hot than Hindoostan. Two of this number had deserted from Leh. My young Companion, who acts as Geographer and Draughtsman[,] the Apothecary a very diligent, attentive and valuable young Man, Meer Izzut Oollah Khan, his Son and eight others, Hindoostanee, Afghanee and a Persian Hajee turned out as Volunteers. And their attention and rapid progress has had a beneficial influence on the conduct of the Regulars. I have

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requested Raja Runjeet Singh to oblige me with twelve stand of Arms and Ammunition. I give an uniform of black Country Cloth faced with french grey and a fur Cap. The boys of the City have been infected and many a Willow stick as a substitute for a Musket has been cut from the Trunk that would have long remained its ornament, but for the development of this military spirit. Imitation often borders on the ridiculous. A boy riding on an Ass and driving a Troop of others before him as he passed me archly gave the words of "Eyes right", "quick march" and seemed to understand and enjoy the humor of the joke. This increase of strength is necessary, for the Kirghiz on Pameer have a bad name, yet from facts of recent date I conclude that they are "more sinned against than sinning" and more frequently provoked to depredation from outrage committed on them than voluntary aggressors. However as they cannot at first sight distinguish friends from foes we must follow the precept of discretion being the better part of valor and be prepared for all occurrences. We have been near witnessing a revolution in this Government. The Lonpa about two years ago attacked the forces of Baltee with an Army of some thousand Troops. This Cavalry were completely armed with Bows and Arrows but the Infantry rather inadequately in relation to numbers, ten men being assigned to one Matchlock and six to a Sword the others making use of such other Weapons as the Country affords. But notwithstanding the employment of manoeuvres equally novel and curious the Ladakhee General was foiled and compelled to retire in disgrace before the sturdy Moosulmans who boast that their Country has never yet been subdued by

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an Invader, though the Macedonian Hero visited their frontier, cut, like Hannibal, a pass through a rock and left the impression of his foot on the stone!! Tradition reports also other events connected with this visit which require farther enquiry before I can venture to record them, even in a letter. In a subsequent exercise in Archery the superior skill of the Lonpa was confessed by a remark of the Raja intimating that if he had so managed his Arms on the day of battle the Campaign would have redounded more to his honor. The Lonpa employed the retort direct rather than the retort courteous and his reflection on the difference between conducting domestic affairs and military tactics generated a feud whence sprung a bold attempt to depose the reigning Sovereign.

On a very solemn festival of annual occurrence a Lama of great reputation for religious sanctity and knowledge of futurity, and who incompatible as may seem the union of Religion, Astronomy and Rope-dancing had exhibited abundant proof of his attainment in the latter talent by boldly walking blindfolded along a slack rope, was questioned by the Raja publicly on the principal occurrences of the coming Year. An abundant Harvest was the welcome answer to the first interrogation. "And what fortunes" demanded the Raja "are to follow from this novel and unexpected visit of the Feringees?" "None but benefits, the Strangers are sincere, friendly and Merchants, but Thou Tyrant" continued the Soothsayer in an elevated tone "what dost thou expect?" "People" addressing the multitude "this man through his Tyranny is not worthy to reign, depose him and seat his Son upon the Throne." A buzz of approbation expressed the sentiments

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of the audience. The Raja in consternation and affright dissolved the assembly. The reputation of the Lama, the exclamations of the multitude preserved the former from personal injury and from insult. He affirmed that he spoke from inspiration, that he was unconscious of the meaning announced from his lips. The Raja confused and astonished retired to his Palace. Obedient to the oracular behest he proclaimed to the people his intention to abdicate and ordered preparations for the inauguration of his Son. The Ranees of a Moosulman family were less infected by superstition. A suspicion suddenly occurred that the inspiration might be of earthly origin a suggestion of the Lonpa, whose ambition aided by the influence of his Wife the affectionate and beloved Nurse of the Heir Apparent, aimed to establish a dominion over the mind and actions of the Young Raja. Enquiry converted surmise into conviction. She silently and speedily assembled her friends whilst appearing to acquiesce in her Husbands resolves. But when the convened assembly anxiously expected the formal renunciation of all temporal power by the Raja and the resumption of the Monachal frock and cowl he had quitted for regal state, on the demise of his elder Brother, the Potentate ordered the Throne prepared for his Son to be overturned, declared his firm resolution to retain his dignity, remanded the Youth to the Nursery and threatened his Enemies with punishment if they persisted in their treason. Thus through the firmness of the Ranees aided by the Kaloon her Husband is still the Ruler of the State, but through an arrangement of circumstances little intelligible to us the Lonpa, the acknowledged author of the conspiracy has neither been punished nor disgraced

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disgraced. He finds, it is said his safety, in his relationship with the Raja, and the affairs of the State are reported to proceed in the same train as if no disturbance had existed. I must have tired you and will conclude though I had much more of other matter to relate.

The seeds of Corn transmitted if they vegetate may prove valuable. The Wheat any where, but the new varieties of barley will be more particularly useful in the

Northern parts of the Island. Will you kindly oblige me by causing a few grains to be sent to the Duke of Montrose, Lord Somerville, Lord Morton, Lord Lyndoch and Sir John Sinclair and to Thomas Scarisbrick Esq^r of Scarisbrick Hall Ormskirk Lancashire the Son of my regretted friend Mr Eccleston. And a little of the Wheat to the Hon Henry Lascelles, Sir John Sebright, and Sir John Dashwood King. The specimens of the Wool of the Kokhear, Chanthan and Poorick breeds are indiscriminately taken and the Merino would effect speedy and decided improvement. I also forward musters[?] of the Shawl Wool of Chanthan, Ladakh and Yarkund unwashed. The portions of the Skins of Yaks are submitted on a suspicion that this animal might perhaps suit well with the climate of the Highlands provided it be rather dry than wet for I profess my ignorance in this particular. The Wool of the yearling Yak is beautifully fine. I procured a small sheep only of one of the breeds of Chanthan. Measurement as follows
Height of shoulder 1 foot 9 $\frac{3}{4}$ inches. D^o of Croup 1 ft 9 $\frac{3}{4}$ in. Length of back 1 ft 9 $\frac{1}{2}$. Height to the Elbow 1 ft 2 $\frac{1}{2}$ in. D^o to the breast 10 $\frac{1}{4}$ in. One 6 inches higher preserved the same relative proportions. From the size of the bone of the leg some idea may be formed of that of the rest of the frame. Breeds of Sheep are to

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be found with much finer Wool than that I have forwarded. The lamb-skins are cured by a process new to me and which I will report. If made up as linings of under waistcoats they might form a dress useful to persons with delicate lungs and disposed to consumption and they can easily be cleaned when soiled. I shall say little of Horses. Those of the Kosaks, Kahnaks, and Kirghiz are all I have yet seen. In general rather ugly than handsome, but active, strong and enduring of fatigue to a degree that is surprising. Mr Adair desired I would learn the process of making Paper from Cotton Rags and I have never forgotten the Commission but his wish could only be realized in Kashmeer where this material is alone so applied. I hope he retains his health. A clean cottage and the humblest fare will now satisfy me as the last and the present journey have given some such lessons as books or study cannot impart. You will appreciate the value of my companion Mr G Trebeck by the Chart sent to you and by his drawings of articles for manufacture. Your Nephews W and H Nisbet are my warm and valuable friends.

Leh Capital
of Ladakh May
10th 1821

Believe me
My dear Sir
Yours Sincerely

William Moorcroft

My correspondence will put you to a heavy expense. However it may perhaps somewhat reconcile you to the sacrifice when I state that I have maintained three persons in food clothing &c ever since June last to carry my despatches and give them a Horse and way expenses. They are Members of the numerous Clan into which I have been received and this insures their fidelity and their observance of instructions.

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My Dear Adam¹⁵

Though my operations are slow, through difficulties inseparable from their novelty, I trust they will on that account be not the less successful and beneficial.

To overcome the timidity of the Rulers of Ladakh and to counteract the intrigues of Kashmeeree and Lhassan Merchants occasioned by the apprehension of our Commerce superseding theirs has been no easy task.

But a conviction that without a formal agreement with the Rulers executed through me, this Country would remain constantly barred to us, and open to the Russians to the exclusion of our Commerce and the admission of theirs rendered my exertions no less pertinacious than that of my Antagonists. My point has been carried and a field so vast has been opened to British Manufactures that it would appear bordering on hyperbole were I to attempt to speak otherwise than very guardedly of its probable extent. My success would have been doubtful had the Russian Envoy reached this place.

He had beforehand established a footing which his presence might have secured. At least his previous connections, his knowledge of the Tibutee language, his persuasive eloquence, his insinuating address, his powers to reward would have confirmed his interest and have weakened mine.

Informed of my objects at Yarkund, duly prepared, he sprung with alacrity to the contest, for dependant as his fortunes were on the success of his Mission it would be absurd to suppose, that he would have suffered me without a struggle, to interfere in concerns, which he had conceived if not represented, as already secured to the interest of Russia.

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And supported by powerful aid both foreign and domestic he certainly possessed the vantage ground.

Indulgence in accustomed gratifications removed this formidable rival – *Requiescat!* The advantages which may spring from the Agreement whatever they may be have cost to the Hon Comp^y my Salary for two years, which contrasted with the Expencc incurred by Russia in this last Embassy alone sinks into insignificance.

What importance must this Power have attached to a connection with these Countries to have pursued its cultivation with such steadiness for so many years, as nine have elapsed since I perceived marks of its existence through my journey to Gurhdokh.

The death of the Envoy, the defection of his Deputy, or Servant, the difficulty of replacing the former by a Man of equal ability for this Mission may perhaps check the ardor of Russian enterprise in regions so distant.

At all events a long time must elapse before the Emperor become thoroughly acquainted with what has happened to his Commissioner and his Treasure &c unless perhaps through the British Indian Government as the accounts which may reach H I M through Tooranee and Nogaee Merchants by the way of Omsk or

Orenburg will be garbled and imperfect except in regard to the fact of his having died on the road between Yarkund and Leh.

The pecuniary loss will form the smallest part of the disappointment incurred by the failure in all the objects of this Mission if a conclusion on this point can be drawn from the liberality of the Outfit.

[Footnote continuing and ending on the next page]: Maharaja Runjeet Singh will certainly not obtain the splendid Jewel with which the magnificence [sc. munificence?] of the Emperor had probably intended to have graced the finger of that Chief. Should he hear of this intention the possession of the Kohee Noor must serve as his solace, if indeed gratification can arise from possession so obtained as that was. There is however a whisper that the ingenuity of the Begum provided a substitute and that the Kohee Noor of Lahour is only a piece of Glass. "He who is robbed not knowing what is stolen tell him not on't and he's not robbed at all."¹⁶

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It is not yet known whether Mahummud Zuhoor will give me the letters of the Emperor to Raja Runjeet Singh, will send them himself or will suppress them altogether. Under the impression that the entire suppression was contemplated and that he intended to go to Bokhara immediately I purposed to forward the Translate to the Raja but observing in him an indecision that indicates a disposition to stay until he shall have got together a large stock of Shawls I would not deprive him of the merit of transmitting the letters even though late and as a Copy previously sent by me would lessen the value of the transmission by Mahummud Zuhoor and perhaps cause him to incur the displeasure of the Singh for his dilatoriness my conduct will wait upon that of the Deputy. I was summoned to attend the Kaloon to discuss the basis and terms of the projected agreement between the Rulers of Ladakh and myself on the part of the British Merchants when the day was far advanced. The Kaloon and his Council had rejected the Draught of a Project submitted by me and substituted another most shackling in respect to roads and the number of the attendants. This I set aside altogether on the principle that it placed British Merchants in a situation more unfavourable than those of other Countries who were in the habits of trading with Ladakh, whereas on account of the vastly greater distance from which the former brought their

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merchandise, they were justly entitled to more indulgence. After much conversation the discussion was concluded by the Ladakhees granting terms more favorable to us than those I had originally proposed. This circumstance increased my anxiety to have the engagement sealed that night lest reflection might start fresh difficulties. It is customary in the formal engagements of this State to render them more solemn

and binding by calling upon the Prophets or Heads of the respective religions of the contracting Parties to witness the transaction. To this ceremony I objected from it not only implying a doubt of the sincerity of my intentions but from it being fertile in itself as those individuals, who could not be bound to the observance of their engagements by the pledge of their word would not be more effectually restrained by the obligation of an Oath. Out of respect to my character from the remarks they had made on our conduct and from a conviction that we meant to act with good faith towards them the Kaloon agreed to waive the performance of this condition. But the scruples I had advanced necessarily carrying along with them some feelings of distrust formed an additional reason for concluding the agreement on the spot. I recite these circumstances in apology for some inaccuracies of expression, which appear on the face of the Engagement. These, and an observation which to say the least of it is useless, would not have been suffered to stand in the Agreement given by me if I had drawn it up "*à tête reposée*"¹⁷; but as they tend not to invalidate the purport of the document, though fair subjects of criticism, their existence will, I trust, be excused as springing alone out of the spur of the occasion

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on a subject wholly new to me with the exception of a single and similar discussion with Raja Runjeet Singh.

The Persian Engagement on my part, somewhat loose in terms was little altered by me from its original form as translated by the Moonshee of the Government from the dictation of the Kaloon in Tibutee, as it contained the substance of the points I argued for, and as the Moonshee, somewhat of a Pedant and partial to his own phraseology, seemed disposed to cavil at any change of expression and from his situation, might have raised difficulties arising out of wounded pride and diminished consequence. Meer Izzut Oollah Khan with his usual sagacity of discernment quickly seized this weak part in his character and cautiously refrained from altering more than was absolutely necessary to be disturbed, in order to convey the meaning correctly. The Tibutee Writer also slid into the Engagement in that language a point in respect to Gurhdokh and Chanthan that had not entered into the discussion. The detection of this matter subsequently to the exchange of Agreements gave me occasion to observe that if the Authorities of Gurhdokh would on their part, enter into a similar agreement for commercial intercourse I would engage, on the part of the British Merchants, that no harm should occur to their Country from its fulfilment. The business seemed deserving of no farther remark. The weight of the Yamboo is not specified in the Agreement. It amounts however to 166 or 7 Fur:Rs¹⁸ and the basis of weight is much more advantageous to the Merchant than that of value as well as less open to cavil or dispute. The principal Kashmeeree Merchant at this

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place, both as to property and character, by name Mohsin Alee, but more commonly called Kojah Mohsin Baba, has been extremely useful as our Interpreter and from his

influence with the Kaloon, as a favorite courtier and one, from the large Capital he has invested in Houses, supposed to be devotedly attached to the interests of Ladakh. At an early period I promised to him that if our negotiations (pardon the character of the term, which unadvisedly has slipped from my pen) should have a termination in perfect accordance with my views, he should be the Agent for the sale of British Merchandise at this place, on a Commission of 2½ per Cent. He has performed his part well and I shall execute an Agreement on the part of the British Merchants to this effect "*quamdiu se bene gesserit*"¹⁹ for the guidance of those, who may follow me on this path. I pledge my word that I have most cautiously avoided compromising the name of the Hon'ble Compy in the whole of this Transaction, but I found it necessary to declare that I was their Servant, lent by the Government to British Merchants to establish a commercial intercourse with the Countries of the North West of Asia and for other purposes as set forth in the Official Document furnished to me under the Seal of the Most Noble the Governor General. It is a curious, if not an interesting fact, that the Country of Ladakh, a territory larger, as it would seem than the whole of England, proves to be a Fief of Delhi. Whether I shall be able to procure a Copy of the Sunnud of the Emperor Arungzeb to the Raja of Ladakh, accepting his allegiance on the terms proposed by the latter, I cannot yet say, but growing confidence on the part of the Ladakhees encourages me to hope it. The Kashmeerees at this place have nearly recovered from the consternation into which the unexpected event of the Agreement had involved them, but the Authorities and

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and the inhabitants of Chanthan and Gurhdokh seem to be possessed by a panic of fear, lest I should employ my numerous forces, in the invasion and capture of their Country, considering the latter as the inevitable consequence of the former. The strength of the Army, reduced by two who have deserted, but increased to double its number of Regulars by an accession of Volunteers amounts in totality to 24!!! *Risum teneatis*.²⁰ It appears that the interruption to the journey of the two Members of the Council ([illeg.]the application of the Term which is really correct) of Chanthan to Leh to hear my promised explanation of the Motives of Europeans appearing on the border of and attempting to penetrate that Country was actually produced by the sudden death of one of the Chinese Governors, and not a mere excuse, as I supposed, when reported to the Rulers of Ladakh. I am willing to hope that the details of a long conversation I lately had with a Chubba or great Merchant of Lhasa, and the principal agent of the Raja of Ladakh (for collecting Shawl Wool) respecting the mode of forming a commercial connection with Gurhdokh will be faithfully reported by the Chubba, who is now near that station on his return to Lhasa as this must tend to subdue the apprehension of the surviving Governor. From the explanations I had with these two personages it appeared that all attempts to obtain a formal agreement with the Authorities of Gurhdokh must fail, as they have not the power of concluding such a Document however obvious the advantages, and that an application to Lhasa with this view would be equally fruitless, as the power of the Grand Lama is wholly merged in that of the Emperor of China since H I M afforded

aid to repel the incursion of the Nypalees (in 1792?). The Umbans or Residents would be obliged

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to refer to Peking. Such reference though not in accordance with an opinion of mine reported in the letter to Mr Metcalfe penned before I was as well informed on this matter as at present is rather to be avoided than sought in reference to the Policy observed by China on this frontier generally, as well as in relation to recent occurrences on the NW frontier as elsewhere alluded to. No order has as yet arrived from Peking to prohibit the admission of foreign Merchandise into Chanthan and it is believed that no obstacle would be opposed to the passage of a Caravan with British Merchandise to Gurhdokh for sale under the charge of a Native Kafilah Bashee not accompanied by Europeans, or to its progress through Chanthan to Leh, under the same circumstances. But in relation to European Supercargoes meeting a Caravan so charged in Ladakh in its Transit towards Toorkistan, whether Chinese or Oosbuk I would beg leave to submit the propriety of a survey being made between Neetee on our frontier and Peethee [Spiti] a station on that of Ladakh, bordering on the Hon Compys Purguna of Koonhur or Busehur : and between Joshee Muth and Peethee by the way of Budree Nath, with the additional view of ascertaining the practicality of making a path for the Bactrian (two humped) Camel six feet in breadth. The horizontal distance between the points mentioned is but small but the way distance is likely to be greatly increased by detours round the base of Mountains however little is positively known upon this line at present and I think it very probable that a march of two or three days on the road from Busehur to Budree Nath in the territory of Chanthan may be rendered unnecessary by the explorations of the

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intelligent Surveyors of these Mountains. It would be equally creditable to the liberality of the Government and perhaps equally beneficial to the New Commerce were an attempt made to trace the line by which so much Commerce was carried on in the reign of Shah Juhan betwixt the Plains of Hindoostan and the Country of Khoten &c at least as far as our northern boundary. Some remains of this road would appear to have been discovered by me in 1812 as alluded to in a despatch marked "Notice on Khoten".

The fears entertained by the inhabitants of Chanthan (perhaps a mixture of fear and desire) I consider as of promising augury and build upon them a presumption almost amounting to a conviction that a friendly though "unannounced" communication will be established firmly when our conciliating and commercing conduct shall have generated a confidence that we entertain no views of Conquest. I will trespass upon you no longer on this topic than to request that you will be pleased to cause this to meet the eye of our friend Palmer, who will hand it to Mackillop.

But I must beg to intrude upon your patience for a few minutes on another subject, which I hope may find its way to feelings on which I have drawn rather largely on former occasions. Mr Elphinstone when at Peshawer engaged a very respectable and well informed personage Hajee Meer Nujeef Ulee, to reside at Herat as a News collector and transmitter, on a Salary of four hundred and ten Rupees a Month according to the Memorandum herewith transmitted. At Lahour the Meer attached himself to my party has remained with us ever since and renders himself useful by

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writing. I have understood that if a Native Servant of the Hon Compy be discharged for misbehaviour he is by this dismissal rendered incapable of ever serving them again. If this be a fact perhaps it may not be unreasonable for an expectation to be indulged on the part of a Servant who may have long and faithfully discharged his duty and has been discharged from their Service without commital or imputation of fault that he may receive from the Hon Compy some mark of his not having abused the trust reposed in him. On this point an appeal is made to your sense of justice, as well as to your benevolence.

Eleven years of service without allegation of misbehaviour may form some claim, which may not be weakly seconded by a term of sixty years, a period at which, little ability remains for engaging in new Concerns in business, did not the loss of former connections through expatriation preclude the possibility of such an occurrence in this instance. Permit me with much interest on the behalf of this worthy and aged individual to submit that independently of all claims to merit a monthly pension such as your own mind would suggest the amount[?] would not be lost to the Hon Company. From his intended residence at "famed Lahour" the report would spread into the neighboring Countries and generate a willingness in others to perform services of an involving nature should circumstances call out such a necessity. I fear the Government will think me dilatory but if my mode of life were detailed little reason would appear to countenance a supposition of my delay being voluntary. An idea was entertained by some who had little opportunity of appreciating the

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motives of my former journey that they were founded in the gratification of curiosity and this made its way to the Hon Court of Directors. It will not now appear extraordinary if apprehending the renewal of such impression I feel an anxiety to prevent its recurrence. Nothing seems so likely to effect this object as to exhibit, at as early a period as possible, some proof, or semblance of proof, that I am not influenced by any such views as have been imputed to me by persons not sufficiently acquainted with my character. And the most tangible proof in my possession consists in forwarding to my friend Mr Parry a Member of the Hon Court some copies of my public despatches which may carry with them internal evidence of my real objects. If they fail to produce conviction I

must bow to the sentence but I am unwilling that the blow should fall without an attempt at least to mitigate its violence.

This transmission however I hold to be irregular though I hope not culpable, but under the former feeling I communicate it to you and throw myself upon the liberality of the Government for punishment or pardon.

Believe me

My dear Adam

Leh Capital
of Ladakh

Very sincerely and gratefully Yours

May 12 – 1821

William Moorcroft

Snow has fallen here this morning.

¹ Wikipedia: Nogai (also Nogay or Nogai Tatar) is a Turkic language spoken in Southwestern European Russia and in Turkey. Three distinct dialects are recognized; Karanogay or Qara-Nogai (literally “Black Nogai”; Northern Nogai”), spoken in Dagestan, Central Nogai or Nogai Proper in Stavropol and Aqnogai (White or Western Nogai) by the Kuban River

² This story, which Moorcroft relates from hearsay, doesn’t seem at all convincing. It may in a general way reflect the enormous profits that could be made by an astute merchant in the trade of shawls to Russia; but it’s difficult to understand the ‘twenty thousand Looms worth about a shilling each’.

³ Semipalatinsk?

⁴ Wikipedia: A stand of arms is a complete set for one soldier, as a musket, bayonet, cartridge box and belt.

⁵ French idiom: used to question whether an action is worth the effort required

⁶ French: ‘a Baron’s expenses’

⁷ French: ‘the appetite comes with the eating’

⁸ French: ‘only the first step is difficult’

⁹ French: ‘with the obstinacy of a well-conducted sheep’.

¹⁰ French: bribe

¹¹ French: ‘fallow land’, used in a wider sense for ‘something left in an unfinished state’

¹² Latin: ‘the highest point capable of being attained’.

¹³ The recipient of this letter hasn’t been identified. Clearly someone in the UK, whom Moorcroft had probably corresponded with earlier, but not a close friend (hence the salutation ‘Dear Sir’ rather than the person’s name). Possibly a senior official of the Company, or the Board of Control.

¹⁴ Probably Sining, today’s Xining, in Moorcroft’s day an important trading city in NE Tibet.

¹⁵ This would most likely be John Adam, Secretary Political Department, Government of India

¹⁶ Quoted from *Othello* Act iii sc. 3. The correct version: ‘He that is robb’d, not wanting what is stolen, / Let him not know’t, and he’s not robb’d at all’. It says a lot for Moorcroft’s breadth of reading and retentive memory that, sitting in Leh far from all European and literary associations, he could quote, even inaccurately, from a Shakespeare play.

¹⁷ French: Calmly, without distraction. Lit. ‘with a rested head’.

¹⁸ Farrukhabad Rupees. There were at this time many different types of Rupee circulating in different parts of India. By the 1820s it seems that the Farrukhabad coin was the one preferred by the officials of the East India Company, and a few years later standardization of the coinage for British India, as well as other weights and measures, was done on the basis of Farrukhabad values.

¹⁹ Latin: ‘as long as he shall behave himself well’.

²⁰ Latin. Means something like ‘makes you laugh’.
