

TRAVELS

IN THE

HIMALAYAN PROVINCES OF HINDUSTAN
AND THE PANJAB;

IN

LADAKH AND KASHMIR;

IN PESHAWAR, KABUL, KUNDUZ,

AND

BOKHARA;

BY

1770-1825
Mr. WILLIAM MOORCROFT AND MR. GEORGE TREBECK,

FROM 1819 TO 1825.

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CHAPTER IV.

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ON the 15th of May I recommenced my journey towards the hills, accompanied by a Jamadar and Harkaras sent by the Raja to escort me to Shahdehra, a town on the left bank of the Ravi, about two kos from Lahore. The road is intersected by three different streams or branches of the Ravi, separated

in the dry weather by intervals of half a mile; but in the rainy season the two most easterly branches are united, and form an expansive and rapid stream. The water is always thick and muddy, and abounds with fish, which had been taken under the Raja's protection. In some moment of whim he had issued an order prohibiting fishermen to ply their trade upon the Ravi. The two first branches are fordable, but the third, which is the principal one, has a ferry. The boats are the largest and best built I have seen in India.

There is nothing worthy of note at Shahdehra except the tomb of Jehangir Shah. The structure, which is built of a reddish freestone, stands in the centre of a spacious quadrangle, to which entrance is given by a handsome gateway of marble and enamel. It is surrounded by a long corridor with cells for fakirs. The corridor is paved with variegated marbles, and the walls are decorated with paintings. In the interior of the mausoleum is an elevated sarcophagus of white marble, enshrining the remains of the sovereign of Delhi, the sides of which are wrought with flowers of mosaic in the same style of elegance as the

tombs in the Taj at Agra. The floor and walls of the chamber are of marble, and along the latter run passages of the Koran. The building was surmounted it is said by a dome, but it was taken off by Aurangzeb, that his grandfather's tomb might be exposed to the weather, as a mark of his reprobation of the loose notions and licentious practices of Jehanjir. Such is the story; but more probably the building was never completed. The roof is now square, presenting an open-work screen, with a lofty minaret at each angle. The edifice is of great extent, and of surpassing beauty.

On the 17th we halted in the suburbs of Amritsar, where I learned that the fugitive ex-Raja of Nagpur, Appa Sahib, was in honourable durance, nominally as the guest, but in reality as the prisoner of Ranjit Sinh. An attempt was made to involve me in an intrigue professing to have for its object the Raja's being delivered to the British, from whom he had made his escape; but I refused to have anything to do with the matter, referring a man who had volunteered the information to General Ochterlony. I had

also a message from Phular Sinh, the Akali, who on a former occasion attacked the English envoy, Mr. Metcalfe, but was beaten off, expressing his contrition for his former misconduct, his dissatisfaction with Ranjit Sinh, his determination to attach himself to the English, and his readiness to carry fire and sword wherever I should bid him. I declined the interview which he solicited; and recommended him to entertain more prudent and loyal purposes. Desa Sinh, the Governor, again sent an apology for not paying me a visit, having, in fact, been expressly forbidden, as he informed Izzet Ullah, by his master, to hold any personal intercourse with me. Desa Sinh had incurred, indeed, the displeasure and distrust of Ranjit some time before, in consequence of some interchange of civilities between him and the officer in charge of the hill frontier, Captain Ross.

At Amritsar shawls are largely manufactured, but they are of an inferior quality. The manufacture seems to have been introduced by Kashmir families, who, before the Sikh conquest of that province, fled to the

plains from the oppressive government of the Afghans. The yarn was formerly imported from Kashmir, but the Governor of that country has prohibited the export, at the request, he pretends, of the Kashmirian weavers, but, in reality, to discourage the foreign manufacture of shawls, the duty on which constitutes the chief source of his revenue. The yarn employed at Amritsar is therefore prepared there partly from the wool of Thibet, and partly from that of Bokhara. From the former a third of fine wool is usually obtained. The latter is of mixed colour and uncertain quality, and is, I suspect, adulterated with the down or fine wool of the yak. The Thibet wool, when picked, sells for six or eight Nanak Shahi rupees a ser. The latter from two to four.

The web yarn is employed double, as well as the weft, which latter is nearly four times as thick as the former. The twist of the thread is very loose, and this, I imagine, contributes essentially to the softness of the cloth.

Having experienced insurmountable difficulty in picking and cleaning a parcel of

shawl wool I brought down from Bhot, I took advantage of my stay at Amritsar to ascertain how these operations were to be best effected. A family of Kashmiris lodged in the gateway of my residence, and the wife picked and cleaned about two ounces of Thibetan wool in my presence. Of this quantity nearly half was fine, nearly half consisted of coarse hair, and the rest was dust and refuse. It was picked by hand in about two hours. Some rice which had been steeped in clean water for two days was then taken out and drained, and before it was quite dry was bruised and ground to flour, in a wooden dish with a stone. Into this the wool was thrown, and it was rubbed and kneaded with the hand until every part of it was impregnated with the rice, when it was taken out and separated. This process was repeated, and after the second opening and drying it was ready for spinning. The spinning-wheel was the coarse implement in common use. A woman could spin about a rupee's weight (about one hundred and seventy-five grains) of fine yarn in a day, and her husband could earn about two anas and a

half by weaving. The weavers are all miserably poor, and can scarcely procure subsistence. Many came to me and offered to accompany me wherever I pleased to take them.

Having remained at Amritsar, engaged in these and other inquiries, till the 23rd, I then moved to Jindiala, but I had no sooner arrived than messengers came from the Governor of Govindgerh with letters from Ranjit, stating that his son, Kharg Sinh, was seized with fever, and desiring me to send some medicine; reminding me, also, that I had promised to send the Raja some brandy from my stock at Mundi. Before I could prepare the medicines which I thought likely to be of use, two of the Raja's principal officers arrived with a letter, desiring me to return with all speed to Lahore. Although not very well pleased with this recall, nor wholly satisfied as to its motive, I had no choice but to express my readiness to comply. When I announced that I was prepared to depart, the Sirdars stated there was no need of immediate haste, as a subsequent express had been received, directing me, in

order to save me the trouble of unnecessarily returning, to wait a couple of days for further orders. With this I was also obliged to comply.

After waiting till the 29th, exposed in a small tent to the hot winds, a letter arrived, desiring me to leave my tent and people at Jindiala, and return to Lahore. The former part of these instructions I did not hold it prudent to comply with, for the state of the atmosphere indicated the approach of the rains, when it would be difficult to move with baggage across the mountains. I therefore ordered my servants to proceed to Mundi, and wrote to my young friend, Mr. Trebeck, to march with them and the merchandise and luggage to Kulu, as he would there be nearly beyond the range of the monsoon. I then set off for Lahore, and, travelling all night, reached Shahlimar at eleven on the 30th, from which the Raja's own palankeen and bearers conveyed me in the evening to a house in the city. The Hakim came to me shortly after my arrival, and from his report I found that Ranjit was really labouring under a sharp attack of in-

termittent fever, which had been treated with little else than diluent and aperient sherbets, and for the cure of which the most effectual remedy devised was the lavish distribution of money and food to a parcel of idle fakirs.

Public business prevented the Raja from seeing me before the morning of the 2nd of June. I visited him at six o'clock, and found him seated under an awning in the open air. Some of his courtiers were on one side, and on the other were ten or twelve grave-looking personages, who he said were his physicians. Several were advanced in years, some had books in their hands, and some were employed in running their fingers over a string of beads. Amongst them I recognized Rahim Ullah, the tutor of my friend, Izzet Ullah, an intelligent and liberal-minded physician. Ranjit represented himself as feeling better, but he looked unwell, and required a more active mode of proceeding. He described to me his feelings, and I gave him my advice. I took my leave at noon. In the evening I had a visit from Nur ad din, to whom I fully explained my views,

and the inconvenience to which any unnecessary delay exposed me, which he promised to represent to the Raja.

In the course of a few days the Raja's fever abated under the management of the native practitioners, and I was assured I should be allowed forthwith to resume my journey. I had been summoned to Lahore evidently in a fright by Ranjit Sinh, although he could not make up his mind to submit to my care, especially as the disease became less violent. Still, however, the fear of a relapse induced him to detain me within call, and it was only when he thought himself recovered that he consented to my departure. I set off on the evening of the 8th upon an elephant, and, after losing my way through the blundering of a harkara, arrived at Amritsar at two in the morning. I had been fifteen hours in a howdah, and felt more fatigue than I recollect to have experienced from any other mode of conveyance for a much longer interval. The sense of weariness and pain, and the extreme heat of the night, prevented my falling asleep. Whilst tossing about in a state little short of

delirium, and having no servants, I was no less surprised than refreshed by the movements of a fan which a stranger was waving over my head. It proved to be a poor Kashmir weaver to whom I had given medicine, by which he had benefited, and, observing my restlessness, he had thus testified his grateful recollection of my aid; this was of essential value, for I slept and woke refreshed. On making preparations to resume my route I found that no orders had been given for any escort, and there was no small risk of my being intercepted by my Akali friend. Kutteb ad din, however, took upon himself the responsibility of sending with me some of his horsemen, and, under their protection, I arrived safely at Bhyrawal, where I learnt that my servants and baggage had been detained at Hoshyarpur instead of advancing to Mundi.

A stormy night prevented my crossing the Byas until the morning of the 10th. I was desirous to visit the stud of Fattedh Singh Aluwala, and, therefore, went something out of my direct route to the town of Kapurtala. I found about forty young horses and colts,

but understood that the mares were the property of the zemindars, none of whom can dispose of the colts they rear until they have first offered them to their chief. Should he approve of any he takes them at his own price, which is rarely more than a half or a third of their value.

At noon I reached Kartapur in an excessively hot day, and was hospitably received at the Dharmasála of a set of Sikh fakirs termed Udasis*. An apartment was given me, the floor and walls of which had been deluged with water to cool them. One of the Udasis, an old man, entered into conversation with me. He inquired by what name we Englishmen designated the Being whom the Hindus term Ram and the Mohammedans Allah? When I had told him, he asked of what colour and form we represented God? To which I replied by asking him how it was possible to represent that Power who was everywhere present, and in whom all things existed, by any shape or colour? On which he expressed his satisfaction at finding that

* So denominated from their abandoning all hope of temporal advantage, even from their devotions.—ED.

our notions were so conformable to the doctrines of the Sastras. In the evening the whole party engaged in prayer, in the course of which, after offering their good wishes for their ruler, the Sinh Sahib, they invoked the protection of the deity for the Firingi (European) Sahib and the other travellers then in their dwelling. I have seldom met with persons of more simple, unaffected, and pious manners than these Udasis.

After a hot march I arrived at Hoshyarpur on the following morning, and found that the people and baggage I had sent on from Jindiala under charge of Miri Mal, who had been deputed to attend me to Kulu, were one march in advance. I therefore procured a fresh supply of cattle, and moved on to Amb, where they were. Miri Mal's plea for the delay was the absence of Dilbagh Rai and Karm Rai, the two chief functionaries of Hoshyarpur, from that place, and consequent impossibility of procuring any conveyance. I was informed, however, that he had spent the interval at his own house, and had only moved when he heard of my quitting Lahore. The town of Amb was nearly deserted, the

people having fled to the neighbouring thickets in hope to escape from the cholera, which had lately been making great ravages amongst them. It was asserted that a preventive of the disease had been discovered in the expressed juice of the onion; persons who took it to the extent of the juice of five onions at a dose, which proved strongly cathartic, not having been attacked. Their desertion of their town, however, indicated but little trust in the antidote.

I was met here by two persons from Raja Sansar Chand, and by a nephew of Magar Mal, the collector of the district. On the following day the latter met me at Rajpura. He is a remarkable man, upwards of seventy, but active and intelligent; he is of fair complexion and athletic make. He was formerly the chief financial minister of Ranjit, but incurred his master's displeasure by a violent quarrel in his presence with a favourite courtier, and, as a mark of disgrace, was appointed to the collection of the revenues of this district, amounting, it is said, to 140,000 rupees a year. He had lately introduced a new principle of rating the annual

collections, which, without diminishing the amount, was likely to be satisfactory to the peasantry :— this was by a rough analysis of the soil. A given quantity of the earth was put into a fine muslin sieve, and washed with water until all the mould was carried through and nothing but the sand left, and, according to its proportion to the whole, a deduction was made from the assessment. Four rupees for two bigahs was the fixed rate for rich soil, three if it contained one-fourth of sand, two if it had a half, and one where the sand was three-fourths of the quantity. The general character of the soil of the Panjab, composed chiefly of mould and sand, renders this mode of appreciating its assessment more correct than might be supposed, and it was, at any rate, preferable to the old plan of assessing the land according to the estimated out-turn of the standing crops. The persons appointed to form this estimate made use of their power to oppress the cultivators, and to levy from them heavy exactions, in which the zemindars not unfrequently were sharers, defrauding the state without benefit to the peasantry. After our interview I moved on to Koloa, where I halted.

Before day-break on the 14th a servant came to me to report that a bag of money had been stolen from the tent of Izzet Ullah. Miri Mal sent word of the circumstance to the Thannadar of Rajpura, but he refused to interfere, saying it did not concern him. Several of the people of the place now came forward and declared that many robberies had been committed of late in this quarter, of which the Thannadar had not taken cognizance, and which could scarcely have been committed with impunity without his connivance. The same man had lately been implicated in an attempt to murder the collector, Magar Mal, but had hitherto remained at large from want of sufficient proof. A zemindar, who had refused to pay the money due upon his estate, had been seized by Magar Mal and put in confinement. His friends bribed the Thannadar, Radhan Sinh, and his assistant, Raju Sinh, to assist in liberating the prisoner and killing the collector. Magar Mal resided in a small fort called Basantpur, about two kos from Rajpura. Radhan Sinh corrupted some of his followers, and a night was appointed for their giving admittance to a hostile party

into the fort. When the time arrived the conspirators of the garrison demanded payment of the stipulated reward before proceeding to action, with which the friends of the prisoner hesitated to comply. Several messages passed between the parties, and the repeated opening and shutting of the gate at an unusual hour at last awoke Magar Mal, who had retired to rest. On inquiring the cause, he was informed some of the garrison had been suddenly taken ill; but, his suspicions being awakened, he rose, and going to the window of his chamber, found a ladder placed against it. Throwing this down, he alarmed the garrison, and the plot was discovered. Miri Mal wrote to Ranjit Singh an account of the robbery, and expressed his conviction that Ranjit will replace the money; but the theft, combined with the circumstances of neglect, delay, and obstruction which have taken place since I left Lahore, seems to me to have been authorisedly perpetrated, and to be part of a scheme intended to frustrate my journey, even whilst acquiescence in its performance is pretended.

On the 15th I marched to Nadaun, where an uncle of Sansar Chand met us. Miri Mal and the Lahore news-writer entertained us with some marvellous tales of the power of the Dains, or witches of the mountains; and, amongst others, one of a zemindar, who, having lost his son and a favourite cow, accused an old woman of the village of having destroyed them by magically "eating their livers." The poor woman, after a severe whipping, pleaded guilty, and accused a number of other women in the village of being witches also: her head was cut off: but when it was found that her supposed sisterhood comprised the wives of all the principal farmers, the Malik of the village contented himself with fining them 300 rupees. I suspect the Malik was no other than Miri Mal, for he said he was bewitched himself for three years afterwards by an ague, which was cured only upon his giving fifty rupees and a suit of clothes to the old woman whom he considered the cause of his malady. These credulous people tell me they will convince me of the real existence of witches both at Shujanpur and Mundi.

From Nadaun we crossed the mountains to Shujanpur, nine kos. A violent thunder-storm and hurricane on our march ushered in the rains. After it had ceased, and we had resumed our progress, I was met by a Mr. O'Brien, an Irishman, in the service of the Raja, who conducted me to a bangalo, where I found refreshments prepared for me. O'Brien, who is a strong, stout man about forty, was a dragoon in the 8th, or Royal Irish. It is said that having come on guard without some of his accoutrements, he was reprimanded by the officer, and on his replying insolently the latter touched or struck him with his cane. O'Brien knocked him down with the butt end of his carbine, and then set spurs to his horse and galloped off. Not daring to return to his regiment, he wandered about the country for some time, and at last found service with Sansar Chand, for whom he has established a manufactory of small-arms, and has disciplined an infantry corps of 1400 men. There is also an Englishman of the name of James in the Raja's service. He has been a soldier, though he denies his having ever been engaged in the

service of either King or Company in India. He is an illiterate, but an ingenious man, with some skill in practical gunnery. These men are of some service to the Raja, and might be of more, but their means are limited, and their habits not of the most regular or temperate description.

In the evening I waited upon the Raja at his desire, and found him with his son and grandson in an open building in a garden. Raja Sansar Chand is a tall, well-formed man, about sixty. His complexion is dark, but his features are fine and expressive. His son, Rai Anirudha Sinh, has a very handsome face and ruddy complexion, but is remarkably corpulent. He has two sons, one of twelve, the other of five years of age, both less fair than himself. Sansar Chand was formerly the most powerful Raja from the Setlej to the Indus. All the potentates from the former river to Kashmir were his tributaries or dependants, and he was extremely wealthy, possessing a revenue of thirty-five lacs of rupees. He is now poor, and in danger of being wholly subjected to Ranjit Sinh. His misfortunes are mainly owing to himself, and his

decline presents a remarkable contrast to the rise of his neighbour, and now paramount lord, Ranjit Sinh.

When Ahmed Shah Abdali invaded Hindustan for the last time, Gomand Chand, the grandfather of Sansar Chand, was military governor of the Doab of Jalandhar, between the Setlej and the Byas. The Afghans conferred his government upon him in perpetuity, along with the royal fort of Kangra. To defend his possessions Gomand Chand raised a force of 4000 men, composed chiefly of Rohillas, Afghans, and Rajputs, drawn from the Delhi and Afghan forces, to whom he gave liberal pay, or five rupees a month for each footman, and twenty for each horseman.

Tegh Chand, the son of Gomand Chand, maintained the same kind of force, and even increased the pay. Sansar Chand, for some time after his accession, adopted the same policy, and was enabled thereby to extend his authority over the hill rajas, and repel an invasion of the Gorkhas. A treaty was concluded with the latter, by which the Setlej was established as a boundary which neither was to pass.

At this time Gholam Mohammed, the deposed Raja of Rampur, was living in the territories of Sansar Chand. Although finally defeated by the British at the battle of the Dojaura rivulet, yet he had gained an important advantage at first, and had nearly achieved a victory, and this circumstance had given him a high military reputation. Sansar Chand, therefore, readily deferred to his counsels, and was persuaded by him to break up his own force as needlessly expensive, and levy an army of Rohillas on cheaper terms: Gholam Mohammed engaging to raise them at four rupees a month for each foot soldier, and twelve for each horseman.

As soon as the Gorkhas heard of the dismissal of Sansar Chand's old troops, they broke their treaty, and repeated their invasion before his new levies had joined. Sansar Chand opposed them as well as he could, and Gholam Mohammed brought up his troops with very creditable expedition. Before they could join the Raja, however, the Gorkha general drew them on to an engagement, in which they were completely routed and dispersed. The Gorkhas then