



them and the Emperor; but he desired, as appears from certain articles in their agreements, to combine his duty to his sovereign with his friendship to the Mahrattas. He also wished to use the latter as auxiliaries: and an engagement* of four articles is chiefly directed against Abber Singh, Raja of Joudpoor, with whom he was then in a state of hostility. But death came seasonably to release this great and accomplished prince† from a scene of intrigue, distraction, and guilt, in which, from his want of means to guide the storm that was around him, his character might have been soiled, but could not have been elevated. The last engagement he concluded with the Mahrattas, from its date, could only have been settled a short period before his death. Its first article is completely an offensive and defensive engagement. The second is remarkable: it supposes (probably on very good experience) the likelihood of Bajerow breaking his faith with the Emperor. Jey Singh states that he will prevent such an occurrence; but, if it happens, he will follow the Paishwah.‡ The third and fourth articles are general; but by the fifth he promises to pay attention to the interests of some Rajpoot chiefs to the north of the Chumbul river,

* This offensive and defensive engagement is dated in the year of the Sumbut 1798, and below 1141 of the Sorsun, the Arabic æra used by the Mahrattas, which dates correspond with Hejira 1155 and A.D. 1741.

† He died A.D. 1742.

‡ The literal translation from the original in the Rangree dialect is, "I will be after you;" which may be interpreted either as implying continued friendship in all extremes, or hostility on a change of conduct. The latter is, fortunately for the fame of Jey Singh, the most obvious reading.



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whom Ballajee had recommended, and to endeavour to establish them in their possessions, on their paying the tribute, provided they were firm in their allegiance to the Emperor. This latter qualification proves, that he was still sensible to his duty in that quarter; and indeed it is probable he acted only a ministerial part, in all that related to the intercourse between Mahomed Shah and the Paishwah. In the concluding and most important article of the engagement alluded to, Jey Singh promises "to procure, in the course of six months, the "Emperor's command for the issue of a Firmaun, or "order, in the name of the Sahoo Raja, and the trans- "mission of the usual presents, also the Sunnuds, or "deeds, for the Vicegerency of the Soobah of Malwa, "and the sanction to take tribute, as established by the "Emperor, from the Rajas on this side (i. e. the North) "of the Chumbul." This treaty was concluded on the fourteenth night of the Moon of Jeth, in the year of the Sumbut 1798, corresponding with A. D. 1741. Jey Singh died the next year. Few chiefs have attained higher or more merited reputation. The city of Jey-poor, which he built to perpetuate his name, exhibits in its splendid appearance the mind of its founder. The erection of an observatory, and its endowment at his new capital, shewed that the love of science was mixed with the other virtues and qualities of this prince, who completely fulfilled, during a long reign, the extraordinary promise he gave even in childhood. But he belongs to the subject of this narration, only as a Chief who at some periods had power, and throughout his life great influence, over the whole of Central India, where his name is still fondly cherished by all, and parti-



cularly by the Rajpoots. These deem him, and Jeswunt Singh of Joudpoor, who is dear to them from his opposition to Aurungzeeb, the greatest of their race.

It is impossible not to suppose, that the influence of such a character as Jey Singh operated as some restraint on Ballajee; but the contempt of all morality, in their political arrangements, was with the Mahrattas avowed and shameless. We have a remarkable instance of this in a note affixed to an engagement made by Ballajee and his uncle Chimnajee with the weak sovereign of Delhi: in which, after stating various conditions of service that they bind themselves to perform, it is added, "that Ballajee Row* intended in future to do every thing "candour and sincerity dictated, to obey the Emperor's "wishes as appeared best to his judgment, and to refrain from the litigiousness he had formerly practised in "causing unnecessary delays, &c., by pretended scruples, "arising from the omission of a Firmaun, or other alleged "informalities; neither would he in future endeavour to "evade the performance of any duty or service by pretended want of cash, or any such groundless excuse."

The Emperor Mahomed Shah had appointed† Ballajee

* This remarkable confession is attached to an engagement of nine articles given to the Emperor by Ballajee and his uncle Chimnajee, after the former had been nominated Soobahdar of Malwa. It is believed to be written in the Paishwah's own hand; and commences with stating that the agreement of nine articles had been made after much discussion, in the time of Khan Dowran, to please the Vizier, by advice of Row Kirpah Ram. The latter person was of some celebrity; he was long Vakeel on the part of Jey Singh at Delhi, and was a personal favourite of Mahomed Shah.

† This appointment is made by two Sannuds, or deeds, the one dated the twenty-second of Jumad-ul-Awul, and the other the eighteenth of Rujub, in the twenty-fourth year of the Emperor's reign.



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to be Soobahdar of Malwa; but there was at this period a remarkable indirectness in all proceedings betwixt the Emperor and the Paishwah;—and the high office of Soobahdar of Malwa is, by a singular form, given in trust* to the Vizier, to be bestowed upon the Paishwah. It is probable that the weak successor of Timur was ashamed of the concessions into which he was forced, and that this expedient originated in a desire to prevent his dignity being compromised by the form of the engagement. On these points the Mahratta chief was careless, and, so long as he advanced in the substance of power,† he

* This is the form in the second Sunnud, or deed, dated the eighteenth of Rujub.

† The great solicitude with which the Paishwah sought the title and power of Soobahdar of Malwa is proved by a variety of papers, propositions, and minor agreements, in which he is profuse of his professions of obedience and allegiance, in the event of his wishes being complied with. There is among these records a curious instance of Ballajee's readiness to subscribe any thing, and to endeavour by every means to promote his objects. In an engagement which he gave the Emperor, dated the twenty-third year of his reign (one year before he obtained the grant of Malwa), it is written in the preamble: "I, Ballajee Row Mookh Purdhan, "through the mediation of Asoph Jah;" and in another paper of the same purport and date, and which exactly corresponds on all other points, he not only omits the mention of this mediation, but states that he (the Paishwah) will not contract any friendship with Asoph Jah, or others, without the royal permission. It has been conjectured that the first of these records was the original draft, but, not being approved by the Emperor, the other was substituted; but it is much more probable, from both having been carefully preserved among the state-papers at Poona, that one engagement was forwarded to the court of Delhi, and another to Nizam-ul-Moolk. Such a proceeding is quite conformable with the usage of Mahratta politicians, who, if they attain the object of the moment, are insensible to the disgrace of future detection and exposure.



willingly left the name of it to others. Ballajee appears, from other documents; to have extorted from the court of Delhi sums of money upon the most groundless and even insulting pretexts; amongst others a large sum which had been promised to his father, on the condition of his joining the Emperor, on the invasion of Nadir, was claimed and extorted, though Bajerow had on that occasion not only kept aloof, but taken every advantage of the crisis to enlarge his possessions.

The gratitude of Ballajee, when he obtained the office of Soobahdar of Malwa, was expressed in an engagement* from him and his uncle, which, though written

* The following is the translation of the articles of agreement of Pundit Purdhan Ballajee Row, and Chimnajee Row :—

“As from beneficence and bounty the Soobahdary of Malwa has been bestowed upon the servants Ballajee Row and Chimnajee Row, we are willing to perform our service as follows :

“1st. We wish to have the honour of enjoying the dignity of being admitted to the august presence.

“2d. We promise that we shall not invade, plunder, or lay waste any country except Malwa.

“3d. No other Mahratta chief shall pass beyond the Ghauts of the Nerbudda, into any part of the Soobah of Hindustan. We take upon ourselves this responsibility.

“4th. A respectable Mahratta officer, with a body of 500 horse, shall always be present in the service of his Majesty.

“5th. We accept the sum which has this year been given us as Enam or gift; but in future we will not ask for a fraction from the court, which is the centre of the world, and shall always remain steady and firm in our duty and allegiance.

“6th. Whenever the victorious army shall move abroad, a body of 4,000 horse shall be furnished by us to accompany the camp; but should more be required, their expenses must in that case be defrayed by the enlightened presence.

“7th. We will not exact from the Zemindars beyond the river Chumbul a fraction more than the established Paishkush, or tribute.



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In a tone of submission to the Emperor, contained in its stipulations ample proof of the real condition of those, who sought the promotion of their temporary interests by unmeaning professions of allegiance and obedience.

In the anxiety of Ballajee to obtain possession of Malwa, he had recourse to the measure, which has been before noticed, of making his chief generals become the guarantees of his good faith; and the following document was given to Mahomed Shah to guard against his future encroachments: "We Ranojee Sindia, Mulharjee Holkar, Jeswunt Row Puar, and Pillajee Jadhoo, hereby give it under our hands, that, Ballajee Row Mookh Purdhan having agreed to serve his Majesty, should he hereafter desire to recede from his duty, we shall by our representations prevent his doing so; but if, notwithstanding our endeavours, he still persists in withdrawing from his duty, we shall in that case quit the service of the Purdhan Pundit. In token of the same we have written the above as a deed." This

"8th. Should the enlightened presence issue an order for us to punish any petty Zemindars in that quarter, we shall furnish a quota of 4,000 horse, who will exert their endeavours to effect the object required.

"9th. With respect to the Jahgeers of Killahdars and the perquisites of Canoongoes, Mooftees, &c., as also lands, pensions, and other charitable institutions emanating from the bounty of the enlightened presence, we declare that we will not infringe upon them, but allow the full benefit of them to those on whom they have been bestowed, that they may employ themselves in uttering benedictions for his Majesty's eternal prosperity."

N. B. The note found on the envelope of this agreement has been before noticed. Vide page 75.



document is dated the seventh of Rubee-ul-Awul, in the twenty-third year of the reign, A.D. 1743.

The retrospect of a few years gives a still more singular character to this extraordinary record. Ranojee had carried the slippers of the father of the chief for whose conduct he now pledged himself, and Mulhar Row Holkar had only a few years before been attending a flock of goats, at his native village in the Deckan; but it was a period of revolution, and these persons were now great military commanders, who had not only armies of their own, but interests, particularly North of the Nerbudda, quite distinct from those of the Paishwah, whose history, indeed, subsequent to the events here stated, has little connexion with that of Central India; to illustrate which it will be necessary to give a concise account of the Mahratta families of Puar, Sindia, and Holkar, whose ancestors were employed in the first reduction of this country, and to whom it afterwards became subject.



CHAPTER IV.

The families of the Puars of Dhar and Dewass.

IN the early periods of Mahratta history, the family of Puar appears to have been one of the most distinguished.* They were of a Rajpoot tribe, numbers of which had been settled in Malwa at a remote era; from whence this branch had migrated to the Deckan. Sevajee Puar, the first of the family that can be traced in the latter country, was a landholder;† and his grandsons Sambajee and Kalojee were military commanders, in the service of the celebrated Sevajee. Three sons of the former, Oudajee, Anund Row, and Jugdeo, served the successor of that prince (Sahoo Raja), during whose reign Oudajee attained considerable rank. He was not only intrusted with a high command, but treated with great consideration, as appears by the style and purport of letters and deeds from Sahoo Raja and his minister Bajerow, still in the possession of the family.

* This tribe has been before noticed.—Vide page 19.

† He was Zemindar of Sopaut Kingee and Kurungaum in the Deckan.



Oudajee, eight years before Bajerow conquered Central India, was employed to establish the predatory claims* of the Mahrattas over that country and Guzerat.† He however offended the Paishwah; who first deprived him of all power, and, having afterwards imprisoned‡ him, raised his younger brother, Anund Row, to the head of the family. From this event occurring before the division of the territories of Malwa, the latter is considered the founder of the Principality of Dhar.

It is a curious coincidence that the success of the Mahrattas should, by making Dhar the capital of Anund Row and his descendants, restore the sovereignty of a race who had seven centuries before been expelled from the government of that city and territory. But the present family, though of the same tribe (Puar), claim no descent§ from the ancient Hindu Princes of Malwa. They have, like all the Khetri tribes who became incor-

* Chout, Sirdaismookhee, &c., &c.

† Oudajee entered Guzerat, but made no permanent impression in that province, in which, as has been before stated, Bandiah and Pillajee Guickwar had established themselves. The latter, after some warfare, obliged Oudajee, in A. D. 1726, to retire into Malwa, and to abandon the forts of Dubboy and Baroda, which he had occupied. Baroda became the capital of Pillajee, and has continued that of his descendants.

‡ One account states that Oudajee escaped from prison and fled to the Deckan, where he died in obscurity at the village of Mooltan near Poona. Thus far is certain, that his name never again occurs in Mahratta history; and this circumstance, connected with his former fame, had given rise to suspicions that his death was hastened by the policy of Bajerow, and the fears of his successor Anund Row, whose defection to the Paishwah is considered to have been the chief cause of his brother's fall.

§ The Rajas of the petty principality of Soont assert their title to this proud lineage.



porated with the Mahrattas, adopted, even in their modes of thinking, the habits of that people. The heads of the family, with feelings more suited to chiefs of that nation than Rajpoot princes, have purchased the office of Potail,* or head man, in some villages in the Deckan; and their descendants continue to attach value to their ancient, though humble, rights of village officers in that quarter. Notwithstanding that these usages, and the connexions they formed, have amalgamated this family with the Mahrattas, they still claim, both on account of their high birth, and being officers of the Rajas of Sattara (not of the Paishwahs), rank and precedence over the house of Sindia and Holkar; and these claims, even when their fortunes were at the lowest ebb, were always admitted as far as related to points of form and ceremony. The late Jeswunt Row Holkar and Dowlet Row Sindia were, indeed, forward to acknowledge their superior rank, at the very moment they were usurping their power and despoiling their territories.

Anund Row Puar was vested with authority to collect the Mahratta share of the revenue of Malwa and Guzerat in A. D. 1734. This commission, however, could hardly have been acted upon, as the Paishwah, Bajerow,

* I have seen this Sunnud for the office of Potail to the village of Komtar, in the Pergunnah of Janneer, which was purchased for 1112 rupees and a horse by Anund Row Puar, in A. D. 1710. The son of Anund Row, Jeswunt Row Puar, bought the half of the office of Potail of the village of Kungaum, in the Pergunnah of Kundah, in the province of Janneer, in A. D. 1734, when Prince of Dhar; he paid 751 rupees for the purchase. These offices, which with their small immunities were occasionally disturbed in the time of the Paishwahs, have been eagerly reclaimed since the British authority was extended over the Poona territories.



became Soobahdar of the former province in the ensuing year, and whatever forms the policy of the Mahrattas might have led them to observe, they were substantially the sovereigns of Malwa from this date. Anund Row soon afterwards settled at Dhar, which province, with the adjoining districts, and the tributes of some neighbouring Rajpoot chiefs, were assigned for the support of himself and his adherents.

Anund Row died A. D. 1749, and was succeeded by his son Jeswunt Row Puar, who accompanied the Paishwah to Hindustan, and was one of the many distinguished leaders * who fell in the celebrated action which the

* Jeswunt Row Puar had attained high consideration amongst the Mahrattas, and is spoken of as alike remarkable for his kindness and valour by the inhabitants of Malwa, who cherish many traditions of his fame. The following anecdote of this chief was related to me by one of my most respectable Native writers, Khealee Ram, who had at one period the management of Bersiah. He said, that about thirty years ago he had a long conversation with Himmut Singh, the hereditary Choudry, or chief officer of the district (then eighty years of age), who praised the goodness and high spirit of Jeswunt Row Puar extremely. When the Bhow was encamped on the river near Bersiah, Himmut Singh told him that Jeswunt Row took him and some others to the tent of the commander to see what was going on. "Jeswunt Row had gone to the inner tent to pay his respects, while I with other Zemindars (Himmut Singh observed) sat myself down at the entrance of the outer. Three Mahratta chiefs dismounting from their horses, and having no horsekeepers, bade me and two others hold them while they went into the tent of the Bhow. We did so. Jeswunt Row, on coming out, enquired how we came to have such occupations; when informed of what had occurred, he exclaimed in anger, 'Who dares degrade my Zemindars into horsekeepers?' and then turning to us, said, 'Mount these animals and ride them home, they are your property.' We readily obeyed (said Himmut Singh), and never heard more upon the subject, but kept our excellent horses and their fine housings."



Mahrattas, commanded by Sadasheo Bhow, the Paishwah's brother, fought at Paniput, against the combined Mahomedan armies, under the Afghan sovereign Ahmed Shah Abdallee. Kundee Row, the son of Jeswunt Row, was a minor * when his father was slain, and the management of the family possessions fell to a Brahmin of the name of Madhoo Row Ourekur. From this period the petty state of Dhar appears to have declined. The Mahratta chiefs in Malwa, in their turn, took advantage of the weak and distracted state of this principality; and its ruin seemed at one period inevitable, when the well-known Ragobah, who brought misfortune on all who supported him, sent his family for refuge to Dhar, which was immediately surrounded by a detachment of the combined forces of his enemies. Anundee Bae, his principal wife, who had just been delivered of Bajerow (the last of the Paishwahs), was within the fort; and the object of the assailants was to obtain possession of her and the young prince. As Kundee Row had openly joined the standard of Ragobah, his countries in Malwa were resumed, and their restoration was the price given for the surrender of Anundee Bae and her child,† who were carried prisoners to

* He was only two years and a half old.

† The infant who was so early doomed to a prison might have been pitied; but none commiserated his depraved ambitious mother, who, when the young unfortunate Paishwah Narrainjee Row, flying from his murderers, was clasping his arms round his uncle and imploring life, rushed from her apartment and unknit the boy's hands, and threw him with violence from Ragobah. He met the fate to which, it is believed by almost all Mahrattas, she, from a desire to raise herself and children, was the chief cause of his being doomed. Ragobah (that name of ill omen to all, and to none more than the Eng-



the Deckan. The orders in the name of Paishwah Madhoo Row, directing the restoration of the different districts in Malwa to Kundee Row, explain specifically their tenure to be for the support * of troops; indeed, that was the only grant ever made to military chiefs, and no other appears to have been sought. It was, according to the practice of this loose state, no check to usurpation; and it gave them, when the paramount power was strong, an excuse with themselves and others for submission, which was congenial to their habits. The usage that rendered military command, as well as civil charge, hereditary, made them confident that their descendants would keep possession under this tenure, as long as they could under any other; for they well knew, from the principles of their empire, that, when they ceased to be able to defend themselves, no titles, however valid, would save them from ruin.

Kundee Row Puar had married the daughter of Govind Row Guickwar, by whom he had one son, born six months after his death. This prince, who was called Anund Row, remained at Baroda, the capital of his

lish), who is considered by his countrymen as being weaker than he was wicked, continued through life under the influence of this bold bad woman, of whom I never heard a Mahratta speak but with disgust and indignation.

* It was by accident I discovered the deed for this tenure, which is termed Serinjam. The Pundit of Dhar shewed some alarm; at which I smiled, and told him his master had now the best tenure in India, a treaty with the British Government, and no retrospect could or would be taken to his former rights. He said he believed so, but that many stories were told of our giving a construction to the terms of grants, which, though liberal and perhaps just, was not consistent with the manner in which they were understood by Mahrattas.



grandfather, till he was seventeen years of age, when he proceeded to Dhar; and, though at first opposed by the Dewan Rung Row Ourekur, he succeeded in establishing himself in his principality.

From the date of Anund Row's return, the history of the Puars of Dhar presents one series of misfortunes; and during the last twenty years the efforts made by its princes have had less the character of a contest for power, than a struggle for existence. The Mahratta chieftains Holkar* and Sindia were amongst its principal despoilers.

* Jeswunt Row Holkar received the rebellious minister, Rung Row Ourekur, who claimed his protection, in the most friendly manner, and, while he carried on an ineffectual negotiation to reconcile him to his master, plundered and laid waste the country. The minister, however, finding that Jeswunt Row could not accomplish his views, went to the Deekan, where he succeeded in instigating Dowlet Row Sindia to attack Dhar, A. D. 1807. That prince at first demanded thirty lacs of rupees from this petty state, asserting that he had orders from the Paishwah to resume its lands, which he threatened to enforce if this requisition was not complied with. After a great effort, two lacs of rupees were raised, which were given, with an order for four more upon the Kotah tribute; but this was only a part of the loss which the conduct of Ourekur brought upon this principality. The districts of Aggur and Soneil, which had been granted to that minister for his support, were by him made over to Sindia; and the hostilities of the latter did not stop, till he had despoiled Anund Row of the principal part of his possessions, A. D. 1805. Those in Harrowtee were all seized, and Dhar was a second time attacked by one of his leaders, Juggah Bappoo, who extorted a considerable sum from its ruler. In two years afterwards (A. D. 1807) another of these, Sambajee Jugha, made war upon this declining principality, and took, after an action fought at Budnawur, the whole of that district, to satisfy the demand made by order of Sindia for seventy-five thousand rupees. A desire to regain his country led to this amount being raised and paid by Anund Row; but, during this transaction, that unfortunate prince died. This event, with the confusion that ensued, was made



Anund Row, after some vain efforts to preserve his territories, died. His power devolved on his widow, Meenah Bae.* This princess was pregnant when her husband died, and, fearing the designs of Moraree Row, an illegi-

the pretext of keeping both the money and the territory. Anund Row is believed to have been poisoned by his sister, who was of a very bad and dissolute character. Her supposed object was the government, which she would have exercised in the name of some child she meant to adopt. These hopes, if ever entertained, were completely frustrated; she was seized and put to death, with several real or presumed accomplices, a few days after her brother's death.

About the period of these transactions, Mheer-Khan seized on Bersiah, a district of the Puars, and made it over to Kurreem Khan Pindarry. Some years afterwards the Pergunnahs of Tal and Mundawul were seized by Jeswunt Row Holkar, and granted to Ghuffoor Khan for the support of troops. While the territories of this state in Malwa were taken and partitioned by every description of plunderers, the Dewan, who had been the chief cause of these misfortunes, after a reconciliation with Anund Row, which led him to stay at Dhar a few months, fled to Poona, where he completed the ruin of his prince, by persuading Bajerow to seize upon his possessions in the Deekan.

Rung Row Ourekur is still alive, and resident at Poona. He is represented as being an able man; and while he had the sole management of the affairs of Dhar, it was well governed. His desire was, that Anund Row should remain at Baroda with his mother; but, when the impetuosity of that prince (for, though only seventeen years of age, he is said to have acted upon the impulse of his feelings) led to his sudden appearance in his own territories, and to a rupture with the Dewan, the latter, governed by ambition, seems to have found a malignant pleasure in giving his aid to destroy the state which he could not continue to rule: and he lately made an unsuccessful attempt to defraud his prince of some small rights of inheritance in the Poona territories, which he pretended had been assigned for his support.

* Meenah Bae was niece of Gahena Bae, the widow of Govind Row Guickwar, a woman of considerable ability, whose influence had for many years been paramount at the court of Baroda.



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timate son of Jeswunt Row Puar, who had formed a party at Dhar, she went to Mandoo, where she was delivered of a son called Ramchunder Row Puar. This event gave strength to her cause ; and the commandant* of the fort of Dhar remaining faithful, obliged Moraree Row to have recourse to deceit. Meenah Bae was persuaded, by his professions of obedience and attachment, to come to the capital ; but, instead of being permitted to proceed to the fort, was compelled to occupy a place in the town, where she was immediately besieged by the troops of her enemy, who even attempted to burn the house† in which she and her adherents lived. But her spirit was not to be subdued. While this contest was carrying on, she exchanged her child with that of a peasant's wife, and, keeping the latter, she instructed the woman to carry the young Raja to the fort, which was effected during the night. Moraree Row, the moment he discovered what had occurred, threatened vengeance ; but the exulting mother told him he might wreak his rage on her as he pleased,—she was indifferent, now the prince who represented the family was beyond his power. She had sent the commandant a message imploring him to defend her son to the last, and to be heedless of her fate. Moraree Row, after

* Killahdar.

† I listened with pleasure when at Dhar, in December, 1818, to the animated detail which Meenah Bae gave me of those events. "Ask Bappoo Raghunauth," she said, "and others who are near you, what advice they gave me, when the house in which I lived was ready to be enveloped in flames. They intreated me to fly ; but I told them I would remain where my honour required I should, and if the purpose of my enemy was accomplished, it would be a Suttee (self-sacrifice by a female) worthy of my late husband."



an unsuccessful attempt to take the fort, fled upon hearing that a body of troops from Guzerat were hastening to the relief of Meenah Bae. The desperate condition of the principality had led the Regent Princess to apply every where for aid. Sindia (in spite of his having been the principal despoiler) was solicited to save the legitimate heir from ruin. The British Government was courted, through the Resident at Baroda, to interpose its protection. But it did not suit the convenience or policy of these states to interfere. The intreaties, danger, and spirited exertions of Meenah Bae, at last interested her relations and friends in Guzerat so far, that a force under Succaram Chimnajee* was sent to her support.

The avowed object of this aid was to save the principality of Dhar from destruction; but it was, no doubt, in contemplation that it might eventually become a dependance of the Guickwar Government, and the immediate expedition was looked to as a source of profit and strength to the individuals who had projected, and were employed upon it. The latter speculation was completely frustrated; a load of debt was incurred without any adequate advantage. Succaram died, and his place was supplied by one of his officers, Bappoo Raghunauth, who, though he failed in realizing the hopes of the court of Baroda, succeeded by his activity and energy, which were supported by the confidence and courage of Meenah Bae, in keeping this petty state alive, till those revolutions occurred which have restored it (though with reduced territories) to a condition of peace

* Succaram Chimnajee was the brother of Seetaram, the minister at Baroda, who was supported in this measure by the influence of Gahena Bae, the aunt of Meenah Bae.



and permanent security far beyond what it had ever known.

The history of this change is short. During the last few years, Meenah Bae, aided by her Guzerat friends, carried on a petty warfare with Moraree Row for the possession of the principality, and made incursions on the territories of neighbouring Rajpoot chiefs to support her troops; for the country was rendered destitute of regular revenue, and they, like others, had no resource but plunder.

The son of Anund Row died, but his mother, sanctioned by the Hindu law, and by the concurrence of neighbouring princes,* immediately adopted her sister's son, who was of about the same age, and seated him on the Musnud, under the name of Ramchunder Puar. Moraree Row, after several vicissitudes, was ultimately compelled to leave the country, and soon after died. The district of Kooksee was wrested from Dhar by the Mukranee chief Moozuffer, who, having settled with a body of his countrymen in the strong country of Ally Mohun, situated between Guzerat and Dhar, had made himself formidable to the latter, and several other petty states, on the plunder of which he in fact subsisted. The Guzerat troops of Seetaram almost all retired to that province. Detachments of Sindia's entered the Dhar territories to levy contributions; and within the last five years it has been subject to frequent predatory attacks from the Pindarries, and the different leaders of Holkar's army.

At the commencement of the year in which the British

* Both Dowlet Row Sindia and Jeswunt Row Holkar concurred in this adoption.



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troops entered Malwa, Dhar was the only possession that remained to Ramchunder Puar, and the whole revenues of the principality did not amount to more than thirty-five thousand rupees; but, while Meenah Bae and her adopted son lived in the fortress, Bappoo Raghunauth, with a rabble of an army, amounting to eight or nine thousand men, plundered the country, and levied contributions from Doongurhpoor to Nemaaur. The advance of the British armies afforded advantages which were not neglected. Dowlet Row Sindia was opportunely reminded of the gross injustice of his keeping the district of Budnawur, after the money it had been pledged for was paid. His aid to recover Bersiah from the Pindarry chief Kurreem was also solicited; and it was intimated, that should he refuse compliance, the Puar prince must seek justice from the British Government, now the arbiters of India. The court of Gualior was not at that moment willing such a reference should be made. Budnawur was given back, and a promise made by Sindia's Government to use its influence in effecting the recovery of Bersiah. But the latter district, from its being occupied by Pindarries, fell an early conquest to the English arms. It was, however, granted to the family of Dhar, to whom the protection of the British Government has been extended, in a manner which has already restored their distracted and wasted country to a condition of order and tranquillity.

The revenues of the petty state of Dhar will be hereafter noticed.

Raja Ramchunder Puar is a fine boy, twelve years of age. The regent Meenah Bae, who is still young in years, though old in the vicissitudes of life, entertains



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the most lively gratitude towards the British Government; and Bappoo Raghunauth, the minister of Dhar, is now displaying as much zeal and energy in promoting cultivation and tranquillity, as he did two years ago in plundering the country, and disturbing the general peace. When this active and intelligent man was upbraided with his former practices, and asked how he could assemble and maintain an army of eight thousand men, without the means of paying eight hundred, his answer* was prompt: "Can you contemplate what has occurred, and blame the foresight that succeeded, by keeping up the contest on any terms, in preserving the title to a principality? With respect to our being plunderers," he added, "there was no other class in Malwa. The course pursued was the only one left to protract the existence of this petty state; and we were from year to year in hopes that the extremity of misery to which the country was reduced would cause some great change. That has now occurred; and you will judge by the future, whether we are worthy of better fortune than we before enjoyed."

The Puars of Dewass, though their possessions are very limited, merit a short mention as chiefs of rank, and also from the singular construction of their power. The country they still enjoy was originally granted to two brothers, and has continued for more than a century in equal shares of both authority and revenue to their descendants.

It has been before stated, that Sevajee Puar had

* The answer from Bappoo Raghunauth is taken from my notes of the first conference I had with him.



two grandsons, Sambajee and Kalojee.* The former, as has been related, was ancestor to the princes of Dhar. Kalojee's two sons, Tukajee and Jewajee, came with Bajerow into Malwa; and in the subsequent division of that province, they obtained possession of several districts.† This family afterwards received the grant of a district in Bundelcund,‡ and of one in Hindustan.§ These two latter possessions they have lost; but the remainder have continued (though often overrun, and at times usurped, by other powers) in the family. Though their name always obtained them some respect from their more powerful Mahratta neighbours, the Puars of Dewass have suffered, throughout the last thirty years, the extreme of misery. They have been, in fact, the sport of every change. With territories situated in the most distracted part of Central India, and unable to maintain any force, they have alternately been plundered and oppressed, not only by the governments of Sindia and Holkar, but by the Pindarry chiefs, and indeed every freebooter of the day. A detail of their history during the last twenty-five years leaves an impression of wonder at their being in existence, or having an inhabited village in their country. But all that belonged to them in Malwa is now restored,|| and their petty principality (under the protection of the British

* The Puars of Dewass have given me an account of the family by which Kalojee is stated to be the elder brother.

† The districts first ceded to the sons of Kalojee were Dewass, Sarungpoor, and Allote, in Malwa.

‡ Hummerpoor.

§ Kundelah.

|| Sarungpoor, which had been seized by Sindia, was restored to the Puars of Dewass at the conclusion of the Pindarry war. Their other possessions in Malwa, though desolated, had not been alienated.



government, which has concluded a treaty with them), is rising into prosperity, and promises at an early period a larger revenue than they have ever yet enjoyed.

The first chiefs of Dewass had a quarrel, which led to a division of lands and villages; but the original union of power and authority has been revived in their descendants. Tukajee, the elder of the present Rajas, is the grandson of Tukajee, one of the first possessors; while Anund Row, his cousin, is the adopted son of the grandson of Jewajee. They are equal in rank and pretensions, and share equally in all receipts. An inquiry was made into their exact relations, to ascertain how they were to be treated in points of form and ceremony. It was explained by one of their officers saying with a smile, "If a lime is presented by a villager, it must be cut into equal parts and divided between our two Rajas." It was early found, that, though their chiefs were personally on good terms, their principal servants often came in collision; and in making arrangements for their future welfare, a primary object was to induce them to appoint one minister. To this they agreed;* and the nomination of a respectable old servant of the family to this office, has tended greatly to the improvement of their territories.

* The arrangement was facilitated by the hereditary minister of one of these Rajas being a minor.



CHAPTER V.

Family of Sindia.

THE family of Sindia are Sudras of the tribe of Koombee, or cultivators. Ranojee Sindia, the first who became eminent as a soldier, had succeeded to his hereditary office of head man, or Potal, of Kumarkerrah in the district of Wye, before he was taken into the service of the Paishwah Ballajee Bishwanath, after whose death he continued in that of his son Bajerow Bullal. The humble employment of Ranojee was to carry the Paishwah's slippers; but being near the person of the chief minister of an empire in any capacity, is deemed an honour in India. The frequent instances of rapid rise from the lowest to the highest rank led men of respectability to seek such stations; and it is probable that ambition, not indigence, influenced the principal officer of a village to become, in the first instance, the menial servant of Ballajee Bishwanath. Ranojee's advancement, however, is imputed to accident. It is stated,*

* This anecdote receives confirmation from a letter of Captain Stewart, Acting Resident at Sindia's court, dated 3rd September, 1819 : "Ranojee (he observes) is stated, after he was promoted, to have



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that Bajerow, on coming out from a long audience with the Sahoo Raja, found Ranojee asleep on his back, with the slippers of his master clasped with fixed hands to his breast. This extreme care of so trifling a charge struck Bajerow forcibly: he expressed his satisfaction, and, actuated by motives common to men in the enjoyment of such power, he immediately appointed Ranojee to a station in the Pagah, or body-guard. From this period his rise was rapid; and we find him, when Bajerow came into Malwa, in the first rank of Mahratta chiefs, subscribing a bond of security to the Emperor Mahomed Shah for the good conduct of his master. Ranojee appears to have been a very enterprising active soldier. His expenses went far beyond his means: and he was indebted for considerable pecuniary aid to Mulhar Row Holkar, with whom he formed an intimate connexion. He died in Malwa, and was interred near Shujahalpoor, at a small village called from him Ranagunge,

Ranojee Sindia had been married in the Deckan to a woman* of his own tribe, by whom he had three sons Jeypah, Duttagee, and Juttobah; the two eldest of whom became distinguished commanders.†

carried with him carefully packed in a box, a pair of the Paishwah's old slippers, which he never ceased to regard with almost religious "veneration as the source of his rise."

* Her name was Meenah Bae.

† Jeypah, who had been employed upon the earliest expeditions to Malwa, was, after many vicissitudes of fortune, massacred at Nagpoor by two Bhattore Rajpoots, employed by Bajee Singh, Raja of Joudpoor, against whom he was advancing at the head of a large force. Duttagee, who had accompanied Ragonauth Row in his conquests as



He had also two sons by a Rajpoot woman, a native of Malwa, Tukajee and Madhajee Sindia; the latter of whom became the head* of the family. His character early developed itself; and his rise to a station, to which he had no right from birth, does not appear to have been disputed. This chief was present at the battle of Paniput. He fled from the disastrous field, but was pursued to a great distance by an Afghan, who, on reaching him, gave him so severe a cut on the knee with a battle-axe, that he was deprived for life of the use of his right leg. His enemy, content with inflicting this wound, and stripping him of some ornaments and his mare, left him to his fate. He was first discovered by a water-carrier, of the name of Rana Khan,† who was among the fugitives: this man, placing him upon his bullock, carried him towards the Deckan. Madhajee used frequently to recount the particulars of this pursuit. His fine Deckany mare carried him a great way ahead of the strong ambling animal upon which the soldier who had marked him for his prey was mounted; but, whenever he rested for an interval, however short, his enemy appeared keeping the same pace; at last his fatigued mare fell

far North as Lahore, was defeated and slain on the plain of Rudber, near Delhi. Juttobah, the younger brother, died at Kamber, near Deeg in Hindustan.

* Junkajee, the son of Jeypah, succeeded to be the head of the family on the death of Ranojee, but he was slain at Paniput almost immediately after his accession to power.

† His service was gratefully rewarded. Rana Khan, the water-carrier, was afterwards styled the Bhaee, or brother of Madhajee Sindia, raised to the first commands in his army, and afterwards loaded with favours. His grandson (a weak young man) still enjoys some of the Jahgeers that were granted to his ancestor.



into a ditch. He was taken, wounded, spit upon, and left. He used to say to the British Resident at his Court, the late General Palmer, that the circumstance had made so strong an impression upon his imagination, that he could not for a long time sleep without seeing the Afghan and his clumsy charger pacing after him and his fine Deckany mare !

The survivors of the Mahrattas fled from the field of Paniput to the Deckan, and for a period the nation seemed stunned with the effects of that dreadful day ;* but the return of Ahmed Shah Abdallee to Cabul, and the contests among the Mahomedan nobles for the different provinces of the dissevered empire, enabled them to reoccupy Central India, and again overspread Hindustan.

The family of Sindia, with that of other Mahratta chiefs, had lost by the battle of Paniput their possessions in Hindustan and Malwa. Madhajee Sindia, however, independently of his being the most distinguished leader of the household horse† of Ballajee, who had succeeded his father Bajerow in the imperial office of Paishwab, had entertained a large military establishment of his own ; and the death of Mulhar Row, the founder of the family of Holkar, which took place three years after the defeat of Paniput, made him the first in power of the Mahratta military chiefs. His behaviour on the occur-

* Few actions have been attended with greater carnage. The lowest at which the loss of the Mahratta army is estimated, is more than two hundred thousand men, half of whom were slain ; and the moral effect was still greater. The armies of the nation had collected for the struggle, and defeat was for a moment felt as the annihilation of their power.

† Pagah.



rence of Mulhar Row's death was generous towards the family. When Ragobah, the uncle of the Paishwah,* desired to coerce Ahalya Bae, the widow of Mulhar Row's son, and the representative of the family, into an arrangement that would have destroyed its power, Madhaje,† though he offered his personal service as belonging to the household troops of the Paishwah, refused to command the army which he had collected independently of that prince, to act against the family of so distinguished a leader. His example was followed by Jannojee Bhonslah of Nagpoor, and the designs of Ragobah were frustrated.

The Mahrattas having, three years after the battle of Paniput, collected an army of considerable force,‡ marched into Hindustan, under Visajee Krishna,§ who commanded on the part of the Paishwah, and received a nominal obedience from Madhaje Sindia. But that chief had now commenced his own plans for forming a separate, if not independent sovereignty. He had succeeded to all those assignments of lands made to his father to pay the troops of the family; and both in Central India and Hindustan, Raja after Raja was laid under

* Madhoo Row, son of Ballajee.

† It may be doubted whether this conduct was altogether gratuitous. Ahalya Bae had come into the possession of a full treasury, and there is reason to believe she used some of its contents, with other means, to gain the friendship of Madhaje Sindia and the Bhonslah on this emergency.

‡ This expedition was directed against Nujeeb ud Dowlah, who had succeeded to the management of affairs at Delhi, which he conducted in the name of the weak Shah Allum.

§ Visajee Krishna was long Beenec Wallah, or quartermaster-general of the Mahratta armies.



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contribution, and district after district added to the territory he governed, in the name of the Paishwah; and although the share of the latter in these possessions was only nominal, his commands were made the pretext of exactions and conquests, from which his own territories were not exempt; for Madhajee Sindia took full advantage of the dissensions that occurred at Poona after the death of Ballajee, to usurp, as far as he could, the rights and lands of the head of the empire to the North of the Nerbudda. The detail of the progress of this system of spoliation of both friend and foe is not necessary: suffice it to say, this able chief was the principal opposer of the English in the war they carried on in favour of Ragobah. He was the nominal slave, but the rigid master, of the unfortunate Shah Allum, Emperor of Delhi; the pretended friend, but the designing rival, of the house of Holkar; the professed inferior in all matters of form, but the real superior and oppressor, of the Rajpoot princes of Central India; and the proclaimed soldier, but the actual plunderer, of the family of the Paishwah.

Although by the treaty of Salbaee, Sindia was recognized, as far as related to the British Government, an independent prince, he continued to observe, on all other points which referred to his connexion with the Poona Government, the most scrupulous attention to forms.*

* Madhajee Sindia originally transacted all affairs in the name of the Paishwah, and not only his ministers, but all his public servants, even to his Chobdars, or mace-bearers, were called the Paishwah's; but during the minority of Sevae Madhoo Row, when Nana Farnavese was Dewan, all Sindia's possessions South of the Chumbul were made over to his direct authority. In the conquests made North of the Chumbul, the Paishwah's name was used, and two principal officers from Poona attended Madhajee to guard the interests of the chief of



When he became master of Shah Allum and his capital, he made the degraded Emperor sign a commission appointing the Paishwah vicegerent* of the empire, and received from the head of the Mahratta state one as his Deputy in that high office; but when he came to Poona, during the rule of the second Madhoo Row, a scene was exhibited, which stands perhaps alone amid all the mummery to which the mock humility of artful and ambitious leaders has resorted to deceive the world. The actual sovereign of Hindustan from the Sutleje to Agra, the conqueror of the princes of Rajpootana, the commander of an army composed of sixteen battalions of regular infantry, five hundred pieces of cannon, and one hundred thousand horse, the possessor of two-thirds of Malwa and some of the finest provinces in the Deckan, when he went to pay his respects to a youth who then held the office of Paishwah, dismounted from his elephant at the gates of Poona; placed himself in the great hall of audience below all the Mankarries, or hereditary nobles of the state; and when the Paishwah came into the room, and desired him to be seated with others, he objected on the ground of being unworthy of the honour, and, untying a bundle that he carried under his arm, produced a pair of slippers, which he placed before Madhoo Row, saying, "This is my occupation; it was that of my "father." Madhajee, at the moment he said this, took

the empire. On first entering Hindustan, some grants were made in the Paishwah's name; but when the latter was nominated Vakeel ul Mootlik at Delhi, these were recalled, and regular Sunnuds given in the name of the Emperor with the seal of the Paishwah as Minister, and of Madhajee as his Deputy.

* Vakeel ul Mootlik.



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the old slippers* the Paishwah had in use, which he wrapped up carefully, and continued to hold them under his arm; after which, though with apparent reluctance, he allowed himself to be prevailed upon to sit down. This was not the only instance in which Madhajee Sindia professed to feel pride, instead of shame, at the recollection of the origin of his family, as well as of its first occupations. He had added to their property as Mahratta Ryots in the Deckan, by some purchases, and he desired to be called by the title he derived from his humble inheritance. The feeling was national, and made him popular; but he had, no doubt, other motives: these indeed are described in a common saying in India, "that Madhajee Sindia made himself the sovereign of an empire, by calling himself a Potail, or head man of a village." But though we may smile at a conduct which appeared an endeavour to reconcile stations and duties that were incompatible, it must be confessed, that this able chief was throughout his life consistent in the part he acted; which appeared more natural, from the manly simplicity of character which led him equally to despise the trappings of state and the allurements of luxury. His actions were suited to the constitution of the society he was born in, which had a just pride in his talent and energy, and esteemed him one of the ablest, as he was the most successful, of Mahratta leaders. Though Madhajee, following the example of the first statesmen of his nation, was content with the substance of power, and left others to wear its robes, there are strong grounds

* These old slippers, Captain Stewart was informed, were carefully preserved by the successor of Madhajee Sindia.



to conclude, that at one time he cherished the intention of giving to his vast possessions a more compact and permanent form. But this plan, if he ever entertained it, was frustrated. His career (which was one of constant action) was marked by many acts of violence and oppression; but he was nevertheless a man of a mild disposition, and particularly desirous of improving the countries he had conquered or usurped. His ambition was, however, restless; and, tempted on one hand by the dissolution of the Moghul empire, and on the other by the weakness and distraction of the chiefs of his own nation, he extended his territories and influence too widely, and too rapidly, to admit of their being well managed.

Madhajee Sindia continued through life to retain many Mahrattas in his service; but, as he was, during the greater part of it, engaged in wars to the North of the Nerbudda, these were soon outnumbered by Rajpoots and Mahomedans. This was, though unmarked at the moment, a serious departure from the first principles of the Mahratta confederacy; and the habits of that nation were thus given to a population acting from a different impulse, and with few congenial feelings. But the policy of Madhajee carried the change a step farther. His genius saw that, to realize his plans, the mere predatory hordes of the Mahrattas could never prove adequate. It was a circle of plunder; and, as one country was exhausted, the army had to march, with numbers increased by those whose condition their success had made desperate, to ravage another. They had, in their first excursions, little or no means of reducing forts; nor did their system of war admit of protracted



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hostilities in a difficult country, and against a resolute enemy. These wants were early discovered by their enemies. The Bheels from their mountains, and the Rajpoots and others from their strongholds (which were multiplied by fortifying every village), not only resisted, but retorted upon the Mahrattas, by laying waste their lands, the wrongs they had suffered. This evil was only to be remedied by a regular force. We are distinctly informed, that its existence led Madhajee Sindia to determine upon the measure he now adopted, of raising some corps of infantry; and accident gave him the aid of a man of no ordinary description. De Boigne, who entered his service at this period, is said to have been brought by chance to the notice of Madhajee, who discovered in the author of a plan to frustrate his operations against Gohud, that military genius, which was afterwards to raise him to a greater, if not a more consolidated* power, than any Indian prince had attained since the death of Aurungzeeb.

Madhajee, accompanied by the brigades, or Campoos, as they were termed of De Boigne, took forts and fought pitched battles, in a manner that the Mahrattas never before attempted. Not merely the petty disturbers of the peace of Hindustan and Central India were attacked and subdued, but the proud spirit of the higher Raj-

* His regular troops were increased from two battalions to eight, and afterwards to sixteen, with eighty pieces of artillery and a corps of well-appointed cavalry. The pay and equipments of this army were liberally fixed, and the successive proofs which they gave of their superiority led to arrangements, which made this body of men for a long period more efficient than any one of a similar nature that had ever been formed by a native prince in India.



poor states was completely broken. The battle of Meirtah, which was fought against the collected* force of Joudpoor, was a great triumph, and fixed the ascendancy† of Madhajeé over that principality and the neighbouring weak state of Odeypoor, the prince of which had twenty years before been compelled to make over some of his most fertile possessions‡ to the families of Sindia and Holkar. Soon after the battle of Meirtah. De Boigne fought an action with the troops of Jeypoor. To these victories were added the defeat of Junkajee Holkar, and the destruction of four corps of regular infantry under a French§ officer in the service of that chief. Before this last action took place, Madhajeé Sindia had left Malwa, and arrived at Poona, where he died in A. D. 1794.

The great object of Madhajeé Sindia was to give a more permanent shape to his government than had ever belonged to that of a Mahratta chief. He generally

* Two thousand horse of the tribe of Chundawut, of the Marwar army, made the only effort on this memorable day. They actually cut through De Boigne's corps, but were, when rallying to return, almost destroyed by grape, A. D. 1790.

† Beeja Singh, who was ruler of Marwar when the battle of Meirtah was fought, was the same prince who had directed the murder of Jeypah Sindia; and independent of the tribute now exacted, a cession of the district of Ajmeer was demanded and made as the price of the blood of that leader.

‡ In A. D. 1771, Jowud, Neemutch, Ruttenghur, Khonee, and Byjpoor, were made over to Madhajeé Sindia. Bampoora, Rampoor, Mulhargurh, and the Pertaubgurh tribute were given to the Government of Holkar. The amount of these cessions is computed at seventy-five lacs of rupees.

§ The Chevalier Dudernaic, commander of this corps, escaped; but every other European officer was either killed or wounded.



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resided in Hindustan, but sometimes came to Malwa, and remained for a short time at Oojein. The countries under his own observation were well managed, as were all those where the inhabitants were peaceable and obedient; but in his efforts to reduce the chiefs of Hindustan, the princes of Rajpootana, and the petty Rajas of Central India, to the state of subjects, he let loose all the irregular violence of his army; and the proceedings of some of those he employed* to complete the subjugation of the Rajpoots, were marked by a spirit of rapacity and oppression, that has, perhaps, never been surpassed even in the annals of the Mahrattas.

Madhajee Sindia had been the enemy of the British; but he was not insensible to the benefit he derived from that nation's acknowledging him as an independent prince, which was done by the terms of the treaty† of

* Ambajee Ingliah, who was one of Sindia's principal officers employed in Rajpootana, though he oppressed the princes and chiefs of that country, was kind and considerate to the inhabitants. It was on his departure that the scene of devastation commenced.

† This treaty, which was negotiated by Mr. David Anderson, has been often alluded to as furnishing an extraordinary proof of the "Anomalous Government of the Mahrattas, from Sindia, a military chief subordinate to the Paishwah, becoming guarantee for the latter's conduct." But at this period the actual condition of the state warranted the assumption of Madhajee. The infant Paishwah was in the hands of a Dewan, Nana Furnavese, who was, like Sindia, a functionary of the state. It was in fact a guarantee, by the leading military chief of the Mahratta empire, of the conduct of one of the principal officers, and done with the latter's advice and concurrence; and, after all, Madhajee Sindia had the precedent of his father, who was one of the four principal chiefs who became in A.D. 1743 guarantee to the Emperor Mahomed Shah, that the Paishwah Ballajee, then in the plenitude of power, should not infringe the engagement into which he had entered with the sovereign of Delhi.



Salbaee, and by keeping a resident at his court. These circumstances, however, could not make him indifferent to the rapid growth of a foreign power; and it is probable that the materials he collected for empire were formed into the shape he gave them, with a hope that they might one day prove sufficient to arrest its progress. He refused to become a party to the treaty of Poona; and when Lord Cornwallis was before Seringapatam,* he arrived at that city, with (it was conjectured) no friendly feeling to the British nation. Whatever were his designs as relating to the English, he did not live to carry them into execution; and his great power devolved, before it was well consolidated, upon a successor little equal, from his extreme youth, to complete the arduous task he inherited.

Madhajee Sindia had no sons; his brother Tukajee had three,† of whom the eldest died without issue; the second had two; the youngest, Anund Row, became the favourite of his uncle, who, in consequence of his affection to him, adopted his son, Dowlet Row Sindia, as his heir. This prince was only thirteen years of age when his grand uncle died, and left him not only his vast possessions, but an army which rendered him the arbiter of the Mahratta empire. The succession of Dowlet Row was disputed by the widows of Madhajee, who proclaimed another prince, and, having assembled an

* Madhajee Sindia had a short time before proposed to become a party in the confederacy against Tippoo, on condition that the British Government would grant two battalions to accompany him to Poona; "engage to defend his possessions in Hindustan, and aid him in his wars with the Rajpoot states." This proposition was rejected.

† Kebanjee, Joteeba, and Anund Row.



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army, did not give up the contest till they had been defeated in several actions. The territories of the Sindia family in Central India, which were at the death of Madhajee Sindia nearly the same as at present, were comparatively a small portion of the dominions inherited by Dowlet Row, the foundation of whose power was laid in Hindustan. The greatest part of his regular army subsisted on the revenues of that country, and upon the tributes which its discipline and efficiency enabled it to collect from the princes of Rajpootana. The Government of Holkar, which had declined from the death of its founder Mulhar Row, had been expelled from all share in the territories North of Jeypoor. Its title to the tribute of that country, however, was still recognized; but this, as well as the preservation of its possessions in Malwa, was owing, in the latter years of Madhajee Sindia, less to any power the Holkar family possessed of maintaining its rights, than to the ties which still subsisted between Mahratta chiefs, and which were not forgotten even in the hour of battle. This national feeling gave a peculiar feature to their occasional contests with each other, which frequently terminated in a way that was unintelligible to those who did not understand the character and construction of the confederacy. The value of this disposition to reunion, when apparently in the most broken and divided state, had been fully appreciated by Madhajee Sindia; and he maintained, sometimes by great sacrifices, all those bonds and relations upon which it depended. When in the plenitude of power, he did not deny the justice, though he evaded, by a counter-statement of expenses, the payment of the large demands made upon him by Nana



Furnavese, for the Paishwah's share of the revenues of Malwa and Hindustan, and of the tributes he had collected. He is said to have discharged part of a large debt his father owed to the house of Holkar; and when a dispute about their respective shares of the tributes led to his troops attacking those of Tukajee at Lakherree, no advantage was taken of the latter's defeat, beyond the favourable settlement of the point in dispute, and we find Madhajee immediately afterwards in the most amicable and intimate intercourse with this chief. But sentiments and conduct such as have been described could not be expected in his successor. Born and educated at a distance from the Deckan, surrounded by Europeans, Mahomedans, and Rajpoots, and despising, when contrasted with his disciplined bands, the irregular and predatory hordes, whose activity and enterprise had established the fame of his ancestors, Dowlet Row Sindia was, and considered himself, more the principal sovereign of India, than a member of the Mahratta confederacy. Some national feelings were still cherished by the high hereditary officers of his government; but their attachment to the former usages and rules of the empire were unequal to resist the growing influence of the Rajpoot and Patan soldiers, who constituted the bulk of his army, and whose commanders were among the first rank of his counsellors.

During the life of Madhajee Sindia, though intrigues were in progress among the different Mahratta chiefs for the management of the affairs of the Paishwah, whose power had for a long period, like that of the Sahoo Rajas, become nominal, no open rupture took place, and the peace of the country was preserved. The war under-



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taken against the Nizam promised to their united efforts so easy and rich a booty, that it proved, for the few months it continued, a bond of union; but this short campaign soon terminated in a convention, by which the Nizam, in alarm for his person and family, purchased safety at an enormous sacrifice of territory and treasure. This great success was immediately followed by a scene of intrigue, art, and treachery, which is, perhaps, unparalleled. The principal of those events which may be enumerated as its causes and consequences, were, the unfortunate fate of the young Paishwah Madhoo Row,* the death of Tukajee Holkar, the imprisonment of Nana Furnavese, the murder of Purseram Bhow, and the release of Azim ul Omrah, prime minister of the Nizam, who had been given as an hostage for the performance of his master's engagements. During the contests that ensued between the different chiefs, the Poona territories were laid waste, and all the miseries which the predatory bands of the Mahrattas had inflicted upon other countries, were now retaliated by the inhabitants of Central India and Hindustan; for of such (as has been before stated) the armies of both Holkar and Sindia were almost entirely composed. The youth of Dowlet Row Sindia has been stated as an excuse for his early abuse of power; but his unfortunate marriage with the daughter of Sirjee Row Ghatkia (which happened at this period), by placing that designing and wicked man at the head of his councils, was, perhaps, the chief cause of the shameless and bold rapacity which marked the

* He fell, or threw himself, from a high wall of his palace, and was killed on the spot.



commencement of his reign. The seizure of Nana Furnavese in violation of the most sacred pledges, the murder of several Brahmins (among whom was the brother of Nana), the plunder* of the inhabitants of Poona and the principal places in its vicinity, the giving his aid to Casee Row Holkar to slay his brother Mulhar Row, and the confinement of Kundee Row, the infant son of the latter chief, were among the crimes of this prince before he left the Deckan. When he returned to Malwa, whither he was summoned by alarm at the growing power of Jeswunt Row Holkar, his conduct on every occasion shewed that his views of aggrandisement were unchecked by any of the scruples that had restrained his predecessor. He accepted, as has been stated, from the rebellious minister of Dhar, two provinces of the Puar princes; the whole of the Dewass territory was seized, and only restored on the payment of a fine.

Jeswunt Row Holkar had, before Dowlet Row Sindia reached Malwa, made himself master of Oojein, but was satisfied with exacting a large amount from its wealthy inhabitants, and he forbade its being plundered. But Sirjee Row Ghatkia, who commanded a force which a few months afterwards defeated Jeswunt Row, and took possession of Indore, sacked that city in the most merciless manner, and ordered its best houses to be burnt, after he had either murdered or pillaged of their property the greater part of its inhabitants. This profligate chief was well aided in the work of destruction by his friends the Pindarries, numbers of whom were at this

* One of the chief pretexts was the expenses of Sindia's marriage with Baizee Bace, the daughter of Sirjee Row Ghatkia.



period attached to Sindia's army. The district of Indore, and several others belonging to the Holkar family, were, on this occasion, placed under the management of Sindia's officers, without any form being observed, either of resuming them in the name of the Paishwah, or of declaring the possession temporary, till the succession to the Holkar territory was settled. This was considered so offensive a departure from usage, that it united the adherents of the house of Holkar; for even those who were hostile to the character and pretensions of Jeswunt Row, saw nothing but the complete ruin of the family in the success of Dowlet Row Sindia.

The period of trouble,* as it is emphatically called, had now commenced in Central India; but the tide of intrigue and war was again turned to the Deccan. Jeswunt Row Holkar marched towards Poona, with the professed design of making the Paishwah, Bajerow, arbiter of the difference between the families of Holkar and Sindia. This movement compelled Sindia to leave Malwa. He first went to Boorhanpoor, from whence he sent a detachment to join Bajerow, and to maintain his preponderance in the councils of that prince. The arrival of Sindia's troops at Poona put an end to Jeswunt Row's hopes (if he ever entertained any) from the Paishwah; and his fear of being hemmed in between two armies, if Sindia advanced, led him to instant hostilities. The victory obtained by Holkar, his alliance with Amrit Row, the flight of Bajerow, the treaty of Bassein, the

* "Gurdee ka Wukht," or "the period of trouble," is the name given to the period from 1800 to 1818; that is, from the first appearance of Jeswunt Row Holkar, as the supporter of his family against Dowlet Row Sindia, till the destruction of the Pindarries, A.D. 1818.



interference of the British Government, its war with the Mahratta leaders, Dowlet Row Sindia and Ragojee Bhonslah, are events that do not belong to this memoir. Suffice it to say, that Dowlet Row Sindia, after a vain trial of his strength against the British arms, had all his dreams of glory and ambition dispelled. The brigades* formed by De Boigne, and completed by Perron, were destroyed; above five hundred guns, cast in the arsenals which scientific Europeans had established in his dominions, were taken; and he was compelled to purchase peace by the sacrifice of his finest possessions in Guzerat, Hindustan, and Bundelcund. This prince had still a large territory, and, however little his conduct merited it, the doubtful articles of the treaty of Sirjee Anjengaum were favourably interpreted; and he gained by another engagement, concluded two years afterwards, a considerable addition to his dominions.†

Subsequently to his making peace with the British Government, the troops of Dowlet Row Sindia were constantly employed in reducing the numerous Rajas of Central India, and adjoining countries, who owed him allegiance or tribute. He was in general successful; many chiefs were coerced into complete submission, while others were destroyed; but the result of this warfare was to feed and excite that predatory and tur-

* The regular infantry brigades in the army of Dowlet Row Sindia, at the commencement of the war, consisted of seventy-two battalions, amounting in the aggregate number of armed men to forty-three thousand six hundred and fifty, with a large proportion of field artillery.

† The territories of Gohud, and the fort of Gualior, were given up by the treaty of peace concluded at Muttra, in 1805.



bulent spirit, which now pervaded this unhappy country. The miseries which it had suffered from Pindarries and Rajpoot plunderers soon appeared as a light evil, to what it was destined to sustain from the regular brigades, or Campoos, of its principal Rulers. Those of Sindia levied contributions indiscriminately on all the towns and villages through which they passed; and the constant state of mutiny these corps were in, from want of pay, made their oppression of the inhabitants more indiscriminate and insufferable.

The causes which made Dowlet Row Sindia so instrumental in dissolving the ties by which the chiefs who constituted the loose confederacy of the Mahratta nation were bound, have been stated. He afterwards attempted, in vain, to arrest the progress of British power by an union with Ragojee Bhonslah and Jeswunt Row Holkar. The feelings which had once supported such combinations no longer existed in any force. Bajerow, however, made a last effort to revive them; and there is ground to suppose that he succeeded to a very considerable extent. Dowlet Row Sindia could not but be secretly hostile to a state, by which he had been so humbled as the English; and he saw with satisfaction the increasing embarrassments of the war that nation was carrying on in Nepaul. But though his intrigues in that quarter, when discovered, were passed over with a generosity that must have made a strong impression, still he was not able to resist the call of the Paishwah, to whom there can be no doubt he promised support when that Prince determined on hostilities. But Sindia acted upon this occasion more from the recollection than the existence of ties, and from a sense of distant, not proximate, danger; and such



motives were not of sufficient strength to make a chief like him engage in a war, which, from the measures adopted to prevent his precipitating that step, must have commenced with the hazard of his sovereignty. He preferred the path of safety; and entered into an alliance, by which he engaged to combine his efforts with those of the British Government in suppressing the predatory system, and restoring the general tranquillity of the country. That this was an act of necessity, not choice, there can be no doubt; and it has been since proved, that he secretly endeavoured to evade the performance of some of the engagements into which he had entered. But his situation was painful and difficult, and he was only able to preserve his dominions by a departure from all that is deemed honour* by the tribe to which he belongs. He merited on this account the indulgence and consideration with which he has been treated, and its effects have not been lost. Dowlet Row Sindia, who is personally of a good disposition, and is now

* The following is a literal translation of a letter from Bajerow to Dowlet Row Sindia, given to me in April, 1818, with an assurance of its being a true copy of the original. It purported to be taken from an Ackbar, or paper of intelligence. "Your father, Madhajee Sindia, agreeably to the orders of the Sircar, went to Delhi, was made a Vizier, and acquired a high reputation. He served us with his heart and soul. When you became his successor, you entered into alliance with the English: thus you govern in Hindustan, and thus you shew your gratitude." In thus serving us, it is befitting you to put bangles on your arms, and sit down like a woman. After my power is destroyed, is it possible that your's should stand?"

Dowlet Row, the writer of this article adds, after having heard the above, remained in much distress during two hours, and then went to sleep: he sent no answer.



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free from the counsellors who betrayed and corrupted his youth, sees in their true light the motives that have actuated the British Government. He appears already to have submitted to the great revolution that has occurred; and, viewing the struggle for superiority as past, is forward to recognize the paramount sway of the British Government, and to benefit by its action being directed to the restoration and maintenance of internal tranquillity.



CHAPTER VI.

Family of Holkar.

THE family of Holkar are of the Dhoongur* or shepherd tribe. The first who obtained any eminence, or indeed rose above the class of peasants in which he was born, was Mulhar Row. His father is only termed, in the record given to the author by the present minister† at Indore, a respectable cultivator, or Ryot, of a village in the Deckan, called Hull,‡ from which this chief and his descendants take their name of Holkar, or more properly Hulkur.§

Mulhar Row was born near the end of the seventeenth

* In Hindustan this family are usually described as Gadrees, or goatherds, which is a shade below a tribe of shepherds, to which they consider themselves to belong.

† Tantia Jogh.

‡ The village of Hull is in the Pergunnah of Phultin, in the Jahgeer of Nimbalkur. It is near a bridge on the Neva, and about five coss from Phultin, and twenty coss from Poona.

§ Many of the principal Mahratta families derive their name from a compound similarly formed from that of the village where they were born, and the substantive Kur, which signifies an inhabitant, as Nimbalkur, Pattun-Kur, &c.



century.* His father, whose name was Cundajee, died when he was between four and five years of age; and his mother, in consequence of some dispute with her husband's relations, removed to the house of her brother, Narainjee,† a respectable landholder,‡ who lived in Candeish. The first employment of his nephew marks the condition of Narainjee. Mulhar Row was for several years appointed to watch the sheep of the family, from which occupation (according to a fable which belongs to the youth of almost all Hindus that have attained eminence) he was only released by the accident of a snake having been seen to interpose its crest or hood§ between his face and the rays of the sun, as he lay asleep in the fields. This at first gave alarm, but was afterwards favourably construed; and, according to the family tradition, his uncle Narainjee, acting from the impression

* I believe in A.D. 1693: there is no exact register or accurate account of births (except in their principal families) kept by the Mahrattas. They guess from events antecedent or subsequent to their birth. Had Mulhar Row been born a chief, his *Juannum Putee*, or the State of the Heavens, written by the astrologer at his birth, would have been kept. This is the usage among all Hindus of rank.

† He was usually called Narainjee Bargul. In a Persian manuscript in my possession, she is said to have carried her son to one of her brothers, called Mudkur, who resided at the village of Sasunt; but I follow in this place the paper given me by the present minister, Tantia Jogh, which I believe to be correct. Mudkur was the maternal uncle of the second Mulhar Row, the son of Tukajee; and the similarity of name has occasioned the mistake of the Mahomedan author.

‡ Narainjee is termed a Zemindar, which (though it has another signification when applied to an official person) usually means a man possessing property in land, however small, in his own right. He was an inhabitant of the village of Talandah in Candeish.

§ The snake was a Cobra de Capella (*Coluber Naga*), a species which is deemed peculiarly sacred.



it made, placed him in a small party* of horse which he kept in the service of Kuddum Bandee, a Mahratta chief of rank. Whatever circumstances raised the young Holkar from the occupation of a shepherd to that of a soldier, he soon shewed that he possessed all the qualities necessary to acquire distinction in the latter. In one of the first actions in which he was engaged he slew a leader of Nizam ul Moolk. This exploit, and his extraordinary zeal and activity, brought him into early notice. His uncle, Narainjee, gave him his daughter† in marriage; and, after a few years, his increasing fame led the Paishwah, Bajerow, to take him into his own service, in which he was at once raised to the command

* Twenty-five in number.

† The name of this lady was Gotama Bae, who afterwards rose to celebrity as the principal, and indeed only wife of Mulhar Row Holkar. Her family, that of Bargul, is now extinct. The brother of Gotama Bae (whose name, like his father, was Narain) attained some eminence. He was in the service of the Raja of Odeypoor, who gave him the Pergunnah of Boodda, near Mundissor, as a Jahgeer; half of which he bestowed as a present on his sister, who immediately named the principal town of her share Mulhargurh, in honour of her husband, while her brother called the capital of his lands Narraingurh. At the death of Narainjee, this Jahgeer went to his son Bouj Row; who, on the countries around his Jahgeer being delivered over to the Mahrattas, became a Jahgeerdar of the Holkar family. Bouj Row died about thirty years ago, leaving the Jahgeer to his sons, Mogajee and Shumkur Row. It was resumed in the year 1805 by Jeswunt Row Holkar, and restored in 1807. Mogajee died A.D. 1813, leaving Narraingurh to Shumkur Row, who held it for two years; after which it was resumed, and Shumkur Row, who fled to the neighbouring fastness of Sattolee, gained a precarious livelihood by plundering. To induce him to leave off these incursions, two villages of his former Jahgeer were given him: of these he was deprived after the peace of Mundissor, and the last of the family died a few months ago in extreme poverty.



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of five hundred horse. This change of masters was with the entire concurrence of Kuddum Bandee, who rejoiced in the good fortune of the young shepherd; and the latter gave a marked proof of his gratitude, by assuming the colours* of the Bandee chiefs, which still remain the standard of the Holkar, as they are of the Guickwar family, who were originally followers of the same leader.

The progress of Mulhar Row Holkar to high command was rapid. Shortly after he entered the Paishwah's service, he was detached with the Paishwah's brother† to the Concan, in the subjection of which they were very successful. Bassein, and many other places of reputed strength in that quarter, were wrested from the Portuguese. The fame that Mulhar Row acquired on this occasion was subsequently increased by his conduct in a war with Nizam Ali Khan,‡ and on several lesser expeditions.

Mulhar Row Holkar received§ his first lands North

* The standard is of a triangular shape, striped red and white, and surmounted by pennons or streamers of the same colours. The present representative of the once celebrated family of Bandee, is about twelve years of age. He fled some time ago from the persecution of the late Paishwah to Baroda, to beg a pittance for his support from the Guickwar, whose ancestors owe, in a great degree, their rise to his family.

† Chinnajee.

‡ Holkar acquired much distinction in an affair that took place at Rakisbon, and on the peace which followed he obtained several possessions. The Pergunnah of Ambah was granted at this time to the Holkar family.

§ In the Roze Kurd, or Diary of the Poona Office, in A.D. 1728, we find the first grants of twelve Mahals to Mulharjee Holkar, and thirty-three to Oudajee Puar.



of the Nerbudda (twelve districts) in 1728, and in 1731 seventy additional districts were granted* to this chief, who appears at the same time to have been nominated, by a letter from the Paishwah, to the general management† of the Mahratta interests in Malwa; and in the ensuing year he commanded, as has been stated, the advance of the army which invaded that province, when Dia Bahadur was defeated and slain. Mulhar Row was, at the period above-mentioned, at the head of a considerable detachment, and obtained, before the Mahrattas ascended the Vindhyan mountains, possession of several places in Nemaar, of which the town of Mhysir was the principal. When Malwa was conquered, the district of Indore was assigned to him for the support‡ of his troops.

The high rank and consideration which Mulhar Row had now attained, have been before noticed, and are sufficiently proved, by his name being, as before related, in the deed of guarantee given by the principal military leaders to Mahomed Shah, as a security against the insincerity or perfidy of their superior, the Paishwah. He may, in fact, be deemed, from the invasion of Malwa till his death (a period of more than thirty years), the most distinguished of the military commanders§ of the Mah-

* Poona Diary.

† It is mentioned in the Poona Diary, that in this year, 1730-31, the Paishwah wrote a letter to Mulhar Row Holkar, committing Malwa to his charge, and stating that he must regularly transmit the dues of the Sircar, &c. This employment was probably given him to check the growing ambition and insolence of Oudajee Puar.

‡ A.D. 1733.—It was, according to usage, a Serinjam grant, and revocable.

§ He was, by an order of the Paishwah, associated with Ranojee Sindia, and directed to collect, on account of Sirdaismookhee and



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ratta empire; and he appears, from his continual employment, to have been greatly favoured by Bajerow, to whose authority he continued, even in the zenith* of his power, to pay the greatest deference. The life of this leader, though he established his family and government in Central India, has little connexion with the history of that country. The Deckan and Hindustan, but especially the latter, were the scenes of his principal military achievements. In one of the first incursions of Bajerow into that region, he was among the chiefs who plundered the celebrated fair† at Kalka Bhowanee, within fifteen miles of Delhi, where the weak emperor Mahomed Shah was then residing. The Mahrattas on this memorable and bold incursion shewed their contempt of the Mahomedan power, by hanging a hog over the bridge near Humayoon's tomb. The booty they took was great, and Mulhar Row obtained on this occasion a share of wealth and fame, which completely compensated for the discomfiture he had sustained a few months before from the Imperial army.‡ The Paishwah, who had been secretly aided in the enterprise by Jey Sing, returned by the way of Kotah, and had an interview with that Rajpoot prince, who, with others

other Mahratta claims, thirty-five per cent. of the revenue of Malwa. These chiefs pledged themselves to pay one lac and five thousand rupees the first year, one lac and ten thousand the second, and one lac and twenty-five thousand rupees the third and future years, to the Poona state, dividing the remainder betwixt them equally.

* Poona Diary.

† Jattrā.

‡ The Imperial army, commanded by Burhan ul Mulk, defeated Mulhar Row at Mootta Baug, near Agra, to which place he had come after ravaging part of the Duab. The Mahratta chief with difficulty escaped, and joined Bajerow at Gualior.



of his tribe, agreed to transfer their tributes to the Mahrattas; and, on Bajerow's proceeding to the Deckan, the tasks of realizing this revenue, and of prosecuting military operations, were committed to Mulhar Row Holkar, to whom considerable tracts* were assigned for the maintenance of his increased contingent. There is little interest in the detail of the predatory warfare which this chief carried on in Malwa, Rajpootana, and Hindustan; it was, in fact, a series of petty actions and pillaging incursions. In one of the latter, he took the baggage of Malika Zemanah, the Queen of Mahomed Shah; and his family preserved with great care, until the death of Ahalya Bae, two substantial records of this Mahratta victory over the property of a female; the one was a carriage,† the curtains of which were embossed with seed pearl, and the other a comb, richly ornamented with jewels, and worth above a lac of rupees.

Mulhar Row Holkar, encouraged by the wretched condition of the Moghul empire, appears to have entertained the design of fixing the power of his nation permanently over Hisdustan; and we find him, both alone and in combination with other chiefs, endeavouring to effect this object, by operations which extended from the province of Oude to the Indus, and from the hills of Rajpootana to the mountains of Kumaon.

* His grant from the Paishwah for the support of his troops is stated in a manuscript in my possession to have amounted to forty lacs of rupees in Malwa, and twenty lacs in the Deckan, or Southward of the Satpoora range. The number of his contingent was fixed at fifteen thousand horse.

† This species of carriage, which is called a Ruth, or Hackery, has two low wheels, and is drawn by bullocks.



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The Vizier Sefdar Jung had, in the reign of Ahmed Shah, called in the Mahrattas to preserve Oude from the Rohillas ; and, during the war that ensued, Mulhar Row Holkar particularly distinguished himself by the night attack he made with a very small body of troops. His success on this occasion has been ascribed to an ancient stratagem.* He directed torches and lights to be tied to the horns of several thousand cattle, which were driven in one direction, while in another he placed lights upon every bush and tree, and, when this was done, marched silently in the dark by a different route to the attack. The enemy, pressed in one quarter by an actual assault, and seeing lights in several others, thought themselves surrounded and in danger of destruction ; they dispersed, and fled in dismay, leaving their camp to be plundered by the conquerors, whose leader acquired a just increase of fame from the victory ; and, in recompense for his zeal and gallantry during the whole of the campaign, the Emperor granted him a deed for the Sirdaismookhee (a due of twelve and a half per cent. on the revenue) of Chandore, which is the only royal grant in possession of the family. It is indeed stated, that when Mulhar Row Holkar was asked what reward he wished, he replied, that he was the officer of the Paishwah, and desired to have no country independent of him, but that a nomination to the office

* The similarity of this stratagem to that recorded of Hannibal is remarkable. Human invention has every where the same character ; and this coincidence must be accidental, for we cannot suspect the Mahratta chief of having read the history of the Carthaginian leader.



of Daismookh* of Chandore in Candeish would be acceptable. The request was complied with, and the family have ever since held the office. When the province of Candeish was recently ceded to the English Government, a politic attention to the feelings of the house of Holkar led to a restoration of the title and immunities of the situation.

Mulhar Row Holkar had connected himself with Ghazee Udeen, one of the sons of Nizam ul Moolk, whom he accompanied to the Deckan to aid him in asserting his succession to the royal office (for such it had become) of Soobahdar, or viceroy, of that division of the empire; and the Paishwah, with the principal Mahratta chiefs, who had also engaged in the same enterprise, assembled at Aurungabad, from whence they were about to march, when the sudden death of Ghazee Udeen, by poison,† put an end to the expedition, and gave temporary peace to the Deckan.

Invited by the weakness of the Mahomedan dynasty in Hindustan, the Paishwah again detached Mulhar Row Holkar to that quarter to maintain his interests, conferring on him the title of Soobahdar,‡ and furnishing him with considerable reinforcements. The annual invasions of the Afghans under Ahmed Shah Abdallee had now commenced, and the Mahrattas were

* Daismookh is a Hindu compound term, signifying the head of the district.

† He was poisoned by his mother, whose desire to save another son, Nizam u'Dowlah, from destruction, impelled her to the horrid act.

‡ The title of Soobahdar descended to his successors; and Dowlet Row Sindia, and other rulers, always addressed them by it as their highest distinction.



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forced, as has been stated, to evacuate the Punjab. Duttjee Sindia was slain; and Mulhar Row, who had encamped at Secundra, after intercepting and plundering some supplies going to the camp of Ahmed Shah, was himself surprised, and completely routed, by a corps of the Afghans. The occurrence of these events led to the battle of Paniput. The early escape of Mulhar Row, on a day so fatal to his nation, has given rise to some reproaches; but his advocates ascribe his safety to his superior knowledge as a leader, which made him, when he saw the action lost, keep his party together, and retreat with an order that none of the others preserved. This account will be more probable, if we credit the statement given of his quarrel with his commander, on the morning of the day on which the battle was fought. He had, it is affirmed, intreated Sedasheo Bhow to delay the action for one or two days: but the latter, whose pride and vanity exceeded all bounds,* impatient of the advice, exclaimed, "Who wants the counsel of a goatherd?"† If the anecdote be true, we cannot wonder that a chief of Mulhar Row's character should not have anticipated success.‡ At all

* Sedasheo Bhow used to allow his attendants to exclaim "Purseram Ootar," or an Incarnation of Vishnu, as one of his titles.

† A nearly similar taunt lost the Mahratta commander the services on this day of one of his most efficient allies, Scoruj Mull, the Jaut Prince of Bhurtpoor.

‡ The victory of Paniput, which is to be ascribed to the superior courage and energy of the Afghans, is naturally enough referred by the Mahrattas to other causes, and among these to the death of Biswas Row, the son of the Paishwah, which was imprudently proclaimed to the army by the obstinate impatience of Sedasheo Bhow, who made the elephant sit down, that he might see for the last time his favourite nephew.



events he was one of the few that escaped; and he retreated into Central India, where he employed himself in settling his possessions. These had been increased in the mode usual to Mahratta chiefs; and, with the exception of one district,* all that now belongs to the Holkars in Malwa was bequeathed by their founder, Mulhar Row, who, besides his lands in that province, left extensive claims upon Rajpoot princes. Taking advantage of the disputes which occurred on the death of Jey Singh, he had established a considerable influence in the country of Jeypoor, and on the succession of Madhoo Singh, through his aid, the latter agreed to pay in money, besides an amount of seventy-six lacs,† and a cession of four districts,‡ an annual tribute of three lacs and a half of rupees. Mulhar Row had before obtained large domains in the Deckan, and a considerable part of the province of Candeish had been allotted to him for the maintenance of his troops. Independently of these acquisitions, various grants of villages were given, both by the Paishwah and Nizam, as presents to females of his family.

Mulhar Row was seventy-six years of age when he died; he had for more than forty years of his life been a commander of reputation, and during the latter part of this period was certainly one of the most distinguished in the Mahratta confederacy. His remains were interred at a place now named, in honour of him, Mul-

* Tal Mundawul, usurped from the Dhar family by Jeswunt Row Holkar. The greater portion of it now forms part of Ghuffoor Khan's Jahgeer

† According to some statements eighty-four lacs.

‡ Tonk, Rampoor, Torah, and Pottah.



hargunge, in the district of Alumpoor, and about forty miles from Gualior. Although inferior to Madhajee Sindia as a statesman, Mulhar Row was his equal, if not his superior, as a warrior. For simplicity of manners and manly courage, no Mahratta leader stands higher in the opinion of his countrymen; nor were his talents limited to those of a soldier. His administration of the countries subject to his direct control was firm, but considerate; and if we judge of his character by his conduct to the petty Rajpoot princes of Malwa, the conclusion will be favourable to his memory. He conciliated their respect, if not their regard, by his good faith and moderation* in the exercise of power. Many of them were his associates and adherents,† and their descendants still speak of his memory with sentiments of gratitude. This feeling, however, may owe much of its strength to the opposite conduct of some of his successors. The principal virtue of Mulhar Row was his generosity. He had personally no regard for money; he was wont to declare (probably with truth) that he understood nothing of accounts, and he listened with impatience to those ministers who recommended the diminution of his frequent largesses.‡ To his relations, and indeed to all Mahrattas, he was uncommonly kind.

* He is stated to have reduced the tribute of Pertaubgurh to seventy-five thousand rupees, which, though as much as the chief of that petty state could pay, was not more than one-half of what had been before assessed.

† Among the principal of those chiefs who were his friends and supporters as well as tributaries, were Bulbudder Singh, Raja of Ragoogurh, and Gokul Doss, Raja of Baglee.

‡ It is recorded of Mulhar Row Holkar, that, when pleased with a soldier's gallantry, he used to exclaim, "Fill his shield with rupees."



It is stated of this chief, that in his conduct to the Paishwah, and in the performance of all his duties as a member of the Mahratta confederacy, he did that from the heart which Madhajee Sindia did from the head: the one was a plain, sincere soldier, and the other added to great qualities all the art of a crafty politician.

Mulhar Row Holkar had only one son, Kundee Row; who, some years before the battle of Paniput, was killed at the siege of Kumbhere,* near Deeg. This prince had married Ahalya Bae, of a family of the name of Sindia, by whom he had one son and one daughter. To the former, whose name was Mallee Row, Ragobah Dada (the uncle of the reigning Paishwah, who was then commanding the Mahratta armies in Central India) immediately sent a Khelaut, or honorary dress, recognizing him by the act as successor to the

* Kumbhere is four coss from Deeg; it lies between that place and Bhurtpoor, equally distant from each. Nawul Singh, grandson of Sooruj Mul, was at this period Raja of Bhurtpoor. After he made peace with Mulhar Row, a Mausoleum, or Chettery, was built in honour of Kundee Row, and the revenue of five villages assigned as a charity for the support of the Brahmins who attend it, and pray for the deceased. The feeling of all Mahrattas towards the Jauts of Bhurtpoor is strong, from a recollection which still exists of the protection the Raja of that place afforded their ancestors after the disastrous battle of Paniput. He not only clothed and fed the fugitives who came to his territories, but furnished them with means of reaching their homes in the Deckan. In consequence, there is hardly a family of any note in this nation that has not a tradition of a debt of gratitude to the Jauts of Bhurtpoor. Such facts are important, as a knowledge of them often gives a very different colour to actions of political consequence. It is, however, to be added, that, according to Mahratta system, this feeling did not prevent the chiefs of Bhurtpoor being laid under contributions, when their professed friends were able to compel them into payment.



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power and possessions of his grandfather. This youth, however, did not long enjoy the dignity; and his death, which occurred nine months after his elevation, was very melancholy. He had been always considered of weak and unsettled intellect, but no symptom of positive insanity had appeared before he came to the head of the government, when every action displayed it. His conduct was at first more marked by extremes of folly than of guilt. The life of his mother was devoted to acts of charity and benevolence, and she was particularly kind to Brahmins. This tribe became objects of Mallee Row's malicious ridicule. It was a common usage with him to place scorpions in clothes and slippers that he gave them; he also put these venomous reptiles in pots filled with rupees, which he invited the holy mendicants to take; and, when their eager cupidity caused them to be stung, his joy was as excessive as the grief of the pious Ahalya Bae, who used to lament aloud her hard destiny, in having a perfect demon born to her as a son. The avowed sentiments of his wickedness, and his incapacity for government, had given rise to a report,* that this admirable woman hastened the death of her own offspring. Every evidence proves this to be false, and his death is referred by all that have been interrogated (and

* This report of the death of Mallee Row has been stated to several European inquirers, by whom it was believed. I thought it a duty, as connected with the memory of Ahalya Bae, to make the most minute investigation of the fact; and the result has been a conviction of her complete innocence of a crime which no circumstances could have excused. I have no doubt that she was led by horror at his cruel acts of insanity, and a despair of his recovery, to look upon his death as a fortunate event for him, herself, and the country; but such a feeling is an honour, instead of a disgrace, to her character.



among them many were on the spot when it occurred) to the same cause. He had slain, in a jealous fury, an embroiderer, who, he believed, had formed an intimacy with a female servant of his family. The innocence of the man was established, and remorse for the crime brought on so severe a paroxysm of madness in Mallee Row as to alarm all for his life. It is a confirmed belief with many of the natives of India, that departed spirits have, on some occasions, the power of seizing upon, and destroying the living. It was rumoured, that the embroiderer was a man with supernatural power, that he warned Mallee Row not to slay him, or he would take terrible vengeance; and the ravings of the latter were imputed to the person he had murdered, and who, according to their preposterous belief, now haunted him in the form of a Jin, or demon. Ahalya Bae, satisfied of this fact, used to sit days and nights by the bed of her afflicted son, holding communion, as she thought, with the spirit that possessed him, and who spoke to her through his organs. She shed tears in abundance, and passed whole hours in prayer. In the hope of soothing the demon, she offered to build a temple to the deceased, and to settle an estate upon his family, if he would only leave her son. But all was vain;—a voice still seemed to answer, "He slew me innocent, and I will have his life." Such is the popular tale of the death of Mallee Row; an event that only merits notice as connected with the history of Ahalya Bae, whom it compelled to come forward to save from ruin the interests of the family she represented, and to exhibit in the person of a female, that combined talent, virtue, and energy, which made her, while she lived, a blessing to



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the country over which she ruled, and has associated her memory with every plan of improvement and just government in the province of Malwa.

The daughter of Ahalya Bae had been married into another family, and could therefore, according to Hindu usage, have no claim to participate in the administration of the Holkar sovereignty. Under these circumstances, Gungadhur Jeswunt, the Brahmin minister of the late Mulhar Row, strongly recommended that some child (distantly related to the family) should be adopted to succeed Mallee Row, a plan which would have secured the continuance of his own authority as minister.* This proposition was combined with the offer of a large separate provision for Ahalya Bae, whose abilities were admitted, but her sex objected to as a disqualification for the conducting of public affairs. Gungadhur at the same time proposed to give a considerable present† to Ragobah Dada, in the event of his agreeing to the arrangement and promoting its execution. This venal chief gave a ready assent to the measure; and his concurrence was considered by the minister so conclusive, that he waited upon Ahalya Bae, completely assured, that, if other motives failed, a despair of successful resistance would compel her to acquiesce; but he soon discovered his error. He was told at once by this high-minded woman, that his plan was disgraceful to the house of Holkar, and should never have her consent; and she

* Gungadhur Jeswunt held his station of Dewan, or Minister, to the Holkar family from the Paishwah. He had been nominated by Bajerow to that office with Mulhar Row, when the latter was first promoted to high command.

† This description of present to a superior is termed Nazarana.



particularly disapproved of his intended gift to Ragobah, whose right of interference on the occasion she entirely rejected. The heirs of Mulhar Row, she said, were extinct on the death of her son, and she had, as wife and mother of the two last representatives of the family, the exclusive privilege of selecting the successor,—and that just claim she was resolved, at all hazards, to maintain. It is probable that Ahalya Bae had not only also consulted with her own principal adherents, but with the Mahratta military chiefs who were in Malwa when these events occurred. Her whole conduct, however, at this crisis of her fortune, and of the Holkar government, shewed that her resolution had been seriously taken, and would be firmly maintained. On hearing that Ragobah was making preparations to compel her to compliance, she sent him a message, earnestly advising him not to make war on a woman, from which he might incur disgrace, but could never derive honour. She added, to give effect to this remonstrance, every preparation for hostilities. The troops of Holkar evinced enthusiasm in her cause; and she made a politic display of her determination to lead them to combat in person, by directing four bows, with quivers full of arrows, to be fitted to the corners of the howdah, or seat, on her favourite elephant. Ragobah seemed at first equally resolved to proceed to extremities; but all his followers were reluctant; and Madhajee Sindia, and Jannojee Bhonslah, refused to unite with him and an ungrateful minister, to subvert the independence of the Holkar family. These sentiments, and the arrival of a letter from the Paishwah Madhoo Row, to whom Ahalya Bae had referred, turned the scale



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completely in her favour. That prince directed his uncle to desist from all farther attempts against the respectable widow of Kundee Row, whose right to the management of affairs was indisputable. These injunctions were implicitly obeyed; and Ahalya Bae gave, in her first act, a proof of her judgment, to which much of the prosperity and reputation that afterwards attended her administration may be referred. She elected for the commander of her army, and to fulfil those duties which as a female she could not perform, Tukajee Holkar, a chief of the same tribe, but no way related* to Mulhar Row. Tukajee was highly esteemed as a soldier by that chief, and commanded the Pagah, or household troops; and, before he had reached his present power, had established a character, which he maintained through life, of a plain unaffected Mahratta soldier. Ragobah, after this arrangement, proceeded to Poona; and was invited to take the route of Mhysir, where he was most hospitably entertained by Ahalya Bae. She directed the contingent of the family to accompany him to the Mahratta capital, under the command of Tukajee, who, she desired, should in person receive from the Paishwah an honorary dress, and a commission, confirming him in his high station. All her wishes were complied with; and she in her turn restored, on the ground of his former services and high character, the minister Gungadhur to favour.

The divided authority established in the Holkar state,

* As this chief is the grandfather of the present representative of the house of Holkar, he is always termed, by the present minister and others, a relation of the great Mulhar Row; but this is not the fact.



from the day of Tukajee's elevation, had a character which, judging from common rules, was not likely to admit of its subsisting a week; but it remained for above thirty years undisturbed by jealousy or ambition. This is to be ascribed to the virtue and moderation of the parties, to their respect for each other, and to their having distinct and, generally speaking, distant spheres of action.

Ahalya Bae had chosen Tukajee to command the armies of the state, and to be the titled head of the sovereignty, after he had attained an age when the mind is confirmed in its habits. A partiality for her own choice made her very indulgent; and Tukajee seems never to have forgotten for a moment his original sense of obligation to his benefactress; besides which, the respect that her virtues and liberal piety had established over all India, had given her such a reputation, that to have treated her with neglect or ingratitude, much less to have returned her generosity with any usurpation of her property or rights, would have consigned him to general execration. It is but justice, however, to this manly soldier to declare, that he appears never to have needed the check of such considerations. Although for a time much under the influence of one of the principal ministers* of the government, who was not favourably disposed towards Ahalya Bae, he never deviated from the path he first pursued. He was more than obedient: he was dutiful, and all his actions were directed to please and conciliate the princess, to whom he was solely indebted for his high station.

* The name of this man was Narroo Gunneiss. He is represented to have been an artful and ambitious Brahmin.



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He constantly called her his mother; but, as she was much younger than him, this relation was not engraved upon his seal. On that he was styled, by her command, "Tukajee, the son of Mulhar Row Holkar."—These facts will appear still more extraordinary, when we advert to the manner in which the state was governed. When Tukajee was in the Deckan (and he remained there at one period for twelve years), all the territories of the family South of the Satpoora range, were managed by him, and the countries North of that limit were under Ahalya Bae, to whom the different tributaries also made their annual payments. While he was in Hindustan (he never remained long in Malwa) he collected the revenues of the countries that had been acquired there, and in Bundelcund, and also the tributes of Rajpootana. The districts in Malwa and Nemaar continued, as usual, under the direction of Ahalya Bae; and her authority was on such occasions extended over the possessions in the Deckan. The treasures of the family, which were very considerable (said to have been two millions), remained with Ahalya Bae; and she had besides personal estates yielding annually above four lacs of rupees, which, with the hoard above-mentioned, were entirely expended at her discretion; while all the rest of the receipts were brought into a general account, and applied to the expenditure of the government. The accounts of receipts and disbursements were kept with scrupulous exactness; and Ahalya Bae, after paying the civil and militia* charges, sent the balance that

* The term Sebundy, which means a local military, employed for the preserving of internal peace, and to aid in revenue collections, may be literally interpreted "Militia."



remained in the public treasury, to supply the exigencies of the army employed abroad. Tukajee was, no doubt, from the distance at which he was placed, and the scenes in which he was engaged, often obliged to act for himself; but he is stated to have referred, on every occasion in which the general interests of the government were implicated, to Ahalya Bae; and in matters relating to peace or war, or to the foreign relations of the state, her supremacy was proclaimed by the envoys* of all the principal, as well as petty, rulers of India residing at her court: ministers, deputed directly from her, resided at Poona†, Hyderabad, Seringapatam, Nagpoor, Lucknow, and Calcutta; while inferior agents remained at the courts‡ of the petty Rajas, particularly those from whom tribute was collected.

It appears, from what has been related, that Ahalya Bae was the actual head of the government; and Tukajee, gratified by his high station and her complete confidence, continued, during her life, to exercise no duties beyond those of commander-in-chief of the army, and the collection of the revenues that his vicinity enabled him to realize with more convenience than any other agent of her administration. The servants of the Holkar Government, who filled offices at the period, speak all the same language; and, with every disposition to praise Tukajee, strengthened by his grandson being on the throne,§ they never go higher in their eulogium

* Vakeels.

† When Tukajee was in the Deekan, he was the medium of all intercourse with the Paishwah; but in his absence, Ahalya Bae kept an intelligent agent at the court of Poona.

‡ Durbars.

§ Musnud.



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than to say, that he fulfilled all the expectations of Ahalya Bae, and was to the last hour of his existence attentive, faithful, and obedient.

It has been stated, that Tukajee went to Poona to attend the Paishwah, but his stay was short in the Deckan. While the behaviour of the Bhurtpoor Jauts, subsequent to the battle of Paniput, had excited gratitude in the minds of the Mahrattas, that of many of the Mahomedan chiefs in Hindustan, and above all, of Nujeeb ud Dowlah,* had inflamed the resentment of the discomfited nation. An attack upon Nujeebabad, the stronghold of the latter's family, was determined on; and a large army marched from the Deckan to carry it into execution. Tukajee was on the expedition, but acted only a subordinate part, being under the direction of Ramchunder Gunneiss,† who commanded on the part of the Paishwah. It appears from a Persian manuscript, that Tukajee opened a communication with Nujeeb Khan, on the ground of the ancient friendship that had subsisted between him and Mulhar Row Holkar, which was approved by Ramchunder, but reprobated by Madhajee Sindia, who asked if a peaceable settlement was to be substituted for the revenge which they had united to accomplish. "I require (he said) for the Paishwah the country possessed by this

* To the courage and conduct of this celebrated chief, the victory of Paniput has been in a great degree attributed; and there can be no doubt he was the chief author of the combination among the Mahomedans, which produced that memorable result.

† This chief is distinguished from another of the same name by his title of Beenee Wallah, or quartermaster-general of the Mahratta armies. He had on this occasion above sixty thousand horse, of whom many were stated to be Pindarries.



chief and the Afghans. I demand for myself the blood
“of my brother,* of my nephews,† and my own leg,
“of all use of which I am deprived. Nor will I aban-
“don my hopes of vengeance, because Tukajee Holkar
“chosos to make a brother of this Omrah. You may
“write, however (he added), to Madhoo Row at Poona;
“and if he sanctions by his command such proceedings,
“I am a servant, and shall obey.”‡ These sentiments
did not prevent the counsel of Tukajee from being
adopted. It was thought best to take advantage of the
good disposition evinced by Nujeeb ud Dowlah, lest pro-
ceeding to extremities against so brave and popular a
chief might again unite the Mahomedans; and it was
farther foreseen, that peace with him would enable them
to levy, undisturbed, tribute on the Jauts and Rajpoots,
and increase their resources for future operations. This
policy was pursued, and a twelvemonth passed in plunder-
ing their Hindu friends.§ Nujeeb ud Dowlah was at this
moment in the last stage of his existence. He visited
the Mahratta camp, and an attempt was made to recon-
cile him with Sindia, but neither were sincere; and, a
few weeks before Nujeeb ud Dowlah retired to his capi-
tal to die, he placed the hand of his son Zabita Khan
in that of Tukajee, and requested his protection, antici-
pating the ruin that was soon to overwhelm his family.

* Duttajee.

† Junkajee and Sambajee.

‡ I translated this from a Persian manuscript, written for Sir Charles Malet, by Meer u Deen Hussein Khan, the father of the Nabob Kumal Udeen, and given to me by the latter's son, the present commander of the Guickwar horse in Malwa. Meer u Deen was an actor in the scenes he describes.

§ Among these, Newul Singh of Bhurtpoor, for whom they pro-
fessed such friendship, was the chief sufferer.



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The death of this Omrah removed the last barrier to the Mahratta conquest of Hindustan, the capital of which, and its finest provinces, they soon afterwards subjugated. They were aided in the accomplishment of this undertaking by the weak Shah Allum, who had left the protection of the British Government to lend his name, and what little influence he still retained, to enable the enemies of his dynasty and religion to destroy the only Mahomedan chief who possessed sufficient energy to retard their progress. These events led, as has been stated, to the aggrandizement of Madhaje Sindia, who soon became the real sovereign of Delhi and its surrounding territories; while Tukajee Holkar returned to Malwa, where he declined to the rank of a secondary chief before the rising fortunes of his abler and more aspiring rival.

The death of the Paishwah Madhoo Row,* and the murder of his younger brother, Narrain Row, by Rago-bah Dada, called at this period all the Mahratta chiefs to the Deckan. The celebrated confederacy of Barrah Bhaee, or the twelve† brothers, as the chiefs were designated who combined against the murderer, was joined by Madhaje Sindia and Tukajee Holkar, which involved these leaders in a war with the British Government, whose name was, at this crisis of Mahratta history, asso-

* Madhoo Row died on the 18th November, 1772; and his brother, Narrain Row, was murdered on the 30th August, 1773.

† I never could learn why the number twelve was used on this occasion to express, as it did, an indefinite number. With the attachment to usage that marks the Mahrattas, the term Barrah Bhaee has been continued, as denoting combination; and a body of Mahratta horse now in the service of Holkar, composed of parties of different chiefs, is distinguished by this appellation.



ciated with the cause of guilt and usurpation. The united chiefs proclaimed Madhoo Row, the posthumous son of Narrain Row, Paishwah; but the real power of that high station devolved on Ballajee Junardun, commonly called Nana Furnavese, an able Brahmin, who acted a prominent part in forming the combination against Ragobah. The results of this combination have been noticed. The treaty* of Salbaee confirmed the triumph of those by whom it had been effected.

Tukajee Holkar appears acting a very conspicuous part in a war which the Poona Government, aided by the Nizam, carried on against Tippoo Sultan; and he proceeded, the year after it was concluded, to Mhysir, to pay his respects to Ahalya Baee. There, however, his stay was short, as he was called upon to take a share in the operations which terminated in establishing the power of Ali Bahadur,† the natural son of Bajerow, over a great portion of Bundelcund, and that of Madhajee Sindia over the whole of Hindustan. The force of Tukajee bore no proportion to that of the latter chief; and he consequently derived little benefit from these conquests. The claims of the family of Holkar to an equal share were advanced and nominally admitted, and at a settlement of accounts‡ some districts were

* A treaty was concluded by Colonel Upton in 1776; but hostilities recommenced, and the war was not terminated till the treaty of Salbaee.

† He was the son of the first Bajerow, by a Mahomedan mother; and as his birth deprived him of the privileges of his father's tribe, he was, though acknowledged by the latter as his son, brought up in the religion of his mother.

‡ These accounts had commenced between Ranojee Sindia and Mulhar Row Holkar, and remained unsettled till the period mentioned.



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granted to liquidate the acknowledged balance in their favour; but the predominating control of Madhajee prevented any benefit from the cession, and when that chief proceeded to Poona, to establish his influence at the court of the Paishwah, Tukajee became involved in disputes with the leaders, particularly Lukwa Dada, left by Sindia in Hindustan; which terminated, as has been before stated, in an action at the pass of Lakheree, where he was defeated by the infantry of De Boigne.* This victory was, from reasons before assigned, productive of no immediate consequences. Sindia's troops returned to Hindustan, and those of Tukajee pursued their march to Indore and Mhysir, without retaliating the aggression upon Madhajee's possessions in Malwa. This fact leads to a conclusion, that it was more of a quarrel between Tukajee and Madhajee's commander, than between the Sindia and Holkar families.

Tukajee remained but a few months in Malwa, from whence he was summoned to join the Mahratta chiefs, then assembling at Poona for a general attack on the dominions of Nizam Ali Khan, which had been long projected. The result of this attack has been narrated. Tukajee Holkar, who was at this period about seventy years of age, had risen to higher consideration after the death of Madhajee Sindia, being looked up to as the oldest of those Mahratta military chiefs who had witnessed the zenith of their glory; but his real strength was greatly inferior to that of Dowlet Row Sindia,

* This, like all Mahratta defeats, is imputed to treachery; and in the manuscript given me by Tantia Jogh, no less persons are accused than Casee Row and Bappoo Holkar, the son and nephew of Tukajee.



whose youthful impetuosity calculated solely on force; and the consequence was, that Tukajee acted a less distinguished part in the transactions which followed the defeat of the Nizam, and the death of the Paishwah Madhoo Row, than might have been expected from his age and reputation. He appears, throughout this scene of unparalleled intrigue, as the friend and supporter of Sindia; but he was probably, from years and infirmities, incapable of exertion; for he died before it terminated, leaving behind him the character of a good soldier, a plain unaffected man, and one whose courage was superior to his craft, which is no slight praise for a Mahratta leader. We are greatly prepossessed in favour of Tukajee, by the temper, gratitude, and obedience which he evinced towards Ahalya Bae. Throughout the long period that intervened between his elevation and her death, which occurred two years previous to his own, there never was any serious* dispute, much less a rupture, between them. This reflects great credit on both; but, perhaps, the greatest on Ahalya Bae, whose government of the Holkar territories in Central India must now be noticed. It presents us with few events like those which have been narrated; but its merit consists in their absence. The character of her administration was for more than thirty years the basis of the prosperity which attended the dynasty to which she belonged; and although, latterly, it was obscured by the genius and success of Madhajee Sindia, it continued

* I considered this fact so extraordinary, that I made the most minute enquiries from numerous persons personally acquainted with both: these all confirmed the truth of what we learn from their history.



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to sustain its rank during her life as one of the principal branches of the Mahratta empire. The manner in which the authority of the state was divided between Tukajee and Ahalya Bae has been already mentioned. The management of all the provinces in Malwa and Nemaar was the peculiar department of the latter; and her great object was, by just and moderate government, to improve the condition of the country, while she promoted the happiness of her subjects. She maintained but a small force independent of the territorial militia; but her troops were sufficient, aided by the equity of her administration, to preserve internal tranquillity; and she relied on the army of the state, actively employed in Hindustan and the Deckan, and on her own reputation, for safety against all external enemies.

It is not common with the Hindus* (unless in those provinces where they have learnt the degrading usage from their Mahomedan conquerors) to confine females, or to compel them to wear veils. The Mahrattas of rank (even the Brahmins)† have, with few exceptions, rejected the custom, which is not prescribed by any of their religious institutions. Ahalya Bae, therefore, offended no prejudice, when she took upon herself the direct management of affairs, and sat every day for a

* The principal exceptions are the higher classes of Rajpoots, and particularly the Rajas and chiefs of this tribe; and there is reason to conclude they have adopted the practice, in a great degree, from the Mahomedans, as we find many passages in their popular tales to warrant a belief that their customs in this respect were different when the Hindu government prevailed over India.

† Mr. Scott Waring, in his History of the Mahrattas, mentions having frequently seen the wife of the Ex-Paishwah Bajerow exercising her horse.



considerable period, in open Durbar, transacting business. Her first principle of government appears to have been moderate assessment, and an almost sacred respect for the native rights of village officers and proprietors of land.* She heard every complaint in person; and although she continually referred causes to courts of equity and arbitration, and to her ministers, for settlement, she was always accessible; and so strong was her sense of duty, on all points connected with the distribution of justice, that she is represented as not only patient, but unwearied, in the investigation of the most insignificant causes, when appeals were made to her decision.

Aware of the partiality which was to be expected from information supplied by members and adherents of the Holkar family, regarding Ahalya Bae, facts were collected from other quarters to guard against the impressions, which the usual details of her administration are calculated to make. It was thought the picture had been overcharged with bright colours, to bring it more into contrast with the opposite system that has since prevailed in the countries she formerly governed; but, although enquiries have been made among all ranks and classes, nothing has been discovered to diminish the eulogiums, or rather blessings, which are poured forth whenever her name is mentioned. The more, indeed, enquiry is pursued, the more admiration is excited: but it appears above all extraordinary, how she had mental and bodily powers to go through with the labours she imposed upon herself, and which from the age of thirty

* These are termed Wuttundurs, or holders of native rights, in Central India. A particular account of their duties and immunities will be given in the Chapter on Revenue.



to that of sixty,* when she died, were unremitted. The hours gained from the affairs of the state were all given to acts of devotion and charity; and a deep sense of religion appears to have strengthened her mind in the performance of her worldly duties. She used to say, that she "deemed herself answerable to God for every "exercise of power;" and in the full spirit of a pious and benevolent mind was wont to exclaim, when urged by her ministers to acts of extreme severity, "Let us, "mortals, beware how we destroy the works of the "Almighty."

From a very minute narrative† which has been obtained of Ahalya Bacc's daily occupations, it appears, that she rose one hour before daybreak to say her morning prayers, and perform the customary ceremonies. She then heard the sacred volumes of her faith read for a fixed period, distributed alms, and gave food, in person, to a number of Brahmins. Her own breakfast was then brought, which was always of vegetable diet; for, although the rules of her tribe did not require it, she had forsworn animal food. After breakfast she again went to prayers, and then took a short repose; after rising from which, and dressing herself, she went

* She succeeded to the administration of the Holkar Government in A. D. 1765, and died in A. D. 1795.

† This was given me by Baramul Dada, the present manager of Mhysir. This sensible old man (now near ninety years of age) was the Kower, or adopted domestic, of Ahalya Bacc. His occupation was to wash her tutelary deities and attend her person. His reverence for her memory exceeds all bounds. He gave me a manuscript containing the account in the text of her usual appropriation of time, and of the devotional exercises she imposed upon herself every month in the year, which varied according to the rank and attributes of the presiding divinity of the season.



about two o'clock to her Durbar, or court, where she usually remained till six in the evening; and when two or three hours had been devoted to religious exercises and a frugal repast, business recommenced about nine o'clock, and continued until eleven, at which hour she retired to rest. This course of life, marked by prayer, abstinence, and labour, knew little variation, except what was occasioned by religious fasts and festivals (of which she was very observant), and the occurrence of public emergencies.

The success of Ahalya Bae in the internal administration of her domains was altogether wonderful. The principles upon which the collections were made and justice administered, will be noticed hereafter: suffice it here to say, that so efficient were those relations which she had established with foreign princes, that her territories were never invaded, except for a few weeks by Usee Rana of Odeypoor, who made an unsuccessful effort to aid some of his tribe who had seized upon Rampoor. The undisturbed internal tranquillity of the country was even more remarkable than its exemption from foreign attack. This was equally produced by her manner of treating the peaceable, as well as the more turbulent and predatory classes; she was indulgent to the former, and, although firm and severe, just and considerate towards the latter. We shall find no more correct standard by which to estimate

* Ahalya Bae instantly detached a force under Shereef Bhaee, the commander of her guards, who surprised and defeated the invaders at the village of Palsorah, twenty-four miles North of Mundissor. The Rana, on hearing of this event, sued for peace, which was granted.



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a government in India, than the permanence, or instability of its ministers, and the reputation of its provincial and other public officers. It is a criterion by which the natives always judge of their governors. Ahalya Bacc had the same minister,* a Brahmin of excellent character, throughout the whole period of her reign; and her managers were seldom, if ever, changed.†

Indore, which she had raised from a village to a wealthy city, was always regarded by her with particular consideration. Many extraordinary instances of her maternal regard for its inhabitants are narrated. Tukajee Holkar, when encamped near it with the army, had desired (at the instigation of some interested persons) to share in the wealth of a rich banker‡ who died without children. The wife of the deceased hastened to Mhysir, where she implored relief of Ahalya Bacc. Her story was listened to; a dress, which confirmed her as sole mistress of the house and property of her husband, was bestowed upon her; and Tukajee instantly received an order to march a short distance from Indore, and not to molest her city with unjust exactions. A ready

* His name was Govind Punt Gunnoo.

† Kundee Row was for more than twenty years Komisdar, or manager of Indore; and it is the general tradition, that he gratified his mistress less, by the regularity with which he collected the revenue, than the spectacle he presented her of a happy and contented population.

‡ The name of this banker, or Soucar, was Davychund. It is true, that, according to the usage of the Bunniah tribe, the wife succeeds, and it may in strictness be termed unjust to have acted otherwise than Ahalya Bacc did on this occasion; but on reference to the common practice of Native governments we find that, in such cases, a large share of the property is often claimed by the state, and a farther sum is usually required for charitable purposes.



obedience to the mandate made amends for the error of Tukajee, while the occurrence more endeared Ahalya Bae to a town where her name is to this day not only revered, but adored.

Ahalya Bae derived much aid, in the internal administration of her country, from the strength and reputation of Madhajee Sindia, which maintained tranquillity throughout his possessions in Central India. She had been greatly indebted to this chief at the commencement of her career, and she continued through life to cultivate his friendship with the fullest sense of its importance. His character forbids the conclusion that his motives for supporting her were disinterested; but, although he might have desired to share the treasures left by Mulhar Row to his successors, no prince was ever more alive to the value of impression; and in seeking to be considered the friend of Ahalya Bae, Madhajee was well aware how much he advanced his own reputation. It does not appear how she first purchased his support; subsequently, however, she lent him thirty lacs of rupees,* for which he gave a bond, but probably without any intention of ever paying it. He perhaps thought his active friendship conferred benefits amply discharging the pecuniary obligation. His managers and other officers, civil and military, had orders to aid and support her authority; and this gave a strength to her government, which, from the intermixed nature of their respective territories, could have been derived from no other quarter.

* Besides this loan, Huirkar Bae (oftener called Mosseah Bae), the favourite mistress of Mulhar Row, advanced Madhajee, when in distress, six lacs of rupees.



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The tributaries of the Holkar family were, during the administration of Ahalya Bae, treated with an attention and moderation that made delays even in their payments unusual; and when these occurred, her indignant remonstrances, which were as severe as they were just, inspired an awe that hardly ever failed of effect. The numerous petty leaders * of the Rajpoot tribes, who had, from their ability to pillage, established a claim to a portion of the revenue, were almost all brought to fair and amicable terms. And, as Madhajee Sindia observed the same policy, this class, generally speaking, were peaceable and contented. The fond object of her life was to promote the prosperity of all around her; she rejoiced, we are told, when she saw bankers, merchants, farmers, and cultivators, rise to affluence; and, so far from deeming their increased wealth a ground of exaction, she considered it a legitimate claim to increased† favour and

* These chiefs, who are called Grassiahs, will be particularly described in a subsequent chapter.

† Khealee Ram (the nephew of Himmot Row, formerly a civil officer of high rank in the service of the Nabob of Bhopal), who was two years one of my principal writers, informed me that about thirty-two years ago, when he was manager of Bersiah, a rich Soucar, Subh Khem Doss, died at Seronje without heirs. The manager demanded three lacs of rupees, threatening, if this sum was not paid, to seize the property for the state. The family desired the widow to adopt a son; but this he peremptorily refused to allow, unless they paid the present, or rather fine, he had demanded. The widow and her nephew whom she wished to adopt, attended by a numerous party of relations and friends, hastened to Mhysir. Ahalya Bae did not keep them a day in suspense; she removed her manager, confirmed the adoption, and refused even a small present. Taking the adopted child upon her knee, she gave him clothes, some jewels, and a palanquin, and sent him and all concerned back to Seronje, to speak, while they existed, of her goodness and justice. The object of her



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protection. The settlements of Ahalya Bae with the Gond plunderers on the Nerbudda, and the Bheels who inhabit the mountainous tracts of the province, were as happy as her other arrangements; and that they had not complete success, is to be imputed to other causes than her want of vigour or sagacity. She first tried gentle measures of conciliation with this class, but finding them ineffectual, she had recourse to a more rigorous system. Several incorrigible offenders * were taken and put to death. Such examples of her severe justice were rare; for though she knew well how to inspire dread, when it was necessary, in the minds of the most hardened robbers, conciliation and kindness were the means she preferred; and, while she deterred them

bounty is still alive, but he has lived to be despoiled of all his wealth by Ameer Khan, the present possessor of Seronje.

Another remarkable instance of Ahalya Bae's disinterestedness was related to me by Tantia Jogh, the present minister of the Holkar state. Tuppee Doss and Benares Doss, two brothers, who were Soucars, or bankers, in Kergong, died about the same date, without heirs, leaving two lacs of rupees in specie, and two more due to them. Tuppee Doss's wife came to Ahalya Bae, at Mhysir, and, through the elder brother of Tantia Jogh, proposed to make over to the state the fortune her husband and her brother had accumulated under its protection. Ahalya Bae declined the offer, and advised the widow (if she did not want it) to bestow it in charity, or expend it in public and useful buildings that would do honour to her husband's memory. The advice was taken; and a Ghaut, or flight of stone steps, to the river at Kergong, with a temple dedicated to Gunputty, still remain as memorials of the manner in which the wealth which Ahalya Bae rejected was expended.

* Amongst these was Mundroop Singh, a noted freebooter, whose stronghold was Sillanah, on the banks of the Nerbudda. The trouble I had for three years with the descendants of this robber chief gave me full insight into the atrocities which compelled Ahalya Bae to exert a severity to which her nature was reluctant.



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from the continuance of a life of plunder by the establishment of posts, she invited them to a better mode of life, by the most considerate attention to their habits. Their ancient right to a small duty* on goods passing their hills was admitted; but she exacted, in recompense for her concessions, and for the grants she made them of waste lands, an obligation to protect the roads, and to recover any property that was stolen within their respective† limits. There would be no end to a minute detail of the measures of her internal policy. It is sufficient to observe, she has become, by general suffrage, the model of good government in Malwa. Tantia Jogh, the present minister of the prince Mulhar Row, is satisfied that he is at once pleasing us, gratifying the family with the management of whose affairs he is entrusted, and gaining popularity by professing to follow the example of this extraordinary female; and her name is considered such excellent authority, that an objection is never made, when her practice is pleaded as the precedent.

The correspondence of Ahalya Bae extended to the most remote parts of India. It was generally carried on through Brahmins, who were the agents of her pious munificence, which was as unexampled as it was un-

* This is called the Bheel's Cowry. It differs in almost every place, but is no where above half a piece on a bullock load.

† I have had the same settlement to make with the same class of people; and while the present minister of the Holkar Government has considered that he went as far in liberal conciliation as he could, by agreeing to restore the relations which were established in Ahalya Bae's time, I have never found the rudest inhabitants of the mountains desire farther indulgence. This is incontrovertible evidence of her able conduct in this difficult department of her administration.



bounded. When the treasures of Holkar came into her possession, she is stated to have appropriated them, by the performance of a religious ceremony* (common with Hindus), to the purposes of charity and good works. She built several forts, and at that of Jaum constructed a road, with great labour and cost, over the Vindhya range, where it is almost perpendicular. She expended considerable sums in religious edifices at Mhysir, and built many temples,† Dhurmsallas (or places of rest for travellers), and wells, throughout the Holkar possessions in Malwa. But her munificence was not limited to her own territories; at all the principal places of Hindu pilgrimage, including as far East and West as Jagger-nath in Cuttack, and Dwaraca in Guzerat, and as far North as Kedarnath,‡ among the snowy mountains of Himalaya, and South as Ramiseram, near Cape Como-rin, she built holy edifices, maintained establishments, and sent annual sums to be distributed in charity. Her principal structures are at Gyah, where a figure of her-

* She placed water in her hand, and having mixed with it some leaves of the Toolsee tree while a Brahmin pronounced a prayer, she sprinkled the water over the treasure, which was considered by this act devoted to charity.

† That at the village of Nimawur, opposite Hindia, which she erected, although small, is one of the most beautiful buildings I have seen in this quarter of India.

‡ Captain T. D. Steuart, one of my political assistants, when travelling to Kedarnath in 1818, had frequent opportunities of remarking the veneration in which the memory of Abalya Bacc is held in that remote part of India. There is an excellent stone Dhurmsalla still in good repair, and a Coond, or reservoir of water, built at the expense of that princess, for the accommodation of pilgrims and travellers at the stage beyond Mundul, and about three thousand feet higher, where not a vestige of any other habitation is to be found.



self adoring the image of Mahadeva is preserved in one of the temples; and she is sainted among her own tribe, by its having been placed near the statues of the god Rámachandra, and his wife, the goddess Seeta.

Besides the fixed yearly disbursements which Ahalya Bae sent to support her establishments at the holy shrines of India, proportional, but less sums, were remitted to other sanctuaries. In addition to this fixed charity, she occasionally bestowed other presents; and nothing added more to her fame in the Southern regions of the peninsula, than the constant supply of Ganges water, which she was in the habit of sending to wash the sacred images of the different temples. These extensive and pious donations probably proceeded from a sincere belief in her religion, and a desire to promote her own and her country's welfare, by propitiating the favour of the deities she worshipped; but we find in many of her observances and institutions, a spirit of charity which had the truest character of wisdom and benevolence. She daily fed the poor; and on particular festivals gave entertainments to the lowest classes. During the hot months of the year persons were stationed on the roads to supply travellers with water; and at the commencement of the cold season she gave clothes to great numbers of her dependants, and to infirm people. Her feelings of general humanity were often carried to an extraordinary excess. The beasts of the field, the birds of the air, and the fish of the river shared in her compassion; portions of food were allotted to them, and the peasant near Mhysir used in hot days to see his yoke of oxen stopped during their labour to be refreshed with water brought by a servant



of Ahalya Bae; while fields she had purchased were covered with flocks of birds, that had been justly, as Ahalya Bae used to observe, driven by cultivators from destroying the grain, on which the latter depended for their own sustenance.

We may smile at such universal sympathy, and perhaps censure the bigotry which bestowed on Brahmins the largest share of her charity, and wasted the treasures of a state in the erection and maintenance of edifices in distant lands; but it was well asked by an intelligent Brahmin* (to whom this remark was addressed), "Whether Ahalya Bae, by spending double the money on an army that she did in charity and good works, could have preserved her country for above thirty years in a state of profound peace, while she rendered her subjects happy and herself adored? No person (he added) doubts the sincerity of her piety; but if she had merely possessed worldly wisdom, she could have devised no means so admirably calculated to effect the object. I was (this person concluded) in one of the principal offices at Poona during the last years of her administration, and know well what feelings were excited by the mere mention of her name. Among the princes of her own nation, it would have been looked upon as sacrilege to have become her enemy, or, indeed, not to have defended her against any hostile attempt. She was considered by all in the same light. The Nizam of the Deckan and Tippoo Sultan granted her the same res-

* I quote here the precise words of the reply made to an observation of mine that expressed doubt of the wisdom of Ahalya Bae's conduct.



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“pect as the Paishwah; and Mahomedans joined with
“Hindus in prayers for her long life and prosperity.”

An event occurred in the latter years of Ahalya Bae of too interesting and afflicting a nature to be passed over in silence. The melancholy death of her only son, Malee Row, has been noticed. She had, besides, one daughter, Muchta Bae, who was married,* and had one son,† who, after reaching manhood, died at Mhysir. Twelve months afterwards his father died, and Muchta Bae declared immediately her resolution to burn with the corpse of her husband. No efforts (short of coercion) that a mother and a sovereign could use were untried by the virtuous Ahalya Bae to dissuade her daughter from the fatal resolution. She humbled herself to the dust before her, and entreated her, as she revered her God, not to leave her desolate and alone upon earth. Muchta Bae, although affectionate, was calm and resolved. “You are old, mother (she said), “and a few years will end your pious life. My only “child and husband are gone, and when you follow, life, “I feel, will be insupportable; but the opportunity of “terminating it with honour will then have passed.” Ahalya Bae, when she found all dissuasion unavailing, determined to witness the last dreadful scene. She walked in the procession; and stood near the pile, where she was supported by two Brahmins, who held her arms. Although obviously suffering great agony of mind, she remained tolerably firm till the first blaze of the flame made her lose all self-command; and while her shrieks increased the noise made by the exulting

* Her husband's name was Jeswunt Row Paunseah.

† The child's name was Nutheabah.



shouts of the immense multitude that stood around, she was seen to gnaw in anguish those hands she could not liberate from the persons by whom she was held. After some convulsive efforts, she so far recovered as to join in the ceremony of bathing in the Nerbudda, when the bodies were consumed. She then retired to her palace, where for three days, having taken hardly any sustenance, she remained so absorbed in grief that she never uttered a word. When recovered from this state, she seemed to find consolation in building a beautiful monument* to the memory of those she lamented.

These particulars are related on the authority of several persons who were near witnesses of the affecting scene, besides that of Baramul Dada,† who was throughout in attendance on her. It is pleasing to find that her devotion, although it forbade her to infringe what usage had sanctioned and rendered holy, had not subdued in this admirable woman's mind the natural feelings of humanity.

Ahalya Bae died at the age of sixty, worn out with care and fatigue; and, according to some, she hastened her death by a too strict observance of the numerous fasts prescribed by her religion. She was of middle stature, and very thin. Though at no period of her life handsome,‡ her complexion, which was of a dark olive,

* There are few modern temples in India of more beautiful and finished workmanship than this monument of maternal love.

† I went to the spot where this afflicting scene occurred, with the venerable Baramul Dada; and though much affected, he seemed to take a melancholy delight in showing the spot where the pile was made, and that where his mistress stood to witness her daughter's sacrifice.

‡ When the beautiful but wicked Anuntia Bae, wife of Ragobah and mother of Bajerow, the ex-Paishwah, was at Dhar, envious, per-



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was clear; and her countenance is described as having been to the last hour of her existence agreeable, and expressive of that goodness which marked every action of her life. She was very cheerful, and seldom in anger; but, when provoked by wickedness or crime, the most esteemed of her attendants trembled* to approach her. The mind of this extraordinary woman had been more cultivated than is usual with Hindus: she could read, and understood the Purānas, or sacred books, which were her favourite study. She is represented as having been singularly quick and clear in the transaction of public business. Her husband was killed before she was twenty years of age, and to that misfortune were added the vice and insanity of her son. These afflictions made a strong impression on her mind. After her husband's death she never wore coloured clothes,† nor any jewels except a small necklace; and, indeed, remained, amid every temptation, unchanged in her habits or character. Flattery even appears to have been lost upon Ahalya Bae. A Brahmin wrote a book in her praise, which she heard read with patience; but, after observing "she was a weak sinful woman,

haps, of the fame of Ahalya Bae, she sent a female attendant to bring an account of her looks. The woman is reported to have said on her return, "Ahalya Bae has not beautiful features, but a "heavenly light is on her countenance."—"But she is not handsome, you say," was the only reply of her mistress, who felt consolation in this part of the report.

* Baramul Dada, the venerable manager of Mhysir, who was for many years one of her most favourite servants, assured me that when really in anger, which was of rare occurrence, her countenance struck terror into the minds of the boldest.

† She always dressed in plain white clothes, according to the usage of Hindu widows, without even an embroidered or coloured border.



and not deserving such fine encomiums," she directed it to be thrown into the Nerbudda, and took no farther notice of the author.* The facts that have been stated of Ahalya Bae rest on grounds that admit of no scepticism.† It is, however, an extraordinary picture:—a female without vanity, a bigot without intolerance;‡ a mind imbued with the deepest superstition, yet receiving no impressions except what promoted the happiness of those under its influence; a being exercising, in the most active and able manner, despotic power, not merely with sincere humility, but under the severest moral restraints that a strict conscience could impose on human action; and all this combined with the greatest indulgence for the weakness and faults of others. Such, at least, is the account which the natives of Malwa give of Ahalya Bae: with them her name is sainted, and she is styled an Avatar, or incarnation of the Divinity. In the most sober view that can be taken of her character, she certainly appears, within her limited sphere, to have been one of the purest and most exemplary rulers that ever existed; and she affords a strik-

* This anecdote was related to me by Baramul Dada, when sitting on the terrace of her palace at Mhysir, which overhangs the Nerbudda.

† Independently of the numerous and authentic sources from which these facts are drawn, my duty led to my making, in detail, settlements and agreements with the same classes; and the minute evidence I have obtained regarding the acts and measures of the internal administration of Ahalya Bae, places its real character beyond all doubt.

‡ Intolerance is not a defect of the Hindu religion; but Ahalya Bae is represented to have gone farther, and to have been peculiarly kind and considerate to such of her subjects as differed from her in faith.