



obnoxious to her. In this negotiation Ameer Khan was supported by Zalim Singh of Kotah, who offered to become security for the full performance of the proffered engagement; but Toolsah Bacc concluded, and on just grounds, that Ameer Khan's purpose was to deprive her of power, and to assume the sole management of affairs: in her answer, therefore, to his overture, she insisted that Ghuffoor Khan should be recalled, and the battalions brought to order, as preliminaries. Ameer Khan made every effort to effect the latter object, but in vain; and a renewal of hostilities was only avoided by both parties agreeing to refer to the decision of Zalim Singh, the Regent of Kotah. The army of Mulhar Row marched to within twelve miles of the cantonment of that chief, to which place Tantia Jogh was deputed. Ghuffoor Khan came soon after on the part of Ameer Khan; and three months passed in a series of reconciliations and quarrels between the parties, and in making and breaking promises and oaths; but the intelligence received at the close of the rainy season, of the advance of the British armies towards Central India, effected for the moment a reunion of interests, which nothing else could have accomplished.

Zalim Singh had now his own safety to consult, and was eager to get rid of friends who might embarrass, but could not assist him. It is to the honour of Tantia Jogh's character, that the wise and experienced Regent of Kotah selected him, at this crisis, as the man best able to combine and direct the discordant adherents of Holkar; and as a proof of his own friendship, he sent a detachment of three hundred infantry, with two standards, for the avowed purpose of protecting his person.

Before the events, which now hastened affairs to a crisis, are detailed, it will be necessary to notice an influence which had long been employed in vain endeavours to unite the courts of Sindia and Holkar, and to restore, by the reunion of its different chiefs, the former strength of the Mahratta confederacy.

The control which the notorious Trimbuckjee* established over the councils of Bajerow, may be fixed as the date from which that prince changed his policy, and commenced his intrigues against the British Government. These assumed a more serious aspect, when the murder of Gungadhur Shastree† had placed the infamous favourite in the situation of a proscribed malefactor. The engagements between Sindia and Holkar, first negotiated by Gunput Row, and afterwards by Tantia Alikur, have been already narrated. The mutual obligation and determination of the parties to serve and obey the Paishwah, are made, in the first article of the treaty,‡ the bond of their faith to each other. There can be no doubt that, though the object was to confederate against the English, it was intended to proceed slowly and with great caution; but the situation of Bajerow precipitated a rupture; and, as he became every hour more alarmed

* The complete ascendancy of Trimbuckjee in the councils of Bajerow may be dated from A.D. 1815.

† Gungadhur Shastree, the minister of the Baroda State, came to Poona to negotiate a settlement of accounts between his master and the Paishwah through the mediation of the English Government, under whose protection and guarantee he was deputed. He was murdered by Trimbuckjee, under circumstances which left no doubt that the deed was perpetrated with the knowledge of Bajerow.

‡ Major Agnew's letter to the Chief Secretary to Government, under date 31st August, 1818.



respecting himself and his favourite, he was urgent in his endeavours to obtain immediate and efficient assistance. Agents were in consequence sent to Sindia, and a man of some eminence reached Holkar's court* about the same time. He was received with marked honour, being met by all the ministers; but the state of affairs was unpropitious to union in any cause, and the intrigues and struggles for power which took place after the death of Balaram Seit, baffled all his efforts in favour of Bajerow. That prince sent in the beginning of the ensuing year another agent,† who joined Holkar's camp a short time before the ministers and chiefs had referred their disputes to the Kotah Raja. This second envoy, while he professed to have a large command of pecuniary resources, expressed perfect confidence in his ability to bring Sindia and Ameer Khan to concur in the measures, to the adoption of which he urged the ministers of Mulhar Row; and, after remaining some time at the cantonment of Zalim Singh, he proceeded to the camp of the Patan chief, who did not reject his proposals, but demanded an advance of four lacs of rupees. The payment of this sum was agreed to, and a letter was sent to Holkar's camp, directing the necessary bills to be transmitted. This delay proved fatal to the negotiation. The approach of an English army decided Ameer

* This person, whose name was Gunput Row, was generally called Gunobah Punt. His arrival and honourable reception at the camp at Mukra, on the 4th of Assar in the year of the Sumbut 1783, charged with a letter from the Paishwah, is reported in a letter from Mr. Wellesley, acting Resident at Gualior, to Mr. Secretary Adam, dated 20th February, 1816.

† The name of this man was Dhoondoo Punt Tantia. He assumed, for concealment, the name of Krishen Row.



Khan to accept the offers made by that Government ; and after his first interview with Sir David Ochterlony, he dismissed Bajerow's agent, and wrote to Ghuffoor Khan, to desire he would urge Toolsah Bae not to think of going to the Deckan, but to wait his arrival in camp, when he would adjust all differences between her and the English.

Such was the result of the Paishwah's negotiation with Ameer Khan ; but the intrigues of the former's agents were more successful at the court of Holkar. An artful Brahmin,* who was an hereditary servant in the family of Gunput Row, had accompanied the mission from Poona, and laboured to promote its success. The absence of Tantia Jogh with Zalim Singh gave this man an opportunity of increasing a coolness, which had for some time subsisted between that minister and the Dewan ; and the instant the mind of the latter was turned against his friend, Toolsah Bae adopted similar sentiments. This party was strengthened by the accession of some of the military leaders, who were secretly excited, soon after Tantia's return to camp, to seize his person, as a security for their arrears.

The party, who now directed the councils of Holkar, having pledged themselves to adopt Bajerow's cause, they received an advance of one lac and sixty thousand rupees from the agent of that prince, a part of which was distributed to the troops, while the intention of proceeding to the Deckan was proclaimed, and orders sent for all corps and detachments to join without delay. This took place in November ; and early in the ensuing month the whole assembled about twenty miles from

* Sreeput Row.



Mahidpoor, to which place they afterwards marched. All were now in high spirits, for the Dewan and his friends were lavish in their promises of high and regular pay, after the army had crossed the Nerbudda; but the intelligence of the arrival of a division of the British army at Aggur,* a distance of about fifty miles from Mahidpoor, and of another† having penetrated into Malwa, made a serious impression on their feelings.

Thakoor Doss, the news-writer at Holkar's court, employed by Mr. Metcalfe, the resident at Delhi, had been despatched with a letter to that gentleman, containing general professions of friendship; but no definite propositions were made. The state of affairs was, however, now changed, and it was necessary to take some decided measures. A council was held, of which Tantia Jogh (though a prisoner) was president. He advised the deputation of a respectable person to communicate with the English officer commanding the troops at Aggur; but his advice was not approved, and it led to an accusation of having intrigued with the English, which not only prolonged his confinement, but increased the severity of his treatment. He was particularly obnoxious to the commandants of the infantry corps, who, as well as the principal leaders of the cavalry, went, after this council, to the tent of Ghuffoor Khan, and interchanged pledges of fidelity, by which they bound themselves to union during the dangers that were approaching.

* My corps reached Aggur on the 4th December, 1817.

† The first division, under the command of Sir T. Hislop, crossed the Nerbudda on its march to Oojein on the 1st December, 1817.

A correspondence was entered into with the British* officer commanding the division at Aggur, who, while he moved to join the army of Sir Thomas Hislop near Oojein, stated to the ministers of Holkar, that if they were really desirous of peace they should send a mission to the head-quarters of that General. This step was adopted, and agents came, vested, as they said, with full powers to negotiate a treaty. The most liberal terms† were offered; but the complete reform of a mutinous infantry was insisted upon, and the ministers were told, when they urged their inability to control this body, as

* I had, on my arrival at Aggur, written a letter to Mulhar Row of a friendly nature, but meant to bring his ministers to a clear explanation of their sentiments, as far as these affected the British Government. Before this reached them, a letter had been sent to me, written in the name of the young prince, which contained nothing but mere general expressions of regard, and a call upon me, as a former friend of the family, to preserve the ties of peace. I had offered in my letter to send an officer to wait upon Mulhar Row; but receiving no answer, I moved towards Oojein by Turanah, whence I addressed a short note to the Dewan Gunput Row, informing him of my intended junction with the Commander-in-Chief Sir Thomas Hislop, and warning him, if he desired to avoid danger, to lose no time in entering into a negotiation.

† These were comprised in ten articles, as detailed in the notes of conference between Holkar's Vakeel and myself on the 15th December, 1817. Their moderate purport was to restore the Government of Holkar to a condition in which it could be tolerated by other states; and this necessarily included a complete separation from the Pindaries, a reduction of a great proportion of a mutinous army, and, in short, the abandonment of the predatory system, the pursuit of which had been found hostile to the tranquillity of other states. The English Government offered a gratuitous aid to effect this desirable change; and, so far from desiring any cession of territory, engaged to assist Holkar's Government with funds to pay the arrears of the troops it was called upon to discharge.



an excuse for non-compliance, that, if they desired safety for themselves and their prince, they should bring the latter to the English camp, and leave its commander the task of reducing to order a licentious and disobedient rabble, that had so long disturbed the tranquillity and laid waste the territories of the princes they nominally served. During this negotiation there was literally no head in Holkar's army.* The commandants of battalions, satisfied that, if an alliance was formed with the British Government, there would be an end to the distractions that gave them importance, were from the first disposed to hostilities; and this made them violent against all who proposed peace. It was through their influence that no satisfactory answer was returned to the friendly overtures which had been made; and those who desired a rupture, urged the leaders of the Mahratta horse to provoke it by daily depredations on the cattle and followers of the British army. The day before Sir Thomas Hislop advanced to Mahidpoor, his videttes were attacked, and every movement evinced determined hostility. This result had been anticipated from the intelligence received of the circumstances which had just taken place in the camp of Mulhar Row Holkar, where even the semblance of regular authority was extinct, and the question of peace or war was decided, like all others, in a clamorous council of the insolent and ignorant leaders of a rebellious soldiery.

Ghuffoor Khan had at this period joined the party who were anxious to destroy Gunput Row and Toolsah

* Toolsah Bae was alarmed by the surrounding scene; and her favourite Gunput Row was too perplexed with various councils and parties to give her any support in this trying emergency.



Baee. To effect this, there was no want of instruments; for, though Ram Deen had joined their combination, they were hated by all others. The troops still cherished an active resentment on account of the murder of Balaram. The feelings of Tantia Jogh, in consequence of his severe treatment, are supposed to have made him an active promoter of this plot, and his confinement did not deprive him of the means of being so; but the leading executive persons were the principal officers of the Pagah, or household troops. A person, acting under the direction of the commander* of that body, enticed young Mulhar Row from an outer tent where he was playing, and a guard was at the same instant placed over that of Toolsah Baee. Gunput Row came to her relief; but on learning that the prince had been separated from her, he saw at once the extent of the plot, and, turning back, mounted a horse and attempted to escape; but a party of his enemies came up with him in the bed of the Seepa river. He was slightly wounded with a spear before he was thrown from his horse, when he was plundered, insulted by blows, and, after being treated with every species of indignity, conveyed a prisoner, amidst hoots and execrations, to the infantry lines.

This happened on the morning of the 20th December. A more tragical scene took place at night. The death of Toolsah Baee appears to have been early determined on, for the guards placed over her were so strict, that all access was prohibited. This hitherto arrogant female now refused sustenance, and passed the day in tears: and, when she was seized to be carried to the banks of

* Sudder-u-Deen, the Havildar, or commander of the Pagah.



the river (the place fixed for her execution), she is stated to have implored those who conveyed her to save her life, offering her jewels as a bribe, and loading others with the guilt of which she was accused. It was near the dawn of day when this occurred; and many who were asleep in the quarter of the camp where she was, were awakened by her cries; but to use the emphatic expression of a person who witnessed this scene, "not a foot stirred, and not a voice was raised, to save a woman who had never shewn mercy to others." She was taken from her palankeen on the banks of the Seepra, where her head was severed from her body, and the latter was thrown into the river, being denied even the common rites of a Hindu funeral.

Toolsah Bacc was not thirty years of age when she was murdered. She was handsome, and alike remarkable for the fascination of her manners and quickness of intellect. Few surpassed her in a fluent eloquence, which persuaded those who approached her to promote her wishes. She rode (an essential quality in a Mah-ratta lady) with grace, and was always when on horse-back attended by a large party of the females of the first families in the State. But there was never a more remarkable instance than in the history of this princess, how the most prodigal gifts of nature may be perverted by an indulgence of vicious habits. Though not the wife of Jeswunt Row, yet being in charge of his family, and having possession of the child, who was declared his heir, she was obeyed as his widow. As the favourite of the deceased, and the guardian of their actual chief, she had, among the adherents of the Holkar family, the strongest impres-

sions in her favour; but, casting all away, she lived unrespected, and died unpitied.

Ghuffoor Khan is implicated in the death of Toolsah Bae, from his being known to have cherished feelings of active resentment against her. Tantia Jogh was also hostile to her; and those in whom he most confided were busy actors in the scene. Kessairah Bae, the mother of Mulhar Row, was too deeply interested to have escaped suspicion. That the junto of military leaders who at the moment had usurped power, were not the only persons concerned in this deed of violence, there can be no doubt; for, though it had their full concurrence, the act, which was deliberate, was not executed by soldiers, but by the persons whose duty it would have been to put to death any State criminal; and that it is not deemed a reproach by those who now enjoy power, is proved by the men who acted as the executioners of Toolsah Bae still holding their places in the service of the Holkar family.*

On the day Toolsah Bae was seized, the British army had advanced to within ten miles of Holkar's camp, on the banks of the Seeptra, near Mahidpoor. A tumultuous council was held, in which the military chiefs decided that it was advisable to hazard an action on the favourable ground they then occupied. On the morning

* Rowjee Trimbeck was asked who were concerned in Toolsah Bae's death? He said, he believed every one in Holkar's camp desired it, except Gunput Row and Ram Deen. The executioners were the two Jemadars of Mewattees, Sadutt Khan and Mohdeen Allec. The former died five months ago. The latter commands a party of two hundred infantry, who form the guard over the palace of Mulhar Row, at Indore.



of the 21st of December, a considerable body of horse crossed to the right bank of the river to meet the British troops. On the day before, a short letter had been addressed to Mulhar Row Holkar, warning him, for the last time, of the dangers of his situation. An answer was received, when the army was on its march. It was in the former style of evasion, and after some general expressions, concluded by a short sentence written in a spirit not to be mistaken: "If you will advance," the young prince was made to observe, "recollect it is the "army of Holkar." However much the chiefs had before differed, a sense of common danger, and a feeling connected with the reputation of the army to which they belonged, led upon this occasion to a momentary union. They had sworn fidelity to each other on the night of the 20th, and on the ensuing morning the order of battle was skilfully arranged. The horse which had crossed to the right bank of the Seepra, took a position that was well calculated to embarrass the operations of the advancing army, by occupying its attention, and threatening its stores and baggage; while the infantry and cannon, covered by the remainder of the cavalry, occupied a strong and well-connected line, protected on the right by a deep watercourse, and on the left by the abrupt bank of the Seepra. The horse that had crossed the river were commanded by Ram Deen; the infantry were under Roshun Beg; while the Pagah or household troops under Sudder-u-Deen, and Ghuffoor Khan with his personal adherents, remained around the young Prince in the rear of the whole.

The attention of the British army was from the first

directed to the storming of the heavy batteries of guns.* All skirmishing and partial actions were avoided; and the troops having crossed the river, formed under cover, where they remained till the advance of the right of the line upon the enemy's left (the strongest point of his position) gave the signal for a simultaneous attack; which, after a short period of sharp conflict, was successful in every quarter. The army of Holkar fled in great confusion. The horse, who had shewn much boldness at the commencement of the day, were the first to leave the field, when the action grew warm; and both they and the infantry gave way, before the artillery ceased its destructive fire.

Mulhar Row was in the action upon an elephant; and, according to all accounts, behaved with spirit. When he saw his troops flying, he burst into tears, and entreated them to return. His cousin, Hurry Holkar, is said to have shewn much gallantry. He had cut down two Mysore horsemen, when his horse was shot, and the young prince called out with great anxiety to remount his relation. These anecdotes are remembered as proofs, that, young as the representatives of the Holkar family were, they displayed on this memorable occasion that courage, of which its adherents boast as its distinguished feature.

The flight of the army continued through the night, in the direction of Seeta Mhow, which they reached early next day. Tantia Jogh and the Dewan Gunput Row had made their escape from their guards, when the battalions were routed, and found a temporary refuge in the town

* About seventy.



of Mahidpoor; which they left during the night, and joined Mulhar Row, whose mother, Kessairah Bae, being now the acknowledged head of the Government, sent for Tantia, and giving him an honorary dress as minister, placed her son, and the interests of the family, in his hands. From Seeta Mhow the army marched to near Mundissor, where a body of Pindarries under Kurreem Khan were encamped. This chief offered his services, but his alliance was not now desired. The English were in pursuit, and every hope of successful resistance, or even protraction of the campaign, was at an end.

Meer Zuffer Ally, who had been before employed as an agent,* was sent from Seeta Mhow with overtures of peace; the draft of a preliminary treaty was given to him, and he was informed that when he returned with that signed, hostilities should be suspended. He arrived at Mundissor with this engagement executed, a few hours before that fixed for the march of the British troops† to attack the remains of the Mahratta army, which was encamped at a distance of only sixteen miles, near Pertaubghur. Nothing but this seasonable submission could have saved them from destruction. By it the

* Meer Zuffer Ally was the agent of Ghuffoor Khan, who took at this time a very decided turn, refusing to accompany the court in their flight. He had received letters from Ameer Khan urging this conduct, but he was chiefly swayed by his own interests. He obtained the reward he sought, in the Jahgeer he held from Holkar being confirmed, on condition of his supporting a body of horse.

† My division, which had been detached from Mahidpoor in pursuit, had reached Mundissor on the morning of the 31st of December, and my preparations were made to march at night, and fall upon the enemy next day, who, from his condition and situation, could not have escaped.



blow was completely averted. Tantia Jogh came to camp next day; and on the sixth of January the treaty of Mundissor was concluded, by which the family of Holkar, though it abandoned its claims upon the chiefs of Rajpootana, its lands in the Jeypoor country, and its territories* South of the Satpoora range, attained, through the support of the British Government, the actual possession of its remaining countries. This was, in fact, a condition new to the Holkar State; for twenty years had elapsed since it had enjoyed any regular resources, or government, and its name, during the greater part of that period, had only served as a pretext to plunderers for committing every species of excess and crime.

The good effects to be anticipated from the great change made in the condition of this principality by the peace of Mundissor, were justly appreciated by some of the adherents of the family; but the Mahratta horse, the moment they heard the treaty was signed, hastened in a body to the Southward to join Bajerow, who was still in arms. They were commanded by Ram Deen,† who had an additional motive for his desertion, from the irreconcilable nature of his quarrels with Tantia Jogh, whose recent elevation was confirmed by his having become the negotiator of peace with the British Government.

* The rights of the family in its native place, Waubgaun in the Deckan, and as Daismookh of Chandore, were subsequently ceded by the considerate generosity of the Governor-General.

† Ram Deen surrendered when Bajerow did, and disbanded his followers; this and his agreeing never to return to Malwa have obtained him a pension of three thousand rupees per annum from the British Government, in whose territories he now resides.



The remains of the battalions defeated at Mahidpoor had gone to Rampoor, where they were surprised and routed, and their remaining guns captured by a corps under General Browne. The new minister, and others who had thrown themselves decidedly upon the British protection, did not deplore an event* which disembarassed a bankrupt state of a mutinous soldiery, and cancelled a number of old and troublesome claims.

The transactions of the period that elapsed from the insanity of Jeswunt Row until the conclusion of peace between his son Mulhar Row and the British Government, have perhaps been noticed more in detail than they merit; but they exhibit a remarkable picture of a State in which every tie but that of opinion was dissolved, and which continued, through the influence of habitual feelings, to have the name, after it had substantially lost all the reality of a Government. A respect, almost sacred, for the person of their prince, was the only sentiment which, throughout these scenes of confusion and violence, appears to have been participated by all; and it for a time shielded those who had charge of him from the punishment due to their crimes. His name (though a minor) was the only rallying point left; but there was in this disorganized community, as in others constituted of similar materials, always a disposition to reunite, which gave to such a centre of common attachment

* The treasury of the Holkar State had been for years empty, and the jewels of the family, which were once very valuable, had been greatly diminished. There is good reason to conclude there were not twenty lacs of rupees lost at the battle of Mahidpoor. At first this loss was greatly exaggerated, but subsequent minute enquiry has reduced it to a much more moderate amount.



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EVENTS AT THE COURT OF HOLKAR.

more than ordinary importance. The events narrated have utility in another view; most of the actors are still on the stage, and from the scenes in which they have borne a part, we may form some judgment of what is likely to be their future conduct.

It is, however, now necessary to revert to one, who, though a professed dependant of Holkar, rose, amid the revolutions and changes which have occurred during the last thirty years in India, to an importance that demands a notice beyond that which has been incidentally given to him in this chapter.



CHAPTER VIII.

Ameer Khan.

AMEER KHAN is a native of Sumbul, in the province of Mooradabad. His father was a Moollah, or priest, and possessed a small property in land. Ameer Khan and his younger brother Kurreem u Deen left Hindustan when the former was about twenty years of age; and that he was of some consequence in his native town, is established by his having ten adherents, with whom he entered into the service of the Zemindar* of Ranode in Aheerwarra.† He was afterwards retained by a Mah-ratta officer‡ of the Paishwah, who had the management of some districts in Malwa; and from this employment he passed into that of another § collector of revenue. In all these services Ameer Khan and his followers were employed as Sebundy, or local militia, with an

* Deleep Singh.

† This tract of territory, which contains many districts, lies on the North-east frontier of Malwa.

‡ The name of this officer was Dojee. He was collector of the Punj Mahal of Aroun, Tomyu, &c., near Serenje.

§ Nuttee Khan, manager of Shujahalpoor.



average monthly pay of three or four rupees a man, and from ten to fifteen to him as their commander. Brighter prospects, however, soon opened to the young soldier. The troubles which ensued at the petty court of Bhopal, on the death of the minister Chutta Khan, led to the entertainment of a number of men by the different parties; and Ameer Khan, with six horsemen and sixty foot, was enlisted by Hiyat Mahomed Khan;* with whom he remained about twelve months, when he joined Doorjun Lal and Jey Singh, ex-chiefs of Ragoo-ghur, who, expelled from their country by Dowlet Row Sindia, subsisted by plundering the fields they had once cultivated.

Ameer Khan distinguished himself in one of the first actions that these Rajpoot chiefs had with their Mahratta enemies; in consequence of which he was raised to the command of five hundred men, presented with a palan-keen, and became a personage of some importance in this predatory army, which consisted of about fifteen thousand men. But his farther advancement was prevented by an affray with some Rajpoots, in which he was so severely wounded by stones, that he lay three months at Seronje, before he had strength to move out. This affair led to his separation from Doorjun Lal, and his entrance into the service of the Mahratta chief, Balaram Ingolia, who was at the same crisis deeply engaged in the disputes at Bhopal.

* He was entertained by Himmud Row, the Dewan of Hiyat Mahomed Khan. By a strange change of fortune, Himmud Row afterwards became the Dewan of the Jemadar, when the latter was raised to the rank of Nabob; and the son of this Hindu (Duttee Ram) is at the present moment the principal man of business of Ameer Khan.



Balaram Inglia increased Ameer Khan's party to fifteen hundred men, and confided to him the fort of Futtygurh, which he was obliged to abandon, as has been before stated; but this seeming reverse in his fortune proved its happiest juncture, for it led to his adopting the cause of Jeswunt Row Holkar, as the associate of whose fortunes he rose to a fame that made him for many years eminent among the disturbers of the public peace.

The connexion of Ameer Khan with Jeswunt Row Holkar was first that of equality; but the rank of the latter, his being at the head of a sovereignty, and his more energetic character, soon established the relation of prince and dependant. Jeswunt Row, however, always continued to call the Patan leader his brother, and to treat him in a distinguished manner from that shewn to his other officers. Ameer Khan was sole commander of his own army, entertained and dismissed whom he chose, and this made him in a degree independent; but his condition was little to be envied. His followers, who were always much more numerous than he had any means of paying, were in a state of constant mutiny, and for more than half of every year their chief was under restraint; the consequence was, that his conduct was always more regulated by the clamours of this turbulent rabble, and the necessity of providing for their support, than by any regular system of policy. The excesses of Ameer Khan's Patans at Saugor have been noticed; but these were far surpassed at Poona, where he was seized by a party of them, and not only beat and bruised, but almost strangled with his own turban, which they fastened



round his neck. Though Jeswunt Row repressed and punished this act of violence,* he too was compelled, on many occasions, to soothe and humour the turbulent spirits of the freebooters. Hindu feeling was outraged by their continuing to slaughter cows† close to the city of Poona; and the licence they ostentatiously exercised in this particular, may be received as a proof of the insolent and domineering spirit in which they acted on all occasions. It was the constant object of Jeswunt Row to employ them at a distance; and he appears to have considered them more as a body of plunderers, whose general movement he could direct through his connexion with their leader, than as an integral portion of his army, whose services he could at all times command. They, on the other hand, were sensible of the advantages they derived from acting in the name of one of the recognized India Governments; and the main influence by which Ameer Khan retained his precarious rank as their chief, was his forming the link that attached this band of depredators to the house of Holkar.

* Jeswunt Row seized and confined Ghous Mahomed Khan, and some offending Patans, who committed this outrage. He desired to put them to death, but Ameer Khan interceded, fearing the consequences of such a step among a race whose sense of honour impels them to revenge real or supposed wrongs.

† The cow is a sacred animal with the Hindus, who not only abstain from eating the flesh of cattle, but deem killing them a capital crime, and it is constantly punished as such. The Mahrattas of the lowest tribe have this feeling. D. R. Sindia, when I was at his court, A. D. 1802, offered an additional cession of territory, if I would introduce an article in his treaty with the British, that should prevent their slaughtering cows within the limits of the territories he had been compelled to cede; and though it was a period of famine, several persons were executed for killing cows.



The history of Ameer Khan is comprehended in that of Jeswunt Row till their separation after the return of the latter from Hindustan. He at that period entered the service of Juggut Singh, Raja of Jeypoor, who engaged his aid in an approaching contest with the Raja of Joudpoor, for the disputed hand of the daughter of the Odeypoor Rana.* The latter family is the highest in rank among the Rajpoots, and an alliance with it has always been esteemed the greatest honour to which a prince of that tribe can aspire. The princess Kishen Kower added to her high birth the reputation of extraordinary beauty. She had been betrothed to the deceased Bheem Sing, Raja of Joudpoor. On his death Maun Singh,† a distant relation, succeeded to the

* The celebrated but now fallen family of the Rajas or princes of Odeypoor are considered by many (I believe erroneously) to be descended from Porus, who opposed the progress of Alexander the Great. There can, however, be no doubt that they are among the most ancient and renowned of the princes of India, and that they formerly possessed the whole of that tract now termed Rajpootana, or the country of the Rajpoots, which is situated between the Western part of the province of Agra and the North-east of Guzerat. It has Malwa as its boundary to the East, and the Sandy Desert to the West. Its extreme length is computed at 330 miles, and its breadth in the broadest part 200. The chief states are the Rajas of Jeypoor, Joudpoor, and Odeypoor. The territories of the former are the most fertile. Those of Joudpoor, or Marwar, as it is more commonly called, are still very extensive; while Odeypoor, or Mewar, is now a limited and desolate principality, but it is fast reviving under the liberal protection it has received from the British Government. The whole of Rajpootana is a succession of hills and narrow valleys.

† It was settled at Maun Singh's elevation, that if any of the Ranees had a son, he should be Raja. This posthumous pretender to the throne was not brought forward for two years; and the circumstance of the reputed mother (Sevace Singh's sister) denying the fact of its being hers, and his being brought forward by Sevace Singh

throne ; but two years afterwards Sevaee Singh (who had been minister to Bheem Singh) brought forward a real or supposed son of that prince, in support of whose claims he formed a strong party ; and as one means of accomplishing his ends, he used every effort to render the princes of Joudpoor and Jeypoor implacable enemies. With the knowledge that Maun Singh cherished hopes of obtaining the hand of the Odeypoor princess, Sevaee Singh instigated Juggut Singh,* the Raja of Jeypoor, to demand her in marriage, and this prince, inflamed by the accounts of her beauty, fell immediately into the snare. A negotiation was opened with the Rana of Odeypoor for the hand of his daughter, and the marriage seemed at one period certain ; but the art of Sevaee Singh was farther employed to prevent such a result, and the Raja of Joudpoor was excited not only to insist upon his prior claim to the hand of the disputed princess, but to adopt violent measures to arrest the progress of his rival's suit.

It is neither necessary to detail the intrigues that took place, nor to enter into the particulars of the war

a discontented minister, has led to a belief, that the child Dhokul Singh was spurious. The point, however, appears never to have been clearly established.

* Juggut Singh was a weak, dissolute prince, who devoted himself to sensual pleasures. The history of his low amours, and of those who were elevated by him as favourites, would be received as an incredible tale. Ruskapoor, a Mahomedan dancing-girl, was raised to the first rank in the principality. He followed himself in her train of attendants, and gave her great estates. The high Rajpoot females of his family were ordered to salute and visit her as their superior ; but they rejected the command, offering to swallow poison or stab themselves if he desired it. but they never would, they said, condescend to the degradation of placing themselves on a level with a female of her character.



that ensued; every feeling that could excite Rajpoot princes to desperate hostility was inflamed, and assistance was solicited from all quarters. The British Government was in vain entreated to interfere.* Sindia gave his countenance to enable two of his most unprincipled partisans, Bappojee Sindia and Sirjee Row Ghatkia, to support their predatory bands upon the quarrels of these Rajpoot chiefs, while Holkar made them, as has been before stated, the still more baneful present of Ameer Khan and his Patans.

The consequence was, the almost complete destruction of both principalities. That of Jeypoor expended, at the lowest computation, one crore and twenty lacs of rupees in prosecution of this unhappy war, which, although successful at the commencement, terminated in disgrace and defeat.

Sevae Singh, when he saw Maun Singh completely involved, renewed his demand in favour of Dhokul Singh, the posthumous prince whose pretensions he supported. On the Raja's having recourse to evasion, he not only left him, but prevailed upon almost every other chief to desert; and Maun Singh, who had taken the field, was, in consequence obliged to fly, attended by only a few adherents; leaving his camp to be plundered by Juggut Singh and his auxiliaries.

The misfortunes of Maun Singh did not terminate

* When I was at Delhi with Lord Lake in 1805, every argument was tried, and every offer made by the Jeypoor Vakeels, to engage me to become the advocate of their master's cause, and to give him the support of an English force. Aid from the British Government was subsequently solicited by the Raja of Joudpoor, who desired to purchase it by cessions of territory.



with this reverse: he was pursued to Joudpoor, and his whole country was overrun by his enemies. Dhokul Singh was proclaimed Raja, and the allegiance of almost every Rhattore chief transferred to the young prince. The contest appeared decided, yet still the courage of Maun Singh, and of the few troops who remained faithful to him, was unsubdued. He had early endeavoured to divide his enemies, and the difficulties attendant on a lengthened siege now promoted his efforts. Ameer Khan listened to his overtures; and, on the usual pretext of want of pay, separated from the besieging army, and began to plunder and levy contributions indiscriminately over the districts of Joudpoor and Jeypoor. The interest of almost every chief of the latter State was affected by his excesses in laying waste his lands, and their clamours obliged Juggut Singh to detach a force to punish the Patan leader: who at first retreated towards Tonk, but having been reinforced by some battalions and guns, he attacked and defeated the Jeypoor troops. After this success, which was very complete, Ameer Khan was expected at Jeypoor, the inhabitants of which were thrown into great consternation; but on this, as on many other occasions, he shewed that he was only a leader of freebooters. Shunning, from apprehension of danger, the great prize of victory, he contented himself with plundering in the vicinity of the capital, which was out of danger the moment that its inhabitants recovered from their panic.

The intelligence of the discomfiture of the Jeypoor troops spread such dismay and confusion in the besieging army, that Juggut Singh determined to return to his capital, and offered a large sum to the auxiliaries sent



by Sindia to convey him there in safety. The cannon and spoils taken in his first action were sent in front; and some Rhattore chiefs, who had remained faithful to Maun Singh, but, from becoming objects of his suspicion, had been obliged to leave Joudpoor, now determined to give their prince a convincing proof of their fidelity; and having concerted an attack upon the troops escorting the trophies of their country's disgrace, they completely defeated them, retook forty pieces of ordnance, with much other booty, and, having effected a junction with Ameer Khan, marched with that chief in triumph to Joudpoor.

The fortunes of Maun Singh were restored by these events; but, while his enemy Sevae Singh lived, he entertained the most serious apprehensions. That chief had taken refuge in Nagore. The Raja entreated Ameer Khan to march against him, and made him an advance of two lacs of rupees, promising future wealth and favour as the reward of success in this important enterprise. The Patan leader undertook the service, but seems from the first to have trusted more to art than force for its accomplishment. He moved to within a few miles of Nagore, and under a pretext of discontent, caused by some discoveries he had made of the ingratitude of Maun Singh, he made overtures to establish a connexion with Sevae Singh. The latter suspected treachery; but the officer employed by Ameer Khan, pledged himself for the fidelity of his commandant, and obtained a promise that he would visit his leader. The Rajpoot chief faltered when the time for fulfilling his promise arrived; but Ameer Khan went to meet him, and succeeded, by protestations and oaths, in lulling him into complete



security. The consequence was, he went to the camp of his supposed friend and was murdered,* with the great majority of those by whom he was accompanied.

Though Sevae Singh, as the author of a war which brought ruin on his country, may be considered to have

* The following is an account of this transaction, as stated by a respectable eye-witness :—

“Mahomed Shah Khan succeeded by his protestations in persuading Sevae Singh to promise a visit to Ameer Khan; but when the hour came, the Rajpoot chief, who probably had received some intelligence of the designs against his life, hesitated. Ameer Khan, when he learned his irresolution, mounted, and proceeded with a few followers to the shrine of a Mahomedan saint, close to the walls of Nagore. He was here joined by Sevae Singh, whom he reproached for his fears, and asked him if he thought it possible that a man who cherished evil designs, could shew such confidence as he had that day done, by placing himself in the power of the person he meant to betray? Sevae Singh confessed his error. Presents, dresses, and even turbans (a pledge of brotherhood) were exchanged, and Ameer Khan swore, at the tomb of the saint, to be faithful to his new ally: who was persuaded to go next day to his camp, where splendid preparations were made for his reception, and a number of chiefs appointed to meet him. The troops were under arms, some on pretext of doing honour to the visitor, others apparently at exercise. The guns were loaded with grape, and pointed at the quarters prepared for the Raja, who with his principal adherents, to the number of two hundred, were seated in a large tent, when it was let fall upon them at a concerted signal, and while the officers of Ameer Khan saved themselves, all the Rajpoots were inhumanly massacred by showers of grape and musquetry from every direction. Of seven hundred horse that accompanied Sevae Singh, and continued mounted near the tent, only two hundred escaped; the rest were slain, and a number of Ameer Khan's people, among whom was one of his own relations, fell under the promiscuous fire of the cannon. Sevae Singh had been killed by grape, but his head was cut off and sent to Maun Singh, who rewarded Ameer Khan with a Jahgeer and a large sum of money.”



merited his fate, that fact in no degree extenuates the deep guilt of Ameer Khan, who evinced on this occasion that he was alike destitute of humanity and principle.

It was during these proceedings that Holkar became insane, and Ameer Khan, after taking and sacking Nagore, was compelled to come to Bampoor. His conduct when there has been narrated, as well as his expedition into the territories of Nagpoor. Some unadjusted disputes between the families of Holkar and Bhonslah were the pretext of this invasion,* but the object was plunder. Ameer Khan had left his infantry and guns at Joudpoor under Mahomed Shah Khan; but his ranks, in the plundering excursion he now engaged in, were swelled by all the Pindarries, and by the Nabob of Bhopal, whose hostility to Ragojee Bhonslah made him the forward and zealous ally of that prince's enemies.

The dissolution of the Holkar State, the distractions that prevailed in the Government of Sindia, the seditious spirit evinced by many of the Nizam's subjects, combined with the large army under Ameer Khan

* Ameer Khan stated that he acted by the orders of Holkar's Government; but when the Governor-General addressed a letter to Jeswunt Row Holkar, demanding an explanation, one was returned written in the true style of Mahratta diplomacy. That Prince was made by his ministers to disclaim all hostile intentions against the Nagpoor Raja. It was asserted that when Ameer Khan entered the territories of the Bhonslah, he was directed, instead of committing injury, to extend protection to them; and in consequence of the Governor-General's letter, these orders were promised to be repeated. This letter, probably dictated by Ameer Khan himself, admitted the fact of the invasion of this host of freebooters; but added, that it was made with the most friendly views. It suited the policy of the moment to admit this evasion.

(whose reputation was now at its zenith), led to a very general conclusion, that he cherished plans of restoring the Mahomedan power; and there can be no doubt, that had he been a man of great talent, either as a statesman or military commander, the period was most favourable; but there is every ground to believe that he at no time seriously entertained any such designs. His Patans were continually exclaiming, that the prediction of a holy mendicant that he would be sovereign of Delhi, was nearly accomplished; but he does not appear to have encouraged such expressions or sentiments; and not only professed to act in the name of Holkar, but never took one step towards establishing any power beyond that of the leader of a predatory army, which it was his object to keep together, and subsist, by every means that the prevailing anarchy placed within his power.

After Ameer Khan returned from Nagpoor, and relieved Jeswunt Row and his family from Dherma Kower, he became the chief actor in a tragedy, in which a good end was obtained by a deed which revolts every feeling of humanity. A reconciliation between the Rajas of Jeypoor and Joudpoor was an object of just and wise policy; and it suited the views of the Patan chief to promote its accomplishment. It was proposed, that this should be effected by a double marriage. Juggut Singh was to espouse the daughter of Maun Singh, and the latter the sister of his rival and enemy. To propitiate these nuptials, it was conceived that the honour of all parties required the death of Kishen Kower, the princess of Odeypoor. The question of this sacrifice was agitated when Ameer Khan was at Odeypoor, and that chief



urged it strongly on the counsellors* of the Prince, representing the difficulty of establishing peace while the cause of the war existed, and then pointing out the impossibility, without offending the two most powerful Rajpoot rulers in India, of giving his daughter to any other chief. To these he added arguments well suited to the high, though mistaken, pride of a Rajpoot, regarding the disgrace of having in his family an unmarried daughter. It is stated, and for the honour of human nature let us believe it, that neither arguments nor threats could induce the father to become the executioner of his child, or even to urge her to suicide; but his sister Chand Bacc was gained to the cruel cause of policy, and she presented the chalice to Kishen Kower, intreating her to save her father, family, and tribe, from the struggles and miseries to which her high birth and evil destiny exposed them. The appeal was not in vain; she drank three poisoned cups, and before she took the last, which proved instantly fatal, she exclaimed, "This is the marriage to which I was foredoomed." All were acquainted with what was passing in the palace; and the extraordinary beauty and youth of the victim excited a feeling, which was general in a degree that is rare among the inhabitants of India. This account is written from the report of several persons who were on the spot, and they agree in stating that the particulars of Kishen Kower's death were no sooner spread through the town of Odeypoor than loud lamentations burst from

* He is stated never to have proposed it direct to the Rana. The Thakoor Adjeit Singh, of Koorawa, was the Rajpoot lord, who is reproached with being his instrument upon this memorable occasion.

every quarter, and expressions of pity at her fate were mingled with execrations on the weakness and cowardice of those who could purchase safety on such terms. In a short period after this tragical event, the public feeling was again excited by the death of the mother of the princess, who never recovered the shock she received at the first intelligence of the fate of her beautiful* and cherished daughter. If it is to the disgrace of the nobility of Odeypoor that one of them (Adjeit Singh, a man of high rank, who possessed unbounded influence over the mind of his prince) proved base enough to act throughout as the instrument of Ameer Khan, the character of this proud race was redeemed by the conduct of Sugwan Singh, chief of Karra-dur, who, the moment he heard of the proceedings in the palace, hastened from his residence to Odeypoor, and dismounting from a breathless horse, went unceremoniously into the presence of his prince, whom he found seated with several of his ministers in apparent affliction. "Is the princess dead or alive?" was his impatient interrogation: to which, after a short pause, Adjeit Singh replied by intreating him "not to disturb the grief of a father for a lost child." The old chief immediately unbuckled his sword, which, with his shield, he laid at

* I visited the court of Odeypoor in March, 1821, eleven years after the occurrence of the events I have stated, and possessed complete means of verifying every fact. I could have no doubt of the beauty of Kishen Kower, after seeing her brother Juan Singh, the present heir to the Musnud, whom she is said to have exactly resembled. His complexion is very fair, and his features are fine; and though they have that softness which characterizes Hindu physiognomy, they are full of animation and intelligence.



the feet of the Maha Rana,* saying in a calm but resolute tone: "My ancestors have served yours for more than thirty generations, and to you I cannot utter what I feel; but these arms shall never more be used in your service. As to you, villain!" he exclaimed, turning to Adjeit Singh, "who have brought this ignominy upon the Rajpoot name, may the curse of a father light upon you! may you die childless!" He retired from the assembly, leaving, according to the account of those that were present, an impression of awe and horror in the minds of all who heard him. Sugwan Singh lived for eight years after this occurrence; but, though he continued in his allegiance, he never could be prevailed upon to resume his arms. The last child of Adjeit Singh died a short time ago, and the event was deemed by the superstitious Rajpoots a fulfilment of the curse that had been pronounced upon him. He maintained his influence over the mind of his weak prince till very lately, when he was disgraced,† to the joy of the inhabitants of Odeypoor, who continued to consider him as the chief cause of the self-murder of their regretted princess.

Ameer Khan proceeded from Odeypoor to Joudpoor; and from the period that the disputes between the latter and Jeypoor were settled, his Mahomedan bands ranged over every part of Rajpootana that presented the slightest hopes of plunder. These scenes of pillage were only interrupted by occasional mutinies of the troops, the

* Maha Rana means Great Prince, the title by which the rulers of Odeypoor are always distinguished.

† The intelligence of his disgrace, and the sentiments of joy it had caused, were communicated to me by Captain Tod, Political Agent at Odeypoor, in June, 1821.

quarrels of their commanders, and the protracted resistance of fortified places.

A few years had brought the principality of Joudpoor to the lowest state of poverty and distraction, when the minister Induraj, aided by Deonath, the spiritual instructor* of Maun Singh, who exercised complete influence over the mind of that prince, determined on an effort to clear the country of its destroyers. Ameer Khan was desired to depart. He did not refuse to do so, but he urged an immediate settlement of his pecuniary claims. This was complied with to the extent of the ability of the State, and all appeared in the best train of arrangement. The Patan chief had left the town, and a few of his troops only remained to enforce some payments which were still due. These had placed Induraj in restraint; and in an affray which ensued, both that minister and the Hindu priest were slain by these turbulent men, whose insolent and domineering habits had now reached such an extreme as gave colour to the protestations of Ameer Khan, that he was innocent of this crime; but there is every reason to conclude it was perpetrated with his knowledge, and indeed by his direction. Maun Singh was so shocked and alarmed at this proceeding,† that he instantly affected the condition of

* The name of this man was Gooroo (priest) Nathjee.

† He was particularly affected at the murder of his Gooroo Deonath, to whose tenets (those of the Jullender sect) he had devoted himself, to the great offence of his relations and subjects. This religious feeling is supposed to have led Maun Singh to prefer strangers, and to form his guards, and other corps, of Patans, Gosseins, &c., instead of confiding, as his ancestors had done, in his Rhattore soldiers. To this source most of the misfortunes of his reign are to be traced.



a religious recluse, whose mind was abstracted from all worldly concerns. He spoke to no person, allowed his beard to grow, and soon had the appearance of one who, though he continued to exist, was dead to all the cares and interests of life. On his remaining some time in this state, his son Chutter Singh (who is supposed to have been concerned in the murder of the minister and priest) took upon himself the duties of the Government, and exercised them till his death, which happened about two years ago, when his father, confident in the protection of the British Government, recovered from his feigned insanity, and re-ascended the throne.

Ameer Khan did not return to Joudpoor. He was, during the ensuing two years, sufficiently occupied in plundering Jeypoor, against one fort* of which he had been engaged for nine months; and he was found carrying on this siege with a mutinous army, when the British force under Sir David Ochterlony advanced into Rajpootana to co-operate in the general suppression of that predatory system, of which he and his adherents were deemed the principal supporters. The Patan chief had no prospect of successful resistance, and the terms proposed and accepted were to him personally most liberal; for, while they provided for the dispersion of the numerous mass of plunderers that had formed what was termed his army, they made a princely provision for its commander. All the countries he held from the Holkar State were confirmed (making nearly an annual revenue of fifteen lacs of rupees), and the fort and district of Rampoorra have since been added as a gratuitous boon from the English Government.

* Maddoo Rajapoor,



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Ameer Khan had cherished some expectations that were disappointed; and this, added to the discontents and reproaches of his disbanded followers, kept his mind for a period after he had submitted to the proffered terms, in a state of great irritation, which, however, appears to have subsided. The generosity of the Governor-General has, no doubt, aided to produce this effect; but the Patan leader is a cautious calculator: his prudence has sometimes brought suspicion on his courage, and the chief who abstained from hostility with the British Government when he might have marshalled half the plunderers of India under his standard, is not likely again to disturb the general tranquillity. Besides, as far as regards impression, which was his principal source of power, the illusion is dissipated; and it may be asserted, that few men ever retired from a scene of great operations less respected than Ameer Khan. By the court of Holkar he is naturally viewed as a person who has deserted and despoiled the sovereignty, to which he owed his rise; and when he desired to interfere* as a mediator between this Government and the English, both before and subsequent to the treaty of Mundissor, a rancorous feeling of hostility was evinced by all parties against him; yet it must be acknowledged, that, if there be any redeeming good quality in Ameer Khan, it is the regard and friendship he uniformly shewed for his friend and prince (for he acknowledged him as such), Jeswunt Row Holkar. This attachment led him to make

* I received, both before and subsequent to the treaty, several letters from Ameer Khan, expressive of his anxious desire to interfere in the affairs of the Holkar State, which I told him, in answer to every communication, never could be permitted.



every effort to wean the latter from his dissolute habits.*

It made him most zealous to recover him from insanity; and in the action with Dherma near Sadree, Ameer Khan, as has been stated, exposed his person in a manner that did honour to him. The most prejudiced of Ameer Khan's enemies gave him the merit of this attachment, and of steady friendship to Zalim Singh, the able Regent of Kotah.

The past life of Ameer Khan has received more notice, from his furnishing an example of a chief at the head of a numerous armed rabble, who subsisted during a long period upon the quarrels of the weak and distracted native States of India. A few observations will throw light on his character and condition.

Ameer Khan sought and obtained lands for his support, but he never, though he had frequent opportunities, kept for himself any of the many fortified places which came into his possession; nor does it appear that he ever cherished views of establishing a separate and independent power. This may, perhaps, be regarded as a proof of his judgment. His success, in such an attempt, would at all times have been very problematical, and his failure would have reduced him to complete insignificance. He well knew the insecure foundation on which he stood; for the man who appeared to those at a distance as the head of the Mahomedan soldiery of India,

* The dissipation of Jeswunt Row Holkar appears to have reached its height at Poona, where the intoxication of victory, aided by a large supply of cherry-brandy, of which he was immoderately fond, led to great and shameful excesses, with which he was openly and boldly taxed by Ameer Khan. He was not offended at the freedom of the latter, promised amendment, and kept his word for a few days, when he relapsed into his usual habits.



CSL

AMEER KHAN.

was reminded by the daily mutinies of the rapacious mercenaries under him, that he was merely their instrument. Whatever may have been the motives and end of his former actions, the temptations to such guilt are now past ; nor can he again have the plea of that necessity which his advocates have brought forward to excuse or palliate his excesses. Let us hope that he will understand his present condition, and seek, by the good management and improvement of his territories, the continued favour and protection of the British Government.



CHAPTER IX.

Nabobs of Bhopal.

THE account given of the principal Mahratta families, and of Ameer Khan, comprises much of the History of Central India during the last hundred years; but there were subordinate actors throughout the whole, or the greater part of this period, whose names cannot be omitted without leaving in obscurity much of what relates to that region. A short account of the Bhopal family, and of the Mahomedan leaders of the Pindarries, with a brief notice of the principal Rajpoot chiefs who have been destroyed, or who have survived the extension of the Mahratta power, and of the Grassiahs, Sondees, Bheels, and other plunderers who have been raised into importance by the anarchy of the last thirty years, will complete what is necessary on this part of the subject.

Mahomedan and Hindu authorities, though they agree as to the principal facts in the life of Dost Mahomed, the founder of the Bhopal family, are at variance with regard to several of the details connected with his establishment of independent power.

This chief came, when young, from Afghanistan* to Delhi, where he entered the service of a nobleman† of the same Afghan tribe (the Mirajee Kheil) to which he himself belonged. Dost Mahomed appears shortly after his arrival to have quitted the service of his countrymen, and entered that of the Emperor Aurungzeeb. He was one of the party detached into Malwa, where he succeeded in bringing himself to the notice of the Governor of the province by his gallantry, and was in consequence rewarded by nomination to the superintendence of the district of Bersiah,‡ the revenues of which are stated to have been then greatly reduced by the unceasing depredations of freebooters.

The progress of Dost Mahomed subsequent to this period was very rapid. He obtained his first wealth by a connexion with a Hindu family,§ formed under cir-

* Afghanistan is the country of the Afghans. It lies between India and Persia.

† The name of this nobleman was Jelal Khan.

‡ Bersiah is stated to have only yielded a revenue of fifteen thousand rupees when Dost Mahomed was nominated to the charge of it, which is lower than ever this fertile district has been reduced to during the last troubles. It forms, however, if the fact be correct, a criterion to judge of the condition of the empire during the last years of Aurungzeeb.

Bersiah yielded when recovered from the Pindarries in 1225 Fuslee forty-four thousand and nine hundred rupees. This year, 1227 Fuslee, its revenue is eighty-five thousand and three hundred rupees. (Henley's MSS.)

§ Dost Mahomed, according to a Hindu writer, had become intimate with Anund Singh, the Hindu Thakoor, or lord of Munghalgurh, who having gone to Delhi on business, left his Mahomedan friend in charge of his affairs and family. Anund Singh died in Hindustan, and when the intelligence of his demise reached his family, his children, who were all young, could oppose no resistance to their Maho-



circumstances that have subjected his memory to reproach; and his most partial biographers admit that his efforts to obtain power were unchecked by any scruples as to the means to be employed. His capture of Jugdespoor;* the murder of its Hindu proprietor; his assisting Newal Shah, the Raja of Gunnour, to destroy his enemy the Raja of Cheynpoor Barree,† are deeds which prove the fact, though at the same time they establish the claim of this military adventurer to courage and enterprise. Newal Shah, by whom his advancement was so much promoted, was in turn deceived and destroyed. This Hindu chief had made over the town and lands of Bhopal to the Mahomedan soldier, in order that he might settle there with his family and their adherents, whom he had invited from Afghanistan. Some time after their arrival, Newal Shah was attacked by the imperial troops, which, however, with the aid of his

medan guardian, who, it is asserted, converted the whole of the property they should have inherited to his own use. The more favourable accounts of this transaction state, that Dost Mahomed obtained the daughter of Anund Singh in marriage; and with her inherited the greater portion of her father's possessions.

* The loss of some baggage plundered by the Hindu Zemindar of Jugdespoor, whom his superior, the Gond Raja of Cheynpoor Barree, was unable to punish, led Dost Mahomed Khan to revenge himself by attacking this chief; and he is said to have taken advantage of the family being assembled at a feast, to surprise and massacre the whole of them. The name of this village, Jugdespoor, was changed into Islamnuggur, and became the capital of Dost Mahomed.

† The wife and mother of the Raja of Cheynpoor Barree, preferring death to dishonour, fired a magazine, and were killed by the explosion. He himself, however, found means to escape to Seronje, where he was poisoned by a servant for his jewels. A younger son of this family became a Mahomedan, and obtained a Jahgeer of twenty-four thousand rupees, which has continued to his descendants.

Afghan auxiliaries, he defeated.* He was on this occasion so well pleased with Dost Mahomed, that he assigned a residence for him and his family in his capital, Gunnour. This imprudent kindness, according to the Hindu narrator, suggested a stratagem (very common in Indian history) which was carried into immediate execution. One hundred Doolies, or close covered litters, generally used for the conveyance of females and children, were filled with armed men, who were admitted, with unsuspecting confidence, into the fort, where they rose upon the garrison, and soon made themselves masters of the place.†

Dost Mahomed, after he had captured Gunnour, greatly increased his army, and adopted measures to enable him to preserve the territories he had obtained, which included all that have ever belonged to his successors. He built a citadel within the limits of the town of Bhopal, which he named Futtygurh; and having connected this with the town, and enclosed the latter by a wall, gave to the whole a security which was indispen-

* The writer here followed asserts that Dost Mahomed took three guns from the Delhi general on this occasion, which are still in the possession of the Bhopal family.

† This, though an old stratagem in Indian history, may have been the mode adopted of seizing the place; at any rate, there is little doubt that the place was taken possession of by some undue means. It does not, however, appear whether this event occurred prior to the death of Newal Shah, or not; the account only states that the Raja of Gunnour had no issue but two nephews, one of whom endeavoured to poison him. He did not succeed altogether, but reduced the Raja to such a state of debility, that he never recovered the use of his faculties. His Ranie survived him many years, the last of them having died subsequent to the death of the Nabob Feyz Mahomed. These ladies were always treated with marked attention at Bhopal.



able to the object he meditated, of increasing the population and prosperity of his capital.

About three years before the death of Dost Mahomed Khan, Nizam ul Moolk, who was proceeding towards the Deckan from Malwa (of which province he had been for a short time Governor), sought the friendship of the Afghan chief against the court of Delhi, which threatened him with an attack. Dost Mahomed, from political motives, not only declined the Nizam's alliance, but acceded to the requisition of his enemies, by aiding them with a force under his brother,* who was slain in an action that ensued, in which the Nizam obtained the victory. The Afghan chief, alarmed at having incurred the resentment of so powerful a prince, offered his only son as an hostage for his future good conduct. The Nizam, satisfied with this pledge, left him in tranquil possession of the countries he had subdued and formed into a principality.

Dost Mahomed died at the age of sixty-six. His character is very differently given by Hindu and Mahomedan writers. The former impute cruelty and treachery to him in the capture of Jugdespoor, which are denied by his Mahomedan biographers. The facts, however, of his immediately changing the name of the village to that of Islamnuggur, or the city of the faith, and of the river near it to the Halalee, or the lawful, evince a spirit of bigotry which might at once prove the source and excuse in his mind for crimes that he would otherwise have abhorred. His ambition is admitted by all, and every account agrees as to the combined perfidy and

* Meer Mahomed Khan.

violence by which he gained possession of Cheynpoor Barree and Gunnour. He assumed the title of Nawaub after the death of Aurungzeeb, and it was amid the distractions of that period that he formed the principality of Bhopal. Whatever might have been his defects, there can be no doubt of his talents. He was deemed, even in a tribe where valour is a common quality, a man of remarkable courage. His life was for more than thirty years one scene of warfare; he had received in action above thirty wounds; and his memory as a soldier is still fondly cherished by the family of which he was the founder.

On the death of Dost Mahomed Khan, the ministers at the petty court of Bhopal elevated Sultan Mahomed Khan to the Musnud, or throne, to the prejudice of his elder, though illegitimate, brother, Yar Mahomed Khan, who had been carried to the Deckan as an hostage by Nizam ul Moolk. The pretext for this act was the absence of Yar Mahomed Khan; but the real motive was a desire to conduct the affairs of the State during a long minority. Sultan Mahomed Khan was a child of seven or eight years of age, while his absent brother was a youth of eighteen or twenty. The attempt, however, was not successful. The cause of Yar Mahomed Khan was espoused by Nizam ul Moolk, and he was sent to Bhopal with the title of Nawaub, escorted by a thousand horse.* No opposition was made to his return; but though Sultan Mahomed Khan was compelled by the

* He also received from Nizam ul Moolk the high insignia of the Maha Muratib, or the dignity of the Fish, one of the first honours of the Moghul empire. This is still assumed as a hereditary honour by the Nabobs of Bhopal.



Patan chiefs to abdicate, they would not instal Yar Mahomed as prince, for being an illegitimate son, on the pretext that the usages of his tribe prohibited his inheriting the name of prince, though there was no objection to his exercising all the royal functions.* The arrangements which took place on this occasion deserve more notice, as they explain the origin of feelings which still exist, and give to the Patan colony at Bhopal a very peculiar constitution. When Dost Mahomed had, after his first successes, invited his brethren and kinsmen to join him, they were accompanied by his elder brother, Akil Mahomed Khan, who being at the head of a party attached to the usages of their country, with a view to keep these unchanged, established certain rules for the regulation of all their personal and family affairs, which were deemed as imperative upon their chiefs and princes, as upon the most obscure individual of the tribe. Akil Mahomed Khan was first in rank among these Afghans, and his excellent character merited the distinction which his birth and their good opinion assigned him. This respectable nobleman was Dewan, or prime minister. On his death† the office was conferred on Byjeeram, a Hindu,

* Major Henley states, in his notes upon the Bhopal family, that the arrangement with respect to Yar Mahomed's succession to power arose from motives of policy, rather than from any precise rule on the subject. Akil Mahomed saw the necessity of complying as much as possible with the wishes of the Nizam; but it was settled that on Sultan Mahomed's entering the Durbar, Yar Mahomed should from courtesy rise to receive him, and removing aside from the Musnud, allow him to sit on the right.

† Akil Mahomed Khan was murdered at the Hoolee. This murder is believed to have been committed at the instigation of his nephew. Akil Mahomed was great-grandfather to Kurream Mahomed Khan, the present Dewan of Bhopal.



to whom Islamnuggur owes its principal improvements: he built a palace, and augmented its strength by diverting the course of the Parwa, so as to make that river a ditch to its fortifications.

There are few particulars given of Yar Mahomed's life. The murder of Deleel Khan, the friend and supporter of his father, is imputed to him; and his seizing upon the possessions of that chief to the prejudice of his infant children, renders the charge probable. He was succeeded by his eldest son,* Feyz Mahomed Khan, then eleven years of age. The pretensions of his uncle, Sultan Mahomed Khan, were again brought forward by a strong party of Afghan lords. Feyz Mahomed, however, had been placed on the throne, and the army, amounting to five thousand men, remained firm to his interests. Supported by them, he made every preparation to resist the attack with which he was threatened. The Mahjee Sahibah, or lady mother (as the widow of Yar Mahomed was called), despatched a man of religious character, named Shah Allum, with a body of Rohilla's, to seize Sultan Mahomed. The latter at first concealed himself; but in an affray which followed, Shah Allum was killed, and his party repulsed. On this intelligence reaching Islamnuggur, Byjeeram, with the young Nabob and his followers, immediately advanced towards Bhopal; and Sultan Mahomed with his Afghans marched to receive them. Imitating the usage of the Hindu saints and warriors, they dyed their garments with yellow,† the hymeneal

* Yar Mahomed Khan had four sons, Feyz Mahomed Khan, Hiyat Mahomed Khan, Yassein Mahomed Khan, and Seid Mahomed Khan.

† The flower from which this dye is made, is called, in Hindustanny, Kuswur. To use it on the day of battle, is among the Hindus deem-



colour, which indicated, that they went to battle as to a bridal feast, and were determined to die, or to live exulting conquerors.

Byjeeram, whose numbers were superior, saw with pleasure his enemies quit the protection they had in the walls of Bhopal. He drew up in line of battle; but his troops, who were chiefly Hindus, would probably have been broken by the furious charge of the Afghans, had not these when exhausted by their first success been attacked, and in their turn routed by the desperate Rohillahs of Shah Allum, who continued faithful to the cause of Feyz Mahomed, and were eager to revenge the death of their late commander. The assailants were, in their turn, defeated; their chief, Sultan Mahomed, fled to Seronje, whence he went to the hill-fort of Rathgurbh, into which he was admitted by the governor. Here he was immediately besieged by Byjeeram; but the Mahjee Sahibah, or lady mother, seeing the evil of these family dissensions, interposed her authority, through the influence of which Rathgurbh with its dependencies was bestowed in free grant to Sultan Mahomed and his descendants; but they were precluded, by the same agreement, from all future pretensions to the sovereignty, or any interference with the management of the Bhopal territory.

The termination of these disputes was probably accelerated by a sense of common danger. The Paishwah Bajerow, while returning from Delhi, encamped on the plains between Sehore and Ashta, and required, in the

ed a sacred pledge to die or conquer. Volunteers are often invited to assume the yellow dress, which implies desperation in any undertaking.

name of the Emperor, whom he represented as Soobahdar, or Governor, of Malwa, a restitution of all the lands which the Bhopal Patans had usurped. Resistance appeared unavailing, and the minister Byjeeram negotiated a treaty, by which the Bhopal Government made a sacrifice of half its territories to save the remainder. By this engagement, it lost the whole of its possessions in Malwa, except a few towns. What remained, which was chiefly in Gondwarra, was confirmed to the family by the treaty with the Paishwah.

Soon after the departure of the Mahrattas, the discontent of the garrison which occupied the hill-fort of Raisen gave Byjeeram an opportunity of making himself master of that place, which has ever since belonged to the principality.*

Byjeeram, the minister of Feyz Mahomed, was a man of talent, and the country of Bhopal attained a state of considerable prosperity under his management. He conciliated the Gonds,† who are the aboriginal inhabitants

* The possession of it was afterwards confirmed by a Sunnud from Delhi, which, as well as the title of Futtih Jung, given at the same time, was paid for by the Nabob.

† This numerous class of Hindus, denominated Gonds from their inhabiting Gondwarra, once held a high rank among the natives of this part of India, but they have been successively reduced by the Mahomedans and Mahrattas to a very low state. This tribe, who inhabit both banks of the Nerbudda from near its source to as far West as Ongkar Mundatta, are spread over the greatest part of the Nag-poor territories. They have a language and usages distinct from other classes of Hindus; and their history merits that illustration which it will, no doubt, soon receive from some of the able British officers employed in the countries of which the Gonds form the majority of the inhabitants.



of the Southern portion of the Bhopal territory; and made some amends for the treachery of Dost Mahomed, by bestowing small estates, which their posterity still enjoy, on the nearest relations of Newal Shah, Raja of Gunnour. On Byjeeram's death he was succeeded by his son Gassy Ram, who had only been in office a twelvemonth, when Hiyat Mahomed Khan and Yassein Mahomed Khan, two brothers of the Nabob, hurt at his presumptuous deportment, and the partiality he shewed to his own tribe,* and taking particular offence at what they deemed his contemptuous refusal to restore their estates, determined to destroy him. Yassein Mahomed Khan became himself the chief actor in the plot: he cut off Gassy Ram's head with his own hand, and received from one of the adherents of the latter two severe wounds.

On the death of Gassy Ram, a Patan named Ghyrut Khan succeeded to the office of Dewan, which he held for six years, when he was poisoned by a courtesan. His successor was Raja Keisoree, of the Kayastha tribe,† who had been a writer with Byjeeram: he was a man of talent, and the country prospered for fourteen years under his superintendence; but he chiefly owes his celebrity to the circumstances of his massacre.

Feyz Mahomed Khan, who had embraced a life of austerity and devotion, though he had abjured all sensual

* Gassy Ram is said by the Afghan biographer to have conferred all offices on his Hindu favourites, and even to have cut off the noses of butchers who attempted to kill oxen or buffaloes; and this account is confirmed by some respectable Hindu writers.

† The tribe of Hindus, who will be noticed hereafter, are all writers and accountants.



indulgence, had still a haram filled with ladies: amongst them there was one known by the title of Begum, or princess, a native of Delhi, who became remarkable for her supposed incontinence, and that of her daughters. One of the latter was suspected to have maintained (though in the Nabob's haram) an adulterous intercourse with the son of Keisoree. The Mahomedans do not admit the criminality of the Begum of Feyz Mahomed; they admit, however, that an intrigue was carried on between the son of Keisoree and the daughter of Ashruff Khan, a Patan of high rank, which was detected, and the lady put to death by her family. Either way, a pretext was made by the brothers of Feyz Mahomed for destroying the minister; and they could not have chosen an accusation better calculated to excite the Afghans, whose pride and prejudice were alike inflamed by a belief that the honour of their race was stained by a Hindu. Their rage made the intention of the conspirators so public, that the latter were obliged to have recourse to deceit. A brick was wrapped up in a fine cover as a Koran, and Ishmael, the priest of the family, attended by some of the chiefs, presented it to Keisoree (who appears to have been alarmed) as the most sacred pledge of his safety they could give. He received it as such, and in consequence complied with a request to deliver up the Sicca, or seal, of the State. This act was violently opposed by the principal Hindu leaders of the army, who warned him of the intended treachery, and promised, as long as he had the seal in his possession, to obey all his orders, and to guard him to Feyz Mahomed, to whom alone he should surrender the type of his authority. Keisoree, however, directed them to retire,



and not to create a disturbance. He would die a hundred times, he said, rather than be a traitor; and, faithless as he knew the Afghans to be, he seemed (ignorant of the deception that had been practised) to be satisfied with the pledge of the Koran.* He had, however, no sooner come out of the Old Fort, where he resided, than the palankeen in which he rode was thrown down, and both himself and his son were murdered in the street. His wife, anticipating his death, had collected the females of the family in one chamber, to which she conveyed a large quantity of gunpowder. A servant brought her intelligence of the murder, when she instantly set fire to the powder, and not only destroyed herself and the remainder of the family, but threw down the house and some of the decayed ramparts of the Old Fort. This explosion, which took place at mid-day, to the horror of the inhabitants of Bhopal, was the first information Feyz Mahomed Khan received of the fate of his minister, whose death he is said to have deplored; but he was incapable of doing more; for his brother, Yassein Khan, the perpetrator of the massacre, immediately assumed the functions of minister of the State. Nabob Feyz Mahomed, who had nominally governed Bhopal for thirty-eight years, did not long survive this event: he died of a dropsy, brought on by his sedentary habits, in the forty-eighth or forty-ninth year of his age. This prince was throughout his life a religious recluse, of very weak intellect, and of an enormous stature, being

* The chiefs whom Major Henley interrogated as to this fact, said they did not know whether the priest really presented this sacred pledge or not, but that it was well known that he made every effort to dissuade the chiefs from the assassination of Keisoree.



nearly seven feet high, and his hands, when standing, reached below his knees. He never, but once, went beyond the precincts of his palace. Ghyrut Khan, when minister, carried him to Bhilsa, which had been for some time besieged, and it happened to fall soon after his arrival. The belief, which the ignorant Afghans before entertained of the holy character of their chief, was confirmed by this occurrence, and his memory is revered as that of a saint. Feyz Mahomed had no issue. His brother Yassein Mahomed was at the head of the Government during the few days he survived him. At his death, Hiyat Mahomed Khan was proclaimed Nabob; but he was also, from disposition and habits, a religious recluse, and the actual exercise of power continued with the person who held the office of minister.

The whole revenue of Bhopal at this time amounted to about twenty lacs of rupees, of which a portion of five lacs value in land was set aside for the support of the Nabob. With this the minister had no concern; it was managed in an office separate from those of the Government, and the amount collected was appropriated according to the pleasure of the prince; but, beyond this, he and his personal attendants were considered to have no further claim on the public treasury, or any connexion whatever with State affairs. The history of Bhopal, while this system continued, consists in the proceedings of the Dewans, or ministers.

Hiyat Mahomed Khan, when installed Nabob, had no children by his wife, but he had adopted four Chelahs,*

* Chelah means literally an adopted dependant; it neither applies to a slave, nor an adopted child, but to a person who is admitted to the claims of a dependant relation.



an family dependants, who were considered almost as relations. The oldest of these, Fowlad Khan, was the son of a Gond. The second, Jumshere Khan, was the son of a Gossein; and the third and fourth, Chutta Khan and Islam Khan, were the sons of a Brahmin. The merit of having withdrawn these children from their errors to the true faith, no doubt, constituted, in the mind of a pious Mahomedan prince, another tie to strengthen that of adoption.

Fowlad Khan, the eldest of the Chelahs, was the first who possessed the power of minister; and it was during his administration that the detachment under General Goddard passed through the territories of Bhopal. The inhabitants of that country are justly proud of the part their prince took upon this occasion, and with reason, for it was bold and decided in a degree beyond what their condition warranted. Every aid required was freely given by this petty State; and, from the certificates still preserved by some of the heads of villages, it would seem that all ranks behaved in the most friendly manner to a body of men, who prized such conduct more from having elsewhere met with nothing but hostility. That the remaining part of the march of the Bengal detachment, after it passed the Nerbudda, was unobstructed, may in some degree be ascribed to the line taken by the Patans of Bhopal, whose conduct on this memorable occasion established a claim upon the British Government, that merited all the notice which it has since received. In an official* abstract made from the correspondence of

* I obtained this abstract of the proceedings of the Bengal detachment at Bombay. There are no records of the progress of this corps in the political office at Calcutta.



General Goddard, it is stated that every effort was made to render the Nabob of Bhopal hostile to the English, but in vain; he remained true to his first promise of friendship, though many of his fields and villages were, in consequence of his fidelity to his engagement, plundered by the Mahrattas.

Soon after these events a family quarrel occurred, in which Fowlad Khan was slain, in an attempt to capture the Old Fort of Bhopal, then the residence of the widow of Yar Mahomed Khan: who, from disgust at his violent and tyrannical acts, had for some time resolved to subvert his authority, and to raise to power Chutta Khan, who she had taken care should be well instructed, that he might be competent to the duties of the high station.

The history of this extraordinary princess, who lived to the advanced age of eighty, and who for more than half a century greatly influenced, if she did not control, the councils of Bhopal, is very extraordinary. Her name was Mumullah: she came from Upper Hindustan, but seems to have been of too obscure an origin to leave any exact record of her parents or place of birth. Though never publicly married* to the Nabob Yar Mahomed, she became the principal lady of his family. She had herself no children, but all those of Yar Mahomed she considered as her own, and the title of Mahjee Sahibah, or lady mother, which was given her by them and all others, proves the respect in which she was held.

* The Nikah was performed on her union with the Nabob. This engagement, though inferior to marriage, is still respectable. It is common where the condition of the parties is too unequal to admit of one more legitimate.



From the account given of her conduct, under the most trying circumstances, it seems difficult to pronounce whether she was most remarkable for the humanity of her disposition, or the excellence of her judgment. She was beloved and respected by all. Her memory is still cherished by the natives, both Hindu and Mahomedan, of Bhopal; and it is consoling to see, in the example of her life, that even amid scenes of violence and crime, goodness and virtue, when combined with spirit and sense, maintain that superiority which belongs alone to the higher qualities of our nature, and which without these can be permanently conferred by neither title nor station.

This virtuous woman had every reason to congratulate herself on her choice of Chutta Khan, who proved, throughout his life, the friend of the poor, and the promoter of order and tranquillity; but the determined resolution with which he pursued these objects, brought him in violent collision with several of the principal nobles of the State, some of whom were his enemies from the first, being indignant at the elevation of one they deemed so much their inferior. Two brothers, Kumal Mahomed and Sheriff Mahomed, who were nearly related to the Nabob, on the failure of a plot to possess themselves of Gunnour, retired with about seven hundred followers towards Sehore. Chutta Khan pursued them, and, in an engagement which took place, Sheriff Mahomed was slain. Kumal Mahomed effected his escape, though wounded, with the son of his brother. The latter, Vizier Mahomed, then a youth, lived to preserve his country, and to become the founder of the present family of Bhopal.



To this event succeeded others* of a similiar character, which greatly irritated the mind of Chutta Khan, and urged him to very severe, if not oppressive, measures. This change of conduct is generally attributed to the death of the princess, by whom he had been raised to the high station of minister. He had certainly acted with great prudence and moderation while she lived, from respect to her advice, and confidence in her support; but when left alone, he saw his safety in another course. Enraged by the frequent conspiracies of the nobles against his power, he put to death some, and expelled others. He removed this class from all offices of trust, which were filled exclusively by persons on whose attachment he could rely. He established such a police within the walls of Bhopal, as completely suppressed the sanguinary affrays to which the Patans are so prone, and their turbulent spirit was for the moment subdued. By these means Chutta Khan not

* Among the conspiracies formed against the power of Chutta Khan, one of the most remarkable was that of Nijabut Mahomed Khan, a turbulent Patan chief, the son of Yassein Mahomed Khan, whose object was to murder the Nabob and ministers. This tragedy was to be acted on the last day of the Ramazan, when all the Afghans of the Nabob's family were assembled at the house of the Mahjee, or lady mother, to pay their respects to that princess. Some suspicion was attached to Nijabut, and he had been desired to leave his arms; he apparently did so, but a breeze of wind which blew aside his upper garments revealed a concealed dagger. The alarm of treason was given by a domestic, and the fierce chief, finding he was discovered, flew at the Nabob, but was overpowered and slain, not without a great struggle, as he is represented to have been a man of immense strength and desperate courage. Three of the principal conspirators were killed at the same time, but not before they had cut down Raja Bholanath, one of the principal Hindu officers of the Government.



only maintained internal quiet, but promoted, beyond all who had gone before him, the prosperity of the town and country of Bhopal. His next object was to remain at peace with his neighbours, but particularly with Madhajee Sindia and Ahalya Bae, who at this period were the chief rulers in Central India. His principles of moderation were sometimes carried to an extent that astonished many. Of this, the following instance may be given:—A few years before his death, the Pindarry leader, Hera Bae, plundered and burned some villages of Bhopal. Chutta Khan sent troops in pursuit of the depredators; and they returned with four hundred naked prisoners, who had been stripped of their horses and clothes. When these expected to be put to death, they were surprised to hear Chutta Khan direct that they should be released, and that each man should have a turban and a rupee to carry him back to his home. "Take this," he exclaimed, "but recollect you shall have other treatment if you come again into my country." When those around him looked surprised, he said, "These poor creatures are, of themselves, no objects of vengeance; their leaders, from their connexion with the Mahratta chiefs, are above my power; why outrage by useless violence those whose employers we cannot punish? They will now feel obliged by my humanity to their followers, who were in my power; and it will be an additional motive to make them refrain from attacking us."* Nor was he mistaken: during his life there

* This occurrence and Chutta Khan's speech were stated by Khealee Ram, then a writer in his office, who witnessed and heard what he narrates.

were no more inroads made by these freebooters on the territory of Bhopal.

Chutta Khan was not above forty years of age when he died. Though he had been brought up a Mahomedan, he appears to have continued as much a Hindu in his disposition as he was in his appearance. He was of a moderate stature, slight make, temperate in his language, and smooth in his manners: he combined art with resolution, and was, in short, in every thing the opposite of that tribe to which he belonged by adoption.

On the death of Chutta Khan, efforts were made by several persons to obtain possession of his wealth. Nawaub Khan, a Patan officer, who had long been in his service, tried to make himself master both of his treasure and the Government; but after some acts of great violence, he was forced to leave Bhopal, carrying with him property to the supposed amount of six lacs of rupees. He left the unprotected family of his late master to the oppression of their enemies.

Ghous Mahomed Khan, son of Hiyat Mahomed, stimulated by the exaggerated reports of the wealth left by Chutta Khan, exercised every species of torture to exact it from the mother of his two illegitimate sons, who was the daughter of a tradesman. This unfortunate woman, after being plundered of every thing, was glad to escape alive. She is now at Seronje, dependant for daily food on the Nabob Ameer Khan. Her only son, Ameer Mahomed,* is among the poorest of the followers of Ghuffoor Khan at Indore. Such has been

* From the several opportunities that have been afforded this man of improving his condition in life, and the bad use he has made of them, I am disposed to believe he is a worthless character.



the fate of the family of a man, who by his management raised Bhopal to the highest state of prosperity. But these reverses of fortune are too common in India to excite attention, much less commiseration.

Himmuto Row, a native of Upper Hindustan, who had been during almost the whole of Chutta Khan's administration at the head of the revenue department, now received the title of Raja, and was created Dewan, or minister; but during the twelvemonth he held this office, he had hardly any power. Every thing was done by the Bebee (so Hiyat Mahomed Khan's favourite lady was called) and an eunuch of the name of Gul Khojah, in whom she confided; and among other ruinous expedients to which these persons had recourse to avert the dangers that threatened Bhopal, amidst the confusion which at this period prevailed in Central India, Luckma Dada, one of Sindia's independent leaders, was called upon as an auxiliary, and promised high pay and reward if he would recover the fort of Hussingabad, which had, immediately after the death of Chutta Khan, been attacked and taken by Ragojee Bhonslah, whose armies, aided by large bodies of Pindarries, had begun to lay waste the territories of Bhopal.

While these events threatened the destruction of this petty State, a youth made his appearance as its defender, in a manner which gives to his history an air of romance which continued to its close. He came to the gate of the city, habited as a soldier of fortune, and attended by some well-mounted adherents, and on being stopped by the guards, proclaimed himself to be Vizier Mahomed, the son of Sheriff Mahomed Khan, the cousin of the reigning Nabob, with whom he



desired an interview. This was immediately granted. The Nabob, after the first salutation, asked him how he had subsisted during his absence from Bhopal. He frankly avowed that, having been banished his native country by the power of Chutta Khan, against whose administration his father had rebelled, he had been compelled to earn a livelihood by serving Huttee Singh, a plundering Rajpoot chief in the province of Omut-warra. He had learnt, he said, the profession of a soldier; and the reports which he heard of the distress and danger of the land of his ancestors, had made him determine, at all hazards, to offer his services, and to give his life (it was all he had) in any way the Nabob pleased, for his country. The old prince was roused from his usual state of abstraction by the occurrence. He gave to Vizier Mahomed the endearing title of son, and hailed him (with a spirit of prophecy) as the future saviour of the State. The period was one of action. The troops of Nagpoor were besieging Hussingabad, and the depredations of the Pindarries were every day more dreadful. We may imagine how rapidly the fame of Vizier Mahomed, who at once became a distinguished actor in these scenes, increased, when we are told that, in eight months after he reached Bhopal, he was a popular candidate for the office of Dewan. The Nabob is said to have determined on his elevation; but it was opposed by his son Ghous Mahomed, and the mother of that prince, who represented the danger of giving such a station to a person whose mind was still warm with the wrongs of his family, and who had a father's death to revenge. It was acknowledged, however, that a Patan of high rank was



necessary to the conduct of affairs, and the choice unfortunately fell on Mooreed Mahomed Khan, the descendant of Sultan Mahomed Khan, and hereditary lord of Rathgurrh. This chief refused to accept the office till the Mahratta auxiliaries were dismissed. A large sum was given them in consequence of their agreeing to depart; and the new Dewan came, accompanied by a thousand adherents, to take charge of the Government. Mooreed Mahomed Khan presented, in his appearance and character, a very remarkable contrast to Vizier Mahomed. He had more the look and manners of a Hindu merchant than an Afghan chief. On the first day of his arrival he encamped at the garden of his grandfather, Sultan Mahomed Khan, where the day was passed in a display of tender feeling. He wept aloud at the recollections of the misfortunes of his family which this spot brought to his mind, and embraced the trees which had been planted by his dear ancestors.* Next day, when he was introduced to the old Nabob, he addressed him in the most humble and fulsome language, calling him his more than father; he lavished at the same time the most exaggerated praise on Ghous Mahomed. The Bebee, or mother of that prince, at whose court he next attended, was termed his aunt, and the person towards whom he looked for advancement. A still more extraordinary part was acted when the chief bankers and merchants of the city waited upon him. He refused their usual offerings of money, and made them presents of clothes, and honoured some of

* Persian Manuscript.

the principal with the title of relations.* All the citizens he met were conciliated by the most soothing language; and, to gratify the poorer classes, he directed considerable sums to be distributed in charity. Many of the inhabitants of Bhopal were delighted by a demeanour to which they had been so little accustomed; but the haughty and turbulent Afghan lords of that capital could hardly repress their indignation at a conduct which they considered derogatory and disgraceful. Some, better acquainted with the individual by whom these arts were practised, waited anxiously till the veil should be withdrawn, and his real character developed. They were not long in suspense: for in less than a month the vindictive and avaricious spirit which Mooreed Mahomed Khan evinced, in the oppression of the aged widow of Raja Byjeeram, opened the eyes of all. His conduct on this occasion was more despicable, from the distressed condition the poor woman had been before reduced to. His next attack was on the late Dewan, Raja Himmud Row, whom with his nephew, Khealee Ram,† the manager of Bersiah, he confined for six weeks, till they paid a fine of ten thousand rupees. The supplies extorted from such sources of petty oppression were insufficient either to satisfy the Dewan's avarice, or the wants of the State, which latter

* Dharm Chund and Kool Chund were both styled cousins by this cajoling minister. The whole of the proceedings of this period are taken from authentic manuscripts, and from the statements of actors in the scenes described.

† This person has been in my service for the last two years. He is a man of very clear intellect, and has a complete knowledge of the affairs of Bhopal at this period.



every day became more pressing, from the general confusion that prevailed throughout the whole of Central India.

The Bhopal possessions, in common with others, were now overrun with freebooters and robbers of every description, and the troops it was necessary to maintain for their defence were clamorous for their pay. To relieve these wants, Mooreed Mahomed Khan imposed a tax on each house in Bhopal, which was levied according to the real or supposed wealth of the inhabitants; and those he had a short time before conciliated by the most endearing epithets, were now treated with marked severity. Grown bold with success, the Dewan demanded money from the Bebee, and, irritated by her refusal, he determined on her destruction.* This lady had been raised from the lowest† class, and, though not married to Hiyat Mahomed Khan, had enjoyed as his favourite mistress all the rank and power of the first princesses. She paid little attention to the Nabob, who, absorbed in religious contemplation,‡ was heedless of her conduct. The character of Chutta Khan had kept her in restraint, but subsequent to his death she had been less prudent.

Mooreed Mahomed, after exciting the prejudices of the Patans against her, on the ground of her mean birth, and the intrigues she carried on, took the opportunity of a

* Mooreed Mahomed had persuaded the Nabob and Ghous Mahomed to forbid any person attending Durbar with their arms. This order induced Vizier Mahomed and other Patans to retire from court.

† She was the daughter of a poor musician.

‡ Different reasons have been assigned for this seclusion; but, whether his conduct was guided by religious contemplation, or arose from apathy or stupidity, the effect was the same—a complete disqualification for the management of the affairs of the principality.

visit of ceremony to have her assassinated. Two of her principal officers were killed in her defence ; and though she fled from the court where she was seated to the inner apartments, the partizans of Mooreed followed and dispatched her. To cloak his own conduct, and to avoid the odium of the massacre, the Dewan swore upon the Koran that he had put the Bebee to death at the earnest entreaty of her son, Ghous Mahomed, who insisted on the execution, as a punishment for the dishonour her licentiousness had brought on him and his family. Whether Ghous Mahomed, or his father, really assented to this proceeding, could never be known, as they were both too much at the mercy of Mooreed Mahomed to venture any expression of their feelings. But the secret motives of the minister's conduct were soon revealed, by the plunder of all the property this lady had amassed,* a great part of which he is believed to have conveyed to Rathgurrh and other places, where, amid the rapid revolutions that ensued, it became lost to him and to the State.

The next person whom Mooreed Mahomed Khan marked for destruction was Vizier Mahomed, whose reputation excited both his jealousy and alarm ; but all his attempts against this young chief were unsuccessful. They added to the fame of the man he hated and dreaded. Vizier Mahomed, when sent with inadequate means to oppose the Pindarries, supplied by his personal valour and judgment the want of numbers, and obtained the admiration

* The unpopularity into which this woman had fallen from her cruel usage of the family of Chutta Khan, prevented her being pitied : but this fact was by none deemed a palliation of the atrocity committed by Mooreed Mahomed Khan.



even of his enemies.* His penetration soon developed the artifices of the Dewan, and he was cautioned not to trust himself in his power. A plan was laid by Mooreed Mahomed to cut him off near Cheynpoor Barree; but the letter which contained the instructions was intercepted, and the governor† of that place, to whom it was addressed, was defeated, and fled wounded, with the loss of guns and baggage, into his fort, which next day surrendered to Vizier Mahomed. The news of this event was received by the timid Dewan as the prelude to his downfall, and, regardless of every thing but personal considerations, he summoned to his aid a large body of Mahrattas under Balaram Ingolia (one of Dowlet Row Sindia's predatory leaders, who was then subsisting his force by pillage); and the standard of Sindia was, on the arrival of this force, displayed over the ramparts of Futtygurh, and the citadel of Bhopal. The next concession the minister desired to make to his new allies, was the fort of Islamnuggur; but what his fears had granted was saved by the spirit of an Afghan widow lady, named Motee Bebee,‡ who, when the Mahrattas were advancing, ordered the gates to be shut and the guns to be opened, saying she knew not by what authority Mooreed Mahomed Khan disposed of the Bhopal fortresses, and that she would not permit any strangers to intrude where she

* Vizier Mahomed, when in the service of Huttee Singh of Omutarra, had, on a plundering expedition, the tail of his horse cut completely off. But he knew his value too well to reject him on this account, and the fame of the horse, well known by this mark, and that of his rider, were associated. It is asserted that the cry of *Banda Ghora ka Sowar*, or the cavalier with the cut-tail horse, was certain to put the Pindarries to flight, whatever were their numbers.

† His name was Raheem Khan.

‡ Aunt to Vizier Mahomed.



dwelt. The noble resolution of this high-minded female appears to have been well supported by the troops of the garrison; and the Mahrattas were forced to retire.

Vizier Mahomed, who had been employed in establishing his authority over the country round Cheynpoor Barree, moved, the moment he heard of this occurrence, upon Bhopal. This led the Dewan and his Mahratta ally to march out of Futtygurh to a plain four miles distant, where they were reinforced by some infantry and guns, and a body of troops under Bappoo Sindia.

The fort of Futtygurh was on this occasion left to the care of the since celebrated Ameer Khan, to whom the custody of Ghous Mahomed was also assigned.

Vizier Mahomed had several sharp skirmishes with the Mahrattas, in which his courage and talent gained him the advantage; but the numbers of his enemies would perhaps have ultimately prevailed, if the troubles* which commenced in Sindia's own possessions had not made him direct his leaders to withdraw from all interference with the affairs of Bhopal. These orders were immediately obeyed; but Balaram carried with him the Dewan Mooreed Mahomed Khan as far as Seronje. He now accused that chief of being the author of all his disappointments, and of being concerned in the resistance which had been made to his occupation of the fort of Islamnuggur. The other in vain denied the charge, and stated how irreconcilable such conduct was with his own interests; his notorious reputation as a deceiver was brought forward by the Mahratta leader in answer to all

* The contest between Sindia and the widows of his uncle and predecessor commenced at this period.



he could urge in his defence. He was threatened with torture, unless he immediately gave up the treasures he was known to possess, and his fears and confinement brought on a violent illness; but even this was treated as a trick, and when he died, Balaram refused for two days to allow his body to be buried, declaring his conviction that he had counterfeited death to effect his escape; nor was it till putrefaction had commenced that the Mahratta chief would resign his prey, and believed that for once Mooreed Mahomed Khan did not practise deceit! The name of this man is doomed to execration by his tribe, and to this day, when a Patan of Bhopal visits Seronje to pay his devotion at a shrine sacred to Murtiza Ali,* it is deemed an essential part of the pilgrimage to bestow five blows with a slipper on the tomb of Mooreed Mahomed Khan, to mark at once the contempt and indignation which his memory excites.

After the retreat of the Mahrattas, Vizier Mahomed surrounded the fort of Futtygurh, of which Ameer Khan still retained possession. The latter, however, soon agreed to give up Ghous Mahomed, and to evacuate the place. He afterwards entered into the service of Bhopal, but was found so intriguing a character, that at the end of six months he was discharged, and proceeded, as has been before stated, to share the fortunes of Jeswunt Row Holkar.

The mode in which the revenues of Bhopal were collected, has been already noticed. The Dewan, which office Vizier Mahomed now filled, received all the collec-

* This is the title by which the Caliph Ali, the nephew and son-in-law of the Prophet Mahomed, is designated.



tions, except those appropriated for the personal support of the Nabob; but this revenue, from the distracted state of Malwa, and the incessant incursions of the Mahrattas and Pindarries, was, at the present period, not above fifty thousand rupees, out of which an army was to be maintained that could not be reduced below four thousand men without endangering even the nominal sovereignty of a country, which it was always hoped might yet enjoy peace and prosperity. Under such circumstances, Vizier Mahomed cannot be censured for having, to preserve the existence of the State he governed, had recourse to the same irregular practices, to which all others, from Dowlet Row Sindia down to the pettiest chief in Central India, then resorted; or, in other words, to endeavour to make his army support itself. This system of indiscriminate violence, which appears on the first view to confound all rights and property, and to attain its ends by any expedient, was, nevertheless, not without its distinctions; certain principles being recognized, and, generally speaking, well observed by all parties.

The Bheels, and other tribes of petty robbers, plundered wherever and whatever they could. The chiefs of the Pindarries often contracted obligations with the principal sovereigns of the country, which limited their depredations; and though these freebooters had never established any character for good faith or honour, they had a knowledge of their own interest, which constituted some check on their proceedings. The Grassiah or Rajpoot chiefs, who, deprived of their lands by the Mahrattas, still claimed a share of their revenues on the ground of their ability to injure them, were satisfied



with a fixed and known Tanka, or tribute from certain territories, on which they had a real or pretended claim ; and their irruptions were directed to enforce this payment. The latter class of freebooters were always natives of the soil, and generally the friends, often the relations, of the Zemindars, or landholders. Their war was with the Government, and not with the inhabitants. The next and highest description of plunderers were the existing Governments. The armies and detachments of Dowlet Row Sindia, Holkar, and other Mahrattas, wherever they marched, levied as heavy a contribution* as could be extorted from the managing officers of the province or town they entered or attacked. At this period the greatest part of the revenues of Central India was collected in the manner described. The Campoos, or brigades, of Sindia and Holkar, traversed that unfortunate country, making little distinction to whom the place belonged from which they desired to obtain money. The leaders of these corps had always the ready excuse, if they desired it, of a mutiny among their troops for arrears of pay ; and the prince whose name they usurped, avowed or disapproved their actions, as it suited his temporary interests.

Vizier Mahomed, not satisfied with the re-conquest of the districts which had been taken from Bhopal, levied contributions on other States. He displayed equal gallantry and judgment in the various incursions he made into the neighbouring principalities, which he compelled

* The districts of Raiseen, Ashta, Sehor, Duraha, and Itchawur were reconquered, and contributions were levied from Shujahalpoor, Bersiah, Bhilsa, on the North side of the Nerbudda ; and from Seonee, and other districts South of that river.



to furnish a portion of revenue to supply his exhausted resources. But of all his exploits, there is none during this period of his life which reflects more credit on his character as a soldier than the recapture of Hussingabad, which he, in concert with the Pindarries, came upon so suddenly, and with such determined resolution, that he actually terrified its governor into a surrender.* After this exploit, Vizier Mahomed carried on for several years a petty warfare, marked by vicissitudes, with the Mahratta chiefs, who now considered him as a declared enemy. He in consequence endeavoured to strengthen himself by a connexion with the Pindarries. His first ally among these freebooters was Kurreem Khan, to whom he gave two villages in Bersiah. Cheettoo, another Pindarry chief, entered also into a compact of friendship with the Prince of Bhopal. He was promised a place of refuge for his family in one of its fastnesses, and received a grant of the village of Chippaneer, on the Nerbudda. The Pindarry leader, in return, aided the State of Bhopal against the Raja of Nagpoor.

The relations between the petty State of Bhopal and the Government of Sindia had latterly undergone a considerable change, of which it is here necessary to take a retrospect. Madhajee Sindia had been, throughout his life, looked upon as the friendly protector of the Afghan principality; and though no actual supremacy was either asserted or admitted, still there was, from the policy of both parties, an implied connexion. This led to considerable importance being attached to the Khelaut,

* This event occurred A.D. 1803. About a year after the reduction of Raiseen, Hussingabad had capitulated to the Nagpoor Raja in 1799, and remained with him till thus recaptured.



or honorary dresses, which Dowlet Row Sindia sent to the Nabob, and to Vizier Mahomed Khan; but the latter, nevertheless, kept aloof when Sindia required him to accompany his army, then on its march to attack Jeswunt Row Holkar. The consequence of this caution was, that when the Pindarry leaders, Kurreem Khan, Dost Mahomed, and Cheettoo, were loaded with favours and created Nabobs (for the Mahratta ruler now conferred* this Mahomedan title) in consideration of the aid they had given, the brother of Vizier Mahomed, whom he sent to congratulate that prince on his success, was received with such marked coolness, as left little doubt of the measures in contemplation.

Ghous Mahomed, the son of the nominal Nabob, continued to regard Vizier Mahomed, after his elevation to the office of Dewan, with envy and hatred, and in consequence entered into a league with the Pindarry chief Kurreem, to supplant his authority. Their first efforts were so far successful, as to compel Vizier Mahomed to retire from Bhopal; but he soon returned, and drawing them from that capital, forced them to seek refuge in the camp of Dowlet Row Sindia, who was then engaged in the siege of a neighbouring fortress. Although that prince deemed this the proper period to execute a design he had long cherished, of seizing Kurreem,† yet it did

* The bestowing this title had no form but the Chiefs Sindia or Holkar addressing the favoured person in writing, or verbally, as Nabob; on which the Chobdars and Durbar officers proclaimed the new title, and the party ever after assumed it, was addressed by it in letters, and had it engraved on his seal.

† This event occurred in A. D. 1806. Sindia afterwards proceeded to besiege Rathguruh, which fort was evacuated in A. D. 1807.



not prevent his listening to the complaints of Ghous Mahomed Khan; and so eager was this imbecile chief to ruin Vizier Mahomed, that he engaged to surrender the fort of Islamnuggur, pay four lacs of rupees in cash, and present an annual tribute of fifty thousand rupees to Sindia, with eleven thousand to his public officers. Having consented to these disgraceful terms, he proceeded to Bhopal, after being invested with an honorary dress by Dowlet Row Sindia, whose ostensible support he seems to have thought sufficient to maintain him in power; nor does he appear, on his return, to have met with any opposition on the part of Vizier Mahomed.

The fort of Islamnuggur was immediately surrendered to one of Sindia's officers; and eighteen days after that event Hiyat Mahomed died. He was seventy-three years of age, very corpulent, and of large stature. This weak and wretched prince appears to have been completely exhausted by the harassing scenes amid which he lived; and those near him relate that his invocations for death to release him were frequent and earnest.

In the same year that Hiyat Mahomed died, Hus-singabad and Cheynpoor Barree were taken by the armies of the Nagpoor Raja, one of whose generals, Sadick Ali, was invited by Ghous Mahomed to advance on Bhopal. Vizier Mahomed probably felt himself unable to prevent these ruinous measures, taken as they were by one who was the recognized prince of the country. He, in consequence, after expressing his indignation at such disgraceful proceedings, retired to the fortress of Gunnour, leaving the capital, and part of his own property, to be plundered. Sadick Ali, after remaining at Bhopal about six weeks, retired towards



Nagpoor, carrying with him the son of Ghous Mahomed as a hostage, while the agents he left in possession of Bhopal placed that prince under restraint.

Vizier Mahomed watched these events, and, encouraged by the security that appeared to, reign among his enemies, he determined on an attempt to recover Bhopal. He left Gunnour with his adherents in the evening, and by break of day reached* the city. The walls were instantly assaulted, the Mahrattas in the town were attacked and expelled, and the fort of Futtygurh was evacuated during the night. On meeting Ghous Mahomed, he rebuked him in the harshest and most contemptuous manner. The weak prince said, that he had been betrayed by wicked men, whom he named. Vizier Mahomed ordered them to be immediately produced, saying, "If these are the wretches who have betrayed you, punish them forthwith." Six Hindu officers† of rank, or more, were put to death. Besides these, two Brahmins were bound; and a cow being killed before them, their mouths were opened with wedges, and the blood poured down their throats: they were then liberated, and desired to go and describe the taste of cow's blood to Sindia and the Nagpoor Raja. No mode of vengeance could have been more cruel or insulting than that which Vizier Mahomed thus perpetrated. It was thought that he had outraged the feelings of the Mahratta princes, of whom the traitors he punished were but the instruments,

* A distance of nearly 40 miles.

† Lal Jee and Roop Chund were trodden to death by elephants. Nowbut Raee Bukshee (or paymaster), Benee Lal Moonshee (secretary), and Sooraj Mul, were blown from guns.



beyond the hope of forgiveness ; but he succeeded, for the moment, in averting the anger of Sindia, by promising faithfully to fulfil the terms into which Ghous Mahomed had entered, and by sending his eldest son as a hostage for the liquidation of such part of the four lacs of rupees as was still in arrear.

About a year after these transactions, Vizier Mahomed reconquered the territories of Bhopal, North of the Nerbudda, which had been seized by Sadick Ali, whose brother, the governor of those districts, was slain. Some months afterwards, Ameer Khan solicited and obtained the assistance of Vizier Mahomed in a contest with the Raja of Nagpoor. They came upon the troops of that prince in a situation where they were strongly posted ; but Ameer Khan, nevertheless, proposed an immediate attack. Vizier Mahomed, who was remarkable, notwithstanding his sense and courage, for his superstitious prejudices,* said the day was unfortunate, and requested him to defer it. This, however, Ameer Khan refused to do, with an expressed contempt of the reason on which the advice was grounded. The action, in which he immediately engaged, had an unfavourable termination. Ameer Khan being (from having fallen from his horse) reported slain, his followers, after plundering their own camp, fled in every direction. The discomfited chief went to the tent of Vizier Mahomed, who had taken no

* He always carried about with him a Takweem, or almanack, in which the good or bad days were noted, according to the calculations of astrologers ; but besides this he had great faith in omens. It is difficult to say, how much of this belief was real or pretended ; he certainly, amidst the extraordinary vicissitudes of his life, often derived and imparted to his followers courage from the slightest events.



share in the battle, and requested he would accompany him in the retreat he was compelled to make. But the latter, who was disgusted with the whole conduct of his ally, and quite indignant at the cowardice and want of discipline of his followers, bade Ameer Khan go back, as he had advanced, alone. "You," he said, "who have no country to fight for, may think a casual defeat of little importance; but in the defence of a State, the reputation of its leader is one of its strongest bulwarks; and that, if once lost, cannot be regained. What hopes could a people entertain of a chief in my situation, who shrunk from danger? Retreat, therefore, shall never be resorted to by me, till I have convinced my enemies that I am resolved to achieve whatever is within the verge of possibility."* This conference was quite public: Vizier Mahomed acted as he said he would; he immediately led his troops, who were animated by his brave resolution, and proud of the superiority of their chief, against the Nagpoor army, which he forced, in their turn, to give ground; but their numbers were too great, and he derived no benefit, except the substantial one of maintaining his high name by this temporary success. His attempts at this period to obtain the assistance and mediation of the British Government,† were unsuccessful; for though there was no doubt, from the character of Vizier Mahomed, that it was with a view to self-pre-

* I took down this speech of Vizier Mahomed from the relation of a most intelligent native, who was present when it was made; and had it subsequently confirmed by others who heard it.

† Enayet Musseah was employed on this occasion to endeavour to interest Mr. Jenkins, the Resident at the court of Nagpoor, in his favour.



servation alone that he had contracted friendship with the Pindarry leaders and Ameer Khan, this could not prevent his being classed among those who had combined to overrun the territories of Nagpoor and the Deckan. He had, in fact, not only co-operated with these plunderers, but his country was their professed asylum. He was, in consequence, at this period in imminent hazard of being destroyed by the British forces, which advanced under Sir Barry Close across the Nerbudda. That army acted in co-operation with the Raja of Nagpoor against Ameer Khan; but the officer who commanded it had discretionary orders to attack Bhopal. The danger which threatened this petty State was averted by the jealousy of the court of Nagpoor, and by the open and manly conduct of Vizier Mahomed. While Sadick Ali was seizing Cheynpoor Barree and other possessions, Vizier Mahomed sent an agent to Colonel Close to describe the necessity under which he had acted; to urge the claims of the Bhopal family on the British nation, for the aid formerly given to General Goddard; and finally, to state his complete acquiescence in whatever terms the Colonel might dictate. His agent was instructed to declare distinctly, that no thoughts of opposition were entertained against a nation which was regarded by the princes and nobles of Bhopal with a hereditary feeling of hope and confidence, and towards which no extreme of distress could ever make them place themselves in the relation of enemies.

The conduct of Vizier Mahomed and his officers, when the British troops were within and near his territories, corresponded with his professions. But he chiefly owed his safety to the vacillating policy of Ragojee Bhonslah,



on whose friendship the British Government had every day less cause to rely. He saw and took advantage of this state of affairs: he eagerly pressed the claim of Bhopal to British protection; but an apprehension that interference in its concerns would involve much embarrassment, and carry Government beyond the limit they wished, led to the rejection of all the propositions which he then made, and often repeated during the seven successive years of his arduous and unsupported struggles to maintain the existence of the State of which he was the head. This gallant chief was at once an object of terror and of calumny at the Mahratta courts, particularly at those of Nagpoor and Gualior. Their efforts to destroy him had driven him to have recourse to every means for the preservation of himself and his country; but, forgetting that they were the real authors of the condition in which he was placed, they represented him as the willing associate of Pindarries, the patron of plunderers, and the chief enemy to the restoration of peace in Central India. His being viewed in this light created a combination of various States against him, which, from the strength collected, seemed to render his escape from destruction almost impossible. But this part of the subject deserves minute notice, as it evinces in a remarkable manner, what the natives of India are capable of effecting, when commanded by an able leader who possesses their confidence and attachment.

In March, 1812, one of Dowlet Row Sindia's principal generals, Juggoo Bappoo, made an attack on Bhopal, with the troops of which he had several slight actions, but appears to have made no impression. The pretence for this attack was the non-payment of sums due by



Vizier Mahomed to the Government of Sindia. On a small amount being given, and a promise of more, Juggoo Bappoo retired during the monsoon to a neighbouring district. When the season opened, this officer again advanced ; and the approach of the Nagpoor troops under Sadick Ali, announced the commencement of that combined plan of operations, which Sindia and the Raja of Nagpoor had for some time contemplated against Bhopal. Their object was its annihilation, and an engagement was entered into by which the parties agreed to share equally its territory, the complete conquest of which they anticipated as the certain result of their great preparations.

The city of Bhopal, which stands on the high land of Gondwarra, North of the Nerbudda, is of considerable extent, and about four miles in circumference. It is surrounded by a tolerable wall, but without any ditch, or other defence, on three faces. On the other, or Southern face, is the citadel of Futtygurh, which stands on an eminence, and is defended on one side by the tank or lake of Bhopal, a noble sheet of water, which extends in length five miles, and is in average breadth about one. Most of the irregular crags or heights upon the bank of the lake had formerly been fortified ; but all these works were at this period in a very bad condition, and their appearance, with that of the empty houses (for Vizier Mahomed had warned all the inhabitants that could not share in the toils and dangers of the siege, to depart), made Bhopal look more like a desolated ruin than the capital of a country. The events which ensued will be best given in a plain narrative,* written

* The name of the respectable Mahomedan who furnished me with this account was Ameer Khan. He had been a soldier, and had become



By a respectable person who witnessed the actions he has described.

"Vizier Mahomed had within the walls of Bhopal nearly six thousand horse and foot in his own pay; three thousand Pindarries under Namdar Khan, nephew of Kurreem, and two thousand men furnished by the Zemindars of the Tal Pergunnah, and by Ruttun Singh, Thakoor or Lord of Satunbaree.

"When Juggoo Bappoo,* after the rainy season was over, invested Bhopal, he was joined by one of his officers named Dan Singh, who reinforced him with twelve battalions of infantry and thirty guns; and this force, already amounting to twenty-five thousand, was subsequently augmented by the corps of Ram Lal† and Krishna Bhow, consisting of fifteen thousand men, horse and foot, and an army from Nagpoor under Sadick Ali of nearly thirty thousand men.

"When this great force, amounting altogether to seventy thousand men,‡ was assembled, the siege commenced. During the first fortnight there was only a cannonading; after which the regular infantry commanded by Dan Singh, assaulting Vizier Mahomed's outposts, drove them with much loss on both sides under

a merchant. His account was compared and corrected by those of several others, and no fact has been stated that has not been authenticated.

* His proper name was Jugapoh Bappoo, but he is best known in Indian history by the name of Juggoo Bappoo.

† Ram Lal was commander of the horse, and Krishna Bhow of the infantry.

‡ This statement is, perhaps, exaggerated by ten or fifteen thousand men, but the force is acknowledged by all to have been very great.

the shelter of the town,* which the besiegers began to batter—having occupied all the advanced positions from which the besieged had been driven. The latter, when confined within the walls, suffered some distress, particularly the Pindarries, who representing to Vizier Mahomed that they were unable to procure forage for their horses requested his permission to withdraw from the city. Vizier Mahomed consented, and the Pindarries withdrew by a by-road unknown to the enemy. Most of the mounted troops belonging to the Zemindars were compelled by the same necessity to follow this example. They promised, however, to assist as much as possible, by conveying grain to the town as opportunities should occur: they fulfilled their pledge, and the besieged received for a time occasional supplies by a secret road leading from the gates of the old fort of Bhopal, over hills and defiles. But a deserter from the town gave information to the enemy of this communication, and it was immediately stopped by Sadick Ali, who occupied a space reaching from the gate of the old fort to the Gun-nour gate of the town wall. Juggoo Bappoo also took positions which commanded the approach to the principal gates of the town wall; and the three or four remaining ones were blocked up in the same manner by Ram Lal and Krishna Bhow. Whilst the enemy were employed in preventing the ingress or egress to or from the town, Vizier Mahomed made his dispositions for defence, by posting a certain number of men inside of

* It is stated in Major Henley's notes on this siege, that the friends of Vizier Mahomed had on this occasion the utmost difficulty in prevailing on him to abandon the tombs of his ancestors, where the principal battery of the enemy was afterwards raised.



each gate.* He gave a strict order to his troops that they should not expend ammunition by firing unnecessarily, which could only tend to impress the enemy with an opinion of their unsteadiness; and was so rigid in enforcing its observance, that after the occurrence of several false alarms from unnecessary firing, he punished the offenders by cutting off their ears and noses, and expelling them with disgrace from the town. The siege commenced about the latter end of October. In November the regular infantry of Juggoo Bappoo drove in the Bhopal outposts, as before mentioned; and in the beginning of December the enemy took up the positions that have been detailed, to blockade the town gates. Shortly after this, Vizier Mahomed was informed of a

* The old fort was guarded by a Rajpoot officer, named Doongurh Singh, with one hundred men. The Gunnour gate by Thakoor Jey Singh, with two hundred. The Gondwarra gate by a Seid named Meer Bakur Ali, with two hundred. The Mungulwarra by another Seid named Nunga Sir (bare head, from continually going with his head uncovered), who had two hundred men under him. The Etwarra gate by Moolaeem Khan, with two hundred men. The Jumarath gate by a Chelah named Khaja Buksh, with two hundred. The Sondwarra gate by Moiz Mahomed Khan, son of Ghous Mahomed, with four hundred men; and the Hummamel gate by Kurreem Mahomed Khan, with two hundred. In a suburb called Vizier Gunge, founded by Vizier Mahomed outside the town, an officer named Goolshun Row was posted with five hundred men. Fattygurh was defended by an officer named Dil Mahomed Khan, with two hundred men. A fortified eminence within Fattygurh called the Bala Killa, or upper fort was guarded by a Rajpoot named Zalim Singh, with one hundred men. The sally-port of Fattygurh was defended by Soota Khan, a Chelah, with one hundred men. Vizier Mahomed did not restrict himself to any particular place, but, with five hundred men under his immediate personal command, had a general superintendence over all the posts, to any of which he was ready to move as occasion required.



spot where treasure was supposed to be concealed. He ordered the ground to be dug, and found twenty-two large bags, or sacks, containing each eight or ten thousand pieces of copper. He also found thirty small iron guns, in good condition: these he directed to be mounted on the walls, while the copper was coined, and distributed to the troops. Grain had now become so scarce, that only two seers* were procurable for a rupee. As it has been stated that every road to the town was blocked up by the enemy, it is necessary to recollect, in order to account for the besieged continuing to receive occasional supplies, that the town of Bhopal is defended by a large lake on the western side, over which grain was from time to time transported in boats, for the use of the besieged, by some of the principal Zemindars, or landholders, of the country, and particularly by Ruttun Singh. The progress of the besiegers was slow during the first two months. The wall of the town of Bhopal is high and strong, and the artillery of the enemy seldom fired more than forty shots in a day, except on occasions of their making an attack. None had yet been made upon the body of the town; but about the middle of December a general assault took place. A storming-party was directed upon every gate, whilst others attempted to escalate the walls; but they were repulsed at every point, though not till after a conflict which lasted eighteen hours. The conduct of Vizier Mahomed on this occasion gave great courage and confidence to the troops and the inhabitants. He flew himself, or sent

* A seer is eighty rupees in weight; and, according to the Oojein rupee, this may be estimated about two pounds avoirdupois.



succour, to every point that was pressed, till attack after attack was abandoned in despair by the assailants.

"In the month of January two different assaults on the town were made at the same time—one by Sadick Ali on the Gunnour gate, and the other by Dan Singh on the Mungulwarra gate. Some of the assailants were so successful as to effect an entrance by escalade over a part of the wall that had been battered near the top; but they met with so warm a reception from the defenders within, that the whole of them were forced to retreat. The partial success of the attack on the Mungulwarra gate having attracted the attention of the besieged, who all crowded to that quarter, the defence of the Gunnour gate was neglected; and a party were enabled to escalade the wall and gain a bastion, where they planted their standard. This display, however, afforded but a short-lived triumph; as the women of this quarter of the town, alarmed at the danger that threatened them, assembled in crowds on the tops of houses and other high places, and attacked the enemy with a shower of tiles, stones, and other missiles. The unexpected annoyance from these Amazons galled the assailants so severely, that they were compelled to lower their standard, and could hardly maintain their ground. At this juncture Vizier Mahomed, having repulsed the attack at the Mungulwarra gate, arrived to oppose that at the Gunnour gate, where he was equally successful, forcing those who had entered to retire precipitately and with great loss.* He was quite delighted with the con-

* Another account states that the scaling-ladders were thrown down, which left the assailants without retreat, and the greater part of them were destroyed.



duct of the women who had defended this ungarded post, and, after highly applauding their courage, he rewarded them with presents for the essential service which they had performed. No event that occurred gave Vizier Mahomed such satisfaction as this. He was of a very sanguine temper, and inclined to superstition; and he drew a happy presage, from the display of valour made by the females of the town upon this occasion, that the place was not destined to fall into the hands of the besiegers. The situation, however, of the defenders of Bhopal became every day worse: during the month of February the price of the coarsest grain rose to the rate of a rupee per seer.* The boats had hitherto continued to bring occasional, though scanty supplies; but this mode of relief was discovered by the enemy, who bribed the boatmen to desert. This misfortune reduced the besieged to such distress, that numbers of the inhabitants, as well as the troops, were unable to resist opportunities which occurred of withdrawing; which, with casualties, diminished the number of the garrison from six thousand to as many hundreds. The Mahomedan part of this body did not scruple to eat carrion; while the most rigid of the Hindus endeavoured to appease the cravings of hunger by making food of bruised tamarind-stones and the leaves of trees. They, however, at times received assistance from the besiegers themselves, some of whom, tempted by exorbitant profit, furnished by stealth supplies of grain, which were handed over the walls. During this month some more efforts were made by Dan Singh, but with such unvaried bad success, that

* A seer, as has been explained, is two pounds weight. The usual price of the best grain is twenty seers the rupee.



it excited the indignation of another commander, named Ram Lal, who resolved to make a desperate attack, boasting that he would in the course of next day be in possession of the town. In furtherance of this determination, he prepared an assaulting party of three thousand chosen men, with which he marched before daybreak upon Vizier Gunge. The troops stationed at this point were fortunately on the alert, and opened a smart fire, which gave the alarm to the besieged in the town: the latter immediately sent out two guns to their support, which, with those from the walls and from Futtugurh, were so well served, and did such execution by a cross fire amongst the enemy, that when day broke, nearly a thousand of them were killed and wounded. The assailants, notwithstanding this loss, pushed boldly on till they advanced so close to the walls of Bhopal as to be under cover from the cannon. At this crisis Vizier Mahomed with only fifty men made a sally from the Jumarath gate; and the party at Vizier Gunge sallying from thence at the same time, they made conjointly an attack upon the enemy with such desperate resolution and ardour, that they forced them to retreat, with their numbers reduced from three thousand to little more than five hundred. Vizier Mahomed lost on this occasion sixty or seventy of his best men, which, with other casualties, lessened his adherents to the small number of two hundred. But Ram Lal, one of the bravest of the leaders of his enemies, was so much dispirited and afflicted by the defeat he had sustained, and the loss of so many men, that he would never venture upon another assault.

“Grain was not now procurable in Bhopal, except such as was sold clandestinely by the besiegers; even that

was little, and at the enhanced rate of two rupees per seer, whilst it continued to be sold in the Mahratta camp at the rate of one rupee for five seers. To preserve life, the besieged had no other food than what has been before mentioned, pounded tamarind-stones and Casnee,* and even these two articles were not to be had under the exorbitant price of a rupee and a half per seer.

“In March the besieged experienced some respite from hostilities on the part of the enemy, in consequence of the death of Juggoo Bappoo, an event which occupied the Mahrattas nearly a month. The performance of the funeral obsequies and rites of this chief, appears to have been deemed a duty that superseded every other. About the end of April one of Vizier Mahomed's officers, named Doongurh Singh, who had been stationed with a party of one hundred men (now reduced to ten) to defend the old fort, allowed himself to be tampered with by Sadick Ali Khan; and he not only deserted his post during the night, but conducted about five hundred of the enemy into the fort he had abandoned. It chanced that two men stationed at the old fort gate leading to the town were alarmed at the bustle made by the Nagpoor troops as they entered. They imagined at first that it was created by Doongurh Singh returning from his rounds; but upon attentively listening, they became convinced that the noise was that of a larger party than he had under his command. In order to ascertain the fact, they cautiously entered the fort; and on arriving near the Mausoleum of the late Nabob Feyz Mahomed Khan,

* Casnee, — Cichorium Intybus, or Wild Succory. It was probably the root of this plant that was used as food.



they found it filled by a body of the enemy, with the matches* of their fire-arms lighted. On this discovery, one of the men hastened to report the circumstance to Vizier Mahomed, who enquired what had become of Doongurh Singh; the other replied that he could not tell, but advised that some prompt and decisive steps should be taken, otherwise the enemy would soon possess the town. On this remark, Vizier Mahomed, who had at that time only thirty men with him, cast an anxious glance at his son Nuzzer Mahomed Khan, who, construing the expression of his father's eye into a wish that he should be the first to go against the enemy, entreated permission to do so. 'If matters are come to this crisis,' said Vizier Mahomed, 'we must all go.' But, on farther solicitation from his son, he permitted him to proceed in advance with twelve men, whilst he himself with the remainder of his party followed at a short distance.

"In the mean time the enemy had not quitted the Mausoleum, but conceiving themselves already masters of Bhopal, had become neglectful of precaution: many of them had laid their matchlocks aside, while others undressing themselves, sat down at their ease, enjoying the thoughts of their fancied success. On Nuzzer Mahomed arriving near the Mausoleum, two of the Patans who were a few paces in advance of the rest, called out, with a view of deceiving the enemy, to those in the rear, 'Come on, comrades; the enemy are very inferior to us in numbers.' A volley was instantly fired by this small party, which did great execution, as the

The irregular infantry of Native princes in India use matchlocks.



fire-arms of the Patans consisted of a species of blunderbuss, each of which was loaded with thirty or forty small balls. The enemy were thrown into the greatest disorder and consternation by this unexpected attack. They were also deceived by the call purposely made by the foremost Patans, and in this state of perplexity were incapable of adopting any plan of defence. Vizier Mahomed with his party joined that of his son, and the whole of this little band of Patans threw aside their fire-arms, and, drawing their swords, rushed with impetuosity into the Mausoleum. Those of the enemy who could escape offered little or no resistance, but they left behind them above a hundred men killed and wounded, and a number of their arms and clothes. Vizier Mahomed Khan was on this occasion most severely bruised with stones; and Nuzzer Mahomed Khan received a deep sabre-cut on the shoulder, and a slight one on the head. This success was attended with more important consequences than could have been anticipated. In a few days after it occurred (in the beginning of May) Sadick Ali Khan announced his having had a dream, in which he heard a voice uttering awful maledictions against him for his apostacy, in leaguering with infidels against the followers of the most high Prophet. He had been warned, he added, to desist from attempts which were alike futile and impious, for it was evident the besieged were under the immediate protection of a divine Providence. The impression, real or pretended, made on Sadick Ali by this dream, was so great, that he publicly declared his resolution of conforming to what it dictated, and in consequence issued orders to his army to prepare to withdraw from Bhopal. Dan Singh and



others of Sindia's commanders used many arguments to induce him to remain; but their entreaties were answered by exhortation to follow his example, if they wished to avoid the vengeance of Heaven.

"After the departure of Sadick Ali, which greatly injured the confederate cause, the leaders and troops of Sindia, fatigued by a harassing service which had already lasted nine months, during which they had lost many thousands of their men, without making any substantial progress in their operations, desisted from any farther attempts against Bhopal; and, after a fortnight spent in preparation for marching, they raised the siege by moving towards Sarungpoor, at which place they cantoned."

Such was the termination of this memorable attack upon Bhopal; but the danger to that city was not yet over. Jeswunt Row Bhow, the cousin* of Juggoo Bappoo, who had succeeded to the command of his troops, employed himself during the monsoon in making preparations for renewing the siege the moment the season would permit. Vizier Mahomed, who, though his means and numbers were reduced to the lowest ebb, still preserved an unbroken spirit, employed himself during the rainy season in sending grain and stores from Raiseen to Bhopal, to enable him to sustain another attack. His difficulties, however, appeared insurmountable; the Pindarries had all joined the camp of the Bhow, and that was now reinforced by Jean Baptiste, an European†

* Jeswunt Row Bhow was the son of Jewa Dada, the first cousin of Juggoo Bappoo.

† This officer, though called an European, was born in India. He is the half-brother of Colonel Filoze, celebrated for having betrayed Nana Farnavese.—Vide Toone's letter on the Mahrattas.